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We had a wonderful presentation on Monday night from Herb Mones on all the parks and recreational areas right in the Three Villages, just in time for summer! For those that missed the meeting, you can read about Herb's Recreational Guide below:

2023

A Recreational Guide to the Three Villages

By Herb Mones

West Meadow Beach and Preserve - With more than a mile of beach access, vast sand bars at low tide, two large child friendly play-grounds, beach volleyball, jetty fishing, a paved multi-use path that is 1.2 miles long, and spectacular sunsets – West Meadow Beach and Preserve has something for everyone. The crown jewel of this “little slice of heaven” is the Gamecock Cottage – a small Swiss chalet style cottage at the end of the peninsula that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The beach is a local favorite for sunbathing, jogging, bicycling, rollerblading, walking, picnicking, or simply “people watching.” Located at the western end of West Meadow Road, this Town of Brookhaven park is handicapped accessible. In summer season 2016, visitors will find that the bathrooms and changing room have been updated, adding an even more pleasant beach experience. A seasonal parking sticker from the Town is necessary.

The Nora Bredes Preserve at Forsythe Meadows - This is one of the newest,

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honor of the late County Legislator Nora Bredes. This 36 acre park sits in the heart of Stony Brook. Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn has worked tirelessly to see this area open to the public. Now, it is available to the public! You can walk a variety of terrains – meadows, hills, and valleys - and get an unrivaled elevated view of Stony Brook Harbor and Stony Brook Village. Access can be found on Hollow Road in Stony Brook. Look for the Suffolk County Park's sign near a stone wall entry way on Hollow Road. Parking is limited, but there is usually a spot for You!

Flax Pond - Simply put, this is a magical place. There is a unique beauty to this 135-acre coastal paradise. The wind, light, color constantly changes throughout the seasons, and the salt march is teeming with wildlife. If you haven't visited Flax Pond, you are missing one of the Three Village's - and America's - most spectacular wonders. Yet, even with the great beauty found here, it is one of the least visited sites in our recreational guide! That might be because it is a bit off the beaten path, or, is it because some people are trying to keep it a best secret? Supervised under a partnership of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Stony Brook University, Flax Pond has a rich diversity of ecological treasures. Go for a hike, nature viewing or practice your painting or photography. Keep in mind a couple of particulars: Parking is at the end of Shore Road in Old Field, at the State University's Flax Pond Lab. There are not many parking stalls, and Flax Pond continues to grow in popularity. It is best to visit at low tide, otherwise your visit can be wet and muddy on your feet. Wear appropriate waterproof footwear. You'll need to apply for a parking permit from the NYS DEC and display it on your vehicle's dashboard. Permits are free, but necessary.

The Old Field Light House - Built by the Federal government in 1868, the Old Field Lighthouse sits on a high cliff overlooking the Long Island Sound. Deactivated in 1935, the property was conveyed to the Village of Old Field for public park purposes. Open to the public every day, these grounds are perfect for short walks with amazing views. Want a place to take photographs – look no further. You can check out the special history of the lighthouse at www.oldfieldny.org/history.html

Avalon Park and Preserve - Just about everyone has seen or heard about the new cable series titled *Turn*. The television show focuses on the drama and intrigue of the Culper Spy Ring in our own Three Villages during the

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go. The park has been specially designed, plant by plant, to reflect the woodlands found in our area centuries ago. Avalon has a unique, magical beauty that will delight you. With a total of 82 acres of woodlands, forests, meadows, and ponds you will think you have been transported to another place and time. The Paul Simons Foundation manages and maintains Avalon Park. The main entrance is opposite the Stony Brook Grist Mill on Harbor Road. There is limited handicap accessibility.

