OLD GREAT NECK

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A STROLL IN MEMORIES' LANE

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By
AN OLD TIMER
Many times have I been tempted to jot down my thoughts on the life, customs and people of the days long gone by, as I recall them. I believe I qualify as the oldest living native of Great Neck. My first peek at this great big beautiful world on November 2nd, 1869 brought to view the beautiful waters of Locust Cove and the lovely sandy beach, on which I spent so many of my childhood days. I invite the reader to stroll with me down Memories' Lane, recalling the customs and those wonderful people of those times.

Great Neck in those days was mostly farms and country estates of wealthy business men. The village consisted of two general stores - Samuel Hayden's at the corner of Hicks Lane and Main Street and Nehemiah Haydens at Main Street and Beach Road. Charles and Christ Benders Blacksmith Shop and a two room schoolhouse about where the present Arrandale school now stands. The Union Free Chapel, now enlarged and called the Youth Center and the twenty or so homes of the village residents and other houses scattered around on farms and estates and another small settlement Steven Nineslings Half Way House and a few houses on the new or now Steamboat Road. Strange as it may seem to us now, for many things we needed the nearest supply was Manhasset, a business center clustered around the Doncourt flour mill where the Northern Boulevard crosses the Mill Dam at the (now Whitney Pond) Valley Road.

In the early days of water transportation, the first business centers seemed to be where a mill could be built and a through road could be had. Incidentally, the voting place for all of this section was in a Town Hall on the top of Manhasset Hill opposite the Episcopal Church, on Northern Boulevard and about where the Undertaker is located, just past the Catholic Church. At that time we were in Queens County. Since there were no telephones, in order to call a doctor some one had to drive to get the doctor and bring him to their home and as a matter of convenience the doctors had a slate in each store where one could leave their name for a call and the doctors, on their rounds, would check. We had three doctors then - Dr. Rogers, Dr. Hogue and Dr. Porter, who took care of all the ills of the people from surgery to teeth extraction. I am informed that Dr. Rogers never sent a bill to the poorer people.
As was the custom, most of the farms and estates produced much of their food supplies; perishables were stored in specially built cool rooms or in icehouses - where ice was stored in the winter to be used in the summer for cooling needs. Chicken eggs and meat were in sufficient supply-usually in abundance. Nearly every family had a small garden patch, a chicken yard, a pigpen, where the meat supplies were produced and later put in the cellar. Hams, shoulders, bacon were cured by some, another had a smoke house and generally cured the food for neighbors; the food supply for the winter was provided for in the summer months. As there was little work for the average laborer in the winter time, they did some wood cutting, harvesting the ice crop, getting fence posts and rails ready for the repairs needed and such odd jobs that could be found to help out until Spring. In the Spring, the estate people would have their places put in order for their return for the Summer; the farms were at planting time then and everything was booming and all was bright and gay once more. But believe me the winter time for many was not so happy. However, they would plan again and would not starve, having potatoes, cabbage, pork, ham, bacon and other food stored during the summer. In the supply time for fresh meat the butcher wagon came around two or three times during the week. In the summer time, the butcher wagon would carry a cake or two of ice and the meat was covered with a heavy sheet. The cook would get her supply of meat - the dog a bone and the cat a piece of liver or something, and good bye till the next call.

The grocery man too, would make his rounds every few days - usually twice a week. Then too, we had the traveling dry goods store on wheels where mother bought yard goods for a new skirt, and for pop, a new pair of pants or overalls, or other articles of clothing. Also there was the wagon festooned with all sorts of pots, pans, kettles, wash boilers, dust pans, pails etc. Also brooms, dusters, fly beaters and kindred supplies. Some of the names of these vendors now are over the doors of business houses in our larger towns. Then too, we always looked for the fishman in the Spring of the year. George Row always set a fish pond net on the Skidmore shore, where Sinclair Drive ends. During the shad run, I am sure he supplied Great Neck, Little Neck, Bayside and many other places with all the shad they could use. My folks would buy a pair (buck and roe) shad for 50¢ and later in the season, other kinds of fish. Gradually the business methods changed. New business people came and the population increased, we had telephone, electric lights, but there are many things to recount.
The Long Island Railroad had its terminal at the present Great Neck Station. There were probably four or five trains in the morning and the afternoon and evening a few more than that. The western terminal was at Long Island City at the end of Jackson Ave. where the 34th Street Ferry took the passengers to New York City. Steam engines of course were used on Long Island at that time. There were not more than six or eight houses in a half mile radius of the station. As this was the terminal of the railroad, the mail was carried to Port Washington by Edward Baxter by horse and wagon. It was delivered first to the Great Neck Post Office, then to Manhasset, and so on to Port Washington - morning and evening this continued until the Railroad was extended.

The Post Office was established in one of the grocery stores for many years. Nehemiah Hayden was a Republican, therefore was post master during Republican Administrations. Samuel Hayden was a Democrat and when administrations changed, he took over, and so it was always in the family.

