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# HISTORY *of the* ROCKAWAYS

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THE STUDENTS OF FAR ROCKAWAY HIGH SCHOOL

# DOLPHIN

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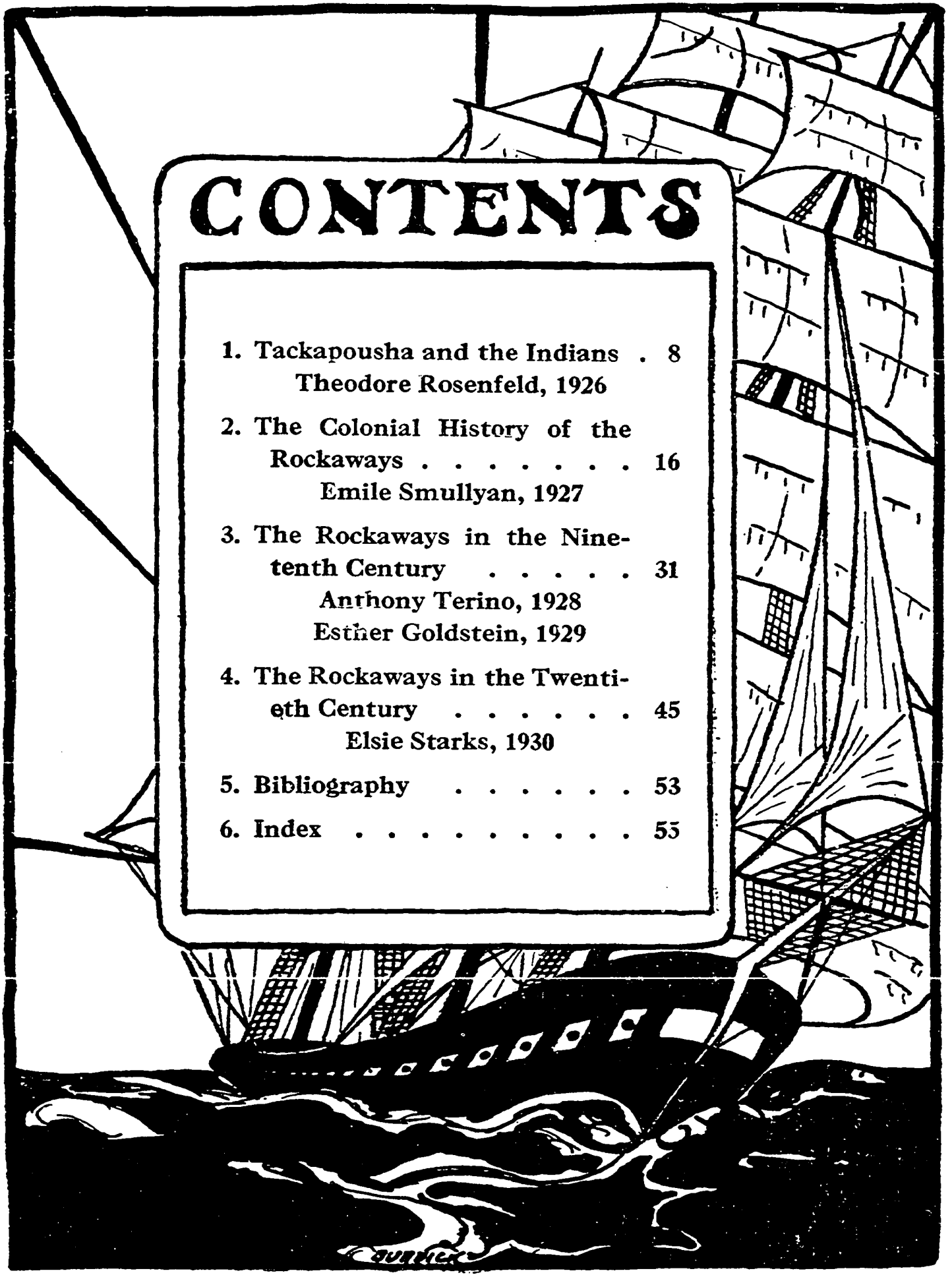

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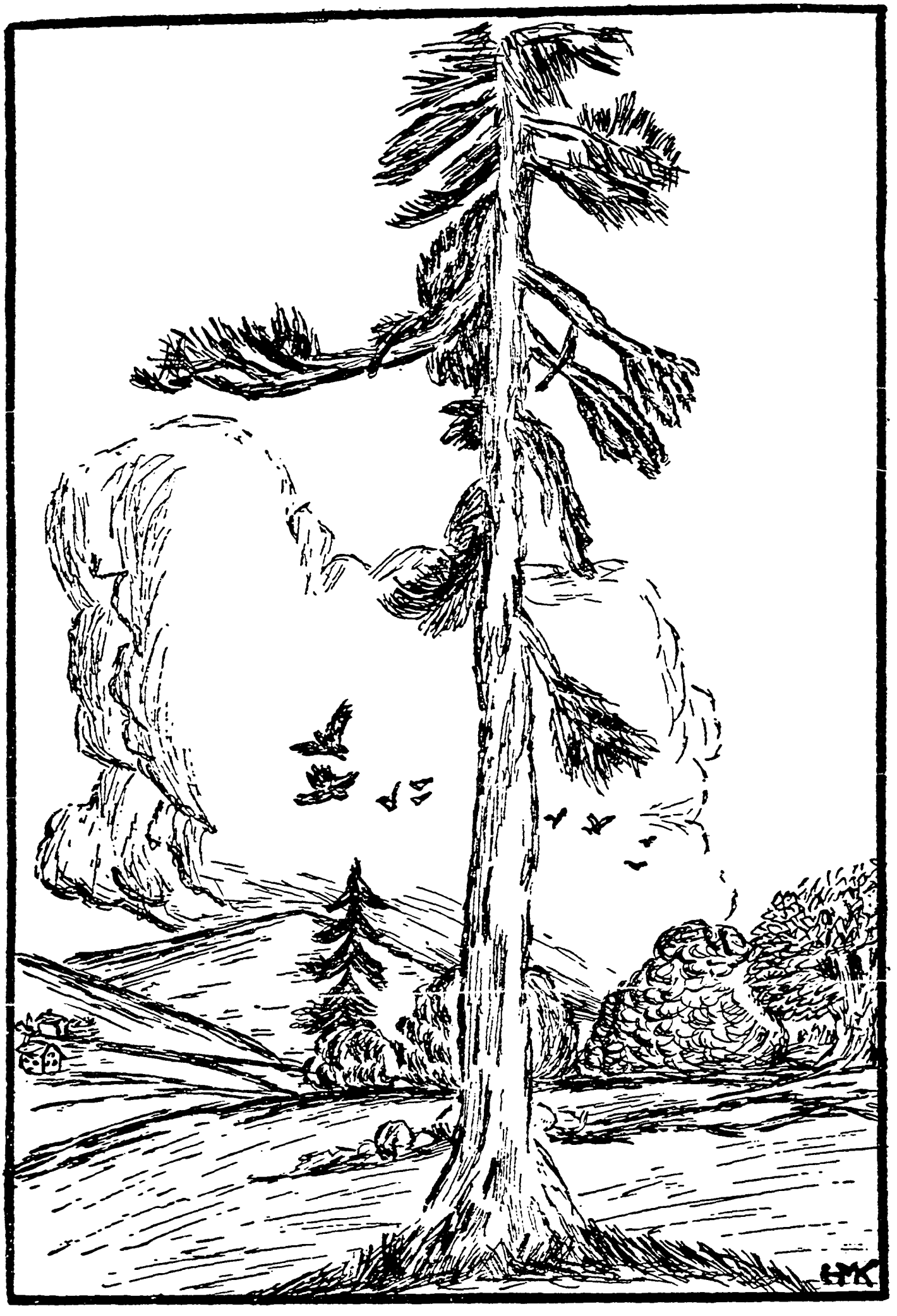


# FOREWORD

*THIS book is the outgrowth of a senior class project in local history, inspired and encouraged by the Exchange Club of Far Rockaway which has contributed annual awards for the best essays. It is published by the Far Rockaway High School in the hope of arousing a greater interest in the past life of the community. No claim is made to absolute authenticity: the difficulty of research in a subject where records are so meagre and the inexperience of the investigators should be kept in mind by the indulgent and gentle reader.*

*We believe, in the main, that this work gives an interesting and lively survey of the development of this section. If not perfect, it may lead to further and more intensive investigations. As it stands it represents a pioneer effort and we hope that the reader will gain as much pleasure in reading it as the editors have gained in compiling it.*

*The editors wish to thank the Exchange Club of Far Rockaway, the English and History departments of the Far Rockaway High School, the school magazine, the "Dolphin", and the many citizens of the community who loaned old letters and family records to the writers.*

# Tackapousha and The Indians of Rockaway

*Theodore Rosenfeld, 1926*

## PART I

## THE INDIANS OF LONG ISLAND

THE Indian names for Long Island were derived from a commodity which had much to do with early Indian history. This was the quahog or hard clam, found abundantly along the shores; wampum belts made from these shells form our only extant, though imperfect, record of pre-colonial times. Long Island was called Sewanhacky and Wamponomon, both names pertaining to the quahog shells.

Old Dutch prints and maps mention the Long Island Indians as Mohegans. This was only a subtitle, for they were members of the widespread Algonquin tribe. From various sources we find that the Long Island Indians were tall, straight, muscular, and agile, possessing straight hair and a reddish-brown complexion. They spoke the Algonquin language, the tongue in which Elliot wrote the Indian Bible. The era preceding the Dutch settlement is and will forever be a mystery. The data which the wampum belts offer are slight indeed. Nevertheless, we have proof that there were thirteen distinct tribes on Long Island. This great number may be explained by the fact that two Indian families in any

district warranted the formation of a tribe, and the taking of a tribal name.

These tribes were distributed as follows: the *Canarsies*, Kings County and Jamaica; the *Rockaways*, southern part of the town of Hempstead, part of Jamaica, and all of Newtown; the *Montauks*, around the Montauk section; the *Merricks*, near Rockaway to the west side of Oyster Bay; the *Marsapeagues*, Fort Neck; the *Matinecocks*, east of Newtown as far as Smithtown; the *Nesaquakes*, from the Sound to the middle of the Island; the *Setaukets*, from Stony Brook to Wading River; the *Manhassets*, Shelter and Hog Islands; the *Secatogues*, adjoining the Marsapeagues on the west and extending as far east as Patchogue; the *Patchogues*, east from Patchogue to Westhampton; the *Shinnecocks*, Canoe Place to Easthampton; the *Corchaugs*, Wading River to Oyster Bay.

Glimpses of Indian life may be gleaned from Denton's "Description of New York, Formerly New Netherlands", a very rare work published in 1670. A condensation of his chapter on the Indians reads as follows:

"The Indians live by hunting, fowling, and fishing. They build movable tents which they remove two or three times a year. Their recreations are football and cards.

"They are great lovers of strong drink yet do not care for drinking unless they have enough to make themselves drunk; and if there be so many in their company that there is not enough to make them all drunk, they usually select so many of their company proportionate to the quantity of drink, and the rest must be spectators. And if any one chance to be drunk before he hath finished his portion (which is usually a quart of brandy, rum, or strong waters), the others will pour the rest of it down his throat.

"An Indian often kills another when drunk, and friends of the murdered person take revenge unless he can purchase his life.

"They worship twice a year. Their usual time is about Michaelmas, when their corn is first ripe, the day being appointed by their chief priest or powwow. Most go hunting for venison. When congregated, the priest tells them—if he wants money—that their God will accept of no other offering. The people believing, everyone gives money according to his ability. The priest takes the money, and putting it into some dishes, sets it upon the top of their low flat-roofed houses, and falls to invocating their God to come and receive it. He beats his breast, knocks the ground with sticks, and makes loud noises which are seconded by the people.

"When their sachem sits in council, he hath a company of armed men to guard him. He states the cause of their meeting, and then asks for someone's opinion. A speaker may not be interrupted, no matter how long he pauses, unless he says he has nothing more to say.

"If a person is condemned to die, . . . the king shoots first, and then the others may. When an Indian dies, they bury him upright sitting

upon a seat, with his gun and money, so that he may be furnished in the next world, which they conceive is westward. At burial, the nearest relations of the deceased man attend the hearse with their faces painted black, and visit the grave once or twice a day, where they can send forth sad lamentations until time hath worn the blackness off their faces, and afterwards every year they make new mourning for him, view and trim the grave, and suffer no grass to grow by it. They fence their graves with a hedge, and cover the top with mats. When an Indian dies, his name dies. To repeat it is sacrilege, and any person with a similar name changes it."

The Dutch and English settlers found the Long Island Indians reduced in numbers through incessant warfare with the Iroquois, who had laid them under tribute. After the coming of the Dutch, who promised to protect them from the local tribes, they discontinued the tribute to the Iroquois. In 1655, the Mohawks, one of the Five Nations, made a descent upon Staten Island, in which they killed sixty-seven of the natives. From there they invaded Gravesend, Canarsie, and other places on Long Island.

The settlers at the east end of the Island found Wyandanch, the grand sachem, at war with Ninegret, the sachem of the Narragansettes of Rhode Island. There had been massacres on both sides. Niningret struck the finishing blow on the occasion of the marriage of a daughter of Wyandanch to a young chieftain of his tribe at Fort Pond on the Montauk. Knowing that all precautions would be overlooked on this occasion, Ninegret came down in force upon his enemy, slaughtered half the tribe including the groom, and carried the bride away as his captive to the mainland. This broke the power and spirit of Wyandanch, who by a cession of Montauk came under the protection of Easthampton.

Benjamin Thompson attributed the conflicts of the two tribes to a refusal of Wyandanch to join in a plot for exterminating the white settlers. Roger Williams traced the war to the pride of the sachems. The Long Island chief, he said, "was proud and foolish; Ninegret, proud and fierce."

