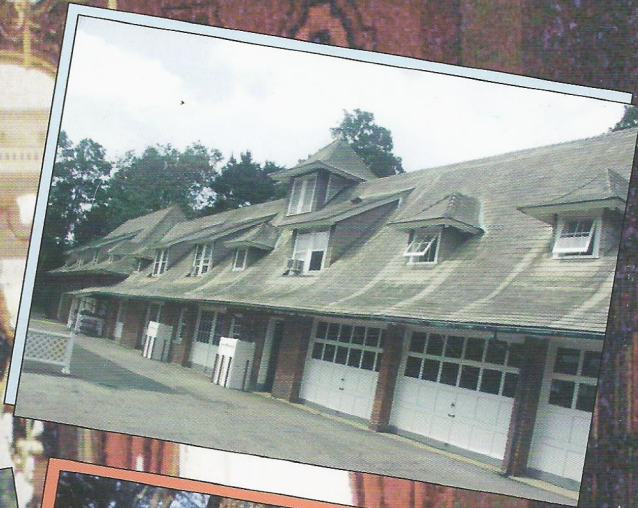
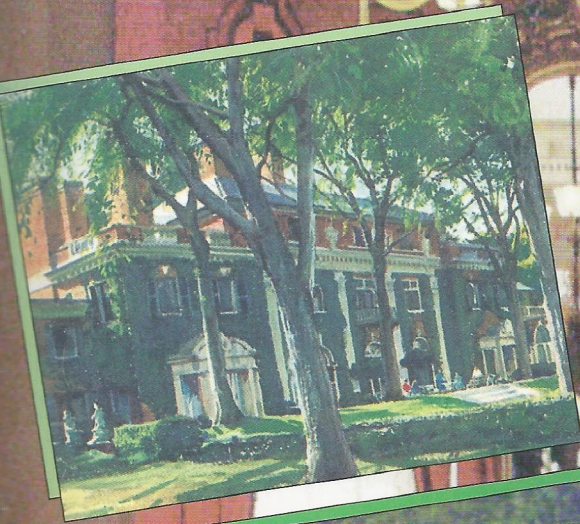


An "Upstairs, Downstairs" Look At Oyster Bay Estate Life



The Oyster Bay Historical Society
Fall 2005

OYSTER BAY DURING THE GILDED AGE

A LOOK AT THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN

The Oyster Bay Historical Society presents a coordinated series of events, on an annual basis, in order to fulfill its mission of community education. Each year a specific historical theme is developed in an exhibition at the Earle-Wightman House, the Society's headquarters. In addition, special events are created to re-enact some portion of this theme in historically correct formats. Many people work together, on a voluntary basis, in order to create, deliver and evaluate the success of these endeavors. The ultimate result is the raising of funds for the Society's Building Fund.

The 2005 program has included particularly lively offerings. The re-creation of a favorite Gold Coast pastime, tennis, was held at the restored tennis and pool house of a long demolished Locust Valley estate. Attendees were given freedom to explore this historic structure which has seldom been open to non-family events. An extravagant dinner, representative of late 19th century elegance, was held at an Oyster Bay period mansion, which the owners are in the process of restoring to its former glory. The emphasis was placed on *all* the people who made these events possible, not just the partygoers. The exhibition documented this period with interviews, photographs and artifacts gleaned from descendants of actual Oyster Bay estate owners and their staffs

Once again, we would like to thank all those people, who through their generosity, have made these events possible. We must, in particular, thank Senator Carl Marcellino for procuring the grant which made this exhibition possible. We hope that the historical materials presented, through this and previous events, will serve as guides to the community as it strives to preserve its past and to carve out its future direction.

Thomas A. Kuehhas
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OYSTER BAY DURING THE GILDED AGE

by Maureen Monck, Ph. D.

The latter part of the 19th century is usually referred to as the "Gilded Age" in America. It was a time of opulence and excessive consumption by the very rich. During this time many of the Gold Coast mansions were constructed on Long Island's North Shore. In order to maintain a lavish show of wealth in these homes, legions of servants were required. The differences between the master and servant classes were dramatic, "upstairs" mingled with "downstairs" only when it was necessary for utilitarian purposes. However both classes existed in the larger community and contributed to its heritage. The Oyster Bay Historical Society's 2005 exhibit describes the opulent lifestyle here while focusing on the many people who made it possible.



Residence of Charles W. Wetmore, Centre Island.

In order to understand the excesses of this era it is necessary to review some historical precedents. Since colonial times, Americans had been attempting to emulate the European aristocracy or English landed gentry and create an aristocracy of their own. Despite the fact that the earliest colonists arriving on the *Mayflower* were from the middle and lower classes, in England and elsewhere, the notion of old family was applied to the descendants of these families. As the nation grew, the wealth and importance of many early mercantile families grew apace. "Society" was made up of the subsequent generations of these early families. As their wealth became derived from law, banking and brokerage services, they castigated those who continued to thrive via the "odious" mercantile routes.

Changes in science and technology in the 19th century resulted in the creation of a new mercantile class with far greater financial success as compared to the old family wealth. Like the earlier colonists they too wanted to emulate the gentrified families. Building and extravagantly furnishing large mansions while maintaining a plethora of servants, were outward and very obvious signs of wealth but not of gentrification. Many of the "nouveaux riche" as these families were pejoratively referred to, came from the lower class themselves and were not schooled by "polite society." The lot of many servants in these households was abusive exploitation, low pay, long hours of work, poor living conditions in servants' quarters and unquestioned obedience to the master. (One cannot deny that some servants were well cared for and thrived in service.)

The old order cherished good taste, subtlety and simplicity, privacy, the love of beauty, familiarity with the humanities and arts, manners, decorum and good form. The new took pride in their accomplishments and wanted to display their success. Money could buy entry into society. Numerous books and magazines were published with advice regarding the correct way to decorate one's home, acceptable behavior and how to entertain. The "servant problem" or unruly and ill mannered servants, could be blamed for failure on the hosts' part to carry off the required elegance. Ultimately the servant problem, income tax, and World War I's drafting of the household help were listed as the causes for the demise of this opulent period.

Returning to Oyster Bay, let us focus on just one local Gilded Age family, the Beekmans, and

imagine their life style by drawing on what is known about the time they lived here. This trip through fantasy will expand upon the Historical Society's recreation of a lavish 19th century dinner party, held at The Cliffs, the Beekman family's Oyster Bay residence, in September 2005.

According to Cleveland Amory, author of *Who Killed Society*, the Beekman family were importers and traders in dry goods. While they were considered an old New York family, they were not listed among Caroline Webster Astor's infamous 400 ball guests. He describes the family as kind and friendly but like other old families they looked down upon the new millionaires who made their money in shipping and railroads. Amory describes this exclusiveness as a part of the age old rise and fall process of both Society and aristocracy in America.

Perhaps they would have been seen dining, in elegant formal attire, at Delmonico's, Louis Sherry's, the Astor, or the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, where they had their primary home. Recognition by Oscar Tschirky, maitre d' of the Palm Garden at the Waldorf, was the quintessential symbol of New York power and wealth. Oscar personally selected the food from the French menu and wines for the important socialite diner, the Beekmans no doubt among them. Helen Bullock, writing for *American Heritage* tells us that Oscar considered the nouveaux riche as equals of the established American Aristocracy while Mr. George Boldt, the manager of the Waldorf preferred to cater to the 400. Oscar referred to this exclusivism as "obsolescent."

The years 1838 to 1901 are referred to as the Victorian Era or Belle Epoque as they coincided with the reign of Queen Victoria in England. During this time there were very strict codes of etiquette and well defined, expected behaviors. For those hoping to acquire gentility there were numerous publications advising on such things as how to decorate the home, how to have an elegant dinner party, or how to comport one's self in society. Persons who did not conform to these strictures were snubbed or forthrightly excluded from the scene. If Edith Wharton's comment in *The Age of Innocence* is telling "...his wife looks like she might have been a chamber maid a few years ago..." then quick, superficial judgments and labeling were the ways in which one class attempted to note its superiority over another.

Allison Leopold tells us that etiquette books of the time advised ladies on how to be graceful. She declared that a lady's step should be short on entering a room, not to exceed the length of her foot. Gentlemen were advised that it is indelicate for a seated gentleman to rise and offer a lady his chair as the seat cushion might retain body warmth. Instead the hostess is to provide a fresh chair. She comments on the decor matching the manners; this is the reason for there being so many chairs in the sitting room.

Godey's Ladies Book stated rules such as the hostess must make her callers feel welcome, ladies should sit in a chair or sofa near the fire while a gentleman *never* sits on the sofa or near a lady, unless he is told to do so. The gentleman is to have his top hat and gloves firmly in his hands during the visit. Conversation must be pleasant, certainly not inclusive of controversial topics. The hostess or a servant must escort guests to the front door at the end of the visit. Callers were advised to limit calls to half an hour, between noon and five o'clock, but not to call during the ladies' lunch.



The Cliffs, 19th c. home of the Beekman family.

Such rules were considered mandatory for the moral improvement of all people.

The American Victorian code of etiquette, inspired by English and French precedents, was most demanding in defining the rituals required for dinner parties. Here was where a family could display their culture and refinement both with the household decor and with the well served dinner. Traditional or English service, with all food placed on the well appointed table, the hostess or the guests passing it along, was replaced with service *a la Russe* after 1870 wherein the food was placed on the sideboards, while gloved, sometimes liveried servants carved and did all the serving. Here again was an opportunity to display one's wealth both with the greater use of silver services and centerpieces, candelabra and elaborate flower arrangements in silver vases; as well as in the complement of servants one had for such occasions. At parties one servant or "waiter" for four guests, preferably with an English butler supervising, was thought to be in good taste.

Just about every move one could make was prescribed for dinner party behavior. Written invitations to dine, and written responses by guests were required. Six to ten guests was considered proper, thirteen was in poor taste, the exception being the very opulent, grandiose dinners held by the very rich. Name cards and a carefully planned seating arrangement were obligatory as good conversation

was a must for a successful evening. A table rug was placed under the table and two white cloths were on the table top to be changed between the meat and dessert courses. A castor set or celery stand was to be placed in the center of the table with the salt stands at the four comers. Jellies and pickles were to be placed at diagonal corners. After dessert, finger bowls were presented on a lace doily with a slice of lemon or a leaf of rose geranium floating in it. Finally the table was crumbed and bared for fruit and coffee.

