Some Aspects of the Development of Freeport, Long Island
1897-1900

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Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

The Freeport area was settled by Englishmen by the end of the seventeenth century. From then to the Civil War period, the area attracted settlement very slowly. It remained an area populated by small farmers, fishermen, and baymen, until the advent of the Long Island Railroad. The railroad brought commuters, and businessmen, and real estate developers, and summer vacationers. By 1892 local development had reached the point of desiring local control, and an incorporation movement grew and achieved success.

Incorporation in 1892 gave the village control over most local affairs, and within five years Freeport was a bustling little village, growing rapidly and changing mightily. Brooklyn and New York people found Freeport to be a wonderful summer home or permanent home. Farms were sold for building lots, streets cut, real estate business increased, and business flourished. And all this while the village government wrestled with the responsibilities of an ever more complex society, and the growing metropolis to the west.

The concluding years of the nineteenth century were filled with innovations, and with hope, and with the prospect of better ways of living. Freeport reached out for change and welcomed it when it came.
Chapter II

CHANGING SOCIAL LIFE

By 1900 Freeport's social activities were racing headlong from the practices of a quiet rural village to the sophisticated entertainments of an urban area. Whereas the newspapers of the early 1890's contained about one half a column of Freeport news of church suppers, birthday parties, holiday bonfires, and baseball games, the social news of Freeport in the summer of 1899 occupied three and one-half to four columns, covering a wide range of clubs, performances, and other activities.

The Review Hall offered moving pictures New Year's eve, 1897, using "the best projection machine" on the market, and presented the Biograph. Opera Hall featured an "electrical and musical treat" in January of 1898 which included Edison's improved phonograph and American cinematograph. The next week W. W. Dayton and troupe played Opera Hall, featuring spiritualism, hypnotism, and mesmerism, as well as banjo-playing and skirt dance.

The comings and goings of Freeport's permanent and summer residents were regularly chronicled in the Review and the Observer. Most residents visited around Long Island and New York City, especially Brooklyn, but quite a few visited Florida, Canada, and elsewhere. The papers listed distinguished summer visitors, and boasted of the numbers of summer visitors. The fourth of July holiday, 1899,
attracted "several hundreds" of visitors for the height of the season. Mayor Robert A. Van Wyck of New York City first summered in Freeport's Woodcleft Inn in 1898, and returned for the entire summer of 1899. That summer also saw Senator W. J. La Roche of Brooklyn entertaining at the Prospect Gun Club House on the bay, and rumor had it that Tammany's leader, Richard Croker, was at the Woodcleft Inn one evening in August.

Notices of club meetings filled the social columns, and the wide range of interests illustrated by these various clubs is astounding for a village of 2,215 (January 1898). Club notices included the following organizations:

- Freeport Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar Club
- Downtown Social Club
- Freeport Athletic Club
- The Outing Club
- Young Men's Social Club
- Freeport Band
- Freeport Mutual Benefit Society (an insurance club)
- The Women's Christian Temperance Movement (sparked by the wife of the Rev. W. W. Wilson of the Methodist Episcopal Church)
- The Freeport Literary Class
- The Freeport Club (for bowling)
- The Village Improvement Society (the first civic association, founded 28 March 1894)
- The Freeport Political Equality League (a suffragette organization)

All these clubs and more, plus church clubs and fire departments, filled the social life of this bustling village, and someone always looked for more social activity. The spring and summer of 1898 brought rumors of a golf club to be organized on land belonging to the Freeport Land Company. New York City sportsmen planned a clubhouse on the meadows for hunting. And the rage of the nineties, bicycling, consumed the time and energy of Freeport's hot rod set as much as that of any other town. As early as the spring of 1896,
Summer residents included influential New Yorkers, such as Mayor Robert Wurster of Brooklyn, and Mayor Robert A. Van Wyck of New York City. Mayor Van Wyck had taken a suite of rooms at the Woodcleft Inn, and commuted regularly on the 8:08 train. The Long Island Railroad planned for the summer crush by planning for twenty-two additional trains for the spring of 1893.

As more commuters moved to Freeport, the citizens once again besieged the Long Island Railroad for a new depot. In 1895 the South Side Observer had moaned, "Again we hear the talk of a new depot," which the Observer felt should have been built years before. By 1898 agitation for the depot had stronger impact, and more effective backers. The railroad offered a $6,000 building, ready for the "season of 1898" providing that a proper site were provided by the village. The Review urged harmony because the new station was considered a necessity. A committee was soon formed to handle the details of providing land for the depot, and obtaining consent to closing a road, if necessary, for the site. The committee included some of the village's most prominent citizens, such as John J. Pandall, Jere Brown, and Henry P. Libby. The committee wasted no time, and soon came up with a plan to close Henry Street, (running just east of Main Street and parallel to it), and to give Henry Street access to Main Street, thus providing an adequate site for the depot and a freight loading area. The committee evidently lacked no resources in ingenuity or finance. Of the $2,300 needed to purchase the land, $1,900 had already been subscribed by 22 April.
1898. and a musical entertainment (at $1.00 ticket) was planned to provide the remainder. By 29 April the Review reported that the entire amount for the depot had been pledged (without telling by whom) and praised the committee for handling matters so satisfactorily. The new depot was to be 121' x26' with a station house 61' x16', red brick outside and hardwood finish inside. When the new depot finally opened in the spring of 1899, the Review ran a drawing of it from the Brooklyn Eagle and a long article praising Freeport as moving into the group of 'up-to-date villages in New York State.'

