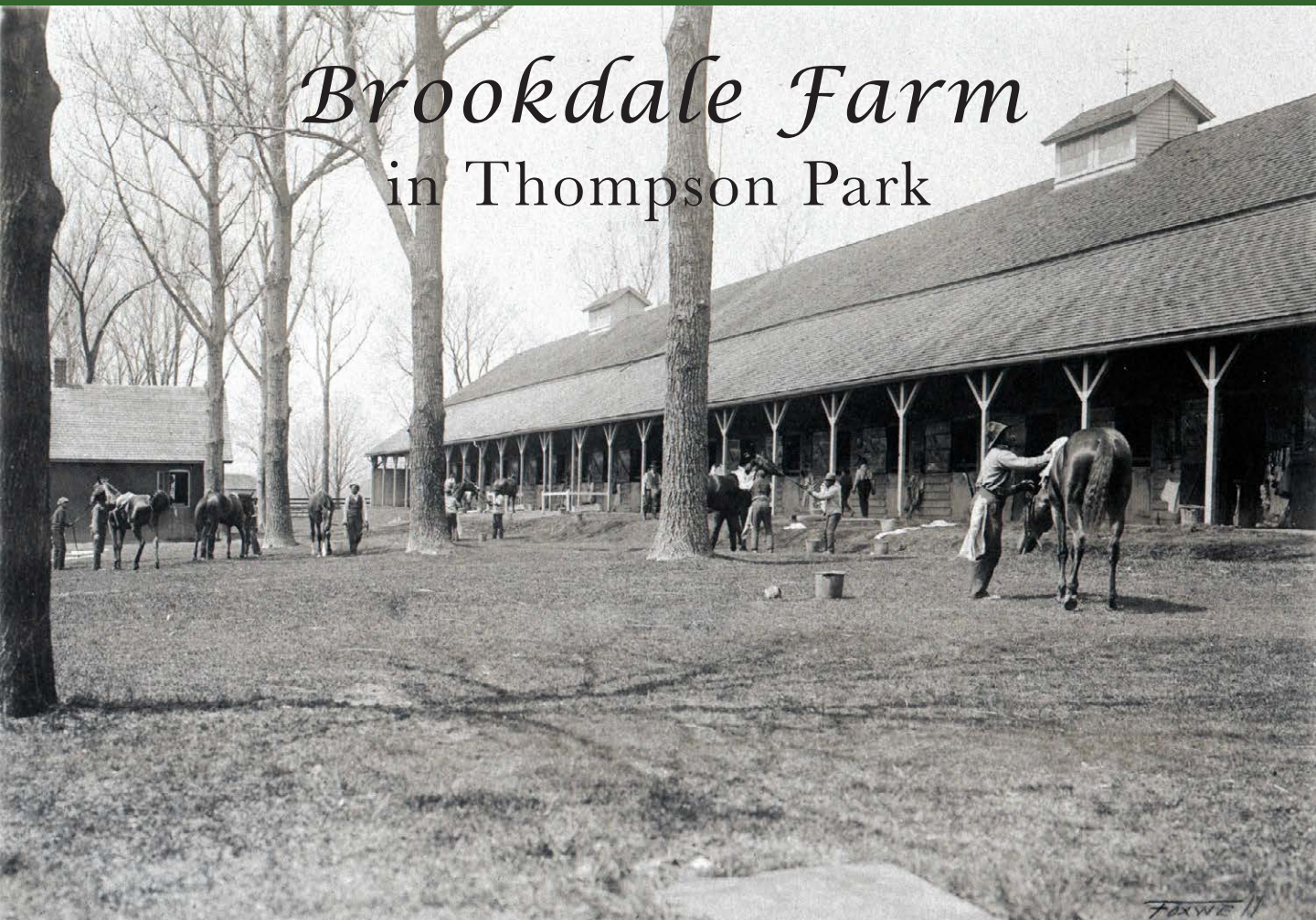


DISCOVER
HISTORY IN THE PARKS

Brookdale Farm
in Thompson Park



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM



Thompson Park preserves 667 acres of fields and forests in a significant historic farm setting. Native Americans had lived in this area for several thousand years when Dutch and English pioneers started settling Monmouth County in the late 17th Century. By the 1780s, Thomas Lloyd, a prosperous landowner and tanner, acquired about 316 acres that included the core of the park, and he built his house there in 1786.