A successful dinner kept guests at the table for no more than two hours. After dinner



Fashions from an 1864 issue of Godey's Ladies Book.

gentlemen might retire to the library while the women returned to the parlor or everyone gathered in the parlor for conversation, whist, charades, a short theatrical performance, or a tableau vivant (pantomime).

One can imagine many successful dinner parties at the Beekman family home with its very large and grand dining room and the library and parlors overlooking the lawns rolling down to beautiful Oyster Bay harbor. Musing further the guest list might have included some Oyster Bay Roosevelts, van Courtlands, perhaps Louis Comfort Tiffany who had a home nearby, the nouveaux Astor, Vanderbilt or Belmont families.

There is not a single Victorian style of decor. Rather this period was composed of many revival styles such as Gothic, Rococo, Renaissance, Colonial and newer Arts and Crafts and Aesthetic Movements. One commonality though was a preference for a harmonious mixture of styles

arranged in specific configurations. Again numerous style sources advised the homeowner about the doctrines of interior decoration. In the parlor there must be a marble topped center table for serving tea or refreshments, an area for conversation, and an area for relaxing or reading (usually near the fire). The sofa and loveseat, sporting hand crocheted anti-macassars, should match the chairs. Chairs without arms had to be provided to accommodate the ladies' large skirts. Cheaper means of factory mass production and rapid transportation made parlor sets available to the burgeoning, widely ranging middle class. A parlor in Kansas or Vermont could now look like one in New York!



A parlor decorated in period style.

Signs of wealth and breeding had to be obviously displayed. A piano signified culture and the means to achieve it, many books (preferably in a library room) denoted scholarship and intellectual refinement, a tapestry on the wall indicated travel and a fondness for the arts. Heavily hung drapery and sumptuous window dressings in layers, portieres, lambrequins, fringes and tassels in abundance, layers of China rugs, ferns in wicker stands in the parlor and on the porch, flamboyant etageres for the display of objects like sea shells and majolica, and framed pictures were placed wherever there was an empty space. Lincrusta (a linseed oil paper backed with canvas to look like stamped leather) or carved wooden dados, scenic wallpaper, the new ready mixed paint in colors such as deep red, dark blue, gold or green, faux marble and graining, and the de rigueur still life painting hung over the mantel were just some of the recommendations for parlors or dining rooms. Catalogues such as Montgomery Ward's, and John Wanamaker's or Marshall Field's department stores were some of the well known purveyors of these furnishings.

It was Charles Eastlake, in his *Hints on Household Taste*, originally published in England, who pleaded for plain ornament and simple design. This was in reaction to the visual and sensory overload of prevailing 19th century American decoration. For every space there is an object and it was filled. Now it is easier to understand the modernist movement deploring the over ornamentation of the 19th century.

The collections of the current owners of The Cliffs are an attempt to present an authentic but tasteful 19th century decor. The house itself is built in the neo-Gothic style but the interior rooms represent the late Victorian emphasis on eye pleasing combinations. Although it is not certain how the Beekmans actually decorated their home, one can be almost certain of a plethora of wicker with the accompanying fern plants being placed on the large front porch. The family and guests surely must have retired here in the evening to enjoy the cool breezes from the nearby harbor.

As has been noted previously, servants were paraded as a sign of a family's wealth and social position. During the 19th century many middle class families employed at least one domestic live-in worker, often in combination with a part time laundress. As was noted during the Oyster Bay Historical Society's Holiday House tour in the historic Florence Park area of the hamlet, almost all houses had back stairs leading to the servants' quarters, usually the attic rooms. On an estate there was the housekeeper (the deputy of her employer) and the butler in the management positions and



A typical servant's bedroom in the garret.

a staff of footmen, house maids, chef, cooks, kitchen maids, laundresses, nannies, tutors, valets, ladies maids, young ladies maids, chamber maids, stable boys, grooms, coachmen, gardeners, garden boys, greenhouse keepers, kennel keepers and various carpenters and handymen. Liveried servants, attired in specially designed dark frock coats with gold braid trim; tails, and white gloves, in the European manner, were an even more notable sign of the employers' "having arrived."

The female help lived in the servants' quarters in the manor house while most male help lived above the stables or in outlying buildings. These quarters have been described as poorly heated and ventilated, crowded and sparsely furnished. Servants were expected to keep to their place, almost invisible, "behind the baize door," not intruding upon the family. The back entrance, the back stairs, the servants' hall were their areas when not attending to the backbreaking household chores or monotonous and repetitive daily routines.

Servants were drawn from immigrant groups. Socially stigmatized, menial work was that most available to them. Although factory work was preferred because workers had more freedom, it was less lonely and isolated in the employers' house. In New York at this time the Irish filled the ranks of domestic workers. Daniel Sutherland, an American historian, noted that due to anti-Catholic prejudice, the Irish immigrants referred to as "Paddy" or "Bridget" were stereotyped as untrustworthy, dirty, greasy, uneducated, having difficulty learning the intricacies of household service, undisciplined, and immoral or less often as fun-loving, genial and good natured. He claimed that as soon as they married or found other employment, the women left domestic service.

Once again there were publications advising the lady and gentleman of the house on how to deal with the servants. Talking pleasantly in a composed voice and demeanor, being patient and mannerly, and treating the servants fairly were often mentioned but just as often ignored. The lot of domestic workers was not a pleasant one during the 19th century. Reform movements and attempts at unionization failed due to the transient nature of the work. Wages were low and there were no pensions when one aged out of service. If one became ill he/she was dismissed either to the care of relatives or to the workhouse. Few were able to depend upon the generosity of their employer. Employers often felt that servants should consider it an honor to be in their employ and this employment should be more highly valued than financial reward. Coincidentally, servants in the employ of prestigious or old families were contemptuous of those working for parvenus and they too ridiculed the unsophisticated nouveaux riche.

It was said that neither side really understood the problems of the other. Employers frequently stereotyped servants as ignorant, immoral and as incompetents who could not earn a living in a respectable trade. They often had an idea of the "perfect servant," expected too much and readily dismissed those who didn't measure up. Servants, seeing little hope for fair treatment, became hostile and oppositional to employers they considered haughty and condescending. They might eaves-

drop on private conversations, read private papers and spread rumors in the community.

The Beekman family had to have a staff of servants to maintain their estate in Oyster Bay. It is interesting to note that this estate had its own private Long Island Railroad stop, in the rear of the carriage house, permitting easy access for both guests and servants. Not much is known about the staff, however certain surmises can be justified by looking at historical precedents in the area. Some married men returned to their families in Brooklyn or New York City; usually young, single women left domestic service, married and moved away; older women, especially housekeepers, remained in the service of their employers for their lifetime. Some former servants bought homes and raised families here in Oyster Bay. Based on information gleaned from interviews with the descendants of the early estate workers, many of them are now among the lawyers, physicians, business owners, teachers and others who own sizable properties in the town.

In order for the estate owners in Oyster Bay to maintain their lavish life styles during the Gilded Age, they had to rely upon the skill and loyalty of their servants. Although the employers are frequently the ones credited with the successful parties, the well maintained mansion, the beautiful gardens, the prize winning dogs and horses, etc., it was usually the staff who was responsible for the smooth operation of each endeavor. In fact, it might have been the sophisticated housekeeper or butler who actually directed some families in these activities. Perhaps it is best to conclude that it was a symbiotic relationship between employer and employee where each derived benefits or miseries from the other.

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A staff this size was not uncommon in the Gilded Age.

“HIGH SOCIETY” TENNIS

by Bradford Warner

This article is an initial survey of some of the remaining “Playhouses” of the North Shore of Long Island with a focus on the tennis facilities of these sports complexes. The genesis for the article was the Oyster Bay Historical Society’s “Cherrywood” event which was a cocktail reception, buffet and tennis exhibition held on June 12. As more fully described below, Cherrywood is an outstanding example of a playhouse comprising an indoor tennis court, indoor pool, guest bedrooms, bar, lounge area, changing room, tennis professional’s room, kitchen-banquet preparation area, and caretaker’s quarters.

Playhouses were an integral part of some of the great estates of the North Shore. Most were constructed in the 1920s, and many were designed by the architect James W. O’Connor. In addition to the indoor tennis court, a number of the complexes included one or more of: indoor pool, steam bath, squash court, bowling alley, shooting range, billiard room, bar, gymnasium, lounge (usually with a fireplace), changing room, guest bedrooms, tennis professional’s room and caretaker’s quarters.

While the architectural style of the complexes were complimentary to the main houses of the estates, the O’Connor courts have similar distinctive glass roofs, large windows on one side for additional daylight, girders, balconies and backstops. The playing areas are very generous by today’s standards and include ample sideline and baseline retrieving space. The basic court dimensions are: 156 feet long, 80 feet wide and 60 plus feet high. (This amounts to almost 12,500 square feet of floor area in one room.) Typically, the backstops have tended ivy growing on them which served the purpose of deadening the ball rebounds. The courts are also, typically, illuminated for night time (or predawn) play.

It is believed that there were some thirty of these playhouses constructed of which about ten, or so, still exist. (In at least two instances the original owners moved out of their main houses - due to the burden of upkeep - and took up residence in their playhouses.) Based on our initial survey the following courts are still in operation:

Former W. R. Grace Court, Old Westbury

Former Arthur Loew Court, Glen Cove

Former John Schiff Court, Oyster Bay

Former John S. Phipps Court, Old Westbury

Former Isabel Dodge Sloane Court, Lattingtown (see further below)

Former Davison Court, Muttontown

J. H. Whitney Court (Court Tennis), Greentree, Manhasset

Former Edmund Lynch Court, Cherrywood, Locust Valley (see further below)

Former Winthrop Court, Woodbury (see further below)

The remainder of this article discusses Cherrywood, the former Winthrop Court and others previously managed by the current owner of the Winthrop Court, and concludes with a note on the former Isabel Dodge Sloane Playhouse.

