



SPRING 2022

THE DOUGLASTON HISTORIC DISTRICT
celebrates 25 years!

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THE DOUGLASTON AND LITTLE NECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Preserving and protecting the historical significance of Douglaston and Little Neck
and adjacent nature preserves.*



Cutter's 20-room house in Little Neck was nicknamed "Curiosity Castle" and contained rooms arranged thematically, including "The Room of Wild Beasts" (stuffed animal heads); the "War Room" (Revolutionary War mementoes); and "The Jewel Room" (precious stones).

**BLOODGOOD HAVILAND CUTTER:
THE LONG ISLAND FARMER POET**

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

**THE DOUGLASTON GARDEN CLUB
CENTENNIAL**

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SURVIVE?**

THE GARDEN CLUB MOVEMENT

Bloodgood Haviland Cutter: The Long Island Farmer Poet

Bloodgood Haviland Cutter, who relished being called The Long Island Farmer Poet, was one of the most colorful characters living in the Little Neck area during the nineteenth century. Much written about him portrays him as a Bible-quoting fool who wore old-fashioned clothing and wrote awful poetry. The interesting question that arises as you learn more about him is, "Who was he?" Was he a ridiculous figure, or was he someone who was possibly underestimated by those who knew him?

Cutter was born on August 5, 1817, in Little Neck, son of Mary Bloodgood Haviland and Richard Cutter (who died shortly after he was born). His childhood must have been difficult because sometime shortly after his father's death, his mother married her first cousin, Roe Haviland. Bloodgood was shipped off to live with his grandfather, also named Roe Haviland, who was also his stepfather's uncle.

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LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Despite the continuing pandemic the Society has stayed the course and has been able to keep YOU—our Friends and Supporters—informed, educated, and even entertained with several events and programs during the past Fall and Winter seasons.

A special thanks to our board members and volunteers, and to our Executive Director, Susan Mathisen, for their dedication in making it all happen!

In October, we made a shift in what we had previously done in partnering with Open House New York (OHNY) and the Douglas House Trust and toured one building only—the recently renovated and restored Douglaston Club. It was a great success.

More than thirty guests visited the Club and got an insider’s glimpse of the renovations and restoration of this amazing 1819 mansion.

The Society had a tent for the Winter Festival at the Douglaston Village, sponsored by the Douglaston Local Development Corporation in December. More than a thousand visitors attended. We served goodies and gave out information about the Society.

As I write this, our Publications Committee is preparing for our next newsletter for this twice-yearly publication. In this edition you will read about the mysterious—or was he notorious? —Bloodgood Haviland Cutter of Little Neck. Cutter was a millionaire farmer, landowner, venture capitalist and self-described “Farmer Poet,” immortalized by Mark Twain in one of Twain’s first books.

There is also a story about the Douglaston Garden Club, which celebrated its 100th anniversary last year, and which has contributed greatly to the beauty of our area for the past century. Congrats DGC on this milestone!

We will be celebrating an anniversary of our own this year—the designation of the Douglaston Historic District, twenty-five years ago.

So, keep a look out for a date for that event, as well as for our upcoming Annual Meeting in May (with a special speaker!) to be posted via email and on our web site.

To all of you—thank you for your continued support of the Society and the preservation of our unique Douglaston and Little Neck neighborhoods!

Sincerely,
Pamela Broderick, President

THE FIRST CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE DOUGLASTON GARDEN CLUB

In 2021, the Douglaston Garden Club celebrated its Centennial. The history that follows, prepared by Lori Hinchey, President of the Douglaston Garden Club, and former President Catherine Touwsma, reviews the organization’s history and describes a precious 1928 photograph showing officers and members on the porch of the Douglaston Club following the annual Flower Show. The identifications of five of the figures in the photo are by an unknown hand.

The Douglaston Garden Club, a private non-profit organization, was founded on March 22, 1921. In 1924, the Douglaston Garden Club became a charter member of the Federated Garden Clubs of New York State, Inc., and subsequently an affiliate of the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc. The very first president was Mrs. Henry Sampson (1921–1925), and the current president, Lori Hinchey (2019–2022), is the fiftieth.

