

BUILDING-STRUCTURE 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.	<u>10305.006536</u>
QUAD	_____
SERIES	_____
NEG. NO.	_____

YOUR NAME: Town of Islip/SPLIA DATE: May 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

IDENTIFICATION

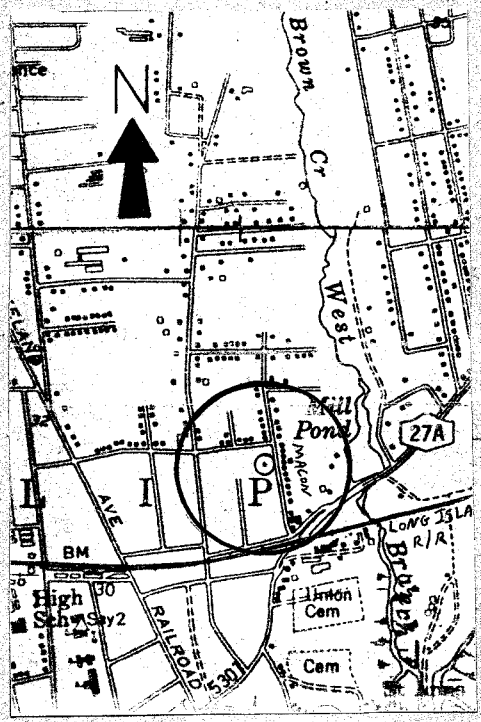
1. BUILDING NAME(S): Father Divine Mission House
 2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: Sayville
 3. STREET LOCATION: 72 Macon Ave.
 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public b. private
 5. PRESENT OWNER: _____ ADDRESS: _____
 6. USE: Original: residence Present: residence
 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes No
 Interior accessible: Explain private residence

DESCRIPTION

8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard b. stone c. brick d. board and batten
 e. cobblestone f. shingles g. stucco other: _____
 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: a. wood frame with interlocking joints
 (if known) b. wood frame with light members
 c. masonry load bearing walls
 d. metal (explain) _____
 e. other _____
 10. CONDITION: a. excellent b. good c. fair d. deteriorated
 11. INTEGRITY: a. original site b. moved if so, when? _____
 c. list major alterations and dates (if known): _____

12. PHOTO: Neg. KK XXII-34, fm. SE

13. MAP: NYS DOT composite Patchogue and Sayville Quads



14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known b. zoning c. roads
d. developers e. deterioration
f. other: _____

15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:
a. barn b. carriage house c. garage
d. privy e. shed f. greenhouse
g. shop h. gardens
i. landscape features: _____
j. other: _____

16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):
a. open land b. woodland
c. scattered buildings
d. densely built-up e. commercial
f. industrial g. residential
h. other: _____

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:
(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

Refer to 1979 Inventory Form

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):

Refer to 1979 Inventory Form

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: _____ Prior to 1915

ARCHITECT: _____

BUILDER: _____

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Refer to 1979 Inventory Form

21. SOURCES:

Refer to 1979 Inventory Form

22. THEME:

Research by Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities - KEK

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ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

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UNIQUE SITE NO. _____
QUAD _____
SERIES _____
NEG. NO. _____

Sa 23a

green

YOUR NAME: Town of Islip Town Hall DATE: 8/17/79

655 Main Street
YOUR ADDRESS: Islip, N.Y. TELEPHONE (516) 224-5450

ORGANIZATION (if any): Department of Planning and Development

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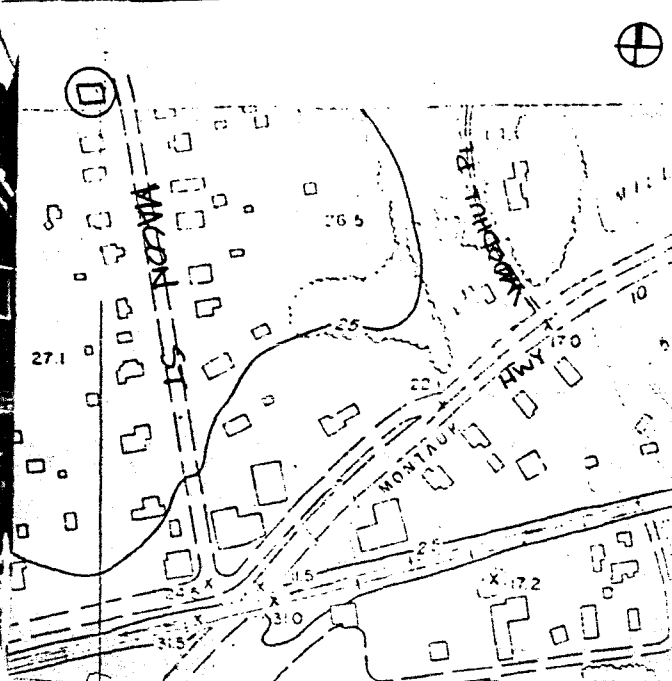
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- 3. STREET LOCATION: 72 Macon Street
- 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public b. private
- 5. PRESENT OWNER: Mrs. Divine ADDRESS: see #3 above
- 6. USE: Original: mission house Present: residence
- 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes No
Interior accessible: Explain _____

