

**MERRIMAN PARK/COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE RECREATIONAL SPACE
IN PORT WASHINGTON**

Collection Abstract: Correspondence, memos, petitions, blueprints, slides, and printed matter documenting community efforts to create a local park at the site of the Merriman School in Port Washington, New York. The collection also includes documents, meeting minutes and agendas, relating to the Port Washington Board of Education.

Collection Title: MERRIMAN PARK/ COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE
RECREATIONAL SPACE IN PORT WASHINGTON RECORDS

Inclusive Dates: 1927-1980

Size: 4 Boxes, 1 Oversize folder (1.5 l.f.)

Source: Gift of Julie Geller, 2005

Prepared by: Francesca Pitaro, 2006

Repository: Port Washington Public Library Local History Center

MERRIMAN PARK/COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE RECREATIONAL SPACE IN PORT WASHINGTON

INTRODUCTION:

In 1977 the Port Washington (New York) Board of Education announced the closing of the Merriman Elementary School. The school was situated on a 3.6 acre plot in the Manhasset Bay Estates neighborhood and contained the school building, playing fields, and wooded areas. In January of 1978, the school board voted to excess the Merriman School property, leading to a community debate over the future of the property.

The Committee to Preserve Recreational Space in Port Washington (originally named the Ad Hoc Committee to Save Merriman) was founded by neighborhood residents who wanted to maintain the property as open space. Among the organizers of the group were Bruce Burmester, Joe and Loretta DiBenedetto, Norman and Julie Geller, Edward and Lois Klimerman, Maureen and Peter Murphy, Dick and Linda Silverman, and Robert and Karen Youdelman. They were supported in their efforts by civic groups including Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington and the Manhasset Bay Estates Association. After considering various options the Committee elected to create an independent park district known as the Manhasset Bay Park District. Residents of the district would be assessed an additional tax to pay for the purchase of the park which would be financed by the issuance of bonds by the Town of North Hempstead.

In June of 1979 the voters of Port Washington approved the sale of the Merriman School property to the Manhasset Bay Park District. The Merriman School was demolished in 1980. The property, now known as Manhasset Bay Park (also known as Merriman Park or Pine Street Park) is officially to be used by District residents only, but at this time access is not restricted.

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The collection spans the years 1927 to 1980, with the major part of the collection created between 1977 and 1979. It includes correspondence, brochures, school board minutes and memos, architect's plans of the Merriman School, petitions, assessment maps, and clippings. The records of the Committee document the formation of a grassroots effort to preserve open space in Port Washington. The papers also include information on the Port Washington school board, school board elections, controversy over the best plans for community property, and the role of the school board in community affairs.

The earliest document in the collection is a copy of a 1927 indenture for the transfer of land from the Manhasset Bay Estates to the Union Free School District #4. Also included are several files pertaining to the Port Washington Children's Center, which had been a tenant in the Merriman School building before it was demolished.

ORGANIZATION:

The collection is arranged into seven series:

- SERIES I: Correspondence**
- SERIES II: General Files**
- SERIES III: Publicity**
- SERIES IV: Port Washington Board of Education**
- SERIES V: Petitions and Lists**
- SERIES VI: Artifacts**
- SERIES VII: Oversize Material**

OTHER SUBJECTS:

Community organizations – Port Washington (New York)
Environmental organizations – Port Washington (New York)
Hasset, James
Merriman School
Port Washington Children's Center
Port Washington (New York) Board of Education
Port Washington (New York) schools
Town of North Hempstead

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS:

Series I: Correspondence, [1977-1979] (3 folders)

This series contains correspondence to and from the Committee, and also copies of correspondence between other individuals and organizations which were pertinent to the Committee's business.

Series II: General files, [1927-1980] (9 folders)

General files contain background documents on open space and other topics, budget estimates, a copy of the deed for the property, two folders of information on the Port Washington Children's Center, and a transcript of the town meeting held to discuss the establishment of a Manhasset Bay Park District. A paper by Reina Teeger, written while a student in New York University's Department of Journalism, gives an account of the events leading up to the formation of the park district.

