Short Summary of the History of Rocky Point, Long Island, New York

by the Rocky Point Historical Society

Prehistory

Twenty two thousand years ago the most recent North American glacier (Wisconsin) formed the top layer of earth of Long Island. Some distinctive features of Rocky Point date from this time period, including the north shore cliffs (morainal bluffs) and the many large boulders (or glacial erratics) here, such as Indian Rock on Sam's Path.

Native Americans (Indians) first arrived on LI circa 10, 000 BC and was populated by these various Indians until well past the arrival of European settlers. Evidence of their presence has been found on the north shore of Rocky Point by archeological studies performed by the State University at Stony Brook. Rocky Point's earliest record is described within a transfer of land, which extended from Old Man's, Mt. Sinai to Wading River. The deed was recorded on June 10, 1664 by the Sachem Maynew of the Setalcott tribe to the Town of Brookhaven for pasturage and timber rights in the land known as The Great Forest.

The 1700s

The first European to see Long Island was Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524 and the first to set foot on Long Island was Henry Hudson and his crew in 1609. Among the very first European settlers were a group of 13 immigrants who landed at Southold Village on the Peconic Bay in 1640. Peter Hallock was one of these 13 and his great-grandson, Noah Hallock (with his wife Bethia) were one of the first (if not the first) European settlers of Rocky Point. Noah Hallock built his homestead (ca. 1721), which is on the plot of land currently bounded by Hallock Landing Road, Culross Drive, and Hallock Lane. This is the oldest house still standing in Rocky Point. The Hallocks were prominent Rocky Point residents up through the mid 1900s. The only extant cemetery in Rocky Point is the Noah Hallock Cemetery, with about 40 Hallocks buried there from 1766 to 1920. Josiah and Noah Hallock were patriots in the Revolutionary War.

In 1714 "Rock Hollow" (now Hallock Landing Road) is first mentioned in Book B of the Brookhaven Town Records. At that time, Richard Floyd laid out seven acres on cliffs overlooking the Sound and also five acres adjoining his fifty acre lot. Rocky Point Hollow is also mentioned on June 18, 1755, when a twenty foot road

was laid out at the request of Thomas Robinson. In 1755 we see the first written mention of Rocky Point as Rocky poynt hollow again in the Town records. In 1772, two, still existing, roads were cut, Hallock Landing Road and North Country Road. In 1802, two more current roads were laid out: Broadway and Friendship Drive. In the first US census of 1790, there were approximately 14 families and 91 people living in what is today Rocky Point.

Rocky Pointers took part in the Revolutionary War as Patriots. Josiah Hallock the1st, Noah Hallock the 2nd along with Josiah Lupton were signers of the Association in May of 1775 in Captain Ebenezer Miller's Second Company.

The 1800s

This raises the question of what really is Rocky Point, since it is not a political or geographic area. As of 2000, there are three main Rocky Point entities: the Rocky Point School District, the Rocky Point Fire District, and the Rocky Point Postal District (all of which are slightly different). The first formal school was started in Rocky Point in 1812 and school district #9 of Brookhaven Town was established here in 1842. The Rocky Point Post Office was first established in 1872 with Sylvester Tuthill as the first Postmaster. The North Shore Beach Fire Dept. was founded in 1930, followed by the formation of the Rocky Point Fire Dept. in 1934. The two were merged to form the Rocky Point fire District in 1957.

The 1800s began with 18 families and 122 persons in Rocky Point, which remained fairly constant, till an increase to 180 people just after the Civil War. In the 1800s the main occupation in Rocky Point was agriculture, with prominent farming families as follows: Hallock, Brown, Horton, Hulse, Jones, Laws, Skidmore, and Tuthill. They raised cows, sheep, and swine, and crops such as wheat, rye, buckwheat, hay, indian corn, peas, beans, and Irish potatoes. Toward the latter half of the century, an increase was noted in seafaring. Many families had another interest in owning and sailing schooners to haul the cordwood from its landing shores. Each family boasted of a sea captain or a boatman who was involved in the cordwood industry. The Landings along the north shore were convenient places for sloops and schooners to come ashore. These included Hallock Landing, Hagerman Landing. The ships would sail in at high tide and beach themselves as the tide went out. Then wagons would drive alongside and load the ships with cordwood, cut in Rocky Point and nearby Middle Island and Ridge, bound for New York City and other ports. The cutting, carting and shipping of cordwood for fuel was a flourishing business in the latter half of the century.

