

WEST MIDWOOD NEWS

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One of the Great Joys of Living in West Midwood is Watching the Changing Seasons: Spring is Actually Here!



After more than 600 days without significant snowfall, Winter finally came in with inch after inch of the white stuff — to the delight of kids building snowmen and riding sleds, and the less enthusiastic groans of shovelers and drivers. But if the snow falls, the daffodils are not far behind, and Spring has finally arrived in all her colorful glory.



Our Sewer History *By Joe Enright* (Spoiler Alert: This will not be about the history of sewing.)

With pressurized water and gas main replacements tearing up our roads, we've been able to see for the first time some of the vital infrastructure installed here 120 years ago. Not yet visible, at ten feet deep, are the sewer pipes, which combine household waste (sinks, toilets, bathtubs, drainpipes – categorized as wastewater) with the precipitation pouring into our catch basins (stormwater). All of that is conveyed by gravity into two separate sewer systems, one under Glenwood Road, the other under Foster Avenue, both built at the turn of the 20th century by a visionary engineer who, foreseeing climate change, built BIG. Queue the history music, maestro. My suggestion is Gravity by John Mayer...

After the creation of Greater New York in 1898, the Bureau of Sewers Chief Engineer, a remarkable veteran from a distinguished military family, Major Henry R. Asserson, took a look at southern Brooklyn and concluded: Danger, Will Robinson, DANGER! The Flatbush area had an old brick system that emptied its wastewater into the Paerdegat Creek, an inlet from Jamaica Bay. That raw sewage was wiping out oyster beds – back then New York City was the oyster capital of the

world – which led to a court order against the City to cease that dumping by 1905. Moreover, since 1881 Flatbush Water Works, owned by the scions of the old Dutch rural families, had been pumping groundwater from the aquifer at the foot of Paerdegat Creek to supply most of the Flatbush area with its drinking water. Uh-Oh.

On a larger scale, Major Asserson also realized the increasing population of southern Brooklyn was taxing old sewers. And so he devised a plan to divert a significant portion of the flow away from Jamaica Bay and push it west to the waters off Bay Ridge. The waste and storm water flowing down from the glacial ridgeline stretching along Crown Heights, Windsor Terrace, and Prospect Park would be sent through Flatbush, then westward under Parkville, Borough Park, New Utrecht and Bay Ridge. There it would empty into a new gigantic trunk sewer that would dump it out, untreated, at the foot of 64th Street near Owl's Head Park into Lower New York Bay where oyster beds were already tapped out. A new sewer under Foster Avenue would be the lynchpin for redirecting the flow.

Continued on page 4



President's Message Spring 2024



Dear Neighbors,

Some of you are fully aware of Community Board 14 and the services they provide within our area, but some newcomers to West Midwood may not be. Fear not, as Community Board 14 provides a wealth of information on their website (<https://cb14brooklyn.com/>), including contact information, which I briefly summarize here.

Our local Community Board office is at 810 East 16th Street. Per CB14's website, they act "as a liaison between government agencies and residents. Our board members represent the interest of neighbors, colleagues and friends by weighing in on city budgets, liquor licenses, and zoning decisions. Our office staff assists residents with service delivery issues including trash collection, construction and housing violations, and much more. Our six topical committees hold periodic meetings where members of city agencies and public interest organizations give presentations and hear community concerns."

CB14's six committees include Community Environment, Human Services, Community Safety, Transportation, Housing and Land Use, and Youth Services (and Education). CB14 has helped area residents with sanitation issues, safety issues, communicating with schools and much more. One resident a few years ago needed help with the high school application process, and needed an actual human to solve a technical glitch with their child's application which would not allow the child to apply for a program due to a mistake with geographical boundaries. CB14 to the rescue, and from what I understood, the problem was handled. As many of you also know, CB14 routinely handles sanitation, traffic and other inquiries from our residents. Several months ago, CB14 was the source of information and basic scheduling for the water main work now taking place in West Midwood, which information was in turn posted on our own West Midwood blog.

If you have a legitimate need to interact with a local government agency, and have been unable to do so on your own, CB14 may be able to help. While CB14 is not your personal attorney or TaskRabbit, their office, including District Manager Shawn Campbell and her assistants, are extremely adept at helping residents navigate the complexities of NYC government and public services. A happy upcoming spring season to all,

— *Eric Goldberg*

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Spring Pasta Bolognese With Lamb and Peas

4 servings
45 minutes

This recipe comes via Kay Chun at the *New York Times*. According to her description, it is inspired by Bolognese bianco or white Bolognese, a hearty Italian meat sauce made without tomato. It calls for ground lamb, but you can also use beef, pork or veal.