After the Civil War wealthy businessmen established horse farms and estates in this area, and David Dunham Withers assembled 838 acres including the Lloyd Farm to establish Brookdale Farm as one of the county's premiere thoroughbred breeding and training farms. William Payne Thompson acquired Brookdale Farm in 1893 and after his death his son and daughter-in-law, Lewis and Geraldine Thompson, continued it as a major thoroughbred horse farm into the 1930s.

Geraldine Thompson's generous bequest to the County preserved the core of Brookdale Farm, establishing Thompson Park in 1968. Today the historic farm landscape is preserved within the county park. The Thompson mansion is now the Thompson Park Visitor Center, and the complex of farm buildings serves as offices, recreation facilities, and maintenance and storage functions. The one-mile Brookdale Farm Training Track, where the sound of thundering hooves was once heard, is now a popular walking and jogging trail.

Thomas Lloyd's Georgian style house, the central portion in this photo, was the largest house in Middletown Township recorded in a 1798 tax assessment, which also noted that he owned six slaves. A small barn to the west may date to the Lloyd era. In the Brookdale Farm years, the house served as the Horse Trainer's residence, and today it houses the Park System's Acquisition and Design offices.



Thomas Lloyd House
1786



Historic Brookdale Farm at Thompson Park

Thomas Lloyd Farm - 1780s

Brookdale Farm - est. 1872
(current uses)

Brookdale
College
Formerly Part
of 838-acre
Brookdale Farm



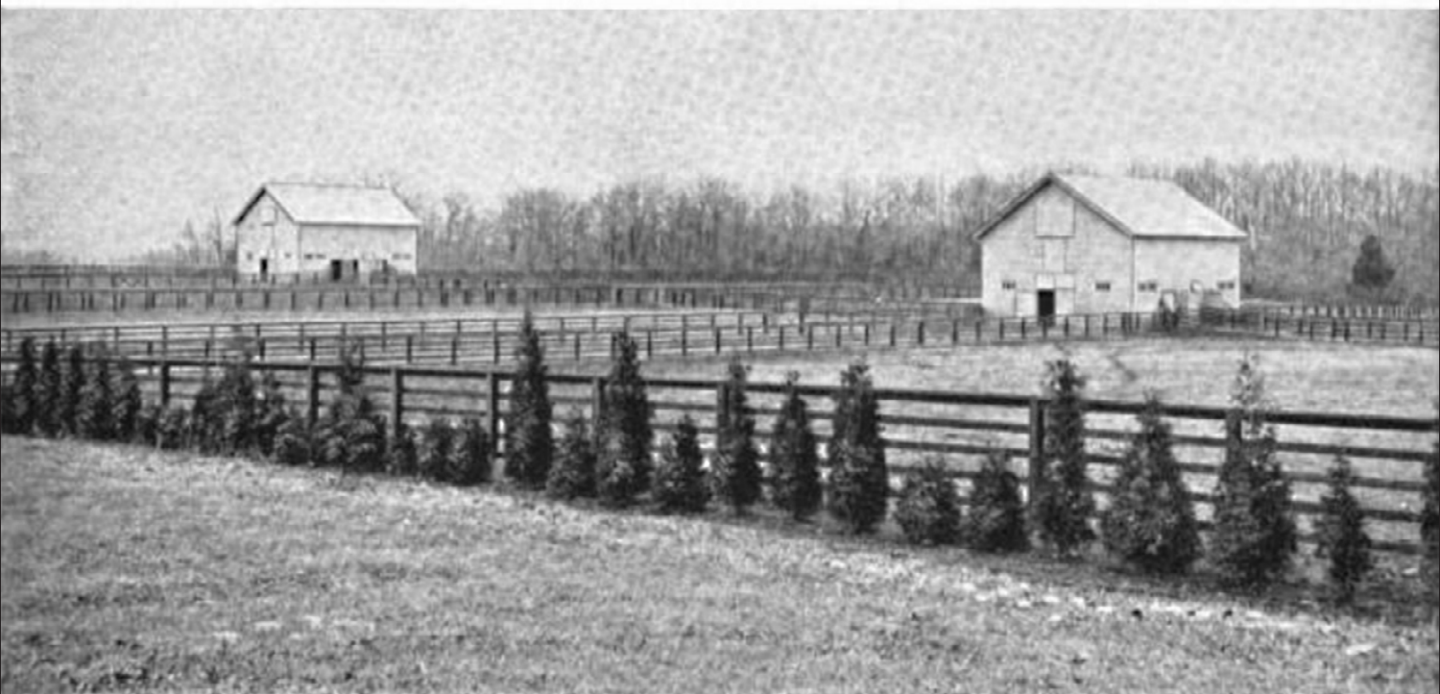
In its 1898 obituary, *The Illustrated American* called David Dunham Withers “an honored patron and sportsman who did more than any one of his generation to elevate” horse racing. While he kept his main residence in New York City, he built the large house, above, east of the Thomas Lloyd House and stayed there from Saturdays to Mondays to oversee the extensive construction, breeding and training activities at Brookdale Farm.

