

# Freeport's Story

**Filling in the South Shore's Historical  
Void and Bringing Visibility to a Gem of a  
Community**

Regina G. Feeney

Head of Reference /Archivist

Historian, Incorporated Village of Freeport

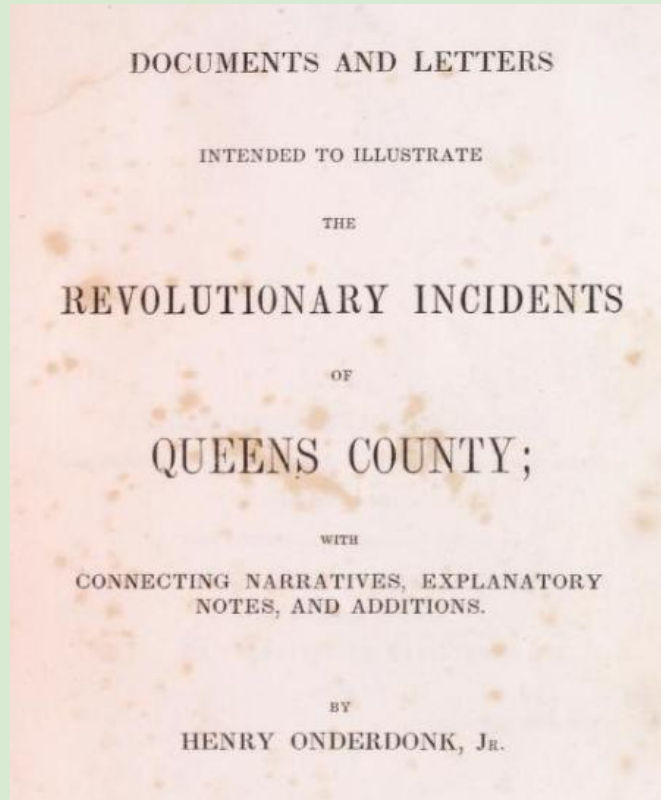
**[Rfeeney@freeportlibrary.info](mailto:Rfeeney@freeportlibrary.info)**

# To the victor goes the spoils... and the history!





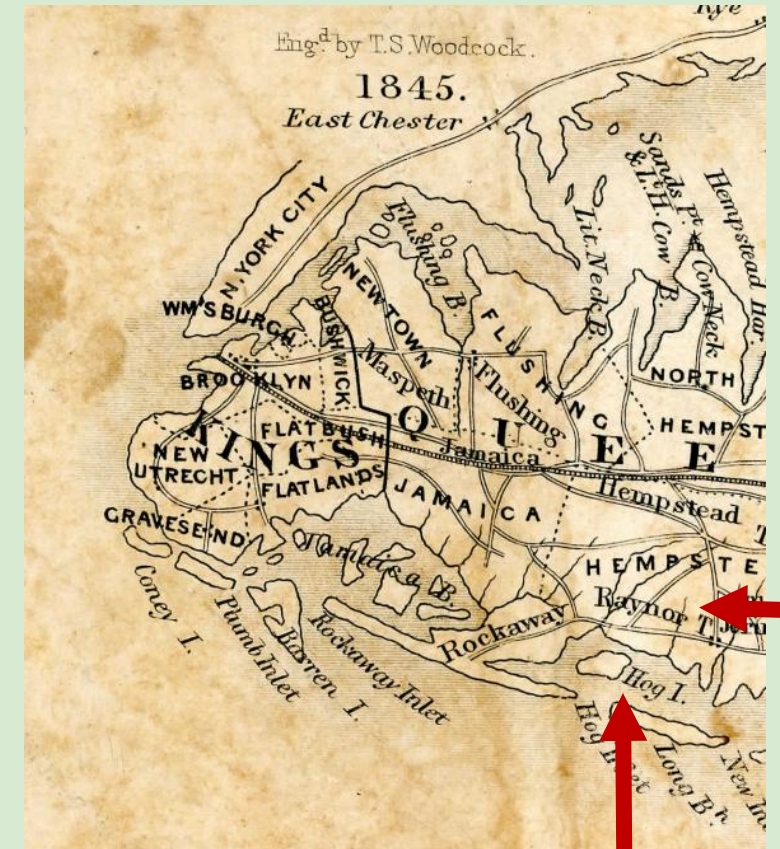
# Our Coats Were Red (mostly)



