

THE OLD OAK

The dead oak tree at the head of the service road may be a remnant of the old lopped-tree fencing systems that defined field boundaries in much of Long Island. To make the "fence," living trees were cut partway through and then bent down to take root and grow up again. As this process was repeated, there would soon be a wall of living vegetation which farm animals could not penetrate. This oak, like the tree on the cover, was eventually allowed to grow up to its full height.



A group of Floyds in the 1880's sitting on a tree "lopped" to make a field boundary earlier in the century.



Photo — 1910

THE LANDSCAPE ABOUT THE HOUSE

The *front lawn* is divided into two parts, a formal grassy section near the house and a rougher section, with hay and wildflowers, further away. The rough part has been called the "pikel" (an old English word for a hay rake) since at least the second quarter of the 19th century. At the far southwest corner of the "pikel" is a break in the tree line known as the *Vista*. Cleared down to the marsh in the southern portion of the property, the Vista provides a view of Moriches Bay from the second floor hall. The extent of foundation plantings around the house has varied greatly, from none in William Floyd's time to dense vines, shrubs, and trees for shade and privacy in modern times.

The huge *linden* or basswood tree just west of the house and the large beech tree at the west end of the garden are among the largest trees on Long Island. They were reportedly planted by Catherine Floyd (1804-1854), and are at least 130 years old.

The *four locust trees* in front of the house continue a tradition that began with Sarah K. Floyd (1837-1923), who planted the first ones there in the 1850's and named them after her favorite cousins, the four Tracy sisters, one of whom later married J. P. Morgan. Locusts and hawthorns were first extensively planted at the Estate in the 1820's.

The *garden* north and west of the house has been changed many, many times, from herbs and flowers to vegetables and fruit trees. For a long time, its most spectacular feature was a double row of English boxwood which might have been planted as early as William Floyd's time. The boxwood, about 18 feet high when they died a generation ago, formed a canopy over a brick walkway running westward from the parlor door. The existing brick walkway and the stone patio next to the west porch were added in 1960.

HISTORIC GROUNDS TOUR

WILLIAM FLOYD ESTATE

FIRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE, N.Y.



ADMINISTRATION

The William Floyd Estate is a unit of Fire Island National Seashore, and is administered by a Superintendent, whose address is 120 Laurel Street, Patchogue, New York 11772.

1982

BARN AND OUTBUILDINGS

Separated from the main house by a high board fence, the barnyard area contained the buildings that served as the hub of the agricultural enterprise that was the Floyd's livelihood until the late 19th century. The number, location, and function of the buildings changed from time to time. If you look closely at some of the buildings, you can see marks on the timbers of former uses.

Among the earlier buildings that we know of were a calf barn, a horse barn, a goose house, a hog pen, a wagon barn, a smoke house, an ash house, a blacksmith shop, two sheep-shearing sheds, and a cottage for the overseer. Walking around the area, you can see depressions in the ground and occasional foundation stones revealing the sites of earlier structures. Those that were standing when the Estate was donated are:



OLD SHOP

An early 19th century building, the Old Shop was originally a grain house. In the 1890's, windows were cut in, and it became a workshop for the farm's caretaker.

STORAGE CRIB

Originally a corn crib, this structure was covered with novelty siding in the early 20th century and used for storage.



PUMP HOUSE

The pump house is a modern structure built to cover the well that supplied water for the garden.



ICE HOUSE

With its brick-lined tub fifteen feet deep, this structure, built in the second half of the 19th century, was used to store ice cut from Lon's Creek, Home Creek (now the Estate's eastern boundary), and the pond that used to be east of the main house. Layered with salt hay from the marsh, the ice would keep for most of the year.

INCINERATOR

This was a modern solution to the trash problem. During earlier periods, garbage was hauled to refuse pits distant from the house. Such pits are prime resources for archeologists investigating early life-styles.



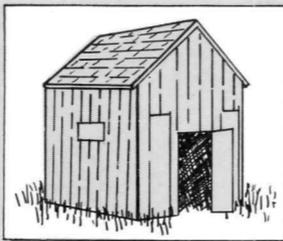
BARN

This early structure was once used as a shop. There is one early report that it originally stood at the west end of the house and was used as a kitchen.



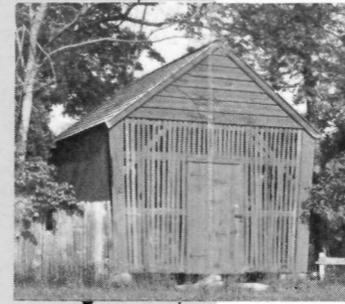
OLD SHEEP BARN

This structure was razed in 1979. Originally used for both sheep shearing and hay storage, it was renovated in the early 20th century into a cabin for use by poor city families who were sent here for two-week refreshments in the country by a cousin who was a minister in New York. During that period, it was called "Merrifield."



NEW BARN

This is the remnant of a very early and very large barn that stood on this site and was torn down in 1950. A windmill and water tank erected on top of the original barn in the 1880's supplied water to the main house.



CORN CRIB

Used to store corn in the 18th and 19th centuries, the crib collapsed in 1972 and was rebuilt by the Floyd family.

WOOD SHED

Built probably in the mid-19th century, this little structure appears taller in early photographs of the property. As the bottom rotted away, structural changes were made to keep the rest of the building intact.



CARRIAGE HOUSE

This structure, built to hold two carriages, was constructed in 1884 by John G. Floyd, Jr., after the Estate had become just a summer home.



CARETAKER'S WORKSHOP

Now a park office, this building was constructed in 1898 and originally stood close to the house, serving as a store for the kitchen. It was moved to its present location in the 1920's and was used for extra guests and servants. It was last used as a workshop by the family's resident caretaker.



ESTATE HOUSE



GAZEBO

This garden house was built about 1910, and screened for protection against mosquitos.

The walk to the family graveyard follows the route of Squirrel Lane, which was the historic road to and from the homestead. After passing through several miles of forested Floyd land, visitors would suddenly see the open expanse of lawn and get a sharp sense, even before they could see the house itself, that this land had been impressively civilized. The now-forested hollow just south of the road was, until the late 19th century, a pond created by damming the headwaters of Home Creek, which now forms the eastern boundary of the Estate.

THE ROAD TO THE CEMETERY

THE CEMETERY

The cemetery has been in use since early 1755, when William Floyd's parents, Nicoll and Tabitha, died of typhus. The area around the graveyard was an orchard until the early 20th century, and evidence of that use can still be seen. William Floyd's original gravestone is the one lying flat at ground level. It was moved here when a new monument was erected at his actual gravesite in Westernville, New York, to which he had moved in 1803. Certain descendants of William Floyd still have the right of burial here.

The small area in the southeast corner with seven wooden crosses is the gravesite of men who had been slaves on the Estate. Several of them lived past 1827, when slavery ended in New York, and stayed on the Estate as free laborers. Lon's Creek, about a quarter of a mile north of here, was named for one of them, London, who had a cabin near its headwaters. It was still standing in the 1890's, when it was depicted in a painting that now hangs in the main hall of the house.