



FALL 2022

THE DOUGLASTON HISTORIC DISTRICT
CELEBRATES 25 YEARS!

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THE DOUGLASTON AND LITTLE NECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Preserving and protecting the historical significance of Douglaston and Little Neck
and adjacent nature preserves.*



The Sullivan homestead at 202 Grosvenor Street was designed in 1910 by architect Winthrop A. Welch for himself in the Colonial Revival style. He made an extensive scrapbook of sketches and ideas for the house which today are part of the DLNHS collection at the Archives of the Queens Public Library in Jamaica. Unfortunately Welch did not enjoy his house for long. He died unexpectedly in 1914 at age 44

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

ANNUAL MEETING

A FANTASY CONVERSATION

If These Walls Could Talk

Picture a young, hopeful couple in the late spring of what would become a four-season lifetime together. He's a strappingly handsome young man, born in Belle Harbor, Queens, a child of the Great Depression and the son of a NYC police lieutenant. Despite a keen intellect, his only means of a college degree was as an elite athlete, attending the equally elite University of Notre Dame on a football scholarship.

Through a serendipitous introduction, he meets a ravishing beauty from Oak Park, IL, recently graduated from Marymount College and attending the Art Students League in New York City. The rest, as they say, well, that was the beginning of my history, along with my eight siblings.

—continued on page 6

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

I hope you had a healthy and enjoyable Summer 2022! We have been busy preparing for a new season of events and publishing our Newsletter. Here is what we've been up to:

This year's Annual Meeting was a great success—and in person for the first time since 2019! Our guest speaker, Gregory Dietrich of Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting, gave a fascinating talk on researching NYC buildings. If you missed it, we have his slide show on our web site, dlnhs.org. Thanks go to the Community Church of Douglaston for the meeting space and our local Douglaston Village sound and repair shop owner Scott Gramlich (S&G Sound) for loaning and setting up the projector and sound equipment.

Afterwards, we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Douglaston Historic District designation (June 24, 1997) with a champagne toast, followed by a fantastic cake, coffee and a beautiful flower display on the table. Huge thanks to our Events Committee for organizing this lovely event!

The DLNHS makes preserving and documenting the history of our neighborhoods a top priority. I am pleased to announce that we have just been awarded a Shelby White & Leon Levy Archival Assistance Grant from the New York Preservation Archive Project. The grant will allow the DLNHS to digitize the archives of the Douglas Manor Association and the Westmoreland Association in Little Neck. These two digital archives will help bolster the DLNHS's existing archive, which is currently housed at the Queens Public Library Archive in Jamaica. Together, all three archives are integral to documenting Douglaston and Little Neck's history.

With the return of in-person events, we are planning a new family event sponsored by Con Edison at Glenwood Landing Park in Little Neck. Besides learning preservation skills, children and their parents will also learn about and help plant indigenous plants that will attract butterflies and bees. Check our website and e-blasts for the upcoming announcement.

This Newsletter is made possible by our member contributions, and we are grateful to all who renewed their membership. We are thrilled that you enjoy reading about our local history and historic preservation, and for your ongoing support of the DLNHS! We look forward to seeing you—in person—this fall!

Sincerely,

Pamela Broderick, President



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BLINDED BY THE LIGHT, BEWILDERED BY THE BULBS

Buy Now Into the Cart Check out And CLICK! As I completed the second purchase of ten E26 Standard Soft White incandescent filament light bulbs from Amazon, I recognized with certainty that THIS was a losing battle. Diminished stock and no longer manufactured widely, the standard filament light bulb has come and gone.

Something seemingly more sinister has taken its place. Unpleasantly bright and blue, the loathsome Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) have won. Can it be true? Have the days of retiring to a warm and dreamy bedroom glow or peering into soft glimmering windows on a snowy winter stroll been permanently snuffed out? It seemed so. I finally accepted that my last-ditch effort to purchase the world's remaining stockpile of heat-producing, energy inefficient (albeit beautiful) filament light bulbs was futile.



Three eras of lighting displayed on one house--old fluorescent lighting, second floor left; the warm glow of the preferred but soon-to-be-extinct incandescent bulb, second floor right; and the dreaded but eco-responsible harsh white glare of the LED bulb, at the front door.

