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A 1950's Stroll  
through the Center of Mattituck





# Peconic Bay SHOPPER

...preserving North Fork History

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## On our Cover –

K. G. “Kenny” Brown (age 12) on his bike with his dog, Rex, in front of the Gildersleeve Bros. store, Mattituck, c. 1932. Across, and east on Pike Street, can be seen Fischer’s Hall, which has since been razed and replaced.

— Courtesy of Mattituck-Laurel Library)

See story on facing page....

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# A 1950's Stroll Through the Center of Mattituck

by G. C. Whyte, Ph. D.

Ex Officio Consultant to the Mattituck-Laurel Historical Society

(All photos courtesy of Mattituck-Laurel Library. We apologize that many of the photos for this article about the 1950's were taken in the 1930's. They are still relevant, however, because many of the buildings had not changed their location or configuration that significantly in a few decades. If any readers have photos of Love Lane and Pike Street from the 1950's, please submit them to Mattituck-Laurel Library for scanning, and we will put the scans in our digital collection of historical images.)

A bit over a year ago, I was walking on the south side of Pike Street, heading towards Love Lane and approached a young father with a small boy in his arms. Decades ago, I was that little boy. It was one of those moments, or as the late, great Yogi Berra would say, "It's like Déjà vu all over again." Each of us little boys, in our own time, were both waving to the engineer of the LIRR train stopped at the station. In my case, he was driving a much more colorful G-5 steam engine and did wave back. Not so sure that happened now.

The event brought back not only that parallel event, but memories of a stroll on those same streets in the 1950's. Library Hall was in the final years of its life, and one could not miss the entry and marquee for the movie theater upstairs. (The name "MATTITUCK" on the marquee was spelled in red letters.) Looking at the photos now, maybe it wasn't the best place to be in a fire! But who worried about such things then – like having seat belts?

A bit further down Pike Street stood the small Victorian building, of which few remain, housing the Village Dairy, one of three delicatessens in the center of town. Remember the so-called Blue Laws and restricted opening times for supermarkets? My uncle never patronized this establishment after the owner's son broke into his summer cottage – even after the place had changed hands a number of times!

Opposite stood the forlorn, shuttered Mattituck railroad station building. Closed for years,

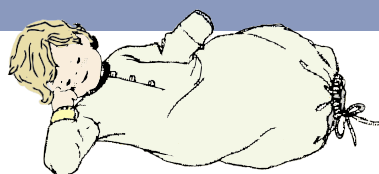
In 1905, Library Hall (right) was built and donated to the town by native son and publisher, Frank Moore Lupton. Located on the southeast corner of Westphalia Avenue and Pike Street, the building served as a library and bank downstairs with a hall upstairs for entertainments and dances, and eventually, a movie theater. After a serious fire in 1960, the wooden structure was taken down.



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The Library Hall post card above gives us a better view of the hall.



Where Library Hall once stood is now a parking lot shown below.



The Village Dairy (c.1970) and Liquor Store on Pike Street.

it seemed to stand silently awaiting its destruction in the next decade. The adjoining small baggage building with its two sliding wooden doors escaped demolition and was moved diagonally across the tracks to the west side of Westphalia Road. Wonder what ever happened to it?

Next on the south side of Pike Street was the "stationary/candy/cigar" store of K. G. "Kenny" Brown, whose parents had



The Village Dairy building is gone, and the liquor store has become "The Broken Down Valise."

