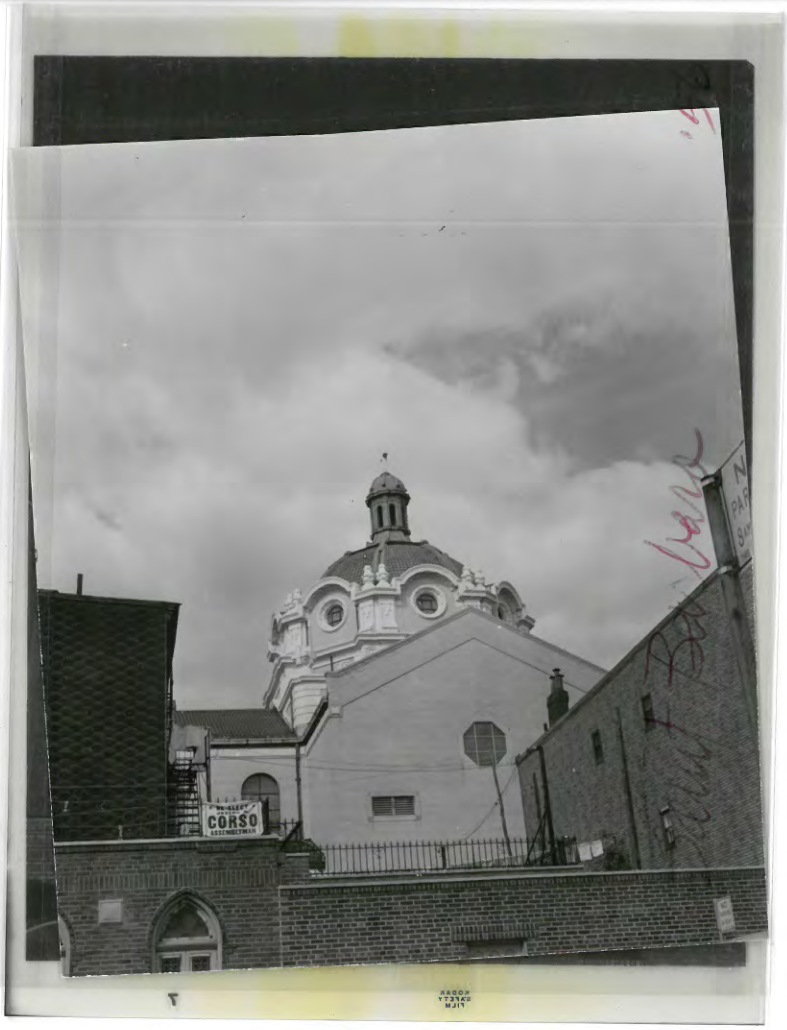
ST. BARBARA'S (R.C.) CHURCH

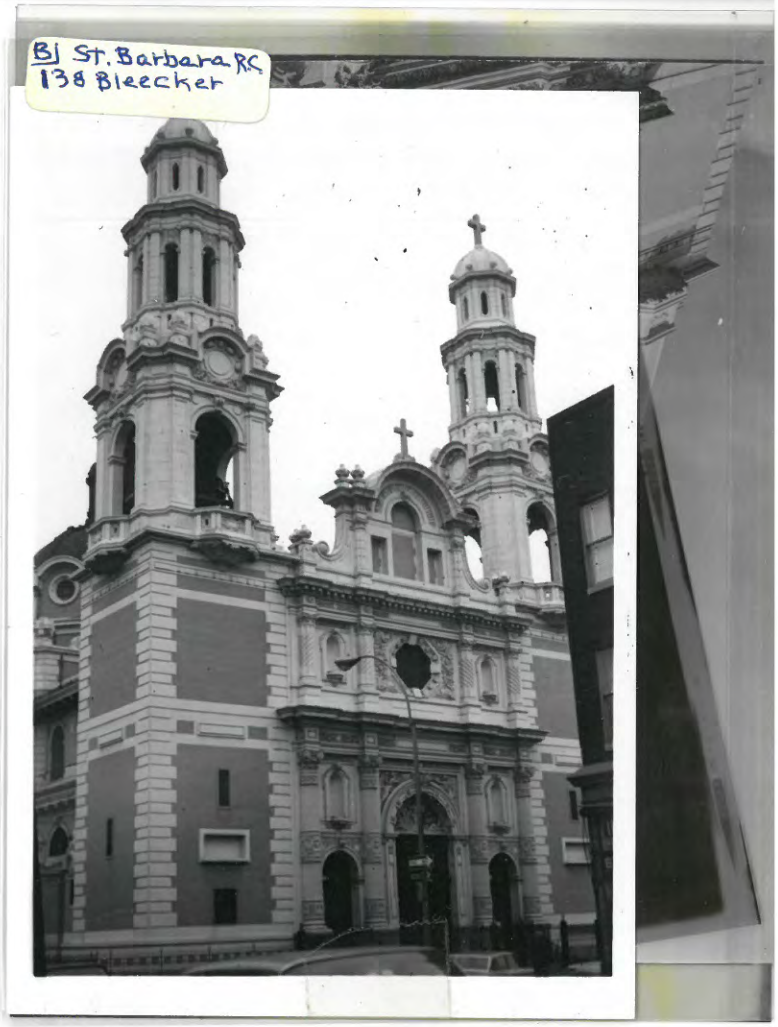
EAST COR. BLEECKER ST. AND CENTRAL AVENUE

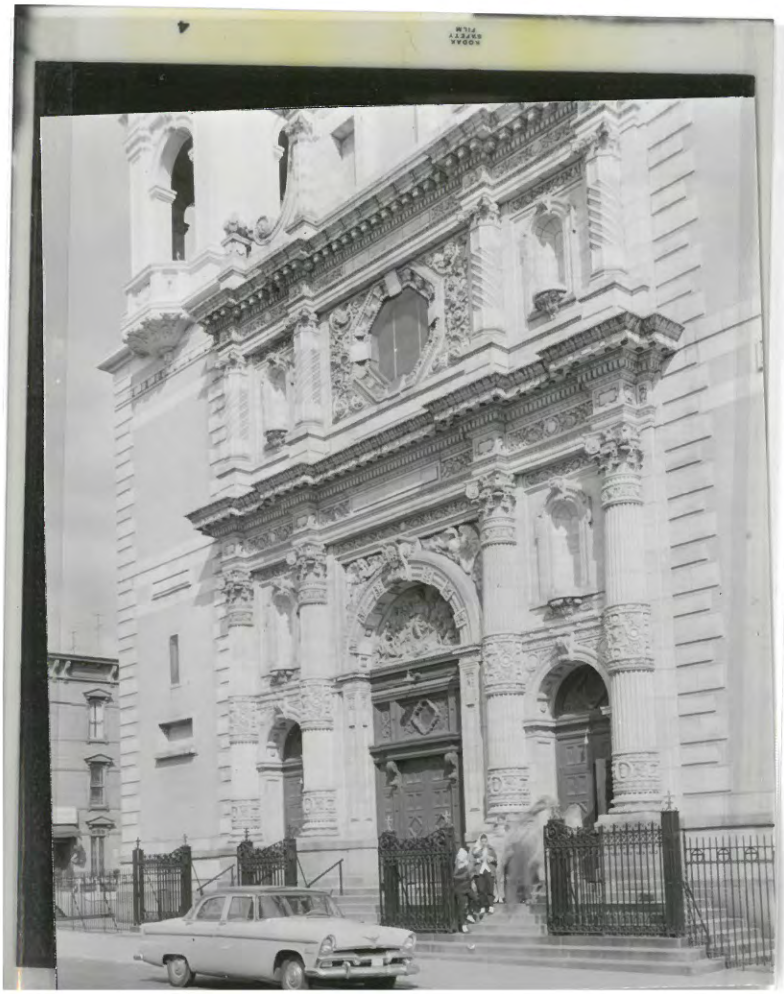
BROOKLYN N.Y.

