

Raynor Saw Mill and Grist Mill
Raynortown/Freeport, LI, Freeport,
L. I., NY
Thursday, October 2, 1997

As a part of the Raynor Family Association's Reunion Activities in 1997, a restored historic marker was dedicated and placed on Mill Road in Freeport to note the site of the Raynor Grist Mill and Saw Mill of the 1800's which was located at the head of Freeport Creek across Mill Road from the present Recreation Center and parking lot (which at one time was Mill Pond). The marker was first placed at the same site in 1935 by the Daughters of the American Revolution to denote the site and recognize Edward Raynor and children as first settlers of "Raynortown" in 1659.

The Grist Mill and Saw Mill was a vital industry to the fledgling community of Raynortown, and Daniel Raynor was the town's first miller. He lived between 1791 and 1867 and during his time, farmers would drive their wagons full of wheat from many miles around to the mill, where Mr. Raynor would grind it in return for a share of the flour.

Two brooks supplied the water for the mills. Most of the waterpower was used for the gristmill. Corn was ground in the grist mill, using large undershot wheels powered by water in a stream below. But in the spring when water was plentiful, the saw mill would be in operation. It was not uncommon for Mill Pond to overflow its bank onto Mill Road.

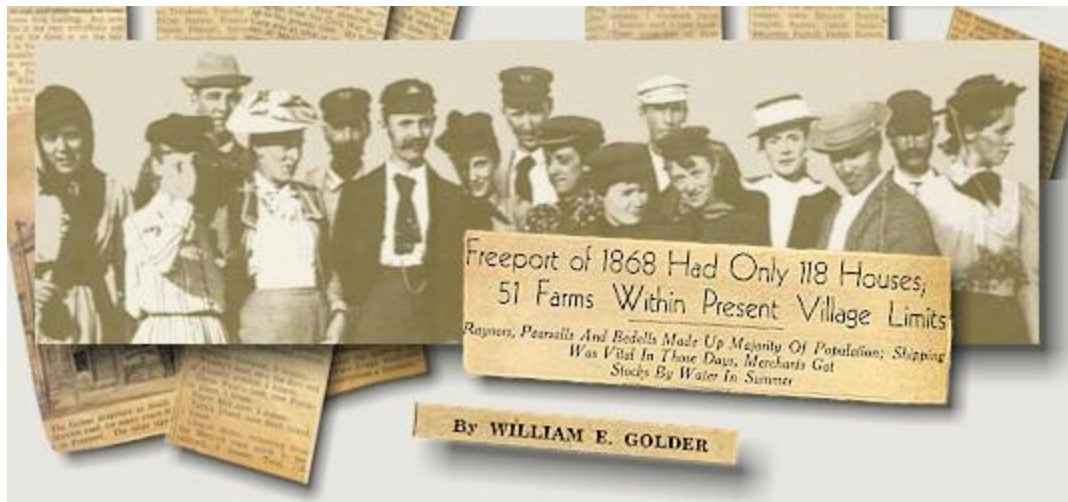
Edward Raynor, the son of the above mentioned Daniel, inherited the mill. He and his son Bedell operated the mill until it was sold in 1874 to Isaac Horsfall. Mr. Horsfall operated the mill until 1885, whereupon he sold his property to the Brooklyn City Water Department. The mills were abandoned two or three years later.

Editors note:

Information for this piece was taken from "Reminiscences of the Mill Pond" by William E. Golder found in the Raynor Family History Booklet by Clinton E. Metz

Photographs and map provided by Jeanne and Robert Raynor of Merrick, LI





What I remember concerning Freeport dates back as early as 1860 and I have observed its progress from the Civil War days up to the present time. My birthplace was at what is now the corner of Merrick road and Church street. Then Church street did not extend below Merrick road. It was then the Northwest corner of Stephen RAYNOR's farm.

There were seven houses on Merrick road between Main street and what is now Ocean avenue, three on the North side and four on the South side, my home being the second from Main street.

