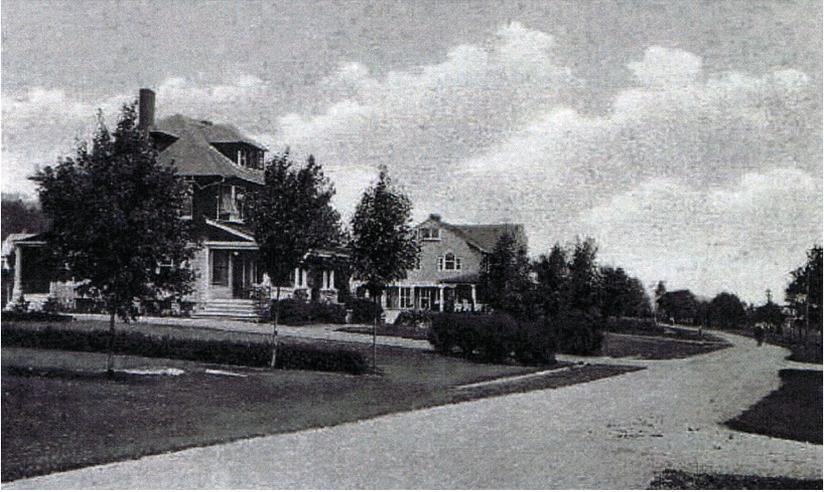




Olcott  
Historic District  
*Walking Tour*  
Bernardsville,  
New Jersey



# Introduction



View of Olcott Avenue c. 1909

Built over a period of thirty years, from 1899 to approximately 1930, Bernardsville's Olcott Historic District contains a number of notable examples of architectural revival styles that were popular at the turn of the 20th century. There are also four outstanding buildings designed by prominent American architects of the period: William Stone Post, Henry Janeway Hardenbergh, William Davenport Jones, and the firm Dennison & Hiron. The District also contains excellent examples of vernacular building types popularized during the late nineteenth century. Olcott Avenue was the most fashionable street in Bernards Township during the opening decades of the 20th century, and it is still a lovely area today.

## Historical Context

In the colonial era, Bernardsville was known as Vealtown. It was one of several small farming and trading hamlets outside the larger town of Basking Ridge. During the American Revolution, Continental troops moved throughout the area. After the Battle of Princeton in 1777, General Washington's troops marched through town on the way to their encampment at Morristown. In 1840, Vealtown was renamed Bernardsville after the colonial governor of New Jersey, Sir Francis Bernard. In the years after the Civil War, wealthy New Yorkers began buying land in the area. With the arrival of the railroad in 1872, the hills north of town became a fashionable place for rich, Gilded Age tycoons to build magnificent homes. This enclave of summer estates, which became known as the Mountain Colony, stretched across the Somerset Hills, through portions of the towns of Bernardsville, Mendham, Peapack-Gladstone, Far Hills, and Bedminster. The grand estates required a large amount of local labor, bringing carpenters, masons, farm workers, and servants to the area. Many of the new arrivals were immigrants who moved into neighborhoods of simple homes. Businesses opened and were patronized by families from the rich estates, and by members of the working class that made their lifestyle possible. A middle class developed as merchants and professionals flourished. Thus, by the late nineteenth century there was a market for homes that would appeal to this newly prosperous group.

