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FLATBVSH



The Vanderveer Mill

FLATBVSH
Past & Present

By EDMUND D. FISHER
Illustrated from Drawings by ALLEN B. DOGGETT



FIDELITAS ET SECVRITAS

P U B L I S H E D B Y
FLATBVSH TRVST COMPANY
B R O O K L Y N N E W Y O R K

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Press of
Robert L. Stillson
514 Pearl Street
New York

Preface

Flatbush, although a community founded over two centuries and a half ago, is yet young in strength and vigor, and is an active and growing power in the political, social, and intellectual life of the city of New York. It has seemed to the management of the Flatbush Trust Company, however, that not enough is generally known of the beauties and possibilities of the section; so this little sketch has been written with the desire that it may be of some service to the people of Flatbush as a means of giving to their friends and acquaintances in other places some little idea of the home neighborhood.

This work has also been undertaken and published with the hope that it will be regarded as a slight token to depositors that the officers and directors appreciate the confidence and support (see page 68) which has been so generously accorded to the Company.

January 1, 1901.

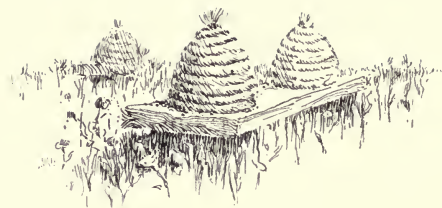
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York.
- CAMPBELL. The Puritan in England, Holland and America.
- FLINT. Early Long Island.
- LORD. Modern Europe.
- MOTLEY. Rise and Fall of the Dutch Republic.
- MOWATT. Autobiography of an Actress.
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- STRONG. History of Flatbush.
- TOOKER. The Algonquian Series.
- VANDERBILT. Social History of Flatbush.

Amateur Photographic Work by
GEORGE M. BOARDMAN, HARRY S. SHAPTER,
ROBERT L. STILLSON and WILLIAM R. VANDERVEER.

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Chapter One

THE seventeenth century was eminently a period of birth, of growth, of development. The shackles of Spain, the great world-power of the preceding era, had long retarded the progress of civilization; but her power had now been broken by the indomitable courage and perseverance of the Dutch in their successful struggle for liberty. The humiliation of Spain was completed and her spirit crushed by the defeat of the invincible Armada, through English pluck and valor. There were thus released, for civilization and for progress, those forces, which, in their natural development, have made the America of to-day. The "Half-Moon" and the "Mayflower" now could make their peaceful voyages across the great Atlantic, for, although the warships of Spain were still a menace to navigation, they were but little feared by the hardy mariner.

Among the daring spirits who thus ventured westward from Europe toward the unknown regions



From Anderson's History of the U. S., by permission.

The Half-Moon.

beyond the sea, was Henry Hudson, a picturesque figure in early American history. While searching for the mythical northwest passage, in the employ of the Dutch East India Company, he had the rare good fortune to find the entrance to New York Harbor. It is doubtful whether Hudson fully appreciated the magnitude of his discovery, but he certainly did not underestimate the value of the land for purposes of settlement, as on his return the Dutch West India Company was organized, and soon the prosperous colony called New Amsterdam, was flourishing on the island of Manhattan, and the entire region was called New Netherlands.

Long Island at this time was occupied by some thirteen tribes of Indians, of whom the Canarsies



Photo by Geo. M. Boardman.

Flatbush Avenue Entrance to Melrose Park.



The Birdsall Homestead.

held the territory between Prospect Park and the ocean. Their straggling trail from the hills to the water, now daily traversed by crowded electric cars, is known as Flatbush Avenue. When the early Dutch settlers explored the region one can imagine they found a picturesque and narrow path, winding its way through the primeval forest. It was sufficiently attractive or convenient, however, to be chosen as the centre of the little settlement which about the year 1634, under the name of Midwout, became the foundation of Modern Flatbush.

A history of Flatbush might well be given the title of one of George MacDonald's novels, "The

Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood ;” for, with the exception of the excitement and disturbance caused by the battle of Long Island and the quartering of British and Hessian soldiers in the town, there is but little recorded that indicates other than a continuously peaceful, prosperous, and happy community.

The Dutchman’s record as a fighter is unquestioned. He struggled manfully and successfully for



The Vanderveer Barn.

nearly three-quarters of a century for the great principles which were embodied in our own Declaration of Independence, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." But he was a diplomat as well as a fighter, and in the colonies found it the best policy to be on friendly terms with the natives; so the annals of Flatbush are free from the record of such sangui-



The J. C. Bergen House.

nary conflicts with the Indians as may be found in the history of many of the other colonies.

Nothing definite is known regarding the first settlement of Flatbush, but it is probable that about the year 1634 a party of pioneers, attracted to the section by the rich character of the soil, as well as the abundance of fine timber land, effected a purchase





The Vanderveer House.

from the Indians. The first authentic record indicates that in 1651 there had been allotted some forty-eight tracts of land, two to each proprietor, with a liberal central tract for church purposes. A considerable stretch of timber land lying to the north-east of the settlement, was for many years held in common, and afterwards became the town of New Lots. What was known as Corlear's and Twiller's Flats to the southeast also remained long undivided, and a portion was ultimately sold for educational purposes.

A title to all this territory was confirmed in 1651 by a patent given by the Director Stuyvesant to Jan Snedecor, Arent Van Hatten, Johannes Megopo-

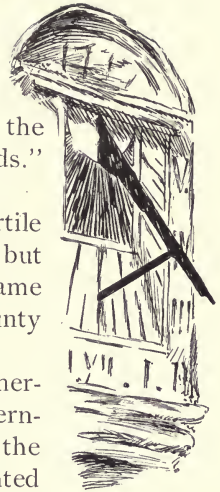
lensis, and others. A second patent was granted in 1656 to the inhabitants of Midwout, as title to "a parcel of meadow ground or valley lying on the east-northeast of the Canarsie Indian planting lands." This tract is known as the Canarsie Meadows.

With practically unlimited territory, with fertile soil, great forests of hickory and oak, a secluded but central location, Midwout prospered and soon became the most important of what were known as the county towns.

During the period of ownership of the New Netherlands by the Dutch West India Company, the government of the Long Island towns was vested in the Director at New Amsterdam, who was represented locally by what was called a "schout." It seemed to be the general feeling, however, that the government of the Director resembled too nearly that of a dictator.

This feeling crystalized in 1653, and Midwout sent two delegates, Elbert Elbertsen and Thomas Spicer, to a convention called to consider the entire question. The demand of the convention was for laws resembling more nearly those of the Fatherland. Governor Peter Stuyvesant, although a man of energy and character, was, nevertheless, something of a tyrant. He was very much incensed at this endeavor of the colonists to secure additional privileges, and ruled that the Dutch towns of Long Island had no jurisdiction at New Amsterdam, and ordered the convention dispersed.

The natural indignation of the Long Islanders at this summary treatment was somewhat allayed and their attention diverted for a time by the necessity of



banding together for mutual protection against certain robbers and pirates who infested the rivers and bays in the vicinity. So Breuckelen, Midwout and Amersfort formed a military company in 1654 for this purpose. Every third man acted as minute-man. A sergeant was placed in command in each village, and an efficient patrol organized. A little later were the days of the famous Captain Kidd, and though it is certain that he never "sailed" in the immediate neighborhood of Flatbush, yet tradition asserts that some of his gold was buried, if not within the limits of the town itself, certainly not far from its borders. Many a Flatbush boy has spent weary hours at the near-by beaches and islands in a fruitless search for some of the treasure safely hidden by either Captain Kidd or some other rover of the seas.

The convention of 1653, although so displeasing to Stuyvesant, was not without its salutary effect, for in

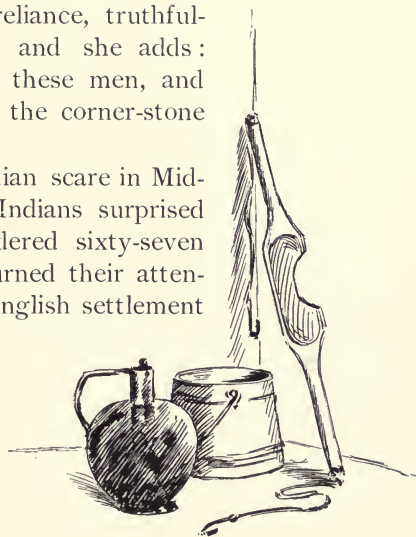


The Vanderbilt Homestead.

the following year the villages were permitted to send lists of names to the Governor, from which he chose local magistrates. These officers, thus indirectly elected by the people, were called "schepen," and were under the control of a District Court composed of delegates from each town court, as well as the "schout" from each village. This District Court seems to have had control of all the affairs of the three towns, subject, of course, to the authorities at New Amsterdam. A further change was made in 1661, when the Long Island towns were associated together as the "Five Dutch Towns" into one district and given two delegates to the general government.

In the county affairs of this early day Midwout bore a prominent part. It was a community of thrifty farmers and tradesmen, and, from its central location, became the market town and the seat of the Justice for the county. The population increased quite rapidly, and at this time the inhabitants probably outnumbered those of a century later. Mrs. Vanderbilt, in the "Social History of Flatbush," describes the characteristics of these people as those of "honesty, industry, economy, prudence, self-reliance, truthfulness, patience, and forbearance," and she adds: "Such were the characteristics of these men, and upon these as a foundation they laid the corner-stone of their home in the New World."

In 1655 there was quite an Indian scare in Midwout. A large band of Northern Indians surprised the settlers on Staten Island, murdered sixty-seven people, and in the flush of victory turned their attention to Long Island, attacking the English settlement





Residence of Mrs. Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt.

at Gravesend. A party of soldiers from New Amsterdam came to the rescue, and the Indians were driven from the island. As a result of this raid, Governor Stuyvesant ordered that Midwout be enclosed in "palisadoes," but it is doubtful whether this was ever done, for an English record, dated December 15, 1675, states: "The town of Flatbush having neglected the making of fortifications, the court take notis of it, and reffer the censure to ye Governor."

The Dutch church, however, which was built in 1654, was probably so enclosed, as it was not an uncommon custom in the colonies partially to fortify the churches, and so provide for a central location where the women and children could quickly gather in case of sudden Indian attack.