352. *Gaine, July 11, '80.* Last Tuesday morning his Majesty's ship Galatea run ashore near Hog Island, the sloop Revenue, privateer, of New London, W. Jagger, commander, fitted out by Joseph Woolridge, carrying 12 guns and 52 men. The vessel bilged, the men jumped overboard and swam ashore with their arms: on which 13 of the militia of Hempstead South, viz:

Richard Green,	Ezekiel Raynor,	Isaac Smith,
John Mott,	Reuben Pine,	Joseph Smith,
Joseph Mott,	Benjamin Palmer,	Abel Southard,
Joseph Rainer,	W. R. Smith,	[who was wounded,]
Elijah Rainer,	Amos Shaw,	

commanded by Ensign Elijah Wood, assembled, and after a skirmish of 6 hours, took 10 of the rebels prisoners, together with their boat. Mr. Wood was then reinforced by 26\* more of the Hempstead South militia, when the remainder of the rebels were secured, and on Thursday all brought to the Main Guard in this city.



# Revisionist History

George Washington Did Not Sleep Here



1938



1951



Today





# Urban Legends



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yclopedia

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Search

## Freeport, New York

23 languages

Article Talk Read Edit View history Tools

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Coordinates: 40°39′14″N 73°35′13″W﻿ / ﻿40.65389°N 73.58694°W﻿ / 40.65389; -73.58694

For other locations with this name, see *Freeport (disambiguation)*.

**Freeport** is a village in the town of Hempstead, in Nassau County, on the South Shore of Long Island, in New York state, United States. The population was 43,713 at the 2010 census, making it the second largest village in New York by population.<sup>[3][4]</sup>

A settlement since the 1640s, it was once an *oystering* community and later a resort popular with the New York City theater community.<sup>[5]</sup> It is now primarily a *bedroom suburb* but retains a modest commercial waterfront and some light industry.

### History

[ edit ]

**Pre-colonial settlement** [ edit ]

Before people of European ancestry came to the area, the land was part of the territory of the *Meroke* Indians.<sup>[6][7]</sup> Written records of the community go back to the 1640s.<sup>[7]</sup> The village now known as Freeport was part of an area called "the Great South Woods" during colonial times.<sup>[7]</sup> In the mid-17th century, the area was renamed Raynor South, and ultimately Raynortown, after a herdsman named Edward Raynor, who had moved to the area from Hempstead in 1659, cleared land, and built a cabin.<sup>[6][7][8]</sup>

**Freeport, New York**

Village

Incorporated Village of Freeport

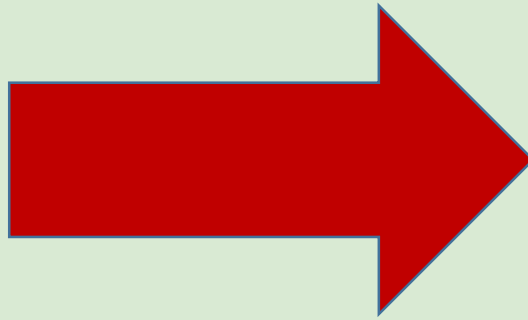


Freeport Village Hall, also known as the Municipal Building, was built in 1928 to replicate Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and was enlarged in 1973.

