

The Park Slope Civic Council

April 2009 Volume LXXI, No. 8

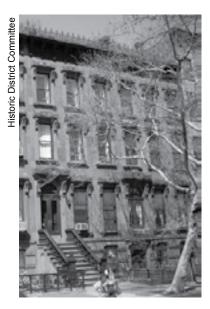
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Garrison's Finish

See where the jockey lived who helped bring Park Slope in a winner



"Save the Slope," the Historic District Committee blog that explores the Slope's landmark nooks and crannies (savetheslope.blogspot.com) has focused several recent entries on homes on this year's 50th Annual House Tour. This article is adapted from two of those entries, on March 12 and March 15.



home on this year's House Tour, 30 8th Ave., is part of a row of flush-front neo-Grec houses from 1881-82, largely developed by ownerarchitect-builder J. Doherty (who may have been the same person who built another home on the tour, 199 Berkeley Place). Although it has lost its original front stoop, the house retains the handsome wrought iron cresting at the roofline. Horizontal banding at the basement level unifies the row. The house to the left, at #32, retains the original stoop, balustered handrailings and newel posts.

In the late 1880s-early '90s, this house was the residence of Edward R. "Snapper" Garrison, a "man of the turf," a jockey who became famous for hanging back during most of the race only to finish at top speed to achieve a thrilling victory. He became so well known for this racing style that a contest in which the winner pulls ahead at the last moment to score the victory is known as a "Garrison finish."

Snapper Garrison's career seemed bright in 1886 when he married Miss Sadie McMahon, daughter of a prominent Brooklyn judge. In addition to his career as a jockey, Garrison entered into business with his father-in-law, investing in stables and strings of racing horses. The New York Times noted on June 1, 1890, that this stretch of 8th Avenue was known as "Sportsmen's Row" due to the presence of Garrison and other sporting gentlemen.

Alas, by the early '90s, Garrison's business affairs had taken a turn for the worse, and he had had a falling out with his wife's father. The January 2, 1890, edition of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle recounts that "his riches had taken wings," that Garrison was "almost broke," ... See Garrison's Finish, page 6



n 1959, the House Tour helped save a deteriorating neighborhood. Fifty years later, it raises thousands of dollars for grants to organizations that help make Park Slope a great place to live.

To celebrate the tour's Golden Anniversary, homes in all areas of Park Slope will be on view. Vans will shuttle participants from our starting point, the Poly Prep Lower School on Prospect Park West and 1st Street, and from other designated locations.

A special feature this year will be "The Architecture of Park Slope," a narrated slide show by architectural historian Francis Morrone, author of "The Park Slope Neighborhood and Architectural History Guide."

The tour runs from noon-5:30 on May 17. The slide show will be at 6pm in the Rotunda of Congregation Beth Elohim, 8th Avenue at Garfield Place. House-tour tickets are reguired for admission and seating is limited.

Tickets are available on line through our web site and go on sale May 1 at Aguayo & Huebener, Astoria Federal Savings, tb shaw realty associates, Brenton Realty, Brown Harris Stevens, Dixon's Bicycle Shop, Dizzy's Diner, Ideal Properties Group LLC, Warren Lewis Realty, Windsor Café and Zuzu's Petals.

The homes on tour are described in the calendar listing at parkslopeciviccouncil.org. Many have also been featured on the Historic District Committee blog, savetheslope. blogspot.com.

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Toward a More Inclusive

Historic District

This month's column begins a rotation among members of the Civic Council Executive Committee. Lots were cast and the first column fell to David Alquist, recording secretary and a member of the Historic District Expansion Committee.

In March, we held a public forum devoted to our ongoing project to expand the Park Slope Historic District. For those unable to attend, I would like to review here my introductory remarks on the "History of Preservation in Park

Slope: 1965-2009." My remarks were intended to set the context for our panelists, who included Francis Morrone, historian, author and scholar; Simeon Bankoff, executive director of the Historic Districts Council; and Kate Daly and Tenzing Chadotsang of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

The story begins in 1965 with the passage of the New York City Landmarks Law, which established the LPC and empowered it to designate individual landmarks, scenic landmarks and entire neighborhoods as historic districts, and gave it the authority to regulate changes for those landmarks and historic districts.

According to the LPC, neighborhoods that have been designated historic districts represent "at least one period or style of architecture typical of one or more eras in the city's history; as a result, the district has a distinct 'sense of place."

Park Slope has always seemed to us to have an amazingly strong sense of place, and not just on the residential streets. One can walk down the commercial strips on 5th or 7th Avenues and sense immediately that there is nowhere else in the world quite like Park Slope. It has something to do with the old buildings that contain and preserve small, locally owned and operated businesses. It also has something to do with the people who are attracted to living here, despite all the challenges of urban life. Sense of place is both a social and physical phenomenon.