As the station section began to grow, a grocery store was established on Cutter Mill Road corner and a post office was placed there with George Duck, Post Master.

The only time I recall the old steam locomotive failed to make the scheduled trips was during the Blizzard of 1888 and then the East River was frozen over and there was no ferry service and hardy individuals made the crossing from New York to Brooklyn on foot over the ice covered river.

To get back to Great Neck, Smiths Point, now Elm Point, has quite a story to tell. In 1861, the 42nd Regiment of New York, known as the Tammany Regiment was camped there and trained before going to the front. This regiment served with honor and was in many of the important battles with the Army of the Potomac, being mustered out in 1865. About this time a real estate developer, Mr. Blackwell mapped this point for Mr. William Smith including both sides of Steamboat Road - expecting the property of the Nassau Hotel - the section east of Steamboat Road to Sunset Drive. The auction of this property was quite an affair, I am told and information from the records, (since I was not on the scene then). The auction ran for some time and attractions
consisted of an Ox Roast Barbecue, a balloon ascension and trapeze performance from the balloon by a Professor Fisher. I am told that the balloon landed in the Great Swamp and those days this was a disaster and rescue was not easy. There also was a brass band and singing, at this auction.

Before the Kings Point people took over the Great Swamp, and did the drainage work, it was only when frozen or a very dry summer that it was possible to cross it. We have spoken of the Long Island Railroad transportation, but during the summer months the pleasant and popular mode of travel to the City was by the Steamboat Sewanaka, which made the trip to and from New York each day - leaving Glenwood Landing about 7:00 a.m. stopping at Sea Cliff, Glen Cove, Sands Point, Great Neck, Whitestone, 23rd Street, New York to the New York Terminal at Peck Slip; on returning it would leave Peck Slip at 4 P.M. On her return trip on June 28, 1880 the steamer caught fire coming through Hell Gate and burned and was beached on Sunken Meadow near North Brother Island in the East River. Many of our prominent people lost their lives in this disaster among them Mr. Abe Skidmore, M.M. Smith, Mr. Wescott and others and from other towns en route. The Sewanaka was replaced by the Idlewild, and continued for many years. Some of us remember the dock master, Wash. Van Nostrand. I am sure many remember his successor, Morris Englehardt, who took over when the L.I.R.R. took control of the traffic and replaced the Idlewild with the smaller slower steamer Orient. The amazing amount of freight handled made the dock a very busy place during the loading time allowed in the morning and the time allowed for unloading in the evening. It always seemed incredible, the amount of freight the crew put off on the dock in a few minutes — bales, barrels, boxes, sides of beef, sometimes horses and all kinds of other freight. The freight filling the space set apart. The manifest would be delivered to the Dock Master and the steamer would be on her way.

In the morning, the farm produce in barrels, bales, baskets and boxes was there to be put aboard for New York. For passengers, this was a delightful way to travel. The sail to Peck's Slip took about one hour — landing near Wall Street and in those days in the business section of the City. Many of the big business men used the steamboat way and I have heard say — many big deals were made on these trips. On the return of the boat, it was the custom for the ladies to drive or be driven by their coachmen to meet and greet their returning
husbands. This was the era of the Top Hat and frock coat for the gentlemen and beautifully dressed ladies, beautiful carriages, well-groomed horses with their silver mounted harness. Carriages were either team drawn or single horse but all well turned-out and there was the surrey with the fringe on top. There were the shimmering wheels and glint of beautifully finished carriages and everything spic and span as the carriages circled in the waiting space for the returning ones. It was something to see and not soon forgotten.

Then there was the stream of guests at the Nassau Hotel and their wives and families coming to meet them on their return. During the peak of the season there was a dance at the Hotel each Friday night and the musicians came on the boat and returned to New York by boat the next morning. Some of the guests of the hotel became residents of the community - building homes of their own.

When opportunity permitted: I recall going to our gateway at the west end of Redbrook Road to watch the returning carriages go by in the evening, of the Mitchels. Mr. Mitchel and his four sons, all over 6 feet tall, in their three seat-open wagon, being drawn by a fine team of horses and driven by their coachman (Big Sam), a big tall man, well over 6 feet. Their estate is now the Kennilworth Development;

And the return trip of Mr. Wm. R. Grace and Mr. James E. Ward, many times was a real treat to see. They were met at the landing by their drivers in light road wagons and a team of horses. Both Mr. Ward and Mr. Grace, upon getting into the wagon took the reins and the race was on. The roads were not too wide, were very dusty, their horses were fast and they both were good drivers and good sports as well as good friends.

