

Harbor Beach Pavilion

Garvies Point,
Glen Cove, New York

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In 1902, a public beach with a large bathing and dinner/dance pavilion called the Harbor Beach Pavilion was opened at Garvies Point in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York to provide local residents with recreational access to the waterfront.

The need for a public bathing beach in a Glen Cove did not develop until the last decade of the 19th Century. Glen Cove – then a village in the Town of Oyster Bay – possessed some of the finest beaches in the region, with Long Island Sound forming the border on the north side of the community, and Hempstead Harbor forming the western boundary. Through-

out the colonial era, and well into the 1800's, beach access was generally regarded as a common law right of residents of the community, and little evidence of conflicts over such access appear in the historical record. The beaches had served as important places of recreation for the residents, whether the activity was bathing, fishing, or picnicing; the lands under water were important shellfishing grounds which provided an income to many residents and which served as the last, best resort of the working poor during times of economic hardship.

However, this changed radically in the 1890's when the



Harbor Beach Pavilion as it appeared circa 1906. This early Glen Cove postcard, like most of the era, was printed in Germany. The colors used for structures were therefore sometimes speculative; an identical run of this postcard depicts the roof of the structure as green rather than brown. (Postcard courtesy of the Warren Griffen Postcard Collection, Glen Cove Public Library Robert R Coles Long Island History Room.)

“Great Shoreline Grab” occurred in Glen Cove. Wealthy New York City and Brooklyn businessmen who had erected mansions along Glen Cove’s coastline successfully petitioned the State of New York to grant them enormous tracts of beach frontage and under water land adjacent to their estates. Fences and gates were erected to bar beach access, sometimes overnight. On some estates, armed guards patrolled the beach. Residents found themselves arrested for “trespassing” on lands which had historically been regarded as part of the birthright of every resident of the community. Legal challenges by both local residents were unsuccessful.

In 1900, State Senator James Norton, a resident of Glen Cove, introduced a bill to the Senate authorizing the creation of a public park and dock somewhere in the Glen Cove area. Norton was an

Irish immigrant who had come to New York as a child. Both his father and uncle died tragically by drowning in Oyster Bay. After a short career as deck hand aboard a schooner, he became involved in politics and was elected successively to the posts of Constable, Collector of Taxes, Superintendent of the Poor, County Sheriff and finally State Senator. He also owned and operated a hotel and bar at the corner of modern day Mechanic Street and Landing Road called the American House, which served as the Landing’s tax collection hub and election polling place.

At first glance, Norton’s proposal to build a public dock in Glen Cove and create a two acre public park around it seemed to offer a genuine benefit to the public. However, it quickly became evident to almost everyone that Norton’s motivation was largely self-serving. The proposed dock and park were to be located inside what is today Morgan Park, just yards south of the existing steamboat dock at the end of Landing Road. A local millionaire, Edward R Ladew, had purchased the old steamboat dock and had forbidden Sunday “excursion boats” – steamboats which brought people from Manhattan and western Queens to picnic at Glen Cove – to use it. While the majority of the weekend excursionists were decent people seeking a day of peaceful recreation in the country, there were just enough hooligans and drunkards looking for innovative ways make a nuisance of themselves to render the “Sunday boat” crowd odious to many residents of the community.

Curtailed of the excursion boats cut into the profits of Norton’s saloon business (and those of other Landing saloon keepers), and Norton wanted the landing privileges of the excursion boats restored... even if it meant constructing a new



Map showing the location of Harbor Beach Pavilion, south of modern day Garvies Point Road (“Bay Street”)

steamboat dock at taxpayers’ expense. As the Brooklyn Eagle pointed out “the establishment of a town park there would bring thousands of visitors to this spot, far famed for its beauty, and that would add largely to the receipts of Senator Norton’s hotel.” (Brooklyn Eagle, 1990a). An anonymous local resident stated, more succinctly and less charitably, “the title of the bill should be changed to read: ‘An act to increase the receipts of mine host Norton’s hotel and bar’” (Brooklyn Eagle, 1900b)

Public outrage over the proposal was swift and powerful. Residents throughout the Town of Oyster Bay balked at the thought of being saddled with a \$30,000 cost merely to increase the number of clients visiting Norton’s saloon. Realizing his proposal was in trouble, Norton amended the bill to move the site of the park to Garvies Point in hopes that it would placate his critics and still allow him to construct the real prize – the new dock at the Landing. The park would include “five or six acres of upland,” and that “250 feet of fine beach” would be made available “to a population of 5,000 people in Glen Cove and vicinity.” (Brooklyn Eagle, 1900c) By the spring of 1901, Norton’s park proposal was beaten into the ground by overpowering local opposition.