The 1965 Landmarks Law launched the modern preservation movement in New York City, and the Civic Council immediately set to work to protect our neighborhood. Public hearings about historic district recognition were held as early as 1966, according to the Park Slope Historic District Designation Report (which can ...See Inclusive, page 7

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News & Notes for the Civic Minded

Candidate Forums: The Civic Council has invited all the candidates running for City Council in Park Slope to make their cases to the public on two Tuesdays in early May.

The forum for candidates in the 39th district, covering much of the south-central and southern Slope, will be held May 5 in the auditorium in the John Jay building on 7th Avenue. For candidates in the 33rd district, roughly covering the north central and northern slope, the forum will be on May 12 at PS 282 on 6th Avenue.

Both forums begin at 7:15pm, will run for about two hours and will allow audience members to submit questions to the candidates.

Around the Slope: As summer approaches, the Prospect Park YMCA will begin the process of taking control of the 14th Regiment Sports Complex.

First, by late May or early June, the Y is scheduled to begin operating parts of the complex where construction is complete: the former drill floor and the basement. In place of the drill floor, in the back of the armory, there is now a quarter-mile oval track enclosing a gym floor that can be used for basketball, soccer and a variety of other sports. There are state-of-the-art scoreboards and a gallery that can seat up to 300 people.

In late August or early September, the Y will begin operating a part of the first floor in the front of the building. There are 10 rooms in this area including six on the 14th Street side and two on the 15th Street side that are approximately 700 square-feet each. The Y has not yet announced how these rooms will be used.

-Tom Miskel

CALENDAR

These events are sponsored or co-sponsored by PSCC. For details and additional listings, go to parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

Brooklyn Food Conference

Saturday, May 2, the John Jay building and PS 321, beginning at 9am. A day of workshops, food demos, discussions and activities for kids, followed by dinner and dancing. To pre-register and for more information, go to http://brooklynfoodconference.org.

Candidate Forums

City Council candidates face the public. District 39: May 5, 7:15pm, John Jay auditorium, 7^{th} Avenue. District 33: May 12, 7:15pm, PS 282, 6^{th} Avenue.

PCCC Monthly Meeting

Thursday, May 7, 7pm, New York Methodist Hospital Executive Dining Room.

Spring Fling & Eco-Fair 2009

Saturday, May 16, 11am-4pm. Welcome spring with the Civic Council, Park Slope Parents and the Old Stone House, many hundreds of kids, plenty of music, and lots, lots more. Washington (J. J. Byrne) Park.

The 50th Annual Park Slope House Tour

Sunday, May 17, noon-5:30pm. This extra-special Golden Anniversary tour will include nine homes around the Slope, a shuttle bus and a slide show on Park Slope architecture. Starting point: Poly Prep Lower School, Prospect Park West and 1st Street.

Pitching in for Park Slope: Dozens of volunteers spread out from in front of MS51 on Saturday, April 18, to clean up litter, scrape fliers from lampposts, mulch tree pits, plant pansies and paint over graffiti. Leopoldi Hardware donated mulch; Greg's Express delivered the mulch and clean-up supplies; Tarzian Hardware donated paint supplies; and Lapide Nursery donated pansies. Additional assistance came from New York Methodist Hospital, Astoria Federal Savings, MS 51, Park Slope Food Coop and The Park Slope Day Camp.

Shown here (clockwise from top left): Karim Uthman and his mother, Lisa Rosettie, mulch a tree pit; Joe Leopoldi gets ready to load mulch for delivery; Michael Rieser and Ed the Worm tell passers by about the ins and outs of recycling and composting; Vincent Cross and Good Company provide good-earthy entertainment; and Johanna Jainchill sweeps a section of 3rd Street — stunned, she said, by the vast quantity of cigarette butts she was collecting.



zra Goldstein

Viewing Brooklyn: A Look Back in Postcards and Pictures

Landmarks Around the Slope



his month's column honors our 50th House Tour on Sunday May 17, which will take participants to many parts of the Slope. I will do less talking than usual and instead offer tidbits from different corners of the neighborhood. Most of the buildings shown here still stand, and tour participants might recognize them as they go by.

Remember that Park Slope grew from different starting points. Its row houses sprang up near the horsedrawn trolley routes that came up Flatbush Avenue from the Fulton Ferry (under where the Brooklyn Bridge now stands). The oldest of these row houses still exist at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Park

Place, just off Flatbush. Other trolley lines ran along 3rd Avenue from the ferry that docked at the foot of Atlantic Avenue.

