

## The Yaphank Garage

By Karen Mouzakes

The old Yaphank Garage stands on the corner of Main Street and Yaphank Avenue. It was built by Yaphank's Leslie R. Marchant for station owners Sheridan and Ehrenworth. The design was typical of the 1930's. It was made of cement blocks that were painted white. The trim was red. It first opened in 1937 as a Shell Gas Station/Garage and Machine Shop. The station hummed with activity as cars pulled in and out, filling up on gas that sold for fifteen cents a gallon. Customers received full service that included an oil check and a friendly chat not available at today's busy self-serves. Old timers remember the garage's old wooden swing-in doors, the big thermometer that hung outside and a freestanding Shell sandwich sign. Out back, beside the burn barrel, stood a gray wooden box for old oilcans. When locals reminisce, it is the small garage office that is remembered most fondly. It had a brown swivel chair that stood opposite the window. Below the window was a long shelf stuffed with auto repair manuals. A big old safe stood in the corner and an ornate cash register rang each sale. A schoolhouse clock ticked away the hours next to the cheesecake calendar so familiar to the service stations of yesterday. The brown and gray kerosene heater warmed the room and invited one to stay awhile and perhaps share a story or two. A frequent visitor to the Yaphank Garage was the local Police Constable. In those days the constable worked out of his car as there was no formal Police Headquarters. It was at the garage that the Constable stopped in to use the phone, bathroom, and sometimes he was even allowed to use a drawer in the old rolled-top desktop to store his reports and the tools of his trade.

Years passed and the Suffolk County Police replaced local Brookhaven Town Constables. The old Yaphank Garage was condemned for a road widening project that never came to pass. But that's not the end to this story. The Suffolk County Police Historical Society has restored the Yaphank Garage. Mannequins and display boards tell the story of how a small community service station and its local constable worked together to serve their citizens in the 1930's and 40's.



Yaphank Garage, 'back in the day'...



Period police car at the Yaphank Garage in 2004