

# Next meeting: April 9 at 8 PM

**Meetings at the Bellerose Baptist Church (basement), Braddock Avenue at 241<sup>st</sup> Street**



## Creedmoor Civic News

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CREEDMOOR CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.  
Founded 1927, Incorporated 1938

April, 2007

*"UNITED EFFORT REAPS UNITED GAIN"*

VOL. 76, NO.4

### Walter Farmhouse May be Razed

**Nothing is sacred from today's rapacious developers. Creedmoor Civic has learned that the 113-year-old farmhouse on Braddock Avenue that once farmed our area is scheduled to be replaced by new mixed-use buildings.**

The one last link in our neighborhood to our agrarian past apparently is one link too many for a developer looking to make a buck. The lot located at 238-09 Braddock Avenue



**Walter's Farmhouse as it appeared in late March, altered from its original late Victorian charm.**

has been subdivided into three lots with a proposal to build three buildings with stores at the ground level and apartments above. The owner is Mohamed B. Khan, according to City records. The City places the market value of the property at \$780,000. The lot is 68 feet wide and 90 feet deep.

The history of this house goes back to 1894, when it was built as a wood frame farmhouse. Charles and Elizabeth Walter had moved in the brand new house, and several barns and outbuildings existed in the rear until at least the 1960s. In 1957, Elizabeth Walter, by then widowed,

moved to Hicksville. Shortly thereafter the single-family house was converted into a two family house and the Victorian-style turned columns on the front porch with gingerbread trim were replaced by wooden Tuscan columns. Some years later, the entire porch was demolished. The land in the back was sold off and three homes were built fronting on 239<sup>th</sup> Street.

Commercial properties on Braddock Avenue have not been doing well. Why anyone thinks there is a market for more, is a mystery. The large spruce on the lawn will probably have to be sacrificed.

### MEMORIES OF A SMALL TOWN

by Walter Audubon

*(Editor's Note: Walter Audubon is a long-time resident of our civic. We are running this story in recognition our civic's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.)*

Our family moved to Bellerose from Queens Village in 1938, during the Great Depression. Many people were unemployed and some resorted to selling apples on the streets. My father was a foreign tax accountant for the old American Express Company, and was fortunate enough to be retained during this terrible period. The homes on my block had been built in 1927-28 but some people couldn't afford to buy these mostly wood frame houses, so they were rented from banks or mortgage companies. Today most of the houses are owned. In the 1940s most homes were heated with coal and a furnace. The buildings had coal bins in the basements and coal chutes with an outside

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## Civic Party Taking Shape - Tickets Now Being Sold

Creedmoor Civic celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on May 5 (Saturday) at the Queens County Farm Museum, an organization our civic was largely responsible for creating. We will have live music provided by Risky Business, hot Italian food from the popular local Bellerose eatery, Trattoria Lucia, beverages, awards, and a beautiful day in "farm country" where you can take hay rides, peruse a French wine vineyard, feed livestock, and tour an 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse. Punch and snacks will be available at 12 PM while you tour the Farm, then dinner will be served at 2 PM. Tickets for adults are \$30 per person, and children under 12 are just \$15. You can get tickets at the civic meeting on April 9, or by sending a check to: Jim Trent, 242-33 90<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bellerose, NY 11426-1115. Make checks payable to Creedmoor Civic Association. The party starts at 1 PM. We are honoring long-time board member Helen Trent, and recently deceased board member (Marian) Jean Corbett. The event is open to all residents of the association, and their relatives and friends.

## Around the Town

❁**Condolences to:** the Duskwicz family on the death of Stanley Duskwicz, father of our Civic President Richard Duskwicz. Wake and funeral were held in Lynbrook, where Stanley lived. He was 81.

## Dues Payment Updates

Following are dues payment for 2006 which were received since last month's listing:

| Street         | Block | Name     |
|----------------|-------|----------|
| 88 Ave.        | 234   | Donoghue |
| 90 Ave.        | 242   | Yevoli   |
| Gettysburg St. | 88    | Murphy   |
| 241 St.        | 88    | Pabon    |
| 242 St.        | 88    | Burke    |
| 242            | 88    | Rocco    |

## Donations Update

The following donations have been gratefully received:

| Street         | Block | Name   |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| Lyman St.      | 88    | Thomas |
| Gettysburg St. | 88    | Murphy |
| 239 St.        | 89    | Haslop |

## New Graffiti Law Goes Into Effect - Commercial Properties Take Note

A new nuisance law, in effect as of April 1, will be enforced against property owners who refuse to clean graffiti off their buildings.

