

THE DOUGLASTON AND LITTLE NECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



Gala Day marchers parade west on Broadway (Northern Boulevard) and Dartmouth Road (243rd Street) on June 5, 1915

Hooray For Gala Day!

There were probably few better ways to promote your neighborhood in 1915 than to create a day to celebrate it and hold a spectacular party! That is exactly what the Douglaston and Little Neck local leaders had in mind when they created Gala Day. Although traditional Gala Days had been fall harvest celebrations, the local leaders decided to have a Spring Gala Day extravaganza on June 5th, 1915!

To start things off, mock “elections” were held; there were two political parties, the “Little Neck Boomers,” headed by Joseph Hicks running for “Mayor” and the “Douglaston Boosters” with Nathaniel Merry running for the same “office.” A platform for each party was created with the stipulation that nothing of a serious nature could be included. The Boomers won all the key posts in the

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A Letter From Our President

Dear DLNHS Members!

It's that time of year again when the scorching days of summer come to an end with a sudden shift in the weather as cooler autumn breezes and temperatures arrive. I do enjoy these days when the weather is still comfortably warm in the daytime and the nights are cool. This is unofficially "Indian Summer." The days begin to shorten dramatically, and the nights start to turn chilly to remind us that yet another change of season is near.

What better time to send out our Fall Newsletter! This issue will surely delight you with two feature stories that offer some tantalizing glimpses into the history of our Douglaston and Little Neck neighborhoods: one about a one-of-a-kind century-old house in Douglas Manor, and another about a long ago--and long forgotten--"Gala Day" parade through Little Neck. Dig in!

Before you do read I wanted to thank all of our members who attended another successful Annual Meeting this past May. We had a great and enthusiastic audience on a beautiful spring day. Our fantastic Guest Speaker, Simeon Bankoff, discussed how to keep an Historical Society going after it achieves a major goal, as DLNHS has done in advocating for the creation of local Landmark Districts.

Simeon, the former Executive Director of the non-profit Historic Districts Council, has watched the progress of the DLNHS first hand from its founding in 1989. I was so glad to hear during his talk that Simeon gives us a five star rating! He enumerated some of the steps DLNHS has taken since accomplishing two New York City Historic Districts--the Douglaston Historic District (1997) and the Douglaston Hill Historic District (2004)--that have ensured not only our organization's survival, but its continued success.

He also discussed the successes and some failures of other similar historical societies he has witnessed. If we continue with the right moves as we've been doing, Simeon felt the DLNHS should still be going strong 25 years from now--hooray!! Let's make sure we do!

I want to thank our Executive Director, Susan Mathison, for playing a crucial role in helping DLNHS run smoothly for the past decade since joining us, and for helping our small non-profit organization survive the pandemic. Susan has applied for and gotten grants over the years that have allowed our education programs to grow and prosper, so that we now have four to five public education events a year, for both children and adults.

She has also gotten funding that has helped defray some of our newsletter publishing costs, the upcoming digitization of our archives, and management of the website, all of which allows us to keep our members informed and involved.

This Fall DLNHS will again partner with Open House New York for a tour of the historic Douglaston Club mansion (1819) that will be hosted by the Douglas House Trust on Saturday, October 21st. A week later we will then join the other spooks in on the Halloween fun at Zion Episcopal Church in Douglaston, handing out treats to local children (and adults)!

Later in the Fall, DLNHS will reprise our very successful Indigenous Plants Day event with our partner, the Westmoreland Association, at Glenwood Landing Park in Little Neck. The Association is the homeowner's association for the historic Westmoreland neighborhood founded in 1907.

Local elementary school students and their parents are invited to the park to hear a talk with a local environmentalist who is an expert on indigenous plantings. Children will be able to take native plants home to grow.

Just in time for the holidays in December, DLNHS will have a tent with informative handouts, hot chocolate, and holiday items for sale at the Annual Winter Festival. This year's event, hosted by the Douglaston Local Development Corporation, will be held at Douglaston Village at the Douglaston Long Island railroad station, date to be announced.

Look out for our e-blast updates through the Fall and early Winter to keep you updated on these events.

