

West Midwood Architecture Gutters!

By Nate Rogers

My last installment left you with more information than you might have expected (or cared to know!) about exterior wall assemblies and thermal insulation. In closing the previous installment, I did promise mechanical systems in this issue, but with your indulgence I will save that for late summer when outdoor temperatures are high and we share our appreciation for mechanical cooling (otherwise known as air conditioning). Here, I'd like to talk about gutters.

Capturing water that falls from the atmosphere, collecting it, and diverting it “somewhere else”—without wetting a building’s inhabitants, causing excess erosion, or leading to long-term damage to the building—is a concept that has drawn a significant share of design attention over centuries. And whatever the rainfall diversion approach, it has to work equally well (at least in our climate) whether the precipitation is a summer deluge, a winter ice storm, or two feet of snow.

Once collected, where does the water go? In the era our homes were built, standard practice was to send all this collected rainwater into pipes below ground, joining it up with the domestic wastewater produced from toilets, sinks, and showers. From here the combination runs out to the “combined” sewer pipe below the street. This plumbing arrangement, a legacy of nineteenth-century thinking, has been the cause of increasing concern in recent decades because of the water quality issues, public health hazards, and long-term ecological damage that result when heavy rain events overwhelm the City’s sewage treatment facilities. Such heavy rain events are becoming only more frequent with climate change.

A Brief History of Gutters

As modern usage of the word would indicate, gutters were invented long before they were attached to buildings. In fact, for most of human history, buildings didn’t have gutters: rainwater fell from the eaves to the ground below. As a concept, gutters more or less arrived with the Romans as they developed the modern roadway: the cross-section consisted of a crown at the center and low channels—gutters—along the edges that could carry

water-borne refuse away to ditches and sewers. While open street gutters in cities are mostly a thing of the past, the etymology lives on in words like “guttersnipe,” a nineteenth-century term that evokes an era in which cities were expanding rapidly and the vast numbers of workhorses toiling in the streets created a well-known sanitation headache. Of course, these days we have automobiles, which have turned out to be less of a

panacea than people predicted in 1910, but I digress.

Gutters were first integrated into buildings and roofs during the Middle Ages, when the emergence of Norman and Gothic architecture led to the use of steeply-sloped roofs, parapets and gargoyles: grotesque figures, sculpted from stone, that channeled water clear of the building. Fast forward to the 18th century, and gutters became typical features on the modest wood-frame dwellings of the American Colonies. These gutters consisted of two wooden boards in a V-shape. In the second half of the 18th century, likely responding to

the persistent issue of wood rot, people began lining them with metal.

Yankee Gutters

While developments were made in diverting water for larger commercial and civic buildings, the technology of house gutters—wood with a metal liner—didn’t change much through the turn of the twentieth century. The houses of West Midwood would have all been built with Yankee gutters: these were custom built-up gutters set partway up the roof. The eave fascias were left free for crown moldings. During construction, a carpenter would shape the Yankee gutter in wood and then line it with copper or galvanized metal that was soldered to form a continuous water barrier. Copper would have been best, but galvanized metal was the budget option and most often used. Over the years, as the metal corroded and failed and leaks developed, homeowners and contractors would apply layer upon layer of roofing cement over the metal liner.



West Midwood Architecture — *continued*

Fascia-Hung Gutters

The early twentieth century brought a key development in gutter technology with the invention of fascia-hung gutters: metal gutters of sufficient strength that they could hang alongside the fascia of the eave. This meant water could be handled from gutter to down-spout completely outside the envelope of the structure. The first fascia-hung gutters had a half-round profile, enabled by the invention of metal rolling machines. Half-round gutters are still available today for those desiring a traditional look, and typically come in copper.

In the 1960s, seamless gutter machines were invented that could produce gutters of almost any length, using aluminum as the material. The availability of high-strength, lightweight aluminum at affordable prices dramatically changed the market; it is estimated that 70% of gutters in the U.S. are made this way today. Aluminum gutters typically come in a K-style shape (mimicking a crown or cornice profile) with options for powder-coating in various colors.

