

APR 14 LMA Spring General Meeting

At Church of the Evangel on Bedford Ave. (between Hawthorne and Winthrop Sts.), 10am–noon.



APR 28-29 Sakura Matsuri at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Coinciding with the blossoming of the BBG's renowned cherry trees, Sakura Matsuri is the garden's annual celebration of traditional and contemporary Japanese culture. More than 60 events and performances over two days. Music, dance, food, crafts and much more. Tickets are \$30; students and seniors with ID, \$25; children under 12, free (must be accompanied by an adult). No admission fee for BBG members. For event schedules, tickets and more information visit bbg.org/sakura

For the 2019 centennial of the Lefferts Manor Association, the *Echo* will feature stories about the history and residents of the neighborhood. The series kicks off in this issue (see the story below) and in the *Echo's* upcoming special edition for the PLG House & Garden Tour (which will be held this year on Sunday, June 3). Whether you've been here 50 years or 50 days, we'd love to get your slices of life in Lefferts Manor. Contact *Echo* editor Milford Prewitt at milfordprewitt@aol.com with your story ideas.

The Homestead Made Way For The Manor

by Mary Miller

Have you ever noticed that the historic Lefferts Homestead, located in Prospect Park, is directly across Flatbush Avenue from a wide gate into the Brooklyn Botanic Garden? That was not by chance. The Homestead was moved from its original location on the east side of Flatbush Avenue between Maple and Midwood Streets in the early hours of February 13, 1918, one hundred years ago.

The home was the second one built by the Lefferts family, since the original was burned by Continental Army soldiers during the Battle of Brooklyn in 1776 to prevent it from being occupied by the invading British. Pieter Lefferts served as a lieutenant in the Continental Army and he and his son rebuilt the current house by 1783 and the family continued to live there for several more generations. After descendant John Lefferts died, his estate offered the historic building to the City of New York in 1917 on the condition that the city move it onto city property, since the family was planning to develop their property along Flatbush Avenue beginning with the building of the apartment house at 10 Maple Street.

The City of Flatbush provided the \$6,000 required to raise the house and pull it through the developing Brooklyn Botanic Garden (which had opened some sections in 1911) and across Flatbush Avenue into Prospect Park, making the last move at night and requiring the lifting of the trolley car wires that ran above the street. It must have been quite a scene!



The Lefferts Homestead in 1918, raised and ready to move.



LEFFERTS MANOR ASSOCIATION SEEKS YOUR HELP CELEBRATING ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

by MARY MILLER

We have something to celebrate!

The year 2019 will mark one hundred years since the residents of Lefferts Manor first got together to form the Lefferts Manor Association. Now is the time to start thinking about how we want to honor the work of the Association in preserving the character of our neighborhood.

The LMA was originally formed to continue the protection of the single-family covenant tied to our deeds by the Lefferts family, who set aside 600 lots for development in 1893. The mandate of the Association today is much wider, however, encouraging both the maintenance and improvement of our neighborhood and bringing together the residents for our “better acquaintance and mutual benefit.”

Over a century that has seen countless changes in American life in general, and this part of Brooklyn in particular, the Association's work has been the basis of our sense of community.

How best can we celebrate this history, when we are so diverse in many ways, yet share so many values?

We want to reflect on this long history, to encourage residents to delve into the unique history of their own homes, and to profile current residents as well as historic ones whose lives enlighten our understanding of the history of Lefferts Manor.

Elsewhere in this issue of the *Echo* is an obituary of Doris Watterson, who, with her husband, bought a home on Midwood I in 1961. They were among the first black families to move here and represent the kind of neighbors expected to be profiled in the year to come and it is hoped you can help us with other story suggestions.

The annual PLG House & Garden Tour, which was held for the 47th year in 2017, has long been a community-building exercise for the larger PLG neighborhood. There is an emerging consensus that the 2019 House Tour should have a special emphasis on Lefferts Manor itself, offering one home from each of the ten Manor blocks to celebrate the diverse range of Manor architecture and history of our homes.

Other suggestions include involving long-time residents in oral histories, and reproducing the historic yearbooks the Association published in the years 1930-31 and 1938, with an updated history of the neighborhood and LMA activities. And to top it off, plans are beginning for social events to give us all the opportunity to gather and celebrate this important milestone for our neighborhood.

These are some of the early thoughts, and we encourage the ideas and energy that residents can bring to this project. Reach out to LMA Board members (see the list on the *Echo's* back page) with old photographs, clippings, or other records of the past. As plans get formalized there will be many opportunities to be involved. But it is not too early to start celebrating our unique community and the Association that has shaped it.

