

HISTORIC AND NATURAL DISTRICTS
INVENTORY FORM

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
UNIQUE SITE NO.	_____
QUAD.	_____
SERIES	_____
NEG. NO.	_____

YOUR NAME: Town of Islip/SPLIA DATE: April 1990

Town Hall, 655 Main St.
YOUR ADDRESS: Islip, L.I., N.Y. 11751 TELEPHONE: 516.224.5450

ORGANIZATION (if any): Dept. of Planning, Housing, and Development

1. NAME OF DISTRICT: Long Island Motor Parkway section, Central Islip & Islandia

2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Central Islip & Islandia

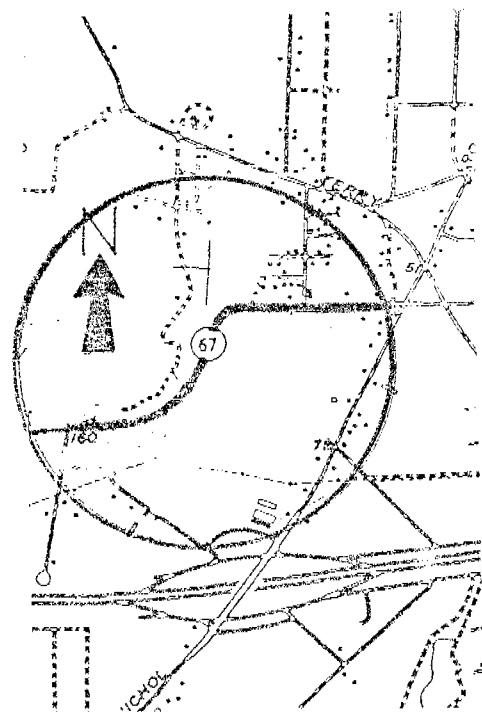
3. DESCRIPTION:

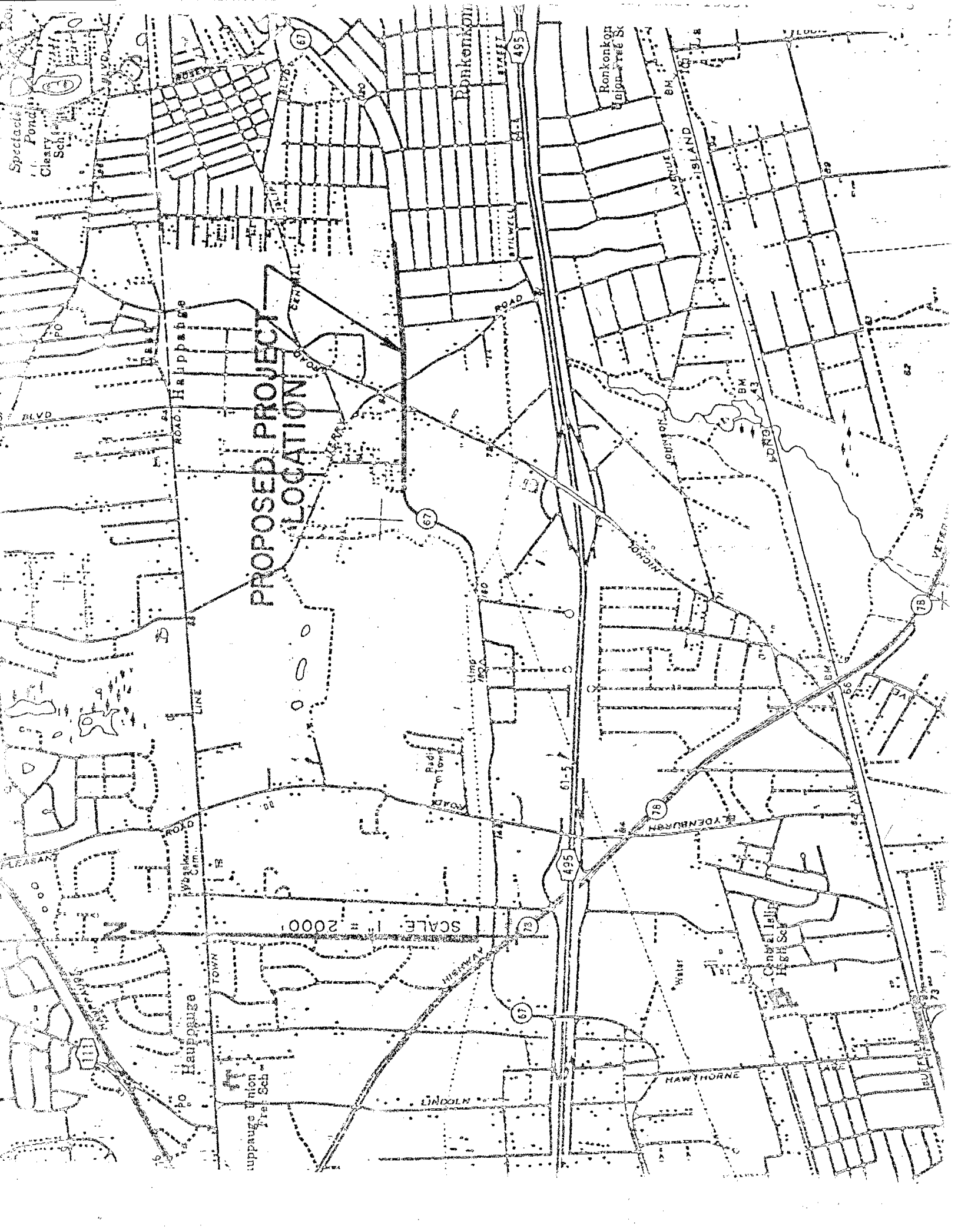
This portion of the Long Island Motor Parkway (CR 67) covers a distance of .8 miles from Bedford Avenue eastward to Nicholls Road. The section consists of an elongated "S" curve on a steeply inclined ridge of the terminal moraine and is bounded primarily by Suffolk County Parklands on the north and south. A nature trail maintained by the Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference traverses this section as well. Although widened and brought to code according to NYS DOT standards, this section of the Motor Parkway retains its original context and is not interrupted by curb cuts, sidewalks, and other interferences which have marred the integrity of other nearby sections of the historic roadway.