## The Olcott Historic District

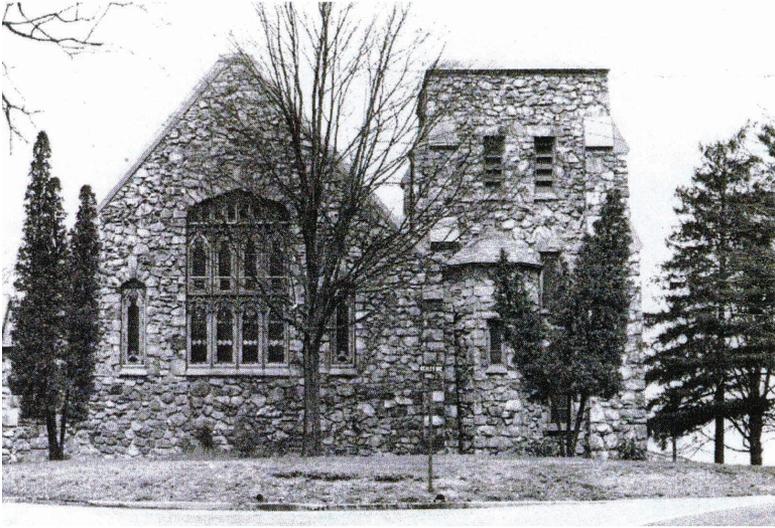
Olcott Avenue was the first street in Bernardsville designed to appeal specifically to the rising class of local merchants and entrepreneurs. It was a planned neighborhood of comfortable homes constructed in the most fashionable architectural styles, on a broad new avenue set apart from working class neighborhoods. Restrictions were written into each deed by the developer to control how each buyer could use his property. The result was a residential district of substantial dwellings in a homogenous setting. A number of architectural and technological innovations of the period are evident in the district, as a result of designs created by some of the most notable architects in America. The Historic district, established in 2009, has fifty-six contributing buildings, including a school, a church, a parsonage and thirty-seven dwellings, as well as carriage houses, garages and World War I memorial plaques. As a whole, the district possesses excellent historical integrity.

## The Tour

Welcome to the Olcott Historic District Walking Tour. The tour covers a distance of approximately 1.6 miles. The tour starts at the Bernardsville United Methodist Church on Wesley and Church Streets, where parking is available nearby, and ends at the Olcott Building. Please refer to the attached map.

## 22 Church Street

### *Methodist Church*



Bernardsville Methodist Episcopal Church c. early 20th century

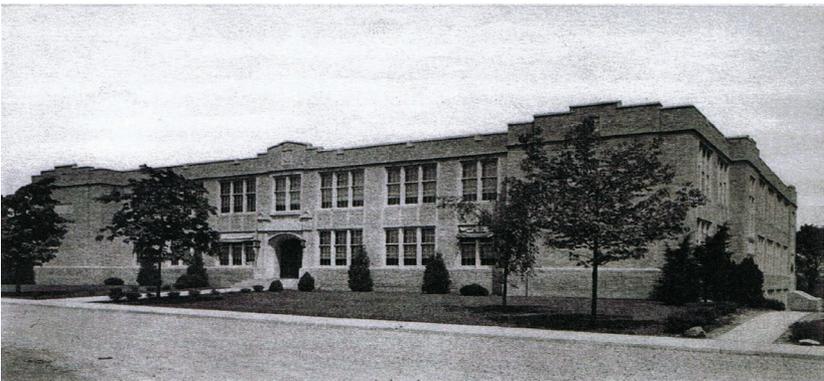
One of the outstanding buildings in the historic district, this Tudor Revival church dates from 1913-1914 and was designed by Dennison and Hiron, a New York architectural firm. The church was modeled after the rural English parish church, a popular inspiration for suburban Protestant churches in the region during the early 20th century. It is characterized by rough-hewn, random-laid native stone walls, a steep roof, parapeted gables, heavy buttresses, and a massive square tower. Relatively small in scale, the church is rectangular in plan with an appended flat roof tower containing the main entry. A secondary Tudor arched entry is located in a projecting bay on the west side of the church. The south gable end of the building faces the intersection of Wesley and Church Streets and is dominated by a grouping of three Tudor arch windows fitted with stained glass. Other windows are Tudor arch openings that feature wooden tracery or fixed diamond pane sashes. The building was constructed by local Italian stone masons and today many of their descendants still live in Bernardsville.

