

HISTORIC AND NATURAL DISTRICTS
INVENTORY FORM

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

UNIQUE SITE NO. 10305.000625 *file under*

QUAD. also 10304.000728

SERIES 10308.000002

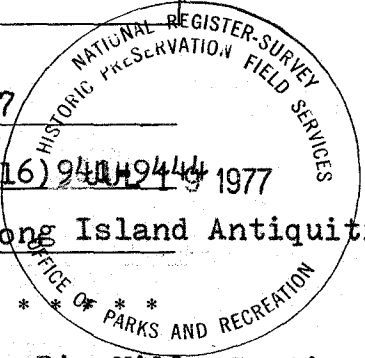
NEG. NO. _____

YOUR NAME: Ellen T. McDougall DATE: 5/4/77

93 North Country Rd.

YOUR ADDRESS: Setauket, N.Y. 11733 TELEPHONE: (516) 941-9444 1977

ORGANIZATION (if any): Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities



1. NAME OF DISTRICT: Long Island Motor Parkway, Ronkonkoma-Dix Hills Section

2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Various
Huntington

3. DESCRIPTION: Bounded on the east by the terminus of the Long Island Motor Parkway; the site of the American Inn at Lake Ronkonkoma, the district then proceeds westerly following the original route of the highway. For this portion of the district the boundary is formed by the right of way. The western boundary is the remains of the road between 448 & 458 Half Hollow Hills Road. Included in this district are sites and structures related to the Vanderbilt Parkway. In those cases where related properties are located outside of the right of way, the district boundary is the rear lot line of these sites.

Suffolk County acquired the Long Island Motor Parkway in 1938 and although what is now called Suffolk County Road 67 follows exactly the course of the Motor Parkway, the initial concrete road bed is now covered with black top. However, this is the most intact portion of the road, following closely the natural terrain of the area. Yet what appears to be genuine is really the result of careful planning. From the very beginning A.R. Pardington, Manager of the Long Island Motor Parkway Corporation, intended that the road would wind through the hills of the north shore, along a glacial ridge of the island and finally past the pine barrens. Seemingly unspoiled curves were really the result of careful calculation and experiment.

Today, riding along Route 67, one begins to understand the difference between driving and "touring". The careful observer will also note smaller reminders of the past, such as wooden guard rails, remaining toll gate lodges, concrete posts and patches of the original concrete.

4. SIGNIFICANCE: Hailed as a "Modern Appian Way," the Long Island Motor Parkway was built by a corporation whose... "list of directors all high in the business and financial worlds, reads like a list from Who's Who." Ironically, one of the largest subscribers was the Long Island Railroad. CONTINUED ON ATTACHMENT I.

5. MAP: SEE ATTACHMENT II.

6. SOURCES: See bibliography that follows.

7. THREATS TO AREA: The Suffolk County Highway Department has proposed straightening of curves and leveling of hills.

BY ZONING BY ROADS BY DEVELOPERS

BY DETERIORATION

OTHER _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Part of the traffic problem along the Motor Parkway would be mitigated if there was a ban on future curb cuts.

8. LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AREA: The Long Island Motor Parkway is of a great deal of interest to local amateur historians who are concerned about the history of the automobile, roads, the Vanderbilt family and the development of Long Island.

9. PHOTOS:



ETM-4: Frame # 33, General View of the Long Island Motor Parkway and what is probably the original guard rail.

ATTACHMENT I

4. SIGNIFICANCE: The general history of the road is related to the social history of the Long Island "Gold Coast" in the early 20th century. William Kissam Vanderbilt, Jr. had become enamored with the automobile in France and sponsored a cup race that bore his name. Deaths resulting from the 1906 Vanderbilt Cup Race caused him and his peers to propose a private, limited access, toll road that would also serve as a speedway. While the Panic of 1907 slowed construction plans, within a six month period during the next year nine miles of road had been built. Originally supposed to end in Riverhead, the road never went further east than Lake Ronkonkoma, the location of the American Inn. World War I put a stop to all building of the Motor Parkway, but during the 1920's there was some revival of interest in the highway. Additional connecting roads were constructed at this time and the Commack Spur is an example of one of these. By the 1930's, the creation of public parkways, specifically Robert Moses' Northern State Parkway, began to affect Motor Parkway revenues. In 1937, Vanderbilt liquidated his toll road for back taxes.

While the parkway history is interesting social history, the road has a significance above and beyond this. It was the first limited access, toll, concrete road ever built on such a scale. Technologically, it was innovative and offered design solutions that were later emulated. There were other concrete roads in existence at this time, but the processes used to fabricate this highway were the subject of great interest to both professional engineers and laymen.

