

by Walter D. Kolos

The years between the Civil War and the first decade of the Twentieth Century was the era of the summer resort period on Long Island. The North Shore of Queens County (which now includes Nassau) saw a phenomenal growth of recreational establishments designed to furnish the demands of New York’s burgeoning population. The Cold Spring Harbor estuary, with its deep clear waters and scenic landscapes was considered to be a choice vacationing spot for city dwellers seeking relief from the sweltering city environment.

By the 1870’s, numerous hotels and resorts had been established along both sides of Cold Spring Harbor. From the head of the harbor at the south, resort hotels such as “Laurelton Hall” (which became the site of Louis C. Tiffany’s estate), the “Glenada” and “Forest Lawn” were renowned for their luxurious accommodations and healthful activities. “Columbia Grove,” on Lloyd Neck was one of the many famous establishments of the resort era.

Situated on the Southwest corner of Lloyd Neck, and the North end of the causeway, “Columbia Grove” was a classic Nineteenth Century amusement park. It was made famous by Edward Lange’s 1881 painting, and although nothing remains of the place, the views of Lloyd Neck depicted by Lange remain virtually unchanged.

The “Grove” was established at the shipping dock built by Henry Lloyd VI. This pier was the perfect site for “side winder” steamships to dock and transfer passengers for a daylong visit of seaside fun, entertainment and recreation. In this post war age, many groups—especially church and Sunday school organizations--- would “hire out” boats for an excursion to these facilities. This resort at Lloyd’s Neck, as it was called then, was sometimes referred to as a “honky-tonk,” and probably would not have been considered suitable for religiously centered activities.

Judging by Lange’s painting and some of the scant accounts of the day, “Columbia Grove,” was place of fun and excitement. There were bathing houses “to let” which allowed adequately dressed bathers to stroll on the shore and frolic in the water. Boats were also rented, and numerous small

craft such as row boats and cat rigs could be seen traversing the shoreline. Ladies, elegantly gowned, and gentleman in tops hats, either walked along the causeway or were driven in horse drawn carriages. The park, run by George Van Ausdell, had numerous buildings on the property, but apparently no hotel or residential facilities.

Edward Lange's painting shows "Columbia Grove" as being a very vital and festive resort, crammed with visitors enjoying a summer day. At the dock, the sidewinder ship, *General Sedgwick*, festooned with flags and pennants, waits for its passengers. Unfortunately, there are no recollections of what a day would have been like at the "Grove." The detailed painting offers us the best description.

During this period, the area surrounding "Columbia Grove" was sparsely inhabited. Lloyd Neck and West Neck were heavily wooded areas which included vast tracts of farmland. At the South end were the Crossman and Jones brickyards, the sites now occupied by the Bath Club, West Neck Beach and the Village Park. This era would come to a close around 1900, when the great estates would be established along the east coastline. This event not only marked the closing of the resorts and brickyards, but it substantially curtailed public access to the beaches for decades.

"Columbia Grove" and the other resorts of the Cold Spring Harbor basin are a vanished part of our history. Unlike the great estates, there are virtually no markers or remnants of this important part of our Village's ancient history. Little is written about it, and no one living remembers it.