- 2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup finely chopped yellow onion
- 1 cup finely chopped carrot
- 6 garlic cloves, minced (about 2 Tbsp)
- 2 lb. ground lamb (or beef, pork or veal)
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 large fresh rosemary sprig
- 1 pound spaghetti
- 1 cup thawed frozen peas
- 5 oz fresh baby spinach
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup freshly grated parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish
- ¼ cup freshly chopped parsley, plus more for garnish

1. In a large pot or Dutch oven, heat oil over medium. Add onion and carrot and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 1 minute.
2. Add lamb, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring to break up the meat, until no longer pink, about 3 minutes. Stir in broth, heavy cream and rosemary, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium, and simmer, partly covered and stirring occasionally, until mixture is thickened, about 30 minutes. (The sauce may look broken at first, but it will emulsify as it cooks.) Discard the rosemary sprig.
3. As the sauce cooks, make the pasta: Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Cook spaghetti until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of pasta cooking water and drain the pasta.
4. Over medium heat, add the peas and spinach to the sauce and stir until spinach is wilted. Add the cooked pasta, butter, and ½ cup of the reserved pasta cooking water to the sauce. Toss vigorously until sauce is thickened and coats the pasta, about 2 minutes, adding more pasta water if a looser sauce is desired. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice, cheese and parsley. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Divide pasta among bowls. Garnish with more cheese, parsley and black pepper.



Citrusy Lentil and Sweet Potato Soup

4 servings
30 minutes

This recipe comes via Ali Slagle at the *New York Times*. She writes, “With lentils, sweet potato, chard and earth spices, this soup is certainly hearty and cozy, but it’s also surprisingly uplifting, thanks to the acidity and crunch of chard stems that have been quick-pickled in citrus juice.” I heartily agree! If you’re someone who is sensitive to spicy foods, just make sure you scrape out all of the seeds from the jalapeno and it will pack much less of a punch. I also usually double this and freeze some leftovers. You won’t have the fresh quick pickle garnish, but it’s still yummy without.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 scallions, thinly sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 1 tsp ground cumin or coriander (or a mix)
- 1 bay leaf, thyme, or oregano spring (optional)
- Kosher salt
- 1 jalapeno, halved lengthwise, seeds removed if desired
- 1 medium sweet potato (8 to 10 oz.), peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 cup green lentils
- 1 medium bunch chard (8 to 10 oz.)
- ¼ cup lemon or lime juice

1. In a large Dutch oven or pot, combine the oil, scallions, garlic, cumin, bay leaf (if using), a pinch of salt and one jalapeno half. Set over medium heat and cook, stirring constantly, until scallions are softened and fragrant but not browned, 2 to 4 minutes.
2. Add 5 cups of water, the sweet potato, lentils and 1½ tsp salt. Bring to a simmer over medium-high, then reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, thinly slice the chard stems all the way to the leaves. Place the stems in a small bowl; add the lemon juice and season with salt. Thinly slice the remaining jalapeno and add to the chard stems to taste. (If you don’t want your soup too spicy, just add a few slices or leave them out entirely.) Coarsely chop the chard leaves.
4. After the lentils have been simmering for 10 minutes, taste the broth. If flavors are muted, add more salt. If the broth tastes spicy to you at this stage, remove the jalapeno. Add the chard leaves, stir to combine, then cover and cook until the lentils and sweet potatoes are tender, 8 to 12 minutes. Remove from heat and thin with water if necessary. Remove and discard the bay leaf plus the jalapeno half (if you haven’t already done so).
5. Divide soup among bowls. Top bowls with a spoonful of the chard stems, jalapeno and lemon juice. For a more bracing soup, add another spoonful or two. Soup and topping will keep separately for up to 3 days in the refrigerator. Warm the soup, add water and salt as needed, then combine with the citrusy chard stems.

Our Sewer History — Continued from page one

Another sewer, originating at Glenwood Road & Coney Island Avenue, would be a major part of the system needed to drain Flatlands, flowing to a plant at the Paerdegat Inlet, near the intersection of Ralph & Flatlands Avenues. From there the waste would be pumped to a new “Disposal Works Plant” located near Flatlands and Pennsylvania Avenues to mitigate the sewage before it discharged into the Bay, thereby satisfying the court mandate.

But Asserson’s grand plan languished until Mother Nature came calling on Monday morning, December 15, 1902, when a driving rain in Brooklyn pelted the piles of snow and ice left days earlier by a blizzard. Small sewers and catch basins were overwhelmed, flooding Flatbush Avenue from Prospect Park to Flatlands. All the buildings along Church Avenue, Beverly Avenue, and Cortelyou Road, and basements from Windsor Terrace to the north and Parkville to the south were inundated.

