

## A Short History of Shoreham Village

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In 1999 Shoreham celebrated the 86th anniversary of its incorporation as a Village in 1913.

Although the outlying farms and settlements date back to Colonial times, the Shoreham of today is essentially the product of the last one-hundred years.

As far back as 1650 the east end of Long Island was being settled by New Englanders, and in 1655 colonists from Connecticut settled in the vicinity of Port Jefferson.

The latter were instrumental in organizing the Town of Brookhaven in 1664, at which time the Town extended well to the east of Wading River. Sometime around 1670 one Richard Woodhull negotiated a confirmatory deed from the Indians under which the Town acquired full title to the lands along the Sound; in gratitude for this accomplishment the Town deeded to him a large tract of land along the shore which is believed to include the portion of Shoreham to the east of Woodville Road. The earliest owners of the lands west of Woodville Road appear to have been the Miller family of Miller Place.

By the time of the American Revolution the Miller lands belonged to one Peter Skidmore and the Woodhull lands to one Wessell Sells (the latter's name still survives in "Sills Rock"). During the century before 1880 wood chopping was the principal industry in and around Shoreham. Cordwood to fuel the brick kilns along the Hudson River was brought to Shoreham beach by way of a network of trails converging on Woodville Road, whence it was loaded aboard small sailing vessels for transport to New York City. A small cluster of woodcutter's cabins sprang up about a mile inland and was known as "Woodville"; the wagon trail to the beach becoming "Woodville Landing Road".

In the early 1800's the Skidmore holdings passed to one Daniel Swezey, who operated a small store near the beach and during whose tenure the beach became known as "Swezey's Landing". Somewhere around the time of the Civil War Swezey's holdings passed to one William Dickerson, under whose family extensive orchards of apples, peaches, pears, and plums were developed in the lowlands along both sides of Woodville Road.

The history of modern Shoreham may be said to date from 1890. In that year the North Shore Branch of the Long Island Railroad terminated at Port Jefferson, but plans were afoot to extend it to Wading River, with way stations at Miller Place, Rocky Point and Shoreham. Appreciating the boost this would give to property values, a far-seeing Ohio banker, James A. Warden, acquired extensive landholdings in and around Shoreham and undertook the development of a residential community there under the name of "Wardenclyffe." When the railroad extension opened in the spring of 1895, the station at Shoreham was officially "Wardenclyffe."

Warden was also instrumental in inducing a syndicate of New York bankers to finance the construction of an experimental laboratory for Nikola Tesla, whose work in the fields of alternating current and high-frequency electronics had aroused worldwide scientific interest. Tesla's plant opened in 1902 and achieved some notable successes, but was short-lived and soon closed for want of adequate financing. While the plant was in operation, Tesla was a part-time resident of the Village.

Shortly thereafter Warden disposed of most of his lands here and Wardenclyffe became "Shoreham".

With the notable exception of a few of the older houses on or near Woodville Road, most of the older houses went up in the first decade of this century. Development of the old village west of Woodville Road and north of Overhill Road was undertaken by the Oak Ridge Company, which was financed through Charles J. Tagliabue. His son-in-law, Herbert Hapgood, handled the engineering and construction work.

**By** 1913 it had become apparent that the hilly terrain of Shoreham made it necessary to construct a system of streets which would be free of washouts which had plagued the community from the start. It was proposed that the streets be concreted, and that the village be incorporated as an entity to issue bonds to cover the cost of the work.

Incorporation was accomplished in 1913, and the road work was undertaken forthwith.

The Suffolk County Land Company, owner of the lands east of Woodville Road, had commenced development of what came to be known as the "Estates". Under its owners, Richard D. Upham and Henry B. Johnson, some dozen large houses had been built along Briarcliff and Tower Hill Roads; the Shoreham Inn; at the site of the present basketball court, was in operation and had achieved considerable success; a "power house" with a pumping station and ice plant had been built east of the Inn and water mains had been laid throughout the Village. Electricity and telephone services were established around 1915.

In 1951 a large portion of the "Estates" east of the village was annexed; in 1957 the "Shoreham Slopes" was added; and in 1966 the lands now occupied by The New York Telephone Company and the Long Island Lighting Co. were also added. There are now about 190 homes in the village and the official census for 1980 was 576.

The Village has from time to time acquired various park and recreational lands.

It owns a strip of undeveloped land along the west edge of the Village extending from the Sound almost to Route 25A. Along Woodville Road it owns several recharge basins to take care of surface water runoffs, and also owns park strips along the west side of Woodville Road to limit potential traffic hazards. Opposite the store it owns a tract of nearly six acres of undeveloped land designated as "Major Hopkins Park", which was given to the Village by Arthur J. Sackett and wife in memory of her brother. At the corner of Woodville and Briarcliff Roads it owns the land on which the tennis courts and ball field are located, and also the lands where the basketball court, the paddle tennis court, and the waterfront bluff lot are located. It also owns the Village Hall property on the waterfront, which is under lease to the Shoreham Country Club when it is not required as a Village Hall.

The Village Government consists of a Mayor and four Trustees, elected for two-year terms, a police justice elected for a four-year term, and several Commissioners and other officials appointed by the Trustees. The present officials are listed on the frontice page.

Uniquely, Shoreham has witnessed five generations of the Electronic Age. Firstly, there was Nikola Tesla, mentioned previously. Secondly, Lee Deforest, who was an early resident of the Village and inventor of the "audion" vacuum tube, represents the generation of the radio telephone and all its ramifications. Thirdly, there was the longwave worldwide radio transmission station at Rocky Point. Fourthly, there is Brookhaven National Laboratory, and, finally, there is the Shoreham nuclear power facility.

Shoreham is also notable for two unique qualities of its own: when incorporated, it was the smallest village in New York State; and it is the first municipality in the State to have concrete roads throughout its original incorporated area.

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1972-1986