

LPC OUTREACH CONTINUES FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) will continue an outreach campaign this fall to property owners in the proposed Douglaston Historic District Extension, in preparation for the Commission's vote later this year, according to an LPC spokesperson.



A ca. 1915 gambrel roofed Colonial Revival style house at 39-15 Douglaston Parkway is one of 20 buildings proposed for the Douglaston Historic District Extension. (Photo by Paul Graziano, Associated Cultural Resources)

To better inform residents, LPC is sending a mailer to each homeowner in the proposed Extension that explains what designation will mean, including rules and regulations.

The proposed Extension includes 17 private houses, P.S. 98, the Community Church of Douglaston and the Manor Apartments, and is bounded by Willow Drive on the south, Cherry Street on the north, and Douglaston Parkway on the west. It contains a range of buildings including a farmhouse dating from 1854 on Douglaston Parkway, several "high style" suburban houses from the early 20th century on Willow Drive and Cherry Street, and the Tudor-style Manor Apart-

ments, a cooperative apartment building built in 1931.

In June, LPC held a public hearing at the Commission's headquarters at 1 Centre Street in Manhattan. More than 80 supporters of the Extension attended, including many residents of the existing Douglaston Historic District which was designated in 1997, and the Douglaston Hill Historic District which was designated in 2004.

City Councilman Tony Avella (D) testified in favor of the proposed Extension, and stated that opponents of designation had "muddied the waters" by waging a campaign of intimidation and misinformation that has scared some residents – several of whom are elderly – into opposing the proposal. State Senator Frank Padavan (R) is also a vocal supporter of the proposed Extension, and has met with residents voicing his strong support.

A spokesperson for LPC said that the Commission is still receiving phone calls from residents of the proposed Extension who are confused or misinformed, having been told by opponents that they cannot add on to, alter or even repair their homes if they are designated, none of which is true.

The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS) first proposed that the 20 buildings should be designated as part of the Douglaston Historic District in 1989, but the area was left out when the Douglaston Historic District was designated in 1997. The Commission identified the proposed Extension during a survey of historic neighborhoods in Queens in 2006. Last year DLNHS formally requested the Commission consider the area for an Extension.



The wheelwright shop of Alfred P. Wright at 251-10 Northern Boulevard, shown here ca. 1920, will be one of several sites visited as part of the House Tour and Reception on October 18th. (Photo courtesy of Jenny Wright Cooper)

CELEBRATE LITTLE NECK HISTORY!

HOUSE TOUR

AND RECEPTION

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18TH

The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS) is sponsoring the first Little Neck House Tour and Reception on Saturday, October 18th, from 1 to 5 pm, during a special event called *Celebrate Little Neck History!*

The House Tour will feature several unique properties, including a complex of historic buildings, one of which is a former carriage shop from the mid-19th century and another a farmhouse which dates to the 1820s; two unique historic homes in the Westmoreland section which feature unusual antiques and artisan crafted items; and an original "Bossert" house in Little Neck Pines renovated by a master carpenter. On tour and also the site of the reception will be the Hart residence on Iowa Road, a charming Arts & Crafts style house that is beautifully decorated inside and includes a recently built swimming pool with surrounding terrace and a lush garden.

The reception will feature hors d'oeuvres and refreshments and will be catered by the well-known firm of Fran Zaslow Caterers of Carle Place. Tickets are limited to the first 110, and are \$60 for DLNHS members and \$65 for non-members (*see end of article for additional ticket information and order form*).

Little Neck has long been one of the most desirable residential neighborhoods in New York City. But its roots go back much farther than the suburban communities we know today. The area played an important part in New York City history, dating back to Colonial times, and before that, to the Matinecoc Indians who called the Little Neck peninsula home.

While most of the homes and commercial buildings erected in the 19th cen-

(continued on page 3)

The Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

Some say that anticipation is greater than realization. Not in the case of the Douglaston Historic District Extension public hearing at the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 24th, 2008, with almost unbounded support in favor. We were overwhelmed by the many people who presented eloquent testimony and in particular by City Councilman Tony Avella's positive statements in favor. We await the Commission's vote – we expect it will be a "yes" sometime this fall – after which the Extension goes to the City Council and City Planning Commission hearings.

This has been such an important effort for our community: the proposed Extension will provide a connecting corridor of designated buildings between the Douglaston Historic District and the Douglaston Hill Historic District; this unique area was part of the original dream for a Douglaston Historic District in the late 1980s, and now we're almost there.

On to other challenges. We are pleased with new memberships in the Society coming in as a result of our ever more widely distributed twice yearly newsletters. We now mail to the membership of the Douglaston Civic Association and the Westmoreland Association in Little Neck, as well as Douglas Manor, the Hill, and to other friends of the Society. If you know someone who would like to receive our newsletters and invitations to events, send them the membership coupon in this publication, or contact us through our website at www.dlrhs.org.