ARCHT: HELMLE & HUBERTY

STYLE: NEO-SPANISH RENAISSANCE, 1910


CORSO


BJ St. Barbara RC
138 Bleecker



DEI + CUM + HOM
ET + HABITABIT

St. Barbara Catholic Church

138 Bleecker Street at Central Avenue
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11221

Click on images to enlarge

Organ Specifications:
Present building (since 1910)
► III/19 M.P. Möller, Inc., Op. 5948 (1931)
• II/17 Unknown Builder – moved from previous building?
First building (1893-1910)
• Unknown Builder

The Roman Catholic parish of St. Barbara was established in 1893 to serve German immigrants, many of whom worked in the breweries in the Bushwick area of Brooklyn. Bishop McDonnell dedicated the first church on Thanksgiving Day, 1893. It is said that the church was named for Barbara Epping, the wife of local brewer Leopold Epping. Over the years, the congregation has evolved to serve Italians and now Latin Americans who have displaced the original German population in the neighborhood.

Ground was broken in 1907 for the present church, designed in the Spanish Baroque style by Helmle & Huberty, and the church was opened in 1910. Noted for its 175-foot high cream-colored spires — which the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects has described as "wedding-cake icing: edible" — the elaborate exterior includes a beautiful dome. Inside, the church interior is filled with statuary, carvings, frescoes and more than 25 stained glass windows.

M.P. Möller, Inc.
Hagerstown, Md. – Opus 5948 (1931)
Electro-pneumatic action
3 manuals, 67 registers, 35 stops, 19 ranks

The organ at St. Barbara's Church was installed by M.P. Möller in 1931. A detached drawknob console controls the four divisions, all of which are enclosed in swell boxes. About 1972, around the time that the neighborhood was ravaged by fires and in serious decline, the organ began to falter and eventually became unusable. In 1982, Father Edmund Brady determined that repairing the organ would mean a great deal to the congregation and would be a symbol of things getting better for the church and neighborhood. With the support of donations from the Brooklyn Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, John Tully was engaged to begin repairs on the organ.

Great Organ (Manual II) – 61 notes, enclosed with Choir

8	Open Diapason	61	4	Octave [ext.]	—

8	Doppel Floete	73	4	Flute Harmonic [ext.]	—
8	Melodia	73	8	Tuba	61
8	Dulciana	73		Tremulant	
8	Viole d'Gamba	73		Chimes	21 bells

Swell Organ (Manual III) – 61 notes, enclosed

16	Bourdon [unit]	97	4	Salicet	—
8	Open Diapason	73	2 2/3	Flute Twelfth	—
8	Viole d'Orchestre	73	2	Flautina	—
8	Salicional	73	8	Oboe	73
8	Vox Celeste [TC]	61	8	Vox Humana	73
8	Gedeckt	—		Tremulant	
4	Orchestral Flute	—			

Choir Organ (Manual I) – 61 notes, enclosed with Great

8	English Open Diapason	73	8	Viole d'Gamba	GT
8	Flute Harmonic	73	4	Flute Traverso [Melodia]	GT
8	Doppel Floete	GT	8	Clarinet	61
8	Dulciana	GT		Tremulant	
8	Unda Maris [TC]	61		Chimes	GT

Pedal Organ – 32 notes

32	Resultant [O. Diap. + Bdn.]	—	8	Octave [ext.]	—
16	Open Diapason	44	8	Flute [ext.]	—
16	Bourdon	44	8	Violoncello [V.d'Gamba]	GT
16	Lieblich Gedeckt	SW			

Couplers (Stop keys above top manual)

Great to Pedal 8', 4'	Great to Great 16', 4'
Swell to Pedal 8', 4'	Swell to Swell 16', 4'
Choir to Pedal 8'	Choir to Choir 16', 4'
Swell to Great 16', 8', 4'	Great Unison Separation *
Choir to Great 16', 8', 4'	Swell Unison Separation *
Choir to Swell 16', 8', 4'	Choir Unison Separation *
Swell to Choir 16', 8', 4'	* located in jambs

Adjustable Combinations

Great Organ	Pistons No. 1-2-3-4-5 (thumb)
Swell Organ	Pistons No. 1-2-3-4-5 (thumb)
Choir Organ	Pistons No. 1-2-3-4-5 (thumb)
Pedal Organ	Pistons No. 1-2-3-4-5 (thumb)
Full Organ	Pistons No. 1-2-3-4-5 (thumb)
	General Cancel (thumb)

Pedal Movements

Balanced Expression Pedal, Swell Organ	Great to Pedal Reversible

Balanced Expression Pedal, Great-Choir Organ
Grand Crescendo Pedal

Sforzando Pedal and Manual Piston

Unknown Builder
Mechanical action
2 manuals, 17 stops

The first-known organ in the present building had two manuals and 17 stops. It seems likely that this organ was moved from the previous church. The ledgers of Reuben Midmer & Sons, organbuilders in Brooklyn, show that the firm installed an electric blower on this organ.

Organ in first church building:

Unknown Builder
Mechanical action

It is not known who built the organ in the first church building, but the *Brooklyn Eagle* (Oct. 7, 1902) reported that it was the gift of Brooklyn millionaire George P. Pope, president of the Manhattan Enamel Brick Company and a generous benefactor of Catholic organizations. Specifications of this organ have not yet been located.

Sources:

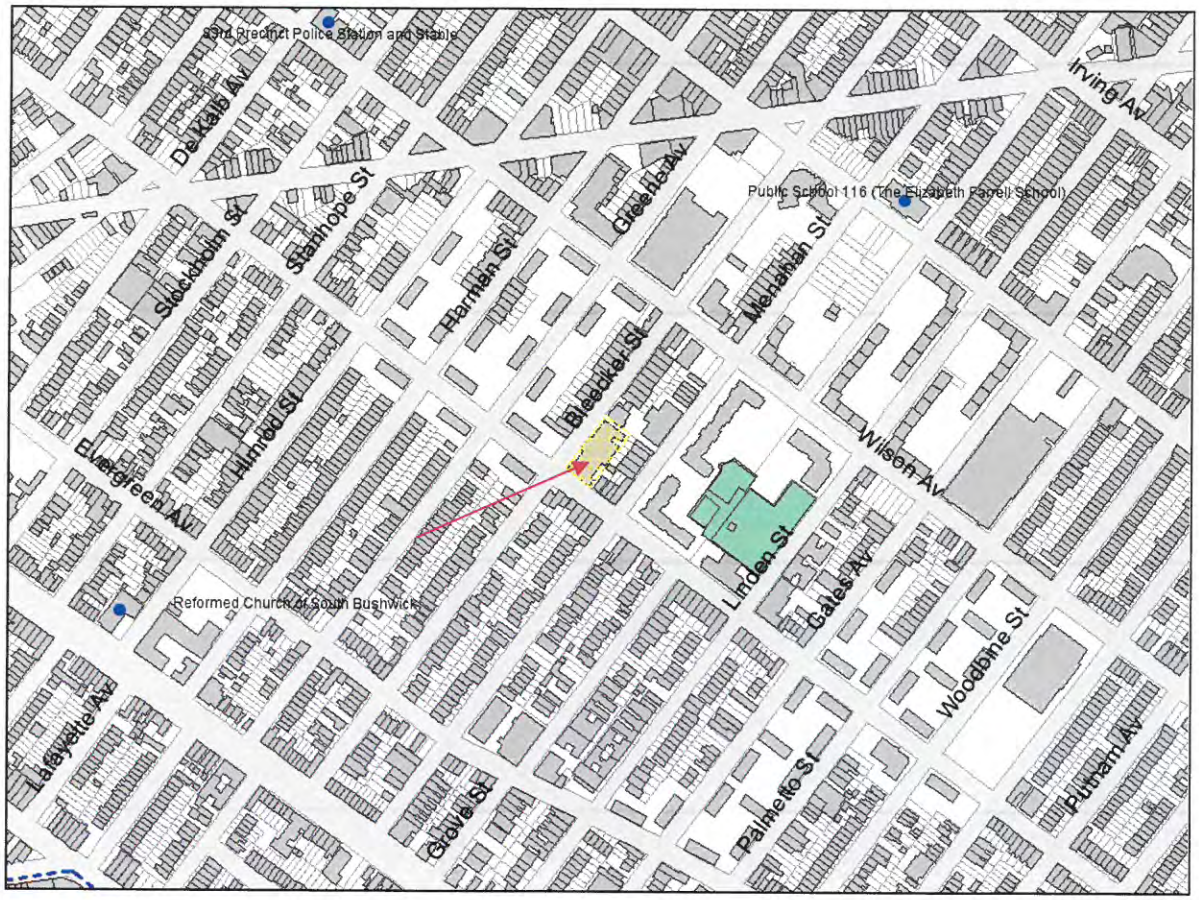
"Among the Catholic Parishes," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Nov. 26, 1893).
"Bestowed by the Pope," *Brooklyn Eagle* (Oct. 7, 1902).
Cox, Paul. "Brooklyn Baroque: Inside St. Barbara's," *The Bushwick News/BrooklynBK* (Apr. 19, 2011).
Daley, Suzanne. "Bushwich Parish Restoring Organ to Past Glory," *The New York Times (* Dec. 25, 1982).
Gottlieb, Martin. "Church Mirrors Neighborhood's Hope," *The New York Times* (Aug. 15, 1993).
Marrone, Francis. "Up From the Flames in Bushwick," *The New York Sun* (June 21, 2007).
Trupiano, Larry. Electronic correspondence (10/3/2012) concerning blower installed by Reuben Midmer & Sons.
Trupiano, Larry. Factory Specifications of M.P. Möller organ, Op. 5948 (1931).

Illustrations:

Bridge and Tunnel Club web site: http://www.bridgeandtunnelclub.com
SImpson, Devvon. Interior of St. Barbara's Church (2011).

| NYC AGO Home Page | Back to NYC Organ Project List |

Request for Evaluation
St. Barbara's R. C. Church
138 Bleecker Street
(Bushwick, Brooklyn) (Block 3306, Lot 6)



ST BARBARA'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, 299-307 Central Avenue, Brooklyn.

Designed in 1907 by architects Helmle & Huberty, St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church is an early example of a building designed in the Spanish Mission Revival or neo-Plateresque style. Constructed of yellow brick and gleaming white terra cotta, the church towers above the low-rise residences of the surrounding area, and is the most prominent structure in Bushwick.

Founded in 1894 as a German parish, St. Barbara's has served successive generations of immigrants. The present church building was designed by a leading turn-of-the-century Brooklyn architectural firm, Helmle & Huberty, who were responsible for many important public and institutional commissions. Their buildings were designed in a wide stylistic spectrum and include such notable works as the Boathouse in Prospect Park, the Shelter Pavilion in Monsignor McGoldrick Park, and St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Church.

It is the sumptuous Spanish Baroque or Plateresque detailing that is considered to give St. Barbara's its architectural importance. This neo-Plateresque style is unusual for a church in the northeastern United States, particularly one built as early as 1907. The Plateresque architecture of 17th century Spain combines large unornamented wall areas with sections that are embellished with highly ornate and complex classically-inspired forms. The entranceway is generally given the most ornate treatment on these buildings. The Plateresque style was brought to the New World by early Spanish settlers in Mexico and the American southwest. St. Barbara's is modeled after the mission churches built in these areas.

St. Barbara's follows the basic form of 17th-century Plateresque buildings. The church has a terra-cotta frontispiece in the form of a triumphal arch that

gives emphasis to the main facade. This dramatic frontispiece is enlivened by projecting Corinthian columns, squat twisted columns, sculptural panels and bands, and a projecting rounded pediment. Heavy unornamented brick pavilions with terra-cotta quoins flank the entranceway, but these are crowned by decorated terra-cotta towers. The church is cruciform in plan and the facade of the north transept on Bleecker Street is designed as a small frontispiece. A large Renaissance-inspired dome covers the church crossing.

Located in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, St. Barbara's stands as a solid anchor in the neighborhood.

Henry R. Stiles History of the City of Brooklyn
1870

p. 734 Catholic church of comparitively recent date in Brooklyn - begins as a body in second decade of the 19th century. Catholics compelled to cross East River to New York to attend St. Peter's Church to worship.

p. 735 On Jan. 7, 1822 a meeting of the Catholics of Brooklyn convened at house of Peter Turner on corner of Washington & Front Streets to take up work of erecting a church. St. James Church begun in 1822 at a site on the corner of Jay and Chapel Streets.

Long Island formed into a diocese in 1853. First bishop was the Most Reverend John Loughlin.

IRM (Brooklyn) NN.

Lees, H. A. Historical sketches of the churches of the city of Brooklyn ~~(1950)~~ 24p. 1904

IRM (Long Island)

Sharp, John Kean, History of the diocese of Brooklyn, 1853-1953, the Catholic Church on Long Island (1954) 2 vol.

ZAE p.v.774 or IXZ p.v.427

[Mary Maud, sister] History of the Catholic Church in the diocese of Brooklyn (1938) not detailed enough

ZLRL annex

Sharp, John Kean, Priests and parishes of the diocese of Brooklyn, 1820-1944. (1944)

AB Am 32

St. Gregory's Church, Brooklyn Amer. Archt vol 112 pt 2 (12/5/1917) pp 409-410, 414 Helmle + Corbett archts.

AB Am 32

Bldg. of the Williamsburgh Trust Co., Brooklyn NY AABN vol. 90 pt 2 (12/15/1906) p. 192. Helmle, Huberty + Hudswell, archts.

AB P372

Competition for design of a fountain on Prospect Park Plaza [Bailey Memorial Fountain] Pencil Points vol. 10 (July 1929) pp 490-493. Competition archts: Helmle, Corbett + Harrison, Egerton Swartwout [winner], H. Van Buren Magonigle, Lorimer Rich

AB
A+25

Church of St. Brigid, Brooklyn, NY
Helmle & Corbett as arts Architecture +
Building vol. 55 (1923) pp 5-6, pl. 2-5.

Frank J. Helmle (1869-1939) in Withey death date corrected to 1939 from 1929
Joined Harvey Corbett in partnership in 1912
Banks in Brooklyn: Williamsburgh Savings
Bank, (1915) Williamsburgh Trust Co. Bldg;
Dime Savings Bank; Nassau Trust Co.;
North Side Bank.