The Benjamin Hicks Farm extended from both sides of Hicks Lane down to the shore of Manhasset Bay. This was a farm principally given over to the production of hay. I am told that the hay was carted to New York City. Down the hill at the waters edge was a lovely old rambling homestead in which there was an ideal old family life being lived together. Yet in this rambling old homestead, although living together several families could have privacy.
Continuing on East Shore Road, came the Underhill House, two large homes of Mr. Joseph Hill. (The first one was rented for two years to Lillian Russel of theatrical fame.) Then there was the home of Mr. Joseph Spinney, who was the power that built Spinney Hill Church. This lovely old home with its terraced front grounds remains much the same as when I first knew it.

Continuing on, we come to L'Hommedieu Mill, lumber and coal yard. This truly was an institution. It created much labor and business for Great Neck and Manhasset - having steam and belt driven saws, lathes and other wood working machinery. Mr. L'Hommedieu was the contractor who built Garden City for Mr. A. T. Stewart; many of the larger houses in this section of Long Island and many of the larger houses in the Hamptons. He built the Edwards Morgan's house at the end of Arrandale Avenue; All Saints Church and some smaller houses. In those days the working day started at 7 A.M. and continued for 10 hours. In the mill the whistle blew at 7 A.M., at 12 noon, 12:30 and 5:30 P.M. So many of the young men from both Great Neck and Manhasset had their training there as both carpenters and painters, draftsmen and architects and went into successful business of their own. The location of the mill is now taken over by several oil companies. Mr. L'Hommedieu also had the contract for the building of Tuxedo Park for Mr. Lorrilard. All the details and special work was made here and trucked up to the Park by teams, mostly at night, starting from the mill after hours. Tony Dietz and other teamsters of Manhasset were kept on the go. The mill also built a schooner to ship material to the Hamptons and to bring lumber from New England here. This boat, the Henrietta, was named after one of Mr. L'Hommedieu's daughters, and I believe was very successful.

Since I too had to be at work at 7 A.M. I recall with fond memory, the fragrance of the loaded pipes of my fellow travelers on a spring morning as we traveled to our tasks.

Miss Louise Skidmore gave to the town a small plot of ground near Steamboat landing, in exchange for one at the end of Beach Road. This was later extended by the Park Department to include the Steamboat Landing itself. Later all this was exchanged for the present Bathing Beach. Going back to Beach Road, Old Mill Road joined it at the beach and crossed on a strip of land at the Old Mill following a winding course and came out at Middle Neck Road at Wooley's Brook,
from the mill over the hill through Mr. Udall's property, a road led to George Dodge Estate (Saddle Rock). Then continuing through the Allen and Eugene Thorne Estate to Rail Road crossing at Cutter Mill Road.

Saddle Rock brings up another part of things past and gone. Saddle Rock oysters were famous in the City Market. It was the custom after the theater to go to an oyster house for an oyster stew. Many of these oyster restaurants existed and did a thriving business and many oyster sloops plied back and forth constantly both from Little Neck Bay and Cow Bay (later Manhasset Bay) with full loads of oysters and clams for the New York market. Many people made a good living taking clams and oysters and people helped out their own living by a trip to the shore.

Returning to the road to Kings Point from the George Hewlett Estate the adjoining one is the Jager Estate. The George Hewlett estate combined with his half-brother, Lawrence Hewlett, and extended to the King, Recknagle and Arnold property. These are comparatively small holdings on the point property. The King property gets its size by its water frontage on Manhasset Bay. To enter King's Point property, one crosses the bridge over the tide race to the tide water pond belonging to Lawrence Hewlett. This extends from this inlet across the Point to their frontage of property on Locust Cove to Arnold's property on the Sound and Cove frontage. Facing Manhasset Bay, first is the Hoyt property, then the MMN Smith property to Cherry Lane and Mitchels Creek. This is where Redbrook empties into the bay. Our neighboring bay called Yellow Water Creek by some men was slightly colored where it entered the bay. The brook itself did have a decided tint from the tree roots of the swamp.

I doubt if this is so today owing to the drainage ditches dug to dry up the park and reducing water contact with the tree roots and the thinning which has taken place in the park.

I find that many people have not even heard of Oriental Grove. This was probably the liveliest and a vital part of Great Neck and yet definitely separated from it by a 9 foot board fence, guarded by watchmen on the outside and with Peter Dannenfelson, as gate guard during the part of the day it was in use. This piece of
wooded grounds was leased by the Hewletts to a picnic or excursion company, the Briggs Excursion Co., during the summer months. It extended from Pond Road to the shore of Locust Cove - took in what is now the Rodney Lane development - including all the shore frontage to the Arnold property. There is a dock now on the shore and it is in the same spot and may be the same dock that the picnic barges and steamers used in those days. The grove itself was a beautiful place to picnic on a summer day. There were many large white beech trees and plenty of room for large crowds to spread out. The part set aside for games and a ball ground took in all the section now used as the Rodney development. From the landing dock set back from the shore was a large building with accommodations for summer guests and living quarters for the manager and his family. There was also quarters for other personnel to live in. A large dining room provided for serving meals to the picnic people who did not wish to bring their own food. For those who did, tables were scattered through the grove in ample supply. In the front of the main building was a bar and drinks of all kinds were served. A large platform for dancing in front of the main building was provided with a band stand and tables seating 6 persons was provided on a raised platform from the dancing floor - raised probably about 6 inches. All in all seemed ideal. Grouped around the center but not crowded was a bank of 8 bucket swings seating 6 people each, a shooting gallery, a large carousel, a soft drinks stand peanuts, ice cream and soda fountain, a gallery where you and your girl could have your tin type picture taken. There was a nice sandy stretch of beach and a line of bathing houses. Near the landing was a clam and oyster bar. There was a float where row boats could be rented for a row on the bay. The size of picnics varied but there were few vacant days during the summer. Sunday school tug and barge picnics were frequent. A steamer and two barges alternated to take care of the larger picnics. They sometimes came from as far away as Patterson, N.J. The Caledonian Society of New York would come on the grounds when in great demand. All the Scottish games were in order. This was always a very large and interesting picnic.

