

SAYBROOK*

Prepared by

The Staff of the Hillside National Bank

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The origin of the name "Saybrook" for the eastside of the Township of Hillside continues to remain in doubt today.

The first use of the name is found on an 1892 "Map of Saybrook" in the Township of Union prepared by A. M. Woodruff of Roselle for a real estate development in the section formerly called "Woodruff Farms."

Streets listed on this map were Conant Street, Prospect Street, Superior Street, Long Avenue (actually today's South Long Avenue), New York Avenue (today's Hollywood Avenue), Park Street, Vine Street, Race Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

According to the late Police Sergeant Horace V. Tichenor, the name was suggested for the area by his grandfather, Frederick F. Tichenor, when the property was subdivided. Mr. Tichenor observed that many of the forefathers of residents migrated from Old Saybrook, Conn. to settle Newark in 1666 and suggested that their former home be remembered.

A New York developer who conducted excursion trains along the Lehigh Valley Railroad to the new real estate development shortly after the turn of the century was credited with the origin of the name in a 1917 citizens' promotional pamphlet, but checks with the New York and New Jersey Historical Societies fail to substantiate this claim.

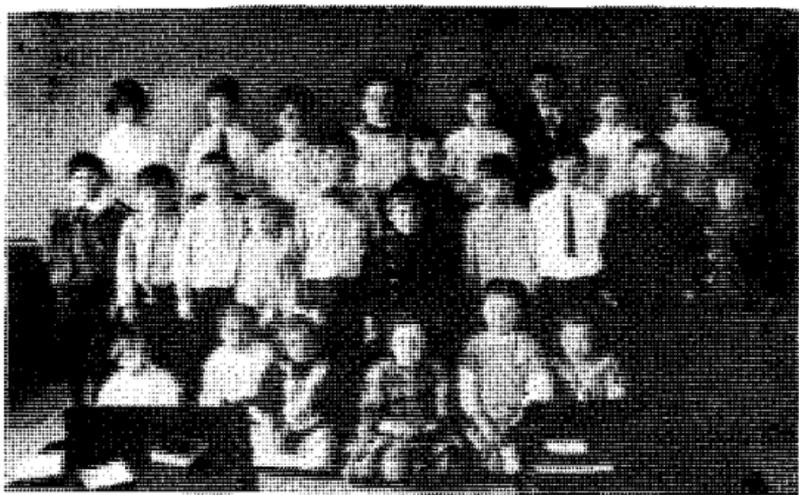
* This is one in a series of pamphlets dealing with various sections of the Township of Hillside and area. Others have been called "Ursino," "Waverly Park" and "Old Lyons Farms."

The term "Saybrook" came into general use after the turn of the 20th Century and was applied for 20 years.

Even the Board of Education and the new Township Committee listed their meeting places as "Saybrook" or "Lyons Farms" as the northside was known from 1913 until 1920. By then, the township had grown to more than 5,000 persons and the name "Hillside" was used for the entire area.

A one-room school, called Saybrook School, was erected about 1904. The first teacher, Miss Dodd, taught about a year and was succeeded by Miss Josephine Savage who remained there for many years.

Miss Savage taught the first three grades in the single room. She had about 40 children, the youngest being 4 years old. The school session was begun daily by Miss Savage's appearance in the school door with a large bell which she rang to call the children into the building. She remembers them as being extremely well-behaved children.



OLD SAYBROOK SCHOOL CLASS

When Miss Savage was sick which was seldom or directed by the Union Township Board of Education to visit other schools, the school was closed. It also was closed during severe storms or at noon-time if the weather were bad because the dirt roads, muddy when wet, made it difficult for the children to walk to the school.

Miss Savage conducted well-remembered programs before each holiday such as Christmas or George Washington's birthday anniversary. She provided proper decorations such as fir boughs and lights and refreshments for these occasions.

Kenton D. Wood, assistant cashier at the Hillside National Bank, recalls that she would direct the children to place their heads on their desks and she would drop candies in their hands on these events. On other occasions, apparently more important, the children would be given packages of candies, each carefully wrapped the previous night by Miss Savage and her sister, Miss Sue Savage.

The real estate boom led mostly by Edward A. Bloomfield caused the one-room school to be outgrown. It was moved across Woodruff Avenue in Virginia Street where it was converted into a small dwelling and a four-room school was erected in its place in 1910.

The school was too big for immediate use and one of the rooms was used for a neighborhood dancing class or parent meetings. The neighborhood continued to grow rapidly and when Hillside Township was separated from Union Township in 1913, one of the first orders of business of the new Board of Education was to erect four more rooms on top of the existing four to make an eight-room school.

The building was used for school purposes until 1950 when it was declared unsafe for continued use. It was altered to become the Board of Education's Administration Building in 1950. The second floor is used as a teachers' library, new books display and conference room.

An abandoned box car served as the Saybrook Station on the Lehigh Valley Railroad at Long Avenue for several years.

Hollywood Avenue was considered a lane and the cows from the Crane and Tichenor families in North Broad Street were driven down it each morning and home again each night. Pastures were between Long Avenue and Conant Street and along Pennsylvania Avenue.

Dr. R. W. M. Westrup, a veterinarian, was kept busy tending to these cows and the horses and other animals.

Charles T. Woodruff erected a store in front of his home in Conant Street about 1900 and operated it for some time. The mail was delivered to this store for some years and the store became the center of the community.

