



**Garden City
Chamber Of Commerce
and Taylor Warner Realty
Present**



**A History Of The
Vanderbilt Motor Parkway
and
The Garden City Toll Lodge**

Vanderbilt Opens New Era In Auto Travel

Garden City Toll Lodge Last Remaining Of World's First Parkway

When the Nicholas Brothers' huge house moving truck slowly edges the Garden City Vanderbilt Motor Parkway Toll Lodge onto Clinton Road for its 2.9 mile trip to a new site, it will be a milestone event in Long Island history. Perhaps not as significant as Charles Lindbergh's 1928 departure in the Spirit of St. Louis from Curtis Field to Paris or the opening of the Motor Parkway itself in 1911, but certainly it will stand in the history of accomplishments to preserve what has played such a huge part in the history of Long Island, and in particular, Garden City.

The Toll Lodge, etched into history by the heir to fortunes amassed by early American pioneers, serves to remind us of a new era, the birth of the automobile, and the romance that man had with its' speed and power.

William K. Vanderbilt Jr., was



Paying the toll was a lot easier in 1908 at the Bethpage Lodge

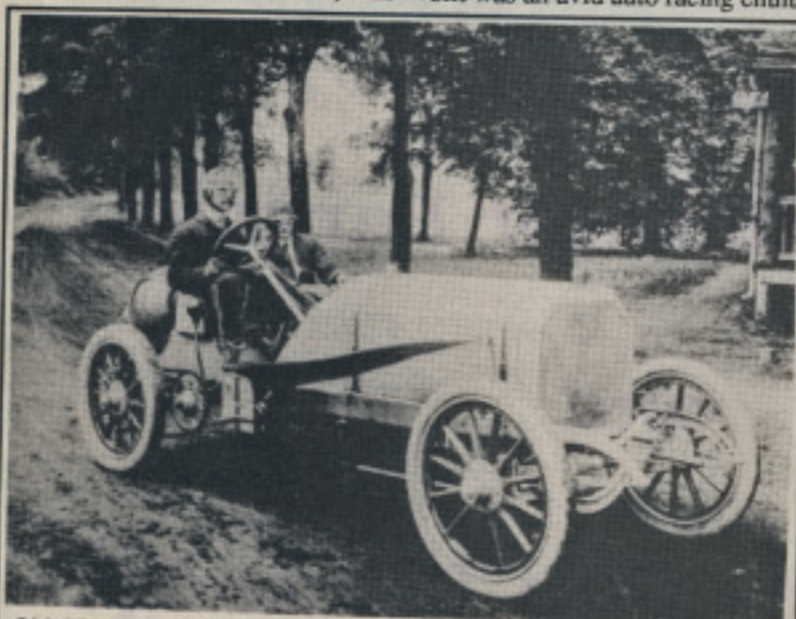
born in 1878, the greatgrandson of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, ship captain from Staten Island. Vanderbilts father and grandfather built on the Commodore's moderate wealth by pioneering the early days of railroads and now it was time for Young Vanderbilt to explore the potential of the automobile.

At the turn of the century, Vanderbilt was an avid auto racing enthu-

siast, competing in many races in Florida and Europe. His interest and participation in the new sport earned him world-wide notoriety and in 1904 he lent his name to one of the most famous competitions of the day, The Vanderbilt Cup Race.

In October, 1904, competitors from around the world entered the first Vanderbilt Cup Race, travelling at speeds of up to 80 miles an hour over a 29 mile course. The course began in Westbury, on Jericho Road, later known as Jericho Turnpike, worked its way south to Hempstead Turnpike, west to Queens County near the present site of Belmont Race Track and back east along Jericho Road through Floral Park, New Hyde Park, and Mineola. Drivers would run the course ten times with two timed safety zones when the course crossed railroad tracks or went through populated areas of Hempstead.

The race itself, although significant, was not as important as the honor bestowed on Long Island for having this site selected and the impact it had on the development of the area. It was written in the program of the day that "what Long Island most needs to hasten its development is adequate



Old 16, winner of the 1908 Vanderbilt Cup, was a 1906 "Locomobile" manufactured in Ct. The car weighed 2,200 pounds and was driven by Joe Tracy with Al Poole riding as mechanic. Photo courtesy of Dennis Egan.