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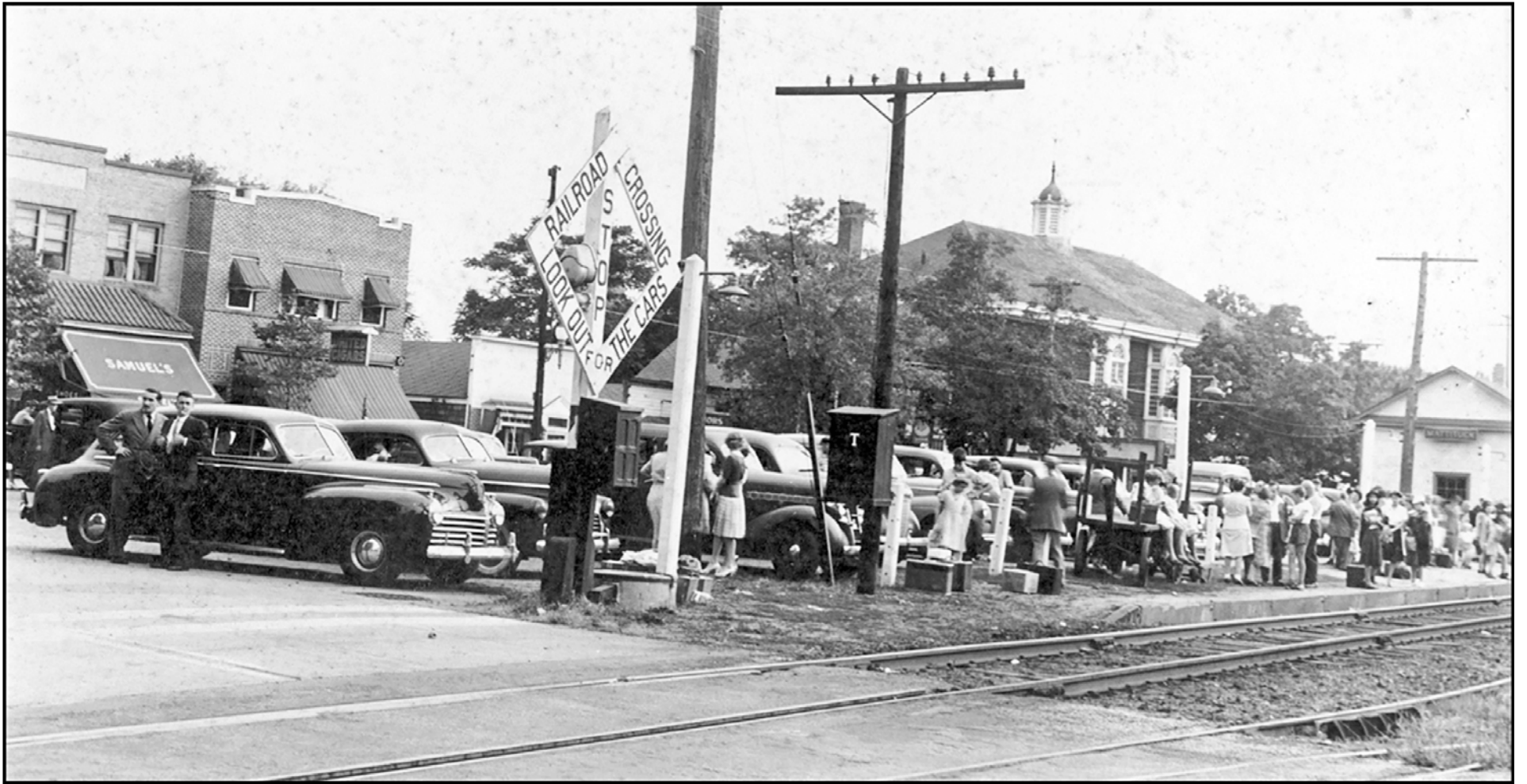


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opened in 1928 under the sign "United Cigars." His name was spelled in black letters against a white background in the mosaic in the pavement of the entrance. Dark wooden display cases and shelves covered the three interior walls, but not quite all the way up to the high ceiling. That left room for several goose necked gas lamps to be at the ready in case of a power failure. Their son, Kenneth "Kenny" Brown, later assumed ownership, but he was also a very



The railroad crossing on Love Lane (c. 1945) where a large number of passengers wait for the train. In the background (left), on Pike Street, you can see the awning advertising Samuel's Department, and immediately to the right, the "United Cigar" store.