Because of the murder of an Indian in 1641, the Long Island Indians joined the neighboring tribes in hostilities against the Dutch. In 1643 some Dutch farmers on the Island ventured to seize and carry off two wagonloads of corn belonging to the Indians. The owners, attempting to defend their property, were killed. The Island Indians, anxious to avenge the depredations of the whites, rose in open war, killed many settlers, and destroyed considerable property. A temporary peace was established between Grand Sachem Penhawitz (the predecessor of Tackapousha), and Governor Kieft of New Amsterdam. The war flamed forth anew, however, when it was charged that one of the parties had embezzled the gifts which should have ratified the treaty.

Thus it may be seen that the period which preceded Tackapousha's reign was one of ceaseless conflict between the red and white man, one trying to oust the other from Long Island.

## THE INDIANS AND THE SETTLEMENTS

Though we find no definite proof, it has been conjectured that John de Verazzano visited Long Island in 1542. The first authentic discovery was made in September, 1609, by Henry Hudson. It is from him that we get the first written account of the Long Island Indians.

On the 4th of September, Hudson anchored to the north of Coney Island. He records that the Canarsie Indians came aboard his vessel without fear, and seemed pleased with his arrival. They brought with them green tobacco and exchanged it for knives and trinkets.

The Dutch sought to counterbalance the New England settlements in Connecticut with rival settlements on Long Island as early as 1683. This move on the chess-board of empire was thwarted by the English when they succeeded in getting a grasp on the eastern or Montauk end of the Island, thus hemming in their rivals. Both the Dutch and English purchased their lands from the Indians, the English directly, the Dutch through their Governors. In old documents, we find that Long Island officially was conveyed to the Earl of Stirling on April 22, 1635. This conveyance was later dissolved by parliament.

During the first half of the 17th Century, some Dutchmen from a trading post on the Southern tip of Manhattan Island crossed the East River and laid out their bouweries (farms) on the hills of the Breuckelen region. These were the first white men and women to live on Long Island. The first English hamlets founded on East Long Island were Southampton, Easthampton, and Southhold.

On the west end the Dutch settled Brooklyn, first named Breuckelen, in 1636; Flushing, in 1645; New Utrecht in 1657; and Bushwick in 1660.

English immigrants were permitted to settle on Dutch territory if they took the oath of allegiance to the Dutch government. Among the English towns under the jurisdiction of the Dutch, Hempstead was settled in 1643; Gravesend in 1645; Jamaica in 1655; and Newtown in 1656.

The Dutch towns appear to have been wholly under the control of the Governor, whose will in civil, individual, and ecclesiastical matters was absolute. The English towns were allowed to choose their own officers, subject to the approval of the Governor, to hold town meetings, and to manage their own affairs as nearly like the eastern towns as circumstances would permit. Concerning early Long Island History there is an interesting anecdote in "Narratives of New Netherland".

In 1647, a Scotchman, who called himself Captain Andrew Forester, claimed Long Island for the Dowager of Stirling, with himself as Governor. He had an unsigned commission from King James dated 1618,


A.S.K.

and a seal which could not be deciphered. The commission embraced all of Long Island and five leagues about it. He had authority from Mary, Dowager of Stirling, but this was all. He clamored to see the credentials of Governor Stuyvesant, saying that if they were better than his, he would be willing to submit. Stuyvesant seized him and sent him to England on the *Falconer* but as the vessel neared port, he escaped.

Rockaway, in the Indian tongue, means the "Place of Our Laughing Waters".

The succession to the title of the Rockaway section was as follows: Tackapousha to Palmer; Palmer to Cornell; Cornell to Norton. At this point it was divided, and ownership rested in different hands.

In 1685 in the earliest recorded deed of property, Tackapousha and Paman (Sagamores of the Rockaway tribe) conveyed to Captain John Palmer the land from the present Lawrence Village line to Rockaway Beach for a trifle over $125.00. After the transaction, a Mr. Pearsall of North Hempstead wrote a protest to the King claiming that there was a conspiracy between Governor Dongan and Palmer, in securing the land from the Indians. This accusation was later disproved.

The name Reck-ou-wacky appears first on record in the Indian deed to the Dutch of 1639:

> "Mechowodt, the chief sachem of the Marsapeague and its dependencies, who conveys all his patrimonial lands on the south side of Long Island from Reck-ou-wacky to Sicke-touwhacky . . . "

The first conveyance to the English mentioned Rockaway in 1643. It reads thus:

> "We of the Marsapeague, Merriak, or Rockaway . . . "

Practically no aboriginal landmarks survive in the Far Rockaway and Rockaway sections. The old Indian path of the Rockaway Tribe (Rockaway path) ran north through Evergreen cemetery to Bushwick.

* * * * *

Future generations will never realize the immense courage and fortitude of the first settlers on Long Island. With the savage tribes in front of them and the water behind them, the penalty of defeat was torture and a cruel death.

## TACKAPOUSHA AND THE WHITE MEN

Mechowodt, the chief sachem of the Marsapeague tribe, was succeeded by his son, Tackapousha, no later than 1656.

Tackapousha means the "Man Father", or the "Father of the Indians". Tackapousha was a peaceful man, little addicted to fighting, and much in the habit of consulting Thomas Dongan (Colonial Governor of New Netherlands under Charles II) in any controversy. Dongan was known as the "Great White Father", for he often acted in the capacity

of mediator. At one time, he forbade all unsanctioned land deals with the aborigines, for they, having drunk the rum, or spent the money they had received as payment, would again lay claim to their tribal territories.

In 1656 there existed a confederacy of all the tribes on Long Island, west of the line of the Great and Nissequague Rivers, except the Matinecock tribe. Tackapousha was grand sachem. The tribes were distributed as follows: The Marsapeague tribe at Fort Neck; the Maskahoung, a minor clan of uncertain location; the Secatoug tribe, east to Patchogue and Secatoug Neck; the Meracock tribe, from East Rockaway to the west line of Oyster Bay; the Rockaway tribe, at Hempstead, Newtown, and a part of Jamaica; and the Canarsie tribe in what is now Kings County, and Jamaica.

The Rockaway tribe was scattered over the southern part of the Town of Hempstead, which, with a part of Jamaica and the whole of Newtown, constituted their claim. The greater part of their tribe was at Near Rockaway. Part lived at the head of Maspeth Creek, in Newtown. Deeds for land transfers were executed by the Rockaway sachem. This tribe also had a settlement of several hundred acres on Hog Island in Rockaway Bay. The first Rockaway sachem known to the Dutch was Chegnoe. Nowedinah was sachem in 1648, Eskmippas in 1670, Paman in 1685, and Quaquashe, or the hunter, in 1691.

The Long Island Indians, aware of the enmity entertained against them by the other tribes, hastened to secure the good will of the Dutch. A delegation from Tackapousha presented themselves accordingly at Fort Amsterdam to conclude a treaty of peace. They declared that since the last general war they had not done the Dutch the least harm. "No, not even the value of a dog." "Our Chief," continued the orator, "has been twelve years at war with those who have injured you." With these words the Indian ambassador deposited presents in token of the friendship of Tackapousha. They were accepted, and the sachems received every assurance of good will.

The following year a treaty was made between Stuyvesant and Tackapousha. Its provisions were as follows:

> "Articles of agreement, betwixt the Governor of ye New Netherlands and Tackapousha, March ye 12, 1656:
>
> "I. That all injuries, formerly passed in the time of the Governor's predecessors, shall be forgiven and forgotten, since ye year 1645:
>
> "II. That Tackapousha being chosen ye chief sachem by all the Indian sachems from Marsapeague, Maskahoung, Secatoug, Meracock, Rockaway, and Conarsie, wh ye rest, both sachems and natives, doth take ye Governor of ye Netherlands, to be his people's protector, and doth put

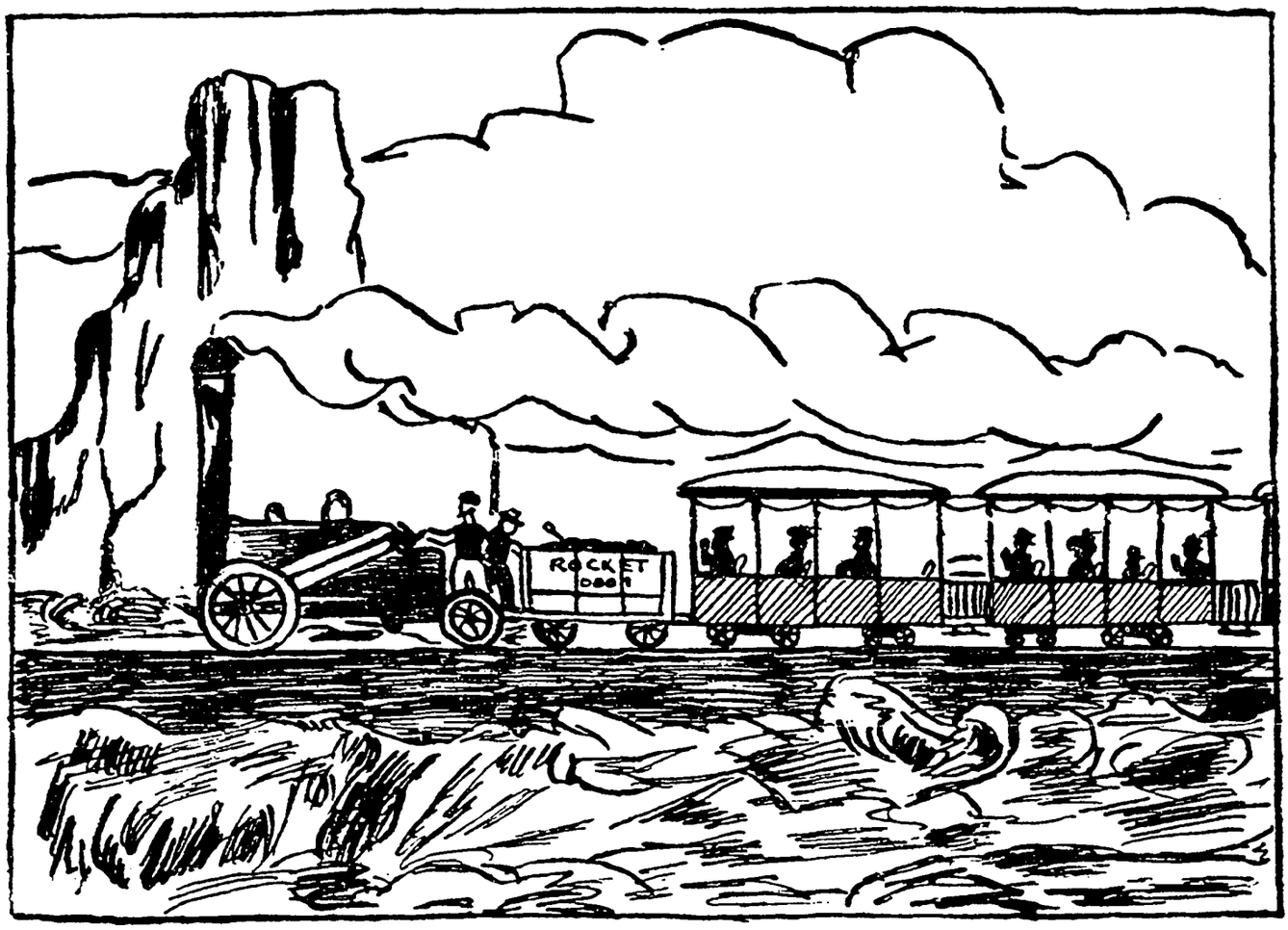
under his protection theire lands and territoryes upon Long Island, soe far as ye Dutch line doth run according to the agreement made at Hartforde.

"III. The Governor doth promise to make noe peace with the Indians that did the spoile at ye Manhatans on the 15th of September last, but likewise to include the sachem in it.

"IV. That Tackapousha shall make noe peace wh ye sd Indians, with out ye consent and knowledge of the Governor, and the sachem doth promise for himself and his people to give noe dwelling place, entertainment, noe lodging to any of ye Governor's, or theire owne enemyes."

If the agreement of the treaty of March 12, 1656, was the treaty of peace, looking towards which Tackapousha had sent his ambassadors to Fort Amsterdam on November 27, 1655, it may have been that the intervening four months were spent in the choosing of Tackapousha as chief sachem.

The exact date of Tackapousha's death is not known. We surmise that it was between the years 1685 and 1688. There is documentary evidence that on October 6, 1695, Paman, sagamore of Rockaway; Tackapousha, and others, sold Rockaway Neck to John Palmer, a merchant of New York. After 1685, the actions of Tackapousha elude the researches of those who are interested in the unlettered, but diplomatic Indian chieftain, whose melancholy fate it was to live to see the downfall of his own race.




# The Colonial History of the Rockaways

*Emile Smullyan, 1927*

## PART II

### OUTLINE OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF HEMPSTEAD

IN COLONIAL times the Rockaways formed a division of the town of Hempstead, founded in 1643–4 by the Rev. Robert Fordham and John Carman, who bought the lands from the Rockaway, Marsikoke and Marsapeaque Indians. About the origin of the name there has been some difference of opinion. Some authorities believe the town was named after Hemel Hempstead, the former residence of the colonists in England. Others believe the name to be a corruption of the Dutch "Heemestead", meaning homestead. The land was bought in 1643 but it was not until November 16, 1664, that the patent was granted by Governor Kieft, under which the settlers had to pay a tax of one-tenth the total yield of their crops.

In 1657 the tax to the Governor amounted to 300 pecks of wheat. Under the English government this tax was continued under the name of quit rent at four pounds per annum.

The courts of Queens County were originally held at Hempstead and the Governors ordered several meetings of delegates there. In 1650 a commission consisting of two delegates appointed by the Dutch government and two others representing the United Colonies of New England

divided Long Island by a line running south from Oyster Bay. All towns west of the line were to be Dutch, and all east of it, British. The Dutch government never recognized this line, however, claiming the whole island, while the English colonists settled both on the Dutch and English sides.

The English crown then further complicated the question of ownership by granting Connecticut a charter which was interpreted as including the whole of Long Island. Dutch sovereignty was allowed in a few local matters. In 1653 Deputies from the English villages sent a remonstrance to the Governor because of an abridgement of their freedom and privileges. The question of Dutch or English sovereignty was definitely solved by the British capture of New Amsterdam in 1664.