The worst hit location was on the western border of a planned real estate development, West South Midwood, specifically at the intersection of Glenwood

***Fun Fact:** Flatbush Water Works, located along Foster & Newkirk Avenues, east of Nostrand Avenue (the site of today’s Vanderveer Estates/ Flatbush Gardens apartments), supplied most of Victorian Flatbush with drinking water until 1947 when, after decades of complaints about its foul taste, the City canceled its franchise. But after those wells were capped, in just a few years the water table in the aquifer rose, creating a babbling brook that coursed for decades between the tracks of the IRT subway from the Newkirk station to Flatbush Avenue. The US Geologic Survey stopped monitoring the huge Brooklyn-Queens Aquifer in 2013. Uh-Oh.*

Road (then, Ave G) and Coney Island Avenue. A huge lake had formed, preventing trolleys from passing and flooding nearby roadhouses. The situation there was so dangerous that the Bureau of Public Works dispatched its only water-pumping truck to battle the rising waters. Ironically, that very intersection was the site of a shaft that had just been sunk to create the Glenwood Road sewer. . . if new funding ever arrived. In the aftermath of that December flood, it did. And Major Asserson completed the two Brooklyn sewers by



1903: Owl’s Head Sewer: Tours Were Given



1906: Foster Avenue Sewer Under Brighton Tracks

Avenue sewer consisted of a brick tunnel with an inside diameter of ten feet. But in 1906, the surface Brighton line was depressed into a trench fifteen feet below the street and the Foster sewer had to be lowered to accommodate that railroad bed. Accordingly the sewer for a stretch of 120 feet was flattened by two feet but widened to 14.5 feet so as not to reduce its capacity. The Glenwood sewer was smaller and The Grade Crossing Elimination Project failed to inform the contractor of its existence. As fate would have it, the excavation of the

***Fun Fact:** The Foster sewer was capped with a reinforced concrete top as it passed under the Brighton trench – still visible today in the center of the roadbed just beyond the Newkirk Plaza station platforms. Moreover, a separate 36 foot circular brick drainage sewer was created under Newkirk Avenue to collect all the rainfall from the Brighton trench and send it to the large Paerdegat Inlet Sewer under Farragut Road. To create a steady flow of the Brighton storm water, a slope of only three-quarters of an inch for every thousand feet was necessary. Gravity does the rest.*

1905.

West South Midwood lies equidistant from the terminal points for those two sewer systems and today it straddles their catchment areas. The Paerdegat Basin Sewer – now part of the “Coney Island System” – runs eastward under Glenwood and Farragut Roads, draining the area from Coney Island Avenue east to Jamaica Bay and all of Flatlands. Buildings and catch basins south of Glenwood (and a slice of Rugby and Dekoven north of Glenwood) flow into the Glenwood sewer. The Foster

Avenue Sewer – now part of the “Owl’s Head System” – runs westward from Flatbush Avenue, connecting pipe/brick conduits to feeder branches in Parkville, Borough Park, and eventually into the enormous trunk sewer in Bay Ridge. Houses north of Glenwood flow into the Foster sewer.

The Foster

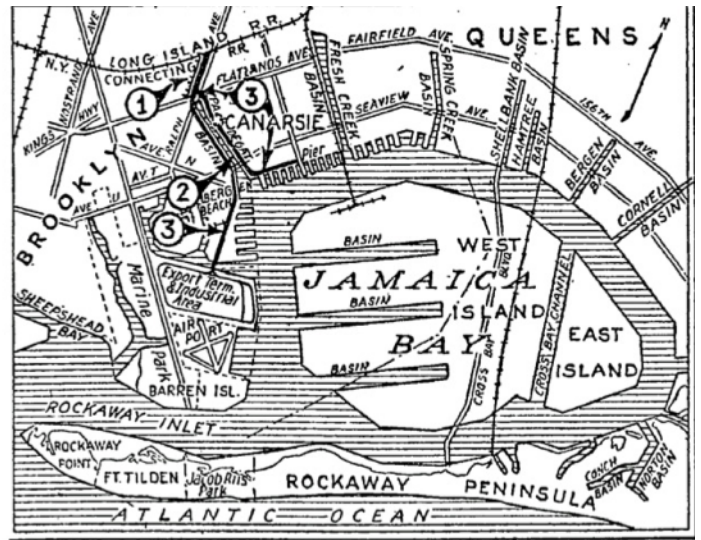
Brighton line began at Glenwood Road where the contractor unexpectedly encountered “a gas pipe, water pipe, sewer and some electric and telephone conduits.” They were all lowered under the roadbed.