Yankee vs. Fascia-Hung Gutters

Yankee gutters are the original "look" for West Midwood homes but they demand regular maintenance and periodic partial rebuilding to stay on top of water intrusion issues. The high surface temperatures of roofs, freeze-thaw cycles, and the stresses of thermal expansion between unlike materials gradually wears them out. Their other point of weakness is that the downspout drains "through" the house, exiting through the roof soffit below. When we moved into 725 Argyle, we had Yankee gutters that had been leaking into the roof soffits for years, rotting out the rafter tails and areas of sheathing. We made the difficult decision to replace them with K-style aluminum gutters during our recent renovation. But it's a joy to see well-maintained Yankee gutters still in existence on my walks around Victorian Flatbush.

Look Up!

West Midwood Has an Interesting Bird Population

On Mother's Day, Ruth Waide spotted this huge turkey buzzard on her roof. As often happens with such events, many neighbors weighed in with comments about their own encounters with turkey buzzards in West Midwood, and tales of other impressive birds they had spotted. One suggested that perhaps this guy could be enlisted as part of the campaign against rats. Alas, it is not to be: According to bird expert Tom Stephenson and others, turkey buzzards are not equipped for that fight. They don't have talons for catching live prey, and don't hunt like hawks and eagles. However, they are effective garbage collectors, as they feed on carrion. All part of the complicated West Midwood ecosystem.

A Last Word on Stormwater

Any large-scale solution to the combined sewer problem is bound to be expensive and complex, and will take decades because of the scale of the infrastructure involved. However, we can each do our small part by collecting rainwater in cisterns or rain barrels on our property before it gets to the sewer, and make use of the collected rainwater for gardening. This has the added benefit of helping to conserve New York's excellent tap water. (And in case you were curious, never drink rainwater, which is not sanitary.)

The City has periodic rain barrel giveaways. If you do collect rainwater onsite for gardening, consider the use of a handy diverter valve, and be sure your water container has a screen at the inlet to discourage mosquitos from making it a habitat.

One more advantage to collecting rainwater at the surface is you may spend less time and money solving issues with the underground rainwater piping, which is prone to clogs because of the way the tight under-ground turns can trap decomposed leaves and pollen. Many of us have given up on this piping altogether, it now being more solid mud than metal. However, while it is very common in Victorian Flatbush to see down-spout outflows directed so that they send the water out to the street, this is technically against the New York City Plumbing Code. If this is you, be a good neighbor and ensure your street-corner catch basin is free of debris on a regular basis.

Lastly, when it comes to protecting your basement and foundation, bear the age-old concept in mind of ensuring that the direction of the grade (whether hardscape or plantings) sheds water away from your building foundation, and your house will thank you.



Current Members of West Midwood Community Association

Below is the list of all West Midwood household addresses that have paid dues as of May 9, 2023. A super thank you to all dues payers, and an extra thank you to those of you who chipped in a donation in addition to your dues payment. Is your address not included? Please join your neighbors in supporting your neighborhood organization and have your address included in the next issue. A dues payment form is attached as the back page of the newsletter, or find the form on the West Midwood website (www.westmidwood.org – click on “Pay Dues” on the right side of the Home Page.) Did you pay and your address is not included? My sincere apologies – please email me and let me know – j.r.ewing@verizon.net. Also email me if you paid and did not receive a lavender window sticker (and would like one.)
—*Jeff Ewing, Treasurer WMCA*