The change occasioned by the fall of the Dutch was taken quietly by the settlers; deputies from all the towns on Long Island met at Hempstead. They sent a humble and timorous address to the Duke of York proclaiming themselves perfectly satisfied with his charter. The people of Long Island were enraged at the cowardice of the reply and would have attacked the deputies but for a ban of the court of assizes in October, 1666. At this time, however, the "Duke's Law" was made the "Colony's" and it was in force until the meeting of the first colonial legislature in 1683.

The extent of freedom enjoyed by the settlers varied with their governors. Under Nicolls they enjoyed a fair amount of liberty but they were severely oppressed by Governor Lovelace whose method of keeping the people submissive was to impose such heavy taxes that they had time to think of little else but how to pay them. However, when Governor Lovelace tried to tax the people without giving them the representation they wished, they refused to pay. Long Island thus has the honor of being the first place in America to refuse to pay taxes without representation.

After the rule of Lovelace, the Dutch regained a brief control in 1672. Some of the British colonists wanted to fight the change but as soon as Colve became governor, he guaranteed them as much power as was conceivable in those days, leaving most local affairs in their hands. With the return of Governor Andros and the British rule, at the end of fourteen months and eighteen days, the duke's laws were enforced much more rigidly than ever and the settlers lived under a stern tyranny until 1681.

At this time Governor Thomas Dongan summoned an assembly to devise a system of self-government for the colonies. Obsolete ordinances were repealed and effective laws substituted. As a part of this reform the town of Hempstead was required to obtain a new charter. Three years of negotiation and a sly gift to Governor Dongan of 650 acres of ground were necessary to procure a liberal one.

However, on the accession of King James, the governors ruled despotically again. The downfall of James II and the coming of William and Mary brought back to Hempstead the limited self-government it had previously enjoyed.

In the French and Indian war, Long Island played an important part. Its chief service was the raising of provisions: the men of Queens County sent "1000 sheep and 70 cheeses" to the army after the battle of Lake George. Hempstead, however, gave more than provisions: it gave its sons. Out of 100 men raised in the whole of Queens, Hempstead gave 78, an admirable record. The people, however, objected to having soldiers billeted on them because of the evil example they set for the children of the household. Among those who stormed Fort Frontenac was Richard Hewlett, a member of the well-known family whose activities have been so closely associated with the development of the Rockaways.

At a public meeting held on April 4, 1775, some of the people of Hempstead renewed their allegiance to George the Third and decided to remain Tory.

When the British army entrenched itself in New York, many of the Whigs of Queens County, hopelessly outnumbered, abandoned their lands and houses and fled to Connecticut where they experienced all the pangs of patriotic poverty. The war period saw the demoralization of the Island. The forces in the city would send out marauding bands of foragers to scour the countryside for hidden food supplies. The beautiful woods of Brooklyn and Hempstead were ruthlessly sacrificed to furnish cord wood for the army. After 1783 the tables were turned; the Whigs returned and the Tories went out, most of them never to return.

## THE FIRST SETTLERS OF THE ROCKAWAYS

Richard Cornell (often spelt Cornwell), who was said to be the younger son of Lord Cornwall, was the founder of the Rockaways. In 1670, he obtained permission to sell liquor and powder to the Indians. After obtaining a royal title, he purchased a large tract of land from the Indians which included the territory now known as Far Rockaway. The precise date of this transaction is not certain. It is known, at least, that it was the legality of this first sale that Hempstead later disputed. The Cornell family moved to the Rockaways in 1690 and built a large frame house, believed to be the first house ever erected in the Rockaways.

Additional settlers must have come to Far Rockaway, for a dispute arose over the land which resulted in the following request of the governor: "There are some persons who *pretend to land here;* however, the Governor will send them to forbear settling or planting so near them to avoid disputes and that they shall take care that they may be sure that what they settle upon is their own and no other settlement till spring." An interesting law suit followed, a record of which is among the state

archives. On September 29th, 1676, the town of Hempstead sent Jeremy Wood and Abraham Smith to warn trespassing settlers to leave Cow Neck. The squatters affirmed that they would defend their rights and a band of these interlopers attacked Cornell, destroying his goods and threatening his life. When he took the matter to court, the attackers were declared guilty, fined heavily, and one of them was sent to jail for six months.

## EARLY CHURCHES

When the early settlers of the Rockaways desired to attend church, they were forced to travel to Hempstead, where there is one of the oldest Presbyterian churches in America. The first minister was the Rev. Denton, a Cambridge graduate, who left England because he objected to the practice of the state church. In 1643, he led his flock to Great Plains and the following year he settled at Hempstead. Denton held to the Presbyterian idea that baptized children were included in church membership and that the church was distinct from the state.

Hempstead became a church-dominated colony, peopled in part by a congregation from Stamford, Connecticut. The town meeting, which was controlled by the Presbyterian Church until the beginning of the eighteenth century, supervised all local matters, even to the fixing of wages and prices. Attendance at church was compulsory, absence being punished by fines, bodily chastisement, and even banishment.

"The town records show that on the establishment of episcopacy here, sustained as it was by the patronage of the English government, affairs both civil and religious fell into the same hands, and the church exercised extensive control in this town and in Oyster Bay which constituted one parish. At the annual parish meetings vestry men, church wardens, and all other civil officers were chosen; assessments were made for the support of the rector, and for the maintenance of the poor, and for all other town purposes. The vestry men were ex-officio overseers of the poor and controlled the distribution of public money."

In August, 1657, eleven Quaker preachers reached Hempstead. They at first found the governor, Peter Stuyvesant, "moderate both in word and action". Two women preachers, however, who tried to convert the Dutchmen, were promptly jailed and then exiled to Rhode Island. Robert Hodgeson, a Quaker missionary, found the English colonies receptive to his message. His "testimony was well received" at Gravesend and Jamaica, but at Hempstead, he was flogged and, on remaining defiant, was imprisoned. The authorities sustained these actions by fining the wife of Joseph Shott and the wife of Francis Weeks, for absenting themselves from public worship and going to a Quaker meeting; it was also ordained that no person should talk to any Quakers, entertain them, or give them lodging for more than one night.

There seems to have been a scarcity of clergymen, for on the 15th of February, 1661, the people of Hempstead wrote to Governor Stuyvesant, "for the want of a minister". A Dutch minister who was sent baptized forty-one persons. The governor then urged the town folk to get a permanent pastor of their own; this they did, in the person of the Rev. Jonah Fordham. In 1674, however, they were again without a spiritual guide and seven citizens petitioned Governor Andros "to install such authority among them, that God's honor may be promoted and his Sabbath observed."

When the Rev. Jeremiah Hobart was minister, a parsonage was built for him on the ground of St. George's Church. The Quakers, however, preached so successfully against "hireling priests" that Mr. Hobart found it impossible to collect his salary and consequently left the town in disgust.

## SLAVERY ON LONG ISLAND

At first among the Dutch on Long Island, the institution of slavery flourished. Slaves were lazy and sometimes insubordinate and there was an expression current "as saucy as a Long Island negro". "Being kept from rum, well fed, and clad, they were healthy and multiplied exceedingly, so that from 200 in Queens County in 1698 they had grown in 1738 to the number of 1,311."

In Hempstead, 82 households reported a total of 222 slaves, an average of not quite three to each family; however, in the long run slavery was found not suitable to this part of the country.

"The expense of food and clothing often exceeded the value of their labor." In 1708, Cornbury, Governor of New York, issued a riot warrant for a band of unruly slaves in Kings County. Generally, however, they were peaceful and attached to their white masters. That they were highly valued is shown by an inventory of 1719 in which a negro woman and child are valued at 20 pounds, while five milch cows, five calves, three young bulls and two heifers are collectively valued at 20 pounds. The labor of negro slaves was not heavy; the sons of the household did the same kind of work. The blacks were a carefree, happy lot, well cared for in old age. On only one occasion is there word of serious revolt: at the time of the negro plot to burn New York, some of the slaves on Long Island were suspected of complicity and it is recorded that one was sentenced to be burned to death on the 18th of July, 1741.

Some of the slaves were very clever. "Jupiter" Hammon, who belonged to Mr. Lloyd of Queens Village, was the author of three books. The horse rake was said to be the invention of a Hempstead negro. The blacks, bond and free, were fond of roving from house to house on Sundays and holidays. "A mug of cider was accorded them, with which they were content, but a dram pleased them more." Old newspapers abound in advertisements for runaway slaves.

There were two other classes of slaves on Long Island, Indians and bonded white servants who had pledged themselves to work for a certain number of years, entirely at the disposal of their masters. About the number of Indian slaves, there is some dispute. Furman says that the Dutch never used any Indian slaves and that the English used only a few. Onderdonk believed that they were more widely used. In 1687, Christopher Dean sold an Indian boy slave to Nathaniel Pine. In 1722, Ezekiel Baldwin offered three pounds reward for a runaway Indian slave. The old journals of the General Assembly from 1691 to 1763 contained many regulations about "Negro and Indian slaves".

## ECONOMIC LIFE OF LONG ISLAND

In the colonial period, Long Island was predominantly agricultural, her fields furnishing the crops necessary for the city dwellers of commercial New York. The land was extremely fertile and well suited for farming, and the flat fields on the south shore of Brooklyn and Jamaica appealed to the Dutch, reminding them of the low marshy lands of Holland. Daniel Denton's glowing description says "the greater part of the Island is very full of timbers, as oaks, white and red walnut trees, and chestnut trees. The rivers in the southern part of the Island are swift and healthy, unlike those of Virginia and they remain flowing throughout the winter, unlike those of Northern New England. They are well stocked with such fish as bass, sheepshead, perch, trout, and eels. There are many horses, herds of cattle, hogs, sheep, and goats, and excellent pastures for raising them. Many wild beasts inhabited the woods such as deer, bears, wolves and foxes." In the middle of the Island there lay the rich and fertile Hempstead plains sixteen miles long and four miles broad which grew fine grass and were lateru sed for horse racing.

Cattle were first imported for breeding in 1625 and because of excellent pasturage, cattle-raising flourished. In 1667, Abraham Smith was hired to care for all the cattle in Hempstead, because there were no fences to safeguard the animals. His duty was to drive the beasts into one herd and then lead them out to pasture half an hour after sunrise. Aided by his dog, he would keep the herd together until sundown, preventing any cows from straying off into the woods or on tilled land. His pay was twelve shillings a week in butter, corn, and land.

Sheep raising did not assume importance until a much later date, for in 1643 there were only sixteen sheep in the whole colony of New York. These were scrupulously guarded on the great plains by a prudent shepherd and no one was allowed to take from the flock and kill even his own sheep, without two witnesses. "As late as 1775, there was a public sheep pen in the town common of Hempstead. Every proprietor had an earmark for his own sheep recorded in the town book but there were

sheep thieves who altered the marks." "In May, the sheep were parted for washing and shearing." After the animals had browsed on the plains all summer, the owners would drive them to a central pen where on some day in October or November they would be sorted out by their earmarks. Those unclaimed would be auctioned off. "The sheep parting in the fall was of great historic interest; it was the great holiday of the time. Rogues, gamblers, and drinkers had a gala day; creditors, debtors, dealers, and swappers did much business; and constables were on the lookout for fugitives from justice." To counteract these numerous evils, the town enacted a law that there should be no taverns or selling of liquor at the pens.

From the wool of the sheep, the women carded rolls. These they spun into yarn by the use of a spinning wheel and the yarn was woven on the domestic loom. The cloth was made at first without being colored, pulled, or dressed, but later mills were set up for this purpose on streams. Thus at a town meeting April 5th, 1720, a man named Burtos was given liberty to set up a fulling mill on Rockaway River Stream at any place he thought convenient.

Flax was raised from the beginning, although it required hard work to grow it and prepare it. It was pulled by men or boys and not infrequently by young women and bound into small sheaves.

The seed was beaten out by a lusty slave and sold at high prices. The stalks were then left on the ground to rot and turned over so all sides should be equally subjected to the action of the elements. Then it was stored away in the attic till winter when it was exposed to the wind and sun for drying. "After the seed ends had been hatcheled out, it was dressed on a swingle board with a hickory swingle knife. It was then carried into the garret of the dwelling house to be again hatcheled by the women who were kept busy the winter long in spinning the yarn on a foot wheel." So urgent was this work that women, when invited to tea, sometimes took their wheels with them. The flax was used to make stockings for old ladies and little girls, and sheetings, towels, and domestic wear. The tow from the hatchlings made slaves' clothes and horse harness.

We know that wheat was raised from the first since there was a government tax paid on it in 1657. Insect pests were as active then as they are now, and in 1786 the depredations of the Hessian fly wrought such havoc with the wheat crop that farmers replaced its cultivation with that of rye. Before the invention of modern farming machinery the cleaning of wheat and other grains was tedious and laborious.

Rye was raised early, especially for the superior quality of its straw for thatching and binding sheaves.

Barley is seldom mentioned in the chronicles of the time but yet a small amount of it was regularly raised. It was often mowed instead

of cradled. It was not usually sheaved but thrown on the wagons with a barley fork. In 1743, a field of barley was destroyed by caterpillar worms of a strange kind.

Bee hives are spoken of in 1691. Bees were kept much earlier, as honey took the place of sugar, then very scarce.

Tobacco was extensively cultivated in early times. In 1645, it sold for 40 cents the pound in New York. It was also used as money, for in 1678, John Kissam bought 99 acres of land on Great Neck to be paid for in tobacco. This culture of tobacco gradually fell off until at last Hempstead produced only enough for domestic consumption.

Instead of the European artificial grasses, there were here abundant natural grasses, rank and tall. Due to premature destruction of the grass, a law was passed in 1748 against mowing it before the 28th of August. This tall lush grass was excellent for horse-raising but "the settlers considered horses as beasts of burden rather than of elegance and speed." They even branded the owner's name on the buttocks, and slit and cropped the ears. Governor Nichols ordered a horse race to take place in Hempstead, "Not so much," he said, "for the divertissement of the youth as for encouraging the bettering of the breed of horses which, through great neglect, has been impaired."

Fruit trees were more successful on the north than on the south side of the Island. Apple, pear, peach and cherry trees grew in orchards in Hempstead in 1656. The peach was often overabundant and was thrown to the hogs. There were also many good chestnut, butternut, black walnut, and hickory-nut trees.

