

ASHAROKEN'S MAYORS:

WALTER T. YOUNG
1925-1944

MINOR D. CRARY, SR.
1944-1950

SYDNEY BEVIN
1950-1960

CLAYTON F. "BEN" MUGRIDGE
1960-1968

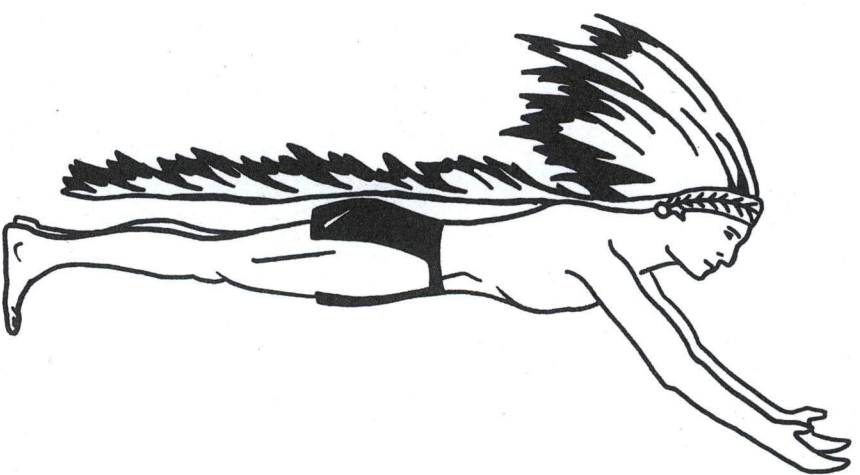
HENRY W. "HAP" GENTZLINGER
1968-1970

KENNETH VERZYL
1970-1976

PETER C. ANDERSON
1976-1982

WILLIAM H. KELLY
1982-PRESENT

ASHAROKEN



DIAMOND JUBILEE
1925-2000

A SHORT HISTORY OF ASHAROKEN

IN THE FIRST PLACE

The Village of Asharoken begins where the Eaton's Neck peninsula joins the mainland of Long Island and extends to the northerly half of Eaton's Neck as well as to all the waterfront property abutting Duck Island Harbor. Originally the hunting grounds of the Mattinecock Indians, it was "sold" by Chief Asharoken, the Sagamore of Ketewomoke, to Theophilus Eaton, first elected governor of New Haven, in 1646. Chief Asharoken then "resold" the property to Jonas Wood, William Rogers, and Thomas Wilkes for "two coats, four shertes, seven quarts of licker, and eleven ounces of powder." A court eventually recognized Eaton's prior possession of the land.

Ownership passed to George Baldwin, who built the first house and fence on Eaton's Neck. In 1668, he sold his property to Alexander and Richard Bryant, who petitioned the Royal Governor to make it a Royal Manor so that it became the "Lordship and Manor of Eaton." Eventually, ownership passed to his grandson, the Honorable John Sloss Hobart, an outstanding leader of Long Island during the American Revolution and later a New York State Judge and United States Senator.

The Gardiner family bought the manor in 1792, sold ten acres to the United States for the Eaton's Neck Light-house in 1798, and, beginning in 1862, sold the bulk of the property to Cornelius H. Delamater, a wealthy New York iron merchant. It was he who built the gun turrets and machinery for the Union ironclad, the Monitor. Until 1882, Delamater purchased more lots, parcel by parcel. Upon them, he built magnificent homes for his daughters and their spouses. His estate, which had passed to his five daughters and their descendants, remained whole until 1920.

IMPROVING UPON NATURE

Asharoken is part of the Atlantic Coastal plain. Its

fundament is probably from the Cretaceous Age and its surface is Pleistocene. Its coastline was formed by the retreating glaciers in the Ice Age. As they receded, rivers washed sand, gravel, and stones to form banks and cliffs. Tides and winds created sandy spits and reefs. Native plants, such as beach grass, beach plum, bayberry, briar and beach roses, and even such noxious vines as poison ivy and bittersweet traditionally help to hold the dunes in place.

In the early years, the tideway often crossed the road to the Neck at times of high tide. According to the *Long Islander* on September 8, 1871, "The people of Eaton's Neck and Northport have united in building a roadway across the beach landing to Eaton's Neck by covering that almost interminable sand bed with loam for a sufficient width and depth to make a good carriageway. When complete, it will make a very decided improvement on the former mode of dragging through the sand bed. The work is nearly completed, the two parties having reached within half a mile of each other. When finished, the improvement will be a very important one to those who travel across the beach. The distance is about two miles."

ASHAROKEN BEACH RESORT

In 1900, William B. Codling, Esquire, one of the most successful realtors in Suffolk County, began a small development he named Asharoken Beach. He built two model homes—one on the Bay side and one on the Sound side to show prospective beach lot owners. He fell in love with the area, and kept the Sound side house for his own use until his death in 1924—just before the incorporation of Asharoken Village.

