

Valley Stream Historical Society

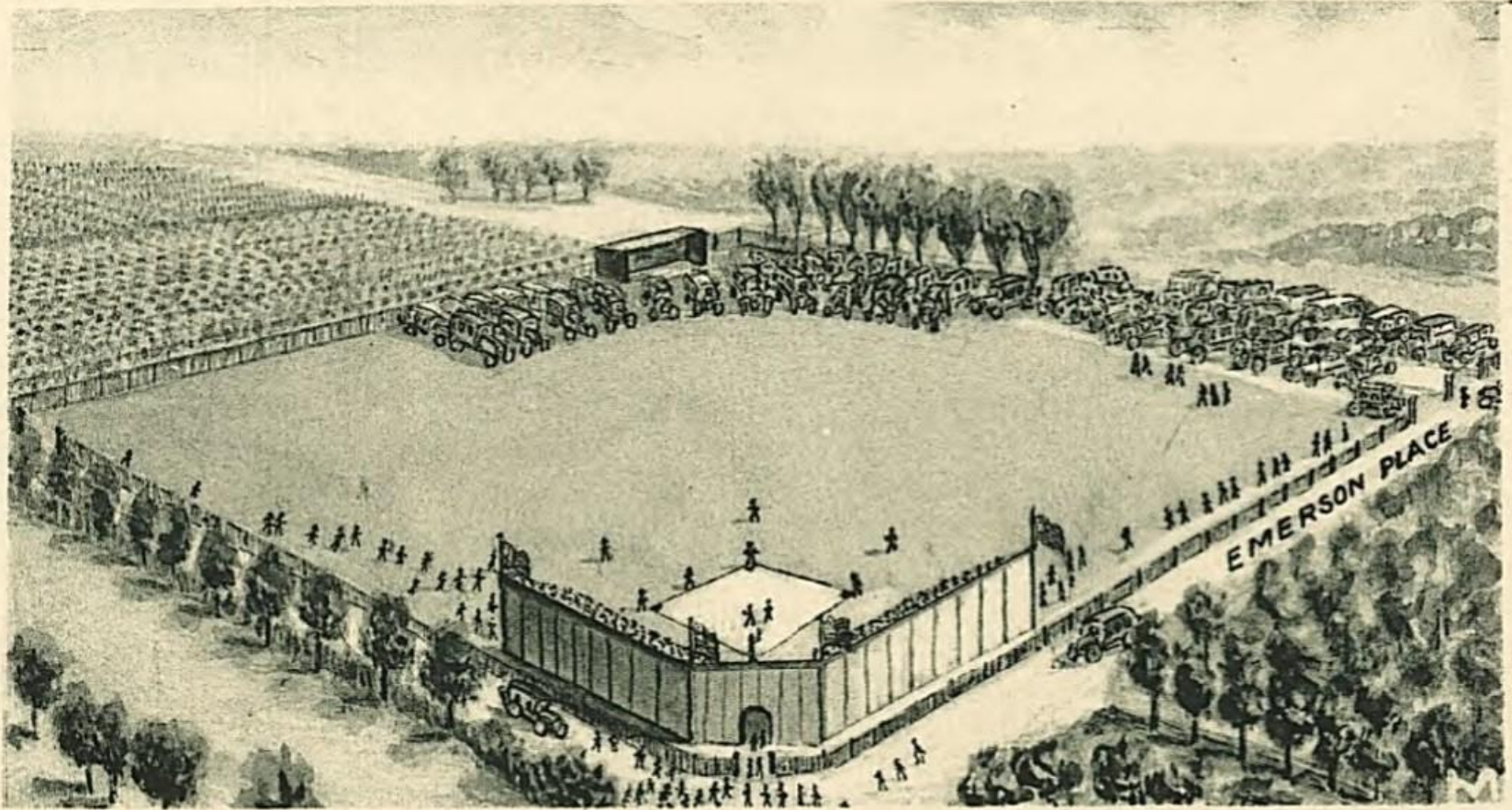
# Firemen's Field

## THE EARLY YEARS

HISTORY HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT *series*

November 2022





## FIREMENS' ATHLETIC FIELD.

ca. 1924

[Aero-view map of Valley Stream, Long Island, Hughes & Cinquin, Brooklyn, NY](#)

# Introduction

Firemen's Field was renamed Firemen's Memorial Field in 1940, the year the Village of Valley Stream purchased the field from the Firemen's Athletic Association of Valley Stream, Inc. (FAA). Most of the material included in this presentation (except for the years 1940-1941) was prior to the sale date. For the sake of consistency and accuracy when quoting newspaper articles, books, and oral histories, "Firemen's Field," and not "Firemen's Memorial Field," will be used.

Chronicling the history of Firemen's Field has many challenges intrinsic to the nature of the subject matter. One of those challenges is how best to present the ever-changing landscape of team rosters, leagues, affiliations, seasons, players, managers, coaches, dates, scores, financials, etc., without sacrificing clarity and reading pleasure.

Local history is a lot like genealogy; they are closely related disciplines. While researching my European ancestors many years ago, I made the acquaintance of a distant relative. After asking about a certain branch of the family, he politely chastised my inquiry regarding birth, marriage, divorce, and death dates. He pointed out that my endeavor shouldn't be an all-inclusive statistical feat, an unwieldy list of names and numbers that will most likely be quickly forgotten. Instead, he told me, one should focus on the relative's life and coax out stories that leave a lasting impression. Was the person's life well-lived, and if not, what happened?

Should the story of Firemen's Field be strictly about the field and nothing else? Or, should it include ancillary information that is connected, although not central, to the narrative? Since Firemen's Field is but one component of Valley Stream's rich history, the decision was made to use the ball field as a jumping off point; a vehicle to share other historical tidbits. Biographical profiles, descriptions of other local ventures, histories of other land plots have also been included, as they help round out and create a more nuanced story. The side stories, in fact, have a greater chance of being remembered and passed down; more so, than a string of team names, scores, and years.



Images that accompany text help keep the reader engaged and move the story forward. But, they can also be distracting and overwhelming. So as not to compete with the core story being told, links to team rosters, images, articles, books, maps, and the like, have been embedded in the text. If the reader wishes to learn more, they can click on the link that will take them to the data. But, it isn't necessary to do so, as the story is understandable without them.