The more well-to-do families didn't ride the trolleys, but were brought all the way up the hill in private carriages to their mansions in "Prospect Heights." A few of these mansions still stand along 8th Avenue and Prospect Park West (which was originally 9th Avenue). Most of them have changed from being private homes to other uses; these include our House Tour starting point, the Poly Prep Lower School on Prospect Park West and 1st Street, and Brooklyn Parks and Recreation headquarters in the Litchfield Villa (which was featured in March's column).

When the Brooklyn Bridge opened in 1883, it allowed many more people who were living in crowded New York (the city on the other side of the river) to find homes in the city of Brooklyn. Rows of single-family brownstones and apartment houses soon filled in the rest of Park Slope, and the elevated train along 5th Avenue sped workers to their new homes. All Brooklyn experienced a similar boom, growing from 570,000 in 1880 to 900,000 in 1894.

Clubs and social halls dotted Park Slope, and their placement mirrored their clientele. The Montauk Club on 8th Avenue and Lincoln Place gave solace to those living in the mansions on the hill. The Acme Building on the corner of 9th Street and 7th Avenue had a beer garden on the ground floor, which spilled onto the sidewalk in good weather. There was also a large hall upstairs and a bowling alley in the basement. The Acme catered to throngs of working-class men, mostly Irish and Italian, who labored along the Gowanus Canal or the Red Hook waterfront. The slightly more "dignified" went to the Knights of Columbus Hall on the Plaza (now Grand Army Plaza), which became the Madonna Residence and is now the Prospect Park Residence senior living center.

And, of course, Prospect Park, which gave us our name, still gives Slopers both refuge and pleasure, whether for a quiet stroll along a waterway or a Little League baseball game in the meadow on a Saturday morning.

-Bob Levine, Trustee and PSCC Historian



Places to work, worship, play shop and study: The Montauk Club (above) was founded in 1889, and the clubhouse was completed in 1891. Its founding members included names seen today on street signs and public institutions, including Pratt, Litchfield, Schermerhorn, Dean, Lefferts, Montgomery and Underhill. A matchbook cover (right) advertises the Columbus Club in the Knights of Columbus Hall as a place to dine. Members and non-members could also dance and play cards. From top right: The Worsdell Leather Co. was one of the many industries that thrived along the Gowanus Canal and in the nearby streets. The back of the company's calling card states that they made leather for harnesses, saddles and reins, as well as



straps and bags for cycles. <u>PS 39</u> was built in 1877 at 6th Avenue and 8th Street and served the children of families working in the Lower Slope and Gowanus area. <u>Old First Reformed Church</u> has played an active role in Park Slope since 1891. The <u>Boat House</u> was built in 1905, replacing a rustic structure for renting rowboats on the Lullwater in Prospect Park. It was modeled after a 16th century library in Venice. The <u>McCormick Store</u> at 9th Street and 5th Avenue was part of an important shopping area at the time this photo was taken in 1908, when the 5th Avenue Elevated Rail Road brought people home from Manhattan via the Brooklyn Bridge Terminal.











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123A 7th Avenue, Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York, 11215 Sales 718.638.6500 Rentals 718.638.0632 Fax 718.638.4603 www.warrenlewis.com ... Garrison's Finish continued from Page 1 ...

and that his "differences with his father-in-law" had occasioned "no end of talk" in the racing circuit.

Garrison managed to hang onto the house until 1896, when a *Brooklyn Eagle* article announced a special auction of his entire household effects "sold by the owner, a shining young member of the turf."

Garrison later became a trainer and "man about the track." In September 30, 1919, the *New York Times* recounts that Snapper Garrison was involved in unpleasantries with a tailor in Ozone Park, Queens, regarding a bill for a two-pants suit.

A book, *Garrison's Finish*, was made into two silent movies, one starring Tom Mix and the other with Mary Pickford's brother, Jack. On Garrison's death, in 1930, an obituary in the *New York Times* called him "one of the most famous jockeys in turf history." In 1955, he was among the first inductees into the newly opened Natioal Rac-

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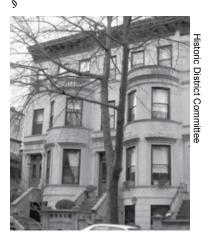
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718.399.4103 Iryan@bhusa.com ing Hall of Fame. It was estimated that he rode nearly 700 winners and won some \$2 million in purses, an enormous sum in his day.

Another home on the house tour, 626 6th St., together with 624 next door, was built in 1898-99 for Charles G. Peterson. These two buildings closely resemble the great row of houses around the corner, on Prospect Park West between 6th and 7th Streets, which had been developed in 1896, also by Peterson.

