

*The Great Houses of Leyton and
Leytonstone*

**Park House in
Leytonstone
High Road**

(the first Leytonstone Library)

Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

Park House in Leytonstone High Road (the first Leytonstone Library)

Number 1 in The Great Houses of Leyton and Leytonstone Series

Occasional Publication No 5

Published in January 2007 (slightly revised in 2009) by

Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

85 Forest Drive West

Leytonstone

London

E11 1JZ

Website : www.leytonhistorysociety.org.uk

Introduction

This is the first in a series Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society will produce about the mansions of the wealthy in our area. They have almost all been demolished now. This booklet is about a building that has had various names but came to be called Park House. It was converted into the first Leytonstone Branch Library.

In the 18th century Leyton and Leytonstone contained many large houses set in their own grounds. These had an impressive approach for horse-drawn carriages, outbuildings, leisure gardens, vegetable gardens and fields.

The landholding later known as 'The Park' stretched from what is now Cathall Road, once called Knaves Lane, to where the Barking - Gospel Oak railway line now runs. It included an ancient wood of several acres called Grove Green. In the 19th century it had its own farm stocking the usual kinds of animals, and presumably this was the case throughout the period for which we have the names of owners. Photos and a drawing of the house survive, but we have to create our own mental picture of the rest of the property from 19th century sale descriptions.

A brief history with the names of owners

There was some kind of house, probably timber-framed, with gardens and about 10 acres of land, which in 1562 passed from Francis Hanger and his wife Dorothy to John Pragle, gentleman. There were people called Hanger in Walthamstow in 1332. A John Hanger of about 1400 wanted to be buried in the Leyton parish churchyard, St Mary's (in

what is now Church Road, London E10). In the 1480s John Hanger lived in the Grange, one of the two manor houses in Leyton. Another John Hanger had six children baptised at the parish church in the later 16th century. Perhaps they moved out of the area, because that is about the last we hear of the Hanger family.

In 1588 what became The Park was transferred from John and Magdalen Archer to William Cooker, a gentleman, and his wife Suzanne. At this time the house had been newly rebuilt and came with kitchen, barn, stable, hay loft, garden, orchard and 7 acres of grounds onto Leytonstone High Road, together with some fields. Further changes of owner took place, some described as gentry, others as merchants, for example the Andrewes family of the Haberdasher's Company and the East India Company. Daniel Andrewes was active in Leyton church affairs in the 1650s, donating a silver gilt cup. In 1656 he provided some of the money to add an aisle to the church (made of brick). His London house was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 but he contributed to the cost of a vicarage for John Strype. When he lived in The Park it had 19 fireplaces, nearly as many as Forest House and Ruckholt manor house which were occupied by wealthy people.

In the reign of William and Mary The Park was owned by George Hockenhull of the Grocers' Company.

In 1704 the estate was purchased by Sir William Russell who rebuilt the house and sold it to John Cookes, a silkworker who had lived from 1701 on Capworth Street in what was later known as Lea Hall. The Park at this time had three walled gardens of three acres with two summer houses, two large



yards, a barn, two stables, two coach houses, a malthouse, a milkhouse, and a water house with pipes leading to the house. (This suggests there had been two separate residences on the property but quite how is not known at present.) Several large fields stretched down to the wood called Grove Green. A small artificial 'Mount' was between smaller fields called 'Shoulder of Mutton Field' (from its shape) and 'Grove Field'. The parish register records Richard Hollins as being found dead, having fallen down-stairs "at Mr Cookes".

Archer's 1721 map of the manor of Ruckholt (above) shows several landholdings stretching between Leytonstone High Road and Grove Green Road (to use the modern names), with Cotton's opposite what is now Davies Lane (marked "L. Lane, probably for Lord's Lane") and The Park as 'Cookes'. A

circular feature seems to be the 'Mount' surrounded by trees. A younger son of John Cookes, Henry, probably lived in The Park after his father's death. Elizabeth Cookes leased the house to Nicholas Magens or Meighin, a nonconformist Dutch merchant who died in 1764. His widow lived in The Park until she died in 1779. The house was then described as two storeys high.

