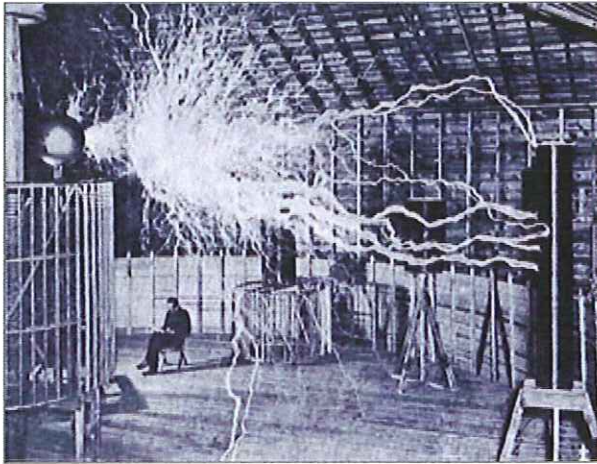


Tussle over Tesla's Shoreham land

by David Winzelberg

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Widely credited with inventing radio, Nikola Tesla also pioneered the technology to create AC power, television, robotics and radar.

Now the 16-acre Shoreham property where Tesla made many of his discoveries is up for sale, and a campaign to save it has gained support among elected officials.

Suffolk County is currently considering purchasing the property owned by Belgian photo giant AGFA Gevaert, which is currently on the market for \$1.65 million. AGFA has also offered to demolish existing buildings and clear the site at no extra charge to the buyer.

Suffolk has sent a letter to AGFA asking if the film company has any interest in selling to the county, said Chief Deputy Suffolk County Executive Christopher Kent.

Tesla enthusiasts have written letters to lawmakers urging them to preserve the Shoreham parcel on the corner of Randall Road and Route 25A and create a science museum and park on the property.

Rep. Tim Bishop, D-Southampton, and state Assemblyman Marc Alessi, D-Wading River, have asked AGFA to donate the property as an historic center and memorial.

But John O'Hara of Hauppauge-based Corporate Realty Services, who is brokering the land for AGFA, said it won't be donated. O'Hara said AGFA has spent millions cleaning up film processing fluids left by former owner Peerless Photo Products, which AGFA bought in 1979, and it doesn't need the tax write-off.

After AGFA ceased operations in 1994, the Environmental Protection Agency declared the property a Superfund site, which O'Hara said has since been cleaned up. An underground cadmium plume from Tesla's demolished radio tower was encased in concrete as part of the remediation. Even after the property changes hands, AGFA remains responsible for monitoring any migration of cadmium from the site.

While no offers have yet come from Brookhaven or Suffolk, O'Hara said an unnamed developer has offered to buy the Tesla property and donate seven acres for a science center if he can build 48 condominiums on the other nine acres. The Town of Brookhaven changed the former photo finishing facility from industrial to residential two-acre zoning in 2003.

O'Hara said the proposed housing would serve the scientific community at nearby Brookhaven National Laboratory, but he said the plan got a frosty reception when it was presented to the Shoreham Civic Association.

Civic association president Kevin Ward said the seven acres offered by the developer wasn't enough.

"We want it preserved in total as a Tesla memorial," Ward said.

Before Tesla built his laboratory on the property in 1901, it was a resort community owned by

banker John Warden called Wardencllyffe-on-Sound. Deep in debt, Tesla lost the land in 1915. Peerless leased the site in 1939 and gained ownership several years later.

Find out more about Tesla at www.teslasociety.com.

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