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Newton



2020 SPECIAL EDITION
NEWTON
HOUSE
TOUR

SATURDAY,
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WELCOME TO HISTORIC NEWTON'S 2020 NEWTON HOUSE TOUR, SPECIAL EDITION!

Photo by Shelly Harrison

For the past 37 years, Historic Newton has celebrated Newton's rich architectural heritage through our Newton House Tour. Just as we were readying our annual tour for May 2020, the pandemic arrived – and we had to figure out the best way to pivot.

Now we are delighted and honored to bring the story of Maud Howard Brodrick out of obscurity and give it the scholarship and public exposure it deserves. Laura Fitzmaurice, our House Tour Committee Chair and an architectural historian, discovered Maud when a friend sent her an old ad from the *Newton Graphic* for a “woman-planned home” and she became intrigued.

As Laura's research progressed, it became clear that Maud and her company, Brodrick Bros., had a major impact on our local landscape. Also Maud's story stands out as unusual in American history at this time. Thank you, Laura for sharing this fascinating discovery! And thanks also go to the owners willing to open their homes for the video tours that you will be watching.

This project would not to be possible without our sponsors, including our lead sponsor, The Village Bank. We thank them and encourage you to patronize their businesses.

Enjoy this inside look at four lovingly preserved historic houses from the safety of your own home. We hope to welcome you inside Newton's spectacular homes again in the future.



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Detail from a mural painted by James King Bonnar in a Maud Brodrick home

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A WOMAN WITH AN ENDURING VISION



A thoroughly self-made woman, Maud Brodrick overcame daunting circumstances to build about 200 homes in Newton, Wellesley, and other Boston-area suburbs. In 1893 she was born Maud Howard Townley in Ashton-Under-Lyne, a town located outside of Manchester, England, where the industries were cotton spinning, weaving, and coal mining. Her mother, Elizabeth, worked as a ring spinner in a cotton mill. Maud's father, Edwin, was a carpenter. Maud left school after sixth grade and worked in a cigarette factory, a department store, and a cotton mill.

Maud's father moved to the United States in 1906 to seek a better life and sent for

Maud and her younger sister in 1909. Their mother had joined Edwin the year before. They eventually settled on Taft Avenue in West Newton. After the move, Maud held a series of jobs, including one at the Waltham Watch factory. On the side she designed and made hats for her co-workers, which she sold for a dollar.

Maud was working in a shop that sold millinery when she met her future husband, Walter Brodrick, through friends. They eloped on November 7, 1916. Walter turned out to be the perfect husband for Maud. With his help, she was able to build a fulfilling career.

A few years later, the Brodricks moved into a house built for them at 130 Randlett Park in West Newton. Maud's first taste of the real estate business happened by chance when a friend asked Maud to show a home to a prospective buyer and she made the sale. Elated, Maud and Walter began a part-time real estate business while Walter continued in his main job selling advertising space in the *Boston Herald*. Maud began designing and building homes in 1923. She and Walter chose the name Brodrick Bros. for their business because people expected construction companies to be male-owned and operated.

Maud learned the building trades by working with her father, who had become a housebuilder. An article in the *Boston Herald* in the 1940s reported that Maud "supervised crews of workmen as well as working at designing, and still can do almost everything connected with building a house except pour cement." On her own, Maud also studied books on architecture and construction. With this excellent training she ran Brodrick Bros. – sketching out designs, hiring architects to draft the formal plans, employing workers, and overseeing construction.

Around 1930, in the early years of the Great Depression, Maud purchased land on Allerton Road and Centre Street in Newton and started an intense building campaign. This kept many workers employed during the Depression. Maud also decided this was the time to begin advertising on a grand scale. Her main theme was the superiority of houses designed by a woman. It was a brilliant marketing move, as these homes continued to sell. A frequently used tagline was: “Woman Planned – Woman Supervised – Brodrick Built.”

Maud also developed Manor House Road in Newton between 1932 and 1934, designing brick homes in the Tudor, French Eclectic, and Colonial styles. Many of her inspirations came from her English childhood and from a sketching tour of England and France that she took in 1936.



Maud’s most ambitious homes, located in Cliff Estates in Wellesley Hills, helped establish Wellesley’s reputation as a well-planned town of elegant and gracious estates. Maud designed and built 14 magnificent homes here from 1935 to 1938. Maud’s and Walter’s strategy of selling high-end homes to wealthy buyers during the Depression worked until the bank foreclosed on Pondbrook, a baronial estate Maud had developed. This forced her into bankruptcy and ended her building career. After that, from time to time Maud sold a house, but she essentially retired. She and Walter stayed in Newton, had a summer house in Rhode Island, and enjoyed spending time with their grandchildren. Family members continued Brodrick Bros. as a brokerage until the early 1990s.