4. SIGNIFICANCE:

In 1974 the Town of Islip Landmark Preservation Committee listed the William K. Vanderbilt Motor Parkway as a significant site.

5. MAP: NYS DOT Central Islip Quad





PROPOSED PROJECT LOCATION

SCALE 1" = 2000'

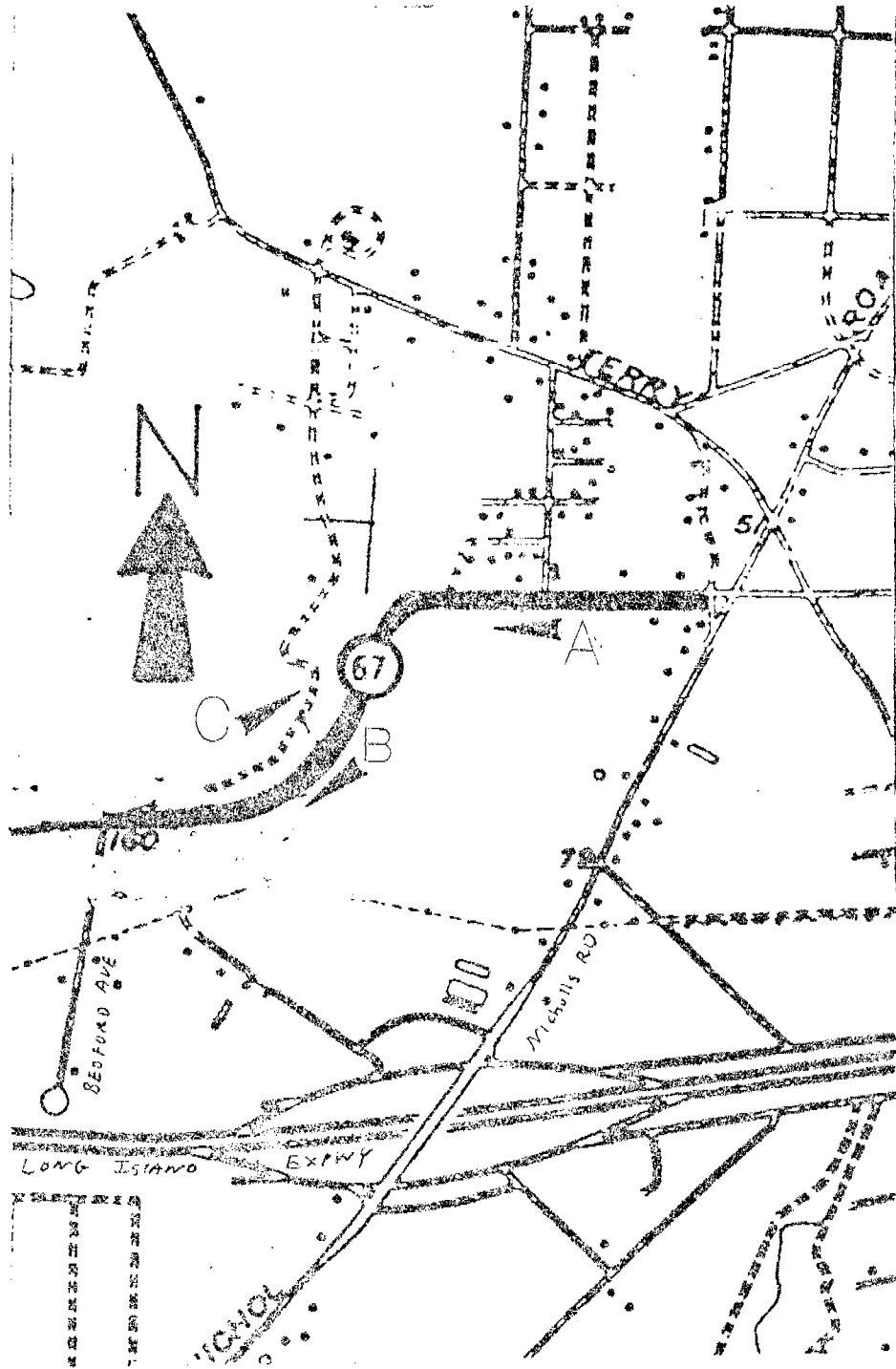
Map labels include:
 - **Streets/Roads:** Haddonfield Blvd, Haddonfield Road, Springfield Rd, Camden Rd, Lincoln Ave, Hawthorne Ave, Canby Ave, Union Ave, Island Ave, John St, Kings Hwy, and various local roads like 'ROAD TO TOWN' and 'ROAD TO TOWN'.

- **Railroads:** BURLINGTON RAILROAD, PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD.

- **Landmarks:** Spectacle Pond, Cleary Sch, Springfield Township, Haddonfield Township, City of Camden, Ronkonkton Union Free Sch, Canby High Sch, and various 'BM' (Bench Mark) points.

- **Other:** 'WATER' areas, 'PO' (Post Office) locations, and 'RADIATION' markers.

PHOTOGRAPH KEY



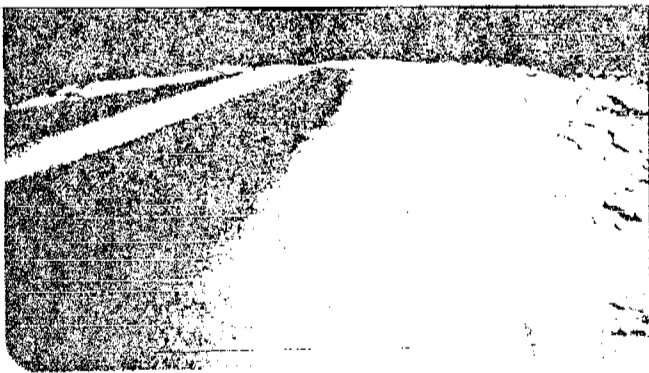
NYS DOT Central Islip Quad (enlarged)



PHOTO A - Neg. KK XVIII-21, fm. east.



