This is Great Neck

Old Names on Madnan's Neck

The League of Women Voters of Great Neck
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THIS IS GREAT NECK

A History of the Great Neck Community from 1600 to the Present
Roberta Pincus, Editor

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INTRODUCTION

Picture a splendid peninsula of gently undulating terrain formed millions of years ago by glacial action, surround it with calm waters on three sides and cover it with lush trees, green spaces and pleasing views at every turn. And when you have done all this you will know what has made Great Neck attractive to its inhabitants for many centuries.

Great Neck's earliest residents, an ancient Indian tribe, called the peninsula "Wallage" and so began a series of fascinating name changes for this 11.4 square mile community. On old maps one sees the area titled Matthew Garrison's Neck and Little Neck Bay is called Matty Garrett's Bay. Records do list an early settler known by that name. There is also mention of Great Neck as Cornbury and this probably refers to Lord Cornbury who served as governor of New York in 1700.

Anne Hutchinson (old drawing)

Perhaps the most famous name is Madnan's Neck and much speculation has arisen over its origination. Many attribute the name to Anne Hutchinson who, it is said, landed here in 1640 with a band of settlers and tried to take possession of Kings Point. According to legend, Miss Hutchinson was famous for her temper and so gained the appellation "Madnan." Her anger may have been aroused by the Dutch authorities who forced her to leave or she may have been
"mad" at her lover Captain Howe who had abandoned her. (Actually, Captain Howe was one of the first settlers in Manhasset and part of Manhasset Bay was once called Howe’s Bay.) It is unlikely, however, that Nan’s emotional state was responsible for the name “Madnan’s Neck.” Most historians agree that it was derived from the Indian name for this area. The Flushing Historical Society notes that local Indians called most fish “menhaden” and that the Indian word for place as “ack” or “ock.” Thus, the Indians may have once called the area “Menhaden-Ock” and later shortened it to Madnan-Ock. White settlers then interpreted this as Madnan’s Neck. This is a somewhat less romantic, but more likely accurate explanation!

Old records finally mention the name Great Neck in 1670 and by 1752 the name was in common usage. It no doubt referred to the size and perhaps the future of the peninsula.
The Mattinecock Indians, who lived in and around Great Neck, were one of thirteen tribes dwelling on Long Island. They spoke the Algonquin language and were part of the Delaware Indian group. Living in the area was easy for there was an abundance of natural resources. An illustrated map of the period shows a fisherman's paradise, the waters filled with hard and soft shell clams, scallops, oysters, crabs, blue fish, bass, eel, sturgeon and shad. The peninsula was rich in fur-bearing game such as rabbit, beaver, fox, raccoon, woodchuck and weasel. It was natural, therefore, for Indian men to engage primarily in hunting and fishing. The women supervised most home activities and tended the land which was fertile and able to support a wide variety of crops and orchards. In addition, much of the area was covered by heavily timbered woodland.

Wampum, or shell beads, was the outstanding local Indian product. In early years wampum was an acceptable monetary substitute and a Town record dated June 1, 1662 states that "A Day's work shall be valued at 2 gilders coins or 4 gilders in wampum." White settlers also traded wampum for beaver skins which were then sold on European markets. Because of its many uses wampum was in abundant supply and Great Neck became the scene of great shell mounds, refuse from its manufacture.

Trading and other interchanges were common among white settlers and Indians and began when the Indians gave food to the early settlers. The Indian Sagamore paid two shillings to a white lady, Mrs. Washington, for a "Hollande shirt." The settlers paid Indians a bounty for killing wolves. Another item of trade was liquor. The Indians who were unaccustomed to such "spirits" could not, or would not, set limits and often drank to the point of intoxication. Authorities, wishing to curb Indian excesses, forbade the sale of liquor, but a black market in diluted whiskey soon thrived. The Indians, learning of this deception, would buy only "firewater"—liquor with an alcohol content high enough to burn when ignited!

The Directors at New Amsterdam received many complaints of settlers being brutally treated by the Indians. Indians ransacked homes, killed or stampeded cattle and flattened corn fields. Indian dogs, part wolf, undernourished and foul-tempered, harassed settlers. In response, Governor Kieft sent raiding parties against the Indians. These were often so harsh that even stronger retaliatory
attacks resulted. When Peter Stuyvesant became governor he tried to soothe Indian-white relations and signed a treaty of mutual "good behavior" with Chief Tackapousha. Stuyvesant was often reluctant to intervene on behalf of the settlers, and this proved to be a source of frustration to them.

Another difficult problem for both settler and Indian was the disposal of land. The Indians were not accustomed to individual ownership of land. They believed one could sell only the rights to the grass and food crops grown on the land. The white man, of course, believed that he could buy the land itself. This led to drawn-out disputes, as can be seen on the Carman-Fordham transaction which extended over a period of fifty years.

In 1643, Robert Fordham and John Carman left Connecticut and crossed Long Island Sound to make a new settlement. They "purchased" the area of Hempstead and North Hempstead from Chief Tackapousha and the following year a patent for this territory was granted by Governor Kieft. In 1657, the Indians protested the sale. John Hicks, John Seaman and Richard Gildersleeve signed a certificate attesting to the validity of the original transaction and added certain goods to make a new purchase price.

In 1666, Tackapousha again denied the sale of the "northern necks," only to have the sale confirmed again by Gildersleeve and Hicks. In the fall of 1675, the governor heard Tackapousha's latest protests. Tackapousha demanded that he receive 120 pounds sterling for the three necks and that he keep Cow Neck (Port Washington) for himself.

More than two years later, in the spring of 1677, this issue was still unresolved. Testimony was taken before the governor. Mr. Gildersleeve swore that he and Mr. Hicks paid the Indians for the land. Further testimony from Willian Yeats supported Mr. Gildersleeve's statement. Yeats had seen "several fathoms of wampom, 2 great cattels, some trading cloth—some knives and some powder, some lead—and he thinks some guns" given to the Indians, particularly to Tackapousha. The Indians, he noted, appeared to be "satisfied with it—for all the land hempstead men had either by purchase or patten" and after this transaction the Indians were heard saying "they knew they had no lands in hempstead bounds."

The matter continued to drag on undecided. Finally, at a town meeting held on December 12, 1684, the residents elected Robert Jackson, John Seaman, George Hewlett and John Treadwell to represent them in settling all claims with the Indians, even if it meant making an additional payment. It may be assumed that the
matter was thus satisfactorily resolved, since there is no further mention of these land disputes in town records.

Around the mid-1600's the Dutch and the English began a permanent settlement and the Indian population rapidly declined. In 1662 a terrible smallpox epidemic wiped out many of the Indians. Intermarriage and tribal wars also decimated their population. Daniel Denton (whose father, the Reverend Richard Denton, helped found Hempstead) observed, in 1670, that the Indian population had shrunk from six towns to two, probably “due to the Divine Hand of God, who, wherever the English choose to settle, clears the path for them by removing or shutting off the Indians either by wars one with the other or buy some mortal disease.”
The Dutch

Captain Adrian Block, sailing under charter of the Dutch West India Company, was probably the first white man ever to see Great Neck. Around 1614 he arrived in New York Harbor aboard “Der Tijger.” The ship burned and Block remained to build a fur trading post and home at what is now 41 Broadway in New York City. However, Block was a man of the sea and soon built another vessel, “The Restless.” It was aboard “The Restless” that Block sailed around Long Island, mapping it as he travelled.

The Dutch settlement on Long Island began in Brooklyn, but soon expanded eastward. At the same time English settlers, coming from Connecticut, were also moving into the area and the land patents granted by Governor Kieft to Fordham and Carman, as was previously noted, provided a basis for a permanent settlement. Soon 30 to 40 families were living in the Hempstead area.

Great Neck, along with the other North Shore necks, started out as pasture land. Peninsulas made natural “ranches” where cattle could be easily corralled. Of course, with so many cattle about, it was essential that the gates and fences be kept in good repair. Fines were levied against persons who disobeyed gate and fence laws, and rewards were given to those who informed on lawbreakers.

Samuel Allen (one of 40 Allens who arrived here before 1700) was hired by the town to keep the cattle. George Hewlett was also employed by the town to keep a herd of 70 calves. His job was to “watter them carefully twise a daye or onese at least and to goe out with the calves halfe ane ower by Sonne in the morning and not bring them in before sunset at night.” Mr. Hewlett promised to keep accurate records since he was responsible for any cattle lost. He “moonlighted” with another job, that of maintaining the Town Gate in good repair, and for that he was paid one shilling.

In early years, making payments in kind was a common practice. For his cattle-keeping job, Hewlett was paid in butter and eggs; the Town Drummer, Mr. Gildersleeve, in corn; and land was often exchanged for rum. Rewards of 20 shillings worth of corn were offered for wolves shot within four miles of town. Thomas Langdon appears to have been a self-appointed wolf killer, for in the year 1659 he was awarded six bushels of corn for killing ten wolves.
Other entries in old town records provide further glimpses of daily life in the 17th century. Many restrictions dealt with fire prevention. Homes were built of logs, thatched with straw or sedge, had wooden slat chimneys and so caught fire easily. Therefore, no resident was permitted to start a fire on his home-lot unless he had the agreement of his neighbors and adequate help on hand. Chimneys were to be swept, not burnt, and each had to have a ladder nearby. Rewards were given by the town to persons who helped put out fires.

Regulations, in early days, dealt with both practical and spiritual matters. The “Laws of God,” established in 1650, set the pattern for behavior and morality. Although most settlers were quite pious, those who defied the “Laws” were subject to severe fines, corporal punishment or banishment.

As time passed, farming gained a foothold as a way of life. Town records show that the first sale of land for agricultural purposes occurred in 1663. Soon town meetings were devoted to the granting of land (often by the drawing of lots) and to other farming matters. John Ellison, Jeremy Wood and Samuel Allen were a few of the peninsula’s first farmers. Thomas Hicks was granted a patent for 4,000 acres on Madnan’s Neck, surely one of the largest transactions ever concluded in the area.

Even in early days, citizens had to pay taxes. An excise tax on wine, beer or “any manner of drams of strange liquors” was used partly to educate poor children and to provide funds for the purchase of ammunition. Settlers were also required to pay a tithe of 1/10 their annual wheat crop to New Amsterdam, which they did reluctantly.

As a means of avoiding the tax or duty on goods imported from Holland (the only country with whom trading was permitted), smuggling flourished on the beaches, inlets and coves of the North Shore. Just such clandestine activities took place at a home on Locust Cove in Kings Point. This beautiful old home, which still exists, has been continually occupied since the 1600’s. Beneath the trapdoor in the dining room lies a tunnel leading under a cliff to the beach and a fine port for contraband! Smuggling to avoid duties and to broaden trade continued under English rule.

The English

Although Long Island was part of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, the local population and administration in Hempstead
were mainly English. The people were given some self-government through a limited court system and were permitted to nominate candidates to magistrate positions. However, the Dutch governor, Peter Stuyvesant was unpopular and often did not satisfy the colonists' needs. England, who never lost interest in New Amsterdam, took advantage of this civilian unrest to demand that English rights to these lands be recognized.

These rights dated back to 1636, when King Charles I issued a patent for Long Island to William Alexander, Earl of Stirling. The Earl did not press his claim and it was later bought for 3,500 pounds by King Charles II, who then presented it to his brother James, the Duke of York. The Duke had stronger notions about the English claim. An avalanche of public announcements issued from Hempstead Village, all aimed at influencing the population to surrender to the English, who in turn, would confer upon them the rights of English subjects and protect them from attack. After long and arduous bargaining, and a recognition of his weaker military position, Governor Stuyvesant surrendered to the English.


One of the first acts of the new rulers was to call an important town meeting, the Hempstead Assembly. Representatives from all over the island gathered mainly to settle old land disputes and fix several boundaries. John Hicks and Robert Jackson represented Madnan's Neck. The chief outcome of this meeting was the adoption of the Duke's Laws, to which the representatives could give only their consent. This mass of ordinances covered many aspects of daily life, and the courts were kept busy settling a variety of misdemeanors. Unfortunately, no provision was made for the convening of a self-governing body. Citizens were furious and threatened the delegates with bodily harm. They pressed for representation in a legislative body until one was finally authorized in 1683. This first legislature created courts of justice and modified many of the Duke's Laws.
The Peninsula Becomes a Community

Residents of the peninsula were still dissatisfied with the degree of self-government that had been achieved. They held their first community meeting in 1681 and, after debate, voted continued support of the town government in Hempstead. They agreed to provide both financial assistance and political loyalty. But this was soon to be tested. In a local “hot” election, those dwelling on Madnan’s Neck outvoted the inhabitants of the larger area of Hempstead and supported Robert Jackson for local office, instead of Simon Searing. Searing, however, was declared the winner. The residents of the “Neck” threatened to secede, but their petition was denied. Twenty years later the peninsula again petitioned for separation. Recognizing the extent of this drive for independence, the town did make some concessions and granted the community its own cattle pound and the right to hire its own Caretaker of Highways and Fences. William Mott and Henry Allen were soon engaged to fill this post. The people now felt they had some control over their everyday existence.

Religious life, too, took an independent turn. Tiring of the long ride to the village of Hempstead, local residents built a church near the present entrance to the South Middle School. The town minister, a Mr. Hobart, rarely came to preach and when he did, it was during the week, when most people were working. Worshipers protested to the Council in New York and refused to pay for the services of a minister who did not serve them.

In January, 1687, the Governor ordered Hempstead’s minister to travel to Madnan’s Neck at least once a month to preach and instruct the inhabitants and their children (then numbering about 60) in the duties of Christianity. Still, Mr. Hobart neglected his duties, although desiring full and retroactive salary, and the residents hired Reverend Morgan Jones. Mr. Hobart objected and Mr. Jones was fired. By June of that year the dispute was finally settled: Mr. Hobart was awarded all back salaries, Mr. Jones was hired as minister and Madnan’s Neck was separated (religiously) from Hempstead.

The Mills

As the 17th century drew to a close, there was an increased emphasis on farming and grist mills became an integral part of community life. Farmers exchanged the latest local news and transacted business while waiting for their grain or corn to be
ground. Children loved to come with their fathers, since the mills, with their roaring machinery, were exciting places to visit.

In 1679, Governor Edmund Andros gave Thomas Rushmore permission to erect a grist mill and saw mill on the west side of Madnan's Neck. As years passed, the mill came into the hands of the Allens (Elijah and then Elizabeth) and was finally sold to Bloodgood Havilland Cutter. Mr. Cutter used it as a fulling mill for the making of cloth and rope. Cloth was made from the wool of local sheep. Cutter Mill Road and Watermill Lane lead to the former site of this mill. (A sidenote: when his mother died, Mr. Cutter laid a two-ton tombstone at her grave. It still stands on a plot between 260th and 261st Streets.)

The most famous mill is the Saddle Rock Grist Mill, located on Grist Mill Lane in the Village of Saddle Rock. At one time Old Mill Road ran from the "Main Road" (Middle Neck Road) to this site. In 1702, Richard Hubbs, Jr. sold Henry Allen "the full half of ye mill which was between my brother Alexander Hubbs and myself with all that doth belong to said mill, mill stones, mill house, timber work, iron work, with one half of ye stream and dam."

In 1714, the Town gave Allen permission to operate the mill in return for a twelfth part of all grain ground. Because the machinery was simple, the miller was required to exert great physical labor. The grain was hand-carried upstairs and dumped into the millstone feeding hoppers. The finished flour was then carried down the same stairs. The well-worn indentations in the mill staircase bear witness to this procedure. The grinding stones were brought from France and the supporting ceiling beam was fashioned from a whole chestnut tree. Record books show that the mill was highly profitable and in its hey-day could grind 26 bushels or 1,300 pounds of grain.

Some historians have suggested that Henry Allen was related to Ethan Allen. Others trace the family back to Pyrus Allen, Lord Mayor of London in 1247. At any rate, the Allens were both prosperous and ubiquitous. It has been noted that at one time they probably "owned" most of Great Neck. Part of the old Allen homestead can be seen at 220 Grist Mill Lane. The house, a marvelous rambling building graced with scalloped shingles, even boasts a secret passageway.

Another Allen farm was located at the present site of the Village of Kensington and, still another, just to the north. Allenwood Park and Allenwood Road are named after this family. On Beach Road one can see a simple white frame house, its porch tilting slightly and its windows paneled in imperfect glass. This house, too,
was once part of an Allen farm, as a small sign perched in a tree proclaims. The beautiful farmhouse on Brookbridge Road also belonged to the Allens at one time. Allens held many government positions and were a powerful force in the community.

In 1829, when David Allen died, the mill was sold by his heirs to John Tredwell. He sold it, in 1833, to Richard Udall. From that time until 1950 the mill remained in the Udall family. The Udalls made many improvements, including the installation of a grain elevator. Toward the latter half of the 19th century, as the number of active farms decreased, the mill ceased to operate and fell into disrepair. In 1940, Louise Eldridge (Udall’s great-granddaughter) restored the mill. Upon her death in 1950, the mill was donated to the Nassau County Historical Society for preservation as an historical site open to the public. The Saddle Rock Mill, as it stands today, is a fine working example of one of the principal industries of rural Long Island.

**Slavery**

Although, in many areas, farming and slavery became synonymous, slaves were never used extensively on Long Island, nor was their employment particularly profitable. An old record shows Hempstead as having 82 householders and 222 slaves, or less than three per family. Evidence of this is seen in the Last Will and Testament of one slave owner and local resident, Lawrence Hewlett. In it he made this bequest: “to my beloved wife, Chastity Hewlett, the whole use of my farm and the use of one Negro man and my Negro woman and child.” Historians agree that Long Island slaves were relatively well-treated and often considered part of the family. This feeling was expressed by Letitia Cornell when she gave her slaves their freedom and acknowledged that she did so “knowing it to be the will of her husband to free his eight slaves, (she) gratified her own desire also in liberating James and Isabella with their children and giving them the additional name of Cornell.”

Mrs. Cornell was not alone in granting her slaves their freedom, and slavery on Long Island lasted barely 100 years. By the 1820’s it had disappeared. A small group of freed slaves settled along the upper part of Community Drive and, in 1836, founded the Zion AME Church. The small cemetery next to the church holds the graves of blacks and Mattinecock Indians who died here over 150 years ago.
Education

In colonial days formal schooling was provided for in the center of Hempstead on land set aside for that specific purpose. Poor children, for whom the long trip was arduous, were helped to find boarding places near the school by a charitable organization known as the Venerable Society. Wealthier children were often tutored at home.

School teachers were hard to find, and years passed without suitable instruction. In 1709, the Reverend Mr. Thomas of Hempstead bemoaned the fact that a teacher had not been found and, "the young grow up in miserable ignorance and I can't catechise for want of a school master to teach the children to read."