Co-incident with the settlement of the Dutch towns on the west end of Long Island there had been also established several English communities. The Dutch towns were Breuckelen, Amersfort, Vlissingen (Flushing), Midwout, New Utrecht and Bushwick, and the English settlements were Hemstead, Gravesend, Jamaica and Newtown. English immigrants had been permitted to settle after taking oath of allegiance to the government at New Amsterdam. They were left much to themselves, however, and allowed practically all the advantages of local self-government. By comparison the Dutch were at a disadvantage, as they were directly subject to the arbitrary will of the Governor.

Although the territory called New Netherlands was held by the Dutch through right of settlement and possession, yet all that portion of America be-

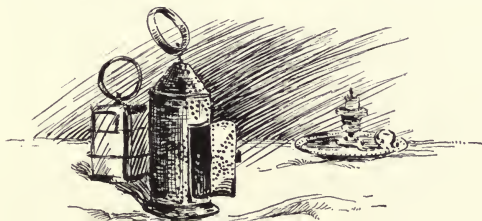




Photo by Robert L. Stillson.

The Gerritson Tide Mill.

tween the fortieth and forty-eighth parallels, north latitude, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, had been granted to the Plymouth Company in 1620 by James I. of England. A portion of this grant, which included Manhattan and Long Island, finally reverted to the Crown, and was regranted in 1664 by Charles II. to his brother James, Duke of York. The new proprietor immediately determined to take possession of the territory; so a small fleet of three vessels was sent westward for this purpose, under the command of Colonel Richard Nicolls. Governor Stuyvesant had previously learned of this projected attempt to seize the colony, so when the fleet appeared in the outer harbor, the fort at New Amsterdam was in

readiness to meet the attack. As soon as the vessels had dropped anchor inside Sandy Hook, Colonel Nicolls sent a formal demand of surrender to the Governor, which was peremptorily refused. The Colonel, instead of enforcing his demand, landed at Gravesend, and effected his purpose through diplomacy. He offered his protection and the privileges of English subjects to Dutch and English alike. It has been previously stated that there was serious dissatisfaction with the dictatorship of Stuyvesant, so English control was apparently not unwelcome. The rule of the Duke of York, through his representative, was accepted, and the change of government very quietly made. Nine years later, while England and the Netherlands were at war, a successful attempt was made to regain the lost possession, and New Amsterdam was held by the Dutch again for about fifteen months, after which the English regained control.



Second Reformed Church.

A convention called by the new Governor met in Hempstead in 1665, and formal acceptance was made by the various towns of what was known as the "Duke's Laws." The delegates from Midwout were John Stryker and Hendrick Gucksen. The only serious effect of this change of government

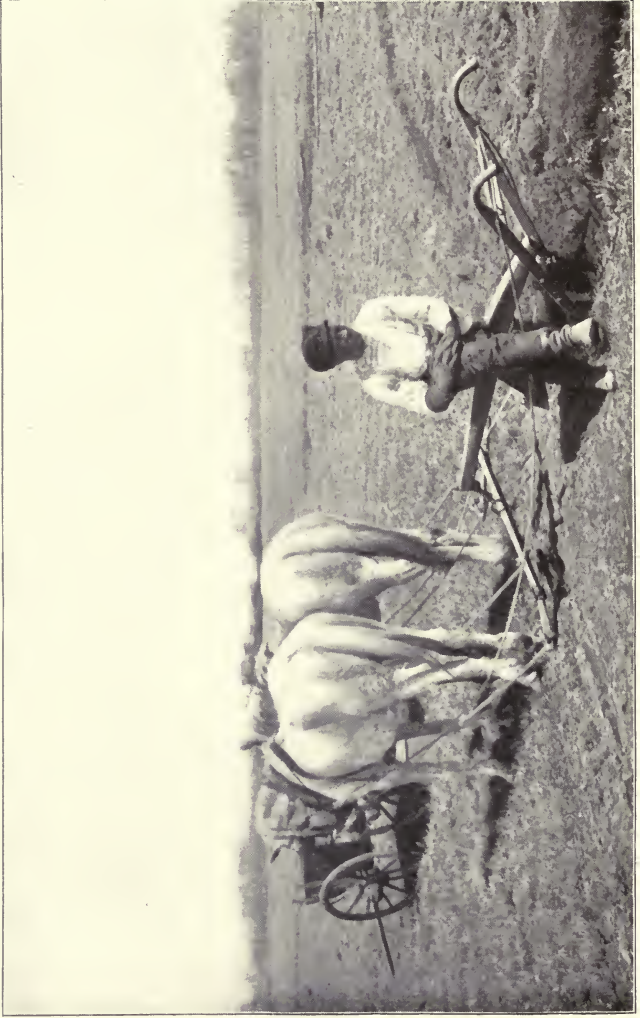


Photo by William R. Vanderveer.

On the Vanderveer Farm.

to Midwout was the temporary removal of the County Court to Gravesend, probably because it was essentially an English town. This change proved to be exceedingly inconvenient to most of the county towns, so in 1686 Flatbush was again made the seat of justice. A building was erected for the court, which was in continuous use until 1758, when a new one replaced it. This served its purpose in turn until 1793, when a larger building was needed.

Another result of English control was the anglicization of many of the Dutch names, and Midwout, which had also been called Flakkebos, now became Flatbush. Dr. Strong says of the origin of this name, that it was given to the town "from its being situated on an apparently level plain and surrounded on almost every side by woods"; but he adds, "it is here proper to remark, that the ground in and about Flatbush is far from being a dead level. It is an inclined plane, gradually extending and lessening in inclination to its southern boundary. Hence, here are no stagnant pools or marshes, but all surplus water from rains and storms, passes off gradually, but yet in a very short period, to the ocean. This renders the situation of the town healthful, and hence, it has seldom, if ever, been visited with any prevailing epidemic." This commentary on the healthfulness of Flatbush, made nearly sixty years ago, long before the days of artificial drainage, and written by a clergyman for his own people, with no thought of interesting the outsider in suburban real estate, may be regarded reliable testimony as to natural conditions in Flatbush.

With the advent of English rule there came to the old Dutch town a long period of quiet and prosperity ;





The Lefferts Homestead.

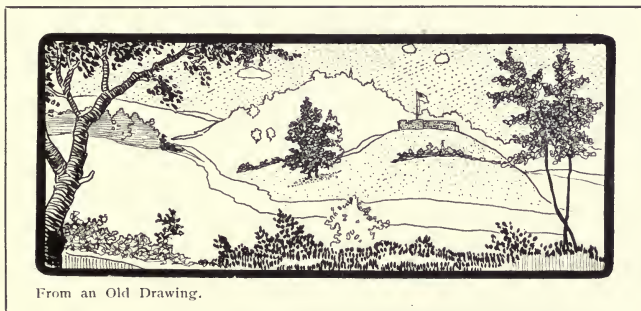
so for over a century there is little recorded but minor matters relating to questions of title or boundary, the ownership of slaves, payment of rents, such details of disputes as were naturally a matter of court record.

The feeling of allegiance to Holland was none the less real after the change of government than before. There is ample evidence that articles of personal luxury and of household decoration continued to be imported from the Fatherland; Dutch was still taught in the village school; what may be called the Dutch spirit was stimulated in the children; of Dutch architecture there still remain a few specimens in houses of perhaps from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years old.

The colonial troubles of the early eighteenth century did not cast a shadow on the peaceful town ; the French and Indian war was but as a dark cloud on the far western horizon, but the War of the Revolution brought many a trial to the people of Old Flatbush.

The success of the American cause in Boston proved a severe misfortune in and around New York, for after the English fleet had retired from the New England city, its course was ultimately directed towards Sandy Hook. Staten Island was taken, and a campaign planned involving the capture of New York. For this purpose a British army of some 20,000 men who landed at New Utrecht, and, in three columns, it gradually advanced on Brooklyn—one by way of Gowanus, another through Flatbush, and the third around to the rear of General Putnam's little army by way of the Jamaica turnpike.

The melancholy story of the Battle of Long Island (August 27, 1776,) has been often told,—a stubborn but unsuccessful fight on the part of the weak and



From an Old Drawing.

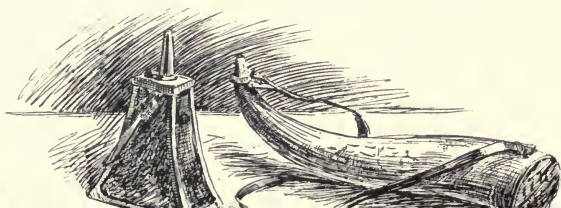
Redoubt Overlooking Battle Pass.

half-drilled patriots against the well-trained soldiers of many wars. The masterly retreat under the guidance of Washington prevented what might have been a fatal blow to the cause of liberty.

Flatbush had been for sometime prepared for the arrival of hostile troops. Many families had retired to Queens County or to New Jersey; the cattle were driven northward beyond the hills, and the grain stacked preparatory to burning on the approach of the enemy.

For purposes of defense a crescent-shaped fortification was thrown up across the main highway of the village, and the pass to Brooklyn through the hills was obstructed by the felling of a large tree of white oak which had for many years marked the boundary line between the two towns. It was located in what was known as Valley Grove, afterward called Battle Pass (in Prospect Park). As the English army advanced, a regiment of Pennsylvania troops, which had been guarding the sea coast, retired behind the intrenchments in Flatbush, but finally fell back to the pass in the hills, after burning much of the grain in the northern part of the town as well as the old Leffert's homestead.

From this point of defence the central column of the approaching army, composed mostly of Hessians under General DeHeister, was held in check for a time by this regiment, assisted by other American troops under General Sullivan. But while the little army of patriots were engaging what was supposed to be the entire force of the enemy at Flatbush and Gowanus, the main body of the English troops made





Battle of Long Island.

the detour to the rear, which resulted in the complete victory that made Valley Grove a scene of carnage.

Until the close of the War of the Revolution and the evacuation of New York, Flatbush remained within the British lines, and though no longer in the midst of conflict, those of its people who were not with the Continental army and had returned to their homes, naturally suffered many hardships.