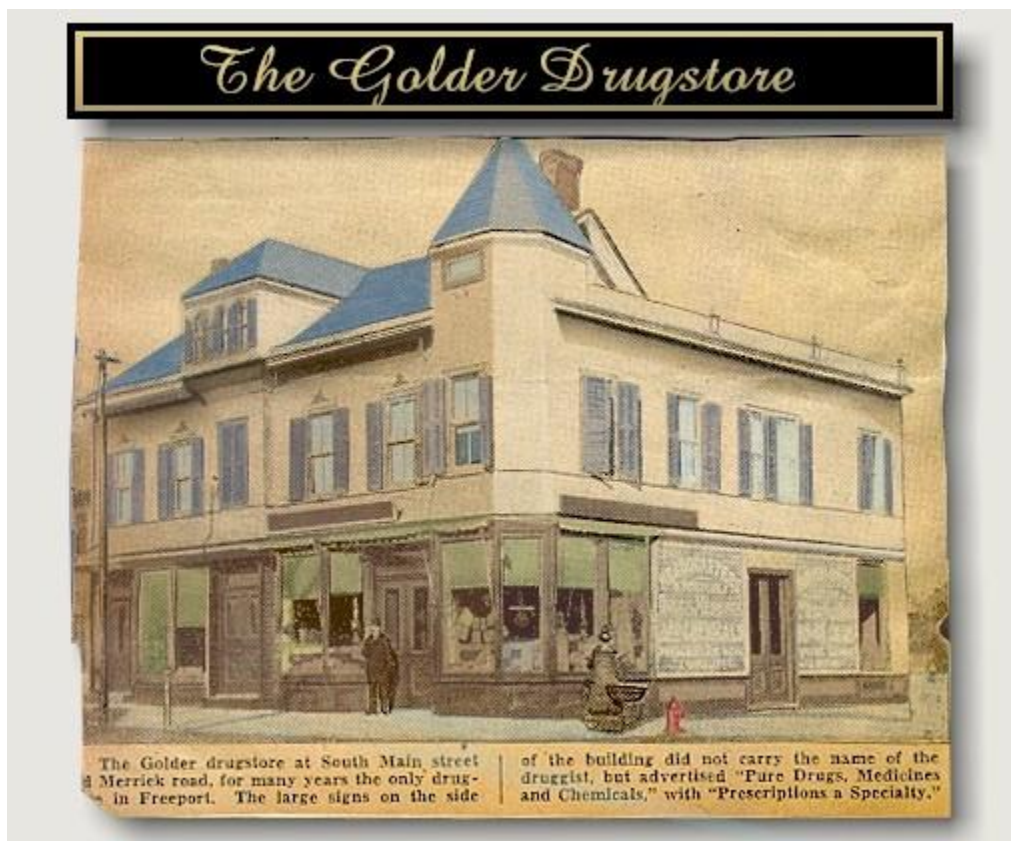
In 1868 there were 118 houses in Freeport. located on the following streets and lanes;

- **M**ain street, extending from the meadow land North to what is now Woodside avenue, 61 houses, 29 North of Merrick road and 32 South.
- **M**errick road, extending from Merrick river to Milburn lake, 16 houses, Merrick road was then known as the plank road. There was a toll gate near where the Freeport Hall apartment house now stands.
- **C**arman's lane, now Ocean avenue, 4 houses.
- **C**oe's Neck, now Bayview avenue, 10 houses.
- **T**readwell's lane, now Brookside avenue, 5 houses.
- **C**rooked avenue, extending from Main Street to Babylon turnpike, now Broadway and Grand avenue, 9 houses.
- **B**abylon turnpike, 5 houses.
- **W**haley's lane, now the East end of Atlantic avenue, 2 houses.
- **U**ncle Wash's lane, now Franklin place, 1 house.
- **P**aper Mill lane, 3 houses.
- **T**urk's Island, now Shell Island, 1 house.
- **C**hurch street, extending from the Merrick road north to the railroad, 5 houses.
- **T**otal, 118 houses.

Raynors In Majority

Of this number, 51 houses were the homes of farm owners. In the Freeport area there were approximately 51 farms. Nineteen were South of the Merrick road and the owners were Edward RAYNOR, Stephen RAYNOR, Daniel RAYNOR, Benjamin RAYNOR, Joseph RAYNOR, John C. RAYNOR, Richard BEDELL, James WHALEY, Henry SMITH, William SIMONSON, Thomas CARMAN, Samuel CARMAN, Albert WHALEY, Jacob BEDELL, Edward HERBERT, John COMBS, Daniel TREADWELL and Daniel D. SMITH.