N.Y. Times Obit:
Harvey W. Corbett Apr. 22, 1954 p. 29:1
Frank J. Helmle July 16 1939 p. 30:6
? Joseph Huberty July 10 1941 p. 19:1
? Oliver Huberty July 27 1944 p. 17:5
? Paul Huberty Sr. Oct 29 1943 p. 19:2

John K. Sharp. History of the Diocese of Brooklyn, 1853-1953, The Catholic Church on Long Island
New York 1954

Vol. 2
pp. 82-83

"The descendants of the German immigrants grew up speaking English and, as many of them intermarried with the Irish and moved out of Williamsburg, they were absorbed into the old and the new English-speaking parishes. These facts and the lessening of German immigration were reflected in the establishment, during the administration of the second bishop of Brooklyn, of only 10 new German-speaking parishes, ... The diminishing number of German immigrants was reflected in the foundation of only three new German parishes in Kings County, all of them in Ridgewood. They were: St. Aloysius', established in 1892; St. Barbara's, founded the year after; and St. Matthias', in 1908,

Form 10-445
(5 62)

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION AND PHOTOGRAPHS MAY BE ADDED ON SHEET OF SAME SIZE

1. STATE New York
COUNTY Kings
TOWN Brooklyn VICINITY
STREET NO. 138 Bleecker St. cor. Central Ave.
ORIGINAL OWNER Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn
ORIGINAL USE Church
PRESENT OWNER Same
PRESENT USE Same
WALL CONSTRUCTION Cream color brick and terra cotta
NO. OF STORIES 2 & basement

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
INVENTORY

2. NAME St. Barbara's Church
DATE OR PERIOD 1907-1910
STYLE ~~Italian~~ MEXICAN Renaissance
ARCHITECT Helmle & Huberty
BUILDER P.J. Carlin

3. FOR LIBRARY OF CONGRESS USE

4. NOTABLE FEATURES, HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESCRIPTION

OPEN TO PUBLIC yes

Block 3306 Lot 6

Dedicated Dec. 3, 1910. Cost $100,000 to build. Church is noted for its music and the first built-in organ was a gift of George Pope. Facade is Italian Renaissance with some features of Spanish architecture. SPANISH

Two towers rising to height of 175 feet contain 4 bells. The cruciform plan of nave and transept is Gothic, but the dome over the crossing is ~~Roman.~~ RENAISSANCE High ~~embowed roof~~ VAULTED NAVE, massy MASSIVE pillars and imported storied windows of stained glass. From the piers on the side, facing the nave are projecting brackets on which are statues representing the Apostles, and Sts. Michael, Anne, Elizabeth and Christopher. The organ gallery is decorated with bas-reliefs of choir of angels singing to the music of St. Cecilia.

On the front panel of altar is a bas-relief of the Lord's Supper. The four Evangelists occupy the niches on the reredos, which is surmounted by 4 adoring angels. On either side of the altar are 3 corbelled steps with a kneeling angel on each. The altar itself is of marble. Above the tabernacle rises a canopy supported by 2 free-standing slender columns. In front this canopy ends in a pointed arch in which the All Seeing Eye of God is represented in mosaics. Over this is a dome of stained glass.

The best example of the Brooklyn Terra Cotta Iberian style.

5. PHYSICAL CONDITION OF STRUCTURE Endangered no Interior excellent Exterior excellent

6. LOCATION MAP (Plan Optional)

7. PHOTOGRAPH

8. PUBLISHED SOURCES (Author, Title, Pages)
INTERVIEWS, RECORDS, PHOTOS, ETC.

Brooklyn "Tablet"mDec. 10, 1907; Dec. 1910
Word of Fr. Ryder, Oct. 30, 1956

9. NAME, ADDRESS AND TITLE OF RECORDER
Maud Esther Dilliard for
Municipal Art Society of N.Y.
119 East 19th St. N.Y.C. 3

DATE OF RECORD Oct. 31, 1956

5439

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L.P. - 1201

Heard:

ITEM NAME : St. Barbara's R.C. Church
ADDRESS : 299 Central Ave.

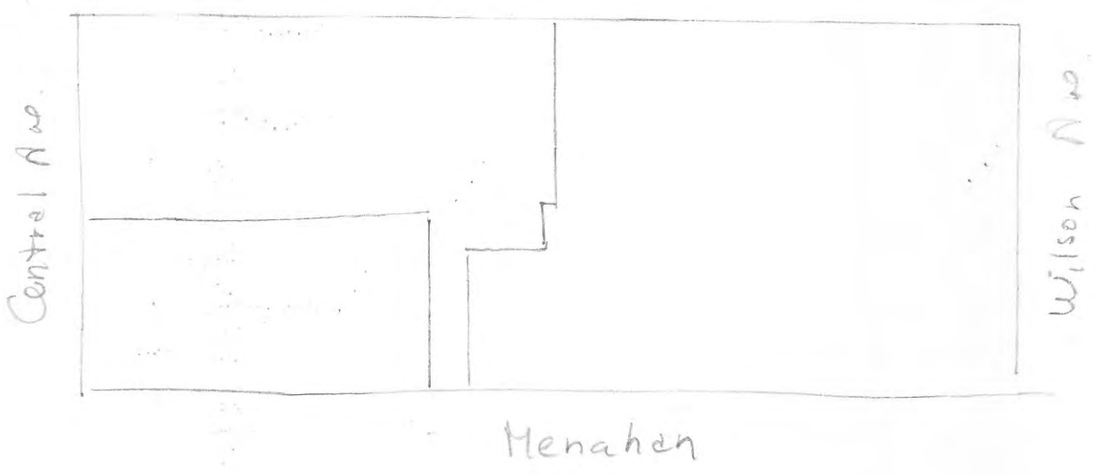
Dept. of Collection/Bureau of City Coll.
OWNER/OCCUPANT:
ADDRESS :

Father Edward Brady
13E Bleecker St.
Bklyn, 11221

REGION : Bklyn
BOROUGH :
OWNER OF RECORD:
DATE OF VERIFICATION:

BLOCK: 3306 LOT: Church-6
Pars-41

SANDBORN MAPS
VOLUME: 9
PLATE : 16
BLOCK : 3306
LOT :



CITY SURVEYORS OFFICE
SECTION :
VOLUME :
PLATE :
BLOCK :
LOT :

REAL ESTATE DIRECTORY:

NOMINATION :

