

The Flower Hill Historic Trail



Port Washington Route

Guidebook

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Guidebook

This guidebook provides a description and brief history for each location on the Port Washington Route of the Flower Hill Historic Trail. All of the locations are listed in the order of their stop numbers, starting with St. Francis Hospital and ending with the Humus Area. See map for more details.

1. **St. Francis Hospital:** When Carlos Munson and his wife Mabel first moved to Flower Hill around 1900, they were soon alarmed when they took an evening stroll and noticed “the tumble-down buildings and the carousing of drunken men” which plagued the area at the time. This resulted in Carlos purchasing large portions of land to remove the drunks and the derelict buildings.

It was around this time that two sisters from the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary visited the Munsons to try and sell hand-made goods for charity. The Munsons quickly formed a friendship with the nuns, and offered them 15 acres of his estate. The offer was accepted, and the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary established the St. Francis Home in 1922 as a summer camp for poor children.

In the 1930s, after learning that many poor New York school children suffered from rheumatic heart conditions, they would turn it into a sanatorium for children with rheumatic heart conditions.

In 1954, St. Francis would begin taking in adults as well as children, and they would continue to expand and grow.

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Today, Saint Francis Hospital is one of America's leading heart care centers and is New York's only specialty-designated heart care center – and it is all thanks to “the carousing of drunken men” and a friendship.

2. **Elderfields Preserve:** Originally owned by the Hewlett family for roughly 224 years, this home was sold to Carlos and Mabel Munson at the turn of the 20th Century. Carlos and Mabel would live here until their deaths. Following the death of Carlos in 1940, the property was sold to Henry Williams.

As per the will of Henry Williams, the property was bequeathed to the County of Nassau, and it has been operated by Nassau as a park, museum, and preserve ever since.

The main building, the Hewlett-Munson-Williams House, is one of the oldest homes in Nassau County, and rivals in age the historic Van Nostrand-Starkins house in neighboring Roslyn.

3. **Eldelfields Road:** The name of Elderfields Road reflects the fact that this land was once owned by shipping executive Carlos W. Munson, Flower Hill's founding father. Munson named his estate *Elderfields*, and this name has been used ever since the subdivision was developed by T.B. Ackerson in the 1920s and 1930s.
4. **Birch Lane Dead-End:** The Village of Flower Hill once owned the lot immediately north of this dead end. and the acquisition allowed for the possibility for Birch Lane to be extended northwards to Bonnie Heights Road, as stated in the minutes from the October 11, 1958 Board of Trustee meeting.

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The acquisition was recommended by a committee of the Flower Hill Association in March 1945. However, the lot was ultimately sold, and the dead end remains.

5. **Bonnie Heights Road:** While it is unknown how Bonnie Heights Road got its name, many speculate that the first part of this street's name is derived from the Scottish word "bonnie", which means beautiful, attractive, etc. in English, thus meaning that the name of Bonnie Heights Road translates to something along the lines of "Beautiful Heights Road."

Additionally, not long after Carlos Munson's death, the Village proposed renaming the street as "Munson Road" or "Carlos Munson Road", with the latter being the chosen name for the proposal, as it was more specific.

6. **Logan Murder:** During the early morning hours of July 24, 1946, a burglar and murderer by the name of Ward Beecher Caraway broke into the estate of Mayor W. John Logan, which was located in this area.

Once inside, Caraway murdered Mayor Logan's wife, Marjorie Church Logan, and then assaulted and severely injured their daughter, Marjory Jeanne Logan.

Following the incident, a major, chaotic investigation took place, and Caraway confessed on the night of August 2, 1946. Caraway, who worked at another Flower Hill estate nearby, was sentenced to death for his actions, and was executed by chair at Sing Sing Prison in Ossining, New York on July 3, 1947.

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7. **Philip L. Becker Residence:** This home was designed in the 1930s by Aspinwall & Simpson for Philip L. Becker, the President of the American Chicle Company and Flower Hill's former Planning Board President.
8. **Hawkins Residence:** A significant, historic home built for the Hawkins family.
9. **Manhasset Woods Road:** Manhasset Woods Road's name is likely due to how this area was historically forested.
10. **Ricks Estate Guest House & Driveway Walls:** These are amongst the only remnants of the former estate of Jesse Ricks, named *Chanticleare*. The main, 42-room mansion and this guest house were constructed for Ricks in the 1920s, and were both designed by the architect Frederick A. Godley.

Following the manion's demolition in the 1960s, this guest house would remain standing as a private residence, and the stone walls on each side of the former driveway remain intact.