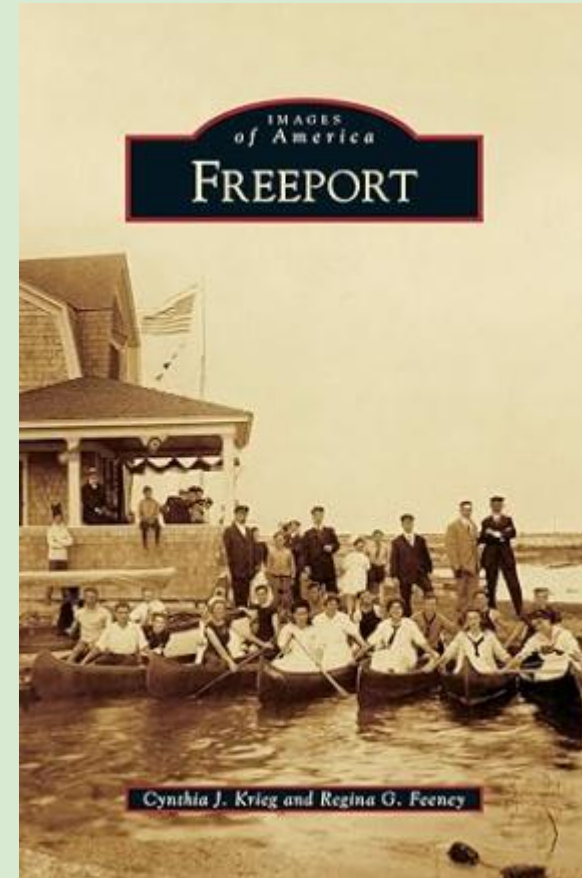


Seal

# Where We Started



NYS HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS





# Problems with Digitization

## Metadata Isn't History



Item Description	
Title	Woodlief Canal & Hotel
Description	Black and white photograph of boats on Woodlief Canal at the turn of the twentieth century. The boat on the right of the photograph is the launch "Naptha" owned by Georg P. Bergen. The "Cambelle" sloop in the foreground was owned by Hiram R. Smith and just ahead of the sloop is a catboat "Mardi" owned by S. R. Smith. The catboat moored on the left bank was owned by Dr. Hammond. The Woodlief Hotel is at the north end of the photograph.
Subject	Woodlief Canal--Freeport (N.Y.); Woodlief Inn--Freeport (N.Y.); Canals; Boats
Location	Freeport - Nassau County - New York
Date of Original	1897?
Publisher of Digital	Freeport Memorial Library, 144 W. Merrick Road, Freeport, NY 11520 Tel: (516) 370-3274, www.nassaulibrary.org/freeport
Physical Format	Black-and-white photographs
Type	Still Image
Physical Description	photograph, b/w; 8 x 10 in. (20.32 x 25.40 cm.)
Format of Digital	image/jpeg
Identifier	1902.002.281
Digital Collection	Freeport Historic Photographs
Holding Institution	Freeport Historical Society
Contact Information	Freeport Historical Society & Museum, 300 So. Main Street, Freeport, NY 11520, Tel: (516) 623-9532, email: ask@freeportlibrary.info, <a href="http://www.freeporthistoricalmuseum.org">http://www.freeporthistoricalmuseum.org</a>
Library Council	Long Island Library Resources Council
Notes	This material may include outdated attitudes, language and cultural depictions that could cause offense.
Rights	In Copyright - Educational Use Permitted, <a href="http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/HC-EDU/1.0/">http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/HC-EDU/1.0/</a>
File Name	1902002281.jpg
Date created	2008-07-15

# Problems with Publishing

## A Lot

1. Limited space – number of pages/images
2. Limited resources for research
3. Publisher's rules
4. The critics!
5. New information conflicts with published information



## Freeport Memorial Library

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### Freeport History Encyclopedia: Home

Freeport History Encyclopedia includes authoritative information about Freeport's past. This guide is perfect for anyone wanting to know more about our village.

Search this Guide Search

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#### Welcome

Welcome to the Freeport History Encyclopedia! This guide provides authoritative information about Freeport's incredible past. It includes the history of local institutions, parks and buildings, as well as biographies of the men and women who have added to the development and culture of the Village of Freeport.

A number of the entries had been contributed by Cynthia J. Krieg, the former Village of Freeport Historian and president of the Freeport Historical Society.

Entries have been proofed and edited by Denise Rushton, Trustee of the Freeport Historical Society.

The Freeport History Encyclopedia is a work in progress. Please check back often for new entries and updates.

[Click here for additional information related to researching Freeport history.](#)

If you can't find what you are looking for, try searching our digitized newspapers.

#### Quick Facts

##### Quick Facts about Freeport

Freeport was settled in 1659.

Freeport was known as Raynortown and Raynor South until 1853 when the name "Freeport" was chosen by popular vote.

Freeport was incorporated in 1892.

Today, Freeport is the second largest incorporated village in the State of New York.

[Click here for a timeline of Freeport.](#)

#### New Entries

[Woodcleft Inn](#)

##### New Collection!

[Freeport High School Athletic Hall of Fame](#)

#### Librarian / Archivist / Public Historian



#### Local History Resources

##### Woodcleft

Woodcleft (also known as Woodcleft Park) is a section of Freeport that was developed by John J. Randall. It extended from Merrick Road on the north to Woodcleft Canal on the south. In 1890, the section was opened up for building purposes. This property was originally comprised of the farms of S. S. Carman, Elisha Raynor, Elbert Cox, D. W. Pine, and John Holloway, and was combined with the adjoining lands known as the Whalley and Southard sections. It was said that the streets in this section were laid out five feet wider than other streets in Freeport. By 1900, Randall had constructed 50 houses in this section. [Samuel R. Smith's home](#) was identified as being located in Woodcleft Park.