BLEECKER
ONE WAY
ONE WAY

The New York Times

Metropolitan Report

TUESDAY, JULY 17, 1984
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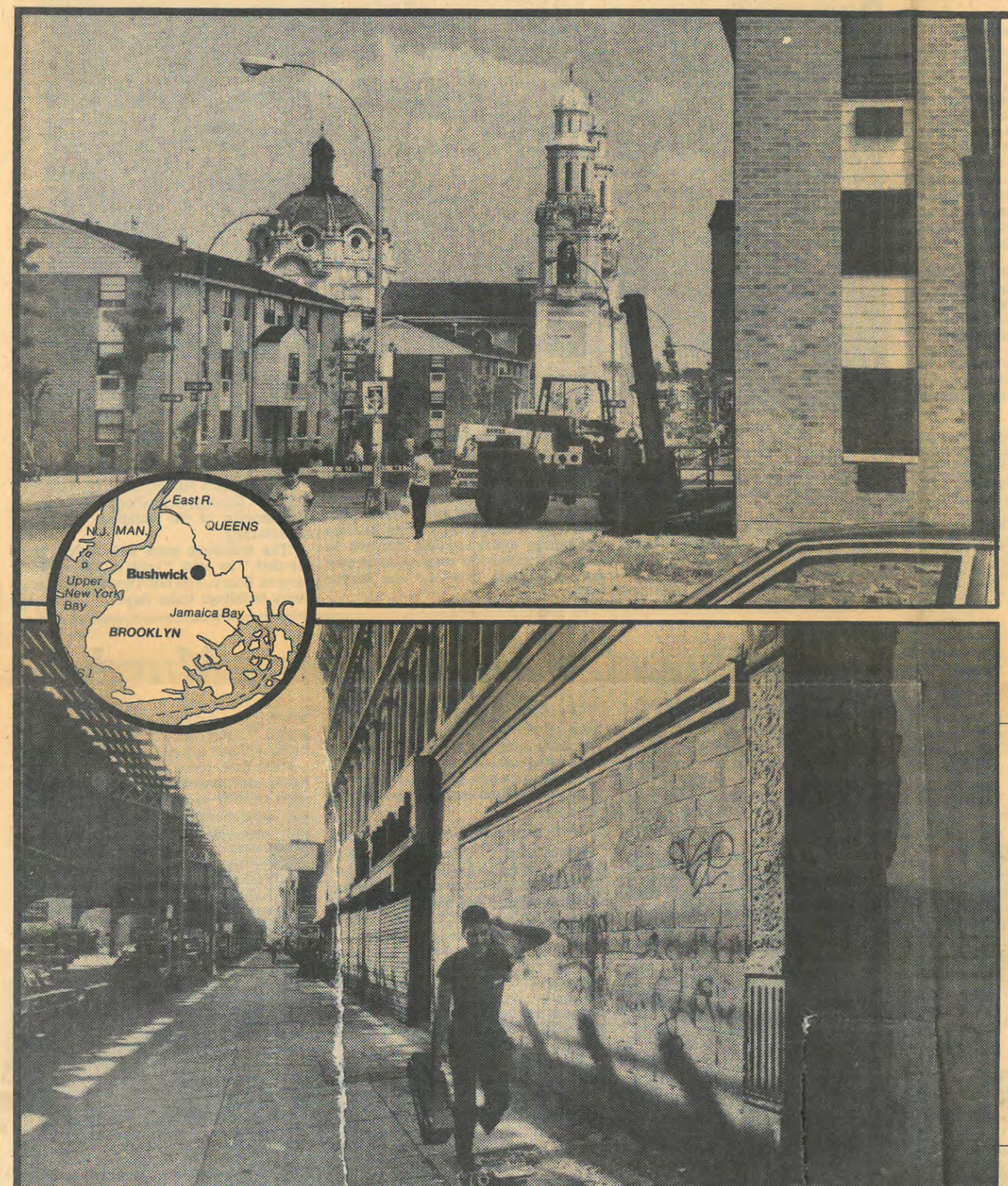


Bushwick, a Shambles in '77, Showing Signs of a Recovery

By MARTIN GOTTLIEB

Seven years ago, an Ecuadorean priest with pinched cheeks and somber demeanor looked out over the depleted congregation at Sunday mass at St. Barbara's Roman Catholic Church in the north Brooklyn community of Bushwick and contemplated what seemed to be a neighborhood's death rattle.

Four days earlier, at 9:34 P.M. on July 13, 1977, a power failure plunged New York City into darkness and, within minutes, mobs of looters raced through dilapidated blocks of wood-frame apartments toward Broadway, the neighborhood's main shopping street.

By morning, the street, shrouded in the shadows of an elevated train line, was a shambles of broken glass, wooden police barricades, looted stores, flames and smoke — the most heavily damaged street in the city during a steamy night of looting, with 124 stores ruined.

Fire and Destruction

That was the first blow to the Bushwick section. A few days later, as a less spectacular trail of arson, drugs and crime wove its way through half-abandoned side streets, a 10-alarm fire, one of the largest structural fires in the city's history, erupted near another anchor of the neighborhood, Myrtle Avenue, and destroyed 24 buildings in a four-block area.

"The disaster," the priest, the Rev. Gabriel Santacruz, told his congregation then in a sermon delivered softly in Spanish, "all the robbery and looting and destruction — that tells us we are without God now."

Today, however, despite continuing hard times on blighted Broadway, empty lots and abandoned houses on scores of blocks, and some of the most severe poverty in the city, this modest-sized, 300-year-old community of roughly 80,000 is showing signs of life that many thought impossible only a few years ago.

A Village of Public Housing

A tangible recovery is building in the bombed out heart of the neighborhood around St. Barbara's. It can be traced to construction of what amounts to a small village of public housing units, ordered by Mayor Koch at a cost of $58 million, and to a revival in a private real-estate market that has spilled over from the adjoining neighborhood of Ridgewood, Queens.

Little noticed by those outside Bushwick, this insular community has, along with sections of the South Bronx and some other parts of Brooklyn, become an example of a downtrodden community, seemingly at the end of its

Continued on Page B4

New low-rise housing projects on Central Avenue near St. Barbara's Church in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. At left: A resident walking along Broadway, where some buildings have been boarded up since the blackout of 1977. Members of the Casuso family, at right, outside their home on Harman Street. They are from left: Octavio; his son, Richard; daughter-in-law, Haydee; wife, Kathleen, and daughter, Lisa Vargas, who is holding her daughter, Elizabeth.

The New York Times / William E. Sauro

Housing, Never Lived In, Being Razed

By RICHARD L. MADDEN
Special to The New York Times

NAUGATUCK, Conn., July 16 — The Naugatuck Heights Apartments, a cluster of 13 buildings that were to have been homes for 135 families, are being demolished, after more than a decade of litigation and controversy.

Built with a Federal loan guarantee in the early 1970's at a cost of about $4 million, the buildings stand on a steep, rocky hill with a sweeping view of the lush, green valley of the Naugatuck River.

Occupancy Certificate Refused

But nobody ever lived there. Naugatuck officials, citing an array of building code violations and alterations to the project's original design plans, refused to grant a certificate of occupancy in 1973.

Over the next 11 years, the buildings, almost 95 percent completed and with the kitchen appliances already installed, remained vacant and fell victim to deterioration and vandalism.

Earlier this year, the borough of Naugatuck sold the two-story buildings on the 13.45-acre site for about $1,000 each to salvagers, who are carting off the plywood, the insulation and the roofing trusses for resale.

Demolition of the 11 remaining buildings is scheduled for completion by November. Local officials hope to convert the site into a park in this old factory town, just south of Waterbury, with a population of more than 27,000.

Glaring Example of Failure

As a federally aided housing project for low- to middle-income families, the Naugatuck Heights Apartments were a glaring example of failure. What went wrong at Naugatuck Heights is still a matter of dispute between Federal and local officials.

"What a waste," said Chris Billings, 19 years old, as he kicked sheets of plywood loose from a roof and loaded them into a pickup truck in front of the building he and a partner bought.

"It was just a nightmare," Naugatuck's Mayor, William C. Rado, said today in an interview. "I'm sure the Federal Government is happy to get rid of it, and so are we."

"I would say it's unique," Mary Lou Crane, a special assistant in the Hartford office of the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, said of the project's failure. "It's the only one we had."

Naugatuck officials, such as Mayor Rado, said H.U.D. should never have guaranteed the loan to build a project on what they said was a rocky, hilly site unsuitable for that number of buildings. "There's a multitude of sins up there, in my opinion," Mr. Rado said of the project.

Federal officials said the issuance of the building permits that allowed construction to start was a local responsibility. "You don't let a project go that far and decide you don't like it," said Mrs. Crane of the H.U.D. Hartford office.

Origins Lost in Obscurity

The origins of the project have been lost in obscurity with town and Federal records in storage and not readily available and the original participants no longer involved with the project.