PHOTO B - Neg. KK XVIII-24, fm. east.



"Dangerous Hill", travelling east at the top of the terminal moraine. 1964 view, Collection SPLIA.





West of Nicholls Rd.,
view towards west.
1964 view, Collection
SPLIA.



View towards west, road
curves to south and up
the hill. 1964 view,
Collection SPLIA.

Islip

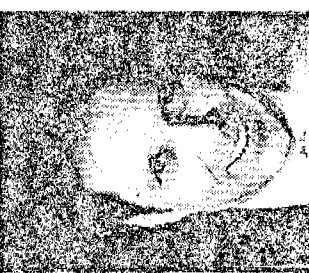
Of major concern to many of Islip's residents and businessmen is the preservation of the township's remaining open space. Some open areas which are in immediate danger are: Camp Edey in Bayport, which may be offered for sale next year; part of Sagtikos Manor lying south of Montauk Highway, which has been proposed for downzoning; and sections of the indigenous pine-barrens lying on both sides of the historic Motor Parkway on the ridge west of Lake Ronkonkoma, which are threatened with development.



The defining and preservation of the Motor Parkway tract, which supplements 55 acres recently acquired by Islip, would link the headwaters of two of Long Island's important river systems. The northeast branch of the Nissequoque River takes its rise in the hills in this neighborhood near the backbone of the island; and a short distance south of the ridge are the headwaters of the Connetquot Brook which flows through the Southside Sportsmen's Club to Connetquot River. The establishment of this natural area connecting the two rivers would create a highly desirable *greenbelt* across Long Island which is considered to be essential to the proper development of Suffolk County.

Opinions concerning these Islip areas may be addressed to Hon. George W. Raven-Supervisor, Town Hall, Islip, L.I., N. Y. 11751.

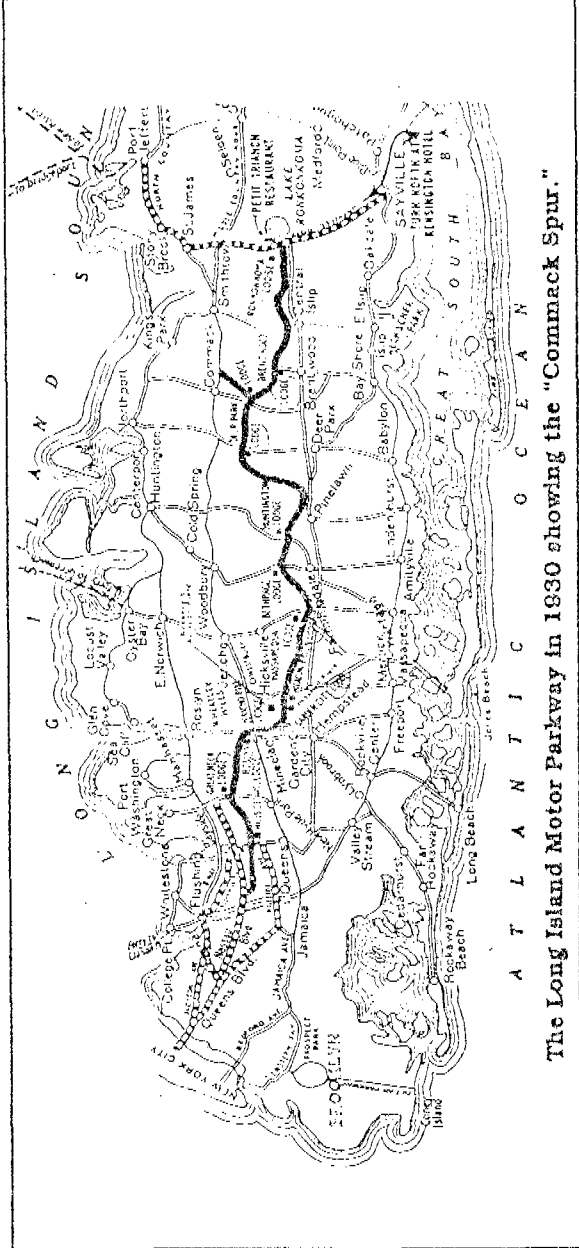
By Councilman Brad Harris
Smithtown Historian



I have been writing about the history of the Commack community. This article is about the Long Island Motor Parkway, its development, and the resulting impact that it had upon the Commack area! "The Long Island Motor Parkway..."