Prior to the 1930s, and during the formative years of black baseball, the terms “Colored” and “Negro” were the accepted terminology when referring to African-Americans. The Colored World Series took place from 1924-1927, and the Negro World Series, a post-season baseball tournament, from 1924-1927, and again from 1942-1948. In order to accurately quote printed matter, I've matched my wording to the nomenclature used in the source documents.

Back in the day, homes and commercial structures in Valley Stream often did not have house or building numbers. And if they did, and if that structure is still standing, the address has most likely changed. For the sake of simplicity and convenience, modern-day addresses, where applicable, are noted. This makes it easier to find look up locations on the internet.

The structure of this story has been divided into four eras: before Firemen's Field (prologue), the 1920s, the 1930s, and the early 1940s. Each era has a distinctive set of traits, a personality specific to that time frame. Each of the decades end with a self-appointed “Hall of Fame” page, where players, managers, coaches, and other personalities who left their mark on the ball field during that decade are honored.

By reviving histories once known, but now forgotten; and by sharing stories that have never been told, we can envision Valley Stream's yesteryear in a more dynamic and exciting fashion.

—Amy Kassak Bentley  
November 2022



# Prologue

1899-1918

# Before Firemen's Field where did Streamers play ball?

Prior to Firemen's Field opening in 1923, there were many empty lots to play organized sports, sandlot ball, and pick-up games.

In addition to the open lots, there were also three swaths of land specifically used for organized sports:

- Irma Park Oval
- Sumpter's Lots
- Scherter's Lot/Gibson Oval

Eventually, the majority of land in Valley Stream was bought and sold by three principal land developers:

- Royal Land Company, est. 1893
- Windsor Land & Improvement Company, est. 1908
- Gibson Corporation, est. 1921

# Irma Park

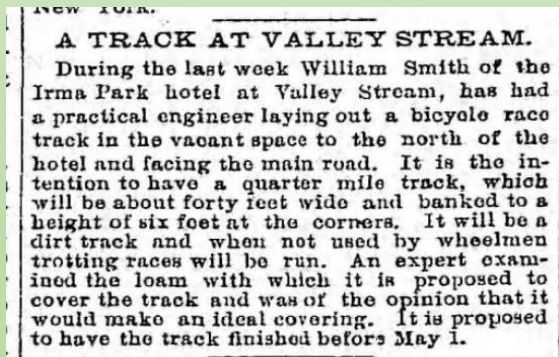
## Royal Land Company

Circa 1893, three Brooklynites bought land in the west end of Valley Stream from local farmers and other land owners. In 1893, they formed the Royal Land Company and immediately started selling plots of land. They called their new development Irma Park.

## The Irma Park Hotel & Oval

In 1895, William "Billy" Smith opened the Irma Park Hotel at 400 West Merrick Road. In February 1897, a quarter-mile bicycle track was laid out in front of his hotel, facing Merrick Road. It was built in response to the bicycle racing/riding craze that gripped the nation and would continue to do so through the teens. Smith's hotel catered to the wheelmen and wheelwomen of the day. He provided pumps for flat tires, tools for repairs, and registries for the riders to record their stats, clubs, and destinations.

In August of that same year, a baseball field was constructed in the track's interior.



02/29/1897

Brooklyn Daily Eagle



08/05/1897

Brooklyn Daily Eagle



# William Smith

William “Billy” Smith, Sr. (1831-1906), a German immigrant, was the owner of the Irma Park Hotel and first baseball oval in Valley Stream. Smith was a resident of the west end since at least 1859. A tailor by trade, he was also the Excise Commissioner for the Town of Hempstead. Uncle Billy, as he was called by the locals, owned a trio of buildings on Merrick Road: a “clothing manufactory,” a store, and a homestead. He fitted all the local farmers and their families in their “Sunday best.”

## **Billy Smith and the Civil War**

During the Civil War, Smith supplied the Union Army with uniforms. After the war, Smith manufactured uniforms for the Grand Army of the Republic. The GAR was a fraternal organization composed of Union Army, Navy, and Marine veterans.

In 1878, Smith took his horse and wagon to New York and delivered clothing to a customer. He received \$160 for his efforts (close to \$5,000 in 2022 dollars) which was allegedly stolen by his hired hand who was arrested on suspicion.

Smith amassed a small fortune from his clothing business which he invested in real estate. Before owning and operating the Irma Park Hotel, Smith owned and operated the Grand Central Hotel on Front Street in Hempstead.

The Irma Park later became the famed Royal Pavillon nightclub/roadhouse.

Billy Smith eternally rests in Greenfield Cemetery in Uniondale.





**ca. 1903**

400 West Merrick Road (between South Montague and South Waldinger streets)

1895 - Irma Park Hotel / 1903 – Edlich's Irma Park Hotel / 1921 – Pavillon Royal

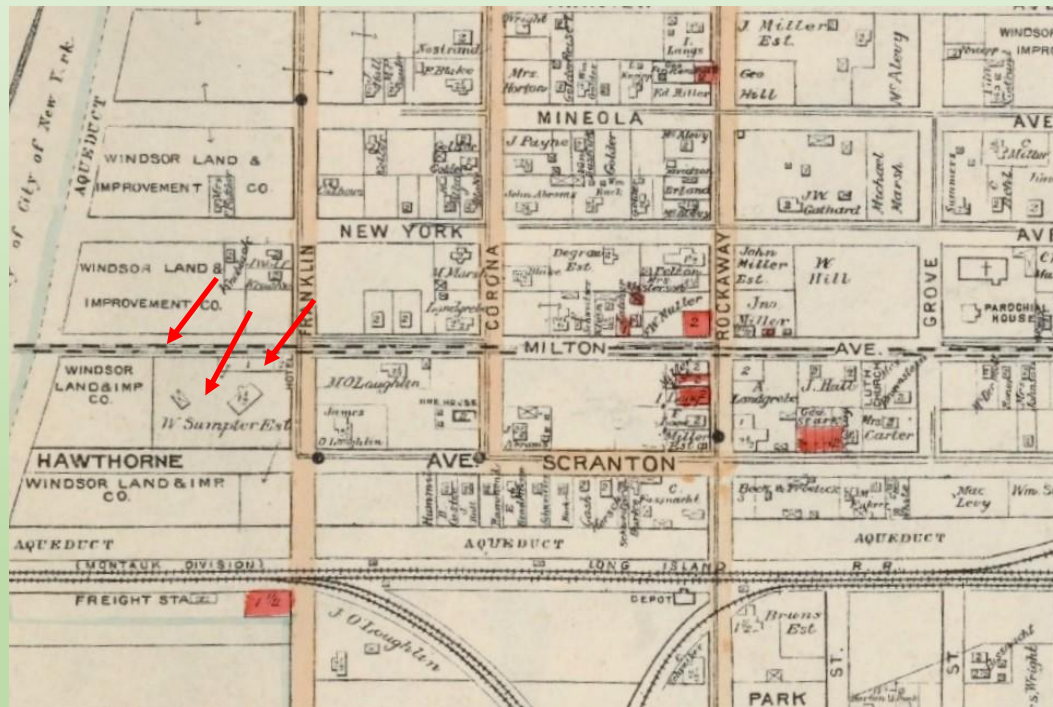
Brian Merlis postcard

# Sumpter's Lots

The second ball field in Valley Stream was Sumpter's Lots, owned by William Sumpter (1854-1904), a long-time resident of Valley Stream. (He previously lived on the northwest corner of Fairfield Street and Roosevelt Avenue.)