Alas, the sewer redirection did not save the oysters of Jamaica Bay. In 1921 the City Health Department, concerned about typhus, banned their collection in the Bay and by 1929, all oyster beds in the City had been closed. Soon, concerns spread from oysters to people as Brooklyn’s beaches drew huge crowds. Enlightened pioneers in public health pointed out that bathing in those near-shore waters, increasingly polluted by raw sewage, was an epidemic waiting to happen. The result? In 1935 the City built its first Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on Knapp Street in Mill Basin (called the Coney Island Facility) which now processes the sewage for the eastern half of Brooklyn. In 1952, another WPCP opened at Owl’s Head, which now handles all the waste of western Brooklyn.

Since those sewers were built, swaths of Brooklyn gradually disappeared under solid surfaces that prevented rain from soaking into the earth: asphalt, concrete, stone, brick, sidewalks, patios, driveways, parking lots. Flooding again proliferated in southern Brooklyn neighborhoods. And so a new system was created: Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) to catch and temporarily store the runoff in concrete tanks. A huge CSO was completed at the old Paerdegat site in 2011, catching the overflow during heavy rain, storing and then pumping it to the Knapp Street plant when conditions abate. A two tank CSO is now being constructed for the Owl’s Head system along the Gowanus Canal at Butler Street, and at the foot of 2nd Avenue near 6th Street.

Amazingly enough, Major Asserson foresaw the changing climate in 1900, publicly predicting that rainstorms of five inches or more would occur much more

***Fun Fact:** Two Flatbush men, Henry Meyer, whose Germania realty company developed East Flatbush, South Midwood, Midwood Park and West South Midwood, and John Corbin, the builder of most of our one family houses here, created the Jamaica Bay Improvement Association in 1907 and began lobbying for a new port that would divert traffic from the teaming docks in Red Hook and Manhattan. In 1918 Meyer was appointed Deputy Dock Commissioner of New York City and drafted plans to create channels in the Bay that could accommodate more ocean-going vessels, followed by docks, storage facilities and eventually railroad spurs to and from the LIRR Bay Ridge freight line at Ralph Avenue and the City’s new airport at Floyd Bennett Field. And where would this port be located? At the foot of Paerdegat Creek! In 1930 this plan was approved by the City and the Creek was dammed, transforming Paerdegat Inlet into Paerdegat Basin. However, the Depression cut off the funding needed to complete this grand project. In 1934, Meyer retired from his City post and the Project was never revived. The focus on the Bay, however, undoubtedly spurred the building of Cross-Bay Boulevard, Floyd Bennett Field, and the Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge. Finally, we have Robert Moses to thank for saving the Bay from being “improved.” He put an end to the City’s garbage dumping there and preserved what is today a wonderful wildlife refuge.*



MAP SHOWING JAMAICA BAY PROJECT.

Figure 1 indicates the line of the proposed spur track from the Long Island Railroad connecting its present line with the head of Paerdegat Basin. Figure 2 shows Paerdegat Basin which is to be dredged to provide a deeper channel into Jamaica Bay. Figure 3 shows the proposed branch of the Long Island Railroad connecting the east and west sides of the bay the route of which has been approved by the Board of Estimate.

1930 Oct 22 New York Times Story - The lynchpin of the Jamaica Bay Project was damming Paerdegat Inlet, creating a Basin.

frequently. Which is why Brooklyn became the beneficiary of the largest trunk sewers of their time. I think the Major would agree we could use a few more nowadays. And some new catch basins on Dekoven Court, Glenwood Road and Avenue H.

For more, see <https://argyleheights.blogspot.com/2023/12/some-sewer-history.html>



NYC’s infrastructure saga continued in West Midwood, with a huge water main replacement project that kept the neighborhood engaged for months. See story on page 10/

Above: 800 E12th Street, outside Midwood Safe Haven Right: Harriet Rhine supervising electrical repairs needed when wires were severed during water main repairs



OMNI Ensemble

The OMNI Ensemble will be performing two more concerts this coming Spring at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music- April 6 at 8:00 pm with a Trio program of music by Beethoven, Gorecki, John Cheek, Renaissance music and improvisation. The ensemble will finish the season on May 4 with a Baroque program of flute, strings and harpsichord.

These concerts take place at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music- 58 Seventh Ave., Park Slope Brooklyn. Tickets are \$25 for general admission and \$15 for students and senior citizens. For more information please visit www.theomniensemble.org or call 718-859-8649.

