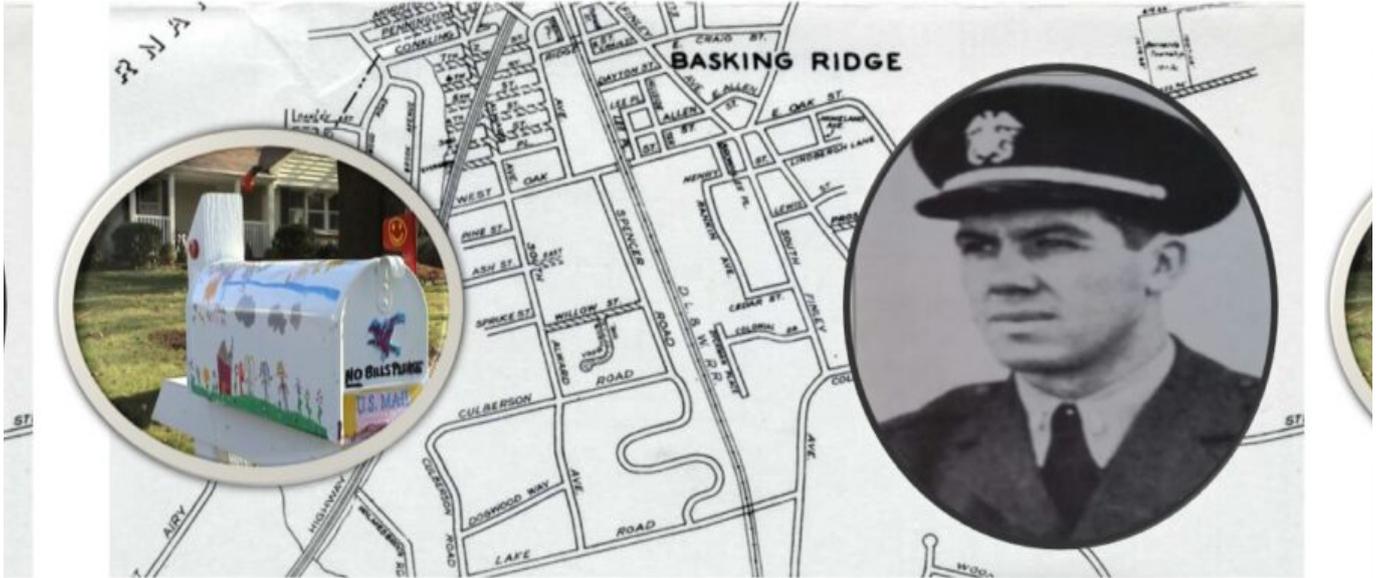




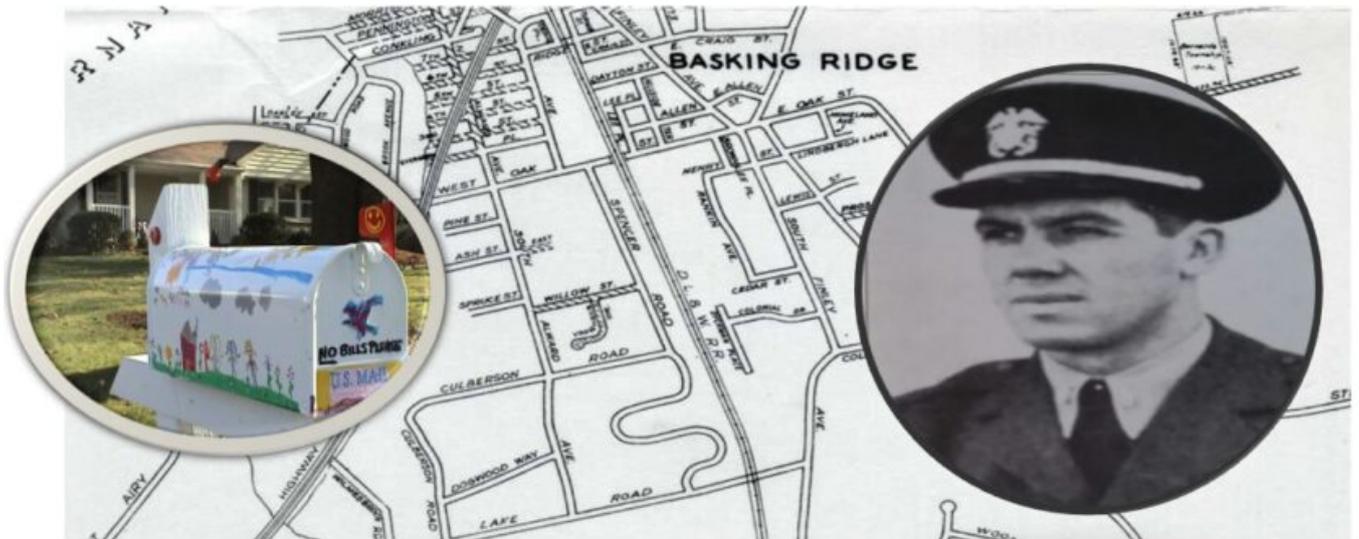
Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too



