Suffolk Woman Urges Lehman Join in Attack on 'Private' Roads

Cold Spring Harbor—A little old lady's battle with the well-heeled estate owners of Lloyd Harbor over some ancient roads landed on the desk of Sen. Herbert Lehman yesterday but he couldn't help her.

Ann McGrath, antique store owner and defender of poor men's causes in Cold Spring Harbor for many years, has carried her case against the bankers and brokers from the Huntington Town Board all the way to Washington but last night admitted she hadn't had much luck in getting the old roads opened for public traffic. Lehman pleaded lack of jurisdiction.

Her contention is that the landed gentry on Cold Spring Harbor's east shore have appropriated and placed "private" signs on three thoroughfares that were the property of the people long before the American Revolution. And, she says, they get away with it "because the town officials are afraid of them."

Road to Bench

The roads are Snake Hill Road, a winding two-laner which goes through the Walter Jennings estate, now the Industrial Home for the Blind, Shore Road north of Snake Hill Road and White Hill Road. Snake Hill Road is marked with a definite "private" sign but Shore Road, leading to an old little used town beach, says "No Thoroughfare" over the signatures of Ward Johnson and Chester Burden, two of the owners on the street. It narrows to little more than a lane of gravel but the embattled Miss McGrath believes it's the town's property and she wants it open for use.

All three roads may have existed since George V was running things in Cold Spring Harbor, but the courts once held that one of them, Snake Hill Road, had been abandoned by the Huntington Highway Department. That was in the 30's and caused the town to turn out at mass protest meetings. The town board even sued its own highway superintendent, Ira Lewis, to force him to take it over. Lewis won. The judges ruled the road had been legally abandoned.

All this means nothing to Miss McGrath who says the Shore Road case "just happened recently."

"We can't let them go in and take over like this. They're depriving us of a beach and we certainly need one." She said she wrote to Senator Lehman because, as a former New York Governor, she thought he would be able to send her to a man who would get her some action.

To Dulles Next

"If Lehman can't do anything I'm going to take it up with Allen Dulles. Let him take care of us here in Cold Spring Harbor." Dulles, head of the Central Intelligence Agency, owns a Lloyd Harbor home. His more famous brother, John Foster, the secretary of state, recently sold his big estate overlooking Cold Spring Harbor.

Even though the roads are within the Incorporated Village of Lloyd Harbor, Miss McGrath says the town owns them. Supervisor Walter Fasbender said last night that he "doesn't see how that could be possible." He has already ordered Town Attorney George Blaesi to look into the case and Blaesi said his cursory examination didn't "look good for the town."

"I don't care. This is going to be a stiff fight. The Lloyd Harbor men, the decent ones that is, are going to have to stand up and be counted," said Miss McGrath.

And to bolster her case, Huntington's official zoning map and town card files on official roads list Snake Hill Road, White Hill Road and Shore Road as public thoroughfares.