

# The Flower Hill Historic Trail



**Parks, Museums, & Overlooks**

**Route Guidebook**

# The Flower Hill Historic Trail – Parks, Museums, & Overlooks Route Guidebook

This guidebook provides a description and brief history for each location on the Parks, Museums, & Overlooks Route of the Flower Hill Historic Trail. All of the locations are listed in the order of their stop numbers, starting with Flower Hill Women's Club Green and ending with Guggenheim Green. See map for more details.

1. **Flower Hill Women's Club Green:** The Women's Club of Flower Hill is our village's philanthropic and charitable organization, which was founded in 1949. Over the decades, the Women's Club of Flower Hill has sponsored many community improvement projects and contributed to many children's charities, and in the 2010s, they landscaped this traffic island during its reconstruction project; a plaque was placed to commemorate their work.
2. **Nelson Olmsted Green:** In the late 1940s, actor Nelson Olmsted purchased home here in Flower Hill, located on Mason Drive. Olmstead was known to take great pride in his home's garden, as reported by *Newsday* on May 7, 1949.
3. **Stephen H. Mason Green:** Stephen H. Mason, the third Mayor of Flower Hill (serving between 1937 and 1940), owned an estate nearby. His estate would be developed into the Sunset Hills and Stratford Woods subdivisions in the 1930s and 1960s, respectively.
4. **Sunset Hill Green:** This very spot marks the approximate location of the former mansion at *Sunset Hill*, which was designed by and for Alfred D'Oench and his wife, Alice Grace D'Oench.
5. **Mason's Overlook:** From the top of this hill, one can see the New York City skyline on a clear day. Although partially obstructed by trees during warmer months, the location is high enough

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for the tips of the Empire State Building, One World Trade Center, and other New York skyscrapers to be seen.

The view of Manhattan from this part of Flower Hill was featured in a New York Times article from the 1930s, in an article on construction in the area.

The name of this scenic overlook reflects the fact that this very part of Flower Hill was once owned by Stephen H. Mason, Flower Hill's third Mayor.

6. **Romola Bowditch Green:** Romola Bowditch, who lived a few houses to the east of this traffic triangle on Sunset Drive, was one of the Manhasset Public Library's five founding board members, as well as one of the first two females to hold the position. In May of 1945, Bowditch famously received Manhasset's first library card.
7. **D'Oench Green:** This traffic circle was built in the 1930s as part of the D'Oench Estate subdivision, which was developed by the Mott Brothers; the subdivision is split between Flower Hill and Plandome. Although early plat maps for the subdivision indicate that the circle was to be called Dale Circle, the name has seldom been used over the years.

The name of D'Oench Green reflects the fact that Alfred and Alice Grace D'Oench once owned this land.

8. **Charles Bagley Wright Green:** Around 1940, a child by the name of Charles Bagley Wright moved into a home on Elderfields Road, located slightly to the south of this traffic triangle.

Wright would eventually become a major real estate developer and philanthropist, and was one of the five main developers of the Seattle Space Needle.

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9. **Carlos W. Munson Green:** This area of Flower Hill was once owned by Carlos W. Munson, a shipping executive and Flower Hill's founding father.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Munson would sell off large portions of his estate to developers, who would construct new residential developments on the land. Due to his guidance, generosity, and leadership in incorporating Flower Hill as a village, he was offered the position of Flower Hill's first Mayor. However, Munson declined the offer, and instead accepted the position of Village Trustee.

At the first board meeting following his death in 1940, the Trustees held a moment of silence for Munson, and spoke about his life and the gratitude felt towards him by Flower Hill. Their closing line was the following:

“He [Carlos Walter Munson] was the First Citizen of Flower Hill and it is fitting that his name be in some way indelibly impressed upon this Village for the perpetuation of his memory.”

10. **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.

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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.

11. **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.

12. **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.

13. **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

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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.

14. **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.

15. **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.

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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.

16. **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.

17. **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.

18. **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.

19. **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.

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20. **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.

21. **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.

22. **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.

23. **Old School Green:** This traffic island is located approximately where the Roslyn-Flower Hill Elementary School's field was located. The Roslyn Union Free School District purchased the property in the late 1940s, and the school was opened on January 12, 1951. The Roslyn Union Free School District purchased the property in the late 1940s, and the school was opened on January 12, 1951.

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The school was designed by the Manhattan-based firm of Moore & Hutchins, and was built as part of the same project as East Hills Elementary School and the former Highland Elementary School. The Flower Hill School and the Highland School were notable for their small design, which was designed to make the home-to-school transition easier for little kids.

The school served local children between kindergarten and the third grade, and operated until the early 1980s, when it was closed due to declining enrollment numbers. Following its closure, the Mashady Development Corporation subdivided the property and constructed eight new homes in its place.

24. **Sand Miner’s Overlook:** From this location at the top of this hill, the Long Island Sound and Westchester County are visible.

The name of this scenic overlook reflects the famous sand mining operations which took place in the area throughout much of the 20th Century.

Additionally, parts of what are now modern-day Woodland Road and the Wildwood at Flower Hill subdivision were once owned by Colonial Sand & Gravel.

Furthermore, this hill overlooks the areas once used for sand mining operations; much of which is now the Harbor Park Planned Industrial Park.

25. **Hearst’s Overlook:** This scenic overlook, which is located on Fernwood Lane between Woodland Road and the cul-de-sac slightly downhill, provides a spectacular view of Hempstead Harbor, Roslyn, Roslyn Harbor, and East Hills – especially during the Winter months. John Randolph Hearst, the son of William, once owned this portion of Flower Hill.

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The Hearsts would sell this land in the 1950s to the Greenway Construction Corporation, which would redevelop the area as the Roslyn Hills subdivision.

26. **Desmond Gallagher Green:** Staff Sergeant Desmond A. Gallagher was a hero of the United States Air Force during the Second World War and received a Purple Heart for his service and heroism. He resided down the road from this park.
27. **Warren Moss Green:** Warren Moss was a former President of the Rolling Wood Civic Association. Moss was very devoted to this role and was a constant advocate for the Rolling Wood subdivision. He was one of the key figures in changing the former traffic triangle at this location into this traffic circle, which took place in the 1960s.
28. **Howard Fein Green:** Howard Fein was a former President of the Rolling Wood Civic Association. Fein was very devoted to this role and was a constant advocate for the Rolling Wood subdivision.
29. **George Bryant Green:** George Edison Bryant served as the Superintendent of the Roslyn Union Free School District for many years and lived on Bayberry Ridge. He served as Roslyn's Superintendent of Schools when the district purchased the land for the Roslyn-Flower Hill Elementary School in 1948 and when the school was ultimately opened in 1951.

In addition to serving as the Superintendent of the Roslyn School District, Bryant also served as a Village Trustee and as the Director of the Flower Hill Association.

30. **Guggenheim Green:** The name of this traffic island reflects the fact that Edmund A. Guggenheim owned this very land before it was sold to developers.