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Posted on March 30, 2025

Views: 2,138





It's always fun to hear how a story becomes a story for us. In fact, there's always a story about a new story. History is a bit like sewing.... when you pull a thread, you never know where it will go and who is involved. This one is no different. We were researching veterans and soldiers from the area. We stumbled upon this fascinating story, which is tied to today's New Jersey affordable housing developments, the cost of living, and how to help provide housing in a suburban environment. Spencer Road brought us here.

This story came about after the Mr. Local History Project researchers prepared research of Bernards Township developments in the 20th century. Many residents started asking about the Spencer Road development, one of the first in the township to provide lower-income homes for veterans returning from WW2. Spencer Road was one of the township's first large-scale developments with a few of the area's developers.

Coincidentally, Mr. Local History's founder and his family moved to Basking Ridge in 2004, and guess where they chose to live? YES, Spencer Road.

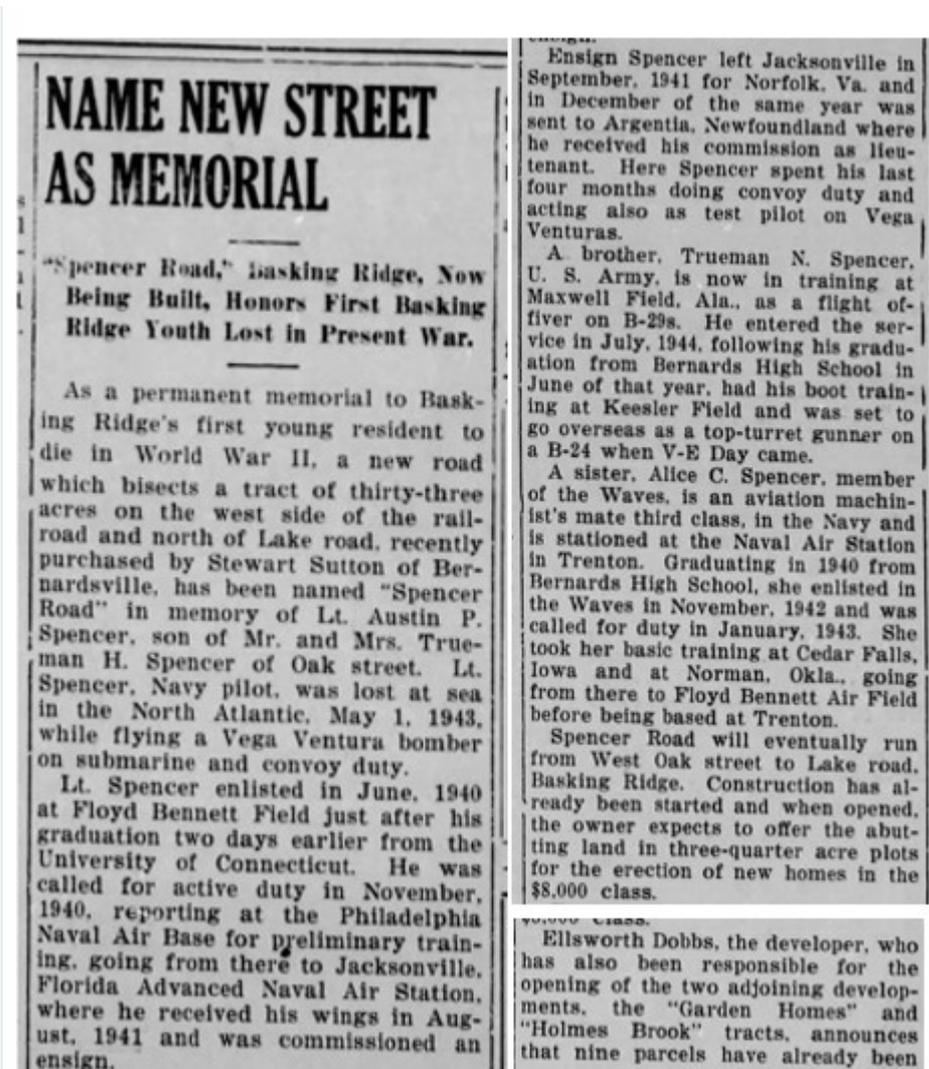
Spencer Road - An Affordable Housing Development Paves the Way (1940s)