At first the soil of Hempstead was so fresh and rich that no fertilizer was needed. When it became exhausted, manures and burnt grass were often used to enrich the soil. The farmers did not employ chemists but experimented themselves. Marl, lime, plaster of Paris, seaweed, and fish were used with varying degrees of success.

The fishing industry was of tremendous value to Hempstead and its vicinities. A great number of people, both on the north and south shores, were engaged in taking fish, oysters, clams, scallops, crabs and other sorts of shellfish. "As early as 1643, the Indians at Rockaway feasted their white visitors on oysters and fish. As late as 1667 they dried their oysters and clams."

To such an extent did interlopers rake up the clams and break their shells to make lime, that the practice was forbidden by a town act of 1753.

The whaling industry was popular from the beginning and we find early mention of it in colonial documents. Mr. Cornhill (Cornwell) and Mr. Doughty were given permission to sell drink, guns, and ammunition to the Indians who assisted in whaling and William Osburn and John Smythe of Hempstead were appointed to look out for all dead whales stranded on the beach to prevent them being stolen from the government

whose rightful prize they were. On February 5th, 1710, certain woods at Rockaway were granted to the whalemen by an act of the town and Whale Neck is mentioned in the records of 1658 and 1684. Whaling, besides being an important industry, was a thrilling sport. A large number of whale boats, each one owned jointly by four or five families, were kept bottom up near the beach. Watch towers were established and at the cry of "Whales" everybody would rush to launch the boats and make a speedy dash for the distant monster. The extent of the industry is shown by the fact that forty whales were caught off Long Island in the year 1721 alone.

"The prices of produce were generally fixed by the governor's court of assizes but were sometimes submitted to the court of sessions, subject to the revision and approbation of the Governor." Prices varied because of wars and droughts. Here are the prices of a few staples before 1700: butter was 12c; pork 9c; and beef 6c a pound; wheat was $1.00 to $1.25 and corn 60c to 75c a bushel. A day's work in the harvest field cost 87c; a week's board was $1.25; silver cost $1.50 an ounce; the minister's salary was $350.00 per annum together with the parsonage and food; the town clerk's was only $10.00 a year and that in corn.

At the time of the settlement of Hempstead, there was little, if any, current coin. Exchange rested chiefly on barter. In contracts the kind of pay was specified. Wampum, beaver skins, corn, New England currency, pork, and wheat were all used as instruments of exchange. If the payment was to be made in farm produce, the price per pound was specified. Wampum was widely used as a monetary medium. A hogshead of wampum is spoken of which a man kept in his cellar. The practice of paying in produce continued until about 1700 when trade rendered money plentiful and introduced it into general circulation. Colonial money consisted mostly of copper coins from England, silver from Spain and the West Indies, and Portuguese gold. All dealers of importance kept a special scale for weighing coins. Henry Onderdonk, Jr., writes, "I have myself seen a gold coin wrapped in a paper on which was written the goldsmith's certification of weight and value."

The first paper money was issued by the General Assembly in 1709 to carry on a war. This issue was subsequently renewed. In 1737, 6,000 pounds was loaned to Queens. The settlers used the Dutch system of weights and measures and the Dutch system of coinage.

Manufacturing was not yet well established at this time, but there were a few factories. A potash factory, run by Joseph Burr, stood at Herrick's in 1773. A paper mill was set up at Hempstead Harbor by Henry Onderdonk in 1773. Henry Onderdonk, Jr., writes, "I have seen an earthen sugar cup that was made in the pottery on Cow's Neck."

Mechanics, always useful in a new colony, were encouraged to settle in Hempstead. Grants of land were freely made to attract coopers,

millers, and blacksmiths. In 1691, John Stuart petitioned for a grant of land, wishing to establish himself as a cooper or surgeon, though what he meant by "surgeon" we dare not ask!

In medicine, great faith was placed in herbs and roots. Clergymen served often as doctors, as for instance, the Rev. Samuel Seabury of Hempstead. All the clergymen, however, kept a book of recipes of herbs and roots and were often consulted by their parishioners. Doctor Searing was a most noted "worm doctor" and was famed throughout the country for curing jaundice. Epidemics puzzled the physicians and ravaged the towns. There was an epidemic of smallpox in 1730; malignant sore throat, and distemper in 1769; a "great sickness" in 1686; and pleurisy in 1728.

## SOCIAL LIFE OF LONG ISLAND

No part of the history of the Rockaways is more interesting than the lives and customs of the people.

Fashions in colonial days changed slowly, so that clothing could descend from parent to offspring. A boy or girl was expected to make one pair of stout shoes last the year round. Sheepskin was worn by the working class and bucksin was invariably used by tailors. Shoes were sometimes made of dog skins.

The structure and the furnishing of colonial homes was characterized by a stark simplicity. The home of Rufus King at Jamaica, an example of an early type of colonial homestead, confirms this impression. Rock Hall at Lawrence is a later example of colonial architecture.

In the typical Hempstead home, the white parlor floor was sprinkled with sand and although the room was called the dining room, it was never used to eat in, but for purposes of display. The furniture consisted usually of highbacked walnut or mahogany chairs and couches with brass nails and leather cushions. Table utensils, such as dishes, porringers and tankards were usually made of pewter. Ornamented porcelain plates were sometimes hung on the walls. Silver plates such as water bowls and tankards were highly prized and kept for generations as family heirlooms. Big tanks for wine would be made and at important dinners, madeira, spruce beer, cider, port, sherry, and bordeaux would be served.

The settlers did not drink tea or coffee to any great extent. Milk, bread, butter, hasty pudding, and hominy were, in the main, breakfast and supper foods. Cider, bread, and meat with a few vegetables were sufficient for dinner. Samp was a common meal made from whole grains of corn hulled in a large wooden mortar with a heavy pestle. Since the task of grinding corn was usually given to the negroes, it was often known as "niggered corn". Metheglyn and mead, with home brewed beer, cider, and domestic wine, gladdened the hearts of our ancestors.

The social life of the settlers was far simpler and quieter than ours. A

matron of means would "drink tea with her friends in the afternoon, return home by candle light, tie on her check apron, put her children to bed, and then pass her evenings sitting by the fireside with her husband or with some friend who might occasionally drop in to chat for an hour with them."

Tea drinking from tiny cups was a favorite diversion since tea was considered the finest drink one could offer a friend. Onderdonk writes, "Few now remember the little round table in use over one hundred and fifty years ago around which half a dozen ladies sat at a foot's distance with handkerchief in lap and a tiny tea cup in hand. On the table were a plate of thin sliced bread thickly buttered, a plate of cake and of smoked beef, and a saucer of sweet meats into which each guest dipped her spoon."

The custom of Sunday afternoon visiting in groups was broken up by the clergy because the young men would stay too late at the girls' homes. Picnics to the tulip or white wood trees, situated in Brooklyn on the banks of the East River were very popular.

From 1664 to the Revolution, almost all the marriages on the Island (about 100 a year) were under the Governor's license. This was a good source of revenue for the state. The old method of thrice publishing the banns, although cheaper, seems to have gone out of fashion. A commissary of marriage affairs was appointed to hear and decide matrimonial controversies, but it redounds well to the credit of these honest settlers that no divorce took place until 1670.

The Dutch and the English did not agree very well at first and there was constant jealousy and antagonism between the two races. However, by living as neighbors and by intermarrying, they grew tolerant of one another.

The Dutch were fond of celebrating holidays. On Christmas, they would have great feasts while the yule log burned. Disguised as Santa Claus, the father would give presents to the children. On St. Valentine's Day, each girl, besides interpreting dreams and casting apple peelings to discover the name of her future husband, would take a cord knotted at the end and go out and beat the shoulders of every boy she met, a quaint custom which really ought not to have been discontinued. Easter was the time for the exchange of colored eggs and for the Pinckster Saturnalia. The latter consisted of a crazed, wild negro revel which drew spectators from all parts of the country.

The Dutch had queer burial customs. At first, they used no engraved headstones. Private burials were so common that laws were passed against the practice in 1664 and 1684, but the laws were not observed. The first earnings of every young Dutchman were set aside to provide for a decent burial in the style which his social standing called for. There was generally a wake for eight or ten days after burial by friends and

relatives of the deceased. Funerals were very expensive as it was the custom to present gloves and scarfs to the pallbearers, clergy, physicians, and guests, and to give a good dinner to the relatives of the deceased.

The Dutch schools were so good that many Virginians sent their children to them. We owe much to the Dutch for founding so early such an excellent system of elementary education. The same schools were later maintained with little change by the English.

The schoolmaster became acting minister when the regular pastor was absent. When Long Island was divided, the English used the New England common school method while the Dutch retained their old parochial system.

The English, although their schools were not as good as those of the Dutch, never neglected education. In Hempstead, as early as 1658, the fines collected by the town were used for the schooling of orphans. The first schoolmaster was Jonas Houldsworth and, following him, there were Richard Gildersleeve and Richard Carlton in 1670. In 1702, the town voted 100 acres of land for a school site and timber for building the schoolhouse fence and for firewood. In 1707, four acres of land, west of the meeting house pond, were granted to "settle a school for to teach our children".

It seems that the early settlers in this part of the country were inclined to gamble heavily. This practice usually took the form of betting on races. Lotteries were not only tolerated but were often used by churches to procure extra funds. Other forms of amusements were hunting, fishing, horse racing, huckleberry picking, beach parties, helping spells, roof raisings, sheep parties, court attendance, auctions, and hunts for hens' eggs. Young men and women went in parties to pick huckleberries and on the way home would stop at taverns to dance. Traveling overland to New York City was very difficult because of the bad conditions of the roads; hence, whatever amusements there were had to be those close at home.

Authors differ about the spirit of freedom animating the early settlers. Silas Wood believed them to be great lovers of freedom, for he says, "They (the settlers) held that by the British Constitution, the people were entitled to a share in legislation and that their properties could not be taken from them without their consent; that every man had a right to adopt that mode of worship which he believed most agreeble to the Scriptures, and that religion was essential to order and social happiness. For the unmolested enjoyment of these blessings they had forsaken the scenes of civilization and they were anxious to incorporate these principles in their new establishments and to make them the basis of their social and political fabrics." On the other hand, Von Skall thinks that the English settlements had only a semblance of home rule and religious freedom seems to have been practically unknown. At frequent intervals

some governor would attenpt to deprive them of their privileges. Peter Stuyvesant was so harsh in his rule that a number of deputies from the towns of Long Island sent a protest to the Dutch Government. This not being answered and assembling again to send another and a more vigorous complaint, "they received orders to disperse and not to reassemble again on such business." They obeyed without protest for they were afraid of Stuyvesant who did not hesitate to use cruel measures to compel obedience. This makes it appear that the people, desirous as they were for political freedom enjoyed only a small share of self-government.

That they were sturdy and self-reliant, there is no doubt. Almost every farmer's son learned some trade. Their thrift was well known and is attributed by Onderdonk to their industry and frugality. As an instance of the latter, he states that one or, at the most, two candlesticks a night were used in an ordinary family and "even more than a century later, 365 candles lasted a year in a farmer's family"; he also states that they bought nothing from other districts that they could possibly raise at home.

Their honesty is shown by the rarity of criminal actions for theft in the town records. In one case, the guilty party is ordered to restore the value of the stolen goods fourfold, a heavy penalty which, no doubt, helped to discourage crime.

It is an interesting observation that many of these early settlers were so illiterate that they were unable to sign their own names. This is shown in the Hempstead records. And yet no people ever thought more highly of education or labored harder to procure it for their children than these selfsame settlers.

The fundamental difference between the Dutch and the English which led to frequent quarelling is well brought out by Von Skall. The Hollanders were industrious and pious but fond of the good things of life. The English, on the other hand, were Puritans, and were almost as intolerant as their kin in New England. They allowed no person with different views or customs to live with them and "they punished strictly the desecration of the Sabbath, profane language and the sale of intoxicating drinks by means of the whipping post and the pillory." The Dutch believed that everybody should get as much fun out of life as possible while the English just as firmly believed that "eternal perdition could only be avoided by crucifying every desire for material welfare." Here Von Skall has, perhaps, overdrawn the case against the English. Many of their town laws did not represent the free will of the majority of the people but rather the will of the church; finally we must not forget that they loved sports, picnics, dances, and many other amusements. Onderdonk paints a much brighter picture of them and he admits that, while honest and industrious, they also enjoyed relaxation.

After all, we must not forget what we owe to the colonial forefathers of

the Rockaways. Their chief service to America lay not in their glorious exploits and mighty deeds, but rather in the sound stable background of which they were no unimportant part. Only such men as these, modestly self-sufficient, and drilled in self-government, by years of actual democracy in their town meetings, could have successfully sustained the moral courage necessary for the struggle with the mother country during the Revolution.

## A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE COLONIAL EVENTS OF THE ROCKAWAYS

1656—Tackapousha chief of the Rockaway tribes signs a treaty with the governor on March 12th.

1659—April 17th: On lands previously laid out, the Rockaway settlers are ordered to build three railed fences before the end of June on penalty of 2S–6D fine. Large property holders are Adam Mott, Henry Persall, and Mr. Ashman.

1659—May 13th: Some of the individuals refuse to transfer their cattle from the neck of land to the inclosure ordered on the 17th of April for that purpose. This being detrimental to the crops these cattle are ordered down into the inclosure and the following decree was passed, "We doe hereby prohibitt and straightly forbid any manner of person or persons not to attempt to repaire or make vp any part of ye fence at the old towne-neck upon penalty of paying such old fines as shall bee thought meete by the towne assembly."

1661—The town orders all inhabitants of Rockaway to fix their fences.

1666—The English governor makes a treaty with Tackapousha the Marsapeague Sachem.

1667—The first surgeon is licensed. He is Jonas Wood of the famous family of that name in the Rockaways.

1680–1—The Governor permits Major Thomas Willet and Captain Thomas Hicks to purchase land from the Indians. He also directs the surveyor to lay out various parcels of land on the West side of Cow Neck for Settlers.

1681—William Thickstone has meadow laid out "at ye far Rockaway att a place called Cose Meddoe."