—continued on page 4

OPEN HOUSE NEW YORK



DLNHS volunteers placed the OHNY sticker at the front door of the Club to identify where to gather for guests.

On October 16, 2021, a very successful Open House New York event took place at the newly renovated Douglaston Club, drawing more than thirty participants from all five boroughs of the city. The DLNHS sponsored the event in collaboration with The Douglas House Trust of the Douglaston Club.

Victor Dadras and Kevin Wolfe led the tour and were assisted by DLNHS President Pam Broderick, and board members Nicole Schorr and Dede Martin. Thanks to Club General Manager John Veneziano and Events Planner Susan Turchiano, who prepared for OHNY visitors and provided cookies and cider on the porch. Thanks go as well to Pam for hosting the DLNHS table, where handouts and membership forms were available, and to Nicole for creating name tags with the DLNHS logo. And hearty thanks go, of course, to Kevin and Victor for leading the tour; to DLNHS board member Peter Reinharz for photography; and to DLNHS Executive Director Susan Mathisen, who made all the arrangements with OHNY for this delightful and popular event!



Volunteers from other OHNY events (pictured in green shirts) gathered at the Club to meet their colleagues and were treated to an impromptu private tour of the Club.



Kevin Wolfe and Victor Dadras greet guests for the start of the OHNY tour of the newly restored rooms of the Club.



Victor Dadras shows OHNY guests the double parlors with restored woodwork and detailing dating from 1819, when then mansion was built. The rooms are used for informal dining.



Kevin Wolfe shows the OHNY guests the renovation of the 1950s-era Tap Room, which was reimagined with traditional detailing, a mahogany bar, and framed photos depicting the building's long history.

DOUGLASTON GARDEN CLUB CENTENNIAL, *continued*



The picture above was taken in 1928. It is likely that both Mrs. Sampson and Mrs. George W. Clement (president from 1925–1927) are among those depicted. Bottom row, fourth from the left is Mrs. Ronald R. Kelsey, president from 1927–1929; bottom row on the left is Mrs. Albert Humble, president from 1929–1931; top row on the right is Mrs. Olivia Morris, president from 1934–1936.

The Douglaston Garden Club's activities were summarized in this excerpt from the notice of the 75th Anniversary celebration on March 19, 1996.

In concept and in fact, the club has stressed learning and working. The membership has participated in community, city, state, national and international projects and concerns. Efforts and financing have been expended in such widely diverse areas as furthering food production in developing countries by contributing to CARE projects, saving park land in New York State, exhibiting gardens at the 1939 New York World's Fair, and growing greenhouse vegetables to supply military hospitals during WWII. Contributions to District II Scholarship Fund were made and through membership support to Alley Pond Environmental Center (APEC), L. I. Sound Watch and Nature Conservancy was provided. The Douglaston Garden Club also sponsored a Youth Group and has led a Garden Therapy Program with patients at Creedmoor Hospital.

To this long list needs to be added: the maintenance of trees on Douglaston Parkway, plantings at the Douglaston Long Island Railroad station, and in 1991, a stewardship of the Catharine Turner Richardson Park. The park was named to honor Mrs. Richardson, an environmental activist who was President of the Douglaston Garden Club from 1944–45, and a long-time member (55 years) until her death in 1988.

Fast forwarding to 2022, the Club's mission has not changed since its creation, i.e., to promote mutual helpfulness among its members in the study of practical gardening and flower arrangements; to maintain at all times the highest standards in all branches of horticulture; to arouse public interest in landscape art; and to preserve the natural beauty of Douglaston.

Over the years, the Douglaston Garden Club has received many awards for flower shows and for beautification work the Club does in the community. The most recent awards received include First Place Flower Show Awards Second District; Club Recognition Award, Federated Garden Club of New York State (FGCNYS); National Garden Club Award; and the FGCNYS Award of Honor for contributions in civic beautification.