Progressive Dinner

Date Set for Saturday, June 8

The next West Midwood Community Association Progressive dinner will be on Saturday, June 8, 2024. The rain date is June 9th. Watch your email for details about how to participate. Are you Interested in being a host for this fabulous outdoor event? Contact Melissa at 718-781-6509!



YARD SALE!!!!

It's time to start cleaning out your closets, your basement and your garage: The next West Midwood Community Association Yard Sale will be held on Sunday, May 5. The rain is will be May 19. Watch your email for details!

Alternate Side Parking Calendar

Purim Mar 24, Sun
Holy Thursday Mar 28, Thurs
Good Friday Mar 29, Fri
Idul-Fitr (Eid Al-Fitr) Apr 10-11, Wed-Thurs
Passover Apr 23-24, Tue-Wed
Passover (7th/8th Days) Apr 29-30, Mon-Tue
Holy Thursday (Orthodox) May 2, Thurs
Good Friday (Orthodox) May 3, Fri
Solemnity of the Ascension May 9, Thurs
Memorial Day May 27., Mon



February Flip (Happily No One Was Injured)

On cold and cloudy Saturday, February 10th, while our Asian-American neighbors celebrated the dawn of the Year of the Dragon, a black sedan turned down Argyle from Avenue H and proceeded to sideswipe a car parked near the Dunfey-Nissan home. The vehicle apparently swerved upon impact and rolled over, landing on its roof a short distance away. Neighbors rushed out to see the lone occupant climb out of the driver's window, straighten his clothes, announce that he hadn't been feeling well all morning by golly and walk away. A tow truck worked its magic and by sundown the wreck was gone. Just another day ever since Waze calculated Argyle was a faster north bound road than Coney Island Avenue. *(Photo courtesy Raphael Hermosa)*

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 Listserv.

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.

The Spirit of Saint Patrick in West Midwood (A Reminiscence)

by Eileen Brennan

Dia is Mhuire agat: (God and Mary Bless) our fathers, Tom Brennan, Sr. & Bill Byrne, and all our neighbors and friends here in West Midwood.

West Midwood has been my home for over 75 years; Tom and I have been here for almost 50 years. Almost every year we have created a Saint Patrick's Day celebration. Books of Irish history, poetry, cooking and Celtic artwork are placed between the dishes of traditional food. Cousins bring loaves of brown bread and soda bread. Thin sliced salmon is placed on the sliced brown bread, and the soda bread, slathered with butter, is served with many cups of tea. Large platters hold about 25 pounds of corn beef, a very large green bowl holds the traditional colcannon, potatoes mashed with cabbage and onion.

The sharing of meals is but one way the Irish give 'welcome,' nurturing friends and family. Just as "a hundred thousand welcomes" are extended in our home, several religious congregations throughout West Midwood have always supported this spirit. My best friend in childhood was Ellen Rivlin. She attended a Jewish elementary school and I a parish school. After school, we did our homework together and then played until dinner. A tender memory from childhood captures our fathers. For a few weeks, early each morning, my Dad and Mr. Rivlin (Trudy and Paul's house) walked together to the corner. Here, my Dad turned right walking toward Saint Rose, Mr. Rivlin turned left on his way to East Midwood Jewish Center. Today, the religious traditions continue with an ever-increasing spectrum of houses of prayer.

Over the years, the tender, welcoming "I have called you by Name" has continued through of our West Midwood Newsletter: "Tell us about your family events. We would like to recognize the passing, the life-well spent by family member, the joy of your new new-born, pride in the spectrum of accomplishments of family and community."

Traditionally, in happy times, the Irish gathered "at the Crossroads." Often a violin or 'squeeze-box' were played and encouraged hours of dancing. Here, in West Midwood, 'Glenwood Road, between the train tracks and Rugby Road' has become our traditional gathering place. Newcomers to our community are welcomed, encouraged to join in, and soon, each of us is 'Called by Name' both in person and in our virtual community.

Kilcrohane is a wee, hilly, village located 16 miles from the town of Bantry, 60 miles from the City of Cork, in the southwest of County Cork. It is here that the Byrne and Brennan families spent many summers. The village contains a general store with post office, a church, an elementary school and two pubs. A delightful local tale describes its beauty on Christmas Eve. Families from both sides of the hills surrounding the village walk down the Goat's Path, never looking back until they reach the center of the village. Then they turn toward the hill to see a Welcome Candle burning in a window of each farmhouse, and yearn to believe that on this night, 2000 years later, all travelers would be welcomed. In our home,



Ellen and Dave Newman walking the hills west of Kilcrohane. (Photo courtesy of Dave Newman)

each evening, a candle is lit in each window, seeking to welcome all in West Midwood.