The 32 farm owners on the North side of Merrick road were Raynor Rock SMITH, Edward RAYNOR, Joseph J. RAYNOR, Riley RAYNOR, George SMITH, Benjamin SMITH, Abram V. TREADWELL, Elijah RAYNOR, Francis BENEDICT, Nelson PEARSALL, Sylvanus PEARSALL, Samuel SPRAGUE, Jerry CORNWELL, Mr. HOLLOWAY, Willet SMITH, John MEAD, Allan RAYNOR, George SOUTHARD, Miles SOUTHARD, William RAYNOR, John POWELL, Thomas RAYNOR, Sylvanus BEDELL, William R. SMITH, Mr. CHARLICK, Thomas SMITH, Samuel L. SEAMAN, Robert SMART, John H. RAYNOR and John A. SMITH.



Main street was the Main street in Freeport in those days and has continued to be Main street all through the years that have come and gone up to now. In 1868 there had been very little increase in population or change in Freeport from what it was in 1860, for during the Civil War everything in the way of improvement was at a standstill. Among the 61 houses on Main street those that didn't occupy farm land were located on lots varying from one-quarter to an acre of land, giving plenty of space for raising garden vegetables. Freeport's population in 1868 was chiefly native growth.

Freight Came By Boat

From 1860 to 1868 there were 25 business places within the limits of Freeport, as follows: 2 grocery stores, 1 general country store that sold almost everything a family needed, 2 blacksmith's shops, 2 grist mills, 2 paper mills, 1 saw mill, 1 harness shop (my father was the harness maker), 1 candy store, 1 carpenter shop, 3 hotels, 2 beer saloons, 1 wholesale liquor store, 1 lumber yard, 2 boat builders. There were two or three sloops engaged in carrying freight between Freeport and New York City. Paper, cord wood and clams were shipped to the city and store freight, hardware, lumber, coal and brick came back to Freeport.

Fish, poultry, hay and straw were carried to the city all through the year in market wagons. In the winter the market men would accommodate the storekeepers. During Civil War days there wasn't much business activity in the winter season except to cut and chop wood to keep the home fires burning. But nine months in the year everybody was busy on the farm or on the bay. Even in those days Freeport was a community of some importance.

There were two churches in the village, Presbyterian and Methodist. With their Sunday schools they exercised a much-needed influence in the community. There were two day schools, public and private, the public school for large and small pupils, the private school for children under 10 years of age. The public school was in operation 11 months of the year, one month for vacation. There came a time when additional room was needed and during the vacation period the roof was raised and a second floor space was added for the older pupils. I became one of that number. Instead of it being the little brown schoolhouse on the hill or in the dale, it was the little brown school house on Main street.

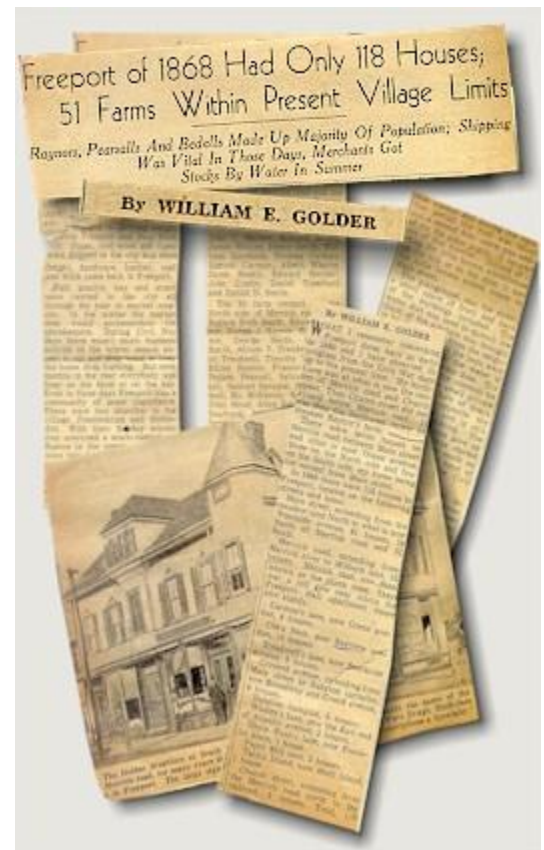
The playground was the street, a small space in front and back of the buildings included. The water that was used to quench the thirst of the scholars was brought in by the pail full from the neighbors' wells. Any of the boys were pleased to go after the water if it didn't occur at recess time. The drinking was from the common tin cup or dipper. The small private school was on the turn of South Main street, now opposite the Smith street corner, and is still there as an old building. The lady teacher married and gave up the school. Another was started to take its place farther south on Main street opposite the head of Freeport creek during the Civil War.