Not content with a new depot, the citizens (and the Review) were also agitating for open air band concerts. The Review argued that the concerts would please summer residents and entice business. Subscriptions to a band fund were sold, and Randall and Miller donated the band stand set upon the corner of Brooklyn Avenue near Main Street. The first weekly open-air concert was held on Saturday, 2 July 1898.

The telephone was another innovation of the age entering Freeport and changing its life. As with many other franchises, more than one company was competing for the monopoly. The first in the field on the south shore (preceding the Bell Company) was a firm with local backing. It was called the South Shore Telephone Company and was formed in the summer of 1897. At its first annual meeting in August of 1898, the company elected directors. Almost all these men were prominent Freeport businessmen, including John J. Randall, William G. Miller, H. P. Libby, Charles D. Smith,
George W. Berge, and George F. Berge. The same report cited service already installed in Freeport, Baldwin, Rockville Centre, Lynbrook, Ocean Side [sic], East Rockaway, Hempstead, Garden City, Mineola, Merrick, and Parram Island (the County almshouse). In November of 1897 the advertisement of the South Shore Telephone Company listed forty connections (at a price of $15.00 per year), and by June of 1898 the same advertisement boasted one hundred and fifty connections. Election returns of November, 1898, came in by telephone faster and more accurately than ever before. By the summer of 1899 the New York and New Jersey Telephone Company had also obtained franchise rights in the area, but the Review was against the "Bell monopoly" and praised the local company.

Change was the order of the day. By the fall of 1897 the oystermen were so busy installing engines on their boats, they were said to have "the steamboat fever." K. P. Libby installed acetylene gas lighting in his office. (He was also the agent for the Bournonville Acetylene gas machine.) New streets were opened. In the summer of 1898, Randall and Miller completed a new dock several hundred feet in length at the head of Woodcleft Channel, where thirty yachts were anchored. In addition, they were building cottages on or facing the channel. They also planned to dredge the water route from Woodcleft to Point Lookout, and to get a sidewheel steamer for use as a ferry from Woodcleft to Point Lookout. The fall and winter season of 1898-99 was a busy one for local builders. "The dawn of an era of prosperity is appearing," rhymed the Review. On Woodcleft a new hotel serving 150 guests was being built by O. W.
Humphrey, and a boarding house for 60 guests was being built by Mrs. Prost. "Prosperity is surely at hand," quoth the Review. Improvements reflected the local scene, however. The road covering for the new road to the depot was oyster shells.
Chapter IV

OLD FREEPORT AND CONCERN WITH THE NEW

So much of Freeport was changing by 1900; new streets, new gadgets, new people, new religions, new businesses were altering the economic, social, and cultural life of the village. All these changes seemed to be recorded under the heading “Progress.” And yet progress seldom can be achieved without paying a price. Few people seemed to voice objections to the trolley line or the telephone poles, and little resentment to the new leadership and the new money in town found its way into the newspapers. There must have been some feeling of loss on the part of the old residents. Perhaps this latent resentment was reflected in the popular names for early political parties: the “Clamdiggers” and the “Silk Stockings.”¹ The newspapers sometimes carried a note of regret over the necessity to clear away the old for the new:

“Another familiar landmark in the tree line was removed on Monday to make way for the electric light poles.”²

Auction notices often showed the course of events. The property of Washington Paynor, deceased, was sold at auction in the spring of 1898, and the farm was split up into plots 50x300’ in the sale.³ In the spring of 1899 the property of P. N. Mollineaux, of Greenwich Point, was offered at auction. Horses, cows, hogs, wagons, harness, farm implements, and household furniture were included in the sale. The Review was moved to voice concern since
Mr. Mollineaux was planning to abandon farming, tear down the old "road house" to erect a modern building. The house at the junction of the macadam road and Babylon Turnpike was over one hundred years old, and well-known by "nearly every Long Islander." It had been "liberally patronized" by soldiers in the Revolutionary War. "The removal of the old landmark will materially change the looks of things at the point," concluded the article.

Obituaries of old residents sometimes contained a picture of a world fast passing. One native Freeporter, Andrew Golden, died in the summer of 1899. He had learned the art of sailing as a boy, and had made "many long voyages to distant ports commanding large vessels." In later years he had commanded the schooner "Ludlow" carrying coal from New York City. And the march of commerce even disturbed the dead. In the spring of 1900 a well-known family cemetery was eliminated to make the 50'x500' plot available for commercial buildings. The plot occupied the corner of Fulton and Grove Streets, and belonged to the Smith family. It had been founded by George Smith (1773-1856) in the early 1800's, and contained the remains of George Smith and some twenty of his descendants.

Not every change within the village pleased everyone. A bill introduced in the state legislature to prevent net fishing in Hempstead Bay (one of the nearby bays) was disturbing to the baymen. Rumor had it that the Prospect Gun Club was behind the bill; but the baymen planned to fight this threat to their livelihood. Progress marched on, however. In the spring of 1900 "the novel
but dangerous sport of auto racing" was reported on Merrick Road, and in the summer the Board gave a permit for auto races to be held by the Automobile Club of America on that macadam road.

