

THE CART

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Official Newsletter of the Tottenville Historical Society

Dec 2023



**Toast For
The New Year..**

**Here's to the
Bright New Year
And a
Fond Farewell
to the Old;
Here's to the
Things that are
Yet to Come
And to
the Memories
that we Hold.**

Author Unknown

**Holiday Festival of Trees
and
Art from the Heart**

Opening: Sat., Dec. 9 12-3pm

*Hoping for peace and joy
this holiday season.*

*Wishing you much happiness and prosperity
in the year ahead.*

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HISTORY'S MYSTERIES

It seems there are always mysteries and unknowns to be solved. We continually find ourselves relying on historical thinking to answer the question, "Is it fact or fiction?" And we continue to search for the historical data that supports our work. Sometimes we get lucky.



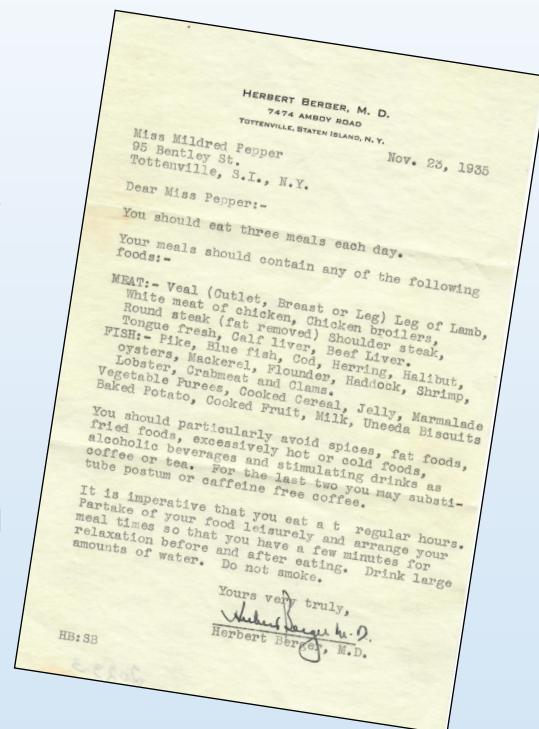
One example concerns Dr. Herbert Berger (d. 2003), a beloved Tottenville physician who became a pioneer in drug addiction treatment. After medical school, Dr. Berger looked to find an opportunity where "he could do everything and not have to refer patients to specialists." In his 1991 book, "Did this Really Happen?" Dr. Berger wrote, "Finally, I found Staten Island, at its farthest end, a little town called Tottenville. Here at last was what I was seeking." The year was 1934. He continued, "I found an old dental office and a small three-room apartment. The office was opened with second-hand equipment. The home was furnished with hand-me-downs." During his first

month in practice he earned twelve dollars. "But at least I was doing what I had dreamed of all my life."

We had been told that Dr. Berger occupied the house that once stood at 7474 Amboy Rd. (corner of Brighton St.) when he first arrived in Tottenville, but we have never been able to confirm this. Until now. While arranging a newly acquired family collection, we found a typewritten letter on Dr. Berger's personalized stationery dated Nov. 23, 1935 with the address 7474 Amboy Rd. Mystery solved! Another letter in the collection, dated May 1, 1938, chronicled his move to 7440 Amboy Rd. (next door to the Tottenville Library). He retired in 1988.

Dr. Berger and his wife Sylvia moved to Pleasant Plains in 1947. Known as the Berger Estate at the corner of Amboy Rd. and Bloomingdale Rd., the impressive house and picturesque property were bulldozed in 2004.

From country doctor to world-renowned medical professional with an illustrious career, Dr. Berger said his one goal all along was to help other people. Indeed he did.



WHEN HARRY MET CARRIE

As we announced earlier this year, we dedicated most of our time this past year to organizing several large family and organizational collections. It is a time consuming process, but an up-to-date inventory of each is important for better accessibility.



Currently we are working on the *Caroline Sleight Kreischer Collection*. Known locally as Carrie, she was born in 1885 in the family farmhouse at 374 Sleight Ave. on the street named for her ancestors. From items in the collection we learned that, like most young girls, she liked to read and sew. She even created her own handwritten “how to” sewing guide. Other hobbies included Victorian scrapbooking. Bowling was a favored activity, too. After receiving her diploma from Tottenville High School, Carrie worked for two years at The Novelty Dress Shop in Perth Amboy, NJ. She later received her NYC Board of Education teaching license, and taught at P.S. 3 in Pleasant Plains, P.S. 5 in Huguenot, and at P.S. 31, the former Rossville school in Sandy Ground.

Carrie was a patriotic hometown gal. An aged typewritten copy of a poem, “Young America’s Creed,” was preserved among her papers. A commemorate medal and card thanking her for her support of the New York City George Washington Bicentennial Commission is still in the envelope, postmarked 1932. She was honored by the Tottenville Improvement Council in 1975 for outstanding community service. Carrie often volunteered at Historic Richmond Town events including “Old Home Day.”