By William E. GOLDER

Freeport Review Star

(date unknown but probably in early 1940s)

Newspaper Clipping provided by Gerald V. S. Raynor, Huntington, L.I.





Freeport Village Was Once Raynor South

It was Later Hailed as Raynortown, the Raynor Family Being the First Settlers
A Lively Town Even Long Ago Interesting Reminiscences of the Past from a
Descendant of the First Settler.

Brooklyn Eagle
1903

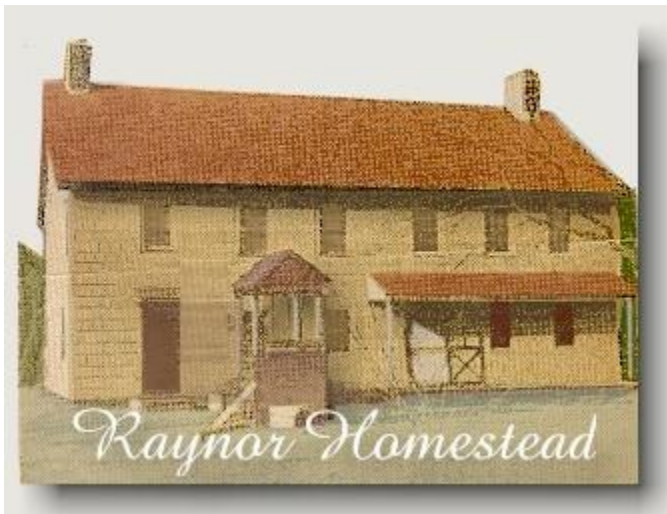
Freeport, L. I. January 17, 1903 - In the rapid growth of this progressive village and its several changes in name, many residents, even of the old-time stamp, have, with but few exceptions ceased to talk about its antiquated title, "Raynortown," applied because the original settlers were RAYNORS, and only a small percentage of inhabitants remember when "Raynor South" was in existence, prior to "Raynortown."

Among the few left who love to talk about the early days of the village, before Freeport came into existence, and of their ancestors, are Captain Alanson RAYNOR and his brother, Mott RAYNOR, who are, so far as is known, the only living male descendants of the first one of that branch of the family which set foot on South Side soil. They have a sister living, Miss Amanda RAYNOR. These are the only three remaining children of a family of ten, great-great-grandchildren of Edward RAYNOR, the original settler.

Captain Alanson RAYNOR is of the quaint type, having been a bayman and captain of sailing vessels nearly all his life of seventy one years, while his brother, Mott, who is four years his senior, has been a farmer until a few years ago. Both are well preserved for their years and are in fair health. Their sister, who is younger, also wears her years lightly.



The old homestead, where the family was reared still stands on its original site, on lower Main Street, opposite the mill road, and within a short distance of where Edward RAYNOR built the first house in Raynor South. The homestead is smaller than it was originally, but remains among the few landmarks of the village, and old-time residents take pride in pointing it out to the younger generation and also in showing the place near it where the first settler built his humble home. In its early days the homestead was surrounded by nothing but farm and wood land from the junction of Main, Smith and Church streets on the north to Raynor street on the south and Church street on the west, embracing several hundred acres, which were owned by Benjamin RAYNOR, father of Alanson and Mott, who kept the homestead as a boarding house and grocery and sold a few refreshments in the liquid line.



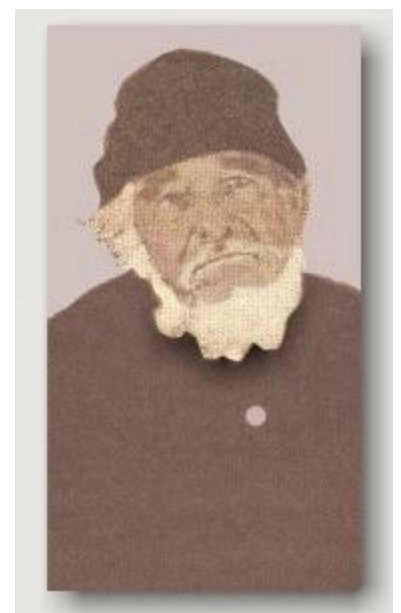
When an Eagle reporter called on Captain Alanson RAYNOR to procure his photograph and some reminiscences of "Raynor South" and "Raynortown" the venerable descendant of the original settler readily consented to give the desired information, as did his brother, Mott.

