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YOUR NAME: Town of Islip DATE: 8/25/75
Town Hall 655 Main St.
 YOUR ADDRESS: Islip, L.I., N.Y. 11751 TELEPHONE: 516-581-2000
 ORGANIZATION (if any): Dept. of Planning, Housing, & Development

1. NAME OF DISTRICT: Brentwood Historic District

2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Brentwood

3. DESCRIPTION:

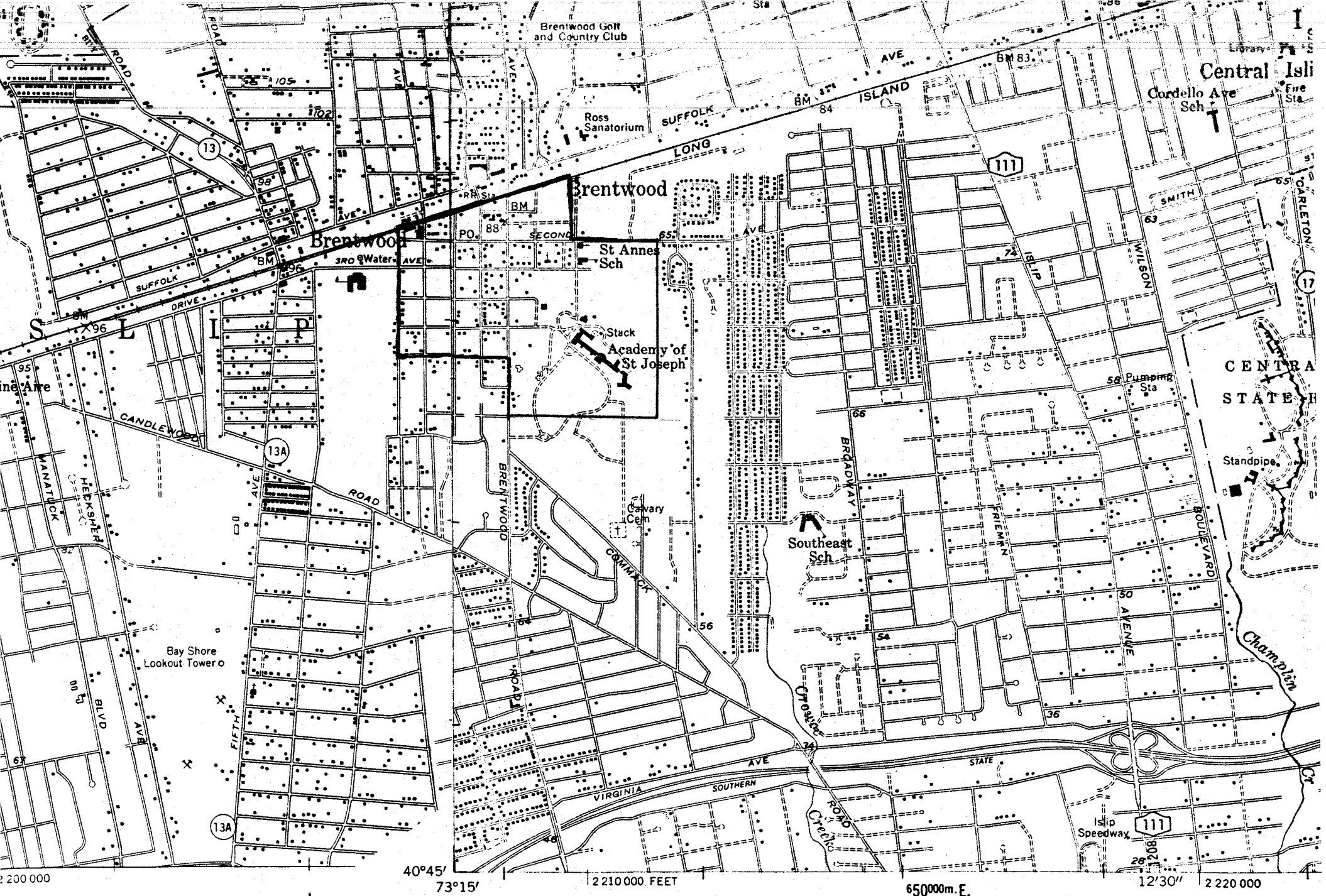
The Brentwood Historic District extends as far east as St. Joseph's Academy, west to First Street, North to the Railroad tracks, and South to Eighth Avenue. It consists of mid and late nineteenth century buildings some of which date back to the era of the Utopian community of Modern Times that encompassed the Brentwood area. Among these buildings are two rare octagonal houses, two church buildings, and many Victorian and Queen Anne style houses, as well as the vast complex belonging to St. Joseph's Academy.

4. SIGNIFICANCE:

The Brentwood Historic District is historically significant for its association with a group called Modern Times. Modern Times was a Utopian community founded by Josiah Warren and Stephen Andrews. The group built many of the old houses that are a part of the historic district. William U. Dame's Octagonal house, and the Octagonal Schoolhouse are rare examples of an interesting historical building type. St. Joseph's Academy, founded in 1896, contains many different periods of buildings, dating from as early as 1870, on its three hundred acres. Most significant about the Historic District is the integrity of the houses that together form the district.

5. MAP:

See Attached Map.



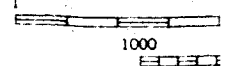
Brentwood Historic District

CENTER ISLIP QUAD

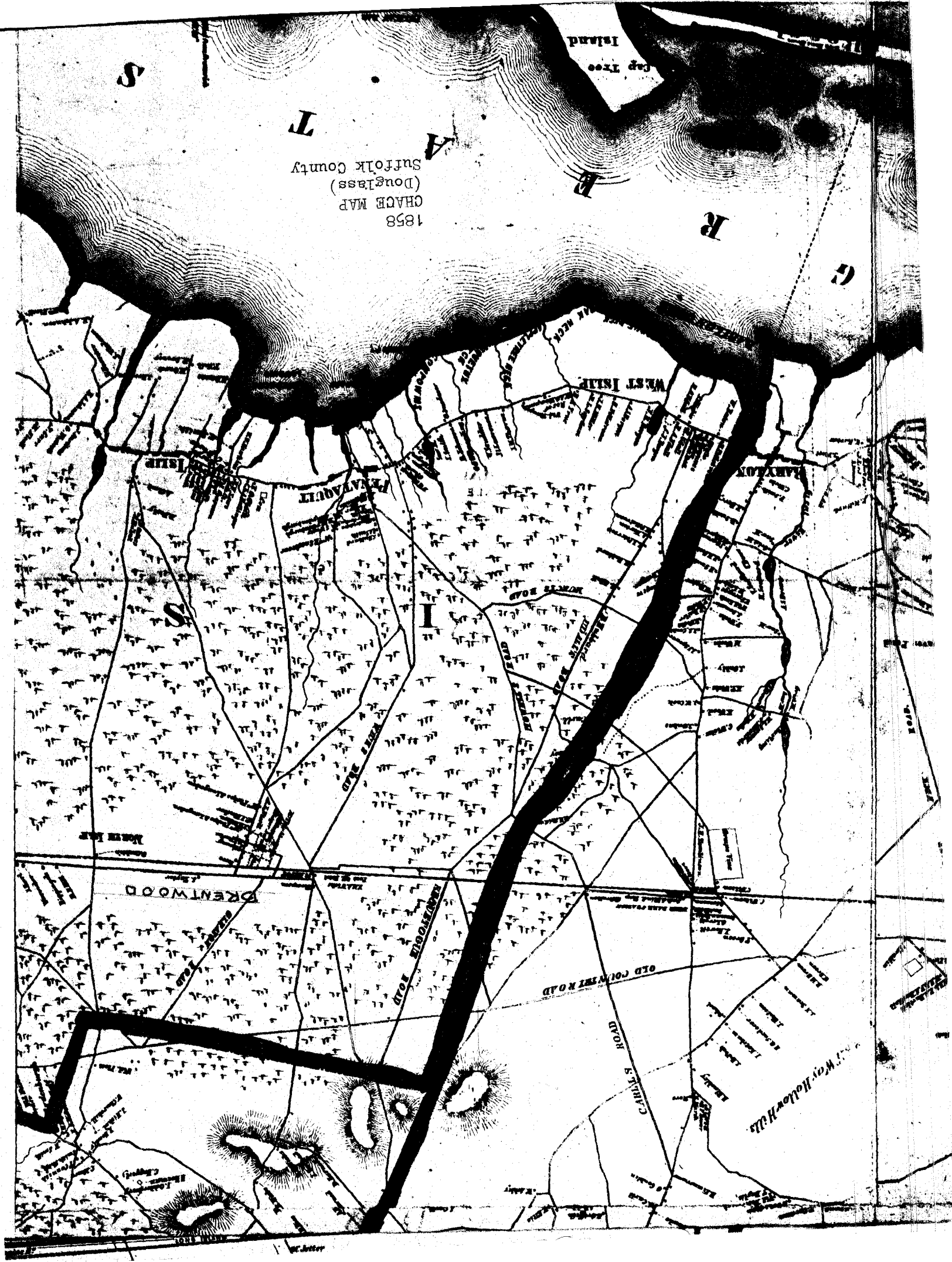
Prepared and published by the New York State Department of Public Works, Subdivision of Transportation Planning and Programming, Bureau of Programming, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Public Roads

BOUNDARIES: GREENLAWN QUAD

- State
- County
- Town
- City or Incorporated Village
- Federally approved Urban Area



