

Did a Ghost Really Appear at Jane’s Walk?

This spring’s Jane’s Walk, part of Jane’s Walk NYC, that is sponsored by the Municipal Art Society of New York in collaboration with the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society, took place on Saturday, May 4th. It was an exploration of Zion Episcopal Church and Cemetery led by DLNHS Board members Victor Dadras and Kevin Wolfe, local architects and preservationists, and the Reverend Lindsay Lunnum, Rector, and the Reverend Carl Adair, Assistant Rector, of Zion Episcopal Church

The first half of the tour through the cemetery, led by Victor Dadras and Kevin Wolfe, highlighted some of the older gravesites and discussed Zion’s part in the history of the rural cemetery movement in the United States. Visitors were unexpectedly stopped midway by an apparent ghost who suddenly appeared before his impressive twelve-foot-tall memorial. It was Bloodgood Cutter, who died in 1906, who welcomed visitors. The somewhat legendary (and infamous) self-proclaimed local poet arose from the dead to talk to the group of visitors. In addition to imparting some self-congratulatory information about his life, Mr. Cutter (rumor has it that it was really Carole Cox, DLNHS Board member) insisted on reading one of his poems before quietly returning from whence he came.

The Reverends Adair and Lunnum led the second half of the tour. They discussed the Matinecock burial site which is located in the churchyard. Inside the historic church, they discussed enslavement, and how some of the original founders of Zion Church were enslavers. This well attended event was interesting and informative, and visitors commented on how they enjoyed the afternoon.



The intrepid visitors set off



Pausing for information and questions



Bloodgood Cutter wows the crowd with his “inspirational poetry”



Pastors Adair and Lunnum show visitors the lovely Zion Episcopal Church interior

Separated at Birth? The Twin Dutch Colonials of East Drive

By Todd Tarpley

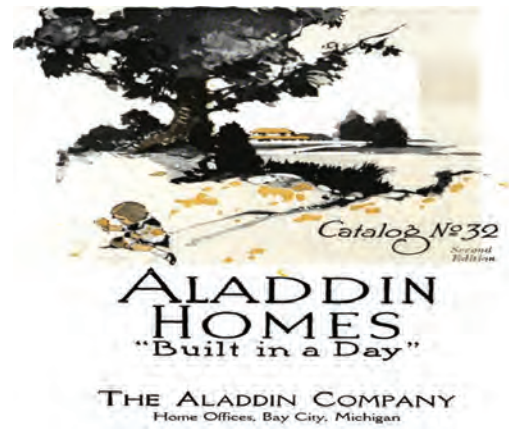
Two houses. Built at the same time. By the same person.
A block from each other. From the same mail-order-house company.



245 Beverley Road, Douglas Manor

303 Grosvenor Street, Douglas Manor

Look closely! These two houses are not the same. They are mirror images of each other! Some of the story is lost to history, but here’s what we know. In 1922, F. Willard Bowman, a local oil heater dealer, and James H. Welch, a Yale grad in the “real estate business in Douglaston, Long Island,” teamed up to build two houses in Douglas Manor. They ordered a model called “The Avalon” from the Aladdin Company catalog (see below). Two, actually: one with reverse plans.



Aladdin’s slogan was “Built in a Day.” Materials were shipped to the building site for \$2,129, including plaster, nails, and two coats of paint! If not literally to be built in a day, these houses were meant to be built very quickly.

The two Aladdin houses were shipped by rail from Michigan—which means they arrived via the Long Island Rail Road. We think of the LIRR as a commuter line, but in the 1920s it also delivered mail and freight—including kit houses to Douglaston.

Bowman and Welch erected the first house at 245 Beverly Road—a corner lot with a driveway on East Drive. Bowman and his wife occupied that house for many years, complete with a garden of exotic ferns (Bowman was a member of the American Fern Society, for what it’s worth.) They built the second house one block to the north, at 303 Grosvenor Street—another corner lot fronting East Drive. Upon completion, that house was sold to a “Mr. Robbe from New York City,” about whom nothing else is known.