I have known the steamer Gem Sedgewick come in with three barges attached with the Galliope (steam organ) going full blast. So you see this little piece of Great Neck was very lively and many people, especially from the new road section found employment as roving waiters, part of the show, cleaning up and getting ready and patrolling outside the board fence and anyone inclined to leave would get
their knuckles wrapped. Usually about four o'clock the boats left for their return trip. It was a beautiful spot for a picnic and I think that most of them had a good day. There was never a picnic allowed there on Sundays and knowing the Hewlett family I can understand why the lease prohibited Sunday excursions.

It seems we have traveled the shore in some detail. Now we shall start at Mitchel's entrance on Middle Neck Road. The first landmarks I had intended to mention were the two large stone gate piers that once had two large iron gates at the entrance to the Messenger Estate on Manhasset Bay through the woods. A pleasant drive to their home, now called Cow Lane, but I find this has gone so there is nothing to say except one more good bye.

On the bend of the road stands a very old house much the same as years ago, I am told, which was repaired to keep it looking as it did when first built. On the corner of Redbrook Road, there was a very old house if not the oldest. It was moved back and was very much changed. Originally it was close to Redbrook Road and on the line of Middle Neck Road. There was a large stone oven built in its wall.

A winding road following a sort of gully winding up the hill at the top east side was Patrick Regan's home, changed somewhat but still standing. Next there was a small farm and house set way back, this was the Ellard Homestead which still stands but at another sight of the farm.

At the corner of Ellard Avenue, the Fallon House stood. The location is presently a gas station. This was the home of Father Smith, the first Priest of the Roman Catholic Church. Next was the John Gutheil home which still stands and is much the same as originally, and is now a children's school.

Continuing south on the East side of Middle Neck Road next came the Patrick Hoey home - much changed. Where the present village parking lot and garage is located, the Michael Synott home used to be located. Then came the Jacob Wolfee Home, now the property of the Art Florist and Greenhouses. From his property down to Hicks Lane there were no houses.
On the west side of Middle Neck Road was the Sylvans Smith Estate, which included Park Circle and extended to Red Brook Road west on Steamboat Road to and including Buckley School (now the Kings Point School).

On the south side of Hicks Lane and corner of Middle Neck Road was the Samuel Hayden Store and home. On the east side of Middle Neck was the two room schoolhouse. This had quite a large playground in the rear with a high board fence separating the girls and boys, for whose protection I never quite knew. The boys entrance to the building was on the north side - the girls' on the south side. The coat hall with its rows of hooks took care of all hats, coats, lunch pails or what have you. There was a corner shelf in each on which a water pail was placed and a small tin cup chained to the shelf, was provided and water each day was brought from Mr. Hayden's bucket well by some of the boys appointed by the principal (this was considered an honor). The water from this kind of well was of the best. These wells were 50 to 60 feet deep. In fact many home owners kept their milk, butter and other perishables in a basket let down near the water level.

Next to the Samuel Hayden property was a Mr. Mitter. It passed through many owners and rentals. I believe all to butchers to the last butcher owner, Fred Faigle. It is now occupied by the Boack Stores. Then came the Studer property, a house he rented and now the bank (L.I.Trust Co.) property. His homestead stood next to the bank until recently. This is now the Post Office location. The next property was part of the George Smith farm. Before passing through many hands and before the stores and apartments were built, it was the home of the Schenck Brothers Carriage Sales Shop and Auto Repairs and Sales. There always seemed to be a harness maker on this property. The last one being Edward Scott, who bought the property except a strip that Mr. Studer sold to Mr. Thomas Thurston on which his grandson now has a bicycle store, for sales and repairs.

Across the street on the corner of Beach Road was the N. Hayden store and residence. This property is now the Village Park (called the Village Green) and this corner was the business center of all Old Great Neck. On the property was a platform scale to weigh loads of hay, coal or what have you, and the Blacksmith and Carriage shop down Beach Road. On the opposite corner, a store belonged to Mr. Henry Brewer, this store seemed never to be in use during this period.
Continuing down Beach Road, there was the Brewer residence, next the Andrew Palmer Carriage and Blacksmith Shop, then the Holley Residence, and the Blacksmith Shop. On the south side of Beach Road was more of the Brewer holdings, also the Thomas Grady and Christy Dixon homes.