Typical ranch-style block homes were the most straightforward and most affordable homes of the time in one of Basking Ridge's first mass-produced communities, the Spencer Road Project.

Official Street Dedication - August 1945

In 1945, two years after a tragic event at sea, a new street in Basking Ridge was dedicated as a memorial to Ridge resident and Navy pilot Austin Spencer. The 33-acre tract from West Oak Street to Lake Road, owned by Bernardsville's Stuart Sutton, was later developed by Stewart K. Sutton, Dobbs Realty, the Basking Ridge Development Company, and others.



Spencer Road street dedication - August 23, 1945. Bernardsville News

Austin Pendleton Spencer - US Navy

Lieutenant Austin (Spike) Pendleton Spencer was born in Colchester, Connecticut on January 17, 1918. He was later raised as the eldest of four siblings, Emily, Alice, and Trueman Jr., in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, and grew up on West Oak Street, across from today's Oak Street Elementary School. After graduating from Bernards High School, Spencer graduated from the University of Connecticut in May 1940. Shortly after he graduated, Spencer enlisted in the United States Navy.



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SERIAL NUMBER 3677	1. NAME (Print) Austin Pendleton Spencer		ORDER NUMBER 2546
2. ADDRESS (Print) WEST OAK STREET BASKING RIDGE, SOMERSET NEW JERSEY			
3. TELEPHONE BERNARDSVILLE 295	4. AGE IN YEARS 22	5. PLACE OF BIRTH COLCHESTER CONNECTICUT	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mr. Townsman Howe Spencer		8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Father	
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON West Oak Street Basking Ridge Somerset New Jersey			
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Peter Brown		11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Rockwood Summit, Maine	
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.			
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. FORM 1		Austin Spencer (Registration's signature)	

Austin Spencer's Military Registration Card



Austin's home growing up on W. Oak Street

During World War II, Spencer was lost at sea in 1943 while piloting a Lockheed PV-1 bomber on a submarine search mission in the North Atlantic. "Spike" Spencer served as a naval aviator after achieving his pre-war



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Aviation Cadet (AVCAD) program credentials.

Spencer held the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade, with the service number 0099935. Although his remains were never recovered, a memorial stone exists in his honor alongside his parents.