Perhaps the meager salary prevented more people from entering the teaching profession. Pay was low and often consisted of a combination of money, goods and wampum. In 1714, Mr. Thomas Gildersleeve was engaged as a school-master at a salary of ten pounds and expected to teach "the poor with several others to read, write and cast accounts at under 20s, a head each." By 1744, when a school mistress was hired the salary had risen to 40 pounds and a school system seemed well established.

Private schools provided another means of education. The Reverend Samuel Seabury opened a school in 1762 and ran this advertisement in the New York Mercury: "Mr. S. will entertain young gentlemen at his own house in a genteel manner at thirty pounds per year, schooling, washing, and wood for school fire included."

The first school on the peninsula was started by Adam and Anne Mott, whose 400 acres bordered Manhasset Bay. As Quakers they were very interested in education and so built a small (12' by 30') school house on their own land. The building had two floors, the upper being used for the storage of apples, hams, etc., and the lower acting as the schoolroom. Paper was scarce, so small writing was encouraged. Pens were made from goose feathers. When a new pen was needed, the whole school trooped out to catch the goose and pluck a quill. Firewood, gathered by the children, came from Mr. Mott's woodland. Candles were made from tallow obtained from the Mott's sheep. Because the children received plenty of manual training at home, only academic subjects were taught. It was the attitude of people like the Motts and other Quakers that encouraged educational efforts, and especially co-education, all over New York State.
As the colonial period came to an end, the growth of the area was very evident. Although farming and cattle-raising still provided the economic backbone, many new occupations had been added. The needs of the people were becoming more complicated, and millers, smithies, cordwainers (leather workers), teachers and doctors found gainful employment. Another advertisement by the ever-busy Reverend Seabury provides an insight into this new economic growth: "For bleeding, tooth-drawing, a potion for diarhhea, an emetic styptic, suporforic, cathartic, blister plaster 1s each; a visit—2 shillings; a visit in the night—4s; one visit and drawing a will—3 shillings; electuary—5 shillings; jalap—2 shillings." The last two items are medicines; jalap was a powder used as a purgative and electuary was a composite of powders mixed with honey or syrup to form a paste. This community growth was soon to be violently interrupted by the revolutionary spirit abroad in the colonies.

The Revolution

As the need to break away from England became more and more obvious, the Town of Hempstead was faced with a dilemma. The northern half (of which Great Neck was a part), with closer ties to New England and the Presbyterian, Congregationalist or Quaker heritage, supported American independence. The area of Hempstead south of Old Country Road and west of Great Neck had closer ties to England and was nearer the seat of government in New York City. Many residents in the southern half were members of the Church of England and, therefore, had religious ties as well. Because of this difference in allegiance, North Hempstead formed its own Town Committee and seceded from Hempstead. This took place in 1775, nine months before the Declaration of Independence was signed. In 1784, this act of separation was confirmed by the State Legislature.

The citizens in Great Neck were also faced with divided loyalties. Families found themselves split by their beliefs on the issue of "taxation without representation." Some aligned themselves with the Tories and remained loyal to England, others became patriots and joined the newly formed Whig party in support of the Continental Congress.

Finally, in January of 1776, Great Neck and Cow Neck formed an association loyal to the Continental Congress and declared themselves "greatly alarmed at the avowed design of the Ministry to raise a revenue in America." A few months later the Committee
devised America's first loyalty oath, aimed at preventing Loyalist (pro-English) infiltration and assuring allegiance to the Revolutionary movement. In order to gain acceptance by the community, all newcomers were required to sign this pledge. Residents felt themselves committed to independence.

Although no major battles were fought in the community, the Great Neck peninsula did offer several excellent vantage points from which scouts of the Continental Army could view enemy ships. In July, 1776, Sergeant William Hicks was ordered to assemble his men at Joseph Hewlett's Point (now Kings Point) for the purpose of spotting the English fleet's movements and reporting such activity to Major Richard Thorne, Commander of the Great Neck Militia. It is possible that a minimum of ship movement occurred, because four months later Hicks was ordered to forbid gambling, drinking or idle target practice which would result in a waste of ammunition. To bolster morale, the troops were ordered to exercise at least four hours each day.

Great Neck men took part in the Revolution in many other ways as well. A band of Great Neck horsemen was sent by General Washington to patrol the Rockaway coast. Others fought attacking whaleboaters sent by the English to raid the peninsula. Groups of Great Neckers engaged in lightning-fast raids on British forts across Long Island Sound in Connecticut. They also participated in the North Shore spy ring, bringing intelligence reports to General Washington.

For the most part, however, the war was more an ordeal than an adventure. When General Washington retreated, after losing the Battle of Long Island, the English army, led by General Howe, occupied the choicest lands. English and Hessian soldiers were billeted in the area for eight years and they did not discriminate between Tory and Whig when making demands on the people.

Livestock and crops were commandeered to supply English troops. Here is an example of one such directive: "You are hereby ordered to preserve for the King's use 10 loads of hay, 100 bushells of wheat, oats, rye, barley, Indian corn and all your wheat and rye straw and not to dispose of same but by my order in writing and will answer to the contrary at your peril. (signed Major John Morrison.)."

Residents had to contend with the army of occupation, and with bands of marauding "gangsters" as well. Sometimes the robberies and assaults were politically motivated (Tory against Whigs), other times the attacks were based solely on greed. The Allens, Motts and Thornes were among the many who suffered at the
hands of these bandits. Major Richard Thorne, who had served bravely during the fighting and had even been taken prisoner, and his family were particularly badly treated. "Once his back was cruelly cut down with a knife and his wife put under guard, to extort a confession where his money was hid." His wife outwitted the robbers by hiding the money bag in the folds of her gown. Another time, the Thornes were not so lucky and all of their clothes and many other valuables were carried off. In response to such terrorism, ladies carried muff pistols (guns small enough to conceal inside a lady's muff) whenever they went out into the streets. When the war ended, this area had been laid waste and the peaceful rural life of its inhabitants had been completely disrupted.

Home Henry Allen, early Great Neck resident.
THE PROSPEROUS NINETEENTH CENTURY

After independence was achieved, Great Neck began immediately to recuperate from the devastating effects of the war. Agricultural life returned to normal and the residents settled into an era of prosperity which continued despite upheavals in the rest of the country. Only barely recovered from the War of Independence, the nation was once again plunged into hostilities by the War of 1812. Although many sea battles took place off the shores of Long Island, Great Neck was untouched.

During the Civil War this pattern continued. No doubt there were Great Neck men among the first 15,000 Long Islanders called to fight for the union and Great Neckers surely responded to later draft calls as well. Local farms helped supply foodstuffs for the army. Huge depots were established in Queens to which farmers sent much produce. The industrial and commercial boom of the Civil War brought a concentration of population to the western half of Queens County, of which Great Neck was still a part. In fact, the Dutch Reformed Church in Lake Success once served as the Queens County Courthouse. As the ties between western Queens and the city grew stronger, the eastern half applied to the State Legislature for permission to form a new county, "Ocean County" by name. Plans for Ocean County were never completed.

In 1898 Queens became part of New York City and leaders of the eastern half met at the Allen Hotel in Mineola to form plans for the creation of Nassau County. The name Nassau was chosen in honor of King William III of Nassau who was of English and Dutch background, and so reflected the county’s heritage. In January, 1899 the County of Nassau was formally established and Great Neck became its westernmost boundary.

The Farms

During the 1800’s Great Neck was filled with fertile farms and orchards. At the south end, in the Lake Success area, Judge David Provost built a fine home (still standing south of Windsor Gate) and a large farm. Windsor Gate Road was once the path to many of the Judge’s farm buildings. Other farms in Lake Success were owned by Sam Warren and the Woolley family. On Farm Lane one can still
One of the old Woolley family homes in Great Neck.
see Maple Cottage, the Warren's farm house. In 1814 the A.N. Woolley family built a home over-looking Lake Success and members of the family continued to reside there until 1949. The Wooleys sold much of their land to the Phippses and the Vanderbilts. Another Woolley family lived on a farm between Woolley's Lane and Woolley's Brook.

The Schenck family also settled on the peninsula at this time. Their farm was on the present site of Schenck Avenue and Russell Gardens. In later years, Moses R. Schenck would serve as first Chairman of the School Board. Tredwells lived both in this area and further north. Dr. Benjamin Tredwell was one of the first licensed local physicians. He served a good portion of North Hempstead, and his horse and buggy could be seen carrying him to visit patients until 1830. Of course, during this period many people still used herbal teas and other home remedies to cure their ailments.

On an old map, the D.E. Smith farm, just north of the present train station, was imposing enough to be called an estate. Other Smith farms were located on the peninsula, too, but D.E.'s was famous for its apple orchards. Apples from these orchards were pressed at a cider mill on the Main Road. People would come from miles away to purchase cider from this mill. In season, cider was the local "hard liquor."

The Henry Ditmas farm, on the east side of Main Road, faced a huge tract owned by Richard Eugene Thorne. The Thorne family had received their land directly from the Indians early in local history. The property remained within the family until 1909 when it was sold to the McKnight brothers who named their estate Thornewood in memory of its original owners. McKnight Road was named in honor of these later proprietors. Thorne Lane (now Cedar Drive) led to the Thorne house which sat on the side of a hill overlooking Little Neck Bay. Part of this home later became the clubhouse of Soundview Country Club. The club house and golf course no longer exist. Houses line the fairways where golfers swung their clubs in summer and children sleighed in winter. Yes, fields, farm and fairways are now the Village of Great Neck Estates. Another branch of the family, Henry Thorne's, lived in Lake Success. Their home, built in 1826, was used, until 1964, as the Greenskeeper's House for Lake Success Golf Club.

The Deering family maintained a large farm where Kensington is today. Deering Lane is now called Beverly Road. Many of the magnificent lindens and Norway Maples which today line Kensington's streets were saplings in the 1800's. When the 135 acre
A view of Deering Lane, later Beverly Road in Kensington.
Deering farm was sold in 1904, only an old farm house and barn remained of this once prosperous farm.

Further up on Main Road lay the fertile 150 acre Mills P. Baker farm, Baker Hill. Mr. Baker, at one time, owned the third largest bakery in New York City. In 1815, he left Williamsburg to settle in Great Neck as a farmer. A descendant, John C. Baker, and his wife, Elizabeth, were great contributors to community life and both served on the School Board for many years. The handsome Village Hall of the Village of Great Neck is the old Baker home.

Near the Baker farm, running between Main Road and East Shore Road to the water beyond, lay the Messenger estate. It occupied part of the original Mott farm. In the early 1850's, Thomas Messenger arrived here by steamship from the Isle of Wight with a cargo of Jersey cows. He bought this estate and named it Minnamere Farm, for there was a small lake on the property. Mr. Messenger moved into the original Mott homestead, although he later added a Colonial-style wing and then another in Victorian design.

The property was inherited by Mr. Messenger's daughter, Emma. She married Charles Gignoux and the estate became known as the Gignoux Farm. At one time, the sight and smell of the first “horseless carriage” so inflamed Mr. Gignoux he had East Shore Road diverted to its present route in front of the barn and away from the house. Elise Gignoux, although known as a well-educated and refined lady, was also famous for performing much of the manual labor about the place. Between the years 1922 and 1924 she served as the first School Superintendent and would invite school children to picnic on her property. Often the children were allowed to wash the ancient petrified abalone shells (souvenirs of Mr. Messenger's travels) that lined the planting beds.

The western reaches of this estate became All Saints Church and Cemetery and the site of the John F. Kennedy School. Many homes now divide the land between East Shore Road and Middle Neck Road. The original farm and surrounding acres are once again called Minnamere Farm and are still functioning. The barns and the milk and chicken houses remain as they were and can be seen at the junction of East Shore Road and Cow Lane. An amusing anecdote recalls the day when some of the cows broke through a fence and were blocking traffic. No one else but Elise, herself, then a very old lady brought them back!

The Messenger estate was located close to Kings Point which, in the early 1800's, was known as Hewlett's Point. The land remained within the Hewlett family until John Alsop King, Jr.
bought the entire "point" in 1850. The King family stands out in American history. John’s grandfather, Rufus (who lived in Queens) attended the Constitutional Convention, was later a Senator and served as the first Ambassador to England. John’s father was elected Governor of New York. The Kings were related to the Rhinelander, Gracies and Van Rensselaers.

John King set about to turn his estate into a show place. A fine architect was hired to plan a villa in the Italian mode. King, himself, brought many fine specimen trees and flowering shrubs back from Europe. As a Harvard graduate and trained lawyer, King was active in civic life, serving as a State Senator and as a founder of All Saints Church. King sold his estate to the Church family (Arm and Hammer Company) who sold it to its present owners, the Brickmans. The beautiful gardens are still recognized by the Long Island Horticultural Society as one of the "outstanding privately maintained collections now in existence."

But life was not always easy for the farmers, and the rigorous weather could cause great devastation. Richard Allen described the Christmas of 1811 as the most destructive to life and property of any that had occurred on the North Shore. The mercury fell to zero and the snowstorm, with tremendous winds, lasted a full day. Between 50 and 60 vessels foundered in the Sound and, in some cases, entire crews perished. In 1816 crops were destroyed because of an unusually cold summer. In fact, it snowed in June that year! A hurricane several years later wrecked buildings, trees, fences and growing crops. And, in 1826, a great storm deposited eight inches of rain on the land.

Trade

Despite these natural hazards, Great Neck farms so prospered they supported not only the natives but filled the food and fodder baskets of New York as well. To provide access to Westchester markets, a ferry service was established in 1785, running from Long Island to Classon’s Point. A ferry continued to make this trip until the Whitestone Bridge was built. Many landings on the Great Neck peninsula, such as Woolley’s Dock, Hewlett’s Dock, Adam Mott’s Shore and other public docks, provided access to open water and trade with other areas.

One of the major trading items was hay. In 1784, when North and South Hempstead were separated, they were ordered to keep certain natural resources in common. In 1821, South Hempstead
(later Hempstead) denied North Hempstead access to the sedge or salt hay that grew along its marshes. At first, deprived farmers bought plots of 10 to 50 acres in South Hempstead for cutting hay, but they soon began to grow it themselves. New York City relied heavily on horse-drawn vehicles, and the horses ate hay. On the other hand, orchards and planted fields required fertilizer and horses produced the best—manure! A vigorous trade between Great Neck and the City ensued. The boat-landing at the Grist Mill served as a trading and shipping center.

The sloop, "The Richard Udall," owned by brothers Archibald and James Udall, made frequent round-trips into the city. Old accounts listed at least 300 items carried to New York. A typical shipment might include 100 to 200 bales of hay, 300 fence posts, eggs, chickens, pigs, apples and flour. (Indeed, the Grist Mill so flourished that it ground grain not only for the farmers' own use but for sale as well.) On return trips the hold would be filled with sugar, coal, iron, oil, lime, ashes, seed, rice, candy, coffee, crockery, hardware, crackers and farm tools. First on the trading list, however, were hay and manure.

To serve the farmers and their families, many more shops and services thrived along Main Road. Adam Muler owned a shoemaker's shop, Jonathan Studer was the village blacksmith, Bender and Palmer were wheelrights, Henry Lahr ran a candy shop, E.A. Gilliar was a stone mason and Charles Austin, a teamster. General stores run by the Hayden brothers, Nehemiah and Samuel, were so popular that for a while the old village was called Haydenville. Today, Hayden Avenue is a reminder of this family's prominence. Sam Hayden was a Democrat and when the Democrats won an election, the post office would move to his store at the corner of Hicks Lane. If the Republicans were in, the post office would be found at Nehemiah's store near Beach Road. In 1882, the brotherly feud subsided when Great Neck built its own official post office. Another Hayden enterprise was a coal yard down by the beach. Henry Hayden married "Aunt Lizzie" Allen and together they had three sons and a daughter. Their daughter married William Ellard who was a relative of Thomas Ellard. The Ellards farmed the area around Ellard Avenue; Thomas' son Robert was born there, attended school in Great Neck and became a fine carriage-maker. It is Robert Ellard's reminiscences that have provided school historians with many details about early education in Great Neck.
Education

In 1812, the New York State legislature passed the country’s first state-wide common school law, and shortly thereafter, in 1813, the Great Neck public school system was born. Here is the official description of its boundaries.

“Beginning at the old mill creek below Elijah Allen’s Mill, from thence running one rod south of Elijah Allen’s Mill, from thence one rod south and easterly of Roelf Schenck’s house, from thence one rod east of Daniel Cornell’s house from thence north and west of John Morell’s house until it comes to Cowbay, easterly by Cowbay, northerly and westerly partly by the Sound and partly by the Little Neck Bay to place of beginning.”

School trustees were chosen, taxes levied, a site selected and teachers were hired. In 1814, the first one-room public school house opened in Great Neck. It was located beside Woolley’s Brook, east of Main Road. Population was centered in the old village and, until 1869, children were educated in a series of one-room schoolhouses. The last of these, built in 1838, still stands, although it is now a shop at the corner of Fairview Avenue and Middle Neck Road.

In 1869, a fine T-shaped, two room school house was built on Arrandale Avenue. It had belfry and a bell, the first play yards which divided boys and girls by high wooden barriers, and was surrounded by a white picket fence. Education was compulsory until the age of 14, although bright students were encouraged to stay beyond the mandatory age. Mr. Ellard recalled that “a boy didn’t graduate, he just left when he got tired, or wanted to do something else, or they had a job for him.”

The school population continued to grow and the school system grew with it. Just before the turn of the century a high school curriculum was established and, in 1898, Great Neck graduated its first four year high school students ready for college entrance. Other firsts were a microscope, a health program, a laboratory and indoor plumbing!
Great Neck's third public school from 1840-1869, later a bootmaker's shop.

Expanded 1869 Great Neck Public School.
The Library

The school and library systems have always been a source of pride to the community. The library was started in 1880 at a meeting in Mrs. William Onderdonk's home. She, Louise Udall Skidmore and a few other friends felt that Great Neckers, then numbering about 1,000, would definitely benefit from the creation of a library. And so they set about raising money for equipment, books and a proper location.

For a fund raiser, Miss Skidmore organized a slide show of classical and mythical subjects and obtained a magic lantern using gas to show the slides. Imagine Miss Skidmore's dismay when the gas tanks, ordered from New York, were sent to Roslyn and not Great Neck! On a cold snowy night, Miss Skidmore, herself, travelled by sled to retrieve the tanks. Thirty dollars were raised that night and contributions brought in another $1,000. The library soon had its first home in the office of the telegraph operator. The operator's mother served as librarian.

The library was always meant to be a public institution, but, in 1888, the Reverend Louis de Cormis wanted to take over the library on behalf of All Saints Church. Again, Miss Skidmore came to the rescue. She obtained the New York Mercantile Library Constitution and had it adapted to fit Great Neck. In 1889 the Library was incorporated as a public facility (and Reverend de Cormis was made President of the Library Board). By 1890, the library could boast a circulation of 657 books (80% fiction) and 57 subscribers.