The Club has worked closely for many years with the New York City Parks Department through their "It's My Park Day," hosting clean-up and planting events at Catharine Turner Richardson Park and many other locations around Douglaston and at Glenwood Landing Park in Little Neck.

The Club has also been closely involved with local schools (PS 98, MS 67, PS 221 and Divine Wisdom Academy) in teaching programs to all grades and hands-on planting classes. Most recently, the Club boasts a new partnership with the Center for the Women of New York, an organization that advocates for women's rights <<http://cwny.org/>>, helping out in the creation and maintenance of a sustainability gardening program at Fort Totten in Bayside.

WILL SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING SURVIVE?

While we in Douglaston and Little Neck have been building decks and remodeling our kitchens during the pandemic, a nationwide movement has been afoot to eliminate single-family zoning, which its opponents consider “exclusionary.” Although many people feel that the ideal way to live is in a single family, freestanding house with a green space around it—the “American Dream” for some—others see that ideal as a threat to a large and needy population: those who do not have a decent place to live.

Federal agencies are pressuring states and localities to alter their zoning restrictions. Viewing how intractable the housing problem is, many would recognize this goal as noble. They are aware of the insufficiency of low- and middle-income housing; the failures of public housing; and the explosion of homelessness. How are we to house people adequately?

In response to such problems, several cities across the country—notably Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; and Minneapolis, Minnesota—have passed legislation that eliminates single-family zoning. This allows property owners to build ADUs—Accessory Dwelling Units—free-standing, separate buildings or cottages in their backyards, or create apartments in their attics, garages or cellars. Small scale multi-unit apartment buildings are also permitted.

New York State legislators have been seeking a similar remedy: Assembly Bill 4854 and Senate Bills 4547 and 7574 would allow residents to build ADUs or add apartments regardless of local zoning laws, effectively eliminating single-family zoning. These bills would specifically impact our local neighborhoods, as well as other parts of Queens and Staten Island where New York City’s single-family zoning is most concentrated.

Opposing that legislation are our own Community Board 11 (which passed a resolution doing so on February 7, 2022), the Douglaston Civic Association, and local Congressman Thomas Suozzi, who is looking to challenge Governor Kathy Hochul, both Democrats, in the Fall 2022 election. Hochul, who initially supported the legislation, responded to the concerns of local leaders in February, and pulled her request for such measures in her budget proposal for the coming year.

Opposition to the bills is easy to understand. Opponents envision the specter of multi-family units built on plots now accommodating a single-family house, and long-cherished architectural standards degraded by a hodge-podge of building types. It is uncertain that existing deed restrictions could stand up to this new legislation.

Many of the older single-family neighborhoods throughout Queens, including Westmoreland and Douglas Manor, were created before New York City adopted zoning in 1916. Instead, deed restrictions—still in force today—were used to limit development to single-family houses on minimum lot sizes that exclude commercial uses, multi-family houses and apartment buildings.

Although many of our neighbors would choose not to build ADUs, or to sell to developers who would add ADUs or build multi-family units, some might do so; the price offered could be tempting, for there is a potential profit to be made by selling several and not just one unit, or by renting to several tenants on a single lot.

The principal threat of eliminationist legislation to residents of Douglaston and Little Neck would be the uglification of our neighborhoods that we have labored to keep beautiful, while respecting their historical integrity. Other threats would be the environmental degradation caused by the loss of green space, and a strain on public services that increased density brings, including the need to build more schools, and expand public transportation. The threat posed is not only to the physical environment but also to a way of life—and shared community values.

—Margaret L. King and Kevin Wolfe

On March 21, 2021, three honors were bestowed upon the Club in recognition of its Centennial Celebration

<<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=245892167267736>>

- A certificate of Special Congressional Recognition presented by Thomas R. Suozzi, Member of Congress Third District of New York;
- A New York State Senate Proclamation presented by John C. Liu, New York State Senator;
- A proclamation from the New York State Assembly presented by Assemblyman Edward C. Braunstein.