New building and renovation projects in our two Districts continue apace. The Architecture Committee of DLNHS has met with property owners from both districts to review plans and provide any help we can to promote a successful presentation at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The Committee includes four practicing architects, legal counsel and an administrative chairman.

A moment of silence for the weeping beech tree at 604 Shore Road that died this summer. This magnificent tree, planted when the house was built in 1919, joins the fern leaf European beech at 26-15 Shore Road which also died earlier this year. Both succumbed to damage sustained from construction and excavation in and around their sensitive roots.

Much has been written about the fragility and vulnerability of our trees, and the care that needs to be taken to protect them during construction and other work. Just look at this drawing: it comes from a plant care group of professional arborists and vividly demonstrates the extent of vulnerable roots, which typically extend beyond the drip line of the tree's branches.



Diagram of a typical root system

If you have a situation of tree/construction conflict, please let us know and we will try to help with advice and references. The likes of the two beech trees lost this year will not be seen for another century, if they were to be replanted today. Our tree canopy is a precious asset, loved by all, and deserves our care.

And thanks to the Douglaston Club for new plantings on the front lawn. When the copper beech at the northern end was dying and subsequently removed, analysis of the trunk revealed that it had been planted not by William Douglas but by Wynant Van Zandt, an earlier owner and builder of the mansion at 600 West Drive (1819). The sugar maple at the southern end is presumed to be a Douglas tree. These two trees are replaced in kind and are flourishing.

Finally, we look forward to seeing you at our House Tour and Reception on October 18th, called Celebrate Little Neck History! Little Neck has undiscovered treasures, and here's a chance to see some of them.

Best regards from all of us,



DOUGLSTON PARKWAY GEM LEVELLED

This ca. 1900 shingled Arts & Crafts style house and carriage barn at the corner of Alameda Avenue and Douglaston Parkway in the Douglaston Park section was demolished this summer, to be replaced by two speculative houses. (The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society)

tury and earlier have been displaced by newer construction, there is a treasure trove of old Little Neck history in the complex of buildings on property owned by Jenny Wright Cooper. Mrs. Cooper is a lively nonagenarian who still lives on property her family has owned for more than a century, located at the southeast corner of 251st Street and Northern Boulevard. This site, the last open green space on Northern Boulevard and variously known as "Hippie Hill" or "The Grassy Knoll," will be a stop on our tour.

The oldest of four buildings on this property is a very rare survivor, a typical Long Island vernacular style farmhouse that was built between 1820 and 1830. The only change to this building is a porch addition from the 1860s. During the horse and buggy era, Alfred P. Wright, Mrs. Cooper's grandfather, operated Wright & Company, a carriage shop in the building currently occupied by Arash Real Estate Company, at 251-12 Northern Boulevard.

Those joining us on October 18th will not only be given a tour of the half-acre property, but will also be able to view an exhibition at the Arash Real Estate offices. The display will include old Little Neck postcards and Wright family photos, documents and other memorabilia made possible by the generosity of Mrs. Cooper.

Just as Alfred Wright was shifting his

carriage operation to service the automobile that was supplanting the horse and buggy, the Rickert-Finlay Realty Company purchased the farm of Benjamin and Mary Woolley to the north and east of his shop in 1907, and laid out streets and lots for the Westmoreland development. Today this development comprises 300 homes and a commercial strip along Northern Boulevard. Many of the houses were built between 1907 and 1930, and reflect the many eclectic architectural styles typical of the period.

Westmoreland, like other Rickert-Finlay developments, used protective covenants establishing lot size, setbacks, side lot lines and restrictions on the placement of fences. The Westmoreland Association has vigorously and successfully enforced these covenants for a century. You will enjoy seeing two houses in Westmoreland: the charming Colonial Revival style 1926 cottage of Walter and Kathrine Mueller at 250-39 41st Drive, and the Arts & Crafts style home of their neighbors, Tom and Cathy Moran at 41-44 Westmoreland Street, which was built ca. 1915.

Brian McMenemy will also open to us his newly renovated house at 42-04 247th Street in the Little Neck Pines neighborhood. Brian, who grew up nearby in a house still occupied by his parents, is a tal-

ented carpenter. He has done an impressive amount of work since buying this attached house two years ago. The house is one of the "Bossert" houses developed by lumber magnate Lewis Bossert in the late 1920s, when the area was promoted as Marathon Park.

Marketed to first-time house buyers, Bossert stressed low prices (a house started at \$5,260) and proximity not only to the Long Island Railroad but to the pleasures of the nearby Long Island Sound. No house was more than five blocks from the railroad, which had 66 trains per day and a monthly commuter rate of \$9.19.