In his original brochure, he described the houses in the development in the following way: "Every lot is a shorefront. The shore on both sides is very fine bathing

beach. 35 houses mostly occupied by owners, three-fourths city parties. Short sail from beach to Northport, Centreport, and Huntington Harbors and large yachts can anchor on Bay side and have deep water to City. Best drinking water. Always cool. Restricted for residences and apartments. Easy terms. Mortgage money to build if desired. Electric lights, N. Y. phones." The Sound side lots, 50 feet wide and 350 feet deep, went for \$2,400 and the Bay side lots, 50 feet wide with about 600 feet of upland and 400 feet below high water, cost \$3,200. A fully built house with seven rooms, 100 feet on the Bay and a garage with room for chauffeur cost \$20,000.

TOO MANY TOURISTS

The splendid beaches attracted so many "day trippers," who bathed, camped, and hunted there that local landowners decided to restrict access. On August 23, 1919, a meeting was held by a group of property owners at the home of Captain James Moorehead, who proposed that Eaton's Neck and Asharoken create a Property Owners Association, incorporating for the purpose of protecting their interests, their property, and the roads leading to them.

In subsequent meetings, a watchman was employed, the problem of garbage disposal and various means of halting the deterioration of Beach Plum bushes were discussed. A notice stating "By the order of the Town Board, parking of cars on the road from Chesebrough corner to and including Eaton's Neck is prohibited. Trespassing on and of the land adjoining said road is prohibited."

By 1920, it was found necessary to hire Town Constable Kissan to police the area during the summer months. After he resigned in 1921, Rudolph Arndt was employed with an admonition to "use the utmost caution" as he patrolled the road. In 1922, the Board purchased a second-hand Ford runabout painted bright red and a uniform for the Beach Officer. The car cost \$200 and the Police

Officer's salary was raised to a dollar a day.

As time passed, The Eaton's Neck and Asharoken Beach Association became more of a civic group than a working organization with influence and a political agenda. Today, it is inactive and the two communities are essentially separate.

ASHAROKEN BECOMES A VILLAGE

By 1925, residents complained that reckless motorists drove too fast on Asharoken Avenue. Despite some dispute between various interested parties, a resolution was made that the community should be incorporated into a Village. In August, 1925, Asharoken Village was created. Its chief officer was named President and was a Trustee; four other Trustees were to be elected. The other officers of the Village were the Village Clerk, Treasurer, Attorney, Police Justice, Chief of Police, and Historian.

The Village's first zoning regulations were adopted in 1926, as were the first Code of Ordinances. By 1927, the Northport Water Works had run a water supply main to Asharoken at a cost of \$24,000 to be collected by voluntary subscriptions. In 1929, Asharoken Avenue was professionally paved for the first time. By 1930, a gas line was installed by LILCO to parts of the Village.

In 1934, a sidewalk was proposed to go from the entrance of the Village to Duck Island on the south side of the road. Construction would have cost \$4000 to \$6000 depending upon the material. After much heated discussion, the project was abandoned.

In 1933, the Board of Trustees of the Village of Northport requested that the Village of Asharoken contribute to the support of its Fire Department on a regular basis. In the past it had answered calls as a matter of courtesy, to be recompensed only by voluntary contributions from property owners. Today, each property owner is taxed by the Village, which currently pays ap-

proximately \$45,000 a year for fire protection.

In 1941, Asharoken zoning was divided into "A" and "B" areas. The "A" area, located along Asharoken Avenue, including Duck Island, has a minimum road frontage of 50 feet and a 10,000 square foot plot required for building. In the "B" area, located on Eaton's Neck and Beach Plum Drive, zoning requirements are 100 foot frontage on the road and one acre of land. In 1964, a "C" area was added, to include the Morgan property, which requires 150 feet frontage on the road and a minimum of 2 acres. In 1993, Duck Island changed its zoning so that 2 acres of land are required.

A later development was the 1958 vote for Asharoken to continue maintaining its own Police Department rather than joining Huntington in becoming part of the County Police System. From 1984 to 1987, residents of Bevin Road agreed to pay for the installation of water mains. Today, the whole village has access to city water.

VILLAGE HALL

A small police booth was erected in 1931 near 116 Asharoken Avenue. By June, 1937, the Village decided that it needed a Village Hall. Land was purchased from the Metropolitan Sand and Gravel Company on the present site and the police booth was moved to it. A two-car garage was also built. In 1981, one garage was converted into an office so that Village Clerks no longer needed to work from their residences.

