



VILLAGE “VISIONING” KICKS OFF; MERCHANTS ORGANIZE

Business owners at “The Village” commercial area near the Douglaston train station are organizing a merchants’ association as a beginning step in spearheading a first Visioning Project session scheduled for later this spring.

Diego Von Schmeling, owner of The Douglaston Market, and Dorothy Matinale, owner of Station Realty, are leading the effort to organize the business owners on both sides of the LIRR tracks for the newly formed Village Merchants Association (VMA).

All merchants, owners of the buildings, and residents in the apartments above the shops will be invited to the first Visioning Project meeting. A second Visioning session later in the year will be open to residents of the adjacent neighborhoods.

Visioning Project meetings are an open forum for participants to express their ideas and thoughts about what the commercial area at the station might be in the future. The Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society



Storefronts, north side of Douglaston station

(DLNHS) is a co-sponsor of the Visioning Project and will make a slide presentation detailing the history of the development of the area – from the arrival of the railroad in 1866,

through the creation of the commercial district in the early 20th century, to the present.

Little Neck resident and architect Victor Dadras, whose New York City firm Dadras Architects specializes in commercial “Main Street” redevelopment projects, is a member of the DLNHS board and has volunteered to help lead the first Visioning session. Civic leaders and organizations as well as City Councilman Tony Avella (D) and State Senator Frank Padavan (R) will be invited to participate.

Mr. Dadras explained that the meeting ideally will be the first of several Visioning sessions that would eventually expand their scope to include the participation of residents of the surrounding Douglaston neighborhoods, as well as the larger community that uses the train station area.

“Visioning” typically focuses on several aspects of a commercial area including the economic life of the merchants, the physical

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NATIVE AMERICANS TOPIC AT SOCIETY’S ANNUAL MEETING, APRIL 19

Dr. John A. Strong, an expert on Native Americans on Long Island, will be the featured speaker at the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society’s (DLNHS) annual meeting at 3 p.m on Sunday, April 19 at The Community Church of Douglaston, 39-50 Douglaston Parkway. The lecture and meeting are free and open to the public.

Dr. Strong will present a slide lecture that will focus on the evolution of American Indian culture on Long Island before the arrival of European settlers, including the Matinecoc Indians who are native to the Douglaston and Little Neck areas.

Prior to Dr. Strong’s presentation, DLNHS will conduct its annual meeting, with committee reports and election of members

to the Board of Trustees. Refreshments will be served.

Dr. Strong has published three books, including *We Are Still Here! The Algonquian Peoples of Long Island Today*. Dr. Strong explained that all the tribes in the Long Island and Southern New England region were joined by the use of languages having their common roots in the Algonquian language, similar to the European tongues which originated from Latin roots.

Dr. Strong will discuss the Matinecocs in relation to other Long Island tribes. The Matinecocs were an indigenous people who occupied the land from Flushing to Manhasset. In 1919, James E. Waters (Chief Wild Pigeon), whose descendants still live in Little Neck,

wrote that the Matinecocs were responsible for naming nearby Great Neck (Madnan’s Neck), Little Neck (Little Madnan’s Neck) and Manhasset (Cow Neck). They lived peacefully as hunters, farmers and fishermen.

It was not long however, until members of the Hicks family and other European settlers expelled the Matinecocs and took the majority of their land. According to Waters, “As the Hicks and the Quakers waxed strong, the glory of the family departed. The family graves were desecrated by the whites at the Point (now Douglas Manor, the burying ground of the Rockaway and the Matinecock Indians)... So that is how along the roadside where the iron shoes of the pale face horses instead of the

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*Douglaston and Little Neck
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MYSTERIES REVEALED: *Our Fall 2008 edition showed this post card from the Westmoreland section of Little Neck, circa 1910. The view is looking northeast from Northern Boulevard into Bayview Avenue, known today as Morgan Street. The name was changed to honor the Morgan family whose farm became the Marathon Park subdivision in the 1920s, today's Little Neck Pines neighborhood. From left to right (in the foreground) is 43-15 Morgan Street; (in the background) 41-87 Glenwood Street and 41-75 Glenwood Street. The small building between the Glenwood Street houses (it looks like a garage) is actually a house, 41 Nassau Road, behind Glenwood Street. In 1906, Bayview Avenue began at Northern Boulevard and continued north and west ending at Hillendale Avenue, today's 247th Street.*

– Mike Gannon

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

How did you spend the cold days of January and February? My uncountable hours were spent sorting through, organizing, coordinating, identifying, labeling and packaging the photographs, building plans, publications and all the other material that has accumulated in the archives of the Historical Society over the past twenty years and more.

It's of course thanks to all of you who have contributed to the archives...may it keep coming because it's all useful and frequently astonishing in helping to assemble this great puzzle of what was here in Douglaston and Little Neck, and who did what.