A highlight of the tour will be a visit to and the reception at the home of John and Anna Hart, at 255-18 Iowa Road. While they have preserved the feeling of this historic house, including their interest in photos and memorabilia left behind by the original owners, the Hegerman family, the Harts have put the stamp of their own personalities on it. Visitors can gather around the pool and enjoy the refurbished garden that surrounds it, while enjoying refreshments including wine and hors d'oeuvres. Proceeds from this event will be used to do further research on Little Neck history.

– Kay MacDermott

For further information, contact us at: 718-225-4403, or through our web site: www.dlnhs.org.

TICKET ORDERS

Here is my check for
 ____ member tickets @ \$60 ____ non-member tickets @ \$65

Sorry, we cannot attend, but our donation in the amount of _____ is enclosed.

TOTAL: _____

Complete this coupon and a check made out to:

The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society, and mail it by **October 10th** to:

Lori Finck, Treasurer

372 Grosvenor Street, Douglaston, NY 11363

(Tickets can also be purchased at Arash Real Estate Co., 251-12 Northern Boulevard, starting on Monday, October 13th.)

name _____

address _____

phone _____

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

If you would like to join the Historical Society, please include the fee as part of your order.

____ Annual, \$25
 ____ Contributing, \$100
 ____ Lifetime, \$250
 ____ Benefactor, \$500

HISTORICAL SOCIETY COMMITTEES

The Society is presently re-invigorating committee formation and function. Perhaps you are interested in volunteering for one or more of the following:

____ Research & Archives
 ____ Events
 ____ Architectural Review
 ____ Communications
 ____ Community Relations/Education

If so, please check above.

Website: www.dlnhs.org

LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PLAN BEGINS AT DOUGLASTON CLUB

The Douglaston Club took the first step in implementing a landscape restoration plan this summer to replace historic trees – some more than 150 years old – which have been lost to age or disease. The project is a joint effort with the Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS).

Just before the Fourth of July weekend, two new trees arrived at the Club – a 15-foot-tall copper beech and a 15-foot-tall sugar maple – and were planted by Joe Pizzirusso and his crew from New Creations Landscape in Melville, Long Island. Mr. Pizzirusso provided the trees to the Club at cost, and donated his firm's time in planting the trees. He conducted a regional search for the two specimens which were hand picked for the site.

The copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) was planted at the north end of the Club's lawn, and replaced an enormous beech that was lost about eight years ago. The maple (*Acer saccharum*) replaced a once majestic sugar maple that anchored the south end of the lawn for 150 years but was in a severe and dangerous decline.

The maple had a diameter of almost six feet and was cut down this spring after several of its few remaining branches fell. Many trees are believed to have been planted by George Douglas, who bought

the 188-acre estate that is now Douglas Manor in 1835. Douglas was assisted by his friend, the famous Flushing nurseryman Samuel Parsons, in planting and experimenting with many exotic specimen trees, some of which were brought to the United States from Europe and Asia for the first time. The Club is located at 600 West Drive on a two-acre parcel at the center of the Douglaston Historic District.

Last year DLNHS contacted the Club about its historic trees, suggested a restoration plan and offered to assist in providing both historic photos as well as technical information for any new tree plantings. Mr. Pizzirusso, whose landscape contracting firm has built many gardens in Douglaston over the years, offered to find the new trees and donate his services as a thank you to Douglastonians.

Throughout the 20th century the Douglaston Club was famous for its ancient trees, some of which were listed among the largest on Long Island. Two other Douglas era trees still remain at the Club – a ginko and a linden in the courtyard overlooking the pool – but are also in severe decline. Significant trees in the Douglaston Historic District are identified in a DLNHS pamphlet which is available upon request by contacting us via our website at: www.dlnhs.org. – Kevin Wolfe



Workers install a new copper beech tree on the lawn of the Douglaston Club this past summer. (Photo by Alexandra Parsons Wolfe)

CITY DOB HALTS WORK AT HISTORIC HOUSE

A stop work order from the New York City Department of Buildings was issued in mid-September halting all work at 39-12 Douglaston Parkway, an historic house in the proposed Douglaston Historic District Extension.

The owner, David Huang, received permits from the Department of Buildings (DOB) earlier this year to build a 4,800 sf addition to the existing 1,500 sf house, despite pending landmarks designation.



A test pit for a septic system is filled with water recently at 39-12 Douglaston Parkway, where DOB issued a stop work order September 15th. (The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society)

In June Mr. Huang brought tons of landfill to the site after receiving permits from the DOB and raised the grade of the entire property five to seven feet to eliminate standing water in the hopes of passing a percolation test required for a new septic system. The property passed the first percolation test in July, but a required second test has not been performed. Large pools of standing water are visible at the site on top of the landfill in wet and dry weather. The excavated pit for the first septic test – a concrete ring filled with sand eight feet deep – is full of water after heavy rains.