However, the desirability of having some form of public beach access available to Glen Cove residents was evident to many, and in early 1902 a group of private citizens gathered together for the purpose of creating a public park along the shore in Glen Cove that would provide residents with at least token access to the waterfront. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902a). The committee formally incorporated as the “Harbor Beach Association” in April of 1902, with its first Board of Directors being Henry F Noyes, John S Appleby, David N Gay, Alexander C

Humphreys and F B Edmonds. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902b)

Henry Frothingham Noyes was born in Brooklyn in 1854. He attended Brooklyn's Polytechnic Institute, one of the distinguished technical schools in the metropolitan New York area. He was a member of the firm of Noyes, Bauscher and Gerrish, which served as sales agent for several different large cotton mills in New England; after the firm was dissolved in 1900, he joined C L Bauscher & Co., its successor. He was also a Trustee of the Brooklyn Trust Co., a member of the Board of Directors of the Home Insurance Co., and Vice President of the Brooklyn City Railroad Co., which was the largest operators of trolley car lines in Brooklyn. (NY Times, 1922) He owned an estate in Red Spring Colony in Glen Cove, and was one of the investors who created North County Colony in the 1890's. He was a yachtsman of repute, owner of the luxury steam yacht *Katrina* and a member of both the New York Yacht Club and Sea Cliff Yacht Club. It is interesting to note that Noyes was one of the three "commissioners" that James Norton had proposed to be in charge of his Landing "park." The press suggested that Noyes' interest in having a new public dock constructed in Glen Cove stemmed from his desire to have some place near his Glen Cove estate to dock his luxury steam yacht, the *Katrina*.

John Storm Appleby was the son of Charles Edgar Appleby, one of the wealthiest real estate developers in New York City. Born in 1866, he attended Columbia University in New York City, getting his first bachelor's degree in architecture in 1888, (Columbia Spectator, 1888) a second in political science in 1890, (Maxwell, 1916) and his master's degree in architecture – the first ever conferred by the university (Bannister, 1954). His master's thesis was entitled "The Renaissance in Architecture" (Columbia University, 1891). Like Noyes, Appleby was a yachtsman with a solid reputation, and was one

of the founding members of the Hempstead Harbor Yacht Club. (NY Times, 1950)

Alexander Crombie Humphreys was a native of Scotland, who had emigrated as a child to the United States. Graduating from Stevens Institute with a degree in engineering, he embarked on a highly successful career in designing and constructing "water gas" plants – facilities which produced the "carburetted hydrogen" or methane gas used to illuminate homes and offices. Partnering with Arthur G. Glasgow to form the firm of Humphreys & Glasgow, he erected gas plants in Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium, Cuba, China, Holland, Germany, Africa, West Australia, Asia, New South Wales, New Zealand, Japan and Switzerland. In 1902, he returned to Stevens Institute as its President. (MacDougall, 1917) Humphreys constructed a large Mediterranean style mansion for himself in the North Country Club colony which would later become the summer home to Frank Winfield Woolworth before it burned down in 1916. (Mackay et alia, 1997)

David N Gay served as Cashier of the Glen Cove Bank (a position that was of considerable importance and responsibility a century ago) and was later promoted to President (Skinner, 1918). Francis "Frank" B Edmonds would later serve as Deputy Sheriff for Nassau County as well as Assessor for the City of Glen Cove. (NY Times, 1935) At the age of 27, Harry L Hedger was one of the younger members of the company; he would go on to serve as President of the First National Bank of Glen Cove, followed by a thirteen year stint as Treasurer of Nassau County, before being appointed Postmaster for the City of Glen Cove. (NY Times, 1946)

The group soon settled on the concept of a public beach with an upland pavilion that would serve as changing rooms bathers could change from their street clothes into their



Harbor Beach Pavilion. green rather than brown. (Postcard courtesy of the Warren Griffen Postcard Collection, Glen Cove Public Library Robert R Coles Long Island History Room.)



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swimwear, as well as serve as a social center for local residents during the summer month. In many ways, the pavilion emulated the two-story “recreation piers” established in New York City in the late 19th Century: large areas, built atop commercial docks and covered with roofs to protect visitors from the sun and rain, where Manhattan residents could stroll, picnic, and enjoy the vista.

Rather than ask the Town of Oyster Bay to finance the structure, it was decided to raise the money by public subscription among the residents of Glen Cove. Appleby offered to lease the association a parcel of land on a sandy peninsula jutting into Glen Cove Creek, south of Garvies Point Road on which to build the pavilion, taking only a nominal sum for rent. The peninsula was known as “Harbor Beach.”