There are waterfront pictures showing the wooden slat fences with stone aggregate concrete piers that used to grace Shore Road in Douglas Manor, wonderful pictures of children at play in an early private nursery school in the Manor on Beverly Road, scenes from the Village at the Douglaston Railroad station at the time the overpass was being constructed to eliminate the railroad grade crossing, early maps with familiar and not-so-familiar names, and Douglas Manor Association beach tags of fabric with embroidered logo. Some recent acquisitions include a cache of images from Little Neck, including many post cards from vacationers who came here to relax in "the country" – one suggesting: "I could use \$5, Mom." There are striking photos dating from the mid-1860s from Jenny Wright Cooper, whose property we toured last fall for our first ever Little Neck House Tour.

We hope to have most of this material on the website soon – although it may take a while – and if you guessed there were a thousand images you would be close. Again, check your scrapbooks and closets; if you are not yet ready to relinquish items, allow us to scan them for our records and for the website, and we will return them to you in good order and quickly. You can contact us at 718-225-4403, or through our web site: www.dlhns.org

Otherwise, we continue. Elsewhere in this newsletter are stories about our recent events, the Annual Meeting of DLNHS scheduled for April 19, the Village Visioning Project, and pieces contributed by members of the Publications Committee and others.

Last November, the Bayside Historical Society (BHS) presented a tour of the Lawrence Cemetery at 216th Street and 42nd Avenue in Bayside, just south of the LIRR. The tour was conducted by BHS Board member, Paul DiBenedetto. Although it was an uncommonly cold afternoon, 15 people attended and lingered. The tiny family "Burying Ground" has a variety of headstones marking the final resting place of forty members of the Lawrence family, their descendants and heirs. Also buried there is Lawrence Moccasin, the faithful Indian servant of Judge Effingham Lawrence. According to a BHS brochure which contains detailed information about every stone, "The plot of ground is part of the original patent granted by the Dutch Governor Keift of New Amsterdam to John and William Lawrence and others in 1645. The first burial took place in 1832 and the last in 1939." To enter and tour the cemetery was revealing; how often do you pass the wooded area on the train and wonder what's there? A call to the Bayside Historical Society at 718-352-1548 will advise you of the next tour; and then you, too, can see this bit of history. Don't miss the remains of the wonderful double stone wall at the south perimeter.

Who knows when this was published, but a piece called *What's a Tree Worth?* tells us that an acre of trees can remove 13 tons of dust and gases from the air each year; also that a tree that lives fifty years will contribute services worth \$196,250 within its life span through humidity and air pollution control, oxygen replenishment, wildlife shelter, soil erosion control and additions to the soil as fertilizer. Trees are our friends. Cherish them and help support the great canopy of trees in Douglaston and Little Neck.

Thank you, and best wishes.

LITTLE NECK HOUSE TOUR ATTRACTS MORE THAN A HUNDRED ON A PERFECT AUTUMN DAY



More than 100 members and friends of the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS) toured several 19th century and early 20th century homes in Little Neck this past October, as well as the site of the Cooper family's carriage business, established in Little Neck in the 1860s.

The tour, part of a special event called *Celebrate Little Neck History!*, began on a nippy but sunny afternoon with an exhibition of photos and other memorabilia belonging to the family of nonagenarian Jenny Wright Cooper. Mrs. Cooper personally greeted some of those coming to see the historic materials on display in the offices of Arash Real Estate Company on Northern Boulevard.



Society President Julia Schoeck presents award to Jenny Wright Cooper, seated, right

The Arash offices occupy the very building where Mrs. Cooper's grandfather, Alfred P. Wright, established his carriage and wheelwright business, Wright & Company, almost 150 years ago. Tours were conducted on the property, which includes four houses, three

of which are occupied by Mrs. Cooper and her children. One of the houses is a farmhouse that dates to the 1820s, another is from the mid-19th century and the other two from the early 20th century.

The exhibit, which was organized by DLNHS President Julia Schoeck and board member Michael Gannon, included original historic photos loaned by Mrs. Cooper, some of which were more than 150 years old. The photos showed long-vanished scenes of Little Neck's rural life at the mid 19th century, including one of her grandfather as a young man in front of his carriage shop. Later photos through the early 20th century showed the transformation of his business into an auto repair business, as cars replaced horse and carriage.

Today, the Cooper houses and the former carriage shop form an ensemble of historic buildings set among a heavily treed acre just east of the Little Neck post office building, a green respite from the commercial district along Northern Boulevard. In one sweep of the eye, these buildings encompass the changing face of Little Neck from rural outpost to early 20th century suburb.

Celebrate Little Neck History! also afforded participants the opportunity to visit four additional houses located in different parts of Little Neck – the Westmoreland and Little Neck Pines neighborhoods located north of Northern Boulevard and the Little Neck Hills neighborhood located between Northern Boulevard and the Long Island Expressway. Traveling between these

houses, one could further see the changing face of Little Neck over the last century.