At the time of publication, it was not clear why the DOB issued the stop work order. The house is a vernacular style white clapboard house dating to 1910 and is one of a series of small farmhouses that line the west side of Douglaston Parkway north of the Community Church of Douglaston. – Kevin Wolfe

CITY PARKS AND NASSAU COUNTY NEGOTIATE TO BUY CORNELL FARMHOUSE

Negotiations are continuing for the City of New York Department of Parks & Recreation and Nassau County to enter a joint agreement to purchase the Cornell farmhouse property at 54-47 Little Neck Parkway in Little Neck.

According to published reports this summer the Patrey family, which owns the site, took the property off the market earlier this year after the City expressed interest in buying it to use as an adjunct to the Queens Farm Museum which is further south on Little Neck Parkway.

The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS) has advocated for City landmarks designation of this site for several years, and formally requested designation last year.

The two-acre site, which includes the

1826 Cornell farmhouse and several other historic buildings, straddles the Queens and Nassau County border, with 1.3 acres in Queens and the balance in Nassau.

Queens Borough President Helen Marshall announced her intention to seek funding to purchase the property after Jim Trent, Executive Director of the Queens Farm Museum, requested funding during City budget hearings earlier this year. But the sale of the property is complicated by the fact that New York City cannot purchase public parkland outside of its borders. Ms. Marshall approached Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi to see if Nassau would be interested in purchasing and protecting the portion in Nassau, which includes some of the site's historic buildings.

In addition to the farmhouse, the property includes an 1880s barn, a late 19th century carriage house, a greenhouse built in 1904 and another single family house built in the early 20th century. There are also several trees that are more than 100 years old. The property was advertised for sale as a development site for \$5.8 million in September 2007.

The property is the only surviving remnant of a 1,000 acre land grant given to the Cornell family by the King of England in the 1600s. The property originally extended from today's Alley Pond Park to Lake Success in Nassau County, and from Little Neck north of Northern Boulevard to Jericho Turnpike. — *Kevin Wolfe*



Negotiations continue for City and Nassau County to buy Cornell farmhouse.

DJYS JUNIOR SAILING PROGRAM HAS BEST YEAR EVER

The re-invigorated Junior Sailing program of the Douglaston Junior Yacht Squadron finished its most successful season ever with an all-time high of 45 sailors, back from the brink just two years ago when the program was in danger of being abandoned.

Sailors from the program competed in 20 regattas this summer, with more than 45 other yacht clubs from Long Island, Westchester and Connecticut participating. On July 22nd the Douglaston Yacht Squadron hosted an Opti Regatta that included more than 60 boats.

In the spring of 2007 the Douglaston Junior Yacht Squadron had very little equipment, no instructors or parents to

oversee the program, and it seemed that the program would shut down. This year's success can be attributed to several factors, including community outreach that included fundraising events that enabled the program to purchase new equipment. The introduction of a two-week program, as well as the excellent reputation of the instructors, also attracted new sailors.