According to the files of The Naugatuck Daily News, the project was conceived in 1969, and a private partnership called Naugatuck Associates began construction in 1971, with the Federal Government guaranteeing a $2.5 million mortgage. The guarantee was part of a housing program, which is no longer available, under which the Federal Government subsidized the interest costs of projects to hold down the rents.

Although a H.U.D. architect warned in 1972 that the building site was extremely rugged, the nearly completed project was not halted until 1973. Naugatuck refused to issue a certificate of occupancy, and the Federal Government refused to increase its loan guarantee to permit the construction of retaining walls and other design changes.

Wash of Boulders and Water

"I'm the one who put the stopper to it," said Mr. Rado, a Democrat who was first elected Mayor in 1973.

He said the developers had not followed their original design plans that had been submitted to obtain a building permit. He said that the grade of the road winding up the hill among the buildings was too steep, that the rocky ledges should not have been built upon and that boulders and water washed down from the site onto the property of neighboring homeowners.

"The place wasn't fit for anything," Mr. Rado said. "If you took the wrong step out the door you were in trouble. I don't know how the hell they got a building permit in the first place."

"I'm sure somebody made big bucks," he said of the project, but he said he was never able to establish who or how much.

After the project was stopped in 1973, there was prolonged litigation, according to Federal officials, and the Federal Government finally foreclosed and took title to the property in 1981.

Records Not Available

H.U.D. officials said they could not estimate the financial loss to the Federal Government because the records were not available, but local news accounts have put the loss at more than $3 million.

In 1982, H.U.D. sold the property to Naugatuck for $40,000, touching off a long dispute over what the borough's government should do with the property.

Naugatuck residents in a referendum in late 1982 voted by a 3-to-1 margin to tear down all the remaining buildings instead of trying to retain a few of them for conversion into condominiums.

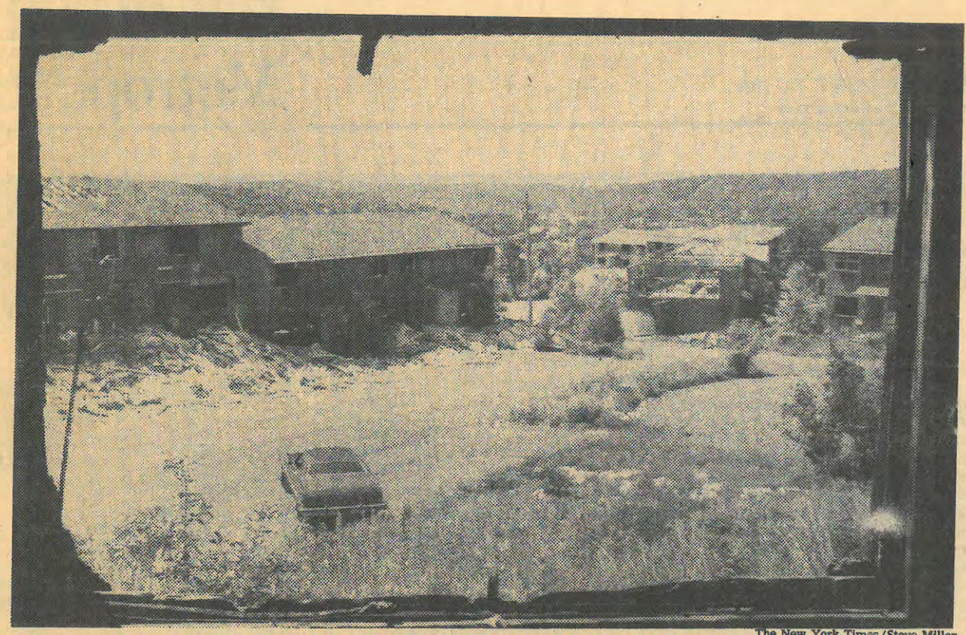
"It's a shame the three or four buildings at the bottom of the hill had to go," the Mayor said. "They could have helped someone out."

Naugatuck is growing and could use the housing, he said.

Before selling the buildings to salvagers earlier this year, Naugatuck conducted a raffle and sold the kitchen appliances and plumbing fixtures to local residents. "At least some people got some good from it," the Mayor said.

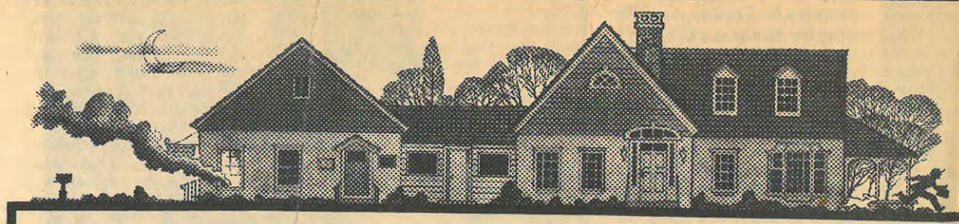
Standing on a roofing truss the other day, Mr. Billings looked down through the skeleton of the building he was demolishing.

"The buildings were well built, I'll say that," he said. "Look at those oak parquet floors. You don't see that in too many buildings these days."



The New York Times/Steve Miller

The Naugatuck Heights Apartments in Naugatuck, Conn., which are being demolished.



Right this second, your home, office or business may be screaming for help.

In Northport, a Meeting on a Murder

By LINDSEY GRUSON
Special to The New York Times

NORTHPORT, L.I., July 15 — Residents of this waterfront community met in a church here tonight to bind wounds opened by the murder of a teen-ager in what authorities said was a satanic ritual that involved illegal drugs.

Some youths at the gathering acknowledged that they habitually used drugs, and some parents acknowledged that they could not control their children. But there was no consensus about the cause of the crime.

"Parents don't talk to kids, so they turn to drugs," said Michelle DeVeau, 15 years old. Using a public address system, she announced that she began smoking marijuana when she was 10 and tried to commit suicide the first time when she was 13.

About three dozen residents talked during the meeting, which attracted about 200 people and lasted more than two hours. It was conducted in St. Paul's United Methodist Church, a few blocks from the wooded park where the body of Gary Lauwers, 17, was found 11 days ago.

'Why Not Northport?'

"Possibly the most tempting and least helpful thing we can do is try to place the blame," he said. "There's been some notoriety and we called the meeting to let people talk about what it means to them and what we might do about it."

Appeal for Direction

Nonetheless, parents blamed drugs. Youths blamed parents. Social workers blamed uninvolved residents — both parents and youths. And the police were chastised by members of all groups.

Though residents said drugs and lax discipline set the stage for the murder, there was little consensus about how to react. Some urged more discipline, others a police crackdown, and others youth centers. Still others pleaded for marching orders.

"I want somebody in authority to tell me what to do," said one man, who has two daughters in elementary school. "I don't want to leave here tonight without my name on a list."

Mimi Kail, president of the Village Residents' Association, urged a late-night curfew to help parents "practice conscientious parenting." She also demanded a boycott of a drug paraphernalia store on Main Street.

But young residents said those proposals would not be effective because they blamed youths for the problems and responded to the symptoms instead of the disease.

The meeting broke up with some people agreeing to meet later this week to discuss the agenda for another meeting. That led to cynicism that any action would be taken.

"Lots of things were said," said Rosanne Lombardi, 18, "but I don't think anything will be done because people talk to sound good."

The Region

From Shambles After '77 Blackout, Bushwick Shows Signs of a Recovery

Continued From Page B1

line, that for all its problems has quietly managed to negotiate an upturn.