The flagpole was installed in the mid-1980's and a statue of Chief Asharoken was donated anonymously to the Village. The statue mysteriously disappeared and never was found. Unfortunately, the mold had been destroyed. In 1988, the Sbarro family commissioned and donated a new statue.

In 1992, the restroom was enlarged to make it accessible to the physically challenged. The remaining

garage became additional office space, the meeting room was expanded, and extra space for the Police Department was added.

THE MORGAN ESTATE

In 1963, Henry S. Morgan, owner of the 448 acres that comprised the Morgan estate, decided he wanted to annex the bulk of his estate (in Huntington's jurisdiction) to the Village. The Village agreed, giving him greater police and zoning protections, and increasing its own tax base as well as nearly doubling the size of the Village.

From 1972 through 1976, a proposed condominium development on the Morgan property by Otto Papparazzo dominated Village affairs. It was defeated and Morgan sold the property. In the 1980's, a riding school opened on the property. It was not in accord with Asharoken zoning laws and closed in 1987. Today, the former Morgan property remains untouched, one of the largest estates still found on Long Island.

DUCK ISLAND

A separate part of Asharoken, Duck Island, was at one time owned by Sarah Gardiner. It was purchased from her trustees in 1872 by Richard Rowland who gave his name to what later became a picnic facility. Rowland's Grove, under a subsequent owner. Small local excursion steamers were invited to stop there to enjoy a rustic picnic. In 1892, Edward Thompson, owner of Northport's Thompson Law Book Company, bought the property.

Eventually, in 1922, Raymond V. Ingersoll and his brother-in-law, Miner D. Crary, purchased the property. The two families formed the Duck Island Corporation, cementing their ownership of the causeway which connected Duck Island to East Beach. Their descendants still live there.

In 1925, Rosalie Jones tried to have the causeway declared a public road so she could fill in and subdivide the

marsh bordering it. The New York State Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the Duck Island Corporation and in retaliation, the disappointed owner erected a hot-dog stand (which never actually sold a single hot dog) at the entrance to Duck Island Road to harass the victors. Later the Jones property was sold and the Corporation purchased the marsh.

ASHAROKEN FIGHTS EROSION

Asharoken is in a physically vulnerable position. Periodically, storms and other causes have eroded its beaches. Although, in the course of time, sand is naturally replenished, jetties were also erected in 1932. In 1951, a rock jetty was built in the vicinity of 489 Asharoken Avenue.

After two damaging hurricanes in 1954 and 1960, the Mayor and Trustees petitioned the federal and state government for help. In 1964, the Army Corps of Engineers replenished the entire beach. In the 1960's the LILCO plant was constructed, impeding the natural accretion of sand on the Asharoken beach. The Village is presently in litigation with KEYSPAN (formerly LILCO) for this reason.

During the surprise winter storm of 1992 on December 12, severe erosion and damage was inflicted on the community. Electric poles between 413 Asharoken Avenue and Bevin Road were destroyed, Asharoken Avenue was flooded, as were many homes, and on Duck Island, the tidal surge was recorded at 10 feet above mean sea level. As a result of the damage, an artificial dune on the Sound side of Asharoken Avenue at Bevin Road was erected by the Army Engineers with assistance from FEMA.

FAMOUS ASHAROKENITES

Among the well-known people who have spent time in Asharoken were the writers Eugene O'Neill, who finished *Mourning Becomes Electra* here and Antoine de Saint-Exupery, who completed *The Little Prince* while living on Bevin Road. Mayor La Guardia, Jackie Gleason,

Neil Diamond, and Marlene Dietrich were summer visitors. Artist Marcel Emmanuel Vertes and Cartoonist Ruben Goldberg were well known local figures as was the silent screen star Edith Storey.

A DIAMOND JUBILEE

For seventy five years, Asharoken has flourished, offering residents and visitors a way of life that is fast disappearing in today's world. This oasis is home to song birds and waterfowl, porpoises, fish and shellfish, raccoons, foxes, deer, and opossums. Its days are punctuated by the tide, by glorious sunrises and stunning sunsets.

Those who live here find something elemental and deeply rewarding in this continuous relationship with nature's ebb and flow. The water, always changing yet forever constant, symbolizes the invigorating yet peaceful pattern of life so many here find essential to their well-being.

There is an "Asharoken way of life." Let us hope that the first seventy five years are only the beginning and that someday others will celebrate the Village's One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary.

By Joan G. Hauser

Thanks to the following authorities whose well-researched information I used extensively:

Faded Laurels, The History of Eaton's Neck and Asharoken, by Edward A. T. Carr

Asharoken and Eaton's Neck, a pamphlet by the Long-range Planning Committee for Asharoken and Eaton's Neck

A Short History of the Village of Asharoken, a pamphlet by Edwin L. Brooks, Village Historian

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JGH