The lots were located on the west side of Franklin Avenue, across from the modern-day Valley Stream Post Office. In 1902, Sumpter opened a hotel and bowling alley on the northeast quadrant of his land. He was killed in 1904 when trying to cross the street-grade train tracks on Rockaway Avenue. The property was sold soon thereafter, but the lot, for the most part, remained sparsely occupied and eventually morphed into a ball field.

Red arrows point to trolley tracks, hotel-bowling alley, and Sumpter's Lots.

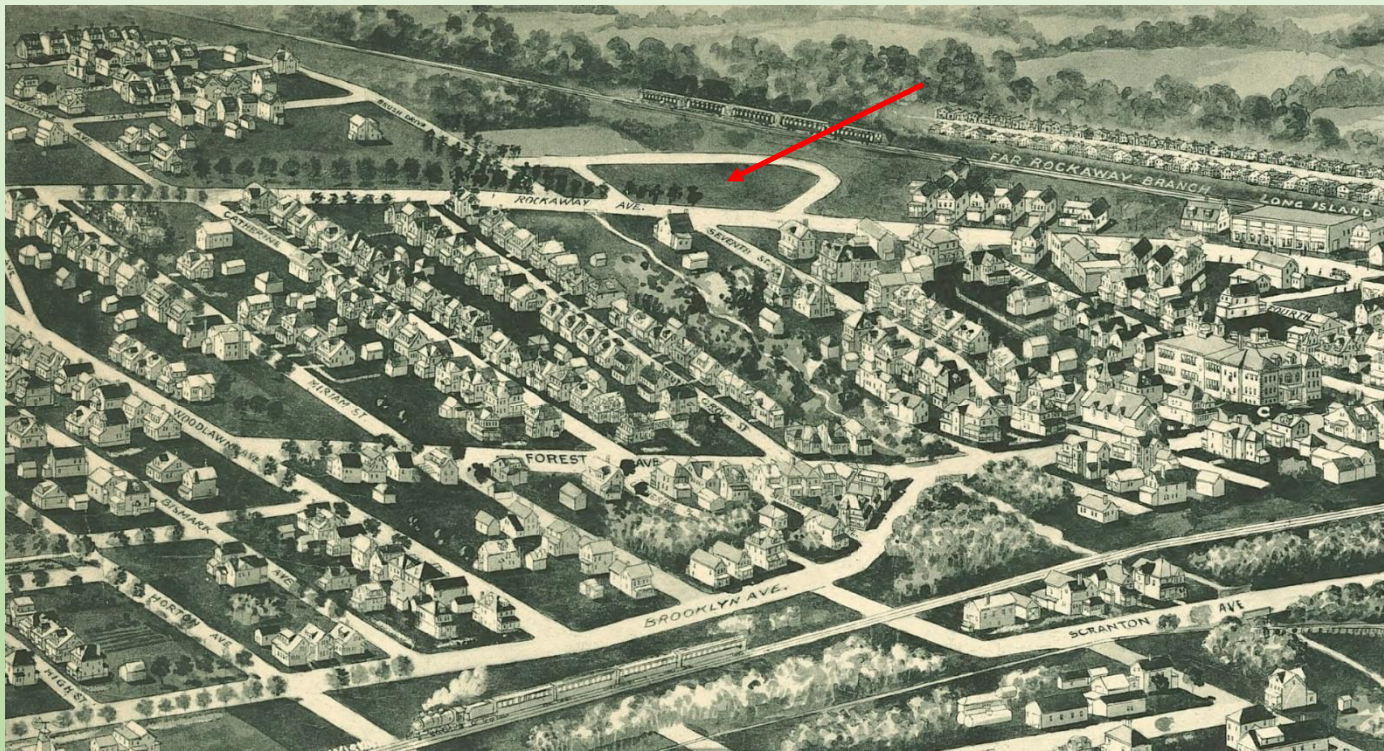


1914

[Atlas of Nassau County, Long Island, N.Y. / E. Belcher Hyde, cartographer and publisher](#)

# Scherter's Lot – Gibson Oval

The third ball field in Valley Stream was Scherter's Lot. Located in South Valley Stream, the lot was bounded by Alsop Street, Rockaway Avenue, Sandalwood Avenue, and Gibson Boulevard. In 1870, Peter Scherter (1853-1930), an Alsace, France native, settled in Valley Stream. Just south of Scherter's property was a large empty lot owned by the Queens County Water Company and Franklin B. Lord. After Scherter passed away in 1930, the lot became known as the Gibson Oval, although William Gibson (1880-1964), the namesake of the South Valley Stream development, did not own the land at the time. When he eventually purchased the property in the 1950s he tried to put up an apartment building, but the Gibson Civic Association nixed that idea and two-family homes were built instead.



ca. 1924

[Aero-view map of Valley Stream, Long Island, Hughes & Cinquin, Brooklyn, NY](#)

# Public transportation

## Long Island Railroad

Sumpter's and Scherter's lots were close to the Long Island Railroad depot on Rockaway Avenue, 0.3 and 0.4 miles away, respectively. In 1933, a new train station, the one that stands today, was constructed west of the demolished original.

## New York and Long Island Traction Company

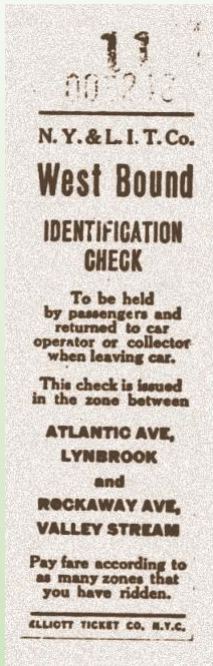
Another form of public transportation available to travelers visiting Valley Stream was the New York and Long Island Traction Company, a LIRR-operated trolley service that ran from 1903-1926. The trolley was known locally as the "Toonerville Trolley," named after the popular newspaper cartoon of the time. The trolley portrayed in the comic strip was rickety and unreliable, as was the one operated by the NYLITC.

