

dining & entertainment

'Bayside' Details Neighborhood's History

Bayside
Alison McKay, Bayside
Historical Society
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BY LINDA J. WILSON

No matter what the subject may be, any book in the Arcadia Publishing "Images of America" series takes the reader gently by the elbow and points out a place and time that live on in the excellent photographs, the subject matter of which is underscored by the text. Among the latest releases in the series is *Bayside* by Alison McKay, archivist at the Bayside Historical Society. In 10 chapters plus an Introduction McKay gives readers both an overview and a meticulously detailed look at an area that has been considered prime real estate since 1824, when a wealthy shipping merchant by the name of Abraham Bell purchased 245 acres in the area now known as Bayside, created an upper and lower farm, and bisected them with a country lane now called Bell Boulevard, from which Bayside began to develop. Over succeeding generations, Bayside evolved from its beginnings as a rural farming community to a resort destination with lavish

estates that lined the shore of Little Neck Bay. Later, the town was transformed again into a commuter suburb touted by real estate developers for its scenic beauty and convenient location. *Bayside* chronicles the community's ever-changing history with short narratives at the beginning of each chapter and goes into further detail with the captions for each of the vintage photographs culled from the Bayside Historical Society's archives in the section that follows.

Chapter 1, "The Alley", describes the "large tract of land nestled between Bayside to the east and Douglaston to the west", most of which today is Alley Pond Park. Reproductions of photographs, some almost 150 years old, show the once verdant landscape and the beginnings of the urbanization that in some three centuries later would encroach everywhere but in the park that owes its life to the "Walk In the Alley" in 1969 that brought renewed awareness of the unique ecological environment to the public's attention.

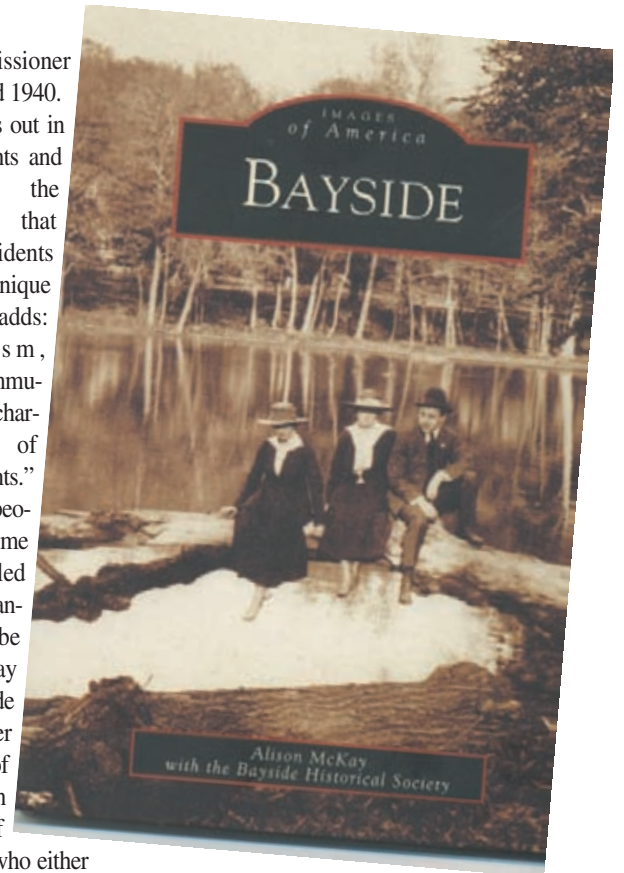
"Bell Boulevard" traces the development of the private, unpaved lane dividing the upper and lower sections of the 245-acre farm that the first Abraham Bell bought from Timothy Matlock in 1824 to what is today the neighborhood's main drag and a thriving

commercial district. "Estates, Mansions, and Homesteads", as its title suggests, recounts the rise, flourish and later demise of the dwellings that once made the area prime residential real estate. Of the 29 homes whose photographs constitute the illustrations for this chapter, only two are still standing.

Like many of the properties in "Estates, Mansions, and Homesteads", many of the golf courses and yacht clubs that made up a large part of the facilities described in Chapter Four, "Recreation" no longer exist. The North Shore Tennis Club and Clearview Golf Course are two exceptions to the rule. Like the property now known as Crocheron Park cited in the previous chapter, they owe their continued existence either to private concern or the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. "Little Neck Bay" continues in this vein, noting that by the dawn of the 20th century, the bay, named for the small peninsula that juts into it, "was highly touted in real estate advertisements and auctions for both its scenic quality and recreational value". The last two photographs in the chapter and the caption for both describe the influence of Robert Moses on the bay and the shore that borders it when the Cross Island Parkway was constructed at the behest of the then

Parks Commissioner between 1934 and 1940.

McKay points out in "Famous Residents and Pillars of the Community" that Bayside's residents "make up its unique quality" and adds: "Volunteerism, activism and community spirit are all characteristics of Bayside's residents." While the list of people who at one time or another called Bayside home cannot possibly be complete, McKay manages to include a sizable number of past residents of the community on the shores of Little Neck Bay who either enhanced their community by their efforts to give back to it in one way or another, such as Elizabeth Boyce Lawrence, Frederick Storm and William L. Titus, or who gave it a certain cachet merely by their presence. The latter category includes boxer "Gentleman Jim" Corbett, silent film star Pearl White, who frequently walked her pet pig through the center of



town and William Picard Stephens, "Dean of American Yachtsmen". Of course, no history of Bayside notables would be complete without an encomium for Joseph H. Brown, activist, preservationist and founder of the Bayside Historical Society, and McKay

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