We are not sure how or when Carrie Sleight and Harry Kreischer met, but they apparently were acquainted beginning in the early 20th century. Photographs in the collection dated 1908 corroborate this.

Harry, the only child of Edward and Frieda Kreischer [you might recall that his father, son of industrialist Balthasar Kreischer, died in 1894 of

an apparent suicide] graduated from St. Austin’s School, Staten Island. By 1924, soon after his mother’s death in 1923, Harry was boarding at the Sleight Ave. residence with Carrie and her father. He worked for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. for many years and later the Department of Public Welfare, Emergency Home Relief Bureau on Staten Island.



*Harry and Carrie at Tottenville Beach
c 1913*

Cont’d page 5

OLD STATEN ISLAND

1889 G.W. C.B. Colton & Co.



Recently we were asked about the former towns of Staten Island. That's right. In 1788 Staten Island was divided into four towns: Northfield, Southfield, Castleton, and Westfield. In 1860, a fifth town, Middletown, was created from portions of Southfield and Castleton.

In 1898 the towns were dissolved with the consolidation of the City of Greater New York. Staten Island officially became the Borough of Richmond. The former towns became wards (noted below).

- ★ • **Castleton**, aka New Brighton, included Sailors Snug Harbor, New Brighton, Elliottville (Livingston), Factoryville (now West New Brighton), Castleton Corners (until 1860). *Later became the First Ward.*
- ★ • **Northfield**, included Mariners Harbor, Port Richmond, Graniteville, Chelsea, Long Neck, Linoleumville (now Travis), Springville. *Later became the Third Ward.*
- ★ • **Southfield**, included Stapleton until 1860, Clifton, New Dorp, Richmond, Ocean View (Great Kills), South Side, Concord, Dongan Hills, Grant City, Edgewater. *Later became the Fourth Ward.*
- ★ • **Westfield**, included Rossville, Marshland (Greenridge), Kreischerville (Charleston), Richmond Valley, Pleasant Plains, Lemon Creek P.O. (Prince's Bay), Annadale, Bloomingview (Huguenot), Bentley (Tottenville). *Later became the Fifth Ward.*
- ★ • **Middletown**, formed 1860 from Castleton and Southfield, included Stapleton, Edgewater (incorporated 1866 with Clifton), Tompkinsville, Egberville and Centreville (Castleton Corners). *Later became the Second Ward.*

Note: The descriptions above came from the New York Genealogical & Biographical Society website. We acknowledge that some names and boundaries have changed over the years and the information should be accepted in its historical context.

WHEN HARRY MET CARRIE CONT'D

Carrie and Harry were married on February 1, 1930. Harry was age 50; Carrie age 44. A handwritten faded announcement of their wedding ceremony states the marriage was solemnized at St. Andrew's Church. "The bride was attired in beige crepe," Carrie wrote, and "The groom was attended by his cousin Arthur C. Kreischer of Manhattan. About 100 witnessed the ceremony at the church, followed by a dinner at Geidel Tavern [Tottenville]." The couple lived together as husband and wife for four years at the Sleigh Ave. residence. Then, on March 4, 1934, Harry died in Richmond Memorial Hospital from complications from a ruptured gastric ulcer.

When Carrie died in 1981 she was the oldest living graduate of both P.S. 1 (1902) and Tottenville High School. She died with no immediate survivors and was buried in the Sleigh family plot at Bethel Cemetery, Tottenville, along with Harry, her parents, grandparents, aunt and uncle. For whatever reason, even today, there is no stone marking her grave. We plan to correct that. We have created a fund to raise money to mark her grave with a permanent stone, similar to Harry's. Any donation to this cause would be greatly appreciated. Please contact us with any questions.



AROUND THE TOWN



In collaboration with NYC Parks, the Tottenville Historical Society erected a new sign in Tottenville Shore Park at the foot of Bentley St. to mark the site's historical significance and to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Tottenville-Perth Amboy Ferry.



THANK YOU!

NEW MEMBER

Dominic DeFranco, Staten Island, NY

PATRON LEVEL RENEWALS

Nick Downen, Staten Island, NY

Mary Alice Brassel Elwood, New York, NY

Gail Hamilton, Staten Island, NY

Peggy Manee Hendricks, Austin, TX

Carol Joline, Staten Island, NY

Benita Kiernan, Staten Island, NY

Jean Literate, Iselin, NJ

Douglas Mester, Anderson, SC

Patricia Salmon, Windsor, NY

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Robert & Jenny Szmania, West Springfield, MA

Nancy Tierney, Staten Island, NY

Jacqueline Bishop Torresen, Carlsbad, CA

Chris & Rich Travers, Staten Island, NY

CORPORATE LEVEL RENEWALS

Nancy Burri, Staten Island, NY

Gary & Joanna Koster, Greenville, NC

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