



## **A History of the Brownstones in the Park Place Underhill Avenue Civic Association**

# Where did the land under our houses come from ?

The Legislature of the State of New York passed an act on 18 April 1859:

*"To Authorize, the Selection and Location of Certain Grounds for Public Parks,  
and also for a Parade Ground for the City of Brooklyn."*

The site chosen was referred to as Mt. Prospect Park. Its name came from the hill on which the Mt. Prospect Reservoir was located, near the intersection of Flatbush Avenue and present Eastern Parkway.

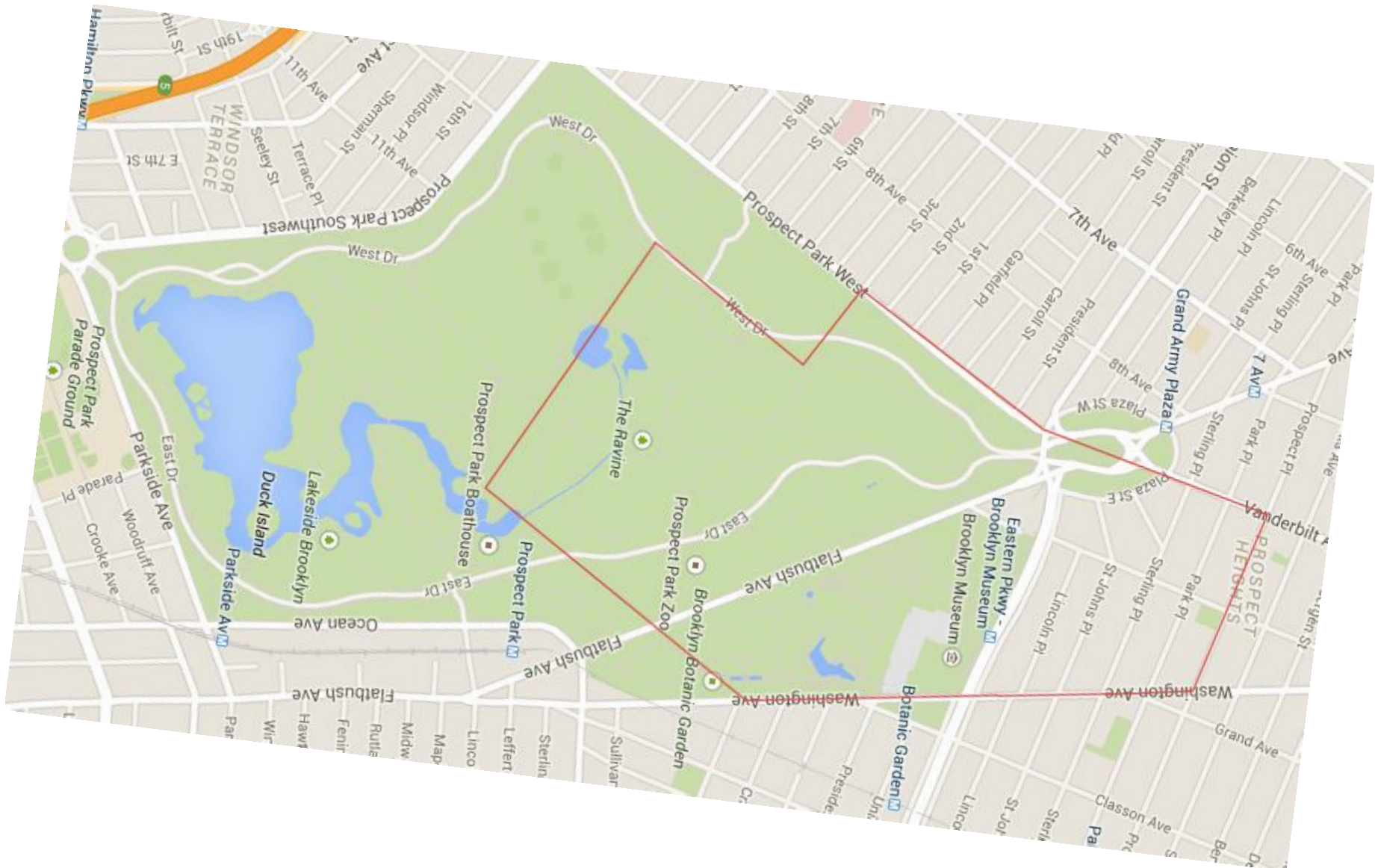


The initial plan for a Mt. Prospect Park was submitted by Egbert L. Viele.  
The lands for his proposal were purchased by the city, but the Civil War intervened.