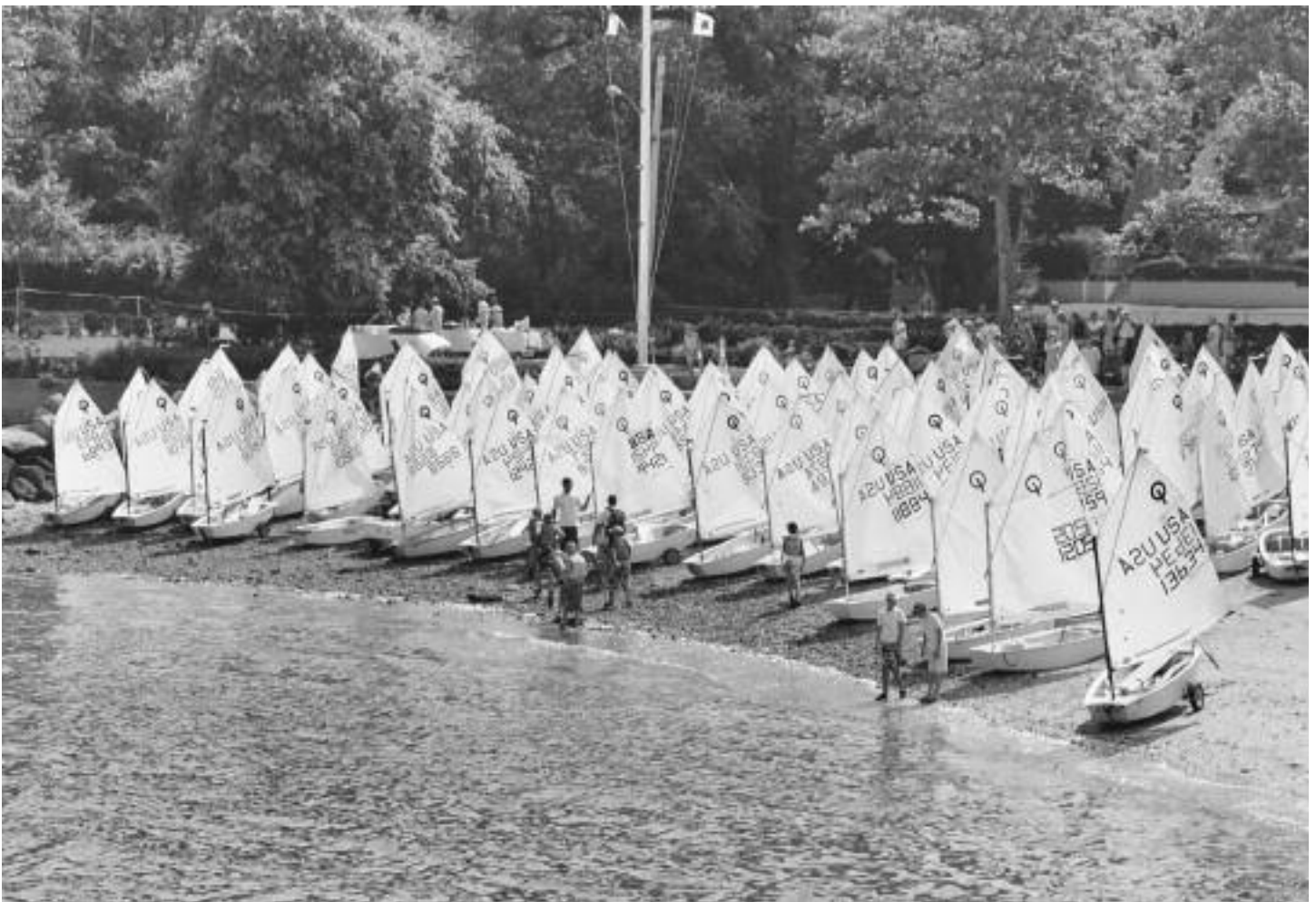
With the support of the Douglaston Club, many parents and sailing supporters stepped up to help the program, donating time and money to continue Douglaston's long heritage as a sailing center.

The program was started in the 1930s and is one of the oldest on Long Island,

serving youngsters from ages 7 to 17.

The 8-week program runs from June through August, and is the only junior sailing program in New York City. Boat classes include Optimist, Blue Jay, Laser and Pixel. The program is a member of the Junior Sailing Association of Long Island Sound.

Monday Night Racing takes place at the Douglaston Dock and the community is always welcome to come and watch the junior sailors compete as the sun sets. Racing starts the first Monday of July and ends in the middle of August, from 6 pm to dusk. —*John Weston*



Opti sailboats are lined up along the beach at the Douglaston Dock for the Junior Sailing program of the Douglaston Junior Yacht Squadron. (Photo by John Weston)

DO YOU DIBBLE?? DIBBLE FEST 4.0 CREATES A SPLASH DESPITE BEACH CLOSINGS

Water quality at Little Neck Bay yo-yo-ed this past summer causing inexplicable and distressing beach closings at the Douglaston Dock. Water devotees nonetheless plunged into the waters of Little Neck Bay through most of the summer and went swimming, taking advantage of one of the Douglaston peninsula's greatest assets.

But this year's Dibble Fest 4.0, which celebrates a diving game that originated in Douglaston, was battered by Tropical Storm Hanna on Saturday, September 5th, and had to be postponed a day. Even worse, the game of Dibble was not played due to the turbulent and potentially contaminated water generated by the storm, because of overloaded combined sewers that empty into the East River and Alley Creek after heavy rains.

Picture-perfect skies the day after Hanna allowed a truncated version of Dibble Fest 4.0, the fourth annual festival for "children ranging in age from 5 to 95." Dibble Fest traditionally includes a parade for the Dibble Queen, Dibble competition, awards and refreshments. This year, instead of playing Dibble, Dibblers young and old had to be satisfied with a visit from the Dibble Queen, Lisa Mueller, a Douglaston native who revived the sport several years ago, followed by a party on the Dock lawn.

About 30 people attended, including a dozen children, their parents and Dibble aficionados. Last year Dibble Fest Trois attracted more than 40 children and about 20 adults who gathered to welcome the Dibble Queen, participate in the parade and play Dibble.