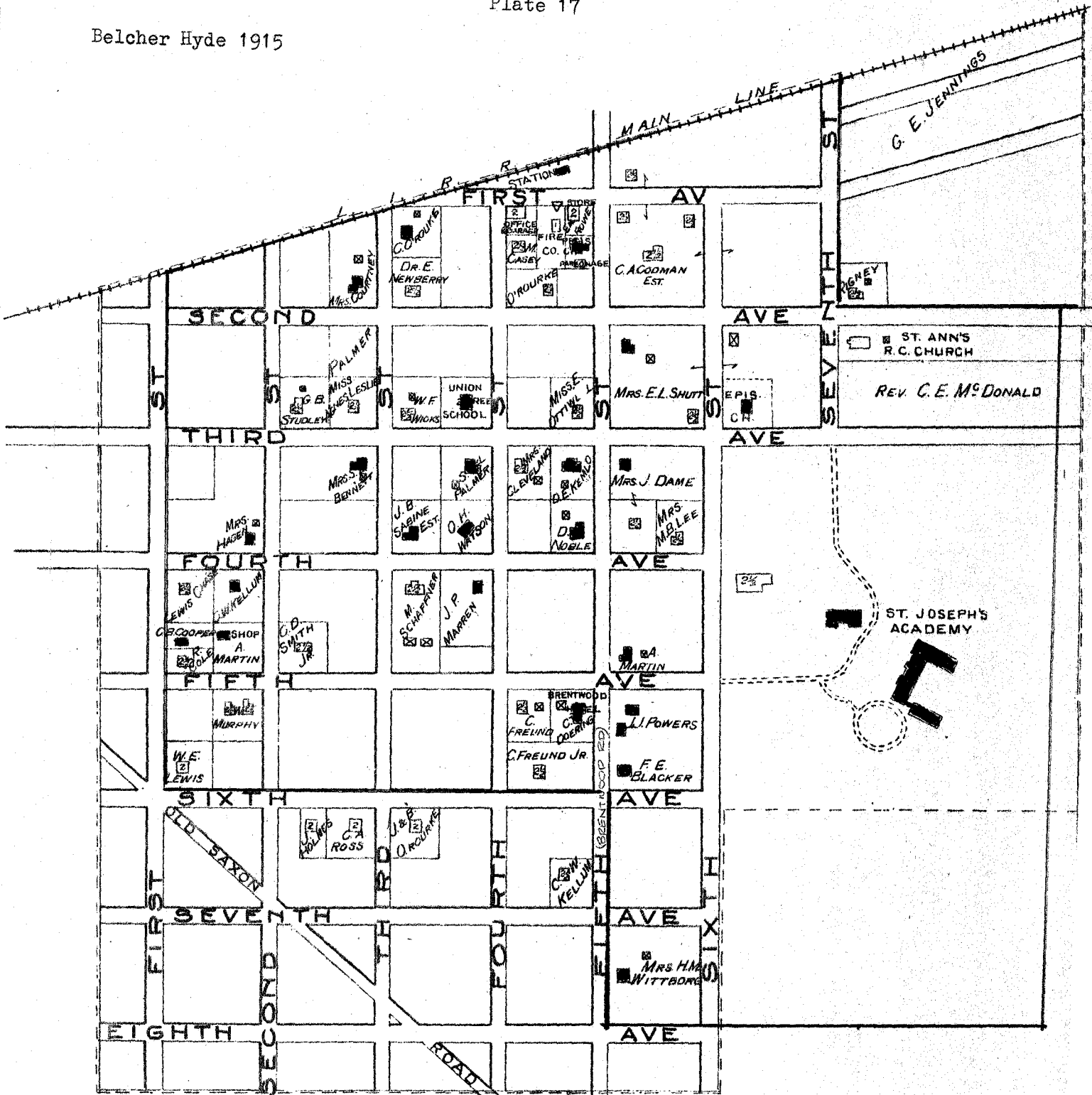
1858
CHASE MAP
(Douglas)
Suffolk County



BRENTWOOD

Plate 17

Belcher Hyde 1915



BRENTWOOD HISTORIC DISTRICT

SCALE



EXPLANATORY

Brentwood, In-The-Pines

THE VILLAGE of Brentwood (sometimes called Brentwood-in-the-Pines) has an interesting story behind it. It is however, a short story compared to those of many other communities on the island. Little over a century ago, this village in the northerly part of Islip town was an unidentified section of the scruboak belt. It wasn't until 1842, with the main line of the LIRR completed that far out from Jamaica, that a station was erected, not at the site of Brentwood, but some distance to the west. Called Thompson's Station, it served such nearby communities as Smithtown, Hauppauge, Central Islip and several south side villages. It was also the nearest rail stop for city sportsmen who patronized Liff Snedecor's hunting and fishing lodge at Great River and Liff ran his own stage to and from the station over the sandy, and sometimes snowy roads between. The same service was continued, with Liff's son Obie doing the driving, after Liff sold the lodge and its 1100 acres of woodland to the newly organized South Side Club.

A little settlement naturally sprang up around Thompson's Station and in 1849 a

Paul Bailey

U.S. post office was established there. The following year Josiah Warren and Stephen Pearl Andrews purchased several hundred acres in what was some day to become Brentwood, and within the next few years founded a community of families whose adult members subscribed to the political and social doctrines which Messrs. Warren and Andrews preached. They called the place Modern Times. Warren was the sparkplug of the movement which, far from the teachings of Karl Marx as some writers have reported, emphasized "the sovereignty of the individual." 1850

Warren built an octagonal structure as the center of activities. Here was located the seat of local government which was Warren himself. Also housed in the building were Warren's general store, Warren's printing plant, his community weekly, and a school, of which Warren was the sole instructor. Using the printing plant to good advantage, he circularized the living advantages of Modern Times throughout state and nation and the place grew by leaps and bounds.

Meanwhile, the tract was

subdivided and zoned and a highway system laid out with the main thoroughfares converging upon Warren's eight-sided building. In 1856 when the town established a school district to include the area, a primary school was established with Miss Eleanor Blacker as teacher.

During the early years of the community, homeowners had difficulty in obtaining water. The only available supply had to be toted in buckets from the farm of Dr. Edgar F. Peck which lay outside the area. Warren finally called a public meeting to solve this problem and as a result a community well was sunk conveniently close to most homes. This led to some householders acquiring horses and cows. Thereafter a community manure pile was started and this in turn led to a boom in gardening. Among the inhabitants of the place before 1860 was Charles A. Codman, an experienced farmer. Brothers William and John Metcalf joined in building a home and with them lived two sisters and a Mrs. Hayward. One Henry Edgar turned his home into a meeting place for the Positivist Society which he founded.

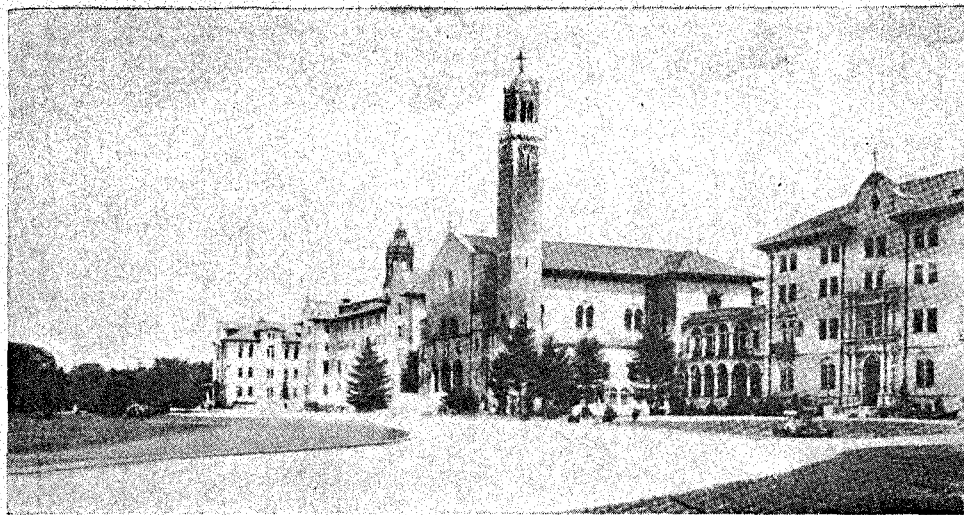
(Continued on page 141)

See 1873 Atlas

See Stills

see 1873 Atlas

gone was SW corner third + third



The Academy of St. Joseph at Brentwood.

was built between the Brooklyn Elevated line on Crescent St. and the surface tracks on Jamaica Ave. and on May 30, 1903, Broadway elevated trains started to run to Jamaica by that route. However, as there were so many accidents involving farm wagons and pedestrians, the service was discontinued on December 8, 1903. Finally, in 1916, the elevated line was extended from Crescent St. to 111th St. and a further extension was made to 168th St., Jamaica, in 1917. Also, the Fulton St. elevated line was extended from Grant Ave. to Lefferts Ave. in 1915. In recent years, the latter has been connected to the Independent Subway System. Then, too, the Independent subway in Queens Blvd. and Hillside Ave. came into the picture in the 1930s.

The extension of rapid transit lines into the Richmond Hill - Jamaica area had, of course, taken much passenger business away from the L I R R and the various improvement programs had taken away much freight business.

Brentwood

(continued from page 129)

Other societies were founded by men and women, each society having its own special philosophy of life. The male members of one society wore long hair and their wives went in for what today would be called boyish bobs. One society is said to have sponsored polygamy. In fact, before very long Josiah Warren's philosophy became lost in a conglomeration of conflicting cults, some of which cast undesirable shadows over the fair name of Modern Times. In

1864, therefore, the residents assembled and adopted a new name for the village. They chose Brentwood after a town in Essex, England, from which some of them hailed.

This change of name occurred in 1864, towards the close of the Civil War in which fifteen local residents served with the Union forces. One of them, George Baxter, was killed in battle. He was especially missed as he had belonged to the Modern Times Brass Band before the war, a group which toured the island and met with great public favor.

Among the leading residents of Modern Times were W. U. Dame, Peter I. Blacker,

Edward Linton, and Henry Edgar, an English lawyer who brought a large family, together with 300 books with which he founded a circulating library. He and James D. Blacker planted many arbor vitae hedges about the village.

Stephen Pearl Andrews, co-founder with Warren of the community, was a scientist and philologist, while Dr. Edward Newberry, the local dentist, went in for phrenology, chemistry, botany and geology. He and his wife were also successful artists. From Ohio came Isaac Gibson, a Quaker, bringing Mr. and Mrs. William Jenkins and their two children; also a Mr.

*See 1873
Atlas
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I. Harris and a Miss Jenny Frantz. This band, traveling east in covered wagons, brought many small evergreens, including pines, which years later inspired the name of Brentwood - in - the - pines. Many still flourish.