Westmoreland residents Walter and Kathrine Mueller and Tom and Cathy Moran, as well as Brian McMenamy, owner of a "Bossert" house in the Little Neck Pines section, were generous in allowing us to explore the interiors of their homes, examples from the period of development



Cooper Homestead, ca. 1820

and expansion in Little Neck during the early decades of the 20th century.

The event culminated with a tour and poolside party in the garden of the beautiful 1920s era Arts and Crafts style home of John and Anna Hart in Little Neck Hills. An award was presented to Mrs. Cooper in recognition of her contributions to historic preservation in Little Neck.

DLNHS wishes to thank all who contributed to the success of this most enjoyable community event.

– Kay MacDermott

LIVING WITH LANDMARKING – ONE HOMEOWNER’S STORY



“Landmarking” has been an important part of my life for the past 15 years. This has been as a wearer of many hats, including being an early supporter of creating a Douglaston Historic District, as a board member of the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS) and as a member of Community Board 11’s (CB11) Landmarks Committee.

Most importantly, my experience with landmarking has been as a homeowner, seeking permission for renovation projects big and small. In the past 12 years, I have successfully filed five applications for different renovations with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) which regulates the Douglaston Historic District.

Each time I have come away from the process feeling that not only does landmarking work – that is, living in a New York City designated historic district – but convinced that the extra steps taken to file with LPC are well worth the effort.

My first experience with LPC was in 1997 when my wife Andrea and I were the first residents of the newly-created Douglaston Historic District to file an application. We replaced our front walk; this was a simple project, and was quickly approved by LPC staff.

I submitted a sketch of the existing front walk, photographs of the walk, and a sample of the new materials, which were to match the existing bluestone. I was impressed with the rapid turnaround of my application, especially considering this is a New York City government agency.

In 1999, we embarked on a major addition

to our home: the construction of a one-story 625 square foot great room at the back of the house. This was clearly more complex, and required a public hearing at LPC’s offices in Manhattan.

While at first glance the LPC application process may seem daunting, it is really a logical progression of steps that starts with developing a design with an architect, followed by meetings with the various groups and agencies that review the project.

The approval process went smoothly since we followed all the suggested steps in the correct order, and submitted all the required paperwork and materials – and that in short is one of the basic secrets of success. To ensure our project would go quickly, we built the design and review process into the timeline of our construction schedule, as follows:

- 1) Hired a good architect familiar with how LPC works
- 2) Reviewed our preliminary plans with the DLNHS Architecture Committee which gave us important feedback
- 3) Met with LPC staff to get their input
- 4) Incorporated comments from LPC into the final design
- 5) Submitted final plans to the Douglas Manor Association to determine there were no violations of deed restrictions
- 6) Submitted final plans to CB11 as required by law
- 7) Submitted final plans to LPC for the hearing

Critical to our success was meeting first with the DLNHS Architecture Committee. Although this is voluntary, the Committee not only offered insights into what LPC might

object to, but also outlined the steps in the process and advised us how best to proceed. (Today I am a member of this Committee.)

Also invaluable was arranging an informal meeting with LPC staff at an early stage of the design process, long before plans were finalized, which required a simple phone call for an appointment. The staff – which consists of trained historic preservationists and architects – was very enthusiastic and gave us important tips that streamlined the process. I also felt that they gave us good, intelligent design advice in the preliminary stage that ultimately improved the design.

We incorporated LPC staff comments into our final design and received an easy approval of the commissioners at the LPC public hearing, enabling us to move swiftly on to the next steps – selecting a contractor and getting the Department of Buildings permit.

Construction began in March 1998 and the addition was completed in October of the same year. Our project touched most rooms on the first floor of our house compelling us to live primarily in the kitchen and dining room during six months of construction with two young children and a small white dog – but that is another story!

Since 2000 we have filed three additional applications for work with LPC, and approval of each of those went smoothly. The resulting changes to our home have been positive. Visitors ask: “Where’s the addition?” – a testament to the fact that even though we have significantly expanded our living space, the changes to our 1920s Tudor house are seamless and the

THEN AND NOW: THE EVIL TWINS

house still blends in nicely with the surrounding neighborhood.

As a member of the DLNHS Architecture Committee and CB11's Landmarks Committee, I have seen plans for almost every proposed new home and addition during the past 12 years in the Douglaston Historic District and in the Douglaston Hill Historic District, designated in 2004.

This has given me an unusual perspective on the merits of living in a "landmarked" district. Many proposals for work that were poor or marginal designs at a first review have turned out to be welcome additions to the historic districts by the time they went through the process. The collective input of our community has spared us from the disastrous effects of poor design and development that have taken place in Little Neck, Bayside and other parts of Douglaston.

As both a homeowner and in serving on local committees, I can only say that the benefits of going through the landmarks process far outweigh any downside when one views the big picture. In addition, the homeowner doing the renovation gets free design advice by going through the LPC process, and ultimately gets a better design as a result.