DESCRIPTION

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12. PHOTO: ELW VII, # 12
from SE, south side & E. front

13. MAP: Bowe-Anderson



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17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:
 (Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

The Mission House is on the northeast side of Macon Street, just north of the Long Island Railroad tracks.

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):

1 1/2 story rambling side entrance house with cross gable roof
shingles throughout, and 2/2 balcon-fenetre windows. Varigated
 Original picket fence survives in front of property.

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: before 1915

ARCHITECT: _____

BUILDER: _____

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

The Father Divine Mission House was purchased by the religious leader in 1926. It was used as a headquarters for his religious movement beginning in 1930, which resulted in a reputed membership of 4,000,000. It is still owned by Mrs. M.J. Divine, who carries on his Palace Mission, INC. D. Mertins owned it in 1915.

This house has been designated a town landmark.

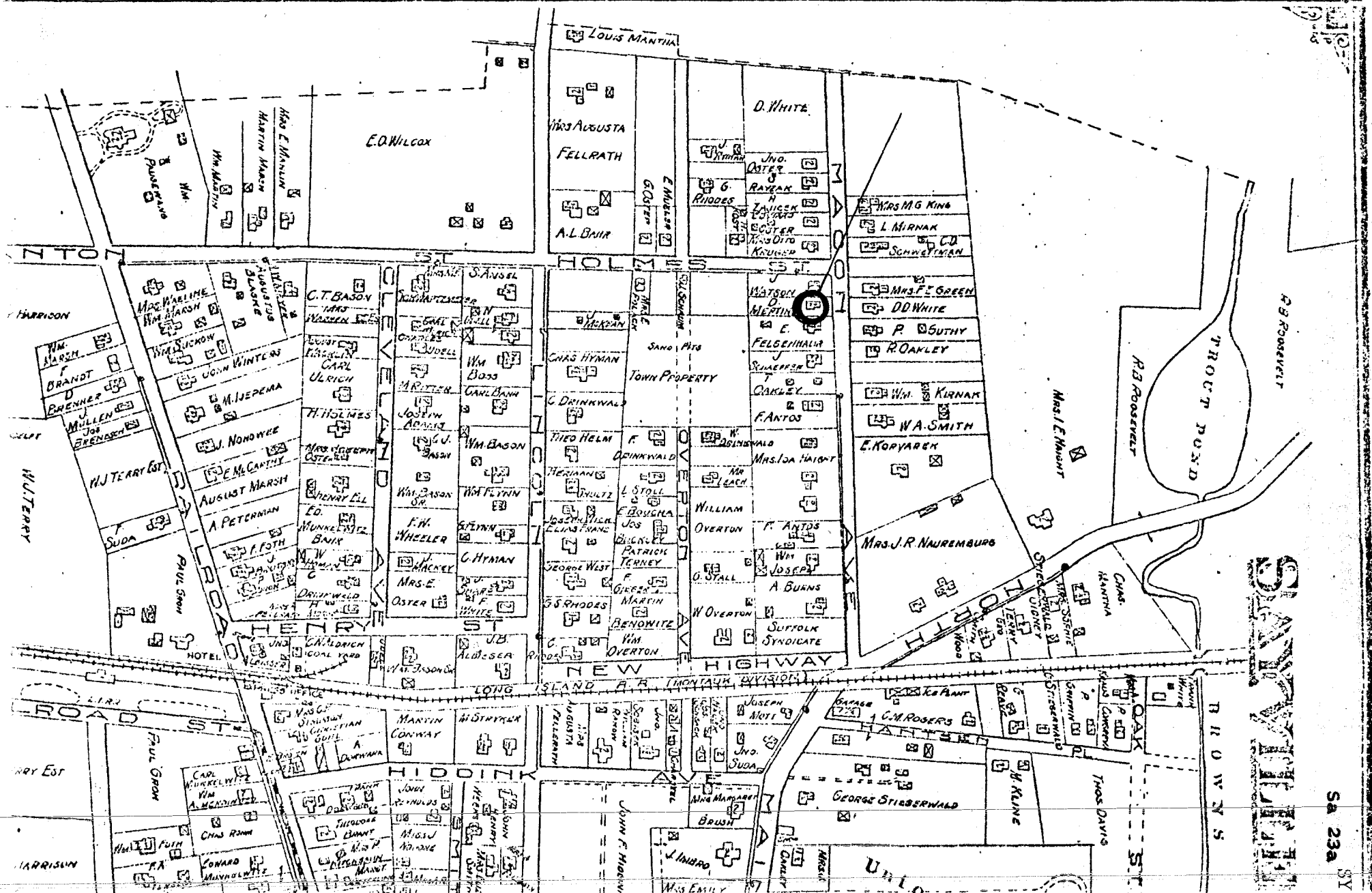
21. SOURCES:

Charles P. Dickerson, A History of the Sayville Community, Suffolk County News, 1975. p. 85.
 Belcher-Hyde, E., Atlas of Suffolk County, Brooklyn: 1915, pl. 29.

22. THEME:

Prepared by: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities
 Setauket, New York 11733
 Nina Monastero, Research Assistant
 August, 1979

Belcher-Hyde, E., Atlas of Suffolk County, Brooklyn: 1915, pl. 29. Sayville, NE section.



A HISTORY OF THE SAYVILLE COMMUNITY

age of rum running, and the Ku Klux Klan, and Father Divine.

Much rum was run thru the Fire Island Inlet and across the bay to the mainland in Sayville and West Sayville where trucks were waiting under cover of darkness to evade the Coast Guard on Fire Island. Many lives were lost on both sides in this dangerous pursuit. As a consequence there were substitutes for Scotch Rye and Gin made in the bathtub, that produced death or blindness. Convoys of imported liquor started from Eastern Long Island and paid tribute to the police in every community between Montauk and New York City. In March 1924 seven trucks with 1500 cases of liquor were seized in Sayville. The loss to the bootleggers was about \$100,000.

The Klan came to this area about 1922. A 15 foot cross was burned in the Village Square on Feb. 12th, 1923. In 1925 a public Klan meeting was held in the Methodist Church. Hundreds of local misfits and oddballs joined the organization, and enjoyed the cross burning ceremonies. For \$16.50 you could buy a nightgown and a dunce cap. Leading citizens and politicians who should have know better, kept their mouths shut, either from fear of harm, or loss of votes.

There was an old movie theater on Railroad Avenue until after World War II known as the Novelty Theater. A news item of 1924 says "The sound effects man will be on the job at the Novelty Theater for the Hoot Gibson production "Hook and Ladder". You will hear gongs, sirens, crashing glass and the hum of engines. It will make you feel as though you were looking at the real thing." Admission 10c.

The story of Father Divine begins with his birth on a Georgia rice plantation about 1870. His name was George Baker, the son of a slave. He came to Sayville in the 1920,s and bought a home on Macon Street. He was in the gardening business, but was also itinerant preacher on the side. He had a number of black companions living with him who did housework in Sayville and were respected as good workers.

In 1930 George Baker had a vision that he was God and that his name was Father Divine. Many negroes came to visit and to all he fed free food. So popular did his home become, that on week-ends bus loads of people came out from New York, including many white people. The sumptuous meals served free to all, caused many folks to call the mission "Heaven." His followers believed he was truly God, and they gave him money and jewels. As the numbers of his followers increased, Father Divine became richer.

The local merchants in Sayville saw him take a big black bag of money to the bank each morning. They called it the "celestial kitty." But with his popularity, the crowds and cars in the area increased to the extent that they became a public nuisance. And when they sang the noise could be heard for blocks around. Finally a Committee of Sayville people asked if he would be willing to move farther out from the closely built up residential area. But Father Divine refused.