Later, Woodcleft represented only the area of Freeport located around Front Street and west of the Woodcleft Canal. In 1914, this area was sometimes referred to as the "Venice of Freeport." This same moniker would be applied to Meister Beach decades later.

According to a 1914 map, Woodcleft was identified as being part of an unincorporated section of Freeport.

[Click here for images related to Woodcleft.](#)

##### See Also:

[Meister Beach](#)

[Randall, John J.](#)

[Woodcleft Avenue](#)

##### Sources:

"Church Societies." *Brooklyn Times Union*. May 19, 1894, 3. Accessed October 5, 2019. [newspapers.com](#).

E. Belcher Hyde. "Northwest Section." 1914 Map.

[Freeport Methodist Church](#). *Freeport: Past and Present, With a Prospect of Its Future*. Freeport, NY, 1900.

"Woodcleft As Seen From Brooklyn." *Nassau County Review*. May 29, 1914, 5. Accessed December 12, 2016. <http://myshistoricnewspapers.org/cccn/an95071433/1914-05-29/ed-1/seq-5/>.

Researched by Regina G. Feeny, December 15, 2016.

Updated by Regina G. Feeny, Accessed October 5, 2019.

- [Woodcleft Real East Brochure](#)  
Source: John J. Randall Co.

- [Woodcleft, 1914](#)  
Source: E. Belcher Hyde.

- [Woodcleft](#)  
Source: Brooklyn Daily Eagle. September 8, 1910, 35.

- [Woodcleft Real Estate Poster](#)

# My Solution Regina's Brain



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<a href="#">Yearbooks 1927-2005</a>	<a href="#">Early Descriptions of Freeport</a>	<a href="#">Teacher Resources for Local History</a>	<a href="#">Virtual Tours</a>	<a href="#">Subject and Vertical Files</a>	

#### Freeport Story

##### The Freeport Story

by Cynthia J. Krieg, Village Historian (2002-2023)

Freeport, or as it was originally called Raynor South, later Raynortown, was founded in 1650s by Edward Raynor, after he came from Hempstead village. These were the Great South Woods with beautiful streams, well supplied with fish, flowing to a bay that yielded plenty of fish.

In colonial days, Raynor South was known as a "free port" by seafarers. The legend is that boat captains landed their cargo to avoid the fees charged for bringing goods into New York City or Sag Harbor. More likely, since there were no waterways large enough for big ships to dock, smaller local boats used dock space that local baymen provided without having to pay a fee. In 1853 the residents voted to

#### About Me



Regina Feeny

Email Me

Contact:  
516-379-3274

people who built summer  
in 1892 decided the

filling the lowlands with

#### Local Genealogies

The Freeport Memorial Library has the following family genealogies:

1. Cornelius Family
2. Samuel and Mary Dodd LI R 929.2 D
3. Ella Adelia (Bedell) Hunt LI R 929.2 H
4. Kouwenhoven Family (LI R 974.721 B)
5. Raynor Family, LI R 929.2 C
6. Raynor Family History LI R 929.2 M
7. Rock Smith Family LI R 973.3 C
8. Mildred Tucker LI R 929.2 T (2 volumes)
9. Verity Family (1976 edition) LI R. 929.2 B
10. Verity Family (2000 edition)
11. Mary Elizabeth Ryan and John Francis A. Steward LI R 974.723 P
12. Williamson Family [Freeport Autho] LI R 929.2 B
13. Rasanen and Tanner Families [Genealogy Collection]

#### Online Genealogies

[The Seaman Family in America Captain John Seaman](#)

#### Online Genealogies

- [The History of the Allison, Or Allison Family in Europe and America](#)  
This source also mentions the Ellison Family on Long Island.