Flatbush, in common with most of the Colonial towns, had its Whigs as well as its Tories. Among the latter was Colonel Axtell, an Englishman by birth, who occupied the old mansion afterwards called by Mrs. Mowatt Melrose Hall. After the departure of the last of the English army, of which a guard of fifty men had been left for some time, Colonel Axtell raised a Tory company, which he called the Nassau Blues. The unpopularity of this body of men is suggested by the name given to them by the townspeople—that of “Nasty Blues.” Fortunately they were not billeted upon the town, but used the Court House as their barracks. American prisoners were frequently quartered in the village, and it is hoped they found a hearty welcome. That they did not always receive fair treatment, is indicated by the experience of a Captain William Marriner, who felt himself to have been insulted and abused by a Tory clique consisting of Colonel Axtell and some of his friends. After he had been exchanged in 1780 he planned an expedition from New Brunswick, and with twenty-two volunteers came across the harbor in a whale boat, landed at Bath, and attacked the houses of four of the unpopular Tories in Flatbush with the

intention of capturing them. The doors were broken in with heavy posts, and Major Beach, Major Moncrief and Colonel Sherbrook were secured. Colonel Axtell and a friend who were attending some affair in New York escaped.

Later, at two different times, parts of regiments were quartered in the village, but the treaty of peace in 1783 brought an end to these trials, and Flatbush once more became the quiet, peaceful town.

* * * * *

The Revolutionary period may be said to mark a transition, historically considered, in the character of Flatbush. It is the dividing line which separates the oldest and the older from the merely old. The ravages caused by the war made necessary some new buildings, and the impulse which always follows a long period of depression also had its natural effect. There still remain a few fine specimens of the architecture of this later eighteenth century movement, and in many respects these houses resemble those of the early Colonial days.

The latter were usually constructed of brick or stone, and were long, low, rambling dwellings, of which the distinctive feature was the broad overhanging eaves. The gable end of the house usually turned toward the street if it chanced to run north and south, as does Flatbush Avenue, thus giving a good southerly exposure, while the roof projection formed an adequate shelter to the piazza.

The windows in the oldest houses were very narrow, and often protected against possible chance





Photo by William R. Vanderveer.

A Flatbush "Gunboat."



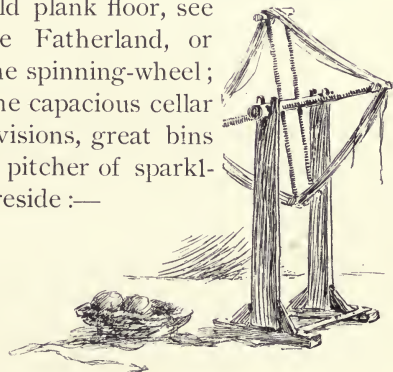
Seventeenth Century Scripture Tile.

shots from the Indians by strong palisades, while the main entrance had its typical "Dutch door," divided across the centre, and the bulls-eye lights at the top. The richly wrought-iron or brass knocker was, of course, a feature of the door.

It is probable that only the houses of later construction had the dormer windows and the break in the roof which are characteristic of what is known as the Dutch house of to-day.

It would, no doubt, be entertaining and instructive to wander in imagination of a winter's evening into the immaculately clean kitchen and living room of one of the old Flatbush homes, settle comfortably before the great roaring fire-place and listen to the good house-wife while she chats of the doings and traditions of by-gone days; or go with her up under the heavy oaken rafters of the garret, and while the flickering light of the tallow candle makes weird and ghostly shadows above and on the old plank floor, see the treasures that came from the Fatherland, or admire the fruits of the loom and the spinning-wheel; or yet again delve with her into the capacious cellar below, with its wealth of winter provisions, great bins of russets and greenings, then with pitcher of sparkling cider, rejoin the family at the fireside:—

*As round the hearth the circle smiled,
While log fire roared 'neath mantle tiled,
Where, figuring forth the scripture tale,
Blue Jonah fed the azure whale!
What singing sounds! what genial glow!
In Flatbush homes of long ago.





From Photo of Landscape Wall Paper in the Duryea House.

The purpose of the sketch however, is rather with fact than with fancy, with history rather than with tradition; but

it rests with the reader to linger if he so desire over such scenes of the past as may be suggested to his imagination.

The movement of recorded events in town affairs is now more rapid, for Flatbush as we know it is the result of a century's growth. Following the Revolution, the first public improvement was the building of the Erasmus Hall Academy in 1786. Certain public lands, to which reference has been previously made, were sold for this purpose, and the sum of £915 was raised by private subscription, both in the town and in the City of New York. The total cost of the original structure is stated by Dr. Strong to have been \$6,250.00.

A charter was granted by the Regents of the State of New York, November 20, 1787, being the third charter so granted.

The attention of the townspeople was next directed towards the erection of a new church. The

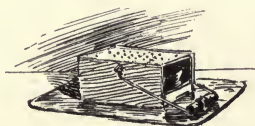


edifice in use had replaced the original structure about 1698, but it had been badly constructed, and although of stone, the pressure of the roof timbers had forced the walls out of plumb. It had also been damaged to some extent by the British and Hessian soldiers who had been quartered there for a time during the war. The school and the church held an equal place in the hearts of the people; so, following the new Erasmus Hall Academy, came this new Reformed Dutch Church. The building was commenced in 1793 and finished three years later. In removing the foundations of the older structure it was necessary to transfer the remains of the many bodies that had for generations been buried under the church. These were placed in the ground in front of the present building. This old custom of burial, probably originating in the idea of protecting the graves from desecration by the Indians, has been suggested as the reason why the old yard contains so few stones of ancient date.

What was known as "Vanderveer's Mill" is said to have been the first wind-mill erected on Long



Reformed Dutch Church.





Lloyd's Mill.

Island. It was built in 1804 on the John C. Vanderveer farm. Its sails are described as similar in construction to those now in use in Holland, and in their sweep reached very nearly to the ground. An old cow of Mr. Vanderveer's

that was either too inquisitive, or possibly possessed with something of the spirit of a Don Quixote, had her back broken by one of the arms on its downward course.

The sails were blown away in the September gale of 1821, but were immediately replaced, and the mill continued in use for nearly ten years longer, when the sails were again destroyed and never replaced. The old dismantled structure, like the lonely tower of an ancient castle, long remained a familiar object in the Flatbush landscape. It was destroyed by fire in 1879. What was known as Lloyd's Mill, or the "Zabriskie Mill," built in 1820, was entirely novel in construction. It was run by the rotary motion of a large circular and horizontal frame-work which supported a number of fans. This mill was in use until the middle of the century, and was taken down in 1868, being superseded by the tide mills at New Lots and Flatlands, which, having more power and larger stones, made a finer and better flour.

The war of 1812 was the next event of national importance after the Revolution that deeply stirred all



Fennimore Street M. E. Church.

sections of the land. The fear of British invasion extended along the coast from Maine to Florida. Probably with memories of the past successful attempt of the English to approach New York by the way of Flatbush, the government built a small arsenal or gun-house for fieldpieces on the old school house lot in Flatbush. Fortunately for this section of the country the tide of warfare surged to the south, and victory soon came to the American arms as the conflict came to an end in 1814.

The Dutch have always had a passion for trees and shubbery, for plants and flowers. Their great speculation in tulips is historic, and tulips still remain the favorite flower. Their kindred in this country have inherited this love for the beautiful, and Flatbush, in particular, has long had the reputation of being the garden of Long Island. Even to-day certain rare varieties of plants or bulbs are imported from abroad, and nearly every place in the community shows that there has at least been an attempt to make it picturesque and attractive.

From the days when Flatbush Avenue was but an Indian trail, nature has lavished her beauties upon the place, and, until the warning voice of science said that some of the great trees must go, each street was a veritable bower. In the early part of the century poplars were the favorite tree, and a large number imported from Lombardy were planted in various parts of the town in 1812. Later, weeping willows were the fad, and many were planted, though but few of this short-lived variety now remain. A sketch of the Reformed Church made in 1842 shows it to have been surrounded by these trees.



The next recorded event in Flatbush affairs is the organization of the Flatbush Fire Engine Company in 1821. An engine was purchased four years later, and was of the force-pump variety, with long arms. Its box-like reservoir was supplied by passing buckets from man to man from the most convenient pump or well. It proved inefficient when the Court House was destroyed by fire in 1832, and was replaced by a larger and more powerful machine, which was named Washington No. 1. Later, the engine company became an efficient and powerful volunteer organization, and many of the prominent men in the community were among its members. With consolidation, the Brooklyn Fire Department absorbed the local company, and now at least three well-equipped stations are ready day and night, and give a service that is unsurpassed in any other part of the city.

Although at one time Flatbush exceeded Brooklyn in the number of inhabitants, the proximity of the latter to New York now began to be felt, so, when the Court House in Flatbush was destroyed, the seat of justice was transferred to Brooklyn, as nearer the center of population.

The time had now passed when Flatbush could remain isolated. Men of prominence in Brooklyn and New York circles lived in the town, and transit was not always convenient by private conveyance. In 1830 a line of stages was started by Smith Birdsall, which left for Brooklyn in the morning and returned at night. Other lines followed in time, running at increasingly short intervals, until the introduction of street cars in 1860. The coach-and-four,





Photo by Geo. M. Boardman.

A Bit of Pardaegat Woods.

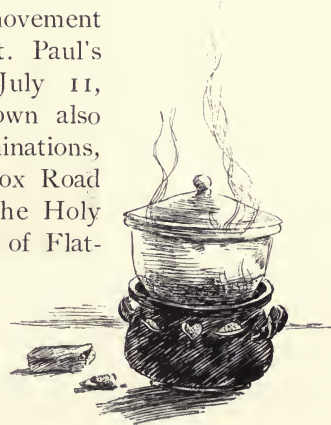
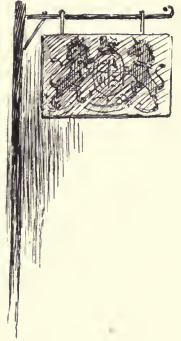
Reservation of the Flatbush Water Works.

or tally-ho coach, as it is now called, is a common sight in Flatbush, the gay parties from New York or Brooklyn frequently driving through the park and down the Boulevard to the ocean, but seventy years ago the advent of such an equipage with its four horses, was an occurrence of no small interest in the quiet community, and an opportunity for a first ride to Fulton Ferry was an event looked forward to with anticipation by both young and old.

Flatbush at this and later times had several hotels, but, perhaps, the most interesting and picturesque was that kept by the "Widow Schoonmaker" on Flatbush Avenue, in the front of which old inn hung the sign of the "Lion and the Unicorn."

