

If you're thinking of living in:

By FRED FERRETTI

TEANECK — "Teenakut," to its ancestral Minsi Indian tribe, "Tiene Neck" to its Dutch settlers, "Tee Neck," to Robert Erskine, George Washington's cartographer, who mapped it in 1778 — is a small town on the high ground of Bergen County four miles west of the George Washington Bridge. Route 4 cuts through its center and the newer Route 80 runs along its southern rim.

Its racial and ethnic diversity, a source of almost excessive community pride as well as occasional friction, has long been a determinant in Teaneck's development.

Once an insular, Christians-only town of real-estate restrictions and covenants, it became after World War II, a haven for Jews who left the urban atmospheres of Jersey City, Hoboken, Manhattan and the Bronx. Now, Jews make up slightly more than 20 percent of the population.

Teaneck anticipated the national thrust for school desegregation. Well before busing and other educational devices became mandated tools for school desegregation, Teaneck, with a black population of about 25 percent of the total, created a magnet school system and alternative educational programs in a largely successful effort to avoid racial friction.

As the township's population mix changed, many of its institutions accommodated themselves to those changes. Thus Teaneck's major Roman Catholic church, St. Anastasia's, opened its doors to the members of Congregation Dar-Ul-Islah, while that Moslem's group's mosque was being built. It also housed the Chinese Community School for some of Teaneck's newer Asian residents.

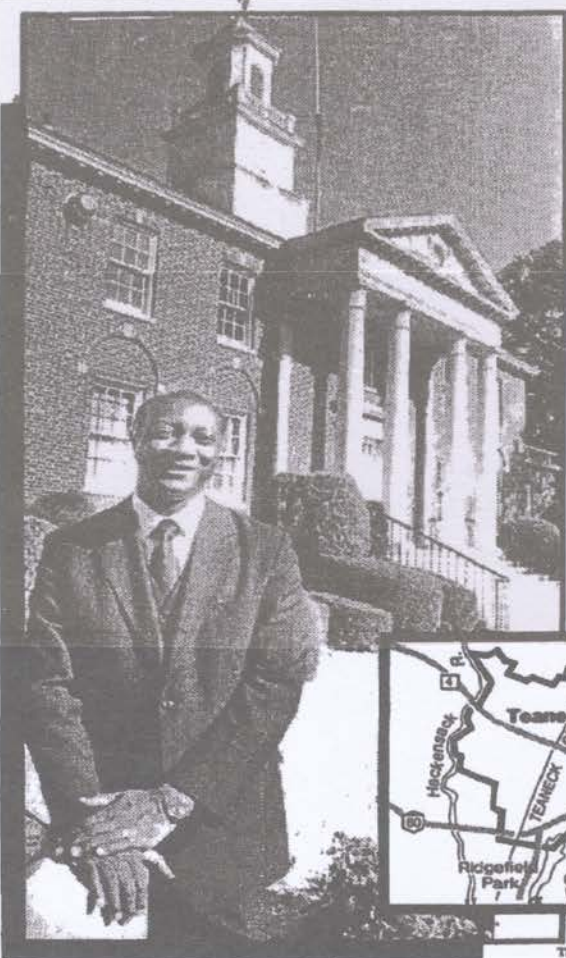
"We have been enriched by all of these new people," said Mildred Taylor, author of "The History of Teaneck." Mrs. Taylor has lived in a small frame house on Palisade Avenue for 37 years and is a member of the Bergen County Historic Sites Committee, which is currently involved in identifying and cataloging many of Teaneck's 10,000 single-family homes.

Another longtime resident is Robert D. Gruen, a lawyer who practices in nearby Hackensack and who for eight years was Municipal Judge of Teaneck. He described the town, where he has lived for 35 years, as "well-run by pros" and "as good as you'll find anywhere."

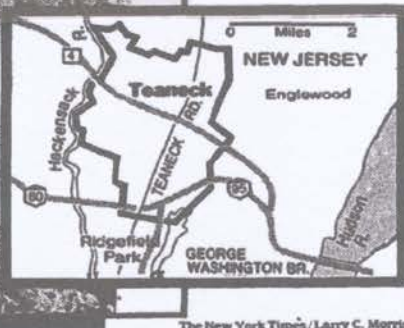
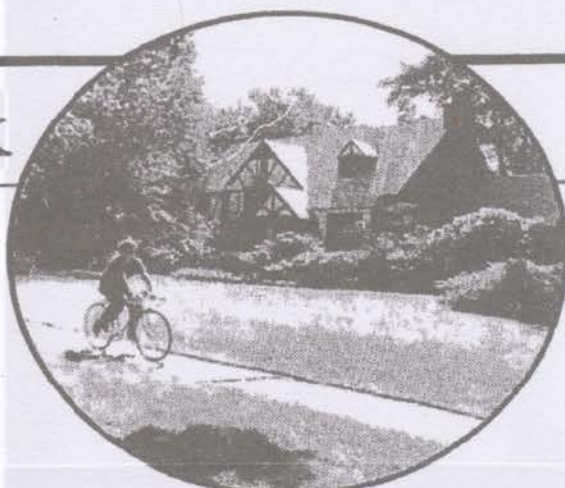
Alfred P. Levin, whose real-estate office has been on Cedar Lane, the main shopping avenue, for more than three decades, said years ago residential zoning called for large lots, many more than a half acre. "Then, as more people from cities came in, permissible lot size dropped to 50 by 100. Later, to prevent too much density, gradually the size has grown to 60 by 100, then 75 by 100."