This wee, wind-swept village of Kilcrohane is relatively unknown, but is a unique part of a West Midwood experience. A few years ago Tom and I were enjoying dinner with beloved friends Ellen and Dave Newman. Our lively conversation turned to memories of their walking tours and especially one in Ireland. Amazingly, they described their days of walking through the hills above a village in Cork. Shortly after, Ellen forward to us a photo of herself and Dave walking an historic pathway that includes Kilcrohane.

As Saint Patrick's Day 2024 nears, Tom and I extend to all our West Midwood community: *Go mbeannaí Dia is Pádraig sibh'*

West Midwood Salons Brighten the Winter Social Scene

This is a neighborhood that enjoys getting together, both through official WMCA events and gatherings planned and organized by a few energetic locals. The latest addition to the locally organized social scene, and a welcome antidote to the winter doldrums, has been a series of salons, featuring presentations by local West Midwood residents sharing their stories and talents over a drink and a snack at Coffee Mob (owned by West Midwood resident Buck Berk). The first salon, in February, featured poetry by Jennifer Firestone, baked goods by John DeLamar, and tales from his legal career by Ron Russo. Watch your email for upcoming salons!



West Midwood Bookshelf — Joan Greenberg, librarian

*Read any good books lately? Have a book recommendation for your neighbors?
Please send them to Joan Greenberg at joandaveyg@gmail.com.*



Recommended by Paula Hochman

(the main character is her friend's father)

Incident at San Miguel. By A.J. Sidransky
A historical novel based on the true story of Brooklynite Juan Bradman. The Cohan family fled from Poland to Cuba to escape poverty and antisemitism. The elder son, a lawyer worked under Batista's regime, while younger son Moises was an accountant and sympathizer of Castro's rebels. As the revolution intensifies, the family must deal with the consequences of their choices and changes in their country. A fascinating historical read!

Recommended by Harriet Rhine

Beyond That, the Sea,

by Laura Spence-Ash

The novel starts off in 1940, in London, with twelve-year-old Bea being sent to a family in America, to keep her safe during the War. A poignant story is told of Bea's life for the next fifty years



Recommended by Andrea Freshman

The Great Alone by Kristin Hannah.

It is the saga of a young woman's growth and development in Alaska. Her father, a Vietnam Vet, takes the family there to escape his terrifying PTSD. You live with her through her adolescence and young adulthood in the wild world of "off the grid" Alaska.

Recommended by Joni Greenberg

The Covenant of Water, by Abraham Varghese

A family saga that stretches across three generations from 1900-1977 which takes place mostly in India, the story unfolds against the backdrop of politics, religion and the ever growing influence of modernization on this town and family. The NYT called it a fable and I think that is the good perspective to have. I listened to, rather than read, the book and I thoroughly enjoyed the author's reading of his work.

West Midwood Architecture *by Nate Rogers*

This is now the eighth installment of the West Midwood Architecture column. To give you a brief recap of the previous topics and themes, the column began with a love letter to the unique spatial, physical, and landscape qualities of this wonderful neighborhood we call home.

The second column was an exploration of roof types and silhouettes, and how different combinations of roof elements can result in a whole variety of outcomes that make each house look unique compared to others.

We then turned our attention to the nuts and bolts of how our houses work, beginning with the role of the envelope (roof and walls), and how transfer of heat and vapor needs to be carefully managed. We looked in depth at the historic roof assembly, vents, and roof insulation.

The fourth column addressed historical exterior wall assemblies, what it means to install new materials over old ones, and a discussion of wall insulation. Last

spring we talked about gutters, historical gutters, and how roofs and sites handle rainwater.

The last two columns carefully examined heating and cooling systems, both historically and in terms of newer technology on the market, and how these interact with our old homes, with some key aspects to consider.

Whew! That was a lot! For this installment, I'm going to catch my breath, and ask YOU: what topics and themes relating to West Midwood architecture and urban form are you interested in hearing more about? Methods of construction? A history of historic preservation efforts in the Victorian Flatbush area? More information on New York City's zoning reform and how it impacts historic properties?

Let me know!



School News — P.S.217 *by Eric S. Ost*

When the crocuses and tulips start breaking ground, parents know it's time to get planning for the summer! The Summer Rising program, which runs from July 2 - August 16 from 8am-6pm, is a great option. Summer Rising is a partnership between NYC Public Schools and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and is run in partnership with local non-profit organizations like the Flatbush Development Corporation.