As we go further south on Middle Neck, the Henry Ninesling Barber Shop and Department Store; the George Smith farm continues on the east side to the Henry Lahr property and his neighbor, Raymond Gilliar. These men were real neighbors, sharing in the building and maintaining of one of the famous deep bucket wells. On the west side were three small 3-room houses owned by Mr. Brewer. The rest of the frontage down to Old Mill Road was the Allen farm; later the Crabb property except the Wash Hutton farm of approximately ½ acres and about opposite from the McGowan Hardware store. In fact the Allen farm originally extended from Beach Road to Old Mill Road to the edge of Udall Mill Pond.

On the other or east side of the street across from Beach Road, next to Raymond Gilliar comes the James Carpenter home and Carpenter shop. He was the local builder of the Great Neck locality. Mr. L'Hommedieu did most of his work on a larger scale and far afield outside of Great Neck. The next piece of property was a small home of a teamster, Charles Austin and located where the Alert Fire House now stands. We now come to the home of another carpenter and builder, Henry Hayden. This old house still stands with some changes. (I certainly would not call them improvements).

From here on runs the frontage of the Baker Farm. It had three houses rented to various people. One that has been mentioned in the past, Patrick Gogins, who was one of the old time hack men and was a red haired and red whiskered Irishman, familiarly known as Pretty Pat, the other hack man was known as Lame Jake.

Baker Lane, the entrance to the Baker farm and home entered at the H.P.Allen and Hooley line, made a curve at the top of the hill, passed the old house and on up to the Baker House - the old house. The building which is now the Village of Great Neck Hall was moved across, which is now Baker Hill Road. Mr. John Baker lived in the main house at the top of the hill for many years. Later a new wing was built on to match the other side. Otherwise, the build-
As we continue, there was a fine old colonial house owned by J. H. Wooley which no longer exists. Wooley Lane goes in past the Wm. O'Shea house and so on to come out on East Shore Road through a fence rail next to the Joseph Spinney house, which is now Vista Road. The O'Sheas's had a small farm facing Wooley's Lane. Their home is still standing. They were a fine family. Jimmie, the youngest boy was a fine person and schoolboy friend of mine. One of the daughters taught school in New York City. The oldest daughter, Mary, was a fashion authority of the Great Neck neighborhood and the ladies came to her to make their party, wedding and other dresses. Naturally, she needed help and many of the girls of the town came to be employed by her and the name Miss O'Shea became famous in the local style world.

Continuing we find J.H. Baxter's home then the Henry Warren Allen home. The present site of Tuscan Court - then the Allen Homestead - to so many of us the home of Uncle Eddie Allen.

On the west side going south from Old Mill Road the George Smith Home, then the Andrew Vetter property, later the Wm. Gross home (now new apartments) then on to the T.F. Ryan property. The next on the hill was John Chester's home, his land is now Linden Boulevard. At the corner of Thornes Lane, now Cedar Drive, was a small house occupied by the hackman, Lame Jake, then the Vincent Barnes Tin Shop and home and next was Pools store.

From the Allen property on the west side was the Harpers Lane and Farm house. This land is now the Kensington main road. The next property consisted of the Wm. Allens and next the Adams greenhouses. From here on there was nothing down to the station. When one stood at the station looking north, there was a large farm house and barns occupied by Samuel Jackson, a veterinarian, and horse trainer who also boarded horses and sold them, I am told. Then on the west side another Allen homestead. On the east was Schencks Lane and homestead also Susquehanka Lane, then called Woods corner. At that time so called because New Yorks Mayor Wood lived here and was the Boss Tweed Controller of the City.

As we continue south the John Clark home stood on the hill on the south east corner. This was claimed to be the highest house on
Long Island at that time and now only Harbour Hill exceeds it. On the west side is John Dennelly's farm house and Maple cottage was still there when I passed there the last time. On the east side, William Kissam's homestead - then a farm house and opposite this - Judge Provost's old home.

On the southwest corner of Marcus Avenue stood the Lakeville School. On the southeast corner was the Lousane Hotel and boarding house, whose entire population seemed to be French and many a frog was taken from Lake Success by them. Opposite Lake Success were the homes of several of the Wooley families and their farm lands. The present Great Neck School property was then owned by the Phipps family. Further on there were farms of which I knew very little. Since then, many and rapid changes have taken place.

