

October 11, 1913 excerpt from
"Plain Talk", a bi-weekly publication,
regarding the expansion of the Long Island
Railroad to Port Washington

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PLAIN TALK

ELECTRIC SERVICE CELEBRATION.

On June 23, 1898, the village of Port Washington, in the words of an eye-witness, "was in a state of the wildest excitement and jubilation." On that day the extension of the Long Island Railroad was formally opened and it meant much for the people who had been so long isolated. In the '60s the road ran to Flushing and it took six hours to drive to New York. When the railroad finally got to Port Washington the people either drove to Manhasset and took the stage to Great Neck or took the boat from Sands Point, leaving early and returning late; or perhaps they went down on one of the many freighting sloops. The railroad opened up the community to the outside world and they had something to celebrate.

The Brooklyn "Times" the next day referred to "the enthusiasm of the villagers, the great friendliness of the big army of visitors from neighboring towns and villages and the great hilarity that prevailed, making it a day to linger pleasantly for many years in the minds of those fortunate enough to have participated in the festivities." There was a parade, joined in by gaily dressed school children carrying little American flags and eliciting much applause. They were reviewed from a stand on the lawn of the Women's Club. The fire companies of adjoining villages participated, including the Sea Cliff Hook and Ladder Co. with their band; the Mineola Hook and Ladder Co. with the Mineola band; Roslyn Hook and Ladder Co. with Hicksville band; Atlantic Hook and Ladder Co., and the Protection Engine Co. The Brooklyn "Times" said this about the music—read this carefully:

"But didn't the Port Washington Band cut a dash yesterday! Out in their new uniforms for the first time, they played as they never played before and it was good music too. Had the boys been getting pay for their services this might have been expected, anyhow; but the fact that their services for the day were gratis speaks emphatically for their already acknowledged obliging disposition!"

After the parade came speeches on the ground opposite the station. District Attorney William J. Youngs was the first speaker, introducing the Hon. W. Bourke Cockran, who expressed their gratitude and appreciation to President Baldwin. Chairman Webb then introduced President Baldwin, whose remarks were greeted by great applause.

The ladies provided at least 3,000 visitors with something to eat, introducing their famous chowder.

Let us quote a reporter: "Mrs. Potter was struck with admiration for the beauties of Port Washington and its apparent natural advantages."

The crowning event was the epic of the Long Island farmer poet, Bloodgood H. Cutter, consisting of 28 stanzas, of which the following are examples:

Port Washington is too nice a place
To be shut off from city race.
For summer boarders 'tis the place
So safe it is for city race.
Manhasset has a lovely bay
With splendid scenery all the way.
Cars running here will be so nice
That many ladies 'twill entice
To city go, to shop and buy
Things that do most attract the eye;
To get a new hat or a shawl
Or cloak to wear on over all.
In winter evenings they can go
To theaters, or public show.
The advantages be so great,
Too many to enumerate.
Some now may think this wild in me,
Many will live to all this see;
I suppose, in fifty year
There will be a great city here,
With trolley car and electric light
To illuminate it well at night.
So I will say to friends, each one:
O, prize this place, Port Washington.

Probably five thousand people participated in this celebration of 15 years ago. The Reception Committee consisted in Thomas J. McKee, Charles F. Lewis, C. C. Thatcher, Isaac M. Allen and William M. Hyde. The invited guests were dined at O'Brien's hotel, and included the principal town officials.

★ Let us look for a moment at the Port Washington of 1898. A few houses around the Cove and along Flower Hill Road, a group west of Carlton Ave., possibly a population of 1,500 and maybe 300 houses. All the rest was farm land. To the south was the larger part of the Mitchell 40-acre farm, which he sold for \$50 per acre and which now is the Heights, worth perhaps \$10,000 per acre. To the eastward was Capt. Webb's farm with his residence. Then came the Mullon farm up to the railroad, with one or two houses. Further east was more farm land, now the Maryland Ave. district, the northern portion of which had a little old house on the corner and less than a

dozen houses westward to the present gas office. All this farm land is now built up and laid out as real estate developments. In two square miles there are now left perhaps three farms—since the railroad came.

