

# 14 Rms., Rolling Vw

Hevesi, Dennis

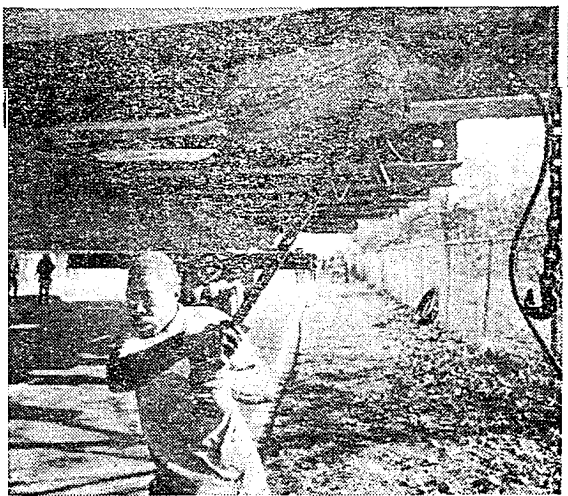
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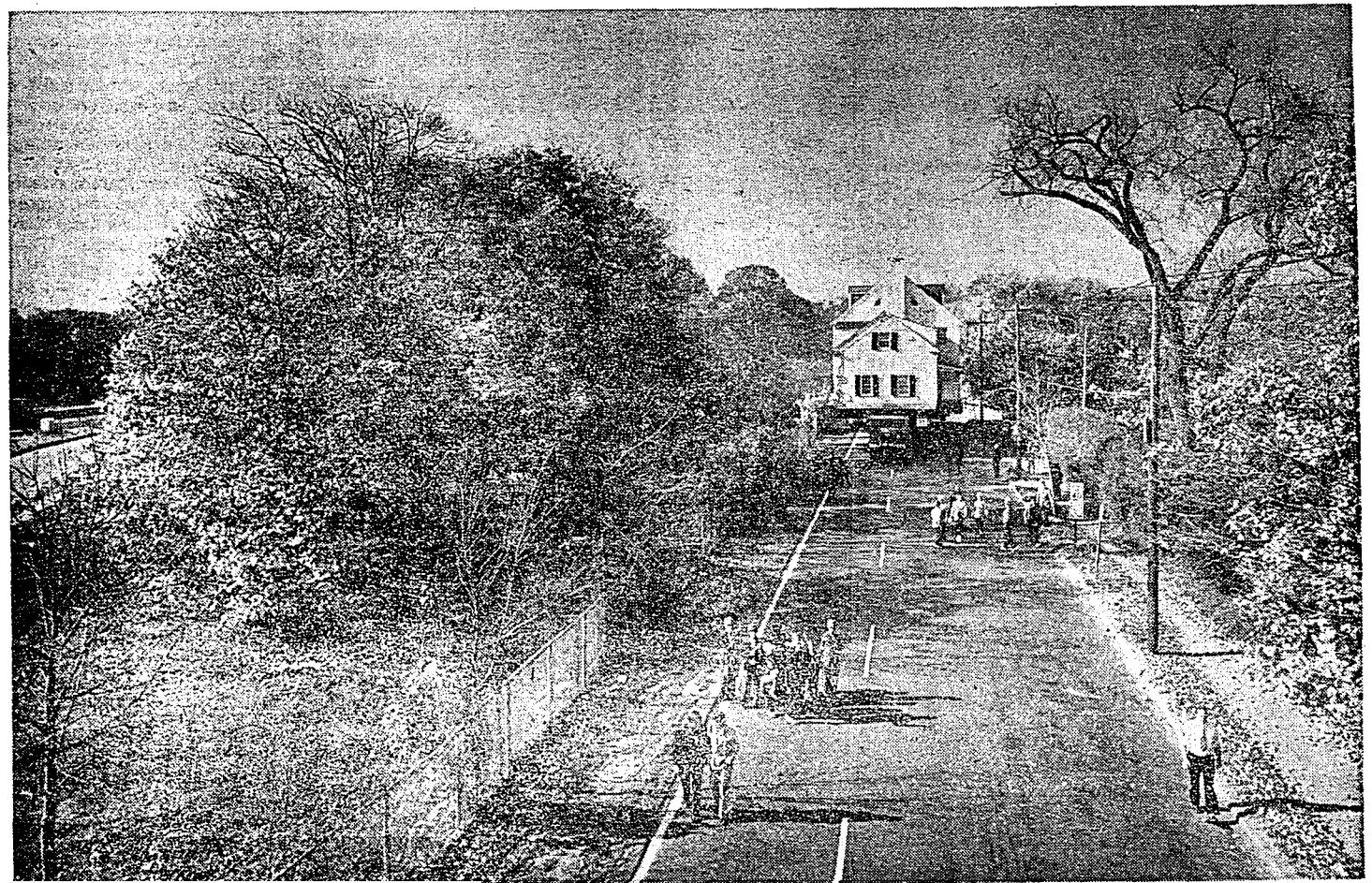
Newsday Photos by Stan Wolfson