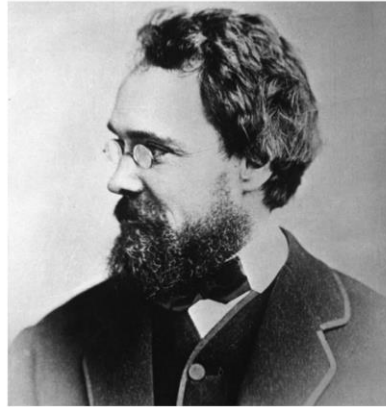
## Egbert L. Viele's Plan for Prospect Park 1861



**Placing Viele's plan on a current map, we see that all the houses in the PPUACA were originally supposed to be part of a bifurcated Prospect Park.**



**After the Civil War, Viele's original plan was rejected. Olmstead and Vaux were then offered the opportunity to design the park.**



Calvert Vaux



Frederick Law Olmstead

**They proposed that the city buy additional land so as to fulfill their dream of a park containing:**

***“first, a region of open meadow, with large trees singly and in groups; second, a hilly district, with groves and shrubbery; and third, a lake district, containing a fine sheet of water, with picturesque shores and islands”.***



The Olmsted and Vaux plan of 1867 is shown below.

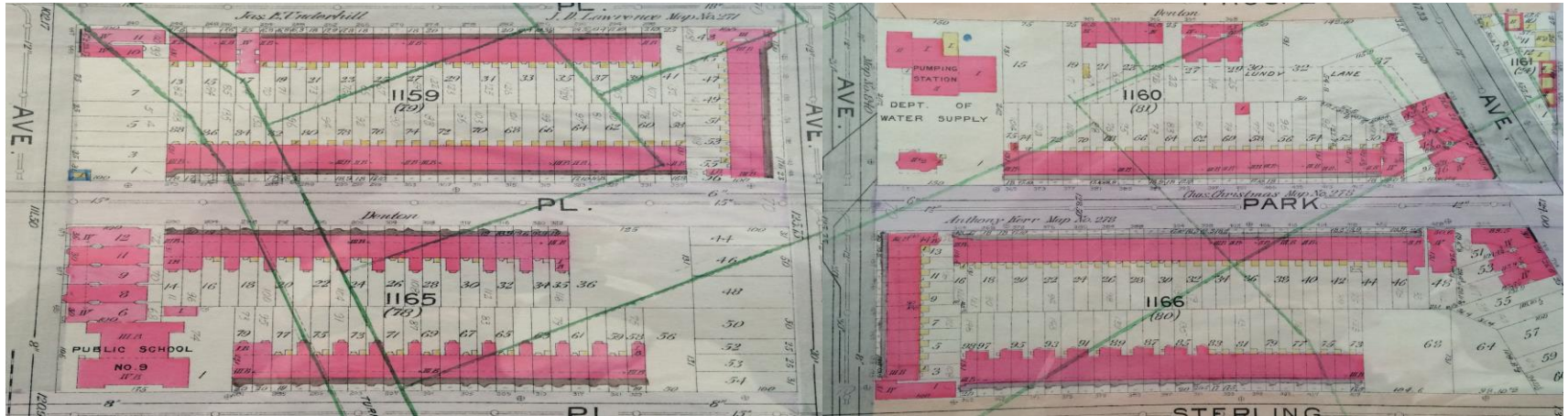
Note that the 'extra' land (in beige) left room for the Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn Public Library, Mt. Prospect Park, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Brooklyn Museum, and the houses we live in today.



**After the completion of Prospect Park in the 1870s, the city took several decades to decide what to do with the area of Prospect Heights bounded by Eastern Parkway, Prospect Place and Vanderbilt Ave.**



**It wasn't until the early 1890s before that development began in our neighborhood.**



PPUACA houses in 1904

**The four blocks of Prospect Heights constituting the *Park Place Underhill Avenue Civic Association* contain about 150 row houses built as single-family residences.**

**Who were the builders and architects?**

**121 were built by William H. Reynolds, and 29 by other builders.**





*Reynolds was born in Brooklyn to a father who was a builder. Before he was 20, he took over his father's business and successfully built homes and apartments in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Prospect Heights and Park Slope. Elected to the NYS Senate at age 24, but served only one 2 year term (1894-1896). Published plans for a palatial home on Eastern Parkway and Underhill Avenue. Developed the communities of Borough Park and Bensonhurst. Owned several legitimate theatres and opera houses in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Developed and operated the "Dreamland" amusement park in Coney Island. Built Jamaica Racetrack and headed the Jockey Club. Owned several yachts, a water company and a trolley company. Developed the community of Laurelton in Queens. Developed, and was mayor of, the City of Long Beach. Built the Lido Beach Resort.*



*Along the way he was indicted and convicted of corruption, but the decision was overturned on appeal. He had very good relations with the political powers of the time, even though he was accidentally shot in the thigh by Mayor John Purroy Mitchell in 1914.*

*He also was active in Manhattan real estate, and owned the lease to the land under the current day Chrysler Building. Walter Chrysler bought the lease, but not before Reynolds had proposed building the tallest building in the world, of course called the "Reynolds Building". He died in 1931 at age 63 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery*

William H. Reynolds claimed to be the architect of 83 houses, while the firm of Dahlander&Hedman designed 36, and Benjamin Dreisler 15.



