



# GOV'NORS

## THE OLD GOWANUS ROAD.

### Researches Into the History of Past Centuries.

#### A First Paper on the Line of Travel from the King's Highway Toward the South—An Antiquarian's Walk and Objects of Interest by the Way.

In investigating the origin and early history of the old roads of Brooklyn I have found two points which have given rise to dispute and my conclusions in regard to which might as well be stated in this article as elsewhere.

One point is in reference to the King's Highway. As far as my search has gone I have found but one road which went by the name of the King's Highway and that was the road from Brooklyn to Bedford, to East New York and on to Jamaica. As a matter of fact all the old roads laid out under the king's authority by the King's commissioners were king's highways, just as roads now laid out under orders of the commissioners of the counties are called county roads, and were so designated in legal documents; but the designation as a specific name attached itself only to the road mentioned above. Thus, as the Gowanus road was laid out by royal commissioners, according to their report of March 25, 1704 (the same date as the report on the road through Bedford), it was a king's highway, but unlike the Bedford road it did not carry that title, but was always called the Gowanus road.

The other point is in reference to the legal status of the road, whether Dutch or English, now included within the limits of the city. By the treaty of 1664 the title of all public highways was vested in the State; and thus the British Crown became the lawful proprietor of the road of the old Dutch colony roads. As the legal successor of this right the Common Council of the City of Brooklyn came into possession of the title. By English law the fee remains in the adjacent proprietors, and in case of abandonment of the right of public easement the land in the roads of the English colonies may be seized and occupied by them. But the land in the roads opened before 1664 (the Dutch roads) was the property of the City of Brooklyn, and I think that the adjacent property owner occupies them at his peril. I am satisfied, however, that a deed from the city will give the holder a perfect title.

According to the records the Gowanus road was laid out in 1704, and ran east-west from the King's Highway at Atlantic avenue down along the coast, which guided for it the name of the Coast road—to New Utrecht. As there are matters of interest connected with it which can best be so treated, I shall divide it into two sections, the first and short section being between Atlantic avenue and the Fort road (about First street); the second extending from First street southeast to the city line.

### A TRIP BY WATER.

#### Newtown Creek Carefully Examined by an Eagle Man.

As the summer approaches the Newtown Creek nuisance promises to take as prominent a place in a topic of newspaper discussion as they have done in the past. For years the citizens associations in the Seventeenth and Fifteenth wards have kept hammering away at the fertilizer factories on both sides of the stream, and the Peter Cooper gas works. Congress has laid its restraining hand upon the mighty Standard Oil company with its horrible output of sludge and other refuse with which it has defiled the bottom of Newtown creek and driven the fish from one of the best fishing grounds about New York bay, and the summer of 1895 opens with the creek and the region along its banks in better condition, apparently, than it has been for years. Of course the condition during the cool weather of this year is an imperfect guide for August, but a thorough inspection of the creek from the dredging machines above the Grand street bridge, where the creek is still overflowed, will probably be little danger to health and comparatively little outcry from the Seventeenth warders. The talk about Newtown creek will come from the peddling prosecution of the Peter Cooper Gas works as a nuisance, and the dispute between the proprietors of the Cooper works and the fat rendering establishments just across the creek from the gas works on Furman island and who is responsible for the smells which the police claim to have discovered in March and for those from which the residents of the Seventeenth ward suffered last summer. The Cooper are fighting what they consider to be a preservation of their business. The fat rendering establishments are fighting the preservation of their business. The trouble was turned at last and the Cooper process is to be pursued. All sewers should lead into the East river, and in a day or two an examination will be made of the situation. A long main sewer will undoubtedly be necessary and it should run from near the head waters along the bank and not far from it in a northeasterly direction with branch sewers from the bank of the creek.

What He Will Advise in Improvement of Newtown Creek.

Special Committee is Preparing an Exhaustive Report—He Feels That Country Members Will Not Be Willing to Appropriate Funds for a Water Connection With Flushing Bay.