As part of the attraction for summer sojourners, Randall and Miller introduced a ferry to run from Woodcleft Dock to Point Lookout at Long Beach. The craft was an old W. K. Vanderbilt ferry. By June of 1899 the ferry was running, and was evidently so popular that the operators decided to run on Sundays as well as weekdays. But here, Randall and Miller objected, since their contract specifically forbade Sunday runs, Mr. Miller expressed his disgust at this "desecration of the Sabbath." But the ferry ran on, and Randall and Miller went to court for an injunction to prevent the Sunday traffic. The case took many turns before being settled, and even the Brooklyn Times praised Randall and Miller for sacrificing financial gain for conscience. The Review indignantly stated, "Freeport does not need or want a Sunday ferry. By making the day one of recreation, an element of society would be brought here here that is repugnant and iniquitous. The beach would become a scene of revelry and hilarity a la Coney Island and many acts of wickedness be recorded against the place." Finally, by the spring of 1900, the Supreme Court of the State of New York issued an order forbidding these Sunday ferries. Freeport was anxious for summer visitors but they still held the Sabbath in respect, and they wished to keep a low element out of the village.
Chapter V

ELECTRICITY

A major innovation in Freeport was the introduction of electric power, to light homes and streets. Private companies had attempted to bring electricity into Freeport even before incorporation of the Village in 1892, but sentiment stood against private electric concerns and in the fall of 1897 the village approved appropriations for a municipal electric system in open election. By the end of 1897, the contract for the electric light building was granted to Randall and Brown for $1,963, and by January of 1898, over half the poles for the electric wires were already set.

In January and February, the board (sitting as Light commissioners) wrestled with the problem of rates, considering flat rates per light as well as metered rates. But the public grew worried, and the board requested a public hearing on the matter after a taxpayers' meeting at Opera Hall on 21 February 1898. That meeting was attended by almost one hundred taxpayers, and stormy criticism was leveled against the rates and even against the electric power plant under construction. At least one critic thought that the masonry in the plant would crumble. (At this moment, spring of 1967, the building still stands firm). At the budget meeting of the Village Board held 28 February and 1 March 1898, the board set a figure of $2,100 for street lighting out of a total budget of $8,798.
By April of 1898 the streets of Freeport were lighted by arc lamps of 1,200 candle power, and the Review congratulated Freeport as one of the "best lighted, best governed, and most progressive villages in New York State." The old lamp-lighter, Thomas H. Whaley, began gathering the old kerosene lamps to be sold. If a resident wanted to keep the kerosene lamp, he had to purchase pole and all from the Village, and some residents did.

The local citizenry joined in a celebration in honor of the electric lights on the evening of the annual firemen's parade. The evening's events included fireworks, decorations, youngsters with flags, and a parade, winding through John J. Randall's estate. The celebration was very well attended and was a complete success. The Island of Floral Park praised Freeport for its progressive system, saying, "The beautiful orb of night is a fair illuminant in its way, but the Freeport system of street lighting is more to be depended upon."

Electricity proved popular. John J. Randall's was the first house in town to have electric lights, and stores soon followed. But the rate problem only grew more perplexing. Rates had been set according to the number of lights used, and by November of 1898 the Board had to raise rates, despite a petition of protest from businessmen. Still the lighting plant was not paying its way, and in the spring of 1899 matters came to a crisis. Village president, William G. Miller, urged expansion of the power plant to provide service for further applicants, and he defended the cost of municipal water and light, saying private service would be more expensive.
The citizens supported him, voting "A" to "A" to expand the power plant in June of 1899. But before the end of the fiscal year, Village Treasurer Helland was authorized to borrow $3,200 on a demand note from the Freeport Bank. Of this amount of money needed by the village, $823.40 was earmarked for the water and light fund.

The village election of March 1900 swept a new slate of officials into office. No doubt the electric lights mess helped to elect the new slate. (See ChapterX, "Politics") The new president, George Wallace, was faced with the necessity of eliminating the constant loss from the power plant. Problems multiplied. The yearly report of the Fire Wardens reported the electric light plant to be "entirely unsafe and liable to catch fire at any time of the night." But the main problem was still the electric rates. President Wallace made a long public statement explaining the need for raising the electric rates, and the need for installing meters (at the customers' expense). The Observer claimed that Freeport's rate was still lower than Rockville Centre's rate, and noted that Rockville Centre was also contemplating meters, since her plant was running at a loss.

The meters helped, but not enough. In May of 1900, the board, meeting as Light commissioners (their biggest function), faced a dilemma. They had to raise $2,792 for the expenses of the lighting system, but they had no power to raise taxes without a special election. President Wallace reminded the voters that "we cannot light the streets during the year unless there be a majority" for this appropriation. At a trustee's meeting, citizens questioned the need for this appropriation, and asked about "rumors that the village was in debt." Wallace handled them diplomatically, thanking
Chapter VI
TROLLEY

At the same time that Freeport welcomed electricity, telephones, new railroad service, and macadam roads, the village anticipated with eagerness a new form of transportation linking Freeport to New York City—a trolley. Talk of a trolley appeared in print as early as 1895. The village board discussed seeking a trolley as early as 1896. By 1898 several companies were mentioned: the Long Island Electric Railroad Company, the Nassau Belt Line, the South Shore and Flushing Railroad Company, the Mineola, Hempstead, and Freeport Traction Company. The Review supported the Town of Hempstead proposition for a trolley, stating that, "The introduction of the trolley means progression, and the upbuilding of the communities through which it passes." The Queens County Sentinel said, "Freeport is booming," and urged the trolley line for Freeport.

