GREAT NECK HISTORICAL·SOCIETY· SETTLED 1643

HERITAGE RECOGNITION PROGRAM
To Identify and Honor
Great Neck's Most Notable Homes

RECOGNIZED BY
GREAT NECK HOUSE
OPENED AS THE FIRST
GREAT NECK LIBRARY IN JULY 1907
ACQUIRED IN SEPTEMBER 1973 BY THE
GREAT NECK PARK DISTRICT
GREAT NECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
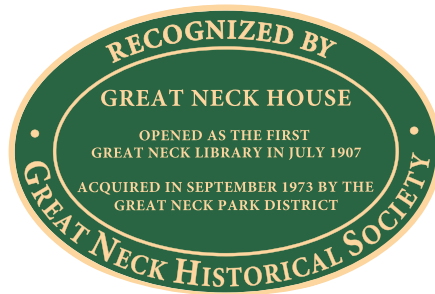
GREAT NECK HOUSE, GREAT NECK, NY

*G*reat Neck's first library was established in 1880, when Mrs. William Onderdonk, Louise Udall Skidmore [later Eldridge] and friends created a board, began fundraising, sold memberships at $10 per family, and loaned books from temporary space—first from the telegraph office, then from the home of the librarian, Mrs. Daniel Gordon. Twelve years later, in 1892, the space proved inadequate, and the library was relocated to the men's social clubbuilding, on Middle Neck Road. Fifteen years later, in 1907, the collection outgrew its space once again. Library membership had increased to 252 families and the collection to 2,500 books. Great Neck needed a true library.

Thanks to a generous donation by Louise Udall Eldridge and her husband Roswell, a handsome, half-timbered Tudor-style building was erected on Arrandale Avenue, next to the Arrandale School. The building cost $15,000. Not long afterwards, the Eldridges added several wings to the original building.

Anyone who paid taxes in the school district could use the library. Nonresidents could borrow books by paying an annual fee. Despite the addition of three branches—Station (1923), Lakeville (1934) and Parkville (1954)—in 1970 the community once again needed more library space. The building on Arrandale Avenue was sold to the Park District, who took over the space in 1973. Other groups vying for the property included Temple Isaiah, the Police Boy's Club, and the Community Theatre of Great Neck.

No. 9–Great Neck Library, Great Neck, N. Y.

Roswell Eldridge's philanthropy extended to recreation in Great Neck. He filed petitions to establish the Great Neck Park District, which were granted by North Hempstead in 1916. As its first transaction, the Park District purchased property at the foot of Steamboat Road that included the public bathing beach on Long Island Sound. In the 1920s, the District added several parks: Memorial Field, the Village Green, and Allenwood Park. Kings Point Park was leased from the Village of Kings Point in 1938, and in 1941, Cutter Mill, Grace Avenue and Wyngate Parks were added to the Park District portfolio. Soon after, the Park District purchsed the property of Walter P. Chrysler and built Steppingstone Park and Marina.

Recreation opportunities expanded substantially with the opening of the Parkwood Sports Complex in 1964, with its Olympic-size outdoor swimming pool and an ice-skating rink. The acquisition of Great Neck House in 1973 provided a large amount of indoor space for classes, meetings, card and mah jongg players, movies and other culltural events, as well as administrative offices. Indoor tennis courts were added in 1992. The Park District's most recent additions have been the Peninsula Club in Thomaston, site of the popular Dog Run, and a waterfront parcel that expanded Steppingstone Park, providing a superb vista of the Long Island Sound shoreline.