**Got a match?** *That's no joke to the unidentified workman at right, who's tightening connections on supports for a 14-room house before it was moved, above, to a new site in East Hills. Pages 4A-5A.*

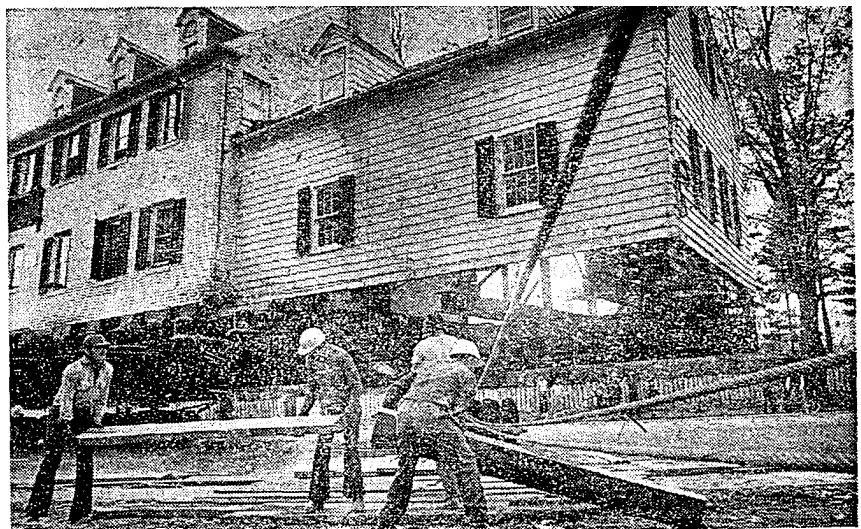




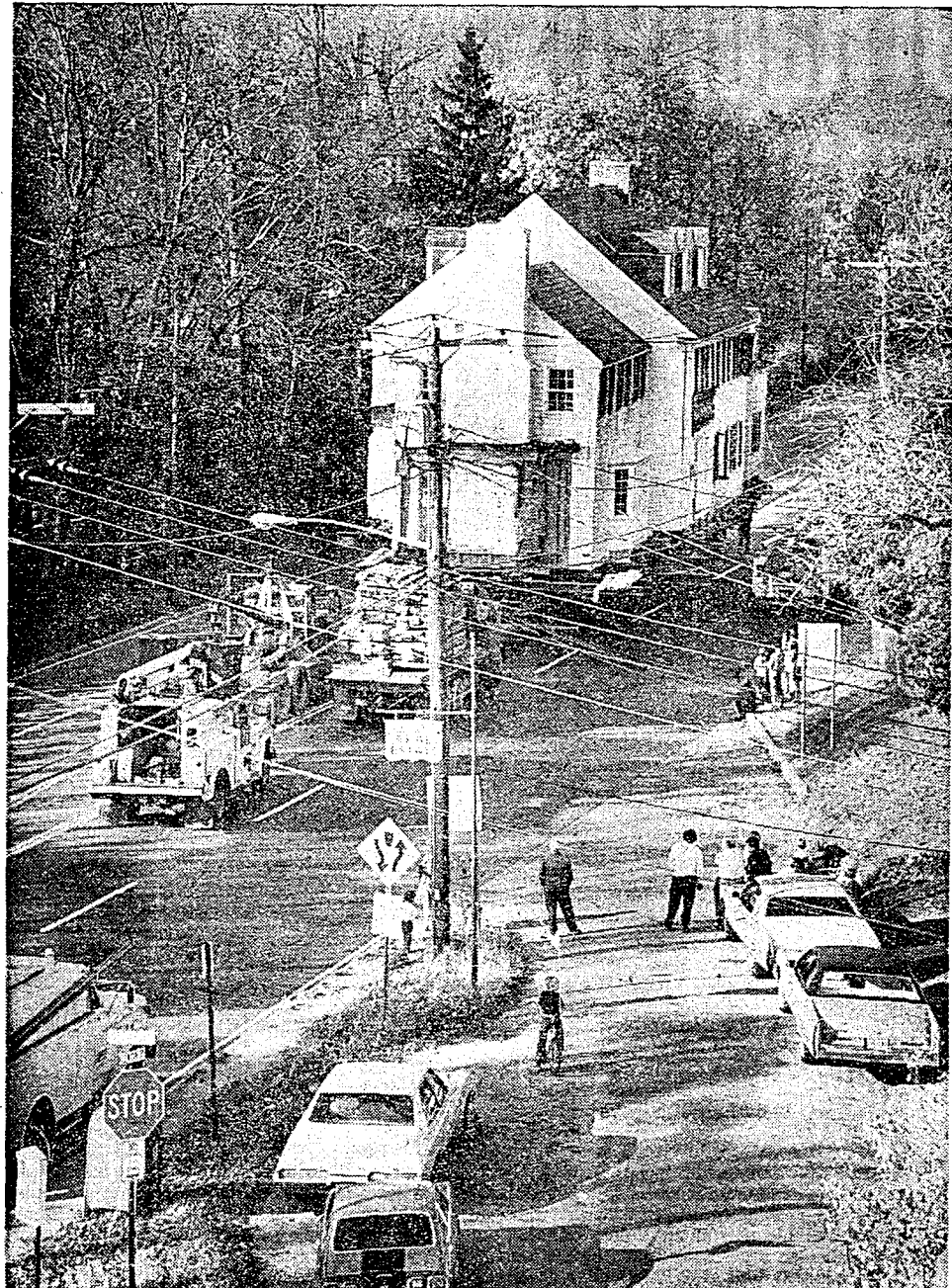
# 14 Rms., Rolling Vw.



*The house is pulled along Old Westbury Road, which is the Long Island Expressway service road. At left, workmen replace a traffic light that was removed to clear the way for the house when it reached the intersection with Glen Cove Road. Below, at the new home site, workmen prepare the way for turning the house around into the property.*







**By Dennis Hevesi**

Give John Nicholas a place to stand and maybe he can move the world.

Of course, the fee might be a bit higher than the \$30,000 he charged to move a 20-ton, 14-room house a little more than a mile yesterday along roads in the Roslyn-area village of East Hills.

Nicholas, who bills himself as a building mover rather than a house mover, was hired by two East Hills real estate men. The brokers, Sal Pisciotta and Jerry Romantini, recently acquired the house and wanted it moved from its original five-acre site on Old Westbury Road to a two-thirds acre parcel on Glen Cove Road. The 55-year-old house was due for destruction. A developer has purchased the five-acre site and plans to construct 16 homes on it. Pisciotta and Romantini hope to sell the huge, old house for at least \$175,000, Pisciotta said, perhaps to a doctor who can use it as both a residence and an office.