George T. Devlin followed Mr. Woodruff as the proprietor of the store and he was succeeded by George C. Ryno in 1907. The Gilbert Eaton family began operation about 1910 and continued until the mid-twenties.

William Thomas, a retired tailor, who served as a special policeman and truant officer, opened a candy store in Union Avenue at Virginia Street opposite the Saybrook School in 1910. Joseph J. Scannell succeeded him about 1915 and added a bakery business to the facilities in 1918. The store, still in existence today, became a delicatessen in 1926.



DANCING CLASS AT SAYBROOK

There were mainly large farms in the section. The largest were those of the Earl and Woodruff families. Odgen Woodruff's land extended from his dwelling in Salem Avenue along Wilder Street to the Elizabeth River. The Earl farm in Conant Street stretched south toward Elizabeth. Together they comprised most of today's Westminster section.

Charles T. Woodruff also had considerable land which he farmed, an apple orchard from which he made cider and a sand pit near today's Woodruff Place.

The Elizabeth Nurseries, the section's largest, covered much territory. Its largest parcels were in Conant Street near Liberty Avenue and in King Street at North Broad Street, but it had many smaller scattered plots of land it used from time to time.

Hiram T. Jones also conducted a nursery extending from North Avenue to Wilder Street near Salem Avenue. The Hutchinson and Tichenor florists were on North Broad Street near the

Evergreen Cemetery and the McGhee and Gehrie Monument works were located near them.

Early residents recall that the streets were so muddy and rutted in Saybrook that rubber boots and rubbers had to be worn to reach the trolley cars in North Broad Street. Many of the residents to avoid carrying or wearing them left the boots and lantern they carried to light their way through the dark lanes behind the display monuments at Coe Avenue. None of the residents reports that any of the rubbers or lanterns was stolen.

The section in 1906-07 was considered country to many New Yorkers who had their summer homes along Conant Street, but made occasional winter visits to their estates.

Recreational facilities were close at hand. Children swam at Salem Dam, skated on Cook's Pond in Union Avenue at Linwood Place, went sleigh riding on the property of a Mr. H. Isham near Salem Avenue and Fairbanks Street, and played ball on open fields in Hurden and Looker Streets.

A Saybrook Citizens Union or Saybrook Citizens Improvement Association was formed about 1905 and made requests for city improvements such as paved streets, joining of the local streets with those in Elizabeth, sidewalks, crosswalks, electric lights, mail delivery, street lamps, street name signs at intersections, house numbers, water supply, improved drainage, sanitary and storm sewers, garbage collection, police and fire protection.

The lack of a fire department caused the formation of the Saybrook Volunteer Fire Company. It was incorporated on June 4, 1913 with thirty-three members in order to be permitted to purchase a building for a firehouse at Hollywood and Long Avenues. This volunteer group continued in operation until 1932, when it was disbanded. It formed the basis for the present fire department.

A train whistle was used as the fire alarm. It was replaced by a large metal fire gong located near Long and Hollywood Avenues. A two-wheel pumper was the department's only equipment and it had to be dragged to the fire by the men. Ladders for the fire fighting were stored at Woodruff Avenue, Conant Street and Hollywood Avenue.

Residents wanted greater protection at the Long Avenue crossing on the main line of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. A warning bell was placed at the site, but residents complained it rang continuously. Finally a gateman was stationed at the crossing.

The section was traditionally Republican, but the candidates also ran on the Progressive party ticket.



SAYBROOK VOLUNTEER FIREMEN

The home of Mrs. John Gwyer of 137 Conant Street was used for Roman Catholic services from May, 1904 to 1907 when a large dwelling in North Broad Street was purchased for St. Catherine's Church. The present church was erected in 1926.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Beale and Mrs. Fred Chapman canvassed the Conant Street area and found 35 children too removed from Elizabeth and Newark churches to attend Protestant services. An appeal was made to Rev. Samuel Graham, then pastor of Elizabeth Avenue Presbyterian Church, for aid in opening a school in the Beale home in the spring of 1909.

Rev. Mr. Graham and William Tunison, long-time superintendent of the Newark church school, organized the school. When the group outgrew the Beale's living room, dining room, library and front hall, they converted their barn loft into Sunday school quarters. The next year property at Coe and Salem Avenues was acquired and in 1911 the Saybrook Chapel was erected. It was dedicated on Children's Day following a parade from the Beale barn. The existing building for the Hillside Presbyterian Church was dedicated on April 17, 1927.

The Dod-Crane Company and many other builders began constructing dwellings in the area. These were described as "charming cottages" in "The Elizabeth Daily Journal." By 1927, plans were prepared by Luster and Luster, engineers, for the Hollywood Park area and the last major development, the Westminister section, began in 1936.

Shopping centers grew along Hollywood and Coe Avenues. The first motion picture theater in the community opened in Hollywood Avenue in 1914.

The rapid growth resulted in the erection of the Central Grammar School in Coe Avenue in 1917. This building is now called the Abram P. Morris - Saybrook School and is the only place in the area where the name, "Saybrook," is retained.

The Pingry School for Boys purchased land in North Avenue 11 years ago and the four-year old Conservative Congregation is now in the process of building a new modern synagogue at 910 Salem Avenue.

Just as the Old Saybrook section gave way to a modern suburban area, the banking methods of the Hillside National Bank, used in 1920 to serve the little community, have been replaced by new and modern methods.

The officers and directors of the Hillside National Bank constantly are reappraising and studying the bank's methods and adapting new systems and new machines which will serve to increase efficiency of operation and services for its customers.