Ms. Mueller arrived at the event on foot this year, since the jazzy red 1951 MG TD convertible she usually arrives in was out of service. Spectators with cameras and camera phones snapped pictures of the Dibble Queen as children gathered around her, and shouted and waved colorful sticks when she arrived at the Dock gate. She was dressed in an ocean blue wrap over her swim suit with a gauzy floor length cape, and a gold crown and carried a seashell-encrusted scepter. The children listened raptly as she described the Rules of Dibble.

Dibble, Ms. Mueller explained, is played with a wooden popsicle stick and involves diving in the water, placing the stick gently in the mucky bay bottom and waiting for it to surface.

The players gather on the swimming float. The first to spot the stick and jump in and grab it screams "Dibble" and holds it aloft and therefore wins the game. The winner gets to dive in and place the stick in the mud for the next round. Despite intense research, the origin of Dibble remains unknown, although it is reportedly played

Mueller reminded the crowd, cannot be played in a pool because the stick is immediately visible, taking all the mystery out of it).

Ms. Mueller organized the first ever "Dibble Day" in 2005, after showing several youngsters how to play, and noting its timeless appeal. Since then the event has grown, attracting more and more children, as well as adults. Several adults dress in water themed costumes for the event, including Dr. Dibble, who reads a poem, and the Dibble Priestess, who blesses the



Dibble Queen Lisa Mueller is surrounded by children gathering to play Dibble at the Douglaston Dock. (Photo by Alexandra Parsons Wolfe)

in other locales.

Several long-time Douglastonians insist the game was invented here, 70 or more years ago. Dibble remained a staple of childhood in Douglaston until a few years ago, when it fell out of favor, a victim perhaps of more organized water sports played in a pool (Dibble, Ms.

Dibble sticks before Dibble play begins. Adult Dibble typically follows the children's event. Next year's Dibble Fest is scheduled for August, date to be announced. — Kevin Wolfe

If you are interested in volunteering for the 2009 Dibble Fest (Dibble Fest Funft), please contact the Dibble Castle by email: MGannon51B@aol.com.

A POET IS IMMORTALIZED ON FILM IN DOUGLASTON

In spring 1971, I was one of several producers for a nationally telecast series on Public Television's "The Great American Dream Machine." The idea of the program was to explore the American Dream and learn where it was fact, where it was myth, where it was achieved and where it occasionally let us down.

Little did I know when I received this assignment, that the project would lead me to a place just two blocks from the

failed.

Remember that, in 1971, the first men on the moon were a fairly new phenomenon, Hank Aaron would hit his 600th home run, the U.S.S.R. still existed and the U.S. was engaged in a cold war with it, and enmeshed in a hot one in Vietnam.

More than three decades earlier, in 1939, the celebrated British poet, W. H. Auden had emigrated to the U.S. with his very close friend Christopher Isherwood,

from that great mind had flowed "*The Unknown Citizen*," a poem that seemed to me to exemplify the theme of the program we were preparing.

I was able to obtain the telephone number of Mr. Auden's apartment on the Lower East Side of Manhattan from his publisher. He readily agreed to discuss the matter with me if I would, in turn, agree to meet him at Ratner's Restaurant on Delancey Street, a short walk from his



Zion Churchyard in Douglaston was used as the backdrop for an episode of the documentary "*The Great American Dream Machine*" featuring poet W.H. Auden. (The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society)

doorstep of my house in Douglaston.

Each ninety-minute segment was made up of several sequences, sometimes related to a theme, often disparate. One of the shows had an overall theme of "Accomplishment, Or Lack Thereof." It explored ways in which people tried to do things in their lives that reached beyond the mundane, and how, at times, they

and in 1971 he was living in New York City. Best known for "*The Age of Anxiety*," for which he had won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947, W. H. Auden was considered "the enfant terrible" of contemporary poetry. Nobel Prize winner and United States Poet Laureate, Joseph Brodsky, said of Auden, "...his was the greatest mind of the 20th Century." And

home, and "treat him" to his favorite delicacy there, kippered herrings.

I made the appointment with pleasure. Once he had consented to be filmed reciting *The Unknown Citizen*, an extraordinarily pleasant two hours of fascinating conversation ensued, during which I learned, among other things, that W. H. stood for Wystan Hugh. It fell to me to come up

with a suitable setting for the recitation. The idea of a sterile sound stage was totally unappealing for the effect I hoped to convey.

I have to confess that some of my best ideas came to me while driving to and from my office. The trip involved passing the historic graveyard of Zion Episcopal Church each day. It was perfect!

A completely appropriate setting for the placement of poet and camera: a field of headstones, some of them dating back to antiquity, representing the lives of so many who have passed this way.

Each of those monuments memorialized a citizen who, in his or her own way, had accomplished the feat of living a lifetime, be it short or long. Each life had made a mark, some known to only his or her loved ones, some to the world. There could be no better place for W.H. Auden to speak of the subject of his poem.