*Magnus Dahlander*



*Axel S. Hedman*



*Benjamin Dreiser*

Dahlander and Hedman were both from Sweden and practiced in Brooklyn for only about eight years before returning home. They are more famous in Sweden than in Brooklyn. Most of Reynolds' brownstone projects used one of these three architects, although he often claimed to be the architect himself !

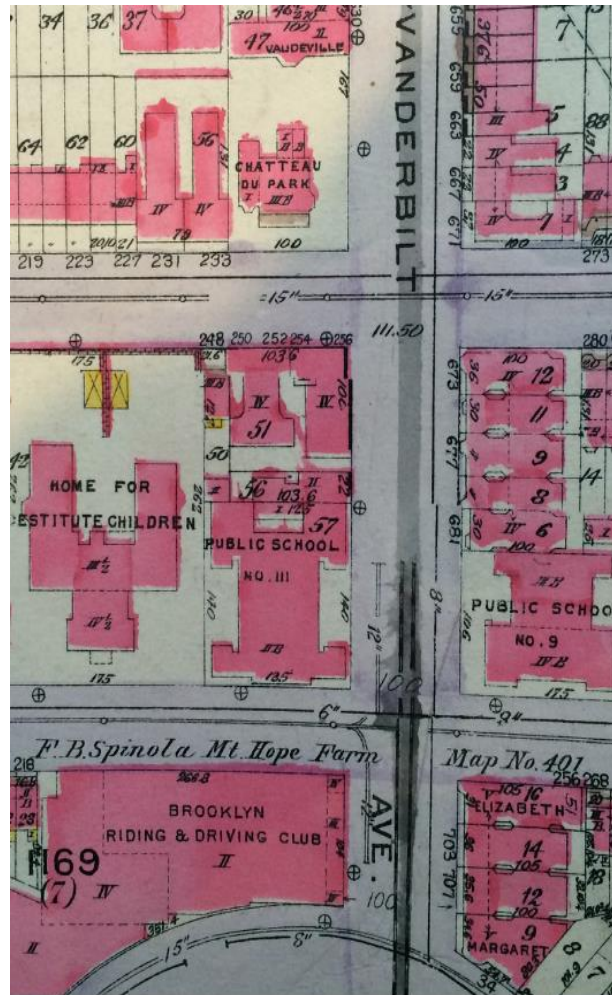
What did the neighborhood look like back then?