The Long Island Motor Parkway is a familiar landmark to most residents of Commack. This heavily travelled roadway, which winds through the southern parts of Commack, serves as the primary access road for the Hauppauge Industrial Park and so is used by thousands of commuters who daily make the trek back and forth to this site. Many other commuters, who make a longer haul into western Suffolk, Nassau County, or New York City, use this road as well. Those who travel this road as it winds its way from Lake Ronkonkoma into Huntington, rarely have the time to appreciate the fact that the road they are travelling on was once one of the finest roads in America. They don't have the time because they are too busy negotiating the traffic lights, concentrating on the stoplights of the automobile ahead, and nervously listening to the traffic reports for possible traffic jams. However, these frenzied commuters may have seen the historical marker which stands besides the road just to the west of the Commack Road intersection. This marker announced the fact that the Motor Parkway was the first concrete highway built in America in 1908. And surprisingly, it was built for speed.

The Long Island Motor Parkway, which is also referred to as the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway, was the dream of William Kissam Vanderbilt, Jr. William K. Vanderbilt, Jr. was an automobile racing enthusiast. "In his travels he has seen many car races. As a result of these European experiences young Vanderbilt decided America needed road races too" and he became responsible for sponsoring a series of automobile races on Long Island that are known as the "Vanderbilt Cup Races." To encourage drivers to participate in these races, Vanderbilt had a huge 10 gallon silver cup, 30" in height, designed as a prize for the winner of the races. These races were held in



The Long Island Motor Parkway in 1930 showing the "Commack Spur."

Nassau County, over public roadways. In 1904, 1905 and 1906. Unfortunately, they were marred by accidents and fatalities and came to an end when elected officials banned the use of public roads. This led William K. Vanderbilt to organize the Long Island Motor Parkway Corporation for the sole purpose of creating a private roadway that could be used for automobile racing. (Chris Vagis, **Huntington At The Turn of the Century**, "Automobiles.")

With the financial backing of men such as J. Pierpont Morgan, Jacob H. Schiff, Harry Payne Whitney, Henry Ford, and Alired G. Vanderbilt, the Long Island Motor Parkway Corporation had no trouble raising the necessary capital to build the roadway. Construction began shortly after the formation of the corporation in 1906, and by 1908, a ten mile section of the roadway had been completed and public officials permitted the Vanderbilt Cup Races to resume. "The roadway was paved, wide enough so that two cars could pass (although the lanes would be considered rather narrow by present day standards), the right-of-way was fenced in to discourage trespassers, and every intersecting highway, except for a few woods trails near the eastern end, were crossed overhead on steel and concrete bridges." (F.E. Reifschneider, Herbert Hale, and E.H. Charlton, "Long Island's Motor Parkway", **Long Island Forum**, June, 1962, p. 125.) The original scheme was to build this limited access roadway from western Queens all the way out to Riverhead, but the completed road

never went beyond the shores of Lake Ronkonkoma. The accompanying map shows the parkway as it was in 1930. The map also shows the location of a number of lodges that existed along the parkway and these were the toll gate stations.

The Long Island Motor Parkway was under construction from 1908 to 1913. By 1913, its terminus on Lake Ronkonkoma had been reached and the toll road was opened. When it was opened, the road was hailed as an engineering marvel of its day. This was because the Motor Parkway was unique in many ways. It was the first limited access highway, the first highway to use reinforced concrete as a roadbed, the first highway constructed with banked curves for high speed driving, and the first highway to have such safety features as non-skid surfaces, guard rails, and fencing. Since it was a private road, a \$1 toll was charged to travel on it and only automobiles were permitted to use the roadway. The engineers who worked on the design and construction of the road were careful to preserve the natural terrain and vegetation whenever possible, and the roadway was then carefully landscaped. The finished result was a roadway which wound through a hilly, beautifully landscaped right-of-way from Queens to Ronkonkoma. It was an ideal road for automobile driving and should have been successful for its owners as well. But this did not happen, and the Long Island Motor Parkway came upon hard times. More about this next week...