#### Local Newspapers

[Click here for searchable historic newspapers.](#)

#### Local Cemeteries

##### History of Freeport's Cemeteries

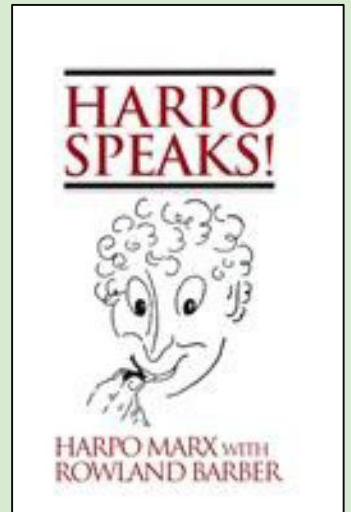
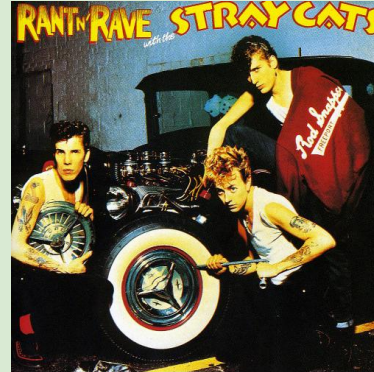
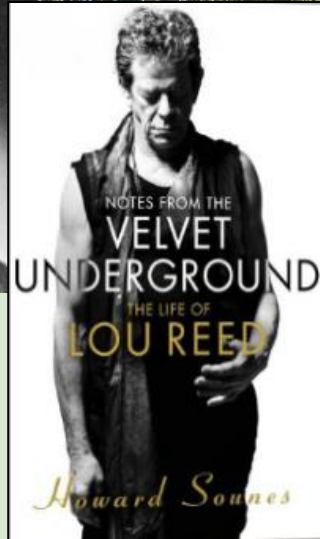
For almost three centuries, Long Islanders buried their dead in local church cemeteries, family plots, or community graveyards. From the early 1800s to 1922, the Village of Freeport had at least four burial grounds. The Powell Family Cemetery established in the 1830s was located on Grand Avenue near Babylon Turnpike. The 50 x 500 feet plot of land known as Smith Family Cemetery was also established in the early 19th century on Merrick Road close to Guy Lombardo Avenue. The Benedict Poor House Cemetery located near Poor House Road (now Bayview Avenue) was established in the early 1800s. The most well known burial ground, the Freeport Cemetery (sometimes referred to as the Presbyterian Cemetery) was established in the early to mid 1800s.

The demise of local cemeteries occurred after Greenfield Cemetery in Uniondale was established in 1870 and when the population of Freeport grew making land more valuable. All traces of the Poor House cemetery disappeared in 1894. After the descendants of the Smith family sold the burial grounds for development to Henry Crandall in 1900, 20 graves were moved to Greenfield Cemetery. The grandson of the founder of the Powell Cemetery had about 13 family plots moved to Greenfield in 1900. By 1904, the condition of the Freeport Cemetery had deteriorated to such a state that it was becoming a public nuisance. A year after the cemetery's last interment in 1920, the land was condemned and ownership transferred to the Freeport Schools so a new high school could be built. All bodies were removed and relocated. Most of the re-interments occurred in Greenfield Cemetery.



# Public Programing

## Don't Know Much About Freeport History

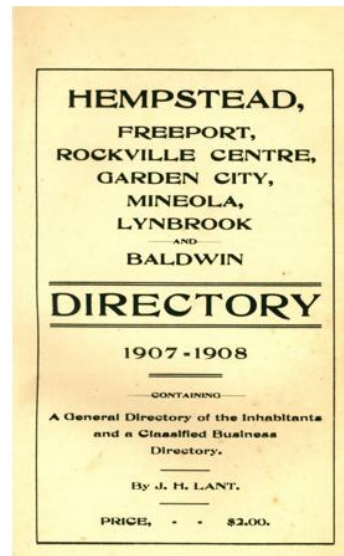
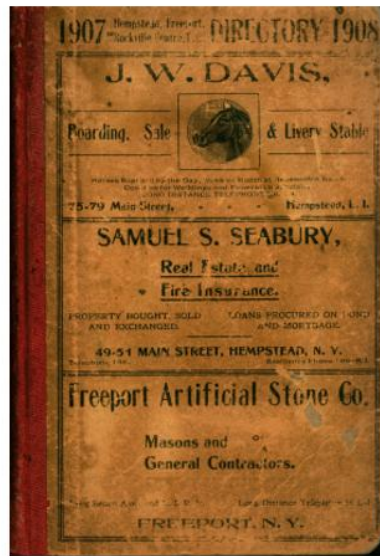