*How the car would struggle to climb up the trestle over the railroad tracks. How the motor would strain to the limit, only to gasp and have the car slide none too gently back to the point of departure. How it would grind faster and more fiercely, pull the reluctant car once more to the top. How the passengers would breathe with relief once they got over the top.\**

— Howard Ruehl, *History of Valley Stream* (1975)

Public transportation made traveling to Valley Stream convenient for players and fans. Game times were coordinated with train and trolley schedules. Snafus occurred, however, which sometimes resulted in no-shows or cancelled games.

- \* On August 9, 1907, car no. 57 and car no. 25 crashed head-on near the Valley Stream trestle due to a misunderstanding of orders. Motorman has both legs crushed and dies.



undated LIRR Depot postcard  
northwest corner of Sunrise Highway and Rockaway Avenue  
George W. Wheeler, photographer  
Brian Merlis photo



undated trolley photo  
New York & Long Island Traction Company  
Vincent F. Seyfried, 1952



# Valley Stream athletic clubs that pre-dated Firemen's Field



# Valley Stream Field Club

Years in existence: 1904-1909

Home field: Irma Park Oval

Classification: Amateur

In June 1904, the Valley Stream Field Club was organized and **William Sumpter** was elected president of the newly formed baseball team. Sumpter, as you may recall, owned Sumpter's Lots on Franklin and Jamaica avenues. The Lots, however, were not used by the Valley Stream Field Club. The Field Club used the Irma Park Oval on Merrick Road. (In 1909, five years after Sumpter's passing, the Sago A.C. Football Team made the Lots their home field.)

Also, that year, **William P. Horton** (Horton Avenue) was elected manager and **Edward Von Buskirk** (Brooklyn Avenue) assumed the role of team captain. In 1908, **William L. Buck** (Rockaway Avenue) became the team's manager. Buck, a railroad agent and Nassau County Deputy Sheriff, would later go on to become president of the Central High School district's school board. He also served on the District 24 school board. The William L. Buck School in South Valley Stream is named after him.

Sumpter, Horton, Von Buskirk, and Buck were all officers and members of the Nassau Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 (formed in 1898). Their names are mentioned in an article that also included the following:

*The organization is prominent as a social organization and a movement is on foot to devote some time to gymnastics and athletic sports.*

— April 4, 1900, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*

The origin of organized sports in Valley Stream can be traced back to the Valley Stream Fire Department.

The Valley Stream Field Club played teams from Lynbrook, Springfield (Gardens), Cedarhurst, Bellmore, and Brooklyn. They lost many of their games.

# Sago Athletic Club

*Sago — a salutation or greeting used by Native Americans when they met on riverbanks to form treaties and strengthen alliances with other tribes.*

In 1909, the Field Club played its last game. This was the same year that the Sago Athletic Club (A.C.) was formed by Ernest J. Chapman; a Valley Stream resident (Mineola Avenue) and father of seven. One of Chapman's sons was Leroy, a well-known Nassau County patrolman. The Chapman's married into the prominent Pagan-Fletcher and Hall families.

Chapman was a Grace Methodist Episcopal Church congregant, as were many others that helped manage the club. And like the Field Club before them, a good number of them were Fire Department vamps.

## Sponsorship

Amateur ball teams usually had a sponsor. Sponsors were necessary, as teams needed money for field rental fees, ground maintenance, uniforms, equipment, traveling expenses, guarantees to visiting teams, etc. The Nassau Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 and the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church most probably helped get the club started.

The Sago A.C. was composed of local young men who lived in the area and were former high school and/or college athletes. The club consisted of four teams:

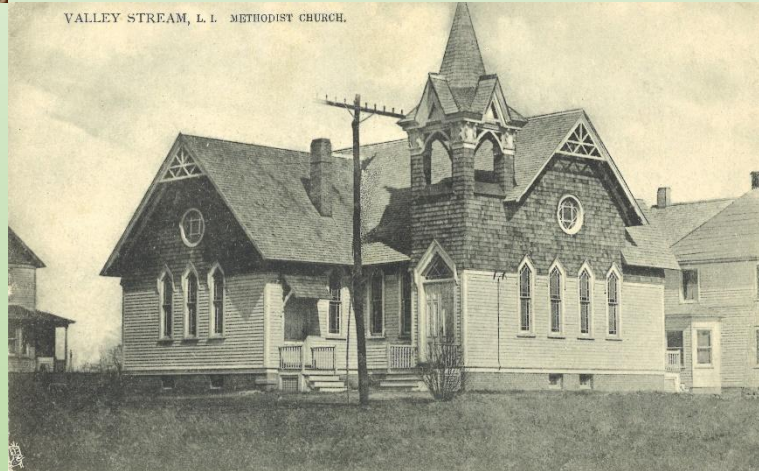
Baseball  
Football  
Track  
Basketball





**Founded 1900**

Nassau Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1  
112 South Corona Avenue  
postcard from the estate of Barbara A. Gribbon  
*firehouse (and bell) still standing*



**Founded 1905**

Grace Methodist Episcopal Church  
northeast corner of South Franklin and West Fairview avenues  
postcard from the estate of Barbara A. Gribbon  
*demolished*

In 1911, Grace Methodist Episcopal Church gifted a tower bell to the Nassau Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1.  
The two entities were aligned in their goal to promote organized sports in Valley Stream.

# Sago A.C. Baseball



Years in existence: 1909-1928

Home fields: Sumpter's Lots (1909-1924), Firemen's Field (1925-1927)

Classification: Amateur

Affiliation: Intercity Association

**William L. Buck**, the former manager of the Field Club, became the manager of the Sago A.C. baseball team. We can assume, with some degree of confidence, that the Sagos replaced the Field Club.

Amateur athletes play seasonally and don't receive a salary. Semi-professionals also play seasonally, but receive compensation. Newspapers of the time typically lumped the Sagos and their counterparts together, listing them as "Amateur-Semi-Pro" teams. It wasn't unusual for amateurs to play semi-professionals, or for players to move from amateur to semi-pro status, season-to-season.

