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LONG ISLAND OPINION; The Day Curbs Came to St. James

By Ken Taub; Ken Taub lives in St. James.

ON occasion there are signs and wonders. On certain select days there will be a burst of revelation or an atypical light above. Most of the time, of course, we just settle for simple progress, and count our health and 10 fingers as the blessings themselves. This year curbs have come to St. James. Some civic group chose Oct. 1 as St. James Day to celebrate 135 years of history and the swell of progress from one general store to four delis.

I love St. James (heck, I live here) and, don't get me wrong, I love the 131-year-old general store and the 116-year-old railroad station and the 75-year-old gas station, but what I have come to like best is our new curbs.

The crickets outside are an average of 112 years old, and the oak trees (those left standing after Hurricane Gloria) are older, and there are 400-year-old Indian shards under my home's foundation. For America, this town is a virtual totem, and the blood in my veins feels a kinship to the local soil, despite the fact that my own heritage is Austrian, Russian, Polish and Californian.

St. James is not a sleepy town, it is just a relatively quiet one, and people are for the most part decent and clean of spirit here in this patch of the North Shore of the ancient glacier. One mentions glaciers and ice ages, lunges ahead to the future, wonders if they'll even be a U.S. of A. in another 100 years, and then focuses back in on St. James and says, well, things may not be so bad after all.

Outstandingly enough, what was once this big, old Connecticut-based glacier is now the home for over two million immigrant children living in the two most affluent counties in the country. That here, on the rich soil of Long Island, some small hamlet less than 50 miles from New York City is just getting curbs is, to me, a virtual miracle. No, it's not interesting, newsworthy, chic or even charming, it's a good, small, tangible miracle.

Curbs are coming to Saint James, and although it is somewhat less than a footnote in history, it is also more than just a new footpath in the suburbs.

We are at once old and young, horse and Porsche, and the old glacier will surely never be the same. Let San Francisco have its cable cars. We now have our curbs.