Beginning in Nassau County, the first portion of the road was of reinforced concrete and was composed of wire netting set between two layers of crushed stone and then filled with a portland cement grout mixture of 1 parts cement, sand and trap. This was a technique patented by the Hassam Company, Worcester, Mass. Later sections of the road benefitted from knowledge gleaned from the first stretch; the concrete was not reinforced, hence no wire net, expansion joints were added and a bituminous coating was added to cut glare.

The chief engineer for the project was a railroad engineer and this is probably why the bridges for the highway bear a striking resemblance to railroad bridges. Also, EG Williams must have been skilled in designing roadbeds with no grade crossings and this was a feature of the Vanderbilt Parkway that attracted a great deal of publicity.

As mentioned above, the road is also significant because of the care that was taken to ensure that it reflected the natural terrain and preserved the scenery that would be an important part of the touring experience.

This concern for the aesthetics of the roadway is further demonstrated by the care that was taken in designing parkway related buildings and structures. John Russell Pope, a prominent New York City architect was commissioned to do both the American Inn and 12 identical gatemans' houses or lodges. Stylistically, these buildings were influenced by French Provincial forms.

The portion of the parkway between the Smithtown line and Half Hollow Hills Road has been designated a landmark by the Town of Huntington. It appears that significance of the district described above is more than of local interest.

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May, 1977.

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May, 1977.

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- "Famous Petit Trianon in 'Abandoned Condition.'" New York Herald, Magazine Section. April 23, 1911. p.11.
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- "Petit Trianon for the Motor Parkway," New York Times. May 28, 1911. p.8.
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LONG ISLAND MOTOR PARKWAY
HISTORIC DISTRICT
RONKONKOMA-DIX HILLS SECTION

FORMS

- Historic and Natural Districts Inventory Form
1. Ruins of the American Inn
 2. Annex of the American Inn
 3. Ronkonkoma Toll Gate
 4. Brentwood Lodge
 5. Commack Spur
 6. Original Commack Toll Gate Site
 - 6A. Second Commack Toll Gate Site
 - 6B. Third Commack Toll Gate Site
 7. Bonwit Inn
 8. Dix Hills Toll Gate
 9. Remains of Long Island Motor Parkway

LONG ISLAND MOTOR PARKWAY
HISTORIC DISTRICT
RONKONKOMA-DIX HILLS SECTION

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7. Bonwit Inn
8. Dix Hills Toll Gate
9. Remains of Long Island Motor Parkway

Prepared by: Ellen T. McDougall, Research Assistant, Society
for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 93 North
Country Road, Setauket, N.Y. 11733. June, 1977

BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
UNIQUE SITE NO.	_____
QUAD	_____
SERIES	_____
NEG. NO.	_____

FEB 15 1977

YOUR NAME: BARBARA VAN LIEW DATE: 2/10/77

YOUR ADDRESS: 93 North Country Road
Setauket, L.I., N.Y. 11733 TELEPHONE: 516/941/9444

ORGANIZATION (if any): (SPLIA) The Society for the Preservation of L.I. Antiquities

IDENTIFICATION

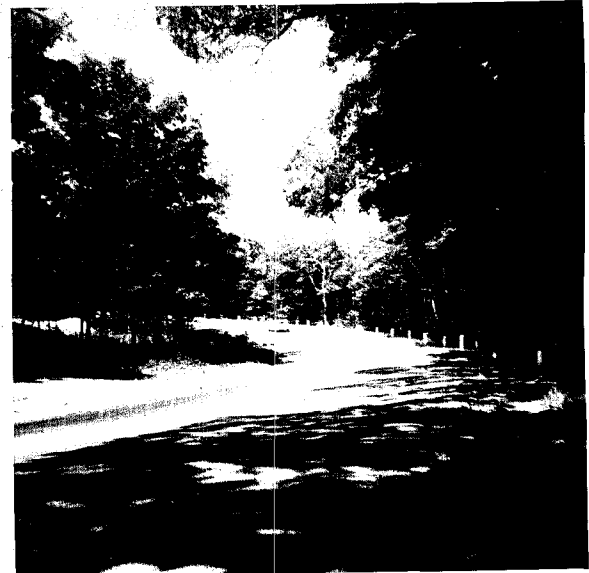
- 1. BUILDING NAME(S): Vanderbilt Long Island Motor Parkway
- 2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Huntington/Smithtown/Islip VILLAGE: several
- 3. STREET LOCATION: From Half Hollow Hills to Lake Ronkonkoma
- 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public b. private
- 5. PRESENT OWNER: County of Suffolk ADDRESS: County Center, Hauppauge, L.I. 11787
- 6. USE: Original: Parkway Present: Highway
- 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes No
Interior accessible: Explain _____

DESCRIPTION

- 8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard b. stone c. brick d. board and batten
e. cobblestone f. shingles g. stucco other: concrete
- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: (if known) a. wood frame with interlocking joints
b. wood frame with light members
c. masonry load bearing walls
d. metal (explain) _____
e. other: REINFORCED CONCRETE 18" - 24" THICK
- 10. CONDITION: a. excellent b. good c. fair d. deteriorated
- 11. INTEGRITY: a. original site b. moved if so, when? _____
c. list major alterations and dates (if known):
Crossing by Long Island Expressway required an overpass.

