

PIONEERS OF WOODSIDE

Story of the Early Residents of the Lately Famous Long Island Village.

MARKS OF GERMAN INFLUENCE

Story of the Freedle Family from the
Time of the Napoleonic Wars—
The Rikers, Kellys, and How-
ells on the Old Farm.

Twenty years ago Woodside, L. I., the scene of the Guldensuppe murder, was a small settlement clustered about the new station of the Long Island and Flushing Railway. Four families—the Rikers, the Kellys, the Howells, and the Terrets, all related and all heirs of old Mrs. Howell, née Mariah Freedle, then living at the old Manor House, on what was originally the Lawrence estate—made up the bulk and the respectability of the village. The story of its foundation by these families runs back through certain interesting pages of the history of early New York, through London and Helgoland, to a place near Stuttgart, in the old Duchy of Würtemberg.

The singular romance of an industrious and wealthy German family, closely interwoven with the early history of New York culminated in the settlement of Woodside by the descendents of Mariah Freedle, who landed in this city about 1811 at the age of thirteen. She died at Woodside in 1882 at the age of eighty-three, loved and respected by all who knew her.

Arrival of the Freedle Family.

A well-to-do German family, the Freedles, consisting of the parents, a son, and two daughters, left their old home during the period of the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the century, intending to come to America. For some reason these people disembarked at Helgoland, perhaps because it was an inaccessible rock under British rule where the French Emperor could no longer force them into his armies, and entered into business, presumably the manufacture of artificial flowers. Within a year the father died on the island, and the widow, with her three children, took ship to London, and thence to New York. It was a long voyage in those days by sailing ships, and when the widow reached New York, having abundant means and an eye to business, she bought a house at 117 William Street and began the manufacture of artificial flowers. The Freedles were good Lutherans, and, although the old North Dutch Church was close by, at the corner of Fulton Street, and a Methodist chapel in John Street, near William, where on Sunday chains were stretched across the street to keep away the noise of wagons, they walked up Broadway almost out of town to the Lutheran church in Walker Street.

The business grew, until more than 100 girls were employed in the factory, which was afterward built back of the house at 117 William Street. Most of the manufactured product was sent to a Southern market, principally Petersburg and Richmond. Bad debts and the importation of French flowers made the business in Will-

am Street unprofitable. The Widow Freedle died, and was buried in the Lutheran Cemetery, at Sixth Avenue and Carmine Street, beside her husband, whose remains had been brought along with the immigrants from Helgoland.

Museum of Wax Figures.

It was now necessary for the survivors of the second generation to make a new venture, and so the brother and the two sisters bought the house at the southwest corner of Howard Street and Broadway and started the Freedle Museum of Wax Figures. These figures were made by Italian workmen imported for the purpose, and the favorite groups were from Scriptural subjects, such as the crucifixion, the last supper, the death of Isaac, Balaam and his refractory ass, Lot's wife looking back, and angels and cherubs galore.

This was the second museum of wax figures offered for the moral entertainment of the citizens of New York. Prior to this the Peale Museum occupied a site lower down Broadway, and doubtless suggested the idea of such a venture to the Freedle family. At all events, the sacred and historical display was shown in the upper stories of the Howard Street house, and proved profitable to its founders.

Maria Freedle, who was active in the management of the museum, had married one Kelly years before in William Street, and was now a widow. The children of this couple grew up with the artificial flowers and the wax figures. John A. F. Kelly graduated at Columbia College at the age of eighteen, and died at Woodside in May of the present year. Constantine Kelly is now living at Woodside. While the museum was at the height of its popularity in the Howard Street house, a daughter married Alpheus P. Riker, a son of Alpheus Riker, who owned and gave his name to Riker's Island.

The museum was removed finally to the corner of Broadway and Anthony Street, (now Worth Street,) and Alpheus P. Riker opened a hotel at the corner of Broadway and Howard Street, which soon became the great resort of the Masons of that period.

The business of the Worth Street museum must have languished about this time, for the brother of Mariah Freedle took the collection to Havana and established it for the moral entertainment of the Cubans. Within a year after his arrival in Havana Freedle was obliged to sell the museum on account of the unhealthy climate of his new home. He died at sea of yellow fever on the return voyage to New York. When his boxes arrived they had been rifled of everything of value, including the proceeds of the sale of the wax figures.

Removal to Long Island.

In 1826 Mrs. Kelly, (Mariah Freedle,) then married for the second time to one Howell, bought the Lawrence estate, a farm of 116 acres, where is now the village of Woodside. The old Dutch Manor House, which has recently been torn down to make way for the new Catholic church, was occupied by the Howards and Kellys for nearly seventy years. It was a quaint old structure, covered with cedar shingles, having two wings, and surmounted by a hip roof. Along the front porch were broad Dutch benches to the right and left of the centred half doors looking out on the thick hedges of box that bordered the graveled walks. Within there were blue tiled fireplaces and a rich store of old colonial mahogany and gilded mirrors surmounted with eagles and stars, with all of which the writer of this sketch was quite familiar in the latter part of the occupancy of old Mrs. Howell and her two bachelor sons, John A. T. and Constantine Kelly. The north wing had been for many years the sealed-up storage room of unused furniture and certain cherubs from the museum, and when the house was torn down the garret was found to be packed with the molds in which the figures of the Howard Street museum had been cast nearly seventy years before.

Lottery to Sell Lots.

When Alpheus P. Riker built the handsome residence overlooking the railway station, which was first considered by Thorn

and Mrs. Nack as a possible place for the commission of their crime. it was called the New House to distinguish it from the old family residence. At about this time, 1865 or 1866, a portion of the farm was cut up into lots and put onto the market by Benjamin W. Hitchcock as the agent of the Kellys, Alpheus P. Riker, and C. Tappan Howell, a son of the second marriage of Mariah Freedle.

The sale was started by means of a lottery scheme, in which five houses already built by the Kellys and Rikers were offered as prizes with the sale of the lots. This was a venture of the real estate speculator, and the numbers of the lots were shaken up in a hat, with tickets for the prizes attached to the lucky numbers, to stimulate the purchasers of the first building sites in Woodside.

It was at this time that Mr. Hitchcock distinguished himself by instituting a series of chariot races over the Old Fashion track, which was then an abandoned course.

In 1845 John A. P. Kelly, who had graduated at Columbia College with honors as a mere lad of eighteen, founded and edited The Long Islander, the first evening paper ever published on Long Island. John Riker and William R. Bishop were associated with Mr. Kelly in this newspaper venture. At the end of a year Riker retired from the partnership, and The Long Islander became The Independent Press, and continued as such for ten years. The paper was finally absorbed by The Brooklyn Daily Times. John A. P. Kelly continued to write in a desultory way for various newspapers, and his letters were signed "Woodside," which thus, without any formality or any intention on his part, became the name of the village that grew up on the soil of the old farm.