"I allus like ter talk 'bout Raynor South," said Captain Alanson, in his quaint way, "and tell what I know."

"My great-great-grandfather settled here in Freeport during the sixteenth century. He located on Main Street, at the head of Freeport Creek, near the homestead where I was born. My great-grandfather was named Thomas, my grandfather Benjamin and my father, Daniel Raynor. My father was born in 1791. My mother was a daughter of General Daniel BEDELL. Bedell street is named in her honor and Raynor street in honor of my father."

"In my early days," continued the captain, "Raynor South, or Freeport as it now is, was a great place. From the homestead to the old Freeport House, now the front of Libby's block on Pine street. I could count every house. There were just eighteen. No railroad was in existence, and the post office was kept by Joe 'Rock' SMITH, a descendant of the original 'Rock' SMITH. The Curtiss boys from Hempstead used to run a stage to Brooklyn, and it took about six hours to make the journey. If you had any business to transact a night's stay was necessary. It was on the Curtiss boys' stage I first saw the word 'Raynortown' painted or used, and I guess they helped to extinguish the name of 'Raynor South.'

"The RAYNORS were closely settled in the neck leading to the meadows within a short distance of my home. My father kept the homestead for public patronage, and talk about sport! Raynor South was full of it in them days. Main Street from the old Freeport house to the head of Bedell street, near where my brother, Mott, lives, was used for running



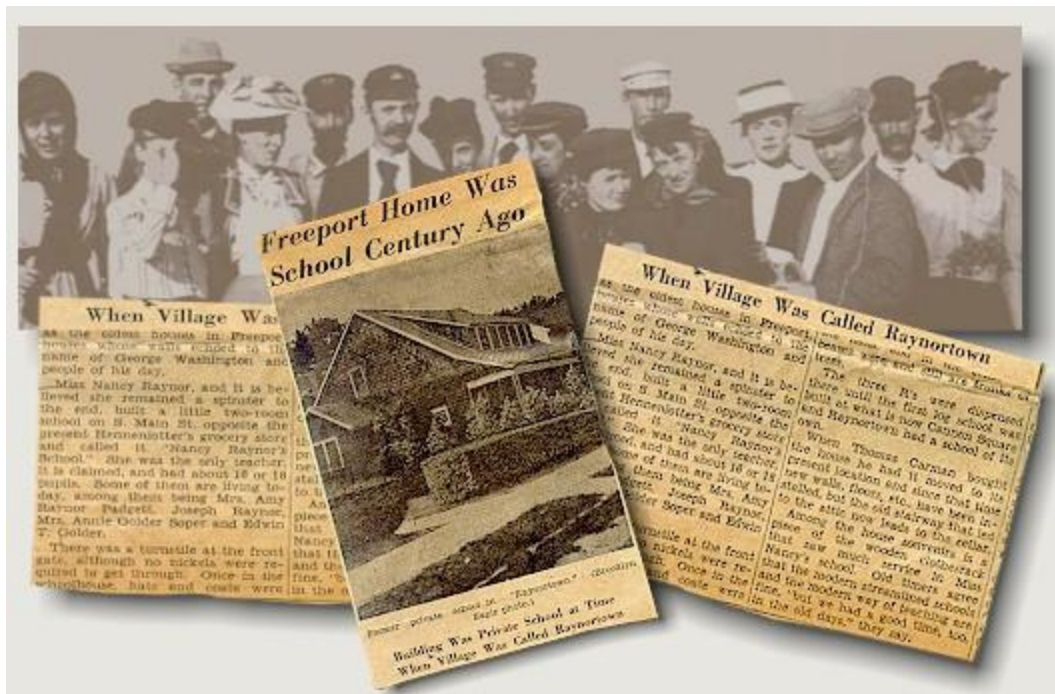
aces. My grandfather kept a number of running horses and put them in the races. He was fond of such sport and fox hunting. I guess I am a chip of the old block, although I have been a boatman nearly all my days. New Year's day was the day for a big time, though, in Raynor South. Every resident got a salute fired over his roof top to herald the new year, and it was impossible to sleep after midnight of the old year. Horse racing was a feature of the day's sport. The fun was continued until late at night.

