
HILLSIDE'S = Independence = MOVEMENT

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By the Staff of

The Hillside National Bank

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Exactly when the idea originated among residents of the Lyons Farms, Salem and Saybrook areas to separate from Union Township and form the twentieth community in Union County is not known.

It is known that the Saybrook Citizens Union or the Saybrook Citizens Improvement Association as early as December 1909 received a report that the new housing development in Saybrook was being planned so its roads would be ready to join streets in Elizabeth when the section was annexed by that city.

The major reasons for seeking annexation to Elizabeth or Newark or a separate government was the growing desire of the population for modern city improvements.

These improvements included electric lighting, mail delivery, sidewalks, street lamps, street name signs at intersections, house numbers, water supply, drainage, improved streets, sanitary sewers, greater government economy and police and fire protection.

On Feb. 13, 1911 Saybrook residents spoke of the advantages of secession from Union and annexation to Elizabeth of all land south of the main line of the Lehigh Valley Railroad.

They noted the municipal gains enjoyed by El Mora, which only recently had been annexed by Elizabeth.

The proposed secession was announced March 5, 1911, at a meeting of the Saybrook Citizens Improvement Association. A bill prepared by Joseph T. Hague, an Elizabeth attorney, outlining "The Township of Ursino" was explained.

This township would embrace all of Lyons Farms, Saybrook and Salem between Elizabeth and the Lehigh Valley Railroad from Essex County to Roselle Park.

The boundary line would cross Morris Ave. at Townley in order to include the Kean estate at Ursino from which the township would have derived its name.

The estate was named "Ursino" or "little Ursin" by Countess Julian Ursin Niemcewicz, a niece of Revolutionary Gov. William Livingston, for her husband's estates in Poland.

During the next week several meetings were held to debate whether the West Newark section south of Long Ave. should be included in the new township.

It was decided to permit the bill to be introduced in the Legislature March 13, 1911 without any changes.

Some of the proposed changes included one offered by John B. Bonnell of Union to make the river the dividing line between the two townships. This line was adopted two years later.

Gottlieb Schnabel, a township committeeman, and several others wanted the Lyons Farms section annexed to Newark, mainly because the drainage system interests were in Newark rather than Elizabeth. A bill proposing this was defeated in the Legislature in 1911.

Despite the Ursino bill's subsequent defeat in the Legislature, Abram P. Morris, one of the prime movers for secession and a member of the Board of Education, promised another fight in 1912.

A meeting to create a new township was held Dec. 10, 1911 at Looker's Hall, but no agreement could be reached. One of the proposals made was that Lighting District 2 be made into a separate township.

This area began at King St., continued along N. Broad St. to the Essex County line to Maple Ave., Liberty Ave., along the Irvington branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad to Hillside Ave. to N. Broad St.

Opponents of the proposed township declared that a few persons desired to create a separate set of municipal officers for their own gains. Saybrook and West Newark residents charged they were being frozen out.

On Dec. 18, 1911, a forum discussion was held. Mr. Morris reiterated his plan for a mayor-council form of government. John Leyser proposed the township form and Christopher Columbus Bailey urged borough form.

George Compton, then Union Township Clerk, on December 20, 1911 urged that the entire Second Election District be set aside as a separate township. This territory would have been bounded by Parker Rd., Elizabeth, the Elizabeth River and the Essex County line. It would have included most of today's North Elizabeth section as well as all of Hillside.

The debate continued through the Christmas holidays and charges of railroading were made. The group on January 4, 1912 voted to form a new borough. The committee named to secure the charter included S. M. Cooley, A. D. Crane, J. H. Doremus, J. F. Chapman, Jacob Wind Jr. and G. W. Fuhrmann.

For nearly a month the proposed borough was referred to as the "New Borough of Lyons Farms." It was bitterly opposed by some 80 Saybrook residents at a meeting at Hillside School on January 9, 1912 because of the inclusion of Saybrook School and by former U. S. Senator John Kean, who said taxes would increase because of the separation.

Michael Cran urged annexation of the area to Elizabeth. Charles T. Woodruff objected. Mr. Cran circulated and presented a petition opposing the borough. Saybrook residents in general indicated they would remain with Union if Lyons Farms did not incorporate and would seek to join Elizabeth if it did.

A bill was prepared by Assemblyman William F. Groves to make Lyons Farms the "Borough of Parkside" in February, 1912. The boundaries of the proposed new borough would include all the northside from the Essex County line to the lands of David Jagers and the Jagers family and of Jonathan Winans, both in the Maple Ave. and Liberty Ave. areas.

It would then cut across from Hillside Ave. to Long Ave. including property of Gottlieb Schnable and John Hebbe, the new development of the Dod-Crane Co. along the railroad and the Julia Coe Estates in the vicinity of Coe Ave. on the south side, cutting down the center of Salem Ave. and King St. and back to the Essex County line.

Former Gov. Foster N. Voorhees represented proponents of the Grove's bill on March 2, 1912 when it was argued in the Assembly. John K. English, attorney for Union Township Committee, spoke against the bill.

Among the objections were the change of the name from Lyons Farms, drawing of the lines through centers of streets to place them in two municipalities and the exclusion of West Newark section. The objectors won, the bill was defeated.

Despite the setbacks, residents still sought separation from Union Township.

On Jan. 30, 1913, the group decided to employ counsel to prepare a bill to include all property east and north of the Elizabeth River beginning at the Elizabeth City line and extending to the Irvington boundary and including Lyons Farms, West Newark, Saybrook and the new Hollywood Heights section.

Mr. Morris observed that the river was the best dividing line. Mr. Woodruff objected, asserting that the township should include Morris Ave. which the taxpayers paid so much to build.

A delegation attended the Union Township Committee meeting Feb. 2, 1913 to urge garbage removal, police protection, sidewalks and other improvements.

Mr. Morris pointed out to the committee the desire for separation and asserted the proposed boundary was identical with that proposed by Union citizens a year earlier.

A committee of ten was formed. Posters were displayed for a mass public hearing February 13, at Saybrook. Union decided to remain neutral. Conant St. residents opposed the plan February 11, at a meeting at the home of Thomas Fitzpatrick and then decided to join the movement with Salem and Saybrook residents.

Another meeting was held February 24, 1913, in the old Hillside School to prepare a petition to the State Legislature for a referendum.

The petition was forwarded by Augustus T. Gray with the aid of Mr. Morris. Signers included Arthur D. Crane, Harry Tindall, Richard S. Earl, J. Elliot Hall, Walter D. Gregory Jr. and Daniel L. Miller Sr.

The order setting April 29, for the referendum was signed by Gov. James F. Fielder April 3, 1913, and was followed by a campaign to register all residents qualified to vote. In those days only men had the franchise.

The vote was nearly 10 to 1 to separate. A total of 222 ballots was cast in favor of the proposal. Thirty-two votes opposed the separation and 36 votes, mostly negative, were rejected. Voting was done in Looker's Hall.

The new township represented about one-third of the territory of Union Township in ratables, but only one-eighth of the territory. It comprises 2.73 square miles. It included 1,600 persons and had an assessed valuation of \$1,612,057.

After the referendum plans were made quickly for an election. It was held May 27, 1913 without opposition. Frank H. Baker, Mr. Tindall and Mr. Hall, known as the Citizens' Ticket were elected as the first Township Committee to represent the West Lyons Farms, Saybrook and Lyons Farms section, respectively.

Mr. Baker was chosen chairman at the organization meeting June 4, 1913 in the Hillside School, completing the secession from Union Township.

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