Withers built the two Stallion Stables and their paddocks, below, on the east portion of Brookdale Farm, which is now part of Brookdale College.

MARCH 12, 1892.

THE ILLUSTRATED AMERICAN.

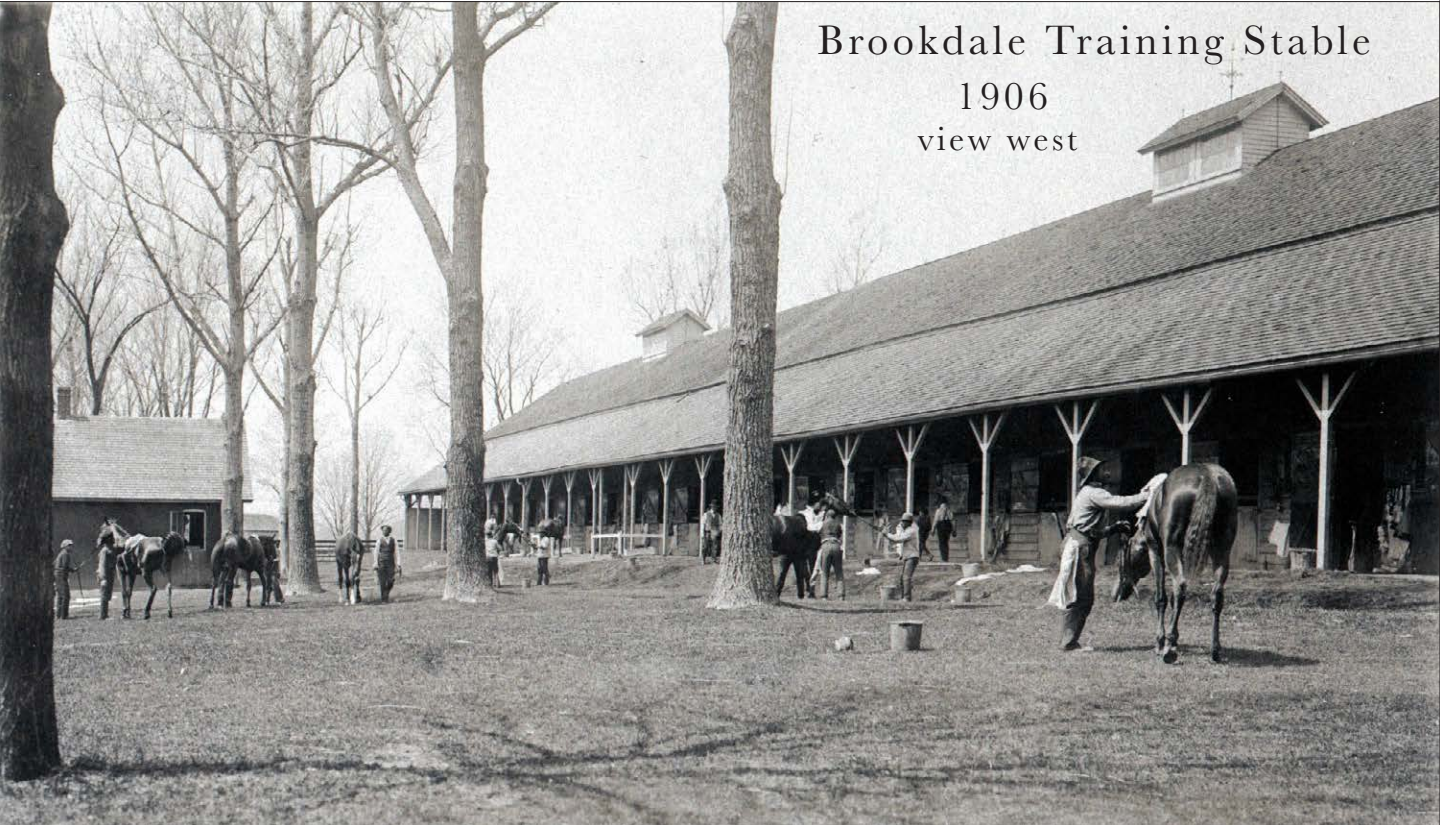
153



Brookdale Training Stable

1906

view west

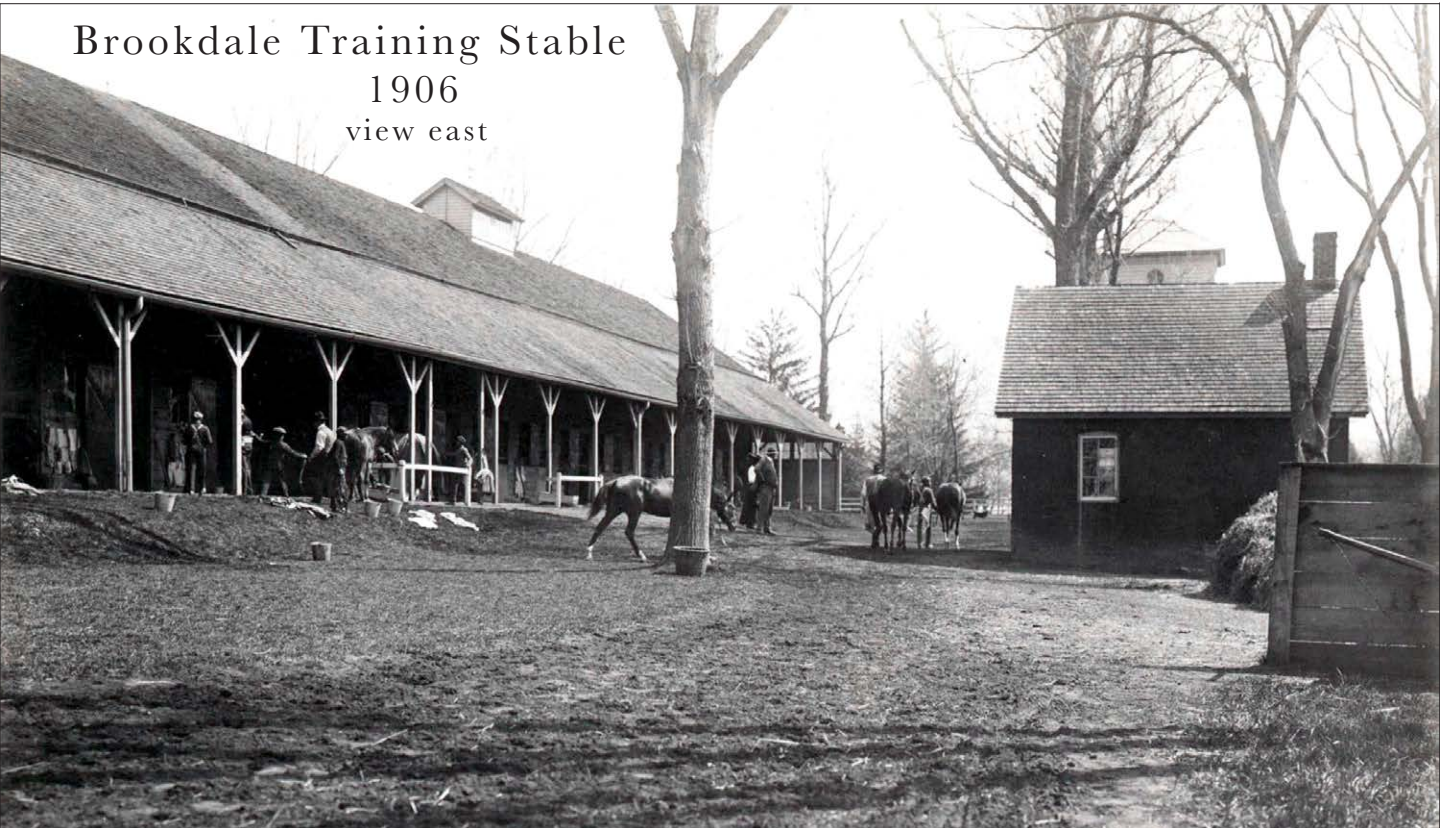


When Withers died in 1892, *The Illustrated American* described Brookdale Farm as “the model stud-farm of this country.” It had more than 100 employees and 45 buildings for stabling, breeding and training some 90 horses, plus large and small tracks for workouts. The 64 ft. x 296 ft. Training Stable housed 40 horses, and in the views above and below from the Thompson era at Brookdale, stable hands are “cooling out” horses after a workout.