Cherrywood

Based on our research to date Cherrywood is the finest, restored to original condition playhouse extant. It was constructed in the late 1920s and acquired shortly thereafter by

Edmund Lynch, co-founder of Merrill Lynch. As noted above, the complex includes the indoor court, indoor pool, two guest bedrooms, paneled bar room, lounge area with adjoining balcony viewing area, a court level changing room, viewing and seating area and professional's room. There is also a kitchen-banquet preparation area on the court level. The caretaker's quarters, in themselves a significant edifice, are structurally integrated with the complex.

Among the interesting vignettes relating to Cherrywood is the role of Bobby Riggs. Riggs is probably best known for his losing effort against Billie Jean King in the early seventies. What is less well known is that a few months before that defeat he beat Margaret Court Smith, an even better player (in terms of

Grand Slam Titles) and reduced her to tears in the process. He is also considered one of the all time great players and had the distinction of winning the Men's Singles, the Men's Doubles and the Mixed Doubles in his initial Wimbledon appearance. He bet heavily on himself to win the three at extremely long odds and, legend has it, made the only real money he ever made in his life.

For a period of time, Riggs was the resident professional at Cherrywood. In return for a small bedroom and bathroom at court level (the professional's room) and the freedom to conduct lessons for other clients during the daytime, Riggs gave lessons to Mr. Lynch before Mr. Lynch left for his office on Wall Street. Some of these lessons must have taken place while it was still dark (the court has good electric lighting to complement its excellent natural lighting) and is an indication of Mr. Lynch's enthusiasm for the game.

The current owner, who is related by marriage to Mr. Lynch, has devoted a considerable amount of time and effort to performing deferred maintenance and restoration of the complex which is now in remarkable original/restored condition. The opening scene of the remake of the film *Sabrina* was filmed here. The photographs below give an indication of the quality of the complex.

Former Winthrop Court

The court is the only remaining original structure of the former 500 acre Winthrop Estate. The remainder of the estate is now a housing development, "The Gates of Woodbury." The court is currently owned by John Dunn, a former tennis professional and entrepreneur who, in addition to owning the Winthrop Court, also leased four other playhouse courts formerly belonging to the Pratt, Whitney, Martin and Woodward families.

The Winthrop Court was erected in the 1920s by Henry Rogers Winthrop. As a point of reference, Mr. Winthrop was the first President of the Piping Rock Club and legend has it



Indoor tennis court at Cherrywood.



The living room of the Cherrywood play house.

that he accepted the nomination under his mandated condition that he would serve for a two year term before handing the reins to a successor. In the event, he served as President from May 12, 1911, until July 29, 1950, and in an honorary capacity until November 1958.

In John Dunn's words "Legend passed down through the decades portrays Tennis House (Dunn's name for the Winthrop facility) as one of the elite playgrounds during the famous 1930s 'Gatsby Era' (Author's note-Gatsby's era was actually the 1920s.). Many of

Hollywood's 'Golden Age' celebrities, including Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Charlie Chaplin, and Cecil B. DeMille were said to have been only a few of the estate's guests." (Based on the author's investigation, Ginger Rogers, Janet Gaynor and Fred Astaire were also said to have been guests.) However, Mrs. Elizabeth Babcock, a Winthrop relative, perceived the estate from a more historic perspective. "The House was much more of an aristocratic retreat than a playground for movie moguls and Hollywood stars." Vividly she recalls that: "The Winthrops were selected by the King and Queen of England to officially host the Duke and Duchess of Windsor on their royal visits to Long Island's Gold Coast. When the Duke and Duchess arrived they would bring an entire staff, including their own cook, maid, valet and chauffeur."

Former Whitney Court

As a young boy, Coulby Dunn, John Dunn's son, played tennis on the other courts leased by his father and had the following eyewitness recollections: "The Whitney Estate had the most incredible indoor court of all. It was a green har-tru court with walls covered with ivy, imported plantings in the corners of the court and double balconies and staircases. (Author's note- This is part of the former Harry Payne Whitney Estate in Old Westbury which is now part of the Old Westbury Golf and Country Club.) The all glass roof was 70 feet high with a special steel roof frame. The court also had a tiled indoor pool, locker facilities with huge tubs, saunas, and showers that sprayed water all over your body from all directions. The ballroom had a huge fireplace that you could literally walk into! Playing tennis at the Whitney estate was special because of the incredible ambiance. The estate had miles of roads, several mansions, stables, polo fields, a sports complex and a private fire department with a 20 story lookout tower."

Former Martin Court

Coulby Dunn continues: "The Martin Estate was a hard court with many moose heads, elk and deer. The facility had a high balcony overlooking the court. The tennis was fun,

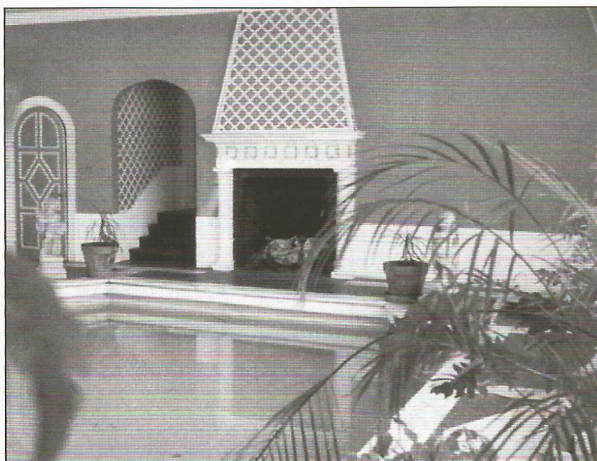
but the estate grounds and main house were incredibly impressive. I enjoyed walking the grounds and looking around the mansion more than the tennis. The indoor court burned down in the late '60s." (Author's note- The Martin Estate belonged to the Bradley Martin family of the Bradley Martin Ball fame which took place in the Waldorf Hotel in New York City on February 10, 1897, a time of economic depression and social tension. It was described in the press as "the most splendid private entertainment ever given in this country." However, as noted by Frederick Martin Townsend, newspapers condemned the Bradley Martins for their extravagance; clergymen preached sermons against them; college debating societies resolved their iniquity; the New York Assessor doubled their taxes. Shortly thereafter the Bradley Martins permanently retreated to England.)

Former Woodward Estate

Coulby Dunn also commented on the Woodward Estate (where, in 1955, Mrs. Woodward shot her husband dead after mistaking him for a prowler): "The Woodward Estate had the main house attached to the court, while most of the estates had separate facilities. The Woodward home was spectacular and included art treasures, huge cut glass windows and a built-in pipe organ. The Great Room had huge dimensions with a 50' high cathedral ceiling with many hand hewn beams. The entrance and parking area was all cobblestone surrounded by beautifully manicured gardens. The home was built by a Woolworth daughter in the mid 1920s. The center of their family life revolved around tennis and so they designed their home around the court."

Former Dodge Sloane Playhouse

The former Dodge Sloane Playhouse is worthy of a separate article as a fine example of imaginative adaptive re-use of what once was a prime playhouse into a magnificent weekend home utilizing the tennis court as its central integral feature. From 1929 to 1964 it was part of the Dodge Sloane Estate. Subsequently, it became the Lattingtown Tennis Association and in the 1980s a professional mixed use training facility which hosted Tiriac, Gerulaitis, and Becker. In 2001 it was purchased by the current owner and transformed into the owner's weekend place. A significant architectural feature in this transformation is a gallery which runs the entire length of the court (some 150 feet) and provides both viewing space as well as interconnection for the various bedrooms and recreational areas. The gallery was created with a minimal loss of tennis playing area-so that the court is still totally functional for tennis. In a future article, the author will compare the pure restoration of Cherrywood with the adaptive re-use of the Dodge Sloane Playhouse.



*The pool of the former Dodge-Sloane Playhouse.
M.Randall, Mansions of Long Island's Gold Coast.*

They had a house in New York, but this was always considered home...



[My grandfather] came to Long Island because so many of his friends were weekendening here. He also had horses and liked to be able to come out from the city and ride with his wife and daughter. Patricia Pulling Sands

*Russell Leffingwell is shown above
with his beloved bulldogs.*

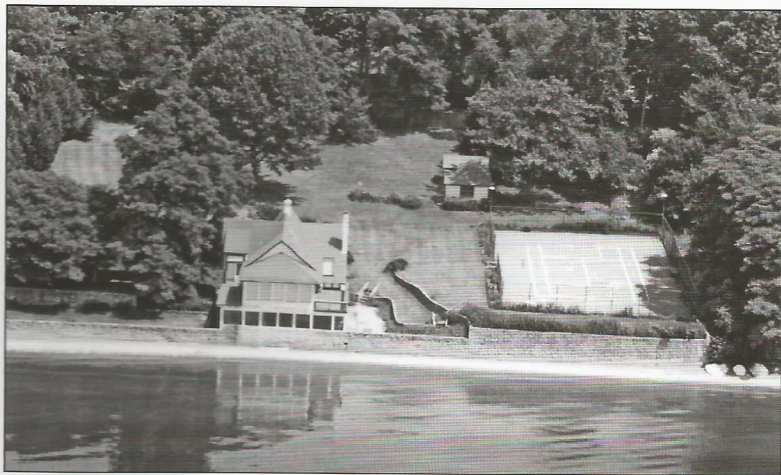
My grandfather bought this property [Peacock Point] in 1910, and it was just short of sixty acres... They had a house in New York, but this was always considered home... My grandmother, in the winter, used to live in New York during the week and she said, "I really don't like New York!" She came out and lived here full-time. *Daniel Davison*

When my father was appointed head of GM International in 1923, which was headquartered in New York, he had to move here from Indiana. I guess his boss, Alfred B. Sloane, suggested... Centre Island, so in 1928 he bought a house here, which he completely refurbished. *James Mooney*

We first started coming out here about 1925 for the summer and some weekends in the winter. My family was originally from Boston, and after we moved to New York... my mother looked around for a place around here. She liked St. John's Church and she liked the Cold Spring Harbor Beach Club, where they had very nice summer programs for children and she liked the family environment... We rented a house for two years from Tiffany's daughter, Mrs. Burlingham. She lived in Europe, so her house was constantly being rented. He had quite a large farm there. *Frances Storrs*

Labor was relatively inexpensive. You could afford to employ a staff of a hundred people then. *Stephen Hicks*

Quite a lot of people of that generation moved down here in the summertime. So we had many friends who lived nearby, the Morrisises, the Parkers, the Hornblowers. Very few of them lived here. You had to be closer to New York. *Frances Storrs*



George Armsby's main house burned down in around 1928 or '29, so he moved into his boat house, which was most interesting because George was on the board of a dozen or more different companies, including some in Hollywood. So every now and then on the weekends you would see this Sikorsky seaplane land, pull up to his beach and off would get Marlene Dietrich, etc. He was quite a swinger and a really nice guy. He once talked my father into getting me a boat, so I liked him! *James Mooney*

My father came here from Ireland in 1923. He worked in the city on the trolleys for a while, then he came out here to visit with his sister, Molly. She told him about a job on the

My grandfather, Edward Ryan, taught the Tiffany girls how to ride horseback at a stable in Central Park. When it came time for them to move out here, Mrs. Tiffany said, "Edward, I'd like you to come to Laurelton. We're going to build a home in Oyster Bay." So my grandfather came to Laurelton with his family as the coachman and then when the cars started coming in he tried to learn how to drive.