After discussing my plan with Rev. Rex Burrell, the Pastor of Zion Church, we settled on a date that was convenient for both the Pastor and the poet. I arranged for my film crew to meet me at Zion Church and for a car and driver to bring Mr. Auden. Prior to his arrival and with the assistance of Rev. Burrell, we carried a beautiful old throne-like chair from the church and placed it at the approximate center of the graveyard.

The camera was placed some distance south of the chosen setting, closer to Northern Blvd. It was a warm and pleasant day, perfect for our endeavor. By the time Auden arrived, at mid-morning, everything was set.

Seating himself in the high-backed chair amidst green foliage and manicured grass, and upon my cue, the poet began his recitation. He required no direction. It was, after all, his poem. Once I had selected the location and placed him in it, all that was required from me was instructions to the cameraman.

We used an extremely long focal length lens, a twenty to one zoom. In this way, we could start with the screen filled with the craggy countenance of the poet, the lines in his face a relief map of a long and eventful life. Nothing of the surroundings could be seen.

At this point, the venue would be unknown to the viewing audience. As Auden continued his poem, the camera began slowly pulling away from him to reveal, little by little, the setting encircling him.

First, only the large monument next to him was visible. As the scene expanded, it became apparent that he was seated in a graveyard. Then more and more headstones could be seen as the shot widened. The ode continued, and as it described The Unknown Citizen, Auden became exceedingly far off in the background.

By the time the poem reached its end, W.H. Auden was a mere speck in the distance, surrounded by the many, many monuments in the cemetery, some of them large, some small, some fairly new, some

very, very old. At the conclusion of the poem, the camera rested on a wide view of the burial ground with a lone man seated somewhat regally in the distance.

We are left to wonder, is one of those many graves surrounding the poet The Unknown Citizen? Is he elsewhere? Is he everywhere?

It didn't take long to complete our work. Auden's familiarity with his poem, the weather, and the innate beauty of the meaningful setting all combined to make this one of the easiest pieces I had done. One good take, and another just for protection, and we were finished. Then we repaired to my house, just down the street from the church, where my wife had prepared a brunch of kippered herrings. —
Stuart Hersh

The Unknown Citizen

by W. H. Auden

*He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.*

THE GEOGRAPHY OF UDALLS COVE PARK AND PRESERVE

Udalls Cove is the eastern arm of Little Neck Bay – the body of water that lies between the Douglaston peninsula and the Village of Great Neck Estates. The cove is named for Richard Udall, who in 1833 bought a mill formerly owned by the Allen family on the western shore of the Great Neck peninsula. The Udall family owned the mill (now called the Saddle Rock Mill) until 1950, when it was donated to the Nassau County Historical Society. Ironically, the mill sits in a separate, small cove off Little Neck Bay that is nearly a mile north of the mouth of what is today called Udalls Cove.

Lost in the mists of time is the explanation for why “Udalls Cove” is customarily spelled without an apostrophe. Since it is named for Richard Udall, it might seem more appropriate to call it “Udall’s Cove.” But while that formulation is occasionally seen, it does not appear to be officially sanctioned, and it is certainly not the one adopted by Aurora Gareiss when she founded the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee in 1969.

The Nassau/Queens County line runs down the middle of Udalls Cove. The concrete blockhouse visible from Memorial Field and Douglas Road (which many years ago was painted with large daisies or sunflowers) sits just on the Nassau side of the border. It is part of the outfall pipeline that carries treated wastewater from the Belgrave Sewage Treatment Plant (more about that in a subsequent column).

Two freshwater streams flow into Udalls Cove. These streams carry groundwater and surface runoff from the hills to the south, hills that are themselves the remnants of the terminal moraine of the continental glacier that covered the entire area during the last ice age, ending about 10,000 years ago. Known as the Harbor Hill Terminal Moraine, this line of hills extends like a spine along the northern shore of Long Island. Streams cut deep valleys into the hills, and the ocean eventually encroached into the resulting valleys as it rose when the glaciers melted. This is why the north shore of Long Island is crenelated with a series of deep embayments between long, hilly peninsulas like

Douglaston itself.

