

Montco's West House

A Car Races a Carriage:
A tale from a nearby
historic house

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As residents leave BBCC along Morris Road, they pass two historic white houses on the right at Montgomery County Community College. Last month's Stroll related the story of George Washington praising the fruit he ate from the community college's "East House," once owned by the Walker family.

The Bernhard family owned what is now the "West House," situated closer to DeKalb Pike. Both structures appear today as nineteenth-century farmhouses, dating from the 1700s. Jacob Kurr constructed both the East House and the West House, and, according to *Whitpain . . . Crossroads in Time* (1977), he built several other houses in the area, all from much the same plan. The design of these early homes is similar, and many of them still exist today.

In 1908, the owner of the West House was James Bernhard. As a farmer and blacksmith, he was "given to mechanical ways of improving [his] agricultural practices." (The use of scientific methods to improve farming began in the 1850s.) Bernhard liked to tinker, and evidently, he was prosperous because he bought one of the first cars in the neighborhood. Then "his future son-in-law challenged him to a race."

Storytellers have passed down that the younger man arrived at the finish line first with his "spirited white horse and well-polished black carriage" before Bernhard could even start his "sputtering, jerking vehicle."



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