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125 years ago was a time when violence intercepted peace, injustice was rampant, and struggles for power plagued the world. At this time, the systemic genocide against Armenians was just three years prior, and China was ending its blood bath of the Boxer Rebellion. America's Gilded Age was in motion, a time coined by Mark Twain that describes how America at the surface level was prosperous, but deeper problems secretly brewed. Amidst the countless flaws of the world clouding the goodness of humanity, Nassau County, since the dawn of its founding, has served to be the beacon of liberty and empowerment of this world. This light in the darkness of a flawed world set the framework for 125 years' worth of growth and success that contributes to the unique experience of Nassau County.

While Nassau County was founded in 1899, our history as a community dates back even further. In the 1600s, when North America was rapidly being settled, the Dutch famously came to an area that would soon be New York. Nassau's name derives from the reigning house of the Dutch, Orange-Nassau. Unlike many other settlers at this time, the Dutch promoted religious tolerance and diversity, values that our County continues to live by. From the various languages spoken each day within the boundaries of our County to the efforts made by our community to uplift traditionally marginalized groups, Nassau County has been unique for its tolerance since even before our official founding.

Between the time our land belonged to the Dutch and 1899, the development of our tight-knit community took place. Small villages were set up along the Island that upheld our famous community values. Nassau was a brilliant output for agricultural products. However, when times of inevitable failure hit our farmers, communities pulled together to hold each other afloat. The beauty of our community is that no matter the occasion, struggle, or fight, we stand together. It is in our roots to stick by one another, guided by the simple truth that we are Nassau County residents. From our times of depending on agriculture and uniting on its challenges during harvest season to our most recent tragedy of losing Officer Jonathan Diller on the line, Nassau County stands together in times of adversity. A loss to one is a loss to all of us. This

mentality has served to be why this County has seen so much success because challenges are much easier with the support of many than just yourself.

Nassau County was officially founded by the turn of the century in 1899. We retained our farming communities, but by this era, Nassau County was home to the most famous faces of change in the world. Teddy Roosevelt, among the greatest reformers of our country and corrector of early-twenty-first America's ills, spent his summers in Sagamore Hill. In addition to a former president living here, an integral component of the American identity also lived here and based his work using the Island as inspiration: F. Scott Fitzgerald. His masterpieces have come to define the uniqueness of American literature, interestingly coming from his house in Great Neck. Nassau County's desirability highlights its prosperity and uniqueness compared to any other place. This applies to the entirety of Nassau County's existence though, not just our County a century ago. Living among us now are the fronts of change: ranging from artists to scientists to activists, Nassau County is indeed a vibrant place to live.

It would only be another half-century before we saw what our modern County looked like. With the help of the post-war economic boom, Nassau County served as a picture example of the American dream, something desired by citizens elsewhere in the country, and people around the globe watching from afar. Nassau was transformed into a Suburbia. It famously became a place where hard-working Americans can experience the most incredible privilege of owning a house, growing a family, and fitting into a community. From fighting in the bloodiest battles in the darkest years of humanity to finding refuge in the haven of Nassau County, among the famous settlers of this Suburbia, WWII veterans' lives took a drastic turn for the better.

Following this massive development of our County, many more extraordinary, Nassau County-defining institutions dominated our community. There is no other place in the world that holds as robust of an educational landscape as Nassau. Centers of scholarship, like Hofstra University, have come to produce some of our country's most outstanding changemakers; these same institutions have been at the forefront of modern national politics, like hosting presidential debates. Our County hosts museums that are essential to society's growth that not many other communities can say they have as well. The Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center, for example, is my personal favorite. Despite the Holocaust happening halfway around the globe eight decades ago, Nassau continues to memorialize the victims – our virtuous nature is what distinguishes us from others. We live by learning and not repeating the mistakes of the past.

Nassau's precedent has been set for 125 years and is the role model of a community. Our strengths, like promoting culture and learning, are among the most prized traits that make Nassau County a great place to work, play, and, most importantly, live. While obviously, Nassau County has beautiful homes and breathtaking scenery from beaches to parks, it is our community that makes it home. It is the feeling that everything will be okay since we are surrounded by a County-wide family that looks out for one another. And it is the clarity we feel when seeing all the achievements we have accomplished as a people.

As we celebrate 125 years of resilience, growth, and prosperity, we are reminded of Nassau County's greatness. For my generation, let us continue to build a future that honors our past while also embracing the countless, exciting possibilities that lie ahead for Nassau County.