Maud Brodrick’s European-inspired homes with well-proportioned rooms and functional layouts have withstood the test of time. The houses you will see on today’s tour retain almost all of their original features. The owners, appreciating the quality of Maud’s designs, have adapted their homes for modern life with care and sensitivity.

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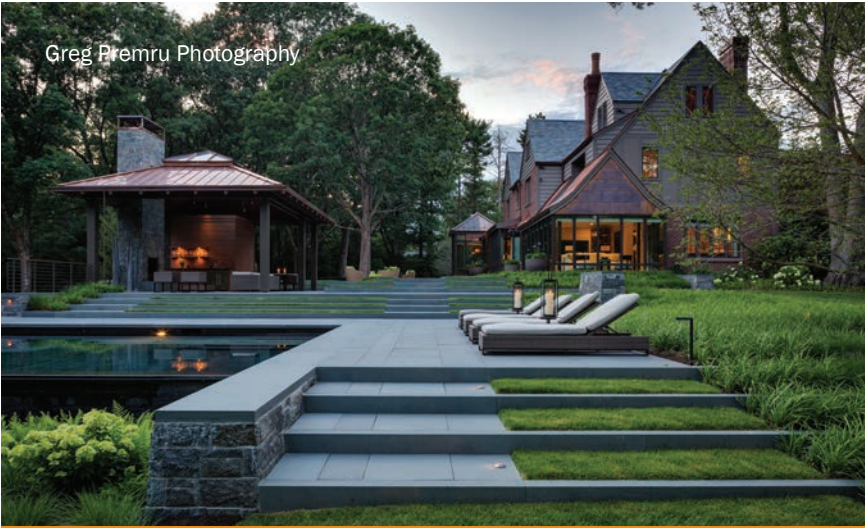
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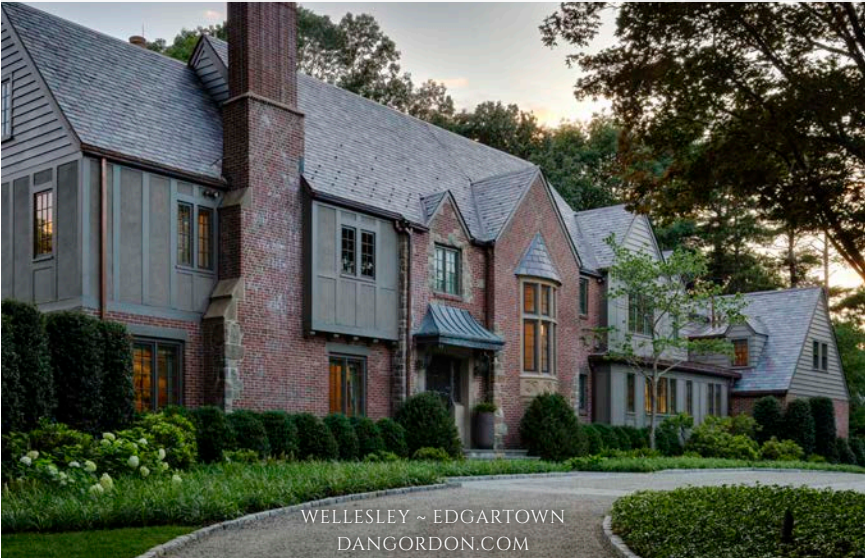


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NEWTON DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

A New York stock market crash in October 1929 touched off the Great Depression, an economic slump that lasted through most of the 1930s. Businesses and banks failed, leading to massive unemployment. Life in Newton at this time reflected the despair and uncertainty in the rest of the country.

After Franklin D. Roosevelt became president in 1933, all U.S. banks were forced to temporarily close so that government regulations could help prevent future failures. Newton banks that reopened, including Newton Centre Savings Bank and West Newton Savings Bank, advertised to attract customers. They noted that savings would be safe and grow over time. Safe deposit boxes were also advertised.

In January 1934, a volunteer group that named itself the Newton Welfare Bureau, advertised the need for donations of blankets, bedding and warm clothing. In October of that year, the *Newton Graphic* reported that 276 Newtonians were receiving local welfare aid due to unemployment. The story also noted that federal funds helped provide relief to others.