Our landmarked neighborhoods are stable, no longer subject to the blight of cookie-cutter McMansions that plague other areas. As a real estate professional myself, I have watched with great interest as our property values have increased – not decreased – as a result of historic district designation, surpassing those in comparable neighborhoods. Landmark status for a property is now featured as a major selling point in realtor advertisements.

Neighborhoods in historic districts are still able to continue to grow and change and adapt to the 21st century, yet retain their character. The time and paperwork required for a homeowner to go through the landmarks process is surely paid back many times over by the assurance that future generations will be able to appreciate these gracious historic neighborhoods that we now enjoy.

– Edward T. LaGrassa



In the months since this lovely Arts and Crafts style house and its carriage house (top) dating from the 1890s were demolished last summer, the "evil twins" (bottom) have sprouted, yet another developer's spec house horror story come to life in duplicate at the corner of Alameda Avenue and Douglaston Parkway, in the Douglaston Park section.



VISIONING *(continued)*

state of the place, and the role these stores and services play in the life of the community at large. Participants are asked to discuss what the issues are for the area, including its assets and liabilities, the kind of shops, services and housing they might like to see there, what problems or issues the businesses may have, possible physical improvements to the commercial district, and both long- and short-term strategies to improve things. The new merchants' association is critical to the development of these ideas, as well as being a vehicle for the merchants to prosper by working together toward common goals. Another benefit of the merchants' association

more economically-focused strategies like business seminars geared to helping small business owners, or programs to help attract new businesses to vacant storefronts.

Another aspect of the visioning plan would be to give a voice to the community regarding future development and redevelopment. Current zoning on both sides of the railroad tracks allows up to a three-story commercial building as of right which could be used for offices and retail stores only (apartments are not allowed under the zoning).

A visioning plan could provide an outline and positive direction for developers, showing what the community and merchants

ARTS FAIR PLANNED FOR THE DOUGLASTON STATION

If all goes well, the roundabout at the weeping beech tree by the Douglaston train station will be the scene of a Village Arts Fair being planned for September with local artists, craftspeople and performers invited to sell and showcase their talents.

There will be live music, and local vendors and restaurants will be able to sell their wares and food, setting up on the sidewalk around the perimeter of the traffic circle. The street would be closed for the day, probably a Sunday.

This will be the first time such an event has ever been held. Karen Von Schmeling, whose husband Diego owns The Douglaston Market at 40-39 235th Street, said she has been thinking of this event for several years now, and hopes to attract a group of committed volunteers who could help organize the Fair. Planning is in the preliminary stages and requires securing a permit from the City to close the street at least six months in advance.

Ms. Von Schmeling said she knows many local artists in the area because they come to her husband's store, where she sometimes staffs the counter. She says there is an astonishing array of talented artists and craftspeople in the area, ranging from photographers to painters, even to an artisanal soap maker.

Marie Marsina, president of the National Art League on Douglaston Parkway just a block from the station, is excited about the Arts Fair and said her artists are ready to participate. There are also several performing artists who live in the area, including poets, jazz musicians and rock bands who may perform.

The Village Arts Fair would be modeled in part on the famous Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit in Greenwich Village that started 79 years ago, at which artists mount their paintings on fence railings or easels set up on sidewalks and sell their work.

If you are interested in participating as an artist, performer or vendor, or volunteering to help organize this event, please contact us at: info@dlhns.org



Storefronts, south side of Douglaston station

is that it enables the merchants to apply, as an organization, for public grants and low interest loans, as is the case with the merchants' association for Bell Boulevard in Bayside, for example.

Mr. Dadras said information gathered during the Visioning sessions may be used to create a community plan based on a consensus of the community's preferred future vision of the Village commercial district. This information may include requests for physical improvements including façade restoration projects, new streetlights, signage, plantings and paving, as well as

would support. Such a plan could promote the idea that new building or redevelopment in the commercial district would be compatible and complimentary to the buildings and businesses that exist, and not destroy the small-town atmosphere that has attracted both merchants and residents.

Several Long Island communities have held successful visioning sessions for their commercial areas and are implementing both long- and short-term redevelopment plans based on them, including Port Washington, Elmont and Wyandanch.

– Kevin Wolfe

ANNUAL MEETING *(continued)*

soft moccasin tread, sleep the dead of the family and several whites too poor to own a grave...”

An Indian burial ground in Little Neck, at the corner of Broadway (today’s Northern Boulevard) and Jesse Court, was taken by eminent domain in 1931 to widen the road. Despite great protests by Matinecoc leaders, including the Waters family, the burial ground was demolished and the remains were moved to Zion Church Cemetery in Douglaston. The mass burial spot at Zion is marked by two large rocks with an oak tree growing between them, a tribal mark.