Doris Watterson, a “Midwood Original,” Dies at 93

by Milford Prewitt

The “Midwood Originals”—a nickname for a pioneering but dwindling group of black homeowners who started the integration of Prospect Lefferts Gardens some 50 to 60 years ago—has lost another member with the death of Doris Watterson.

She died the day after Christmas at 93 years old while recovering from emergency stent implant surgery to open a blocked artery.

In 1961, Mrs. Watterson and her late husband, Clifford Ralphere Watterson, Sr., had saved \$3,000 for a down payment and relied on his \$8,000 annual salary as a parole officer and her salary as an executive secretary to buy 39 Midwood St. for \$28,000.

They raised three sons there and she would become the matriarch and a working mom in a family of strivers and conscientious neighbors who were well known throughout the neighborhood and among the community's local and political leaders.

She worked in executive secretarial and administrative roles at the United Presbyterian Church, retiring after 30 years of service as executive assistant to the director of the communications department.

Although she moved a few years ago to live with her son Keith and his wife, Robin, in Fredericksburg, Va., the tidy and well-kept Midwood home remains in the family's hands.

Physically healthy, mentally sharp, fond of walking and playing with Queen (Keith and Robin's American

pit bull terrier), a voracious newspaper reader and daily crossword puzzle addict, Mrs. Watterson suffered none of the overt illnesses associated with advanced age.

But around 5 a.m. Christmas Day, she complained to Keith and Robin of a slight chest pain and they took her to Spotsylvania Regional Medical Center in Fredericksburg where doctors determined Mrs. Watterson had sustained a small heart attack and held her for observation. The next day, around 1:30 p.m., doctors successfully implanted a stent to open a blocked artery and she returned to her room to recover. But as she was coming out of anesthesia, she went into cardiac arrest.

Despite 20 minutes of CPR, she died three hours after the surgery.

“I believe that her heart just was not that strong to fully recover,” said Keith, a federal law enforcement officer.

Doris Gwendolyn Fisher Watterson was born October 3, 1924 in Roanoke, Va. She was the only child of a mother who was a seamstress and hotel restaurant server and a father who was a mechanic.

She graduated valedictorian from Lucy Addison High School in 1941 and almost immediately headed north with her mother, settling in Brooklyn and attending secretarial school.

Clifford, who was her high school sweetheart, also headed north to



A memorial for Doris Watterson will be held Saturday, April 21, 4 p.m., at 39 Midwood St.

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attend Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, a historically black college.

Little did they know at the time that they were making history by participating in “The Great Migration,” when millions of Southern blacks fled the Jim Crow South before, during and after the two world wars, with the hope and longing for a better life in the North.

With WW II raging, Clifford's studies were interrupted when he was drafted into the Army. He was a Sergeant in an all-black battalion and served in Guadalcanal, a South Pacific island where American and Allied forces won their first offensive victory against the Japanese after a relentlessly brutal seven-month battle.

After the war, the couple reunited and married in downtown Brooklyn in April 1946. (continued on page 2)

The Owl Music Parlor:

PLG's Wise Choice for Great Live Music

BY RICH PIETRAS

Appropriately tucked away behind trees near the corner of Rogers Avenue and Midwood Street resides one of Prospect Lefferts Gardens' best-kept musical secrets—an intimate yet electric concert space and bar called The Owl Music Parlor.

The builder of this musical nest, which is housed in a former beauty salon, is Oren Bloedow, an accomplished singer, guitarist, and composer. Aside from forming the band Elysian Fields with Jennifer Charles in 1995, his personal musical journey is long and eclectic.

Bloedow is a New York City native who has performed with a wide range of artists—from blues, jazz and roots music monsters including Dr. John, Otis Rush, Johnny Copeland, and Paul Butterfield, to close friend Ed Pastorini of 101 Crustaceans. In 2004, his twisting and turning recording and stage life earned him “Artist of the Year” from Greil Marcus, the prominent cultural critic and journalist. He has also worked with the likes of Lou Reed, Emmylou Harris, Steve Earle, and Bruce Springsteen.

The Owl lets Bloedow turn the mic around for other artists. And, for the past two years and despite never having a real “business plan,” the people in and around PLG have been treated (continued on page 2)

The Owl Music Parlor

(continued from page 1)

to quite a show. Patrons have called The Owl everything from “super intimate” and “cozy,” to one of the “best performance spaces in the region.”

“I was very much inspired by Barbes in Park Slope, which I think is one of the greatest music venues anywhere,” Bloedow said. “I sit with the calendar looking for openings and musicians whom I feel are suitable. Then, it’s up to them, and to the audience, to make it a great night.”