1682–3—Joseph Pettit of Hempstead sells to Jonathan Smith, Jr., a meadow at Rockaway.

1682—Nathaniel Persall is appointed at a town meeting to go to Rockaway to dislodge trespassers.

1686—"At a townd meting Held in Hempstead the first of Eaperell in the yeare 1686" three men were chosen to find a man or men to "keepe Possesshon at Rockaway in the townds behalf."

1686—John Ellison Senior "aged about sixty years" testified he heard

his father say that he had sold a lot at Near Rockaway to Thomas Langdon.

1686—Seven men are chosen to appear at "Jemeco" at the court of assizes to defend the town's title in Rockaway against all claimants (Expenses to be paid by the town).

1688—Jonathan Smith and Joseph Pettit are appointed to go to Rockaway Neck or elsewhere and to warn all those settled without the towns consent to "desert, otherwise they may expect to be sued of."

1690—Jonathan Smith, Sr. and Jonathan Smith, Jr. are empowered to manage a sale in the town's name for recovering the town's right at Rockaway. They were later in the year told to sell the old cells to pay for the charges expended at the last Sizzes concerning the trial about Rockaway, to give assurance of the land in the towns name and to "give ye towne an accoumpt how they Dispose of ye money."

1690—John Smith (Jno) sells his land in Far Rockaway to Richard Cornell for 30 pounds.

1699—It was voted that four men hear the complaints of those who demand money of the Rockaways concerning the trial about Rockaway.

1706—Richard Cornell sells land at Rockaway to Thomas Cornell on March 28.

1719—Adam Mott, Sr. and his wife and Adam Mott, Jr. and his wife, all four sold their properties in Rockaway to John Mott for $300.

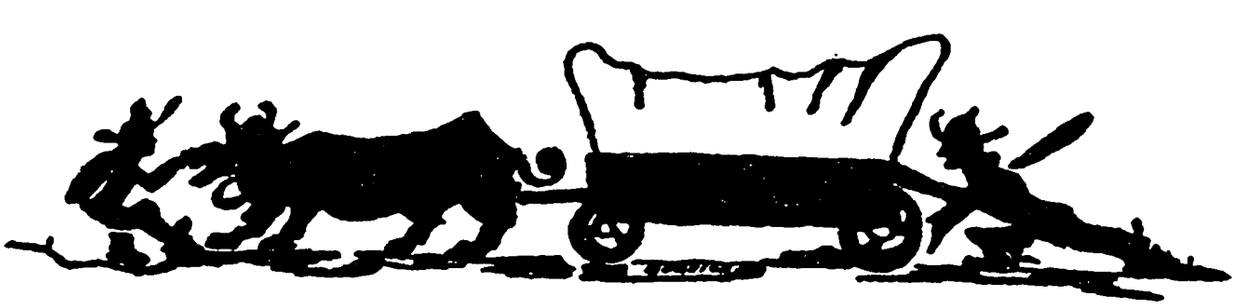
1720—At a town meeting in April 5, a man named Burtos was given permission to set up a fulling Mill on Rockaway River Stream.

1720—Samuel Carmon sells his lands in Rockaway to William Cornell for 570 pounds.

1725—Thirty two men including Joseph Pettit and Joseph Mott grant to Captain Jacob Hicks a beach lying on the south side of the Island at a place called Rockaway.

1764—Silas Hicks sells his Rockaway land to Thomas Hicks for 350 pounds.

1768—The Commissioners for laying out Highways reported that they surveyed and laid out a gate way at Rockaway partly through the lands of Mrs. Glorianna Foster, at the request of Mrs. Helenah Cornell. The justice and jury hereupon ordered Mrs. Cornell to pay 14 pounds for the land to Mrs. Foster.



# The Rockaways in the Nineteenth Century

*Anthony Terino, 1928*

## PART III
## FAR ROCKAWAY

FROM the beginning, Far Rockaway has led all its sister communities and still is at present the most thriving section of the Rockaways. It was the nucleus about which the other villages later established themselves. Without Far Rockaway, the Rockaway Peninsula might have remained little more than "land used for grazing purposes."

Far Rockaway was settled and developed at an early period in the history of Long Island. The many advantages of the locality brought quick recognition and popularity. That Far Rockaway was already a well-known watering place at the beginning of the 1800's is verified by the historian Gabriel who, in writing of the period of 1800 states: "Any day, during the summer season, great numbers of gigs, carriages, and coaches bearing the polite society of New York could be seen crossing the ferry to Brooklyn to make the drive to the shore." Attracted by the beach at Far Rockaway, these aristocrats of New York demanded better transit facilities, and clamored for the building and improvement of roads.

"Far Rockaway Beach," continues Gabriel, "was neither so far from the city as to be inaccessible nor so near as to be overrun by the lower classes. Far Rockaway became one of the earliest watering places of America. Before 1810, a turnpike connected Brooklyn with the beach. Over this 'Appian Way' rolled the carriages and cantered the horses of New York's élite. By 1811, stage coaches were making regular trips and were advertising special accommodations for the convenience of visitors. In those days, when it took five hours to go from Brooklyn ferry to the beach, the greatest portion of the genteel company of New York and elsewhere chose this watering place in preference to any other in the country."

Gabriel's excellent description of the Far Rockaway of the early nineteenth century reveals the wide-spread fame the section had achieved as a summer gathering place for refined society. Even then, in that early period, the beach drew bathers and strollers in great numbers. This attraction was renewed periodically, ushering in many changes and additions in accommodations.

In 1809, as a result of the Cornell Partition Suit, the section of the peninsula extending through Far Rockaway to Rockaway Beach was cut into two divisions. The eastern, or first division, was subdivided into sixteen plots and the second, into fifteen. These divisions form

the background for many land sales. Various disputes arising over land titles had led the Cornell heirs to appeal, in 1808, to the Queens Court of Common Pleas for settlement and division. In November of that year, the land passed into many hands. All future land deals were to be based upon this famous case.

The great prospects of the beach at Far Rockaway attracted John Leake Norton, a brother-in-law of Governor George Clinton. In 1830 he bought from the Cornell heirs lots ranging from number 8 up to and including 15 of the eastern division. This includes all of Edgemere and Far Rockaway and the marsh lands to the north. In 1833, influenced by Mr. Norton, a group of some seventy wealthy New York men formed an organization known as the "Rockaway Association" and purchased several tracts upon which they erected a hotel which later achieved nation-wide fame as the "Marine Pavillion." Among the trustees of the Rockaway Association were Philip Hone, famous diarist and mayor of New York City, and John A. King, Governor of New York State.

The luxurious "Marine Pavillion" was visited by many noted men, such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Trumbull, the artist, and the poet, George P. Morris. "The daily arrival of the stage coach at the Pavillion was an event of considerable importance, and the crack of the driver's whip as he wheeled his four-in-hand team up in style to the imposing entrance, was the signal for all the servants to come out to welcome the guests."

"Among the mere remarkable features," writes Thompson in discussing the Town of Hampstead of which Far Rockaway was then part, "is Far Rockaway, long celebrated as a fashionable watering place and annually visited by thousands in pursuit of air and sea bathing. The house most frequently resorted to in former times has been removed from its foundation, and replaced by a more extensive establishment, one better adapted to the character of the place, its eligible location, and the unrivalled sublimity and beauty of its view" (the Marine Pavillion).

This famous hostelry went up in flames on the 25th of June, 1864. The fire grew beyond control so quickly that in order to prevent the blaze from spreading it was necessary to blow up the adjoining buildings with gunpowder.

The influence of the Marine Pavillion upon the growth of the Rockaways was apparent. Bellot writes of the famous edifice: "The place was run in a splendid manner and was the most fashionable resort on the Atlantic Coast. It gave the Rockaways the first country-wide advertising the section enjoyed, and attracted the attention of numerous investors and promoters who were quick to see the great possibilities of Rockaway as a summer resort. From that time on, its growth as a residential section was assured."

Gabriel deplores the destruction of the Pavillion and describes its end, "For nearly a decade and a half this splendid edifice symbolized the glory of Far Rockaway and the magnificence of its society. Then, of a sudden, from the smoking ruins, the guests of yesterday turned away as courtiers from a fallen king. Far Rockaway, an object of pride no longer, slipped back, unnoticed, into the commonplace. The *élite*, more interested in fashion than in nature, worshipped at new shrines."

Though Far Rockaway attracted many visitors in those days, it remains a source of doubt whether they indulged in sea bathing or merely traveled to the beach to enjoy the sea air and to loiter about the sand. The general belief seems to be that sea bathing at Rockaway became fashionable for the first time, in 1833. In support of this, Bellot claims that "it was after the Pavillion was opened that sea-bathing became popular; and the first caterers to this rejuvenating exercise were Benjamin C. Lockwood and John L. Norton. They provided bath houses on wheels after the English style which were pulled into the surf by horses."

## THE GROWTH OF THE ROCKAWAYS

With the building and improving of roads during the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the coming of the railroad in 1868, Far Rockaway became a typical middle class suburban village. In tracing its growth, Bellot states that "in addition to the prosperity brought by the large number of summer visitors, building activities on all sides added many workmen and employees, either temporarily or permanently, to the winter population, and stores and small cottages were built to accommodate their growing needs. It had been the practice of some residents in previous years to order food and other necessary articles from the city by stage or boat. Several Inwood boatmen for years had supplied most of the needs of the section. They visited Brooklyn and New York weekly in their steam launches and returned with ample supplies."

With the growth of Far Rockaway as a summer resort and an all-year residential section, the necessity of some united body to care for the needs of the village became more and more obvious. In 1880, an attempt at organization was made in the community when an association was formed, the aims of which were "to plant trees, improve streets and walks, and to water streets." The attempt indicated the residents' interest in the welfare and beauty of the community. In that year another step toward a closer community life was made when a court-house was built on Mott Avenue. Edmund J. Healy was Justice of the Peace.

By 1888, Far Rockaway was a well-populated village of the town of

Hempstead, with many added improvements and advantages among which were the railroad, a good water supply, a school, a courthouse, a weekly newspaper, a volunteer fire department, a jail, and two policemen. The village, now well established, applied for a charter of incorporation which was granted. The first village president was Edmund J. Healy, who served for three consecutive years. "After incorporation," writes Bellot, "the new civic spirit led to many community improvements. A local bank was established; stores and storekeepers became progressive; the local newspaper, the *Rockaway Journal*, became a real force in the village; religious bodies of various denominations enlarged their spheres of action; transit facilities were improved; water and gas companies were formed; telephone services were installed; and the essentials of local government became established and created a real, if small, city by the sea."

In 1897 a sewer system was established in Far Rockaway, and a disposal plant was built. The village had been in great need of this, since cesspools had hitherto been its only means of disposal. In the same year, also, two other improvements were made, the paving and curbing of some of the main thoroughfares, and the lighting of the main street with gas lamps.

On January 1, 1898, Far Rockaway was no longer the Incorporated Village of Far Rockaway but merely the "Village of Far Rockaway, Borough of Queens, New York City." This was brought about by an act passed on the above date stating that that part of the Town of Hempstead between the eastern limits of the village of Far Rockaway to the Rockaway Beach Inlet was to be, thereafter, in the Borough of Queens of New York City. The step resulted in both advantages and disadvantages, for the villages were deprived of their individuality and local self-government; but, on the other hand, as part of the City of New York, they were assured of an adequate street lighting system, an efficient police force and fire department, a public library, a sewer system, regular road repairs, and an excellent public school system. Certainly the Rockaway Peninsula has been more prosperous as a part of the City of New York than it was previously.

## THE UPPER BRANCHES

ESTHER GOLDSTEIN, 1929

Far Rockaway owes much of its growth as a business center to the village communities to the Northeast which are usually included in the geographical expression "the Rockaways." A brief word concerning these may not be amiss.

Hewlett, the most distant, owes its name to the prominent family whose members were the first pioneers in the Rockaways. In 1843 the name was changed to Fenhurst, and then because of popular objec-

tion, this was abandoned and the name of Hewlett restored. On June 21, 1897, Augustus J. Hewlett gave to the Long Island Railroad Company a strip of land 31 feet wide running from the present station to Trinity Churchyard on the condition that the station should always be known as Hewlett.

Woodmere, once called Brower's Point, consisted sixty years ago of about half a dozen farms. It was reached from Far Rockaway by an old dirt road, the present Broadway. It remained rural until the completion of the South Side Railroad in 1869 when Samuel Wood purchased all the farms in the vicinity for a realty development. Wood built the famous Woodsburgh Pavillion, which became a fashionable rendezvous. The name Woodsburgh was changed to Woodmere when a separate post office site was created. Later the Woodmere Land Improvement Company, in which Abraham Hewlett, Divine Hewlett, Edward Schenck, Thomas W. Martin, and Julian T. Davis were active, promoted the growth of this very beautiful residential section. The most interesting landmark was the old Culluloo Monument erected in 1888 by Abraham Hewlett. It bore the following inscription:

> "Here lived and died Culluloo Telawana, A. D. 1818, the last of the Iroquois Indians, who was personally known to me in my boyhood. I, owning the land, have erected this monument to him and his tribe.
>
> "ABRAHAM HEWLETT, 1888."

Cedarhurst was first known as Ocean Point from a station built there in 1869 by the South Side Railroad Company. Its growth was hastened by the construction in 1872 of another railroad route from Jamaica. Thomas E. Marsh built houses here and sold plots to New York residents for summer houses. In 1884 the members of the Rockaway Hunt Club called the post office established on the grounds, Cedarhurst, and had the old name, Ocean Point, dropped.

Lawrence, one of the villages adjoining Far Rockaway, grew from a small settlement, called Jenning's Corner, that was located at the junction of the old Jamaica Turnpike and Broadway. A few small houses and a general store that served as the first Far Rockaway post office were located here. With the coming of the railroad, Newbold Lawrence and his two brothers purchased land and laid out a large portion as an exclusive residential section. A station was built on land donated by the Lawrence family. The village grew fashionable when the Rockaway Steeplechase Association with John D. Cheever of Far Rockaway as president, built a race track and club house. The Isle of Wight Hotel, built in 1885, entertained famous artists and writers, including Oscar Wilde, the Irish poet and dramatist. The Lawrence

Association, incorporated in 1891 by Dr. J. Carl Schmuck, Franklin B. Lord, and others, erected the Lawrence private school and public hall. The first president in 1897 of the incorporated village was Franklin B. Lord.