# What Did Vanderbilt Avenue Look Like When Your House Was Built?



**Looking north from Plaza Street where  
20 Plaza and 34 Plaza are located, we would see:**





# Brooklyn Riding and Driving Club







# 34 Plaza Street



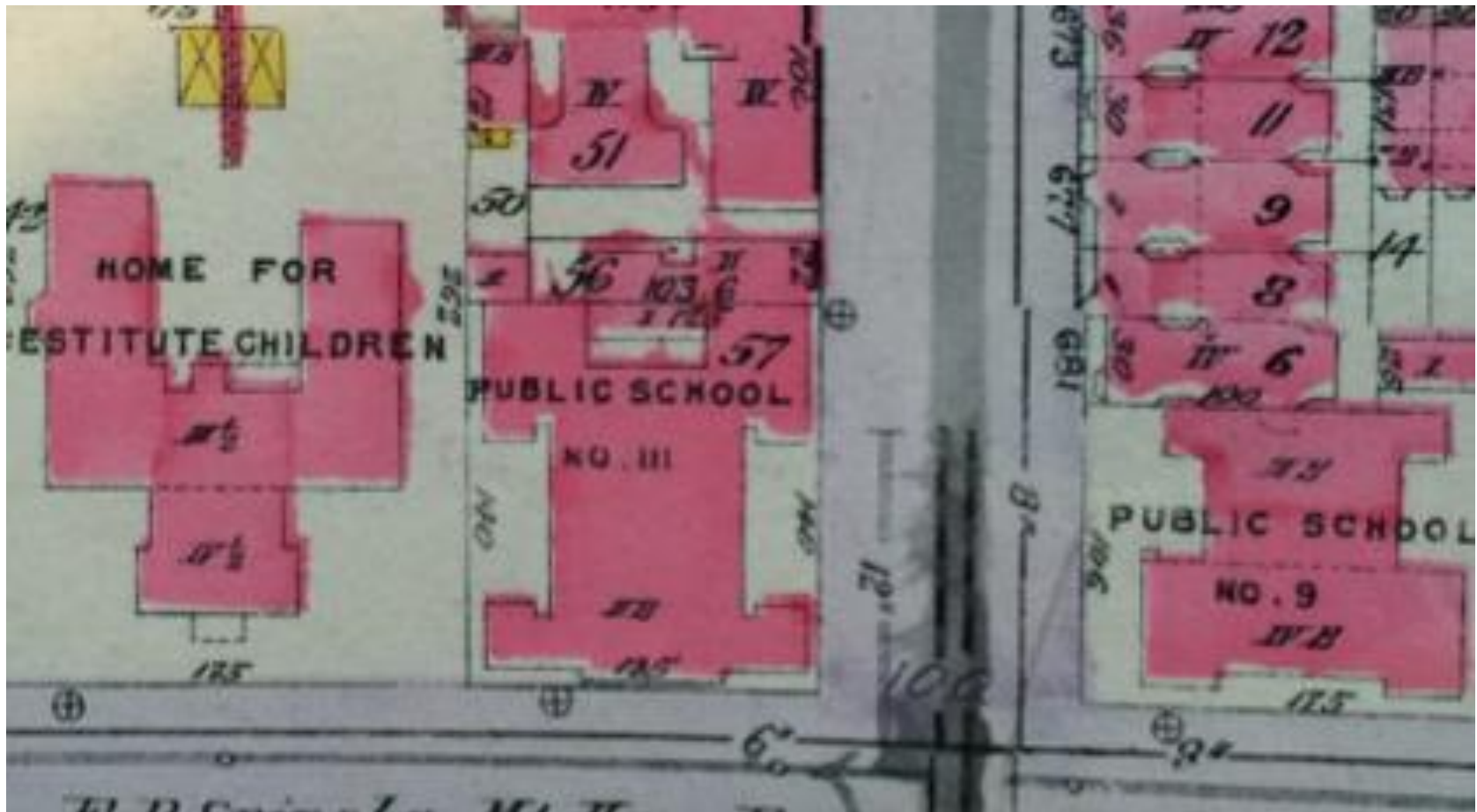








**The view looking north from Sterling Place  
would look like this:**





**BROOKLYN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL AND HOME, 217 Sterling Place.**

Protestant children, 3 to 12 years old. Board and instruction free or partially paid. Maintains seven schools for poor children; supplies them warm dinners daily, and clothing. Mrs. W. H. Lyon, Pres.







Original P.S. 9 (P.S. 111 after 1905) (built 1867)





**P.S. 9 'Annex' (built 1905)**








**The land where Foodtown is currently located was previously occupied by a structure called the Chateau du Parc. This large house dates from before 1880 and belonged to the Duryea family, of Duryea Presbyterian Church Fame. By 1900 the house was owned by Peter Rouss. The 1900 Census showed that Peter Rouss lived with his wife, three young children, nine servants: 2 chambermaids, 2 nursemaids, a cook, a laundress, a seamstress, a Japanese butler and a coachman. The coachman lived with his wife and two children above the rear stable.**



**THE HOUSE HOUSE, PARK PLACE.**



The *Chateau du Parc* was occupied until after WW II. It continued to be used as a church, a school, and for meetings and music lessons until it was demolished for a Bohack supermarket in the early 1950s.



*Wm. Pitt Rivers*  
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OPEN FOR  
SOCIAL FUNCTIONS, LAWN PARTIES,  
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**CHATEAU DU PARC**  
Park Place and Vanderbilt Av.

**THE DENTON SCHOOL FOR  
GIRLS AND BOYS**  
At **CHATEAU DU PARC**  
241 PARK PLACE, BROOKLYN  
Prepares for High School.

Kindergarten, Primary and Preparatory  
Departments. German taught through all  
departments. Tutoring in the English  
branches. Private lessons in German.  
Piano lessons. A Fine Playground.

Reopens Sept. 23rd.  
Miss Louise Denton, Principal

**FRANK X. DOYLE**  
TEACHER OF SINGING IN ALL ITS  
BRANCHES.  
Write for circular.

Studio—**CHATEAU DU PARC**  
Vanderbilt Av. and Park Pl.  
Phone 7055 Prospect. †



1940 Tax Photo



# Looking east down Park Place:



1940 Tax Photos





1980 Tax Photos

To investigate the history of a typical house in the PPUABA, let's start with how the Landmark Preservation Report describes each house.