## *Methodist Parsonage*

The frame and stone parsonage behind the church was built in 1902, designed by the firm of noted New York architect George B. Post, most likely by George's son, William Stone Post. Both had large estates in Bernardsville. The first story is finished with rustic stonework and the second story with wood shingles. The original slate roof still tops the building. The parsonage is an excellent example of Tudor Revival style, displaying a number of its distinctive features. The steeply pitched roof, cross gables, use of multiple wall materials, multi-paned windows arranged in groups, massive chimneys, and decorated bargeboards all speak of Tudor England. However, other features of the house are transitional Shingle Style, which appeared a decade before Tudor Revival. The integral front porch, shingled gables, and rustic stone are more common to the earlier style. The Gothic arch window in the front door is a surprising detail. The house was built with all the modern improvements available -- electric light, steam heat, hot and cold water throughout -- at a cost of \$8,500.98. It was designed with a butler's pantry. This was a misunderstanding, as Methodist pastors had no servants.

*Proceed left around the corner to Bernards High School.*

## **Bernards High School**



View of the 1928 High School c. 1930s

Although not officially a part of the Olcott Historic District, the structure is a fine example of Art Deco style. A citizen's committee was chosen in January of 1926 to work with the Board of Education to design a new school, which was built in 1927. The maple trees shown in the picture were planted in 1931 as part of a memorial to twenty Bernardsville and Bernards Township men who lost their lives during World War I. Memorial plaques have been uncovered from what was originally a group of twenty plaques dedicated in February, 1932. The surviving brass plaques are now on display in the BHS PAC.

*Continue to the corner and turn left on Olcott Avenue.*

## 17 Olcott Avenue



17 Olcott Avenue c. 1912

This handsome Craftsman home was built around 1910. It shows an early Foursquare influence with a characteristic hipped roof, overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails, a stucco finished second story center bay window, and front and side-hipped roof dormers with paired 6-sash windows. The fully extended front porch has three squared openings with rounded corners, and is semi-enclosed with strong stucco columns and a solid rail, which is typical for the style.

## 15 Olcott Avenue

This charming two-story gambrel front Colonial Revival dwelling was built circa 1909-1918. Public records show that it was sold in a sheriff's sale for \$4,708 in April, 1918. Exterior features include overhanging boxed eaves, shingle siding, and solid shutters on the sash windows. The second story window boxes are supported with brackets and the arched window in the gable is flanked by quarter-round windows topped by a small octagonal window. The pretty lattice overhang across the front façade at first story is supported on sawn curvilinear brackets. The garage dates to the same time period as the house.

*Continue around to the other side of the street to 12 Olcott Avenue.*

## 12 Olcott Avenue



Left: Visiting Nurse Association Headquarters c. 1930s

This Colonial Revival building dates to 1906. The family of Cynthia Fairchild Dryden donated the house to the Visiting Nurse Association for its headquarters in 1916. Cynthia was the wife of John Fairfield Dryden, the founder of the Prudential Insurance Company and later a United States Senator. Alterations made at that time, including the addition of an operating room,

were undertaken by the prestigious New York architectural firm of George B. Post. Although a relatively minor project for this important architect, there was a relationship between the Post and Dryden families. They both had homes on Bernardsville Mountain, and Post prepared the original designs as well as later alterations and additions to Stronghold, the Dryden home on the Mountain. The east wing is a modern addition.

## 18 Olcott Avenue



18 Olcott Avenue c. 2014

This gable-front Colonial Revival dwelling dates to about 1909. The property was acquired from Newark Home Builders in 1903 by Charles Alpaugh, a real estate office proprietor, who sold it to a bank clerk named Roger C. Faust in 1909. Faust was likely an employee of The Somerset Hills National Bank in Bernardsville, which was organized in 1903. This handsome building is a wonderful example of early Colonial Revival style. The triangular pediment of the cross-corner gable roof is finished with dentil moldings, which also detail the wraparound porch roof. The façade features Ionic half columns and turned balusters on the porch railing, arched attic windows, a graceful front door with sidelights, and an oval medallion with four keystones below the front gable.

## 20 Olcott Avenue

This property was acquired in 1899 by William R. Bromfield, the proprietor of a local hardware store. He built the Colonial Revival house before 1900, making it perhaps the oldest house on the street. The large center front dormer has a Palladian style grouping of three windows beneath an enclosed pediment featuring a molded arch with a keystone and paneled pilasters. The garage is from 1930.