Carved in stone: “Here Rest The Last of the Matinecoc”

Dr. Strong is professor emeritus of history and American studies at the Southampton College of Long Island University. He is a graduate of St. Lawrence University and holds a Ph. D. from Syracuse University. He is also a Fulbright fellow, and the recipient of an award from the National Endowment for the Humanities Seminar for Teachers. He has devoted his professional career to the study of the history and culture of Native Americans. His many articles and papers delve deeply into this subject, focusing primarily on the tribes of Long Island, including the Shinnecock, Montaukett and Unkechaugs.

– Kay MacDermott

DOUGLSTON DOPPELGÄNGER – FINDING THE OTHER VAN WYCK HOMESTEAD



Van Wyck Homestead, Fishkill, NY

On a recent weekend getaway, my wife Alice and I headed for the Hudson Valley – lower Dutchess County to be specific. We wanted to visit the Dia Museum in Beacon and look in on the antique shops in Cold Spring. We achieved these objectives and then started to tour the historic sites around Fishkill where our retro motel was located – little did we know what we were about to find!

Lo and behold we came upon the Van Wyck Homestead Museum in Fishkill – an ancient farmhouse with some remarkable similarities to Douglaston’s own Van Wyck farmhouse in Douglas Manor.

The land on which the Fishkill homestead stands was purchased from the Wappinger Indians in 1683. Cornelius Van Wyck bought 959 acres of that land in 1732 from the daughter of the original title holder. It is interesting to note that the Van Wyck farmhouse in Douglas Manor was also built by a Cornelius Van Wyck, and also dates from 1732. Douglaston’s Van Wyck house was once part of a 200-acre farm.

In Fishkill, Cornelius Van Wyck built a three-room house, what is now the present east wing. Before 1757 a west wing was added and this addition maintained “pure” Dutch Colonial construction. Douglaston’s Van Wyck farmhouse was also originally a three-room house, and is notable for its pure Dutch Colonial style, although it too was added to over the centuries.

But what of the builders – were the Corneliuses one and the same, and leading a double life? It appears not, although they are

both related to Cornelius Barentse Van Wyck, who came from the Netherlands to the Dutch Colony of New Amsterdam in 1660. Both men were his grandsons.

Both places saw action during the Revolutionary War, although the Fishkill site was critical to the winning of the war by the colonists, while Douglaston’s Van Wyck house was subject to the general occupation of Long Island by the British.

Fishkill became a strategic area at the beginning of the Revolutionary War due to its location on the Hudson River. The Van Wyck Homestead was requisitioned by the Continental Army and became headquarters for General Isaac Putnam, and its acreage served as a mass encampment for some 2,000 soldiers. Over time it housed officers, was a quartermaster post, held military trials and had military orders issued from it. On the surrounding land stood a blacksmith shop, a cannon repair shop, a storehouse and troops barracks. The house is reputed to be the setting for James Fenimore Cooper’s novel *The Spy*.

The Fishkill Van Wycks returned to the house after the war and descendants occupied it for the next 150 years. The house is currently owned and occupied by the Fishkill Historical Society, which saved it from being demolished in the 1960s as highways encircled it. The Historical Society maintains a museum, and continues a restoration program. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a designated landmark of Dutchess County.

Douglaston’s Van Wyck house was purchased by Wynant Van Zandt in 1813. Van Zandt used it as a guest house for the larger manor house he built in 1819, now the Douglaston Club. Today the farmhouse is privately owned, having been restored in 1921 after a brief stint as the first home of the Douglaston Club. It was designated a New York City landmark in 1966 and is located in the Douglaston Historic District.

– Tom Fucigna

For further information about the Van Wyck Homestead Museum, call 845-896-9560

ARTHUR KELLEY REMEMBERS 80 YEARS IN DOUGLSTON

“Oh, I can tell you quite a bit,” Arthur Kelley began, looking at me with a smile. “I have lots of memories.” Arthur Kelley grew up at 311 Cherry Street in Douglas Manor, having moved from Manhattan in the fall of 1925, while still a toddler. “My parents bought the house from Henry Miller, who built it for his bride, but who never actually lived in it. We were its first residents.”



The house at 311 Cherry Street, 1925

The winter of 1926 brought with it a big snow storm documented by family photos, and Mr. Kelley described the horse-drawn wood wedge that the Manor Association used in those early years to plow the snow from the sidewalks: “They steered it with one hand on the handle, while the other hand held the reins for the horse. Since the wedge was sort of like a wheelbarrow, it didn’t cut a straight line through the snow. Rather, it zig-zagged along the sidewalk, and I remember that my father grew a little upset when the back and forth of the wedge knocked the snow back onto the sidewalk where he had just shoveled!”

Mr. Kelley attended elementary school in the old turreted Van Vliet House that served as P.S. 98 until 1931. Called “the Castle,” it was a private house built in the late 19th century by Clinton Van Vliet, president of the Goodyear Rubber Goods Company, and was situated just due west of the current school building.

First grade was on the second floor, but, oddly enough, the children were prohibited from using the interior stairway. They had to climb up the steps of the exterior fire escape to get to their classes.