The mid 1800s brought the Civil War. Rocky Point had several soldiers for the Union, including the Laws brothers, Amos Benjamin and John Gilbert, Jacob Baldwin, Luther Haymer, Jacob Eato, George Rogers, and Theodore Treadwell. By 1880, the population reached 200.

In 1895 the Long Island Rail Road extended its line from Port Jefferson to Wading River, with a stop in Rocky Point. This lasted until 1938 when this extension was closed and the line once more terminated at Port Jefferson. The railroad tracks were removed and the Rocky Point railroad station building became the main office of Thurber Lumber. By 1930 the population of Rocky Point had grown to 325.

The 1900s

In 1911 a Rocky Point tradition began when Hugh McCarrick arrived from Ireland and began selling milk. The McCarrick's dairy farm on Rt. 25A eventually changed to a delicatessen store and real estate business by 2000. This is the oldest continuing business in Rocky Point today. In the 1920s the NY Daily Mirror advertised land for sale in the "North Shore Beach" of Rocky Point in conjunction with the LIRR. Lots were offered for $89.50. Thus Rocky Point became a popular summer vacation for many from Brooklyn and Queens. In 1929, the North Shore Beach Property Owners Association was formed and the Clubhouse built. The heavy use of Rocky Point as a summer community lasted till the latter part of the century when most summer homes were eventually converted to year round homes.

In the early 1920s the RCA corporation built an extensive radio transmitting facility in the pine barrens of Rocky Point and in 1921 the first message from "Radio Central" was transmitted by President Warren Harding. This facility operated until 1961. In the 1970s RCA donated over 5000 acres to NY State as a nature preserve. Today, it is enjoyed by hikers, hunters, and mountain bikers.

Through the 1900s various housing developments were gradually added, removing land from active farming and increasing the population. In 1932 Culross and the Terraces were added. In the late 1960s the Tides and Pickwick were built. The last operating farm was the Tuthill's Rock Level Farm on Rt. 25A. The barn, built in 1875, still stands.

The first church in Rocky Point was the Lecture Room, built at the intersection of Rocky Point Landing and Hallock Landing Rd., as an annex of the Mount Sinai Congregational Church, in 1849. Through the mid 1900s the increasing population of Rocky Point supported a growing number of churches, schools and businesses. In 1942 St. Paul Lutheran Church of Port Jefferson opened a Rocky Point annex in the former Democratic Club on Jefferson Street. The Roman Catholic Church of St. Anthony of Padua was established as a mission station of St. John's parish of Wading River, holding Mass at DeBari's Pavilion (the former Avenue's Restaurant) in 1948. St. Anthony's Church was dedicated on its current property in 1951. In 1964 the Trinity Lutheran Church was built on Rt. 25A and won awards for its unique fish-shaped architecture.

In 1928, the Rocky Point School was built and was later named for its first principal, Joseph A. Edgar. This now serves as an intermediate school. In 1971 the Rocky Point Junior-Senior High School was built. In 1975 the Rocky Point Elementary School opened, later to be named for a long-serving and popular school system superintendent, Frank J. Carasiti. In the late 1990s and early 2000s major school additions and expansions were undertaken. The new Junior High School was completed in 200x, and the former Junior-Senior High School became the current High School.

Through the mid 1900s notable additions to the Rocky Point landscape included the drive-in movie theater (later replaced by the golf driving range), the 9-hole golf course and the many shopping centers along Rt. 25A. The year 1951 brought the inaugural St. Patrick's Day Parade, now an important community tradition. The population continued to grow from 538 in 1940, to 1500 in 1950, 2004 in 1960, 3460, in 1970, and 7012 in 1980. In the 1990s, after much debate and alternatives exploration, the expansion of Rt. 25A to a 4-lane road and the addition of the bypass were completed.

Thus, one can readily see that the once heard comment that "Rocky Point doesn't have any history" is just not true!

Compiled by Jim Higgins, Natalie Aurucci Stiefel, and Suzanne Johnson of the Rocky Point Historical Society