## **PROSPECT HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICT Designation Report**



New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
June 23, 2009

# Let's check how the Landmark Preservation Report Describes Our House - 300 Park Place

Our house, **300 Park Place**, was one of the 22 row houses on the south side of Park Place, viz. numbers 280 through 322, built by William H. Reynolds around 1897. The designation report states:

*Date: c. 1897*

*Architect: William H. Reynolds*

*Original Owner/Developer: William H. Reynolds*

*Type: Row houses*

*Style/Ornament: Renaissance Revival with Romanesque Revival elements Material: Brownstone and sandstone*

*Stories: Three and basement*

## *History*

*This group of twenty-two Renaissance Revival style with Romanesque Revival style detailed elements row houses was built c. 1897 by builder William H. Reynolds at a time when the development of Prospect Park and improvements in transportation hastened the construction of hundreds of exceptionally fine brick and stone row houses in the Prospect Heights area. While none of the houses in the row are identical, they all have decorative details that are very similar, and in some cases identical, to 281-323 Sterling Place, another row of twenty-two houses that was built by Reynolds at about the same time. The row features Renaissance- and Romanesque-inspired ornament, such as rough-faced stone, carved panels, capitals and keystones, pilasters,*



*300 Park Place Four bays including a full-height three-window-wide curved bay;  
L-shaped rough-faced stone stoop with smooth stone walls; wrought-iron gate under  
the stoop*





*wood-and- glass double doors with transom; door lintel with rectangular pediment and molded cornice supported by scroll brackets with carved relief design above*



*wrought-iron window grilles at basement; thin tooled banding at basement; basement window sills incorporated into a continuous band; egg-and-dart design above basement windows; smooth stone band between the basement and first story;*



*one-over-one double-hung wood windows; stained-glass transoms at first story window*



*with carved relief panels below (except at the eastern third story window);*



*window sills incorporated into a continuous molded band (except at the eastern second story window;*

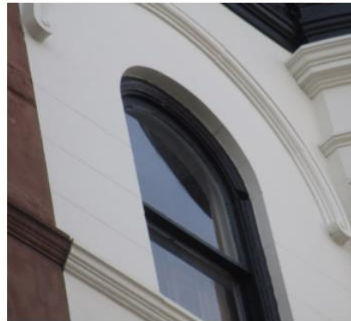
*pilasters with carved leaf capitals at the first and third stories;*



*continuous molded bands in the curved bay above the windows at the first, second and third story (bands have egg-and-dart design above the first and second stories; eastern second story with rectangular lintel and molded scroll cornice supported with scroll brackets and molded sill with curved ends;*



*arch-headed window at eastern third story bay with voussoirs and molded enframement;*



*cornice with dentils and scroll design and scroll brackets at western end.*





In late 1897 Reynolds started building a row of twenty two Park Place brownstones. They were completed in about 6-8 months. Since they were built on speculation, he aggressively marketed them with almost daily ads in the *Brooklyn Eagle*.

**A.—THAT NEW ROW, 22 SWELL FRONT, FANCY stone dwellings, 3 story and basement, with and without extension dining room; tiled bath; open plumbing, hardwood trim, onyx fireplaces, gas logs, parquette floors, lot 131 feet deep; open daily and evenings until 9 o'clock; within one block of Prospect Park Plaza.**

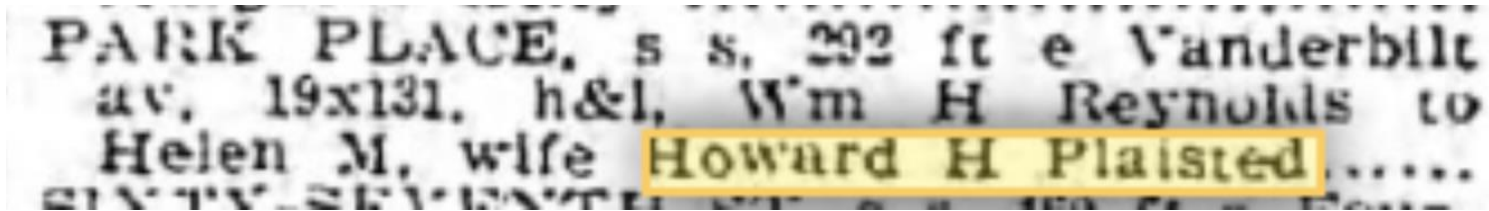
**WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS,**

**Park place, betweet Vanderbilt and Underhill ave.**

*Brooklyn Eagle 8/21/1898*

Reynolds filed an application to build these 22 brownstones with the Building Department on December 30, 1897. The cost of building each brownstone was estimated to be between \$6500 and \$7000 dollars.

**Ten months later on 10/7/1898 Reynolds sold 300 Park Place to Helen M. Plaisted, the wife of Howard H. Plaisted. Helen Plaisted came from a politically connected family, the Fergusons of Bensonhurst. Her father had been supervisor of the Town of New Utrecht before becoming Municipal Court Judge for the 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District in Brooklyn. Howard may have received a position as a tax commissioner with the aid of his father-in-law. Helen was quite active socially and belonged to many Brooklyn organizations.**



PARK PLACE, s s, 292 ft e Vanderbilt  
av, 19x131, h&l, Wm H Reynolds to  
Helen M, wife **Howard H Plaisted**.....  
SIXTY-SEVENTH

**They were childless however, and before 1905 moved to smaller quarters, renting a two story brownstone at 622 Jefferson Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, although still keeping a servant. Howard may have received a position as a tax commissioner with the aid of his father-in-law.**