Series III: Publicity, [1977-1979] (5 folders)

Publicity files contain printed matter from the Committee, and also from their supporters and opponents. Also included are the Committee's slide presentation and a photograph of the Merriman School Park. Newspaper accounts of the controversy over the Merriman School property are filed with oversized materials in Box 4.

Series IV: Port Washington Board of Education, [1976-1979] (4 folders)

These files contain memos and reports created by the Board of Education, and a real estate appraisal of the Merriman School by the Charles E. Hyde Agency. Also included are agendas and minutes of some school board meetings, and a file of material (fliers and publicity) relating to the 1978 School Board election. Newspaper accounts of the School Board elections and newspaper advertising by the candidates are filed with the oversized materials in Box 4.

Series V: Petitions and Lists, [1976-1979] (8 folders)

These files include petitions filed by the Committee, lists of voters, residents and members of the Manhasset Bay Estates Association.

Series VI: Artifacts, [ca. 1978-1980] (1 box)

Artifacts include two t-shirts and a brick, which was probably retrieved from the Merriman School demolition.

Series VII: Oversize Material: [1976-1980] (1 box; 1 map case folder)

Oversize materials include blueprints of the Merriman School, Block maps of the area, clippings, and complete issues of the *Port Washington News* and the *Port Mail and Reporter* documenting local coverage of the events.

BOX LIST:

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Content</u>
1		Series I: Correspondence
	1	1977
	2	1978
	3	1979 and undated
		Series II: General Files
	4	Background documents, 1964-1979
	5	Budget estimates for purchase of park
	6	Deed: Manhasset Bay Estates/ Union Free School District, 1927 (copy)
	7	“Grassroots Democracy”, 1980 (by Reina Teeeger)
	8	Miscellaneous
	9	Notes
	10-11	Port Washington Children’s Center, 1979
	12	Town Board Meeting, 3/20/1979 (transcript)
		Series III: Publicity
	13	Brochures, fliers, and other printed matter, ca. 1978
	14	Election Day – Telephone campaign
	15	Letters of support, 1977-1979

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Content</u>
1	16	Opposition leaflets
	17	Photograph of Merriman School Park
	18	Slide presentation (21 slides and commentary), 1979
2		Series IV: Port Washington Board of Education
	1	Documents, memos, reports, 1976-1979
	2	Merriman School appraisal
	3	Minutes and agendas, 1977-1979
	4	School Board elections, 1978
		Series V: Petitions and Lists
	5	Petitions, 1978-79
	6-7	Petitions submitted to the Town of North Hempstead (by Block), 1979
	8	Petitions by street name (Amherst - Leeds)
	9	Petitions by street name (Luquer – Willow)
	10	Manhasset Bay Estates Assoc. – Membership lists
	11	Manhasset Bay Residents – Lists
	12	Voters -Lists
3		Series VI: Artifacts
		Brick
		T-shirt [“Keep Merriman Green”]
		T-shirt [“If Not Why Not”]
4		Series VII: Oversize materials
	1	Nassau County Department of Assessment Land and Tax Maps Section 5 – Index of Blocks of the Land and Tax Map: Section 5 – Block maps (22 maps): F; 72; 74; 76; 104-110, 112-114; 116-123
	2	Clippings and Newspapers, May 1976 - May 1978
	3	Clippings and Newspapers, June 1978 – Nov. 1979 Clippings – School Board Election Ads, 1978
		Folder (Map Case)
		Blueprints (Eggers & Higgins, Architects) –“Manhasset Bay Neighborhood School” (Merriman School): First Floor Plan, 1951 (2 copies) Basement Plan; Attic & Roof Plan; Plot Plan, 1951 (2 copies) Elevations/Basement & Roof Plans, 1950 (2 copies)