Parkway Revealed Wonders Of Long Island

transportation facilities. . . which will bring the 'stranger within its gates.'

The automobile, in a general way, fills these needs, and the Cup Race, in particular, will be the means of introducing thousands to its pure air and splendid properties."

It was based on this feeling that William K. Vanderbilt conceived the idea of the Motor Parkway.

Vanderbilt had the idea that if a better roadway could be created it could be done in America. That better roadway was the motor parkway, the first of its kind in the world and the first to charge tolls. The concept was one we take for granted today but just 84 years ago it was a pioneering effort. If you think some of today's roads are bad, the roads of that era were just being laid out and in many areas of the island they were non-existent. A trip to Long Island from New York City was an adventure that took not only many hours but also was dangerous.

When the idea for a super-highway, designed for high speed, limited access and dust-free came to Vanderbilt he met with a group of interested financiers and formed the Long Island Motor Parkway Corporation in 1906, at the age of 28.

The corporation began to obtain rights-of-way from Flushing, Queens to Lake Ronkonkoma in 1907. To raise funds, beyond the nearly \$5 million Vanderbilt was eventually to spend of his own, the Corporation sold bonds, and in 1908, construction began. When completed the parkway cost an estimated \$10 million.

The original Motor Parkway consisted of 48 miles of paved roadway with entrances and exits provided at various locations. At each of the access locations was a toll lodge and a family maintained the business of collecting fares. Along the route were approximately 60 highway and railway grade crossings. How-

ever with superb planning they were eliminated via overpasses or by going under the crossing. It was this fact that made the travel along the parkway so carefree. Motorists had little cares other than to sit back and enjoy the woodlands on either side of the road. The road, including landscaping was to be 100 to 200 feet wide at some points, but for most of its length the road itself was 22 feet wide.

Groundbreaking ceremonies took

Although construction used only horse, mule and manpower, it introduced almost all of today's road engineering techniques. Roadbeds were graded, guard rails were used, bridges were constructed on site of steel, and the most innovative practice of all was the steel reinforcing of the concrete for added strength to accommodate the vehicles of the day. Sections of the roadway are still in use as walking and bicycle paths through Cunningham Park and Alley



Some of the 2,000 laborers working on the parkway in 1908

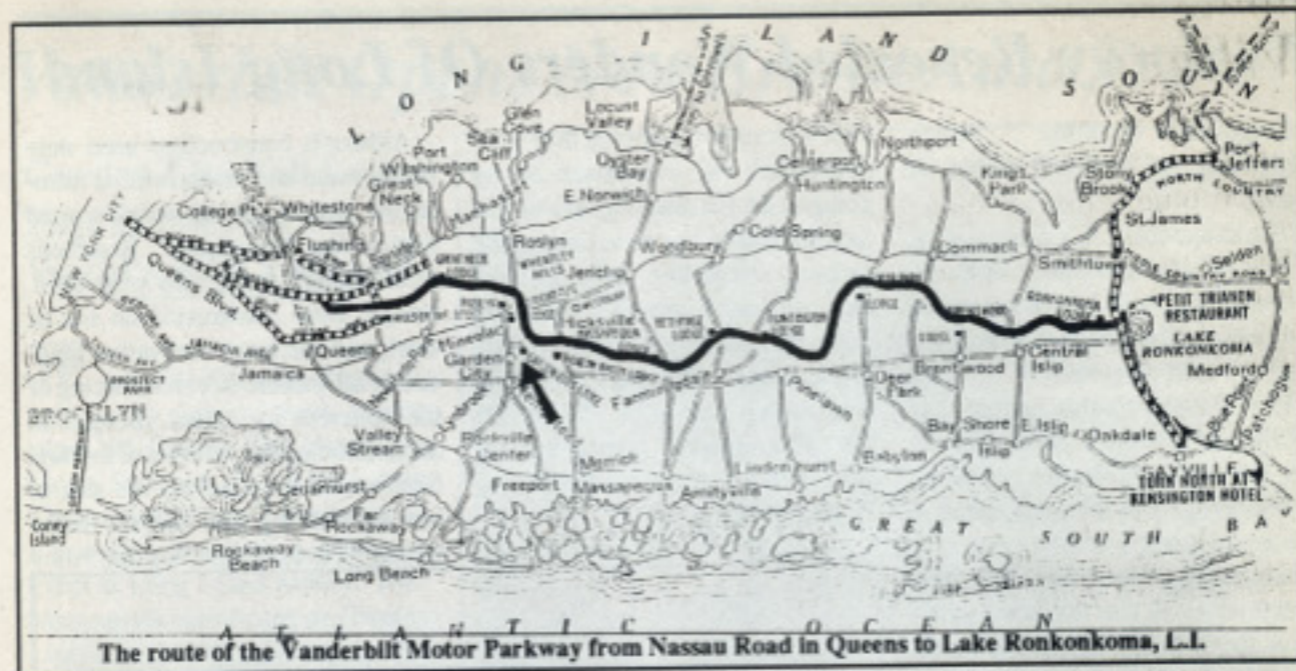
place on June 6, 1908 in Bethpage, on the "Barnes tract at the intersection of the central branch of the Long Island Railroad, Stewart and Jerusalem Avenues." Work began immediately on this 11 mile section to Garden City in order to have it completed by October, in time for the 1908 running of the Vanderbilt Cup race. A.R. Pardington, vice-president and general manager of the Motor Parkway Corporation wielded the ceremonial "first shovel" and in his opening day speech said the route was laid out "with a view to including as many of Long Island's beauty spots as possible."