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DLNHS Holds Its Annual Meeting

On Saturday, June 1, 2024, the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society held its annual meeting at the Community Church of Douglaston's Fellowship Hall. The guest speaker at this very well attended meeting was Lucie Levine, Preservation, Advocacy, and Outreach Manager of the Historic Districts Council, a non-profit advocacy organization. She spoke on the impact the City of Yes may have on historic districts.

DLNHS President Peter Reinharz opened the meeting, speaking of the importance of appreciating the history of our area. Ed LaGrassa, board member, then gave a moving tribute to the late Mike Gannon, a long time DLNHS board member and Douglas Manor resident, telling the audience how much he will be missed, how he was an inspiration, and, a generous, kind, and unbelievably knowledgeable, human being. A moment of silence was held in his memory.

Ms. Levine's talk, which followed, discussed the effect of these proposed zoning changes on historic neighborhoods. Ms. Levine saw some benefits to the section on Carbon Neutrality, and she also mentioned that the Landmarks Commission has approved the use of solar panels. Victor Dadras also expressed concerns about the negative impact of the zoning changes that City of Yes will bring to our neighborhoods. Following a question and answer period, refreshments were served. More than 40 people attended.

Many board members of DLNHS volunteered to organize this meeting, arrange for refreshments, and greet the guests attending the meeting. Victor Dadras was largely responsible for organizing the meeting and served as moderator. Margaret Wolf and Todd Tarpley greeted the attendees, Carole Cox served as reporter for the DLNHS newsletter, and Anne Ronan, Helmut Beron, Scott Bernstein, and Ed LaGrassa helped with refreshments and other tasks.



*Lucie Levine addresses attendees
at the Annual Meeting*



*DLNHS President Peter Reinharz
speaks to the audience*

Letter From Our President, Peter Reinharz

As this fall season arrives, all of us living in Douglaston and Little Neck are facing a serious threat, the destruction of our neighborhoods as they exist today. The current New York City administration, through the Housing Opportunity section of the City of Yes amendment, is working to fundamentally change residential and commercial zoning across the five boroughs, changes which will have a devastating impact on Douglaston and Little Neck by eliminating single family zoning and the suburban feel of our neighborhoods. DLNHS is an organization dedicated to educating our residents about our community's past, and helping them appreciate our region's unique character; this proposal runs afoul of our central mission.

DLNHS also conducts a variety of programs throughout the year to educate our members about the history, culture and qualities of our section of northeast Queens. Recognizing the importance of our past is the best way to preserve our future.

So please, if you haven't yet joined the Douglaston and Little Neck Historical Society, I am asking that you do so immediately. We need everyone in our district to remind our civic and political leaders that a community cannot be built by tearing down neighborhoods and erasing our past.

Peter Reinharz, President

The Power Broker and Alley Pond Park

By Peter Reinhartz

Those of you who are history buffs may know that 2024 is an important year in the literature about our local history. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Robert A. Caro's, *The Power Broker*. The 1200-page volume is a masterful biography of Robert Moses, the Parks Commissioner and, arguably, one of the world's greatest urban planners in American history.

No matter what your opinion of Robert Moses, New York City and New York State benefited from his visions that made New York the urban leader of the Western world. Moses, as Parks Commissioner, oversaw the construction of Flushing Meadows Park, Kissena Park, Cunningham Park, and Alley Pond Park in Queens. Not only did Moses, in the 1920's and 1930's, open these wonderful spaces to residents of Queens and the other boroughs, but he made certain that they had interconnecting parkways. One of these parks, Alley Pond Park, is in our own backyard!

Alley Pond Park is one of our community's most extraordinary resources. The current park, more than 655 acres, borders Douglaston Parkway on its east side, runs north to Little Neck Bay, south to Union Turnpike and borders Bayside on the west. Throughout the park there are trails passing through woodlands that offer the rustic feeling of a hike through Maine's back country, along with fields and grass pastures for sunbathing and picnics. You can play, softball, baseball, soccer, football, and tennis, and even try out an adventure course. Providing places for sports and recreation was a critical motivation for Moses in developing the large Queens parks. In fact, when Alley Pond Park was dedicated in 1935, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia threw out the first pitch to Babe Ruth on the park's new baseball diamond. Softball leagues are there throughout the summer, but there are even more sports activities at Alley Pond Park. If you head over to upper Alley Pond Park on a Saturday morning, you're likely to see cricket matches being played. Also, at the north end of the park, on Northern Boulevard in Douglaston, golfers can enjoy a driving range with an attached sports bar and restaurant.