Students in the program have access to both academic and enrichment programming over the course of the day, including field trips, arts activities, and outdoor recreation. It's free and available to all NYC students in grades K-8. More information can be found at schools.nyc.gov or at FDC's website: www.fdconline.org/

[fdc-youth-summer-rising-program/](#)

Applications are open until March 25!

And speaking of breaking ground, you may have noticed that the PS 217 track and basketball courts are fenced off and being torn up. This is not the playground replacement grant from Councilmember Rita Joseph's office (the planning for that will begin this fall); this is yet a different funding stream from the DOE to fix the damage to the track caused by the previous project.

Round and round we go with this! The School Construction Authority estimates the new track, basketball courts, benches and tree beds will be completed by July.

Cross your fingers, toes, and all your T's.....

In the meantime, happy spring! Keep your eye out for the Friends of PS217 "Spring Concerts in the Garden," returning this May. All are always welcome.



The Great Water Main Replacement Project

By John DeLamar

For the past month residents of Westminster Road, 12th Street, and Avenue H have been front row to a city-wide improvement plan. Argyle Road joined the party in February. New water mains are being laid along the farthest thoroughfare of our little Hamlet, and it's a simple process. If by simple we mean harrowing, funny, overly drawn out, or entertaining to those below the age of ten.

The work was planned to begin at 8:30 every morning and to be completed by 4:30 that afternoon. Residents would fill tubs and pitchers the night before, double check that their Boilers were stocked with water for the chilly days. If you've been reading the messages on the Listserv, you know how most of your fellow WeMians feel about that schedule: it was really more of a suggested schedule, very flexible. This flexible notion of scheduling was unfortunate for one resident who was in the middle of a shower at 8:15 when the main water line from the street was shut off, and their shower slowly became a dribble. Another resident grappled with the none-too-reliable schedule when they were blocked in by a major construction vehicle twenty minutes before work was "scheduled" to begin.

For another neighbor the water had to take a back seat to a ruptured gas line, which had been incorrectly marked by National Grid on the curb. The sidewalk is marked where gas lines are so that the workman can stop using the excavator to dig and would go in by hand. As the workmen moved forward excavating the road, planning to dig by hand soon, they accidentally dug through the gas line. With a hiss and quick dash away, the crew went into rapid response mode to ensure the neighborhood was safe. Once the fire department came and went and the pipes could be replaced, and the water turned back on, it was near 7:00 pm.

One resident was in the middle of remediation work from a flood they had in their home in November when the

work began. Every day, they were balancing the repair work with water shut offs without any major issues. That is until their electrician was working in a bathroom just as the main water line was turned back on, and Whoooooosh! Old Faithful erupted from their newly repaired bathroom. Water began to shoot from the sink and the tub. Turns out the plumber who was doing some work at the house forgot to turn off the house's water line.

This wasn't the only neighbor to receive a soaking when water came back on. On the first day of work one resident was running water in their basement and first floor bathrooms to clear the pipes, when they noticed a large amount of water pouring from their ceiling in the basement. While on an emergency plumber zoom call it was discovered that the second-floor bidet was left on, and the toilet became Westminster Road's own Trevi Fountain!

Not every story from the weeks long work is one of trauma and inconvenience (despite the humor abundant in most of these stories a few days out). The workers were removing the lavender fire hydrant at the corner of Avenue H and Glenwood Road. Menachem Husa and his son Elie spent a lot of time and effort to paint that particular hydrant to match the color of their house on the corner, all when Elie was 7 years old. Anthony, site foreman, had his team snap the old hydrant with a digger, saw the ragged metal edge smooth, and hand delivered the hydrant to Menachem's backyard.

This writer's own son saw the days of work as his own personal Super Bowl. On the walk to school every morning Leo would explain to me how the excavator and the roller and the front loader were asleep but would be coming to work soon. On our walks home he would have Mark and me walk slowly up and down Westminster to watch the machines and the workers do their jobs, all the while cheering them along. The workers were such dolls, one even offered Leo a ride on the bulldozer, which he denied and immediately regretted as the bulldozer drove away, saying "Need to ride on the bulldozer!"



PUZZLE.

By *The West Midwood Puzzler*

This puzzle deals with homophones (words that differ in spelling and differ in meaning but have the same, or almost the same, pronunciation—e.g., cent, sent, scent).

Excluded are proper nouns, contractions, and acronyms. The clues are synonyms or antonyms of the homophones or are somewhat related to the homophones.