The buildings are essentially Neoclassical in design and executed in a handsome lightcolored brick that became



popular in the second half of the 1890s. Columns and entablature frame the doorway, while egg-and-dart detailing surround the parlor-floor windows.

In 1901, Peterson became reviled as the man who ruined "Sportsmen's Row," a stretch of 8th Avenue just off Flatbush Avenue made famous by, among others, the jockey Snapper Garrison. Peterson developed the lots north of the Montauk Club with houses that faced Plaza Street, exposing their backsides to the stately homes across 8th Avenue, where many pinnacles of Brooklyn society lived. Some members of the Montauk Club had tried to fend him off by raising a subscription and buying these lots from Peterson when his plans became known. But the subscription failed, Peterson proceeded, and some members quit the club as a result.

By 1923, 626 6th St. was owned by James J. McCullough. McCullough had earlier married Kathryn A. Tilyou, sister of George C. Tilyou, and the two brothers-in-law became business partners and founders of Steeplechase Park in Coney Island. James and Kathryn had eight children, so even so large a house as 626 6th St. might have felt a bit tight for space.

James McCullough is said to have invented the "shooting gallery" and operated several of these amusements in and around New York. He died in 1934.

Clips of many of the newspaper articles referred to here may be seen on the blog.

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 7, 1901

EIGHTH AVENUE MEN MAY LEAVE MONTAUK GLUB.

Refusal to Help Keep Undesirable Houses Off Sportsmen's Row Creates Trouble.

BUILDER PATTERSON'S SCHEME.

Keeps Within Restrictions, Although He Proposes Building Houses With Rear Exposures on Eighth Avenue.

...Inclusive continued from Page 2 ...

be downloaded from the LPC website, www.nyc.gov/html/lpc). The current district was finally designated in 1973, and the Designation Report states that "all of this work was carried out under the aegis of the Historic and Cultural Resources Committee of the Park Slope Civic Council." Thus, the Civic Council has been at the center of historic preservation in Park Slope since the beginning, and one can view our effort to extend the Historic District as simply the next step in a single, 45-year-long project.

The present district mostly encompasses the so-called "park blocks" and is mansion-centric, focused mainly on edifices built as single-family homes for the wealthiest members of the community. Since 1973, however, we have come to view our historic district in a more holistic way, comprising not just the houses of the elite but also the smaller homes built to house clerks and mechanics, and even the multi-family "flat houses" that sheltered those who might have labored in the factories owned by the businessmen and industrialists "up-Slope." As the Rev. Daniel Meeter of Old First Church memorably expressed at the March forum, this next phase of historic preservation seeks to recognize "the help," making the district inclusive of all the members of the late-19th-century Park Slope community. Beyond the houses, we have also come to recognize that the historic fabric of Park Slope includes the commercial buildings, institutions, schools and religious buildings that have always been part of the daily lives of Park Slope residents.

It is in recognition of this more holistic view of Park Slope that

the Civic Council today seeks to expand the boundaries of the Park Slope Historic District. One of our first tasks was to photograph the entire neighborhood in groups of two or three buildings at a time. This snapshot of Park Slope circa-2008 may be viewed and used at *picasaweb.google.com/pscc.hd.01* (or follow the links from our website).

Currently, our study area comprises all of Park Slope (which we define as Flatbush Avenue to 15th Street and Prospect Park West to 4th Avenue), excepting the present historic district. Unfortunately, this area contains around 4,900 buildings and is too large for the LPC to consider in any reasonable time frame, so they asked us to break it into smaller phases. We hope to submit our phase-one area, comprising about 1,400 buildings, by this summer, so that the LPC can commence an evaluation and come back to us with a concrete proposal for expansion.

We are also conducting our own research using the online *Brooklyn Eagle* and other sources and publishing our results in our blog: savetheslope.blogspot.com. (Noted *New York Times* columnist Christopher Gray has called our research "very, very sophisticated.")We invite readers to join us as we continue to uncover the forgotten stories of our historic neighborhood and press for the recognition and protection it so richly deserves in the form of an expanded Park Slope Historic District.

-David Alquist

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The Park Slope Civic Council

Organized as the South Brooklyn Board of Trade in 1896, PSCC is one of the oldest civic associations in Brooklyn. We identify and address quality-of-life issues important to the community; create and support projects geared to improving and protecting the neighborhood; and assist local non-profit organizations that benefit those living and working in Park Slope. Our many ongoing programs include the Halloween Parade, the Clean Streets campaign, community forums, and a holiday toy drive. Our annual House Tour raises thousands of dollars for neighborhood initiatives. All are welcome to join. To learn more, go to parkslopeciviccouncil.org.

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