Brookdale Training Stable

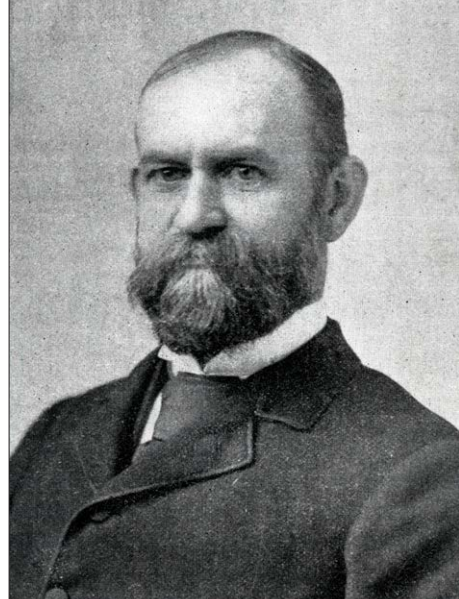
1906

view east





In 1893 Col. William Payne Thompson, right, and his wife Mary Evelyn Moffett Thompson, left, acquired Brookdale Farm. Thompson was born in Wheeling, West Virginia, where his father was a judge. He served in the Civil War, became a lawyer, and made a fortune in New York as a close associate of John D. Rockefeller in the Standard Oil Trust.



Col. Thompson had a keen interest in horse breeding and training, and he hired a prominent trainer for Brookdale. He invested in additional broodmares and stallions and increased the stable to nearly 200 horses. He also expanded the Farm's agricultural operation and its hay, corn, carrots, cabbage and butter soon won prizes at local and state fairs.

In 1895, Thompson hired the noted New York architecture firm Carrere and Hastings to design a Colonial Revival mansion around the core of David Withers' house. Thompson died in 1896 at the age of 59 and left Brookdale farm to Evelyn in trust for their three children. When completed in 1898, the Thompson mansion, pictured below, had 29 rooms, 14 fireplaces and 6 bathrooms.





Lewis Steenrod Thompson, the second son of William and Evelyn Thompson, was named for his uncle who died in the Civil War. He graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1887, the year his parents moved to New York. In 1896, his sister introduced him to Geraldine Livingston Morgan, who was born in New York into a well established family with a history of social service. That same year Lewis and Geraldine married and moved to Brookdale Farm.



Lewis and Geraldine had four children of their own and they took in four nieces and nephews of his after his sister died and also a young cousin of his. Brookdale Farm thus resounded with both children and horses in the first decades of the 20th century. In the photo below taken in 1906, Lewis is standing at the rear of a carriage full with members of his extended family. While Lewis tended to business and hunting, Geraldine became prominent in politics, public health reform, social services, and philanthropy.