*Continue on Olcott Avenue.*

## 26 Olcott Avenue



26 Olcott Avenue c. 2014

William R. Bromfield purchased this property in 1900 for \$1,000. The Foursquare Craftsman dwelling was likely constructed in 1912 -- a fireplace brick is marked with that date. In 1914 Bromfield's widow sold the property to William C. Ludlow, the proprietor of a local meat, fish and vegetable market. It appears in a photograph in the 1920 Bernards High School yearbook. The garage was added in 1920 and the rear side addition is modern.

## 28 Olcott Avenue

Ermonce V. Eberhardt, daughter of Newark industrialist Ulrich Eberhardt Sr., acquired this property from her mother, Emeline T. Eberhardt. Ulrich had been president of Gould and Eberhardt Inc., machine tool manufacturers, and died in 1901. Ermonce married Clare M. Henry (1876-1953), a Bernardsville dentist, in 1901. Henry was a member of the Bernards Township Board of Education from 1908 to 1927 and served as the second mayor of the Borough of Bernardsville from 1930 to 1934.



28 Olcott Avenue c. 1902

The large, frame Colonial Revival dwelling was completed in 1902. It has a hipped main roof with projections at the front corners and wide overhanging boxed eaves. There is clapboard siding on the first story and shingles on the second story. The center second story window grouping is comprised of a large central window flanked by narrower windows, which in turn are flanked by fluted pilasters that support a molded entablature. The shed-roofed porch features Tuscan columns on rubblestone piers, turned balustrades, and a rubblestone foundation with arched openings. The gambrel-roofed office was originally a carriage barn and dates to 1902. The garage behind the house was constructed in 1957.

## 36 Olcott Avenue



36 Olcott Avenue c. 2014

One of the finest buildings in the historic district, this two-story Shingle style dwelling dates to about 1905 and was designed by Newark architect W. Davenport Jones. The property was acquired by Ulrich Eberhardt Jr. from his mother, Emeline T. Eberhardt, after the death of his father in 1901. The exterior features of this large house include clapboard siding on the first story and shingle siding on the second story gambrel ends. Each face of the dwelling is unique. The two window groupings on the west gambrel end consist of a recessed center arched window with wood tracery on the upper sashes, flanked by two narrow windows that are topped by a pair of casement windows with diamond sashes. The shed roof dormers at the intersection of the west and front gambrels feature overhanging eaves with decorative rafter tails. The front dormer features a group of three windows under a flared pent roof supported by shingled brackets above which is a pair of casement windows with diamond sashes. The porch has fluted Tuscan columns and heavy rubblestone posts. The two-story bay window at the intersection of the front and east gambrels features wide overhanging boxed eaves. On the east gambrel end is a random grouping of four windows including a three-part stained glass window and a half-round window. At the east end is a porte-cochere supported on heavy rubblestone posts.

## 54 Olcott Avenue



54 Olcott Avenue c. 2014

This graceful Colonial Revival dwelling dates to 1908-1909 and was subdivided from the Eberhart property. The property was conveyed to Emma N. Craig, sister of Ulrich Eberhardt Jr., in 1911. Mr. Eberhardt lived next door at what is now 36 Olcott Avenue. The house was later acquired in 1935 by the Visiting Nurse Association for use as a boarding house for nurses. The exterior features include wide overhanging boxed eaves with brackets and dentil detail, gable-roofed dormers, clapboard siding on the first story and shingles on the second story. The central entry is charming with fluted pilasters, a cornice with dentil molding, and the glass and panel door. The original home had a two-toned color scheme, which was typical for the period.