Upon the creation of Greater New York a lively dispute took place between New York City and Lawrence concerning the exact position of the city line. In 1898 the Doughty Bill, passed by the Albany Legislature, took from the city of New York all of Inwood and part of Lawrence, which had been included in the Greater New York Act, and restored them to the town of Hempstead.

Lawrence has the distinction of possessing the oldest building in the Rockaways, the Rock Hall Mansion built in 1768 by a North Carolina Loyalist.

Inwood, at one time called North West Point, was a fishing village about one hundred and twelve years ago and its inhabitants fished and clammed in the many inlets of Jamaica Bay. Early records show that they were rather troublesome to the farmers of the other sections. About sixty years ago it was generally known as Westville and began to enjoy, in common with the other sections, the prosperity brought in by the railroad. The northern extension of Lord Avenue was the first real road in Inwood and marked the beginning of real estate development. When the first post office was established in 1889 with Mr. J. D. Crosby as postmaster the name of the village was changed to Inwood.

## ROCKAWAY BEACH

Another important section of the Peninsula is Rockaway Beach with its large up-to-date amusement parks, which annually attract thousands of pleasure seekers. The lower peninsulas have developed into a chain of attractive villages, some thriving summer resorts, others all-year sections.

The pioneer in the development of the west-end, the settlement of which occurred more than a half century after that of Far Rockaway, is James S. Remsen, who in 1853, together with John M. Johnson, bought two-thirds of plot 1 from Charles G. Covert. To this, Remsen added, in 1855, another acquisition of some three hundred acres purchased from Helen Lewis and Abram Hewlett for $485.50. Five years after their first enterprise, in 1858, Remsen became sole owner of the property by buying out Johnson's share for $20,000.

In 1857, Michael P. Holland purchased that section of Rockaway Beach which to-day bears his name and shortly after Louis Hammel bought the land east of Holland. Except for fishermen's huts, there were no houses or structures on the land when it was purchased.

The Rockaway Beach section by reason of its natural position held great commercial possibilities. Realizing this, the first aim of the

pioneers was to make the place accessible to New York City. In 1863, Remsen made a wise move when he assigned a portion of his land, called Seaside Park, to Dr. Thompson, on the condition that he build a railroad from East New York to Carnarsie and from there operate a steam ferry to Seaside Landing.

The building of this railroad was, as Remsen had predicted, the beginning of the development of the Seaside section, although the ferry route which Dr. Thompson established in 1866 was somewhat impracticable. Although the boat arrived at uncertain intervals, it was always crowded and carried many people to the western end of the peninsula.

With the opening of this route which made the section accessible, growth began to take place rapidly. During the period of 1870 and thereabouts, many hotels were built. In 1872, the railroad was extended from Far Rockaway along the ocean front, making several stops at Edgemere, Arverne, and hotels on the way. Many groves and cedar trees formed ideal picnic grounds. The excellent hotels built at Rockaway Beach during the latter part of the nineteenth century lured numerous visitors for week-end stays which in many cases resulted in a permanent residence. Associated with the hotels of Rockaway Beach was William Wainwright, who, in 1874, joined with Remsen in building the Seaside House, a fashionable hotel situated directly at Seaside Landing on Jamaica Bay. This enterprise prospered. More entrepreneurs entered the business, creating a chain of hotels which firmly established the beach as a summer resort.

Large steamers from towns along the Hudson River brought pleasure seekers hungry for fresh sea breezes and excellent shore dinners. "Houses were built everywhere to accommodate and cater to the needs and pleasures of the many thousands who visited the beach; countless bath houses were erected on or near the beach front to accommodate the bathers desiring a dip in the ocean, and many amusement centers grew up."

In 1878 sections of land were donated by the villages of Rockaway Beach as station sites to the New York, Woodhaven, and Rockaway Railroad, which began service in 1880, with the provision that the stations should always bear the old names of the various sections. Remsen and Wainwright donated the land on which the present Seaside station is located. A relative of Michael P. Holland gave the Holland site and Louis Hammel gave the land which now forms Hammel Station. The Rockaway Park Association, then headed by Henry Y. Attrill, gave the Rockaway Park Station site.

The growing transit facilities of the Rockaways added greatly to the value of the land of the western section. The opening of the trestle in 1880 was a most important event in that "this new steam line made

traveling to and from New York and elsewhere easy." Less than thirty years before, the land, according to one historian, was valued only for the salt hay it produced. This was far from true in 1880 when the place was fast becoming prosperous.

During the period of growth much wild speculation went on. In 1880, there was one enterprise which resulted in failure and a tremendous financial loss. The Rockaway Park Association undertook the construction of a giant hotel at a cost of $1,250,000, of which $90,000 alone was spent on plumbing. This huge edifice, facing the ocean and extending from 111th Street to 116th Street, was hailed as the largest hotel in the world, its length being 1,188 feet. Known as the Rockaway Beach, and sometimes, as Attrill's Hotel, it was never opened to the public except for one wing containing the bar which operated for a month in 1881. The backers of the enterprise had fallen badly in debt and the workers went unpaid. Placed in the hands of receivers, the building was sold in 1884 for $30,000 and the second-hand lumber was used by local land owners in building other houses and hotels.

In 1886, the permanent population at the beach was estimated to be one thousand persons. During that year, a step of great importance was taken when the boulevard connecting Rockaway Beach with Far Rockaway was completed.

In the fall of 1892 a conflagration swept Seaside, destroying a great part of the main section and causing a damage of some half-million dollars. Though disastrous to various individuals, the fire proved beneficial to the community as a whole, for in the next year, 1893, Seaside was rebuilt with added places of entertainment. Likewise in this year came the improvement which affected not only Seaside but the entire peninsula, the first boardwalk which stretched from Holland to Seaside.

Having attained a high degree of prosperity during the forty-five years of its growth, Rockaway Beach in 1897 acquired a charter of incorporation and became the village of Rockaway Beach in Queens County. The first president was John W. Wainwright. After incorporation many improvements were brought about. A board of health was formed with William C. Wainwright at its head. The village issued $57,000 in bonds, the money being invested in new roads and streets. The assessed valuation of the village at that time amounted to $570,000.

Nature also has played a generous part in the physical growth of the peninsula. During the last century it has added to the western end of the Rockaways two new communities, Belle Harbor and Neponsit, now thriving residential sections. The extreme tip of the peninsula is Rockaway Point; here at the present time Fort Tilden and a summer colony are situated.

An electric trolley service was inaugurated in 1897, operating from Far Rockaway through Edgemere, Arverne, Hammel, Holland, Steeplechase, Seaside, Rockaway Park, Belle Harbor, and terminating at Neponsit. In 1925 buses replaced the trolley system.

In 1898, all of the Rockaway Beach section was joined along with Far Rockaway, Edgemere, and Arverne to the great city of New York. This union gave Rockaway Beach all the civic advantages of the second largest city of the world.

One of the last sections of the Rockaway Peninsula to be improved, Arverne, has grown into a popular village with a present all-year-round population of 7,500 and a summer population of 30,000. Not until the year 1882 were there any houses built in Arverne. In that year, several pioneers in the settlement of the section, namely William Sheer, Frederick Bressler, Martin Meyer, and Remington Vernam, constructed several buildings.

Vernam, after whom the village was named ("R. Vernam"), owned during the latter part of the nineteenth century the greater part of Arverne, and the part he played in the growth of the section was important. He and the other realtors set about developing the land, making it attractive for investors and homeseekers. In 1886, with the completion of the road between Far Rockaway and Rockaway Beach, communication with the Arverne section became easier and more frequent, whereas it had previously been most difficult and, at times, impossible.

In 1888, a building was erected which assured the popularity of Arverne thereafter. This was the fashionable Arverne Hotel which cost $200,000.

On account of the Rockaway Railway which operated steam trains between Far Rockaway and Rockaway Beach, the development of Arverne was rapid. Wealthy residents from New York were attracted by the location and advantages of the village and consequently erected beautiful and expensive dwellings there.

In 1887 the Long Island Railroad was persuaded to remove the tracks of the Rockaway Railway, which it owned, from the ocean front where they had been laid in 1872, to the center of the village where a station was erected on Gaston Avenue. As a result of some misunderstanding over a deed said to have been guaranteed but never delivered by Mr. Vernam, the railroad later built another station further east at Straiton Avenue and all stops were made at the new station. With this change, the eastern division of Arverne grew rapidly; however, the residents objected to the railroad's action and brought suit demanding a renewal of service at the former station. As their counsel, the residents of the village hired Judge William J. Gaynor, later a mayor of New York City. The railroad was defeated and was ordered to resume service at the old

station. In 1912, however, the Gaston Avenue Station was displaced as the main stop by the present Arverne Station.

The popularity of Arverne as a summer resort steadily increased during the '90's. "The delights and benefits of surf bathing became increasingly popular on Arverne Beach, which, clean and gently sloping and free from treacherous currents, became the chief attraction. To accommodate thousands of bathers, many large bath houses were erected adjacent to the beach, and formed one of the principal sources of revenue. With this rapid advancement, the need for civic unity was apparent. With the advance of realty values, and a corresponding increase in the number of residents, a sense of civic pride impelled them to combine in order to effect permanent civic improvements."

In 1895, the residents of Arverne obtained a charter of incorporation. The first president of the village of Arverne-by-the-Sea was John R. Waters. In 1897, the village issued bonds to the amount of $200,000, for grade crossings, sewers, curbing of streets, gas lamps, and roads.

During the period 1900–1901 when Arverne had reached its zenith of prosperity and family hotels and boarding houses were springing up on every hand, a boardwalk three-fourths of a mile in length was constructed. Arverne is at present increasing in its attractiveness, and the newcomer finds macadamized roads, concrete curbs and sidewalks, city police, and excellent fire protection.

Situated between Far Rockaway and Arverne, Edgemere differs greatly from the other villages of the Rockaway Peninsula in that it is not an all-year round residential section, but a highly prosperous and thriving summer resort.

Up to the year 1892, the only important structure in the Edgemere section was a sandy waste. In 1892, the opening and development of this section on the western border of Far Rockaway was undertaken by Frederick J. Lancaster who named the place "New Venice" but later changed it to Edgemere. Roads were built, marsh lands and a lake were filled in, and with the erection and opening of the magnificent Edgemere Club Hotel in 1894, it became established as a summer resort.

The action of the surf upon the beach at the western end of the peninsula has tended, during the last 150 years, to make real estate a highly profitable business in the Rockaways. "During the years of the development of the older sections of the beach, the ocean was constantly adding land at a rapid rate." The peninsula has lengthened to the westward for several miles during the last century so that now the "Point" lies outside Coney Island.

"The beach at Far Rockaway," stated the historian Thompson, "and for many miles east and west, is undergoing frequent local changes; the surf frequently washes away several rods in width during a single storm and perhaps the next storm adds more than was removed. The

sea frequently makes inlets through the beach to the bays and as frequently fills up others." This destruction by erosion has been stopped through an extensive system of jettying and bulkheading.

## BANKING AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

The banks of the Rockaways, with their various systems of loaning money, discounting notes, and aiding the promoter, have been of tremendous aid in the commercial and financial advancement of the peninsula. Before 1888, if the man of small means had a little money put away for a "rainy day," he had no depository except his pocket or home—and all those places were unsafe because of their easy accessibility.

In 1888, three business men from Freeport, George Wallace, Charles L. Wallace, and Samuel R. Smith gathered together a capital of $5,000. and opened a bank at Far Rockaway on Central Avenue near Cornaga Avenue. Because of previous experience with banks—having for some time managed a state bank in North Dakota—Samuel R. Smith became the active member of the newly formed bank, filling the positions of clerk, bookkeeper, and cashier. The bank proved popular and was used by residents from all sections of the peninsula. Two months after its formation, Valentine W. Smith joined the bank as assistant to Samuel R. Smith. Having succeeded in the new enterprise, the owners formally organized it into the Far Rockaway Bank and on January 1, 1889, the new bank was opened with a capital of $25,000. and deposits approximating $75,000. The officers of the new bank were Peter N. Davenport, president; W. A. Wynn, vice-president; Samuel R. Smith, cashier; and Valentine W. Smith, assistant cashier.

In 1890 a brick structure for the bank was erected at the corner of Cornaga and Central Avenues. Business increased rapidly and soon the institution became the only one in the state with a capital of only $25,000. and deposits of $1,000,000. In 1903, the Far Rockaway Bank merged into the Bank of Long Island, which was established through the amalgamation of the Far Rockaway, Flushing, and Jamaica banks. The new bank, now known as the Bank of the Manhattan Company, then had its headquarters at Jamaica. Samuel R. Smith became president of the new organization and Valentine W. Smith, vice-president.

The bank has now a vast capital, reaching into millions, and has established many branches, some of which are at Arverne, Seaside, Hammel and Rockaway Park.

The other banks of the Rockaways were organized during the twentieth century. The National Bank of Far Rockaway was chartered on October 21, 1908, as an offshoot of the Queens County Trust Company. The first offices were in the old Wynn Building on Cornaga Avenue. In 1912 it moved into the present offices in the beautiful building near the

railroad station. When incorporated it had a capital of $25,000 and a surplus of $20,000.

The Bank of Lawrence, Bank of Inwood, and the Lawrence-Cedarhurst National Bank of the Rockaways are all twentieth century additions which need not be discussed here.

The establishment of an excellent artificial light service in the Rockaways added to its many advantages as an up-to-date suburban section. Old methods of lighting were discarded and replaced by more efficient artificial gas or electric lights.

Before the year 1880, the residents of the Rockaway Peninsula still abided by the old methods of illumination—the candlestick and the oil lamp. Very few thoroughfares were lighted at night, and these by means of oil lamps. On February 19, 1880, the first attempt to furnish artificial light was made when a company known as the Rockaway Gas Light Company, with Henry Y. Attrill as president and James Taylor as treasurer, was incorporated. The main purpose of the organization was to supply artificial light to the mammoth Rockaway Beach Hotel, recently constructed at the time. However, since the building was never actually thrown open, the company supplied gas to the local consumers of Rockaway Beach.