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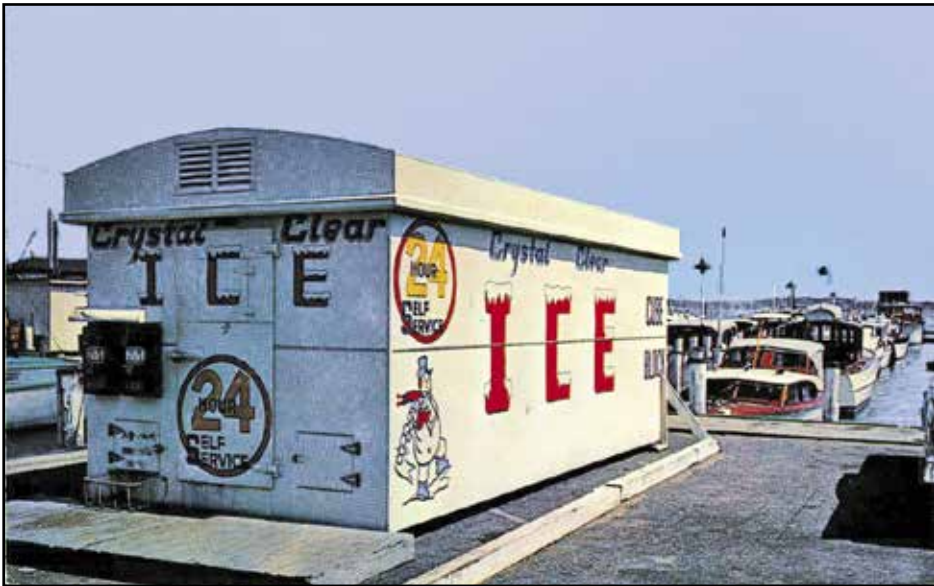


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successful inventor and entrepreneur of ice machines in the 1960's.



K. G. Brown's 24 Hour, Coin-Operated Vending Stations were popular at marinas as you can see pictured here in Mitchell's Marina in Greenport.

Next came Philip's (previously, as my mother told me Samuel's) Department Store. Hard to imagine such a local emporium now. The headquarters of the North Fork Bank and Trust Company commanded the corner. It subsequently expanded several times on both streets.

Diagonally across Love Lane stood a boxy, two-story structure housing the Gildersleeve Bros. store. As a small child I remember the tables, from my eye level, piled high with various wares.

On the other corner, then as now, stood a hardware store. A blue metal sign stuck out from the corner of the building, above the entry with the name "W.V. Duryee." The sign's bracket remains to this day.

Next door to Duryee's, and heading south on the east side of Love Lane, was a Tydol Veedol gas station run by a man by the name of Rudy Armbrust. Its design,



The Mattituck Bank (c. 1938) on the southwest corner of Love Lane and Pike Street, adjacent to Samuel's (later Philip's) Department Store on Pike Street.



Below, the southwest corner of Love Lane and Pike Street, 2011.





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shortly thereafter outlawed, reflected its origins from the early days on motoring. It occupied a storefront as did the other shops on Love Lane. The pumps were right at the curb. Careful when

Below is a repeat of our cover photo of K. G. "Kenny" Brown with his dog, Rex, in front of the store, showing the corner at a different angle.



The Gildersleeve Store (c. 1930) on the northeast corner of Love Lane and Pike Street.



Below, the same corner, 2011



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The Duryee Hardware store on the southeast corner of Love Lane and Pike Street, c. 1925. Adjacent and to the east is Fischer's Hall which catered weddings and eventually housed a movie theater before it was taken down. On the right, the same corner in 2011. Orlowski Hardware still occupies this corner.



pulling in! Perhaps there were incidents but I don't remember them as a child.

A few years hence, the Gildersleeve Store and the residence next to it alongside the tracks were torn down and a new Calso gas station built with a more contem-

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This early photo (c. 1930) shows one gasoline pump on the curb in front of the Tydol Station on the northeast side of Love Lane.