## 60 Olcott Avenue



60 Olcott Avenue c. 2014

This frame and stone Craftsman and Prairie style dwelling dates from the period between 1904 and 1910. The property was conveyed from Newark Home Builders Company to a widow named Helen G. Hedden for \$3,500, suggesting a house was on the lot at that time. According to the 1910 census, Frank B. Allen, a widower who was president of Newark Home Builders, boarded with Mrs. Hedden. She conveyed the property to him in 1915, and three years later he conveyed the property to his daughter, Anna Skinkle Allen. In 1919, Miss Allen sold the property, subject to a \$5,000 mortgage, out of the Allen family. The exterior features rubblestone construction on the first story and shingles on the second story, a steeply pitched roof with decorative finials and overhanging boxed eaves with beaded frieze.

*Continue to the corner and turn left on Highview Avenue*

## 41 Highview Avenue



41 Highview Avenue c. 2014

This two-story home was built in 1909 and can best be described as Eclectic Revival style with some Swiss or German folk details. The exterior features include overhanging open eaves with scalloped rafter tails and brackets. The front gable has two bands of pierced molding that enclose four small casement windows with diamond pattern sashes. The entry features reeded pilasters supporting a simple entablature and a glass and panel door. The home also features a gable-roofed porch with square posts and railing with alternating narrow and wide balusters. There are a few other examples of this short-lived style in Bernardsville; one is on Old Army Road near Elmer Avenue.

## 37 Highview Avenue

Built in 1909, this handsome Colonial Revival home features overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends. It has clapboard siding with a molded trim band. The second story sash windows have diamond patterned upper sashes, and the large front dormer features paired casement windows with diamond pane sashes. There is also a one-story side bay window with a porch above it. The entry portico features a gable roof, with fluted pilasters and square tapered fluted columns.

## 29 Highview Avenue

This Colonial Revival dwelling was originally the carriage house and stable of the Eberhardt residence on Olcott Avenue. It was built between 1901 and 1909, by the same architect, W. Davenport Jones. The exterior features include a flared gambrel roof with an overhang for a hoist, a cupola with a flared roof, and shingle siding. The gabled entry portico has fluted Tuscan columns on rubblestone piers and a double leaf door.

*Cross the street and continue back on the other side.*

## 44 Highview Avenue



44 Highview Avenue c. 2014

This exemplary Craftsman style home was built in 1930. It features overhanging boxed eaves and wood shingle siding. The recessed shed dormer with paired windows is centered on the front slope of the home, and the windows have diamond pattern upper sashes and single pane lower sashes. It also features diamond pattern casement windows and a one story bay window on the west side. The beautiful engaged front porch extends around the east end, and features rubblestone posts and railings.

*Continue on Highview Avenue, cross Olcott Avenue and stay on Highview Avenue.*

## 60 Highview Avenue



60 Highview Avenue c. 2014

This appealing Dutch Colonial Revival home was built between 1920 and 1930. The original owner, Max Hemmendinger, was the proprietor of a pharmacy on Olcott Square and a member of the Bernards Township Board of Education. The house features a stuccoed exterior and overhanging boxed eaves. It also has a three-bay shed dormer, 6/1 sash windows, and a beautiful picture window flanked by 6/1 windows. The glass and panel front door has a classic round arch pediment making a strong statement above the door.

*Cross the street and continue back on the other side.  
Turn left onto Olcott Avenue.*

## 69 Olcott Avenue

This Tudor Revival home, built in 1930 by the Dobbs Family Builders, is a wonderful local example of the style. The frame and stucco cross gable dwelling features a steeply pitched roof with flared eaves on the west slope and curved eaves on the front slope. The hipped roof dormer, shingle siding, and multi-paned casement windows are common to the style. The glass and panel door beneath curved front eaves is flanked by brick piers and the large stuccoed chimney is eye-catching.

*Continue on Olcott Avenue and then turn left on Bell Terrace.*

## Bell Terrace

Although Bell Terrace is not part of the Olcott Historic District, its story relates. Frank Bell Allen, president of Newark Home Builders, was the developer of the Olcott Avenue neighborhood and named this street for himself. The three houses on the left at the end were originally all built as Foursquares around 1920. Each has been adapted and revised. The first house on the left is most closely representative of the original style. Please also note the back of 24 Childsworth Avenue, discussed on the next page. This side was originally the front entry for the house as Childsworth Avenue did not exist in 1920.