From the windows in that original building, however, Mr. Kelley could watch



The soon-to-be demolished Van Vliet house, 1930.

the construction of what we now know as P.S. 98, which had become a necessity by 1930 since the old Van Vliet House was being stretched to capacity.

In fact, by the time Mr. Kelley got to third grade, his class was no longer in the Van Vliet House. Instead, they met at the annex, a two-room temporary wooden building situated on the hill just north of what is now Catharine Turner Richardson Park.

Mike Flynn, the school custodian, kept a pot-bellied stove fired up in the winter, but Mr. Kelley also recalls that the windows in the annex were situated in such a way as to catch the glare of the afternoon sun, forcing his teacher, Marion Chopieska, to wear dark glasses.

Behind the old Van Vliet House, in the marshes, Mr. Kelley remembered that there was a man living in a houseboat who would come around to the neighborhood with a bucket of fish – eel, or clams – for sale. The Village near the school also included Mr. Levy’s tailor shop, a drug store with an ice cream counter, Reeves grocery store, a stationary store, and a shoe repair shop where one remains today. There was also a meat market, a dance studio, and an electrician’s shop, as well as Bily Plumbing, Keyes Market and a store with a lending library called Books & Things.

In 1929, the City built a bridge over the railroad, and later installed the current pedestrian tunnel under the tracks. Prior to that, there was a simple grade crossing at what was then called Main Avenue and is now 235th Street. The gates were not electrified, and with each train, a railroad employee had to manually crank down the

gates, slipping a large iron ring over the handles to prevent them from moving. At night, he hung red kerosene lanterns the length of each of the gates.

In the summer, Mr. Kelley attended what was called the “stay-at-home camp” run by three college students: Donald Wertheim and the two Simpsons, Eleanor and Alan, who lived on Little Neck Road and who used the big vacant property next door for games and activities. They rode the horses that were housed in stables just due west of Zion Church Rectory, and used the trails that reached around the pond and over to Alley Pond Park. At high tide, all went to the dock where American Red Cross swimming instructors taught life saving and the campers were able to earn their Jr. American Red Cross Life Saving Certificates. This was possibly a good thing, since Mr. Kelley confessed to having dived off the dock on the north end where there are currently “No Diving” signs, and to vaulting over the iron railing fence much the same way as you would vault over a gym horse, in order to dive directly into the water – of course, avoiding the rocks.



The devastation from the hurricane of ‘44

In 1938, and again, more seriously in 1944, hurricanes damaged the dock. During one of the storms, Mr. Kelley’s Snipe sailboat was turned over, leaving it upside down with the mast caught deep in the mud. Ever the diver, Mr. Kelley dove under the boat, disconnecting the shrouds from the hull, enabling him to push the boat off the mast, but leaving the mast in the mud, where part of it remains to this day.



Doug Fleming (l) and Arthur Kelley in "Hawk", Arthur's boat which capsized in the hurricane of '44

Mr. Kelley's pride in community appears to have been passed down from his parents, who were themselves participants in the goings on of our community. Mr. Kelley's mother, Mae, was an active member of the Garden Club, and served as Club Treasurer. She also taught flower arranging. Her skills extended beyond



Arthur and his family in backyard of 311 Cherry Street. Grandma Ella, with Mae and Harry Kelley, circa 1930

the local community, however; she helped to stage flower shows at the New York Coliseum and at Madison Square Garden. Mr. Kelley's mother was also known as one of the "Tiffany Girls," a reference to the women who worked in the Tiffany Studios implementing the important Tiffany glass designs. Mrs. Kelley herself worked on ecclesiastic windows for various churches.

Mr. Kelley's father, Harry, was the assistant manager of a Corn Exchange Bank in Manhattan. Just prior to the financial crash of 1929, he had the foresight to advise Mrs. Kelley, who was then serving

as Treasurer for the Garden Club, to move the Club's money out of the Douglaston National Bank, which was established in 1927. She did, permitting the Club to avoid financial loss when the bank collapsed. While the bank never reopened, its handsome beige terra cotta façade is still a part of the row of stores and businesses lining the east side of Douglaston Parkway.

Mr. Kelley, who now lives at 325 Beverly Road, has watched the Manor grow and change for more than 80 years. He married Dorothy Wernlein in 1952 at All Saint's Episcopal Church in Great Neck, raised two children here, and taught science for 40 years in the Great Neck Secondary Schools. His link to the community is a strong and committed one, having participated in the Civilian Defense Program, and having enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II and served on a destroyer escort in the Pacific.

Today, Mr. Kelley is as committed as ever, actively involved in the Udalls Cove Preservation Committee and in the Douglas Manor Association Water Quality Committee, which addresses itself to the quality of the water at the dock.

Most importantly, Mr. Kelley is dedicated to the transmission of memory and experience from one generation to another, and has graciously shared his time in the service of this important undertaking. We are all richer for it.



