

Toll Lodge Gets a Lift To New Site

By Monte R. Young

With all the pomp and circumstance of a dignitary parading through town, the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway Toll Lodge yesterday ducked traffic lights, electric wires and tree limbs as a tractor inched it slowly along the streets of Garden City.

Hundreds of people along the three-mile route lined the streets and took photographs of the 82-year-old landmark that was moved from its original site at Vanderbilt Court, just off Clinton Road, to its new home at Seventh Street, just east of Franklin Avenue. There, it will be restored and will double as the home of the Garden City Chamber of Commerce and a museum dedicated to the Vanderbilt Parkway.

"I thought some dignitary had come to town when I looked down Old Country Road and saw all the police and flashing lights" Charles Simendigner of Mineola said. "This is a part of our history. It is a part of Nassau County history. It's good that they are restoring it."

Like many of the spectators, Neil and Mary Anne McIntyre of Mineola walked along beside the lodge, which was once used to collect tolls along the road and served as a home for the toll keepers.

"We've been following it since eight this morning," Neil McIntyre said. "When I got up this morning, I could see it coming down Clinton. It looked so huge. Saving it was a great idea. Making that turn at the corner will be interesting to see."

"I don't know if the St. Patrick's Day parade tomorrow will draw this big of a crowd," he said. "Most of the time, a building like that is just demolished."

Industrialist William K. Vanderbilt built the 48-mile parkway, believed the first of its kind, in 1911 to link Queens and Ronkonoma. Vanderbilt, an auto racing enthusiast, constructed the road primarily to serve as the scene for the Vanderbilt Cup Race, an auto race that was run annually earlier this century over 30 miles of Long Island's public roads.

Motorists paid \$2 to drive from one end of the paved parkway to the other at tollbooths along the road. The 12 two-story French Provincial lodges were built by famed New York architect John Russell Pope, a friend of Vanderbilt's.

Only two lodges are left standing. One, in Roslyn, is used as a private home. The Garden City lodge was a private home and was used by the original toll keeper long after the Nassau County portion of the road was closed in the 1930s.

It was sold last year to a developer who planned to demolish the structure and build a new house until the chamber stepped in to save it.