The competition narrowed to two companies by the spring of 1899: the Nassau Belt Line and the Mineola, Hempstead, and Freeport Traction Company. But the companies had to obtain written consent from property owners for the right to pass in front of their property, and these were found to be difficult to obtain. Protests against the trolley came from various sources. Property owners feared that property values would decline along the route.
Bishop Littlejohn of Garden City objected to Mineola, Hempstead, and Freeport Traction Company at a hearing of the State Railroad Commission. Someone tried to pass a bill at Albany to prevent a trolley through Freeport, but a senate committee defeated it. Others hated to see the few macadam roads in the area spoiled by trolley lines. And there was the problem of keeping the roads in good condition with trolley lines on them. The Town of Hempstead granted franchises to both the Mineola, Hempstead, and Freeport Company and the Nassau Belt Line. But these companies had to obtain another franchise from each incorporated village through which the lines were to pass. In the fall of 1899 the Mineola, Hempstead and Freeport Line filed for the Freeport franchise. Meanwhile, Ernest Wallace was seeking signatures to a petition for the Nassau Belt Line to run lines down Main Street, with tracks in the middle of the road and macadam extending to both sides. The Review voiced one of the few cautious notes of the time, saying, "The fact that many valuable rights are to be granted should be considered and careful deliberation ensue on all points."

To confuse the issue, the Village of Hempstead granted a franchise to the Mineola, Hempstead, and Freeport Company, while the Village of Rockville Centre gave the franchise to the Nassau Belt Line. A meeting of representatives of all three villages and the Town of Hempstead brought no solution. Thus Freeport had to make its own decision, and the board did, granting the Nassau Belt Line the right of way through Freeport. The franchise ran for ninety-nine years, and the line had to be built within a year. From January 15, the company was to pay the village one percent...
of the gross, from 1920 on, \$12, and from 1930 on, \$15.\textsuperscript{22} The company accepted the franchise, and posted bond.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, construction beginning in the year 1900, Freeport achieved its wish for a trolley. The line operated from 1903 to 1923, running down Main Street south to the bay.\textsuperscript{24} Not everyone was happy with the franchise granted. The baymen had been behind the Mineola, Hempstead, and Freeport Company because that company promised to build its powerhouse in Freeport and haul coal by water.\textsuperscript{25} The baymen would find their chance to protest in the Village election of 1900.
Freeport was primarily a Republican area, but the Democratic party was vigorous too, and in local politics, national party lines were blurred. Contests for village president, trustee, or police justice sometimes saw Democrats and Republicans on the same slate, or Republican fighting Republican. Indeed, the Republican party in Freeport held two distinct factions: the Smith Cox group and the George Wallace group. Both men were popular and held public office, but their rivalry lasted over many years and came to the fore in the election of 1900.

Smith Cox was a native of Freeport, born in 1845. His father, Elbert Cox, owned a shoe business in Freeport and served as town assessor. Smith attended public school, and at fourteen began to clerk in a general store in Hempstead. He then went into the express business, and eventually the storage business, both in Brooklyn. The Review called Smith Cox a "self-made man of the plain, everyday type," and said he never aspired to office. He served several terms as village trustee and was evidently well-respected in Freeport. Proof of this respect came in 1898 when the village gave him enough votes to win a closely-contested election for town supervisor. Cox was closely allied with the most important businessman in town,
John J. Randall. When he posted a $20,000 bond to take office as supervisor of Hempstead, John J. Randall and William G. Miller were two of the four men who signed as "sureties" for him. Cox's cashier for the Town of Hempstead was William S. Hall, cashier of the Freeport Bank.

George Wallace was more of a professional politician. As early as 1893, serving on the town board, Wallace was accused of being a Republican boss. He served as justice of peace and was elected to the state assembly in 1897. In the state legislature, he protected the interests of the baymen, and he sought benefits for his own constituents. The Long Island papers began to boom him for county judge, but the Review wanted him to aim for Washington. In the elections of 1898, George Wallace ran for county judge on the Republican ticket headed by Teddy Roosevelt for governor. Roosevelt won but Wallace lost. Thus by 1899 Cox was supervisor of Hempstead while George Wallace was temporarily out of office. The stage was set for a struggle.

Elections for village office in Freeport often were quiet; few voters turned out, especially if a slate were unopposed. But by 1900 several issues had irritated the citizenry: the trolley question, the electric light rates, and the weakening economic position of the baymen. And then George Wallace, discontented, temporarily out of political office, and bearing a grudge toward Smith Cox, turned his ambitions toward the presidency of Freeport.

George Wallace had served as counsel to Hempstead Town, and at the same time had represented an electric company in its dealings with the town board. The board investigated the case, and disbarred him as counsel. There were even rumors of an
investigation by the Bar Association. But the real issue was the power struggle between Supervisor Smith Cox and George Wallace.

"It all comes of the fact that Mr. Cox refused to submit to the dictation of George Wallace when he began his career as Supervisor," was one paper's opinion. Wallace must have felt the need for vindication after dismissal by the town board, because his decision to run for Freeport's presidency meant giving up his post as counsel to the village board, a job which yielded hundreds of dollars per year.