12. PHOTO: CI 1 M 3

13. MAP: See attached



LOOKING NE IN CENTRAL ISLIP

LOOKING WEST IN CENTRAL ISLIP

* CI 1 M 1

3. "improvement"

14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known b. zoning c. roads
d. developers e. deterioration
f. other: Suffolk County Dept. of Public Works

15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:

- a. barn b. carriage house c. garage
d. privy e. shed f. greenhouse
g. shop h. gardens
i. landscape features: MOSTLY TREE LINED

j. other: SEE COMMACK FORMS FOR REMAINS OF TOLL HOUSES.

16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary): The outstanding feature
a. open land b. woodland of this unique roadway was its
c. scattered buildings engineering. The concrete roadbed remains
d. densely built-up e. commercial today although it is under-
f. industrial g. residential neath modern asphalt. It is
h. other: important that this original concrete and its in-

novative engineering be protected.

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:

(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district) At L.I. Motor Parkway's terminus at Lake Ronkonkoma the ruins of the handsome lakeside restaurant that Mr. Vanderbilt built still survive. Nearby the servants' quarters by John Russell Pope are converted as a nursing home.

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):

First limited access toll road for cars.

" road to use reinforced concrete.

" passenger car road to have banked turns for high speed driving safety.

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: 1908-1911; Commack Spur built 1930's.

ENGINEER:

~~ARCHITECT:~~ A. R. Pardington under direction of Wm. K. Vanderbilt, Jr.

BUILDER: _____

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: Of great significance as this was first road in the world built exclusively for the automobile. Road architects, highway engineers, and automobile buffs came from all over the world to see this new wonder - a bold innovation in roadway design and construction. The road EXTENDED FROM QUEENS TO LAKE RONKONKOMA, THIS PORTION IS THE ONLY STRETCH OF ANY LENGTH STILL IN USE.
A. R. Pardington called it "The Modern Appian Way."

21. SOURCES: "A Historical Tour of Suffolk County" published 1974 by Suffolk County Dept. of Commerce & Industry.

L.I. Collection, Smithtown Library.

~~NAME:~~

Henry Austin Clark, L.I. Automotive Museum, Southampton, L.I.