Growing from the direct and regular communication by stage between Flatbush and Brooklyn, changes suggestive of the future, city improvements slowly, but surely, came to the suburban town. A board of health was organized in 1832; Johnson and Erasmus Streets laid out on city lines in 1834; a new public school house built in 1843; the Flatbush Plank Road Company organized in 1855, and Flatbush Avenue opened to Brooklyn in 1858.

Out of the opening of the first streets, in which a number of Englishmen settled, grew the movement which resulted in the establishment of St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, organized July 11, 1836; and as the natural growth of the town also brought the need of churches of other denominations, the First M. E. Church of Flatbush (Lenox Road M. E. Church) was organized in 1854, and the Holy Cross R. C. Church in 1848. But the doom of Flat-





East 26th Street, South Midwood, Winter of 1899.



Permission Germania Real Estate and Improvement Co.

Same Location, Fall of 1900.

bush as a country place was forever sealed when in July, 1860, the first car of the Brooklyn City R. R. Co. was driven into the town. Now came some large and important movements in this new era of development, which resulted in the establishment of the Gas Company, the formation of the Flatbush Water Works Company, and the sewerage of the streets.

These successive steps in the march of improvement were all necessary to the growing town. But what differentiates Flatbush particularly from the average city suburb, is its most excellent and unusual water supply. This comes from a number of open and driven wells, situated in a reservation of some sixty acres in the southeasterly part of the town. These wells average a depth of forty-five feet, and during continued drought there is no diminution in the amount of supply, but the water keeps bubbling up to tide-level as cool and pure and sparkling as if from a mountain spring. This indicates that it is no mere surface water, but comes through a subterranean channel,

probably under Long Island Sound, from higher sources in the distant mountains.

It is not within the scope of this



St. Paul's P. E. Church.

chapter to give the details, or even to mention the various city improvements that now came in quick succession to Flatbush. From the Past to the Present can be sketched, but the Present is ever elusive, for, like a playful child darting from the sight of the parent, the Present is ever playing hide-and-seek with the Past. A snap-shot at the Present, however, which gives but an inadequate picture, shows Flatbush transformed from a peaceful rural community into a progressive, attractive and beautiful section in one of the greatest cities of the world.



Baptist Church of the Redeemer.

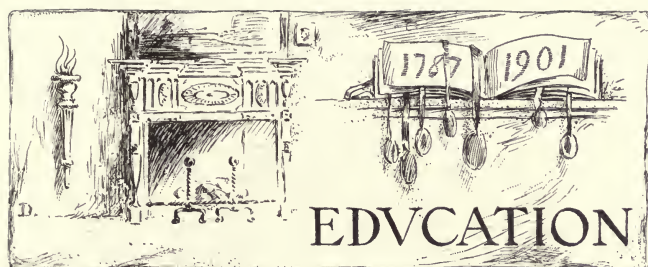


Tennis Court.



ERASMUS HALL, N. Y.
Permission W. A. A. Brown.

Erasmus Hall High School.



Chapter Two

AT a meeting of the Amsterdam Department of the Dutch West India Company, held on Thursday, April 10, 1659, among other matters pertaining to the welfare of the Dutch Colony of New Netherlands, the question of engaging a Latin schoolmaster was discussed. In one of the old record books of the Company are the minutes of this meeting, which state, in part, that, "Before the Board appeared Alexander Carolus Cursius, late Professor in Lithuania, mentioned in former minutes, who offered his services. After a vote had been taken, he was engaged as Latin schoolmaster in New Netherlands at a yearly salary of 500 florins, of which one-quarter shall be paid him in advance, that he may procure what books he requires. The Board further grants him a gratuity of 100 florins, which the Company will lay out in available merchandise to be used by him upon his arrival in New Netherlands, where a piece of land convenient for a garden or orchard shall

be allotted to him by the Director-General. He shall also be allowed to give private instructions, so far as this can be done without prejudice to the duties for



Permission Dr. Willis Boughton.

Rev. John H. Livingston
First Principal Erasmus Hall.

which he is engaged." This action of the Board well illustrates the attitude of this commercial people in relation to higher education.

The success of the Dutch Republic came from an adherence to the principles based on free education, free church, and free state. A lasting monument of its appreciation of the value of education is the University of Leyden, founded in commemoration of the victory of the besieged city over the Spaniards in the great struggle for liberty. As in the Fatherland, so it was in the Colonies. Education was regarded as of primary importance, and the schoolmaster became an important factor in town life.

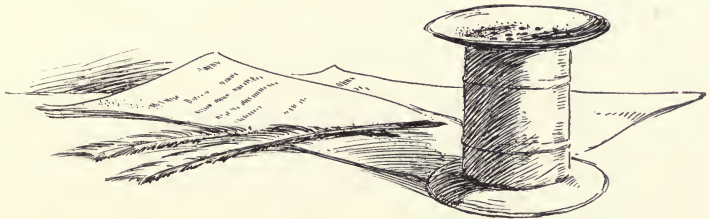
Washington Irving has seen fit to caricature the village schoolmaster in Ichabod Crane, the teacher of the little Dutch community of Sleepy Hollow, but the picture is an unfair one, as the schoolmaster was usually a man of ability and learning, who occupied a dignified and respected place in the community. This is particularly true of Flatbush, where the teachers were frequently men of university education.

As Flatbush remained a very small town for over two centuries, the compensation of the schoolmaster was necessarily small, so, under town regulations, he was given other opportunities of earning a livelihood, frequently acting as town clerk, chorister, sexton, and occasionally as the minister.

Dutch was taught exclusively in the village school until about 1762, but it was not until fifteen years later that it was entirely dropped from the course of study.

About this time the first classical school was started by John Copp, but it seems to have been short-lived, for Mr. Copp soon joined the Revolutionary Army.

Flatbush had been for some time the County Seat, and consequently many lawyers and men of promi-





One of the Art Studios, Erasmus Hall.

nence were its frequent visitors. Neither was it unknown, even at this early day, as a desirable place for suburban residence, as a few wealthy New Yorkers spent at least a portion of the year in the town. Consequently, when the Rev. John H. Livingston and Senator John Vanderbilt started the movement which resulted in the establishment of the Erasmus Hall Academy, it found ready support among many prominent men in New York, as well as among the progressive people in the town. It is interesting to note among the many contributors to the enterprise such names as Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, John Jay, George Clinton, and among the familiar local names, those of Vanderbilt, Lefferts, Martense, Clarkson, Lott, Vanderveer, Voorhies, Suydam.



The Chemical Laboratory.

During 1786 Erasmus Hall Academy was erected, and the original building has remained in a good state of preservation until to-day. During these years Erasmus Hall has supplied the need for higher education in the community, and has evidently been a popular school, securing patronage, not only in Flatbush, but from various parts of the United States, Mexico, and the West Indies.

What is supposed to have been the first village school house stood on a plot to the north of Erasmus Hall campus, and remained in use for over a century and a half. Additions were made as needed, so, when it was sold, in 1803, for use as a village store, and the school moved to the Academy, it was composed of three small buildings joined together.



Ocean Avenue Looking Toward Prospect Park.

In 1844 the trustees of the Academy requested the town to provide other accommodations for the public school, and this resulted in the erection of a large frame building near the site of the present brick structure (School 90, on Church Avenue), which was known as Public School 1. The upper part of the building was for a time used as a court room.

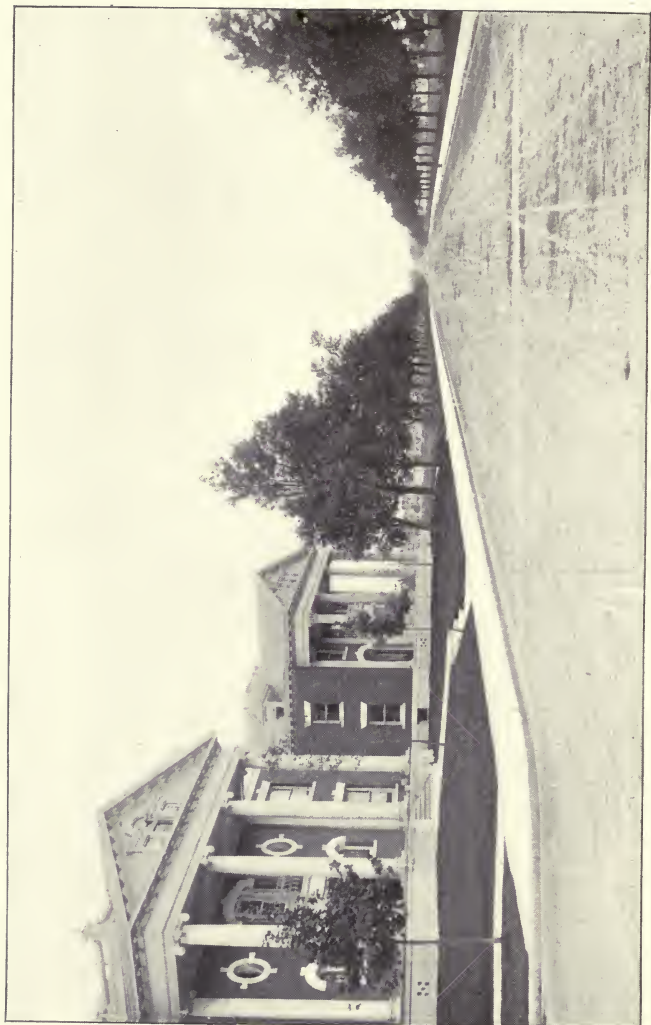
In the spring of 1878 the town appropriated \$19,000 for the erection of a new brick building, which was completed the following fall. During the succeeding years, with the growth of population and the merging of the Flatbush schools into the educational system of Brooklyn, there has been developed six well-equipped schools in various parts of what is now known as the Twenty-ninth Ward.

A new building is soon to be erected on Avenue C, between East 13th and 14th Streets. The plans call for a four-story structure of light colored brick, handsomely ornamented, with perfect ventilation and sanitation, including ample space for kindergarten, gymnasium and assembly. Nearly 50,000 square feet will be used for a play ground.

The crowning feature of the educational system of Brooklyn has been the development of the High schools. The School Board of the Borough, as at present organized, delegates local committees to each school. Flatbush has been particularly fortunate in having a class of men on these committees who have had constantly before them the aim of obtaining for their schools the highest possible standard of excellence in educational work.

As a result of the effort of the local Committee, in co-operation with its principal, Dr. Walter B. Gun-





Permission of Founds & Decker.

