



**WILLIE K. VANDERBILT AND  
THE L.I.M.P.**

**BY JEFF KINZLER**

William K. Vanderbilt II (1878-1944) was the grandson of railroad tycoon "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt. Born in New York to one of the country's wealthiest families, (and possibly great-uncle to CNN newscaster Anderson Cooper) he was an early automobile enthusiast. He purchased his first car in 1899, a De Dion Bouton motor tricycle, which he drove on Long Island en route to his parents' summer estate, "Idle Hour" in Oakdale. In 1904, Willie K. Vanderbilt set a new Land Speed Record of 92.30 mph in a Mercedes at Daytona Beach. That same year, he launched the *Vanderbilt Cup Automobile Race*, to encourage U.S. auto manufacturers to compete against the best European cars and racing drivers.



Held in Nassau County on Long Island, New York, the race drew large crowds hoping to see an American car defeat the Europeans. However, it was not until 1908 that the Vanderbilt Cup was won by an American Driver.

While working at his family's New York Central Railroad offices at Grand Central Station in Manhattan, Vanderbilt founded a



Vanderbilt Cup Race Scene

corporation to build the Long Island Motor Parkway, the first paved, limited access high speed automobile route in the United States. Originally planned to run from Queens out to Riverhead, the route was shortened and terminated at Lake Ronkonkoma. A ten mile stretch of the highway opened in 1908, making it the first superhighway for automobiles. The L.I.M.P. had access points with toll houses where autos could enter and exit along the route. Some toll houses, such as Garden City's survive intact today.



Toll Station at Roslyn Lodge

Roslyn L.I.M.P. Toll House

These were the original access points:



- Nassau Boulevard** (now Long Island Expressway) west of Francis Lewis Boulevard
- Hillside Avenue** - Springfield Boulevard south of 77th Avenue
- Great Neck** - Lakeville Road south of Lake Road
- Roslyn** - Roslyn Road south of Barnyard Lane
- Mineola** - Jericho Pike at Rudolph Drive
- Garden City** - Clinton Road at Vanderbilt Court
- Meadow Brook** - Merrick Avenue north of Stewart Avenue

**Massapequa**- Hicksville Road (New York State Route 107) south of Avoca Avenue, **Bethpage** - Round Swamp Road south of Old Bethpage Road, **Huntington** - Broad Hollow Road north of Spagnoli Road **Deer Park** - Deer Park Road (New York State Route 231), **East Commack** - Commack Spur along Harned Road to Jericho Turnpike (New York State Route 25), **Brentwood** - Washington Avenue, **Ronkonkoma** - Rosevale Avenue

The Long Island Motor Parkway used concrete bridges to traverse intersecting roads. Many of these bridges and sections of the original roadway are visible in portions of Queens and Nassau county, and have been documented by local historians on the internet. The opening of the Grand Central Parkway in 1938 by Robert Moses, spelled the end of the Long Island Motor Parkway, which, due to rapid advances in highway engineering, had become obsolete.



73rd Ave. crossing in Queens

A google search for "Vanderbilt Motor Parkway" or "Long Island Motor Parkway" will direct you to several collections of photographs, articles and maps showing the history and current condition of the remaining portions of the L.I.M.P. Some preservation groups are trying to encourage its development into a bicycle and jogging path. The remaining section of the Long Island Motor Parkway still in use is maintained by Suffolk County, beginning at Half Hollow Road in Dix Hills and ending at Lake Ronkonkoma.

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