In 1780 Susannah Parry, of a grocer's family, and her son Nicholas Segar Parry, became tenants of The Park. Mrs Parry died in 1784. In 1788 Nicholas Segar Parry bought The Park and made the doorway grander. A pediment contained the arms of Parry and Segar (see the photo on page 11). But he took no part in local affairs and in 1793 he moved to Little Hadham, Hertfordshire.

The Park was let to William Harrison who had a address in Bread Street within the City of London. After him came Captain Joseph Cotton. His father was Nathaniel Cotton, who managed to combine the occupations of physician, poet and keeper of the St Albans lunatic asylum. (So there seems to be no close connection with the Cotton who owned the land next to 'The Park' in 1721.) Joseph Cotton entered the Royal Navy in 1760. He later joined the service of the East India Company, commanding the 'Queen Charlotte' on two voyages. He lived at Woodford between 1784 and 1789 and then moved to Leyton House, Church Road. He took up residence at The Park in 1804. He was a director of the East India Company 1795 to 1823 (Chairman in 1803), Elder Brother of Trinity House from 1783 (Master from 1803, writing its history), a Governor of the London Assurance Society, and a Fellow of the Royal Society. Trinity House had an engraving

by C Turner of a portrait of him by Sir Thomas Lawrence, and a marble bust by Chantrey.

In 1805 Cotton got permission to build a cottage next to The Park estate “on the lane from Ruckholt to the village of Leytonstone” – this means what is now Grove Green Road - for one of his workmen and to provide more security for The Park estate and the road. About this time a portico was added to the House. {Old Bailey Proceedings Reference Number: t18470405-1051}

In 1813 Joseph Cotton, perhaps running low on money, moved to one of the houses on what is now Whipps Cross Road, and to Walnut Tree House, Leyton High Road in 1815.

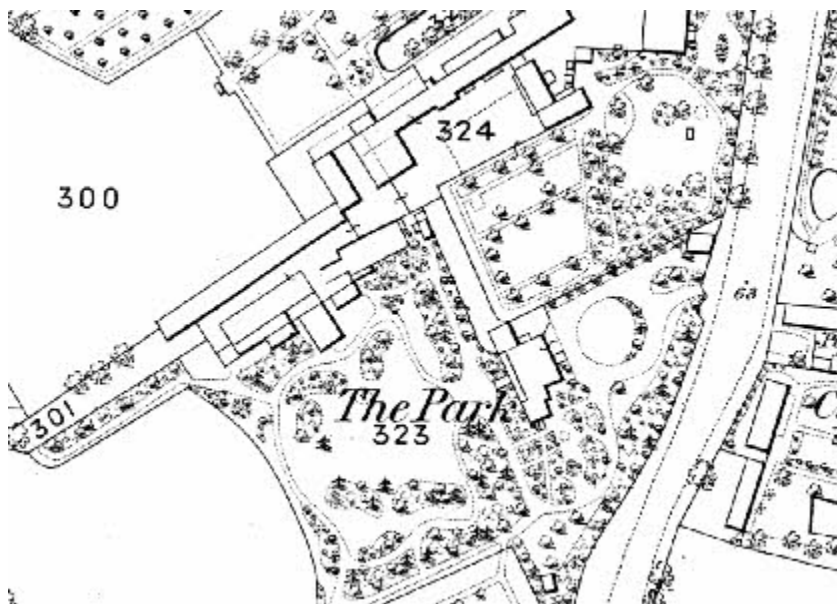
In 1813 Mr Parry let The Park to Thomas Old, a shipowner who in 1807 had come to live in Assembly Row (now Whipps Cross Road). Old became a trustee of the Leytonstone Chapel on the High Road. He left The Park in 1831 and it was empty until 1836 when Benjamin Nind moved in. Nind was a



solicitor of Throgmorton Street who had lived next to The Park from 1814 at a house once called Southwell Grove Cottage and later The Eagles from a pair on its gateposts. Benjamin Nind sold The Park in 1847 when he and his wife born Margaret Wharton moved to Ramsgate. The lead from the portico roof was stolen at this time. {Old Bailey Proceedings Reference Number: t18470405-1051}

David Hart, a wine merchant of Fenchurch Street, bought The Park but took a loan from Mr Nind to do so. Hart seems to have enclosed part of the Grove Green . He paid to turn The





Park estate from copyhold to freehold. His son, also David, became a wine merchant of 123 George Street.