Was I alone in my battle? On evening walks, I scrutinized neighborhood homes with mismatched patchworks of blue, green, and yellow light waves bursting through Tudor, Colonial, and Craftsman-style windows. I contemplated entryways as their bright blue gaze cast cold downward LED beams onto once welcoming stone pathways. Some homes even had a multitude of blue lights cast outward, as if from the movie, "Close Encounters," when the grand and exotic ship, after a long solitary journey through space, descends downwards to finally land on terra firma. Cut scene.

A little dramatic? Perhaps. As light-sensitive persons annoyingly tend to be. This is with good cause, and science backs it. According to the CDC, some light temperatures adversely affect our circadian rhythm, making it hard to fall asleep, and harder to stay so. The Harvard Health Letter agrees: blue light suppresses the production of melatonin. We are also lighting everything lately, including things in the world that were previously never lit, and ultimately our light pollution is eroding the earth's natural day-to-night cycle. Large numbers of nocturnal animals, plants, and microorganisms are increasingly threatened. Sadly, this is our future. I encourage you to explore <http://www.darksky.org>, the website of The International Dark Sky Association. They provide information on the effects of lighting and tips on what we can do to protect what is globally valuable—our evening sky.

I have discovered some good news, too. LEDs are not going away. And that is OK! At the other end of the spectrum, their long-term environmental effects can be considered positive: they are long-lasting, energy-efficient, and ever increasing in quality and technology, with more color temperature options available. Finishing this article under the blazing heat of some leftover halogen track lighting, beads of sweat welling up on my brow, I admit that my home is also guilty of the slow transition from older lighting to the new LEDs.

With enough trial and error, I believe they're finally getting it right. For a warm, glowing, cozy, and MUCH LESS clinical atmosphere, welcome the 2700K LED light bulb. Combine this warm temperature bulb with a dimmer switch and you're golden! Literally. The 2700K produces a nice clear, yet warm light, harkening back to our bygone days but with the technology of today.

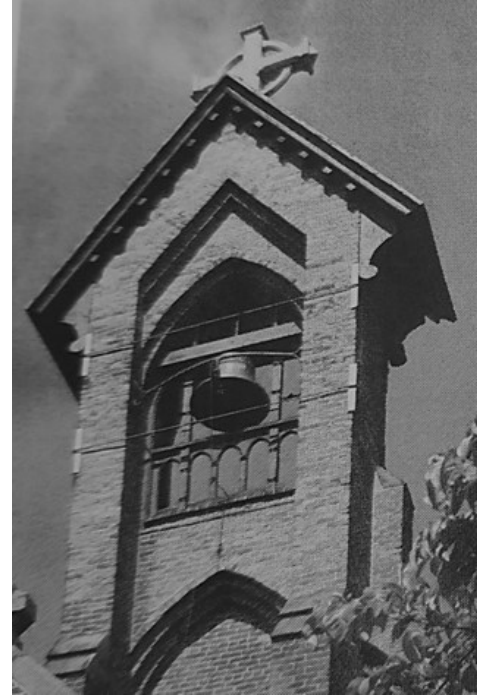
As each halogen in my home bids its farewell, and each filament bulb pops surprisingly to its demise, or fades away disappointingly, I will, one by one, replace them with the golden child of the LED bulbs: the 2700K. But that's only after I've exhausted my stockpile, naturally.

—Nicole Schorr

ANNUAL MEETING

On June 4, 2022, the DLNHS held its annual meeting—the first held in person since the pandemic began—at the Community Church of Douglaston. At the business meeting that opened the session, the members present elected the following members to the Board of Trustees Class of 2025: Carole Cox, Margaret King, Edward LaGrassa, Doris (Dede) Martin, Peter Reinharz, and Pia Thompson. The Board also includes, in the Class of 2023, Scott Bernstein, Rob Cangemi, John F. Duane, Anne Ronan, Kevin Wolfe, and Maura Wrynn; and in the Class of 2024, Helmut Beron, Pam Broderick, Rob Brusco, Victor Dadras, Michael Gannon, Michael Kurucz, Mary O’Byrne, and Nicole Schorr. Thanks to Pamela Broderick, Nicole Schorr, and Maura Wrynn for hosting the meeting, and to Ed LaGrassa for tech management. What a pleasure it is to be able to meet together again!