Owners of commercial properties or residences with six units or more, will be penalized if they fail to clean their property within 60 days of being notified of a nuisance complaint.

Owners of smaller properties, like single-family homes, must attend a nuisance abatement proceeding for failure to comply, but are exempt from fines. First-time offenders face a \$150 penalty, while repeat offenders may be fined up to \$300.

This law is intended to help the city and neighborhood graffiti groups who were stymied by building owners who pull down their graffitied gates at night and go home to other neighborhoods, while the residents of their business neighborhood are forced to look at the mess every night. A perfect example is the property management company of the old Key Food shopping area at Braddock and Hillside. While every store owner has expressed interest in having the graffiti removed, the management company has repeatedly refused to sign waivers to allow the city to remove the graffiti for free.

# Memories of a Small Town

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entry, for deliveries from Frank R. Smith coal yards a short distance down Rocky Hill Road (later paved and called Braddock Avenue). The coal dust filtered through much of the basement, and we had to make regular visits there to shovel coal in the furnace. It was very dirty work and the heating changes later to oil and gas were welcome ones!

The houses had a compartment built into one side of them for milk receptacles. Early each morning the Renken man's milk wagon and horse could be heard clop, clopping down the street to make deliveries. Unfortunately, the horse would often make his own unsanitary delivery in the street! Around noon every weekday the Krug bakery truck would come through to take care of its customers. As a boy I marveled at the little noise it made, and was told it was an electric-powered vehicle. Regularly each day Romanelli's junk wagon would pass my house, seeking items that had been discarded for sanitation pick-up. Finally, there was the Italian fruit and vegetable truck offering fresh items daily, as well as a chance for neighbors to have friendly chats.

Neighborhood stores were conveniently located just a block away on Braddock Avenue. On the corner was Mittleman's candy store, where a candy bar cost a nickel and a tiny box of two Topps chicklets could be purchased for a penny. Next door was the German butcher who sold all kinds of fresh meats, butter, and eggs. Then came Galati's shoe repair where one could get shoes fixed at reasonable prices. Most soles and heels were of leather as the artificial materials used today were unknown then. Following Galati's was Seekamp's delicatessen, serving all kinds of hot and cold foods. Just after that was the German bakery, selling various fresh baked goods. Near the corner was Casey's Bohack, a large grocery store managed by Tom Casey. During the Christmas season the air was filled with the pleasant smell of spruce trees, stacked for sale at the entrance, along with peppermint candy canes and little

green tree-shaped, mint flavored candies. Immediately on and around the corner of the block was Phillips' Drugstore. Finally, on the side street adjoining the candy store was Nick's barber shop, where one could obtain a haircut or a shave. Almost all of the necessary goods and services were in one place.

In spite of the Depression, our area was then in the early stages of development. Many corner lots on Braddock Avenue were for sale. On one corner of our street was a huge lot extending an entire block between 238th and 237th Street. As young children we enjoyed climbing high on the big advertising billboard that stood alone on the property. A well-worn path allowed us to take a shortcut to our stores. And occasionally my friends and I would play a game of touch football on the lot. Today that lot is the site of the Bellerose Post Office. The opposite corner was occupied by vacant stores, containing broken

windows, and a great deal of dust and dirt, and an open invitation to curious children like me. The site has long since been rebuilt into a brick building containing apartments.

During the early forties, notwithstanding the effects of World War II, there were many sources of recreation and entertainment for youngsters. There were many weeded vacant lots along Braddock Avenue where we could play Cowboys and Indians, or explore an abandoned concrete

foundation in one area. At the east end of Braddock stood the Bellerose Theatre, where regularly on Saturday matinees one could see a full-length motion picture, a cartoon, and an exciting 15-minute serial that always left us anticipating the next chapter--- all for just 25 cents! Occasionally, after church on Sundays, our grandpa would take us in his new Hudson automobile to watch the small propeller-driven planes take off and land at Roosevelt Field, where years earlier aviator Charles Lindbergh had taken off for his famous transatlantic flight to Paris.

Television had not yet appeared and the main source of indoor entertainment was that electronic wonder, the radio.