Although the Sago A.C. was an amateur club, and the baseball players did not receive a salary, the team was able to generate revenue by charging admission to games, selling programs, raffle tickets, and refreshment stand goodies (a big money-maker!). They also fundraised: dances, dinners, cake sales. Many events were held at Firemen's Hall above the firehouse on Corona Avenue. They also participated in carnivals and parades — whatever it took to keep the team operational.

## Blue Laws and Sunday games

What they couldn't do, however, was charge admission to their Sunday ball games. In New York, blue laws existed until 1919. If the Sagos played ball on Sundays, however, which they often did, it was possible to get around the law. They could pre-sell tickets, charge for programs equal to the admission ticket, they could even pass around the hat at the end of a game. Playing ball on Sunday was the life blood of the sport, as most of the players had full-time jobs and weekends were their only free days. Where there was a will there was a way. Creativity was everything.

## Decoration Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day

Three non-sectarian holidays were vigorously celebrated in Valley Stream every year: Decoration (Memorial) Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day. The villagers adhered to a strict schedule: a parade in the morning, a Sago baseball game at Sumpter's Lots in the afternoon, and a carnival and fireworks at night. The Sagos were not only known for their prowess on the field (they won many games!), but for the floats they built for parades and annual fairs. In 1911, the Sagos received first prize, a Loving Cup, for their colorful and detailed depiction of all the sports they represented.

1911 was a busy year for the Sagos. They played at least 12 games. The Junior Sagos played two games, winning both — the Charter Oak's from Hoboken and the Bellwood A.A. from Brooklyn. Both teams traveled to Valley Stream. The Sagos played the Darien Field Club at the Parade Grounds in Prospect Park. They lost 4-1. Except for the Charter Oaks and the Darien F.C., the other eight games were home games with Brooklynites.



ca. 1911 at Sumpter's Lots  
*History of Valley Stream*  
Howard Ruehl (1975)

## Toonerville Trolley—Stop 158

As mentioned, Sumpter's Lots was in a good location. It was easy to get to by using public transportation. The Toonerville Trolley ran along the northern rim of the property. In the summer of 1911, The Dahlgren F.C. instructed "followers" to take the Fulton Street "L" from Brooklyn to the City Line (Rosedale); then the trolley to stop 158, Valley Stream.

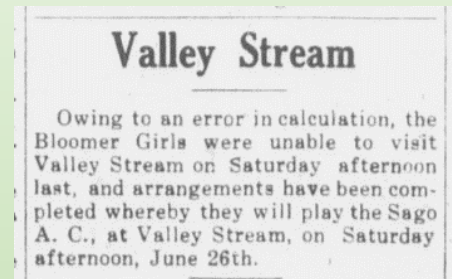
Sunday the Dahlgren F. C. will travel to Valley Stream to a play a return game with the fast Sago A. C. Followers will take Fulton street "L" to City line, and then take trolley to stop 158, Valley Stream. Game called at 4 P. M.

08/23/1911

*Daily Standard Union: Brooklyn*

## Bloomer Girls

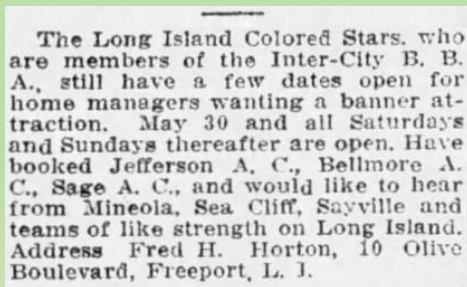
In 1915, the Bloomer Girls purportedly made the trek to Valley Stream to play ball. The barnstorming, traveling team was considered a novelty. (Female teams gained some traction in the 1920s and were considered talented enough to play for all-male teams). They took their name from the comfortable pants that some young women wore instead of the long skirt. Bloomer Girls were not always welcome — Dr. E. T. T. Marsh, a Huntington baseball promoter (he was also a medical doctor) refused to let the Bloomer Girls play in their town. And, they were not the only Bloomers around — not by far! In the greater New York area there were the Western, New York, Coney Island, Yankee, Empire City, Metropolitan, and Jamaica Bloomer Girls! Bloomers often played exhibition games against “Chinamen” and Colored teams. If a Bloomer Girl game was considered top-notch and entertaining, a collection was taken up during the game.



**06/18/1915**  
*Nassau County Review*

## Long Island Colored Stars

In 1916, the Sago A.C. played the Long Island Colored Stars, a barnstorming, traveling team that didn't have a home field. The Colored Stars were members of the Intercity Baseball Association, as were the Sagos. The Sagos were required to mention their affiliation with Intercity when they solicited for games in the local newspapers. The two teams would not have been able to play if they were not members of Intercity. They would have been blacklisted. Intercity, founded in 1906, operated under the leadership of Nathaniel “Nat” Strong.



**04/22/1916**  
*Brooklyn Times Union*



## **Intercity Association**

In February 1906, the Intercity Association of New York was formed. Intercity's objectives were to encourage the NYC Park Commission to build more baseball fields in city parks, and to develop positive relationships with the police, specifically in regards to playing ball on Sundays. As previously mentioned, the blue laws prevented baseball for profit as the teams couldn't charge admission for games. (Blue laws in New York were repealed in 1919.)

## **Nathaniel "Nat" Strong**

Nat Strong (1874-1935) was a Spalding Sporting Goods Company salesman who transitioned into a sports promoter, booking agent, and club owner. Strong controlled Black baseball and to a slightly lesser extent, semiprofessional baseball. He was a shrewd and ruthless businessman who developed strategic relationships with key politicians in the Tammany Hall political arena. Strong owned the Brooklyn Royal Giants, an original team in the Eastern Colored League. At one time, he also owned two all-white teams: the Murray Hills and the Ridgewoods; and was part owner, officer, or controller of at least four other teams, including the Cuban Stars and New York Black Yankees. Strong, like the men who founded vaudeville, saw an opportunity to profit from Black talent and entertainment. Strong's goals were not always on fielding the best team, but of making money.

## **National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs (NACBC)**

In October 1906, Strong, and others, formed the NACBC. The stated goal of the organization was to place Colored baseball on solid ground and to protect players and managers from unscrupulous behavior. The primary focus of the organization, however, was for Strong to develop a booking network that he could control.