At St. Barbara's, a neighborhood landmark with twin 90-foot-high white and caramel spires, the organ is working for the first time in a generation, the leaks in the roof have been plugged and attendance at Sunday mass is up to 800 from a low of 250 just three years ago. In 1977, the attendance was around 600.

At the Barranquita Supermarket at 253 Wilson Avenue, one of the 30 to 50 bodegas remaining of the nearly 150 that used to dot the neighborhood, Mario Santiago is selling 10 cases of milk a weekend instead of the 4 or 5 that he could sell on weekends two

More metropolitan area news appears on page B7.

years ago, and the Burger King on Myrtle Avenue posted the second largest sales gain of any Burger King store in the city last December.

And for the first time, Charles Boisselle, a former city firefighter who was one of the few people to buy property in Bushwick and nearby areas of Ridgewood after bank foreclosures over the last decade, is finding a seller's market for his property. Six-story wood-frame buildings that he bought from the Hamburg Savings Bank five and seven years ago for between $12,000 and $15,000 each are now selling for $35,000 to $40,000 to working-class buyers of every race.

'A Definite Turnaround'

"There has been a definite turnaround and it's going on just all over the place," said Elliott Yablon, director of the Bushwick Neighborhood Preservation Office of the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development. "I think it's own the people who live in its once-gutted heart as the disintegration that began to infect a section, which had remained static for decades, in a matter of four or five years.

Until the late 1960's, the section was best known for having housed some of the city's largest breweries and one of Brooklyn's most handsome streets — Bushwick Avenue, a thoroughfare lined with town houses.

Prejudice and Fear

Among Bushwick's population of 130,000 in 1970 were thousands of longtime residents of German or Italian heritage who seemed to be holding their own despite racial change and often severe deterioration in the neighboring communities of Williamsburg, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville.

But by the late 1960's, according to Mr. Yablon, real-estate blockbusters, preying on racial prejudice and fear, scared many of the neighborhood's property owners into selling buildings at a fraction of their value.

The buildings were then resold, often at greatly inflated prices, to struggling members of minority groups who often found it impossible to keep up with inflated mortgage payments. A complicated $200 million Federal Housing Administration mortgage scandal further tore at Bushwick's stability, leaving scores of other houses in the hands of hopelessly overextended low- to moderate-income owners.

Several landlords, according to local officials, emptied their buildings of longtime residents who were paying low rents covered by rent control in favor of welfare recipients, whose rent allotments from the city were far higher.

41 Fires in Block

Meanwhile, arsonists went to work. The block of Greene Avenue between Central and Wilson Avenues, now completely rebuilt with low-rise public housing, had 41 fires in its 38 frame buildings in 1976.

While the destruction was occurring, at least nine separate housing plans proposed by the city in the late 1960's and early 1970's were stalled for one reason or another for several years. The most devastating delay took place across the street from St. Barbara's Church, where a square block between Central and Wilson Avenues and Menahan and Grove Streets was cleared of 33 businesses and 277 apartments in 1971 for housing that was not completed until 11 years later.

Between 1970 and 1983, Bushwick lost about 40,000 residents, at the minimum, and at least 3,000 of its 12,000 housing units.

"If you weren't here, it's impossible to explain what it was like," said Kathleen Casuso, a member of a fourth-generation Bushwick family whose home is on a block of Harman Street that until the mid-1970's was untouched by arson, abandonment or the nearly biblical series of plagues that have beset it in the half-decade after the blackout.

Ten days before the blackout, the block experienced its first serious fire in eight years, a two-alarm blaze that ruined four of its 33 buildings. In the next year, after three more serious fires, an additional 14 buildings went into abandonment.

Scavengers, scouring the empty buildings for copper and aluminum, could be heard smashing walls and prying loose pipes and wiring into the night, even after eight of them were arrested in September 1977. And because they would frequently tear loose water pipes, the sloping block, and its basements, were often flooded and its sidewalk disintegrated.

Cleared lots on the street and around the corner on Greene Avenue became dumping sites for garbage, which served as breeding grounds for rats and mice. Packs of wild dogs roamed through the lots after dark.

But today small touches of city life have begun to return. Four low-rise buildings of public housing have replaced much of the devastation on the block. The sidewalk has been rebuilt. City traffic agents have even begun to ticket illegally parked cars. And it has been a year since Harman Street has seen its last pack of wild dogs.

Shortly after assuming office, Mayor Koch, making good on a campaign promise, formed a neighborhood task force for Bushwick that guided a number of improvements, the most profound being the construction of 930 public housing units in more than 50 buildings that cover more than a score of once-blighted blockfronts.

The city's Housing Authority is working on a final phase of its Bushwick project that would add 300 more apartments to the neighborhood.

Mr. Boisselle, a member of Community Board 4, argues that the neighborhood recovery has taken place despite the city's efforts, of which he is highly critical, and almost entirely because of the strong housing market in Bushwick's northern neighbor, Ridgewood, Queens, which has been bolstered by the city's housing shortage. An influx of Asian-Americans in particular is evident.

Landlords 'Drummed Out'

"There have been many private landlords who were drummed out of this neighborhood," he said, contending that many viable buildings were demolished by the Housing Department and that private landlords have been needlessly harassed.

And there are many in Bushwick who do not feel a neighborhood revival at all — including business owners on still hapless Broadway and residents of such drug-laced blocks as Linden Street between Central and Wilson Avenues, where a thick white cross has been chalked on the street to mark the spot where a man was recently fatally shot in the head.

"Business is minimal, the reason being there's not a shopping area on Broadway anymore," said Gary Schneiderman, who two months after the 1977 blackout took over an 18,000-square-foot supermarket on Broadway at Lexington Avenue in the expectation that the block would be rebuilt but now, like others, complains of a lack of a wide range of city services.

The block is still a shambles, looking little better than it did a few months after the blackout.

Contract Not Renewed

The city's Public Development Corporation has not renewed a contract it had with a local development corporation made up of owners of businesses in the area. This came amid disputes over strategies for improving the block and over whether $12,000 in city funds was properly spent by the group.

With more than 36 percent of its population on public assistance, 58 percent of its babies born out of wedlock, and an unemployment rate that some community workers believe approaches 70 percent, Bushwick is hardly over the hump.

But in St. Barbara's Church, where one priest seven years ago felt a neighborhood had been orphaned by God, another priest, the Rev. Lewis Maynard, a few days ago sensed what he termed "a prayerfulness, a willingness to be together."

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Ralph Goffner, who owns five pharmacies and the Burger King in the neighborhood, agreed. "I see signs in the neighborhood I've never seen before — the biggest sign is try to touch the real estate," he said. "The kind of rentals I'm being offered in my buildings are ridiculous."

Fires, which often totaled more than 80 a month seven years ago, are usually below the 30-a-month level today, and no more than a handful are labeled arson. Empty, tax-foreclosed buildings, which the city, as recently as three years ago, often could not sell at any price, are being scooped up at auction for an average of $13,500.

A Waiting List

A new development of 27 federally subsidized row houses a block from Bushwick Park called Suydam Village has a waiting list in the hundreds. Almost all of the list is made up of Chinese-Americans and new Chinese immigrants overflowing from Chinatown and such booming immigrant neighborhoods as Flushing, Queens.

After years of working in a neighborhood no less on the ropes than the South Bronx, Mr. Yablon believes he has found its first gentrifier from Manhattan. He is a sculptor named Mario Nania, who bought an abandoned and ransacked town house across from Bushwick Park for $7,000 at a city auction in November 1980.