Pisciotta said Nicholas was called in after officials of Long Island firms said the only way to move the 97-foot-long house was to cut it into three sections. "Nicholas came over and said, 'You want it moved in one piece? When?'" Pisciotta said.

Nicholas, whose firm is based in Yonkers, is the fourth generation of house movers in his family. He claims that his firm, Nicholas Bros. Inc., has moved a nine-story administration building at the University of Toronto, placing it on steel rollers and easing it 300 yards across campus. His claim could not be confirmed last night.

There was no doubt, however, about the professionalism with which the 32-year-old Nicholas handled men and machines during the arduous 12-hour move yesterday. Kick Lamb, a line foreman for the New York Telephone Co., said, "I guess I've done a dozen or so moves with this guy. Boy, he's good. He's a cool dude." Nicholas appeared not to waste a word or a motion as he directed his 10-man, four-truck crew.

Preparations, of course, began well before the 7 AM start of yesterday's move. About three weeks ago, after plumbers and electricians had unhooked and coded all utility connections; a crew from Nicholas Bros. began digging a four-foot-deep trench around the 97-by-35-foot house. When the trench was completed, holes were bored at 18 points along each side of the foundation, just below ground level. Steel girders were then placed on rollers and pushed through the width of the house. Longer, larger girders were then placed under the first ribbing of girders. The second layer ran the length of the house. All together, the house and the girders weighed 280 tons, Nicholas said.

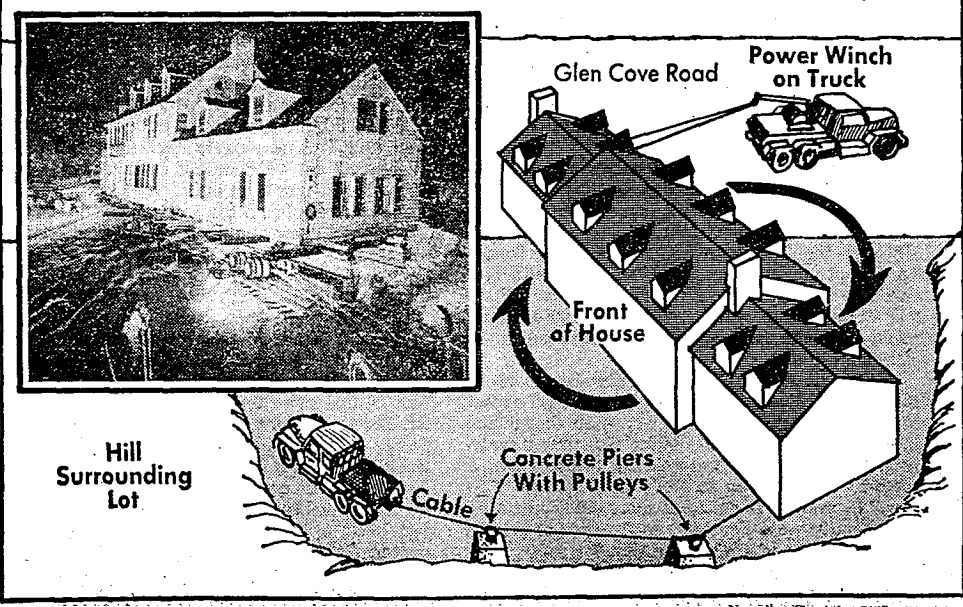
At the east end of the building, meanwhile, a 90-foot ramp had been dug to provide a gentle incline along which the house could be moved. The floor of the ramp and the basement were lined with heavy timber to provide a smooth surface. Six hydraulic jacks, each with the capacity to lift 100 tons, were then placed under the house.

"We have a uniform jacking system, all hydraulic," Nicholas said. "It raises all the jacks at the same rate, about 17 inches every three or four minutes. We raised the house nine feet."

