

THE JERICHO HISTORIC PRESERVE

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In February of 1972, it was announced that the County of Nassau would acquire some twenty acres of land in the most historic section of the village of Jericho. This decision was based upon a desire, expressed by county officials, to preserve all that remained of the earliest portion of that eighteenth-century Quaker community. The separate properties being considered for this proposed Jericho Historic Preserve had been well maintained by their owners, who obviously cherished their buildings and land. Although these properties were not threatened by immediate development, county officials were concerned by what had happened to other parts of the village during the preceding twenty years.

Until 1952, Jericho was one of the few villages in Nassau County which had been virtually untouched by progress, looking much the same as it had in the period prior to the Civil War. The greatest change to take place there had occurred in 1928, when the Jericho Turnpike was rerouted to the south through the village, leaving the former road to become today's Old Jericho Turnpike. Then, ten years later, the Northern State Parkway was constructed along its southern border, but these projects had done little to alter the appearance of the hamlet.

Following World War II there was a tremendous increase in home building across Nassau County, but Jericho was spared until 1953. At that time the Jackson family sold its land holdings south of Jericho Turnpike and work was begun on the area's first housing development. Others followed in rapid succession and were given such names as Oakwood, Rosewood, White Birch, Birchwood, and Princeton Park. Within a ten year period, the population of Jericho has risen from about 600 to more than 12,000 persons.

Despite this tremendous increase in the number of residents, the oldest portion of Jericho remained fairly undisturbed until 1959. In that year construction of the Long Island Expressway

reached this area, crossing Jericho Turnpike at the western end of the community. At about the same time, Route 106-107 was widened and a cloverleaf was planned for the intersection of that road and Jericho Turnpike. It was the construction of this cloverleaf that destroyed a number of historic buildings and gave many people the impression that the village has been obliterated.

Jericho, like many of the Long Island communities which evolved during the 18th and 19th centuries, had most of its oldest structures clustered around a main crossroad. The widening of these roads to their present dimensions could never have been considered a possibility by the builders of the houses located there and, of course, a cloverleaf had an entirely different meaning in that period. Among the structures which disappeared because of this roadwork were the post office, Seaman, Jackson and Underhill family homes, and the old Stagecoach Inn, which in the 1870's had been a hotel that was known as the Ocean View House. In addition, this cloverleaf caused the filling of the spring pond that had given the area the name of Springfield in the 1680's.

During the 1960's and early 1970's other changes, such as the creation of an industrial park at the western end of the village and the erection of office buildings along Jericho Turnpike further reduced the rural character of this community. It also expected that the Lehman, Meadow Brook Club and Henry W. Underhill properties along the north side of Jericho Turnpike, would eventually be developed.

This was the situation which led county officials to advocate purchasing this small enclave of houses and farm structures located along the former route of the Hicksville-Oyster Bay Road and Old Jericho Turnpike. Acquisition by the County, on April 2, 1974, assured that these properties which had been untouched by the 20th century, would remain so for the benefit of future generations of Nassau residents.

It is not known exactly when the oldest and most historic structure on these properties was constructed. This building, now known as the Elias Hicks house, was probably built by Jonathan Seaman shortly after his marriage to Elizabeth Willis, in about 1740. Jonathan and Elizabeth Seaman were to have three sons, all of whom died at early ages, and one daughter, Jemima, who was born on September 2, 1750. Like most members of the Seaman

family, which had descended from Captain John Seaman, they were Quakers. As there was then no meeting house in Jericho, they attended the Westbury Meeting where they first became acquainted with the Hicks family.

Elias Hicks was born on the Hempstead Plains on March 19, 1748, a few months after his father, John Hicks, had joined the Society of Friends. When Hicks was eight years old his family moved to Rockaway where he attended the local school and took pleasure in reading the Scriptures. This happy period in his life ended when he was eleven years old as his mother, Martha Smith Hicks, died and he was sent to live with his brother to keep from falling into bad company.