One more side trip however, might be of interest -- down Cutter Mill Road. There were three rather large homes on the right side and four smaller ones near the L.I.R.R. grade crossing. To the west side of the Mill Pond, as one crosses the present bridge over-pass of the railroad, look down to the west and the outlines of the Pond are easily seen and the old road traces are still there. The Miller's house stood close by the road and railroad tracks. The mill itself, however, was some distance from there along the railroad bridge. On this bend was a house called the old rock house. Then next, a house set in the back on the east side was the home of John Cutter. B.H. Cutter's home was up on the hill where the apartments now stand. He was called the farmer poet. He wrote many pieces and published a book of poems. He was a very wealthy man - had real estate holdings in many places. He left most, if not all, of his fortune to the Bible Society. I knew him in my boyhood days and met him at parties on two occasions. He joined in our games of "Going to Jerusalem," "Hot Potatoes" and such other games that were played at parties for the young at that time and I assure you, he didn't always come out second best. He travelled abroad with Mark Twain and was the character of the farmer in Twain's "Innocents Abroad." At the side of Howard Johnson's on the Turnpike, one may see a monument erected by the Bible Society noting his gift to them.
Little by little Great Neck was changing and the passing of some of the owners of the large estates left property to sell and rent. William Dickerson rented the George Hewlett home in the cove and Mr. Childs also rented and then bought property. These two eventually built their own homes. Then came the Fields, Smiths, Roeslers, Griffins. Mr. Arnold came out and built a new home on his property on the Point; Mr. Morgan bought the Allen Farm and through this farm he built Arrandale Avenue from his homestead in Little Neck Bay to Middle Neck Road. This was maintained as a private road. The Cord Meyers family came to live here and the Howard Clark family.

Mr. H.L. Hoyt bought the Sneeden property. The Skidmore property facing Little Neck Bay was bought by Mr. James Martin and J. Bramhall Gilbert. The Smith Blackman Nap section facing Steamboat Road was sold in smaller parcels.

Mr. Fred Dentz, seeing the need being created for his special talents, bought a grove and hotel site at the top of Steamboat Hill. It contained a large hall and dining room and a nice platform in the grove for dancing; it catered picnics, shore dinners and clam bakes, serving all required refreshments. His establishment became well-known and successful. It is now part of the Academy grounds.

As the new people moved here and became residents, their interests in the village increased and they organized the Village Improvement Society led, I believe, by Mr. August Roesler, Mr. Dickerson, Mr. King, Mr. Baker and many others like minded. As they were used to electricity in the city where they came from and found themselves in the dark here, one of the first plans was to light up the street from the station. Funds were raised and Diets tubular post lamps were purchased, spaced and put on poles from the station to Steamboat Landing. This required a man to keep the lamps full, clean and lighted each night and put out each morning. This required a horse and wagon, a barrel of kerosene, lots of rags and, most of all, a good man. Many tried their hand at it.

These men liked what they had done but the lights revealed very uneven dirt sidewalks, so they had four feet square flagstones laid on the east side of Middle Neck Road from the station to All Saints Church. Mr. Raymond Gilliar was the mason. I remember him and his men leveling the ground and laying the flagstones. Mr. Gilliar, with
his level, was there to see that the job was done right.

The Village began to do things. It is difficult to remember the exact order in which things were done. I should have mentioned the old schoolhouse at the southwest corner of what is now Fairview Avenue. This long narrow building, shorn of its lean-to addition in the north, was, I believe, the first school for the public, before the first Arrandale School. The old school was used as a residence and shoe repair store first. The generation before mine were the first to attend this school.

A house was built just south of this building in which lived Mr. Dan Gordon and family. The two girls were telegraph operators and a station was installed and service extended from the railroad station. Later this office was used as a sort of library. Mrs. Underdonk furnished books from her personal library so the village people might borrow books. Then, when Miss Skidmore and Miss Post bought a building at the corner of Hutton Avenue, they organized a club for the young men of the village called the Great Neck League. The library was housed in one room of this building and as it grew the library was built on Arrandale Avenue and through the years to its present size and importance. The Great Neck Library of today came into being by the continued efforts and help of Mrs. Underdonk.

Across the street from the Old School was the Union Free Chapel (now the Youth Center) in which any religious group, church or educational meeting could be held. Mr. Homan of the Episcopal Christ Church of Manhasset and Mr. Newbold, Rector of the Reformed Church used it for services on alternating Sunday Evenings and each Sunday afternoon for school class and services. Superintendents in the order I recall them are, Mr. William Van Sicland, Mr. George Hewlett, Mr. Abram Post and Dr. D. Cornis, the first rector of All Saints Episcopal Church. I have many happy memories of this Sunday school, the Christmas celebration, a tall Christmas tree trimmed with loop on loop of strings of popcorn, popped by Miss Harriet Smith and strung by the school at the evening meetings. They also wound evergreen ropes for decorations from the greens that young men had gathered out on the Island, and for which Mr. Post and Mr. Hewlett furnished big wagons to transport them
from the woods of Laurelton.