Ocean Avenue, South-East Corner of Ditmas Park.

nison, Erasmus Hall High School to-day stands at the head of the high schools of the city, not only as an institution of learning, but also as a school in life training, well equipped to start on a career of usefulness young manhood and young womanhood.

Under the wise guidance of its principal, there has been developed among the pupils much of the freedom and many of the interests of college life. The petty restrictions, which narrow the teacher and irritate the scholar, are not to be found at Erasmus Hall; yet he who would abuse his privileges finds that the iron hand of discipline is ever present.

Erasmus Hall, in some respects, out-ranks itself. It is a great institutional school. Starting with a corps of eleven assistant teachers and two hundred pupils, when Dr. Gunnison was made the first principal, in 1896, as a school in the Brooklyn Educational System, it to-day has some sixty teachers and seventeen hundred scholars. Work of some kind is in progress in the building from eight o'clock in the morning until five o'clock at night, six days in the week. During the afternoon a teacher is stationed in the reception hall to greet visitors, and one is also in charge during the day on Saturday, to attend to any immediate or necessary business.

Both the pupil and the teacher are thus, as well as in other ways, made to feel that Erasmus is the school-home, where there is always some one to give assistance, or sympathize in time of trouble. Even the outsider who cares to get something of the Erasman spirit is accorded a hearty welcome.

Scholars come to Flatbush from all sections of the city, and the trip, either through Prospect Park, down



Interior Flatbush Conservatory.

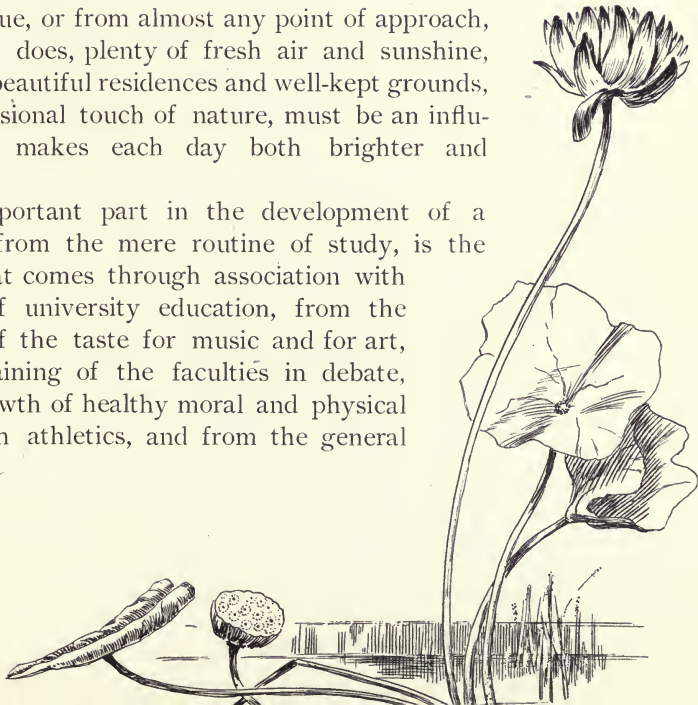


Photo by Harry S. Shapter.

Scene Prospect Park.

Ocean Avenue, or from almost any point of approach, giving, as it does, plenty of fresh air and sunshine, glimpses of beautiful residences and well-kept grounds, and an occasional touch of nature, must be an influence which makes each day both brighter and happier.

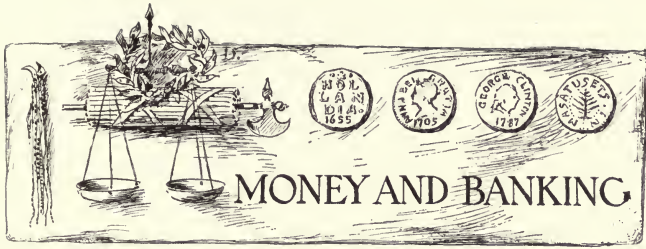
No unimportant part in the development of a pupil, aside from the mere routine of study, is the influence that comes through association with professors of university education, from the cultivation of the taste for music and for art, from the training of the faculties in debate, from the growth of healthy moral and physical tone through athletics, and from the general



culture which the atmosphere of such a life must surely bring.

The people of Flatbush, indeed, may well be proud of Erasmus Hall High School. Plans are in progress for a new building, well equipped as is possible in this day of progressive improvement, with all that is needful to maintain the excellence and increase, if possible, the efficiency of this historic school. Those who love so dearly the old Colonial building, with its many associations, that has so long faced the campus of stately sycamore, will regret that it may soon be but a memory. On the other hand, it will be a matter of general pride in the community to feel that a step will be taken which may bring, in the ripeness of time, to this section of the city, a great public university bearing the name of the illustrious Erasmus. Flatbush also shares with Brooklyn the Public Library, with its admirable local Branch, as well as the great people's university, the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.

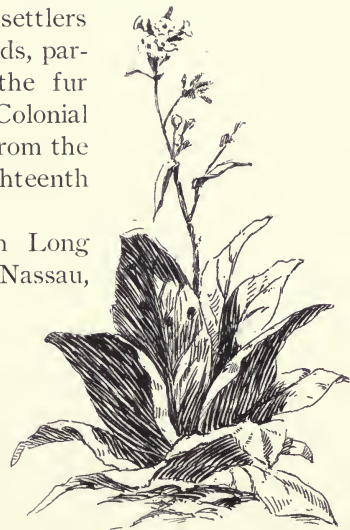




Chapter Three

FROM wampum to the gold standard is an evolution in finance. Often in the absence of the precious metals, that which was most desired in a community has been used as a standard of value, such as iron, cattle, wheat, salt, silk, furs, dried fish, rice and oil. The colonists in America had very little coined money and for many years tobacco and Indian wampum became the medium of exchange. Tobacco proved to be an unsatisfactory form of money, although it was used for nearly two centuries in various parts of the South. It fluctuated violently in value and was constantly the cause of business trouble. Wampum was popular with the Indians and came into quite general use among the early settlers of New England and the New Netherlands, particularly as a medium of exchange in the fur trade, which formed a large part of Colonial traffic. It did not entirely disappear from the currency of the Colonies until the eighteenth century.

Among the many names by which Long Island has been variously called, such as Nassau,



Isle de l'Assension, Capo de Olympo, is the Indian name of Seawanhacky, the "the seawan country." The word seawant (loose or loose beads), applied to money made from shells, has the same root as this word. The sandy shores of the many inlets of Long Island were strewn with shells from the scallop, periwinkle, and clam; and the primitive Indian, as does the child of to-day, had an admiration for the beauties of shape and coloring of these treasures cast up by the sea.

Wampum (white) the term by which all kinds of shell money is more familiarly known, was made from the periwinkle and hard-shell clam by rubbing the piece selected on a stone until it was round and smooth and the thickness of a pipe stem. It was cut into sections a quarter of an inch long, pierced with a drill, and either strung as beads or made into belts.

The value of wampum in Colonial times was not particularly affected by the quantity of the shells; but came from the labor involved in making the beads as well as from the fact that the Indians would always sell their furs for this kind of money. The Dutch called wampum zewant, and with them four beads passed for a stiver. Later, strings of wampum were called fathoms, and varied in value from five to ten shillings. Black wampum, made from the dark purple eye of the round clam, was worth twice as much as white wampum, made from the inner whorl of the periwinkle.

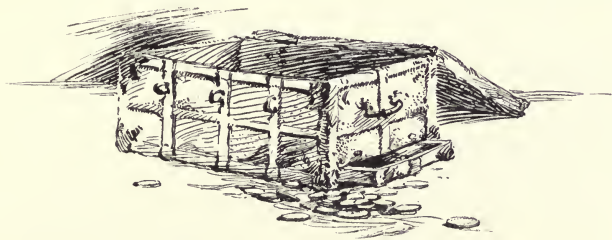
An interesting illustration of the use of wampum in Flatbush is noted in the purchase of land, when, in 1670, Eskemoppas, Sachem of Rockaway, and his

two brothers, claimed to be the true Indian owners of Flatbush. The Dutch inhabitants, in order that there might be no further question as to the title of the section, took a deed for the property, with the following consideration : Ten fathoms of black seawant (wampum), ten fathoms of white seawant, five coats, four blankets, two guns, two pistols, five double handfulls of powder, five bars of lead, ten knives, two aprons, one-half barrel of strong beer, three cans of brandy, and six shirts.

In Bergen Island have been found large deposits of mutilated shells, indicating that the Indians made use of this secluded spot as a kind of wampum mint.

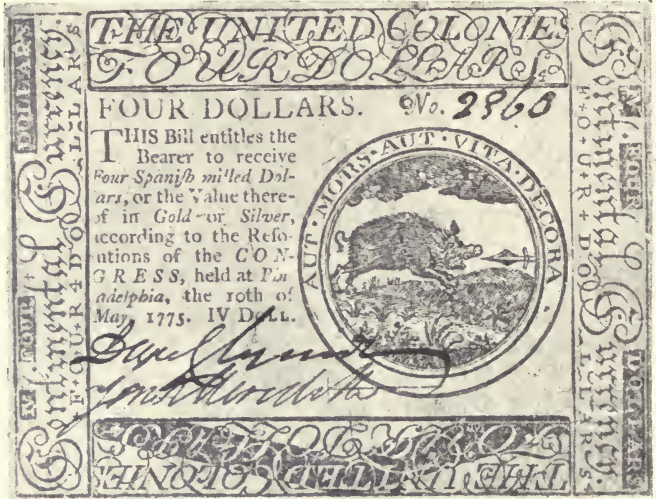
The Dutch and their descendants in Flatbush have always been a saving people ; and although in early days there was but little coined money used in the community, what did come into the possession of the thrifty farmers was carefully laid away in the treasure box and hid behind some secret panel, or was buried in some secluded spot on the farm as was the gold of the immortal Captain Kidd. • In days gone by the plow has not infrequently brought to light coins of ancient date, buried, perchance, by those who but robbed themselves. The false bottom to the great oaken chest, or a secret drawer in the family desk, were favorite places to secrete the hard-earned treasure.

In Revolutionary times the people of Flatbush who did not join the Continental Army had but little opportunity of openly showing their patriotism, owing to the constant presence of British soldiers in the town ; but there is evidence that much coined money was given or loaned to the Government at this critical



period, when the Continental paper money was of but little value.