When Hicks was seventeen years old his father apprenticed him to a carpenter, so that he could learn a trade. During this period he also mastered the science of surveying and began to devote himself to religious improvement, giving up such frivolous activities as dancing and card playing. Upon completing this apprenticeship Hicks joined his family which had moved to Westbury and it was there, at the Quaker Meeting, that he met Jemima Seaman.

On January 2, 1771, Elias Hicks and Jemima Seaman were married and for a few months they lived at Rockaway. In his *Journal*, Hicks stated: "In the spring after our marriage my wife's relations gave me an invitation to come and live with them, and carry on the business of their farm, they having no other child than her. I accepted this proposal, and continued with them during their lives, and the place afterwards became my settled residence."

Beside Elias and Jemima Hicks, their household consisted of her mother and father and grandparents, John and Abigail Willis, and at least three slaves owned by Jonathan Seaman. The farm at that time contained approximately seventy-five acres of land and also a tannery, located across the road from the house. That operation included a bark mill, bark house, and shop, while at the back of the lot was the spring and pond which supplied the water needed for the treatment of hides.

In the spring of 1777, some form of illness struck Jemima Hicks' family and her grandmother died on April 29, her mother and father on April 30, and her grandfather a few weeks later. With their passing this house and farm became the property of

Elias Hicks and remained in his possession until his death in 1830.

Like most Quakers, Hicks declined to support either side during the Revolutionary War. While not affected to any great extent by the war, he was fined several times for refusing to work on military fortifications. During the latter part of the war he was also required to give up the use of half a room to the judge advocate. Being forced to give up this space was possibly the greatest hardship which could have been imposed on Hicks, as five of his children were then living in the house.

Between 1771 and 1793, Elias and Jemima Hicks had ten children, some of whom lived only a short period of time. Their second daughter died at two years of age from smallpox and none of their sons reached maturity. In his *Journal*, Hicks stated: "All of our sons were of weak constitutions, and were not able to take care of themselves, being so enfeebled as not to be able to walk after the ninth or tenth year of their age, the third in his seventeenth year, and the youngest was nearly nineteen when he died. But, although, thus helpless, the innocence of their lives, and the resigned cheerfulness of their dispositions to their allotments, made the labor and toil of taking care of them agreeable and pleasant."

In 1774, Elias Hicks had a "vision of light" which resulted in a rededication to Quakerism. This led him to begin speaking out at meetings and traveling in the ministry across Long Island. Eventually his journeys took him through New York State, New England, Canada, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and as far west as Ohio and Indiana. By 1829, he had traveled more than 40,000 miles and, by speaking to thousands of Friends, became one of the most influential Quakers in the country.

During the 1820's, Hicks and his followers became embroiled in a bitter conflict with the more conservative Quakers. While they stressed the absolute authority of the Scriptures, Hicks believed that faith in man's "inner light" would lead them to goodness. These differences became so great that the two groups separated in 1827 with the majority becoming liberal or Hicksite Quakers. These factions were eventually reunited, but Hicks did not live to see it happen. On March 17, 1829, his wife died from pneumonia and Elias Hicks died at his home on February 27,

1830, following a paralytic stroke. Acting as executors of Elias Hicks' estate, his sons-in-law, Valentine Hicks and Robert Seaman, sold this house and forty acres of land to James C. Haviland on December 19, 1832.

Then followed what was usually the case in Long Island real estate transactions, a long list of subsequent owners until the property finally passed into the hands of Nassau County. Some well-known Long Island names were included, such as Samuel J. Underhill, Isaac S. Ketcham, William Laurie, then Laurie and William Jagger, Jr. and their wives, Frances Laurie and Mary Jagger, who were sisters. By inheritance it went to Frances Laurie's daughters, Mary Laurie Seaman and Anna Laurie Valentine, then Elias W. Seaman, James W. Seaman, Anna Seaman, Frederick M. Selchow, Henry W. Underhill, and finally Lester and Janice Arstark, the last private owners. It was from them that the County acquired the property on April 2, 1974. But by 1946, by virtue of so much activity in ownership, the land was so diminished in area that it consisted of the old Hicks dwelling and only one acre.