Gradually, as Brentwood grew in size and importance, Modern Times blended with the newcomers. By the turn of the century few people remembered Josiah Warren and his strange teachings. Scarcely any of the original settlers remained by then, having either passed to their reward or moved away. Today one finds little evidence of the community's fantastic beginning. W. N. Dame's octagonal residence stands on Brentwood road, between Third and Fourth avenues.

On the east side of Brentwood road, opposite the Presbyterian Church, stands the old Codman home. It was called the Hermitage of the Red Owl because of a legend that such a bird visited the place back in 1877 and held converse with Codman, who claimed that it had identified itself as the spirit of a Secatogue chief. The village's first schoolhouse, also octagonal, now stands on Second street, between Third and Fourth avenues, remodeled into a dwelling. It was built in 1857.

There may be other buildings of the early days still standing, but we know of none. Following the demise of the original colony, Brentwood became the home of large, attractive villas, and several mansions. When in 1896 the Sisters of St. Joseph acquired some 300 acres on which to found the Academy of St. Joseph, on the property was the former mansion of Robert W. Pearsall, completed in 1870 along the lines of a French chateau with lofty ceilings and inlaid hardwood floors. Pearsall engaged Frederick Law Olmstead, who had laid out New York's Central Park, to landscape his grounds.

Also on the Academy's 300 acres stood the fabulous Austral Hotel of 135 rooms, erected by a syndicate during

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Note: Bailey's 2-volume Island History and Historic Long Island in Pictures, Prose and Poetry are out of print.

the 1880's at a cost of \$200,000, which was quite a sum in those days. After a brief career, the project blew up and the hotel stood empty and neglected. Nevertheless, the Academy put the Pearsall mansion and the hotel, as well as other buildings on the property, to good use.

Where the Mackay Radio Station now stands, to the north of the village, was once Wildwood, the thousand-acre estate of two bachelor brothers, Charles and John Arbuckle, who bought the land and built their rambling country home in 1885. The building, greatly remodeled, still stands at the eastern end of Caleb's Path.

We are indebted to Verne Dyson, Brentwood Village Historian and Curator of the Walt Whitman Birthplace at West Hills, for much of the fore-going information. Should one visit the interesting community, Brother Dyson is the right man to contact to learn more of its history.

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Lynn E. Hallock
Red Creek, N. Y.

A Long Time

I find a month is a long time to wait from issue to issue as I read them through as soon as they arrive.

Mildred P. Coslick
Bridgehampton

Kind Words Department

Thanks to Mrs. Henry D. Mills of Patchogue, Archibald N. Young of Southold, and Mrs. Walter W. Voelbel of Sea Cliff.

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October 17, 1975

Mr. George H. Peters
c/o The L. I. Horticultural Society
Planting Fields Arboretum
Oyster Bay, L.I., N.Y. 11771

Dear Mr. Peters:

There were magnificent pines at Brentwood until about ten or fifteen years ago. Now only a portion of them remain.

Can you tell us what kind of pine tree these are and the latin name, also any other information about them will be most welcome. According to our information these trees were planted in the 1850's.

Thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Harry R. Van Liew
Preservation Notes

BVL: jr

There are more than one hundred square miles, or seventy thousand acres, of salt meadows bordering the bays and harbors of Long Island. From these marshes immense quantities of hay are taken, which, with corn stalks, is largely used for wintering young stock and dry cattle. There are three kinds of grasses growing upon them, distinguished by the names of sedge, salt and black grass.

The scarcity and advance in the price of farm labor, as well as the advantages attending their use, have caused the introduction of the best farm implements and agricultural machinery. Stones are used to some extent as fencing material where they are available, but by far the largest part of the island is entirely destitute of stones large enough for the purpose. Chestnut timber is abundant on all the rolling woodlands, and furnishes the material for about all the farm fences.

The cranberry has recently been introduced in many parts of Suffolk county, with great success. The soil and the conditions are favorable, and this industry promises, in a few years, to become an important one.

The Hempstead Plains, which, through a mistaken policy, have until recently been held as public domain, are susceptible of remunerative cultivation. The soil is a dark, rich vegetable mould or loam from one to three feet in depth. The hollows which cross the tract at regular intervals appear to have been ancient water-courses. There is another and still more extensive tract extending eastward from the Plains, reaching to the head of Peconic Bay, which, like Hempstead Plains, has hitherto suffered from an entirely unwarrantable and mistaken aspersion of the character of its soil and consequent adaptation to cultivation.

As all previous histories of Long Island have* wittingly or unwittingly perpetuated this erroneous impression, we take pleasure in presenting an ample refutation of the same, in the form of an autobiographical sketch of Dr. EDGAR F. PECK, who speaks *ex cathedra* on this subject, and who represents the enlightened sentiment of the present day, as regarding these much-abused Long Island lands.

The central and northern portions of the island have a soil rich in the mineral elements and phosphates essential to plant growth. In many places, particularly at Brentwood and Central Islip, there is a fine

* We make but one exception, viz., that of Mr. JAMES B. COOPER's brief History of the Town of Babylon, contained in the History of Suffolk County, recently published by Munsell & Co., the publishers of this work, and which is as follows:

"With the exception of the sand dunes which border the Atlantic Ocean, and a narrow ridge of hills known as the Half-way Hollow Hills, the surface of the town is remarkably level." "The center portion, consisting of level plains, up to forty years ago was covered with pine forests. Since railroads have been operated through these pine-lands numerous fires have occurred, mostly kindled by sparks from locomotives, causing great destruction to the timber, and there are now only found thick tangled scrub oaks and stunted pines. Only a small portion of this kind of land is under a good state of cultivation. The soil is mostly a sandy loam. The land is easily cleared, and is adapted to the growing of grain and root crops, and probably in a few years large tracts will be cleared and cultivated."

substratum of clay that holds the moisture and prevents leaching, the rich yellow loam being almost entirely destitute of sand. These clay deposits are frequently of a quality not excelled by any in America for building-brick; and abundant strata, fully equal to the best grades of Europe for pottery, have recently been discovered in Suffolk County. Hence wheat, potatoes, cabbage and other strong growing crops are more successfully grown than on the alluvial portions of the island.

written 1879
 EDGAR FENN PECK, M.D.

Edgar Fenn Peck, M.D., was born September 20th, 1806, in the town of Amenia, Dutchess County, State of New York. His father, Henry Peck, was a native of Milford, Conn., and son of Michael Peck, a descendant of Joseph Peck, who came over with Davenport's colony to New Haven in 1638, and after residing awhile at New Haven, settled in Milford about 1641. The house he built and lived in in Milford stood two hundred years, and was occupied by his descendants until it was taken down; his descendants are in Milford now, on the paternal land. The mother of Dr. Edgar Fenn was Juliana Chapman, daughter of Zervia Strong and Nehemiah Chapman, of Sharon, Conn., and a direct descendant by his English wife of Elder John Strong, of Northampton, Mass.

The parents of Dr. Edgar Fenn removed from Amenia, when he was very young, to the northern part of the State of New York, to Washington County, and were there during the war of 1812, and were in Salem in 1816, '17, and '18; and Edgar went to school in the Washington Academy, one of the most distinguished academies in the State; he was in the English department under T. N. Allen. George W. Bethune, the "Yorker Boy," as he was called in school, was in the classical department in the Washington Academy; he was also in the sabbath school with John and Mary Williams, who became the wife of Dr. Bethune. He attended the church and sabbath school of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Proudfit, God bless his name and memory. Early in 1818 the family returned to Sharon, Conn., near his grandfather Chapman's, in the eastern part of the town.

I now propose to change the form of narrative, and to speak and write in the first person. I was twelve years old when we returned, and here among kindred and friends of great merit, of religion, learning and good schools, which I attended in the winter, and worked in the summer mostly upon the farm; and here I acquired a most thorough knowledge of farming, for which I had a great desire.

I always thought a farmer's life was the most useful and most happy. The immortal Washington said that "Agriculture is the most healthful, the most useful, and the most noble employment of man." The first work of the Lord, after the great creation, was to plant a garden, to the east of Eden. I would have been a farmer, but I had no means to buy a farm, and my kind father had none to give me; but I acquired great skill for a youth upon the farm. I learned to plough and to hoe, to plant and to sow, to reap and to mow; I learned to bud and graft when fourteen years old; I learned to raise trees from tree seed, acorns, hickory nuts, and keys from the great sugar maple; I learned by observation and analogy when a boy, by seeing or finding acorns and hickory nuts under the trees, in the spring, sprouted, and seeing the young tree-plants under the sugar maple, and the apple seeds, sprouted under the apple trees; it occurred to me if those nuts and tree seeds were planted, they would grow; I tried it, and they did grow. I had never heard or read anything about planting tree seed; the only thing I had ever read was that "Tall oaks from little acorns grow." There was nothing said about planting them.

I had a very strong desire from my childhood for knowledge and learning, a thirsting after knowledge, and I spent all my time, when not at work, with my books and studies, and wondered if I would ever become a learned man, and be good and useful. It was seldom that I ever spent any time in play and pastimes; I had no time to spare. I never played a game of cards, or checkers or chess, never saw a game of billiards played in my life, was never in a theatre but twice, and then not to see the play through. I adopted total abstinence in 1824, two years before Dr. Beecher preached his immortal sermons against intemperance in Litchfield in 1826. I knew Dr. Beecher well in my youth. There were two men then in Connecticut who were my *beau ideals* as men and divines—Lyman Beecher, of Litchfield, and the Rev. Joel Hawes, of Hartford. My pious and excellent mother used to think that boys ought not to drink cider after it had fermented, and in compliance with her wish I abandoned it. I had never heard any temperance speech, or read any temperance paper; I had read but one book on temperance, the Bible; that I had learned from childhood by the teaching of my mother. She had instructed me on the great sin of drunkenness and its terrible punishments, declared by the Lord.

In 1826 I commenced the study of medicine, in the office and under the tuition of a relative, my cousin Dr. Clark Chapman, a man of learning and great skill as a physician. Dr. Chapman is now living, at the age of eighty-six, in Groton, Tompkins County, N. Y. I had a task before me, one that required great industry, prudence and self-denial, to pursue my studies and to support myself, which I did by teaching school a part of the time.