It has been deemed somewhat remarkable that during the two hundred and fifty years of its history Flatbush has had no banking institution until the



establishment of the Flatbush Trust Company in 1899; but it must be borne in mind that until within the last ten years the population has been small and that while it was mainly a farming section, the great wagons of produce made frequent trips to Brooklyn, where most of the business was done. When this almost entirely ceased and farms became so desirable for the residential parks which now characterize the section, the population increased rapidly and with it the necessity of banking accommodation.



Ladies' Room, Flatbush Trust Company.

There is one feature of the suburban spirit which is particularly favorable to the establishment of local institutions, and that is the intense feeling of loyalty which exists in such a community as Flatbush. This spirit was particularly evidenced at the inception of the first banking movement, when a large number of representative citizens gathered together to consider the desirability of establishing some kind of bank. After due consideration, it was determined that the trust company, a combination of bank, savings bank and trustee, was the form of banking institution best suited to the needs of the community.

The term "trust" is often misused, and there is a widespread misconception as to the actual meaning of



Officer's Department, Flatbush Trust Company

the word, both as used in business and banking. The term originally meant, and still means, in banking at least, just what it plainly expresses, *trust*, confidence in, all that is meant by the term "trusteeship." Referring to general business, the term is often made synonymous with monopoly; for when many of the large capitalistic combinations were originally formed, the small companies or firms turned over their stock or gave their powers of attorney to a central company who became "trustee," or virtually manager, for all. Hence the term "trust."

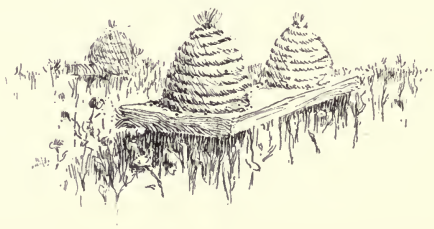
Until the advent of the trust company, relatives or trusted friends were chosen to act as executors and trustees under wills or by the order of the Court. The varying conditions of modern business life, however, with its rush, its speculations, its panics, soon made necessary some form of organized trusteeship, and the trust company, representing stability and perpetuity, was evolved after much careful planning. The following has been given as a description of a trust company's functions: "It can be your guardian or curator when you are under age; your agent or trustee when you are grown, if you are sane; your committee or guardian if you are insane; your assignee if your bankruptcy is voluntary, your receiver if it is involuntary; your most valuable friend while you live, and your executor, administrator or testamentary trustee when you die." A trust company also does a general banking business, making a specialty of family and individual accounts, loaning or receiving on deposit money on which interest is allowed, thus partaking partly of the nature of a savings bank.

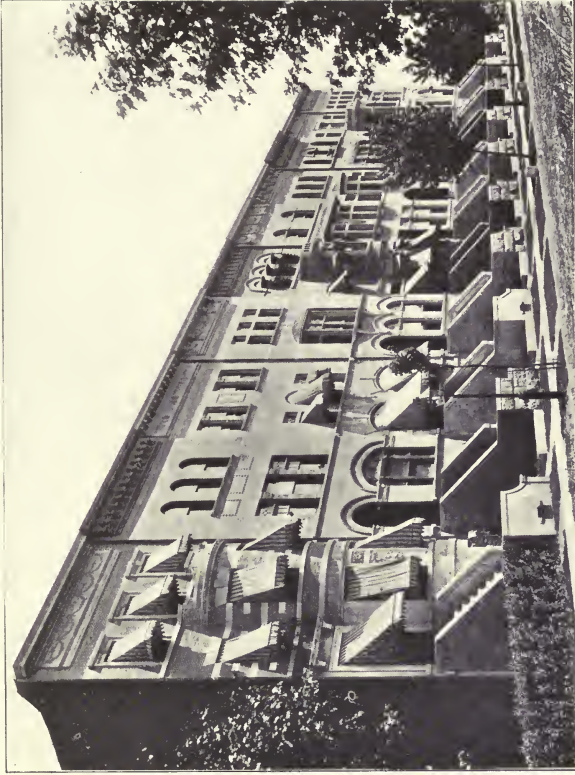
The foregoing is a digression from the historical development of the subject of this chapter, but questions are so often asked on these very themes that the simple explanation may not be amiss. As resulting from the movement to which reference has been made, the Flatbush Trust Company was organized in 1899, with a capital of \$200,000 and a paid-in surplus of \$100,000. Its doors were opened for business on the 20th of July in that year. That its presence in the community was needed may be judged from the record of its first year's business. The progress, as reported to the Board of Directors, from time to time, was as follows :

	No. of Accounts.	Amount on Deposit.
July . . 20. 1899	35	\$95,959.99
October 19. 1899	235	260,803.78
January 19. 1900	356	423,971.66
April . . 19, 1900	497	542,638.16
July . . 19. 1900	646	639,569.17

This ended the first year of business.

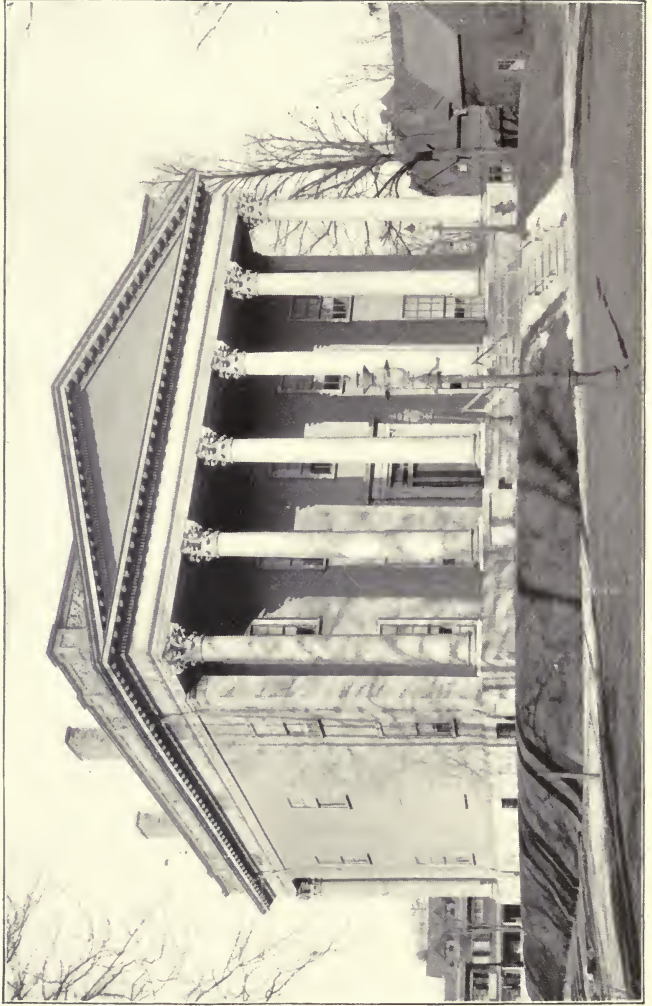
It would no doubt be of interest to the Dutch forefathers to know of the existence of a banking institution in Flatbush, particularly one that can draw directly on banks in the cities of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht, in Holland; as well as on banks in the other principal cities of Great Britain and Europe. With the support which has been so generously given to the Flatbush Trust Company by its present depositors, and with the natural growth of the community, the institution should continue to be a growing power in the financial life of the city.





Permission of W. A. A. Brown.

A Section of Midwood Street.



Midwood Club.



Chapter Four

EDWARD HOWARD GRIGGS opens his recent publication, "The New Humanism," with the statement that "The intellectual vitality of an epoch is determined less by the amount of accumulated knowledge than by the measure of activity and growth that is present," and continuing after reference to the Alexandrine and Periclean ages, he closes the paragraph by saying that "Each epoch must be fertilized anew by some fresh movement of thought if it is to have the highest measure of intellectual life."

Although Professor Griggs enunciates



Lenox Road M. E. Church.



Permission of Pounds & Decker.

East Seventeenth Street, Beverley Square.

these principles in opening a chapter on the "Scientific Study of the Higher Human Life," they are none the less applicable and suggestive in a consideration of more ordinary human affairs. What may be termed the Flatbush Epoch in New York suburban life has been vitalized by a large measure of activity

and growth as well as stimulated by many fresh movements in home development.



Holy Cross R. C. Church.

The Present in Flatbush is the result of an evolution that can be traced back to the Indians of the tribe of the Canarsies, whose hunting

grounds were in the thick forests and whose planting lands were on the fertile plains. To and from their visits to their friends of the Iphetonga and Myrickawick tribes on the north, these Indians



Proposed Vanderveer Park M. E. Church.

made a trail which attracted the attention of the Dutch explorers of the early seventeenth century, who were searching for a home in the wilderness. They used it as the principal avenue of their little hamlet. Time has brought its changes and the houses of these early settlers are not

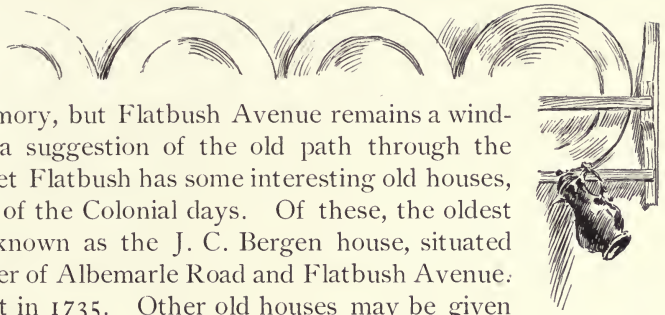


Typical Flatbush Sidewalk.
Fort Hamilton Avenue.



Permission Germania Real Estate and Improvement Co.

Bedford Avenue, South Midwood.

