

Ten Rooms and Lots of Green Grass for \$5,000 | Nutley Yesterday - Today - 1961

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FROM A. L. HUNTLEY

FOR SALE

10-Room house, bath, modern conveniences.
Nutley Park; detached carriage house;
plenty of green grass \$5,000, terms.
See William A. Lambert,
Architect, 490 Franklin Avenue.

THE want-ad ran in The Nutley Sun of September, 1900, and apparently at \$5,000 there were not many takers. The next week Mr. Lambert advertised an eight-room house, Nutley Park, for \$4,000, built to the buyer's convenience.

Happy days with 50-foot lots advertised, too, in The Sun for \$200 and whole farms, right near town, for \$2,000.

William Lambert was Nutley's Christopher Wren. An architect, he had good taste and he brought to Nutley a touch of his native England. An enthusiastic builder, he left behind him when he died about twenty years ago more than 500 homes, the product of his designs.

Nutley Park was, for the most part, his creation. He bought up land in North Woods for \$200 an acre for that development.

Hillside Avenue, Prospect Street, Sylvan Place, Dailey and Raymond Streets are all his monuments.

There was not much to Nutley between the Erie tracks and Washington Avenue when William Lambert turned his attention to the town, after having filled Hackensack with homes. Lambert bought up the Satterthwaite estate and put up more than 100 houses on it. Since Nutley had no sewers in those days, he laid his own sewers and put a disposal plant in what is now the town park beyond Rutgers Place.

His houses were solid and there still are hundreds of them standing today, firm and not ungraceful on their foundations of good masonry. His British taste was somewhat Victorian, but he had no liking for the ginger-bread of the then new Twentieth Century. He liked broad lines and pillars and he had a special weakness for the timbered Norman houses. But he abhorred all the fancy work that carpenters, then paid \$2.25 a day, loved to turn out.

Most of Nutley, back from Franklin and Passaic Avenues, north of New Street was wooded farmland. Lambert tried to preserve that woodsy flavor, and when he sold off building lots he cut them into fifty foot frontages but sold every other lot. Then he went back to the buyers and encouraged them to buy and

share between them the vacant lot between their two pieces of property. In that way he encouraged wider strips of property which permitted the retention of more trees.

Nor was Lambert an architect with a single track mind. He almost never repeated himself. Seldom did he build two houses from the same set of plans. His homes in Nutley did not look like the houses he built in Hackensack. He did not line a whole street with one or two types of houses.

He preceded the age of bungalows, ancestors of today's ranch houses, so his homes were all two-story affairs. Nutley was Dutch in its origin, but Lambert disregarded that angle and none of his homes show any Dutch influence.

When he began building here in 1890, he bought up estates and laid out his own streets. He was generous enough to make them wide and he set his houses back from the street, giving Nutley Park its present spaciousness which has survived a half century of encroachment.

His first houses were 6-room homes which he built to sell for \$3,600 to \$4,000. Then he branched out into bigger and better and more expensive homes. He offered eight and ten room homes for \$5,000 to \$5,500, and even built a few 12-room houses which cost \$6,000.

Lambert went into business, as the Nutley Realty Company, with a New York lawyer, Kneeland Moore, as his partner, and had New York offices at 114 Nassau Street. He had six houses begun when America entered World War I in April 1917, but by that time Nutley was fairly saturated with new houses and building became more costly and more difficult. The old master hung up his T-square and stopped his construction work while the war was on.

Lambert's Nutley homes won considerable renown in the Metropolitan area when they were included in a 'book which he published in 1894 titled "Lambert's Suburban Architecture." The John Howe house was one of those pictured, called "a cottage of modest cost" despite its eight big rooms and, as the book says, "there is a cistern to catch rain water and a cesspool and yard-house." As an afterthought, the book suggests "bathroom could be put in over the pantry."

Also pictured is the J. E. Cronan home which the architect describes as "semi-colonial style well ornamented with octagonal projections" as well as the B. N. Marsh residence complete with stable, the Kuck cottage which belies the name by its size, being about twice as large as any modern house under construction here, and the W. L. Hatch place.

The C. B. Van Dewater and the John Malmar homes are pictured as Lambert creations as well as the stately William J. Vreeland home which, despite its 65 years, is a classic with its straight-line simplicity and pillared porch.

Modern design owes one thing to William Lambert - the den. Arguing that a man's "growelry" is as dear to him as is a woman's boudoir, he put a den in

most of his houses, complete with stone fireplaces. In defining his own theories, he wrote in his book that he abhorred “gimcracks of every description” and urged the scattering of “skins of animals” in lieu of rugs.

“A good home is like having a gold deposit in a sound bank,” Lambert’s slogan read.

A forerunner of Stanford White, the New York architectural genius who was shot to death by Harry K. Thaw over the charms of Miss Nesbit, Lambert proved in 1894 that he was far ahead of his age and his field by conceiving a Long Island resort to be manned by gondoliers in the traditional feathered hats and the silks of old Venice. He also drew plans for a resort hotel for his New Venice which was a masterpiece. Ten years later Stanford White built a big hotel at Atlantic City and the likeness of the two is more than coincidental.

You can find Lambert houses today, on High Street, on Hillside Avenue, Prospect Street, Sylvan Place, Vreeland Avenue, Satterthwaite and Whitford Avenues, Highfield Lane and Edgewood Avenue. Wherever in those streets, you see a house that looks to be about 50 or 60 years old, rugged but still beautiful in line and graceful, it is, more than likely a Lambert house.

His own home still stands, the first house on Cathedral Avenue, number 7, now the residence of Joseph P. Dallanegra. Two of his closest collaborators have survived him, A. L. Huntley and the sister of Mrs. Lambert, Miss Bellinger, who worked with him for many years when his building work was most active.

“Mr. Lambert would turn over in his grave if he could see some of today’s housing projects, with row on row of little houses as alike as peas in pods,” Huntley contends. And missing, today, in modern housing is that “plenty of green grass” which William Lambert felt was so necessary in a home, particularly in Nutley homes.