Thank you again, members! None of these projects could have been completed without your generous support!!
Sincerely,

Pamela Broderick, President

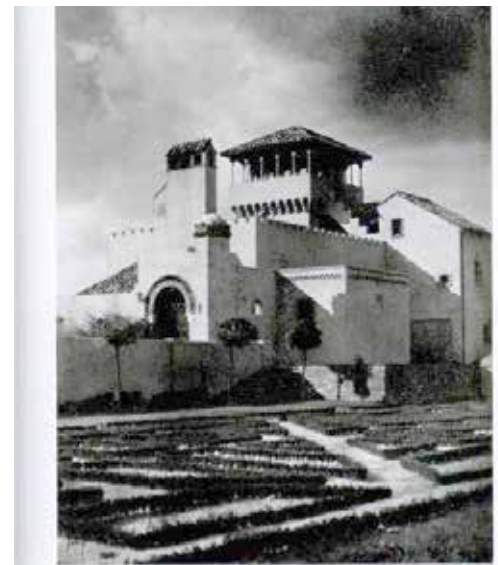
“The House with the Flat Roof”: 5 Grosvenor Street



When Douglas Manor was established in 1906, deed restrictions were put in place to ensure that the neighborhood would remain idyllic and harmonious. One such restriction: “no building of any character having what is known as a ‘flat roof’ shall be erected.” The idea, presumably, was that flat-roofed buildings had a commercial or “tenement” appearance. The developers of the Manor wished to retain the look and feel of an upscale residential enclave. (Never mind that the existing 1819 Van Zandt manor house—now the Douglaston Club—and 1848 Allen-Beville House both had flat roofs.) Alas, for reasons unknown, one new flat-roofed house managed to sneak past the DMA. No one knows why. Fortunately, it has become one of the Manor’s most distinctive homes, adding to the neighborhood’s eclectic mix of early 20th century architecture. 5 Grosvenor Street was designed by noted architect Bradley Delehanty in 1922. Delehanty was famous for his Gold Coast Long Island mansions of the late ’20s and ’30s. In 1922, however, Delehanty was just starting out. His only prior commissions were facade alterations for two Upper East Side townhouses. 5 Grosvenor therefore appears to be the very first house designed by Delehanty. The house is Spanish-Moorish in style—a rarity in the US, both then and now. While there are other Spanish-influenced homes in Douglas Manor, 5 Grosvenor is unique. Stylistic features include a rounded entryway and front door; unadorned stucco facade; a distinctly shaped chimney cap—and of course, a flat roof ringed with ceramic tile.

Delehanty himself apparently designed only two Moorish-style houses in his entire career—both in 1922. The second home—a castle-like estate overlooking Chesapeake Bay—bears a striking resemblance to 5 Grosvenor, other than the differences in scale. Note the rounded entry arch, the chimney cap, the stucco, the sections of flat roof. (5 Grosvenor looks like it could be the caretaker’s cottage for this estate!) Whether 5 Grosvenor influenced the subsequent commission or was a “test run” for the larger home is not known.

The original owners of 5 Grosvenor were Mr. and Mrs. Ivan Weisbrod. Mr. Weisbrod (1877-1967) was an attorney for a Manhattan law firm. The Weisbrods were well-heeled enough for Mrs. Weisbrod to sit for famed photographer Arnold Genthe, known for his photographs of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and John D. Rockefeller.



“Cape Centaur”
Residence of Glenn Stewart, Easton, MD.

5 Grosvenor

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The Weisbrods' son Kendrick (1919-1998) was three years old when they moved into their new home, and grew up in the neighborhood. The family resided at 5 Grosvenor until at least 1940. Kendrick, then 21, was still listed in the census as a resident. The Catalanello family occupied the home beginning in the 1950s, followed by Edward and Edna O'Neill, who owned it until 2002. Since 2002, the home has been owned by the Munseys. The family was already living in the Manor when they purchased 5 Grosvenor from the O'Neills. They subsequently spent several years renovating the home, including rebuilding and enclosing the sagging open porch in 2004; it is now a light-filled sunroom overlooking Little Neck Bay.

Delehanty designed no other homes in Douglaston, but most of his North Shore Long Island mansions survive. 5 Grosvenor, his first full commission remains a unique and vital contribution to the character of Douglas Manor.