## A BENSONHURST WEDDING.

### Ex-Supervisor Fergusson's Daughter to Marry Howard Henry Plaisted.

At 5:30 this evening Miss Helen M. Fergusson, youngest daughter of ex-Supervisor Cornelius Fergusson of New Utrecht, and Howard Henry Plaisted of Brooklyn will be married at the home of the bride's father, Cropsey and Twenty-first avenues, Benson-



MISS HELEN FERGUSON.  
The Bride.

hurst. The wedding will be as simple as possible, owing to the recent death of Mrs. Cornelius Fergusson, the bride's mother. Miss Clara Fergusson, niece of the bride, will be maid of honor. George Eckstein of Brooklyn will be best man. There will be no ushers. The Rev. Harry Howard Bogart of the Church of the Advent, Bensonhurst, will perform the ceremony. Only relatives



HOWARD HENRY PLAISTED.  
The Groom.

and immediate friends of the family will be present. The bride and groom will journey to the Thousand Islands for their honeymoon trip, and in about two weeks will return to spend the summer season at Bensonhurst.



Between the years 1903 and 1905 Henry N. Dubois bought 300 Park Place. Henry's family owned a prosperous dock building and dredging firm dating back to the 1870s.

Henry N. DuBois listed his occupation as a contractor and eventually inherited his family's dredging and dock building business.

DuBois' Henry, Sons Co. (N. Y.) (Abraham DuBois,  
Pres.; Edwin W. DuBois, Sec. Capital, \$50,000.  
Directors: Abraham & Henry N. & Edwin W.  
DuBois) 17 State R. 401

*Manhattan Corporation Directory 1909*

The family must have been quite well off because they soon commissioned the building of a tugboat in 1910 named the *Henry N. Dubois*.



[n/a] Antonio Nicolo Gasparo Jacobsen (American, 1850-1921)

**As the economy faltered after the 1929 'crash', the 'upper crust' were no longer moving to Park Place. Roomers and lodgers were required to meet the mortgage costs.**

**Our house's next owners, the Heaney family, owned the house from the late '20s into the mid '60s. They were a fairly typical family of the depression era: older, no profession, no young children, and taking in boarders to meet expenses.**

**In 1930 the house was worth ~\$14,000 and in 1940 it was worth ~\$11,000.**

**In 1898 the Park Place houses sold for prices in the range of \$12,000 or so.**

**Federal Census data is not currently available beyond the 1940 Census. Using on-line Property Transaction Records it was possible to search for property transactions going back to 1966. The last documented owner after Annie Heaney (died sometime ~1963-1964) was Jocelyne Saintillus.**

**10-10-1967     Jocelyne Saintillus to Eldad Jean-Francois (*lived at 295 St Johns P*)**

**9/2/1968        Eldad Jean-Francois (*lived at 295 St Johns P*) to Jocelyne Pierre**

**6/18/1974       Jocelyne Pierre to George and Laurie Guilfoyle**

**5/24/1977       George and Laurie Guilfoyle to Kennedy/Gately**

**Brooklyn Address Books, or “criss-cross” directories are available on microfilm at the BPL in the Brooklyn Collection for the years 1929-1986. NY Telephone listings for 300 Park Place for the indicated years are shown below.**

<b>1945</b>	<b>Heaney</b>
<b>1955</b>	<b>Heaney</b>
<b>1960</b>	<b>Heaney</b>
<b>1963</b>	<b>Heaney</b>
<b>1964</b>	no phone
<b>1965</b>	Scott
<b>1966</b>	no phone
<b>1967</b>	Bigord
<b>1968</b>	Paul
<b>1969</b>	Debreuil,Jones
<b>1970</b>	Debreuil
<b>1972</b>	no phone
<b>1973</b>	Buffonge,Faulkner,Paul
<b>1974</b>	Jeudy,Jeudy,Faulkner



**It appears that our house was a rooming house while owned by the Heaney family from the late 1920s into the early 1960s. In 1966 the C/O was changed to a two family house, perhaps after the property had been sold to Jocelyne Saintillus sometime between 1963 and 1967.**

**None of the listed owners between the Heaneys and the Guilfoyles (1964 to 1974) had a telephone listing at 300 PP. These owners probably did not live at 300 PP during this period, but used it as a rental property.**

**The Guilfoyles, who purchased the house from Jocelyne Pierre in 1974, had a tenant on the ground floor in 1977 when we arrived.**

## 302 Park Place

### 1900 Census:

John Schultz	Head	37	France	Clothing Contractor for Spanish-American War
Jennie Shultz	Wife	34	France	
Arthur Schultz	Son	15	New York	
Kitty Cunningham	Domestic	22	Ireland	
Annie Anderson	Domestic	19	Sweden	