The Garden City to Bethpage section was used in the Cup Races from 1908 to 1910, the last time the race was run on the Vanderbilt course.

Park in Queens. At the peak of construction nearly 2,000 immigrant workers, mostly Italian, were employed in the project.

The roadway had twelve exits and toll lodges, designed by famed architect John Russell Pope. Socially prominent and a contemporary of Vanderbilts, Pope was later to design the Baltimore Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the National Gallery, Constitution Hall and the Archives Building in Washington.

The Toll Lodges were all similarly built as two-story, brick and stucco "cottages" approximately 24 by 30 feet. Many had steep-pitched, shingled roofs with dormers; large central chimneys; and shingled canopies over the access roads. Inside, each had an office, a pleasant kitchen, a



charming living room, and two bedrooms upstairs. The Toll Lodges were located at Hillside Avenue, (at Francis Lewis Blvd.), Great Neck at Lake Success, Roslyn, Jericho Pike, Garden City, Meadow Brook, Massapequa, Bethpage, Huntington, Deer Park, Brentwood and Lake Ronkonkoma. The Petit Trianon Inn in Lake Ronkonkoma was the terminus of the roadway, famous as a lakeside mecca for bathing, boating, and dining.

At its height, the Motor Parkway accommodated 190,000 cars a year. When completed in 1911, an annual ticket cost \$55 and was good for the period of January 1 through December 31. A season ticket from July 1 to December 31 sold for \$44. Special license plates were issued to annual ticket holders so they could be easily identified by the toll taker. A special one way ticket from all lodges west of the Meadow Brook Lodge to New York was a bargain at 50 cents and included the driver, the car and all the persons in the party. It also included war tax. Full fare for the parkway when opened was \$2 but was reduced to \$1.50 in 1912, to \$1.00 in 1917 and to only 40 cents in 1935. A trend almost unheard of in modern times.

Originally the parkway was to extend all the way to Riverhead but the rights of way for the 28 miles

past Lake Ronkonkoma could not be obtained. Today the Long Island Expressway covers this route and handles nearly 750,000 cars a day compared to the modest 190,000 a year in the early part of this century.

Despite the success of the parkway in its use, the road was never a financial success. Robert Moses came along in the mid thirties and constructed Northern State, Southern State, Meadowbrook and Wantagh Parkways, providing free access to the wonderment of Long Island and in 1938, the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway was officially closed. The Parkway was decided to the counties through which it ran in lieu of back taxes of \$80,000 and the

counties in turn sold the land.