In writing of this house, in 1949, Marietta Hicks stated that the east rooms and hall were original to the period of Elias Hicks and that Selchow (the then owner) was restoring the small pane windows.

On the property immediately to the south of the Elias Hicks house is located the former home of Dr. Selah S. Carll, a sixth-generation descendant of Thomas Carll (also spelled Carl and Carle) of Hempstead. Thomas Carll's son, Timothy, moved to the Dix Hills area in 1706, and later members of the family were all residents of the Town of Huntington.

Selah S. Carll, a son of Phineas Carll who had served as Supervisor of the Town of Huntington, was born in 1789. Little is known of his early life, but he appears to have moved to Jericho soon after he had become a doctor. This may be confirmed by the fact that he was one of a number of village residents who met there at the schoolhouse, on July 1, 1815, to establish a society to suppress vice and intemperance. Being chosen as a member of the committee appointed to draft a constitution for this society would indicate that he was already highly regarded in the community.

Dr. Carll's selection of Jericho, as a place to live and set up his practice, was probably made because he came from a family of Quakers and the village was then largely populated by members of that sect. After becoming established there, Dr. Carll must have looked for a site near the heart of the village where he could build his own house. This search led him to the property adjacent to the home of Elias Hicks and, on May 23, 1816, he paid Adonijah Underhill five hundred dollars for this tract containing fifty-three square rods of land.

Although there is no documentation, it would appear likely that Dr. Carll had this house constructed shortly after he acquired the property. Probably his reason for doing this was that he had just been married and no longer wished to live as a boarder in another person's home. This was obviously a wise decision as Selah S. Carll and his wife Sally were to have at least ten children, the oldest being Albert G. Carll, who was born in 1819.

On December 17, 1829, the Queens County Medical Society had been formed and Dr. Carll was one of the first physicians admitted to that organization. This occurred on May 25, 1830, when he was elected as a member of the society at a meeting held in the Queens County Courthouse in Garden City Park. While there is no record of Dr. Carll's medical career it is likely that he served most of the residents in Jericho and the surrounding area. It is also probable that living next to Elias Hicks, he would have treated the noted minister in his final illness.

During this period, Carll was not only successful as a doctor, but also in his financial ventures. He had begun to speculate in real estate and purchased, on April 16, 1847, in partnership with Valentine Hicks, a hotel located on Main Street in the village of Hempstead. At the time of his death, he owned nineteen separate parcels of land.

In February of 1837, Sally Carll died, not long after giving birth to a daughter, Cornelia, and Dr. Selah Carll died some twenty years later, on January 15, 1857 and was buried in the Jericho Quaker cemetery. He was succeeded in ownership of the homestead by his son Albert, a founder of the Queens County Agricultural Society and its first secretary. He had other civil and political offices serving three years as Oyster Bay Town Clerk as well as school commissioner, highway overseer, and trustee of the Jones Fund.

Following a family dispute, all of the lands which had formerly belonged to Dr. Carl were sold at auction in 1859, the highest bidder being one Newberry Sprague. Over the years that followed the house had a succession of owners, including Sprague, James Malcolm, Isaac Ketcham, Ketcham's wife, Sara, and later was inherited by her daughter, Phebe, who married Henry McAllister, Jr. and later moved to Colorado. Although she returned to take care of her mother in her last illness, Phebe never lived afterward on Long Island and leased the house to various residents. After her death the house was owned by her estate until purchased by Nassau County in 1974.

A portion of the Jackson-Malcolm farm was also acquired by the County on that date. It is partially located on the west side of the former Hicksville-Oyster Bay Road, although the house is on the east side of that road and to the north of Old Jericho Turnpike. The first known owners were members of the Townsend family and it continued in the possession of Townsends until eventually it was inherited by Dr. James Townsend. As a young man he had studied medicine in New York City with the noted physician, Dr. John Bard. After marrying Mary Hicks, on April 2, 1757, Dr. James Townsend moved to this homestead in Jericho, where he established his medical practice.