Before the railroad came we had small school houses on the present site of the Sands Point and Flower Hill Schools. Since then the former was rebuilt in 1904 at a cost of \$12,000. The latter was rebuilt in 1908, at a cost of \$105,000. The little old building at the head of Smulls Pond was used in the '60s. That looks like progress. We have as many children today as we had population before the railroad came.

In 1898 we had O'Brien's Central Hotel (now Old Heidelberg), the Grapevine Hotel (now Hotel Renwick), Bay View Hotel, and the Port Washington Hotel (now Bradly's). We now have so many it is difficult to count them. Stores? Well, there were those kept by Geo. McKee, Chas F. Lewis, Thos. McKee, A. C. Bayles, Thos. Carman, A. H. Baxter, Geo. Bauer, Jacobs Groceries, Benj. Pearsall, Hyde Brothers, W. U. Nostrand, Morgan's Market, A. Van Wicklein, C. H. Witt, Mr. Thatcher, Ching Foo laundry, Dickinson's plumber shop, and possibly one or two others. Now we have, perhaps, 75 stores. Bayles' drug store was burned May 10, 1902. Today he is building a \$35,000 store and office building on the site.

Before the railroad the only utility we had was the telephone. Since then we have gotten electric light, trolley, automobile hacks, free mail delivery, water supply, gas, macadamized streets, concrete sidewalks, and we are making progress on a sewer system and public park. We had one church in use; we now have four fine church edifices and a couple of smaller ones. We have doubled our population and multiplied our wealth many times. Men who wheeled sand those days now could fill their wheelbarrow with gold.

They had one band and a dance orchestra those days; we now have two bands, three orchestras, a singing society of fifty, chorals, four church choirs, etc. We now have four yacht clubs in the bay; the yachting life has practically developed since that time so that we have perhaps 200 yachts of various kinds in the bay.

Since the railroad came we have lost many prominent citizens: Captain Thos. E. Webb, Capt. Elbert Stannard, Elbert Mackey who did so much for the free church, and his brother George, Stephen A. Jenks and Edw. J. Fearon who built the house Dr. Cocks occupies and did much to develop the town, Charles W. Mitchell who at one time owned all the land west of

Webb's farm between Main St. and the Davis estate, Silas, Adam, Benjamin and Edward Mott, Geo. Tibbitts, Benj. Nostrand, Cap. J. H. Cornwall, Dan Cornwall, Henry Treadwell, Isaac Covert, A. H. Baxter and others have passed beyond, but they did their duty as they saw it just as some of us today are doing.

Those who took the most active part in getting the railroad here were Thomas Mott, Martin Joost, Allen H. Baxter and A. C. Bayles. The latter donated the two acres upon which the station stands. These men put up \$700 to have the surveys made, with the understanding that if the road were built they would be repaid, otherwise they would lose the money. "Nothing venture, nothing have" is an old proverb, for that \$700 was the leaven that started Port Washington along the road of progress.

All honor to the pioneers who have made two blades of grass grow where but one grew before.

This is what we celebrate on October 25. Just as the railroad was rapid transit compared with horse and sail, so electric traction and through service are the rapid transit we welcome today. Along the dirt roads of 15 years ago men trudged or leisurely drove their wagons where today automobiles speed over macadam at 20 to 30 miles per hour. Even the people are changed. Editor Jenks in 1898 wrote this in his "Port Washington Review":

"The Port Washington natives bask in the glow of the noonday sun, sit in squads upon the beach and tell each other their tales of hopes deferred and fears realized. Bronzed, grizzled, weather-worn, these small boat seamen review the merits and graces of the belly-ying yachts, the science of tacking and the skill of the amateur yachtsmen from city club boats. Among its prominent citizens are a number of quaint, retired baymen, who wear trousers tucked in hobnail boots, cultivate Greeley beards and are veritable unconscious understudies of the leading characters of 'The Old Homestead' and 'Shore Acres.' They need no art. They are decorative as they are worthy and frugal."