The Garden City Toll Lodge is the only remaining portion of the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway left in its original condition. The last remaining vestige of a dream a young pioneer had that gave birth to a whole new way of travel. Long Island has long been considered the "cradle of aviation" in America. By preserving the Garden City Toll Lodge it should also remind us that Long Island was also the "Cradle of the Automobile", and William K. Vanderbilt Jr., led the way to make our auto industry what it is today.

How the Toll Lodge came into the hands of the Garden City Chamber of Commerce is still another pioneering



A motorist approaches the Bethpage Toll Lodge, one of 12 entry points to the Vanderbilt Parkway. The car would enter to the left of the canopy, pay his fare and pick up the parkway running under the overpass.

Village, Chamber Sign License Agreement

Chamber Of Commerce Continues Pioneer Spirit

effort. After the Vanderbilt Parkway closed in 1938, the toll taker at the Garden City station, which was also being used as the the Vanderbilt Parkway Corporation Headquarters, purchased the building, and was used as his family residence for the next 30 years. The man's name was Ernst, but unfortunately available records do not provide more detailed information.

Mr. Ernst sold the home in 1977. It is one of two homes nestled on Vanderbilt Court, just north of Stewart School on Clinton Road, and adjacent to the huge storm basin behind Stewart Field. Since then, ownership of the Toll lodge changed many times, most recently being owned by Robert Krener, President of Taylor Warner Real Estate in Garden City. Mr. Krener sold the Lodge in 1987.

It was at this point the Chamber of Commerce became aware that the new owners of the property intended to tear down the Toll Lodge to make way for the construction of a newer and larger home.

Michael Stafford, a Garden City Attorney and resident, and a member of



Groundbreaking ceremonies, June 6, 1908 in Bethpage was attended by hundreds of people mostly arriving by horse and carriage.

the Chamber of Commerce, said that when the Chamber of Commerce heard of these plans, he and other members of the Chamber approached the builder and asked if he would be willing to donate the Lodge if the Chamber would move it. The builder responded favorably in early 1988.

The Chamber of Commerce, with more than 350 members, has been promoting community activities for many years earning the reputation as being one of the most progressive organizations of its kind in the country. Each year, on Easter Sunday, the Chamber sponsors an antique car

show and parade, one of the major attractions on Long Island. The Chamber also sponsors a Christmas parade and tree lighting ceremony, honors a "Citizen of the Year", presents a Community Achievement award and salutes a small business owner each year. It also publishes an annual community events and organization guide. The preservation of the Toll Lodge was to become just another contribution the Chamber would make to the Garden City community.

Althea Robinson, Executive Director of the Chamber, said that the Chamber had been looking for permanent office space for many years and "when this opportunity came along we said let's do everything possible to make it happen."

It took several months of negotiations with Village officials and property owner groups to come up with an appropriate site for the historic building and to iron out details of ownership and maintenance. Finally in November, 1988, an acceptable site was located when the Village Board of Trustees agreed to make space available in Parking Field 6E at the Southeast end of Seventh Street. On December 19th, 1988, a license agreement was signed by Robert L. Schoelle Jr., Village



Nicholas Brothers makes Toll Lodge ready for move to 7th Street

History Preserved By Dedicated Group

Administrator and Agnes DiChiara, President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Under this agreement, the Chamber would pay for the relocation of the Toll Lodge and renovate the house. The Chamber would then turn over the lodge to the Village and under a lease agreement, would pay maintenance costs, and insurance but no rent for a ten year period. The Chamber would use a portion of the Lodge for their permanent offices and create a Vanderbilt Motor Parkway museum open to the public in the main lobby.

The Chamber of Commerce immediately put together a committee to coordinate this mammoth project hoping to have the Lodge moved and renovated by Easter, 1989. Under the chairmanship of Michael Stafford, and guidance of Chamber President, Agnes DiChiara, top community and business leaders of Garden City volunteered to make a success of this project. Douglas Kurz, of Coopers and Lybrand and past president of the Chamber, was put in charge of fundraising, coming up with an aggressive program to raise the \$225,000 needed to complete the project. His committee includes representatives from nearly every major financial institution doing business in Garden City including Richard Hamber, North Fork Bank and Trust; James Costello, Kidder Peabody; Paul Fitzpatrick, Merrill Lynch; Donald Kelly; Dean Morman, Pepitone Industries; Larry C. Varvaro, LCV Marketing; and Arthur Thompson, National Westminster Bank.