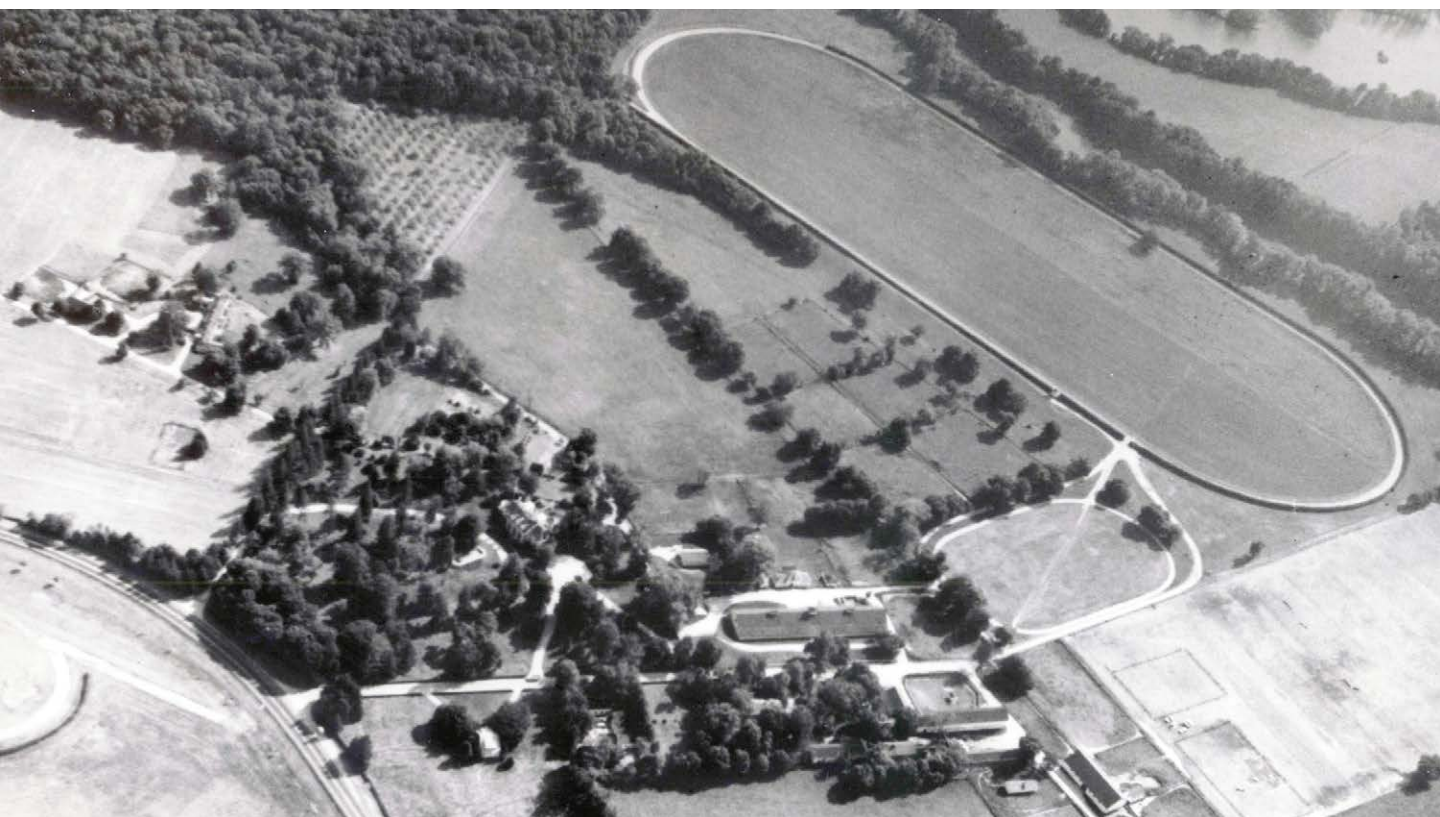
In the early 1900s, Lewis Thompson leased the Brookdale horse facilities to his friend Harry Payne Whitney, a wealthy mining investor and renowned breeder and racer of thoroughbreds. Under Whitney, Brookdale employed over 100 people, including many African-Americans like these stable hands and grooms, photographed in 1906.



MAP OF BROOKDALE FARM
PROPERTY OF L. THOMPSON
SCALE: 1 in. = 250 ft.
APPROXIMATE 17.000 AC.