Lt. Austin Pendleton Spencer - US Navy - Call sign "Spike"



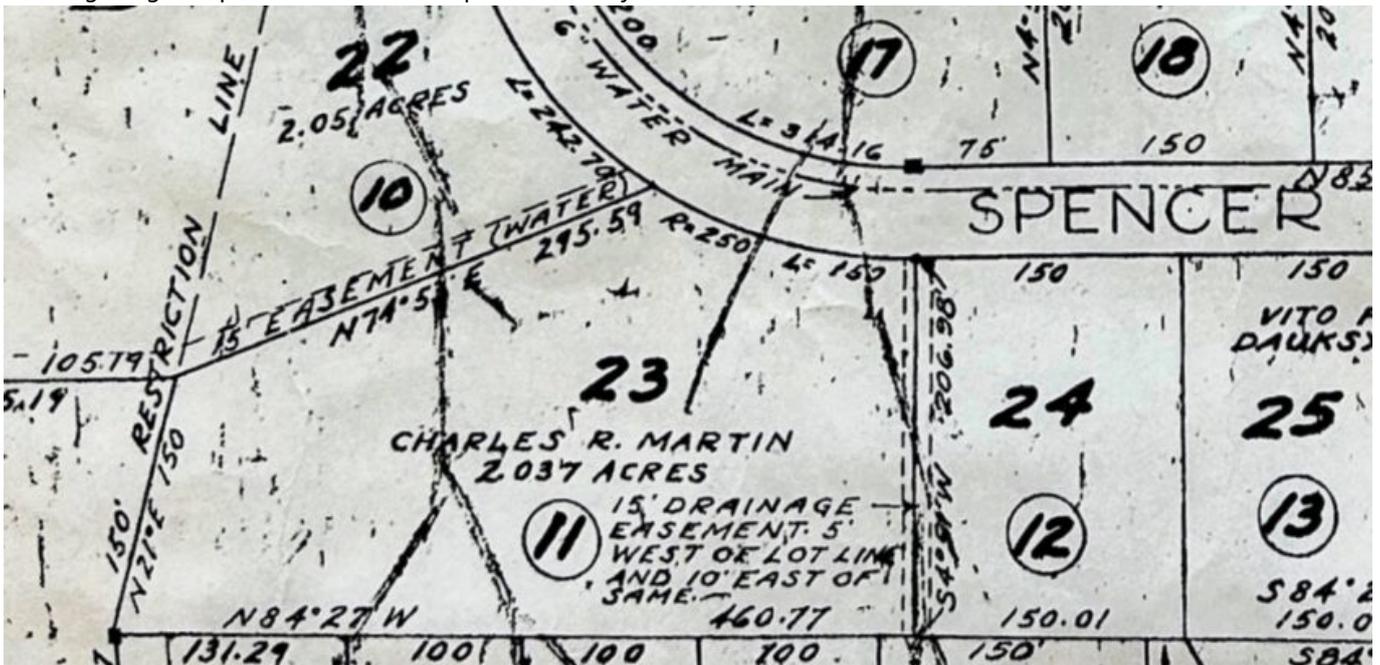
Austin's lost plane - a Lockheed PV-1 bomber.
Spencer was eventually declared missing in action on May 1, 1943.

Spencer Road Development

There's a general assumption that the curvy part of Spencer Road is the original and older section between the curvy and straight sections, but this doesn't seem to be true. After looking at the age of the homes, most homes were built along both sections between 1950 and 1955. We found one built in [1946](#), which seems to be the oldest house on the street. Yes, it's on the curvy section. Did Spencer Road have a street name before the dedication? The answer is leaning towards no. The curved section meanders a left and right based on elevation since Lake Road is at a lower height than the top of the curve by Culberson Road, which may have started as a trail up the hill that was later turned into a dirt road in the mid-1940s to build the first house off Lake Road. MLH will continue to dig.