663 Argyle Road	1205 Glenwood Road	774 Rugby Road
667 Argyle Road	1215 Glenwood Road	780 Rugby Road
671 Argyle Road	1315 Glenwood Road	784 Rugby Road
681 Argyle Road	1304 Glenwood Road	794 Rugby Road
685 Argyle Road	1312 Glenwood Road	
678 Argyle Road	1316 Glenwood Road	15 Waldorf Court
715 Argyle Road	1403 Glenwood Road	19 Waldorf Court
721 Argyle Road	1427 Glenwood Road	27 Waldorf Court
725 Argyle Road	1431 Glenwood Road	35 Waldorf Court
731 Argyle Road	1410 Glenwood Road	12 Waldorf Court
735 Argyle Road	1416 Glenwood Road	16 Waldorf Court
739 Argyle Road	1422 Glenwood Road	20 Waldorf Court
745 Argyle Road	1428 Glenwood Road	26 Waldorf Court
759 Argyle Road	1430 Glenwood Road	28 Waldorf Court
765 Argyle Road	1434 Glenwood Road	
775 Argyle Road		15 Wellington Court
779 Argyle Road	639 Marlborough Court	19 Wellington Court
783 Argyle Road	652 Marlborough Court	23 Wellington Court
716 Argyle Road		33 Wellington Court
722 Argyle Road	655 Rugby Road	20 Wellington Court
726 Argyle Road	659 Rugby Road	24 Wellington Court
732 Argyle Road	663 Rugby Road	28 Wellington Court
736 Argyle Road	667 Rugby Road	34 Wellington Court
740 Argyle Road	660 Rugby Road	
746 Argyle Road	664 Rugby Road	665 Westminster Road
756 Argyle Road	668 Rugby Road	664 Westminster Road
776 Argyle Road	678 Rugby Road	725 Westminster Road
780 Argyle Road	686 Rugby Road	729 Westminster Road
784 Argyle Road	692 Rugby Road	761 Westminster Road
790 Argyle Road	721 Rugby Road	765 Westminster Road
	725 Rugby Road	775 Westminster Road
1407 Avenue H	735 Rugby Road	789 Westminster Road
1214 Avenue H	741 Rugby Road	793 Westminster Road
	745 Rugby Road	716 Westminster Road
815 East 12th Street	751 Rugby Road	732 Westminster Road
	755 Rugby Road	738 Westminster Road
15 DeKoven Court	777 Rugby Road	744 Westminster Road
19 DeKoven Court	783 Rugby Road	758 Westminster Road
29 DeKoven Court	789 Rugby Road	762 Westminster Road
31 DeKoven Court	716 Rugby Road	766 Westminster Road
37 DeKoven Court	726 Rugby Road	776 Westminster Road
22 DeKoven Court	730 Rugby Road	782 Westminster Road
26 DeKoven Court	734 Rugby Road	796 Westminster Road
30 DeKoven Court	764 Rugby Road	
1114 Glenwood Road	770 Rugby Road	

Who You Gonna Call?

When you need help, it's important to call the right number. Here's a list of useful phone numbers with an explanation of when to call which number. It's not a bad idea to cut out this list and stick in on your refrigerator or by your phone.

911—The number to call for emergencies, such as fire, medical emergencies, accidents of any type, a crime in progress, violent behavior, or a person in trouble. Remember to stay on the line until the operator tells you it is okay to hang up. The operator will also ask you your location, so note the nearest house number and street address.

311 — Call this number for non-emergencies such as noise complaints, animal control, air quality, blocked driveway, dangerous tree situation, or to find out where to get other information. For a complete list, see www.nyc.gov/311.

988 — Call this number for mental health crises or suicide prevention. For more information about this service, here is a link: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/07/15/1111316589/988-suicide-hotline-number>

If you're unsure, call 911. The operator will either take your information or redirect you to 311. Remember to get a complaint number and write it down.