Finally, very recently, the Club has been approved as a non-profit partner of **One Percent for the Planet**, an association in support of environmental causes.

—Lori Hinchey and Catherine Touwsma
<<https://www.douglastongc.org>>



The 100th-Anniversary celebration cake, adorned with sunflowers.

BLOODGOOD HAVILAND CUTTER, *continued*

Nothing in Cutter's writings seem to give us clues as to his feelings about his early life, but we know that he had to leave formal schooling at age sixteen to work on one of his grandfather's schooners, and that he continued his education through reading the Bible. This immersion in Biblical studies may have been responsible for his later religious fanaticism; he was often seen on the streets of Flushing during his later years, stopping people and lecturing them, using passages from the Bible to exhort them to change their ways. He was also accused of being hypocritical due to some of his questionable business practices!

His unusual name caused him to be the object of ridicule, and he was often called "Bloody Cutter" which probably caused him embarrassment. However, he seemed not to reveal his discomfort and, on the occasion of his eighty-eighth birthday, he wrote,

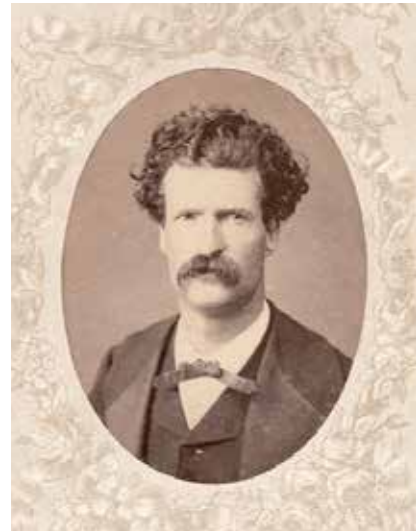
Bloody Cutter is eighty-eight,
Obeying God and defying Fate.
He lives in Little Neck town,
His age goes up, not down!

For all his early difficulties, Bloodgood Cutter became a man of great wealth. We know that his grandfather left him some money, but his fortunes and status as part of the landed gentry really began to improve in 1840 when he and Emeline Allen, a member of the wealthy Allen family, eloped because they could not get her father's permission or approval to marry. Perhaps it was love on his part, but shortly after they were married, because of her money, he acquired the Allen Mill, which was subsequently called Cutter's Mill (hence Cutter Mill Road); this was the beginning of Bloodgood becoming a propertied landowner.

While his occupation was supposedly farming, he somehow managed to acquire numerous parcels of land in Little Neck. He lived in a twenty-room house near the Little Neck railroad station much of his life, located on land that is where the Terrace Apartment complex stands in what is today Great Neck. His home was described in the July 1, 1906, *New York Herald*, as follows: "to enumerate all the wonderful things it contains would require many volumes of catalogues. They include everything from fantastic old French bedsteads, German clocks and Venetian glass ... gathered from every nook and corner of Europe and Asia."

A great deal of this wealth was rumored to have come from his acumen as a venture capitalist and land speculator and from foreclosing on the mortgages of widows in financial difficulty. It seems that he was no fool in his business dealings, and perhaps not so ethical either. It might have been easy for him, as a seemingly religious person, to convince widows to do business with him. At his death in 1906 he left over \$750,000 to the Long Island Bible Society and the rest of his fortune went to numerous other heirs. His collection of objects and paintings was left to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to do with as they wished.

It was his poetry, however, which was his obsession. He seemed to be able to produce a poem at a moment's notice on any subject. In 1867, he was on a five-month cruise to Europe and the Holy Land on the steamer *Quaker City* when he met Mark Twain. Twain described him as "a tiny man ... with a strange proclivity for writing rhymes. He writes them on all possible subjects and gets them printed on slips of paper with his portrait at the head. These he will give to any man that comes along whether he likes them or not." Twain later satirized him as *The Poet Lariat* in his book *The Innocents Abroad*, but Cutter did not seem to notice. He took great pride in his association with Twain and even put an autographed picture of him in his self-published book, *The Long Island Farmer Poems*.