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**Bellerose Theatre, as seen about 1929. It was once part of the Century Theatres chain. The terra cotta urns on the parapet have been long gone along with the ornamental lampposts on the sidewalk. The marquee was changed probably in the 1940s. The marquee in the image says "Double Feature & Local Follies."**

*Trent Archives*



# Memories of a Small Town

*(Continued from Page 1)*

After school each weekday, in the late afternoon and evening, my ears would be glued to the speaker of our old RCA standing in the living room. I would listen to serials such as Terry and the Pirates, Jack Armstrong, and Sky King, announced by a young man named Mike Wallace, the very same one who later became a famous television journalist. The serials were broadcast with commercials by the large cereal and soap companies of the day. To keep the attention of their young listeners from time to time they would offer incentives related to the story lines, requesting box tops and a small sum for postage. Among these were the Captain Midnight decoding ring and Jack Armstrong Tru-flight model airplanes, all of which are now collectors' items worth much more than their original cost. Some of the comic strips of the day mirrored the characters of these radio serials.

With the exception of a brief aborted landing at Amagansett, Long Island had no direct contact with the war going on in Europe. However, we were subjected to government rationing, in the form of food and gasoline stamps. Additionally, people were asked to return bacon fat to our local butchers, for use in the war effort. But the single thing I remember most was the seemingly endless drone of military planes flying night after night over my home. Some nights, sleep was impossible. And as a young boy I always had the fear that one of them might fall from the sky and crash into my house.

There have been many changes in Bellerose during the past seventy years. The radio has been largely displaced by television. The old telephones are being replaced by cell phones. The garages are used almost exclusively for storage rather than automobiles, making street parking a nightmare. Neighbors use machines to dry clothing rather than the old clotheslines in the rear yards. Propeller-driven commercial planes have been replaced by jets that fly faster and carry many more passengers. Large shopping malls nearby have provided overwhelming competition for small local shops. Finally, the ethnic make-up of the area has changed drastically. Early emigrants from western Europe have passed away or moved on, and have been replaced by newer residents from Latin America and Asia.

## Groups Slam Jamaica Plan

Both Community Board 12 and the Queens Civic Congress have voted to reject the City Planning Department's upzoning proposal for over 360 blocks of Jamaica. The groups have noted that in the past when plans were approved with suggested amendments, the City took the vote as a "yes" and ignored the changes. Therefore, it was deemed the only way to get the City's

attention was to outright reject the rezoning.

While most groups do not oppose upzoning the downtown area, although concerned that landmark buildings be identified and preserved, the objections came mostly where the rezoning impinged on surrounding one-family home neighborhoods such as south of the downtown area, and into the Hollis area to the east.

Civic groups have been particularly incensed over plans to upzone Hillside Avenue. This would lead to the demolition of many buildings, forcing thousands of people of limited means to scrounge for housing in a similar price category which simply doesn't exist. It was noted that if Hillside Avenue were rebuilt to the full extent of the proposed zoning with 12-story buildings, 38,000 additional people would be moving in, many of whom would be trying to get onto the F train during rush hours. Even if the F line could accommodate them along Hillside Avenue, it would mean commuters further down the line along Queens Boulevard would not be able to find space on the trains.

### The Mayor's Extra Million People

The Jamaica Rezoning is part of a larger effort to upzone areas whenever there is a downzoning somewhere else. The City is wedded to the concept of a City with a population of somewhere between 11 million and 18 million people as was proposed in the



**A side street in Flushing between Prince and Main Streets. Even these relatively new buildings could be sacrificed as upzoning proceeds to make room for another one million New Yorkers.**

1961 zoning scheme. For example, when it was proposed to downzone the residential sections of Bellerose, the City wanted to upzone Hillside Avenue in Bellerose to regain the lost density.

The Mayor proposes finding housing for another one million people by the year 2030. With no vacant land left, City Planning is scrambling to find where to put these people, most of whom are likely to be immigrants. It has been pointed out by some civic leaders, that the mayor has failed to provide a breakdown by borough as to where the million will go. These leaders further point out that, for a variety of reasons for which space does not permit an explanation here, virtually all of the one million will have to go to Queens. Hence, we've already seen a major upzoning in Long Island City, and in downtown Flushing which in recent years has gone from a sleepy American village to a bustling international downtown.