

MAMARONECK

Historical Snapshots

The following are extracts from a reprint of the 300th Anniversary book *Mamaroneck 1661-1961, A Panorama of Her First Three Centuries*. by Helen Warren Brown, 1961, that was for use with the Social Studies Curriculum.

Dam Nuisance Disposed Of

There was a falls near the mouth of the Mamaroneck River just upstream of the Post Road Bridge, and a dam built there for a factory became a public nuisance because of the floods and the breeding of mosquitoes. An old diary records that in 1854: *"The people bought the Mamaroneck Factory pond, the dam to be taken down; the water to flow forever without obstruction. Bought and let out Saturday night in June; a jubilee lasted until 3 o'clock Sunday morning."*

The mosquito problem was solved about 1915 by draining and oiling the salt marshes.

The Animal-At-Large Problem

Farming, fishing, and lumbering made a livelihood for the early settlers. The townspeople banded together to help each other. The exportation of timber, for example, was stopped by the annual meeting in 1702 until all fields were cleared. Fences were built at a prescribed height. Roads were mended. Animals, straying on the common, had to be identified by brands and had to be regulated. The quit rent for the King had to be collected and forwarded to the Governor of the Province of New York.

In 1717 rams were banned from the common from August 1 through October 20. In 1733 a pound was established for horses and mares found on the common without side hobbles. (Today the problem is dogs.) In 1765 the annual meeting decreed that oysters and clams "were not to be taken or meddled with in the east channel between Hog Island and the mouth of the harbor under penalty of forty shillings fine" from the early part of April until the middle of October. Persons from out of town were forbidden to take oysters at any time. Since 1925 a United States Department of Public Health law, endorsed by the Westchester County Department of Health, has forbidden the taking of oysters and clams from our harbor waters by anyone at any time.

In 1773 geese were forbidden on the common. In 1785 all men were called out to destroy the barberry which was growing wild, probably as a result of neglect during the Revolutionary War, and threatened wheat fields with blight. In 1811 a bounty on crows was established at six cents from April to December and three cents from December to April, with eggs bringing a reward of one cent.

Relief for the Needy

The plight of the poor became painful to the townsmen shortly after the Revolution. In 1789 they voted 15 pounds for the support of these people. Each year thereafter they provided for the poor and that the poor master should visit them, especially during the winter.

In 1802 they started talking with other towns about a joint poorhouse. This they considered again in 1820 at a special meeting. In 1875 they resolved that "travellers in extreme necessity shall be taken care of to the extent of one night's lodging and one meal during the winter months."

Improvement in Thirties

In the early thirties the coal dock was removed and the present bathing pavilion and beach were constructed. A stone retaining wall was built as a WPA project which the Village fathers secured to provide work for the many unemployed, but skilled, stone masons living in Washingtonville. A Federal grant, partially supported by Village tax funds, provided means of dredging the West Basin and filling in the tidal creek, as well as filling the underwater acres which had been gradually filled for twenty years as a garbage dump.

According to William H. Johnson who was the Village Manager at the time, it took about eight years to really establish the beach by spreading layer upon layer of sand on the mud. The Village still buys sand yearly to improve the beach.