Joseph Ryan

The Ryan family.



Farwell estate, down the road, on the other side of Cove Road. That was a much smaller place than this. He worked there for a year or less, when he heard there was a cottage with this job, so he took this job. *Patrick Collins*

Everything was really copied right from the English, architecture and everything else. In the big house were English paintings of English gentlemen and ladies, so that it would look as though we had noble ancestors. We didn't! *Daniel Davison*



I discovered that my grandmother, grandfather and mother, who was an only child, were all trying to figure out where they were going to build their house, because they had plans for a Georgian brick house, like the Lamonts (which is now the O'Neills' house)... and a whole slew of other partners and friends. The plans were evidently all done. They could not agree on the site. They walked all over this property and each one had a different site. So they ended up adding on to the old farmhouse... Later on, when we were all married ...our grandfather offered us houses on this place. He always knew exactly where they should be positioned. I found out afterward that they were sites that had been chosen in 1924!

Patricia Pulling Sands

The original house, before the Leffingwells' additions, is shown at left.

They had some property in New Jersey, I believe, and he was looking for a place. He came out to Long Island and started piecing together property in the Oyster Bay area around the turn of the century. They had rented a property in Roslyn while they were amassing this property and before they built the first house on it. In fact my father, John... was born in 1904 in Roslyn. The property here was named Northwood. The estate was quite large and encompassed a lot of property up to 25A. *Peter Schiff*

[The help] lived on the third floor where we had three bedrooms and a bath... What they did in the summer, God only knows!

[The help] lived on the third floor where we had three bedrooms and a bath. One was very small

and the other two were fair-sized. What they did in the summer, God only knows! If we had a hot summer like this, it must have been really hot! *Adelaide Beatty*

The servants' quarters were located in a separate wing of the house. They had a sitting room, and a dining room, and then the second floor was bedrooms. I guess there were some on the third floor as well. That continued on until 1962, when my grandmother died. *Daniel Davison*

The water from the well did not run to the third floor, where the servants lived. It only went up as far as the second at the Yellowbanks house. You had to carry the water up to the third floor. When we divided the house when my mother died, my sister took the tin sitz baths that were up on the third floor. I didn't even know what they were! *Elizabeth Roosevelt*

I remember when I was five years old, we lived on the Weekes estate, and it was a little matchbox of a house! Two stories...no bathroom, no indoor plumbing...we had an iron sink. One time there was a bad thunderstorm, and we were all huddled in the kitchen...and lightning struck that iron sink! *Belle Santora*

The Trowbridges had a summer home in Maine and they would winter down here. We couldn't wait for the car to leave the big house for Maine. Then we had the place to ourselves and could ride our bikes everywhere! *John O'Hare*

Everyone had their own room... They had about 24 people working here in the house...[and] they all lived in the house. Well, like the people in the stables, they had their place, and the people in the gardens, they had their own place. They had three people in the pantry alone. They had the butler, the second butler, and another guy. And they had three cooks in the kitchen, and they had three chambermaids and I was the third one. *Nora Moulton*

Mary Ferguson was the housekeeper. All the inside help was female. There was a section of the house, off the kitchen, where there was a courtyard by the greenhouse, where there were apartments, unheated. That's where the in-house staff lived. They worked six days a week. The custom was when the property owners went south for the winter, as Mr. Tiffany always did, on a Saturday night they would bring a Victrola to one of the mansions and that's where they would hold their dances. The staffs of the different estates would get together. *Joseph Ryan*

There were three staff bedrooms and one bathroom in the back hall, and they were pretty grim. They were small...narrow, definitely on the darker side. There was a staff dining room downstairs, which was later also turned into the children's dining room. The house was a not terribly fancy Georgian, but it had a wing going back toward the garage, which was over the pantry and the kitchen. Those three rooms and the bathroom were over the kitchen and there was a back staircase that led to a little back hall. Anon.





When we think about what our grandmother did in staffing the house in New York and the house here, and the house in Lake George, and she always had everything peaceful and lovely for her husband when he came home. And she did it in such a quiet way, that we never really were involved with it or thought about it. Hiring and firing cooks and chamber-maids must have been something!

Patricia Pulling Sands

There were twelve indoor servants and a housekeeper/secretary who ran the servants. There were two but-

The garages have apartments in them for the help. One of them is basically a dormitory, with room after room after room...a series of cubicles. At the end of the garage there is a little apartment.

Harry P. Davison

lers, a cook, someone who cooked for the servants, a kitchen maid, a seamstress, laundresses, a maid who helped the two butlers, upstairs maids, and the second butler did a lot of the cleaning downstairs. But there were twelve of them. That I do remember. *Daniel Davison*

We had a cook, a butler... They lived on the second floor in the back. They had their own dining room, and they all wore uniforms with little frilly hats. We had some people making beds...but my parents were not big on a lot of staff. Mother liked to cook, nobody could cook as well as she, so cooks didn't last very long. She didn't know how to cook when she was married because she wasn't allowed in the kitchen in her parents' house. She made up for lost time and was very opinionated. *Jane Stebbins Greenleaf*

Grace Mann was the housekeeper/secretary. She was a middle-class English woman. She com-

At one time the estate was over 150 acres. They bought this part from the Smiths, bought the part over where I was born on Cove Road from Mrs. Layton. It had been a dairy farm over there. There was a nice-sized house on another parcel. When I got married, they let me have it. It had been the chauffeur's cottage. It was a fine, two-story house. I moved into these quarters eight or nine years ago. I was always on the other side, which was nice raising your kids. It was like having your own place. It was very private over there. *Patrick Collins*

The superintendent's cottage, right.



Mr. Tiffany took care of his people. Mary Ferguson, who was the caretaker, and my grandfather were allowed to live on the estate as long as it existed. So the two of them were in this great big mansion. Up until 1946 it was fully furnished, all the glass, everything was there. It was like a museum. I used to go down to pick my grandfather up... Mary Ferguson would do the cooking for both of them. So one morning I came to pick him up and he had just finished his oatmeal. So I said, "Well, are you ready to go, Grandpa?" "Ready to go?" he said. "I haven't had my bacon and eggs, yet!" He lived there well beyond his retirement, into the 1950s. Joseph Ryan



Mary Ferguson appears at left, Jimmy Ryan center and Joe Ryan at right, outside Laurelton Hall.

mitted suicide after my grandmother died. She was getting Alzheimer's and she just couldn't see life without her. Daniel Davison

When we were growing up there was a cook and a chambermaid/waitress. They came out weekends from New York with my grandparents, driven by the chauffeur, who lived in the yellow cottage, weekends, and then drove them back. Patricia Pulling Sands

An in-between class would be the companions. We had a wonderful woman who lived with us a long time, who came as a friend in the mid '20s and she died here in the '80s. She was here for sixty years and she was a companion for my grandmother. She worked, but she kept her company. I remember the dilemma of where does the companion eat. She finally ended up eating with the family. But for a while she took her meals separately. She couldn't eat with the servants and yet couldn't eat with the family. She lived here on the property and is buried in the family plot.

Harry P. Davison

We had a nurse called Molly, she was a Scotch lady, graduated from baby nurse school, so she took care of us. Then she went off and got married, and came back with her husband, who was then the chauffeur. So we had Molly and Jolly for as long as I can remember. They went to Florida, came back and took care of my brother Jimmy's newborn children, and then my three, and my brother Eddie's eldest. Then Jolly died and Molly retired. She died at St. Johnland's, oh, ten years ago. So they were with us the entire time. Jane Stebbins Greenleaf

The staff consisted of a cook, pantry maid, one or two chambermaids, all of whom lived in the servants' wing of the house; a full time gardener who lived in the cottage; and my father, the chauffeur, who eventually became the caretaker. The staff had one day off per week and my father would drive them to the train, church, wherever they wanted to go. John O'Hare

Well the housekeeper, she was a witch... Everything had to be just very clean. She'd go around after the chambermaids, "That bed is not made properly! I don't like the way the sheets are!" And



The governess role was much trickier. The divide was very blurred. They would have dinner with us. They had a bedroom and a bathroom in the main part of the house, and the one we had the longest was on a first name basis with my mother and father. The very proper Scottish nanny was not. I was about six or seven when this very nice, genteel, unmarried lady from the Boston area came in largely to also take care of my father's mother who was very elderly and who had come to live with us.... After my grandmother was moved to a home, Onie stayed and became our wheels, driving us where we had to be, and she stayed until I was fourteen. She was somebody I was openly very fond of. She got us up in the morning, got us properly dressed, picked up our clothes, made the beds, and things like that. She was more of a companion than a governess. She was like a live-in babysitter. Anon.

