

A family saga, from Greece to Port Jefferson

The Poulos history summarizes the history of 20th century America

Part one of a four-part series
BY GEORGE MORAITIS

Among the families who left Greece during the immigration years were the three sons of Konstantinos Poulianos of Ikaria, Greece: John (Iyonne), Anthony (Antonios) and Louis (Elias). They came to America between 1905 and 1920 choosing to gamble everything on a chance for a better life in America. Leaving behind their home which offered few opportunities, they and other Greek immigrants began their great adventure knowing that they might fail but insisting on their right to try for a better life. They sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and after passing the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, began the American chapter of the Poulianos history. These were tough times for the Greek immigrants since they were targets of anti-immigrant hatred.

John, first of the brothers to come to America, arrived in 1905 at the age of 18. He settled in Port Jefferson by 1917 taking a job with the Frank Stein Painting Company and working as a cook in the Elk Hotel and Restaurant.

Antonios, (Uncle Tony), the youngest brother, came to America around 1915, at about the age of 18. Tony went into the United States Army, serving his time in France during the World War I. Upon returning to the states, Tony took his separation money of \$600 and combined it with John's limited savings and together they purchased a farm on Pond Path in South Setauket from Frederick Smith, son of Amos C. Smith, in 1920. Tony was the first to establish a thriving dairy and egg business in Port Jefferson.

John and his new wife, Georgia, did not live on the farm, but instead in a second floor apartment on top of Terry's Barber Shop on Main Street in Port Jefferson. In 1921, the twins, Konstantinos (Gus) and Demetrios (Jimmy) were born.

In 1922, the family moved to a house on Maple Place where a third son, Peter, was born. In 1923, they moved again to William Street where a fourth son, Alexander (Alex) was born. They would soon move to their permanent residence on Sheep Pasture Road in the "Gildersleeve" house that was built by the Loper Brothers. These four sons went to high school in Port Jefferson. Peter and Gus, neither of whom married, remained in the family home. Jimmy and his wife Polly once owned a jewelry store on upper Main Street. Alex

and his family still live next to his parents' home. In 1944, John died at the age of 57. He and his wife are buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery in Port Jefferson under the name of John and Georgia Poulianos, the original family name.

In 1920, Konstantinos Poulianos, father to John and Tony, wrote to his sons in America to inform them that they were to receive their other brother and his family. Konstantinos recommended that Tony wear his American Army uniform so that it would be easier to get his brother and his family out of Ellis Island quickly. Tony refused to wear the uniform but did go to Ellis Island to meet Elias (Louis), his wife, Mary and their daughter, Thespina (later known as Daisy). Louis and Mary relied on Tony for many things during their first years including his ability to speak English.

Tony married Athena and built a house at 480 Liberty Avenue, near the gates to Cedar Hill Cemetery in Port Jefferson, after he sold the farm to his brother, Louis. Tony worked hard holding several jobs at once. He worked as a baker in the Jim Melluses Bakery in Port Jefferson and sold vegetables wholesale. Later, he went to work for the Veterans Administration Hospital



Photo collection of G. Moraitis

Louis (Elias Poulianos) Poulos seen here ca.1940, above, and Mary (Frangos) Poulos, seen here ca.1920, left, lived on the family farm in South Setauket.

The Poulianos family learned what other immigrants had to learn: save as much as possible to survive and that the American dream was all things to all people.

in Northport for many years. Tony and his wife lived in Port Jefferson for many years but, because of failing health, he sold his house and moved to a garden apartment in Port Jefferson Station. Both Anthony and Athena Poulianos died in 1981 and are buried at Cedar Hill Cemetery, leaving no children.

Louis (Elias) and Mary continued to live on the farm and had five more children after arriving in America. Thespina (Daisy) was born Ikaria, Greece in 1916. Visiliki (Bessie) was born at Governor's Hospital in Manhattan in 1921. At that time, that was where immigrant women went to give birth to their children. In 1922, Athena (Ethel) was the first to be born on the farm with Dr. McCrae of Port Jefferson as the attending doctor. Stelios (Steve) was born in 1926 at Mather hospital in Port Jefferson. Elpiniki (Alice), my mother, was born in 1927 also at Mather Hospital. Nicholas was born in 1933, the last to be born on the farm, the doctor being paid with chickens and eggs.