# Public Programing

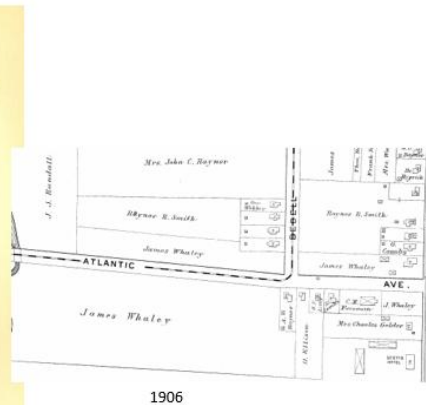
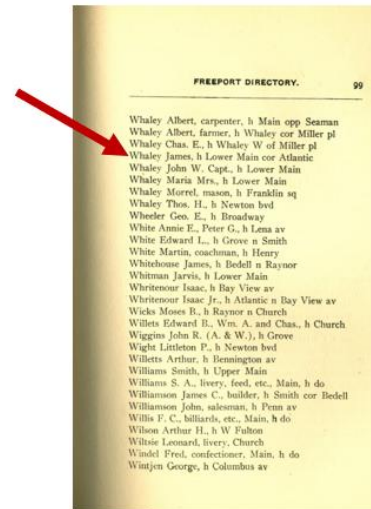
## Regina Reads the Phonebook

*Interesting People, Places, and Businesses Found in the Historical Directories and Phonebooks of Freeport*

### J. H. Lant, Directory 1907



### J. H. Lant, Directory 1907





# Public Programing

## Murder, Mayhem, and Mystery in Freeport

Regina G. Feeney  
Librarian/Archivist/Village Historian  
Freeport Memorial Library

## The History of Freeport's Waterfront: From a Landlubber

Regina G. Feeney  
Librarian/Archivist  
Freeport Memorial Library

## Where Freeport Sleeps

The Final Resting Places for Freeport's  
Pillars, Killers, and Notables

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Librarian/Archivist/Village Historian

## Freeport Walks Into a Bar

The Spirituous History of Drinking Establishments  
in the Village of Freeport

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Freeport Memorial Library  
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## Prohibition In Freeport