Below is a list of clue sets. Each word in a clue set is immediately followed by a number enclosed in parentheses that indicates the number of letters in the answer word. The answer words are homophones. For example, the homophones for the clue set {pain(3), beer(3)} are ail and ale. Count 1 for each homophone set you can identify.

Rank: 35=good; 70=excellent; 105=genius

Clue Sets

{agree(6), outdo(6)} {get(6), minus(6)} {flyer(2), sum(3)} {more(8), version(7)} {sums(4), ax(3)} {affirm(6), derive(6)} {refuge(5), weird(5)} {alter(6), result(6)} {help(3), helper(4)} {wind(3), child(4)} {way(5), reef(4)} {entire(3), tool(3)} {legit(7), voice(5)} {imply(6), avoid(5)} {remark(8), false(8)} {implied(8), shy(7)} {shrine(5), change(5)} {bug(3), kin(4)} {inform(7), value(7)} {curve(3), boat(3)} {extreme(6), wrong(6)} {climb(6), agree(6)} {facet(6), anticipate(6)} {aid(10), aides(10)} {fed(3), octave(5)} {drill(5), seer(5)} {zero(5), must(5)} {audio(5), said(4)} {heart(7), vision(6)} {skate(4), wheel(4)} {tools(4), pivot(4)} {yeah(3), see(3), ego(1)} {bleat(3), distain(3)} {bond(4), bundle(4)} {lure(4), lessen(4)} {fabric(5), water(4)} {bare(4), hollered(6)} {prom(4), yell(4)} {belt(4), taboo(6)} {poet(4), blocked(6)} {nobleman(5), arid(6)} {lowest(5), herb(5)} {ignoble(4), deep(4)} {placed(5), drip(5)} {places(5), footing(5)} {market(6), strange(7)} {coast(5), tree(5)} {weary(4), borscht(4)} {exist(2), insect(3)} {came(4), box(3)} {pint(4), stand(4)} {peal(4), beauty(5)} {ice(4), town(4)} {fruit(5), inter(4)} {bunk(5), labor(5)} {finer(6), gambler(6)} {shield(3), lettuce(4)} {loop(5), tooth(4), data(4)} {publicized(6), construct(5)} {fowl(4), rough(6)} {whistle(4), sad(4)} {faction(4), chunk(5)} {pig(4), pest(4)} {plank(5), tired(5)} {daring(6), stone(7)} {tree(4), dish(4)} {mine(4), dessert(5)} {innate(4), carried(5)} {district(7), mule(5)} {branch(5), bend(3)} {soup(8), funds(7)} {lad(3), signal(4)} {plait(5), donkey(6)} {cook(6), donkey(5)} {control(5), crack(5)} {rift(6), buttocks(6)} {food(5), sired(4)} {width(7), inhalation(6)} {beer(6), chicks(5)} {beer(5), injury(6)} {wedding(6), leash(6)} {suggest(6), jewelry(6)} {mule(5), shelter(6)} {traveled(6), bosom(4)} {still(3), behind(4)} {acquire(3), via(2), ciao(3)} {storage(5), money(4)} {money(7), dome(7)} {mark(5), food(6), gold(5)} {agent(5), crow(4)} {grant(4), spore(4)} {plaster(7), cork(7)} {egg(4), vend(4)} {basement(6), vendor(6)} {examine(6), alarm(6)} {count(6), awareness(6)} {coin(4), odor(5)} {food(6), installment(6)} {accidental(6), songs(6)} {ran(6), {ran(6), modest(6)} {driver(9), horn(6)} {bargain(5), peep(5)} {bites(5), elect(6)} {stylish(4), emir(5)} {pepper(5), cool(6)} {singers(5), ream(5)} {singing(6), color(5)} {music(5), string(4)} {channel(5), bud(5)} {quote(4), place(4)} {phrase(6), nails(5)} {modest(6)} {driver(9), horn(6)} {bargain(5), peep(5)} {bites(5), elect(6)} {stylish(4), emir(5)} {pepper(5), cool(6)} {singers(5), ream(5)} {singing(6), color(5)} {music(5), string(4)} {channel(5), bud(5)} {quote(4), place(4)} {phrase(6), nails(5)}



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 As 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.



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.

Food

John DeLamar - Bakery Do you need a cake for a special celebration? Cupcakes for a kid's party? Challah for the holidays? I have you covered for all things sweet and savory. Baked with love and backed locally, visit littlebakerbaker.com for photos and info. Reach out to hello@littlebakerbaker.com

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.

Ester Sciallo Brooklyn residential real estate. Office: 718-676-1755; cell: 646-389-6248; es@brres.com.

WEST MIDWOOD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022 - 2023

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