*Make a loop of Bell Terrace and then return to Olcott Avenue.*

*Continue and turn left on Childsworth Avenue.*

## 6 Childsworth Avenue



6 Childsworth Avenue c. 2014

Built in 1916, this pretty Colonial Revival home is featured in a postcard from that year. Constructed by the Dobbs Family Builders, who built many homes in the area, its exterior features include overhanging eaves, clapboard siding, 6/6 sash windows, and a glass and panel door with a transom. It also has a shed roof porch that has been enclosed on the two outer bays. The I-House style is only one room deep and was common to New Jersey starting the in 1840's.

## 24 Childsworth Avenue



24 Childsworth Avenue c. 2014

Likely built in 1919 for Lester Lummis, of Lummis Glass Company in Newark, this stuccoed two-story Arts and Crafts style dwelling has Colonial Revival and Stick influences. The exterior of the four-bay hipped roof home has wide overhanging open eaves and various configurations of windows with multi-paned upper sections, eyebrow dormers and a large shed dormer. The secondary front entry containing an arched multi-paned door with sidelights was originally the back door. The hip roofed porch with square posts has Stick-style brackets and railing.

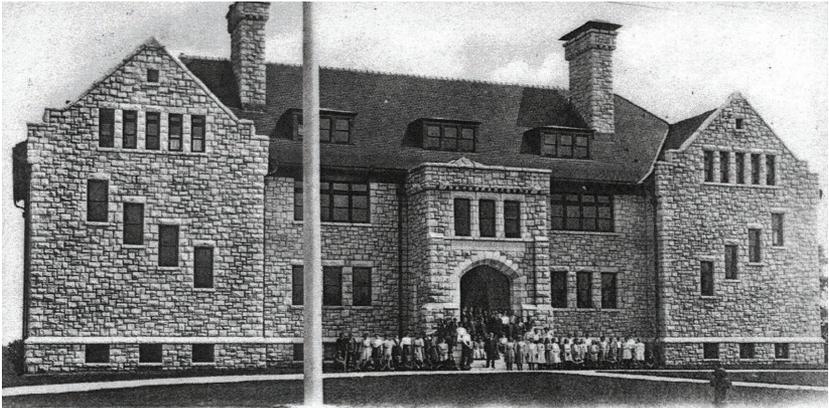
*Cross the street and return up the other side.*

## 17 Childsworth Avenue

This Colonial Revival home was built in 1927 when Senator William Childs conveyed the property to his accountant, Harry A. Phillips. The exterior features include flush eaves, wood shingle siding, casement windows with shutters, and a gable-fronted entry with a glass and panel door with fanlight trim. There is also a charming one-story, one-bay gable front garage with wood shingle siding, 6/6 sash windows and a wonderful elliptical arched door with multi-pane windows.

*Turn left on Olcott Avenue.*

## 25 Olcott Avenue



View of the Olcott School shortly after construction c. 1905

In 1905, the Olcott School was constructed adjacent to the Methodist parsonage. Financier and philanthropist Frederick P. Olcott (1841-1909), the president of the Central Trust Company in New York and a local citizen who owned a large estate in Bernardsville, donated the land and building after purchasing the property from the surrounding neighbors. Olcott chose prominent New York architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh (1847-1918), who also owned a large estate in Bernardsville, to design the striking Tudor Revival building. Responsible for the design of notable New York City buildings such as the 1884 Dakota Apartment Building, the 1893 Waldorf Hotel, the 1897 Astoria Hotel, and the 1907 Plaza Hotel, Hardenbergh was considered one of the county's top architects and had a world-wide reputation. The school had two floors with four classrooms each and a third floor with a large hall and four small classrooms. The building cost \$100,000 to build, on land purchased for \$10,600, an extraordinary cost for the time and rural locale. A Newark newspaper commented that the new schoolhouse would be "one of the most striking features of this part of the State."