Air Quality This summer, this is a frequent concern. For up to date info on our AQI (Air Quality Index), you can go to <https://www.airnow.gov/?city=New%20York&state=NY&country=USA>

Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs):

Noah Elrowmeim

noah.elrowmeim@nypd.org, 917-679-4587

Mohammad Zubair

mohammad.zubair@nypd.org

The NCOs are usually on duty Tuesdays to Saturdays from noon to 6:30 p.m. (Sometimes they are unavailable because they have been pulled for training or special duty.) Former West Midwood president Linda Howell reports that she relies on the NCOs for quality-of-life issues, especially situations “where I do not have complete details, only secondhand reports of events. I feel comfortable giving them as much information as I can and asking them to check into the potential problem.” Examples include gatherings at the dead ends, abandoned cars, chronic parking violations, and patterns of package theft from porches. You can also contact them if you feel a 911 or 311 call was not handled correctly. Note that while they will make every effort to assist, they may also be handling other more time-critical issues.

Community Board 14 (CB14), 718-859-6357

info@cb14brooklyn.com

This office and its staff are a valuable resource that can be contacted for a myriad of situations. Call them to find out the status of a 311 complaint, why your recycling wasn't picked up, how you can get a tree planted in front of your home or a dead one removed, or what's going on with construction (or lack of it) at a specific location. They can also help you get in touch with the local representative for a specific city agency. This is by no means a complete list. If you're unsure of how to handle an issue, call them and ask. They are there to help.

Artist's Notebook:

Florence Manglani



We know there are many talented artists in our neighborhood. Would you like to have your work featured in this newsletter? Let us know!

Editor: WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com

Answers to puzzle from page 7

This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

How many more did you think of?

bass, bear, bird, boar, bull, calf, carp, chub, clam, coho, colt, crab, crow, deer, dodo, dove, duck, fawn, fish, flea, foal, fowl, frog, gnat, goat, gull, hare, hart, hawk, hind, ibex, ibis, kiwi, lamb, lice, lion, lynx, mare, mice, mink, mite, mole, moth, mule, myna, newt, orca, oxen, pika, pike, pony, rail, seal, shad, slug, sole, stag, swan, teal, tern, tick, toad, tuna, vole, wasp, wolf, worm, wren

What Is West Midwood Online?

Want to ask folks in the neighborhood whether they have any recommendations for a plumber or roofer or such? Or maybe what local eateries or merchants they like? Perhaps you'd like to be in the know about issues affecting our area? Then join the West Midwood Online email discussion group, aka The Lstserv.

Send an email to joe@enright.com with your street address, name, and the email address that you want to use to post and receive messages. He will add you to the group and send you the simple instructions. There are presently over 200 email subscribers representing about 125 households.

To join you must be a permanent resident of West Midwood and agree not to post messages of a religious, political, or spam nature. Insulting or crude language can also lead to revocation of the ability to post. Finally, new and existing members can also request a daily recap containing all of the activity within the previous 24 hours, rather than receive messages as they occur.

Ask Mr Trivia Guy

LANCE TUKEL & ROB SEIDEL: Why is it that as properties get closer to Avenue H in West Midwood and Fiske Terrace, they rise on a slight elevation from the sidewalk?

TRIVIA GUY: It's all about the original topography of the woodland that existed south of what is now Glenwood Road from 10,000 BC until the dawn of the 20th Century. In 1895 George P. Fiske, an oil wholesaler with a big ego, bought a 30 acre chunk of that land north of the Long Island Rail Road & east of the Brighton Line and named it after himself. But rather than call it Fiske Land, he noticed that the handful of pioneer houses in that area were terraced two to four feet above the walkways. And so he ran ads proclaiming, "Fiske Terrace is one of the highest points south of Prospect Park." Fiske was a terrible retailer however, so he sold his 413 remaining empty lots to T. B. Ackerson in 1905 for a half million bucks. Ackerson terraformed the land, much the way the Germania realty company had just terraformed South Midwood, Midwood Park and West