The westerly stream is Gabler’s Creek. Today it runs largely underground in a man-made channel from the heights of Little Neck Hills (near present-day Middle School 67). The stream crosses underneath Northern Boulevard near the low point between Douglaston and Little Neck, just west of where the 7-11 store is now located. It continues underground a few hundred feet further until it finally emerges from a pipe into the bottom of the Udalls

enters a stone-lined channel built by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Depression era. The channel takes a dog-leg east, then turns north again through a culvert under the railroad. Until recently, the built channel continued straight north, under Sandhill Road (the “Back Road”), and out to join the Cove near Memorial Field. In 2006 the path of the creek was adjusted once more. Now, on the north side of the LIRR, the channel takes another 90° turn to the west, and flows into the



Gabler’s Creek flowing through the re-routed culvert at Aurora Pond. (The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society)

Cove Ravine. The Ravine is a deep gorge with steep sides. Gabler’s Creek runs along where 246th Street would be if it had been built as originally laid out on the official City map. The creek continues north until, at around the latitude of Depew Avenue, it spreads out and meanders through a somewhat wider flood plain, depositing its heavy load of silt and sand. In that swampy area there grow a number of very large black willow trees, among which generations of kids have established forts and hideouts.

When it reaches the Long Island Railroad embankment, Gabler’s Creek

restored Aurora Pond. Near the Pond overlook there is a small weir or dam that maintains the water elevation in the pond. The water flows over the weir, and back into another channel that returns it to its former bed on its way to the Cove.

The second freshwater creek that feeds Udalls Cove enters at the east side. This creek comes all the way from Lake Success. In some places it runs above ground as a natural stream; in other places it runs underground through a pipe, much like Gabler’s Creek south of Northern Boulevard. The Lake Success stream can best be seen from Northern Boulevard

opposite the “Leonard’s of Great Neck” catering hall. (On an old map of the area dating to the 19th century, this stream is indicated as having fine trout fishing at around the location of Leonard’s.) The creek runs along the western edge of the Leonard’s parking lot, and soon disappears into a pipe. It finally emerges on the south side of the LIRR tracks, opposite the Great Neck water supply well field and pump station located on Water Mill Lane. It continues along the tracks for a few hundred yards, then crosses under the railroad through a culvert. On the north side of the tracks it opens up into a rather bucolic, natural stream that wends its way through the marshland until it joins Gabler’s Creek at the head of the Cove, just north of Virginia Point at the end of Little Neck Parkway.

The two freshwater streams that feed the Cove are critically important to its ecology. These are, of course, the modern remnants of the roaring streams that wore down the glacial moraine and shaped the valley that became the Cove. For eons their fast moving water has carried silt from the wooded uplands to the bay. There, the water slows down and drops its load, creating the mudflats that became the tidal marshes – among the most productive ecosystems in nature. These marshlands are dominated by a typical succession of plants ranging from willow, poplar and silver (or “swamp”) maple trees on the upland side to the south; to the common reed *Phragmites*, tall and dense; and finally down to the valuable marsh grass *Spartina* at the edge of the open water. The marshlands filter silt and pollutants from the streams, and provide crucial habitat and nutrients for the wide variety of wildlife, large and tiny, that live there during all or part of their life cycle. For this reason the tidal or salt marsh is a vital link in the system supporting the animals that live in and depend on the open water – fish, birds, crustaceans, mollusks and, of course, people. – *Walter Mugdan*

Mysteries Revealed:

In our spring 2008 newsletter, we showed a 1926 photo of the LIRR station at Douglaston, and asked two questions:

1) What is the extra track for on the south side of the railroad tracks (far left in photo)?

Answer: The extra track was called a Team Track or Public Delivery Track. It allowed local farmers and merchants to ship and receive goods without having to locate their business along the railroad right of way. The track was the last remnant of the original 1866 freight yard sited on what is today’s commuter parking lot. The freight yard offered an alternative delivery site for goods from the mills at Alley Pond, which were inaccessible by boat at low tide, and the weather susceptible Flushing and North Hempstead Turnpike (today’s Northern Boulevard) which was plagued by heavy mud in wet weather. The Team Track was probably removed in 1929 when an at grade railroad crossing at the then named Main Avenue (now 235th Street) was closed and the viaduct was built. With the viaduct project the Westbound platform was extended East to meet a new stairway from the viaduct (Douglaston Parkway). The Eastbound side was extended only far enough to block the former street. However, that left enough room to suggest the siding may have continued in use after the crossing was closed—we’re not sure.

2) What is the man with the wheelbarrow doing?

Answer: The man with the wheelbarrow was probably delivering sacks of mail to the Eastbound train. At that time, the local post office was in the pharmacy, known until the early 1970’s as the Manor Pharmacy, at the site of today’s MacKay Wrynn and Brady law firm at 40-26 235th Street on the north side of the LIRR tracks. There was another Post Office building at Northern Boulevard and Douglaston Parkway, occupied today by Giardino Ristorante, but it was a postal processing center, not a public post office. – *Mike Gannon.*



This postcard shows a view of the Westmoreland section of Little Neck, ca. 1910. Can you identify the intersection where this shot was taken from? Submit your answer through our website: www.dlnhs.org. (*The Douglaston & Little Neck Historical Society*)

MYSTERY PHOTO: FALL 2008



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Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society

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