In 1907, Nat Strong was elected president of Intercity. Under Nat's leadership, Intercity controlled the bookings of mostly all the ball games, ball parks (including Dexter Park), game dates, and schedules in the greater New York City area. Strong had different booking fees for black and white teams; white-owned teams fared much more favorably. To make up for this inequitable arrangement, black team owners scheduled double-headers whenever possible. If a club owner wanted to play ball in New York and didn't belong to Intercity, the team was blacklisted from the playing circuit. Strong never left Spalding. He sold baseball equipment to all the teams, including the Sago A.C. Spalding was his side hustle. He was all about the buck.

The NACBC only lasted three years, but by then, Strong was fully entrenched in Intercity. In 1918, World War I had a dramatic impact on baseball in the United States. Both black and white teams lost players to the military.



# Sago A.C. Football

Years in existence: 1909-1927

Home fields: Irma Park Oval (1910), Scherter's Lot

Classification: Amateur

The Sago Football team played at the Irma Park Oval, located at William Smith's Irma Park Hotel on Merrick Road. In 1903, Smith sold the hotel to Charles Edlich, who continued operations until 1909, the year he moved to Hopewell, New Jersey.

After Edlich's move, William Smith, Jr. (William Smith's son), booked football and basketball games at the Irma Park Oval. It is not known if the Smith family still had a financial stake in the property or if the Sagos rented the field. Smith Jr. owned a coal pocket and feed yard at the foot of South Cottage Street and Hawthorne Avenue.

Smith, Jr. also had strong connections to the Nassau Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. In 1908, the Company took first place in the "Hook and Ladder Contest" at the Firemen's Tournament in Woodmere. Smith Jr. took second place in the "Single Ladder Contest."

The team played mostly Brooklynites. Their first game was against the Keller Institute of that city. The Sagos won 10-6. Other Brooklyn teams the Sagos played: Atlas Field Club, Kingston A.C., Rival A.C., Crescent A.C., Katona A.C., Pontiac A.C. The Sagos also played the Sinclair Club of Manhattan and a team from Rockville Centre.

The Sagos were a mix of local high school graduates and young men from neighboring villages. South Side High School in Rockville Centre was known for their excellent sports teams. A good many Valley Stream students attended South Side, as Valley Stream did not have a high school until the mid-twenties (a classroom at Brooklyn Avenue Elementary and then the old wooden school on Wheeler Avenue, before Central High was built in 1929). Arthur Hendrickson, of Hendrickson Bros. fame, was a South Side graduate and Sago A.C. football player. Hoeffner, Gunther, Groenwald, and Grevert, were other gridironers from well-known Valley Stream families.

In 1911, the Sago A.C. Football team won the Nassau County Championship!

In later years, the team moved south and played at Scherter's Lot/Gibson Oval.



# Sago A.C. Track

Years in existence: 1909

Home field: Irma Park Oval

Classification: Amateur

On October 31, 1909, the Pennant A.C. of the Bronx held their bi-monthly 3.5 mile cross-country run. W. Welch, from the Sago A.C. finished 16<sup>th</sup>. He clocked in at 23 minutes and nine seconds.

# Sago A.C. Basketball

Years in existence: 1910-1924

Home fields: Irma Park Oval, Community Hall at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church

Classification: Amateur

William Smith, booking agent of the Sago Football team, also booked games for the Sago Basketball team. In the early years, the team was comprised of juniors — boys still in school. The average weight of a player was only 120 pounds. In later years, the team was split into first and second tiers, depending on their abilities.

## **Valley Stream is hard to beat!**

In 1920, the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church built a Community Hall and the Sagos played there. “The Sagos and some of the Grace M.E. boys got together and made the Floral Park Boys realize that Valley Stream is hard to beat,” stated the March 7, 1924 issue of *The Outlaw*. Valley Stream won 49-34.

The Sago hoopsters also played the Atlas A.C. and the Original Samosets — both of Brooklyn; the Rockaway Fives, the Rockville Centre Stars, Floral Park, and St. James. They won many of their games.

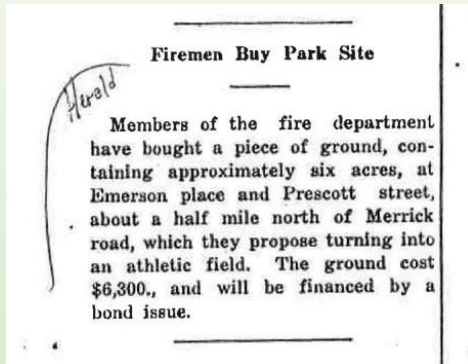
Sometimes amateurs played high school teams. The students were not much younger than many of the amateurs. A game was a game and the athletes wanted to play ball!



# Firemen's Field

## the twenties

# Purchase of Firemen's Field



09/08/1922  
*Valley Stream Record*

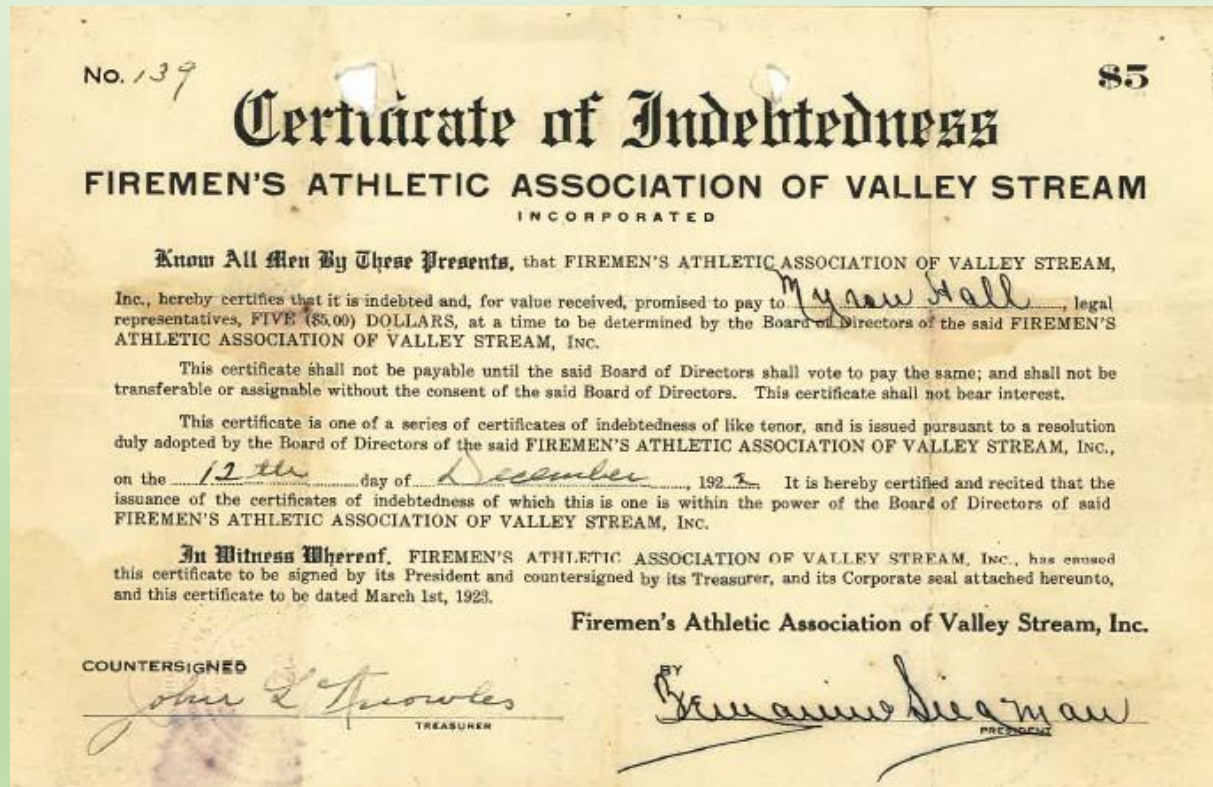
On August 30, 1922, members of the fire department bought approximately six acres of land at Emerson Place. The land, which cost \$6,300, was purchased from the estate of Ezekiel Langdon. The fire department put down a \$600 deposit; the balance was paid in November. The Indenture was signed by both Sylvanus Langdon and the newly formed Firemen's Athletic Association of Valley Stream, Inc. (FAA) In December of that year, the athletic association sold \$5.00 bonds to members of the fire department and to local residents. The bonds, worth \$5.00 each, helped pay the mortgage.