11. **Chanticleare Drive:** Chanticleare Drive is named for the former estate of Jesse Ricks, *Chanticleare*, which this street was built over. The subdivision is called *Chanticleare at Flower Hill* for this reason, as well.

This street would become a wild scene in 1980, when a resident's son-in-law, who was a lion tamer, visited and parked five trailers filled with lions and tigers on this street. This would lead to Trustee Rhoda H. Becker proposing a new local law banning wild animals, which was ultimately approved and signed into law.

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12. **Chanticleare (Mansion) Site:** The Chanticleare mansion, which was owned by Jesse Ricks, was located in this general area near the curve in Drake Lane. The developers, Edwin and Walter Keta, initially planned to save the 42-room mansion, but it was ultimately demolished.

In 1968, the organ formerly located in the mansion's music room was donated by John Ricks and his sister, Jane Ricks King to Hofstra University in nearby Hempstead. The three-bank Aeolian electro-pneumatic pipe organ was valued at \$115,000 at the time, and was installed in Hofstra University's John Cranford Adams Playhouse that fall.

13. **Drake Lane Cul-De-Sac:** This cul-de-sac was the original terminus of Drake Lane prior to the construction of the Chanticleare at Flower Hill subdivision.

14. **Hemlock Road:** According to early plat maps for the northern parts of the Flower Hill Country Estates subdivision, Hemlock Road originally was to be called Robin Road. The name was changed to Hemlock Road at some point during the planning stages in the 1950s, as indicated by records. It is unknown why the name of this street was changed.

Additionally, the Country Estates subdivision of nearby East Hills was developed around the same time by the same firm, Country Estates, Inc., and has a street called Hemlock Drive.

15. **Brook Lane:** The name for Brook Lane is likely due to how the northernmost tip of the road is near a brook, which is now part of the area's drainage system.

16. **Chestnut Road:** According to early plat maps for the northern parts of the Flower Hill Country Estates subdivision, Chestnut Road originally was to be called Quaker Ridge Road.

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The name was changed to Chestnut Road at some point during the planning stages in the 1950s, as indicated by records. The original name was due to how the street would have been located in the never-built Quaker Ridge subdivision.

Additionally, the Country Estates subdivision of nearby East Hills was developed around the same time by the same firm, Country Estates, Inc., and has a street called Chestnut Drive.

17. **Ricks' Overlook:** From the top of the hill on Chestnut Road, the Throgs Neck Bridge is visible in the distance – particularly during the winter months.

The name of this scenic overlook reflects the fact that this area used to be owned by Jesse Ricks.

18. **Sands-Willets House:** The Sands-Willets Homestead is one of the oldest homes in Flower Hill and on the Cow Neck peninsula. It was originally built ca. 1735, and would expand over the next several decades as the family size grew. Local folklore has it that George Washington visited the home during the American Revolution, as the Sands and Willets families were very active in the war effort.

In the 1970s, Eliza K. Willets sold the home to the Cow Neck Peninsula Historical Society, and it remains their headquarters to this very day.

The home is listed as a Village of Flower Hill Historical Site and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

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19. **Homewood Place:** The name of Homewood Place is shared with the subdivision; Homewood was developed by Homewood Properties Ltd.

Furthermore, the Lapham residence was named *Homewood*, and was located in this area.

20. **Vincent Smith School:** The Vincent Smith School is a private school established by Adelaide Vincent Smith in 1924.

Over the years, the Vincent Smith School would grow to serve children from first grade through twelfth grade.

Threatened with closure in the 1960s due to a lack of revenue, parents grouped together to raise the funds needed to keep the school operating.

Today, the Vincent Smith School continues to operate, and specializes in teaching children with learning disabilities.

21. **Country Estates Gateway Entrance:** These walls are the replacement gateway walls for Country Estates, and were constructed after the original walls were demolished in 1957, when Port Washington Boulevard was reconstructed. This reconstruction project saw Waring Drive's slope be increased, as Port Washington Boulevard was raised roughly four feet.

The original walls were demolished as a result, despite local outcry against doing that and increasing the slope.

Prior to their demolition, locals held a sit-in demonstration on the wall. Amongst these locals was opera star Miriam "Mimi" Benzell, who lived on Cardinal Road.

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22. **North Hempstead Country Club:** The North Hempstead Country Club was established in 1916. As such, it predates the incorporation of Flower Hill as a village by roughly 15 years. Its golf course was designed by the famed golf course architect A.W. Tillinghast.