The tree would be decorated and loaded with presents for the children. Plenty of candles were usually used and sometimes instead of candles, a calcium light would be used to light the tree in different colors with color slides. I also remember the strawberry festival with the ice cream, cake and many flowers and some kind of entertainment, with singing in the afternoon and evening. Then there was the Sunday school picnic; market wagons of the farmers-large spring wagons owned by Mr. Post and Mr. Hewlett, all decorated with flags and bunting and the horses with sleigh bells on lined up at the chapel. The children climbed in and away they went to some grove. Sometimes at Oriental, if vacancy in their schedule permitted. Lunch was served and ice cream and roasted peanuts. At Oriental grove the use of the swings was donated by Mr. Wrede.

Returning to Middle Neck Road things were changing very rapidly. The Nehemiah Hayden store was taken over by the Hicks Brothers. A drug store was built in the corner. The La Cluse brothers took the Brewer Store on the opposite corner and Beach Road. They had the first telephone in Great Neck and brought many new ideas to their business and prospered. Schenck Brothers met here to meet their requirements for new and better delivery wagons.

The Roman Catholic Church which was built in 1880 was built on the site where once the three little three-room houses stood, just south of the Union Chapel. New houses began to be built and the old farms became developments for the new families coming into the town.

The first was Ricket & Finley, they turned the Harper farm into Kensington and Harper's Lane into Beverly Road. The McKnight Brothers developed the Eugene Thorn farm into the Great Neck estates and Thornes Lane to Cedar Drive. South of the railroad was developed. The Mitchel Estate is now Kennilworth; the W.R. Grace company took over a large track and put in Grace Avenue and property onto the sides of the railroad from Middle Neck Road to the Meadows; the J.H. L'Hommedieu Mill and yards is now the Oil Tank Center; the Station Road was put in and Gilchrist Avenue; George Smith's farm lane became Fairview Avenue to connect to Grace Avenue; Bakers Lane was replaced and is now Baker Hill Road; and Wooleys Lane had access to Station Road. As the others made development areas of the farm lands, Villages grew instead of
cabbage and corn. The Messenger property is being developed by his grandchildren - the Gignoux's as far as I know. Saddle Rock was mostly the James Udall property; later his granddaughter Mrs. Louise Eldringe. Kings Point has put out its village arms and is holding most of us in its fond embrace from Saddle Rock to the County Line on East Shore Road, having taken and expanded the J.A. King homestead to absorb all of the Hewlett's Point and extended its boundaries to its present size.

In the closing days of the 1800's and the beginning of the 1900's, political contests were the occasion for torch light processions led by brass bands; banner raising in the villages; platforms being built for speakers to tell the virtues of their parties' respective candidates and expose the faults and sins of their opponents. The refreshments furnished for the public were usually a barrel of cider, a barrel of crackers and a drum of cheese, presided over by a committee. For the honored guests of course, there was something better furnished and many fine speakers were heard. Since the marching band was a necessity, the youth of our Village formed a band and solicited funds for instruments and uniforms from the public in which they were very successful. A very liberal contributor was Mr. James E. Ward of the Ward Line Steamship Co. and Cuban mail. I am told he had the uniform firm, Apple Uniform Company of Fulton Street, New York (who supplied the ship uniforms then) arrange to send a man to measure up the Band members and had uniforms made and, the Blue and Gold suits produced a band not equaled for looks in Nassau County or Queens. These uniforms, I am told, were presented by Mr. Ward to the band and for many years the band played on Mr. Ward's estate lawn every 4th of July, afternoon and evening. On this day the grounds were open to the people of the village to see the fireworks display which were put on by the Pane firework company. The display started off by a huge bonfire on the beach. One piece of set design I shall always remember was made up to represent the Idlewild, the steamer that probably took Mr. Ward to New York City every morning during the summer months. The display was on the lines of the steamer with flags flying, side paddle wheels and walking beams in motion, ending in a burst of colored flames of light.

In many ways Mr. Ward was one of our most generous and
public spirited estate owners. Going back to the band uniforms, when a replacement was needed it became a matter of fitting the uniform even more than music ability to qualify. I fitted the Jachet uniform - that's how I became a band member.

In the early days of Great Neck, the social life was simple but wholesome and pleasant and consisted of home parties with games and dancing and occasional surprise party; straw rides; sailing parties; Indian clam bakes on the shore or in some grove. In the winter time when the bay was frozen enough they took to horse racing on Manhasset Bay. Sometimes when sleighing was good, horse racing with sleighs was also carried out on the Main Street. This was always popular and a test to see if the county fair could have an entry from Great Neck. As I think back to the families and friends of those days, I recall the names of the Adams, O'Shea, the Quinn families.

James Quinn, who leased the George Smith farm, and his son William Quinn, bought and farmed part of the Sylvanus Smith Estate, not forgetting farmer John Brown and his family; the Chesters, Maydens, Van Nostrands, Schencks, Coles, Bullens, Franks, Palmers, Mathews, Gilliars, Lahrs and the Mineisling families and of course, my friends and neighbors the William Ryans, the Hetricks and Reeds. The first miller operating Nals Mill that I knew was Wallace Whiting and his successor was George Fowler and there were many others. I could make a long list for I claim them all as good friends and neighbors.