Basking Ridge's Spencer Road Development Survey c.1949

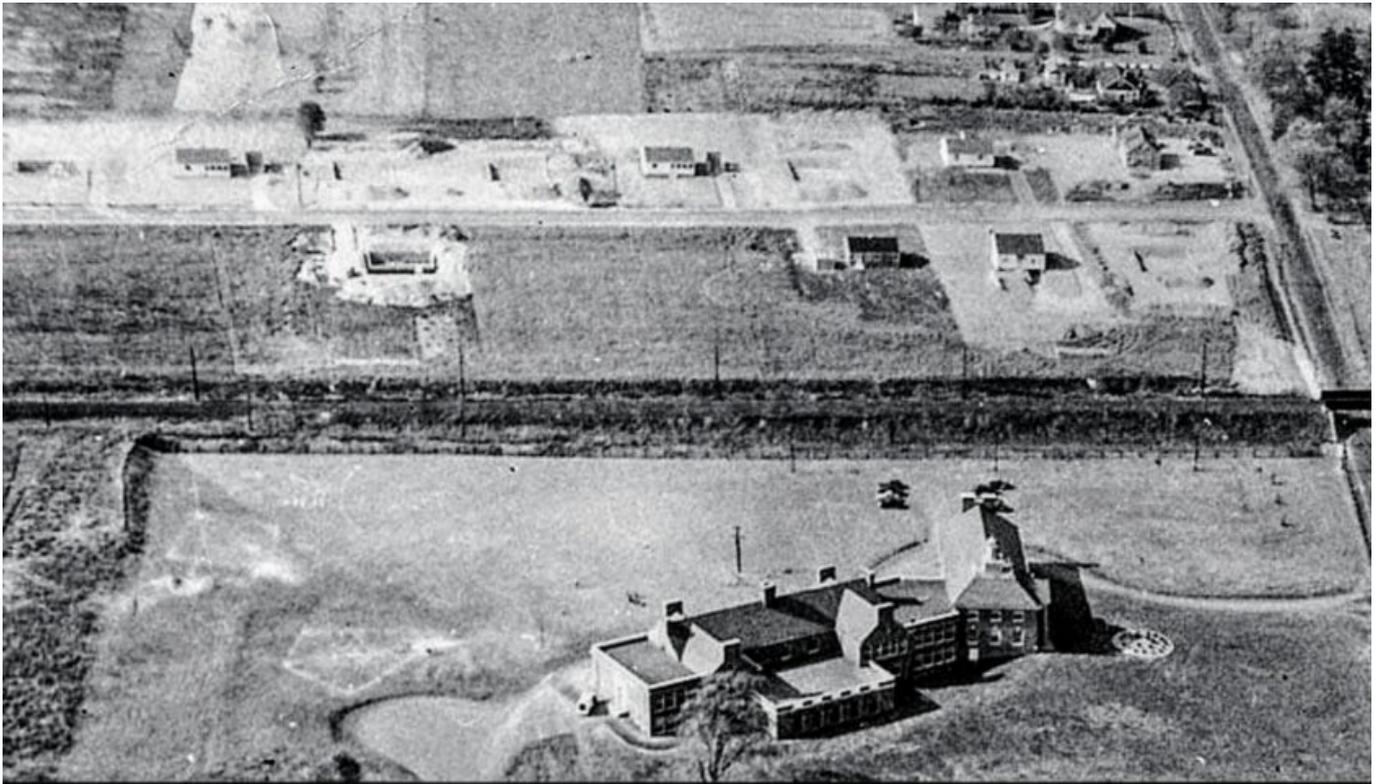


Charles r. Martin's property appears to hold the oldest house on Spencer Road.



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On September 20, 1949, the Bernards Township Committee passed a resolution to approve developer Stewart K. Sutton's construction of a new 3,200-foot road connecting Oak Street to Lake Road, eliminating two dead-end roads. Then, on October 20, 1949, it was reported that the Spencer Road request was approved to connect Lake Road up the Spencer Road hill (the curvy part) north to West Oak Street.