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle reported that “the project has met with opposition in certain quarters” (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902c) but never identified the “certain quarters” which opposed the Harbor Beach Pavilion. Precisely who sought to “hinder the consummation of the plans” of the Association was never divulged; it is possible that it was part of the Landing hotel and saloon owners who had supported the effort to wrest control of the steamboat dock from Edward Ladew the previous year, and who may well have viewed the new Beach Pavilion as a further competitor for tourists’ and residents’ dollars. Regardless of its source, it appears to have been limited in scope and duration.

William Tubby, a prominent New York City architect who also owned a mansion in Glen Cove’s Red Spring Colony, was

hired to design the beach pavilion based on notes and sketches prepared by the Association’s board. Tubby had executed several major commissions in Glen Cove, including designing Charles Pratt’s massive stone mausoleum on Old Tappen Road, J. Rogers Maxwell’s grand mansion “Maxwellton” off Red Spring Lane, the Justice Court on Glen Street, and the main administrative buildings of the Pratt estates at Pratt Oval, at the northern terminus of Chestnut Street. (Mackay et alia, 1997)

The plans called for a structure that was elevated above the sand on wooden pilings, with wooden staircases leading up into the building in front and rear. The first floor of the structure contained 80 small “bath rooms” (changing rooms), as well as showers, toilets, and a small office. Around the exterior of the building was a 6 foot wide piazza, the perfect spot for placing a lawn chair to watch the sun set over Hempstead Harbor. On the second floor was a large open area, measuring 56 by 35 feet, which could serve both as an open-air dining space and as a dance floor. There was also a smaller, enclosed room which measured 14 by 35 feet, meant to serve as a “music gallery.” The building was fitted with a low cupola. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902g) A 1904 map which shows the structure seems to indicate a wooden boardwalk connecting the structure with Garvies Point Road. (Hyde, 1904)

The estimated \$3,500 needed to build the pavilion was rather quickly raised by subscription among the residents of Glen Cove, with the “summer colonists” donating the lion’s share of the cost. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902c) The contract to construct the Pavilion was awarded to W I Lawson, a promi-

nant Glen Cove builder. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902e)

A potentially significant – but thankfully short-lived – glitch appeared in June of 1902 when the Town of Oyster Bay announced that they had discovered an “old map” which showed that a town road extended the length of the peninsula parallel to the beach (if only on paper) and threatened to seek an injunction to prevent the Harbor Beach Pavilion from being constructed. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902d) The board members of the Harbor Pavilion Association decided to move ahead with construction, in spite of the risk that Oyster Bay might derail the entire effort. It appears that the Town of Oyster Bay quickly reconsidered their position, and no injunction was ever filed. Appleby pronounced the issue to be merely a “bluff on the part of those opposed to the plan for a free shore resort for the people”. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902e). In fact, a petition to the Town of Oyster Bay to provide electric lights along Garvies Point Road was received positively, and in early August Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor William H Jones and Justice James H Cocks were both in Glen Cove “making arrangements for placing the lights” (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902f)

The residents of Glen Cove began using the site as a public beach even before the bathing pavilion was opened to the public, and the Sunday School class from St. Paul’s Episcopal Church held their annual picnic on the beach. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902h)

As the day of the official opening grew near, the Harbor Beach Association announced that the new bathing and dance pavilion would be “conducted on most liberal principals.” Access to the beach would be free to Glen Cove residents. A small fee would be charged to rent one of the changing rooms, and all

of the proceeds would be used to meet the operating costs of the pavilion and for property improvements. No alcoholic beverages would be allowed on the premises. The use of the dining/dance floor above the changing rooms would be available free of charge to any Glen Cove organization wishing to schedule its use, also free of charge, and when no event was scheduled there it would be accessible to any resident. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902g)

The Harbor Beach Pavilion officially opened on Thursday, 21 August 1902, with a dinner dance for members of the Glen Cove Club. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902h) “Pretty decorations, good music and a jolly crowd, despite the cool weather, contributed to the success of the affair”. (Brooklyn Eagle, 1902i). Glen Cove’s “Ping Pong Social Club” was already scheduled to have a dance there the following weekend.

Over the next decade, the Harbor Beach Pavilion offered residents a unique recreational opportunity during the summers, including “moonlight picnics” (NY Times, 1904) and “moonlight dances” (NY Times, 1911)

It is uncertain when the Harbor Beach Pavilion ceased to function as a public recreational area. In 1921, there was some discussion in local newspapers of relocating the pavilion to the beach at the end of Landing Road, but this apparently was not acted upon. (GC Echo, 1921)

By circa 1922 the site was occupied by Bair and Edgerton Boat Works, manufacturers of small sail and power boats.



Harbor Beach Pavilion. green rather than brown. (Postcard courtesy of the Warren Griffen Postcard Collection, Glen Cove Public Library Robert R Coles Long Island History Room.)

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