

Port Jeff's past is forevermore on Cedar Hill

Author encourages finding our community's history in the roots of our land

BY GEORGE MORAITIS

Cedar Hill occupies a commanding site on one of the highest hills south of the village of Port Jefferson. Thirteen acres of the property were purchased from Hubbard Gildersleeve and part of the land was laid out for use as a cemetery.

An association was established on March 30, 1859 with first officers: R.H. Wilson, president; J.B. Randall, secretary; and Abram Brown, treasurer; along with the first trustees: Hamilton Tooker, Daniel Hulse and Cyrus E. Griffing. Two hundred and eighty plots were sold.

Some of the headstones that precede the date of the cemetery are from old family cemeteries that were found in different parts of the village and, with handfuls of dirt, were "buried" as the first graves on Cedar Hill. Again on the Roe family headstones, you will find some stones engraved with dates older than the establishment of the cemetery. These were also moved from different parts of the village to the newly-established cemetery.

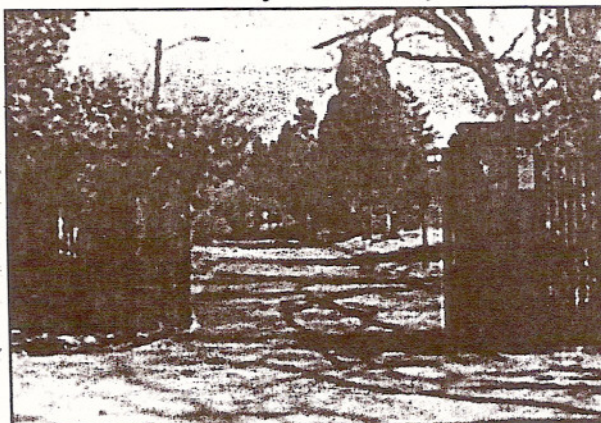
I once noticed, while passing the Warren home on High Street, a headstone planted in their front yard. I stopped, introduced myself and asked, "What gives with the stone?" They told me a story about how the stone was discovered when their driveway was being built.

Mrs. Warren proceeded to tell me of a young apprentice with the paving company, who had become frightened upon learning that the land they were working on was once a graveyard. He fled the job site. Apparently, the property was part of the Methodist church cemetery. Poltergeists? While I found this to be amusing, I respectfully excused myself and left that "hallowed" burial ground. I believe the stone is now removed, and I was told that the rest of the family plots were moved to Cedar Hill.

Today, the cemetery has grown to 23 acres. Arthur Brown is the superintendent of grounds and a great source of information. He knows the whereabouts of every family plot; something I am now learning. The board of directors for the cemetery is comprised of Kenneth Darling, president; James Von Oist, vice-president; Maureen Brown, secretary; Adela Johnson, treasurer; Fred Bryant and Artie Olsen, trustees; John J. Senesi, CPA; and Thomas C. Taylor, financial advisor.

This is a small preview of a writing project on some of the prominent families of the Port Jefferson Village, Port Jefferson Station and Terryville areas. The project will be, I hope, a pictorial guide through the hills and valleys of Cedar Hill Cemetery in Port Jefferson. This prologue article previews some of the people of the past from the "Station and Terryville" areas.

The main objective in the writing of this booklet, which I hope will be called *Forevermore on Cedar Hill*, is to introduce visitors to the vast historical information about the founding fathers of our hometowns. Their final resting place is only the beginning of that study.



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At left, Cedar Hill gates

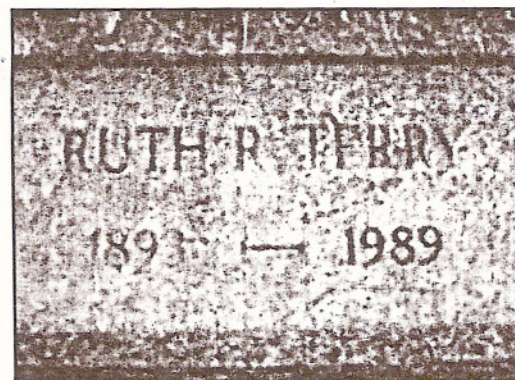
Photos by George Moraitis



Charles A. Squires (1855-1934) was dubbed the "Father of Port Jefferson Station." He was station agent of the Long Island Rail Road at Port Jefferson Station and was the first postmaster of the Echo Post Office. He also established the area's first newspaper, *The Port Jefferson Echo*. He owned large areas of Port Jefferson Station and sold property for developing.



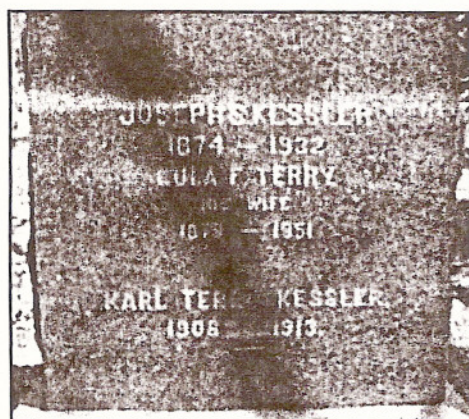
Everett Terry (1874-1946) once owned the property on which the John F. Kennedy Middle School now stands. His homestead still stands today behind the school building.



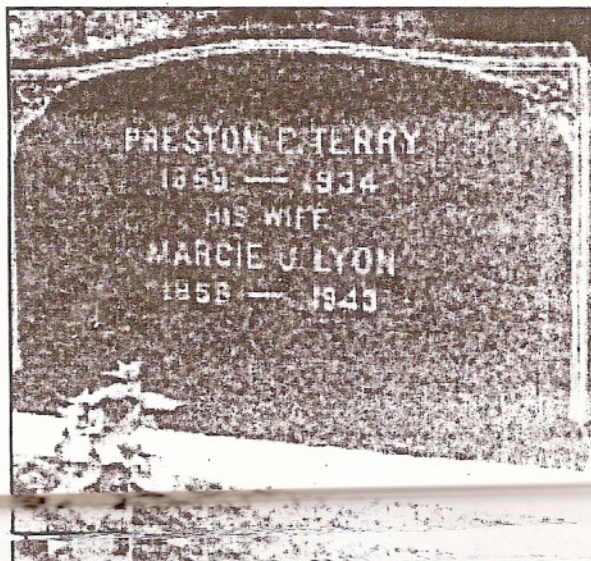
Ruth Terry (1893-1989) ran the last Terryville post office from her home on Terryville Road. She and her husband, Harry Terry, were once treasurers of the school district.



My own family members, both the Poulanos/Poulos and the Moraitis families, are at Cedar Hill. Many, many years in the future, my own plot overlooking the rising sun will also be at Cedar Hill.



Joseph E. Kessler (1874-1932) of Terryville Road, was president of the Board of Education in 1930. His leadership of the board directed the district in the addition and alterations of the original Port Jefferson



Preston E. Terry (1859-1934) was the treasurer of the Board of Education. He, along with the rest of the Terry family and colleagues, was instrumental in the beginnings of the Port Jefferson Station School District.