In 1882 a fire broke out in the plant and offices of the company destroying all the records. Consequently, on May 20 of that year, the company sold out to the Town of Hempstead Gas and Electric Light Company, whose president was Edward W. Mealey. The new company operated efficiently. On May 8, 1890, another company was incorporated under the name of the Rockaway Electric Light Company for the purpose of operating at Rockaway Beach under a franchise granted in 1889. On March 12, 1892, a group of Far Rockaway men formed the Citizens Lighting Company and operated in Far Rockaway. On June 29, 1889, however, the business was sold to the Queens Borough Electric Light and Power, incorporated February 28 of the same year.

In 1902 the Queens Borough Gas & Electric Company bought the Electric Light and Power Company. It is now operating on the peninsula and is giving excellent service as part of the Long Island Lighting Company.

Probably the greatest and most splendid advantages enjoyed by the Rockaway villages at this modern period and even during the latter part of the nineteenth century are those of easy and rapid transportation to and from the great metropolis. Transit facilities have changed the peninsula from cheap land used for grazing purposes only, to a well-populated and prosperous group of beautiful villages, famous summer resorts, and residential sections. "Although," writes Bellot, "the Rockaway Peninsula cannot in any sense be considered as a section which grew overnight, it is an indisputable fact that the most important

steps in its modern development were synonymous with the establishment of modern transit facilities." According to the latest railroad statistics, it takes exactly twenty-seven minutes to reach Rockaway Beach and thirty-six minutes to reach Far Rockaway from New York. A further evidence of the excellent train service to and from the Rockaways is the fact that during the summer more than 109 trains are used on the Rockaway branch of the Long Island Railroad.

In the eighteenth century only two roads connected Far Rockaway with Jamaica and Hempstead. Of these, the first was an Indian trail over which was later built the Jamaica and Rockaway Turnpike; the other road was the present Broadway.

When, in the early 1800's many of New York's society drove to the seashore at Far Rockaway, steam locomotives were operated along the route. In 1872, four miles of line were added when the South Side Company constructed a "Rockaway Railway" running from Far Rockaway through Wave Crest, then along the ocean front to Rockaway Beach, stopping at the old Neptune House.

In 1866, a Brooklyn and Rockaway Beach railroad was established which operated trains from East New York to Carnarsie; from there a ferry carried passengers across Jamaica Bay to Seaside.

The Long Island Railroad began operations on the Rockaway Peninsula in 1873 when it established the Springfield "cut off," a line running from Jamaica through Springfield Junction and entering the Rockaways at Cedarhurst. Several years later, the Long Island Railroad bought out the South Side line and, for a time, both the South Side and the "cut off" routes were operated until finally the latter was discontinued.

One of the most important transit projects on the peninsula was the building of a trestle across Jamaica Bay, connecting Rockaway Beach with Brooklyn. Senator James M. Oakley in 1877, organized the New York, Woodhaven, and Rockaway Railroad Company, which in 1880 operated on a fifteen-mile route from the Long Island Railroad's terminals at Brooklyn, Bushwick, and Long Island City, then on its own tracks to Glendale Junction, through Woodhaven, and across the trestle to Rockaway Park. The company failed, and in 1887 the line, through foreclosure, was acquired by the New York and Rockaway Beach Railroad, now a part of the Long Island Railroad Company.

The Rockaway Village Railroad Company, operating horse-cars from the railroad station to the beach at Far Rockaway, was incorporated in 1886 and after eleven years of service gave way, in 1897, to the Ocean Electric Railway Company which laid tracks and operated electric trolley cars over the route. This company, later taken over by the Long Island Railroad, also installed a trolley system from Far Rockaway to Neponsit, at a fare of five cents, going by way of the Long Island Railroad's tracks in Edgemere, Arverne, and Hammels,

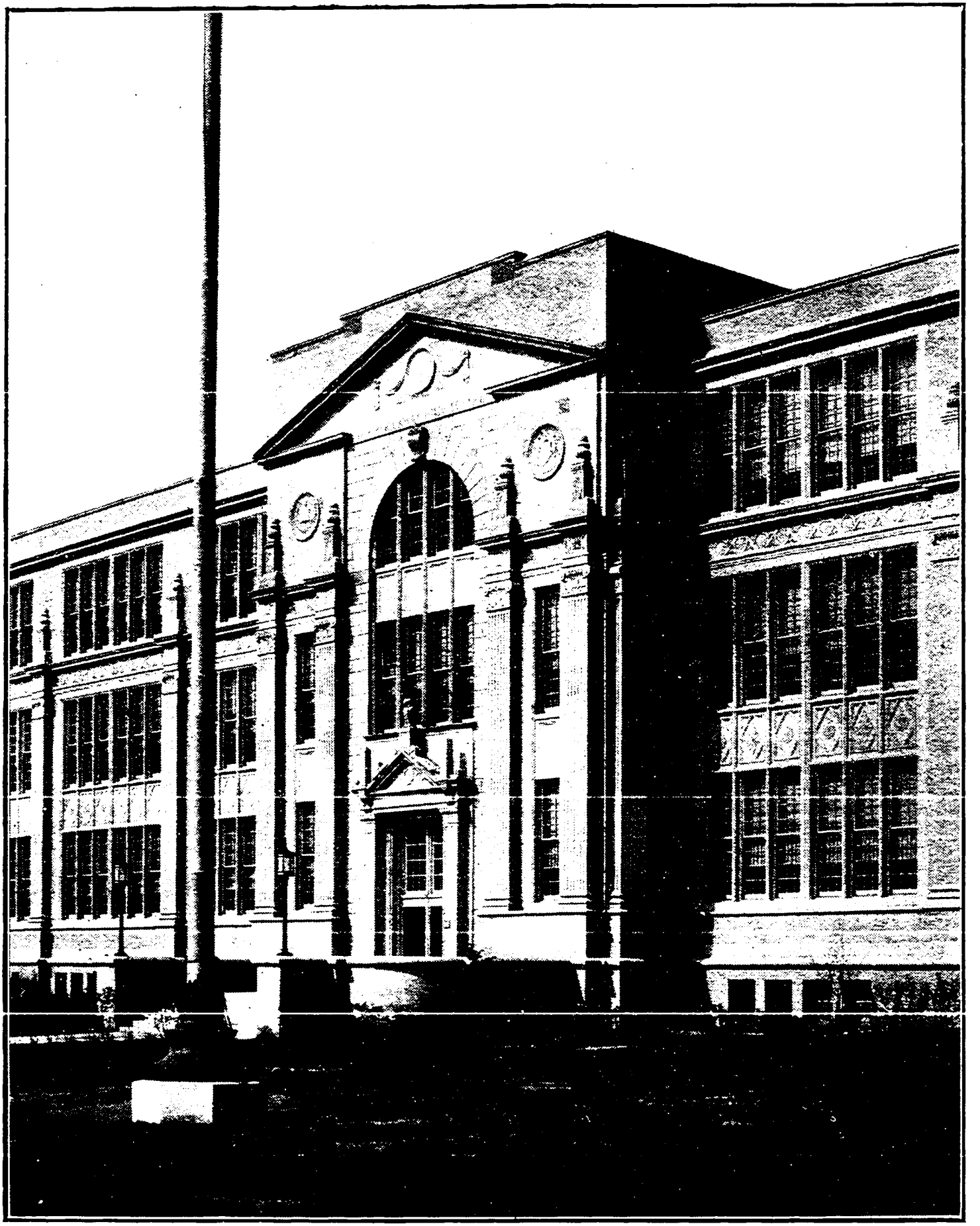
and then over its own tracks along the boulevard to Neponsit.

In 1897, the Long Island Electric Railway Company began operating trolleys between Jamaica and Far Rockaway, passing through Cedarhurst, Lawrence, and Inwood. The service has been replaced by a bus system which uses the Old Mott Avenue terminal.

The Rockaways represented a spirit of pioneer initiative. Although far from the Western frontier of log-cabin and cow-boy, the real estate developments of the nineteenth century in the Rockaways evinced genuine courage and initiative so characteristic of the winning of the West. The leaders of this community who, in the past, staked their all upon their belief in the future growth and value of seashore real estate deserve as much credit as the men who "home-staked" in Oregon. Thanks to such leaders as the Jamiesons, the Wainwrights, the Hewletts, the Remsens, and the Lawrences, the Rockaways were thrown open to settlement and we today reap the benefit of their endeavors.

The nineteenth century was a most important one in the annals of this community. We have witnessed the first blooming of its success as a summer resort; we have felt sorrow when its early glory disappeared in the smoke of the burning Marine Pavillion; our pride returned when we viewed its steady slow growth as a seaside town, not so fashionable, perhaps, as in the days of the "Pavillion," but every whit as happy and as active.

The coach and carriage are almost lost in the dusty road of yesterday, and as we turn the page we hear the approaching roar of the motors of automobile and aeroplane. The nineteenth century has ended!



**THE FAR ROCKAWAY HIGH SCHOOL**

The front view of the present Far Rockaway High School erected by the City of New York in 1927–1928.

# The Rockaways in the Twentieth Century

*Elsie Starks, 1930*

## PART IV

THE bells that rang in the new year of 1898, also announced the new city status of the Far Rockaway and Rockaway Beach sections. At that time the political change was more apparent in name than in deed. The territory was still a string of widely separated summer villages and private estates. Extensive tracts were abandoned to sea gull and sand dune, and brackish marshes impeded the traveler. The only road was in many places nothing but beach sand and communication between Far Rockaway and the Point was very difficult. Unity of civic spirit was lacking, each village depending upon itself alone for improvements.

Since 1900 this parochial outlook has given way to a conception of the Rockaways as a united community with "all for one and one for all." Many active and powerful civic associations are now combined in their efforts to improve the community.

Physically the Rockaways, except for a few of the more conservative sections, have changed almost beyond recognition. What was once sand hill and swamp is now a lively and bustling "city by the sea."

Although much of the quiet, rural charm has been lost through growth, the transformation has brought many compensations. New schools, churches, stores, libraries, and gas and water plants, are only a few of the improvements resulting from the growth of the Rockaways in the twentieth century.

Stimulated and encouraged by their connection with the largest city in the United States, the business men of the Rockaways lost no time in starting new commercial projects or enlarging old ones.

The first important business transaction was the incorporation of the Queens Borough Gas and Electric Company in 1902, which at once initiated A progressive and business-like system of private and public illumination, quite different from the half-hearted and tentative efforts of its short-lived predecessors.

Even more important than artificial lighting is a constant and sanitary water supply. The Rockaways now share in the use of the metropolitan water system as an aqueduct connects its pipe system with the Catskill reservoir. In 1930,New York City bought out the Long Island Water Company in order to insure a cheap and uniform supply of water. The great fire at Arverne in 1922 had revealed the inadequate pressure furnished by the old company and forced the city to extend its high pressure system to the Rockaways. At present the old pumping stations are supplementary to the main system.

The period of 1900–1930 saw many changes in the commercial life of the Rockaways. Chain stores, such as the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company and Reeve's, Woolworth's and Bohack's, became established and furnished keen competition with independent retailers. In spite of these numerous "outside" stores, the rapid growth in population led to the opening of many private establishments. This period saw the success of such stores as Nebenzahl's, Starks', Chubbuck's, and Doolittle's. The live public spirit of Rockaway storekeepers has led to many improvements in the community.

The building of the Ostend Baths in 1908 was an important development in Far Rockaway, adding to its resources as a summer resort. At one time over $600,000 was spent on improvements. The beach clubs at Far Rockaway with their thousands of lockers for private members lend an air of exclusiveness to the beach front.

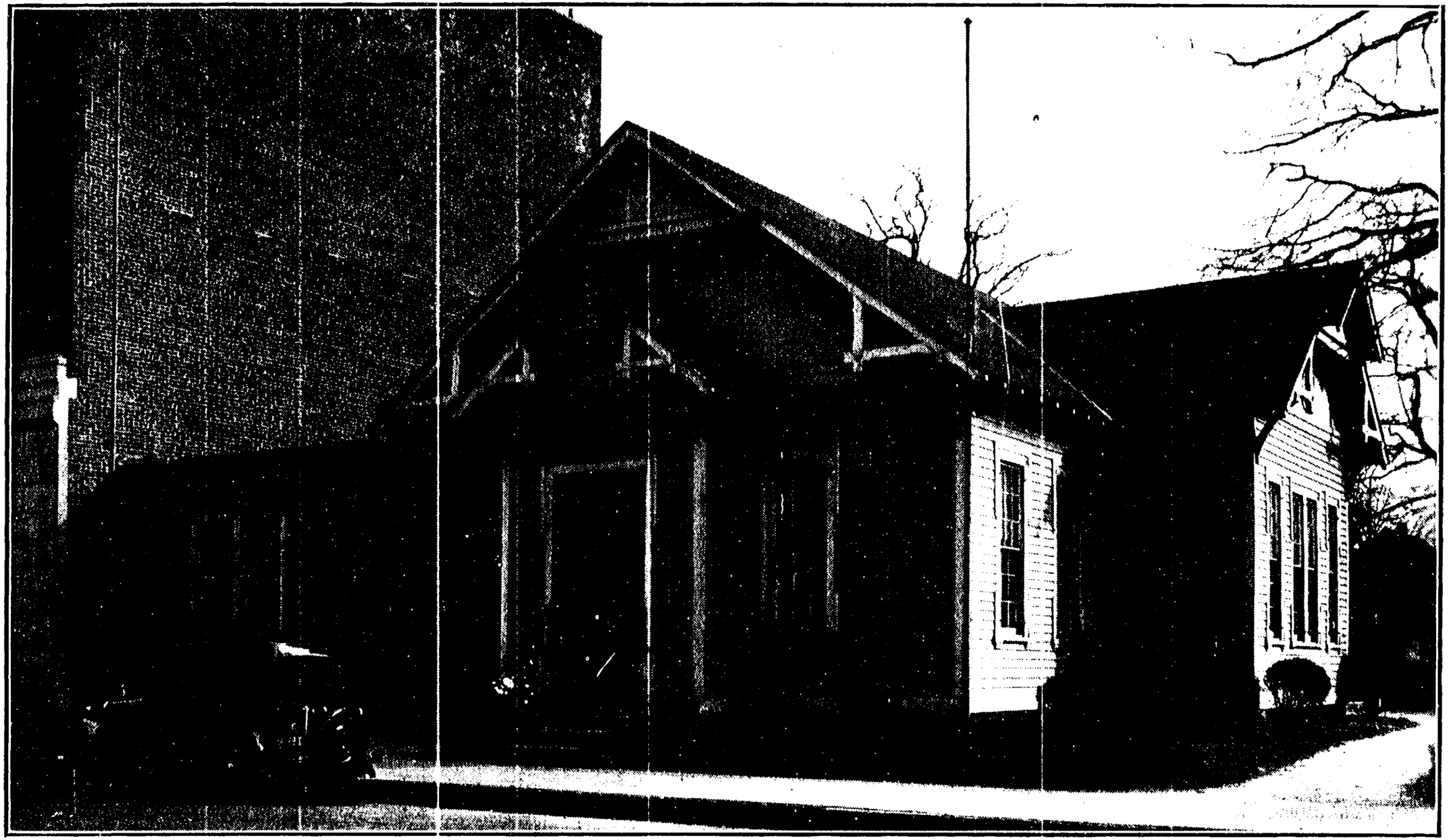
The growth of banking during the first decade of the twentieth century was indicative of the rapid economic growth of the community. The older banks grew more prosperous and new ones were organized to provide increased financial facilities.