While the Babe is long gone, Alley Pond Park is still a shining diamond within New York City. For nature lovers, Alley Pond Park is one of our region's top sites for viewing flora and fauna. In September, as the jewel weed flowers blossom, Hummingbirds fill the park to feed on the nectar. Butterflies, including monarchs, swallowtails, buckeyes, red admirals and great spangled fritillaries are just a few of the spectacular bursts of color that float through the late summer air. At the same time, bird watchers can enjoy one of the best birding locations on Long Island's north shore. In upper Alley Pond Park, the woods are home to Great Horned and Screech owls, Red Tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks and an occasional Peregrine Falcon. Songbirds include cardinals, blue-jays, various woodpeckers, nuthatches and cowbirds. Warblers in their southward migration fill the forest as they head to the tropics, along with the spectacular Scarlet Tanagers, and Baltimore and Orchard Orioles.

At the north end of the park, the marsh and Alley Creek lead out into Little Neck Bay and Long Island Sound. This area provides a fantastic opportunity to see all kinds of shorebirds. Great Blue Herons, Green Herons, and Black-crowned Night Herons are common visitors to the area, while Osprey patrol the skies over the water looking for a fish meal. Occasionally, you'll see the great wingspans of Turkey Vultures and Bald Eagles flying over the Alley Creek marshes.

As autumn approaches, a walk along the miles of trails in Upper Alley Pond's woodlands provide a feast of color for leaf-peepers that rivals upstate New York and New England. Take a walk on a cool fall morning in late October to early November to see some of the best fall colors of the Northeast. Even as winter sets in to Alley Pond Park there's still much to see. The park is so well known for its birding opportunities that the Audubon Society includes Alley Pond Park in its annual Christmas Bird Count.

Robert Moses, and Mayors Jimmy Walker and Fiorello LaGuardia, gave our city one of the nation's best urban parks. Alley Pond Park offers a combination of woodlands, shoreline, and sporting locales that is rarely seen in local parks across the nation. And yet, it sits right in our own Douglaston and Little Neck backyard. The nearly 100-year-old park is a testament to Robert Moses's insights, and it should serve as a reminder to current residents and officials of the importance of quality urban planning.

Say “No” to the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity

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The Universal Affordability Preference is a new tool that is included in the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity. This will allow owners of buildings to piggyback at least 20% more units on them, as long as these additions are “affordable,” which is considered to be 60% of the median income in high-cost neighborhoods. There are many concerns here, but two are: will the design of these additions conform to existing and surrounding architecture, and, how will additions be made to buildings that may not be structurally designed to be expanded?

Transit Oriented Development, as the name indicates, will permit owners of lots 50 X 100 ft and larger, including church owned properties, to build 3 to 5 story apartments if the properties are located within ½ mile of a subway or rail line, are on the short end of the block, or on a street over 75 feet wide. In addition to providing additional affordable housing, the philosophy here is that with the parking requirement eliminated, there will be less pollution because there will be fewer cars, and residents will become less reliant on their automobiles because of the proximity to public transportation. The fact that supermarkets and stores are located at least a fifteen-minute drive from most rail stations in Northeast Queens doesn’t seem to be a problem for these planners. Will residents have to Uber it in order to go shopping? No. Residents will have cars, and parking will be daunting and pollution will worsen. Does it matter to the Mayor and New York City Planning Commission that most areas in Northeast Queens neighborhoods that are within a ½ mile of Long Island Rail Road Stations have historically contained single-family homes, in many cases, homes that are either landmarked or of historical interest? Of course not.



Your neighbor could be this...



instead of this!

I have no room in this newsletter to discuss all the proposed zoning changes. However, some questions, readers, that you should all be asking at this point are, “Who will design and inspect all the planned new housing? If the goal is to provide affordable housing, is that realistic in neighborhoods where rentals for one-bedroom apartments exceed \$1700 a month? How will all these new residences irrevocably change my neighborhood and cause overcrowding? Will the infrastructure of our neighborhoods be overburdened?”