"There were very few business places in Raynor South," continued the captain, and we all went to Hempstead to do our trading. Everybody was neighborly in them days, and you could get a favor done almost any time, gratis, where now you have got to pay for all that is done in that line. Wood was used entirely for fuel, and every one helped his neighbor get in his winter's supply. I remember my father asking once for eleven wagons to get in his wood, and twenty-two appeared. The almighty dollar was a second consideration in those times."

Speaking of wrecks on the coast, the captain said he had seen five at one time. "My father bought a brig which came on," said the captain, "and got it on rollers so that it could be launched and brought to port for repairs. Everybody in Raynor South was invited to take part in the launching and jollification afterward."

[the rest of the article is missing]

[Newspaper Clipping provided by Gerald V.S. Raynor, Huntington, L.I.]



Freeport Home Was School Century Ago Building Was Private School at Time When Village Was Called Raynortown



The first public school in Raynortown, as Freeport was called back in the days when the RAYNORS predominated among the first settlers, dates back to 1838, but there was a private school before that and the building is a comfortable dwelling today. It is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Irving CARMAN at 97 Raynor Street, in the old part of the village.

Mr. CARMAN's father bought the old schoolhouse from Foster SPRAGUE and James B. RAYNOR in 1882 and it has been the family home ever since, although moved and remodeled to suit modern needs.

According to old timers, the house ranks with the old MAHLAND house on Randall Avenue, the old JOHNSON house on Mill Road and the home of Dr. Horace EVANS on S. Main Street as the oldest houses in Freeport, houses whose walls echoed to the name of George Washington and people of his day.



Miss Nancy RAYNOR, and it is believed she remained a spinster to the end, built a little two-room school on S. Main Street, opposite the present HENNEHLOTTER's grocery store and called it "Nancy Raynor's School." She was the only teacher, it is claimed, and had about 16 or 18 pupils. Some of them are living today, among them being Mrs. Amy Raynor PADGETT, Joseph RAYNOR, Mrs. Annie Golder SOPER and Edwin T. GOLDER.

There was a turnstile at the front gate, although no nickels were required to get through. Once in the schoolhouse, hats and coats were hung on a long wooden strip fitted with wooden pegs.

In the larger of the two rooms was a fireplace and the boys were kept busy in Winter cutting wood. A stairway led to the attic and underneath it was a dark closet.

Any one misbehaving was promptly shut in there until he or she decided to be good and it worked like a charm.

The lathes were handmade, also the nails, and in the cellar the beams was and still are trunks of trees.

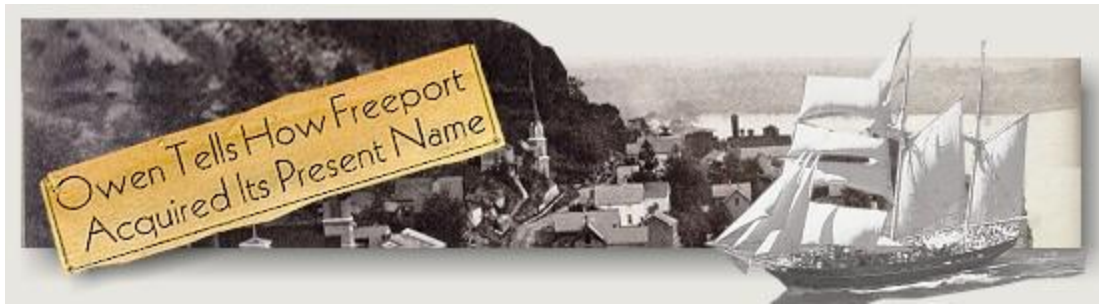
The three R's were dispensed there until the first log school was built at what is now cannon square and Raynortown had a school of its own.

When Thomas CARMAN bought the house he had it moved to its present location and since that time new walls, floors, etc., have been installed, but the old stairway that led to the attic now leads to the cellar.

Among the house souvenirs is a piece of the wooden clothes rack that saw much service in Miss Nancy's school. Old timers agree that the modern streamlined schools and the modern way of teaching are fine, "but we had a good time, too in the old days," they say.

*Freeport, Sept. 26, (1940s ?)
Brooklyn Eagle Newspaper
Freeport, L.I.*

[Newspaper Clipping provided by Gerald V. S. Raynor, Huntington, L.I.]



Owen Tells How Freeport Acquired Its Present Name



Editor, Nassau Daily Review-Star:

This little remembrance of mine does not, as you will see, conflict with the very interesting story by Mr. William E. GOLDER, as to the history of Freeport. His story I enjoy as it brings back old memories of people that were my ancestors on my Mother's side and their friends and neighbors.