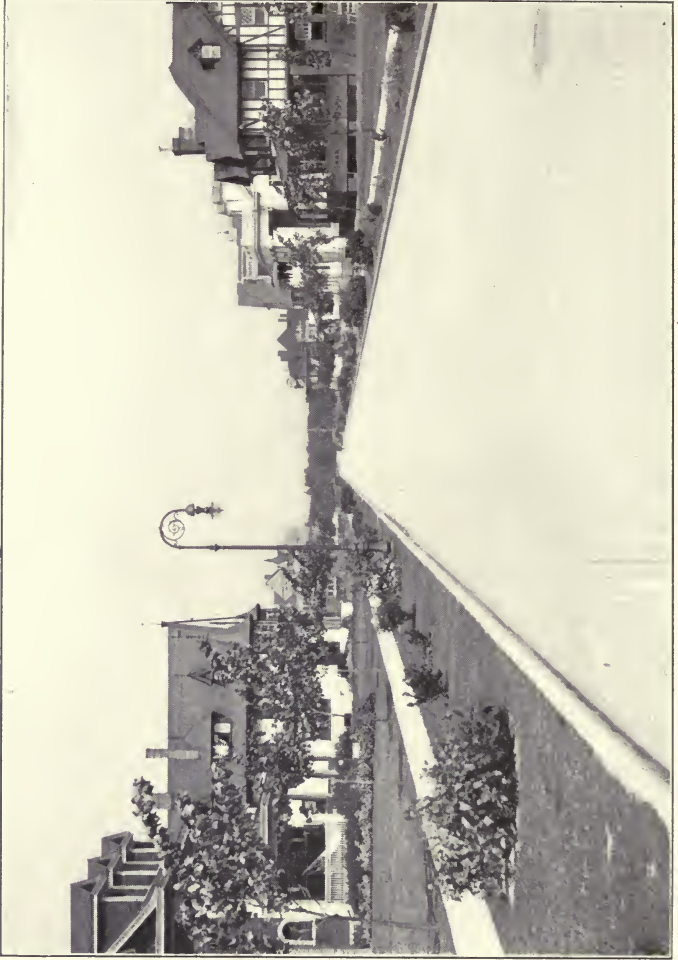


even a memory, but Flatbush Avenue remains a winding street, a suggestion of the old path through the woods. Yet Flatbush has some interesting old houses, suggestive of the Colonial days. Of these, the oldest is what is known as the J. C. Bergen house, situated at the corner of Albemarle Road and Flatbush Avenue. It was built in 1735. Other old houses may be given the names of their original owners, as Vanderveer, Ditmas, Duryea, Schoonmacher, Birdsall, Vanderbilt, Martense and Lefferts. Although built in the Past they are still of the Present, a picturesque touch among more modern dwellings. An examination of the structural work in some of these old buildings—the heavy timbers, the hand-made shingles, the hand-wrought nails, the fine interior finish—is both suggestive and instructive, even in this day of improvement.

An honest job that's done with care,
Will stand long years of wear and tear.

Besides these old farmhouses, Flatbush Avenue is characterized by many old and stately residences, like the Clarkson mansion, now occupied by the Midwood Club, but of too recent date to be of any special historical interest. Dr. Strong refers to the remark of a gentleman from Pittsburgh, who visited the town in the thirties, who called Flatbush "a village of palaces."

It was about this time that Willinck, after whom one of the entrances to Prospect Park is named, erected a large residence at the entrance to the town, and, in 1836, Mr. Mowatt bought for his wife the fine place that was known as Melrose Hall. The old mansion stood for many years at the end of the long



Permission of Dean Alvord.

Marlborough Road, Prospect Park South.

avenue of stately pines which is one of the features of Flatbush ; but in 1880, when Dr. Homer L. Bartlett laid out Melrose Park, the wings of the Hall were torn down and the main building removed to Bedford Avenue, near Winthrop Street.

In her autobiography, Anna Cora Mowatt speaks of her life in Flatbush and of her home. "I was excessively fond of the country and early in the spring (1835) Mr. Mowatt took me to reside in Flatbush, Long Island. The house in which we boarded was a large, old-fashioned mansion, built before the Revolution (1750), and had belonged to General Giles. There were dark and spacious vaults beneath the kitchen, where it was said that English prisoners had been confined, and there was a secret chamber above the great ball-room, to which no access could be found, save by a small window. The neighbors affirmed that a young girl had been purposely starved to death in that



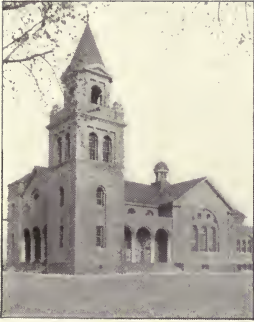
Permission of Dr. Homer L. Bartlett.

Melrose Hall.



Permission Germania Real Estate and Improvement Co.

Newkirk Avenue, Vanderveer Park.



Grace Chapel.

chamber, and that her ghost wandered at night about the house. Indeed, this report had gained such credence that nothing could have induced many of the older inhabitants of the village to pass a night beneath the haunted roof. I become so much attached to this place that Mr. Mowatt purchased it for my gratification ; stipulating, how-

ever, that I should content myself in passing the greater portion of the year in the country, I gladly consented. The house was repaired and refurnished; the gardens and orchards enlarged, and planted with an innumerable variety of fruit trees and flowers.



First Baptist Church.

We gave to our place the name of Melrose, not from any likeness it bore to Melrose Abbey, but on account of the abundance of roses that filled our greenhouses and covered the grounds."

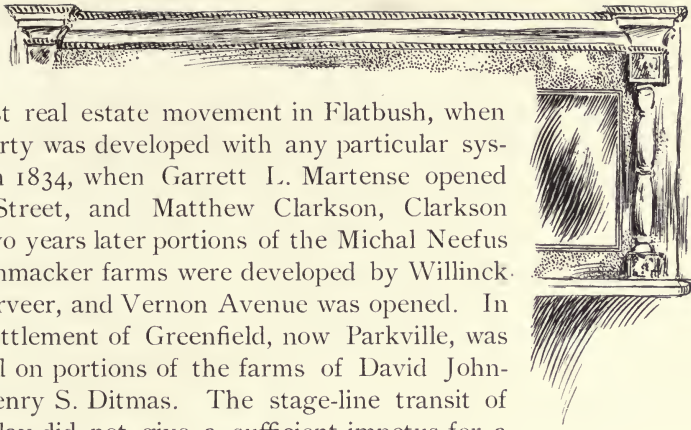


Immanuel Presbyterian Church.



By Permission of Dean Alvord.

Abermarle Road, Prospect Park South.



The first real estate movement in Flatbush, when farm property was developed with any particular system, was in 1834, when Garrett L. Martense opened Erasmus Street, and Matthew Clarkson, Clarkson Street. Two years later portions of the Michal Neefus and Schoonmacker farms were developed by Willinck and Vanderveer, and Vernon Avenue was opened. In 1852 the settlement of Greenfield, now Parkville, was commenced on portions of the farms of David Johnson and Henry S. Ditmas. The stage-line transit of this early day did not give a sufficient impetus for a suburban movement, and no further attempt was made at large improvements until attention was directed to



Cortelyou Club.

the Flatbush section by street-car communication and the development of Prospect Park. This beautiful pleasure-ground, commenced in 1862, includes nearly two hundred and fifty acres of Flatbush property which was purchased by the Park Commissioners mainly from the Martense and Vanderbilt estates.



Flatbush Congregational Church.

This great reservation of nature's handiwork, lying as it does on the very border of Flatbush, suggests the beauties and possibilities of further park development

in the residential section to the south. It is as well a place of recreation and enjoyment, and has been and will be of infinite value to the local district which has thus been reserved for the highest type of modern home development, the suburban home in the midst of the city.

From 1868 to 1872 there were several movements in real estate stimulated by the presence of the Park. The first of these was the opening of Diamond Street (now Lenox Road), on the John Lott farm, by Aaron S. Robbins, on strictly city lines, with asphalt pavement, curbed gutters, and sidewalk laid between double rows of shade trees.

During the same year a syndicate, headed by William O.



Proposed Chapel of the Nativity.



Permission Germania Real Estate and Improvement Co.

Street in Vanderveer Park.

Mills (1868), bought the Helen Martense farm and opened Linden Boulevard, and the same year, William Matthews, on the Samuel G. Lott farm, laid out Waverley Avenue (since closed) and projected that development now called Matthews Park. The following year Robert S. Walker and others bought a portion of the Isaac Cortelyou farm and opened Winthrop and Hawthorne Streets.

South of Prospect Park is the beautiful stretch of greensward called the Parade Grounds. This was purchased in 1872 by the County of Kings from the Estate of Susan Caton, and has since been used for various purposes, both military and athletic.

In 1877 Dr. Homer L. Bartlett opened Fennimore Street, and in 1883, purchased the Melrose property from Dr. John Robinson. A large real estate move-



Knickerbocker Field Club.

ment was projected under the name of Melrose Park, but the sale to many people was made unnecessary by the purchase of nearly the entire property by one individual. In 1885 Avenue A was opened by the estate of John C. Bergen, and in 1886 the Tennis Court section, including portions of Ocean Avenue, East 18th and East 19th Streets, and the Knickerbocker Field Club grounds, was improved by Richard Ficken.

In 1892 a movement of large proportions was started by the Germania Real Estate and Improvement Company, which has culminated in the development of the highly restricted residential section known as South Midwood. Farms, both in Flatbush and to the south, were successively purchased, developed, and sold. That portion of this development which is known as Vanderveer Park included the Vanderveer, Cortelyou, Antonides, Lott and Hubbard farms, Bay

View Heights, the Wyckoff and Voorhies farms, Lincoln Park, the Kouwenhoven farm, and South Midwood, the John A. Lott farm.

The first section of South Midwood which has been improved during the past year includes Amersfort, Mansfield, Delamere, Elmore and Kenmore Places, and Bedford and Ocean Avenues.

These streets have been macadamized and curbed and rows of maple and poplar trees planted on each side of the cosmocrete



Proposed
Flatbush Unitarian Church.

sidewalks. Flowers and shrubs giving a continuous bloom during the warmer months, with attractive evergreens for the entire year, are a feature in this as well as in others of the residential park improvements in Flatbush.

Since 1896 the Lefferts Estate have opened on their property Midwood Street, Maple Street and Rutland Road. As this property is in the more thickly populated section, it has naturally assumed the character of a high-grade city improvement, particularly as some eighty brick and stone houses have been erected by William A. A. Brown on Midwood and the neighboring streets. Flatbush can thus give to the prospective buyer the highest type of city residence as well as the suburban villa.

Ditmas Park, now being developed by Pounds and Decker, is a section in a restricted district. This

property, which was part of the farm of John and Henry S. Ditmas, is characterized by wide parking



St. Stephen's Lutheran Church.

strips, asphalt and macadam streets with the usual city improvements which have now become a necessity in any successful suburban enterprise.