In my school days in the two and three room school, I recall the names of many of my boyhood friends. Some coming from the Lakeville section and from the Point section, had to walk mostly because no buses were furnished.

As to the old families of Great Neck, I am conscious of the disappearance of the name Allen. At one time much of the holdings of real property was in the name of the Allen family and the Gen. William Skidmore. The Allens, Smiths and Hewletts holding most of the shore front on Little Neck Bay and the Sound frontage and turning the point into Manhasset Bay; Mr. James Udall's property made a break in this line. Just where I don't know. In Locust Cove, Mr. John Jagers property breached the frontage for something less than 1500 feet (Mrs. Post was Mr. Jager's daughter). I understand that they and the Udalls were related, as were so many of the old timers.
As one of the new citizens said to me "It is well to check the family tree before being too free with your opinions of your neighbors." The Post family was one of the finest and we lived as neighbors in Locust Cove for many years. Mr. Udall and my father were associated in various farm holdings, the Great Swamp and other property on both sides of Redbrook Road and I often met him and his son, Thomas Udall. He was very nice to me. Thomas Udall often drove over to the farm to see my father. Sometimes driving Miss Louise Skidmore's pony rig - a beautiful pony carriage with bay and gray ponies and fittings, and on occasion would take me for a little ride in the carriage. I thought Mr. Thomas Udall was tops and I felt very badly when he died as a very young man. Louise Skidmore lost a very fine uncle and, then her father, Abram Skidmore, who was killed in the Sewanaka disaster.

To many they connect Mr. Udall with the Old Mill, but he was head of a large water transportation company, using all types of sail crafts, steam and canal and, I always understood quite a large concern - The Udall and Peck Water Transportation Co. I understand that the Pecks were Mrs. Udall's brothers. Mr. Udall however used the Old Mill slip to ship to the great city, much more than Grist cargoes; Locust timber, and other local produce found their way through this outlet.

As we follow the shore line out past Skidmore's Point, past the Academy to Elm Point and from there out to the lighthouse, a bar is formed covered with mussels and spaced with huge rocks, separated from the shore only by the inside channel, through which the steamers made their way. On these rocks, the giant of the story, found stepping stones to the point on City Island using a little extra stride for the outside channel, north of the lighthouse. The Sound traffic passed through this channel up the Sound, some taking the inside channel in the morning. Some of the steamers bound for the great city were: the two deckers, the Rosedale from Bridgeport, The Shady Side from New Haven and others; and the big three deckers from Fall River and Boston; the Bay State, The Commonwealth, Plymouth Priscilla and the Richard Peck and some other big ones and many large and small (tramps) with goods from the New England factories and many passengers too.
Then came return loads from the city to home ports in the evening - not omitting our own little steamer the Idlewild, then the Starin. Glen Island steamers every hour from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. and other picnic tugs and barges or steamers off from groves on the shores of Long Island or Connecticut. All this seen from the beautiful shore of Locust Cove is not soon forgotten. Old Great Neck is no more. New people, new ideas, new public needs roll on so fast that they have all but blotted out the old farm estate homes. The old John Allen Homestead at the end of Beach Road, near the Mill Pond, is the only one of this kind left and this with some well planned repairs. The George Smith farm house on Fairview Avenue with renovations but design held to original lines. The John Guthrie house some slight changes; the Woolfee house next to Flower House, cut in the middle and removed to the north end. The Henry Hayden house next to the fire house still stands but badly changed; the John Shuder house next to the bank (L.I. Trust) which I passed one day was just as it had been in the past, but the next time I passed it was gone.

New people, progress and business needs are pushing the changes relentlessly and old Great Neck is no more and, as I return once more in Memories Lane to the shores of Locust Cove and the sandy shores of my childhood, watching the Sound steamers returning to their home ports loaded with goods and people, all in quest of fame and fortunes. The cargo steamers flow in a steady stream on their way homeward in the afternoon. It was always a pleasure to watch them and as they passed by in the outer channel they caused quite a heavy swell to roll in and break on the shore and in it was one of my great joys to run barefoot on the set sand smoothed by the receding waves and trying to keep ahead of the following waves - always losing the race. The boats pass on - It is the close of day - I watch the rippling surface of the Cove and the setting sun's rays form a golden rippling road to my childish mind, leading me to far off foreign lands, adventure and travels. A dream to me never realized. In the quiet of the closing day, I sit on the sand near the water's edge and hear the soft swash of tide waves breaking on the sands and from the open door of the little red house at the edge of the grove ... My mother's call.
It is not my wish
To blow the horn
To call back days
Long since gone,
Yet
"Where is the heart that doth not keep
Within its inmost core
Some fond remembrance hidden deep
Of days that are no more."

Robert A. Ellard
June 28th, 1963