Arthur Kelley on the job

—Lisa Lempel-Sander, with Joan Corbisiero

TRIP TO SEE STICKLEY SHOW



A dozen members and friends of the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society (DLNHS) took a specially chartered van to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum in Hartford, CT last December to see the exhibition *At Home with Gustav Stickley: Arts and Crafts from the Stephen Gray Collection*.

DLNHS arranged the trip which included a private tour of the exhibit led by a museum docent. Stickley was a leader in the Arts and Crafts movement in America, which had its heyday between 1890 and 1920. Stickley and his followers advocated a return to craft in furniture and architecture, as a reaction against the industrialization of the 19th century.



Stickley house on Prospect Avenue

Stickley designed three houses in the Douglaston Historic District, each of which also originally included furnishings and fixtures designed by Stickley. The historic district is home to more houses with Arts and Crafts influences than any other neighborhood in New York City.

DLNHS is planning more museum trips in the future, including a trip to one or more historic sites in the Hudson Valley during fall foliage season. Members should stay tuned for further developments.

—Kay MacDermott

For further information about upcoming events, contact us at 718-225-4403 or through our website: www.dlnhs.org

NOTES FROM THE COVE: THE CASE OF THE DISAPPEARING WETLANDS

The fourth in an occasional series of columns about Udalls Cove, Little Neck Bay, and the surrounding natural environment

At the start of the 20th century, the Douglaston Peninsula – originally the neck in “Little Neck” – was still largely surrounded by a thriving tidal marsh, dominated by the salt grass known as *Spartina*. The Udalls Cove marshes on the east extended south to the Long Island Railroad tracks, and the Alley Pond marshes on the west extended south as far as the present-day Long Island Expressway. As the suburbs and bedroom communities thrived and grew, the City government and most developers were united in their intentions to eliminate these “swamps” to the maximum extent possible.

Since the Dutch first settled Manhattan and the surrounding lands, filling swamps was an almost universal objective that served several purposes. Filling created more land for the evolving urban center – real estate has been a commodity in limited supply and nearly unlimited demand from the earliest days of the city. Filled land edged with bulkheads also provided better landings for boats, the primary means of transportation for goods. Swamps were also considered to be the best places in which to dispose of the growing city’s ever-increasing quantity of refuse. The swampy areas surrounding Manhattan were filled first; in places, the island’s shoreline is literally hundreds of feet beyond where it was 400 years ago. Then the swamps of the outer Boroughs were targeted. Hundreds of acres of wetlands were used for landfills. Both LaGuardia and Kennedy Airports are built on landfills. The world’s largest landfill, Fresh Kills (now closed), occupies hundreds of acres on Staten Island and, at 400 feet high, is reputed to be the highest point on the eastern seaboard between Florida and Maine.

The extensive marshes of the Flushing Bay estuary – known as Flushing Meadows – extended south nearly as far as Union Turnpike. In the first decades of the 20th century, it too became a major garbage dumping ground. These open dumps of the past routinely caught fire. Most buildings of the time were heated with coal, and huge quantities of ash and cinders were dumped, often still hot. The garbage would catch fire and continue to burn for months or even years. Putrid, stinking smoke plumes rose from every corner. This

hellish landscape in north central Queens serves as the setting for one of the most memorable scenes towards the end of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s immortal novel *The Great Gatsby*. In the late 1930s, this huge dump was covered over with soil and became the site of the 1939 and later the 1964-65 World’s Fairs. Afterward, the site was redeveloped into public parkland for Flushing Meadows Park ... but the marshes are irrevocably gone.

When the Bayside, Douglaston and Little Neck areas were being developed for housing, the City prepared official maps that reflected the anticipated filling of the hundreds of acres of marsh on both sides of the Douglaston peninsula. Streets were mapped in a perfect grid starting just west of Douglaston Parkway and extending all the way to Bayside. The same was done on the Udalls Cove side of Douglaston to the east.



1927, Alley Creek, looking north from Northern Blvd.

During the 1930s, a large coal-fired power plant was built on the east side of Alley Creek, between Northern Boulevard and the LIRR tracks. The plant provided power to the railroad. Wharves were built along the creek for unloading coal and other goods. The power plant is long gone, as is Kiddie City, the amusement park that operated there briefly in the 1950s and early 60s. A mixture of woods and marshes have since reclaimed the area, but hints of the old wharves can still be seen in the stumps of wooden pilings along the sides of the creek.

Douglas Manor was developed in the first decade of the 20th century by the Rickert-Finlay Realty Company. By that time, a seawall had been built along the west side of the peninsula to the Point, exchanging a natural shoreline with its beaches and marshes for the tidier, more genteel waterfront we know today. On the east, a stretch of pristine marsh

was used as a refuse dump. It was eventually covered over and became today’s Memorial Field. More recently, a small pond across from the Field was filled in; the springs that fed that pond continue to run today, which is why there is a constant stream of water down the “300 block” of Richmond Road.