The Setauket School principal, for the most part, changed the children's names, and the American versions were written on their school records. My grandfather supplemented the family's farm income by working as a construction laborer. He worked on building the John T. Mather Memorial Hospital. Often, these supplemental construction jobs took him far from the farm and Long Island.

It was while on one of these jobs that he died in 1943 at the age of 52 as he painted a bridge at Indian Head near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The funeral was at O. B. Davis Funeral Home when it was on East Main Street in Port Jefferson. My grandmother and family continued with the farm for the next 27 years. Mary died in 1970. Both Louis and Mary Poulos are buried at Cedar Hill Cemetery.

America promised a better life and fulfillment of grand dreams, which were no longer possible in Greece. The Poulianos family learned what other immigrants had to learn: save as much as possible to survive and that the American dream was all things to all people. These newly arrived immigrants were part of American history and the story continues.



Photo collection of G. Moraitis

After many years in Port Jefferson, Anthony (Antonios Poulianos) Poulos ca. 1944 moved to a garden apartment in Port Jefferson Station.



Photo collection of G. Moraitis

John (Iyonne Poulianos) Poulos, seen here ca. 1940, was the first of the brothers to come to the local area.

Hard work and pride in being American

Poulianos/Poulos family members establish themselves in local community

Part II of a four-part series
BY GEORGE MORAITIS

The Poulianos/Poulos family originated from the island of Ikaria, Greece. The three brothers, John (Iyonne), Anthony (Antonios) and Louis (Elias) came to the New World between the years of 1905 and 1920 and finally settled in the Port Jefferson/Setauket area. These years were tough times for immigrants since they were targets of anti-immigrant hatred. However, America promised a better life, and the brothers wanted fulfillment of grand dreams which was no longer possible in Greece.

Times were not always rosy. Family members found a letter from the local Ku Klux Klan threatening harm to the family because of their thriving dairy business in Port Jefferson. The KKK objected to foreigners running local businesses. One family member remembers my grandmother, Mary Poulos, asking in Greek, "What is this KKK?" She could not understand how such hatred could be possible. One day, my grandfather Louis found both his milk wagon horses maimed during his route, possibly done by the local members of the KKK.

The Poulianos/Poulos family had proved themselves to be good neighbors by helping others in time of need with shelter and fresh food. The second generation worked as volunteers at the local Red Cross, American Legion halls, and veterans hospital and at the National Guard units on Long Island during the Second World War. All Poulianos/Poulos males served in the American armed forces. There are family members belonging to many Greek and American philanthropic organizations. One of the most critical moments in the family's Americanization process came when the Poulianos surname was legally changed to Poulos. The Poulos name remained as such for many years. However, in later years, the families of John Poulos and Anthony Poulos had the name legally changed back to Poulianos so they would not lose their roots or their name. The family of Louis Poulos retained the name of Poulos. The Poulos name continued in the Setauket area as the Poulianos name is known in Port Jefferson. The Poulos Farm became well-known by all.

In 1920, Anthony Poulos and his brother John brought a 20+ acre farm on Pond Path in South Setauket. Anthony lived on the farm before moving to the home he had built at 408 Liberty Avenue near the gates of Cedar Hill Cemetery in Port Jefferson when he married his wife, Athena. John Poulos lived many areas in Port Jefferson before moving into the Gildersleeve house that was built by the Loper Brothers on Sheep Pasture Road. In 1924, Louis and Mary Poulos, my grandparents, were well enough established to purchase the farm from his brothers. The homestead served as the focal point for the family for the next 50 years. Louis and Mary took over Tony's dairy business



Mary ran the farm and had a dairy and egg route in Port Jefferson. Her clients included private homes and such establishments as the Elk Hotel and Restaurant on Main Street in Port Jefferson.

Photo collection of G. Moraitis
Mary Poulos, left, still milking cows by hand, ca. 1954, and below in the late 1950s.

that operated from the farm. The family made a living by farming, supplemented by the extra cash Louis earned working as a laborer. Mary ran the farm and had a dairy and egg route in Port Jefferson. Her clients included private homes and such establishments as the Elk Hotel and Restaurant on Main Street in Port Jefferson.

