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History of Old Stone Bridge: 1976-1996

Old Stone Bridge is the brainchild of Barry Montgomery, the developer. He had previously developed Dolphin Cove, a waterfront community of private homes in Stamford. Before Barry purchased this property, the previous owner, Chimblo Builders, had permitted the Boy Scouts to camp in the shadow of Cat Rock (the rock behind the Woodman's house - #58). Chimblo had not developed the property because the two-acre zoning and the many rock ledges made it difficult to construct a sufficient number of homes to make a profit after completing the road construction and the associated work required for a new development.

In 1976, Barry Montgomery was able to obtain a change to conservation zoning which permitted subdividing the 82 acres into 41 one-acre lots with the remaining 41 acres left undeveloped. This enabled him to profitably develop the property which he named Old Stone Bridge.

Barry authorized 12 young builders to build on the 41 lots subject to his approval of the house plans which were to be of colonial design. Most of these builders built two to four homes (one built only one and one built eight). Most were built after the property owners purchased lots and selected the house design; a few were built on speculation.

After road foundations, laying of water and sewage pipes, and underground electrical and telephone wiring were completed in 1977, individual home construction was started. (Underground cable TV wiring was not completed until late 1988 -- among the last in Greenwich.) The first home completed was the Davies' (#66) and in April, 1978 they moved in. By August, 1978, all but nine of the 41 properties had been sold and most of the homes were completed or under construction. The last house was completed by the end of 1979. Barry had learned from his Dolphin Cove experience to require that house construction be started soon after the property was purchased to avoid having empty lots marring the neighborhood.

The entire H-shaped road configuration was originally named Old Stone Bridge Road. The houses on the east side of the lower road were odd-numbered and the

remaining (including all on the upper road) were even-numbered. This resulted in much confusion and potential critical problems for emergency vehicles. (Fortunately, we have had no major fires and few medical emergencies.) Subsequently, the town designated the upper road as North Old Stone Bridge Road (even though it is situated almost directly west of the lower road). The numbering confusion still exists. (At #58 on the upper road, we have had countless tradespersons asking us with puzzled looks for the location of #59 -- which is on the lower road.)

The first meeting of the Old Stone Bridge Road Association was held in October, 1978 at the Johnsons' home (#120). Barry Montgomery attended to explain the responsibilities of the Association. Three individuals volunteered to serve as officers (Rik Rikkola - president, Manny Klein - vp-secretary and Cliff Castle - treasurer). They served until the third annual meeting in April, 1981. At this first meeting, the members present voted to have the town maintain the roads (which had recently been completed) rather than have the Association maintain private roads. Annual dues were established at \$100 per property. (They have been increased over the years to the present level of \$200.)

Association meetings have been held annually, generally in early March at the Cos Cob Community Center. Usually fewer than 50% of the property owners have attended. The Association Board of Directors consisted of three officers until the number was increased to five in October, 1993.

The Association affairs proceeded without major concerns until a few years ago. The Christmas party (Santa Claus was a later addition) and the June outdoor party (originally a swimming party at a house with a pool and more recently a wine and cheese party) were annual events coordinated by the Social Committee. A spring clean-up has been held when considered needed as determined by the Board (assisted by the Beautification Committee) which has also been responsible for contracting the property maintenance people responsible for mowing, etc. The maintenance contractors used have been Joe Golia, Paolo Pennela and Bill Ferraro.

As would be expected in a New York suburban neighborhood, there has been considerable turnover among home owners. Fourteen of the original 41 home owners are still here, but there have been 51 moves in the 18 years (1979-96). Thirty-three of these moves came in the very active eight-year real estate period of 1985-1992. Since then, we have had only five property owner changes.

It came to light in 1992 that neither Barry Montgomery nor the Association had been attentive to maintaining the appropriate corporate registrations with the state, and that, accordingly, we were no longer a legal entity. It also became apparent that no one was exercising authority as the Approving Agent for changes in the exterior appearance of house and grounds. Barry Montgomery was the legal Approving Agent but had not exercised this authority since the original home constructions had been completed. The Board requested that Barry turn over this authority to the Association, but, even though he was no longer in the area, he refused. Accordingly, it became necessary to obtain the unanimous consent of all 41 homeowners to change the Approving Agent; this was finally accomplished in 1996. During this period, the Board had the advice and assistance of David Tobin, a local attorney, who facilitated the renewal of our corporate status and advised us of the process needed to change the Approving Agent.

There have also been other important events during the last several years. In 1992, the Board agreed to have the Greenwich Land Trust assume responsibility for the 41 acres of open (conservation) land, but the Association retains responsibility for the appearance of the land near the roadways (i.e., mowing, removing weeds and brush, planting shrubs and flowers). There have been concerns among parents with schoolchildren about the schools to which their children were to be assigned. Due to school redistricting, proposals had been made at various times to have Old Stone Bridge grammar school children assigned to North Mianus, Cos Cob and North Street schools. There have also been concerns about tax assessments, pond use by non-residents and pet control. The Board and certain individuals have been helpful in providing information about and/or resolution of these problems.

All in all, the 20-year history has been one of pleasant association in a neighborhood of residents of varying ages, interests and degrees of concern about Association matters.

Harry Woodman

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