Below: The northeast side of Love Lane, 2011.



porary design. Rudy Armbrust moved there for the rest of his career. Interesting to note that the brick “carriage house” in back of the residence survived as a workshop for a number of decades thereafter.

Before moving south of Love Lane to the next block of stores, then as now there was an alleyway to the parking lot. For years a young man sold flowers out of a number of buckets there. Not knowing his name, my family referred to him as the “Flower Boy.” Being large of stature he wasn’t easy to miss. He disappeared after a number of years.

Next came a number of attached stores, including the A & P (Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company) and further down H. C. Bohack Co. food stores. (See photos on pages 14 and 15). This was shortly before they both built their own free standing buildings, with parking, on the Main Road.

But more importantly, between the markets were *Woodward’s Variety Store* (toys included) and the *Paradise Soda Shoppe*. One could never visit either one too often. The Paradise had a soda fountain counter with stools on the right

and booths at the back. I think they made their own ice cream with equipment on the left? At one point there were hand written signs taped on pieces of paper over the tables warning, “No 5 Cent Drinks Served at Tables!” At the end of the attached stores was another of those delis. My family called it the “Cat Store” as it seemed to be a popular feline gathering spot.

I reached the Main Road where the Octagon stood. In my lifetime, no commercial tenant ever seemed to occupy the space for an extended period. Perhaps the longest was the *Pandora Gift Shop* of that era, with the long forgotten feature, a lending library – for a fee. While I never heard that the place was haunted, my theory is that someone’s remains are under that edifice, and there psychic energy has discouraged customers ever since?!

A quick stroll back the other side of Love Lane deserves mention. Firstly, in the middle of the block stood the “old” Post Office, with its efficient customer traffic flow “system.” There were three doors, one for entry, the other for exit and the third for access to the apartment above. I remember this wooden structure

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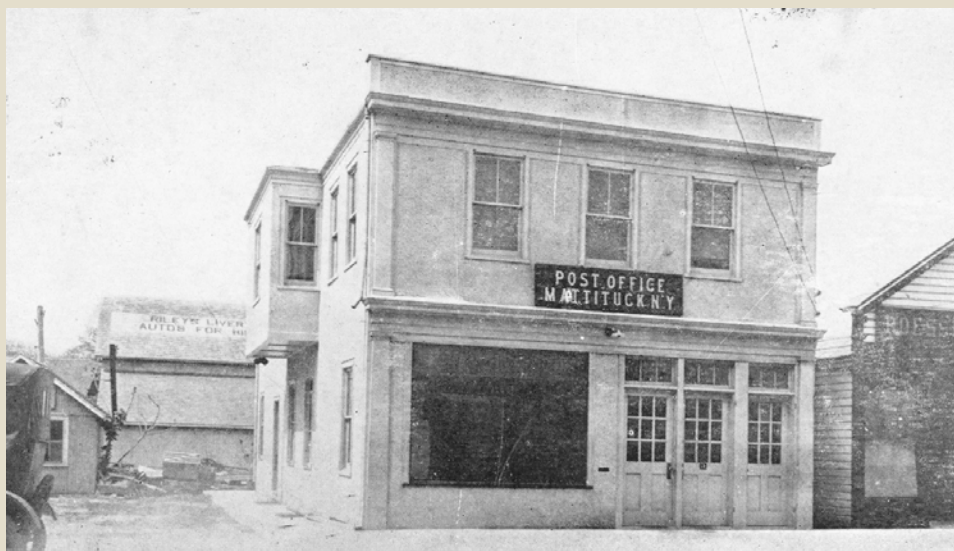
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The former Mattituck Post Office on the west side of Love Lane, c. 1925. In the photo on the right, the Post Office has been superimposed on the color photo from 2011 in order to give our readers an idea about where the former post office had been located on the northwest side of Love Lane.



The Octagon House, c. 1933.



The Octagon House, c. 1925.

The Octagon House, c. 1950.



Views of the Octagon House  
on the east corner of  
Love Lane and the Main Road