There are a great many newcomers in Freeport, which in the old days was Raynorville. To get to the point of how the name was changed, I will have to be a little lengthy. My great grandmother's name was GOLDEN nee VAN HOUGHTON. The family came from Staten Island, bought a farm at Rum Point, now called Roosevelt after the death of my great grandfather. She sold her farm and married Joseph RAYNOR of Raynorville, farmer-oysterman-bayman.

The house was on Main street very near what is called Atlantic avenue today. She had several sons by GOLDEN. These sons also lived on Main street. There were two girls, Francis and Caroline. Francis was my Grandmother. She married Seaman RAYNOR, who was from the north shore, I believe Greenport. Caroline, the other daughter, married a SEAMAN, who was the father of Nelson SEAMAN. In other words, Caroline was the grandmother of Dr. Ben SEAMAN.

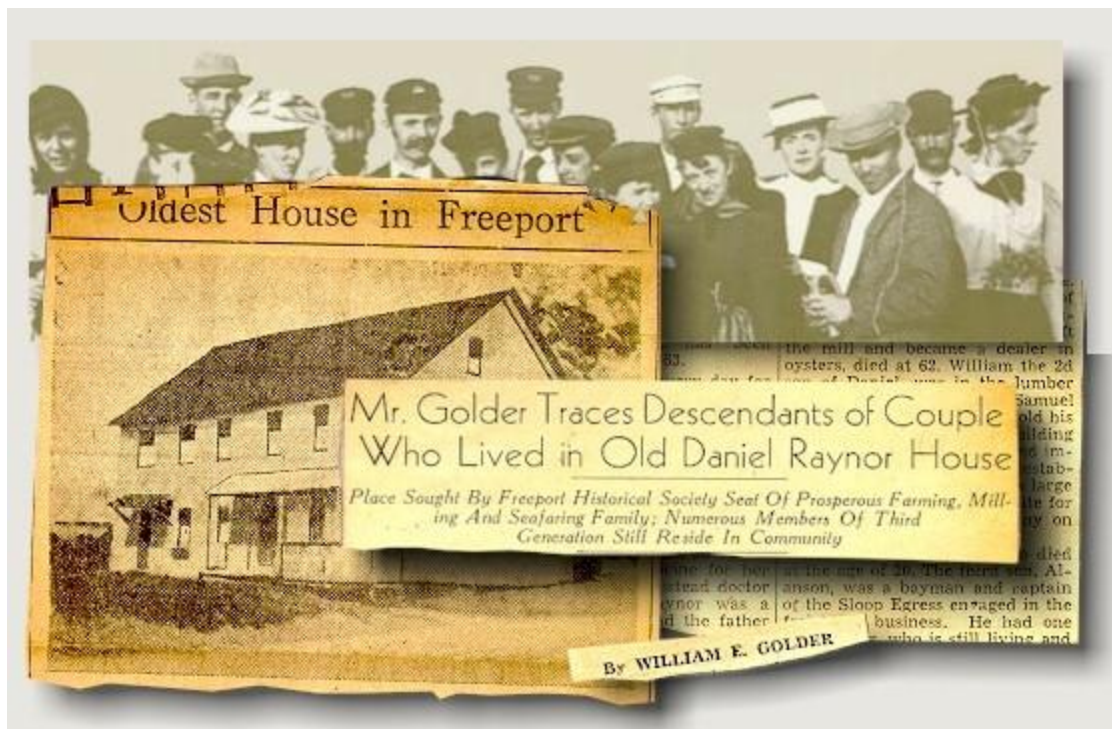
In the old days along Main street, South, there were some farmers and storekeepers, and no matter what their main business was they were interested in net fishing, had their own oyster beds, and a good 30-foot Sloop (boat). At this time there were no railroads on the south shore. If you had anything to sell or you wanted to buy, it had to be carted by horse and truck or by boat. It took a farmer all night to take his products to Brooklyn with a heavy load and most of the next day to get back.

Those that were interested in the oyster business transported their cargo to Fulton Market by their own boats, and if possible brought back lumber and coal. Business began to pick up as the oysters and clams were found to be so good, and the orders were increased. This meant more boats and more money as there was not much money around Raynorville in those days the next best thing was for the customers to come after the cargoes. There was no place to dock (no public dock). It is that way to this day. Those who owned the docks and waterfront charged wharfage. This hurt business. Seaman RAYNOR first got Joe RAYNOR to allow the boats to unload at his docks, as this was found to work out successfully, those that were in the oyster and clam business had a meeting and decided to make it a FREEPORT, and it was a free port as long as the business lasted. Then the railroad came along. This was the finish, particularly for perishable goods, but if we only had a decent channel through Jones Inlet and up to a point where vessels could be discharged, in my opinion, there would be a new Freeport.