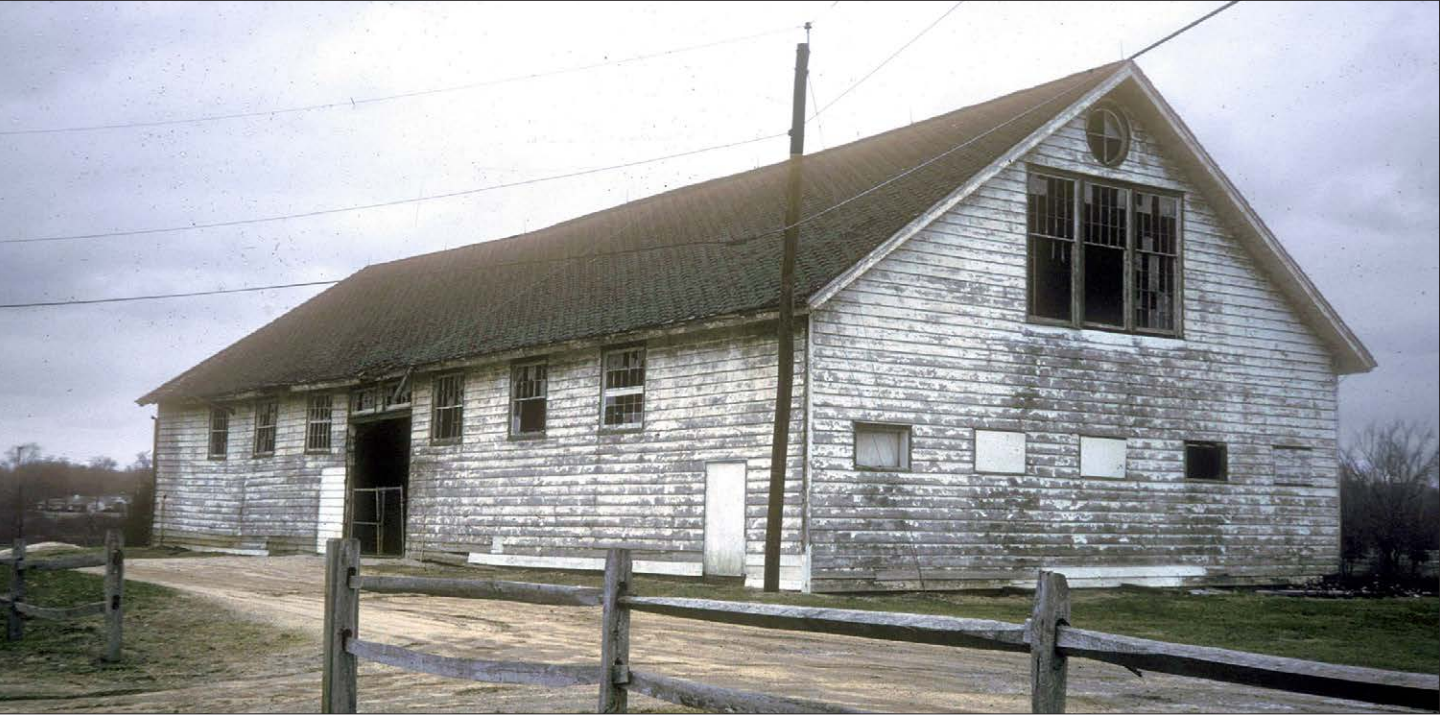
A 1911 survey, above, recorded the extent of Brookdale's land and facilities. The Whitney family continued the Farm's breeding and training operation into the early 1930s. After Lewis Thompson died in 1935, Geraldine Thompson continued living on the Farm until her death in 1967. She bequeathed the core of the Farm, the central part above and visible in the aerial below, to Monmouth County for recreation and open space in 1967. The county purchased the eastern portion, the right part above, in 1967 to establish Brookdale College. The county preserved the western portion, which Geraldine Thompson sold to a farmer in 1940, as an addition to Thompson Park in 1986.





The Thompson Mansion, above, was originally completed in 1898 and suffered three fires over the years, including one in 2006 that led to its reconstruction. Today it continues to serve as the Thompson Park Visitor Center and includes an extensive exhibit detailing the notable history of Brookdale Farm. The unique 1880s Brookdale Training Stable, below, originally had open galleries, as seen on page 7, and today is the largest and most significant historic horse stable in Monmouth County.





The Park System has preserved several other notable buildings from Brookdale Farm's breeding and training era.

A 55 ft. x 110 ft. Yearling Barn, one of two built in 1884, is pictured left in 1906 and above in 1996. It now serves as Thompson Park's Activity Barn, below, for special events and programs.





Brookdale Farm's former Ten Mare Barn, above left, built in the 1880s, now serves as garage and storage space for Thompson Park's maintenance operation. A second Yearling Barn also built 1884 now serves as the park's Theater Barn, above right.

To support the stabling, breeding and training of nearly 200 horses in its heyday, Brookdale Farm required an enormous amount of water. Its water supply system built in the 1880s consisted of a Pump House, below left, with a steam-driven pump that pumped water from an adjacent well to a Reservoir House, below right, that included water filters. The park currently uses these buildings as a carpenter and sign shop.



For more information on the history of Brookdale Farm, including its founding by David Dunham Withers and its evolution under the Thompson and Whitney Families, visit the Brookdale Farm exhibit at the Thompson Park Visitor Center.

MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

www.monmouthcountyparks.com

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