Presented by  
Regina G. Feeney  
Freeport Memorial Library

## The Jews of Freeport

A Brief History of Early Jewish Culture in the  
Village of Freeport

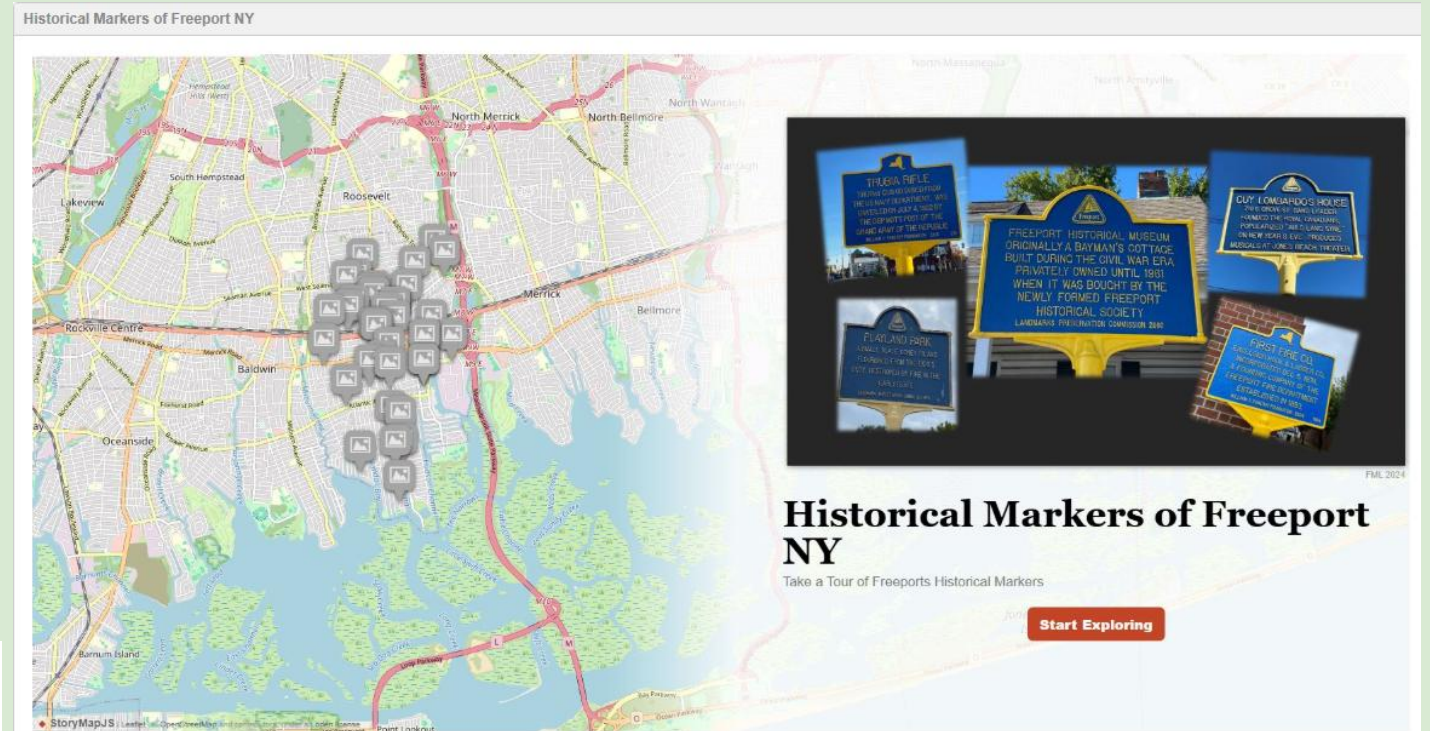
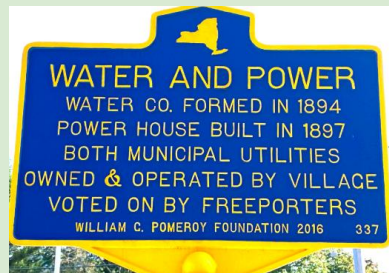
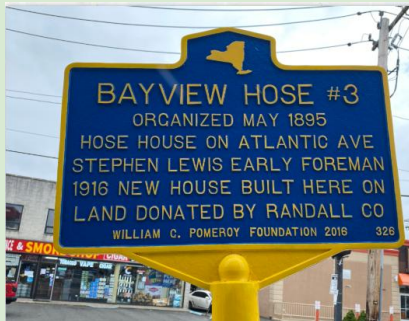
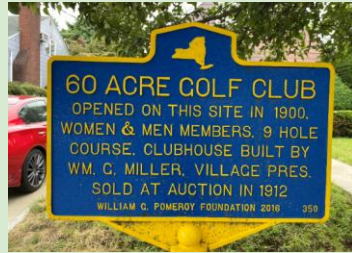
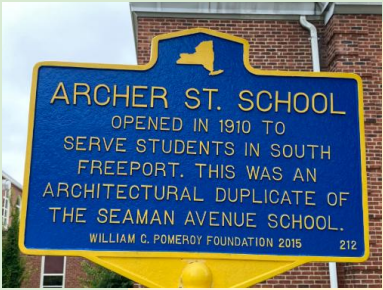
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## Memories of Bennington Park