After a few winters of sleeping in its freezing basement to protect his tools and supplies, Mr. Nania has converted the building into an elegant six-apartment residence decorated with his sculptures and paintings.

That such stirrings are taking place in this mile-long neighborhood of aging three-story, wood-frame apartment buildings, small stores and churches is perhaps as remarkable to the people who live in its once-gutted heart as the disintegration that began to infect a section, which had remained static for decades, in a matter of four or five years.

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The Westway's supporters figure hat members of minority groups vould get 35 percent of the estimated 00,000 man-years of employment dur- ng construction and of a projected ,300 permanent jobs.

Of the average of 187 people who vorked on the Westway during the last ix months of 1983, 31.2 percent were lack or Hispanic, according to project fficials.

The Council of Business and Labor or New York, organized earlier this ear to promote local economic devel- pment projects, said it had paid 20,000 for the six-month study.

removing for inspection all trains whose files showed three or more problems in the past two months with the equipment under the car that controls acceleration. That equipment is known as the group switch box.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been 121 fires that started in switch boxes. Fifteen of them were deemed "serious" because passengers were evacuated or the Fire Department was called in. Six of the serious fires were in the last three weeks, including some in which passengers suffered minor injuries.

A review of the fires had shown that, in about half the cases, the cars that

near 16th Street, was one of the first advertising agencies to flee high rents in midtown. To express enthusiasm for its new neighborhood and possibly to let a few folks know it was in the area, it organized Sweep Our Streets last May.

"We didn't wish to proseletytize or form committees," said Peter Geer, chairman of the agency. "As long as we're in business, we're committed to keeping the neighborhood clean."

The city and the community have responded to Geer DuBois's civic spirit. The Department of Sanitation picks up the garbage they collect and bag. FAB 14, an arm of the 14th Street Association, donated 30 trash cans for both sides of 14th Street. FAB 14 maintains the cans on weekends, when Mr. Quinney and Mr. Sparrock, like most ad agency people, are off.

Under Park Ave., An Infestation of Fleas

Hundreds of cats that live in the

flea bites suffered by Metro-North employees.

Crews fumigated underground work areas last weekend, after 15 workers had been sent home complaining of flea bites.

"A number of the men were having serious problems with the fleas," a spokesman for the railraod said.

A Metro-North employee said that several female employees have been caring for the cats surreptitiously for years. She said it would be disastrous for the tunnels if the cats were killed in the fumigation or removed, because they keep down the rat population, which is far larger than that of the cats.

Jo McCormick, a writer for a cat owners' magazine, deplored the possibility the cats might be eliminated. She acknowledged they were responsible for the fleas but said the wet weather had aggravated the problem.

"If the men who work down there would wear flea collars on their ankles," she said, "they'd be all right."

is an emergency," he said.

Mr. DelBello is a delegate to the convention, and he said it would have been fun to be present for the opening. But he stayed behind at Mr. Cuomo's request because the Governor, he said, was concerned there might be criticism that they were concentrating on national politics if both men were away at the same time.

Mr. Cuomo's three-day absence will be the longest he has been out of the state since becoming Governor. The only times both men have been out of the state at the same time were "accidents," Mr. DelBello said.

Tuesday the two will make a bi-coastal switch, Mr. Cuomo returning to be Governor and Mr. DelBello going to California to take over as head of the New York delegation.

Arrangement Seemed Necessary

As Mr. DelBello sat in his office in the Albany Mall this afternoon, he was asked if this setup was necessary. .

"In his mind it was necessary," Mr. DelBello replied, speaking of the Governor's concern for the image that having both top Democrats out of the state might have created. He said he agreed with that concern.

Had both men gone to the convention together, Warren M. Anderson, the Republican leader of the State Senate, would have become acting Governor.

"I don't think it would have made any difference, substantively," Mr. DelBello said, "I don't think he would have rocked the boat. He is responsible for that."

Mr. DelBello spent his day as Governor meeting with state commissioners. "It is much easier to get access to commissioners when you are acting Governor rather than Lieutenant Governor," he said. He said the meetings all dealt with issues he was concerned with as Lieutenant Governor, such as economic development and the future of the General Motors plant in Tarrytown.

cial development. A highway would run from the Battery to 42d Street, half of it beneath a 93-acre park. The corps' draft environmental analysis last spring prompted 616 written comments, including the mitigation plan presented yesterday by the state.

"This addresses every objection I've heard" involving the striped bass, said Michael J. Cuddy, the Westway project director.

The E.P.A. study said that "the project as proposed would cause significant degradation of waters of the United States," that there was insufficent evidence to assess fully the project's impact and that the effect on

recommends that one be granted.

The artificial habitat would cost between $20 million and $30 million to create, the state estimated, and would be monitored by a committee of Federal, state and private groups to "provide for the long-term effectiveness of the mitigation plan."

All the mitigation sites, on which concrete cubes and other devices would be placed to slow the current and to preserve shallow basins, are in New York State waters and are publicly owned. Earlier plans for additional devices and retaining walls were eliminated, reducing the estimated cost from upward of $50 million.

In a letter accompanying the mitigation plan, Mr. Cuddy said the corps' draft analysis "greatly overstates" the value of the Westway site as a bass habitat.

Earlier yesterday, Dr. Kenneth L. Clark, whose firm conducted the Council of Business and Labor study, said that compared with the potential of trading Federal funds designated for the highway and development project for mass-transit money, the Westway "would be most directly beneficial to the minorities in the New York metropolitan area."

He said a mass transit trade-in "would for the most part benefit com-

NEW YORK
Day by Day

10¢ Bump on the Meter

"Well, I guess I'll be making this speech all day," James Gotsis said to a passenger. "Ten cents will be added to the meter."

Another taxicab pulled alongside, with the former starting rate for the meter — $1 — still posted on its side.

Although yesterday was the first day of the new rate, Mr. Gotsis had already had his sign changed.

"It cost $2 for the new sign," he complained. "I have to do 20 jobs just to pay for the sign, then another $50 to adjust the meter. And then they'll just raise the rates again."

Thick Skin at the Beaumont

A huge round platform resembling

now selling for $35,000 to $40,000 to working-class buyers of every race.

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yelling to one another other in Greek and hammering down what looked like a rhinoceros's thick skin.

It was the set for the Greek National Theater production of "Oedipus Rex," opening tonight and running through Sunday. Supervising the activity was Robert Mitchell, the set designer. He designed the set for the company's 1982 production in Epidaurus, the largest, best-preserved ancient theater on the Greek mainland.

"It's now 40 feet in diameter," Mr. Mitchell said of the set. "It originally was 55 feet, but we had to chop off a bit to fit American theaters."

The round platform was built in New York, has been in Los Angeles, Detroit, Montreal and Boston, and will be taken to Washington, Toronto and Ottawa. It weighs two tons, and

played in a cavernous, renovated television studio. "If you don't have a Greek theater available," Mr. Mitchell said, "something like the Grand Canyon would work well."

Sports and Salads

At an Upper West Side restaurant the other night, a patron spotted a familiar face at the next table but could not place him.

"I know you," she said. "Don't you work in Gristede's?"

"Yes," replied an unfazed Tom McDonald, a weekend sportscaster on WNEW-TV. "I'm in produce."

Pitching In

Around Fifth Avenue and 14th Street, SOS stands for "Sweep Our Streets."

Harold Quinney and Arnold Sparrock Jr. work for Geer DuBois Inc., but they do not make commercials or lunch with clients. They spend their day sweeping the streets from 12th to 20th Streets and from the Avenue of