At the turn of the century, interest in the library was low and circulation was static. The library was now located in the home of a Mrs. Gordon on Middle Neck Road. Rent of $3.00 a month plus a $50 annual stipend was paid to Mrs. Gordon, who kept the library open from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Great concern was displayed over the minds of the young. The Three Musketeers was banned, for example, and all questionable books needed the approval of the entire board before they could be placed on the library's shelves.

The Library Board met and agreed that to increase circulation the library would have to expand its collection and so satisfy different interests. Miss Skidmore, by then, had married Roswell Eldridge, the superintendent of her Grandfather Udall's estate. In 1907, she and her husband built and donated to the community the English-style, half-timbered library building on Arrandale Avenue.

For many years the Eldridges' annual donation of $1,000 was the library's chief source of support. In 1927 Mrs. Eldridge withdrew their contribution, stating that she believed reliance on
Drawing of the library on Arrandale Avenue (Now Great Neck House).
large gifts was unhealthy. Mrs. Eldridge encouraged community-wide financing instead. The Library Board investigated state law and found it possible to include the library budget as part of school funding to be voted on yearly by the taxpayers. The new system was instituted and, since then, every library budget has been passed by the voters.

As circulation grew, the library expanded further. Mrs. Eldridge once again spearheaded much of the growth and development. The first branch was opened in the Black Bird Tea Shoppe. Now there are three branches, one in New Hyde Park, another in the Plaza shopping center and a third on Great Neck Road. By 1954 the library system could boast a yearly contribution of 344,917 books. In 1964 this figure had increased to 522,000, and 25,000 card holders were recorded.

However, once again the facilities proved to be inadequate. The Library Board considered a number of building sites for a new facility. Parcels of land in the Plaza, Lake Success and Kensington were suggested and then discarded. A beautiful plot adjacent to the millpond in Saddle Rock was finally selected, and a handsome modern library, four times the size of the old, was built. The old library, on Arrandale Avenue, was converted into a community center called Great Neck House. It provides space for meetings, lectures, recreation, instructional programs and other activities. The new library contains a vastly expanded collection of books, records, magazines and reference works and has the capacity to include many community projects and programs within its walls. In 1967, the library dropped its $1.00 annual membership fee and resolved to increase public awareness and involvement. Today it is an institution all Great Neck is proud to have within its midst.

**Transportation**

In the nineteenth century, as now, transportation and proximity to New York City were responsible for many changes in the community. Early public transportation was provided by a stagecoach line. The stagecoach began its run at the ferry slip in Port Washington, picked up Great Neck passengers at the corner of Main Road and North Hempstead Turnpike (now Northern Boulevard) and then continued to Long Island City. Few people used the stagecoach, however, as the Great Neck stop was far from the center of population, the roads were muddy and rutted and the trip was long.
The train, too, was not popular in early days. From its inception, the Long Island Railroad experienced financial difficulties and passenger problems. Hoping to capture the New York to New England trade, railroads laid the first tracks through the center of the island to Greenport, where passengers could connect by ferry to Boston. Unfortunately, an improved network of roads and track between Boston and New York soon made the Long Island line virtually unused. To add to the railroad’s woes, most Long Island communities were located on the two shores, but the train ran down the middle. It was acknowledged that branches and extensions would have to be built if the railroad were ever to organize on a sound financial basis.

Railroad fever hit! Many community leaders felt that the present company and its president, Oliver Charlick, were not moving quickly, so they organized and built their own lines. Many track systems were designed to converge in Flushing, which made for further complications. A period of hectic competitive growth was quickly followed by mergers, bankruptcies and a general atmosphere of crisis.

In 1866, the North Shore Railroad Company, backed by Messrs. Mitchell, Willets, Mott and Udall, built the Flushing to Great Neck extension. The first commuter run was made without fanfare. In fact, the conductor had to dismount in the vicinity of 207th Street to let down the fence bars between Thomas and Robert Bells’ farms. When the train arrived in Great Neck it was greeted by an enthusiastic group of school children. Excited by the arrival of the “iron monster,” they raced to the station and were treated to a free ride to Douglaston and back. A fare of 46¢ and a schedule were soon established. One train left Great Neck at 7:30 AM and another started the return trip at 3:00 PM. Passengers were deposited at Hunters Point where they proceeded to New York by ferry. This rail-line, too, was beset by financial problems and, in 1880, the Queens County Bank was appointed as receiver. In 1884 the North Shore Railroad Co. merged with the Long Island Railroad.

When establishing the location of the tracks, Great Neck’s wealthier residents, who had organized the railroad, made sure that the dirty, smelly trains did not come too close to their lovely homes, fields and orchards. As a result, the depot was far away and inconvenient. All agreed nothing could compare with the blue waters and clean air of a steamship ride.

Rudimentary boat service was provided in the early 1800’s by a now nameless rower who would ferry two or three people across to Whitestone where they could board a larger boat, powered by
An early view of the Great Neck RR Station prior to elimination of grade crossing.
sail, and continue to New York. By 1834 the steamships, The Sun and The Statesman, were docking at the landing southwest of the Grist Mill and making it to New York in two hours. Timber for the dock came from Sam Remsen’s farm (now Remsen Road). Whitehead Hewlett and James Udall formed the Great Neck Steamboat Wharf Company to take advantage of the residents’ desire to travel by boat.

In 1876, a large sidewheeler, The Sewanhaka, provided full commuter service. During the 1880’s The Sewanhaka burned off Hellgate and the leaders of 13 Great Neck families were lost. The Grace family (of whom we shall hear more later) was saved, although Mrs. Grace loaned her life jacket to an elderly gentleman and helped save his life.

The Sewanhaka was replaced by The Idlewild and the steamboat’s popularity continued. The boat started its trip in Sea Cliff, stopped at Glen Cove, Sands Point and in Great Neck at Steamboat Landing. If one were to project Steamboat Road through the grounds of the Merchant Marine Academy it would end at the old main dock. One passenger, William H. Arnold, became notorious for his boarding practices. Arnold’s house was on the water and each day he would wait until the steamboat was about to depart and then gallop at full speed to the landing and leap aboard at the very last second. Needless to say, this did not endear him to fellow passengers!

Wealthy commuters had their own staterooms, but, in general the atmosphere on board was friendly and democratic. The 50¢ fare encouraged farmers and their wives to use the steamboats for trading purposes. They often brought baskets of chickens and eggs with them to sell at the Fulton Street market.

From Great Neck, the ship crossed the East River and, in a little more than one hour, arrived at the dock at 31st Street where the women and children were dropped off either to shop or attend private school. The boat continued down to Peck’s Slip at Wall Street where the financiers and tycoons, now beginning to acquire farmland and create major estates, disembarked. The vessel stayed at its Wall Street dock and was loaded with coal and supplies until 4:15 when the trip home began.

Commuting by boat was really a summer affair; partly because the trip was impossible in severe weather but mainly because of the vast increase in passengers during the summer. Farmers traded more and residents, who lived in the city during the winter, used the steamboats only in warm weather. Each spring they would arrive here by boat to take up residence in elaborate
baronial mansions. Their possessions were brought by their servants in long lines of horse-drawn carriages across the muddy roads of Queens to Great Neck.

Waiting for the Steamboat

Miss Emily Childs, who summered in Great Neck on the Hewlett estate, has set down her charming reminiscences of the steamboat ride. Her memory of arriving at the landing to find it "filled with handsome carriages of all sorts occupied by the families of the men who were coming home from business, smartly dressed women in the lovely summer clothes of those days, light silks and organdies surmounted by their flower and feather trimmed hats and overshadowed by gay parasols," gives us an indication of another way of life, the grand rather than the elementary, which was beginning to unfold.
The Grand Estates

Miss Childs recalls that "life at Great Neck was much like English country life . . . large houseparties, much entertaining of all sorts and much formality." Calls were paid and calling cards exchanged. One dressed for dinner and spent a lazy summer enjoying tennis afternoons, garden parties, long dinners, teas and luncheons. Excursion barges were often towed to picnic spots offshore. A life of luxury was truly enjoyed.

Within many of the huge mansions lived numerous branches of the same family. One would find spinster aunts, widows and cousins, as well as the owner's immediate kin, all under one roof. These beautiful homes with their parklike grounds required large staffs of gardeners, workmen, maids and governesses. Many of the male workers lived in the village and, after putting in a ten hour day, could be seen trudging down the lanes to their small homes. Governesses were often young women from southern families impoverished by the Civil War. The maids were usually Irish girls only recently arrived in this country.

William Russell Grace, an Irish immigrant who made a fortune in shipping and trading with South America, was one of the first wealthy New Yorkers to locate here. Mr. Grace also served as Mayor of New York City during the years 1881-1882 and 1885-1886. The Grace estate, located north of Blue Sea Lane, was called Gracefield and consisted of two hundred acres of the original Adam Mott farm. The Grace mansion is still occupied today, although a beautiful walled garden and Italian-tiled pool lay off Blue Sea Lane, decaying beneath years of overgrowth and neglect.

The Graces also owned a good portion of the downtown area. Perhaps the story is more legend than truth, but it is said that Mr. Grace acquired this land through an encounter with the Long Island Railroad. One rare day when Mr. Grace rode the train, he found the washroom locked. He successfully sued the railroad for his inconvenience and received the land around the station in settlement. Grace named the area Thomaston, in honor of his wife Lilus, who was born in Thomaston, Maine. In fact, at one time the Great Neck train stop was called Thomaston. This area is now Great Neck Plaza and Thomaston is further south. Grace brought Richard Kehoe, an accountant with his firm, to Great Neck to manage this property. Ten homes were built for the use of the railroad's engineers and conductors. Some were rented for $10-$12 per month, others sold for $1,500 to $3,000. Plots 50 x 100
were bought for $500. Parts of the Plaza are still owned by the Grace family, as are other estate properties around the area (one lies vacant off Beach Road).

Another branch of the family, Mr. and Mrs. Morgan H. Grace, also played a part in shaping the community. Mrs. Grace lamented the fact that most well-to-do residents sent their children to private schools in the city and, therefore, had to move back to New York in the fall. She particularly missed the glorious country autumns. To remedy this situation, Mrs. Grace founded the Great Neck Preparatory School. The Graces donated ten acres on Steamboat Road and $50,000 for the school’s development. Lord Buckley, a famous educator, was hired to plan the faculty and curriculum. Soon, children from all the leading families were enrolled. When Jewish families requested admission to the school, those in charge were non-plussed at first. But the Graces insisted on an open admission policy and the question was resolved without fuss. The Great Neck Preparatory School, now located in Roslyn, is called the Buckley School. A group of private homes is now found at the Steamboat Road location.

William R. Grace, although himself a Roman Catholic, had a profound effect on Jewish life in Great Neck. In 1891, he brought Great Neck’s first Jew, Avram Wolf, from New York to be his tailor. Louis Wolf, Avram’s son (and prominent local attorney) recalls that Grace persuaded the Merritt Post family to give the Wolfs a twelve room house on eleven acres, rent free. After a while, and much to Avram Wolf’s annoyance, the Posts began to charge a minimum rent. The Posts gave Wolf the opportunity to buy the house for $11,000, but Wolf refused the offer. The house and property were sold, soon after, to Frederick White for $75,000! Another son, I.G. Wolf, became an outstanding realtor who was involved in many major land transactions on the peninsula. Fannie, Avram’s daughter, married Albert Antor, founder of Antor Jewelers, the oldest continuously operated business in Great Neck.

In 1930, the Grace family began to sell parts of their estate. They reserved the manor house and a large tract of land for their own use, but developed 100 acres with private roads, pool and boating facilities and park areas. They called this section Grace Harbor. During the 30’s a few substantial homes were built on Remsen Road and on Henhawk Road. After World War II, the subdivision was completed with the building of more private homes.

Another large estate was owned by William Gould Brokaw, who built a magnificent home on part of the original Allen holdings. In fact, an old Allen barn was turned into a full-sized theatre. The
estate was also famed for its lavish Italian gardens, a half-mile race track and polo fields. The Brokaws were very popular, not because of their wealth, but because they shared their love of horses with everyone. Each year the Brokaws invited the entire community to a gala Race Day. Both flat and steeplechase races were held, bookmakers were available and exhibitions, food and drink abounded.

The Brokaw estate lay in the vicinity of the north high schools, Strathmore and Nirvana Gardens. The mansion, its ruins still visible in 1930, stood behind Great Neck North Senior High School. Nirvana Gardens takes its name directly from that of the Brokaws' estate, which was called "Nirvana." All the streets in the Nirvana section are named after Brokaws. There is Brokaw Lane, William Street, Gould Street, Florence Street and Polo Road. Preston Street may be named after Dr. Preston Pope Satterwhite, who married a Brokaw girl. Their fabulous home, Martin Hall (named after Mrs. Satterwhite's first husband, James E. Martin), was a North Shore showplace. The imposing mansion burned in 1932, but the carriage house can still be seen. It is the unusual brick building on Martin Court.

George M. Cohan, the great actor, playwright and song writer, lived in a breath-taking, all white, hill-top home at the corner of Steppingstone Lane and Kings Point Road. His stables and race track were across the street. Many local boys found work grooming, walking and providing other equestrian services for Brokaw, Grace and Cohan horses.

The most unusual estate was Redcote, belonging to Roswell and Louise Eldridge. Mrs. Eldridge was a Udall and a Skidmore (both old Great Neck families) and inherited vast acreage. The estate consisted of 400 acres and was valued at $2,000,000 during the 20's. It was, also, the only one family village in the entire state. Because of its low population, a special legislative act was needed in 1911 to legalize Saddle Rock's incorporation. The Roslyn News noted that the names of village officials and Eldridge servants often coincided. Mr. Eldridge was mayor from 1911 to 1927, and was then succeeded in office by his wife, who held that office until 1945!

As Mrs. Eldridge had a hand in forming the library, so Mr. Eldridge was instrumental in the creation of the Park District. In 1916, he presented the Town Board with petitions requesting the establishment of a park district to serve 750 families. Great Neck Estates and Saddle Rock, then the only incorporated villages, were invited to join, but declined.
Home and Italian Gardens of William Gould Brokaw.
Roswell Eldridge surveys his estate Redcote, now Village of Saddle Rock.
The Public Bathing Beach, formerly Hayden's Coal Yard, was acquired through the efforts of Mrs. Eldridge. She and Clarkson Cowl also raised funds to finance the Park District purchase of land for the Village Green from the Brokaws. This land was bought in 1905 by Mr. Brokaw, who then conveyed one acre to the Board of Education for the construction of the Arrandale School. The other five acres were offered to the Park District. Everyone of social prominence participated in the funding. In addition, school children donated $24.38 in pennies. Mrs. Eldridge built the bandstand in honor of her husband. A bronze plaque, commemorating Mr. Eldridge's contributions to the community, can be found in the floor of the rotunda.

In 1929 when she returned from Europe, Mrs. Eldridge found a community imbroglio of major proportions. Mrs. Eldridge was, at that time, one of three Park Board commissioners and very influential. During her absence, Walter P. Chrysler offered to donate to the Park District the Olga Petrova estate plus $85,000 for a bath house and lockers. In exchange, he wished the Board to give him the Public Bathing Beach which adjoined his estate. After some discussion the Park Board refused the offer. Many citizens felt that Mrs. Eldridge was unduly swayed by friends whose property would have been affected by the change. Disgruntled residents pressed for direct election of the park commissioners. In 1936, elections were held, but the Eldridge-supported candidate still won.

If we look at the school system we again see the Eldridge hand. For many years nominations and elections to the school board and budget votes took place at one district meeting. Whoever was present voted. It has been suggested that voter qualifications were rarely checked and that Mr. Eldridge was known to pack the house to insure a vote favorable to his candidate. In the 1930's Mr. Eldridge was no longer alive and the demand for personal registration, the use of voting machines and for separate elections met with success. Nominations came into the hands of public-spirited groups such as they Mayor's School Committee and later, the Non-Partisan Citizen's Nominating Committee. Independent candidates now run at large for school board positions.

Little remains of the original Eldridge estate. Along Grist Mill Lane can be seen the caretaker's cottage and the chauffeur's home and a few less easily identified smaller buildings. For the most part the village is now a suburban community of single family homes, village recreational facilities, the Saddle Rock School, the historic Grist Mill, the Great Neck Library and a Sewer District Plant (the
handsome Georgian colonial building next to the library). So, perhaps, the Eldridge idea of service to the community lingers still.

Great Neck as a Summer Resort

The wealthy were not the only ones to crave Great Neck's sublime waters and fresh summer breezes. Many hotels and inns did a thriving business. Mrs. Van Cott turned a handsome white pillared mansion into a summer hotel. Christian Dennelly owned the Brookdale Hotel, near the station. William Ninesling was proprietor of the Half-Way House. John and Peter Kane owned the Annadale Hotel. John was born in Great Neck in 1854, only a few years after his parents immigrated from Ireland. Another fine hotel was owned and managed by George Lasher. John Britton ran a hotel and saloon called The Homeward Hotel at 160 Steamboat Road. On Cutter Mill Road stood the Thomaston House (later called the Evans Hotel) managed by a member of another old Great Neck family, J.B. Gilliar.

Perhaps many vacationers were provided with transportation by Charlie Smith and Jim Ketcham. Their bus company, the Universal Auto Bus Service, operated a bus constructed out of an old trolley body mounted on car chassis. It seated 14 and we can see that fares have barely changed, for a ride cost 30¢ and went from the railroad station to a final stop in Kings Point.

Regular stagecoach service was provided during the 19th century between Jamaica and the resorts in Lake Success. The Lakeville House, on the north side of Lake Success, welcomed guests arriving by coach in the evening. The lake was known for its excellent fishing. For, in 1890, Dr. Sam Mitchell and his uncle, Uriah (who was the County Sheriff) stocked the lake with yellow perch from Lake Ronkonkoma. Lake Success still belongs to the Town of North Hempstead by virtue of a colonial grant. At various times the residents have successfully warded off attempts by such strong-armed notables as William Vanderbilt and Robert Moses to purchase it.

Another inn was located at the junction of Lakeville Road and Lake Drive. It was owned by I.U. Willets and called Willets Tavern. Many parishioners of the nearby church would stable their horses at the tavern during services and stop by for a drink afterwards. Not far from Willets Tavern was the Red Lion Inn. Once a village store, it
One of the original buses on the peninsula.
had been converted to a restaurant and inn and was reputed to be a favorite of the Prince of Wales (later the Duke of Windsor).

Guests at these elegant establishments were often distracted by the delectable odors wafting across the lake from Ole Aunt Hannah Chisholm's fried chicken emporium. The shores of the lake were rapidly filled with similar snack stands and shanties. Surrounding streets were jammed with traffic. The increased noise and commotion forced residents to seek zoning powers which would enable them to control use of the area. They found that incorporation as a village would provide this power. And so Lake Success incorporated for the precise purpose of avoiding its turning into another Coney Island!