Harry D. Sleight, Town Records of Town of Smithtown, 1930, pages 17, 23 and 170

Traffic Safety

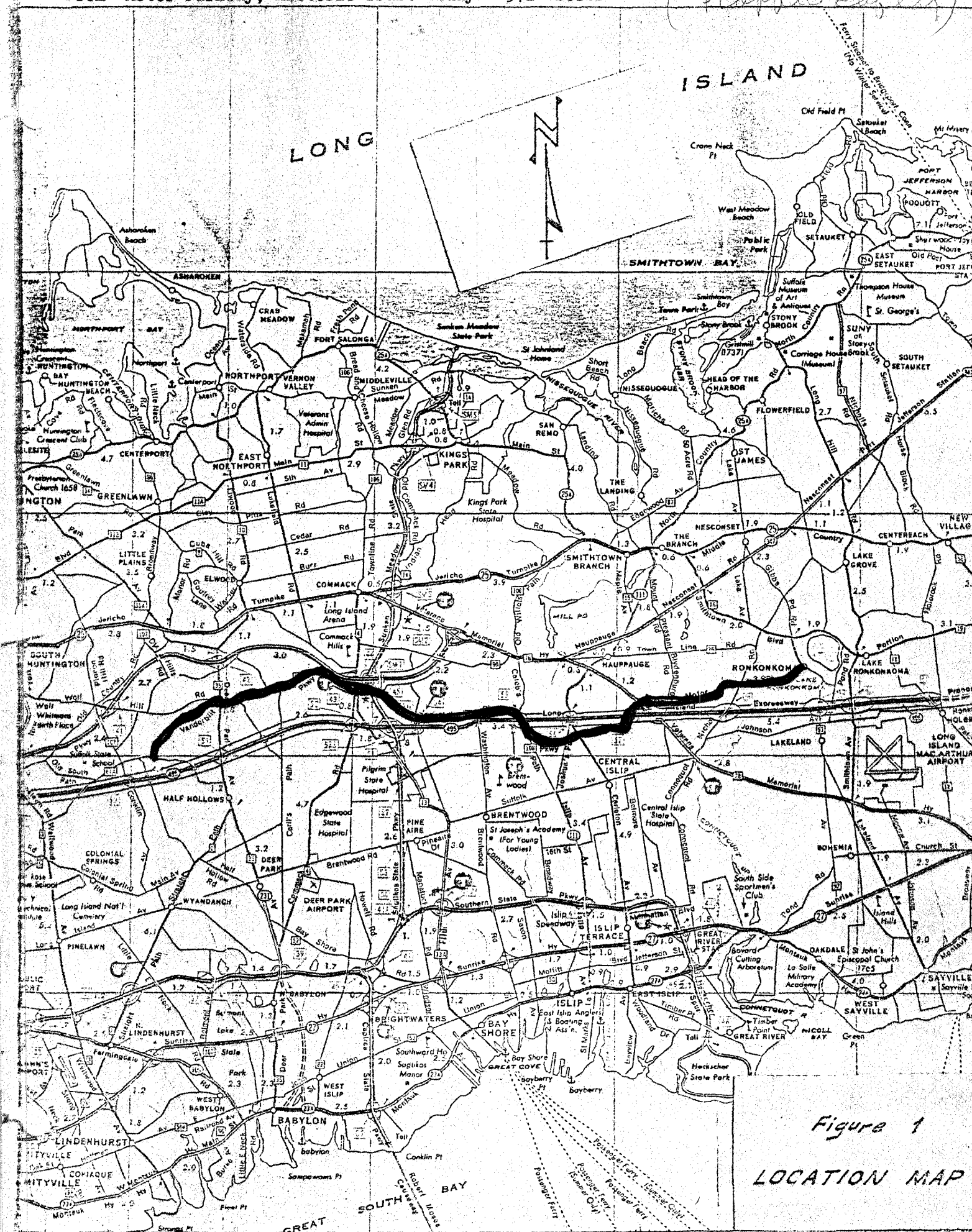


Figure 1
LOCATION MAP

HISTORIC AND NATURAL DISTRICTS
INVENTORY FORM

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

CI 3

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

UNIQUE SITE NO. 10 305-000625
QUAD. _____
SERIES _____
NEG. NO. _____

NOT EVALUATED
see file number

YOUR NAME: Town of Islip/SPLIA DATE: April 1990
Town Hall, 655 Main St.
YOUR ADDRESS: Islip, L.I., N.Y. 11751 TELEPHONE: 516.224.5450
ORGANIZATION (if any): Dept. of Planning, Housing, and Development

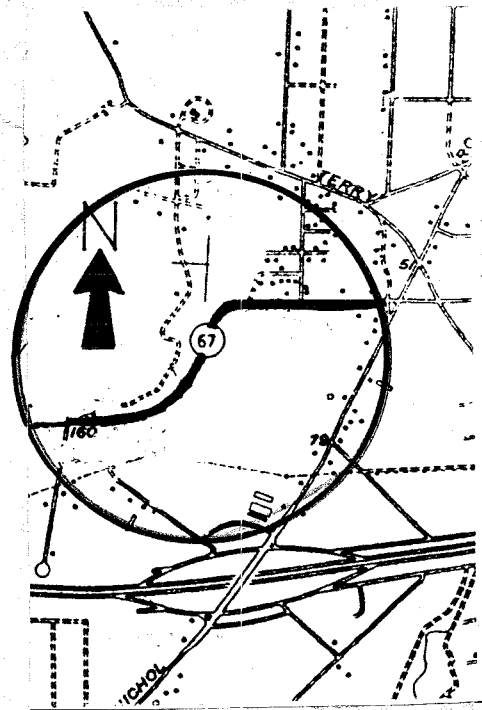
- 1. NAME OF DISTRICT: Long Island Motor Parkway section, Central Islip & Islandia
- 2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Central Islip & Islandia
- 3. DESCRIPTION:

This portion of the Long Island Motor Parkway (CR 67) covers a distance of .8 miles from Bedford Avenue eastward to Nicholls Road. The section consists of an elongated "S" curve on a steeply inclined ridge of the terminal moraine and is bounded primarily by Suffolk County Parklands on the north and south. A nature trail maintained by the Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference traverses this section as well. Although widened and brought to code according to NYS DOT standards, this section of the Motor Parkway retains its original context and is not interrupted by curb cuts, sidewalks, and other interferences which have marred the integrity of other nearby sections of the historic roadway.

4. SIGNIFICANCE:

In 1974 the Town of Islip Landmark Preservation Committee listed the William K. Vanderbilt Motor Parkway as a significant site.

5. MAP: NYS DOT Central Islip Quad



6. SOURCES:

Long Island Motor Parkway, file copy, Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities.

"An Introduction to Marks Upon Our Land", Town of Islip, 1974.

7. THREATS TO AREA:

BY ZONING BY ROADS BY DEVELOPERS BY DETERIORATION OTHER some bordering acreage not protected by
Parklands designation

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

The high elevation of this roadway on the terminal moraine allows for virtually unobstructed views of the surrounding area. The Suffolk County Parklands adjoining this roadway preserve scrub oak and pine barrens habitats.

8. LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AREA:

9. PHOTOS:

Refer to continuation sheets

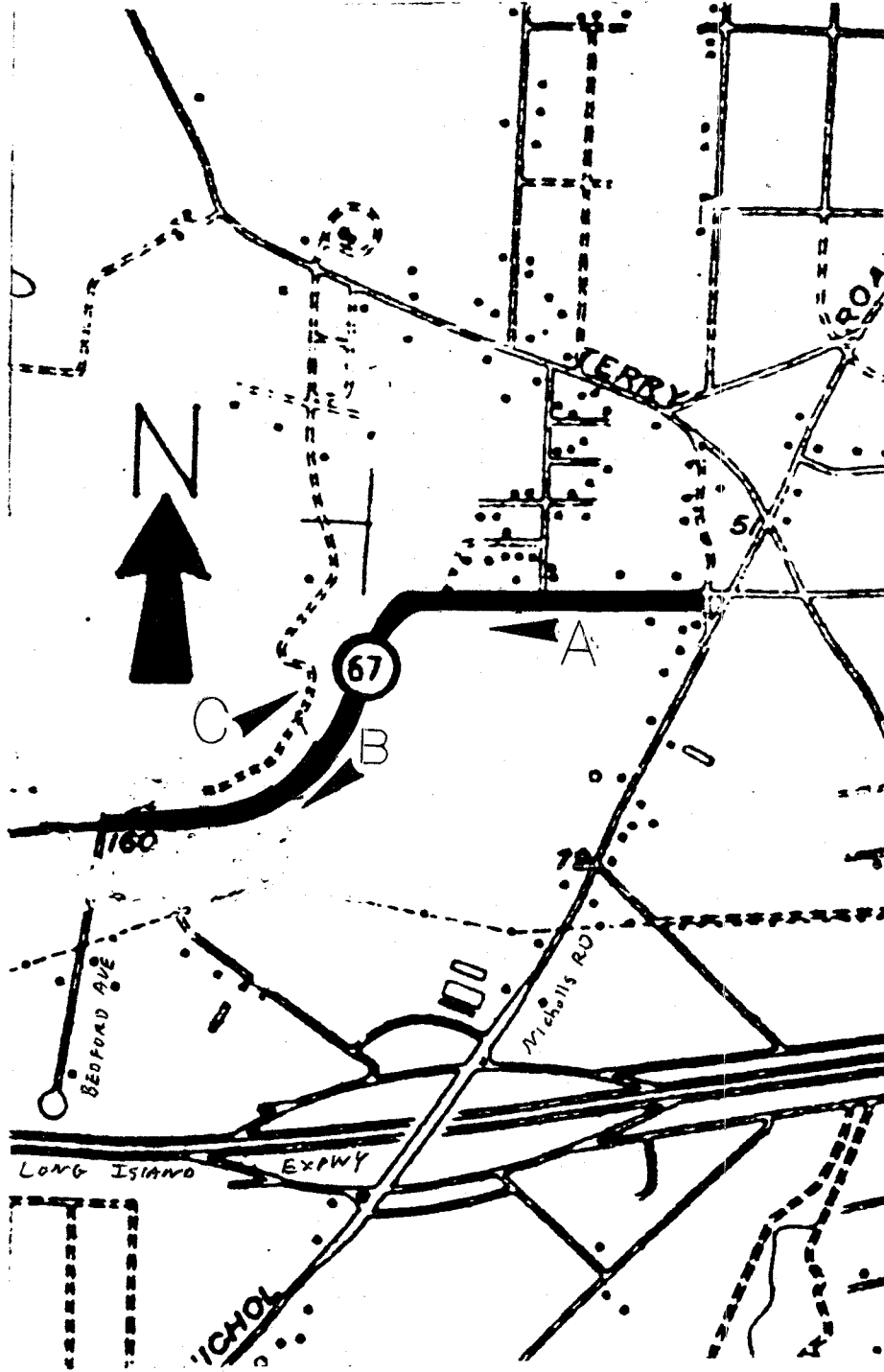


**PROPOSED PROJECT
LOCATION**

SCALE 1" = 2000'

Map labels include: Spectacle Pond, Cleary Sch., Hauppauge, Hauppauge Union Free Sch., Central Islip High Sch., Lincoln, Hawthorne, Veterans, St. Yverson, Johnson, and various street names like Hauppauge Road, Central Islip Blvd, and others. Highway markers for 495 and 67 are also present.