However, filling of the Douglaston/Little Neck swamps did not start in earnest until around 1960. On the west side, behind PS 98, a developer filled in a large tract of marshlands, laid out streets, and built a model home at the northwest corner of the site, the intersection of 38th Drive and 233rd Streets. A family named Guidice, with three children, moved into the model home. Alas, the weight of the structure on the unstable fill caused the house to settle. One night the gas line serving the house cracked. The house exploded. Two members of the family died and the other three were severely injured. (I was 9 years old at the time, and though I did not know the family, this news affected me deeply. A friend and I did some chores for neighbors and we contributed our earnings – just under \$10 – to the Guidice Fund.)

The tragedy halted development for a few years, but in due course a new developer completed the build-out of the area, initially known as Continental Villas, now named Doug-Bay. The homes were all electric, with no gas service. The foundations were properly built, and the houses remained where they were built. So did the sewer line installed by the City. The land surrounding the houses, however, continued to settle and sink. That is why the houses of Doug-Bay all lie higher than the surrounding yards, sidewalks and roads. And that’s why, until a major road reconstruction a few years ago, a number of the streets had a pronounced hump running down their middle where the sewer line was located (which had not settled), while the street around the sewer pipe kept sinking.

In my next column I’ll write about the sea change in society’s view of “swamps” that took place during the 1960s, and how, in 1969, that change was translated into action in our community to save the last wetlands surrounding the Douglaston peninsula.

– Walter Mugdan

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The Society has 5 active committees and welcomes your interest and participation

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___ Architecture

___ Educational Programs and Events

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___ Community Relations

PROPERTIES IN FLUX IN PROPOSED DOUGLASTON HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION

While the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) considers the fate of the proposed Douglaston Historic District Extension, three key properties in the district are in transition – two are for sale and a stop work order was placed on a third where a large addition is planned.

The Department of Buildings (DOB) issued a stop work order and revoked all permits last September for 39-12 Douglaston Parkway, where the owner had already filled the rear of his property and his adjacent neighbors, raising the grade seven feet. DOB received 16 complaints about the project since work began last year. The owner, David Huang, also applied to move a fire hydrant and remove a mature street tree to build a new driveway.

Mr. Huang said the stop work order was triggered by the New York City Parks Department which refused his application to remove the street tree. DOB regulations require specific setbacks from street trees and fire hydrants for new driveways. The existing house, built around 1910, has no garage and has a narrow driveway because of the shape of the lot. Mr. Huang plans to build a 4,500 square foot addition with a two-car garage. He said he is now considering using the existing driveway.

Other properties are in flux as well. In January, the house at 39-21 Douglaston Parkway went on the market for \$998,000, and at the

time of publication was under contract. And the mid 19th century farmhouse at 38-60 Douglaston Parkway – one of the oldest and most significant houses in the proposed district – went on the market in February for \$1.4 million.



The white clapboard house at 38-60 was moved to its current location in 1953 when the Community Church of Douglaston bought the original site to build an annex for the church. The church, which had planned to demolish the house at the time, sold it instead to the late Nicholas Nawrocki for \$10. Mr. Nawrocki built a new foundation on an empty parcel and moved the house to its current site four houses away. His children are selling the house, with the sale being handled by Station Realty in Douglaston.

The 1,500 square foot three-bedroom house, which also has late 19th and early

20th century additions, still has its original wide-plank floors and tin ceilings in some of the rooms on the first floor. The house is located on a 95 by 82 foot lot in an R1-2 zone, which would allow a nearly 4,000 square foot house.

The property at 39-21 Douglaston Parkway is a ca. 1920 center hall Colonial which has façade alterations that were begun before LPC calendared the proposed district in 2008; however, the changes were never completed. Although the windows were changed, wood shingle siding is visible beneath a Tyvec wrap meant as waterproofing for new exterior siding.

The Commission has not voted on the proposed Extension because of vocal opposition from a group of property owners, but as properties are sold opposition may be waning.

A spokesperson for LPC said the Commission continues to do community outreach, including mailing out informational brochures as well as handling telephone inquiries from residents. The proposed Extension includes 17 single-family houses, Public School 98, the Community Church of Douglaston and the Manor Apartments, a 31-unit cooperative apartment building.

– Kevin Wolfe



Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society

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WE ARE GOING GREEN...

We now mail to most of Douglaston and Little Neck. To save trees and to reduce expenses, we are trying to reduce the amount of paper we use in our mailings.

If you would like to receive the newsletter by email, or don't wish to receive it, please contact us at info@dlrhs.org

Join us at our Annual Meeting on April 19. Details inside.



MYSTERY PHOTO:

This is another post card from the Westmoreland section of Little Neck, ca. 1915. Can you identify what street this house is on, what the building is at the bottom of the hill, and what neighborhood is in the far distance of the background? Contact us at info@dlrhs.org if you know the answer.

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