As a medical student, I took up the subject of intemperance, and the effect of alcohol on the human system, as opened by Dr. Beecher. I read everything that I could find on the subject, and gave special attention to diseases directly resulting from strong drink, particularly to delirium tremens, which was not then well understood—nor its treatment. I soon had the reputation of being very successful with hard cases of alcoholic disease in the different medical offices I was in during my studentship, as I was in more than one, and the hard cases were handed over to me, particularly delirium tremens, "the trembling delirium," and I was very successful in treating it. My first medical lectures were attended in the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I was licensed to practice, at Fairfield, January 30th, 1830; and I immediately entered practice in my native County of Dutchess, at Hyde Park, as a partner with the late Hunting Sherrill, M.D., then President of the Dutchess County Medical Society, and one of the principal physicians and surgeons of the county. My thorough study and under practice whilst a student had qualified me for full practice. That able, eminent Professor, David Hosack, M.D., whose country seat was at Hyde Park, showed me great kindness by giving me access to his extensive medical library, and instruction on any question I asked.

In 1831 I removed to New York, and took an office at No. 96 Duane street, near Broadway, so as to be between the Hospital (then on Broadway, between Duane and what is now Worth street) and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, then in Barclay street near Broadway, that I might have access to, and the advantages of both of these great medical institutions. The situation or position, was central and most advantageous. I soon found myself in practice, and made the acquaintance of the leading medical men of the city, the President and professors of the College, from whom I received great kindness and attention.

On the approach of the Asiatic cholera I revived my reading on that terrible disease, to make myself thoroughly acquainted with all that could be known about it. I had five years before read all that could be found of its history in the foreign and American medical journals, and as it came to New York consternation and dismay fell upon the city; all business was suspended, and multitudes fled to the country.

"Come when the blessed seals,
That close the pestilence are broke,
And crowded cities wait its stroke;
Come in consumption's ghastly form,
The earthquake shock, or ocean storm,
And thou, oh! Death, art terrible."

A special medical council was formed by the city authorities, consisting of twelve of the most eminent physicians of the city, with Dr. Alexander H. Stevens, the President of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, at its head; and I received an appointment under this council to take charge of the medical stations in the Twelfth Ward, and the hospital formed on Eighth street; and I had the care of all the stations from the old almshouse, which stood where the Worth monument now stands, to King's Bridge, with the exception of the Bloomingdale station, which was under the care of Dr. Williams.

I entered immediately upon the work assigned, and the terrible scenes of suffering and death I cannot here describe. Those at the Yorkville hospital on Eighty-sixth street were horrible. It was filled with the dead and dying, equal to those scenes described by old Defoe, in his history of the Great Plague in London.

One day I had six dead bodies laid out in the hospital, as the fear and dread upon the people was so great that no one could be found to take away or remove the dead. These did not all die in the hospital; some were brought in dead, others speechless and dying. The records were, "name and age unknown." I roomed in the hospital, and was there day and night.

On the death of Dr. Arnold, of Harlem, I left the Yorkville hospital at the request of Dr. Stevens, and went to Harlem where the cholera had been extremely fatal. Whole families were swept away. The fate of the family of the Rev. Mr. Hinton, the Episcopal clergyman, was terrible. They all died in one night—father, mother and children. I believe there were two children. They died in the house on the southerly side of One Hundred and Twenty-seventh street, about one hundred and fifty feet west of Third avenue. At evening they assembled at the supper-table; when the morning came they were all dead and buried. Dr. Arnold, the physician who owned the house, lived with them, and he was smitten with the fell disease early the next morning, and fled to a neighbor's house, where he died before 12 o'clock. He had been daily to the Yorkville hospital. He called there the afternoon before his death, and I had a full talk with him on the state of the pestilence in Harlem. He was greatly excited and anxious. The next morning, when Dr. Stevens arrived with me in Harlem, we found Dr. Arnold in a state of collapse and speechless. He died in less than half an hour. I held his hand when he breathed his last.

To show with what suddenness and fatality the fell disease took its victims, on Dr. Stevens' return to the city he sent a young physician, Dr. Heston, who was from Pennsylvania, to take my place at the hospital. I remained in Harlem. About 1 o'clock in the morning, after I left the hospital, a messenger came to me in great haste to go immediately to Yorkville—that Dr. Heston was sick; and, as soon as a horse could be harnessed I drove there, and as I arrived at the house of John G. Kip, on Third avenue, near Eighty-sixth street, where I had taken my meals, and where Dr. Heston was; his dead body was being brought down-stairs in a rough board box as a coffin. Consternation and dismay fell upon all the people on that part of the island of New York. The house of the dead where death had left not one, "no, not one," was an object of fear and dread. No one dared to open it, and after several days I went to the house with the Rev. Dr. C. D. Westbrook, who was Health Warden of Harlem. Dr. Westbrook standing at the gate, I opened the house and went in alone and threw open the doors and windows. The house was silent—the silence of death. What a picture! Everything in disorder; table standing with dishes in confusion, unwashed, as if left before the meal was finished; beds in con-

fusion, ladies and children's hats and garments hanging on chairs or on the floor, as if the inmates had suddenly fled in fright.

I continued my medical labor on that part of the island for more than two years, and at the request of the Mayor and prominent citizens, I examined all that part of the island to Kings Bridge. There were places of low and wet ground where malarious diseases prevailed, and on these places and localities the cholera was most fatal, and all these places I examined specially with a view to their sanitary condition.

The Harlem flats had the reputation of being unhealthy, and intermittent fevers were common, and fevers of a high and fatal grade often prevailed. It was said by medical men that these Harlem fevers more nearly resembled yellow fever than fevers in any other locality around New York.

I attended the late Judge D. P. Ingraham through a very serious illness of fever, a high grade of bilious fever with typhoid symptoms. I gave him the most prompt and constant attention, for I was doubly interested in him, not only as my patient, but as my friend. The late Dr. John C. Cheesman, of New York, said he believed that my prompt and careful attention, under Providence, saved Mr. Ingraham's life; because Dr. Cheesman knew the obstinate and fatal character of those Harlem fevers. I was in practice all this time under a license, which gave the full privileges and power of the profession, and I had the most able advisers, such as Dr. Alexander H. Stevens, President of the College, and all the professors, Dr. Valentine Mott, Dr. John B. Beek, Dr. Hosack, and Dr. J. C. Cheesman. These eminent men were always ready to render me any aid or advice in practice.

In the session of 1832-3, I graduated and received the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the old Barclay street College of Physicians and Surgeons of the City of New York. I also received an honorary degree of M. D. from Rutgers College.

On the 2d December, 1834, I married Margaretta, daughter of the Rev. John F. Jackson, of Harlem, N. Y., a lady of great personal beauty and merit. With her I lived forty-one years. I was always a domestic man. My heart was in my wife and children and in my home. We had two dearly beloved and deeply lamented daughters. The youngest, Emma Louisa, died young; the eldest, Julia Anna, a child of great promise, lived until her seventeenth year. My blessed wife died in 1875, aged sixty-six. I am childless and unmarried. "Nor wife nor children more shall I behold."

In the spring of 1841, at a time of serious illness in my family, I went to Long Island. One of my daughters had died and the other was extremely low, and my wife's health greatly impaired. Medical friends advised this removal to the country as the only chance for my daughter's recovery. My attention was directed by friends to Long Island, and to the village of Smithtown Branch, Suffolk County—forty-five miles from New York City.

There I found a pleasant rural place, that had been occupied by the Rev. Ithinar Pillsbury, a Presbyterian minister, as a parsonage. Mr. Pillsbury was a New England man, and had carefully cultivated the garden and grounds of four acres around the house, and had filled the garden and orchard with choice fruit and ornamental shrubbery. He was a man of great learning and ability as a divine. Rev. Dr. Prime, in his History of Long Island, published in 1845, says of Mr. Pillsbury that, in 1834, "he, with a chosen company, formed in good old Puritan style, emigrated and settled in the town of Andover, Illinois. Mr. Pillsbury is deservedly regarded as the patriarch of this new settlement, and a worthy example of future emigrants." The Rev. Mr. Pillsbury founded a college at Andover, Ill., and was president of it during the remainder of his life. There, at Smithtown, on this Old Parsonage Place, as it was called, we found a pleasant and happy home. The society was excellent, and here I was induced to remain, as the health of my daughter improved to recovery. I knew much generally of Long Island.

I knew it was the oldest settled part of the State, that it was called the "Garden of America," and I supposed it was all settled throughout; that all the lands on it that could be cultivated had been cultivated, I had never been any further east on the Island than from Flushing across to Jamaica, and to Rockaway. I had never heard of the great "barrens" of Hempstead Plains. When I went to Smithtown to look at the place, I took the cars of the Long Island Railroad, then completed as far as Hicksville, twenty-five miles from Brooklyn (it was a pleasant day in March), and soon after passing Jamaica we opened on to Hempstead Plains, a vast and beautiful country, which I thought was the handsomest tract of land I had ever beheld. That was my first impression of it then, and it is my opinion of it now. It was covered with cattle and sheep as far as the eye could see. Hempstead Plains is a great and beautiful prairie, an upland meadow. The old historian, Denton, who wrote in 1670, more than two hundred and ten years ago, whose book is called the "Gem of History," says: "Towards the middle of the Island lieth a plain, sixteen miles long and four miles broad, containing sixty-four square miles, or more than forty thousand acres, upon which there is neither stick nor stone, and it produces very fine grass which makes exceeding good hay, which is no small benefit to the towns which own it."

The soil of Hempstead Plains is a fine, dark and perfect loam, of an average depth of three feet over the centre surface of the whole plains, and is of the most productive kind. It is in its native and natural condition exactly such a soil as a lady would seek to fill her flower-pots with.

A. T. Stewart, the merchant prince of New York, purchased of the town of Hempstead, by which it was owned as common land, on September 13th, 1869, 7,000 acres, at \$55 an acre, and paid in checks, one of \$200,000, and two of \$100,000 each, and founded and laid out Garden City on Hempstead Plains, and put under cultivation a farm of 2,500 acres, surrounding Garden City.