The Setauket farmhouse and the homes which John and Anthony had in Port Jefferson would soon let rooms to other Greeks, who came to Long Island from New York City for a weekend or summer vacation. Soon, the American public from other parts of the city would rent rooms at the Poulos' homes and vacation on Long Island. As the Poulos farmhouse grew, the family was able to take in more boarders. The house grew to have 15 bedrooms, one main kitchen with three sub-kitchens, four bathrooms, three dining areas and a parlor with a fireplace. Sick people came to the farm for the fresh foods and fresh air in order to get well. It is said that the city's newspaper ads read: "If you want to get well — Go to Mrs. Poulos." Mary continued to rent rooms until her death in 1970 at the age of 79.

Greeks were so proud of their adopted land that on the Fourth of July, Stelios Raptis, the godfather of Alice Poulos, — youngest daughter of Louis and Mary (the writer's mother) — would purchase hundred of dollars worth of fireworks and shoot them off on the farm for all to enjoy. Neighbors would come around



and watch the beautiful display. Army soldiers on marching drills from Camp Upton in Brookhaven would march across the farm's property, and Mary Poulos would invite them into the house for a home-cooked meal. Louis would pack up surplus canned goods and drive them up to Chicken Hill in Setauket and other areas to distribute these goods to the poor who lived there. Their door was always open.

Community members and local school officials came out for Louis' funeral in 1943, and some traveled many miles from other states for Mary's funeral in 1970. Yet, the story continues....

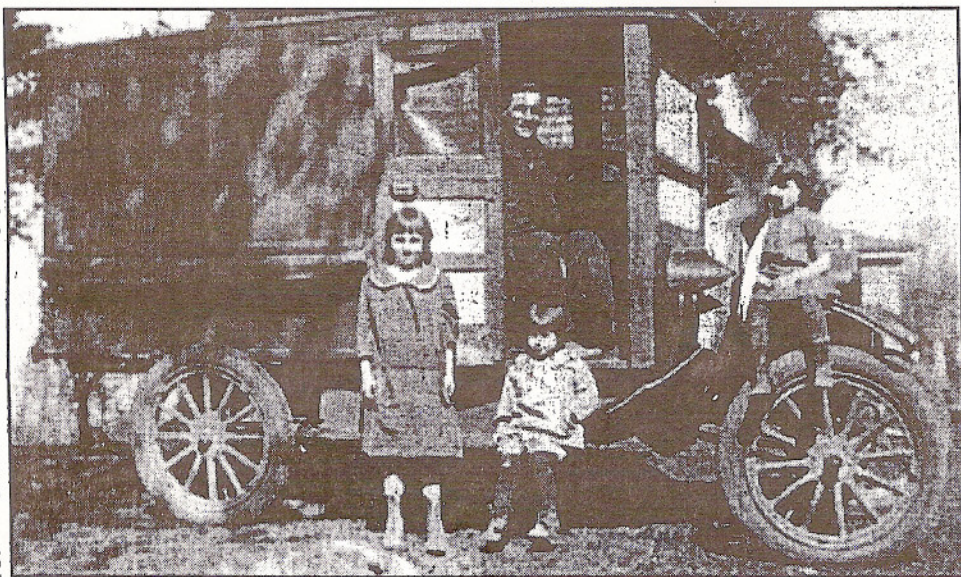


Photo collection of G. Moraitis,
Louis (Elias) Poulos and his "motorized" milk wagon, ca. 1927 with from left, Daisy, Ethel and Bessie.



Photo collection of G. Moraitis.

Farm on Pond Path was home for Greek family

Hard work for all, but also parties with food, dancing, wine and ouzo

Part III of a four-part series

BY GEORGE MORAITIS

In 1924, my grandfather, Louis (Elias Poulianos) Poulos bought a farm on Pond Path in South Setauket from his brothers, my grand uncles, John and Anthony Poulianos. The farm and home, which was built in the middle 1800s, had belonged to the Hawkins/Smith family for many generations.

The two Poulianos brothers, who had come to America many years earlier from Ikaria, Greece, brought the farm of 20 plus acres in 1920, the year Louis and his wife Mary and daughter Thespina came through Ellis Island to the New World. My grandparents and aunt were able to come straight to the farm in South Setauket, which helped start the family's arrival to the Port Jefferson/Setauket areas.

Locally, as community husbands held jobs in business and the wives worked at home taking care of the children, cleaning the house, cooking and preserving food, farming life was a little different. On a farm everybody works: husband, wife and children. Family life on the Poulos farm differed very little from farm life in Greece, especially during the Depression years and during the winter seasons.