Before you get to the soundstage and room that holds about 50 people, guests are treated to a small bar stocked with craft beers and wines. The back room is cozy and possesses great acoustics. Boasting a warm-sounding collection of modern and vintage gear, it is topped off with a beautiful Mason & Hamlin Concert Grand piano from the 1930s.

As for the performances themselves, The Owl features a myriad of musical styles performed for a diverse crowd, just like the neighborhood where it resides. While he is reluctant to point to a single favorite show, Bloedow said some memorable highlights include Elizabeth and the Catapult, Toth, Innov Gnawa, Akie Bermiss, Tredici Baci, Ryan Power, Chocolate Genius, and Relatives.

In February, The Owl hosted the Noam Wiesenberg Quintet, as part

of “Open Ground,” a series created by accomplished pianist Richard Sears. Featuring Wiesenberg on bass, Philip Dizack on trumpet, Immanuel Wilkens on alto saxophone, Shai Maestro on piano, and Kush Abadey on drums.

Wiesenberg, a 2010 Berklee College of Music graduate and Israeli bassist

and composer, did not disappoint. His band was tight and engaging, and the standing-room-only crowd was treated to about 90 minutes of quality jazz—more than worth the \$10 suggested donation. The performance was also recorded live and featured music from their debut album, “Roads Diverge.”

For Bloedow, it is all about the music.

“I try to generally anticipate the artist’s needs and be of service. The biggest challenge is keeping the emphasis on the music—we try to be very respectful of what’s being played and sung and not lay any hubbub over it—without putting too much of a crimp in people’s style. I often hear that it sounds exceptionally good in here, which is partly because we keep the racket down, but I think it’s mainly that the musicians play so well. And, as a rule, they do take extra care to keep the volume reasonable, which is at our request for the sake of our neighbors, but it also helps focus the sound in the room.”

Guests can enjoy the music at The Owl Music Parlor mainly from Thursday through Sunday. For more information, go to theowl.nyc.

Rich Pietras is a journalist who has lived with his wife, Angela, on Lefferts I for the past two years.



Bot, an avant garde fusion band, performed recently at The Owl.



Camillo Brings Roman Cuisine to PLG and Big Food Media Applauds

Camillo and Prospect Lefferts Gardens’ serious foodies have been looking for each other for a long time.

Though they didn’t really know what to expect from each other, their destinies were bound to intersect. The neighborhood’s pent-up desire for an earnest chef-driven dining experience that didn’t involve traveling outside PLG and Camillo’s owners’ years-long search to find the right location in PLG has been fulfilled.

Time and circumstances—otherwise known as gentrification these days—created a match made in gastronomic heaven and offer further testament that the old neighborhood is a-changin’.

Camillo opened last September on Nostrand Avenue between Rutland Road and Midwood Street in the old Caribbean dive bar space Maximillian Bells (five years vacant). With 48 seats, the basic footprint has remained the same.

The owners designed the place themselves, utilizing exposed brick walls, wooden beams, and a partially open kitchen that evokes the aura of an Italian farmhouse. Sprinkled around the dining room and at the bar is antique copper cookware, the same décor accents used in similarly themed restaurants in Rome.

It’s not incorrect to refer to Camillo as Italian, but anyone looking to eat Neapolitan red sauce pasta dishes or Tuscan fare might be disappointed.

“There is not one thing specifically that separates Roman cuisine from the rest of Italy,” says Michael Schall, operations and beverage manager, “as much as there are just many dishes that are known to have originated in Rome and when you travel there, you see them often.”

Schall, who has been in the restaurant business for 17 years, is one of the three partners who own Camillo as well as Clinton Hill’s highly regarded Tuscan restaurant, Locanda Vini e Olii. His two partners are Rocco Spagnardi, general manager, and executive chef Michele Baldacci, a native of Florence who trained and worked in some of the best restaurants in Tuscany.

Baldacci, a hands-on chef in these days of corporate menus and connect-the-dot recipe guides, has put together a menu based on authenticity, freshness and high-quality ingredients, including the house’s signature dish: pinsa, an ancient ancestor of pizza.

The most striking difference between pizza and pinsa is the dough. The latter’s dough is made from wheat, rice and soy, and takes nearly two days to rise as opposed to Neapolitan pizza’s 20-hour rise. Pinsa pies also lack that high crust along the edges when baked.



Courtesy of Raffaele De Vito

Nine pinsas are on the menu, ranging from a \$12 Margherita-style pie to \$20 for the Acciughe version with anchovies, buffalo mozzarella, tomatoes and oregano. Another crowd-pleasing pinsa is the Capricciosa, with artichokes, mushrooms, prosciutto cotto, olives, tomatoes and mozzarella for \$19.