While some continued to regard Great Neck as a summer retreat, more and more estate owners settled here full time, and our less wealthy, but no less important, "villagers" turned Great Neck into a modern community.
By 1900, Middle Neck Road had been paved and was on its way to becoming a commercial center. Shops and businesses were located in the vicinity of the Village Green. General stores owned by the Haydens, Nineslings, Hicks's, and Le Cluses satisfied most consumer needs and also acted as rudimentary banks. Great Neck's first financial officer, August Hicks, would cash checks and either pay in full or in part, and, after depositing the checks in a New York bank, pay the rest. But Hicks found this procedure complicated and one May morning in 1906, Hicks and William Genner travelled to New York and brought back $5,000 with which to start a bank. The next morning the Bank of Great Neck opened at the corner of Arrandale Avenue and Middle Neck Road. William R. Grace and Roswell Eldridge served as President and Vice-President. One of the banker's first acts was to erect two hitching posts and transactions were sometimes held curbside! Great Neck was in business. This early bank was joined in 1916 by the Great Neck Trust Company and in 1925 by the First Bank of Great Neck.

Another sign of progress occurred in 1879 when electricity was produced commercially for the first time. For many years it was provided on a community basis, and available only at night. Then LILCO incorporated in 1910 and 24-hour service began. Great Neck Estates was one of the last communities to retain gas lamps, and was still using them in the 1930's.

The most significant event, in terms of Great Neck's future development, occurred around 1904. Charles E. Finlay (President of the Aetna Bank of New York) and E.J. Rickert bought the Deer­ing farm and set about turning it into the present village of Ken­sington. Until that time, no homes were built for sale, north of the tracks, that cost more than $4,000 to $5,000. Finlay proposed to build moderately luxurious homes in the $15,000 to $35,000 price range. In addition, he planned a community recreation facility with parks, tennis courts and a swimming pool on the shore. Some called it "Finlay's Folly," but this development was to set the standards for the future development of Great Neck. A colorful booklet, published by Finlay and Rickert, extolled the virtues of Great Neck and the ease of commuting to a comfortable suburban-country life.
Middle Neck Road as it appeared in the early 20th century
The Bank of Great Neck at the corner of Arrandale Avenue and Middle Neck Road.
Great Neck's first high-school, built in 1914, 1983 - Site of Senior Citizen housing.
As the population in the Kensington area grew, a frame schoolhouse, Schoolhouse Number 2, was built near the present site of the Kensington-Johnson School. It was joined on a banner day in 1914 when Great Neck opened its first high school. This school was the west building of the Arrandale School and the words "High School" were engraved over the entrance. Residents pointed with pride to the school's modern gym, although there was no gym teacher! Students formed their own athletic organization and played home games on an open field known as Regan's Lot. In 1921, the High School boasted a graduating class of three. Private schooling was provided by the Great Neck Preparatory School and The Wykeham School, a private school for girls, run by Mrs. Clara Wykeham Sweetland in her home on Linden Street.

Influential Residents

Drawing of Judge E. E. LeCluse

During the early 20th century there was a concentration on community improvements. Judge Egbert Le Cluse's experiences provide a good example of the increasing civic pride and awareness. The Judge arrived in Great Neck in 1895. He first lived on the Brokaw estate and then moved into the old Hayden homestead on Arrandale Avenue. He and his brother Milton es-
established a grocery store, but went their separate ways when "Eg" developed an interest in politics. In 1919, he was elected Justice of the Peace and remained an important figure of law and order until 1938. Of his career, the Judge had this to say: "In all my years I tried to keep sight of the fact that a court is a place of law, where a man is supposed to get justice. If it was a case of common sense or the letter of the law, I tried to use common sense. Not being a lawyer, I never held with all that legal mumbo-jumbo."

But the Judge did believe in civic progress, and served as president of the Great Neck Improvement Society. He spearheaded the drive to bring telephone service to Great Neck. The telephone company agreed to install service from the station to All Saints Church, if 50 subscribers could be found at a fee of $3.50 each. Hicks Brothers General Store signed up for Great Neck 1, a pay phone. Great Neck 2 belonged to the Judge. Calls were handled by Alice Stubbs, the peninsula's first telephone operator. In 1900, along with the Schencks and Nineslings, Judge Le Cluse helped found the Alert Engine Hook and Ladder and Hose Company No. 1. Residents currently shaken by the company's lusty fire alarms, will be amused to learn that the first fire bell was a railroad tie hit with a sledge hammer!

An early telephone operator
Great Neck's other fire company, the Vigilant, also owes its beginnings to the efforts of a particular resident. Although founded by Richard Kehoe, John J. Hughes and Claude Warner, it was the enthusiasm and generosity of William K. Vanderbilt, Jr. that really made the Vigilant a going concern. Vanderbilt felt like "one of the boys" and often donned fire-fighting gear and went to work as a fireman. The Vigilant's volunteers went into action before the turn
of the century, hitching up the horses from Robertson’s Bakery and driving at full speed to put out the fire at Harry Alexander’s in Kings Point. Imagine the consternation that occurred if a fire happened when Robertson had his horses out making a delivery! One of the Vigilant’s first purchases was a team of horses of its own. Many years later in March, 1938, after exhausting all the Vigilant’s equipment in attempting to extinguish a huge fire, Chief Frank Gilliar received special permission from Mayor Fiorello La Guardia to use Queen’s companies and aerial ladders. Shortly thereafter, aerial ladders were purchased, and many changes were made in local building codes so that in the future conflagrations might be minimized. The two fire companies continue to serve the community in a brave and efficient manner.

At one time, the Vigilant’s mentor, William Vanderbilt, owned sizeable portions of Lake Success, then called Lakeville. Vanderbilt installed athletic fields, a swimming pool and tennis courts, barracks and headquarters for the use of his naval reserve unit. This complex later became Lake Success pool and tennis club. Vanderbilt also built a private golf course for a very rich and strictly limited membership. Sold during the Depression, it became the Deepdale Country Club and, later, the Lake Success Village Golf Course. His own estate, Deepdale, was the site of the old Glen Oaks Country Club and is now occupied by giant hi-rise apartments.

Lake Success was the western terminus of the famous Vanderbilt Raceway or Motor Parkway. It joined the Vanderbilt estate with one in Lake Ronkonkoma. Some have suggested that Vanderbilt wanted to maintain a right-of-way through the center of the island so that the New York Central could compete with the Long Island Railroad if Montauk ever became the Port of New York. Vanderbilt Drive and Lake Drive stand at the old entrances to the Vanderbilt estate.

If Vanderbilt owned much of Lake Success, the remainder was, to a great extent, owned by the Phipps family. Henry Phipps rose from office boy to become a partner of Andrew Carnegie and the possessor of a $100,000,000 fortune. When the Phippsses bought their land from heirs of the Woolley family, Mrs. Phipps retained one of the old family homes with its carvings made by British soldiers during the Revolution. The Phipps estate and mansion later became part of the school system.

At the turn of the century, realtors noted that “there was a steady absorption of land on the North Shore by great estates creating an aristocracy of Long Island . . . . Great Neck with its
miles of bridal paths, acres of golf courses and ideal bathing, boating and other sources of amusement is placed among the foremost ranks of America's most desirable communities."

Large estates, valued in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, covered the peninsula. Along West Shore Road lay the Cord Meyer estate, The Cove, now Cove Lane. Mrs. Cornelia Meyer was a descendant of the Covert family, one of the oldest Dutch families on Long Island. Cord Meyer was a political and financial leader who built much of Queens. His son, J. Edward Meyer, founded the Citizens Water Supply of Newtown. Nearby, H. White's Beach Lane estate was famous for its exotic trees and plants brought back by his shipping fleets from all parts of the world.

Another estate was owned by Harry Sinclair (Sinclair Oil) who, after his Teapot Dome Scandal conviction, would commute to prison each day in his chauffeur-driven car. Sinclair Drive is named for this previous owner. Moses Anenberg, of the publishing family, bought and lived in the George M. Cohan home. Other properties were owned by A. Wineburg (president of Carbona), Alfred P. Sloan (General Motors), Walter P. Chrysler (Chrysler Motors), who bought Henri Bendel's estate after the tragic death by drowning of Bendel's daughter, I. Herbert Ballantine, Jacob Arons, Hiram Bloomingdale, Ellsworth Statler, of the Statler hotel chain, and Richard D. Wyckoff, the millionaire broker and publisher of the Wall Street Magazine.

The vast estates of the A.H. Alkar and H.P. Booth families were located around East Shore Road. Both were involved with the Ward Shipping Line. The Alkar estate, called Idlewild, had a charming pond which, in winter, was the scene of many gay community skating parties. Much of the Alkar property has lain vacant in recent years, and an Alkar home was only recently demolished. It has been suggested that the Booth estate was F. Scott Fitzgerald's inspiration for the location of Gatsby's mansion. One could stand at the Booth waterfront and gaze across Manhasset Bay to Port Washington (or East Egg, as it is called in *The Great Gatsby*) and, perhaps, that is where one should look to find the green light on Daisy's dock.

The immense estates, the grand social life and the presence of so many important families gave Great Neck the status of a recognized center of society such as Palm Beach or Grosse Point. A reporter, describing the community, had this to say about All Saints Church: "All the wealthy people meet there at least once a week and a membership in the church is open sesame into the best society of this Long Island Newport."
The Cord Meyer estate known as The Cove.
All Saints Church was the first religious construction in modern times. For many years Great Neck had only one church, the Union Chapel, built on land donated by Henry Allen. Abram Skidmore provided $5,000 for maintenance, it being his wish that there never be a need to “pass the hat.” The church was open to all denominations and had a rotating group of ministers. As the population grew in size and wealth, the need for a new, less modest edifice became apparent. After All Saints Church was built, the Union Chapel fell into disuse. Eventually it became a theatre and is now the Great Neck Youth Center.

All Saints, in early days, benefited from the generosity of its wealthy parishioners. It was started in 1876 when Thomas Messenger died and, in his will, left $1,500 to be matched by the community with $2,500 for the founding of an Episcopal church. Mrs. M. Gerard Messenger and Mrs. Charles Gignoux donated land from their estates for the new building. In September of that year, the Honorable John A. King, Edward Morgan and George Hewlett accepted the bequest and formed an organizing committee. The architects of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City were hired to plan a stone church with a rural English character. Mary King donated $50,000 toward the purchase of the handsome altar and interior decorations. She also bought and donated an adjacent piece of property to prevent the building of a saloon. The only deed restriction Miss King insisted upon was that alcohol never be sold on the land. The $20,000 chimes were the gift of Roswell Eldridge. The graves of many founding families, the Messengers, Kings, Hewletts, Haydens, Skidmores, Ellards, Nineslings, Alkars, Posts, Childs and Schencks can be found in All Saints’ cemetery.

The establishment of other religious institutions, also reflected our growing population. In 1872, Joseph Spinney, for whom Spinney Hill is named, built the Spinney Hill Church for those of Methodist persuasion. Saint Aloysius Roman Church opened its present doors in 1913, replacing a small wooden structure built in 1876. Prior to that date Catholic residents had to travel to Flushing for Sunday mass. Currently a fine parochial school serves children to the eighth grade. The handsome church and side buildings are an important Catholic community center. In 1914, the Community Church was founded to serve all denominations. In 1920, 14 Christian Scientists met and organized the Christian Science Society. Six years later they formed the First Church of Christ Scientist and
soon dedicated their church and reading room. To service the expanding southerly population, Saint Paul’s Parish was established on Grace Avenue as an off-shoot of All Saints Church. Today Great Neck has St. Paul’s Episcopal Church on Grace Avenue, First Baptist Church on Allen Drive, North Shore Presbyterian Church on Lakeville Road, St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church on Steamboat Road, and St. Philip and St. James Episcopal Church on Lakeville Road. Mormons, Lutherans and Unitarians worship in nearby communities.

The Jewish population grew slowly in early years. Temple Beth-El on Old Mill Road was built in 1929 and its first Rabbi, Jacob P. Rudin, was installed in 1931 at ceremonies marked by welcoming speeches made by leaders of the Protestant and Catholic churches. Today there are two reform temples—Temple Beth El on Old Mill road and Temple Emanuel on Hicks Lane, and a liberal reform—Temple Isaiah on Stoner Avenue. There are two conservative temples, the Lake Success Jewish Center on Lakeville Road and Temple Israel on Old Mill Road and two orthodox synagogues, Great Neck Synagogue on Old Mill Road and Young Israel of Great Neck on Middle Neck Road.

A photo of Rabbi Rudin and Rev. Flanders expressing amity during Brotherhood Week, February 1951.
Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway

During the 1920’s, this open spirit, plus the ideal juxtaposition of city and country, attracted many theatrical figures to Great Neck. The hum of theatrical activities spread throughout the community. The Long Island Railroad ran an 11:18 theatre special for commuting actors. Kensington School enrolled the children of many celebrities who were so impressed by the high educational standards that they were convinced it must be a private school. Children on their way to class, might pass the filming of Pearl White’s adventures on neighborhood streets. Miss White lived in Great Neck during this period.

Over at the Playhouse Theatre, live vaudeville shows shared the stage with repertory companies. The whole town buzzed with excitement when Broadway shows came in for out-of-town previews. During the 1925 season, 29 shows held openings at the Playhouse. The after-theatre crowd trooped over to Bradley’s Diner (later a pizza place) to discuss the merits and faults of each new production.

Movies were first shown at the Mayfair Theatre for an admission of 15¢. The theatre’s sloping floor made it seem the height of modernity. The Mayfair Theatre was located near the train station and has since been demolished.

In 1928 a 40-acre open-air theatre for Wagnerian productions was scheduled to be built in the present Strathmore area. Because of the stock market crash, papers readied for signature on October 29, 1929 were never completed. The area became a Levitt-built community during the 30’s.

The Woman’s Club, an exclusive social and civic force in town, also encouraged development of the arts. The Great Neck Players, an offshoot of the Woman’s Club drama department, was housed in the old Union Chapel building. Although ostensibly an amateur group, its productions were highly respected and widely attended. The chapel was also the scene of many professional summer stock productions. In later years, a drama group known as the Community Theatre was responsible for many outstanding productions which gave local talent a chance to “tread the boards.”

Many theatrical evenings were held for the benefit of local charities. Owners of large estates offered their grounds for events held on behalf of the Red Cross. Gene Buck produced an extraordinary benefit for the Vigilant Fire Company. Lights were strung up and down the hills of the Soundview Golf Club. The stage set designed by Joseph Urban, the famous Viennese theatrical
Early photograph of the Mayfair Theatre near the train station.
designer, drew gasps from all. Mr. Urban had previously shocked the community by designing a black dining room and an orange painted and upholstered study for Mr. Buck. During this period of theatrical fervor in Great Neck, Buck wrote 19 Midnight Follies for Florenz Ziegfeld. Buck was a strong booster of the peninsula, calling it "a suburban Riviera."

Indeed, before moving to the real Riviera to live more economically, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald lived at 6 Gateway Drive in Great Neck Estates. There, they struggled on $36,000 a year while Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby*. He incorporated much of the Great Neck party scene in the novel. Although the community's "real society" led a quiet life and made a clear demarcation between itself and the theatrical set, Great Neck was known at this time for its social hi-jinks and gay party life. Fitzgerald had also made the acquaintance of rum runners who used Long Island Sound as a gateway to the open seas. The Gatsby character may have been patterned after one of these men.
Scott, Zelda and Scottie staging a gay dance on Christmas day.

Another literary giant, Eugene O'Neill, wrote “Anna Christie” while living at producer Arthur Hopkins’ home. The famous Algonquin round-table celebrities were frequent guests of the Herbert Bayard Swopes’ whose home was built nearby. Next door lived Ring Lardner, and Fanny Brice’s house was but a few blocks away.

The list of famous Great Neckers is very long. Robinson’s Directory once noted: “Great Neck probably numbers among its residents more nationally known people than any other community of its size in America.” Here is the roster: Sam Warner, Paulette Goddard, Lillian Russell, Frederic March and Florence Eldrige, Willie Howard, Sam Harris (on Sunset Road), Jane Cowl, Charles King, Clifton Webb (on East Shore Road), Bobby North, Dennis King (on Melbourne Road), Leslie Howard (on East Shore Road), Maurice Chevalier, the Marx Brothers (Groucho lived on Lincoln Road), Oscar Hammerstein II (in Kennilworth, where Alan King now lives), Richard Barthelness, Francis X. Hope, Jim Barton, Marilyn Miller (on Nassau Drive), Martha Ray (on Turtle Cove), Frank Craven, Ernest Truex (on Vista Drive), Gene Sarazen, P.G. Wodehouse (on North Drive and Arrandale Avenue), Nicholas
Schenck and Norma Talmadge (in the Grenwolde section) and Ed Wynn, whose estate “Wynngate” was sold in 1920 for $400,000. W. C. Fields rented a house on the corner of Darley Road and Melbourne Road, and was notorious for practicing golf strokes and thereby committing the suburban sin of chewing up the lawn!

Later celebrity residents have included Percy Faith, Max Weber, Max Kalish, Oscar Schisgall, Paul and Grace Hartman, Paul Newman, Sid Caesar, Jeanette Davis, Louise Nevelson, Richard Tucker, Ted Weems, Larry Rivers, the Blackburn Twins, Leonid Hambro, Gene Claven, Morton Gould, Peter Nero, Irwin Corey, Sandy Becker, Oscar Brand, Floyd Patterson, Whitey Ford, Tully Filmus, Elaine Malbin and many others.

The Villages

Great Neck’s country atmosphere was cherished by its celebrities and by its less famous residents as well. Rumors of
possible expansion by New York City or the creation of a City of North Hempstead made the citizens aware of the need to maintain the peninsula's pastoral character. Archaic town laws and the lack of an over-all plan forced inhabitants of relatively small areas to incorporate as villages so that they might enact building and zoning codes. They also formed special districts so that services might be efficiently obtained. Some saw these restrictions as limiting their freedom but soon all agreed with the Great Neck Association, a peninsula-wide civic organization, that building and zoning codes were useful planning tools that would protect property values.

To insure the establishment of these home rule powers, Great Neck Estates and Saddle Rock incorporated in 1911 and were joined by Kensington in 1917. Shortly thereafter, in 1922, the Villages of Kings Point and Great Neck were formed. Great Neck Plaza became a village in 1930 and was followed by Thomaston in 1931.

The incorporation of Lake Success in 1927 was spearheaded by Nathan Jonas, President of Manufacturer's Trust Company, who saw zoning powers as vital to the protection of the Lake Success way of life. Jonas lived in a great mansion off Lakeville Road in what is now the Wilshire development. In addition to his efforts on behalf of the Village, Jonas built the Lakeville Country Club (now known as Fresh Meadows) on the old Chapman farm. The original farmhouse, known as the Cox-Chapman House, was left intact and converted into a restaurant now known as The Lakeville Manor.