Farm life meant hard work as it did on many other farms in the area from Stony Brook to Mount Sinai and all around Long Island. The cows had to be milked by hand; fields had to be cleared for planting, and livestock had to be tended to. There was also a produce stand out on Pond Path. The farm had sheep, goats, chickens, pigs and the family dog. Work included making goat's milk cheese (Feta) and shearing wool from the sheep. There were plenty of eggs and bacon. There were also apples and other fruit trees on the property.

Cows had to be led to pasture early in the morning after the first milking, brought back to the barn for the afternoon water and oats, brought back to the pasture and returned to the barn for the evening milking.

The farm did not have a bull, so the family paid a stud fee to keep the herd producing milk after the cows birthed a calf. Cows often had names such as Bessie and Susie. Calving was not always easy. One family story recounts how the vet, with a long glove on, had to reach in for a calf.

Louis would take apples from his large orchard on the farm to the cider mill at the end of Hub Road. This mill was patented and began operation in 1863 by George W. Hawkins and was still milling in the early 20th century. It is the mill portrayed by genre painters William Sidney Mount of Stony Brook in 1841 and William M. Davis of Port Jefferson 20 years later.

According to family tradition, Louis would ferment apple cider into hard cider as well as brewing beer,

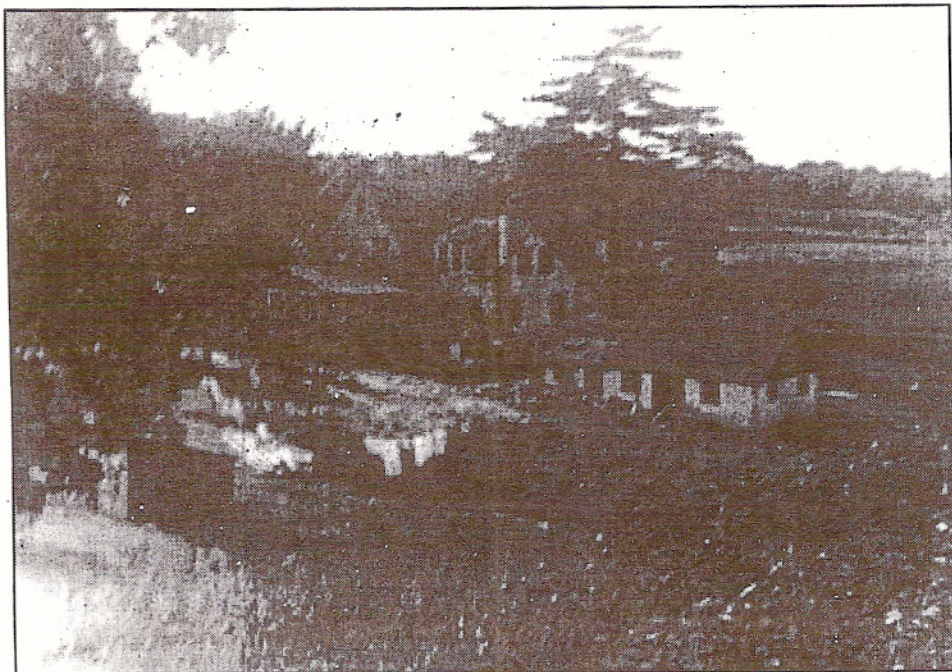


Photo collection of G. Moraitis

The Poulos house and barn on Pond Path, above, mid-1950s. Susie the Cow, right, mid-1960s.

making wine and Greek ouzo (anissette). Family stories indicate that there were many parties with plentiful drink during the life on the farm, especially during the Prohibition era. Louis was known to share with his friends and relatives as well as neighbors.

The police turned a blind eye to Louis' beverage making since Louis was very good to his neighbors — during the Depression. He helped his neighbors by giving them food and dairy products. And so the police would tip Louis off before an inspection was made of the property for "moonshine." Mary, my grandmother, did not always approve of his enterprise. She once took an axe to the beer still that was in the cellar. Cousin Gus Poulianos told a story of when his father John and his family would walk to the farm from Port Jefferson: "Sheep Pasture Road and Pond Path were dirt roads back then." The family would spend the whole day on the farm. Upon arriving, there was plenty of food, dancing and of course, wine and ouzo.

The story continues that when it was time to go back to Port Jefferson, everybody would pile into Louis' Model-T Ford. On the way back to Port, the headlights often went out, and Gus and some of the other brothers would climb on the hood of the car and light up the road with flashlights. However, because of the dimmed lights and drink, Louis would many times drive his car off the roadside and into the wooded areas. Of course, Louis' older brother, John would be cursing in Greek about his brother's driving, for I am told that he hated



automobiles and especially that one.

