

Patchogue's Early Years

1840 — 1920

Patchogue was a relative late comer in the development of Long Islands Suffolk County. In 1655 Setauket was settled by a party from Connecticut, and other settlements soon sprung up in Coram, Mastic, Southaven and St. George's Manor. On the eastern end of Long Island other parties from Connecticut settled in the Hamptons and on the North Fork in the same time period. The Patchogue area remained a wilderness for a number of years. Humphrey Avery owned the land between the Patchogue and Swan Neck Rivers, covered by unsettled forest. In 1755 he placed this area as lot #3 on a lottery sale. It was purchased by Leoffer d'Leofferda on March 15, 1759. This date marks the beginning of Patchogue.

Patchogue's three streams attracted the first settlers, who took advantage of the abundance of waterpower available. There are indications of a mill existing in this area as early as the 1750's. Another mill was built on the Patchogue River in 1798. Squire Mott constructed a dam and built a mill on Swan River in 1814. Many other mills followed over the years. In the beginning of 1800 approximately twelve dwellings stood on the Kings Highway (later called Fulton Street and today Main Street). Another five dwellings stood on The Lane, which is today's South Ocean Avenue.

Justus Roe erected Patchogue's first hotel in 1808 on West Main Street near the Patchogue Lake. In 1820 he built another hotel on the northeast corner of Main Street and Ocean Avenue. Austin Roe Built the much larger Eagle Hotel on East Main Street in 1852, which was enlarged to twice its size in 1898.

Patchogue's location on the Great South Bay and the Patchogue River was ideally suited for the development of the oyster, fishing and shipping industries. The first license to harvest the bay waters was issued by Brookhaven Town in 1820. By 1850 three hundred men made a living harvesting oysters and clams.

Before the arrival of the South Shore Railroad Line in Patchogue in 1869, most commerce with New York City and other parts of the country was done by boat.

The Patchogue River made a great harbor, and as a result, schooners weighing up to 450 ton were based in Patchogue, which traded up and down the east coast of the continent and even traveled to ports in the Mediterranean.

The Army Corps of Engineers dredged the Patchogue River in the 1870's to make it the only deep-water port on the south shore of Long Island. A second dredging in 1900 improved the harbor further. Patchogue became a Port of Entry for the United States in 1875 with a customs house on South Ocean Avenue. The customs house was closed in 1922. In 1870 over three hundred boats were based here. All this activity created a great demand for new boats and their