In 1898 Dean Alvord purchased from the Estate of Luther C. Voorhies what had been part of the John C. Bergen farm and an additional tract from the Reformed Dutch Church. The entire section com-

prising over forty acres is now known as Prospect Park South. The new streets opened are called Buckingham, Marlborough, Rugby, Argyle, Stratford and Westminster Roads. Albemarle Road, running through the centre of the property, and Beverly Road on the south, were named before the advent of the new Park.

Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, which commences at the Public Gardens and runs south toward the suburbs, has long been regarded as one of the finest streets in this country, particularly because of the beautiful parkway containing plants, shrubs and flowers. This idea has been reproduced in Albemarle Road and to a more limited extent in Buckingham

Road. Every street in the section is or will be asphalted and has also wide parking strips set with ornamental trees, shrubs and plants—the spruce, fir, and hemlock, the magnolia, rhododendron and azalea, or the holly, spirea and barberry. Many thousand bulbs are planted in various parts of the park, which assist in carrying out the plan of having something in bloom from early spring until late fall.

The rapid stride of improvement in Flatbush, which has thus outstripped the Past and is overtaking the Future, has been made possible through the evolution in the methods of transit. These are no longer the days of the stage-coach or the horse-car. The electric service for Flatbush, which now takes the passenger to Manhattan without change, is unequalled in any other part of the city.

Thus the Present in Flatbush has been evolved from the Past. No Indian spirit of the early days can haunt the old trail, for he would flee in haste to his happy hunting grounds on the approach of the electric car; no Dutchman of the olden time could find the familiar places, but would shake his head and smoke his pipe in silent contemplation of the mysteries of progress. Flatbush may not be the “village of palaces,” as was suggested of the town three-quarters of a century ago; but it is something very much better, a section of comfortable, commodious, artistic and happy homes.





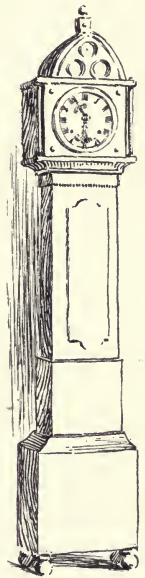
Permission of Dean Alford.

Section of Prospect Park South.

C O N C L U S I O N

A celebrated Jewish Rabbi who was asked to define the attributes of true happiness, said that it consisted in the study and enjoyment of "science, literature and art; love, friendship and religion." Few attain the ideal in any department of life's work, but the ideal is none the less important and necessary to well-rounded development. As environment is a vital factor in the realization of the ideal in any of its many phases, the consideration of the location of the home becomes a matter of supreme importance.

The aim of this little work has been missed if there has not been indicated, at least, the desirability, the happiness, the helpfulness, of the semi-suburban life, as suggested by the beautiful colony of homes lying between Prospect Park and the ocean. The study and the enjoyment of the six principles of the Rabbi are no unattainable ideal in this community. For the study of science, there is the Institute, at the very gateway of Flatbush, a guide to all fields of knowledge—literature is found in the Library as well as on the shelves in the household—as for art there are the beauties of nature, the flowers, the shrubs, the trees, as well as the constant and ever-glowing theme, the house that is builded, or to be builded, its graceful lines, the tones of bold or delicate coloring, the decorations within, in their varied harmonies, or the pictures on the walls, with



their wealth of thought and suggestion. As for love, the subject so sacred—it is found in the heart of the reader—and friendship, in its varied forms, in the church, in the home, at the club, in the political and social life of the community, finds no better or more fertile field. Toleration was ever one of the fundamental principles of the Dutch forefathers, and for two hundred and fifty years it has been held sacred in Flatbush; so religion in many outward forms finds here the breath of freedom.

Thus Flatbush is—born in a period of great world-development, of noble ancestry, it still retains the traditions of its youth. Vitalized with the power of new as well as of old ideals, it promises to be a dominant and powerful force for all that is highest and best in the new era of the twentieth century.



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1609. Explorations of Henry Hudson and the Discovery of New York Harbor.
1614. Organization of the Dutch West India Company.
1624. Settlement of New Amsterdam.
1625. First Settlements on the west end of Long Island.
1630. Settlement of New Amersfoort.
1634. Probable settlement of Midwout.
1635. Purchase of the tract of land known as Corlear's Flats from the Indians by Jacobus Van Corlear.
1636. Also another tract known as Twiller's Flats by Wouter Van Twiller.
1651. Patent granted to the people of Midwout by the Director-General.
1653. Nov. 26. Delegates from Midwout and other Dutch Towns hold a convention at New Amsterdam to adjust differences with Governor Stuyvesant.
1654. Order issued by the Governor to build the first church at Midwout.
April 7. Midwout joins in the formation of a military company with Breuckelyn and New Amersfoort.
1656. June 30. First Dutch Patent of Record: The Granting of the Canarsie Meadows.
Governor Stuyvesant orders Midwout enclosed in "palisadoes."
1658. Midwout a Seat of Justice and a Market Town.
1659. First record of existence of a Town Clerk. Adrian Hegeman served from 1659 to 1671. He was also the first Schoolmaster of whom mention is made.
1664. All the Dutch Colonies in New Netherlands surrender to the English.
1665. Delegates from Midwout and other Long Island towns met the English Governor at Hempstead and assented to the "Duke's Laws."
1666. Boundary dispute between Midwout and New Amersfoort adjusted.
1667. Oct. 11. Governor Nicolls granted letters patent to the "freeholders and inhabitants of Midwout, alias Flatbush."
1668. Court removed from Midwout to Gravesend.
1669. First record of Constable of whom the first was Jacob Stryker.
1670. April 20. Title secured to Flatbush by purchase from the Indians— Eskemoppos, Kinnarimas and Ahawaham.
1675. Title dispute between Flatbush and Capt. Richard Betts.
1677. Mar. 25. Separate patent granted to New Lots by Gov. Edmond Andros.
1678. Boundary adjusted between Flatbush and Brooklyn.
1681. Order of the Court to the inhabitants of Flatbush to fence their corn-fields.
1682. Court orders certain delinquents to pay their tithes to the minister.

1683. Organization of the Colonial Assembly under Gov. Dongan and the establishment of the Counties.
1685. Nov. 7. Court of Sesions of Kings County removed to Flatbush.
Nov. 12. Confirmatory Patent granted to Flatbush by Gov. Dongan.
1686. County Court House erected in Flatbush.
1695. Stocks, Pound and Whipping Post established. The Whipping Post was mainly for the punishment of slaves, of whom, at one time, there were over 200 in the town.
1698. Population at this time, 62 men, 72 women, 263 children, 8 apprentices, 71 slaves. Total, 476.
1700. Survey and allotment of the wood lands which had been held in common.
1703. April. First election of Supervisors, of whom the first was Aris Vanderbilt.
1706. Boundary Dispute between Flatbush and Newtown, which was not adjusted until 1721.
1714. Oct. First record of County Treasurer, of whom the first mentioned was John Vanderbilt of Flatbush.
1758. New Court House erected to replace one which had been partially destroyed by fire.
1775. April 5. Meeting at Flatbush, at which Delegates were chosen to the First Continental Congress. They were Johannes Lott, John Leferts and John Vanderbilt.
1776. Aug. 22. British Army landed at Bath.
Aug. 25. Hessian troops, under Gen. De Heister, invested Flatbush.
Aug. 27. Engagement at Valley Grove (Prospect Park).
1780. Expedition of Capt. William Marriner.
1786. Erasmus Hall Academy opened.
1787. May 18. Academy completed.
Nov. 20. A charter granted to the Trustees of the Academy by the Regents of the State.
1792. Erection of a new Court House.
1793. Dec. Erection of new Reformed Dutch Church commenced.
1796. Dec. Church completed.
1804. Erection of Mill on the farm of John C. Vanderveer.
- 1812 to '14. Gun-house for field pieces built on Public School plot.
1812. Lombardy poplars planted.
1820. Lloyd's or Zabriskie Mill erected near Cow Lane (N. E. corner of Erasmus Street and Nostrand Avenue.)
1825. Flatbush Engine Company organized.
1827. Sidewalks regulated.
1830. A Coach-line between Flatbush and Brooklyn established by Smith-Birdsall.
1832. Court House burned.
July 24. Board of Health established.
1834. First streets laid out; Erasmus and Johnson.
1835. Opening of Vernon Avenue.
1836. July 11. St. Paul's P. E. Church organized.

1840. Population at this time was 1,537. Organization of Flatbush Literary Society.
1842. New Public School House erected.
1844. May 21. First M. E. Church (Lenox Road) organized.
Organization of the Coney Island Plank Road Co.
1849. Erection of the Holy Cross R. C. Church.
1855. Weeping Willows planted.
1858. Flatbush Avenue opened to Brooklyn.
1860. Brooklyn City R. R. Co. bought the right of way on Flatbush Avenue from the Plank Road Company.
1864. April 14. Flatbush Gas Co. organized with a capital of \$40,000, afterwards increased to \$55,000.
- 1867-8. Opening of Lott, Prospect, Franklin and Clinton Streets.
1871. Grace Chapel (Reformed Church) organized.
1872. April 20. Organization of the Board of Public Improvement.
April 29. First Baptist Church organized.
1873. Annexation of Flatbush to Brooklyn first attempted.
1874. Sidewalks and crossings flagged.
Mar. 18. Second Reformed Church organized. Board of Excise Commissioners organized.
1875. Town Hall erected.
1878. June 19. Organization of the Board of Police Commissioners.
1879. April 30. Vanderveer Mill destroyed by fire.
1880. Population of Flatbush at this time, including Parkville and Windsor Terrace, was 7,634.
1881. Flatbush Water Works Co. organized.
1888. Zion's Lutheran Church organized.
1889. Organization of the Femimore St. M. E. Church.
Sewer Commissioners appointed.
1894. Annexation of Flatbush to Brooklyn.
1896. Sept. Erasmus Hall Academy transferred to the City of Brooklyn.
1897. Organization of the Immanuel Presbyterian Church.
Annexation of Brooklyn to New York.
1898. St. Stephen's Lutheran Church organized.
1899. Organization of the Flatbush Congregational Church, Baptist Church of the Redeemer, Flatbush Unitarian Church and Flatbush Trust Company.
1900. Organization of the Vanderveer Park M. E. Church, and the Episcopal Chapel of the Nativity.

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