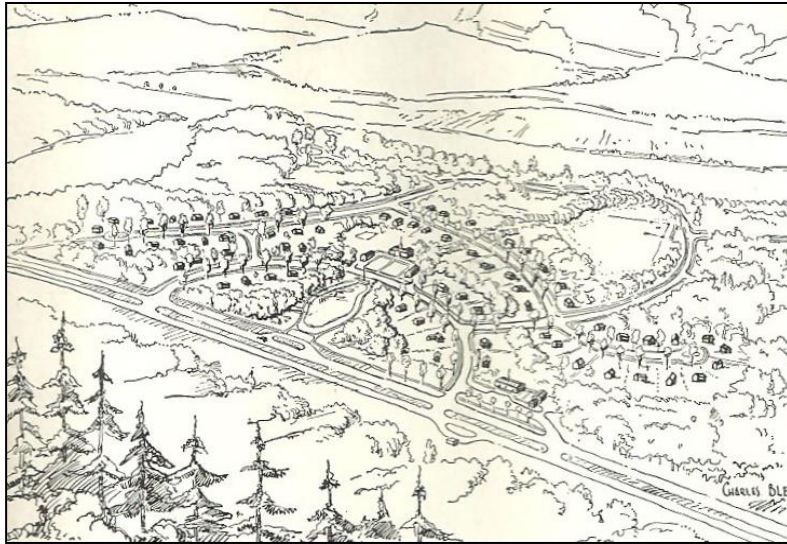


Homes Tell their Story

Just before and right after JDB's Spring vacation, Lucy Natkiel and Carol Asher were back at the school to present a program about the homes in the New Village and the changes the Hill families made during the big move.



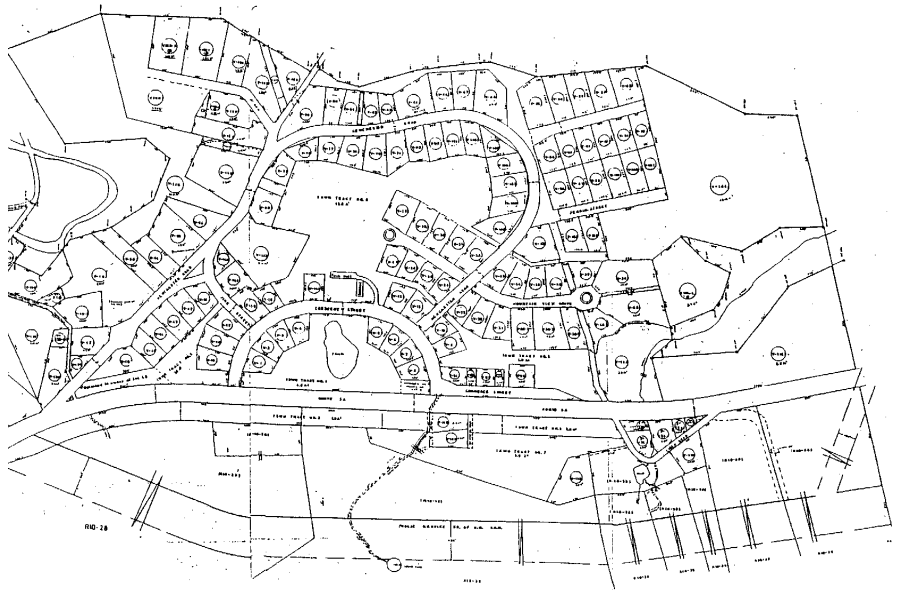
They began by showing a picture of the concept of the new planned village, drawn by architect C.E. Blessing. This idea was presented just as the town began thinking about joining together to move their little village up off the flood plain.

Students were reminded that all great adventures begin with an idea, thought up and laid out to present to others.

(It took the older students about ten nanoseconds to see that Ferrin Street was not in the original idea.)

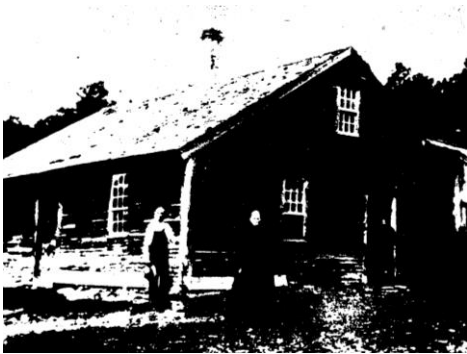
Then the students saw a large plot plan drawn for the Hill Village Improvement Association—an exact plan with lots laid out for each homeowner... and spaces added as more people grasped the idea of a new planned community.

We talked about the changes that families had to make, like smaller plots and houses, no barns or pastures for animals, and above all, a circular pattern for the streets.



Almost all the story we hear about the great move from the Old Village up to the New Village centers on the people and houses of the village itself. But the TOWN of Hill was spread out far beyond the edges of the village area. If the families in the Old Village hadn't stayed together and helped each other to move up to the new location, the rest of the big Town of Hill would not have survived on the reduced taxes that kept the Town functioning. So even those who lived outside the village tried to be supportive of the huge project to build a new village.

Had that not happened, the rest of Hill probably would have been split up and annexed to neighboring towns. Those students who don't live in the village thought about which town they might be part of nowadays—Franklin? Bristol? Alexandria? Danbury?



Lucy Natkiel showed old photos (taken in the 1890s) of the barn and house, built up in Hill Center in the 1770s. She compared those with what her home and barn look like now, and spoke about the many differences—the additions and improvements (like electricity and indoor plumbing)—made along the way.



Carol Asher reminded the students of a photo in their books about Hill history—a photo of the first house to be built in this area, by Cutter Favor, back in mid 1700s.

She then showed a photo of her own home—another log “cabin”, which she and her husband built in Hill. It was a LOT of work, clearing the land of the trees and building the home...and they used special milled logs that were all the same dimensions and had chain saws and electric saws and drills. Carol has a renewed admiration of the first settlers who did everything by hand.

The students took a close look at the photos of some of the twelve buildings that were moved up into the New Village—they showed what they looked like at the time of the move and what they look like more recently.

The students saw the house that Jennie Blake lived in... and they were particularly interested in the house where one of their teachers—Mrs. Desrochers—lives.



The students were really intrigued when they saw the Historical Society's book "Our Chosen Place" that documents the houses of the New Village—not only the ones that were moved up, but those that were newly built at the time of the move.

Those who live in the village looked up the record of their house to see the pictures and the names of the people who lived in their house before them.

Carol then showed a very large photo album of pictures of her family's farmhouse on Snow Road in Hill. The album was filled with old photos and the story of the big house from the time that her grandfather bought the farm before World War I, showing old records and pics from Carol's childhood vacations there... and the total rebuilding of that house by her brother, Frank, and his family.

The most interesting aspect of that album is that the story is told **BY THE HOUSE ITSELF**—telling of all the people who lived there and all the changes that have taken place.

The students were then asked to think about the story that their own house could tell. What would their house say about when it was built (and by whom), and about all the changes that it has seen, and about all the people who have lived there? As soon as Lucy and Carol posed that question, the stories started tumbling out from all the students.

It was so much fun to see those students light up and recognize that they are still part of the **STORY** of our town!