The Great Depression also affected leisure time. The Norumbega Park amusement park in Auburndale, which opened in 1897, closed its open-air theater, which wasn't making a profit, in 1930. The space was transformed into the Totem Pole Ballroom as a way to attract new customers. At the Penny Arcade area in the park, bags of flour, coffee, and sugar were given as prizes to those who won the games of skill and chance – far more useful than stuffed animals.

The Federal Works Progress Administration created jobs that brought workers to Newton. Federal crews built a skating rink in Edmands Park. The WPA also hired Maurice Compris to create a three-part mural dedicated to the memory of Lt. Stafford Leighton Brown, a Newton High School graduate who died in France in 1918 during World War I. The mural was first installed in the original Newton High School's "classical" building. The mural's restored panels are currently displayed at the current Newton North High School.

Though many people could not afford to purchase homes in the 1930s, Maud Brodrick managed to find buyers for the homes she built. It is a testament to her marketing genius that her business succeeded at a time when so many failed.

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STYLE GUIDE

TUDOR REVIVAL

Tudor architecture was popular throughout England during the Tudor dynasty, which began in 1485 and lasted until Elizabethan architecture took over around 1558. While the Tudor Revival style later became popular in the U.S. from the 1890s to the 1920s, it is quite different from the original Tudor style. Tudor Revival houses are characterized by both Renaissance and Gothic elements, half-timbered exteriors, cross gables, steep roofs, patterned stonework or brickwork, and prominent chimneys. The style later faded away around World War II, when a resurgence of patriotism encouraged more American styles, especially Colonial Revival.



LEARN MORE!

1. For a British perspective on the history of Tudor architecture, visit <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/story-of-england/tudors/architecture>
2. A quick video overview of Tudor architecture may be found in this Better Homes and Gardens video on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGmMgpYY8kk>

FRENCH ECLECTIC

This style encompasses architectural elements from many regions of France. French Eclectic became popular in the early 20th century, especially after many American soldiers traveled to France in World War I and saw homes in the countryside. Its popularity continued into the 1940s. Most of these homes have tall, steeply pitched hipped roofs and flared eaves. Many have second story windows which break through the roofline to create dormers with either hipped or arched roofs. Here are some common variations of this style:



Provençal (also called Symmetrical) reflects the Provence region of France, known for its Mediterranean climate and scenery. In general, Provençal architecture is characterized by large, airy rooms that embody rustic simplicity through the use of natural material, exposed bricks, patinated wood floors, and ceiling beams. The cool pastels and neutral color palettes of Provençal houses also make them especially appropriate as summer houses.



Asymmetrical (also called Chateau) homes look similar to Provençal, but with asymmetrical facades and off-center main doors.



Towered (also called Norman Cottage), homes inspired by farmhouses in Normandy and Brittany, feature a rounded tower and a conical roof.

1. *The Provençal House: Architecture and Interiors*, a book by Johanna Thornycroft and Andreas Von Einsiedel (Harry N. Abrams) contains beautiful photos and descriptions.
2. A historical perspective on the French Eclectic style may be found on homereference.net. <https://homereference.net/french-eclectic/>
3. The Antique Home website gives a good summary of French Eclectic elements at <http://www.antiquehome.org/Architectural-Style/french-eclectic.htm>

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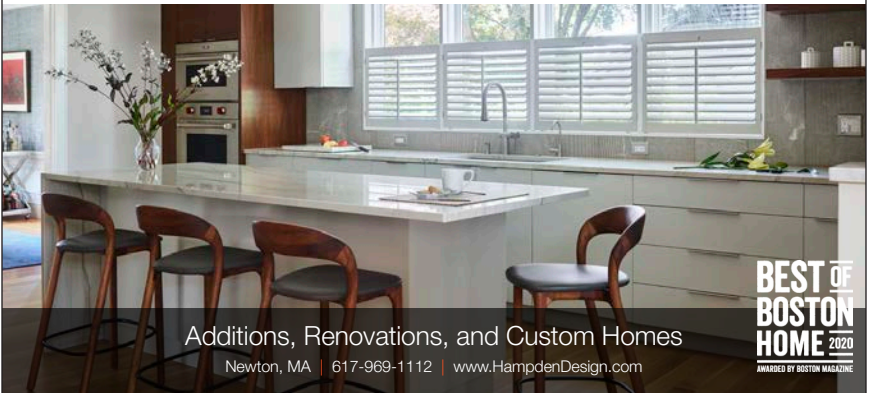
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SPECIAL THANKS

The gracious homeowners who opened their homes for the videos

The panelists who participated in our discussion of Maud Brodrick's life and work:

Laura Fitzmaurice

Elizabeth "Lee" Cook

Patrick Guthrie

Melissa Gulley

Clara Silverstein, moderator

Cabin 3 Media (tour videos)

Carrie Chatterson Studio (graphic design)

Maud Brodrick's granddaughters, Elizabeth "Lee" Cook and Susan Brodrick

Grace Huang (research intern)

Antoine Trombino-Aponte (voice-overs)

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In Loving Memory

Kay Sachs, a much-loved, long-term member of the House Tour Committee, passed away in January. Born and raised in Alaska more than 90 years ago, Kay grew up feisty, independent, and fearless in moving to new places and making friends wherever she went. She volunteered for house tours in Rochester, NY and Essex, CT. When she moved to Newton to be near her son and his family, she brought her expertise to us. We will miss you, Kay.





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SURE-FIRE SNACKS FROM THE 1930S

During the 1930s, the electric refrigerator-freezer became a widely used appliance, giving rise to a new array of chilled salads, sandwich fillings, and desserts. Though homemakers economized during the Great Depression by making their own meals, snack foods including Twinkies, Tootsie Pops, and Ritz crackers also hit the shelves during this decade. When Prohibition ended in 1933, people celebrated with martinis and other cocktails.

These recipes will give you a taste of the time period when Maud Brodrick designed and built homes. Make them as you settle in to watch the House Tour videos!



CHEESE CRACKERS

Mix 4 tablespoons of softened butter with 2 tablespoons of grated cheese, preferably Edam. Spread the mixture generously on crackers and sprinkle paprika on top. Toast a golden brown and serve hot. Be careful not to burn [if using an oven rack, place foil underneath to catch drips of melted butter]. Makes about 12 crackers.

Courtesy of Mrs. Arthur Lane, Past President Newton Federation of Women's Clubs in "A President's Cook Book," published by the West Newton Women's Educational Club in 1930.

LEMON-GINGER FIZZ (NON-ALCOHOLIC)

Put a spoonful of lemon sherbet in a tall glass and fill with ginger ale. Serves 1.

Courtesy of Miss Constance Dort, President, Juniors of West Newton Women's Educational Club in "A President's Cook Book," published by the West Newton Women's Educational Club in 1930.

WARD EIGHT (CHOSEN A TOP 10 COCKTAIL OF THE YEAR BY ESQUIRE MAGAZINE IN 1934)

This drink supposedly originated at Locke-Ober restaurant in Boston as a way to celebrate local politician Martin Lomasney's win of Ward Eight (an area that included Boston's West End at the time) in an election.

Juice of ½ lemon
1 teaspoon powdered sugar
1 teaspoon grenadine
2 ounces whiskey

Place all ingredients in a cocktail shaker. Add cracked ice and shake well. Strain into an 8 ounce stem glass with two cubes of ice, a slice of orange, lemon, and a cherry. Serve with straws [optional]. Makes 1 drink.

Adapted from Old Mr. Boston's Deluxe Official Bartender's Guide, published by Mr. Boston Distiller, Inc., 1935



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Join today at newtonma.gov/HNmembership to bring Historic Newton into 2021!

PANEL DISCUSSION PREVIEW

Our panel discussion about the life and work of Maud Brodrick takes place Sunday, October 18 at 3:00 p.m. If you purchased a ticket that includes the discussion, the Zoom link will be included in the email information that we send to you.

Each panelist will present a different perspective on Brodrick and her remarkable legacy. We will invite your questions after each panelist gives an initial presentation.



PANELISTS

Laura Fitzmaurice earned her degree from Cornell University, College of Architecture, Art & Planning and is currently working as an architectural designer. Since 2009, she has been researching and writing about pioneering women architects and builders. Laura is also chair of the Historic Newton House Tour Committee.

Melissa Gulley is an Interior Designer with offices in Newton, MA. Melissa brings 30 years of design experience to each project, specializing in projects that involve construction. Melissa loves working with people to bring their dream homes to fruition.

Patrick Guthrie, AIA is a principal at Design Associates Architects in Cambridge, MA. His work over the last 30 years has emphasized the preservation and sympathetic renovation of historic homes, religious buildings and landmarks.

Elizabeth "Lee" Cook is the granddaughter of Maud and Walter Brodrick. She grew up in West Newton, two doors from her grandparents. She was very close to her grandparents in every way. Her grandparents were role models: loving, kind, intelligent, and energetic people. She followed in the family real estate business as a broker in Chicago from 1984 to the present.



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— Julia Morgan
American architect

Thank you, Historic Newton, for bringing us the legacy of our community,
and helping us listen to the stories of historic homes.



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