Thus the year 1900 saw two tickets for the March election in the village. The incumbents were running on the Independent Party ticket, with an eagle for an emblem. The People's Party ran the Wallace slate, and their emblem was two oysters on the half-shell. George Wallace accepted the nomination and claimed that it was clearly his duty to do so. The election stirred more interest than ever before manifested in a village election, as the "slamdiggers" turned out in force to elect the entire slate of the People's Party:

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<th>PEOPLE'S</th>
<th>CITIZEN'S</th>
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<tr>
<td>President George Wallace</td>
<td>William G. Miller 246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year Trustee William H. Patterson</td>
<td>Smith Cox 236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 year Trustee William Raynor</td>
<td>Daniel Morrison 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer Fletcher C. Willis</td>
<td>E. Bartlett Helland 229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collector Elvin A. Dorlon</td>
<td>John E. Golding 239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This total of 601 votes was only ten less than the total number of registered voters in Freeport. The Observer hoped the Smith Cox would begin to turn his attentions back to his duties as supervisor of the Town of Hempstead, instead of trying to pick a quarrel with George Wallace and his friends." But although the Observer called
the election earnest but good-natured, feelings were running high. When Trustee Patterson proposed a vote of thanks to the old board at the first meeting of the new board, President Wallace refused to sanction this vote, and his objection prevailed. Later President Wallace mellowed, and refused to condemn the former board for the deficit at the power plant. Certainly Wallace faced problems: the previous administration had not kept any records of orders and purchases, and bills were coming in. Perhaps this casual record keeping had grown slowly during the seven terms William G. Miller served as village president.

But although the two Republican factions fought within the village, they closed ranks as Republicans in county politics. When Smith Cox beat George Wallace 146 to 108 for Republican District Committeeman in August of 1900, Wallace moved the nomination be made unanimous. Perhaps this signaled a rapprochement of the two factions, or perhaps it just showed good party members maintaining party unity.
Chapter VIII

FREEPORT VERSUS NEW YORK CITY

The growth of Freeport during the generation preceding 1900 depended on people and money from the city of New York. Every improvement in local services was designed to lure new city-dwellers to Freeport, either as summer visitors or permanent residents. And yet these transplanted urbanites agreed with the original clam-diggers on one subject—dislike and distrust of the big city. Freeport, along with the rest of what is now Nassau County, showed its feelings when New York was incorporated into the greater city in 1898.

The eastern towns of Queens County included Hempstead, North Hempstead, and Oyster Bay. In January of 1898 citizens from these three towns met in Mineola to discuss the separation of these towns from Queens County and their organization into a new county.¹ At this meeting each town pledged to contribute $250 for legal fees for the project.² But problems existed. There was doubt that the state had the constitutional power to create new counties; some people wanted to attach the three towns to Suffolk County;³ and some wanted the three towns to join Kings County.⁴

Freeport, as one of the three incorporated villages in Hempstead Town (Hempstead and Rockville Centre were the other two), and as a large and leading village of the south shore, took an active part in deciding this issue of a new county. President
William G. Miller was appointed to the committee to prepare the resolutions for the new county, and Assemblyman George Wallace introduced (and fought for) the bill to create the new county of Nassau.

The whole issue came to the fore in the election of a supervisor for the Town of Hempstead in the spring of 1898. Running as a Democrat was John Carl of Baldwin, and running as a Republican was Smith Cox of Freeport. Carl was a popular man, but he endorsed joining Hempstead to the greater city, while Cox campaigned vigorously for the new county. The election was extremely close, and no doubt the strong feeling against the big city kept Carl from winning. The Review took a vigorous stand and reported sentiment:

His attitude regarding the new county movement, vigorously advocating the annexation of the whole of Queens Co. to the Greater New York, will prove a sufficiently serious bloc to practically knock him out of the race for the Supervisorship. This pet proposition of his, which he so enthusiastically introduced at the citizens' meeting held at Mineola, received no support in that body, the sentiment of the meeting being decidedly in favor of cutting loose from all entangling alliances with the greater city. This sentiment has spread rapidly and is practically unanimous throughout the three towns represented, and the people of the town of Hempstead will not allow a man of Mr. Carl's influence, entertaining the views he does upon this important question, to become, officially, so intimately associated with New York's representatives in the Board of Supervisors as Mr. Carl's election would permit.

In the state legislature, George Wallace's bill to create Nassau County at first met with opposition from the Democratic party, and only passed the assembly by three votes more than required, but Democratic opposition was finally withdrawn and the bill was passed. This was the same bill prepared by the committee appointed
at the Mineola meeting. The New York Sun favored the new county, and urged Governor Black to hasten to sign the bill which 50,000 people desired, since it would solve problems "unavoidably thrust upon that part of Queens County" not united with New York. Governor Black finally signed on 27 April 1898, the law to take effect 1 January 1899. Thus Nassau County was created (and the Queens County Review became the Nassau County Review on the same day-1 January 1899).

There still remained technical details to iron out, and one of these was the question of apportionment of debt from Queens County. This was done by figuring the assessed valuation of each of the three towns withdrawing and reaching a percentage which was to be the percentage of debt assumed by the new county of Nassau. The percentage was based on the following figures:

**ASSESSED VALUATIONS 1898:**

<table>
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<th>Town</th>
<th>Assessed Valuation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total of Queens County</td>
<td>$25,871,810</td>
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<tr>
<td>Town of Hempstead</td>
<td>$6,919,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of North Hempstead</td>
<td>$4,788,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Oyster Bay</td>
<td>$14,163,333</td>
</tr>
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The total debt of Queens County was compiled at $4,837,810.94 and, of this, Nassau had to assume $975,694.17.