The work on this great farm was done by W. R. Hinsdale, a farmer, and general superintendent of the Stewart property at Garden City. Mr. Hinsdale is a highly intelligent agriculturist and practical farmer. The land of Garden City, on Hempstead Plains, is more than 100 feet high above tide water, an elevated table-land, sloping to the south; the climate is perfectly healthy and the water of the purest kind, and inexhaustible. The turf is so thick and strong on the Plains that it is necessary to use a team of three horses to turn a furrow through it. This is the tract of land so long stigmatized by Long Islanders, and by Hempstead men in particular, as being barren and utterly worthless.

Omitting details of culture and cost of fertilizers used, I will give the production of the farm of 2,500 acres for the year of 1880, from Mr. Hinsdale's report. All of these large crops were raised at a profit:

Of corn, there were 450 acres, with an unusually heavy yield of at least seventy bushels of shelled corn to the acre.

Of oats, 588 acres, thirty-five bushels per acre (this was a better yield than on the old farms in the country).

Of rye, 495 acres.

Of meadow, or grass, 485 acres; 100 acres of this was in Hungarian grass, which yielded two tons and a half per acre. The native grass of Hempstead Plains is the blue grass of Kentucky.

Of buckwheat, 250 acres, 20 bushels per acre.

Of wheat, 30 acres, 20 bushels per acre.

Besides these, large crops of every kind of vegetables ever raised.

The following table has been made of the total yield of several crops for the year 1880:

Oats.....	20,580 bushels.
Indian Corn.....	31,500 "
Buckwheat.....	5,000 "
Wheat.....	600 "

Mr. Hinsdale says the lands of Hempstead Plains are the finest and most productive of any lands between here and San Francisco; and he knows, as he has been all over the country, in Ohio, Illinois, the Hockhocking and the Sciota flats, and resided in California.

At Hicksville there was only a lonely station-house, the end of the railroad route—twenty-five miles from Brooklyn. Here I took the stage, from Hicksville to the north over the Plains to Jericho, an old and most beautiful and highly cultivated settlement; then turned eastward on the old country north-side road to Smithtown, a distance of twenty miles, passing through a fine farming region, which had been settled and cultivated for more than 200 years.

Arrived at Smithtown Branch, I found the village pleasant and desirable, but I objected to the twenty miles' stage ride, and was told that work was to be immediately resumed on the Long Island Railroad, and cars would soon run to Smithtown.

On my return I went to the office in New York of the Long Island Railroad Company, and saw the President, Mr. Fiske, and he said that work on the railroad would be immediately resumed, and the road would be completed through the Island as soon as possible; that Boston men were to aid; that disasters on Long Island Sound had recently been so great that it was desirable to get a more safe route, which he thought would be over Long Island. I then determined to go to Long Island, and I rented the Pillsbury Parsonage house, in Smithtown Branch, for \$100 a year, and which I afterwards purchased, with fifty acres of land adjoining, which made my little farm there.

I removed my family there. Soon after I arrived I met an acquaintance that I knew in New York, and he said he had a posse of about 100 men at work on the railroad opposite Smithtown, and wished I would go down and see them, as there were several among them that needed medical aid, having received accidental injuries. Up to this time, I had not heard of the great Barren Plains, extending eastward from Hempstead Plains to the head of Peconic Bay, so entirely composed of sand and gravel as to be unsusceptible of cultivation by any process known.

This is the black and false record made by "Thompson and Paige, the historians of Long Island," and which has held that great part of the Island in wilderness.

The next day I started for the railroad, and I went down through Hauphagues, and the last house before entering the woods, I met a man at his wood pile; I asked if he could direct me to where the railroad men were at work? He said I must keep down the road into the woods and then turn to the right, on the road to Islip. I soon struck into the dog path, completely overhung with trees and bushes, and so narrow that my wheels would not run in the tracks (one of them had to go on the bank). After a drive of about two miles I found the railroad camp, at where Suffolk Station was afterwards made. The woods through which I had gone were very dense.

1841
There I found my friend and his men, shanties and cabins scattered around, and the men were grading the railroad bed; they had cut through the woods about three rods wide, and opening a long and beautiful vista, as far as the eye could see. Tall and lofty trees, that stood on each side of the railroad bed, as thick as they could stand, and there I found myself in the midst of a vast, magnificent, primeval forest. I was astonished; and then I learned that this great forest and wilderness was forty miles long and eight miles wide—four miles each side of the railroad—extending from the east end of Queens County about thirty-one miles, from Brooklyn to Riverhead seventy miles; the trees were large and lofty, and so thick and dense that a horse could not go through the woods. Along the line of the railroad, the trees and the timber were mostly yellow pine—*Pinus rigida*—of large and most thrifty growth, from eighteen inches to two feet in diameter, many much larger, perfectly sound and solid; they would square up from twenty to thirty feet in length, and

the timber about equal to the best Georgia pines. A little to the north of the railroad line, there were oaks in variety, chestnuts, hickory and locust, all of large growth. These woodlands extended four miles each side the railroad. I am always impressed with wild woodlands, "when among the trees and wilds where sunshine, birds sing and flowers bloom."

There were no scrub oaks there then, in these woods; thick forests overshadowed them, and they die out or disappear, but ready to come back again as soon as they can get possession of the ground. The scrub oak, of which the Long Islanders have such a dread and hatred, is the best friend of the Island; for, when the wood and trees are all destroyed, this little fellow comes in and takes possession of the lands, and protects them from becoming a barren, by being dried up by the sun and the elements. It is a shrub; can never be a tree in any soil, no more than a lilac bush. It is indigenous, i. e., a native, to the Island, and grows all over the Island, from and in Brooklyn to Montauk Point.

Judge Lefferts, of Bedford, famous Cripplebush farm, in Brooklyn (and willed by him to his beloved daughter, Elizabeth Dorothea, the wife of Mr. Brevoort), is "Scrub Oak Farm," for Cripplebush means "scrub oak;" Cripplebush road is "Scrub Oak road."

It is set down in books of science and natural history as the nineteenth variety of the oak, as the "*Quercus Illicifolia*." It is called Bear oak, from the great abundance of acorns that it produces, upon which the bears feed.

I was very greatly surprised at the soil I found there. It was three feet deep in the railroad cuttings, of the very finest yellow loam, in every way suited to culture—not a particle of sand or gravel or a stone in it. From that time I took a great interest in the railroad, and in the uncultivated lands on its borders. I was so weak and foolish as to think a railroad would be of great benefit, and a very convenient and handy thing to have on Long Island, and I did my uttermost to promote it. There was a very strong opposition to it on the Island; the people opposed it with the utmost violence; they tore up the track and burned its bridges; and yet the road went on by force of right and might, until its completion, as it penetrated into the woods and wilderness of Suffolk County. Then came the conflict of fire and destruction; the people refused to do anything to protect those woodlands from fire, and the railroad company could not, and destruction and desolation of those woodlands were swift by fire and the axe.

The woods were set on fire, and burned with great fury every spring and fall. One of those fires, in 1848, burned for two weeks night and day; "a pillar of fire by night, a cloud of smoke by day." It burned over seventy-five square miles; it broke out in the woods, about a mile south of the railroad, a little to the east of Connetquot River, or Liff Snedicoor's Brook, and it run fifteen miles east and five miles wide, extending, in some places, to the water's edge of the Great South Bay. Buildings were often burned by these fires, as they have been during the past year. Great difficulty was experienced in keeping the villages from being burned up. After the opening of the railroad, those woodlands were made common plunder ground by cordwood men and charcoal burners, and the wood and timbers destroyed in the most wanton and wasteful manner. The revenue or chief freight business of the railroad for years was in carrying off what could be got off the land. Charcoal burners bought the wood, or large tracts, at a mere nominal price, and turned an army of men into their coal bush, and whole trees of the large pines were brought to Brooklyn and driven in as spiles all along the shore and docks of Brooklyn.

James B. Cooper, Esq., a prominent citizen of Babylon, L. I., says the damages by fire in the woodlands of Suffolk County, in the past forty years, are three millions of dollars.

On my return from my first visit to the wilderness on the plains, I asked what was the reason that those lands were not

Brentwood

cultivated, and every man that I saw or met in Smithtown replied that the land was worthless; that nothing would grow on it.

I said it was covered with trees, and any land that will produce a large growth of trees has an element in the soil that will, with a little variation, produce a hill of corn or a blade of wheat. I asked if it had ever been tried? No; they said it was not worth trying. Now, all this did not satisfy me, nor remove the impression that was so firmly fixed upon my mind from what I had seen. I did not believe it possible that I could be mistaken; for my knowledge of lands and soil was so full and complete by practical experience in my boyhood and youth (for I had had the most thorough, practical farming "education" ever a youth had), I did not believe I was or could be mistaken. I determined to make inquisition as a matter of truth and general knowledge; to examine the geology, soil and natural productions, for these are what indicate a country suitable for civilization and use. In the summers of 1841, '42, and '43, I examined more than fifty square miles of the plains with spade in hand, all the way from Farmingdale to Ronkonkoma Lake, and also the lands from East New York to and around Jamaica, that I might compare the old settled land with the new. I had then no intention or thought of purchasing or buying an acre of the woods, and my first purchase at Suffolk Station was made at the earnest request of Mr. Fiske, the president of the railroad.

I felt and believed that these vast woodlands could and ought to be settled and cultivated, as a great public good, and as a special benefit to the Long Island Railroad, to give it business. Mr. Fiske, who was in full accord with me, unfortunately lost his health and left the railroad, and soon after died. The railroad was made through the Island by him and his great energy.

Subsequently, at the request of the president and directors of the railroad, I undertook the herculean task to bring into use, and before the public, these lands for settlement—and by an agreement in writing, a bargain with the officers, president and directors of the road, defining what they should do and what I should do. By this contract the company agreed to do all the carrying trade and freight for the settlement, free of cost or charge; all freight, lumber and building material, manure and fertilizers, and all products were to be carried free, for one year, to each and every settler, and the head of the family to have a free pass to and from the city for two years. This was to encourage and promote settlement, and these privileges were to be given to every actual settler, during the settlement of the ten thousand acres. The settlement was to be an agricultural, or farming, and garden settlement; no village lots were offered.