The question of the best way to rid Newtown creek of its nuisances and at the same time to enhance its commercial advantages, will be one of the first that will be considered by the assembly on its reassembling and a bill will be introduced in accordance with the report of a special committee to investigate the entire matter. Assembly man George W. Brush is chairman of the committee. He gave to an Eagle reporter to-day the points of his report to the committee, so far as he has come to conclusions. He has already selected upon the main considerations, but is still at work gathering material and information.

He said he will be remembered that Assemblyman Schultz at the last session introduced in the assembly a bill providing for a canal to connect Flushing Bay with the head of Newtown creek, for the purpose of flushing the creek and also for commercial uses. That bill was defeated, so that the entire subject is open for consideration. Of the first importance, before coming to the canal is the matter of health, and to that end I have had conferences with the board of health and also with engineers connected with the city works department of this city. It appears that on the Brooklyn side of the creek for a long distance along the two and one-half miles of the stream or inlet the land is low and marshy. Dumping along this shore has been going on for years, and the result is a land with altogether too promiscuous material. The land should be raised not by filling in refuse and organic matter and this will be one of the points in the report. In this connection is the matter of emptying of sewage into the creek. There are now sewers opening on the creek on both banks. This is entirely objectionable; no sewers should empty contents into these waters, on either side. It only adds to the deposit that are caused by the tide, carrying mud and silt to the head waters and leaving them there. So far as the Brooklyn side is concerned the city works department has plans underway now for doing away with the objectionable sewerage system. These plans involve the diverting of all sewage from the bank of the creek to the East river. This will require some time, at least a year, and the remedy will be sufficient to check the evil from that source and the old sewers will be done away with. As to the sewers on the Long Island City side of the creek the same course should now for doing away with the objectionable sewerage system. These plans involve the diverting of all sewage from the bank of the creek to the East river, and in a day or two an examination will be made of the situation. A long main sewer will undoubtedly be necessary and it should run from near the head waters along the bank and not far from it in a northeasterly direction with branch sewers from the bank of the creek.

## SECOND WARD PARKWAYS.

### Chief Engineer Risse Submits an Elaborate Scheme for Beautifying Newtown.

#### TO HAVE A HEARING OCTOBER 18.

#### He Has in View a System of Avenues, Streets, Parks, Squares and Waterways, With a Fine Shore Driveway.

Chief Engineer Risse of the Topographical Bureau submitted to the Board of Public Improvements yesterday a general map or plan showing a design for a system of avenues, streets, public parks and squares, parkways and water ways in the Second Ward of Queens, formerly the Town of Newtown.

The board determined to give a public hearing on the plan on October 18, before which time no action will be taken. Mr. Risse will be present with many of the following report in explanation of its features:

"I have the honor to submit herewith, for the consideration of the Board of Public Improvements, and for the purpose of giving a public hearing prior to the adoption of a plan, a map of plan showing a general design for a system of avenues, streets, parkways and waterways in that part of the Second Ward of the Borough of Queens (forming part of the former Town of Newtown), and bounded by the Borough of Brooklyn, Flushing Creek, Flushing Bay and the East River."

## CALLS IT COLOGNE GULCH

### A Writer in Harper's Weekly Describes the Varied Assortment of Smells Which Harrow This City and Assail the Summer Traveler Who Attempts to Reach Long Island.

A good many thousands of people take the cars each day at Long Island City, bound for the favored resorts of "wind-swept Long Island." Each of these passengers, before he has journeyed far, receives something not called for on his ticket. But it is not a "something" calculated to add to the pleasure of the passenger. It begins as a mild, ill-defined aroma almost as soon as the cars are well in motion, and it becomes rapidly accentuated, till it is an aroma neither mild nor ill-defined, though quite indescribable. The wise traveler at once endeavors to forestall further experience of the gratuitous offering by closing the window and, if so permitted, resorts to a perfumed handkerchief or a vinaigrette. But the ruse usually does not succeed, as some novitiate is almost sure to leave a window open, while for the traveler who is in an open car the case is quite hopeless. He may as well give himself up to resignation from the first, or, at most, attempt to accomplish something by holding his breath.