### 1910 Census:

Theodore Newman	Head	58		Wholesale Oil Dealer
Lottie Newman	Wife	55		
Henry Irwin, Jr.	Son-in-law	34		Stock Broker
Florence Irwin	Daughter	30		
Theodore Irwin	Son	8		
Henry Irwin III	Son	6		
Robert P.	Son	4		
Delia Gilmore	Servant	30	Ireland	
Bridget McCarthy	Servant	35	Ireland	

### 1920 Census:

Theodore Newman	Head	67		Treasurer, Standard Oil Co, Lubrication Division
Lottie Newman	Wife	64		
Nora McCarthy	Servant	30	Ireland	
Delia Gilmore	Servant	35	Ireland	

In 1926 Theodore Newman dies, following shortly after the death of his wife.

**1930 Census:** No Record

**1940 Census:** No Record

**302 Park Place** may not have been occupied after the death of Theodore Newman in 1926.

**The building was auctioned off in 1940 as an empty twelve room house.**

Sometime after 1940 the house was sold to Ernest Boerner and his wife Elsie who were living there in 1945.

It was converted to a multiple family building in 1960.

**5/6/1960**

**C/O multiple family dwelling**

Estate of Elsie Boerner	to	Donald Fanus/Marcel Chabot Lived in Manhattan	4-29-1970
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**10/10/1972**

**C/O to two family house**

Fanus/Chabot	to	Richard/Carol Cherry	1-29-1973
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Richard/Carol Cherry	to	Denise/Marc Gordon	6-9-1988
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**The leading skeleton found in the closet for 302 is the unresolved death of Jennie Schultz who may have been murdered? by her husband in 1900.**



## CORONER INVESTIGATES DEATH OF MRS. SCHULTZ

There Had Been a Family Quarrel,  
but the Woman Died From  
Natural Causes.

### POLICE FIGURE IN THE CASE.

On Friday Night Mr. Schultz Caused  
Edwin C. Mason to Be Taken  
to the Station.

The death of Mrs. Jennie Virginia Schultz, wife of John L. Schultz, a wealthy and well known contractor living at 302 Park place, has resulted in a coroner's investigation and incidentally some unusual facts have leaked out regarding the case. It appears from the report of Dr. Emil F. Hartung, the coroner's physician who performed the autopsy, that Mrs. Schultz did not commit suicide, although there had been a rumor to that effect, but that she died from the effects of chronic intoxication. Dr. Hartung stated this afternoon that the post mortem examination showed that her death was caused by chronic nephritis and uremic coma, conditions brought about by the excessive use of whisky.

An episode in the case occurred on Friday evening, when John L. Schultz went to his home on Park place and found Edwin C. Mason, a theatrical and newspaper man of 301 State street, in a room on the third floor of his house. On Friday afternoon, a few hours before the row at the Schultz home, Mrs. Mason was with Mason at Brighton Beach. A Brooklyn Councilman was also with Mrs. Schultz at the time.

From all the evidence in the case, it appears that Mrs. Schultz and Mason returned to Brooklyn together. About 8:30 Schultz, the husband, came home. Then there was a row. Schultz threw open his windows and began to yell to his neighbors for help. He

began to yell to his neighbors for help. He said afterward that he thought Mason was a burglar. Both Mason and Mrs. Schultz tried to explain how it happened that Mason was there. Mason said he had called around to see the servant girl. Mrs. Schultz tried to corroborate his statement and said she had let him in to see the girl. Mr. Schultz was not satisfied with this explanation. He thought it strange that a friend of his wife should be calling around to see the servant.

Special Officer Joseph McCaffery responded to Schultz's call and took Mason in charge. Together, Schultz, Mason and Mrs. Schultz went to the Grand avenue station house. Captain Cullen of that precinct denied to-day that Mason was under arrest, but it is a fact that he was taken there by Officer McCaffery, and that Mrs. Schultz went there to plead his cause. She told the sergeant in charge that she had let Mason in to see the servant girl. Mason stuck to this story, himself. If any charge was preferred against Mason the police will not allow it to become known. Captain Cullen avers that there is no charge.

According to the story as it comes from the police, Mason and the Schultz family went back to Park place and talked the matter over. Apparently, the trouble was all ended. What happened from that time until Mrs. Schultz's death no one seems to know.

Mrs. Schultz died suddenly Sunday morning about 5 o'clock. Dr. Skerry of 181 McDonough street furnished a death certificate, in which he certified that the woman had died of apoplexy. He certified that he had been attending her from July 10 to July 22, the day she died. The police heard of Mrs. Schultz's death and knowing of the row Friday night, and of Mrs. Schultz's condition at the time she appeared at the police station, they called the attention of the Health Department to the case. The Health Department at once notified the coroner to have an autopsy performed. Dr. Hartung performed the autopsy yesterday, with the results already stated. He says there were no evidences of poisoning.