I purchased ten thousand acres of land of the Nicoll Patent (adjoining Ronkonkoma Lake, and extending south more than four miles, at from five to thirty dollars per acre), of William H. Ludlow, and his wife Frances Louisa Nicoll, six thousand nine hundred and fifty acres, in one tract, adjoining the railroad, at five dollars an acre; two hundred acres north of the railroad and extending to the lake, thirty dollars per acre; one hundred acres next to this, twenty dollars an acre; and a thousand acres next this, extending to the lake, at ten dollars an acre; and of William Nicoll, two thousand acres at five dollars an acre.

All these great tracts of land were purchased on a cash basis, cash and mortgage (the Death (Grip or) Gage), bearing six per cent. interest. There was no trade or sham about it. It was the largest price ever given for those lands. This tract was selected as being the most advantageous and beautiful tract for settlement, of good and excellent soil.

The situation and soil of the land were good in every particular for the settlement. I proposed to call it Lakeland, and Governor King, of Jamaica, approved of it, for he said it was "The Land of the Lake." The lake was not in sight of the railroad; the station there was first called Lakeroad Station. Gov. John A. King was my friend, and rendered important assistance;

he obtained the establishment of a post-office there, and my appointment as postmaster; and he took great interest in my work for the settlement of the lands. I proceeded to erect buildings and to cultivate the land; I opened roads, laid out and opened Ocean avenue—one hundred feet wide from the lake for three miles south—cleared the lands by the plough (without previous grubbing); obtained the best plough, made by Ruggles, Nourse & Mason, of Worcester, Mass., made with a locked cutter, and purchased three yoke of oxen, and ploughed the ground, laid out a beautiful garden by a gardener from Brooklyn, and raised the finest crops of wheat and corn and garden products ever seen on the Island. My crop of Australian wheat was the admiration of every one that saw it.

The *Boston Cultivator* of June 20th, 1850, gave this account of the place:

LAKELAND AS IT WAS IN 1850.

We call the attention of our readers and the public at large to the following record and evidence of the successful cultivation, more than thirty years ago, of the new and neglected lands of Long Island.

The work of settlement and culture of the lands was broken up by the unfortunate failure of the Long Island Railroad in 1851, by nothing else, and from no other cause, for the railroad then passed into the hands of men who were bitterly opposed and hostile to the lands.

We publish an account of a visit to Lakeland, from the *Suffolk Union*, Riverhead, Suffolk County, Long Island, made by a party of gentlemen from Brooklyn, New York and other places, showing that the settlement was then considered as prosperous and successful. The settlement and culture of the lands in that vicinity were then regarded as a complete success, and had the place fallen into honest hands after Dr. Peck left it, there would have been no trouble or difficulty whatever in making it one of the pleasant inland places on the island, for everything at Lakeland was then in a prosperous condition; the buildings and fences were new, complete, and in good order; the garden and grounds under good culture, and everything had been done by Dr. Peck to make the settlement and cultivation of the then hitherto "Barrens of Long Island" successful. His titles were all good, precisely what they were represented to be, as may be seen by the records of the County Clerk's office at that time.

We subjoin from the *New Yorker* an account of the visit to Lakeland, which is not left to "speak for itself," being backed by a host of such witnesses as are absolutely not to be found again, as one might say. In justice to them, and particularly to Dr. Peck, whose exertions would at length appear to have been crowned with success the most perfect, we publish the following account of an excursion to Ronkonkoma Lake and to Lakeland, on the Long Island Railroad:

"Moses Maynard, Esq., of the Long Island Railroad Co., with a party of gentlemen from New York and Brooklyn, took a trip on Thursday over the Long Island Railroad to the new village of Lakeland, and to Ronkonkoma Lake. The object was to examine the road, to view the famous Lake Ronkonkoma and the surrounding country, and also to see what progress had been made in the settlement and cultivation of the wild or new lands of the Island, through the midst of which the Long Island Railroad runs. The day was extremely fine, and nothing could exceed the rich and luxuriant fields of grain and grass to be seen on each side of the road through the counties of Kings and Queens. Arrived at Lakeland depot, the party examined the buildings and gardens at this place, where are now to be seen growing in great perfection wheat and rye, garden vegetables, and fruits and flowers of great variety. This is a new settlement in the very midst of the great wilderness of the Island, a region hitherto regarded by the Island people and others on their authority as wholly unfit for cultivation; but the crops now growing at that place are equal to any others on the Island, and exhibit the most incontestable evidence of the powers of these lands to produce. Indeed, nothing can be more completely successful than have been the efforts of Dr. Peck to cultivate these Island lands, as may now be so fully seen at Lakeland, where a few years since all was wild and desolate.

The party were highly surprised and gratified at the great change made there by the hand of improvement; all admitted that the evidence of the fertility in the soil was complete, and that there can be no doubt of the entire practicability of easily and profitably cultivating all those lands on the borders of the Long Island Railroad, and in this subject the directors and stockholders of the Long Island Railroad Company have a deep interest, for the settlement and population of these lands on the in-

mediate line of this road will add greatly to the business of the road.

From Lakeland the party proceeded, some on foot, through the woods and fields, and some in carriages, to the famous Ronkonkoma, of the Indian name and memory, one of the most beautiful sheets of water that can be found anywhere. It was the unanimous opinion of the whole party that they had never seen any lake or sheet of water of its size more perfectly beautiful. It is a sort of miniature sea or ocean, being about three miles in circuit, with a clear and pearly beach or shore, two or three rods wide, formed of pure white silicious sand, inlaid with beautiful white and variegated pebbles, the waters over which glittered and sparkled like the fish-pools of Heshbon. The shores and bottom are perfectly solid and hard. There is neither rock or quicksand or miry places, no sudden deep places into which a child at play in its tiny waves could by any possibility fall, but a gradual deepening of the water from the shore to the center, which is about 80 feet deep. The land around the shore of the Ronkonkoma is beautifully diversified, and much of it elevated and bold, and the cultivated farms and orchards give to the whole scene a most delightful and pleasing effect. The pure fragrant air that blows around the lake, and the cool and delicious shades offered by the large and beautiful trees that fringe its borders and line the surrounding fields, render it a most delightful resort for summer. Returning to the hotel at Lakeland, a bountiful dinner was prepared in time to take the cars on the return train to Brooklyn, where they arrived at 5 o'clock P. M.

Among the party were Moses Maynard, Esq., of the Long Island R. R. Co.; Elihu Townsend, Esq., Dr. Brewer, R. L. Allen, Hon. Henry Meigs, of the American Institute; Geo. S. Riggs, Esq., of Baltimore; D. J. Brown, Messrs. Saxton and Blanchard, S. Holmes, Esq., and others, directors and stockholders of the L. I. R. R.; Alden J. Spooner, Esq., Rollin Sandford, Esq., G. A. Brett, Esq., Dr. E. F. Peck, and James B. Stafford, Esq.

All expressed their highest gratification at the evidence of improvement which they saw at Lakeland and its vicinity, and were unanimous in the opinion that the successful cultivation of these new lands, on the borders of the railroad, will result in great benefit to the road as well as to the Island, and, from all they saw, were of opinion that the prospects of the Long Island Railroad for a good and profitable business were never better than at present, and that a more desirable and pleasant retreat for summer residence cannot be found within fifty miles of New York, in any direction, than in the vicinity of Ronkonkoma."

N. B.—The above described visit was made the year before the Long Island Railroad Company failed, in 1851.

I had had full experience in cultivating the lands on what I purchased at Suffolk Station, under the advice of Mr. George B. Fiske, president of the railroad company. I there, in 1845, held plough, and turned the first furrow ever ploughed on the plains; I raised wheat and corn there on the despised lands, with complete success.

The settlement was complete and prosperous; sales of land were making, and men of means and reputation were purchasing and preparing to settle there. I advertised the lands extensively in this country and in Europe, as "farming and garden lands," in Boston, in New York, Albany, and in Rochester, in the *London Times*, and in the *Mark Lane Express*, and in Holland; and people came in great numbers to view it. At this juncture, in 1851, the Long Island Railroad Company failed, suddenly and unexpectedly; the failure came not only with most disastrous and ruinous effect upon the railroad, but upon everything connected with it. It stopped all my work entirely; men who had purchased of me, and agreed to purchase, abandoned their purchase and left the place, for it was rumored and believed that the railroad was to be abandoned and the rails taken up. The fate of the Catskill and Canajoharie Railroad was held up as the fate of the Long Island Railroad (the Catskill and Canajoharie Railroad was torn up, and the rails, that cost \$100,000, were sold as old iron for \$4,000). Emissaries were sent out all along the railroad, who reported that the rails were to be taken up and the road abandoned. A suit was brought against the railroad, and judgment entered, and it was put into the hands of a receiver, Moses Maynard, who was the treasurer of the Long Island Railroad Company, and the

road was advertised to be sold at public auction—"all the right, title, and interest of the Long Island Railroad, franchises, real estate, rolling stock of every kind." Under this state of ruin the stock of the company fell as low as seven dollars a share. The plaintiff in this case was the Brooklyn and Jamaica Railroad Company, that owned twelve miles of railroad between Brooklyn and Jamaica. The Long Island Railroad owned eighty-three miles; both companies had distinct organizations; the Brooklyn and Jamaica road was made first, and the Long Island Railroad Company foolishly leased for forty years, at a yearly rent of \$31,500 a year, in monthly payments. Whilst this state of confusion and ruin was going on, the stock of the railroad was being bought up from seven to ten dollars a share. I was in daily attendance in Maynard's office, and saw and heard all that passed. In comes a stockholder: "Well, Alderman, is the road to be sold, and what will it bring?" "Oh, yes, it is to be sold, and it will probably bring enough to pay some of the immediate debts; it may bring twenty-five per cent. of the cost of the railroad—two millions." "Then it is a pretty poor lookout for the stockholders?" "Yes." "I have a little stock, and can get a little something for it." "How much have you?" "I have ten shares." "How much can you get for it?" "Ten dollars a share." "Then you had better sell it." So the stockholder, whose money had built the railroad, goes out and sells his stock. This is literally a true statement of what I saw repeatedly; for I was anxiously waiting to know what my fate would be, since they had repudiated the written agreement made by the company with me, and on which depended the value of my property of more than sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000).