What can YOU do to keep City of Yes for Housing Opportunity from being passed by the New York City Council when it comes before it this fall? First, let me provide a few words of encouragement. The second section of the amendment, Economic Opportunity, passed although it was opposed by almost every Queens Community Board, but some of the more onerous provisions, such as the allowing of manufacturing in residences, were eliminated before it went to a vote. One has to hope that this will also happen with many of the provisions of the Housing Opportunity section of the amendment before it comes before the New York City Council.

This proposed section of the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity assumes that every neighborhood in New York City is the same, which is not true at all. It is also questionable whether providing affordable housing, the supposedly main purpose of this amendment, will actually be a result of its passage. There’s no real plan here, just a recipe for chaos, and certainly no guidelines. Contact your local New York City Council Members Vicky Paladino or Linda Lee, Queens Borough President Richards, and Mayor Adams. Voice your opposition by letter and email, and make your voices heard!

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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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

A Soon to Be Lost Treasure In Little Neck



The lovely, quirky, old house above, located at 253-17 Pembroke Avenue, Little Neck, may soon fall victim to the wrecking ball. Known as the William Van Nostrand House, it was built in the mid-1800's and originally was located where the former Little Neck Theater stood on Northern Boulevard. Before it was bought by the Van Nostrand family, it was owned by Captain Valentine Peters who ran a general store from part of the property. At that time, it was called "Old Oaks" because of the large oak trees that surrounded it. It was sold to William Van Nostrand, a wealthy landowner who was one of the founders of the Little Neck National Bank which was housed in the building that Chase Bank now occupies on the corner of Northern Boulevard and Little Neck Parkway in Little Neck. The Van Nostrand House was moved in 1929 to its current location which is behind where it was before, slightly to the west, and is facing Pembroke Avenue instead of Northern Boulevard. In recent years, this historic house was converted into a rooming house and has slowly fallen into disrepair. At the time of publication, it has been sold to the owner of the local restaurant, Il Bacco, tenants have been removed from the house, and it is rumored that its new owner plans to demolish it and turn it into a parking lot. They call this progress?

**DOUGLASTON AND LITTLE NECK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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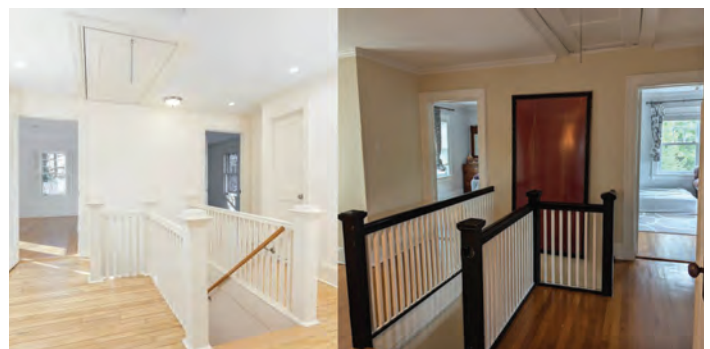
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Separated at Birth – Continued from page 3

The homes were in the Dutch Colonial Revival style, which attained peak popularity in the 1920s. The chief characteristic of a Dutch Colonial is a gambrel roof—a roof with two slopes on each side, giving it a somewhat rounded, barn-like appearance. There are well over a dozen Dutch Colonials in Douglas Manor. Despite minor alterations through the years, the “twin” houses of Beverly and Grosvenor remain remarkably similar, both inside and out.



*Left: 245 Beverly foyer
Right: 303 Grosvenor foyer*



*Left: 245 Beverly second floor landing
Right: 303 Grosvenor second floor landing*

As for Aladdin, its kit-home sales peaked in the late 1920s; it was hard hit by the Depression and never recovered. By the time it ceased operations in the 1980s, it had sold over 75,000 homes in 49 states.

The story of 245 Beverly and 303 Grosvenor has a happy ending. Both homes have new occupants within the past three years. Both are families with a toddler son—though they are not mirror images of each other!