One of the chief reasons for antagonism to New York City in Freeport arose as a result of exploitation by the city of a natural resource of Long Island-fresh water. And this exploitation in turn grievously harmed one of Freeport's oldest industries, the shellfish industry. The story is a long, complicated, and sad one, and is
not yet ended, since New York City still owns (1967) watershed property withing village limits. The mouths of the fresh water streams pouring southward to the bays around Freeport provided the ideal breeding grounds for that delicacy which brought such good prices in New York—the oyster. But New York (originally Brooklyn) owned and tapped the headwaters of these streams, beginning in 1857, when Brooklyn brought the Nassau Water Company (incorporated 1855). Upon the creation of the City of New York, that city succeeded to Brooklyn's considerable water rights. The city reservoirs in Hempstead Town alone were worth more than $5,000,000.

In 1894, the Brooklyn City was the largest single taxpayer within the village of Freeport; its property was assessed at $131,999. Brooklyn had also bought out Isaac Horsfall's mill and pond on Freeport Creek in 1888 for $40,000. This mill pond was fed by two streams and provided power for the mill, ice for ice-houses, and ice-skating in the winter. It had a generous supply of water, and sometimes overflowed in the spring. And this Freeport Creek (and other creeks feeding into the southern bays), provided the ideal breeding grounds for oysters. The oyster trade was so brisk that two freight cars, twice a week, were required to haul the oysters to the New York and Philadelphia markets. These shipments were in addition to shipments by cart or ship by individual dealers. But the 1880's brought difficulties to the baymen since large corporations were giving the individual operators tough competition all over the south shore of Long Island. The oyster season in the winter of 1898-1899 was a very good one, but the next winter, 1899-1900, brought only a fair market. In addition
to competition from giant corporations and the variability of markets, the baymen could see the utter extinction of their cash crop due to the city's drainage of the fresh-water creeks. And they did not intend to lose their livelihoods to New York City's voracious appetite for water. They went to the law, and they went to their representatives in the legislature, and they demanded redress.

In the state legislature, Assemblyman George Wallace had piloted to victory a bill to force New York City to pay for dredging the creeks flowing south of Freeport, and in the fall of 1898 the dredging was begun. The dredging was necessary because so much water had been drained from the creeks over a number of years that the creek mouths silted up rapidly. In the summer of 1899 hearings were held concerning the need for more dredging (per the Wallace bill) and testimony was taken from old Freeport sea captains. Captain R. R. Smith, Jr., master of the schooner "Enterprise" had sailed Freeport Creek for eighteen years, and he testified that in the early 1890's there had been two to three feet of water at low tide, and vessels of sixty tons burthen (drawing five feet of water) had used the creek. In 1899 the water level was down to six to twelve inches at low tide, and only only twenty-ton vessels could navigate. Any larger ship had to use Woodcleft Canal, lying to the west. Not only was Freeport Creek now limited in navigability, it was also ruining the oysters. The sluggish flow of water, after New York City's drainage, left mud piling up at the mouth of the creek, and killed the oysters. In addition, low water in cold weather left the remaining oysters exposed, and they froze. Captain Smith's testimony was corroborated by Captain George S. Weyant and by
Lawyers Wallace and Smith obtained judgments of $4,000 each for Daniel R. South and William Patterson. By February of 1900, suits totaling $130,000 had been commenced in the state courts by Freeporters against New York, based on the diversion of water.

The Review ran an editorial entitled "Brooklyn's Dilemma" which analyzed the problem. Brooklyn already owned all the available ponds and tributaries out to Suffolk County and had drained them "to their very core" at an expenditure of millions, and still did not have an adequate water supply, yet, in spite of the damage suits resulting from this extreme drainage, the city was planning a new pipeline. The Review moaned, "What a ridiculous undertaking! ... It is not more pipeline that is needed, but more water and it is a well-known fact that the latter is lacking." The Review did not have much respect for the water commission of the city. The commission had proposed that the Murn storage reservoir (on the west boundary of Freeport but actually in Baldwin), commonly known as "Freel's Folly", be used as an emergency source. But the Review claimed that the reservoir, designed to hold 400,000,000 gallons, did not hold a drop, and that the city's proposal to spend $200,000 to make it water-tight, was just another "job" to waste the people's money, since competent engineers claimed that the reservoir could never hold water. The editorial concluded that Long Island could not furnish the water which Brooklyn sorely needed.

The city was certainly fighting for its interests, although unsuccessfully. A measure to allow Brooklyn to tap water in Suffolk was defeated in the state legislature, and city interests were try-
ing to repeal the Wallace bill. Long Island pride and weakness were both pricked by New York's encroachment. "Great and powerful as is New York, she finds the counties of Long Island of no mean influence in the Legislature, especially when they have right upon their side." Freeport not only had a grudge against New York because of water stealing, but because of tax disagreements. The city only paid tax on the assessed value of the land, not on the assessed value of land plus improvements, although Freeport demanded the higher figure. In August of 1899, as part of a general tax sale of delinquent accounts, the village of Freeport sold twenty-three parcels of Brooklyn City (now New York City) land. Although New York City protested, Freeport bought the parcels for fifty years.