Stony Brook Beach - Known to locals as Sand Street Beach, this little gem is located in the heart of Stony Brook. With amazing vistas of the Gamecock Cottage, the West Meadow peninsula, Porpoise Channel, Long Beach, Smithtown Bay, and Connecticut, this beach is the perfect respite for those who want to sunbathe, swim, or picnic. There's so much to do! After setting out your beach blanket, visit the pier to see 'what's catchin', stroll to the village for a light meal or take-out, or watch the boats being launched from the boat ramp to pass through the channel. It's hard not to think you have stepped back in time when visiting this beach. And, with the renovation of the bathhouse in 2017, the beach complex looks better than ever. Parking at the Town lot opposite the Three Village Inn is a bit inconvenient. This is a property of the Town of Brookhaven. Lifeguards are on weekend duty only during the Summer. Parts of this area are handicapped accessible.

Frank Melville, Jr. Memorial Park – Its 24 acres of specimen trees and bushes, long meandering trails through woodlands, spectacular views of the Setauket Mill Pond and Conscience Bay, this site is our own local arboretum. And, everywhere you turn there is a historic building- the East Setauket Post Office, the Mill House and the old red barn. Simply walking over the graceful stone bridges and observing the pond is an unrivaled experience. This is one of the most visited sites in the Three Villages! The free Summer Concert Series each Sunday evening is a special pleasure – great music, a delightful environment, and a hip crowd. Concert goers 'in the know' bring lawn chairs, a bottle of wine and some dinner. The park is on Main Street in Setauket, just north of Route 25A. It is owned and beautifully maintained by the Friends of the Frank Melville, Jr. Memorial Park. Some areas are handicapped accessible.

Percy Raynor Park - Experience the excitement of athletic contests being played on the many "fields of dreams" at this large outdoor sports complex. With a children's playground, picnic area, sun shelter, and bathroom facilities,

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spectator or be an active participant jogging or walking in open fields. A property of the Town of Brookhaven, this area, on the south side of Route 347, is handicapped accessible.

The Setauket to Port Jefferson Station Greenway - A true linear park! Up until recently, this was the longest paved multi-use trail in Suffolk County – and has served as a model for other paved trails. The Greenway utilizes land acquired by the NYS Department of Transportation in the 1960's for a planned bypass of Route 25A. This bypass has been re-purposed, and today you can walk or bike through an amazing variety of terrains and landscapes: an old growth forest, rolling hills, rhododendron woodlands, an abandoned sand mining operation, a dormant industrial site, active neighborhoods, county parkland, old farmland, etc. You are able to safely pedal from the Setauket Post Office to upper Port Jefferson Station. The path runs approximately three and a half miles and is handicapped accessible. The Friends of the Greenway, a committee of the Three Village Community Trust, maintains the Greenway.

The Paul Simons Memorial Bike Path at Stony Brook University - Paul Simons was a Stony Brook student and an avid bicyclist. Paul's life was cut short when he was hit by a motorist while riding his bike. This six-mile long path covers a variety of terrains that link the University community together and is a beautiful reminder of Paul's youth and vitality. An amazing number of Three Village residents have not taken the opportunity to walk or pedal this paved, multi-use path that is handicapped accessible and available to University students and the public. Get out and enjoy! At the same time you'll appreciate the size and scope of our growing university.

Stony Brook University's Ashley Schiff Preserve – Located on the southern edge of the University, this 26 acre preserve has everything: a kettle hole, Garnet Bearing Rock formations, ridges and valleys, and a wide variety of trees and wildlife. There are fifteen scientific viewing stations along the established park trails worth investigation. (Search: Ashley Schiff Preserve)

East Setauket Pond Park and Shore Road Beach and Pier- There are big plans for the small park in downtown Setauket. East Setauket Park may look small from Route 25A, but if you park in the Town lot by the corner deli on Shore Road, and walk over the bridge you will get beautiful views of Setauket

vistas! And if you go at low tide you can still see the 19th century rail spur used to launch ships from the nearby shipyard that is now long gone.

With the recent purchase of the auto repair facility to the west of the park, there is unlimited possibilities to create something special to anchor the downtown area.