I hope Mr. Golder, you will not forget to mention the old and only Ben Smith Hotel, Merrick road and Main street. There were many a shin and stomach warmed by the old pot belly stove more than any place in Freeport. As a tall story club, well Lowell Thomas should have been there.

A. E. Owen
Lynbrook, L.I.
(date unknown, early 1940's ?)



The proposed home of the Freeport Historical Society on South Main street, has been known to me since 1863.

I passed it nearly every day for more than 15 years. The building is the same now as then, except there was an extension on the south side which was formerly used as a tavern. Some years later this extension was removed from the building.

I remember Daniel RAYNOR and wife, the owners of the property. Mrs. RAYNOR lived to an advanced age. I prepared medicine for her prescribed by a Hempstead doctor in 1876. Daniel RAYNOR was a prosperous farmer and the father of a noted family, 6 sons and 2 daughters, namely: Edward, Alanson, William, Mott, Francis, John, Amanda and Ellen V.

I knew all, except one who died before I was born. The oldest, Edward RAYNOR, owner of the grist and saw mills which were located at the head of Freeport creek, directly opposite across the street from his father's home, also a large farm extending from Mill road to more than 500 feet north of Merrick road and on each side of road from Liberty avenue on the east to Strassel garage on the west. He had 3 sons and a daughter, namely: Bedell, Quincey, John and Ellen. Bedell operated the grist mill and married a cousin of mine. They lived on the second floor of the tavern extension. I often visited them when a boy. Bedell left the mill and became a dealer in oysters, died at 62.

William the 2d son of Daniel RAYNOR, was in the lumber business, associated with Samuel S. CARMAN for some years. Sold his interest became active in building enterprises, erecting stores and improving real estate, also established a shoe store and had a large patronage, also donated the site for the hook and ladder company on

Church street. He had one daughter, who died at the age of 20.

The third son, Alanson RAYNOR, was a bayman and captain of the Sloop Egress engaged in the freighting business. He had one son, Walter, who is still living and engaged in the boating business.

Mott RAYNOR, the fourth son, was a bayman and oyster planter. He slipped on the ice and fractured a leg from which he never recovered. He had a son and daughter named Daniel B. and Mary. The son was named after his grandfather. He worked in his uncle William's shoe store and succeeded him in the business which he conducted many years. He was a building promoter and a director in Freeport bank. He died suddenly about nine years ago. The daughter married Frank P. Smith a grocerman and expressman. She died about 20 years ago.

Francis RAYNOR, the fifth son of Daniel followed the business of carting and sailing yachting parties. His wife was my first school teacher, prior to her marriage. After he husband's death, Mrs. RAYNOR's dress caught fire from the stove and she was badly burned, dying from the effects. They had one son named Bergen, who became a traveling salesman for a New York wholesale shoe house. He died about 12 years ago.

Ellen V. RAYNOR, a daughter of Daniel, when a young lady, had a sloop named after her. The vessel was engaged in general freight business (the first and only time I was seasick was aboard that boat when a boy). Ellen V. married Carman SMITH of Milburn, they are deceased. They had one son, Charlie D. SMITH, a friend of mine, who is well known in Freeport, his native village. For many years he was actively engaged in the shoe and harness business. He is now residing on West Merrick road and will recall some of the items mentioned, for Daniel RAYNOR was his grandfather.

Amanda RAYNOR remained unmarried living at the old home and had the care of her mother until she passed on. After a few years she left the old homestead for a new residence which she had erected on West Merrick road. There she lived in retirement until her decease.

This is a brief description of the descendants of Daniel RAYNOR up to the third generation.

Aubrey SOPER, the owner of the place, is my nephew, the only son of my sister, Mrs. Annie J. SOPER, who is now living on Raynor Street, adjoining the property of the old homestead that soon will be the home of the Freeport Historical Society.

By William E. GOLDER

Freeport Review Star

(date unknown but probably in early 1940s)

Newspaper article provided by Gerald V. S. Raynor, Huntington, L.I., NY