Due to sand mining operations in the area, its design was altered in the 1950s by architect Robert Trent Jones.

In March of 1962, a small plane crash-landed on the golf course after suffering an engine failure; there were no injuries.

The Tillinghast design was restored in the 1990s as part of a renovation project.

In 2018, the North Hempstead Country Club purchased the adjacent A. Wright Chapman Residence, tore it down, and constructed a driving range in its place.

23. **Miriam Benzell Green:** Metropolitan Opera and Broadway star Miriam "Mimi" Benzell lived diagonally from this park strip.

Benzell was a vocal advocate for the community, and when the infamous reconstruction of the Waring Drive/Port Washington Boulevard intersection took place in 1957, she participated in a sit-in with several other concerned residents to protest the controversial project.

24. **Stonytown Road:** Stonytown Road's name comes from the historic village of Stony Town, which this road led to.

Stony Town was located near where Plandome Station is presently located. Stonytown Road has previously been called Stoningtown and Stonington Roads.

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The Village of Flower Hill purchased this road from Nassau County in the 2000s, and would eventually add a pedestrian and bicycle path along the shoulder of the road.

25. **Future 9/11 Memorial:** On September 11, 2001, Flower Hill lost a number of residents who had either lived in Flower Hill at the time of the attacks or had previously done so.

This memorial shall serve as an eternal testament to the memories of the Flower Hillers and all other innocent lives lost on that fateful day.

26. **Flower Hill Village Park:** The Flower Hill Village Park was first created by Nassau County in the 1960s as Flower Hill County Park.

In 2007, the park was purchased by Flower Hill, as many locals felt that it was of no use to residents. Following this purchase, Flower Hill gave the park a complete makeover. The landscaping was extensively redone by Village Arborist Ann C. Frankel, a playground and sports facilities were added, as well as a stage. Over the course of less than ten years, the Village of Flower Hill transformed this very park into a proud symbol of our community.

The park also contains numerous memorials. These include a memorial for Trustee Karen Reichenbach, another for Public Works Superintendent Scott Hislop, and one for the locals lost on September 11, 2001.

27. **Future Munson Real Estate Office Plaque:** This plaque marks the former location of Carlos Munson's real estate office. This building was where residents voted unanimously on April 27, 1931 to incorporate Flower Hill as a village, and was where many of Flower Hill's earliest meetings were held.

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In 1948, Flower Hill Village Hall was constructed on the property as its replacement.

28. **Village Hall:** Flower Hill Village Hall was constructed in 1948 over the site of Carlos Munson's real estate office. Designed by architect Henry W. Johanson, the building was initially designed to only include the most essential of services, as there was considerable opposition to its construction at the time.

In 1951, a contentious political battle occurred over whether or not coffee and doughnuts should be served after meetings; the incumbents who opposed serving these items were ultimately reelected during that election.

Village Hall would be expanded over the years, and the newer sections were designed to conform with the original parts of the building.

In 2006, a time capsule was buried in front of Village Hall to celebrate Flower Hill's 75th Anniversary, and will be opened in 2081.

29. **Old Blacksmith:** The old blacksmith was located in this approximate area.

30. **Old Spring:** According to Carlos Munson, the stream which runs adjacent to this side of Port Washington Boulevard was a key reason for the old Flower Hill's existence.

Today, the stream is part of the area's local drainage system.

31. **Daniel Ireland's Tavern & Old General Store:** This was the approximate location of both the old general store and Daniel Ireland's Tavern. Ireland's tavern was infamous for being the source of drunken men congregating in the area, and was the key reason why Carlos Munson purchased additional land in the area.

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32. **Henry W. Johanson Green:** Henry W. Johanson was the architect of several buildings in Flower Hill. This includes Village Hall, which is located directly across Port Washington Boulevard from this traffic triangle.

Additionally, Johanson would eventually serve as one of our village's building inspectors, and would hold this position for several years.

33. **Flower Hill Hotel:** This was the approximate location of the old Flower Hill Hotel.

34. **Flower Hill Cemetery:** Also known as the Burtis Cemetery, this historic cemetery dates back to the American Revolution, and is where many prominent, early locals are buried.

35. **East High Road:** According to early plat maps for the original areas which Carlos Munson had developed by the T.B. Ackerson, East High Road was once supposed to be called East Crescent. The name was changed to East High Road at some point during the planning stages. It is unknown why the name was changed.

36. **Old Well:** This was the approximate location of the old well for the old village.

37. **Canning Factory:** This was the approximate location of the old canning factory.