The officials at the time felt certain that if they didn't buy the land when they did, it would eventually be swallowed up by homes. This proved to be a fortuitous decision as most of Valley Stream, especially the northeast section, was in the latter stage of a building boom that began in the mid-aughts. Since 1908, the Windsor Land & Improvement Company of New York City had been acquiring land in north Valley Stream and selling housing plots non-stop. (Maujer Street was named after D. Maujer McLaughlin, president of Windsor.)

Eventually, a little over three acres were added to the original six acres purchased in 1922. Today the field measures 9.33 acres.

Certificates of Indebtedness (COI) are similar to IOUs — they promise the holder a return of their funds, in this case, without interest. Many vamps and locals purchased them in multitudes. Priced at \$5.00 each, they helped fund the nascent FAA. Ben Siegman signed them. The December 1922 batch of COIs amounted to \$140.00.

In 1941, a year after the field was sold to the Village of Valley Stream, the funds were returned to the certificate holders.

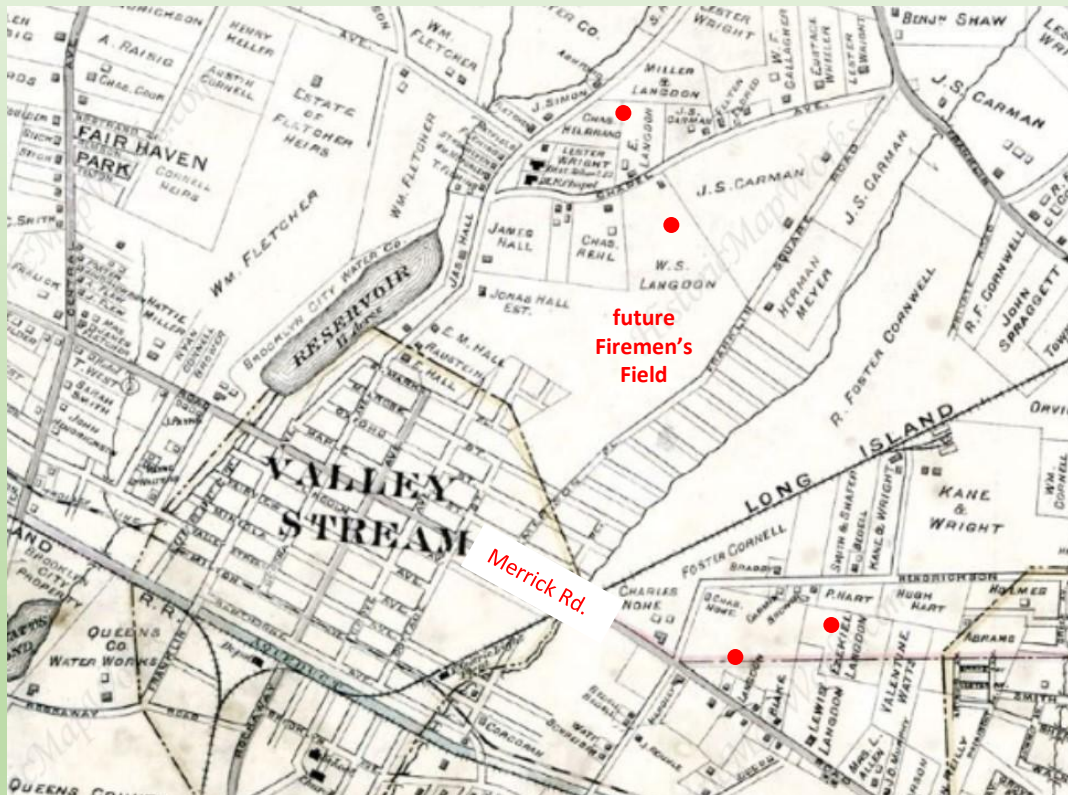


12/12/1922

[Certificates of Indebtedness](#)

# Ezekiel Langdon

The Langdon family were Valley Stream old-timers; arriving in Hempstead, via New Haven and Cornwall, England, in the mid-1600s. Ezekiel Langdon (1827-1903), a farmer, carpenter, then constable for the Town of Hempstead, lived with his wife Lucinda and their six children in Valley Stream and later, on Merrick Road in Lynbrook (close to the Valley Stream border). Some of his children and relatives remained in Valley Stream and settled on Wheeler Avenue. Ezekiel's second oldest son, Sylvanus (1857-1925), executor of his father's estate, sold his father's land to the fire department. Sylvanus Langdon passed away three years after selling the family's property. He died while working in his beloved garden on Wheeler Avenue.