Just a short distance from the park is Shore Road Beach and Pier. There is limited parking, and there are no lifeguards. But this local sandy beach is great for sunbathing and wading and serves as a great place to launch your kayak and explore the main harbor and Little Bay. Recently, the Town, with guidance from 'locals,' improved the pier area to include wooden guardrails, a viewing platform, and fishing benches. A great place to eat lunch or dinner. Setauket harbor has a rich shipbuilding history that you may want to research.

Sherwood-Jayne Hiking Trail - This three mile long trail only opened a few years ago. It takes you through the Sherwood-Jayne property and into Suffolk County parkland for a wonderful experience of densely forested lands. Because the Sherwood-Jayne House features a colonial setting with barns, meadows, sheep, and horses, this trail experience is a step back in time. Look for the signs on the property pointing you to the "Nature Trail" and get hiking! The Preservation of Long Island owns the Sherwood-Jayne site, and works with the Seatuck Environmental Association to maintain the trail.

Patriots Rock - This is a little gem of a walk. Located across the street from the historic Setauket Post Office, Patriots Rock is a wonder to see, and photograph. Our community's patriots used the rock as protective cover to fire on garrisoned British troops during the Revolutionary War. Visit the rock and walk further into the woods to be transported back into an earlier time. The entire area has been beautified under the stewardship of the Three Village Community Trust. Plans are underway to add trails to the site to create a true park experience.

Oxhead Road Park - Located just south of Stony Brook University, this park has several ball fields and playground sites. There are swings, a playground, as well as a picnic area. The Town of Brookhaven owns the park

The Stony Brook Kayak Launch - This facility is pretty new. Check it out. The launch is located across the street from the Three Village Inn at the edge of the Town of Brookhaven parking lot. Kayakers can easily paddle the waters of

The Old Colonial Road Want more of the *Turn* experience? Or maybe you have school age kids that need a dose of history. Or perhaps you just want to connect to our colonial roots. Well, this site is for you. The Old Colonial Road is a surviving segment of the old North Road, the route traveled to Brooklyn and back by our forefathers. Visit the Old Colonial Road and truly ‘step’ back into history. The road has a historical marker at the northwest corner of the Stony Brook campus. The best way to get there is to take Stony Brook Road heading north, make a right onto Dogwood Road, and go to the intersection with Mount Road. Park and walk southwest along the pebbled path for fifty yards. Continue on the forest trail toward the LIRR tracks and you’ll see the sole remaining piece of the road. The trail was once eighteen feet wide. Pretty awesome!

McAllister Park - OK, it’s not exactly in the Three Villages, but it is close. And since its opening to the public, it deserves a mention here – and a visit! Located at the eastern entrance to Port Jefferson Harbor, McAllister Park has it all: huge dunes, sand and pebble beaches, magnificent vistas of Long Island Sound, Connecticut and Port Jefferson Harbor, abundant wildlife, marshes, a rich variety of woodlands and a close-up view of the nifty-named Pirates Cove. Bird watchers, hikers, naturalists, joggers, walkers and beach lovers are all in for a treat at this site. For generations, McAllister Park, nestled in the Village of Belle Terre, lacked any easy access for the general public. Thanks to the efforts of Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn and the Suffolk County Parks Department, a small parking lot has been located at the end of Anchorage Road in Belle Terre. (Parking has been a problem as this site gets more popular – visit early in the day to guarantee a spot) To get there, just take Cliff Road into Belle Terre, go almost to the end, and make a left on Anchorage. Be sure to park in the County lot that is along the fenced area. Although it is part of Suffolk County Parkland, you don’t need a “Green Key” card for your visit to this site.