During the Revolutionary War, the British established a camp at Jericho which was named "Fort Nonsense." It is believed that the site of this camp was located on what had been a part of this farm. The selection of Dr. Townsend's property may have been determined in part as a form of punishment because he had been a member of the Provincial Congress prior to the British occupation of the Island.

In 1789, Dr. Townsend was elected a member to the first U.S. Congress, but he died on May 24, 1790, before the session opened. In addition to the doctor, four of his seven children also died within a few weeks of each other of some unknown cause. Following their deaths, Townsend's widow moved to Oyster Bay to live with her daughter and this farm was sold to John Jackson.

Although the exact date that Jackson purchased this property is unknown, it probably occurred soon after the physician's death. This may partially be confirmed by the Town Records, which indicate that Jackson was living in Jericho as early as November of 1790. With the sale of the property it was noted that

"the name of Townsend became extinct at Jericho, where it was one of the first six European names known."

Very little is known of John Jackson except that he was a Quaker and a fourth generation descendant of Robert Jackson, one of the original settlers of Hempstead. He was married twice, first to Charity Tredwell in 1756, and following her death to Margaret Wright Townsend. By his first marriage he had four children and by his second five more, the third being his son, Obadiah.

Like his father, Obadiah was a farmer and like his father he was married twice, first to Elizabeth Wright, who died shortly afterward. Then in 1804, he married Rachel Underhill. Almost ten years to the day after this marriage, John Jackson transferred ownership of this farm to Obadiah. In the deed, it was noted as being "all that certain farm or plantation of lands that I purchased from the heirs of Doctor James Townsend, deceased."

An event took place during Obadiah's ownership that changed the appearance of this property. This occurred in August of 1816, when the barn there was reportedly burned by Walter and Gilbert Covert. They were subsequently arrested and placed in the Queens County jail to await their trial. While Walter Covert was acquitted of this crime, his son Gilbert was convicted and sentenced to the state prison for ten years. This fire is of special interest as it provides the date that the present barn must have been constructed.

The oldest of Obadiah's three children was William who in turn inherited the farm and continued to live there. By his marriage to Sarah Tappan, he had one child, Phebe. It was during William Jackson's ownership of the property that the main portion of the present residence appears to have been built.

Following his death, the farm was inherited by Phebe and it was at this time that the name Malcolm enters the picture. Phebe had married James Malcolm, a member of a Scottish family which had migrated to this country in 1804. In addition to farming this property, Malcolm also served as Town Assessor and was a director of the Oyster Bay Bank.

James and Phebe had four children, one died in infancy, their two sons had no interest in farming and Sarah, the fourth child, never married and became her father's housekeeper after her

mother died. When James Malcolm died in 1912, the house and farm were left to the three surviving children but because Sarah continued living there no final settlement of the estate was made until after her death in 1930.

The two sons, William and James A. Malcolm, entered into a real estate transaction with each other by which James received the house and William the farm lands. This dual ownership continued until their deaths in 1948, at which time the entire property was inherited by James A. Malcolm, Jr.

On April 2, 1974, the western portion of the farm, containing the barn, outbuildings and fields were acquired from him by the County. Under the agreement between Mr. Malcolm and the County, the farmhouse and surrounding land will remain in his family's ownership as long as he or his descendants wish to reside there. Eventually this property will also be added to other portions of the Jericho Preserve.

The final parcel of land acquired by the County is located between the Elias Hicks house and the western section of the Jackson-Malcolm farm. This land, consisting of a little more than one half acre, had originally been the northern section of the Elias Hicks property and its historical ties are a part of that site. On September 18, 1929, this tract was sold by Anna Seaman to Mr. and Mrs. Leslie R. Cheshire, who had their home built there that fall. They have continued to reside there as life tenants, but eventually their house will be moved or demolished and the land will revert to its original state.

When application is made to place the Jericho Historic Preserve on the National Register of Historic Places, two neighboring properties will also be included to create a historic district designation. The first is the land owned by the Jericho Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, on which is located the Meeting House, former schoolhouse and cemetery. The second of these properties is the site of the former Valentine Hicks house, now known as the Maine Maid Restaurant.