The old Far Rockaway Bank was merged with the new Bank of Long Island in 1903, to be again merged as a branch of the city-wide Bank of the Manhattan Trust Company, founded in 1799 by Aaron Burr. Its old-fashioned red building, considered an architectural show-piece in 1890, was replaced in 1928 by an ultra-modern edifice. Other branches of the Manhattan Company are found in Arverne, Hammel, Seaside, and Rockaway Park.

The National Bank of Far Rockaway is housed in the most conspicuous and most beautiful building surrounding the station plaza. An offshoot of the Queens County Trust Company, it was organized in 1908, and commenced business in an office in the old Wynn Building on Central Avenue near Cornaga. It moved to its present quarters in 1912.

The Bank of Lawrence has been serving the upper branch section since 1902.

Many schools and libraries prove that the residents of the Rockaways are interested in things intellectual as well as financial. The high quality of education, both public and parochial, in the Rockaway peninsula is a most important factor in attracting residents and hence increases the economic welfare of the community. Since the great number of excellent schools forbids a detailed account of the history of each one we shall stress the development of the Far Rockaway High School as typical of the educational advance of the entire community. To realize fully the growth of the Far Rockaway High School the reader should take the trouble to gaze carefully upon two buildings—the court house on Central Avenue and the new school building in the Wave Crest section. It is hard to realize that the little old court house



**MAGISTRATE'S COURT**

This building was formerly the first Union District Free School erected on land donated by Benjamin B. Mott in 1801. It is now the Magistrates Court House of Far Rockaway.

is really the parent of the recently built edifice known as the Far Rockaway High School. During the years from 1900 to 1928 the high school shared crowded quarters with P. S. 39 in the semi-gothic building on State Street. Mr. S. J. Ellsworth, principal of the high school from its organization in 1895, has always been active in securing the most modern educational facilities for the Far Rockaway section.

The intellectual needs of the adults are cared for by two well stocked and excellently managed branches of the Queens Borough Public Library. The beautiful library building on Central and Mott Avenues was built in 1903 from funds provided by Andrew Carnegie. The Seaside Branch was removed in 1912 from a leased store in Hammel to more convenient quarters in the McKennee building in Holland. The resources of both branches are sorely taxed in the summer months by the reading demands of summer residents.

Many churches and temples can be found in every part of the Rockaways. These that are standing and in use at this date are as follows:

Mary, Star of the Sea, Roman Catholic Church; Far Rockaway.
St. Rose of Lima, Roman Catholic Church; Hammels.
St. Camillus, Roman Catholic Church; Seaside.
Saint Francis de Sales, Roman Catholic Church; Belle Harbor.
Saint John's Episcopal Church; Far Rockaway.
Saint Andrew by the Sea, Episcopal Church; Belle Harbor.
First Congregational Church; Holland.
Presbyterian Church; Far Rockaway.
German Evangelical Church; Far Rockaway.
Christian Science Church; Far Rockaway.
Shaaray Tefila; Far Rockaway.
Temple Israel; Lawrence.
Temple Beth Israel; Hammels.
Temple Derech Emuneh; Arverne.
Temple Aba Zedek; Rockaway Park.
Temple Beth El; Rockaway Park.
Temple Beth El; Cedarhurst.
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church; Hewlett.
St. Joachim's, Roman Catholic Church; Cedarhurst.
Our Lady of Good Counsel, Roman Catholic Church; Inwood.
Woodmere Methodist Episcopal Church; Woodmere.
United Community Center; Woodmere.
Lawrence Methodist Episcopal; Lawrence.
St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church; Inwood.
Trinity Episcopal Church; Hewlett.
Colored Church; Inwood.
Temple; Lawrence.
Temple; Woodmere.

The first decade witnessed an encouraging series of private improvements; the second decade was a period of depression and discontent with the city government which culminated in a serious attempt to secede as an independent city. For a few years after 1911 there was a slump in real estate. Rents fell and many summer houses were left untenanted. To bring back prosperity, the city government was asked to provide such improvements as a boardwalk and a road spanning Jamaica Bay. On account of the cost the city refused to grant the funds necessary for their construction. Believing that they were slighted politically and that no relief could ever be obtained from the city, certain citizens held meetings and published literature of a propagandist nature in a movement for independence. Posters such as the following could be seen on billboards all over the beach:

THE ROCKAWAYS NEED

*An up-to-date sewer system;*
*An ocean front boardwalk running from Far Rockaway to Neponsit;*
*Better main roads;*
*A large thoroughfare or boulevard running through their territory;*
*And*
*A highway running across the islands of Jamaica Bay, connecting them with Brooklyn and the City*

* * *

*How can such a small place as we are ever expect to gain all these improvements from the city to which we are paying a small proportion of the total taxes?*

Accordingly in the Spring of 1915 a secession bill was drawn up and presented to the assembly at Albany. It declared the Fifth Ward of the Borough of Queens, a separate city to be known as Rockaway City. The bill was passed by a majority vote of both houses of the legislature. Many residents of the Rockaways who were present at this session had hired special trains to Albany in order to show their interest in the bill. Hopes of success ran high until the measure was presented to John P. Mitchel, Mayor of the Greater City of New York, for acceptance or rejection. His veto of the bill disposed of it for that year. The following year a similar measure was presented to the legislature, but was not passed. In 1917 a third measure was strenuously urged and

again was successfully passed by both houses of the state legislature. The movement came to an inglorious end when Mayor Mitchel in 1917 remained adamant to the demands of the citizens of Rockaway. He vetoed the second bill. By that time the war spirit of 1917 made all local questions seem of slight importance and when the war was over Mayor Hylan, Mitchel's successor, had "seen the light" and helped the Rockaways to obtain the improvements for which they had long been clamoring.

The war years found the Rockaways cooperating with the rest of the country in bringing success to the American army; church, school, and club worked shoulder to shoulder in providing funds and supplies for the government. Of the Rockaway boys who went overseas, many were left behind on foreign fields.

Little building took place in the Rockaways during this period as the federal government tolerated only the most necessary construction work. Consequently the period immediately after the war saw a quick return to prosperity. Rents increased 100 per cent and 200 per cent in many cases, because of the scarcity of houses. New buildings were erected in every section. Hotels were quickly built to satisfy the popular demand for quarters at the beach. In fact a new lease of life came to the beach very unexpectedly. With prosperity a renewed demand for public improvements again arose; this time the city granted what the Rockaways asked for.

The majority of the great public improvements in the Rockaways were made in the period between 1920 and 1930. In 1924, during the Hylan Administration, the city appropriated the sum of $5,000,000 for the construction of a cross-bay boulevard to parallel the old Long Island Railroad trestle, formerly the only short travel link between the Rockaway Beach section and the city proper.

This cross-bay road is an engineering marvel, attracting admiring investigators from countries as far away as Japan. Two draw-bridges over the main channels and a filled-in stretch of over five miles were necessary in its building. Along its route, particularly in Broad Channel, hundreds of cottages and summer pavilions have been built on what was formerly swamp and sea grass land. The broadcasting unit of station WABC is located on the western side of this road.

A magnificently wide Beach Channel Drive running at a right angle to the cross-bay road has relieved the formerly crowded and tortuous single thoroughfare, the Boulevard, of much of its excessive summer traffic. The filled-in stretch between Holland and Rockaway Park, as yet vacant, may be turned into a city park with generous parking spaces, winding walks, and comfortable benches for tired pedestrians. At 103rd Street the new and the old meet. The Seaside House, built fifty years ago by William Wainwright, still stands as a summer hotel.

Formerly on the bay front, it is now far away from the water, for in front of it stretches the new filled-in section and the Beach Channel Drive.

Far Rockaway, before the opening of the Cross Bay Boulevard, was brought closer to the city proper by a short cut to Jamaica that runs along Sheridan Boulevard and the Rockaway Turnpike.

Many developments have been made in the section west of Neponsit. A wide double road runs to the Coast Guard Station at Beach 169th Street where the ferry to Flatbush Avenue is located. Near the Neponsit Hospital, the Park Department has laid the concrete foundation of what will be later a magnificent public bath-house. Many thousand square feet have also been leveled out along the beach of Jacob Riis park for parking purposes. As yet no landscape developments have been made on the Jacob Riis tract for which the city paid $3,250,000. The extreme point resembles a veritable "Deserted Village" during the winter, but in the summer it wakes to vigorous life as a crowded summer colony. Its quaint and picturesque bungalows recall the villages of the "60's" and "70's".

The point of Long Beach, now called Atlantic Beach, is connected to Far Rockaway by means of a bascule rolling lift bridge built at an approximate cost of $1,000,000. The main traffic artery through the Rockaways to this new bridge is McNeil Avenue.

Surpassing all other improvements, the new boardwalk is probably the greatest single achievement of the public-spirited citizens who so long and so earnestly importuned the city fathers for a fair deal for Rockaway. It stretches from 126th Street to 21st Street, from Belle Harbor to Far Rockaway,—the longest boardwalk in the entire world. The old walks at Arverne and Seaside that were once so greatly admired by the "Old Timers" fade into insignificance in comparison. As the years go by the advantages of this great ocean promenade will attract more and more visitors to our community, adding to its wealth and permanent population.

The infallible Bradstreet of any community is its real estate values. On all Long Island, and in the Rockaways in particular, these have increased tremendously in recent years. In 1910 the real estate of the Fifth Ward was valued at over twenty-seven millions of dollars. In 1920 it was valued at over fifty-three millions, showing an increase of twenty-six millions in ten years.

But the increase in real estate values is directly dependent on building and on public improvements. During the year 1920, 9,352 new buildings were erected on Long Island, an increase of over four hundred and fifty per cent. The economic development of the Rockaways has been registered in cement and concrete.

Of the new buildings erected on the Rockaway Peninsula in 1923,

building operations were distributed as follows: Woodmere, 230; Hewlett, 103; Rockaway Beach, 450; Edgemere, 225; Cedarhurst, 54; Arverne, 125; Far Rockaway, 128; and Inwood, 12. Taking into account the size of Long Island, the building concentration on the Rockaway Peninsula is remarkable.

The World War hastened the development of the Rockaways, because merchants and mechanics found an opportunity for earning extra money with which they built one-family houses. This accounts for the colony of less expensive, but nevertheless, substantial homes in Arverne, Edgemere, and Rockaway Beach. These were built in the following concentration and ratio:

| | 1918 | 1919 |
|---|---|---|
| Arverne | 53 | 317 |
| Edgemere | 80 | 815 |
| Rockaway Beach | 1 | 267 |

Nowhere on Long Island was prosperity more in evidence than in the towns of Lawrence and Far Rockaway in the banner year of 1923. The State Bank of Lawrence then contained deposits of over two million, one hundred thousand dollars; the bank of Far Rockaway had over three million dollars.

The greatest single factor in the development of the Rockaways however has been the Long Island Railroad. Few would have ventured into the peninsula without suitable means of transportation. The Long Island Railroad authorities claim that in the year 1905, eighteen million people were carried on the whole system, while in 1919, the number jumped to sixty-four million.

In the year 1900, when the control of the Long Island Railroad passed from the hands of a syndicate of Boston capitalists, headed by Austin Corbin, to the Pennsylvania Railroad, a new era of development began. The entire line was electrified in 1904 to insure better acceleration and braking, and faster and cleaner service, with a possibility of elevated or underground stations.

The Rockaways, according to many residents, need but one more improvement before maximum growth can be obtained and that is an efficient rapid transit system, similar to that of Brooklyn and the Bronx. The present Long Island Railroad is fast enough, but tedious hour- and two-hour intervals, between trains result in great inconvenience to commuters. If trains left the beach every fifteen minutes for the city many of the people who now live in Brooklyn and in the Bronx would move here at once. *The Wave*, a leading Rockaway Beach newspaper which has been very active for the past few years in this movement, stated recently that hopes for rapid transit are becoming brighter.

The Long Island Railroad which claims that it can make no profit from suburban routes would be glad to sell its tracks and franchise to the city. It would be an easy matter to link the subway now under construction from Manhattan to Jamaica to the Rockaway Beach and Far Rockaway lines.

The author now takes her leave, fully aware that this short essay can do no more than merely scratch the surface of the history of Rockaway Beach during the twentieth century. She hopes, however, that this attempt will stimulate an active interest, not only in the past history of the Rockaways but in the worthwhile activities that are now being carried on by the churches, the schools, and community organizations.

From a review of the three decades of the twentieth century, it would be safe to assume that a writer of the future will look upon the Rockaways as the finest example of healthy development in suburban history. Its past record has been a notable one; may its future surpass even the past!

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