19th century descriptions

In 1873 The Park was described as screened from the road by a high wall and a row of elm and chestnut trees, and approached by a carriage drive with an entrance lodge. (A map of 1863 (opposite and above) shows a carriage turning circle in front of 'The Park'.) The entrance hall was paved with black and white marble. The house had a dining room 40 ft. by 16 ft. with French windows opening on to a verandah which in turn had steps down to the garden. There was a billiard room 21ft. by 19ft. The left wing contained a library and the right wing a 'morning room' 18 ft. by 12 ft. On the first floor of the main house there were double drawing rooms 40ft. by 16ft., and a verandah balcony overlooking the

gardens. The principal bedroom was 18ft. by 12ft. On the second floor were four more bedrooms. In the basement were the kitchen, the servants' dining room, a dairy, the wine cellar and a fruit room. The grounds were described as having timber and specimen trees including cedars, lawns, a walled-in kitchen garden planted with peach, apple and plum trees, a large conservatory, two heated vine houses, a rose garden, and an orchard. There was a horsepond with a walled yard, stabling for five horses with two lofts, a double coach-house, a carpenter's shop, lumber room, saddle room, barn, cart shed, four hen houses, and a long range of sheds used for cows and poultry, together with piggeries and a shed with a large copper pan for boiling food for the pigs and poultry. To the rear of the gardens were about 24 acres of park lands extending to Grove Green Road on the other side of the Leytonstone railway line, with an avenue of lime trees and a private road leading from Grove Green Road to the House. On the other side of the railway facing Grove Green Road there were two detached cottages, with two rooms on the first floor and on the ground floor a kitchen and sitting room. There were also two semi-detached cottages with four bedrooms. The cottages had gardens.

The beginning of the end

In 1878 the younger David Hart sold The Park estate, and it was turned into residential streets by William Goodman, described as 'gentleman', and James and Josiah Goodman, contractors of Cumberland Wharf, Bethnal Green. Their family gave their name to Goodman Road, Leyton, and were laying out other estates in the area including one adjoining The Park estate. They extended Mayville, Norman and Woodville Roads into The Park estate, and created Park Grove

Road, Melford Road and Granville Road for The Park development.

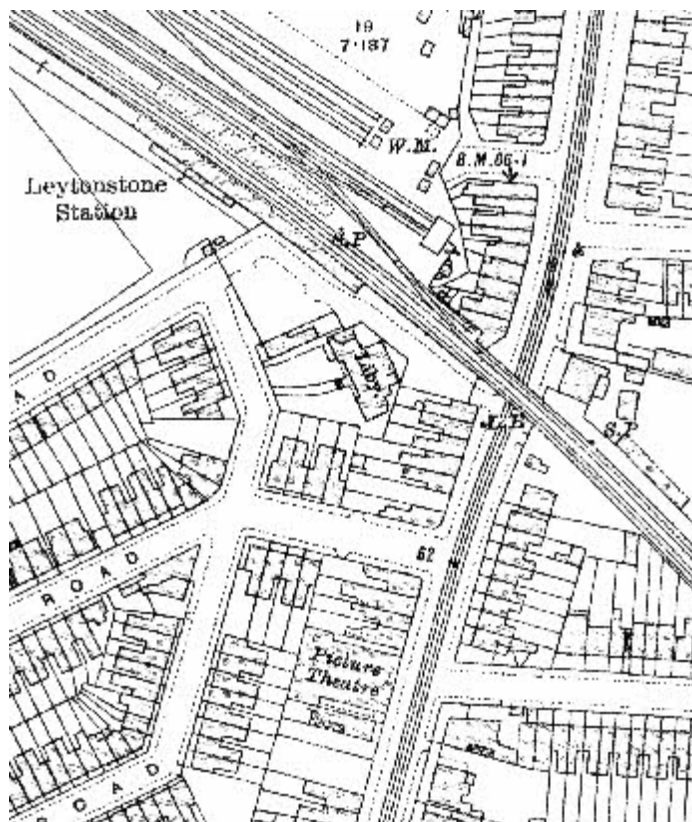
Park House itself with a small bit of land was sold by the Goodmans to Joseph Houlton who occupied the left wing. Houlton let the main building and the right wing to J R Roberts & Co, a large store in Stratford, for use as a furniture depository.