Nicholas then judged, "by instinct," where the three main stress points would be in moving the house. "I've been around this kind of thing

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The house is towed along Glen Cove Road in East Hills. Below, the workmen use previously installed concrete piers with pulleys in them to winch the house around in a gigantic U-turn —see inset—so the front faces the street.



Newsday Chart by Philip Dionisio

—Continued from Page 4A since I was this high," he said, placing his hand by his knee. Three jacks mounted on wheels were then set in place at the stress points. One jack, on a 12-wheel carriage, was placed toward what would be the leading section of the house as it moved. The others, each mounted on eight-wheel carriages, were placed beside each other toward the rear of the house.

Two large tow trucks, each equipped with a 330-horsepower cable tow, were then attached to the steering tongue protruding from the lead jack under the house. Then, barely a few inches at a time, the house was drawn along the gentle incline of the ramp.

By Wednesday night, the house had been inched to the edge of the property. It waited there until morning, when it was rolled out onto Old Westbury Road, which is the service road of the Long Island Expressway.

By 7 AM yesterday, all elements for the move were in place. Besides Nicholas' crew of 10 men and four trucks, 10 men and seven trucks from the New York Telephone Co. and 12 men and six trucks from the Long Island Lighting Co. were on hand. The telephone and LILCO men would leapfrog Nicholas' crew, first taking down, then replacing phone and power cables. Six Nassau County police officers in three radio cars were assigned to detour traffic.

It took two hours before the movers gingerly rolled the house over the curb and turned it to the east. Old Westbury Road is the westbound service road of the expressway. Once on the smooth pavement, it no longer was necessary for the planking to be placed under the jack wheels and the house moved down the street at a relatively fast pace—half a mile an hour. All went smoothly. Then, just before the left turn onto Glen Cove Road, a loud bang burst from under the house. Onlookers scattered. Nicholas raced toward the site of the sound. Truck and house lurched to a halt.

"Damn," Nicholas said. "We blew a tire." The blowout shattered a metal rim plate holding the tire in place.

Fortunately, the tire was in the middle of a set of three. "We can roll without it," Nicholas said. "We

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always overcompensate.”  
The problem would have been more serious had an outside tire blown. The stability of the load might have been affected.

It took more than an hour for the house to negotiate the turn north onto Glen Cove Road. A set of traffic lights strung across the intersection had to be lowered by the LILCO crew. The house raced into the straightaway at a half-a-mile-an-hour clip.

As the house wobbled by his front lawn, Jeff Coletti of 315 Glen Cove Rd. said, “I must have been in that house 100 times in my life; graduations, birthday parties. The people who owned it, the Virdone, are patients of mine. Good friends. It’s sure strange watching it go by.”

Coletti phoned Dolores Virdone, who now lives in a smaller home in Garden City. “Dolores, your house just went by,” he said. Mrs. Virdone, whose husband, Joseph, is a retired chemical company president, said, “We lived in that house for 22 years. We were the third owners. It was built about 55 years ago. We sure spent a lot of happy days there.”

Mrs. Virdone said that she wasn’t sure, but she had heard that the real estate brokers had paid almost nothing for the house. “They were going to tear it down anyway,” she said. Romantini said, “Only my hairdresser knows for sure.” Besides the \$30,000 paid to Nicholas, Romantini did say an additional \$15,000 was paid to the utility companies for their assistance in the move.

It was 4 PM before the house had completed the journey to its new site. Now came the painstaking task of U-turning it. Because of its position at the old site, the front of the house was now facing the back of the 140-by-75-foot plot that had been gouged out of a hillside on Glen Cove Road. It would be three hours before the old house could be nursed 180 degrees around.

Two concrete slabs had been buried in the hillside. Embedded in each was a cable that would serve as an eye. The cable pulling the house was threaded through a pulley attached to the eye and the dead weight of the concrete slabs served as pivot points for turning the house.

Shortly after 7 PM, the tail end of the house finally agonized over the curb and Nicholas called it a day. /II