In order to get the project underway as soon as possible, several local banks pledged short term building loans to the Chamber and the Bank of New York was the first to present a \$10,000 donation. The Garden City Kiwanis Foundation



Garden City Chamber of Commerce Officials break ground at the new site for the Vanderbilt Parkway Toll Lodge on 7th Street. L to R are Richard Hamber, Althea Robinson, Paul Fitzpatrick, Michael Stafford, Harvey Brillat, Jim Costello, John Morrison, Douglas Kurz, and Chamber President Agnes DiChiara. (photo by Dave Allison)

started a major appeal for funds by sponsoring a village wide mailing to residents and Nassau County businesses.

Douglas Wilke was chosen as the architect/engineer in charge of the relocation, having experience in moving historical buildings. Wilke was the architect hired to move the historic Stewart house in July 1988 for the Garden City Historical Society. Nicholas Brothers were also chosen to handle the physical move of the Lodge.

A major portion of the Toll Lodge effort is taking place behind the scenes by Vincent Seyfried, the Village Historian, and coordinated by Ronnie Renkin, a residential Chamber member. Seyfried has been busy collecting old photographs and historical data on the Vanderbilt Parkway as well as the Toll Lodge, including visits to Henry Austin Clarke, renowned antique car buff and historian. Clarke's library includes original license plates used by the Parkway as well as an original 1910 Simplex automobile and hundreds of photographs. Seyfried believes the museum to be established in the Garden City Toll Lodge will have the finest and most complete collection of parkway memorabilia in existence when finished. John Mor-

rison, village resident and honorary Chamber member, has also been tracking down memorabilia concerning the Parkway. Morrison has been the coordinator of the Chambers Easter antique car show and parade for many years.

The overwhelming enthusiasm shown today by Village officials, residents, and business leaders is testimony to the vision that William K. Vanderbilt had nearly 85 years ago. To Vanderbilt, blessed with great wealth, the parkway was to a great extent self serving, but none the less was conceived brilliantly, paving the way to a whole new world of travel.

The moving and preservation of the Toll Lodge will always serve as a reminder of this period in automotive history and through the efforts of the Garden City Chamber of Commerce will be placed in the center of one of the finest communities on Long Island for all to enjoy.

This article was co-authored by David W. Allison Jr., a resident of Garden City, and Dennis Egan, Treasurer of the Bayside Historical Society with contributions credited to Vincent Seyfried and the Queens Historical Society. It was published by the Bayside Times Publishing Corp. with all rights reserved.

WE INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE

INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROJECT IN SEVERAL WAYS

\$100 and up - As an acknowledgement of support, contributors will receive, from the Garden City Chamber of Commerce, a frameable replica of the original stock certificate issued by W.K. Vanderbilt in the formation of the Long Island Motor Parkway Corporation in 1906 and initially received by such notables as the Guggenheim's and the Rockefellers.

\$1,000 - Patrons of the Toll Lodge - Permanent public listing of all Patrons to be displayed in Toll Room (open to the public).

\$5,000 - Toll Lodge Backers - Silver Plaque of all Donors will be displayed in the Toll Room.

\$10,000 - Toll Lodge Founders - Eight Sponsorships. Plaque to be placed noting Founders over entry to each room as well as gold plaque of all Founders to be displayed in Toll Room.

Toll Room (Museum)	Bank of New York
Kitchen	<u>Available</u>
Living Room	<u>Available</u>
Toll Lodge Canopy	<u>Available</u>
South Room	<u>Available</u>
North Room	<u>Available</u>
Meeting Room	Kiwanis
Landscaping	<u>Available</u>

For further information call the Chamber of Commerce at 516-746-7724

Send Your Contribution to: Garden City Chamber of Commerce
953 Franklin Avenue
Garden City, N.Y. 11530

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____