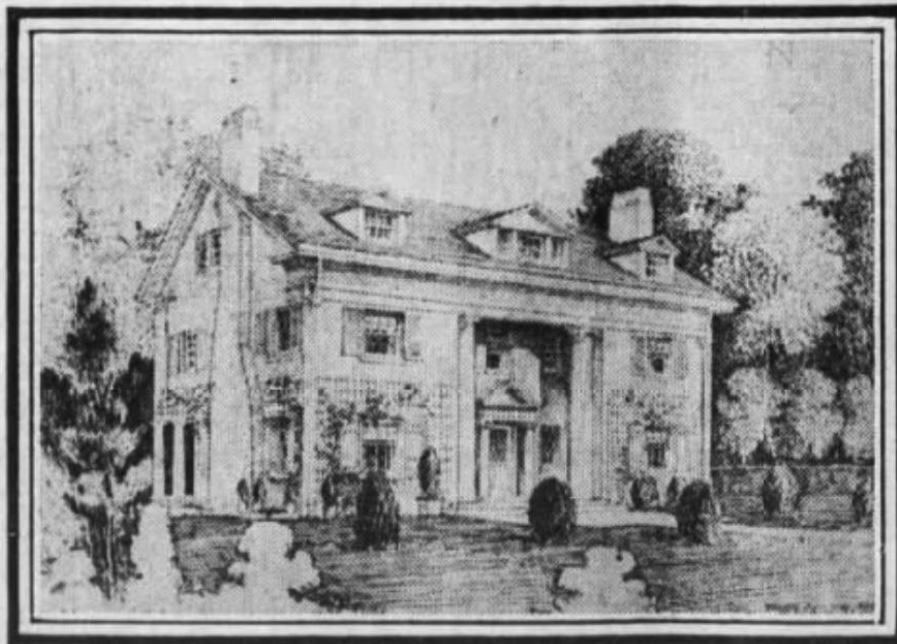


WILLET HICKS HOMESTEAD, ROSLYN.



Its Site, Maple Hill, Now Owned by Roslyn Estates; House Burned Soon After Its Sale.

TYPE OF NEW HOUSES ON OLD HICKS FARM



They Form a Sharp Contrast to the Homestead Recently Burned, and Pictured Elsewhere.

MAPLE HILL FARM NOW ROSLYN ESTATES.

Something of the History of
Famous North Shore
Tract.

FINE OLD HOUSE WAS BURNED.

It Was the Scene of Typical Oldtime
Hospitality—Farm Famed
for Its Fertility.

But, no, she blushed and took my arm;
We let the old folks have the highway,
And started toward the Maple Farm,
Along a sort of lovers' byway.

—The Doorstep.

Transfers of real estate make interesting stories when, between the lines, one can read the records of human lives, that strange weaving of animate with inanimate, and few things are of more general interest than old and new valuations.

Just as the city lots of to-day are radically different from the early days of Bowling Green and Canal street, in Manhattan and the Court House of Brooklyn, so are contemporary farms in the near countryside, which is fast growing to meet the city's approach.

Land that not so very long ago pastured cattle and produced the regulation crops is now outlined by stone roads, bits of parkway, picturesque and costly houses in attractive groupings, not at all belittled by the larger houses and parks so near them.

Between the estates now owned by Mrs. Frank Grey Griswold, Walter G. Oakman and Louis Lee Stanton of Roslyn, is an exceptionally fine bit of rolling country, now known as Roslyn Estates, and for many years only as Maple Hill Farm.

Though the various ownerships have covered a long period of years, it did not come intact or unbroken to its last individual owner. There is, first, a traditional record of "Squire Smith," and then the two Harry Laytons, father and son, the latter selling to John Appleby, and he in turn to Leonard Mott, who gave it to his daughter when she married Willet Hicks. Eighteen years ago it was bought by Eugene D. Berri, Camden Dike, Norman S. Dike and L. W. Lawrence, and later transferred to the Dean Alvord Company.

The tract was divided into what is now known as Roslyn Highlands and Roslyn Estates, each being developed on different lines to suit varying demands.

It is interesting to note that one landmark continues in evidence. A daughter-in-law of Harry Layton, 2d, and now nearing the century mark, still owns and lives upon a part of the old farm. The Laytons, father and son, were noted for their generous living. The great table was always set for unexpected guests, whether they came singly or in pairs, and twenty was by no means an unusual number. They were royal land-owners in those old days, and when son or daughter married there was usually a farm somewhere to establish them on.

The father of Leonard Mott could give him the Maple Hill Farm to the east, and to his son Silas the many acres that were inherited by Thomas Mott of Sands Point and Port Washington. To his daughter, who married Willet Hicks was given the Maple Hill Farm, now Roslyn Estates.

Through the different sales since the days of Squire Smith, the number of acres decreased and increased, and the Roslyn Estates has in a measure rounded out its possessions to something like the original acreage.

Willet Hicks, the last individual owner, is now a courtly gentleman of the old school, and lives at Locust Valley. He was born in the Village of Roslyn, where his father, William Hicks, was post-master for twenty years, his birthplace being the picturesque old house afterward sold to the Poet Bryant, and which met the same fate as the home at Maple Hill—destruction by fire.

William Hicks was a man of large and active interests and identified with the founding of the present lumber yard at Roslyn. When Willet Hicks lived at Maple Hill Farm he was not only interested in orthodox farming, but, like many another born and bred Quaker—past and present—he was an enthusiastic lover of horses, and there were not only horses raised on the farm for general purposes, but for speed, and a half mile track saw many an exciting trot for a record.

At that time many Long Island farms had fine flocks of sheep, and at Maple Hill there was a good range given over to them, but in the beginning the sheep were assaulted one night by dogs, and the result was so disastrous that Mr. Hicks decided that to be profitable sheep-raising must be safe-guarded by fortresses and patrols, and all this was not in his line.

His son Robert was a successful and enthusiastic apiarist, and had, just before the farm was sold, over a hundred hives.

The land must have been wonderfully prolific, for the record was not only of wheat, rye, oats, hay, corn and potatoes, but all the garden vegetables, and such small fruits as strawberries, blackberries and raspberries, both wild and cultivated, apples, pears, peaches, and cherries of the ox-heart variety were notably fine.

Then there were poultry and cows and now, what a change. All that busy, productive life is utterly obliterated, and to-day not even a modernized homestead to serve as a landmark!

Some of the trees near the site of the old house are of immense size, and in one of them there was built a spiral stairway leading to the lookout platform in the top, which the Hicks family called Crow's Nest, and from its great height a magnificent view was to be had.

The original homestead of Harry Layton's time was built on lower land, now owned by George Eastman, and was moved to Maple Hill, where it received such additions as made it of generous and attractive proportions.

A unique feature of many modern land transfers is that in several instances the previous owners retain some sort of interest in the old estates. At Westbury, where some of the noted estates have been made up of several farms, those who sold are retained to help in their management, and when farms have been bought for general development purposes it is not unusual for the seller to have an interest in the future partition sales.

A son of Willet Hicks is connected with the Roslyn Estates, and finds the

real estate business more successful and to his liking than the farming of his father.

Long Island history has never made dull reading, even though the earlier settlers were Quakers, and to-day the intermingling of enterprise and activities with fox hunting and automobiling, and the pomp and paraphernalia belonging to the millionaire settlements make many-sided interests, any one of which is an insistent note in modern life.