Russell Gardens was the last village to incorporate, doing so in 1931. When, in 1893, Captain Frederick Russell brought 80 acres of the original Schenck farm, a Schenck descendant, Mrs. Haviland, was still living in the old farm house. After Mrs. Haviland moved out, Captain Russell built a handsome three-story frame house. The captain was often mistaken for George Bernard Shaw and early photographs do show a strong resemblance. In 1924, Captain Russell sold 60 acres to Russell Gardens, Inc. Another 60 acres were obtained, and the present village of Russell Gardens was born. Because the land had been a farm, there were few trees. The developers bought 10,000 saplings from the State Forestry Service. Unfortunately, they were only 1½ inches high. If residents of Russell Gardens have old pine trees on their properties, they may be some of those "saplings" that survived! It is believed that the first three homes in Russell Gardens were built before there were roads, gas or electricity. A teacher was the first to buy a home from Russell Gardens, Inc. The house was on Dunster Road and cost $20,000.
While the trend was definitely toward incorporation, there were many citizens voicing concern over the peninsula chopping itself into small enclaves. How would peninsula-wide problems be handled? How could the actions of one village, that might affect many, be controlled? Almost immediately such a situation arose, in the form of a garbage disposal crisis.

Although a fine sewage treatment plan was established in 1915, the incineration of garbage became a crucial problem. Dumping, which was permitted in the Great Swamp (Kings Point Park) and in Manhasset Valley, was outlawed. Efforts made in 1928 to build an incinerator were continually thwarted, for no one wanted it in his backyard. A proposal to build the plant in an unincorporated and unrestricted area on East Shore Road met the objections of both residents and the Real Estate Board. Great Neck Terrace, the affected area, debated whether to start a new village or to annex itself to Kensington so that it might exclude the incinerator through zoning powers. Concerned citizens noted: "It is unfortunate that the Great Neck peninsula is composed of five villages, incorporated little kingdoms. . . . They recognize the need, but squabble over the location." Eventually the matter was resolved, and a Riis distillation plant was built in Garden City Park—a location with which no one in Great Neck could disagree!

The present patchwork of special districts, unincorporated and incorporated areas, plus the presence of peninsula-wide problems, is a legacy of this era.

The Roaring Twenties

By the 20's the affluent character of much of Great Neck reflected the boom economy in the rest of the country. Land along Middle Neck Road leaped in value and huge profits were made. In a few short months the price of a running foot jumped from $900 to $2,000. A few years before, similar real estate had cost $100. Between 1912 and 1925 the business property at the Great Neck station climbed 3,000% in value. Middle Neck Road became the scene of one of the most active buying movements on Long Island. It quickly became the North Shore's prime area for business and trade.

In order to curb excessive competition between real estate brokers, the Real Estate Board was formed. Many of the major real estate offices participate in it to this day. One of the outstanding achievements of the Board was the abolition of "For Sale" signs on private residences. In later years, it also took a firm stand in op-
Memorial Day Parade along busy Middle Neck Road shows the road's growth as a commercial center.
position to block-busting. The Real Estate Board continues, today, to work for Great Neck's continued real property growth and well being.

In the 20's signs of progress were seen everywhere. A modern train station was built at a cost of $50,000, and through it passed 1,400 commuters each month. In 1922, 150 homes were built in Great Neck Estates, selling for $25,000 and up. The Park District acquired land for Memorial Park and Allenwood Park. The building of the Colony House Hotel and the telephone company offices were other signs of success.

The population soon reached 4,500 and Great Neck was entitled to its own school superintendent. Miss Elise Gignoux was appointed and then quickly followed by a number of professionally qualified administrators. Shortly thereafter a brick Kensington School was built. In early 1929, residents approved a $1,500,000 bond issue to build the Great Neck High School on Polo Road. After the school was built, its fine architecture, modern facilities, and lovely grounds made it a show place and a talking point for realtors encouraging investment in Great Neck.

Great Neck High School circa 1951.
The Depression

The 20's came to a close with the famous crash, and the ensuing Depression was deeply felt in Great Neck, as in the rest of the country. The real estate boom was over and building slowed to a crawl. Houses which might have sold for $50,000 were now valued at $10,000. Many in Great Neck felt the effects of personal loss. Jesse Livermore, who had made a fortune as a stock market operator, was forced to hire private guards to protect his children and to keep away disgruntled investors who had taken great losses. His estate, called Evermore, was sold at auction in 1933 to pay his divorced wife's debts, and Manufacturers Trust Company became the new owner.

In 1929, Eddie Cantor bought 20 acres of the old Dennelly farm and completed a magnificent Tudor home on Pine Hill Road and Lakeville Road. He lived there only six months and then was forced to sell for economic reasons. A later owner dynamited the house to save taxes. All that was visible, in 1949, were the ruins of the garage and the stable. In the 20's, I.G. Wolf built the Tuscan Gardens Apartments on Middle Neck Road as a replica of Tuscany, Italy. Many expensive antique decorating touches, such as old lamps and cobblestones, were used. Magazines and film companies were attracted by the unusual architecture and it was featured in both movies and periodicals. It, too, was lost to a mortgage company during the Depression.

Help for the local poor and unemployed was provided by the Great Neck Emergency Relief Committee, the Emergency Work Bureau and the Great Neck Emergency Employment Committee. All these groups were dedicated to the concept of work rather than the dole. Although food and fuel were given to those in dire need, employment opportunities were stressed. In 1931, Kings Point established a $10,000 unemployment fund. One hundred fifty men were hired to create Kings Point Park out of the Great Swamp. They were paid $4.00 per day. In 1938, the park was leased to the Park District for $100 yearly. Although the lease has been renegotiated since, and attempts have been made to change the park, it remains a beautiful natural habitat affording many recreational opportunities for the community.

Signs of cooperation in a time of financial stress were apparent everywhere. Assessments were lowered and taxes reduced. Charitable organizations donated holiday food baskets to poor families and gave high school scholarships to worthy high school seniors. The school budget was reduced and teachers did not take...
a salary increase. School Districts 7 and 8 were consolidated to save on expenses, and the Lakeville School became part of District 7. The Great Neck Center Garden Club provided daily home-cooked meals for needy families. At a time when the harshness of life was so apparent, Great Neck voted 16-1 in favor of the repeal of Prohibition!

Even during the Depression years, Great Neck residents spent a good deal and spent it locally. The 1933 Bureau of Commerce Report showed that each person in Great Neck spent an average of $746 in neighborhood stores. This was $544 more than the nation’s per capita expenditure and $451 more than the New York State average.

By the late 30’s Great Neck had lifted itself out of the economic doldrums and a new era of construction began. Soon moderate to moderately-expensive homes were built on the site of the former large estates. Developers began to create our modern neighborhoods. A map of Great Neck, made in 1938, shows: Broadlawn Harbor, 77 homes to be built on the Booth estate; 177 homes, to be called Kenilworth, constructed on the Mitchell-Isom property; 15 houses on Sinclair land; the Cord Meyer estate, 14 houses; on the Eldridge estate east of Bayview Avenue, 122 homes to be called Saddle Rock Estates; Nirvana Gardens and Strathmore, 149 houses; 281 homes on the site of the University Golf Club; and many other smaller developments. Prices ranged from $6,000 (44 homes built on 7 acres off Steamboat Road) to $30,000 in Broadlawn Harbor.

Expansion in the downtown area was capped by the construction of the “Wedding Cake” building on the corner of Piccadilly Road and Middle Neck Road. The unusual architecture drew many comments and the opening of an Oldsmobile agency on the main floor was the scene of much celebration. Newspapers recorded the first sale on opening day of “a stunning eight-cylinder coupe!”

Another highlight of the '30's was the lowering of the railroad tracks beneath street level at Middle Neck Road. It took Ira T. McKnight and a group of concerned residents over ten years to convince the LIRR to relinquish its favored plan which called for elevation of the tracks. Mr. and Mrs. William Slocum Barstow personally donated a very generous amount towards the $600,000 cost of depressing the tracks and building the overpass. 7th Street was renamed Barstow Road in their honor. A plaque mounted on the wall of the Middle Neck Road overpass expresses the community’s gratitude to this family.

The Barstows owned a magnificent estate adjacent to the
Sketch made during crossing elimination construction in 1934
Merchant Marine Academy. It was later sold to the Lundy family of Brooklyn restaurant fame. The main house and outer buildings can still be seen from Sunset Road. Today the mansion belongs to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and houses a fine Maritime Museum. Barstow was well known as a pioneer in the scientific and commercial development of electricity. His lifelong friendship with Thomas Alva Edison began when Barstow worked with him at Menlo Park. One of Barstow's outstanding achievements was the electrification of the Brooklyn Bridge.

The Barstows were involved in the community as well. They built Saint Paul's Memorial Parish House in honor of their son Frederick Ducles Barstow. Mrs. Barstow donated the land and building on Old Mill Road for the Woman's Club and, in addition, was responsible for the Girl Scout House on Berkshire Road.

A portrait of Mrs. Florence Barstow hanging in the Womans Club.
The Barstow-Lundy home (on left with awnings, as seen from the water).
GREAT NECK GOES TO WAR

The post-Depression upswing was colored in Great Neck, as elsewhere, by a growing concern over events in Europe and Asia. Five hundred residents attended a Woman’s Club lecture given by Lieutenant Colonel Stewart Roddie. He described the growth of Naziism and the German struggle to pacify the Allies while creating a sense of self-respect and unity among the German people. At first the local mood was definitely non-interventionist. The Great Neck Record was firmly neutral and Congressman Leonard Hall was outspokenly “America First.” Noted aviatrix Laura Megalls, of 8 Station Road, headed the Women’s National Committee for Neutrality and urged the United States to stay clear of European problems.

Great Neck residents with families in Europe became increasingly aware of the war. Many trips were curtailed or cancelled and a program of war relief for the allied nations was instituted. Benefits were held to raise funds for Finland and China. Great Neck dollars purchased ambulances for France. In response to Red Cross appeals, Great Neck ladies knitted garments for English children. The Russian War Relief Committee, headed by Dr. Lewis A. Eldridge, Jr., gathered bundles at Bohacks, held theatre parties and ran a large fund-raising picnic on the Eldridge estate. The committee also collected watches for Russian officers, doctors and nurses. Many persons active in Russian Relief were also leaders of the local American Labor Party.

Residents became accustomed to the sight of barrage balloons flying overhead 24 hours-a-day. They were installed by the Barrage Battalion of the United States Army and designed to protect the defense industry, namely Sperry Gyroscope Company in Lake Success.

On May 2, 1941 Sperry applied to the North Hempstead Town Board for a zoning variance which would permit the erection of a factory, “a modern structure to employ 7,000 people,” on a 120-acre parcel of land between Lakeville Road and Marcus Avenue. Pillars In Realty, a real estate firm, and Joseph Klein, owner of the New Hyde Park Golf Club, unsuccessfully sued Sperry to prevent the issuance of a building permit. Lake Success residents, who had recently purchased homes built by Newell and Daniel on the Phipps estate, also objected to Sperry’s plans. The force of the federal government was overwhelming, however, and the town
Home of George M. Cohan in Kings Point.
quickly granted the variance, but acceded to homeowners' wishes by insisting on height limitations and the creation of buffer areas through the use of trees and shrubs. During the war Sperry employed close to 19,000 workers and engineers. An expanded franchise given to Universal and Schenck bus companies provided bus routes throughout Great Neck and down to Sperry's from the station.

Hoping to capitalize on the large number of new employees, Pillars In Realty now sought their own zoning variance, which would have downgraded a part of Lake Success into an apartment zone. Lake Success residents formed the Lake Success Civic Association to fight for the maintenance of zoning standards, and the application for an apartment area was defeated.

Further up on the peninsula, in Kings Point, the community was also responding to the nation's needs. The federal government sought a permanent home for the United States Merchant Marine Academy and decided, in 1942, to purchase the Walter P. Chrysler estate and surrounding properties owned by the Posners, Schmidts, Barstows, etc. for this purpose. The Chrysler's thirty-five room marble mansion became the Administration Hall. In addition, the government bought the old Great Neck Public Bathing Beach from the Park District for $90,000. The Park Board then sought to replace this facility and ended up buying the Petrova estate (offered long ago by Chrysler), which now belonged to Walter Chrysler, Jr., for $70,000. The carriage house, which Chrysler had remodeled as a home, became the bath house. Renamed Steppingstone Park, it now provides lovely play, picnic and boating facilities. Swimming has never been permitted because the waters are considered polluted and unsafe by Board of Health standards.

The Merchant Marine Academy, established in 1938, has the same accreditation as the other service academies and provides a four-year military and college curriculum. A number of government dignitaries, including Eleanor Roosevelt and Bess Truman, have attended ceremonies on the Academy grounds. The Academy has always enjoyed fine relations with local residents. On crisp fall days, cadets walking with their dates, the Academy band striking up a march tune and football teams playing on the field truly make Great Neck seem like a college town. The Academy is often open to visitors and provides many pleasant walks and views.

With the addition of these two defense facilities, the community felt it necessary to prepare for possible attack. The Great Neck Report Center was the emergency heart and brains of the peninsula. In coordination with the state and the county, the Great
Neck Defense Council developed a plan for civilian protection. The Great Neck Air Raid Wardens Service mobilized home-owners and offered drill instruction. The first blackout, held in March, 1942, was a great success. A diligent group of plane spotters operated from the roof of the Colony House Hotel and a Coast Guard contingent patrolled the Great Neck shoreline. The Great Neck Casualty Stations, fine mini-hospitals equipped to handle war emergencies, were established in the Westminster Apartments on Maple Drive and in another building on East Shore Road.

Residents felt themselves to be very much a part of the war effort. Grease, tin, rubber, aluminum and newspapers were collected. Sixty percent of the residents grew Victory Gardens. Adjustments were made to meatless meals, food and gas rationing, blackouts and the ban on pleasure driving. In 1941, marriage license requests in North Hempstead reached a record high. Memorial Day parades became a rallying point for the community's war effort. Both children and adults took part in the many bond drives. In 1942, Uncle Sam was promised "a bomber for Christmas." Children raised money for jeeps, trucks and hospital equipment. The Phipps mansion called "Bonnie Blink," which was rarely occupied by the Phipps family, was turned over to 30 young evacuees from the London blitz. Lady Margaret Barry came here from London to supervise their stay.

On October 31, 1940, as the civilian population prepared for war, a list was published with the names of the initial 50 men to be drafted in the Great Neck-Manhasset area. William Wright, of 8 Elm Street, was the first name drawn from the famous fish bowl. Another young man from the area, Ensign Edward Monroe Bates, Jr., died aboard the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor. In recognition of his contribution, Nassau Road was renamed Bates Road. Rabbi Rudin, of Temple Beth El, became a Navy Chaplain and was replaced for the duration by Rabbi Aron Granison. To cheer furloughing soldiers and sailors a Serviceman's Club was opened across the street from the railroad station. Volunteers, trained by the Red Cross, maintained a canteen and acted as hostesses. In 1943, the community erected an Honor Roll at the station and thereupon listed the 2,200 names of the Great Neck men and women who had served during the war.

VE Day was celebrated quietly. Flags fluttered everywhere and schools, after holding appropriate ceremonies, closed for the day. Seventy percent of the G.I.'s from the area were in Europe and discussions were held concerning the number to be sent to the Pacific and those to return home.
With the arrival of VJ Day, thoughts turned to the homecoming G.I.’s. Newspapers printed free “situation-wanted” ads for veterans seeking employment. The Red Cross continued gathering funds to finance entertainments for wounded G.I.’s. These gatherings were held weekly at the Glen Oaks Country Club. The American Legion, Charles A. Fowler, Jr. Post, the Great Neck Serviceman’s Advisory Committee and the Great Neck Veterans Service Committee planned ways to help ease the veterans’ transition to civilian life.

One of the Service Committee’s major purposes was to secure apartments for returning young men and their families. In 1946 Sol Atlas built the Schenck-Welwyn apartments with the expectation that they would provide veterans’ housing. The United Nations, newly arrived at Lake Success, wished to lease these apartments for its personnel and agreed to take over entire buildings for this purpose. After prolonged negotiations between the UN, Atlas and the Veterans Service Committee, it was agreed to release 90 apartments for veteran rental.

Another returning resident was George Yamaoka, Chairman of the American Defense Section of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial at which Tojo and 24 other Japanese wartime leaders were prosecuted. Mr. Yamaoka was part of the American group who were responsible for defending the Japanese officials.

Although the war was over, the spirit of giving did not diminish. The third and last bond drive resulted in the sale of war bonds worth $25,000. Soon a helping hand was extended to those devastated by the war. Mrs. Stephen Foster was appointed chairman of the local UNRRA clothing drive. Working under the auspices of the American Women’s Voluntary Service, Great Neck pledged its quota of 50 tons of usable clothing. Schools held Bundle Days to help in the collection. A CARE unit was organized and Arrandale teachers and students raised $345 to buy boxes of food and supplies.

The United Nations

Great Neck really knew the war was over when Sperry laid off 4,000 workers on one day (August 17, 1945) and continued to do so until the staff was reduced by 90%. Fortunately, the unions cooperated in planning the transition. The community wondered what would happen to the unused portions of the plant. Within a few months the rumor spread that the United Nations was con-
sidering the Sperry plant for its first official home. The UNO had previously contracted for space at Hunter College, but that contract ran out on May 15, 1946.

Soon the rumor of the UN's arrival became a headline. Residents of Lake Success voiced concern over this latest impact on their community. New York Mayor William O'Dwyer assured them that new housing needs for 4,000 persons could be met within city limits. Trygvie Lie, President of the UN, guaranteed the payment of local taxes and after negotiation an assessed valuation of $10 million was agreed upon by Nassau County, Sperry and the UNO. The residents' insistence on economic security was called "crass and cheap" by Fiorella La Guardia. But the assurance that no financial burden would be imposed no doubt brought about favorable results in the Lake Success—UN referendum. Residents voted 102-70 to welcome the UN into their midst. As a show of good will, James O'Neill, of 22 Meadow Woods Road, provided 10 moving vans and a 30-man crew to help the UN move in. His fee for the entire job was $1.00

In August, 1946, the Security Council held its first meeting in Lake Success. The building had been redesigned to include the necessary committee rooms and the Security Council chamber. The General Assembly met in Flushing Meadows. Soon the UN people and local residents were mixing freely. The community was proud to have the railroad station populated by the saried as well as the grey-flanneled. Special train schedules and bus routes were added to accommodate the UN staff. Through rentals and home purchases, UN personnel became part of the community. Tennis tournaments pitting residents against UN people were a highlight of the summer season. No less a personage than Trygvie Lie was on hand to present the winner's cup. In January, 1947, 1,000 residents attended a UN-UN Welcome Assembly. After the UN moved to its permanent home in New York City, the local chapter of the AAUN continued to keep residents aware of UN activities. Sperry today continues to operate divisions on this site. Additional industrial facilities are located there and in an industrial park across the street.
POST-WAR TRENDS

Civil Rights

The world war, the presence of the UN, the influx of new residents and the march of time, itself, changed Great Neck from a small, bedroom-town to one very much a part of the world community. Increasingly, the new trends in the nation were felt locally.