The business meeting was followed by a splendid presentation by Gregory Dietrich, head of Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting. Dietrich introduced the audience to a wide range of ways to learn more about enjoying and preserving historic buildings. He pointed to books on New York City’s architectural history; explained how it is determined that a building is or should be landmarked and how to access NYC Department of Building files and similar resources; where to look up the architects of buildings of interest; where to view historic maps, photographs, and newspaper articles; how to find out who owns, owned, lived or operated a business in a building; and how to do deed research and access past census data. You may view Dietrich’s presentation on this page of the DLNHS website: http://dlnhs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Historic-Building-Research-in-Queens.6_4_2022.pdf.



Belfry, Grace Episcopal Church in Whitestone

All photos are courtesy of Gregory Dietrich



Whitestone Branch, Queens Borough Public Library, 1927



Foster House, near Alley Pond, December 7, 1900

A FANTASY CONVERSATION

In the fabled land of Little Neck, New York, about one hundred long years ago, two men sat quietly sipping coffee in their construction office. They were the team of Ogden & McBride, builders of innovative housing, and successful businessmen. They were pondering what to do with a large tract of property just south of Northern Boulevard, bordered on the west by what is now Little Neck Parkway, the east by Glenwood Avenue, and the south by West End Drive.

“We have an important decision to make today regarding the future of the property which later will become Van Nostrand Court,” said McBride. “Look around us. There seems to be a move afoot to build housing in the area that people such as firemen, teachers, policemen, and others of similar income can afford to buy. Maybe we should jump on the bandwagon. There are Marathon Park here in Little Neck, Treasure Islands in Bayside, and of course Sunnyside Gardens in Queens, among others. The needs of people who work for a living, yet who can’t buy decent housing in Northeast Queens, deserve to be addressed, and now’s our chance to do the right thing by building attractive housing with amenities for them!”

“Listen, McBride, you’re always the soft one here. I say money, money, money for us is the answer. I say we build big, and let the owners carve them up the way they wish,” argued Ogden.



The original 1925 ad for Van Nostrand Court



Postcard Advertising Van Nostrand Court in 1925–1927: Looking West



Postcard Advertising Van Nostrand Court in 1925–1927: Looking South

“That just won’t wash, Ogden. Looking into my crystal ball, I see that in the future, that’s exactly what’s going to happen unless we do something to prevent that catastrophe. Semi-attached houses with a little green space, with three or four bedrooms, will provide decent housing that can’t be profitably knocked down because the lots are too small on which to build big multifamily homes. Hell, let’s even throw in a few fireplaces in the end houses, make two parks for the owners’ enjoyment, and with the money saved on construction costs, build a private road for the thirty houses and garages. You wanna a kid growing up in a basement or in a crowded, small apartment because builders are greedy? We will avoid that happening in the Court at least. Are you in, Ogden? If not, I’m taking my money elsewhere!”

Thanks to the decisions made by McBride and the reluctant Ogden who built the thirty houses in Van Nostrand Court in 1925/26, and others who constructed homes in developments such as Marathon Park and Treasure Islands, small areas of northeast Queens have retained their identity and provided places for working- and middle-class families to call home. There are too few single-family detached houses left, however. Single-family homes are being knocked down at an alarming rate by greedy developers and being replaced by expensive multifamily dwellings as tenants cram together in small apartments and struggle to pay huge rents. The fabled land of Little Neck is in big trouble!

The conversations between Ogden and McBride are figments of the author’s imagination, but Van Nostrand Court, Marathon Park, and the Treasure Island homes remain standing to this day!