Germania and Ackerson let them be – they were features, not bugs. Ackerson continued Fiske's original advertising theme, emphasizing its "highest altitude." I tested these claims decades ago and discovered that Argyle Road rose

from 27.8 feet above sea level at Newkirk Avenue to 33.1 feet at Foster Avenue, to 36.1 feet at Glenwood Road, 38.4 feet at Avenue H and 39.5 feet at the Cut. Hence my brilliant idea to rename the neighborhood Argyle Heights during the early



Fiske Terrace at Avenue G and 17th Street looking south showing the opening of 17th Street through woodland; we cut through heavy growth of trees, as may be seen by the trees left standing on either side of the cut. Embankment on line where trees are left standing also shows the quantity of earth we had to haul away (some 100 cubic yards). This view was taken in September, 1905, less than three months after we took title and a year when compared with the following pictures, taken from same position in April of 1906, only ten months after Fiske's name came into our possession.

1990s recession to stem plummeting realty values (and solve the existential dilemma posed by the nonsensical derivative name "West Midwood"). But alas...

RECENT REAL ESTATE SALES

THE B. Ackerson Company has secured the entire Fiske Terrace property in Flatbush (which has the highest altitude between Prospect Park and Manhattan Beach, and is one of the choicest properties in Flatbush).

along the lots' borders. The excess dirt was used to fill holes left by uprooted trees and to level the roads and the land within each plot. But where natural upslopes existed,

South Midwood: cutting down the trees and piling everything they could into the trenches dug

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle
25 Mar 1905, Sat · Page 13

FISKE TERRACE
The Greatest Altitude. The Largest Trees.
The Best Land in Flatbush.
We expect to build 50 to 100 houses per year.
The Ackerson Houses

Neighbors' Businesses and Services

To add, cancel, or update a listing,
contact **Tori Rosen** at editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com

Education and Lessons

Danielle Buonaiuto *Private voice lessons* for high-school age and adult students in classical, musical theatre, and pop styles. Master of Music from Peabody Conservatory, and 10+ years' teaching experience.
danielle.buonaiuto@gmail.com.

Rob Garcia *Drum lessons.* I've been teaching private lessons to students of all ages for the past 25 years and have a well-equipped teaching studio at my home. More info www.robgarciamusic.com; Contact: robjgarcia@hotmail.com; 917-273-7875

Udi Hazan *Private table tennis and archery lessons.* Certified coach—level 1 in ping pong and level 2 in recurve bow archery. 718-859-8432.

Laura Campbell-Lui *Literacy Tutor* ELA help for reading strategies . Phonics/decoding help for kindergarten-grade 4. Spelling help with common rules and word root hints. Grammar help with punctuation, capitalization and conjugating. Writing help with sentence construction. New York State-certified Reading Specialist and Elementary School Teacher. Licensed in Reading, Common Branches and Early Childhood Education. 30 Years of teaching experience. Email Laura at literacytutor@aol.com

Florence Manglani Semi-retired *bilingual school psychologist* Still teaching at Brooklyn College, is available for consultations. 718-434-2134; florence@imagineblue.com.

David Picton *Music Lessons in Drums, Piano, and Composition.* 35 years teaching experience. Graduate of Mannes College of Music. All ages, beginner to advanced. 718-859-6313; davidpictonmusic@gmail.com.

Julian Rhine *Guitar lessons; SAT, SHSAT, and Regents tutoring.* BA in music and English from Vanderbilt University. 917-981-0675; julian.m.rhine@gmail.com

Amy Rowe *Tutoring and Medicare advising.* Tutoring for young people and adults in math, reading, writing, other academic subjects, and test prep, including SAT, Regents, and SHSAT. Advising on Medicare coverage and enrollment. Professional experience in writing, editing, research, and education helps me make complex topics clear. amyrowe.nyc@gmail.com, 917-723-0348

Melissa Scott *Yoga for Every Body!* Currently offering private or small class instruction. 718-781-6509; kettleandkame@gmail.com.



Jeannine Umrigar *Collectiv3 Fashion Portfolio Lab.* Individual mentorships for students to build fashion and art portfolios for college entrance and beyond. For more information see our website: www.collectiv3.nyc.