Of late, friction has developed between liberal-minded Jews who settled in Teaneck in the postwar years and other Jews, virtually all Orthodox, who arrived more recently. Most of the latter group send their children to yeshivas in New York City and in Passaic County rather than to

Teaneck



Mayor Bernard Brooks outside the Teaneck Municipal Building, and a youngster bicycling past a typical Winthrop Road house.



The New York Times/Larry C. Morris

the township's 14 public schools. A controversy arose over the Orthodox group's desire to construct a mikvah, or ritual bath, a move that the older Jewish residents opposed as divisive. It was eventually built.

Rabbi Louis Sigel of Temple Emeth, one of Teaneck's two Reform synagogues, referring to what Teaneck called, "The Battle of the Mikvah," said: "It was a problem. Non-Orthodox Jews felt that they had put a lot of investment into accommodating their Jewishness to the American scene. They resented a group of people, also Jewish, who in their more vis-

ible religious expression were 'rocking the boat.'"

But Rabbi Macy Gordon of B'nai Yeshurun, one of Teaneck's three Orthodox synagogues, said: "We have often been maligned as being separatists, isolationists. But, except in education, where we find it religiously necessary, I don't feel we are."

Conflicts such as this have not torn the community's fabric, however, and for the people who live in the bucolic six-square-mile township, Teaneck is a good place in which to live, a convenient 30-minute commute to Manhattan by both Transport of New Jersey and private bus lines.

Much of its housing stock was built late in the 1920's, when the George Washington Bridge was under construction. There are vast stone Tudors, Normans, and colonials with rolling frontages along Winthrop Road, English stuccos and brick Dutch colonials on curving, maple-lined Standish Road and smaller frame and brick houses, the most numerous type, throughout the town. Prices range as high as \$350,000 along Winthrop, to about \$150,000 along Standish, and from \$50,000 to \$60,000 for the smaller, newer frames.

Teaneck's tax rate of \$4.62 per \$100 of assessed valuation supports a variety of municipal services and amenities and the township's share of the county's maintenance. Its system of 11 elementary schools, two junior high schools and one high school, sends about 75 percent of its graduates on to higher education. Town services are overseen by Werner H. Schmid, the Township Manager.

The community's main shopping area, Cedar Lane, is a wide boulevard of service shops, food stores, restaurants and boutiques, with such names as Pickwick Village, Jade Spoon, Tabatchnick's, Look & Cook, The Judaica House and Stitches. According to Mr. Schmid, there has been a bit of a merchant-inspired renaissance that has seen storefronts refurbished and new businesses moving into the shops along Cedar Lane. The reason? According to Mr. Schmid, many residents, weary of shopping in the malls scattered about Bergen County, are "shopping at home."

Teaneck has municipal police and fire departments, but its trash removal is done by private carters whose services, paid by individual residents, run from \$3 to \$8 a month. It has a general hospital, Holy Name, is home to Fairleigh Dickinson University and, where the town meets Interstate Route 80, a \$120 million development called Glenpoints. The 50-acre complex, when completed, will include two seven-story office buildings, a 14-story luxury hotel, 292 condominium units, a two-level mall of shops and movie theaters and a four-story parking garage for 2,400 cars.

Teaneck's nine-member school board is elected, three each year. Its legislature, a seven-member council, is elected on a nonpartisan basis and chooses a Mayor, a largely ceremonial position.

The Mayor, Bernard Brooks, is the first black to hold the office. To some, he is a symbol of Teaneck's continuing boast of its ability to be a place that can accommodate people's differences. The Hellers are another example. Charles Heller, a vocational counselor to the State of New Jersey, is white and Jewish. His wife, Marcia Pinkett-Heller, who teaches health administration at Columbia University, is black. "We are not an oddity in this community," said Mr. Heller.

HE said that he and his wife had lived in North Bergen, East Orange and Hackensack before moving to Teaneck two years ago, and that "either she or I felt uncomfortable in those towns." He said he had been raised in Teaneck, had "fond memories" of it and knew it to be "a town that tries to deal with all sorts of situations."

Mrs. Heller agreed. "There is sense of community here," she said. "It is a town that has focused on itself. Neighbors are amiable, friendly, interested in one another."

Another couple, John and Janet Graham, both black, have also lived in Teaneck for two years. Why Teaneck, Mr. Graham, who is an information systems analyst for the New York Telephone Company, was asked?

"We looked and looked," he replied. "Basically, we were interested in cost, nearness to the city, population mix. The house we found suited our budget and it had the reputation for being a community where we would not be uncomfortable. We're not at all disappointed. People here are willing to recognize you and respect you."

Life After the Strike

No recent issue has divided Teaneck more than the 18-day school strike that ended Oct. 6. Some parents, noting that walkouts by public employees were illegal, were embittered by the strike, while others supported it by keeping their children out of school. During the strike, attendance was 45 percent.

Now many residents and officials are calling for a time of healing. But the strike has left its imprint. The videotaping of picketers by police, for example, is an issue that "people have been complaining about at council meetings," according to Werner H. Schmid, Township Supervisor. Some parents were also displeased by the

school board's decision not to add days to the school calendar to compensate for missed class-room time.

As for the teachers, some are using the realities of the strike to teach social studies. And in a back-to-school night at Teaneck High School last week, teachers handed out leaflets noting that they still had not received their raises.

Teaneck's elected school board must still find the money to pay agreed-upon raises, and there is a feeling that cutting some programs will be necessary. The contract calls for salary increases of up to 28.5 percent over three years and a final-year cost-of-living increase.