In the area of civil rights, Great Neck experienced the national upheaval in microcosm. In 1957, Reverend Alexander J. Belton noted that most of the community was unaware of the living conditions faced by black residents. Although all poverty areas were not populated solely by black residents, the great majority of black residents did live in areas of poverty. Living standards, educational levels and incomes needed improvement. Streets and homes could not be properly maintained. Reverend Belton also suggested that although black children attended integrated schools, they often felt alienated from the rest of the community.

Certain sections of Great Neck had sustained a stable and relatively comfortable black population for many years. But the New York State Rental Commission investigation of the Steamboat Road area and a block-by-block survey of Spinney Hill reported cases of over-crowding, deterioration and rent-gouging. Village enforcement of reforms was urged, but compliance was difficult to obtain. Attempts to relocate residents proved futile. According to The Great Neck Record, it was “widely known that a gentleman’s agreement exists as to which properties are available to Negroes.”

For the first time on Long Island, a Committee for Human Rights was formed. In fact, the Great Neck group acted as a model for others all over the island. With Jackie Robinson as keynote speaker and over 1,000 people in attendance, a panel discussion was held on the elimination of discrimination. The meeting made the front page of The New York Times and led the way for a great variety of civil rights activities.

The Committee for Human Rights urged whites and blacks to break down real estate barriers. Through its efforts a black family bought a home and was heartily welcomed in Kensington. Soon the purchase of homes by black families was possible in all parts of the community. In 1964, Dr. Robert Breakstone, chairman of the committee, announced that home buying, regardless of race, was feasible through normal channels.

Discrimination in apartment rentals was also widespread. Many cases were investigated by the State Commission Against
Discrimination in Housing. A program of "test-case" approaches to apartment rentals was instituted and resulted in the establishment of an open rental system. In the Towers Apartments on Spruce Street another kind of housing problem existed. These apartments were originally built in the 1920's as luxury dwellings, with pent-houses, high ceilings, and a private commuter bus. However, over the years whites had left and black residents had moved in. The owners had not maintained the buildings properly and conditions had deteriorated. Finally, tenants banded together and pressured the Village of Thomaston to force the landlords to make improvements.

At this time, builders sought to buy and convert the buildings into plush apartments. They promised to relocate tenants. Irwin Landes, attorney for the tenants, and Hector Gayle, President of the local Economic Opportunity Council, fought for guaranteed tenant relocation. After many meetings it was agreed to pay tenants $400 to $800, plus one month's security, as moving costs. Many found apartments in the Academy Gardens at the intersection of Steamboat Road and Middle Neck Road.

Attempts, in later years, to provide urban renewal for Spinney Hill and scatter-site low-cost housing have been delayed. The Urban Renewal project, in its entirety, awaits government action. No community has yet been willing to include low-cost housing within its perimeters and the problem of providing decent housing for low and middle-income families continues.

Black residents have faced employment discrimination, too. A League of Women Voters' study showed very few blacks employed in other than domestic jobs. The Great Neck Committee for Employment Standards and Training Opportunities surveyed domestic working conditions and formulated a Code for Domestics. The Code covered employment ethics in areas such as hours, duties and relationships, but never received wide acceptance. The United Neighborhood Activity Center opened a recreation facility for single domestics. For five years it provided a place for relaxation and friendship.

The establishment of a local Economic Opportunity Council centered educational and economic programs and social activities for black residents in one organization. Offices were established to administer what Washington called "The War on Poverty." Education and typing courses were made available. Financial assistance was given to the operators of small businesses. The EOC has continued to operate dynamically in the areas of employment, housing and recreation.
In 1961, the Nassau Human Rights Commission chastised the volunteer fire companies for their unspoken "whites only" policy. The Town of North Hempstead renewed its 1967 contract with the recommendation for a more open membership. Luther Corley, the first black man ever to apply, was accepted as a volunteer fireman later that year.

During the peak of the civil rights movement, many of its leaders found Great Neck audiences enthusiastic and responsive. Reports on the status of the movement and fund appeals were made by Martin Luther King, Fannie Lou Hammer, James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Ruby Dee, James Baldwin, and many others. Dr. Aaron E. Henry, leader of the Mississippi Freedom Party, reported on the "Mississippi Battlefront" and inspired an outpouring of funds and activities. The Great Neck Mississippi Bail Bond Trust Fund was among the first to provide assistance needed during the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project. As part of Brotherhood Week, 1965, Great Neck adopted Greenville, Mississippi as a Brother Town.

Young people, in particular, responded to the plight of the poor and displaced. Great quantities of food and clothing were collected by students and sent to Tent City, Tennessee and to Mississippi. Great Neck students participated in the Mississippi registration drives and marched in Washington to protest the plight of the poor. In recent years the schools have instituted special programs and projects in honor of Martin Luther King.

As time passed avid support for the civil rights movement began to wane. New leaders replaced the old ones and many programs became institutionalized. Although the civil rights fervor may have quieted, the movement and its goals continue to be a part of community life.

**Busing**

In an effort to eliminate discrimination, communities across the nation began busing programs designed to integrate schools and so provide equal educational opportunities. In 1967, Great Neck experienced its own version of "busing." In that year a proposal was made to the Board of Education that Great Neck bus a limited number of disadvantaged children from New York City to schools in Great Neck. After an initial hearing in April, 1968, the Board recommended that the proposal be submitted for staff study. In December, the Board announced a plan to bus 45 to 60 primary grade children from nearby ghetto areas at no cost to the...
community. They would be placed in underpopulated classes and receive supportive services. Labeled the Urban-Suburban Action Plan, it was scheduled for evaluation after two years.

The community reaction was divided. Local newspapers were filled with challenging and supporting letters. Led by the Committee for Conscience and Reason, those in favor believed the project to be educationally sound, morally imperative and an opportunity to continue improving race relations. Thirteen hundred students signed petitions backing busing. Sixteen hundred students, 900 white residents, 310 teachers and 95 black residents paid for and appeared in pro-ads. Community, civic, educational and religious leaders expressed their approval.

Another organization, VOCAL (Voice of Community Affairs League) organized the opposition. Members expressed concern that the tensions and ill-will then being felt in the city school system would spill over into Great Neck. In addition, they believed the program was only a token and would not favorably affect the Great Neck student body as a whole. Lastly, they denied the existence of racist attitudes and suggested that the schools improve their efforts on behalf of the locally disadvantaged.

The School Board was faced with conflicting responsibilities: the taking of a leadership position and the obligation to reflect the community's wishes. The Board agreed to hold a special referendum and submit the following question to the voters: "Do you favor adoption of the Great Neck Board of Education plan to admit a limited number of NYC primary grade children to our schools providing there is no cost to the district?" Immediately, the legality of this transfer to the people of the Board's decision-making responsibility was questioned. State Education Commissioner Allen ruled that the vote was legal, but that the results need not be binding. Board Council, Ellis Schiffmacher, suggested that the referendum was an appropriate way of obtaining community feedback.

However, the results were inconclusive. The voting machines were overwhelmed by the record turnout of 14,000 persons. Set to record only 999 votes, some of them returned to zero when this vote was reached. The results showed 5,797 no, 4,988 yes and 3,107 blank. The Board decided to implement the busing plan and controversy raged again. Many in the community were dissatisfied with the Board's decision and, in May, candidates representing the anti-busing view won two seats on the School Board.

And then New York City called the whole thing off. City School Superintendent Bernard Donovan, noting the change in the com-
position of the school board, stated "the policy-making body of the Great Neck schools would be executing a program in which it did not believe. In addition, funding is doubtful. Therefore, there would be no real educational benefit for the pupils involved."

The busing issue officially ended in 1969, but there are some who believe that its repercussions are still felt in the community today.

THE SCHOOLS

Years of Growth

Great Neck has always been a community that evinced a strong interest in its children's education. During the 50's, Life Magazine described the school district as "one of the outstanding systems in the State for its good teachers, good equipment, relatively small classes and actively interested community." In 1955 the district ranked first out of 126 in the State for student mastery of essential skills and ranked high for its well-rounded program. Over 85% of the graduates continued their education in institutions of higher learning.

As the community experienced post-war growth, and double sessions in the high school became a reality, the schools began an expansion program. In the 1950's, Parkville, Baker Hill, Saddle Rock, Grace Avenue, Clover Drive, Cherry Lane and Cumberland elementary schools were built. On a cold day in January, 1952, 800 students left the old junior-senior high school on Polo Road and marched to their new $4,000,000 junior high school a few blocks away. However, growth was so phenomenal that the student population soon outstripped these two high school facilities and by 1955 they were on double session again. As a result it was decided to divide the district into two geographical areas, North and South. Through purchase and gift, the school district acquired the Phipps estate off Lakeville Road. The mansion became administrative headquarters and a South Junior and South Senior High School were built to accommodate 2,500 students. Modern facilities, built to conform to the rolling contours of the land, were constructed.

Next to face overcrowding was Arrandale School. Rather then renovate, the District passed a bond issue and built the John F. Kennedy School, the last major construction within the district. As the school population diminished, Great Neck closed 5 K-3 schools, and Kensington Johnson, demolished Arrandale and has
installed the Adult Education Center at Cumberland and Clover Drive. The junior highs became middle schools (6th-8th grade) and 9th through 12th grades attend senior high schools at North and South complexes.

School Budgets

Reversal in size is but one of the reasons for increasing budget awareness by citizens. Great Neck has come a long way from the budget vote in 1946, when 173 people approved a bond issue for the Saddle Rock School property. That vote, as were all budget votes held prior to 1958, was taken at a school district meeting, where only those present voted. The budget was submitted and amendments taken from the floor. Amendments, approved by the majority of those present, became part of the budget. Amendments concerning debt service, contingent expenses and salaries were not permitted. After the business of the meeting was concluded, those present adjourned to the senior high gym to cast their ballots for or against the budget.

Then in 1958 the State Legislature passed legislation permitting school districts the option of holding budget votes on a separate day if the Board so decided. Only amendments adding to the budget could be passed at the district meeting and then voted upon separately from the main body of the budget. A Budget Advisory Committee noted that although the new procedure might be more orderly and democratic, the inability to reduce parts of the budget might lead to defeat of the whole budget. Superintendent John L. Miller stated that “a rejected budget is a summons to mediocrity, an irretrievable step in the deterioration of the entire community.” But many residents felt that there was a legitimate obligation for citizens to study, evaluate and accept or reject a budget which would be funded with their taxes.

Managing the budget continues to be a problem of citizen input, rising mandated costs, changing needs and a fluctuating school population.

The School Board

The school board, too, has felt the impact of change. For years elections were quiet and frequently uncontested. Then, in 1938, Great Neck High School students went on strike protesting the firing of four teachers. The board began a series of emergency
meetings. When the principal and superintendent attempted to explain the dismissal, they were booed off the stage. In the end four teachers, the principal and the dean of the high school were fired and some thought the board should have resigned as well. When the incident subsided, elections once again were uneventful and, as before, candidates, often ran unchallenged. In 1942, John L. Miller became Superintendent of Schools and remained so for many years. When Dr. Miller retired, Mortimer Abramowitz was chosen as his successor. Dr. William A. Shine is the current superintendent.

For many years nominations to the school board were made by the Mayor's Nominating Committee. By the end of World War II some residents were voicing dissatisfaction with this group. It was felt that many mayors had abdicated their duties and that nominations were actually made by only one man. As a result a new group, the Non-Partisan Citizen's Nominating Committee, was organized to screen all potential candidates to the school board. In time NPCNC also disbanded and different groups, on a less formal basis, now support individual candidacies.

In 1965 a personal matter involving a school board member and the professional staff focused attention on the roles of the school board, the administration, and the staff. School Board election campaigns can be lengthy, expensive and divisive. For many years the League of Women Voters offered a Campaign Code of Ethics and sought both community and candidate acceptance of its guidelines. The community continues to explore many ways to obtain its educational goals.

The Students

In the late 60's, students, too, were challenging the educational establishment. A United Student Front was formed to provide a dialogue between students and the administration. The group called for student participation in curriculum selection, discipline, administration and personnel and for representation on the school board. The Community School, the Village School, the School Within a School, changes in the reporting system, the Headstart program, open classes, representation on the school board and a stepped-up program of electives and honors classes were some of the ways in which the schools tried to meet the needs of the modern student body.

Students today participate in a variety of governmental, educational, dramatic, artistic, physical and social clubs and com-
mittees. One group works to combat prejudice, especially important in a school district with a diverse student population. Students with special needs receive individual attention through a guidance program, psychological services, remedial classes, programs for the handicapped and student and parent networks.

Students use of drugs and alcohol has become a school and community concern. Groups such as COPAY (Community Organization for Parent and Youth) provide counselling and a forum for the discussion of young people's problems.

The increased number of broken homes and latch key children has focused attention on the new life style and its effect on children and other family members. Families have been helped by the parenting program at Parkville School which teaches parents of preschoolers their roles as parents. An organization called CLASP provides a quality after-school activity center for children up to 3rd grade of working or in training parents.
THE POST-WAR YEARS

The Cold War and Civil Defense

During the 50's and 60's Great Neck found itself reacting to international as well as domestic problems. The end of World War II did not bring an end to war, as many had hoped. Instead, the Cold War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War stirred the community anew.

As early as 1947 Congressman Leonard Hall counselled vigilance against the growth of communism here and abroad. He found many voters in his Great Neck constituency similarly concerned. South Dakota Congressman Karl K. Mundt, a member of the House Foreign Affairs and Un-American Activities Committee, was invited to address a capacity audience at the high school. He spoke on the pervasiveness of subversive activities. The Combined Americanization Committee of Great Neck urged the outlawing of communism. *Great Neck Record* Editor Robert Murray, commenting on the loyalty oath requirement for all teachers and school personnel noted that although "teachers are high-minded, they might become prey to so-called liberal ideas and must be protected from acting as unwitting dupes."

Herbert Philbrick, famous communist counter-spy warned his audience at the Great Neck Synagogue against communist infiltration of the schools. A panel of ex-communists, including Howard Rushmore and Bella Dodd, spoke at the Great Neck Forum on the communist conspiracy in the United States. Mrs. Dodd's suggestion that progressive education was a breeding ground for communists upset many Great Neckers. They responded with a staunch defense of the local education system.

As time passed many in Great Neck began to reexamine their attitudes. The Great Neck Teachers Association opposed the state's Fineberg Law covering communists and communist sympathizers in the schools. They applauded the decision of the New York State Supreme Court which declared the Board of Regents' subversives list to be unconstitutional.

Robert Baldwin, National Chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union, cautioned an audience of 250 women against "misguided zealots who would lose our liberties while trying to save them." Kensington resident Orton Hicks served as treasurer of "I Believe," a national organization started by Senator William Benton in opposition to the activities of Senator Joseph McCarthy. The
community and its leaders turned against the excesses of Senator McCarthy and warmly welcomed Senator Helen Gahagan Douglas when she spoke at Temple Beth El.

In 1956 many in Great Neck became fervent supporters of the Hungarian freedom movement. An International Rescue Committee chapter was formed, and refugees from the brief, unsuccessful Hungarian attempt to overthrow the communist regime were welcomed in Great Neck. Held at the Playhouse, Hungarian Relief Rescue Night, with stars such as Sammy Davis, Jr., Ella Logan and Dorothy Collins headlining the entertainment, was completely sold out.

The concern over communism was not confined to political subversion. The Cold War with Russia and the Korean War stimulated an active Civil Defense program. Great Neck was divided into five zones and nine districts for defense planning purposes. Fourteen hundred air raid wardens were appointed, sky surveillance begun and air raid shelters were designated. Students built a Family Fall-Out Shelter on the lawn of the Youth Center with materials provided by the Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization. The Great Neck Civil Defense Radiological Team tested daily for radioactive fallout. Air raid and shelter drills were made compulsory in the schools. A local doctor, William Kaplan, was appointed head of a 200-person volunteer medical aid program. First aid shelters were established and citizens were educated in emergency procedures. All facilities pertinent to rescue operations were inventoried. The community felt it was preparing for a possible attack.

In order to practice and improve civil defense and readiness techniques, residents participated in a series of simulated bombings. In 1953 Cutter Mill Bridge was “bombed” and a train “derailed, trapping one hundred persons.” In 1955 an H bomb was dropped on Memorial Field. Fireworks were used in a Battle of the Clouds to prepare citizens for the sight of real bombs. The object of these exercises was to minimize the time needed to move all residents into adequately stocked shelters and to test rescue procedures.

By 1960, however, students were wearing arm bands declaring “Peace Is Our Only Shelter,” and the Great Neck chapter of SANE (Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) stated that fall-out shelters were a hoax. SANE and the Great Neck Women’s Strike for Peace became leaders in the peace and disarmament movement. Senator George McGovern, Canon and Mrs. L. John Collins (leaders of the British peace movement), Linus Pauling and Nor-
man Cousins spoke to Great Neckers on the need to end nuclear testing and relax East-West tensions. Eleanor Roosevelt addressed an overflow crowd at Temple Israel, declaring faith in the United Nations to be the only way of combating communism.

While the Cold War raged at home, Great Neck boys were fighting in Korea. In July, 1950, Selective Service Board #3 opened in the Kensington Village Hall and began the induction of local young men. Sperry added 3,000 employees to help meet defense contracts. Construction of North Shore Hospital was hastened so that it could respond to any possible civil defense emergency. The USO was re-activated and Mamie Eisenhower attended a Great Neck rally, placing a wreath at the Village Green War Memorial, to help raise funds for recreation centers in Japan and Korea.

Soon the plight of another Asian nation gripped local attention. In 1965 the AAUN and the League of Women Voters sponsored a public meeting entitled "Vietnam, A Case Study" at which background material and different points of view were presented. Many in Great Neck soon took a position on the American participation in Vietnam. Great Neck residents joined the Long Island March for Peace. Local audiences heard Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Benjamin Spock, Julian Bond and former Sergeant Donald Duncan speak against United States policy in Vietnam. In 1967, 13 Great Neck clergymen called for a halt in the United States bombing of North Vietnam and their appeal was signed by 1,200 persons.

Great Neck SANE and the Women's Strike for Peace sponsored the Great Neck Summer Project, during which discussion sessions were held in private homes and veterans-against-the-war addressed Great Neck residents. Locally and in Washington, Great Neckers marched in anti-war demonstrations. Amy Swerdlow, a Great Neck resident and one of the national leaders of the Women's Strike for Peace, attended peace conferences in London and Stockholm. In 1967, Rabbi Jacob P. Rudin was one of 20 persons selected by President Lyndon Johnson to observe the South Vietnam elections. He reported on his impressions of the voting procedures and stated that he could see nothing which would indicate tampering.