In 1894 a new railway line was built close to the House, raised up on a viaduct. Park House was left facing the entrance to the station.

The right to inherit Joseph Houlton's estate was disputed after his death in 1902. Mr Justice Byrne, who had been MP for Walthamstow and Leyton 1892-97, heard the case in the High Court of Chancery. An auction was unsuccessful and the whole building was afterwards used for the furniture depository.

The first Leytonstone Library

Andrew Carnegie agreed to give Leyton Council £ 8,000 for branch libraries at Lea Bridge and Leytonstone. Another donor provided a site for the Lea Bridge Library, but there was no equivalent offer for Leytonstone. An appeal for money raised too little but public subscription did bring enough to buy Park House. The Council's Librarian Zebedee Moon arranged for it to be converted into a branch library. The building work, under the supervision of the Council's architect William Jacques ARIBA, may have involved removal of the oak central staircase but another account says it had already been sold off. In the floors were twelve to fourteen-



inch square beams of oak, and in the roof were beams of eighteen-inch oak and pitch pine, some of them forty feet long. The floor of the upper storey was beetle-ridden and could not be used.

The railway company now owned the land at the front of the house, so a new entrance was created at what had been the rear. What was called the ballroom, presumably the 'double drawing room' of the earlier auction particulars, was converted into the lending department. The very large cellars were used for storage. The 'Carnegie' Library opened in January 1908.

Volume 2 of "The Royal Commission of Historical Monuments of England", published 1921, described Park House in this way : "The walls are of brick and the roofs are covered with slates. It was built early in the 18th century, and has rusticated angles, symmetrical windows, and a modillioned cornice. The central doorway has a round head, and is flanked by fluted Corinthian pilasters supporting separate entablatures and a segmental pediment. Under the pediment is an achievement of the Arms of Parry-Segar. - Condition good." (The description of the doorway is confirmed by the photograph reproduced in this booklet on page 11.)

Demolition

In 1934 a new Library was built on the corner of Church Lane and the High Road, and Park House was demolished, despite a local historian, Crouch, whose great-great-grandfather was the former owner Thomas Old (see the drawing on page 7),

The site now :



suggesting that the House was in reasonable condition and could have been made a museum.

The information in this booklet has been drawn by David Boote from :

‘A History of Park House, Leytonstone, Essex’ by Frederick Temple, 1961, a typed essay of which a copy is in the Vestry House Museum’s Local Studies Room at L72.2;

a newspaper cutting without a heading but annotated "Park House", of about 1932, at p. 31 in "Temple, Frederick, Newscuttings album" in the Vestry House Museum’s Local Studies Room at L04;

printed Particulars of Sale on 7th May 1873 deposited in Vestry House Museum by Gail Bickers and Julia Woledge;

other information in the Vestry House Museum’s Local Studies Room including sale particulars for an auction on 31st July 1903.

The Vestry House Museum is in Vestry Road, Walthamstow, E17 9NH. The telephone number is 020 8509 1917. Information about the Museum is on the website of the London Borough of Waltham Forest www.walthamforest.gov.uk

Note : to the extent that the text of this publication is original work, rather than repeating facts or based on the research of others, it has been written by David Boote, who gives permission for it to be copied on the strict condition that this sentence be included in any copy including subsequent copies made by anyone. Email David at david_boote@yahoo.com for the latest version.

Illustrations

Page 5 : part of John Archer's 1721 map of Ruckholt Manor showing 'Cookes'

Page 7 : 'The Residence of Mr. Nind upon his property in LEYTONSTONE ESSEX / R. OLD. JUN 1845.' *

Page 8 : part of Ordnance Survey map not dated

Page 9 : part of Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1863

Page 12 : part of Ordnance Survey map of 1916 1:2500

Page 13 : photograph November 2006 of the site of Park House