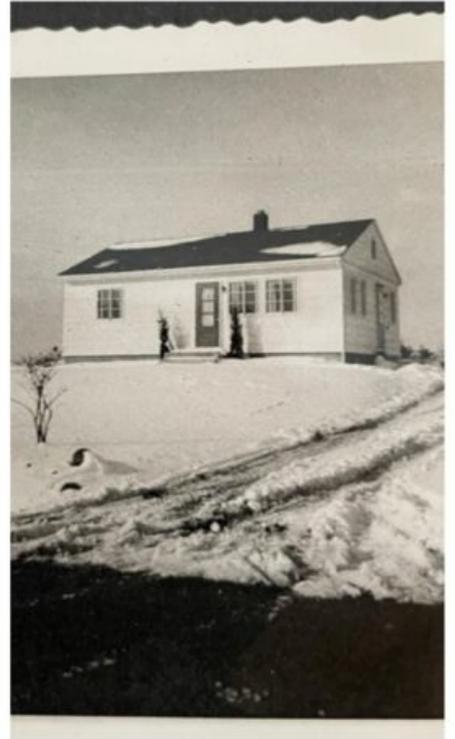
Spencer Road Development - c.1950. The empty lot at the end was built in 1950, and the first house to the left of the empty lot is 5 Spencer Road, built in 1947. Most of the houses in this view were built around 1950.



Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too



5 Spencer Rd.





ROAD ACCEPTANCE SENT TO PLANNERS

Bernards Board Asked to Review Proposal to Take Spencer Road Section Into Township System.

The Bernards Township Committee, which last month agreed to accept a section of Spencer road into the township road system, Tuesday night, October 18, ordered that the proposal be submitted to the township planning board for review.

Stewart K. Sutton, the developer, and Chalres A. Hartman, a Spencer road resident, protested the delay, but the Committee reluctantly told them that the planning board action was necessary because Spencer road had never been recorded on a filed subdivision map.

The planning board review was estimated to take up to five weeks. Mr. Hartman pointed out that, in the meantime, trucks and other vehicles were using his driveway as a turn-around.

The road section is approximately 3,200 feet long. After he received the Committee commitment, Mr. Sutton completed the road and it was approved by Township Engineer Kenneth A. Turner. The section eliminates two deadend streets.

The Committee approved on final



BUILDERS ACTIVE IN SPENCER ROAD

**Close to Half of Township Building
Permits Cover Construction in One
Street. Fees Total \$320.**

About half of the new building in Bernards Township during the last month was in Spencer road, Basking Ridge, according to a report submitted to the Township Committee by Fred W. Kampmier, Jr., building inspector.

Mr. Kampmier said that a total of 47 permits and certificates of occupancy were issued during the month, with three applications for permits rejected. Fees totalled \$320, the highest monthly collection this year.

Eight of the 17 permits for new residential construction were issued to the Springbrook Homes, Inc., for projects in Spencer road. The other new house



BERNARDS ACCEPTS NEW ROAD IN RIDGE

**Spencer Road Extension Ordinance
Passed On First Reading. Total
Length Is 3,253 Feet.**

Bernards Township Committee Tuesday, October 22, passed on first reading an ordinance to accept two new sections of Spencer road in Basking Ridge, and set Wednesday, November 6, as its next meeting date when a public hearing will be held on the ordinance before final passage.

The new sections include that portion starting at Lake road and extending 2,228 feet northerly and another 1,025 feet southerly from West Oak street. The road was recently completed and built according to required specifications. Kenneth A. Turner, engineer, advised the committee at a previous meeting.



