

Port Jefferson (Images of America)

Robert Maggio, Earlene O'Hare



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The history of Port Jefferson, a village on Long Island's North Shore, is rich with the lore of ships and the sea. Once called Drowned Meadow because of flooding at high tide, the town was renamed Port Jefferson in 1836. Those same harbor waters, which overran their banks, would become the natural resource that made Port Jefferson's first industry--shipbuilding--possible. By the mid-19th century, the village had become one of the principal shipbuilding centers on Long Island and a major port of entry. The names of many prominent shipbuilding families are preserved in the village's streets and institutions, including Mather, Jones, Bayles, and Hawkins. When the shipbuilding industry declined in the late 1800s, Port Jefferson used its seaside location to reinvent itself as a recreation destination, attracting notables such as Franklin Roosevelt. The community's heritage is evidenced today in the numerous well-kept historic homes and buildings that stand along the hilly, tree-lined streets overlooking the harbor.



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