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# Pomeroy Roadside Markers

## Using Primary Documents



## Virtual Walking Tour



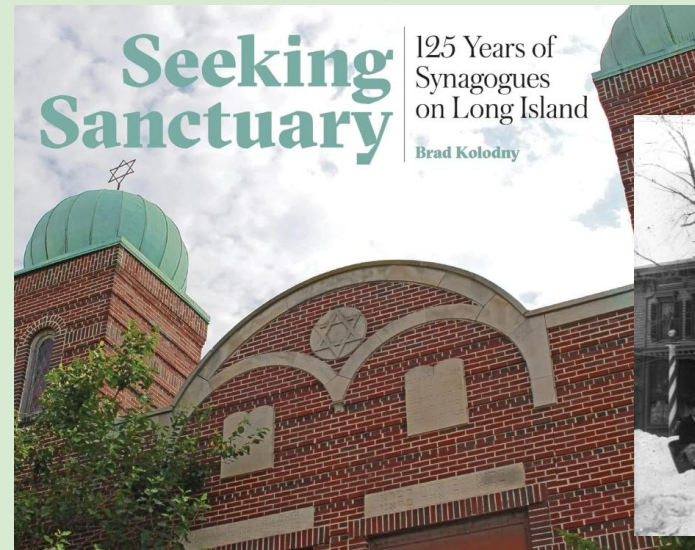
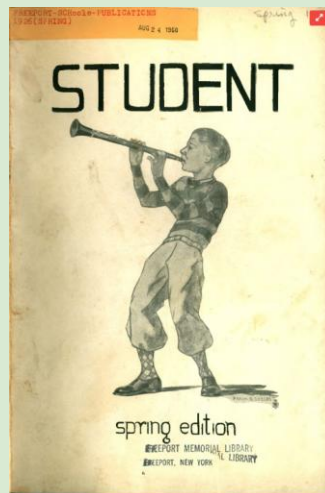
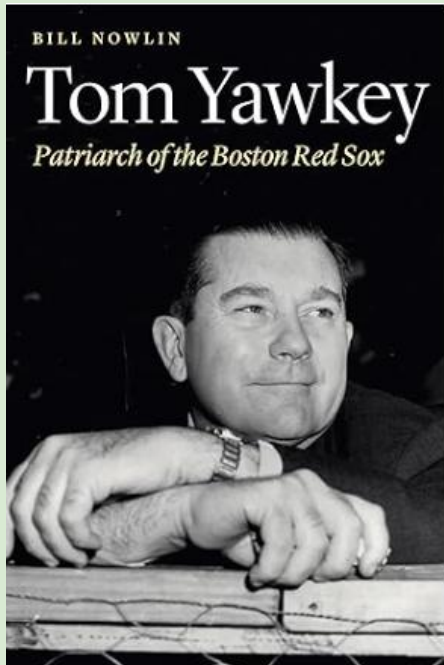
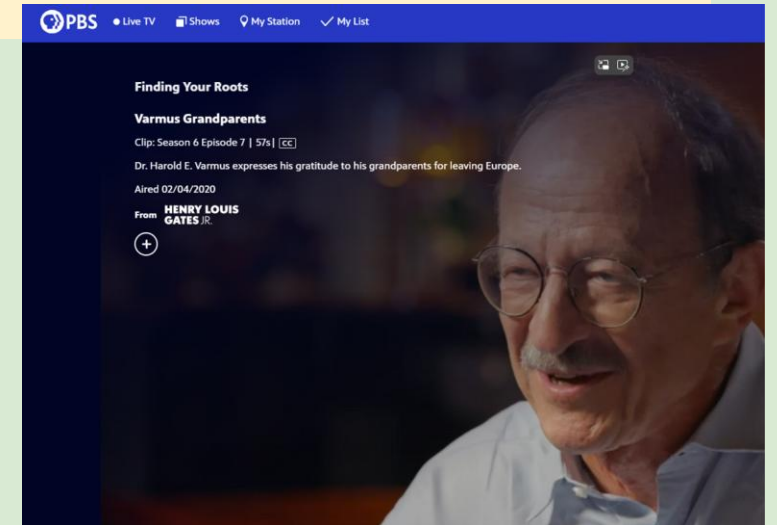
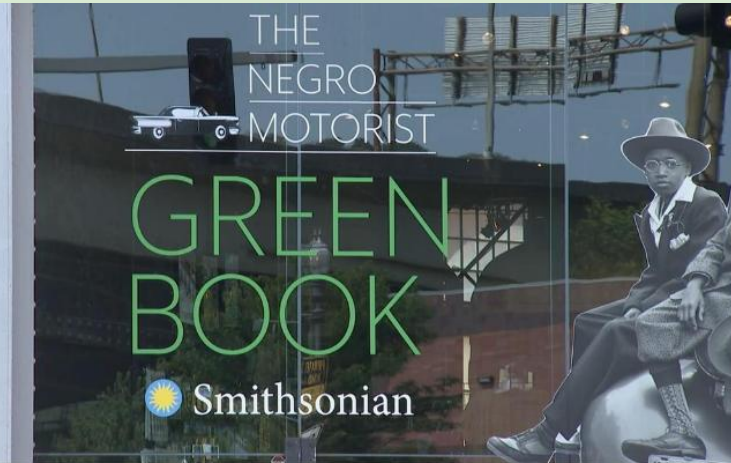
# Results –More Murals With Accurate History!





# Results

## Freeport - Positive Research & Scholarship of Others





# **Telling Your Community's Story Takeaways**

- **Get organized!**
- **Partner with like minded organizations – library/historical society**
- **Identify the misinformation / urban legends**
- **Get the right story out there – blogs/websites, markers, books**
- **Make you history available and findable!**

**★ Most Important – This Takes Time**