PHOTOGRAPH KEY



NYS DOT Central Islip Quad (enlarged)

Continuation Sheet
Long Island Motor Parkway Section

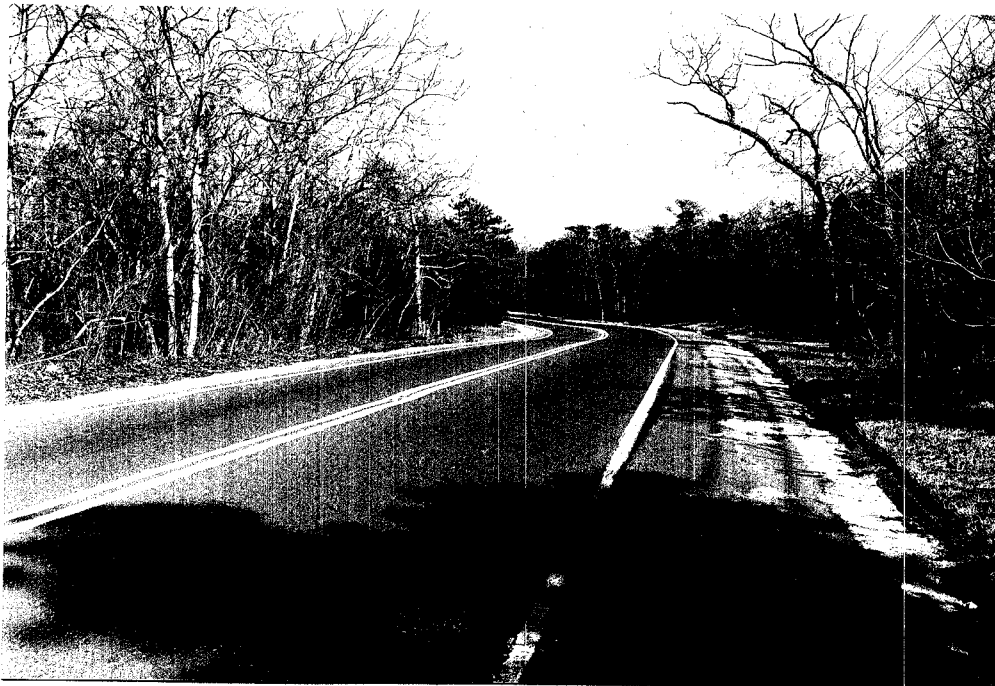


PHOTO A - Neg. KK XVIII-21, fm. east.



PHOTO B - Neg. KK XVIII-24, fm. east.

Continuation Sheet
Long Island Motor Parkway Section

CI 3



"Dangerous Hill", travelling east at the top of the terminal moraine. 1964 view, Collection SPLIA.



PHOTO C - Neg. KK XVIII-22, fm. west. Same view as above, in 1990.



West of Nicholls Rd.,
view towards west.
1964 view, Collection
SPLIA.



View towards west, road
curves to south and up
the hill. 1964 view,
Collection SPLIA.

Islip

Of major concern to many of Islip's residents and businessmen is the preservation of the township's remaining open space. Some open areas which are in immediate danger are: Camp Edey in Bayport, which may be offered for sale next year; part of Sagtikos Manor lying south of Montauk Highway, which has been proposed for downzoning; and sections of the indigenous pine-barrens lying on both sides of the historic Motor Parkway on the ridge west of Lake Ronkonkoma, which are threatened with development.



The defining and preservation of the Motor Parkway tract, which supplements 55 acres recently acquired by Islip, would link the headwaters of two of Long Island's important river systems. The northeast branch of the Nissequogue River takes its rise in the hills in this neighborhood near the backbone of the island; and a short distance south of the ridge are the headwaters of the Connetquot Brook which flows through the Southside Sportsmen's Club to Connetquot River. The establishment of this natural area connecting the two rivers would create a highly desirable *greenbelt* across Long Island which is considered to be essential to the proper development of Suffolk County.

Opinions concerning these Islip areas may be addressed to Hon. George W. Raven-Supervisor, Town Hall, Islip, L.I., N. Y. 11751.

By Councilman Brad Harris
Smithtown Historian

(I have been writing about the history of the Commack community. This article is about the Long Island Motor Parkway, its development, and the resulting impact that it had upon the Commack area.)
"The Long Island Motor Parkway..."



Smithtown News, 2/23/1989.

The Long Island Motor Parkway is a familiar landmark to most residents of Commack. This heavily travelled roadway, which winds through the southern parts of Commack, serves as the primary access road for the Hauppauge Industrial Park and so is used by thousands of commuters who daily make the trek back and forth to this site. Many other commuters, who make a longer haul into western Suffolk, Nassau County, or New York City, use this road as well. Those who travel this road as it winds its way from Lake Ronkonkoma into Huntington, rarely have the time to appreciate the fact that the road they are travelling on was once one of the finest roads in America. They don't have the time because they are too busy negotiating the traffic lights, concentrating on the stoplights of the automobile ahead, and nervously listening to the traffic reports for possible traffic jams. However, these frenzied commuters may have seen the historical marker which stands besides the road just to the west of the Commack Road intersection. This marker announced the fact that the Motor Parkway was the first concrete highway built in America in 1908. And surprisingly, it was build for speed.