This accumulation of woes for Freeport and the city so large and rich and powerful and waterless was not solved by 1900. Certainly the village felt it was being used callously by the city. Perhaps the water grievance and other grievances reinforced the stern desire for separation from city control which all Nassau shared and expressed in the creation of their new county.
Chapter IX

CONCLUSION

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, currents of change swirled throughout American civilization. And these currents reached into tiny Freeport after more than two hundred years of rural quiescence, as Freeporters farmed and fished and clammed and cut salt hay. But incorporation as a village in 1892 gave the growing village control of most local matters, and Freeport's elected officials did not hesitate to attempt to make Freeport modern, progressive, and prosperous. At the same time, alert businessmen exploited Freeport's location within commuting distance of Freeport and its natural assets on the water. Every new resident, new business, new link to other towns was hailed as a sign of progress. To the Freeporter of 1900, more population meant more business and more jobs. If anyone grieved to see the wetlands built upon and farms cut into residential sites, he grieved silently.

As Freeport grew, her population changed. The new population reflected city backgrounds and business contacts ranging outside the village, and the new leadership within Freeport was aggressive and self-confident, whether operating within village, or town, or county, or state. Freeport was not afraid to stand on its own two feet, just as Nassau County was not afraid to stand on its own feet.

Americans of the turn of the century coveted change, and change
was synonymous with improvement, with progress. Freeporters wanted electric lights, a trolley, the tourist trade, macadam roads, and even auto races. And yet they loved Freeport because it represented retreat from the city, access to cool summer breezes, and genteel good living within reach of urban amenities. How seldom Freeport's citizens questioned the maze of telephone, electric, and telegraph wires encroaching on their lovely tree-lined streets. How few protests were voiced to bringing a clanging trolley into the village. Perhaps there seemed to be no end to the green trees, to the natural waterfront, to the farms still uncut by streets.

But Freeport of 1900 was already facing and trying to control urban and suburban problems. Transportation within and without the community, services demanded by the citizenry, control and economical operation of the new gimmicks—these were the concerns of the people and their officials. They wrestled with them pragmatically, because no one had even defined urban problems nor were there experts to help solve these problems. And always, as Freeport grappled with controlling its own destinies, the power of New York City shadowed every activity and conditioned every action, from trolley to pleasure boat.

Freeport moved in the mainstream of American development in those last years of the nineteenth century. As America modernized and urbanized, so did Freeport, within the orbit of the greater city.
APPENDIX

SOURCES:

A. VOTES RECORDED IN LOCAL ELECTIONS, 1892-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of votes cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>69 (but 204 in the special water election)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>ca. 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>no figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>352 (but 618 in state election)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. POPULATION AND ASSESSED VALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>ASSESSED VALUATION VILLAGE OF FREEPORT</th>
<th>ASSESSED VALUATION SCHOOL DISTRICT **</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1,821</td>
<td>(no figures)</td>
<td>$267,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>1,956</td>
<td>$423,218</td>
<td>$459,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>2,148</td>
<td>$454,174</td>
<td>$530,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>2,148 (taken in summer)</td>
<td>$509,704</td>
<td>$530,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>2,215 (taken in winter)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>2,512</td>
<td>$696,075</td>
<td>$686,547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The boundaries of the Village of Freeport and the School District of Freeport are slightly different, but not substantially so. Queens County Review and South Side Observer, 1892-1900.*
## C. PROMINENT FREEPORERS AND THEIR PARTY AFFILIATION

### REPUBLICANS

- George Wallace
- E. A. Dorlon
- Dr. E. Carman
- A. J. Goldsmith
- Franklin Bedell
- Daniel B. Raynor
- H. Asa Nichols
- Alex Rhodes
- E. W. Verity
- Charles T. Baldwin
- Isaac Horsfall
- A. R. Rhodes
- William G. Miller
- Smith Cox
- S. Foster Sprague
- George D. Smith
- Theodore Wright
- A. B. Wallace
- Ernest Randall
- Daniel Morrison
- Charles L. Wallace
- Robert G. Anderson
- James B. Raynor
- Platt Conklin
- George P. Bergen
- H. P. Libby
- H. R. Smith
- William S. Hall
- J. Huylner Ellison

### DEMOCRATS

- F. Jay Bedell (formerly a Republican)
- Dr. J. H. B. Denton
- Thomas Powers
- Raynor R. Smith
- D. De Kremen
- E. B. Bedell
- Frank P. Smith
- A. J. MacLean
- J. W. Thompson
- William Bornscheur
- Richard Losee
- Richard DeLap
- Robert Ramsbottom
- Theodore A. Wright
- Charles S. Powell
- Oliver Golden
Chapter II  CHANGING SOCIAL LIFE

2. Ibid., 31 Dec. 1898.
3. Ibid., 14 Jan. 1898.
4. Ibid., 11 Feb. 1898.
5. Ibid., 7 July 1899.
6. Ibid., 8 July 1898; 9 June 1899.
7. Ibid., 18 Aug. 1899.
8. Ibid., 1 Sept. 1899.
10. Ibid., and South Side Observer (Rockville Centre, New York)
    This list is taken from various issues from 1894 through 1899.
12. Ibid., 18 Mar. 1898.
13. Ibid., 27 Mar. 1896.
14. Ibid., 18 Feb. 1898; Other issues of that winter.
15. Ibid., 23 June 1899.
16. 27 Oct. 1899.