After these parties had obtained a majority of the stock sufficient to control the road, they withdrew all proceedings against it, and reinstated it; made William E. Morris, of Philadelphia, president, and turned Maynard out. Then a great flourish of trumpets was made over the resurrection of the Long Island Railroad, and great things were promised, and the stock, that had been trampled on and hawked at ten dollars a share, increased marvellously. I then made every effort to have my contracts with the road completed, but this they positively refused. I felt wearied and discouraged, and sold the entire property. In this I made a mistake; I could and ought to have held it, but I thought I had done enough. I sold the property to Charles Wood and his associates, of New York. Mr. Wood was recommended as a fair and honest man by Moses Y. Beach, Alfred Beach, and Moses S. Beach, owners and editors of the *New York Sun*, and they sustained and aided him very greatly. I sold mostly on credit, and I continued to do all I could to promote the settlement of the lands, and have done so to the present day. Mr. Wood went on to sell and improve, but ultimately got into difficulty and failed. He was victimized by others, and Lakeland never recovered from the failure, and is now blotted out; while it is called Ronkonkoma Depot, by an act of gross injustice to me, and to the settlement, the pioneer settlement, in the wilderness.

I have done with my journey in the wilderness, though I am not out of it. I propose to introduce some of my witnesses. I wrote to B. F. THOMPSON, of Hempstead, the author of the *History of Long Island*, and quoted his strange libel upon the lands eastward of Hempstead Plains (at page 29, vol. 1st), and asked him to tell me upon what that passage was founded? if any attempt had ever been made to cultivate the lands? if so, by whom, when, and where? and wherein the soil differed from the soils in other parts of the Island? if the soil had ever been chemically examined? He answered that when he wrote that passage it was "the generally received opinion" on the Island that the soil could not be cultivated; that he knew no facts, and encouraged me to go on, and kindly offered to aid, and became my friend as long as he lived. I wrote to the Rev. Mr. PRIME, author of another *History of Long Island*, and sent him a copy

of my letter to Mr. Thompson (see Prime's description of the lands, where he says, "About forty miles from the west end [this is where Brentwood now stands] the sand approaches to fluidity in fineness [for there is no soil].") Mr. Prime wrote me a letter of four pages of special pleading to show that he was right, and I was wrong. I have both of these letters yet.

Now, I am satisfied that all the miserable drivel about and against these lands, which have been published in the past forty years in every history, book or gazette, originated from PRIME and THOMPSON, and from nobody else (for there is not a word found in all the previous history of the Island of any barren lands); and that monstrous wrong was inflicted upon Long Island by these histories. I have never met with a man on the Island who knew the first thing about the land or soil, no matter how much he said against it. Cross-examine him, and he utterly failed.

Now let us hear what men of great intelligence, learning, and ability, men learned in agriculture and soils, who personally went on to the lands with spade and ink-horn to record the result. In 1847 a party of 170 of the most distinguished men in the city and State went expressly to examine the soil as to its fitness for culture. This was on the 22d of July, 1847. The party spent two days there. Among them were the Hon. Messrs. Ogden Edwards, John Lawrence, Professor Renwick, of Columbia College of New York, Hon. Henry Meigs, T. B. Wakeman, Gen. Chandler, of the American Institute, &c. Every one of these pronounced the soil to be good and perfect. Dr. Underhill, of Croton Vineyard, declared it was in every way suited to grape culture. They made an extended report in favor of these lands of more than twenty-four pages: see *Transactions of the American Institute*, vol. for the year 1847, page 678; also *The New York State Agricultural Society Transactions*, published 1859; also the address of Gov. John A. Dix, delivered at Saratoga before the State Fair at Saratoga Springs; also (in the same vol., 1859), an exhaustive report on the *Lands of Long Island*, of 40 pages, by Winslow C. Watson, of Port Kent, of Essex County, N. Y. Mr. Watson is the State geologist for the northern counties of the State, and is one of the most able and learned agriculturists of the State. He came to Long Island twice, and made careful examination of the lands. This kind of evidence can be multiplied to any extent, and no acre of the ground has failed to produce. See the Suffolk County Almshouse farm, at Yaphank, on the plains, where they cut last year two hundred tons of the finest hay from 45 acres. See, also, the splendid stock farm of the Hon. August Belmont, of 1,000 acres, two miles north of Babylon, L. I. I propose, in conclusion, to give the figures of uncultivated lands in Suffolk County, which is one hundred and ten miles long by about ten miles wide, containing 640,000 acres. These figures are from the United States census for 1845, and if these lands were there then they are there now, for no thousands of acres of these lands, as I have heard of, have been since cultivated.

The town of Huntington, 50,968 acres uncultivated. Huntington has lately been divided, and the town of Babylon set off. Islip, 63,984 acres uncultivated; Smithtown, 27,960 acres uncultivated; Brookhaven, 117,360 acres uncultivated; Riverhead, 25,000 acres uncultivated; Southold, 29,000 acres uncultivated; Shelter Island, 6,000 acres uncultivated; Southampton, 68,395 acres uncultivated; Easthampton, 52,672 acres uncultivated, making 447,953 acres of uncultivated lands in Suffolk County. There are in Queens County 90,000 acres of uncultivated lands. These figures include only good arable land, no marshy land.

I purchased in 1848, of F. M. A. Wicks, four hundred acres, at two dollars and seventy-five cents an acre, without the wood, which he retained, and this is the land on which the village of Brentwood now stands. As I did not intend to keep this land, or any part of it, I did not take the "deed for it," as I purchased it for the express purpose of getting it into the hands of those who would improve it; and I employed my friend, the late Samuel

Fleet, then the editor of the *New York Artisan* (not the paper by that name now), and he negotiated the sale of it to Nathan Stephens, Christopher Wray, Uel West, J. Agate, and others; and it was conveyed, on my order, under my contract with Mr. Wicks, to these parties. Most of these purchasers intended to improve the land, but were prevented by the stories that it was worthless and unfit for culture.

Mr. Fleet, who was a worthy and intelligent man, had full confidence and full faith in the productive quality of the land, and he rendered important and valuable aid in bringing it before the public; and after these first purchasers had abandoned the idea of improving the land, Mr. Fleet sold it to Stephen Pearl Andrews, of New York, who laid out and made the settlement of Brentwood upon it. My friends think, and say, if I had not purchased the land and put it into the market, at great trouble and considerable cost, it would have remained unsettled to the present time, and no Brentwood there; for all the surrounding region that I did not put into the market is yet a wilderness—for they know of nobody else who would have purchased it.

I bought and put into the market all the land that Mr. Wicks sold east of his house—the old Thompson station.

I settled Mr. Richardson, the nurseryman at Brentwood, about twenty years ago; he came from Massachusetts under my advertisements in the *Boston Cultivator*, came to my house in Brooklyn, and I went with him to examine the lands; he did not buy any land of me.

There are now ten new and prosperous villages and settlements, made in the past thirty years, along the line of the Long Island Railroad, and on what was thirty years ago a wilderness, in a distance of thirty miles from Farmingdale to Yaphank, including Farmingdale and Yaphank—viz.: Farmingdale, Deer Park, Brentwood, Central Islip, Lakeland, Holbrook, Waverly, Medford, Yaphank, Bohemiaville and Edenvale—the settlement of William J. Spence.

Bohemiaville and Edenvale are not in sight of the railroad, but between the railroad and the old south side country road, not far north of Blue Point and Patchogue. Mr. Spence settled there thirty years ago, in what was then the darkest part of the Island. Men went to him from the old settlements and warned him off, lest he might become a town charge; he cleared and cultivated the land, has lived there thirty years, supported himself and family from the land by farming, and has now a beautiful farm. Go and see his farm. Mr. Spence is dead. These new settlements have churches, schools, comfortable homes, some splendid buildings, fields of wheat, corn, clover, grass, and the finest fruit gardens and fruit orchards that can be found on the Island, and all produced by ordinary culture, without extra cost or extra means; and these ten villages and settlements, with their fields and gardens, over a space of thirty miles, settle the question of the productive quality of the land so long despised, and put to shame its traducers and maligners. It is rather a curious and interesting fact, that six of these new settlements, Brentwood, Central Islip, Lakeland, Holbrook, Bohemiaville and Edenvale, are on the land brought into the market and sold by me—bought and sold expressly for settlement and culture, and for no other purpose—bought and sold, or rather given away, in most cases, for less than the actual cost to me of titles and transfer.

I never purchased an acre of land on the Island for anything that I expected to make on the land by a re-sale of it, but I expected and hoped to receive my reward by what I might be able to retain when the settlements were made. I cast in my lot with the settlements and settlers, having full faith in the intrinsic value of the land and the country. It is the finest and most productive garden land, with the best markets, the most healthy and pleasant climate, in the State of New York.

October 14, 1879.

E. F. PECK.

Mr. Slater's fine buildings at Central Islip are on land that I bought of William Nicoll in 1848.

E. F. PECK.

Historical and Descriptive
Sketches

of

SUFFOLK COUNTY

with a

Historical Outline of Long Island

By RICHARD M. BAYLES

EMPIRE STATE HISTORICAL PUBLICATION XVII



IRA J. FRIEDMAN, Inc.
Port Washington, L.I., N.Y.

1962

1874



Brentwood, first called Modern Times, is a village of about two hundred inhabitants, lying mostly on the south side of the Long Island railroad in the northwest part of the town. It occupies a beautiful level site, on a plain whose surface is elevated near one hundred feet above the level of tide water, and is regularly laid out, with avenues crossing each other at right angles. The village plat is as yet but partially built up. A few handsome residences have been erected here. The settlement was commenced about twenty years ago, by a few individuals who proposed to establish a social community on some modification of the "free love" principle, the precise details of which we do not understand. The scheme seems to have been unsuccessful, and when its vaporous novelty passed away most of its followers settled down to the common customs of civilized life. The village plat embraces about one mile square. The present name was adopted by a meeting of the inhabitants Sept. 7, 1864. Several nurseries and similar enterprises have been established here, and for these the village is noted to a greater extent than any other in the county. An Episcopal chapel, a branch from St. Mark's church at Islip, was built in the autumn of 1872, the corner stone laid Sept. 12th. For about twelve years previous, the school house had been used for public worship and Sabbath school.