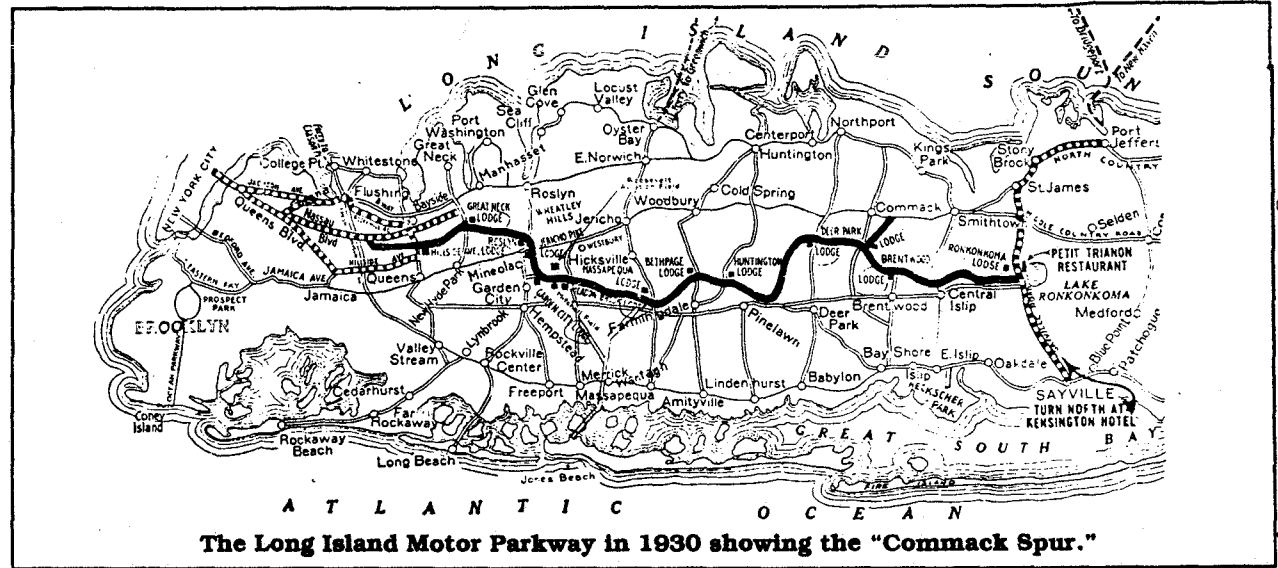
The Long Island Motor Parkway, which is also referred to as the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, was the dream of William Kissam Vanderbilt, Jr. William K. Vanderbilt, Jr. was an automobile racing enthusiast. "In his travels he has seen many car races. As a result of these European experiences young Vanderbilt decided America needed road races too" and he became responsible for sponsoring a series of automobile races on Long Island that are known as the "Vanderbilt Cup Races." To encourage drivers to participate in these races, Vanderbilt had a huge 10 gallon silver cup, 30" in height, designed as a prize for the winner of the races. These races were held in

Nassau County, over public roadways, in 1904, 1905 and 1906. Unfortunately, they were marred by accidents and fatalities and came to an end when elected officials banned the use of public roads. This led William K. Vanderbilt to organize the Long Island Motor Parkway Corporation for the sole purpose of creating a private roadway that could be used for automobile racing. (Chris Vagts, **Huntington At The Turn of the Century**, "Automobiles.")

With the financial backing of men such as J. Pierpont Morgan, Jacob H. Schiff, Harry Payne Whitney, Henry Ford, and Alfred G. Vanderbilt, the Long Island Motor Parkway Corporation had no trouble raising the necessary capital to build the roadway. Construction began shortly after the formation of the corporation in 1906, and by 1908, a ten mile section of the roadway had been completed and public officials permitted the Vanderbilt Cup Races to resume. "The roadway was paved, wide enough so that two cars could pass (although the lanes would be considered rather narrow by present day standards), the right-of-way was fenced in to discourage trespassers, and every intersecting highway, except for a few woods trails near the eastern end, were crossed overhead on steel and concrete bridges." (F.E. Reifschneider, Herbert Hale, and E.H. Charlton, "Long Island's Motor Parkway", **Long Island Forum**, June, 1962, p. 125.) The original scheme was to build this limited access roadway from western Queens all the way out to Riverhead, but the completed road

never went beyond the shores of Lake Ronkonkoma. The accompanying map shows the parkway as it was in 1930. The map also shows the location of a number of lodges that existed along the parkway and these were the toll gate stations.