Until 1787, the Quakers residing in Jericho had attended religious meetings which were held in Westbury. Desiring to establish a separate meeting they petitioned the Westbury Monthly Meeting for permission to organize a preparative meeting. This petition was approved and on May 17, 1787, the Jericho Quakers held their first business meeting. At that time a

building committee, composed of Elias Hicks, Adonijah Underhill, and others, was appointed. The site they selected for the Meeting House was located on the south side of what is now Old Jericho Turnpike and a short distance to the east of the main crossroads. This property, which was purchased for forty-five pounds, originally contained one acre and twenty rods of land and had been part of a farm owned by Benjamin and William Wright.

According to tradition, Elias Hicks not only surveyed this property, but also designed and helped to construct this Meeting House. This building was similar to others of that period on Long Island, being a two-story, box-like structure with a high attic. Measuring thirty-six by thirty-three feet, it had the entrances to provide for the division of men and women, who were further separated during the meetings by a partition. Covered with hewn shingles, this building has been in continuous use since it was constructed. The only notable alteration made to this structure was the addition, in 1818, of a porch to protect the doorways.

Shortly after establishing their own meeting, the Jericho Quakers also created a school committee. Elias Hicks served as a member of that group from 1787 to 1807. He also taught in this schoolhouse on occasion between 1794 and 1798 and his son-in-law, Valentine Hicks, later served as schoolmaster for one term. In 1796 this school was made "select", or open only to children of Quakers to prevent outside influences from corrupting them. Continuing in use as a school until the 1870's, this structure now serves as the residence of the caretaker of the property.

The Friends' cemetery was apparently created shortly after the Jericho Monthly Meeting acquired this property. Prior to that it was probably common for people in the Jericho area to be buried on their own land. This was true in the case of Jemima Hicks' parents, as Jonathan Seaman and members of his family were buried some distance in back of their house and the graves were marked by stones bearing their initials. This was contrary to a rule adopted by the Quakers in the 1760's that all graves should be unmarked. That custom was followed in the early years after this cemetery was created and it has left the identity of some of the persons buried there in question. Despite this it is known to be the final resting place of Elias and Valentine Hicks, and in all probability of most of the Quakers who lived in this village after 1787.

The other neighboring property is the site of the former Valentine Hicks house, which is presently known as the Maine Maid Restaurant. This building had been considered for the Jericho Historic Preserve, but was eliminated because the county officials did not feel justified in taking an operating commercial business. The structure located here was originally the home of Timothy Tredwell and it is believed that he built it sometime between 1800 and 1810.

This assumption is based in part on the fact that the census indicates that Tredwell became a resident of the Jericho area during that period. Several years later he died and, on March 18, 1814, his executors sold this house to Valentine Hicks for \$3,550. The deed for this transaction noted that the property consisted of one acre of land with a house, barn, gardens, fences, and other improvements. The fact that the price was so high at that time for a residence on only one acre of land would further support the theory that this was a fairly new and substantial house.

Valentine Hicks, the fourth of Samuel and Phebe Hicks' five children, was born in Westbury in 1782. His father owned a modest farm but his principal occupation was tailoring and he was noted as being a good businessman. He passed this ability along to his eldest son, Isaac, who became a very successful commission merchant in New York City. Eventually Isaac took his brothers, Samuel and Valentine, into the business. This venture was extremely profitable and Valentine was able to retire sometime after 1810 with savings of more than \$50,000. When asked why he had retired from business at such an early age, he stated "that he loved his children too well to be willing to leave them rich."

In 1804, Valentine Hicks had married his second cousin, Abigail, a daughter of Elias Hicks. Probably this was the reason he was to settle in Jericho and, in 1814, to purchase this house which was almost directly across the road from the home of his father-in-law. At this time Hicks apparently intended to become a gentleman farmer and enjoy a life of leisure. This plan was never fully realized as he was to accompany Elias Hicks on religious tours of duty, which covered more than 2,000 miles, and also became involved in a number of local activities.