Mr. Schultz has denied himself to all callers since his wife's death, on the plea of severe illness. His mother denounced as a falsehood the story of Friday evening's row. Schultz is said to be a large clothing contractor. A friend of Schultz said to-day that Schultz made the greater part of the clothing used by the soldiers during the Spanish-American War. Mrs. Schultz was a very handsome woman and was quite popular with a certain set.

Edwin C. Mason was for a long time treasurer of the Bijou Theater. When Mr. Kennedy sold the amusement house to Hyde & Behman, Mason went back to newspaper work. As to his story of having called at the Schultz home to see the servant girl, the girl herself referred Detective Donohoe to Mr. Schultz, but as he was unable to see Mr. Schultz, his knowledge of the case is still rather limited.

## To research other houses within the PPUA Civic Association area, the following links and suggestions might be helpful:

*“Prospect Heights Historic District Designation Report”*. This can be found on-line at:

<http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/2314.pdf>

**Census Data** is available through Ancestry.com. Ancestry is a paid subscription service, but the Brooklyn Public Library provides free access via four computers located in the Brooklyn Collection, **not on-line**. Ancestry is **NOT SEARCHABLE BY ADDRESS**, only by name.

However the 1940 Census data is searchable by address if you use this website below to obtain the ED, or the enumeration district: <https://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html?year=1940>  
Then use the ED to find the address and the occupants of your house. The search may take a while.

After obtaining the residents of your house in 1940, you can use Ancestry to go back to the 1930 census and search by name. If the 1940 residents were living elsewhere in 1930, then use the next-door neighbors to find your house's residents in 1930 etc. When searching the ED (enumeration district) pages remember that if the resident of your house was not at home when the census enumerator came, the enumerator *would* return at a later date. However this data may require a search through the pages of the entire ED since it would be listed further on.

The ED for my house in 1940 was 24-1194B and contained 18 pages.

**‘Criss-cross’ directories** are available on microfilm from 1929 through 1986 at the BPL. In the process of researching 300 PP, I collected some but not all the data from the ‘criss-cross’ phone books of 1945-1974 for addresses between 280 and 344 PP.

The **Brooklyn Daily Eagle** is available on-line through the BPL website:

<http://bklyn.newspapers.com>

The **New York Times** search engine is available on-line for subscribers:

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Digitized **Brooklyn City Directories** available on-line through the BPL website:

[https://archive.org/details/brooklynpubliclibrary?sort=date&and\[\]=subject%3A%22Brooklyn%22](https://archive.org/details/brooklynpubliclibrary?sort=date&and[]=subject%3A%22Brooklyn%22)

Brooklyn Directories are available on microfilm from 1796 through 1914.

**Old digitized maps** available through the New York Public Library website:

<http://www.nypl.org/collections/nypl-recommendations/guides/fire-topo-property-maps>

Non-digitized old maps of our area (Brooklyn Atlases from 1880, 1888 and 1904) are available in the Brooklyn Collection at the BPL.



**1940 and 1980 Tax Photos** available at:

<https://stevemorse.org/vital/nyctaxphotos.html>

**Digitized city real estate records** are available at:

<http://www.oasisnyc.net/map.aspx>

Enter your address and click the location report tab on the upper right side of the page, then press SEARCH. A map, and your house's position will appear. Just about all of the digitized property information is a few clicks away using the links to the right. Note that the "*year built*" data is approximate.

You can find a lot of information from <http://www.oasisnyc.net/map.aspx> but not all city documents have been scanned into the system.

If you have the time, energy and ability to accept disappointment you also could visit the Department of Buildings across from Borough Hall.

The 'building permit' for 300PP from 1897 was found by our neighbor Madonna McGinty stashed with other documents for the row of buildings behind us on Sterling Place (also built by William Reynolds).

# In the early days of the 20th Century our block was a veritable “Doctors Row”

**280** Park Place was inhabited from 1898 until 1938 by Dr. Charles Goodman. He had a distinguished career as a physician. He served as president of the NYS Medical Society and was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Berkeley Institute (Berkeley Carroll School). When he passed away in 1938, another physician moved in and took over the practice.

Dr. Jesse T. Duryea, former superintendent of Kings Co. Psychiatric Hospital, purchased **282** in 1898, and subsequently Dr. James Gelson, a dentist, practiced there for at least two decades.

Another dentist, Dr. James Dunn, practiced for over two decades at **289** Park Place.

Dr. Frederick Schroeder, a well known surgeon of the time, practiced for over 30 years at **290** Park Place.

Dr. Augustus Harris, another surgeon, practiced for at least three decades at the **306** Park Place.

In addition to the lawyers, factory owners, real estate brokers and importers there were also, of course, the servants, butlers, cooks, maids and chauffeurs. Ethnicities of both the ‘upstairs’ and the ‘downstairs’ residents of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Park Place would be an interesting study.