Fredrick P. Olcott (1841-1909), courtesy of Somerset Hills Board of Education.

The two-story flat roofed central tower has stone dentil molding, granite buttresses, and a round arched entry of dressed stone, above which is a line of three tall narrow windows. The parapeted gables, prominent square tower, large chimneys, and Tudor Romanesque arch entry are hallmarks of the style. Hardenbergh selected rough faced ashlar stonework in a light colored granite and a contrasting red clay tile roof. The shed roof dormers are an unusual detail for the style. Inscribed over the front entry is the phrase, "Knowledge is Power."

**Presented by  
the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee  
Borough of Bernardsville, NJ  
2015**

\*

\*

**Sources**

National Register of Historic Places

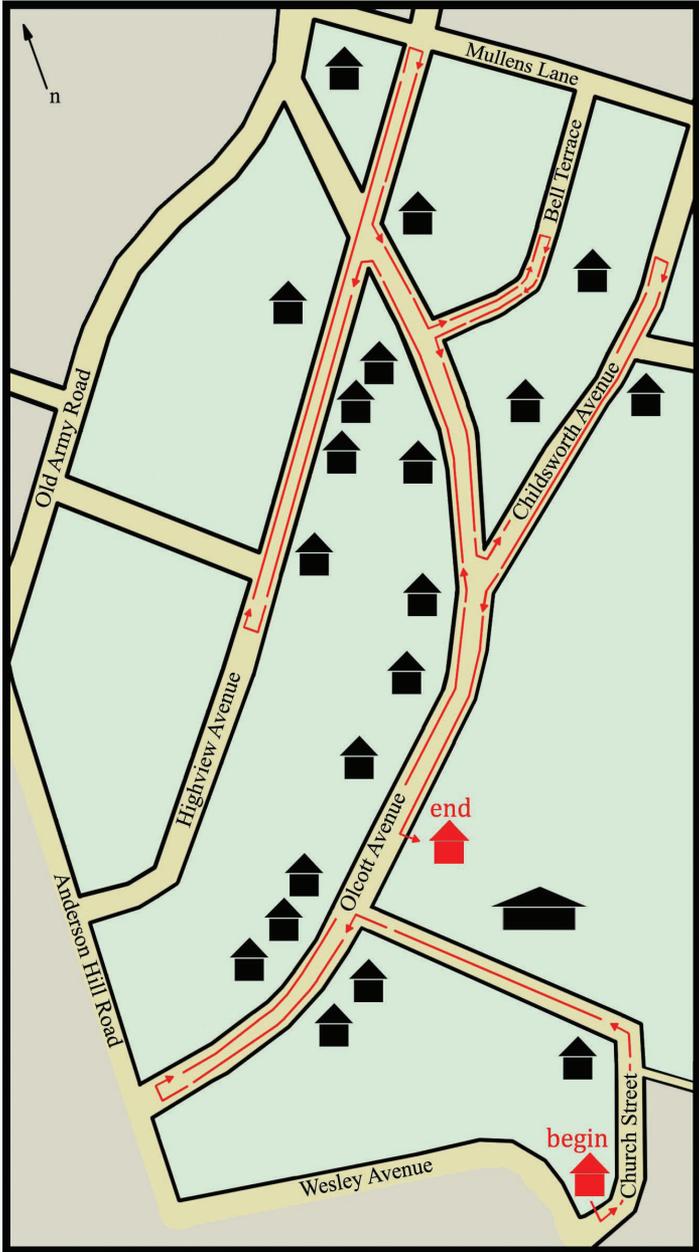
Olcott Historic District, Bernardsville,  
Somerset County, New Jersey

National Register #09000940

\*

\*

Thanks to Dennis Bertland, Ann Parsekian, and Janice Armstrong for allowing their Olcott Avenue Historic District descriptions and photographs to be adapted for use with this tour, which was prepared by Christine Zamarra, Dan Lincoln and Sheila Miller. Design by Meredith Miller.



Walking Tour Map