

A Town Takes Shape: Active Expansion

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As you drive into—or out of depending on your direction—Huntington Village you will almost certainly see the state-of-the-art YMCA facility. It has been an important fixture in Huntington for a long time offering a host of activities, camps, organized sports, and space to get active for the town. It has long been a fixture in the community, and it too was a pivotal part of Huntington's expansion in 1958.

The first mention of the YMCA in The Long-Islander is in the August 10, 1936, issue. J.E. Berger, the Chairman of the Boy's Work committee for the YMCA, was addressing a PTA meeting at the Woodbury Avenue school. The community felt that a recreational center was needed to keep the local children social and active. The article read, "The audience, which includes the leaders of many of Huntington organizations and schools, seemed to feel that immediate action should be taken toward the establishment of some kind of social center. A motion was made and carried by unanimous vote that a survey should be made by the YMCA to determine what to do."

Eventually, the YMCA would host local sports events and leagues but was only able to do so with the use of local school facilities and under the supervision of the Town of Huntington. That was until 1954, when a growing community needed the support of bigger and better facilities.

The first building of the Huntington YMCA opened in 1954. Executive Secretary of the Huntington YMCA, Edward V. Norton pushed to continue building out the facilities to support the community for years to come. After the opening of the initial facilities, the YMCA wanted to expand to The continued expansion of the YMCA was funded in large part by community pledges and donations. The launch of the community funding drive was announced in October of 1956.

In the December 20, 1956, issue of The Long-Islander it was announced that the plans for the continued expansion had achieved forty-one percent of their \$702,000 goal. Mr. Sammis, Chairman of the YMCA at the time stated, "The community at large is vitally interested in providing the YMCA with the facilities it sorely needs to adequately serve the increasing number of boys, girls, and young people who are participating in YMCA activities."

The fundraising would continue and on August 15, 1957, The Long-Islander ran a piece noting that the plans for the expansion had finally been revealed. They were prepared to accept bids and begin construction. The plans for their expansion included: an Olympic sized pool with a men's locker room and women's locker room. The pool could hold up to seventy-five swimmers at a time. There were also plans to "prepare for" but not a complete gymnasium. They were hoping to break ground on the project in 1958.

Later that year, in December of 1957, The Long-Islander published a piece stating that a bid had been accepted. The pool would be seventy-five feet in length and twenty-five feet in width. It would hold 80,000 gallons of water. It was going to be the first indoor swimming pool in the Township of Huntington that would be available for public use.

Alongside the pool were the two locker rooms, each consisting of eighty units and complete with showers. There were also already plans created about programs to be offered with the use of these new facilities. The article confirming that a bid had been accepted noted that there were plans to host progressive swim classes for boys, girls, men, women, and special swim groups for entire families. They were expected to break ground on the project in early spring of 1958.

Top - clockwise:: Edward Norton receiving an award in February 1954 for his service to the community.

Edward Norton returned home from a trip to Brazil. As Executive Secretary Norton had been sent to host a summit with other coaches.

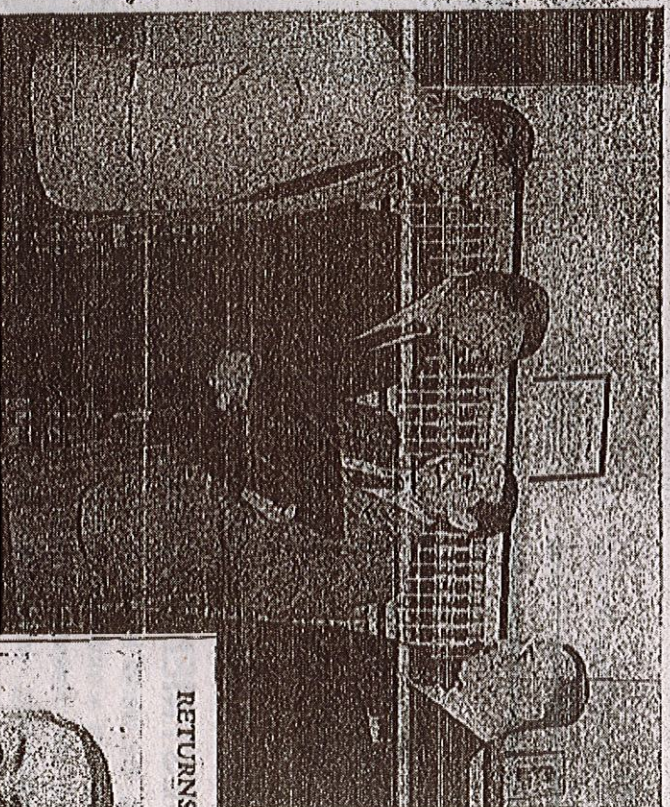
The Edward V. Norton swimming pool was expected to open in early 1959.

The construction appeared to deviate from the previously laid out timeline, or the timeline was entirely too optimistic. The next update came from a Long-Islander piece published on June 26, 1958. Work had begun on the pool, and they hoped that it would be open early in 1959. The purpose of this article though, was the naming of the pool.

The pool—and subsequent amenities—were to be named after Edward V. Norton, the former Executive Secretary of the YMCA. Norton had passed away on July 17, 1956, and the pool was to be named in his honor as a testament to his effort to build up the YMCA to ensure that it could adequately serve the community. According to previous articles at the time, Norton was an important part of pushing for expansion beyond the initial facilities that had opened a few years prior to the pool and locker rooms. The article about the pool naming notes that, "Mr. Norton came to Huntington as the professional head of a YMCA that didn't even exist except in the minds of a few. During his first year in Huntington, Mr. Norton made the "Y" an alive organization, providing recreation for literally thousands of Huntingtonians."

Finally, an article published in the July 16, 1959, issue of The Long-Islander reported that the Edward V. Norton swimming pool had opened to the public. The project had been hit with a few delays pushing it back months but was finally open to the community in the summer of 1959. The story of the YMCA growing into a centerpiece of the Huntington community is a long one, but it is one of many that show us just how much Huntington really grew in the late 1950's. It was imperative that civil services and institutions keep up with population growth but giving the community the space to interact and play proved just as important.

HONORING Y.M.C.A. SECRETARY



RETURNS HOME



Edward Norton

BACK FROM BRAZIL.
NORTON REPORTS HE'S
HAPPY TO BE HOME.

YMCA SWIMMING POOL
NAMED FOR NORTON
TO OPEN NEXT YEAR

Work is progressing on the "hole" on East Main St., Huntington which will be the Y.M.C.A. indoor swimming pool. When completed early in 1959, the pool will provide year-round swimming facilities for the youngsters and oldsters of Huntington, in short, "a family Y."