Congressman Lester Wolff also went to Vietnam as an election observer and returned there a second time on an investigation of charges of waste, inefficiency and corruption in the Vietnamese government. His anti-war feelings grew and, in 1969, he called for a complete withdrawal of American forces. Ten thousand Great Neck residents joined him by signing petitions and participating in
an anti-war vigil, reading the names of 35,000 Americans who died in Vietnam. Over 1,000 students took part in a one day protest strike and attended anti-war meetings held at Temple Israel.

Young people faced direct involvement in the war. In 1966 the local draft board moved to induct childless married men in order to fill an unprecedented monthly quota of 382 draftees. Two local men, Staff Sergeant John T. Flynn and Sergeant David Morris, received heroism-in-combat awards. While many Great Neck men served, others protested induction. In March, 1968, Irwin Messinger appeared before the draft board as Great Neck’s first draft resister. His cause was supported by the Women’s Strike for Peace. Concern over the draft was felt by many young men and the schools responded with a draft counselling program. When the American manpower commitment ended in Vietnam, there were those in Great Neck who felt they had helped produce this result. Today many in the community continue to work towards a rational and realistic approach to solving the problems of the nuclear age and for ways to insure a peaceful future.

Biomedical Research Center at North Shore University Hospital, 1983
GREAT NECK'S CONTEMPORARY GROWTH

Residential and Commercial Development

Long time residents of Great Neck are perhaps most aware of its physical growth. Estates and open fields were developed into communities of one-family homes. Small lots and homesites have been grouped to provide acreage large enough to hold apartment houses. The downtown area has seen a proliferation of stores and office buildings. In the past 30 years the peninsula's nooks and crannies, as well as its open spaces, were filled-in.

Once vast estates became neighborhoods and estate driveways became public roads. The 160-acre Mitchell estate was developed as Kennilworth and sold by I.G. Wolf and R.A. White. In order to entice homeowners to part with $90,000 to $150,000, the builders, hired society decorator Dorothy Draper to furnish four model homes. The Eldridge estate was bought by Sam Berger, who built ranch homes selling for approximately $20,000. Crawford Homes, Inc. built the University Gardens community on the grounds of the University Golf Club. Twelve and one-half acres of the Alkar estate were bought and subdivided for new houses. New streets beribboned the landscape, providing access to a variety of split-levels, ranches and colonial style houses.

Services kept pace with the community's development. In the four years between 1945 and 1949 telephone operators increased by 50%. Telephoners spoke directly to the operator for the last time in 1951, and thereafter dialed local calls directly. Great Neck 2 was replaced by HUnter 2 and 7. The post office collected $5,000 in receipts in 1929, by 1961 volume was up to $127,000 and two offices were needed to service the population. Residents cooperated with LILCO in a two-day switch-over to natural gas, that being the only source large enough to meet growing energy demands.

Medical services also expanded. In 1946, Mrs. Eldridge donated a five-acre site at the corner of Old Mill Road and Bayview Avenue for the building of a hospital. A newly formed hospital committee purchased seven additional acres and made plans for a 150-bed facility to be called North Shore Memorial Hospital. The Great Neck Memorial Fund headed by Robert Wheelan, Alfred P. Sloan and Adolph Levitt collected contributions for the building fund. For a variety of reasons the hospital never materialized at this site. Instead, the name was changed and North Shore Hospital was built on Community Drive in Manhasset. When the hospital opened in
1953, the community was pleased to note that the first baby born in
the maternity section was a Great Necker! Local residents have
been deeply involved with this hospital and with Long Island Jewish
Medical Center built during the 50's just over the Lake Success
border in Queens. These hospitals have received both financial
and manpower support from Great Neck inhabitants, and many
members of the professional community serve on the hospital
staffs. In return, those living in the area have the comfort of know­
ing that two excellent medical facilities exist nearby.

However, not all growth on the peninsula was peaceful and
uneventful. Often, residents felt beleaguered by the building ac­
tivity occurring on all sides. Homeowners in the Belgrave area were
so disturbed by the erection of the Clent Road Apartments that they
demanded that Brompton Road and Knightsbridge Road be closed
as thoroughfares. When builder Sol Atlas requested permission to
build an eight-story apartment house near the post office, citizens
protested and the Plaza imposed a three-story height limit on new
buildings.

During the 60's the Village of Kensington faced requests for
variances which would permit commercial development along Mid­
dle Neck Road. In 1936, the Village fought an attempt to build an
apartment house south of the gates. At that time it was forced to
buy the property and create Kensington Park. The property to the
north, the Valverde property, lay in a state of disuse. Valverde was
an executive with the W.R. Grace Steamship Line and had bought
his house from Kensington developer E.J. Rickert. After Valverde
moved out in 1931, the property was neglected. The house became
a ruin and a safety hazard and, in 1960, the Village obtained court
permission to condemn and raze it. Two Great Neck builders
bought the property and applied for a variance permitting erection
of an apartment house. After many skirmishes with the Kensington
Civic Organization, the builders were finally given permission to
build the Kensington Gate Apartments. Restrictions were set as to
land coverage and the creation of buffer areas with the use of fenc­
ing and planting.

During this period Russell Gardens also faced a zoning battle.
When the original Russell acreage was sold for the development of
Russell Gardens, a large parcel bordering Northern Boulevard and
Middle Neck Road was retained by the family. Frederick Russell's
heirs proposed to sell this property for commercial use, but the
Village Board denied all variance requests. The Village relented in
1958 when the Russell mansion burned and in 1959, a rezoning
was approved permitting homes on the interior and apartments, gas stations and offices along the periphery.

The 160-acre Deepdale Country Club, valued at $2,250,000 in 1955, became the scene of another zoning fight. Plans were announced to take part of it for the Long Island Expressway and to sell the rest to a developer. It was also considered as the sight for a Television City. The residents of Lake Success formed the Non-Partisan Citizen's Committee to Save Deepdale and collected signatures on petitions placed all over town in one-day signature centers. In November, 1955, the Village of Lake Success voted to acquire the golf course and it was reopened as a village facility in May, 1956.

Lake Success residents also vigorously opposed the sale of the Joseph Ridder estate (55 acres around Tanner’s Pond) to We’re Associates who wished to build an industrial park. The people were soon persuaded that a well-planned industrial park would mean a great tax benefit and the area was rezoned for light industry. Because of stringent land coverage, parking, landscaping and usage restrictions, it is considered a model project.

Great Neck Plaza is well known for its commercial development. In 1951 Sol Atlas built the North Shore Shopping Center. It was originally designed to preserve many old trees within an elaborate landscaping plan. But esthetics gave way to shopper needs and a large parking area was tarred instead. The first major department store in Great Neck, Wanamaker’s, was replaced by Stern Bros., then Gertz, and now a mews fills the space.

Retailers heeded the message of a Trendex survey which showed that 41% of all Great Neck residents preferred to shop locally. Stores were built, renovated and expanded along Middle Neck Road, Cutter Mill Road and Bond Street and evening shopping was introduced. A vigorous, community-minded Chamber of Commerce has, over the years, taken an important role in Great Neck’s civic development, championing such causes as adequate off-street parking and the building of a new bridge over the railroad tracks at Cutter Mill Road.

At one time many retailers and businessmen would meet daily for lunch at the Colony House Restaurant. Their “round table” became a community fixture. Unfortunately, progress meant that one day the restaurant changed ownership. The waiters and waitresses, with 90 years of service among them, were fired and a local institution was lost forever. The Colony Hotel has since been replaced by a luxury condominium at the corner of Grace Avenue and Bond Street. Visitors to Great Neck often stay at the Bayberry
Colony House Hotel, during the 1930's
Aerial photograph of North Shore Shopping Center, 1951

This bird's-eye view of Middle Neck Road from the air was photographed by Bartlett. Skeleton gridwork in the left foreground is the construction site for the new John Wanamaker store.
Hotel on North Station Plaza. In 1961 an 85 year old landmark, the
"Sahm House" was razed and this modern convenient hotel erected in its place.

Proximity to New York City, ease of transportation, a beneficial
tax structure and favorable zoning made business development of
the Plaza inevitable. In 1971, alone, six new office edifices were
constructed. Great Neck Road, Cutter Mill Road and the area
around the railroad station mushroomed with new buildings.
Perhaps most outstanding is the Atrium on Cutter Mill Road. Scat­
tered throughout Great Neck from Lake Success to the old village
are over 48 new hi-rise commercial buildings. An industrial park in
the Sperry area has also increased the commercialization of Great
Neck. Businesses range from electronics to stock brokerages,
from insurance offices to optics. Six Great Neck firms employ over
12,000 people. All these office buildings create employment oppor­
tunities, as well as the need for services and a traffic problem of im­
mense proportion.

The Plaza is also known as an apartment house community.
No private homes have been built there since 1945. Recent
statistics show about 78 apartment houses built or under construc­
tion. Of the approximately 6,000 village residents, 5,500 live in the
2,845 apartment units. The trend, in recent years, has been
towards apartment ownership on a condominium or cooperative
basis. Many of the new apartments are in the luxury class, which
may tend to eliminate the middle or lower income tenant. Twenty
percent of all apartment dwellers in Great Neck are over the age of
65.

In recent years those living in the Plaza have experienced a
revitalized interest in the fate of their community. A Tenant's Com­
mittee has successfully fought for the recognition of tenant's rights
and has worked to improve tenant-landlord relationships. Although
C. Ellis Schiffmacher, well-known local attorney, noted that the
trend has been to "develop high class buildings with a minimum
cost to the taxpayer and the maximum in assessed valuation and
attendant traffic problems," the Plaza has permitted a proliferation
of apartments and office buildings filling the remaining open
spaces.

Parking and Traffic

Inadequate parking and congested roads have plagued the
peninsula for many years. Attempts were made to accomodate the
increasing number of vehicles by widening Bayview Avenue, Cutter
Mill Road, Middle Neck Road and East Shore Road. Computerized traffic systems were installed on Middle Neck Road and Northern Boulevard. In 1983 the corner of Lakeville Road and Northern Boulevard was widened to accommodate two new offices buildings and the heavy traffic.

Many bridges were old, narrow and dangerous. Until 1956 drivers passing beneath the railroad overpass on East Shore Road were forced to squeeze through a stone tunnel. This was finally replaced by a modern railroad trestle-bridge. New spans were substituted for the outmoded structures on Grace Avenue (where metal replaced wood) and on Cutter Mill Road. A narrow bridge between Saddle Rock and Kings Point was considered extremely hazardous for many years. The tragic death of a young boy, run-over while crossing the bridge, finally mobilized construction efforts and a wide, concrete arched bridge was built.

In 1946, Great Neck and Patchogue became the first Long Island communities to install parking meters. Over the years residents have seen the minimum deposit grow from a penny to a dime. In 1947 diagonal parking was abandoned in favor of parallel parking. Free off-street parking lots were built and now tiered parking has been built. Commuter lots were built and administered by the Park District. At first they were open to the public, but, as demand grew, spaces were limited to Great Neck residents. Now, only members of the Park District who display the appropriate sticker may park in these lots. Adequate off-street parking continues to be a goal for shopkeepers, customers and commuters.

Residents were shocked to learn that the high level of auto emissions around the railroad station makes Great Neck one of the pollution “hot spots” in Nassau County. At peak traffic hours, long lines of cars on Middle Neck Road, Great Neck Road and Lakeville Road, plus the congestion at the three Northern Boulevard intersections, provide a daily struggle for motorists. Nearby residential streets are burdened by drivers avoiding the clogged roadways in and out of Great Neck. In an attempt to alleviate these conditions, the firm of T.T. Wiley was hired as traffic consultants. Their report suggested a variety of operational and capital improvements. Some of the proposed traffic pattern changes have been enacted, other recommendations have been discarded or are in the planning stage. A copy of the Wiley report may be found in the library.
Planning for the Future

Two other aspects that rest in the library are the Master Plan of 1929 and that of the Regional Planning Board and planners Raymond and May. The first Master Plan was prepared by Richard Schermerhorn, Jr. for the Great Neck Association. It is a fascinating study of plans and predictions made when Great Neck had only five villages. Little was done to implement the Schermerhorn report and no other over-all planning was considered until the 50's.

Between 1956 and 1962 a number of community forums, civic association meetings and citizen committees focused on the direction of Great Neck's future growth. The League of Women Voters, the Village Officials Association and the Great Neck Committee for Community Planning banded together to seek federal and state funds for a peninsula-wide planning study. In 1962, the Regional Planning Board was formed and the firm of Raymond and May was hired to investigate the community and make recommendations.

Soon rumors were rife throughout Great Neck. The release of ideas and proposals, which some thought were final plans, brought about further confusion. Most controversy centered around the "loop plan," which would have removed nonshopper traffic from Middle Neck Road by routing it through streets to be constructed in residential areas. There was great concern over possible destruction of homes and streets in the loop's path.

At a community-wide meeting held in 1965, Raymond and May noted that "residents are basically satisfied with the character of the peninsula and all means should be employed to protect and enhance its residential qualities." They cited the need to improve traffic flow, urban renewal for Spinney Hill, rehabilitation of parts of Steamboat Road and the construction of a larger, more centrally located library as areas of community concern.

The planning consultants emphasized that preservation and expansion of parks, wetlands and other ecologically important areas would be essential to the securing of a healthy and attractive future environment. The Park District responded to this imperative in a number of ways. They expanded recreational facilities through the construction of the award-winning Parkwood Pool complex and built many tennis courts for the residents' enjoyment. They have also acquired parcels of land all over Great Neck for use as active and passive parks. The ecology movement stirred homeowners to fight the destruction of the wetlands around Great Neck Estates, Mitchell Creek and Udall's Cove. Creek Park was preserved by the diligent efforts of Russell Gardenites.
Today, residents realize that to protect the water supply they must monitor and minimize usage of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and weed killers. They have urged local water companies to improve purification and conservation methods. Increased attention has been paid to the effects of sewers and cesspool systems on the water supply. Protecting the environment also means participating in recycling centers and bottle return programs. Many people would agree that the conservation of the environment and way of life in Great Neck can be guaranteed by community-wide planning. At present the only forum for this type of action is the Village Officials Association (the mayors of all nine villages and a representative from the unincorporated areas) and their Planning Council. The meetings of these two groups provide an opportunity for all to hear and discuss mutual and individual civic problems.

Great Neck As an Organization Town

Great Neck is well known for the participation of its residents in organizations, charities, causes and politics. For many years Great Neck was a Republican stronghold, as was most of Nassau County. After World War II, the influx of new residents from New York City brought a change in the political climate. During the 50's the Democrats grew in strength, number and organization. Nationally-known Democratic figures addressed local audiences and made an impact on voting patterns. Great Neck elections continue to show a Democratic majority, although there are vigorous Liberal, Conservative and Republican parties as well.

Any citizen can find an outlet for his or her energies within the myriad of social, educational, fraternal, civic and service groups operating in Great Neck. The United Community Fund Organization, for example, has from its inception brought out members from all over the community to join in raising funds for the 14 different charities it sponsors. Through the years participating recipients have changed as the UCF keeps pace with citizen needs. The North Shore Child Guidance Association, founded in Great Neck and now serving a group of north shore communities is another organization providing help for individuals and families throughout the community. Many other groups have found Great Neck receptive in both membership and financial support. Throughout the year a variety of fund raising events are held by local branches of national charities.

Great Neck is both socially conscious and arts oriented. The North Shore Community Arts Center flourished here for 33 years
providing performing and educational experiences in all the lively arts. The Contemporary Dance Group, Community Theatre, the Chamber Music Group and many others—all now defunct, helped enrich Great Neck over the years.

The tradition is carried on by the Great Neck Symphony, which since its inception has encouraged participation by local residents as well as guest performers. The Great Neck Choral Society, Great Neck Community Concerts, the Great Neck Players, dance organizations, Writers in Residence, Levels and others continue to flourish.

For those interested in the issues of the day, the League of Women Voters, founded in Great Neck in 1954, provides an opportunity to study, take positions, and lobby for legislation in areas of vital concern. The League also offers a wide array of voter service information and holds candidates meetings throughout the year and especially at election time.

In 1981 cable service was introduced. In addition to the presentations of the commercial channels, an abundance of local programming is available on the public access channels. Many community institutions and individuals are now presenting programs on these stations.

Helping to keep our peninsula both attractive and environmentally sound are the Park District, the Great Neck Estates Environmental Conservation Commission, the Great Neck Environmental Council and an organization called Great Neck the Beautiful that is responsible for encouraging local citizens, groups and businesses to sponsor the planting of trees, shrubs and flowers along Middle Neck Road. This project received a National Recognition Award from the America the Beautiful Fund in 1981.

Great Neck senior residents have a unique place in the fabric of the town. REAP, the Academy of Retired Executives and Professionals is a self-governing group of retired executives and professionals providing courses and the benefit of their life experiences to help others. Refreshments and planned activities and programs are offered by the Leisure Lounge of Great Neck Synagogue. St. Aloysius Senior Parishioners, and the Senior Mitzvah Group of Temple Israel.

The Senior Citizen Center of Great Neck provides transportation, a hot lunch program and a wide variety of recreational and educational activities every day but Saturday. It is located on Grace Avenue and may be reached by calling 487-0025. All are welcome.
WHERE IS GREAT NECK GOING?

Latest census figures put the population of Great Neck at 38,344, a drop of approximately 5,400 since the last census. Saddle Rock and Russell Gardens were the only villages to gain residents. The largest age group on the peninsula is between the age of 18-65, although the percentage of those over 65 has risen significantly. The Plaza has the largest number of households, although the fewest number of persons in each. Saddle Rock has the smallest number of households and nearly the largest number of persons in each home. Median family income ranges from $74,522 in Kings Point to $26,319 in Great Neck Plaza.

The community has 11 special districts, 3 fire companies, 16 public parks, 6 police departments, 2 post offices, 2 water companies, 1 library with 3 branches, 2 middle schools, 2 senior high schools, 4 elementary schools, 2 parochial private schools, 16 churches and synagogues and 31 civic associations. There are 5 sports, 5 business, 11 arts-oriented, 11 educational, 97 service, 4 veteran, and 8 youth groups who vie for the citizen's time and attention.

Great Neck can boast of approximately 48 manufacturing plants, 69 wholesale trade establishments, 261 retail stores, 3 car dealers, 25 gas stations, 48 food stores, 8 banks and 50 restaurants, bars, etc. These numbers change all the time.