Samuel Clemens, aka Mark Twain, immortalized Bloodgood Cutter as "The Poet Lariat" (as opposed to laureate) in his book The Innocents Abroad, after they met on a five-month sea voyage to the Middle East and Europe in 1867.



The steamer Quaker City, from the cover of a recent edition of Twain's book The Innocents Abroad (1869). The steamer was used as a Union Navy blockade runner during the Civil War, and later retrofitted for luxury cruises.

**BECOME A MEMBER OF THE DOUGLSTON AND LITTLE NECK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Bloodgood continued to write, to self-publish, and to distribute poems for the rest of his life to a largely unappreciative audience on subjects such as *Observing a Beached Whale in Bayside*, *On Tobacco Smoking in Queens County Courthouse*, *The Bicentennial Celebration at Glen Cove* (for which event William Cullen Bryant turned down the invitation to write a commemorative poem), and *the Blasting of a Big Rock Out of Hellgate*; he even had a few poems published in local newspapers. The excerpt from *The Bicentennial Celebration at Glen Cove, May 24, 1868*, below is fairly representative of his work:

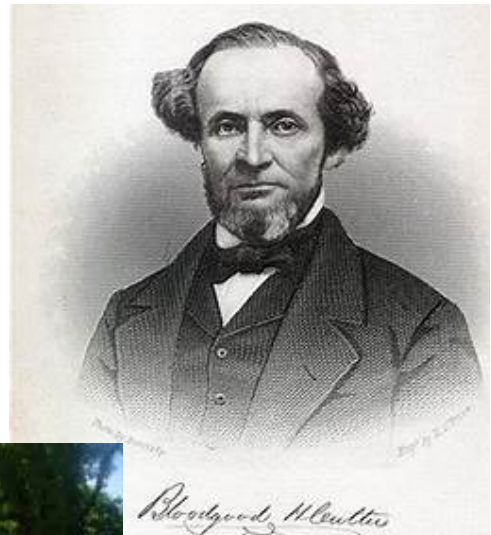
*My friends, we have assembled here,
To celebrate the two hundredth year
Of this your dwelling-place,
And to thank our ancestral race.*

*For choosing this location grand,
As any in our common land,
Here you have a fine water view,
With all the privileges too.*

*Oysters and clams grow on your shore.
You have them brought fresh to your door,
Then they are a delicious treat,
But canned, they're hardly fit to eat.*

I will let you, the reader, judge Bloodgood Haviland Cutter's artistic ability as a poet. I hope, however, that reading about him made you smile at least a little!

—Carole Cox



An engraving of Cutter in middle age.



Cutter died in 1906 at age 89. He is buried at Zion Episcopal Church graveyard with his wife Emeline, where a large freestanding granite cross marks the grave.

**DOUGLASTON AND LITTLE NECK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

P.O. Box 630142
Little Neck, New York 11363

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CONTACT US

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THE GARDEN CLUB MOVEMENT



The formal rose garden at Roselawn, ca. 1920, one of the more elaborate gardens ever built in Douglas Manor. In the 1950s the garden was demolished for construction of a new house at 10 Manor Road.

When the Douglaston Garden Club was founded in 1921, it joined a movement that began in the nineteenth century, as women joined together in all kinds of associations: sewing circles, literary and musical societies, groups supporting charitable and patriotic causes, and garden clubs. In 1891, The Ladies Garden Club of Athens, Georgia, was the first garden club to form. In 1913, The Garden Club of America was founded, not long before Douglaston's own. In 1929, The National Council of State Garden Club Federations (now National Garden Clubs, Inc.) was organized with thirteen states signing on as charter members.

Garden clubs have worked to create areas for rest and recreation in local communities and to promote the beautification of highways. They have protected parklands, restored forests, and set up viewing stations from which visitors can admire impressive vistas of natural landscapes. Joining with other groups, they have supported the preservation of historic buildings and the establishment of the system of national parks. Today, as well, they offer scholarships and fellowships in support of research related to conservation, ecology, and horticulture. They have left their stamp on towns and cities and open spaces across America.

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