Thompson Station, the site of which was half a mile west of here, was discontinued and the depot established at this village in Dec., 1869. At that time the people donated land and money amounting to \$1,400 to the Railroad Company for depot buildings, which have since been used also for post-office, telegraph office, and other railroad purposes.

ness referred to have no possible peak with more suits upon which with great care ons as from con- are familiar with to whom I am the Rev. E. M. in a green and ss of the island the intelligent to Mr. Bridger, bservation much plains. I should fer especially to ck of Brooklyn. has strenuously most unyielding of these lands, I formation. I do the words of an If these plain sful culture, the elligence of Dr. onvictions of Dr. re derived from and subsequent rmed."

his section a few e last twenty-five have made com- in remains at the his is no doubt e of land holders settlers, than to rt is a fine yellow approve it for cul- esults.

We may add that the people of this village are strict adherents to temperance principles, and remarkably liberal in their support of public improvements and educational interests.

North Islip, formerly called Suffolk Station, is a railroad depot and post-office, one and a half miles east of Brentwood, in the midst of the plain. This was formerly the point of connection between stage and rail communication for the village of Islip, four miles south. It is about to be abandoned as a railroad depot, and a new one established at Central Islip in its stead.

About one mile further east, and mostly on the north of the railroad lies the village of Central Islip, another modern settlement which during a few years past has made considerable growth. It contains two churches, a store, school, burying-ground, and about fifty houses. The inhabitants are mostly settlers from abroad. An Episcopal chapel was built here in 1869. In ministerial service it is connected with St. Mark's church at Islip. A Methodist Episcopal church is centrally located, and was built in 1870; dedicated May 19, 1872.

Lakeland is a railroad station, four and a half miles east of Central Islip, and near the angle of Brookhaven town. The settlement contains twenty-five houses, a store and post-office. Manufactories of tobacco and segars, and pearl buttons, have been established here within a few years past. The soil of the neighborhood is good for farming and gardening, and the surface level and beautiful, stretching back to the gentle hills that border the romantic Lake Ronkonkoma about a mile distant, on the north. This settlement was commenced

in 1848-9, by D in the "Plain station house he selected this as of farms and g the place, at a opened Ocean and south) cle a view to den post-office and the enterprise the promised of freight and rates, but afte in 1851, and t managers who settlement, D improvements, land was con disposed of, was disastrou possessed a g

About two dozen houses settlers many Holbrook, of Lakeland, houses, con foundation c ter, who pu plain, and of

*For further
†In the latter eastern part of tract of thirty t dwwings a t Be other houses, which were wit

Postmaster. The name of the Post Office was changed to Brentwood on January 17, 1870 when Frank E. Blacker was appointed Postmaster.

Deer Park Station

Prior to 1842 the nearest railroad station to Bay Shore or Mechanicsville, or Penataquit was at Deer Park and it was necessary to use horses and buggy or stage coach. When Thompson's Station was established, Francis Wicks conducted his own line of stages to villages to the north and to the south.

Isaac Thompson, the proprietor of Sagtikos Manor, used Thompson's Station and a lane on the property was known as Thompson's lane. My great grandfather Robert Weeks was the Overseer of Sagtikos Manor in the 1840s. About 1848 Robert Weeks bought land from Tredwell O. Smith at the corner of Fifth ave. and Howell rd, and with Richard Smith hewed out all of the timber to construct the farm house that was torn down in 1951. Tredwell O. Smith was one of the successful business men of Bay Shore. He was a man of vision and seeing the need for a general store, established the store on the corner of Ocean ave. and Main st., for many years known as Smith & Brewster.

The store in later years was conducted by Harry M. Brewster, the son of Henry D. Brewster. Harry married Miss Anna Gibson, daughter of Samuel Gibson. Samuel B. Gibson conducted a livery stable on Main st., where horses were boarded, bought, sold and exchanged.

Rail Service Here

There was considerable activity in the community in the year 1868, when the railroad was extended from Babylon to Bay Shore. An application by Charles White and others was presented to the Commissioners of Highways, in April of that year to lay out a three rod wide public highway, commencing at the South Country road and near the store of Tredwell O. Smith and running to the South Bay. This street was known as Ocean ave. and passed through property of Tredwell O. Smith, Julia A. Penny, John B. Pullis, John Rodger, Ezra F. Smith, Charles White and Smith Brower. The Highway Commissioners signing the order were William H. Pullis and Walter Homan.

Open New Roads

The meeting was held at the house of Felix Dominy on the 6th day of April, 1868.

SOME OF TOWN OF ISLIP'S
EARLY HISTORY

BY

GEORGE LEWIS WEEKS, Jr.

ILLUSTRATED BY

THE' AUTHOR

ISLIP TOWN HISTORIAN

CONSOLIDATED PRESS

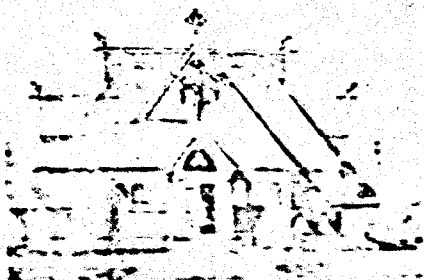
Bay Shore

1955

design. The dwellings designed by Horace Gifford are recognizable by their pin-wheel configurations and wooden cylindrical shapes. Andrew Geller's designs, also fresh and inventive, make use of more familiar profiles.

A short walk east along the beach leads to Point O' Woods, an exclusive community which originated in the late nineteenth century as a Chautauqua assembly. Large late-Victorian shingled houses, "old-fashioned" in appearance but in reality—with their ample porches and broken silhouettes—close relatives of the contemporary idiom, elbow each other on the now-eroding sand dunes.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church (Main St. [Rte. 27A], Islip). William Kissam Vanderbilt, Sr., was the benefactor of this Stick-style church, designed in 1878-80 by Richard Morris Hunt, one of the family's favorite architects. Hunt's eclectic approach dictated the use of a variety of decorative devices—exposed framing, extravagant carvings, shingles, and varied surfaces—which were combined with sure skill. The sophistication of this country church is an agreeable contrast to the vernacular styling of the Shingle-style Methodist Church and the Italianate Presbyterian Church just a short distance west on Main St.



Brentwood

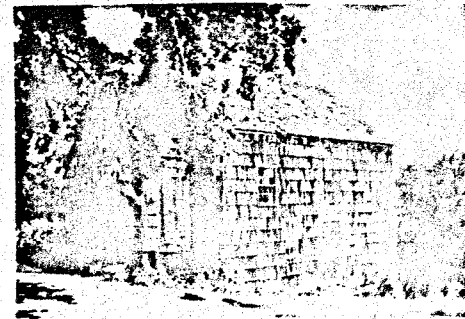
According to an observer of social mores in this community, "The arrangements of marriage were, of course, left entirely to the men and women themselves. They could be married formally or otherwise, live in the same or separate houses, and have their relationship known or unknown to the rest of the village. . . . It was not considered polite to inquire who might be the father of a new-born child, or who the husband or wife of any individual might be." The time: 1850. The community: Modern Times, founded by Josiah Warren, a reformer and anarchist. The utopian Modern Times lasted about ten years; in its place grew the more conventional community of Brentwood.

A few architectural survivals remain from the earlier era. Among them are the grid plan; Christ Church (Third Ave.), a tiny board-and-batten church with a steeply pitched roof and vigorous decoration; and Christ Church Rectory (1769 Brentwood Rd., off Third Ave.), a simple two-story, octagonal structure with a pitched roof. Across the street from the rectory is the News and Sentinel Company, with mid-nineteenth-century carpenter trim on its central gable and dormers.

Bayard Cutting Arboretum

Montauk Highway (Rte. 27A),
Great River
*OPEN: Wed-Sun, holidays,
10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
PHONE: (516) 781-1002

William Bayard Cutting, a railroad engineer



Mill, South Side Sportsmen's Club

ive, began to develop 690 acres of woodland next to the Connetquot River in 1887, along the lines of the plan laid out for him by Frederick Law Olmsted. He hired architect Charles Haight, who specialized in city clubs and offices for the very rich, to design a suitable mansion for the lavishly landscaped setting. Westbrook is impressive, a freely massed Shingle-style structure with Tudor detailing.

Today the property belongs to the Long Island State Park Commission. Westbrook has refreshment facilities, and the grounds have been developed as five nature walks.

South Side Sportsmen's Club (Sunrise Highway, Connetquot State Park, Oakdale). Connetquot State Park now occupies the site of the South Side Sportsmen's Club, founded in 1864. But the spot was a favorite one for hunters and fishermen as early as 1836, when New York City Mayor Philip Hone recorded in his diary that "we went to Shickles after dinner, where we found the house so full that, if we had not taken the precaution to write in advance for beds, we might have slept on the floor. . . . We returned to see the north end of the Clubhouse, a

much-added-to building. Diverse structures from other periods remain—masculine, utilitarian masses with weathered shingled surfaces. The earliest, a mill that was old even in Hone's time. The mill, which used three primitive wheels, is currently being restored by the New York State Division for Historical Preservation.

Dowling College (Montauk Highway [Rte. 27A] and Idlehour Blvd., Oakdale). Idlehour, the country estate of William Kissam Vanderbilt, Sr., was designed about 1900 by architect Richard Howland Hunt. Though intended as a simple country retreat, the lavish brick-and-limestone mansion had flamboyantly curved gables and a grandiose palm court. The expensive plan was determined by the necessity to separate bachelor guests from married couples. Elaborate as it was, Idlehour was more modest than many such estates. The quality of a home was the goal; and, as *Architectural Record* pronounced, "Despite the money spent on it, this is what is."

Until a recent fire, the mansion was used by Dowling College for classroom and administration, and it will be restored. The powerhouse is now used as a parking garage.



Mansions, Mills and Main Street, (Schocken Books)

Rifkind & Levine, 1975