The source of the first installment of odors is plainly a variety of factories, the most of which passed beyond the pale of this particular sensation, and find himself whirling between low, dingy buildings, apparently of some forgotten epoch of architecture, each of which heaves forth volumes of odors and gives out an intangible but by means undetected redolence that makes the effluvia which he inhales seem almost a part of the air. Building after building dies in quick succession (evidently the engineer is under orders, or has regard to his own feelings), each exhaling a stench peculiar to itself and seemingly different from all the others. Language is quite inadequate to describe the peculiar noisomeness and extreme variety of these smells. They are milder, unappreciated, fetid, rank, rancid, old, insipid—run the entire list of odors that you like, not sleeping even the words that are obsolete for the occasion justifies their relation to the scene, and exactly what objectionable purpose each is given over to is unrevealed to the eye. If you cannot well discover what the odors are, and exactly what objectionable purpose each is given over to is unrevealed to the eye. If you cannot well discover what the odors are, and exactly what objectionable purpose each is given over to is unrevealed to the eye.

## DR. BRUSH TO THE ASSEMBLY.

### What He Will Advise in Improvement of Newtown Creek.

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## MANCHESTER SHIP CANAL REVIVED

### FLAMING WATERWAY TEEMS WITH LIFE

Few of the spectators who flock to Salford Quays each May for the annual Twin Cities boat race realize that they are witnessing one of Britain's most remarkable transformations.

Teams from Manchester and Salford universities race on water that was once so polluted there were stories of it catching fire and signs on the canal banks warned people to extinguish any naked flames.

Folklore even recalls that there were heaving mats of sediment thick enough for dogs to walk on.

When the Manchester Ship Canal was opened by Queen Victoria in the 1890s it was regarded as a wonder of Victorian engineering. But a century later, the once thriving docks at Salford were idle after becoming the focal point of a dismal story of post-industrial decline.

Twenty years later, the scene could not be more different. One reason for the improvement in the ship canal has been the death of traditional industries - and the effluent they once poured into the region's waterways.

Another is the introduction of tough new environmental laws from Europe. United Utilities has also invested millions of pounds upgrading its wastewater treatment works. Equally important has been a multi-million pound recovery programme. For the last eight years, liquid oxygen has been pumped into a 2km stretch of the canal at Salford Quays at the rate of 15 tonnes a day, helping to bring the waters back to life. The programme - funded by United Utilities - grew out of an innovative partnership between the company, the Manchester Ship Canal Company and the Environment Agency working with the Mersey Basin Campaign.

Later this month, Manchester-based aquatic researchers APEM will unveil the results of an 18-month study, also funded by United Utilities. Part of the report will chart the canal's remarkable environmental recovery.

Dave Campbell, APEM's senior consultant scientist, explained: "Ever since the decision to develop Salford Quays 20 years ago, it was understood that people and businesses would only want to locate next to healthy, clean water."

"Now there are fish, including perch, bream, pike, roach and gudgeon all living in the canal. It's an extremely impressive turn around." With wildlife returning to the water and economic life flourishing beside it, the long and varied history of the Manchester Ship Canal is entering its best twist - as a weapon in the fight against climate change and road congestion.

Last year, the 3,000 tonne vessel Neptune became the biggest ship to navigate the canal's 36 miles in a quarter of a century, and recent months have witnessed a surge in cargo transported along the canal - as documented on page 11 of GreenLife.

Peel Ports, which owns the Manchester Ship Canal Company, is keen to see it become a thriving waterway once again, and says it is still operating at only a fraction of its full potential.

Could this model work for the Gowanus and the Newtown Creek? A search for either name in the archive of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle results in thousands of false leads, an endless series of demands and condemnations, over-ambitious recovery plans and inevitable failures. One is left with the impression that the Canal and the Creek are damned to an eternity of foul smells, dead fish (and an occasional maligned whale) and ill health for their surrounding communities. The Manchester Ship Canal project is not a readymade. UK environmental controls are different than those in New York City, as is public sentiment, as is the ability of local government to leverage business interests, or regulate them, without fear of economic reprisal. This is especially true in a climate of recession. But the Manchester example is at least proof that the fate of blighted urban waterways is all but sealed, that smart and reasonable, simple solutions to water pollution are being found elsewhere.

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