Meadow Brook Bank Building

First National Bank opened in 1911. This was the second bank in Freeport. The Freeport Bank was established in 1892.

The original First National Bank was a two-story building made of Indiana limestone designed in the Romanesque style that included Ionic Columbian pilasters. It was located in the same location as the current building.

In 1929, the current six-story building was constructed as Art Deco in the flatiron-style bank featuring six stories with a two-story base. The base is of granite and topped by two stories of limestone and brick, with limestone trim above. Mayan reliefs are on the façade of the building. The lobby was finished in Caen marble and bronze, replete with an electric elevator, cigar stand, mail chute, and staircase. The building was approximately 17,277 square feet including a basement.

Also in 1929, the First National Bank becomes the First National Bank and Trust Company.

It was the tallest building east of Jamaica, Queens upon its completion.

The building was designed and built by noted architects, the Hoggson Brothers. Several of their bank buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, including:

- Citizen’s Trust Company (aka Sycamore Building), Sycamore, IL – National Historic Landmark since 1983.

During World War II, an observation tower was constructed on the roof of the building for enemy plane spotting. The bank was also authorized to receive and honor all ration checks.

For decades this bank served as a depository for Village funds.

The Chamber of Commerce, with specifications set by the War Department, painted “Freeport” on the roof of the building with an arrow pointing to the general direction of the flying fields of Mineola.

In the early 1930s, the First National Bank gave the triangle piece of land in front of the building to the Village of Freeport.
In late 1940, the Federal Communication Commission authorized the Doctors Telephone Exchange to create a radiophone system in Freeport. This system allowed doctors, lawyers, taxi companies and other business to install a two-way radio system in cars for the purpose of emergency communication. The antennas for this system were placed on the roof of the bank building. The height of the building allowed the radiophone system to have a radius of 10 miles. According to one source, this was the first radiophone system in the United States.

In the 1940s, First National Bank and Trust Company began to merge with other Long Island financial institutions. By 1950, it was the second largest bank on Long Island. Mergers continued into the late 1960s. Between 1949 and 1968, it merged with 19 other banks. Between 1951 and 1961 its deposits and total assets increased 14-fold.

After merging with the First National Bank of Merrick in 1949, the bank became known as the Meadow Brook National Bank.

In 1950, it became the second largest bank on Long Island after a merger with the West Hempstead National Bank.

Meadow Brook National Bank sponsored local little league teams and amateur photography contests. In the 1950s, the bank provided free income tax assistance.

The bank became the National Bank of North America in 1968.

In 1979, it was acquired by National Westminster Bank USA.

The building has been empty since the early 1980s.

In 1991, the freestanding four-sided clock that is located near the bank’s entrance was locally landmarked and restored.

In 1994, local veteran groups proposed designating the bank’s front tower as a MIA/POW memorial. That same year the Freeport Landmarks Preservation Commission tried to get the Village to designate the building as a landmark. The Village Board refused to vote on landmark status.

In 2004, the Village wanted to create a new “streetscape” for Sunrise Highway, incorporating the bank building. Plaza West was to include 235 one- and two-bedroom, market-rate housing units, some of them duplexes that the architects said will have views of the Atlantic Ocean and Manhattan; a glass-enclosed, rooftop pool and health club; 23,000 square feet of retail space; underground parking; and a refurbished six-story, former Meadowbrook Bank building providing new offices. The cast-stone and stucco-covered complex was to include a new station plaza that is designed to provide
a pedestrian focus for the project and surrounding area. The Village partnered with Time Equities Inc. to create Plaza West.

Important Dates for the First National Bank and Trust Company

- 1911 – original two-story First National Bank constructed
- 1929 - current six-story building constructed
- 1942 – merged with Citizens National Bank
- 1949 – merged with First National Bank of Merrick (name changed to Meadow Brook National Bank)
- 1950 -merged with West Hempstead National Bank (it became the second largest bank on Long Island)
- 1952- merged with the People’s Bank in Hicksville.
- 1954 - merged with the Bank of Hicksville.
- 1955 – merged with six separate banks
- 1957 – Meadow Brook National Bank of Freeport, L.I. became Meadow Brook National Bank of Nassau County and the headquarters were moved to West Hempstead
- 1959 – the bank employed 958 people
- 1960s –C.I.T. the world’s largest independent finance company acquired 95% of the banks stock
- 1965 – 66 branches on Long Island and New York City
- 1968 – name changed to National Bank of North America
- 1979 – acquired by National Westminster Bank USA
- 1991 - the Freeport Community Development Agency purchased the bank building for $690,000 for the purpose of urban renewal
- 1991 – 4-sided free-standing clock at the building’s entrance was locally landmarked
- 2004 – Village partners with Time Equities Inc. to create Plaza West
- 2013 (April)– Lawsuit is settled with TEI