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A HISTORY OF THE SAYVILLE COMMUNITY

Finally he was brought to Court as a public nuisance in the Court House on Railroad Avenue. The Judge fined him \$25. He presented a \$500 bill which the Judge could not change. As time went on the fervor of the singing and prayer meetings became so intense that the neighbors could not sleep. Again he was brought to a higher Court where he was fined and given a prison sentence. A few days later the Judge dropped dead. Father Divine said it was a judgement from God. "Peace - ain't it Wonderful" was heard all over the Village. A mass meeting of the people of Sayville was held in the school.

Finally realizing that further resistance would lead to more trouble, Father Divine moved his mission to Harlem and then to Philadelphia. He traveled widely, owned millions of dollars in real estate, and was said to have millions of followers.

Little was heard of Father Divine in Sayville for many years although he continued to own the mission on Macon Street. Mother Divine died in 1940 and in 1946 he married a white Canadian girl whom he called "Sweet Angel." It was in 1960, that a line of black Cadillacs came thru Main Street and went up to the mission on Macon Street. Father Divine said he was soon to die, and that he had returned to rebuild the mission and dedicate it as his permanent shrine. He said that after travelling all over the world, he had decided that "Sayville was the only true heaven on earth."

In 1965 Father Divine died. It is said he was close to 100 years old.

In the decade of the 1920's Sayville became a sort of summer capital for Tammany Hall. It was on Handsome Avenue that Michael Cruise the City Clerk built his summer home. On his parlor shelf was the little tin box where you deposited the money if you wanted a favor from the infamous Mayor - Jimmy Walker. And it was in Sayville that Mayor Walker handed his resignation to the City Clerk.

When West Sayville built their new Fire House in 1931, the old fire house was moved to Foster Avenue in Sayville and became the American Legion Hall. The Smith Wever Post #651 was founded October 23, 1919.

An Ad in the local paper in 1939 read as follows: "New five room cottages, plot 75 x 150 feet, \$3000, payments \$21 per month.

Two organizations that have had a cultural impact on Sayville were founded in 1949 - the Wet Paints organized by Mrs. Elinor Haff and the Sayville Musical Workshop organized by Robert Danes.

In 1956 the British Broadcasting Co. sponsored by the Voice of America and hosted by the Suffolk County News, spent two weeks in Sayville making TV pictures for a world wide telecast of "Life in Sayville."

Letters came from all over the world, but particularly from small towns in the British Isles. Here is an example of a letter from Cheltenham, in England, which the writer says is a very old village nestling in a range of hills called the Cotswolds.

Dickerson, p. 86.

A History of the Sayville Community, 1985.

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Christian Brothers and recognized by the U.S. Government as a training center for Reserve officers. Officers of the Regular Army serve as military instructors for the 200 students. Those completing the four-year course in military science are eligible for reserve commissions as second lieutenants in the U.S. Army. The War Department has designated the academy grounds as a military base in the event of war.

SAYVILLE, 51.2 m. (3,950 pop.), is an oyster center, packing the 'Blue Point' for shipment the world over. It is also a yachting center, with one of the best sailing courses on Great South Bay. Father Divine, the Negro cultist, maintained a 'heaven' in the village in 1929. A ferry, foot of River St., connects with Cherry Grove on Fire Island, as the Outer Barrier is here known.

PATCHOGUE, 56.2 m. (7,147 pop.), has been something of an industrial center for two centuries. Three small streams in the vicinity were dammed for lumber and gristmills probably before 1750. By 1800 the Union Twine Mill, third of its kind in the United States and the first to supply cotton carpet warp, was in operation. Later capital turned to the manufacture of lace, which now provides employment for about 800. The population includes a considerable number of Italians and Poles. LAKEVIEW CEMETERY (L), State 27 near Waverly Ave., embraces the site of the former Hart's Tavern, visited by Washington in 1790, and contains the grave of Seba Smith, who wrote under the pen name of 'Major Jack Downey,' an early philosopher of the Sam Slick and Mr. Dooley fraternity. With him is interred his wife, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, writer of many books and short stories, and a pioneer in the agitation for equal suffrage for women.

East of Patchogue is a dwarf pine and oak country, through which the route hugs the Long Island Railroad.

At 61.1 m. is the junction with a concrete road.