Later he became one of the original officers of the Long Island Rail Road Company and was its second president, serving in 1837

and 1838. Finally with his in-laws Robert and David Seaman, Hicks formed a land development company, which was named the Hicksville Association. When the financial panic of 1837 halted work on the railroad, its terminus for the next four years was near the land owned by this company. The village which then grew in this area was named Hicksville in Hicks' honor.

Valentine Hicks became ill shortly after the death of his wife and he went to live at the home of his son-in-law, Dr. William Seaman, who was one of the most eminent physicians in New York City. Unfortunately Dr. Seaman was unable to help him and Valentine Hicks died there on March 5, 1850. Two years later, his executors sold his house to Samuel J. Underhill, an extremely wealthy farmer. Following Underhill's death in 1867 this property was inherited by his daughter, Phebe Seaman.

Phebe and her husband, Elias H. Seaman, were to reside there until their deaths and then in 1905 the house came into the possession of their son, James H. Seaman, until 1912. After that it had a succession of owners until finally in 1950 it was purchased by Percy L. Roberts.

It was Roberts who converted this seventeen-room house into a restaurant, which was named the Maine Maid. Again there were a number of subsequent owners until finally it passed into the hands of Philip G. Munson and Charles B. Gordon. The reason this house had escaped destruction may be attributed to the fact that it became a most successful restaurant. If this property should ever be developed, it is possible that the County would acquire the building and move it onto the eastern portion of the Jackson-Malcolm property where it could be preserved.

Having examined the history of the properties which have become the Jericho Historic Preserve, we should now look ahead. The future of this site will certainly prove to be as interesting as its past, and probably even more exciting. By becoming accessible to the public, these lands will now provide residents of the county with a unique educational and cultural complex.

The Jericho Historic Preserve is being developed as an adaptive historic area according to Edward J. Smits, Director of Museum Services for Nassau County. It was acquired to retain a significant historic environment at a key highway intersection in

the County before all the historic buildings and existing farm fixtures were destroyed. While a master plan has not yet been completed for the long-time development of the Preserve, the general approach toward its future use is underway. As an initial step the properties were all reviewed and sufficient preservation work completed on the historic buildings to ensure their retention and prevent further deterioration.

Program use of the properties was initiated through a special educational use of the farm barn building complex and surrounding fields by the Syosset School District. The Jericho Developmental Learning Farm provides an interesting hands-on learning experience in farm activities including animal care for elementary school classes from the district. Staffed by a teacher and several aides this is an innovative program to stimulate and enhance the learning process for children in developmental learning classes. The program has been highly successful and it is anticipated will be a permanent cooperative use of this part of the Preserve. The restoration of the farm barn, carriage building, and site, including farm yard and fields, is planned for completion within three to five years. Since this use includes the retention of a variety of farm animals, it provides a major visual interest for visitors.

The remaining buildings within the Preserve have been placed in the museum's Landmark Preserve Program except the Elias Hicks house. A building review is presently underway to determine its future status considering its significant historical associations. It is possible that the structure could be either completely or partially restored to its historic period and function as a visitor center—historic house for the entire Preserve area. The carriage house on the property is being used as a seasonal shop by the Friends for Long Island's Heritage to raise funds for the Preserve's restoration program.

The Preserve master plan will also include provision for the possible operation of the Malcolm building as a historic house since it is in very original condition. It was not included in the original condemnation since its owner, James Malcolm, desired to ensure its preservation and continue the historic family ownership of the property during his and his children's lifetimes. At such time as the family wants to relinquish its use, the farmhouse would become a major public use element of the Preserve.

The land area of the Preserve along Old Jericho Turnpike opposite the Friends Meeting House is being reserved as a possible site for several other historic buildings. In the event significant structures within the Old Westbury-Jericho area were threatened on their original site, this could be a practical place to move and preserve several historic buildings.

The County of Nassau has preserved over 2,500 acres of natural area throughout the County and the retention of this key historic environment is an element of the Museum Division's program to preserve and interpret our area's unique historical heritage.