The affected stretch of the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway has been designated as a historic site by the Huntington Town Board and lies contiguous to a designated open space parcel that has been mapped on the Town Open Space Index, as well as to publicly owned and operated parkland. Consequently, this area is eligible for dedication to the Suffolk County Historic Trust; therefore, any action taking place in the above mentioned area should be considered a type I action under the provisions of Title 6 NYCRR 617.12 (b) (9) and Chapter 279 of the Suffolk County Code. Therefore, any removal of vegetation along this historic site greatly diminishes the historic character of the area, lessening its esthetic/social impact as an historic landmark. (See Historic and Natural Districts Inventory Form - attached.)

Also, it should be noted, the vegetation along Motor Parkway has been described by the Department of Public Works as predominantly oak, with tree size ranging from 2 to 24 inches in diameter. However, Wagon Wheel Lane and Red Oak Court lie in the easternmost portion of Motor Parkway and may contain state significant oak brush plains habitat.

Therefore, no vegetation should be removed from this site unless explicitly approved by a duly enacted resolution of the County Legislature.

Suffolk County Dept. of Public Works, 8/17/1989.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AT PROJECT SITE

CR 67, Motor Parkway is a minor arterial highway which extends from CR 93, Rosevale Avenue in Lake Ronkonkoma, to Half Hollow Road in Huntington; a distance of approximately 17 miles. The section of CR 67 under consideration, is bordered by Parkway Gardens Boulevard on the west and Port Avenue on the east. This section of Motor Parkway has been designated as eligible for inclusion in the Suffolk County Historic Trust.

Within the project limits, the existing roadway consists of concrete pavement with an asphalt overlay. There are two 12' lanes with 8' shoulders within a 100' right-of-way. The original pavement was constructed in the early 1900's and was later reconstructed in 1974.

The existing drainage system consists of interconnected leaching basins at various low points and individual leaching basins spaced every 500+ feet along the mainline. This system has insufficient capacity to handle the quantity of stormwater runoff from the 10 year design storm (5" rainfall in 24 hrs.) This situation results in flooding at the low points with eventual overflow onto adjacent private property.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LAND ABUTTING THE PROJECT SITE

Wildlife in the area includes the various common indigenous land animals and bird varieties found in residential areas of Suffolk County.

The project is located in a hilly area. The predominant soil types are Plymouth loamy sand and Riverhead sandy loam with slopes between 3 and 8%.

Zoning within the project limits is Residential A, AA, AAA, and B. Sections of CR 67 in this area are bounded by the Islip Greenbelt.



Lake Ronkonkoma, a large freshwater lake covering approximately 300 acres, is located approximately 3 miles to the east of the proposed project. In the vicinity of the project area, the depth to groundwater is approximately 15 to 25 feet.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The purpose of the project is to alleviate flooding in the vicinity of two low points on CR 67. These low points are located near the intersections with Parkway Gardens Boulevard and Edgewood Avenue. Recharge basins will be constructed near these locations. A positive system of drainage pipe and catch basins will be constructed along the roadway to intercept runoff and discharge it to the new recharge basins. Where possible, the existing leaching basins will be incorporated into the positive system.

The typical roadway section will remain unchanged (one 12' through lane with 8' shoulder in each direction). The existing shoulders and adjacent grassed areas will be excavated to install the drainage trunk line and then restored. The entire width of roadway will be resurfaced with a top course asphalt concrete pavement.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

Approximately 3+ acres of densely wooded land will be acquired and cleared to allow construction of the two new recharge basins. In the vicinity of Parkway Gardens Blvd., an additional 0.25 acres of wooded land will be

Suffolk County Dept. of Public Works, Dec. 1989.