The Long Island Motor Parkway was under construction from 1908 to 1913. By 1913, its terminus on Lake Ronkonkoma had been reached and the toll road was opened. When it was opened, the road was hailed as an engineering marvel of its day. This was because the Motor Parkway was unique in many ways. It was the first limited access highway, the first highway to use reinforced concrete as a roadbed, the first highway constructed with banked curves for high speed driving, and the first highway to have such safety features as non-skid surfaces, guard rails, and fencing. Since it was a private road, a \$1 toll was charged to travel on it and only automobiles were permitted to use the roadway. The engineers who worked on the design and construction of the road were careful to preserve the natural terrain and vegetation whenever possible, and the roadway was then carefully landscaped. The finished result was a roadway which wound through a hilly, beautifully landscaped right-of-way from Queens to Ronkonkoma. It was an ideal road for automobile driving and should have been successful for its owners as well. But this did not happen, and the Long Island Motor Parkway came upon hard times. More about this next week...



The Long Island Motor Parkway in 1930 showing the "Commack Spur."

Continuation Sheet
Long Island Motor Parkway Section

The affected stretch of the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway has been designated as a historic site by the Huntington Town Board and lies contiguous to a designated open space parcel that has been mapped on the Town Open Space Index, as well as to publicly owned and operated parkland. Consequently, this area is eligible for dedication to the Suffolk County Historic Trust; therefore, any action taking place in the above mentioned area should be considered a type I action under the provisions of Title 6 NYCRR 617.12 (b) (9) and Chapter 279 of the Suffolk County Code. Therefore, any removal of vegetation along this historic site greatly diminishes the historic character of the area, lessening its esthetic/social impact as an historic landmark. (See Historic and Natural Districts Inventory Form - attached.)

Also, it should be noted, the vegetation along Motor Parkway has been described by the Department of Public Works as predominantly oak, with tree size ranging from 2 to 24 inches in diameter. However, Wagon Wheel Lane and Red Oak Court lie in the easternmost portion of Motor Parkway and may contain state significant oak brush plains habitat.

Therefore, no vegetation should be removed from this site unless explicitly approved by a duly enacted resolution of the County Legislature.

Suffolk County Dept. of Public Works, 8/17/1989.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AT PROJECT SITE

CR 67, Motor Parkway is a minor arterial highway which extends from CR 93, Rosevale Avenue in Lake Ronkonkoma, to Half Hollow Road in Huntington; a distance of approximately 17 miles. The section of CR 67 under consideration, is bordered by Parkway Gardens Boulevard on the west and Port Avenue on the east. This section of Motor Parkway has been designated as eligible for inclusion in the Suffolk County Historic Trust.


Within the project limits, the existing roadway consists of concrete pavement with an asphalt overlay. There are two 12' lanes with 8' shoulders within a 100' right-of-way. The original pavement was constructed in the early 1900's and was later reconstructed in 1974.

The existing drainage system consists of interconnected leaching basins at various low points and individual leaching basins spaced every 500+ feet along the mainline. This system has insufficient capacity to handle the quantity of stormwater runoff from the 10 year design storm (5" rainfall in 24 hrs.) This situation results in flooding at the low points with eventual overflow onto adjacent private property.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LAND ABUTTING THE PROJECT SITE

Wildlife in the area includes the various common indigenous land animals and bird varieties found in residential areas of Suffolk County.


The project is located in a hilly area. The predominant soil types are Plymouth loamy sand and Riverhead sandy loam with slopes between 3 and 8%.

Zoning within the project limits is Residential A, AA, AAA, and B. Sections of CR 67 in this area are bounded by the Islip Greenbelt. 

Lake Ronkonkoma, a large freshwater lake covering approximately 300 acres, is located approximately 3 miles to the east of the proposed project. In the vicinity of the project area, the depth to groundwater is approximately 15 to 25 feet.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The purpose of the project is to alleviate flooding in the vicinity of two low points on CR 67. These low points are located near the intersections with Parkway Gardens Boulevard and Edgewood Avenue. Recharge basins will be constructed near these locations. A positive system of drainage pipe and catch basins will be constructed along the roadway to intercept runoff and discharge it to the new recharge basins. Where possible, the existing leaching basins will be incorporated into the positive system.

The typical roadway section will remain unchanged (one 12' through lane with 8' shoulder in each direction). The existing shoulders and adjacent grassed areas will be excavated to install the drainage trunk line and then restored. The entire width of roadway will be resurfaced with a top course asphalt concrete pavement. 

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Approximately 3+ acres of densely wooded land will be acquired and cleared to allow construction of the two new recharge basins. In the vicinity of Parkway Gardens Blvd., an additional 0.25 acres of wooded land will be

Suffolk County Dept. of Public Works, Dec. 1989.