At left, Governess Onie Teeter.

down in the kitchen she'd tell you, "Those pots are not hanging up right and that pot isn't cleaned right." And she was crazy. She'd have her pencil and paper out the whole time! But she was a nice woman, you know. But still,... she took care of the place good, but we would have been happy without her! *Nora Moulton*

She was more of a companion than a governess. She was like a live-in babysitter.

I had a bunch of governesses. We had a Swiss-German lady called Zuber and she was with us for a long time. She would not, generally, eat with the family. She'd eat with the children; there was a children's dining room. My father couldn't wait to fire her! Because she told him what to do! But we wouldn't let him until we had grown up. *Daniel Davison*

I remember nurses and governesses, but I was not fond of them! *Peter Stehli*

Our governess wasn't that much older than we were...she was certainly into her twenties, but not older... She was very jolly and energetic and was into doing all kinds of things with us. She had been governess for other people before in this country, so she had some experience. She was with us for quite a while. When I went away to boarding school when I was fifteen, she stayed with Mother, did sewing and other things around the house, and was a companion until she got married and went to live on Staten Island. We maintained contact with her until she died.

Elizabeth Roosevelt

The family used to call the butler "Bedford," to the servants, he was "Mr. Bedford."

The butler was Irish and he used to get into the liquor closet once in a while and then he'd chase the maids around. *Elizabeth Roosevelt*

I remember Frederick, our butler, who... took care of the pantry off the kitchen and set the table. He wanted everything in its proper place in that pantry. Well my mother had four Tiffany silver salt shakers, with fillets on top. Apparently they were too tall for the place in which he wanted to keep them, so he cut all the fillets off the shakers to make them fit in! *Peter Stehli*

A friend of my father telephoned and [asked if he could] come over, the Earl of C-----. Of course, my father said, thinking he would stay a few days. At that time, wives, mothers, and children were



[One of our] butler[s]... was a Norwegian, Egil Oddvin. I remember him rather well. Egil was not to a butler's life born. He was sort of mysterious. My mother once had to track him down somewhere. I think he'd gone off on a binge. The minute there was snow, Egil Oddvin had to be out on skis. We had quite a high hill in the back of our property going down to Mill River Road and my father actually put a rope tow on it, working off the back of the tractor....

Anon.

At left, Egil Oddvin on skis.

coming over for lengthy stays and we had a young English girl stay with us for...a school year, (she went to school with me). Well, this English lord came over, and to my mother's dismay, when she greeted him at the door, he had not a weekend suitcase, but he had suitcases that looked as if might spend the duration of the war with us! He settled very nicely into the downstairs guest room and our butler at the time was English, and he was absolutely thrilled to have a genuine lord in the house to serve. And to my mother's chagrin, the butler abdicated all his normal duties with our household in order to

serve m'lord. I'm not sure how long the whole thing lasted, but...longer than my mother would have liked. Finally Lord C----- departed and the butler stayed. Anon.

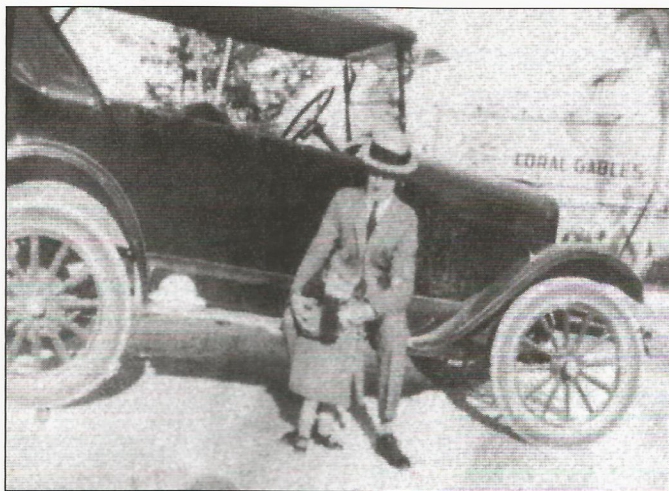
The butler had a terrible time, because my next older brother, who was...college age, liked to sleep late. The butler would be sent up to pound on his door to get him to come alive. My brother threw knives into the door! They had to replace the door eventually. Pretty scary stuff!

Elizabeth Roosevelt

We have a very vivid recollection of the butler, who must have been 6', 4"- 6', 6", and his name was Douglas. One day Joan and I were walking down through the field, and there were...two or three cows in this field. One of them decided to chase us and we were absolutely terrified. We were running hell-bent for leather for the ha-ha here, and I look up and there is Douglas with this great, long, white apron on and his broom aloft, sailing across that lawn, yelling at those cows! The cow stopped absolutely dead in her tracks and fled! In those days the horns weren't cut off, and the cow was just under me. It was a dramatic moment! *Joan Pulling Shepard & Patricia Pulling Sands*



The family used to call the butler "Bedford" and to the servants, he was "Mr. Bedford." He presided over the staff, subject to the secretary, and of course, my grandmother. We used to have lunch every Sunday. Grandma would preside and whoever was around was expected to come. We have a painting of the whole family assembled for lunch and you see Bedford standing there, serving my grandmother. Daniel Davison



My father was a natural-born mechanic and when he was 11 years old he taught Tiffany's daughters how to drive. His father had a couple of minor accidents with Mr. Tiffany on board. In August 1911, my father was going to go into Oyster Bay High School as a freshman. He went to his mother and said, "We're going to lose our position here. I'm going to speak to Mr. Tiffany." So, he's 14 years old and he said, "Mr. Tiffany, I'd like to take over the driving." Tiffany said, "Jimmy, I'd love to have you!" So my father was the chauffeur from then until Tiffany passed away in 1933.

Joseph Ryan

Jimmy Ryan, above, with son, James.

he didn't know how to drive, so he advertised for a chauffeur. Nobody came. He advertised again. George Burhans came. My grandfather said, "Do you know how to drive a car?" George said, "Nope!" Grandfather asked, "What do you do?" He was a coffee grinder! My grandfather threw him out, saying, "I need someone to drive the car, not grind coffee!" So he advertised again and George came back, and was the only applicant for the job. So finally my grandfather said, "Well, I'll send you to school," which he did. So he came to work in 1906 and left in a box in 1957. He's buried in the family plot. *Daniel Davison*

In the summertime my father would commute into the city by boat. He had a captain for this boat who lived in Queens, and the chauffeur acted as the steward. My father would go down in his bathing suit, the steward would bring his clothes down, as well as the mail and the newspaper. My father would get on board, start reading the mail, the newspaper, had breakfast, and they would stop in the Sound so my father could have a swim. Then he'd get dressed, the boat would dock in the East River and a car would take him to the General Motors building... So one hour's commuting of totally productive time! *James Mooney*

We entertained the Queen of Romania in the '20s. George took her into town in my grandmother's wonderful Rolls Royce. Someone asked the next day how it felt to be driving a queen. He said, "I drive one every day!" That went over big with Grandma! *Daniel Davison*

"Mr. Tiffany, I'd like to take over the driving."

There were three chauffeurs here at the time. There was a head chauffeur who was hired in 1906, before we even bought this property and he stayed with us until 1957! He lived in the house, which is still there, up at the head of the property. He drove my grandmother and the other chauffeur drove the children, my father and his sisters. Then there was a third chauffeur who did a lot of the errands and drove the servants to the station and things like that.

Daniel Davison

We had a family chauffeur. He was a very nice man, with a wife and children, and they lived on the place. I think he stayed in the country. I don't remember him coming into the city much. I don't think he would have liked the city at all!

Frances Storrs

My grandfather bought a car in 1906. Quite exciting in those days. Of course,

Nobody ventured into the kitchen ...

Hilda Kusick had worked for my grandmother, too. She was a heck of a cook! But I remember my mother swiping a dozen eggs from the icebox before she came, because if you told Hilda to bake a cake or bake whatever she felt like baking, those eggs were gone when she went home!

Adelaide Beatty

The German cook was formidable! Her name was Amalie Schwann. Nobody ventured into the kitchen...because Amalie wielded...a lot of sharp knives and a very sharp tongue! But she was a wonderful cook, though she did not like to cook fish, so I never learned much about eating fish... She allowed me to come in and make a cake now and then, but otherwise we did not frequent the kitchen or the pantry. *Anon.*

Nellie Fitzgerald... practically brought us all up...

The upstairs maid position was somewhat revolving. Maybe one every year and a half. The best one we ever had was a Polish girl. Everything was cleaned and everything was put back exactly where it had been. She stayed for a couple of years. *James Mooney*

The staff was all Irish and they were wonderful. Nellie Fitzgerald (the chambermaid/ waitress) practically brought us all up when we were going to school in New York and living with our grandparents. She would wake us up in the morning at four or five so we could finish our homework, or whatever was needed. *Patricia Sands*

I did all the maid's rooms, the help's rooms, as we called them. I made their beds, cleaned up their rooms, then I set the table for their dinner. They always had dinner at twelve o'clock. And the tea was... later around four o'clock,... And I served them... And of course we didn't have a dish washer, God forbid! And [I] washed up all the dishes and everything else.

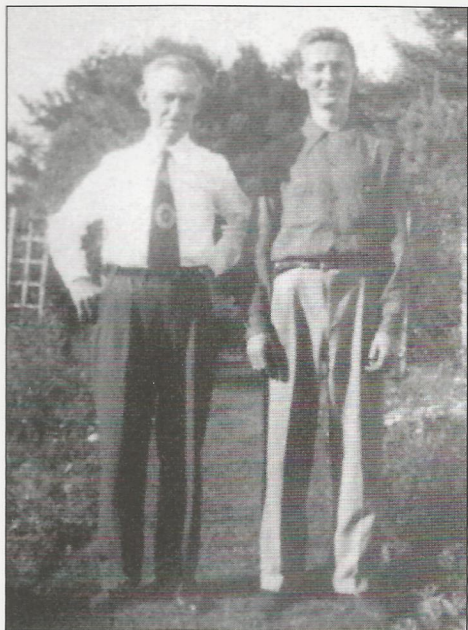
Nora Moulton

My aunt came from County Clare,... was hired and went to Sagamore Hill as an upstairs maid. Her future husband, Edward Murphy,... would come to visit her at Sagamore Hill. One day, she was preparing things in the kitchen, and he was there speaking with her, when she heard footsteps coming down the back stairs. She said, "Here comes Mr. Roosevelt!" My Uncle Ed hid behind the door, but I guess Mr. Roosevelt... had heard the voices, came in and said, "Who's here?" My Uncle Ed stuck his head out from behind the door and said, "Hello, Mr. Roosevelt." "Well, what is your name?" My uncle replied, "I am Edward Murphy." Roosevelt said, "Oh, and are you courting Sarah?" My uncle said, "Yes, I am." "That's very good," said Roosevelt. "Why don't you pick up a towel and dry some dishes for her?" *Joseph Ryan*



The people in the pantry wore black with white aprons and white socks. But we in the kitchen wore... blue. That I wore with an apron, but we never wore gloves or hats. We never seen 'em! Nora Moulton

Above, a typical maid's uniform.