38. **Trolley Siding Site:** This was the approximate location of the former New York & North Shore trolley siding. This siding was one of many trolley sidings to exist along the entirety of the route, which mostly consisted of a single track.

39. **Old Slave Quarters:** This was the approximate location of the Hewlett Homestead's former slave quarters. Contrary to what is often written in history textbooks, it was not uncommon for slavery to exist in the northern parts of the United States.

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Although it is unknown when or for how long slavery was used at the Hewlett Homestead, the existence of slave labor here and of these outbuildings have been confirmed by an old map and in old newspaper articles.

40. **Old Post Office:** This was the approximate location of the former post office for the old village.
41. **E.A. DeQuintal Residence & Outbuilding:** The main home and the outbuilding seen here were built for E.A. DeQuintal. DeQuintal was one of the original members of our local government.
42. **Country Club Drive:** Country Club Drive reflects the fact that much of the road is located next to the North Hempstead Country Club. According to early plat maps, the easternmost segment of the street was originally named East Drive. Although this part of the road has almost always been officially considered to be part of Country Club Drive, tax maps include a parenthetical reference to the segment's original name.
43. **Hewlett Lane:** Hewlett Lane was named for the Hewlett family's farm, how the subdivision is built atop portions of the former farm, and its name directly correlates to this.

Additionally, an old road of the same name once ran near the newer road.

44. **Farmview Road:** Farmview Road was named as such, due to the fact that it bordered the Hewlett family's farm, and because the subdivision is built atop portions of the former farm.
45. **Future Hewlett Homestead Plaque:** This plaque marks the approximate location of the former Hewlett Homestead, which was built by the Hewlett family during the 18th Century.

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In the 1980s, it was saved by developer Ivo Matkovic, and the home became the centerpiece of the Hewlett Farm subdivision.

In the 2010s, the home was demolished by a developer who erected two new homes in its place.

46. **Hewlett House Green:** In this approximate area stood the former Hewlett Homestead. Built by the Hewlett family during the 18th Century, this home would be expanded over the years as the family grew.

Elizabeth Hewlett Hopkins and her husband, Milton Hopkins sold the home and the last remaining portion of the farm in the 1980s to Ivo Matkovic, a retired shipping executive. Matkovic developed this area into the Hewlett Farm subdivision, and made this home its centerpiece.

In the 2010s, another developer purchased this home, demolished it, subdivided the lot, and erected two new homes in its place.

47. **Old Farm Green:** This area was once part of the Hewlett family's farm, and was its last remaining portion by the time it was sold in the 1980s to developer Ivo Matkovic.

48. **Milton Hopkins Green:** Milton Hopkins was a professor of biology, a historian, and a textbook editor. Additionally, he served as the President of the Cow Neck Peninsula Historical Society and lived in the former Hewlett Homestead. He was married to Elizabeth Hewlett Hopkins.

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49. **Walter Uhl Green:** Walter Uhl was arguably the most important and influential builder in Flower Hill's history. Uhl built the first five sections of the Flower Hill Estates subdivision. This traffic triangle is located in the sixth and final section of the subdivision, which was developed by Alrad Realty Co. Inc., although the lot immediately to the west of this park is part of the area developed and built by Uhl. The homes and areas built by Uhl are amongst the most famous in Flower Hill.

50. **Sunnyvale Road:** According to early plat maps for the sixth section of Flower Hill Estates, Sunnyvale Road was originally planned to be called Bridle Path or Fairway when Alrad Realty was developing the area in the 1950s. The name Bridle Path is included as a parenthetical reference on Sunnyvale Road's tax maps. It is unknown why the name was changed to Sunnyvale Road.

51. **Brookside Drive:** Brookside Drive's name reflects the fact that an old brook runs adjacent to it.

When Walter Uhl developed the Flower Hill Estates subdivision, the brook was shifted into an easement behind the properties on the southern side of the road.

52. **Hewlett's Overlook:** During the Winter months, Hempstead Harbor is visible behind the trees from this spot.

The name of this scenic overlook reflects that the Hewlett family once owned this general area of Flower Hill.

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53. **Humus Area:** The eighteen-acre Heritage Hills at Flower Hill subdivision was the location of an infamous humus bog, discovered by Walter Uhl when developing the Flower Hill Estates subdivision. This area was commonly referred to by Flower Hill's officials and the press as "The Humus Area" and "The Humus Bog" for this reason.

The humus in this area hindered any development in this area for many years, and it was finally developed in the 1970s by Holiday Park Industries.