

Malverne of Twenty Years Ago.

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We left Jamaica and moved to Malverne twenty years ago for two main reasons. Jamaica was being built up with the consequent loss of natural beauty. Secondly, we had two young children to educate in what we hoped would be less crowded conditions in schools. So when we found an advertisement of a house for sale in a wooded section in a town called Malverne, we investigated and bought.

It was like living in a park. There were only two other houses on the block and the rest was a rather thick woods mostly of oaks with a sprinkling of hickory trees interspersed with witch hazel, sweet gum, summer sweet, wild azealeas, sumach and sweet fern. Although sidewalks had been laid even on side streets, they were overgrown with moss, and tangled roots and were bordered with different types of ferns. Blackberries abounded at the side of the road and sassafras and birch were everywhere. An idea of the wildness may be indicated by the fact that at first, as night came on and the darkness of the woods blotted out familiar sights, we felt a little terrified at the isolation. But the few neighbors assured us that the police of Malverne made regular rounds day and night and that it was perfectly safe.

Down at the end of the street was Foster's brook, then natural and unspoiled. The State Park Commission controlled it and left alone its beauty. Over one spot in the deep woods they had spanned the brook with a little rustic bridge and we used to bring our lunch and picnic there. On hot days there was a coolness and deep solitude there not unlike up-state mountainous country. The brook itself was a never-ending source of beauty and nature study. There were many different kinds of green water plants on the surface and underneath the water and these harbored the animal life, pollywogs of toads and frogs, minnows, transparent eels, water snakes and skimmers skating on top of the water. Along the lush banks grew sweet flag, skunk cabbage, jewel weed, Jo Pye weed and ferns.

It was not unusual to see a mother duck and her babies swimming in in a quiet cove.

Across the street from us was a dead end street, Willow Place, which defied entrance on one side because of a row of very high poplar trees entangled with wild grape vines and brush. This made a safe haven for crows to build nests and raise young and their raucous calling gave a country air. The high untidy nests of the gray squirrels were conspicuous and their occupants enjoyed an unhampered existence. All kinds of birds natural to this climate as well as those on their migratory trip north were seen and heard. Those most common were robins, bluejays, all kinds of sparrows, catbirds, thrashers, towhees, warblers and wild canaries. Some rarities were scarlet tanagers, mourning doves, cedar waxwings and orioles. A neighbor found a little hoot owl unharmed at the base of his chimney. Wakeful inhabitants often heard their eerie cry in the night.

Malverne was surrounded by the customary Long Island truck farm which is slowly fading from the scene. There was one of these farms which was on the other side of the brook from us. Sometimes horses ploughed the ground in the spring. The Wicks farm, part of the house dating back to the Revolution, was on the main street of Malverne. The lot on which the row of stores now stands on Hempstead Avenue and includes Mr. Sitzers 5 and 10 was rented out to a farmer to raise potatoes.

In our first years in Malverne we had to go to the Post Office for our mail as it was only delivered in a small area around the town. In fact, every facet of life was so country like that even commuting was a trip through a pleasant countryside, Rosedale, Laurelton, Springfield and St. Albans. Years before there had been a railroad between Valley Stream and Hempstead and excavators often turned up the nails used on the ties.

We did not wait long before seeking a card at the library. It

was then housed in a little store on Utterby Road, around the corner from Dittes store. We had to get the Postmistress's signature before the card was issued, proving that we lived in the correct district. There was one librarian and the hours were few and far between.

There was a growing community ^{spirit} even in those days. One of our first social events was a kind of bazaar given by the Republican Club at their headquarters in the large house at the southwest corner of Franklin and Cornwell Avenues. On holidays like Fourth of July and Decoration Day there were parades and speeches in the village park by the station. The Community Church building, now their parish hall, was the gathering place for church congregations, village plays and any organization's activities where room was needed. Besides Dittes store there were two little chain stores, A&P and Bohacks, - no supermarkets as yet in Malverne.