When Tiffany passed away and my father's chauffeuring duties were no longer necessary, he became foreman on the estate, supervising the work on the roads and so forth. In 1940, the superintendent, John Terwilliger, passed away and they appointed my father as superintendent, which meant you lived on the estate in the farm buildings. So we moved out of the house on Tooker Avenue and into the farm buildings.

Joseph Ryan

Jimmy and Joe Ryan, left, on the Tiffany estate.

Mr. Tiffany had a superintendent called Terwilliger [who] loved to make new roads!

My father had been here about ten years or so. They were having problems with the previous superintendent, and they let him go. Then my father became the superintendent. The superintendent lived right in that yellow cottage, across the field there. The old superintendent had a chicken house in the back, with about a hundred chickens in it.

When he got fired, he must have torched the place, because it went on fire. My father said very few carcasses come out of there! Never did hear from him again! *Patrick Collins*

We rented Mrs. Burlingham's house for two years. Mr. Tiffany had a superintendent called Terwilliger. Terwilliger loved to make new roads! So at the drop of a hat, my father would be going to the station and all of a sudden, it would be blocked off and he wouldn't be able to get to the train on time! *Frances Storrs*

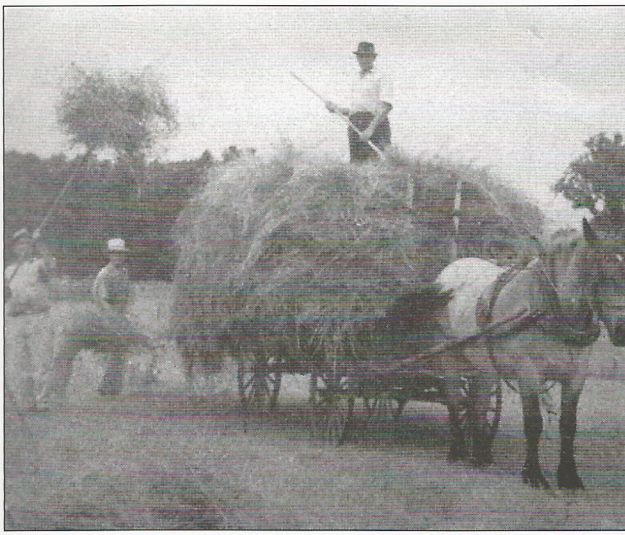
My father pretty much ran things. He was a jack-of-all-trades. He would have outside people come in and do some jobs. In winter, "Sank" White would stoke the furnaces, but in the summer, he was the lawn man. He ran this big lawnmower through the whole property. He'd just finish one pass through and he'd have to start again at the other. So the staff had their assignments. That was his. My brother and I worked in the '40s trimming the hedges, repairing the roads. We had an old International truck we used to drive, filling in potholes. *Joseph Ryan*



*My father... got a job on the Harrison estate in Glen Cove when they were building that estate. He was on the crew that went up to Vermont to bring trees back down for the estate on Peacock Point. The superintendent, a Scotsman, [his office appears above] asked my father if he wanted to stay on and my father did...for 52 years! *Dom Petrella**

The Irish were chauffeurs, the Italians were gardeners, and the women were maids, laundresses and cooks.

We had a dairyman. We had a full-time painter, a full-time carpenter, a garbageman who drove



My father was a gardener and he worked at Tiffany's, Redden's, Coe's. These guys cut all the hedges, shrubbery, whatever you see today was done in the early '20s. We were second class citizens. You had the English, Irish and Scots who were the superintendents on the estates, chauffeurs, were in charge of the domestics; and the Italians, Polish and some of the Irish were laborers.

Tulio Donisi

Above, a group of Italian laborers brings in the hay.

stoking furnaces. There were two furnaces in our house and two in my aunt's house. He did some of the grounds work, but crews would come in from the central estate, but Manuel was here for ages! *Daniel Davison*

I never had much contact with [the outside staff]. I never was aware of it. So I don't really remember. My mother did garden, she had a rose garden and every day she would get those little kerosene tanks and she would try to get rid of those awful little bugs! We had to pick them off and kill them in the kerosene, which I hated! But she had a fairly small garden I believe. *Frances Storrs*

a horse and garbage wagon, we had a superintendent, a man who took care of the water system (Mr. Lake), a captain with the unlikely name of "Swim." Charlie took care of the grass tennis courts. He was here for years, and he spent his life on his knees, pulling dandelions and crabgrass out of the grass court. *Daniel Davison*

Of course we had the horses, so there was obviously some staff. We had a huge silo full of corn, all the hay, so someone did all that. They must have come in by the day, because the only people who lived on the property were Molly and Jolly, who lived in the cottage, and then the indoor people lived in the maids' rooms.

Jane Stebbins Greenleaf

Manuel Petrella was our employee, my father's employee. My grandmother had 99% of them, but my father and his sister lived up at the other end of the property and Manuel, gosh he was a wonderful man, worked around our houses full-time, mostly



*If you bought an estate, and you wanted trees moved, they would transplant and re-arrange them on your property. Anything you wanted done, from growing, designing, installing...they would do. The estate owners did not want a 2" caliber tree. *Stephen Hicks**



My father worked here for over fifty years, seven days a week. He had the cows to milk, a hundred chickens, ducks, other animals. He had to take care of the furnaces, it was all coal back then. He worked half a day on Sunday. Once the cows were gone and the furnaces were converted to oil, my father's schedule was scaled back to six days a week.

Patrick Collins

Michael Collins, above, with two calves.

activity-related buildings here. You had a squash court, indoor tennis court. You didn't see that in England, but here, you did. We have an indoor squash court. *Harry Davison*

I knew the stable people at Mr. Hickox's. He had quite a few horses. The head stable man was Johnny Larsty and probably two or three helping him who did all the heavy work. They kept 7 or 8 horses because all the children rode. Mr. Hickox was a big man and he needed a few horses to ride, so he probably had three or four horses for himself. They needed men in the stables

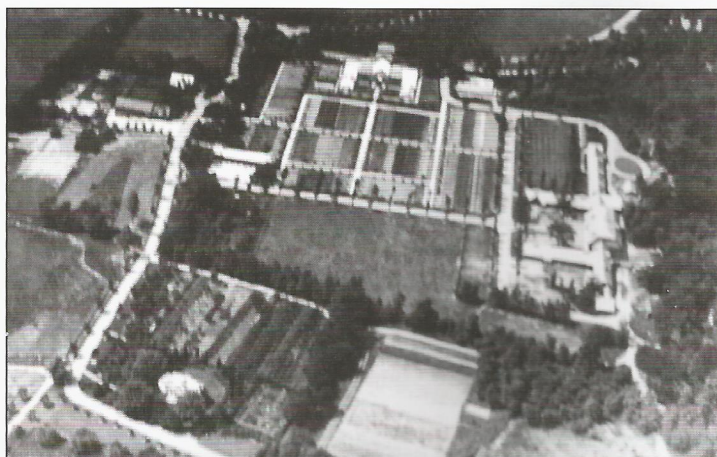
I remember him working on estates. That was how people made their livelihoods here. The Irish were chauffeurs, the Italians were gardeners, and the women were maids, laundresses and cooks. *Belle Santora*

There was a huge grape arbor, all the trees had to be pruned, sprayed. We would spray and it would get all over us...no mask, no nothing! Nobody knew anything about what it could do to you! We used to have an old '28 International dump truck with a wooden barrel on the back, and my father and I would stand up top dumping bags of arsenic and lead into the back of that thing.

Patrick Collins

There was a large group of Italian day laborers... who lived in Huntington Station, and they had to report for work at 7 o'clock in the morning, and he said you could look across the harbor and see this line of men crossing the frozen harbor coming to work. They worked on digging the ponds and... there were some Dutch hornets nesting in there, and one of the day laborers was stung to death by the hornets. He was dutifully put in a wagon, taken back to Huntington and deposited on his front porch. *Joseph Ryan*

One of the differences between the American scene and the English in building their estates was that there were more



The farm was completely self-sustaining. They had a pig sty, which if you knocked a couple of windows in it, would make a gorgeous home. It was a one-story pig sty. All of those buildings were made with clay tile and stuccoed over. In order to cut the taxes in the 1940s, they bulldozed the main buildings down, the greenhouses and everything, to lower the tax rate.

Joseph Ryan

Above, an aerial view of part of the Planting Fields estate.

to take care of things. They ran a tight ship [on the estates]. It wasn't like being in a boarding stable. When you worked in an estate stable, that was like being in the army! *Mike McDermont*

People were earning only a couple dollars a day...

My father used to make about a hundred dollars a month. This was a really good job, during and right after the Depression. When you had fresh eggs and fresh milk, butter and chickens, capons -the finest chicken you could eat!- and a place to live, your oil paid for, and light, you didn't need too much money! My father needed his beer money every day. That's an Irish tradition, to go to the pub every day! *Patrick Collins*

The employee books show what kind of recommendation they were given when they left, what they were paid, which was not too generous!

