

Editor's Messages, 2023

The articles in this year's *Journal*, while diverse in content and perspective, nevertheless have a unifying theme. That is, they each place Nassau County and Long Island squarely within the larger historical forces which have shaped the United States: the need for civil rights, equality, social justice and human dignity for all; the massive waves of suburbanization in the twentieth century; and the continuing need to preserve our endangered national heritage. And appropriately enough, this issue of the *Journal* includes one of the first published writings of a prominent associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, who chose a Lynbrook landmark for her subject.

John Strong's article, entitled "Mismeasuring the Unkechaugs: Eugenics, Race, and Identity in America," chronicles the eugenics movement in the United States and its application to a study of Long Island's Unkechaug people in the 1920s. The study explores the social history and status of local Native Americans a hundred years ago, though more importantly it sheds light on the institutionalized discrimination, pseudo-scientific thought, and false assumptions which characterized racism in America in those days. The points raised by John Strong have meanings which transcend the time period and physical setting covered by his work.

In 2023 the Town of Hempstead granted landmark status to the *Bristol* and *Mexico* Monument and Mariner's Burying Ground in the Rockville Cemetery, Lynbrook. In the course of the landmarking process, we learned that a Cornell University student, Ruth Bader, had written an article on the *Bristol* and *Mexico* Monument for the *New York Folklore Quarterly* in 1953. Ruth Bader, of course, is better remembered as Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The *Journal* received permission to reprint her 1953 article, and it is included in this issue with an introduction and an account of the recent Bristol and Mexico landmarking process. The articles reveal Ruth Bader Ginsburg's connections to Nassau County and is one of her first published works.

Nassau County has been shaped and transformed by suburbanization in the last one hundred years. My article on the Merrick Gables housing development, "Merrick Gables: A Unique Historic District," enables us to focus on this process on a

neighborhood level. Merrick Gables was one of the signature real estate developments on the South Shore in the 1920s. Its California-style Spanish Colonial homes and Hollywood connections created a distinctive ambiance that remains to this day. The historical and architectural significance of the Gables was recognized in 2017-2018 when the neighborhood was declared a State Historic District, a rare designation for an unincorporated area in the Town of Hempstead. Merrick Gables, however, faces an uncertain future since most of its homes are not protected from alteration or demolition. This situation, of course, is commonplace across Long Island and beyond, and mirrors the challenges American historians and preservationists face in the twenty-first century.

— *Paul D. van Wie*