

FIRST HISTORY OF WEST ISLIP

(Secatogue)

Compiled & Edited by Gerald and Judith Wilcox

First Edition

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Dedicated to "Our Favorite kids"

Gail, Jimmy, David, Ranseler, Stephanie and Steven

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Gerald & Judith Wilcox, West Islip, New York

INTRODUCTION

This work has been put into encyclopedic form, so that each subject could be covered in more detail. In the beginning is a general account of the local history and each subject follows, covered in greater detail.

We have attempted to put each subject in as close a chronological order as possible, and grouping others (churches, schools, etc.) where necessary. Many maps and illustrations are also used, to make this a more visual study. We have found this makes for a better understanding of the subject matter.

The contents of this work covers from the dawn of history here in West Islip, to the new buildings and highways of today. You may find many names and places that you have personal knowledge of, including some of your own friends.

We hope you enjoy this work as much as we enjoyed compiling it.

G. & J. Wilcox West Islip, N.Y. Sept. 1973

FORWARD

Wilcox has devoted a great amount of work on this first and only history of West Islip. His devotion to the work is expressed in the manner in which he portrays the early people. The early people came from the Quakers of Jericho. He **and** his wife have given much research for the work. The work resulting has given West Islip schools and historical people cause for jubilation. Much work is the result of this man and should be appreciated.

April, 1974

George L. Weeks
Suffolk County Historian
Islip Town Historian

The Happenings of yesterday are the history of today.

GENERAL HISTORY

Before 1000 A.D., Indians from Rhode Island and Connecticut migrated to Long Island (Paumanak). The Algonquin Nation was the mother nation of the Long Island Indians. The Secatogue Indians of West Islip (Secatogue) trace their origin to the Delawares.

Long Island was divided into 16 tribal locations:

Maerckaawcks Carnarsees Rockaways Matincocks

Merricks Nissequogues Massapeguas Secatogues

Setaukets Patchogues Paspatucks Corchuques

Unkachogues Manhassets Shinnecoaks Montauks

The Indians living in the West Islip area called it Secatogue (meaning black or dark lands). Numbering between 300 and 500, they ranged from Sampwam's Neck in Babylon to the Yaphank River east of Brookhaven. The main villages were in Penataquit (Bay Shore) and Secatogue (West Islip). West Islip was probably the residence of the Secatogue's Sachem (Chief). Just north of the present West Islip beach (near the Little League baseball fields), an Indian village was discovered and a large metal marker has been placed to indicate the area where 13 bodies were uncovered.

One of the main Indian trails is now the modern Udall Road, it is also the first road in Suffolk County to extend north and south.

Long Island first came under the jurisdiction of the Plymouth Company of England, in 1620. The Dutch set up a trading-post on Manhattan Island in 1624.

In 1635, the title to Long Island was conveyed to the Earl of Stirling (Sir William Alexander) by King Charles I. The Earl's agent, James Farret, was sent to this area and conveyed land titles to groups of individuals (British subjects) between 1635 and 1640.

There is some evidence of a Dutch settlement in the extreme western part of Long Island as early as 1625, certainly Dutch settlers crossed the East river in the mid-1630's and located in what is now Kings County. The West Islip area is mentioned in the Dutch archives on January 15th 1639, and is referred to as Kieft's Purchase.

In 1640, Englishmen from Lynn, Mass., under the Stirling patent, attempted to settle near Manhasset Bay but were warned away by Gov. William Kieft of New Netherland, who would not admit to the validity of the English claim. Later that year these people settled at Southhampton; at about the same time a group from New Haven located at Southhold. These two settlements together with the Gardiner family on Gardiners Island (1639) were the first English groups on the Long Island scene. Another band of English settlers obtained a patent from the Dutch Gov. Kieft in 1644 to found Hempstead under the Charter of Freedoms and Exemptions.

By the treaty of Hartford of 1650 between New Netherland and the United Colonies of New England, a demarcation line was drawn from Oyster Bay, south to the ocean, (today's Nassau-Suffolk line), recognizing the island as Dutch to the west and English to the east

In March 1664, Long Island was part of the area given to the of York by King Charles II and in August, the conquest of New Amsterdam and the Dutch territory was effected. By this time, Huntington (1653), had associated it-self with Connecticut, and Connecticut made claim to it by its charter of 1662. Long Island, together with Westchester and Staten Island, became known as Yrkshire and was governed y the Duke's promulgated at Hempstead in March 1665. In 1683, Yorkshire was abolished and the county system introduced in the province of New York. Long Island was made up of three original counties - Suffolk, Queens and Kings.