North Road/Besunder Property – This one is really, really new. This seven acre state-owned property at the entrance of Strongs neck was purchased by the NYS Department of Environment and Conservation in 2018. You enter the area through a split rail fence along Setauket’s North Road and are treated to some spectacular views of Conscience Bay, and an up close look at a salt pond and a salt march. Stop and stand still – the world of nature will amaze you in this unique spot. Try to visit at low tide unless you have some good waterproof boots because the trail can get a bit mucky. Thanks go to the Besunder family

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The North Shore Rail Trail Project – Yes! After decades of planning, this 10 mile bike trail finally opened in 2022! This greenway starts about a mile east of the Port Jefferson Station Trailhead on Route and runs all the way to Shoreham/Wading River. The trail utilizes an abandoned LIRR rail bed. Long, straight, flat – it is a wonderful site for the entire family to walk, bike or run. It is spectacular! Kudos to Suffolk County Legislator Sara Anker for her efforts to see this project become a reality.

Lee Koppleman Preserve – Dear Reader - Still working on thisstay tuned!!

The Beach Walks - Living on the north shore invites residents to the water. Sometimes beach walkers are perplexed by the many waterfront signs that state “No Trespassing,” “Private Property,” “Keep Out,” etc. No worries. No one owns the water, or the land beneath the water – something known as riparian rights. So as long as you are walking at or below the high tide mark you are OK to stroll the beach. Just remember to respect the rights of landowners.

Strathmore Park - OK, it’s small, but it is a “throw back” park – something about it reminds a visitor of a time-gone-by. Maybe, it is the short meandering path that is fully shaded, the ball fields that seem to be constant in constant use, and the picnic benches that invite you to sit down and watch the traffic.

The Suffolk County Old Field Horse Farm –This Suffolk County Park now has a walking trail around its perimeter. Enter opposite the gates of West Meadow Beach and head towards West Meadow Creek. This .4 mile path has some great views of the creek and the salt marches. And, as you walk this trail you will get some unique views of a nearly century old equestrian center and grandstands. There is also an entrance to the trail just past the Old Field Club, though there is no parking at this spot.

Gentleman’s Driving Park –There was a time that horseracing was THE popular sport throughout Long Island. In the nineteenth century, there were about twenty-five half-mile tracks that made up the New England Grand Circuit of Harness Racing. This site is the last one left! As you walk the oval path, which is now a designated Town historical site, you can almost hear the horses pounding the track to cheering crowds. Bring a friend or two to get a ‘first look’

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metal historical marker on Canal Road. Park in the small lot by this marker and walk on the dirt road for about fifty feet, the track is on your left.

Cedar Hill Cemetery - This is located in Port Jefferson Village (at the end of Liberty Avenue), and there is no good reason to include it in this guide – other than to say it is one of the great walks close to the Three Villages. It has magnificent views of Port Jefferson Harbor, beautifully landscaped, and an endless loop of walking paths. Visit it and you'll say – Why didn't I know about this place sooner!!

St. George's Cemetery A fan of history? Hooked on the television series "Turn?" Well, get yourself over to this site in Strongs Neck. But be warned - a stroll around this cemetery will take some time because you'll be constantly amazed at the famous names of our local patriots on the tombstones, as well as the magnificent water views.

Oak Hill Cemetery - You probably have driven past this cemetery on the hill off Hollow Road a thousand times and never really noticed it. Well, stop. This is a short walk worth your time – lots of history here, and simplicity of time and place dominate this well kept sanctuary.

More? Yes, much more. Here are some other properties that may soon be available for your family's enjoyment.

The "**Sand Pits**," located at the western end of the current Greenway. This is 37 acres of County parkland that offers a unique terrain and habitat shaped by man's industrial hand. Today, it is a fascinating place that is easily accessible to walkers. When developed, it will offer Three Villagers another recreational treasure.

And, **Patriots Hollow**, formerly referred to as the "Diocese Property," is 28 acres on the northern side of Route 25A. This former farmland is today heavily wooded New York State parkland. Under the management of the NYS Department of Conservation, this area may see walking and biking trails.

Thompson-Detmer Southern Farm Property is located on the south side of Route 25A and is near the East Setauket Post Office. This three acre

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Greenway.

By Herb Mones

Send comments, additions, and suggestions to: HJMones@gmail.com

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