Arnold Genthe's 1933 photo of Mrs. Weisbrod



Another view of 5 Grosvenor Street

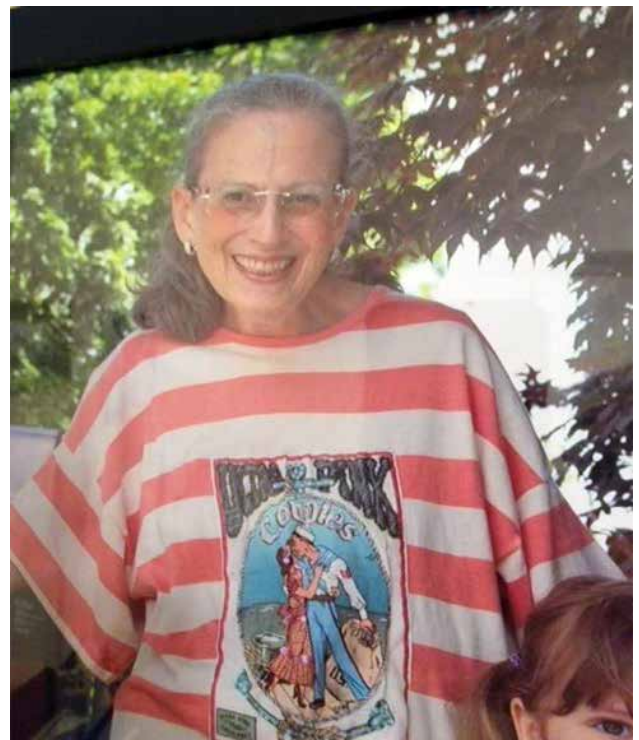
JoAnn Ruiz, A Founding Member of DLNHS

JoAnn Ruiz, who passed away on August 25, 2022, was a very active Board member in the early days of DLNHS. In addition to her work on the organization's newsletter, she was often the meeter and greeter, and donation and ticket taker, depending on the event being held.

Joanne was always very well organized, and she made certain everything was added up correctly. As the friendly face of the organization, she greeted everyone with a smile, and she made all guests at our events feel welcome.

A longtime resident of Douglaston, JoAnn and her husband Ralph lived for many years on Shore Road in Douglas Manor. They enjoyed restoring a beautiful 1909 Queen Anne style house with a wrap-around porch facing Little Neck Bay

We fondly remember JoAnn and thank her for her many contributions to and enthusiasm for DLNHS in the early days of our organization!



JoAnn Ruiz in an undated photograph

Simeon Bankoff Is Speaker at DLNHS Annual Meeting

DLNHS held its annual meeting on Saturday, May 6, 2023, with noted preservationist Simeon Bankoff as the guest speaker. The topic of his talk was, “Building to Last: Ensuring the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society’s Success for the Next 25 Years,” which he presented to a large group of attendees at the Community Church of Douglaston.

The former Executive Director of the Historic Districts Council, and a preservation consultant with more than 25 years’ experience in New York City, Mr. Bankoff works with non-profit historic preservation organizations, helping them to achieve their goals. He has kept an eye on DLNHS during his entire career including the designation efforts for both the Douglaston Historic District and the Douglaston Hill Historic District

Mr. Bankoff touched on many topics during his talk. He shared anecdotes about various community groups in the five boroughs and explained essential steps they followed to be successful. He noted however, that in order to remain vital, organizations must continue to grow and remain relevant in their communities. He also suggested ways to keep community organizations solvent once they have achieved their immediate goals through the use of fundraising, email outreach, and educational events. He also stressed that community involvement is extremely important to keep an organization such as ours moving forward.

Everyone found his talk interesting and informative. A lively question and answer period followed his talk. Afterwards attendees enjoyed the delicious refreshments. We are looking forward to working with Mr. Bankoff as DLNHS plans for the next 25 years!



attendees at DLNHS Annual Meeting



Pam Broderick, President and speaker Simeon Bankoff



Mary O’Byrne & Margaret Wolf greet attendees



Ed LaGrassa & Scott Bernstein volunteer to set up for the meeting



Pam Broderick and Simeon Bankoff with some of the attendees

Gala Day June 5. 1915

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morning “elections” after much speechifying and electioneering. In addition to Hicks’ victory as “Mayor,” the following dignitaries were elected from the Boomer Party: A.W. Sullivan defeated John Dorr as “Public Service Commissioner,” Howard Van Nostrand won over W.W. Walling as “Prosecuting Attorney,” A. Helmas bested H. J. Letterman for “Chief of Police,” and Simeon Pulen was victorious over F. A. Reif as “Justice.” These “Officials,” once elected, proceeded to lead the Gala Day Parade, with more than two thousand marchers, on a route which traveled from Little Neck to Douglaston and back again. There were many decorated cars bringing up the rear of the parade, which were the objects of much excitement. (Autos were still very much a novelty in 1915!)



looking southeast on Northern Blvd. towards St Anastasia's



looking southeast on what is now Northern Blvd

The event attracted huge crowds because of the variety of activities! In addition to the mock election, which was one of the highlights of Gala Day 1915, and the enormous parade, the day and evening was packed with other activities worthy of much larger communities. During the day there were drills by the Boy Scouts and local Fire Departments, a ladies’ tennis match, displays by various stores in the two neighborhoods, noisemaking by the ringing of church bells and fire whistles, games for adults and children, balloon releases, and fireworks. All of this excitement was followed at night by more fireworks, a combination minstrel and comedy show, and concluded with dancing to live music.