—Carole Cox

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK, *continued*



202 Grosvenor Street, decked out for Halloween

My parents, Bette and Ed Sullivan, married in 1948. After rentals in Fresh Meadows and on Alameda Avenue, with nothing but a card table, some hand-me-down furniture, and their tenacious resolve to make a home for their growing family, they bought their dream house at 202 Grosvenor Street (they “found” Grosvenor Street by way of my mother’s sister who moved a block over two years prior and would remain for nearly forty years at 363 Grosvenor Street). My paternal grandmother, upon seeing the house exclaimed, “Why, it looks like Tara!” (referring to the iconic Civil War-era mansion from “Gone With The Wind”). Mind you, as a long-widowed woman who raised nine children alone with no financial resources, she felt great concern for how her son would manage this “mansion” with his limited means.



The Sullivan family gathers on the front porch

The truth is, the house was a shadow of its former glory days at this point. Designed in 1910 by renowned architect Winthrop Welch (thank you, Kevin Wolfe!), the house, which at that point was rented by the former Ambassador to Peru (the United Nations was then located in Lake Success), had fallen into a sordid state of disrepair. Numerous shutters were broken, paint was peeling, the basement was flooded, garbage was strewn throughout the three floors, and the grounds were overrun with particularly thorny rose bushes.



Bette Sullivan as the Good Witch Hazel

Undaunted, my parents brought back vestiges of the home that had seemingly been lost forever, with no resources other than their own “can do” spirit, so typical of their Greatest Generation. In their “off” hours, they tackled many projects together, including restoration of the original crown moldings, back stairs, and pantry originally built for the “help.” They raised nine children here and “202” became the center of spirited cocktail parties with a coterie of Douglas Manor couples also raising their families—I can still hear the sound of Nat King Cole playing on the Magnavox, the smell of perfume, and the clinking of ice cubes competing with the twinkling of charm bracelets worn by the many glamorous guests. It would become Ground Zero for the annual Halloween Party of Parties (at which my Mom would appear as The Good Witch Hazel to the screaming delight of more than fifty neighborhood kids), along with every holiday and birthday celebration and, more recently, the setting for famed motion picture director Sydney Lumet’s final film “Before the Devil Knows You’re Dead.” The home, in every season, was always festively decorated and landscaped by my mother. What a life they forged together with us along for the ride, with 202 Grosvenor Street always taking center stage!

My beloved mother passed away in 2006. My extraordinary Pop (many folks in town knew him for his hours-long walks throughout the Manor and sitting under the trees, his “chapel,” on Memorial Field) joined her at Christmastime, 2019. I can still hear their laughter and feel their spirits within these walls that they so lovingly inhabited.

In nearly seventy years there has never been a day that a “Sullivan” has not literally been living at 202 Grosvenor Street. This place that we call home is truly the soul of my family.

—continued on page 7

**BECOME A MEMBER OF THE DOUGLASTON AND LITTLE NECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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I hope that future generations of Douglas Manor residents come to not only appreciate the extraordinary landscape and architecture that make our corner of the world so amazingly unique but, moreover, fight to preserve the historic and artistic legacy which we have been gifted in the Douglaston/Little Neck area before it's too late.

Postscript punctuation: Mere days after I started drafting this piece, we had a knock on our door and there stood a middle-aged man from North Carolina with his twenty-something son. They relayed that the man's father lived in this house from the 1930s to the early 1950s. From all they heard over the years about this town and this home, father and son took a side trip from a wedding they were attending to see it for themselves. I had the opportunity to speak with the now-eighty-six-year-old former resident and he recalled, in vivid detail, the layout of the home. As we bid "adieu" to our guests that day, the son turned around and said, "Now I know what Grandpa was talking about! This town, this home is awesome."

Indeed it is!

—Maryclaire Sullivan



Bette and Ed Sullivan, owners and hosts at 202 Grosvenor Street

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CONTACT US

info@dlhns.org



The massive, four story high, cupola-topped Manhasset mansion of Bloodgood Havilland Cutter, ca. 1905. Cutter (1817-1906), dubbed the “Poet Lariat” by Mark Twain, was featured in our Spring 2022 newsletter. His main residence was an early 19th-century farmhouse in Little Neck. The 121-acre estate, with sweeping views of Manhasset Bay, was eventually subdivided in 1929 and includes all of today’s Incorporated Village of Plandome Heights. The mansion and Cutter’s Little Neck farmhouse were both demolished after his death.

Photo courtesy of Preservation Long Island’s Harry R. Gelwicks Photography Collection.

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