Right on this road to BROOKHAVEN, 1 m. (510 pop.), the home of William Floyd (1743-1821), Revolutionary War soldier, statesman, and signer of the Declaration of Independence. He served as a member of the Continental Congress for several years.

At 65.6 m. is the junction with Mastic Road.

Right on Mastic Road, which bisects Mastic Neck, to the POOSEPATUCK INDIAN RESERVATION, 1.4 m., a little colony of a dozen or so weatherbeaten and run-down clapboard cottages completely surrounded by woods. When the Poosepatuck, coming from the South, claimed affiliation and sought refuge on the Shinnecock Reservation, the Shinnecock disclaimed kinship, asserting that the Poosepatuck were Negroes, and thereby forced the establishment of a separate reservation. That the Poosepatuck have a strong strain of Negro blood is apparent. Mastic Neck is heavily wooded in oak, cedar, and spruce. Of it Dr. Thomas Hearne wrote:

None die except with age
Among the groves of Mastic.

East of Mastic Neck is a row of villages: MORICHES, 66.1 m. (250 pop.); CENTER MORICHES, 68.1 m. (1,000 pop.); and EAST MORICHES, 69.8 m. (847 pop.). The dunes begin to edge in here.

At EASTPORT, 72.8 m. (964 pop.), the Long Island duckling whitens the shores and waters of inlets. From an obscure beginning, the industry

has grown in recent years ment to many during the section are several large d from 40,000 to 200,000 of t' At WESTHAMPTON street.

Right here to WESTHAM at the point where the Outer and Quantuck Bay. Two roads continue to Southampton, passing and Tiana Beaches. The beach was of September 21, 1938, in

At 78.7 m. is (L) SANCTO fowl Association, where many cousins. This section is no many hunters.

At 79.1 m. is the junction

Right here to QUOGUE, Beach at the western end of S

HAMPTON BAYS, 86 (see *Center Island Tour*), communities near by.

CANOE PLACE (L), 88 m. roofed, weathered, shingle several rambling attached for the élite. At the east which the highway crosses (R) with Great Peconic Bay the western end of the southern tour of the land in this is National Golf Club of America

At 92.3 m. is (R) the SHIP pop.), which occupies the dunes of the Indians are seen

Neighbor to this Reservation (3,792 pop.), settled by one therefore one of the oldest growing center and a famous port, and Mt. Desert. Mastic beach were all but destroyed by New York City stores

Job's Lane and Gin Lane given name of the man an enclosure for cattle. sons—the wealthy summer

The PARRISH MEMORIAL by Samuel L. Parrish, in

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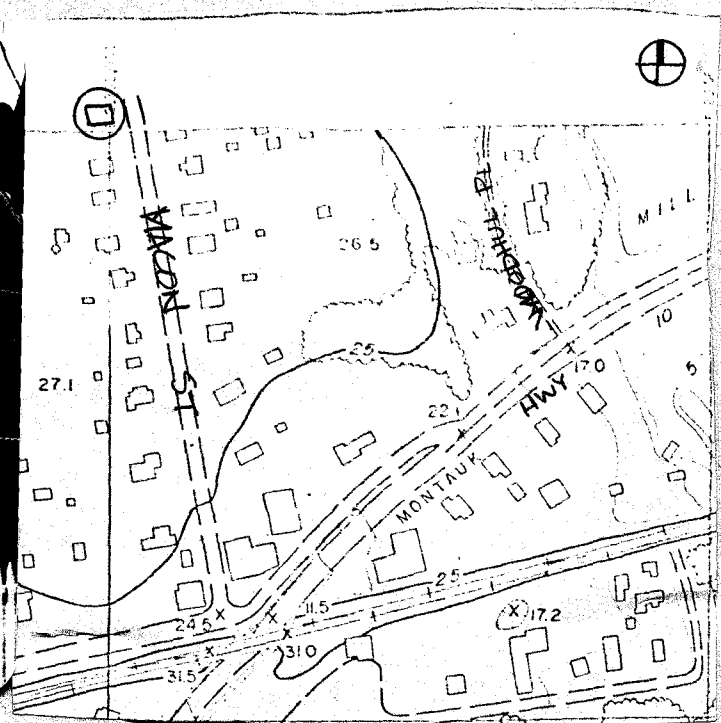
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12. PHOTO: ELW VIII, # 12
from SE, south side & E. front

13. MAP: Bowe-Anderson



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