

History of Lake Success

By Dr. Jack Binder, Village Historian

The Village of Lake Success at the southern end of the Great Neck peninsula is thought of today as a quite residential community. It was not always so.

The native Americans who roamed the area called the place "sacut" which meant "outlet of a pond". Through corruption over time the name came to be Success. Early Dutch settlers came from New Amsterdam and the English came down from Connecticut. Farming was the main occupation. Blessed with a glacial lake, ice was cut out in the winter and the lake provided recreation in the summer. One of the ice houses used to store ice is still preserved in a house across from the lake.

The first public building in Lake Success was the Dutch Reformed Church built in 1732 on land opposite the lake. The church was taken down around 1820 and on the remaining foundation a farmhouse was built. This house is still standing on the grounds of the Great Neck South school property and is known as the Wiles house. It is waiting the necessary funds for restoration.

During the 19th and into the 20th century the area became a summer resort for city people seeking the pleasures of the country and the lake. Restaurants and hotels were built to accommodate the crowds. Popular were the Elverton Inn and Lakeville Hotel. Surviving into the 1970s were Andre's restaurant and the Lakeville Manor restaurant.

Horseback riding was a popular sport with trails throughout the area. One went through Dennelly's farm on what is today Farm Lane. Roundhill Road had a stable for horses and every summer special events were held. The last stable, on the North Service Road, survived into the 1970s.

By the 1920s Lake Success became a very crowded place in the summer time, especially around the lake. The residents felt they had to act to protect their privacy. Incorporation as the Village of Success in 1926 enabled the passage of restrictive ordinances. In 1927 an election changed the name to Village of Lake Success and also increased the size of the village by bringing in the northern area of Lakeville.

During the first half of the 20th century several events took place that affects Lake Success to this day. Starting in 1902 William Vanderbilt II bought several farms around the lake to make his estate, called Deepdale. It encompassed about half of what is today's Lake Success. In 1925 he built a golf course that is today the village golf course restricted to residents.

Lake Success has a second golf course, the private Fresh Meadow. This club started as the Unity Social Club in Brooklyn in the 1890s. It built a golf course in the Fresh Meadow section of Queens in 1925. By the late 1940s the area around Fresh Meadows was being built up. The members decided to move to a more suburban area. They purchased the empty, bankrupt Lakeville Golf Club and renamed it Fresh Meadow.

In 1942, with the start of World War II, the federal government built a plant at the southern end of Lake Success to make material for the war effort. This was the Sperry Gyroscope Company. At the height of activity, 20,000 people were employed here.

When the war ended in 1945, space became available. The United Nations found a temporary home for the Security Council and related agencies. The UN was here from 1946 to 1951. Lake Success was world famous for the place where the UN met. The resolution recognizing the state of Israel was passed in Lake Success. In time, many office buildings were built along Marcus Avenue. Today, commercial real estate contributes about half of the taxes raised by the village.

Today the village is known to residents as Camp Lake Success. Golf is enjoyed for most of the year. The new police/court building houses a summer camp for children and there is a pool, tennis and athletic field at the site. This athletic facility was built originally by William Vanderbilt for his Naval Reserve Unit. The new Community building retains part of the old Vanderbilt Club House. It contains the village offices, a restaurant, exercise room and catering ballroom.

Following an interesting history, Lake Success has become a good place to live.