Toiling in the field was a hard task indeed. Firewood had to be cut from the woods up on the hill. Big logs had to be carried down, cut and split to size and stacked. Rats and foxes often raided the chicken coops, which housed over 3,000 chickens, a problem on all farms. It was a chore to control the vermin that pestered crops and other livestock as well.

However, cleanliness was of the utmost concern of any dairy and egg business. Cleaning of old hay and manure in the barns was a daily chore that was shared by all the Poulos children. Hide and seek games in the hay piles became a favorite while they were working in the barns. Cleaning the barn, feeding the animals and chasing down the cows were a few of the chores done by all the children and later by the grandchildren like my cousins and myself. Large tracts of land were rented out to the United States Department of Agriculture and private farmers and there were the usual farm vehicles and equipment in order to run the farm, both horse drawn and motorized.

The farm on Pond Path served as a Poulos homestead until the house burned down in 1975. Today, what was called The Poulos Farm is now Pond Estates development. For more information on the Poulianos/Poulos family, please see the Three Village Historical Society's journal: *THE HISTORICAN*, Vol. 34, 1993, *A Family History: The Poulianos/Poulos Family, The First Greeks in Setauket*, by George Moraitis Sr. The story of selling the farm and why many other farms were sold to come.



Greek dancing on the east lawn, ca. 1937.

Photo collection of G. Moraitis

February 27, 2003

The Port Times Record • theporttimes.com

Page A 1

Poulos family farm finally sold to developers

High taxes, high costs and hard work bring an end to the local farming era

BY GEORGE MORAITIS

Part four of a four-part series

As the closing of the Poulos Farm became evident because of the death of my grandmother, Mary Poulos, in August of 1970, the family gave notice to all the boarders who were renting parts of the 15-bedroom home on Pond Path in South Setauket. It became necessary to sell the property of 20-plus acres to developers because it had become a burden to take care of the farm. The surviving children had become an association, and Poulos Associates was born in order to sell the property. The partners shared equally in the partnership assets. The final result became the Pond Estate development stretching from Hub Road to Franklin Avenue along the east side of Pond Path.

The selling of farm property had become very familiar on Long Island. Family farms from western Suffolk County to the East End of Long Island were being sold to developers for one reason or another. One reason, of course, was the taxes that had to be paid. The tax bill was very high. Tax bills were lowered by the removal of the farmhouses and outbuildings and the property could be sold as undeveloped for a higher price. The Setauket Fire Department in 1975 burned down the Poulos farmhouse, built in the mid-1800s, and the barn was knocked down and buried. It was the end of an era.

Many farms that were producing dairy, poultry, potatoes and other vegetables were either being sold off to developers or simply were changing to produce other products. Sod grass, wineries and horses were replacing dairy, poultry and vegetable farms. Maine potatoes for the most part, I am told, were originally Long Island potatoes. The regulations against the use of pesticides on vegetables were a burden on the farmers. The high taxes and the high cost of keeping of livestock were also a burden. Supermarkets were replacing the local dairy and egg routes.

Locally, the Port Jefferson, Colinwood and the Sheep Pasture dairies were operating in Port Jefferson Station. The Buttercup Dairy was operating in Terryville. The Randall Farm in Mount Sinai was sold off to developers, as were many other farms.

According to old telephone directories, the Port Jefferson Dairy was on Maple Avenue in Port Jefferson Station in 1942. By 1954, the dairy moved to Dewey Street. According to 1964-1966 directories, the dairy moved to Montauk Highway in Blue Point. The Buttercup Dairy Farm is now a dairy and grocery store on the site of the original farm on the corner of Old Town and Boyle roads. The barn was converted into today's store.

The Sheep Pasture Dairy, Pinewood and Colinwood dairies that once operated in Port Jefferson Station are now long gone. I am sure that all these local farms remember M. Remz Feed Store. Remz was in the building near the railroad tracks across from the station house in Port Jefferson Station.

The Poulos farm had flatbed trucks full of bales of hay, straw and bags of oats and feed for the cows and other livestock. The cows would feed on the hay, and



Photo collection of G. Moraitis
Alice Poulos Moraitis with the writer's older brother John Moraitis, ca.1946

the straw was pulled down from the loft for their bedding. The barn was full of hay for use during the winter months. The cleaning of the barn was a daily chore.