Today dress suits are quite the thing, as are tan shoes with socks to match and white ducks; and everybody reads the newspapers. It is truly a record of remarkable growth. The free library which at that time had 700 volumes, during the past month received over 100 volumes by donation and bought 150 children's books alone, as well as subscribed for a couple of dozen prominent magazines.

When we compare the time tables of 1898 we find they had 44 trains, as compared with our 48 trains per day, at the present time. In 1898 they left Port Wash-

ington at 7:46 and arrived at Long Island City at 8:26, a run of 40 minutes, which we now make in 55 minutes on the 7:35 a. m. and in 43 minutes on the 7:53 express. In 1898 there were no express trains; today we have four per day. Commutation is about \$2 more than it was at that time. In other words, they gave us a great deal more for our money 15 years ago than we were entitled to. In fact President Baldwin said in his 1898 speech: "Profits," he demanded, "who said anything about Profits? We don't expect to make anything in five years!" There is no doubt but that this generous service assisted materially in our growth.

Today we are planning to celebrate the next step in rapid transit. On October 21 the Winter schedule of the L. I. R. R. goes into effect and on that day electric power will supplant the locomotive. This will mean Pennsylvania station in 35 minutes for every train, and that is as good service as anyone could ask for. We are favored and want to show our appreciation in a tangible manner. Committees from the Board of Trade and the Business Men's Association have been working on this celebration and have fixed Saturday, October 25, as the day.

An automobile parade will start at noon toward Flushing and as it passes through the various villages will pick up delegations of cars and get back to Port Washington in time to meet an official train carrying the L. I. R. R. representatives and speakers. Then the local parade will start through town, including the school children, as was done fifteen years ago, the fire companies of which we now have double the number, lodges, and other organizations.

This parade will be headed by Seaman's Fife and Drum Corps, which donates its services and probably by the two brass bands if they also donate their services (if not, by an out-of-town band), and the parade will break up at the High School campus where all the singers of Port Washington will gather to lead in patriotic songs. The speakers will be William Youngs, who spoke on the same occasion 15 years ago. President Peters (or one of his representatives), Martin W. Littleton and Fred. C. Hicks. The guests will probably be entertained in various ways during the evening.

Among the features are Port Washington seal stickers, to be attached by merchants to all their correspondence, reading, "Port Washington, Long Island's Most Progressive Town. The place to live—watch us grow." There will be thousands of buttons,

in red and white, bearing the words: "Electric R. R. Service Celebration, October 25, 1913." Each automobile will carry blue pennants with "Port Washington" in white letters upon them. These can be had through Ernest Walters, on Main St.

All buildings, not only stores but also residences, are requested to decorate. On October 18 the N. Y. "Tribune" will give us a half page and on October 12 the Brooklyn "Eagle" will give us half a page. Newspaper items are appearing in all the newspapers and Port Washington is being put on the map. Let everybody come out and help for the credit of the good old town. In 1899 there were nearly 5,000 people here to celebrate. We should be able to do at least as well.



The school authorities have been notified that pupils attending school must be vaccinated. Steps are being taken to determine what students have not been vaccinated and parents will be personally notified of the provision of the law. This law has met with considerable opposition in various sections.

Several cases of failure to comply with the Compulsory Education Law have been in the court and there are indications of more at an early date.

Much attention is being given, throughout the grades to penmanship. This important branch does not receive sufficient attention in schools generally.

Mr. Harold Strickland, Class of 1913, was a caller at the High School, Thursday. Harold says it seems homelike and he cannot easily break the pleasant relations of past years. We don't want him to. It is such young men that give the school and alumni a standing of which we are proud. Harold won a scholarship in College and was second in Nassau County, being beaten by only six-tenths per cent. Had his photo accompanied his answer papers, we venture to say he would have been at least 99.

An inventory and examination of the school books reveals the fact that books are poorly bound, especially the more recent editions. Books placed in the hands of careful pupils last but a year. This is due to poor paper and binding. Some pupils claim they are "studied to pieces," but examinations don't bear out the theory.