1906

[Lynbrook, Rockville Centre, Freeport, Hempstead, Floral Park. E. Belcher-Hyde, Publisher](#)

# Firemen's Athletic Association of Valley Stream, Inc.

In November 1922, the directors of the FAA called their first meeting for the purpose of electing officers.

**Benjamin Siegman**, president, was a Jewish immigrant born in Constantinople, Turkey (his parents were Austrian). He ran a non-kosher butcher shop on Rockaway Avenue, managed a coal pocket, and was a director and finance committee member at the Bank of Valley Stream. Although sentenced to Sing-Sing Prison for misappropriating bank funds, he never served time and left town in 1933. Identifying feature: tattoo of the American flag on his right arm.

**Christian Schmidt**, vice president (elected president in 1928), was employed in the maintenance department of the L.I.R.R., a member of the Fire Commissioners, and served as fire chief in 1925. Schmidt held the distinction of being the namesake and first president of Krist Kitchen Kanaries, a social arm of the KKK (the Square Club was another), as explained in the club's [1944 dinner program](#). He was not the only KKK-affiliated FAA director or official.

**Herbert Biddulph**, vice president (elected 1928), was an immigrant from West Bromwich, England. He served as Village Trustee and Chairman of School 13. He also held other prominent positions in the village. In 1932, Biddulph vanished — disappeared into thin air. He left behind a wife and three children. To date, Biddulph's disappearance is Valley Stream's greatest unsolved mystery.

## Board of Directors

*Herbert Biddulph, Thomas DeBeauchamp,  
W. S. Boerckel, Frank C. Hendrickson,  
J.P. Knowles, E.H. Golder,  
George Lindner, Sr., Chris Koebel*



## General Ledger

The Firemen's Athletic Association kept a general ledger (two volumes) for the 18 years they owned the field. It's a diary of sorts and despite some gaps between the years, it is a wonderful source of information that has helped piece together the field's history.

Although the field was purchased in late 1922, the general ledger entries began in early 1923 when the first of many fundraisers was held – a Knights of Columbus minstrel show at the Brooklyn Avenue School. A hundred dollars which covered the cost of seeding the field.

May 1923

1923 May 1	Balance in Bank	X		793 38
12	Dues	25	30 00	30 00
19		25	31 50	31 50
19	Bonds	11	115 00	115 00
23	Brooklyn White Sox Game	35	170 00	170 00
23	Refreshment Stand	49	40 20	40 20
27	Far Rockaway Game	65	142 75	142 75
27	Refreshment Stand	49	49 45	49 45
29	Bonds	11	80 00	80 00
29	Carnival Returns	57	<del>225 84</del>	<del>225 84</del>
	Cash Receipts	7	884 74	
				1678 12

May 1923

1923 May 8	Baseball Glove (Briegman)	149	\$ 7 50	\$ 7 50
9	H Keller Fertilizer	127	114 46	114 46
9	Hendyckson Bro. (on field)	127	167 17	167 17
9	Alex Taylor (Baseball Outfit)	149	203 11	203 11
17	Sauers Refreshment Stand	3	50 00	50 00
17	B. Briegman Refreshment Stand	175	5 15	5 15
19	Wm Keller for Doyle (Player)	137	5 00	5 00
28	B. Briegman Refreshments	175	8 55	8 55
21	Salary Ball Players	137	88 00	88 00
21	Guarantee Meeting Team	145	40 00	40 00
23	J.P. Schmidt Cigarettes Stand	175	6 00	6 00
23	Fischer Carpool Electricity	57	365 00	365 00
28	Salary Home Team	137	98 00	98 00
28	Guarantee Meeting Team	145	75 00	75 00
30	Salary Home Team	137	97 00	97 00
30	Guarantee Meeting Team	145	90 50	90 50
31	C. G. Lemman Balls	149	13 50	13 50
	Cash Disbursements	7	433 94	
	Balance			1433 94
				244 18
				1678 12

# Snapshot of 1920s Valley Stream

Valley Stream experienced tremendous growth in the 1920s. It was also a time of great stress; the decade was sandwiched between Prohibition and The Great Depression. A brief look at the decade's highlights:

## Events

- 1920 - Prohibition
- 1920 - Great Flood of Valley Stream
- 1925 - Valley Stream incorporates
- 1929 - The Great Depression

## Churches

- 1923 - Holy Trinity Episcopal
- 1926 - Olivet Baptist
- 1927 - Valley Stream Presbyterian

## Entertainment

- 1921 - Pavillon Royal
- 1926 - Valley Stream Theatre
- 1928 - Texas Guinan takes over Hoffman's

## Banks

- 1920 - Valley Stream National Bank
- 1925 - Bank of Valley Stream

## Firehouses

- 1923 - Engine No. 2, Brooklyn Avenue
- 1927 - Engine No. 4, Clearstream Avenue
- 1929 - Engine No. 3, Cochran Place
- 1929 - Headquarters, Rockaway Parkway

## Infrastructures

- 1927 - Southern State in Valley Stream
- 1927 - Valley Stream State Park/Beach
- 1929 - Sunrise Highway in Valley Stream
- 1929 - Gibson Train Station
- 1929 - Curtiss-Wright Airfield

## Land Purchases

- 1922 - Gibson buys 500 acres in S. Valley Stream
- 1927 - Gibson buys 200 acres in S. Valley Stream
- 1929 - Curtiss-Wright buys Reisert farm

## Organizations

- 1925 - Police Department
- 1926 - Exchange Club
- 1929 - Ninety-Nines (licensed women pilots)
- 1929 - Curtiss-Wright Flying School

## Schools

- 1924 - Wheeler Avenue (new)
- 1924 - Clear Stream Avenue
- 1925 - Franklin School (aka William F. Donahue)
- 1929 - Central High

[unabridged timeline](#)



# Firemen's Field Hall of Fame 1920s

<b>John Carey</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball and football
<b>Edward “Buster” Edstrom</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball
<b>John “Jack” Edstrom</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball
<b>Charles Finkenstadt</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball and football
<b>Earle Goldwyn</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball and football Firemen's Field Vamps/Streamers – football
<b>Edward Graham</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball
<b>Henry Hendrickson</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball and football
<b>Willis “Duke” Keller</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball and football Firemen's Field Vamps/Streamers – baseball and football
<b>Alex Lang</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball and football Firemen's Field Vamps/Streamers – football
<b>Alvin Loew</b>	Sago Athletic Club – baseball and football
<b>George Monks</b>	Sago Athletic Club – football