Daniel Davison

People were earning only a couple dollars a day when they first came here. The estates provided work, but they also kept people down, salary-wise. The owners would give big parties that would have supported several laborers' families for a year or more. *Tulio Donisi*

My father worked on... the Dodge estate in Lattingtown... He worked inside the house. Most immigrants worked tending the grounds. He washed and waxed floors, washed windows. My father was cleaning windows, and fell...broke his leg. He dragged himself into the house to call for help. Mrs. Sloane came to visit him while he was laid up. My father worked there for twenty-five years, until her death, when he retired. His salary was only \$25 a week. *Vincent Suozzi*

My dad was out of a job for a while [during the Depression] and I would ride with him through the estate areas and he would go and ask if there was anything, but there hardly ever was.

Tulio Donisi

After the [wedding] ceremony, my father, who was then making \$75 a month as the chauffeur, was handed an envelope by Mr. Tiffany. In it was a check for \$5,000. *Joseph Ryan*

When we first started living on the estate, my father started me off at a dollar a day, weeding the vegetable garden. Every so often I would take a walk in the woods. One day I came upon this blackberry patch. The bushes must have been twenty feet high! In the morning I would pick twelve quarts of berries, my mother would drive me down to the village,... and I would go around selling those blackberries for 50 cents a quart. By noon I had sold all twelve quarts and made six

HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS		
1912 Monthly Wages		
James Thompson,	Valet	\$125. -
Ernest Joslin,	Butler	\$150. -
John Leven,	Footman	\$100. -
Josephina Arheid	Cook	\$125. -
Nora Malloy,	Kitchen Maid	\$ 50. -
Mary Sullivan,	House "	\$ 65. -
Katherin Sullivan	" "	\$ 60. -
Jaenne Berthon,	Maid, Personal	\$100. -
Nat Townsend,		\$ 84.-

[At Christmas,] Mr. Coe would always sit there and we all went in one by one and he gave us our gifts, and it was always money.

Nora Moulton

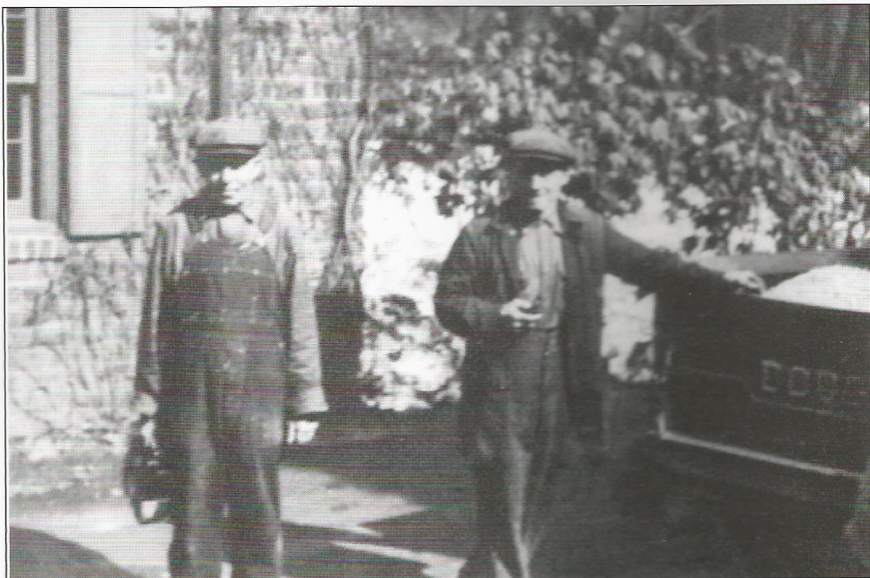
The inside staff's 1932 monthly earnings appear above.

Planting Fields Foundation Collections.

dollars! I gave up my day job at a dollar a day! I would spend the afternoon on the beach... One evening I got a call at home from Mr. Massini, who owned Massini's Market. He said, "Joe, you're wasting your time going around the village selling those blackberries for fifty cents a quart. I'll pay you that for all the berries you can pick." So I said to my uncle, who was working on the estate and living with us at the time, "Uncle Matt, how would you like to go to work for me?" He said, "Doing what?" I said, "Picking blackberries at 25 cents a quart." *Joseph Ryan*

When the war came, we lost everybody we had working for us...

When the war came, we lost everybody we had working for us because we lived so far away. We lived three miles from the railroad station. We couldn't take the help anywhere on their day off, because there was nothing to do but walk around Huntington, which was nothing. Most of them came from New York or Brooklyn. So most of them didn't stay very long. *Adelaide Beatty*



*Above, workers on the staff of the Planting Fields estate.
Planting Fields Foundation Collection.*

My father had about fourteen acres, just north of the village hall... My father sold off...about half the property during the war. He went from being Vice-Chairman of General Motors, with the third highest salary in New York...to that of a lieutenant commander in the Navy. So he sold the property across the street for \$5,000. It was recently sold for \$750,000! *James Mooney*

During the war, Father had Aberdeen Angus, and Guernsey cows for milk, and pigs. He and Arthur Dean, who had some big government job,... had pigs together, black and white pigs. I remember asking Father whether he owned the black end or the white end! *Jane Stebbins Greenleaf*

During World War II, we had two trucks, but gas was rationed. My father walked back and forth through the woods to work, a half mile each way. He would have to be to work by 7 in the morning, and there was no clock here to punch! But you could set your watch by him! He would get an hour for lunch, walk home, and then walk back. He would be back here one o'clock sharp! He would come over, milk the cows, take care of the furnaces, get the team of horses out, mow the fields, put the hay up in the barn. He wouldn't leave here til 4:30. I remember that. We would be splitting wood up there, no boss around, and he would work until 4:30. I'd be saying, "Why aren't we home already?" But he was so dedicated! Never heard him complain once in my life.

Patrick Collins

There's no question there was emotional caring between the people of the house and the staff.

This story is an example of the unfortunate, but perhaps necessary division or divide that existed ...between the people of the house and the staff. We always had Sunday afternoon tea in a silver tea service, which was brought in by the maid, Emma. She was an elegant lady from Jamaica, of British background, never married. She was a maiden lady, very correct and rather stern. I never really got to know her. Years later, when she was leaving my father (who was living there alone by then) after thirty years, I came in from the city to say goodbye. I was in my 20s at the time. I never realized what miserable quarters they lived in! She was all dressed and ready to go when I went to her room to see her. She was eighty-three years old, and she was sitting on her iron bedstead, crying, and she said to me, "You know Miss M--, I've always loved you!" Well, I loved her, too, but that sort of thing wasn't said! So she left and three days later, she died. I was working in New York and heard that she was...in a coma. I told the office I had to go, drove all the way to Newport where she was in the hospital, and they wouldn't let me see her. She died, and I never did see her.



Mrs. Larrabee always worked for the family, for my grandmother as well as Mother. George, her husband died on the place. He loved my grandmother!

Adelaide Beatty

Above, George Larrabee with young Addy.

Anon.

Taylor (the chauffeur) and Mrs. Taylor were English. My younger brother...was fascinated by automobiles, so Taylor took him under his wing. He spent a lot of time with Taylor. The Taylors had the records of all of Gilbert and Sullivan's [operettas] and we used to go in and sit in their house and listen to all the Gilbert and Sullivan stuff a lot, so we had an education of a different kind there.



My father, James O'Hare,... instructing Mrs. Trowbridge's maids on flower cutting. Brian O'Hare

Elizabeth Roosevelt

They were as much human beings as... everybody else, but we were

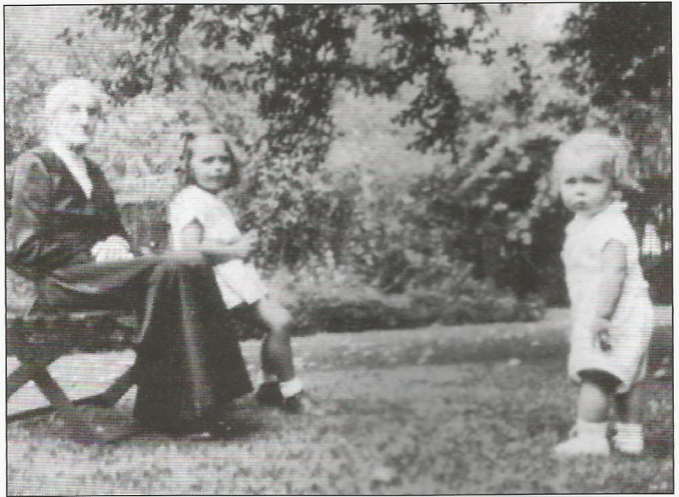
never brought up to exchange confidences. Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing, I don't know, but that's the way it was. As a small child, I was not about to breach that divide. And certainly a correctly trained staff wasn't going to do it either. The whole system would have broken down. But there's no question there was emotional caring between the people of the house and the staff.

Anon.

If you go to the family cemetery plot, you'll find some of them buried there. You're talking about life-long employees. They left this world in our employ! And they're buried right next to their employers, so it really was a "family" operation.

Harry Davison

My father knew the staff pretty well... The chauffeur was Murphy, and given his Irish heritage, he was automatically part of the family. He lived above the garage. In the house itself there were



I would describe our relationship with our people as not quite members of the household. Mrs. Larrabee knew my mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She knew when they were having problems...with the TB and that sort of thing. I think they treated her as an equal. She was always known as "Mrs. Larrabee" and I think they respected that. Once Mother asked Mrs. Larrabee to come to the dining room table for a birthday party, but she refused. Perhaps she was self-conscious. *Adelaide Beatty*

Mrs. Larabee appears at left in the above photograph.



W.R. Coe is shown above in one of the greenhouses on his Planting Fields estate.

servants' quarters for about five servants. They were all part of the family and they were of all nationalities. *James Mooney*

Vis-a-vis my parents, they were employees and they did what they were hired to do and there was a pretty strong line between what they did and the rest of the family. Being a younger kid who was there alone most of the time, I had a little different relationship with them. With many of them, they were more my friends.

Peter Schiff

They treated the cook like she was one of the family, and the butler. And they got them dinners first, the butler, anyway. *Nora Moulton*

Bridie and Nellie...were so much a part of our family's life, that we tended to take them for granted. We had so much affection for the staff and they seemed just part of the whole wonder-

ful scene of visiting our grandparents!