Gala Day 1915 in Douglaston and Little Neck must have been a day to remember! The author wishes she could go back in time for that one day just to have been there!



looking southwest on today's Northern Blvd. towards the location of the current CVS in Douglaston



Become a Member of the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society
It's the best way to receive the latest news and learn more about local history

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WWW.DLNHS.ORG

Or detach and mail this form with your check made payable to:

Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society
 P.O. Box 630142
 Little Neck, New York 11363

The Battlefield Around the Corner

Two years ago, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Stop and Shop market at the corner of Northern Boulevard and Marathon Parkway in Little Neck closed its doors and left our community without a local grocery. Finally, J-Mart came and opened a community supermarket on the site. While having a supermarket to serve the surrounding community is critical, local residents should take a few moments to learn the historical significance of the new J-Mart site.

The history of the white man in the Little Neck area began in 1621, Robert Hicks left England and arrived in the New World aboard a ship called "Fortune." Hicks arrived shortly after the Mayflower made its famous landing in Massachusetts in 1620, and he joined the Puritan community in the Plymouth colony. Two of Hicks' sons, John and Stephen, chose to leave the Puritan group and move to Long Island. In 1642, John Hicks received a land grant from the Governor for the area that is now part of the Glen Oaks community. Three years later Stephen received a grant for land on the west side of the current Alley Creek.

But land grants from the Governor were not always recognized by the indigenous people who had lived and worked the land for centuries. The Matinecocks were a tribe that occupied much of Long Island's North Shore and today's Little Neck and Douglaston region whose territory ranged from Newtown Creek in the west, to the area currently known as Smithtown on the east. Many of the Matinecocks occupied the area in and around the Little Neck region because the Little Neck Bay and the Alley Creek were ideal locations to support fishing, clamming and hunting; the waterways which made for easy travel by canoe. They tilled some of the land, and hunted deer, wild fowl, and trapped small game. Their land belonged to the tribe, and it could not be sold by individuals.

As the numbers of European settlers increased in the area during the 17th Century, many conflicts over the land arose. Some of these conflicts were settled peacefully, including the sale of certain parcels of land to the settlers. But in other instances, the disputes resulted in violence. When Thomas Hicks, the son of John Hicks, inherited his childless Uncle Stephen's land, Thomas became an active member of the community and even served terms as sheriff, town councilman and local justice. As a leader in the community, Thomas Hicks had many allies and followers.

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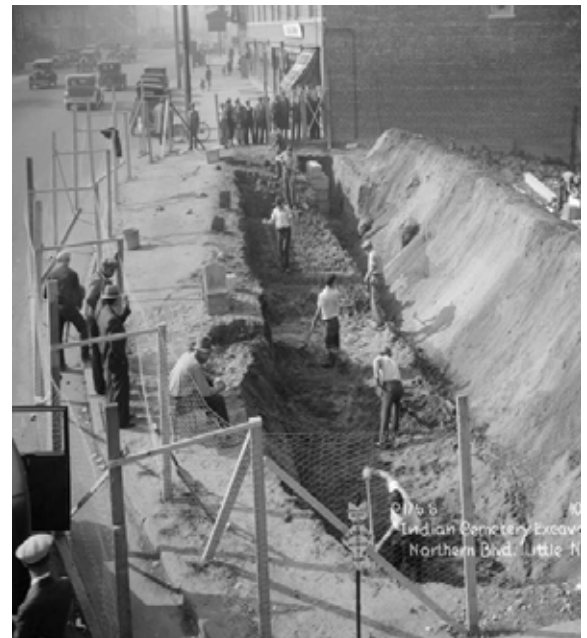
The Battlefield Around the Corner

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As struggles over land with the Matinecocks grew, Thomas Hicks and his supporters faced off against the Matinecock tribe in 1656 at the site that is now J-Mart. That battle was the final stand of the Matinecock tribe in the area, and all Native warriors were reportedly killed. These heavy losses left only women, children and older men among the Matinecocks, and their sovereignty over the area was forever lost.

Ten years later, in 1666, Thomas Hicks received a significant land grant from the Governor for 4,000 acres in the region west of Alley Creek, and was granted land in Little Neck years later. Thomas, who lived to 100 years of age, was able to watch the early development of the region we now call our home.

Next time you go to, or pass by J-Mart, please stop and pay tribute to the Matinecocks who, at that very spot, fought for their land and their heritage more than 350 years ago. It is more than a marketplace; it is a piece of our history!



Matinecock graves are dug up in 1931 during the widening of Northern Boulevard and relocated to a mass grave in Zion Episcopal Church Cemetery