Numbers, of course, do not tell the whole story. Great Neck is a community with a vital history, with roots and a past that make it more than a suburb. Its growth has been parallel to that of the nation's; a wilderness barely occupied by Indians; a simple colony marked by a desire for independence, a prosperous agricultural community, the home of artists, writers and theatrical luminaries, the residence of millionaires and shapers of the country's industrial economy, and the neighborhood of today's modern citizen. Great Neck is a melange of income levels and political points of view, national origins and backgrounds, tastes and interests. Its residents are an alive and exciting people and Great Neck reflects their passions and enthusiasms.

THE END
A RESIDENT'S GUIDE TO THE COMMUNITY

1. The School System
2. Recreation
3. Local Government
4. Voting Rights and Qualifications
5. Communicating With Your Representatives

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A Complete List of Emergency Numbers

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Maps
Great Neck in the early 20th Century
Great Neck development of villages
Town of North Hempstead
Congressional, Senatorial, Assembly Districts
THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

All of the peninsula of Great Neck, together with a portion of New Hyde Park, constitute Union Free School District 7 or the Great Neck Public School System.

The district includes two senior high schools, John L. Miller North Senior High at 35 Polo Road and the South Senior High at 341 Lakeville Road, which serve ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students. In addition, there is a non-structured Village School at this grade level, housed in the Youth Center. Sixth, seventh and eight graders attend the North Middle School at 77 Polo Road, or the South Middle School at 349 Lakeville Road.

There are four elementary schools for children in kindergarten to sixth grade. They are the E.M. Baker School at 69 Baker Hill Road, the J.F. Kennedy School at 1-A Grassfield Road, Lakeville School at 47-27 Jayson Avenue, and Saddle Rock School at 10 Hawthorne Lane.

The central administration is housed in the Phipps Building on Lakeville Road. Administration officials are responsible for maintenance of educational standards, recruitment of personnel, evaluation and development of new educational programs, purchases and repairs, pupil testing and special services.

The Board of Education consists of five elected local residents who serve without pay. They have broad powers in determining educational policy, supervising school administration and levying taxes. The Superintendent of Schools serves as the Board's executive officer, although a President and Vice-President are elected from the five Board members. The Board meets regularly, usually on the second and fourth Monday nights, in public as well as executive session. Many Great Neck residents serve on advisory committees to help the Board with decisions on educational goals and policies, budget needs, youth recreation, career counseling and adult education.

A school budget is devised each year by the superintendent. In 1983, a School Site Budget system was introduced involving input from parents, teachers and principals of each school. It is submitted to the Board of Education for acceptance and/or revision and eventual adoption. Finally, it is presented to the residents for a vote. At this election, it has also been customary to vote for members of the Board of Education and the library budget as well. Local property taxes provide the Great Neck Public School System with the bulk of its operating revenue. Grants, state and federal aid,
bank interest and adult education fees provide some additional funds.

Any child who legally resides in the school district and who will be at least five years of age on or before December 1st of the year is eligible for September admission. Bus service is provided for kindergarten through third grade ½ mile or more from school; Grades 4-6, 1 mile or more; Grades 7-9, 1½ miles or more; Grades 10-12, 2 miles or more, as measured by the shortest walking distance. Hot lunches and a variety of additional foods are available.

School district policy is designed to keep parents aware of their children’s progress. Records are open for inspection by parents, and parent-teacher contact is encouraged. In the elementary schools, parent-teacher conferences are held on Wednesday afternoons and written reports are available upon request. On the secondary level, report cards are mailed home four times a year.

Programs

Within the schools, there are a variety of guidance, psychiatric, special need and social work services. Several schools offer a choice of different types of classroom organization (mixed grade, open class, interest media centers) and special cultural, drug prevention and field or outdoor experience programs. Disadvantaged younger children may participate in “head-start” and in-home programs designed to prepare them for formal education.

High School students may attend the regular high schools or enroll in more individualized programs such as the highly-flexible Village School and the somewhat more structured School Within a School and Community School.

Remedial services are also available, as are programs for blind, speech-impaired, physically handicapped, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, multiply handicapped, foreign born, disadvantaged and low-achiever students. Great Neck participates in BOCES. This state-wide program operates its largest division in Nassau County. It works cooperatively with the schools, providing courses for career bound students and those with special educational needs.

Great Neck students can take advantage of an after-school and summer school program, a summer recreation program and a Saturday Entertainment Series. A large number of adult residents participate in an extensive Adult Education program offering courses in subjects such as basic education, arts, languages, human and global affairs, physical fitness, swimming and boating.
Parent-Teacher Associations operate in every school and a United Parent Teachers Council works on a district level. Here, parents, teachers and administrators have an opportunity to work together. Two school-wide conferences, the Fall Leadership Conference and the Landmark Conference, provide additional forums for parent-teacher communication.
RECREATION

The Park District

The Great Neck Park District encompasses the entire peninsula of Great Neck except Saddle Rock, Great Neck Estates and Harbor Hills. South of Northern Boulevard University Gardens, the Uplands, the Manor, Deepdale Estates, Lake Success and Waverly Hills are omitted. All residents of the district are entitled to use the parks. Administrative headquarters are located at 5 Beach Road. Park identification cards are required for use of tennis courts and Steppingstone Park. Parkwood Skating Rink is open to all Great Neck residents paying the entrance fee. Park District residents using the pool and tennis courts pay a separate fee for these facilities.

Kings Point Park: 175 acres between Steamboat and Red Brook Roads. Available are ball fields, bicycle and hiking paths, picnic and barbecue areas, tennis courts and a children's playground.

Allenwood Park: North of Kensington. Included are walks, tennis courts, a children's park and wading pool and a duck pond.

Steppingstone: Steppingstone Lane on Long Island Sound. Beach, formal gardens and lawn, picnic tables, boating and fishing pier, lockers, launching ramp and several hundred moorings, children's indoor and outdoor play areas, wading pool and snack bar. A nature center, boating program and performing arts program are also available.

Athletic Field: Also known as "Memorial Park," on Fairview Avenue. Included are tennis courts, ball fields and courts, a roller skating area and a children's park.

Village Green: Located in the center of the "Old Village." There are shade areas and benches, a children's playground and wading pool, and a band-stand.

English Garden: Located behind the Village Green. This walled, secluded formal rose garden has beautiful plantings and shrubs.

Parkwood Pool and Rink: On Wood Road and Arrandale Avenue. The pool area has Olympic and children's pools, food bar, dining patio, playground and game area and locker room. The rink area has a roofed skating rink, snack bar, lockers, a skate shop and a lounge with a brick fireplace. Ice hockey and a skating school are also available. Out of season, the ice rink is converted into a roller rink and recreational area. There are also 7 tennis courts.
Neighborhood Parks: Throughout the community are a variety of parks offering playgrounds, lawns, shaded sitting areas and gardens. Some also have wading pools and ball courts. They are Cutter Mill, Grace Avenue, Wyngate, Uplands, Lakeville, Ravine and Manor Parks. During the summer thousands are drawn to Steppingstone and Grace Avenue parks to see a variety of programs from jazz to opera.

Great Neck House: This handsome building, the former library on Arrandale Avenue, is now used throughout the year for recreation, exhibits, concerts, movies, meetings, classes and informal get-togethers.

Great Neck Library: On Bayview Avenue can boast an extensive research collection, microfilm department, up-to-the minute assemblage of new publications, study and listening facilities, and a remarkable book collection for children as well as adults. A series of cultural events—from musicals to movies is presented throughout the year.

The Library system has three branches—located in the Plaza, New Hyde Park, and the Great Neck Terrace sections. A free bus provides access from many points on the peninsula.

Levels, a unique gathering place for young people between 7th grade and college, is located at the main building. Films, music, theatre, dance, art, games and computer workshops are organized by student themselves with fine adult guidance.

Village and Neighborhood Facilities

The following are open only to residents of a particular village or neighborhood:


Ball Fields: Great Neck Estates and Saddle Rock.
Local government for residents of Great Neck consists of four separate units of government: county, town, village and special district. The largest of these units is Nassau County. It is composed of three towns—Hempstead, North Hempstead and Oyster Bay, and two cities—Glen Cove and Long Beach. Within the county there are 64 incorporated villages, 80 unincorporated areas, 269 special districts and 66 school districts. Nassau County has a total area of 300 square miles.

For most of its early history, Nassau County was a part of Queens. In fact, Queens County at one time extended all the way to the Suffolk County line. The six towns within these borders were called "the Eastern Towns." The seat of government rested in the Queens County Court House located in the geographical center of the county at the corner of Jericho Turnpike and Herricks Road in Mineola.

The new County of Nassau, New York State's 61st, was born on January 1, 1899. Government offices were moved to the Mineola Hook and Ladder Company Truck House. On July 13, 1900, Governor Theodore Roosevelt laid the cornerstone for the first Nassau County Court House in Garden City. With the expansion of the county's population and services, these quarters became outmoded. In 1961, the Executive Office Building on Old Country Road in Mineola opened and is now the county seat.

Nassau County has had its own charter since 1938. This charter, the first in the state, served as a model for other counties. It provided for a County Executive and a Board of Supervisors to serve as the legislative branch of government. It also provided for the centralization of many services and a court system.

Through its many departments and commissions, the county maintains health standards, park and recreation facilities and police and fire protection. It administers hospitals and social service agencies, establishes a civil service commission, transportation standards, a bureau of weights and measures and educational programs. In recent years, a Commission on Human Rights has been added.

A Planning Commission, created in 1945, is maintained to plan for the physical development of the county. It has broad research and advisory powers and consults with planning boards and local officials.
Although the county does not collect taxes, it does assess property for taxation purposes. A complete reappraisal of all real estate in the county was made in 1939. Since then, copies of all new building permits are sent to the assessor's office for valuation. All records of the Department of Assessment are open to examination by the taxpayer. The only revenue collection for which the county assumes responsibility is delinquent taxes.

**County Executive:** The County Executive is elected from the county at large for a three-year term of office. He presides over the Board of Supervisors and votes only in case of a tie. He appoints the heads of various departments, boards and commissions subject to confirmation by the Board of Supervisors. He has veto power over the action of the Board, which in turn can be overridden by a two-thirds vote. The County Executive prepares the budget with the help of the Chief Deputy County Executive, and the budget director. A public hearing is held in November, and any resident may attend this hearing. A copy of the budget may be obtained from the county office in Mineola.

**Board of Supervisors:** The Board of Supervisors is the legislative branch of county government and consists of the three Town Supervisors, two City Mayors and the County Executive. It acts through passage of resolutions and ordinances which are open to public inspection. In addition, the Board has administrative duties such as the supervision of county departments and the terms of employment of county workers. It has custody and control over the county's real and personal property. Fiscally, the Board has the power to make appropriations, levy taxes and incur indebtedness necessary for county purposes. Currently, the Board is illegally constituted and must redesign its apportionment system.

**Standing Committees:** Each of the Supervisors is a member of one or more standing committees. They research proposed ordinances, resolutions and local laws and hold open hearings during which citizen opinion is recognized and recorded. Some of the standing committees are Health and Welfare, Judiciary, Finance, Public Safety, Transportation, Education, and Industry and Labor.

**Other County Officials:** The County Clerk, the Chairman of the Board of Assessors, The Comptroller, the Sheriff and the District Attorney.

**The Judicial System:** The Judicial System in Nassau County has four levels: Police Justice (Village Courts), District Court, Family, County and Surrogate's Court and the State Supreme Court.
The political subdivision of a county is a town. Great Neck is in the Town of North Hempstead, which covers an area of 69 square miles. It includes Great Neck, Manhasset, Port Washington, Roslyn, Westbury, Williston Park, East Williston, Mineola and New Hyde Park. It is bounded on the east by the Town of Oyster Bary and on the west by Queens County. In the Town of North Hempstead, there are 31 unincorporated areas, the local government is the town government. Village residents receive some town services. Residents of both unincorporated and incorporated areas elect the town officials.

The town maintains roads, award contracts, manages town property, appropriates funds, borrows money within debt limits, enacts certain ordinances, collects taxes, provides parks and playgrounds, administers refuse disposal plants and plans for the town in general. In addition, the town issues licenses and permits. Since the 30's, towns have had zoning power everywhere except in already established villages.

**Supervisor:** The Supervisor is the chief executive officer and head of the administrative branch of town government. He is elected for a two-year term and presides over Town Board meetings. He votes as a member of the Board and has no veto power. In addition, he represents the Town of North Hempstead on the Nassau County Board of Supervisors. As chief fiscal officer, he appoints a director of finance to assist him in fiscal matters and in the preparation of the preliminary town budget. He also prepares a capital budget and administers all departments.

**Town Board:** The Town Board is composed of the Supervisor and four Councilmen. Its meetings are open to the public. The Board is the legislating, appropriating, governing and policy-determining body of the town. It conducts hearings, administers state laws, controls town finances and property and passes ordinances. It approves the budget and may also approve its modifications and transfers. It also creates and consolidates departments and appoints their heads and deputies. The Town Board may not abridge or interfere with the power and authority of the villages within its limits. It has no administrative powers over special districts except those that do not have elected commissioners.

The following are elected officials:

**Town Clerk:** Elected for two-year term. He acts as custodian of town records, registrar of vital statistics and issuer of licenses and permits.
Receiver of Taxes: Elected for four-year term. He collects town, county, special district and school taxes, based on county assessments. A single tax bill is issued by the town to cover all taxes except the school tax.

Trustees of the Jones Fund: Two persons elected for two-year terms. They administer the Jones Institute, an endowed home for 100 elderly, indigent people from the towns of North Hempstead and Oyster Bay and the City of Glen Cove.

The Following are appointed officials:

**Town Attorney:** Responsible for all legal affairs.

**Town Comptroller:** Responsible for financial operations and all accounting records.

**Commissioner of Public Works:** Oversees Department of Highways, Parks and Recreation.

**Board of Zoning and Appeals:** Consists of a Chairman and four other members. They study and plan for future growth of the town. After a public hearing before the Town Board, variances of zoning ordinances may be granted. They are processed by the Executive Secretary.

**Examining Boards of Plumbers and Electricians:** Serve three-year terms and examine and grant licenses.

**North Hempstead Housing Authority:** Five members who plan and provide for low income housing.

**The Villages of Great Neck**

Villages get their charters from the state (after preliminary approval from the town), are incorporated by the state and exercise local governing powers as authorized by the Village Law. Each village government controls the property within its corporate area. It levies taxes and enacts ordinances (dealing mainly with traffic regulation, sanitation, zoning, noise and smoke restraints). It issues licenses and records vital statistics. Other basic services performed by the villages are street cleaning, snow removal, maintenance of storm water drains and in some villages fire and police protection. Not all villages furnish the same services. These depend entirely on what the citizens of a village want and decide through their mayor and trustees, who are the village governing authorities.

Residents of each of the incorporated villages elect their own mayor and trustees, who serve for either two or four year terms. Board of Trustees meetings are held every month and are open to
the public. In addition, the mayor may call other meetings. A typical
order of business at a village consists of approving outstanding
charges against the village for services and equipment, discussing
general village business and hearing reports from each of the
trustees. First class villages are required by state law to elect a
police justice. Smaller villages may elect one if they wish.

Suggestions for improvement of administration, complaints,
recommendations or any requests for village action may be made
to the Board of Trustees by the citizens either verbally at the public
village meetings or by petition.

Each village except Russell Gardens has a police justice elec­
ted or appointed for a four-year term. The police court handles off­
enses under the vehicle and traffic laws and local ordinances.

After a public hearing, each village board adopts an annual
budget which the state constitution limits to two percent of the full
value of the total taxable property, averaged over the past five
years, in that village. Each board determines its own tax rate and
supervises the collection of taxes. It may borrow money on the
credit of the village, although the state constitution limits the
amount to not over seven percent of the average full value of total
taxable property for the past five years.

State law requires that all village budgets be prepared by the
Budget Officer, who may be the mayor or someone specially ap­
pointed. All heads of departments must submit estimates of the
year’s expenditures for their departments. These figures are then
reviewed by the Budget Officer or a Budget Committee. A public
hearing is called, and further revisions may be made at that time,
after which the budget is adopted.

Each village has a Planning Board appointed by its Board of
Trustees except Great Neck Plaza where the Board of Trustees
acts as its own Planning Board. It is the responsibility of each Plan­
ing Board to review all sub-development “plats;” to see that
streets are laid and public utilities, including water mains,
provided. The Board makes certain that lot areas conform; and it
plans roadside planting. The plat must be approved by the State
Department of Health, the Nassau County Department of Public
Works, the Nassau County Treasurer and Collector of Taxes, the
appropriate Village Clerk and Planning Board Chairman and other
agencies.

On zoning questions, each Planning Board makes its recom­
mendations to the Board of Trustees. After a public hearing on the
issue, the Board passes the necessary ordinances if zoning
changes are desired.
Building inspectors of each village make certain that structures comply with the building codes and zoning ordinances. The Board of Appeals hears appeals regarding these ordinances.

All financial records of the villages are subject to New York State audit. These audits are usually held every two years. An annual report of village activities is distributed to its taxpayers by each village in the form of a treasurer's or village report.

The typical village administration consists of an elected Mayor and Board of Trustees, who serve two-year terms. Some villages have a Police Justice, who serves a four-year term. The Board of Trustees appoints a Village Clerk, a Treasurer, a Village Attorney, a Superintendent of Public Works, a Building Inspector (who may be one of the Trustees), a Village Planning Board and a Board of Appeals. Other commissions, boards and village employees may be appointed by the Board of Trustees as necessary.

Special Districts

Special districts are created by the town to provide services not available in any other manner. They are formed in response to the formal request of 51% of the residents of the area to be served and are administered by commissioners who are elected (if created prior to 1934) or appointed (if created since 1934). All districts are supported by property taxes levied by the county and collected by the town. There are eleven special districts in Great Neck. They are:

- Great Neck Water Pollution Control District
- Great Neck Village Sewer District
- Belgrave Water Pollution Control District
- Manhasset-Lakeville Water District
- Manhasset-Lakeville Fire District
- Town of North Hempstead Lighting District
- Town of North Hempstead Sidewalk District
- Great Neck Fire District, Alert and Vigilant Fire Companies
- Great Neck Park District
- Harbor Hills Park District
- Town of North Hempstead Lighting District

The Great Neck Public Library

The Great Neck Public Library is an association library with a Board of Trustees elected by members of the association. It is a free voluntary organization open to all citizens of Great Neck.
The library is supported principally by local taxation (raised by the school district) and some state aid, plus income from fines, lost books and rentals. The budget is voted upon annually.

The library system is available to all who live and work in the school district. The main library is located in a beautiful setting on Udall's Pond off Bayview Avenue. Bus service is provided continually from this library to many parts of the peninsula. The three branches are located in the North Shore Shopping Center (corner of Great Neck Road and Middle Neck Road) in the Great Neck Terrace area (475 Great Neck Road, one block off Northern Boulevard); and at the Parkville School (20-52 Lakeville Road).

Special art and anthropology exhibits, films, children's story hours and community meetings supplement one of the finest collections of books, recordings and reference materials on Long Island.