Patricia Pulling Sands

The summer that the superintendent Raymond Purdy hurt his back, we all sat in the boathouse, me, my brother, my governess and Purdy, and played parcheesi!

Elizabeth Roosevelt

We had very, very nice Irish servants who were with us for years and years and years. I was a bridesmaid for one when she got married in New York City. I remember getting all dressed up. I was six years old or so.

Frances Storrs

The people who worked here treated me nicer than you can imagine. They treated me like a little prince! I remember playing checkers with the chauffeur and spending time with Chester, who was the carpenter in the wood shop, and Charlie, who was the handyman, who had one eye going one way and the other eye going the other. It wasn't an efficient operation by today's standards!

Harry Davison

Well, we never associated. The workers were never allowed to associate with those big-shots. But she [Natalie Coe] used to see me... if I happened to be out

in the front walking or something, I would meet her out there sometimes. And I always remember when she'd go to New York (City) or go somewhere, the butler Edgar would come up to me and say, "She's gone away for three days," and I'd go and take her bike and go off.

Nora Moulton

As chauffeur, my father would spend some nights in the city. He had an apartment in Tiffany's mansion on Madison Avenue. They would go out to the opera and different social gatherings and so forth. About 1925, my older brother Jim was very ill here on Tooker Avenue, so my father wanted to get home and see him in the worst way. So he went to the woman who arranged Tiffany's appointments and social engagements and asked her what was going on. She replied that he didn't have anything scheduled. My father figured he would take a chance, so he went down to Penn Station, got on the train to Oyster Bay, and at 5 o'clock the next morning, got on the train and was back at his post in front of the mansion. When Mr. Tiffany came down that morning, he helped Mr. Tiffany into the car, put the lap robe across his lap, and Mr. Tiffany said, "And where were you last night?"



After the war, in 1919, my father went to Mr. Tiffany and said, "Mr. Tiffany, I'm going to get married and I want you to come to the wedding." Tiffany said, "Jimmy, I'm going to be at your wedding, but I haven't been able to travel during the war. I'm going to Europe for six months. Will you wait for me to come back?" My father said yes. My mother wrote in her diary, "It was a quiet ceremony at the ten o'clock Mass. Just family and friends and Mr. Tiffany. He covered the altar with flowers from his greenhouse." It was a Tiffany altar of course in St. Dominic's Chapel.

Joseph Ryan

Above, photo of Louis C. Tiffany by Jimmy Ryan.

My father said, "Well, Mr. Tiffany, my little boy was very ill and I went home to see him."

Tiffany said, "I don't care about that! When I want you, I want you!"

So my father drove him down to the office, took the lap robe off him, helped him out of the car, and said, "Mr. Tiffany, today I'm going upstairs with you and I'm going to resign my position. If you're not happy with me, I don't want to stay."

So they got on the elevator, came to the floor where the superintendent was, the doors opened, my father went to step out, and Tiffany put his hand on his arm and said, "Jimmy, you're not going anywhere. You're staying with me!" *Joseph Ryan*



Workers on Theodore Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill estate.

There's no servant class anymore.

When we were married in 1952, there were still 35 outside staff. That was way down from its peak... I never counted, but there must have been sixty people or so. *Daniel Davison*



After my grandfather Mortimer died in the '30s, my father and mother inherited the original house [above] and thought it was too big and gloomy to live in, so they tore it down and built a house about one third of its size, which was built primarily during the war years... They used some of the materials from the original building and kept some of the original basement. Some of the walls surrounding the gardens and things that exist today were part of the original building. Peter Schiff

On their day off they would go out and realize that they could get a job, not as a domestic, but as a factory worker, at a social level that was much higher. Work forty hours a week, get two days off, and so forth. There's no servant class anymore. *James Mooney*

Most people would think that to grow up surrounded by property like that would be fabulous, and it is, but it comes with its downsides, too. It's not like you have a lot of neighbors to chat with. And, of course, there's a tremendous amount of

My grandmother died in 1962 and my father was really a public servant and he had a great mind, but he knew nothing about taxes or money. I told him he had to get rid of the big house, which upset him considerably, but he didn't have the money to keep it up, and even if he did, he couldn't get twelve servants. They were all in their eighties by the time Grandma died! Daniel Davison

The "Big House" (as it was referred to by the family) appears at right.



work to be done to maintain it. Peter Schiff

It was a very short period of history that these big places were built. A lot of them were focused in this very area. Most of them were just around the turn of the century and they lasted, some of them for thirty years, some for fifty years. They were rich and everybody else was poor. Now there's so many rich people, there's no way to get the help anymore to run the places.

Daniel Davison



By the 1940s, huge sheets [of stucco] would come falling off the building. It almost killed John Beaton, who was the orchid gardener there...just missed him! So my father went to the trustees and said, "This isn't going to work. We've got to close it." Joseph Ryan

Above, the last remnant of what was once Tiffany's Laurelton Hall, destroyed by fire in 1957.

The estates were being broken up, Levittown was being built...the suburban marketplace was developing. Long Island was becoming less of a producing economy and more of a consuming economy.

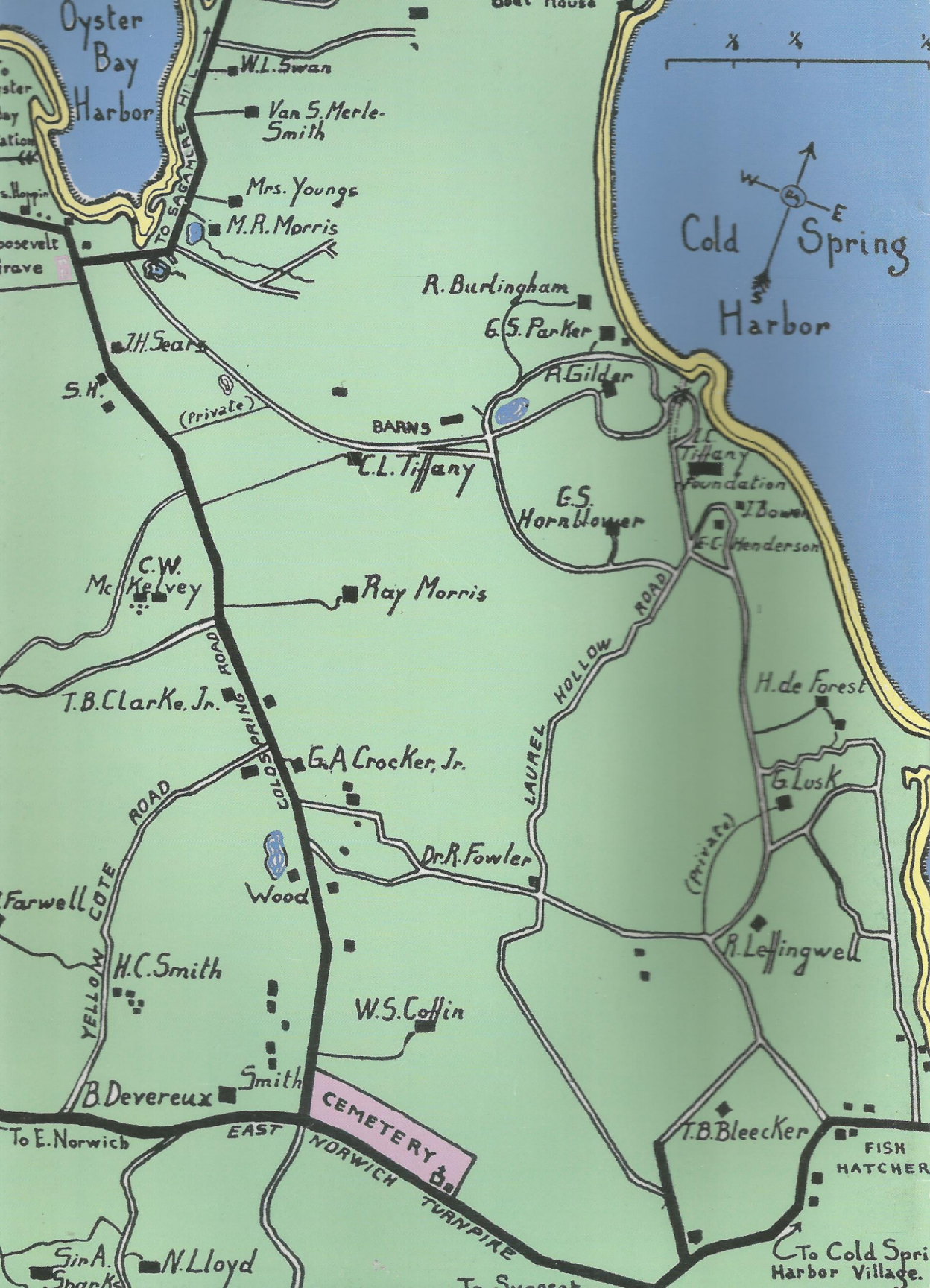
Stephen Hicks

Over the years, we've cut back on a lot of what's done. There's acres of grass, all through the gardens, and we had to cut it with a mower you'd walk behind. Now Mr. Pulling bought a mower we can ride on. I can cut all this in a few hours. We couldn't keep it up like they used to. We keep it as nice as we can.

Patrick Collins

So eventually we've gotten down to no staff! We have contract help; people come in. We have a hired hand here in the summer who does a lot of the work. We've sold off about eighty percent of the property. I developed it in the '70s and '80s into four acre lots and that's worked out and permitted us to live here, otherwise, we'd be out!

Daniel Davison



Oyster Bay Harbor

W.L. Swan

Van S. Merle-Smith

Mrs. Youngs

M.R. Morris

R. Burlingham

E.S. Parker

A. Gilder

BARN

C.L. Tiffany

G.S. Hornblower

Cold Spring Harbor

S.H.

(Private)

J.H. Sears

C.W. Kelvey

Ray Morris

T.B. Clarke, Jr.

G.A. Crocker, Jr.

Dr. R. Fowler

Wood

H.C. Smith

B. Devereux

Smith

CEMETERY

T.B. Bleeker

FISH HATCHER

Sin A. Sparks

N. Lloyd

To Cold Spring Harbor Village