There are nine pasta dishes—only the gnocchi and the amatriciana have tomato sauce—and eight antipasti dishes ranging from \$5 to \$15.

Under a section called Big Plates, one of the sheer delights of the menu is the fritto misto, a lightly fried smorgasbord of artichokes, zucchini, onions, eggplant, cauliflower and chicken, seasoned with sage, for \$17.

Schall says he is grateful that Camillo has been a hit and the recipient of strong traffic ever since it debuted.

He says he wants the restaurant to become known as both a charming and comfortable neighborhood favorite while welcoming those for special occasion dining.

The New York Times, *Gothamist*, *The New Yorker*, *The Village Voice* and others have written positive reviews and commendatory opening stories, perhaps the first time the mainstream media heaped such praise on a restaurant in PLG. The influential dining website *Eater* called the place “magical” in its headline.

But Schall says he hopes such glowing attention does not give the neighborhood residents or the restaurant’s patrons the wrong idea. While he is aware that affluent, young, white families and individuals are rapidly changing the demographics of PLG, he insists that the last thing he wants is for Camillo to morph into a clubby hideaway for well-heeled newcomers to the neighborhood, as has happened in Bed-Stuy, Harlem, Crown Heights and even Washington, D.C.

Camillo Joins Pizza Saves to Support Gun Control March

When thousands of students nationwide take part in the National School Walkout on April 20 to advocate for gun safety legislation, Camillo will be a behind-the-scenes supporter of their efforts.

PLG’s newest restaurant is teaming up with a national project called Pizza Saves to ensure that every student who participates in any state receives free pizza for lunch.

“We aren’t just throwing money into a vast national fund-raiser,” says Michael Schall, a partner in the restaurant. “We are supporting students who actually live in our community.”

“I think we have an added responsibility as restaurant owners in a gentrifying neighborhood to make an effort to appeal to longtime locals, and that has been an important factor in a lot of our decision making,” he says.

Schall points to the moderate price points (about half of that at Locanda), and the “overall vibe” to make Camillo welcoming and inclusive to longterm locals, newcomers and those who travel from other parts of the city.

“The thing we love about this neighborhood is its diversity and its strong sense of community,” he said.

Doris Watterson, 1924-2017

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Doris and Clifford bought on Midwood I in 1961. But it would be decades later, with the gentrification of the neighborhood, that the Wattersons and other families like them would come to be appreciated as the “Midwood Originals” as their numbers declined.

Other families who bought homes on Midwood in the 1950s and ’60s included the Worthy family at 41, the Nelsons at 43, the Palmer family at 45, the Mills at 38, the Tyrrells at 29, the Rose family at 50; and the Crawfords at 51.

Clifford Sr. became known as “the Mayor of Midwood St.” He would engage politicians and other community leaders about service needs in PLG and help his neighbors shovel snow, rake leaves and prodded newcomers to say hello when he was outside.

Along with Keith, the Wattersons had two other children, both of whom preceded Mrs. Watterson in death. Clifford Jr., a social worker, died in 1996 at 48 from heart disease. Louis Douglas, a youth counselor and social worker who specialized in counseling young men on adult and parental responsibility, died in his sleep in 2013 of natural causes at age 63.

Clifford Sr. died in 1998. He retired from the New York State Department of Corrections in 1985 after a 35-year career, achieving the rank of assistant deputy commissioner for program services.

Keith recalls his parents being bon vivants, big lovers of music, dancing and Broadway shows, to which he and his brothers were often dragged along.

He said his mother was also fond of margaritas and was a great seamstress who loved making outfits for herself and her grandchildren.

“But she loved Queen and Queen still misses her,” he said.

Besides Keith and Robin, Mrs. Watterson is survived by three grandsons, three granddaughters, three great-grandchildren and is mourned by a host of neighbors and friends.



NY State Assemblywoman Diana C. Richardson (left) presents neighbor and global bicyclist Robert Thomason with a citation saluting his 45 years fighting for fair housing and diversity in PLG. The honor was bestowed in January when Mr. Thomason turned 90 years old.



For a stronger community, join the

Lefferts Manor Association

Dues are \$25 per household or \$15 per senior citizen household

Dues cover January through December 2018. Make checks payable to Lefferts Manor Association.

Send payment with your name, address and contact info to: Martin Friedman, 214 Rutland Rd., Brooklyn, NY 11225, drop in the mail slot at 214 Rutland Rd., or sign up at the upcoming spring LMA meeting on April 14.

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