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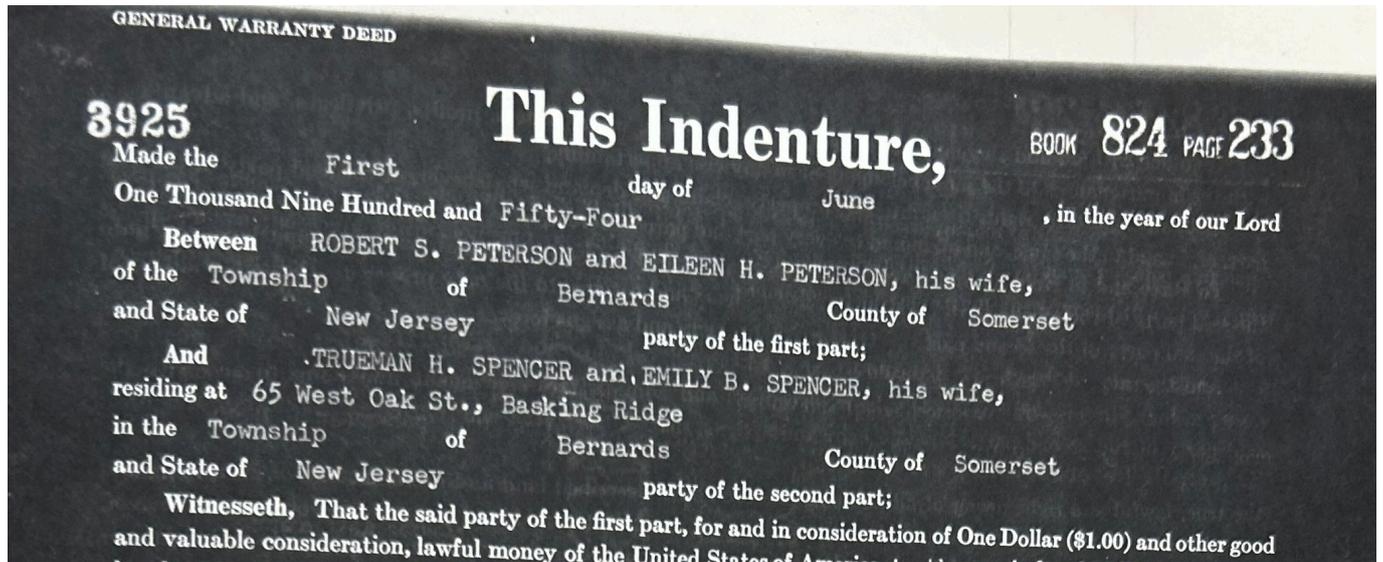
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Spencer's Parents Move from West Oak to the Road Dedicated to Their Son

Records show that on June 1, 1954, Austin's parents, Trueman and Emily Spencer, moved to 122 Spencer Road. Before moving to the street named after their son, the Spencers lived at 65 West Oak Street, across from the Oak Street School off Hillside Terrace.



Bernardsville News - Sept. 20, 1962 on the curvy section of Spencer Road



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Trueman Spencer, a WW1 veteran was the Bernrads Township tax collector for 25 years.





c.1949 – Spencer Road Survey



After raising his family with his wife Emily, the Spencers would move from 65 West Oak Street to this home on Spencer Road.

Cosmic Occurrence

2025: Interestingly, we learned that the home Austin Spencer grew up in in the 1930s actually has another "Austin" living in the same house. The owners reached out to let us know. We're glad this **"Austin came home."**



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Mr. Local History's Connection

After WWII, many veterans wanted to take advantage of the GI Bill and get a piece of the American dream. In Bernards Township, that area became Spencer Road. While not a "typical complex development," it became known as one of the first neighborhoods built at a rapid scale.

In 2003, before there was a Mr. Local History Project, there was Spencer Road. After losing out on a bidding war on our new home on Melborune Way, we went on a one-day fifteen-house tour and FINALLY closed on our first home on Spencer Road. Our life in Basking Ridge began.



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Mr. Local History's Basking Ridge Spencer Road story began on August 22, 2003.



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Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too

Looking towards the curvy portion of Spencer Road



Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too





Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too

Looking down the straight portion of Spencer Road





Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too



Spencer Road with the Railroad tracks behind the tree. A Spencer Road staple.



Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too



Our first community gathering "Betzapalooza"



Basking Ridge's Spencer Road is Important to Mr. Local History Too





Our first Spencer Road Thanksgiving



Our first Basking Ridge and Spencer Road Easter.

Share Your Spencer Road story

Post in the comments section below.

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[History of Housing Developments in Bernards Township](#)

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