Fruits and vegetable farms were plentiful in the local area. The Poulos farm had a vegetable stand out on Pond Path in earlier times. There were also Davis Peach Farm in Mount Sinai, which also was sold to developers, the Chereb farm in Miller Place, Scappaticcio family operating Scappi's on Boyle Road in Terryville and Borrella's on Old Town Road in Setauket.

Poultry farms were also plentiful in the area. The Poulos farm once had over 3,000 chickens housed in large buildings. There was also the Mount Sinai Turkey Farm which later became Fischer's Turkey Farm. It was on Crystal Brook Hollow Road on the property of today's Hildreth's Glass in Mount Sinai. The store building is still being used. As youngsters, we would go near the turkeys and yell, "Gobble! gobble! gobble," and the turkeys would respond in unison. The McDonald Poultry Farm was on the property of today's Lawrence Aviation Corporation behind the Woodhull development area in Port Jefferson Station. Also there was the Crown Poultry Farm on North Country Road. Wick's Poultry and the Baur Poultry Farms both operating on Jayne Boulevard in Terryville.

Western Suffolk Produce was a large warehouse at the end of the tracks of the Long Island Rail Road in Port Jefferson Station. I remember large trucks that hauled potatoes. The workers would slide the potatoes down into a sinkhole in the woods north of the tracks for their winter's rest. In the spring, the potatoes would be collected again for market. As youngsters, we would take potatoes from there and a neighbor would slice them and deep-fry them into French fries. The Western Suffolk warehouses burnt down in the middle of the night around 1965. The trains at the end of the line occupy the area today.

This important stature of farming will never be seen again in this area. Some continue with small plots that the families plow, then sell the produce at small roadside vegetable stands. You will see the Gladysz's with a table on Terryville Road selling vegetables. Borella's Flower

There was a time when deliverymen delivered milk, eggs and bread to local homes and businesses. Now, we go to King Kullen, Pathmark, Waldbaum's and the like. There are no large buildings housing chickens and turkeys nearby.

Kingdom on Old Town Road sells some vegetables. Seasonal items are still being sold at Scappi's corner. Setauket Vegetable Stand is on Route 25A in Setauket.

In the better months, the roadside stands of Nick Pastis on Pond Path, near where the Poulos Farm once stood in South Setauket, and Rena Mamatos on Route 347, by Crystal Brook Hollow Road in Port Jefferson Station and Daisy White Farmstand and Nursery on North Country Road in Mount Sinai are all operating. Jerry Shulman Produce Shippers still operates on Hallock Avenue and has for many years.

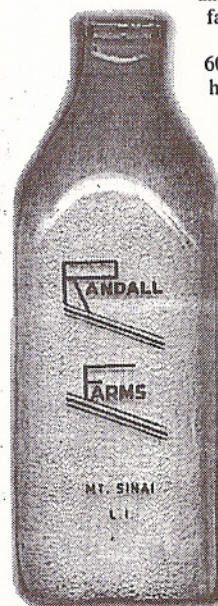
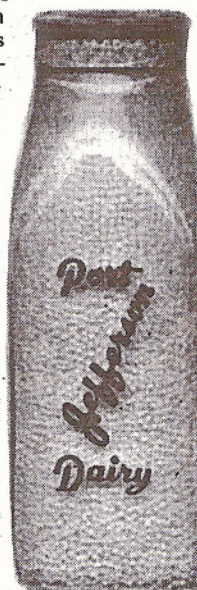
But these roadside stands, just to name a few, will never match the grand farming industry this area once saw in which dairy, poultry, fruits and vegetables covered acres of land. Farmers rose early in the morning to prepare their livestock and crops for market.

There was a time when deliverymen delivered milk, eggs and bread to all local homes and businesses. Now, we go to King Kullen, Pathmark, Waldbaum's and the like. There is no large buildings housing chickens and turkeys nearby anymore. No barns keeping cows, goats or sheep. The feed store is gone. As our lives continued and we moved away from the farm,

I often think back to the 60s and how much I hated the hard work as a youngster and yet, now that it's all gone, I miss it.



Photo from the collection of G. Moraitis
Alice Poulos (left) with unknown, ca. mid-1930s.



Photos from the collection of G. Moraitis
Old milk bottles from the dairy farms that once were common in the local area.