Chapter III  INNOVATIONS

1. 24 May 1894.
2. 7 July 1899; 14 July 1899; Other issues of that summer.
3. Review, 19 Nov. 1897; Other issues through Dec. 1897.
4. Ibid., 11 Mar. 1898.
5. Ibid., 17 June 1898.
8. Review, 1 Apr. 1898.
9. Ibid., 15 Apr. 1898.
10. Ibid., 22 Apr. 1898.
11. Ibid., 29 Apr. 1898.
12. Ibid., 19 Aug. 1898.
14. 10 June 1898.
15. Review, 8 July 1898.
16. Ibid., 26 Aug. 1898.
17. Ibid., 5 Nov. 1897.
18. Ibid., 10 June 1898.
19. Ibid., 11 Nov. 1898.
20. 16 June 1899.
21. Ibid., 26 Nov. 1897.
22. Ibid., 11 Feb. 1898.
23. Ibid., 26 Aug. 1898; 20 May 1898.
24. Ibid., 22 July 1898.
25. Ibid., 16 Sept. 1898.
27. 8 Dec. 1899.
28. Ibid., 19 May 1899.
Chapter IV OLD FREEPORT AND CONCERN WITH THE NEW

1. William Croiverserat, oral interview with author 25 January 1967. Mr. Croiverserat is a lifelong resident of Freeport, former trustee of the Village, and now head of the Water Department.
3. Ibid., 29 Apr. 1898.
4. 31 Mar. 1899.
5. Ibid., 7 July 1899.
6. Observer, 30 Mar. 1900
7. Ibid., 2 Mar. 1900.
9. Observer, 1 June 1900.
11. Ibid., 30 June 1899.
12. Ibid., The tortuous course of the court action is contained in many issues, including 7 July 1899; 28 July 1899; 4 Aug. 1899; 24 Nov. 1899; 1 Dec. 1899; 29 Dec. 1899; 9 Mar. 1900.
14. 28 July 1899.

Chapter V ELECTRICITY

2. Observer, 10 Jan. 1896.
3. Review, 10 Sept. 1897.
4. Ibid., 3 Dec. 1897.
5. Ibid., 7 Jan. 1898.
8. Ibid., 4 Mar. 1898.
9. Ibid., 15 Apr. 1898.
10. Ibid., 22 Apr. 1898.
11. Ibid., 20 May 1898; 3 June 1898.
12. Ibid., 10 June 1898. Reprinted from the Island.
13. Ibid., 1 July 1898.
15. Ibid., 25 Nov. 1898.
16. Ibid., 2 June 1899.
17. Ibid., 16 June 1899.
20. Ibid., and Observer, 27 Apr. 1900.
Chapter VI TROLLEY

1. Observer, 12 Apr. 1895.
2. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, (Freeport Village Hall), I, 153.
4. Ibid., 28 Mar 1898.
5. Ibid., 5 Aug. 1898.
6. Ibid., 3 Mar. 1899.
8. Ibid., 18 Nov. 1898.
10. Ibid., 26 May 1899. Property owners on Greenwich Street, Hempstead, had a bill passed in Albany forbidding a trolley on that street.
11. Ibid., 23 June 1899. No reason was stated for his objections.
12. Ibid., 14 Apr. 1899.
13. Ibid., 19 May 1899.
15. Ibid., 15 Sept. 1899; Observer, 19 Jan. 1900.
17. Ibid., 27 Oct. 1899.
18. Ibid., 3 Nov. 1899.
19. Ibid., 17 Nov. 1899.
20. Ibid., 1 Dec. 1899; 15 Dec. 1899. And the two companies planned different routes.

Chapter VII POLITICS

1. Review and Observer regularly contained reports of Republican and Democratic club activities and elections. See Appendix C.
2. Review, 8 Apr. 1898. Contains a picture of Cox and a biographical article from which the following information is taken.
3. Idem. The vote was 1,941 to 1,933. Freeport gave him 299 votes to 187 for his opponent, John Carl of Baldwins.
Chapter VIII. FREEPORT VERSUS NEW YORK CITY

2. Idem.
3. Ibid., 4 Feb. 1898. Mostly Suffolk County leaders.
4. Ibid., 28 Jan. 1898.
5. Idem.
6. Ibid., 15 Apr. 1898.
7. See above, "Politics."
8. 25 Mar. 1898.
10. Ibid., 15 Apr. 1898.
11. Idem.
12. Ibid., 15 Apr. 1898.
13. Ibid., 23 Sept. 1898.
14. Ibid., 8 June 1900.
18. Golder, "Reminiscences," 29 Jan. 1940. A sloop might anchor at Long Creek with a clam basket nailed to the mast. This was a signal to the baymen that they were loading that they were buying shellfish for the New York market.
21. Ibid., 4 May 1900.
22. Ibid., 23 Sept. 1898.
23. Ibid., 23 June 1899. The following account is from that testimony.
29. Observer, 12 Jan 1900.
30. Ibid., 26 Jan 1900.
31. Review, 23 Feb. 1900. J. Joseph Raynor asked $25,000; S. Foster Sprague $30,000; Richard Bedell $15,000; Hewlett Simonson $20,000; James B. Raynor $20,000; and John Wesley Raynor $20,000.
32. 22 Dec. 1899. The entire paragraph is from that editorial.
33. Ibid., 23 Feb. 1900.
34. Idem.
35. Ibid., 18 Aug. 1899; 22 Sept. 1899.