On Sept. 19, 1692, Thomas and Richard Willetts purchased part of West Islip from the Indians. This sale was confirmed by colonial Governor Fletcher, in a patent granted, October 10, 1695.

There is mentioned in an agreement with the town of Huntington, of the hiring of one Jonas Houldsworth to teach the children. It is doubtful if the children of the West Islip area attended, as it was too far to travel.

In the early part of the 1700's, Richard Willetts sold all rights in the original purchase to his brother Thomas. Richard was paid 300 pounds sterling and the deed was signed April 1, 1702. In April 1710, Thomas Willetts gave to his son, Thomas, land bounded on the east by the Sequatogue River, extending west to a creek known as "Soquams."

The town of Islip was established in 1710. The name Islip is of British origin, as were most of the early settlers in the region. On April 3, 1720, Islip had its first town meeting. There were no more than 31 freeholders in the town. At this meeting they elected the supervisor, constable and tax collector.

Samuel A. Higbie, Born in Jamaica in 1708, was supposed to have build the La Grange Inn on what is today Montauk Highway. It has been established that La Grange Inn was in operation shortly after the American Revolution. This inn was named after the home of the French General Layfayette. For a short time the inn was used as a way station between Jamaica and Patchogue. When the railroad came to Deer Park, the stagecoach would come from the train station to the inn.

Several deeds between the Indians and the settlers were made and the last deed of these lands in Islip, was conveyed to the town in 1775.

The first engagement in the campaign of 1776 (American Revolution) was the battle of Long Island. In this engagement George Washington lost 1,200 men to the British as prisoners, and 400 killed and wounded. The British had about the same number of killed and wounded. Many men from the West Islip area fought during Revolution, but West Islip played only a very minor role during the War of Independence.

The first school in West Islip was started in 1807, and was a one-room building located on South Country Road (Montauk Highway). In the year 1835 a two-room school was built on Love Lane (Higbie Lane). By the year 1872, there were 64 students enrolled.

In 1750, a mill was built by Nathaniel Conklin on Sampowams stream separating West Islip from the village of Babylon. It was operated by Nathaniel Oakley in the mid-1800s. During this period, some of the family names that could be found in West Islip were Crum, Dow, Baldwin, Wood, Miller and Totten.

By the 1800s, West Islip consisted of many estates. The land owned by George G. Magoun, now Magoun Landing, has provided sites for many comfortable West Islip homes. At one time, it was used for carriage races, a popular sport of the day. (There was also a race track at Sagtikos Manor).

The Udall family, whose estate was located on South Country Road, was also well known in West Islip. Udall Road was named after this family.

The stagecoach and horseback were the only means of transportation in the 1700's and 1800's. The stagecoach carried passengers and mail. It left Brooklyn once a week and followed South Country Road. Passengers would dine in Hempstead, drive to West Islip and probably stay the night at the La Grange Inn. The journey would end in East Hampton about three days later. The railroad was extended to Babylon in 1863, and then extended in 1867 to Patchogue. At the time it was known as the Southside Railroad.

The main occupations of West Islip were farming, fishing and lumbering. The farmers raised hay and grain for their livestock and food for themselves. During the winter when their crops didn't need attention, the farmers would take a load of lumber to New York, bring back fertilizer, cloth, and other needed items. Fish, clams, and oysters were also a main source of income.

The exporting of lumber was also important in West Islip. Charcoal and lumber would be loaded on boats and taken to New York to be use as fuel. Even after coal replaced the charcoal and lumber, the wood industry continued. Much was taken to Haverstraw, N.Y., located on the Hudson River, to be used in brick making. These occupations claimed some of our best trees. When the railroad came, it went through the heart of our best woodland.

Great quantities were used in the construction of the railroad and also the fuel. The greatest damage, however, was caused by fires which were started by sparks from the locomotive stacks. The railroad practically ended the lumber industry.

By 1900, all of the real-estate in West Islip bordering Montauk Highway consisted of the old estates, complete with stately mansions, huge servants' quarters, riding stables and vast stretches of land. At this time West Islip school was a common school and recived a small amount of aid from the Treasurer's Office (1901-\$115). To meet its needs, the school house became a Union Free School in 1932. Population grew slowly, and as late as 1930, there were only 734 residents and about 400 homes. The upsurge in migration to West Islip did not occur until after World War II.

Today, West Islip has many different types of businesses and places of entertainment. There are also 12 modern public schools and 2 modern parochial schools. West Islip is a beautiful community and a wonderful place to live. Why not look around and find the many places mentioned in this book, there is nothing better than seeing these places for yourself.