David Wechsler *Flute lessons.* Many years of teaching at all levels from beginner to professional. Long-time member of Brooklyn Philharmonic and many other groups in the NYC area, including Broadway, recordings, symphony, opera, ballet orchestras, and chamber music. 347-528-6318; davewechs@earthlink.net.

Health and Mental Health

Laura Campbell-Lui Shaklee Distributor household cleaning products; nutritional skin care; nutritional supplement products; appointments available. 917-767-3579; lauraclui@yahoo.com.

Jan Castro. De-stress with Swedish massage or Thai body work. Safe, clean, open space. I've had 3 vaccine shots. Credentials & references on request. 60–120 minute sessions, reasonable rates. Phone 314-323-9060.

Andrea Freshman, LCSW Specialty: trauma healing with emphasis on integrating the mind-body connection 718-434-6873.

Sara Hochman *Nutritionist, MS, RD, CDN.* Registered Dietitian specializing in chronic disease management and weight loss, nutrition therapy for all ages. Reasonable rates, in-person or televisit appointments. Sarahoch780@gmail.com

Pet Sitting

Nell Mendlinger and Lauren Sullivan, Owners, Abby on Argyle Pet Sitting & Dog Walking, LLC. Available 365 days a year for your pets. We have been in the neighborhood for 10+ years. Bonded and insured. Member of PetSitters International and an eco-friendly company. www.AbbyOnArgyle.com.

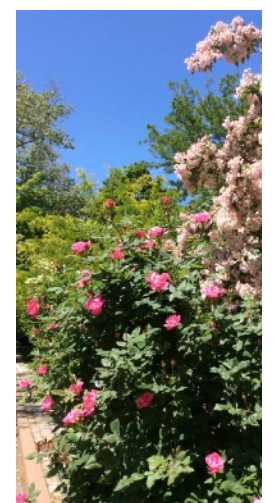
Real Estate

Miriam Hurwitz Associate real estate broker with Douglas Elliman on Cortelyou Road. 917-589-6717.

WEST MIDWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022 - 2023



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WEST MIDWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

12 Waldorf Court
Brooklyn, New York 11230
www.westmidwood.org



2023 DUES NOTICE

Dear Neighbor,

It's time to pay your annual membership dues to the West Midwood Community Association (WMCA) - your neighborhood organization - for 2023. For the modest sum of \$40, you help support all of WMCA's activities on your behalf.

Your dues fund a variety of expenditures. The largest outlay is for the upkeep of the Glenwood Road Malls, including supplies for a spring planting by residents. These malls help maintain the park-like environment of our neighborhood, and incidentally add to the value of your home

Other WMCA activities include the Halloween Parade, the annual Progressive Dinner, yard sales, maintenance of our website, www.westmidwood.org, our quarterly newsletter, and numerous other activities carried out by members that help preserve the character of West Midwood as a small town in the big city. WMCA works on an on-going basis with our Community Board 14, elected officials, and City government agencies to address problems. Your dues also fund contributions to worthy neighborhood causes approved by the Board.

Please send (or drop off) your check made out to WMCA, with the completed tear-off below, in the envelope that this letter came in, to Jeffrey Ewing, WMCA Treasurer, 776 Westminster Road.

You may also use Paypal. WMCA's Paypal email address is info@westmidwood.org. Please include your name and address with the Paypal payment, & check "Send Money to Friends and Family".

Paid up members are acknowledged in the WMCA newsletter. Have a question about WMCA? You can email WMCA at info@westmidwood.org.

Are you on the WMCA email listserv? Join the conversation! Email joe@enright.com and ask to have your email address added.

Many thanks for your support!

Eric Goldberg

President

Enclosed is my \$40 annual dues for 2023 for the West Midwood Community Association.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ EMail _____

[] I have included an additional contribution of \$ _____ with my dues payment.