

# THE HISTORY OF THE VAN BRUNT-ROBERT HOMESTEAD



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Brooklyn, 2016







## BOOKS

BANGS, Charlotte Rebecca. *Reminiscences of Old New Utrecht and Gowanus*. Brooklyn: Charlotte R. Bangs, 1912. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/reminiscencesof00bangiala>

BERGEN, Teunis G. *Genealogy of the Van Brunt Family, 1653-1867*. Albany: Joel Munsell, 1867. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/genealogyofvanbr00berg>

DITMAS, Charles Andrew. *Historic Homesteads of Kings County*. Brooklyn: Charles A. Ditmas, 1909. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/historichomestea00ditm>

## MAPS

DRIPPS, Matthew. *Map of Kings and part of Queens Counties, Long Island, N.Y.* New York, 1852. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/item/2013593245/>

ROBINSON, Elisha. *Atlas of Kings County, New York*. New York, 1890. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/item/2011594778/>

HYDE, E. Belcher *Brooklyn, Vol. 2, Double Page Plate No. 16; Part of Ward 30, Sections 17 & 19*. Brooklyn, 1917. Retrieved from <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/6c139c3f-233a-8c04-e040-e00a18060512>

STILES, Dr. Samuel Edward. *Plan of the Battle of Brooklyn, August 27<sup>th</sup>, 1776*. Brooklyn, 1876. Retrieved from [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/1867\\_Stiles\\_Map\\_of\\_Brooklyn,\\_New\\_York\\_City,\\_New\\_York\\_-\\_Geographicus\\_-\\_BrooklynBattle-stiles-1867.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/1867_Stiles_Map_of_Brooklyn,_New_York_City,_New_York_-_Geographicus_-_BrooklynBattle-stiles-1867.jpg)

All other sources, such as newspapers or photographs, will be cited below as part of footnotes. Where available, underlined titles or page numbers (links) will lead to specific online sources. Style of citation does not follow academic standards.

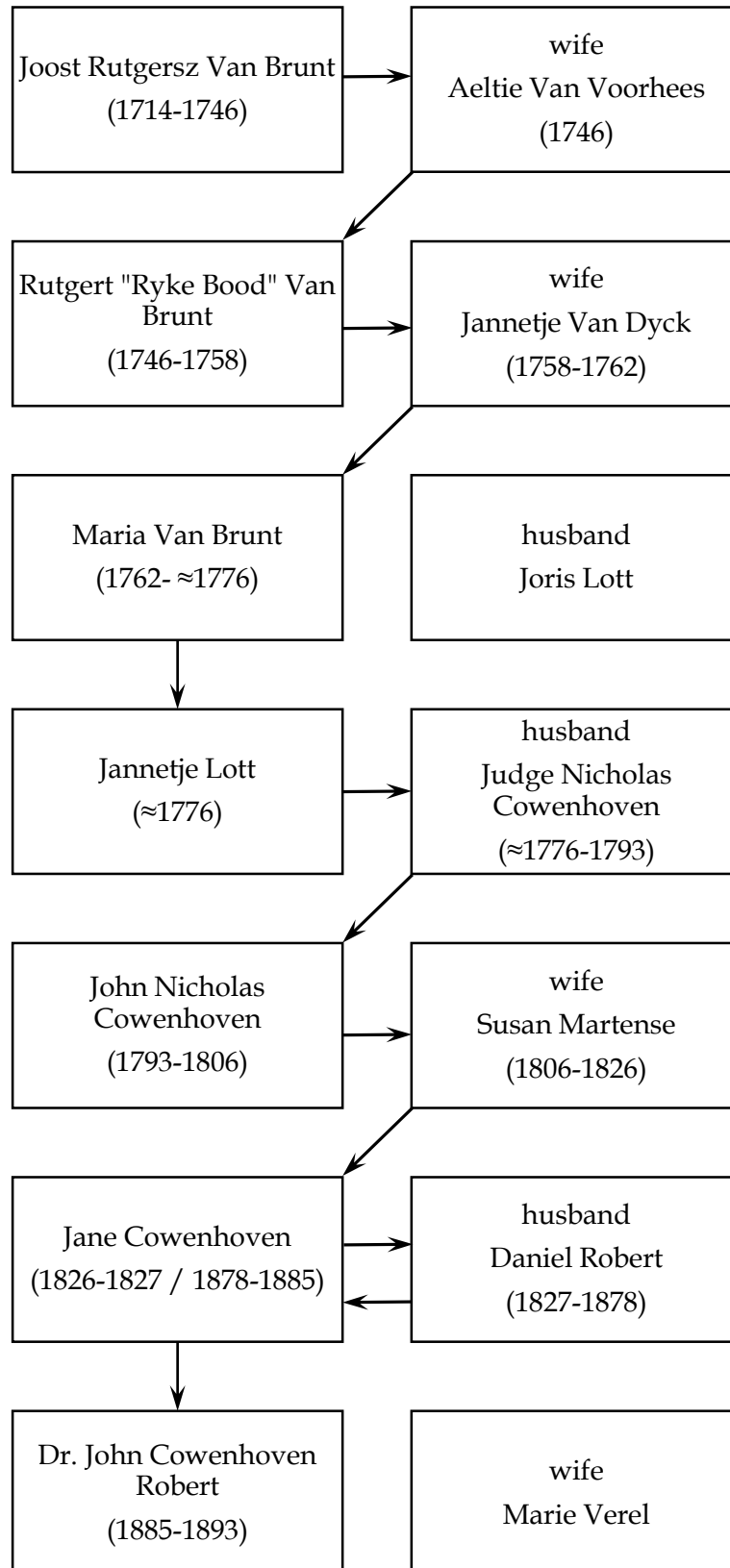
## CHRONOLOGY

- 1524 Giovanni da Verrazzano names the island of Manhattan, New Angoulême, in commemoration of his patron, King Francis I of France
- 1609 Henry Hudson explores New York Bay on behalf of the Dutch East India Company
- 1624 The first Dutch settlers arrive and establish themselves on the *Noten Eylant* (now Governor's Island)
- 1625 The Dutch begin settlement of the island of Manhattan and name it the New Amsterdam
- 1647 Peter Stuyvesant arrives in New Amsterdam as the new Director General of the colony
- 1653 Rutger Joesten Van Brunt arrives in New Amsterdam**
- 1657 The village of New Utrecht is settled by nineteen Dutch families
- 1658 The Rutger Joesten Van Brunt House is built
- 1714 The Van Brunt-Robert Homestead is built**
- 1836 Jane Cowenhoven Robert and her family move into the homestead
- 1893 Dr. John C. Robert, the last resident of the homestead, dies
- 1916 The Van Brunt-Robert Homestead is demolished**
- 2016 Bank of America is built on the site of the homestead

## Genealogy of ownership of the homestead (years of ownership)

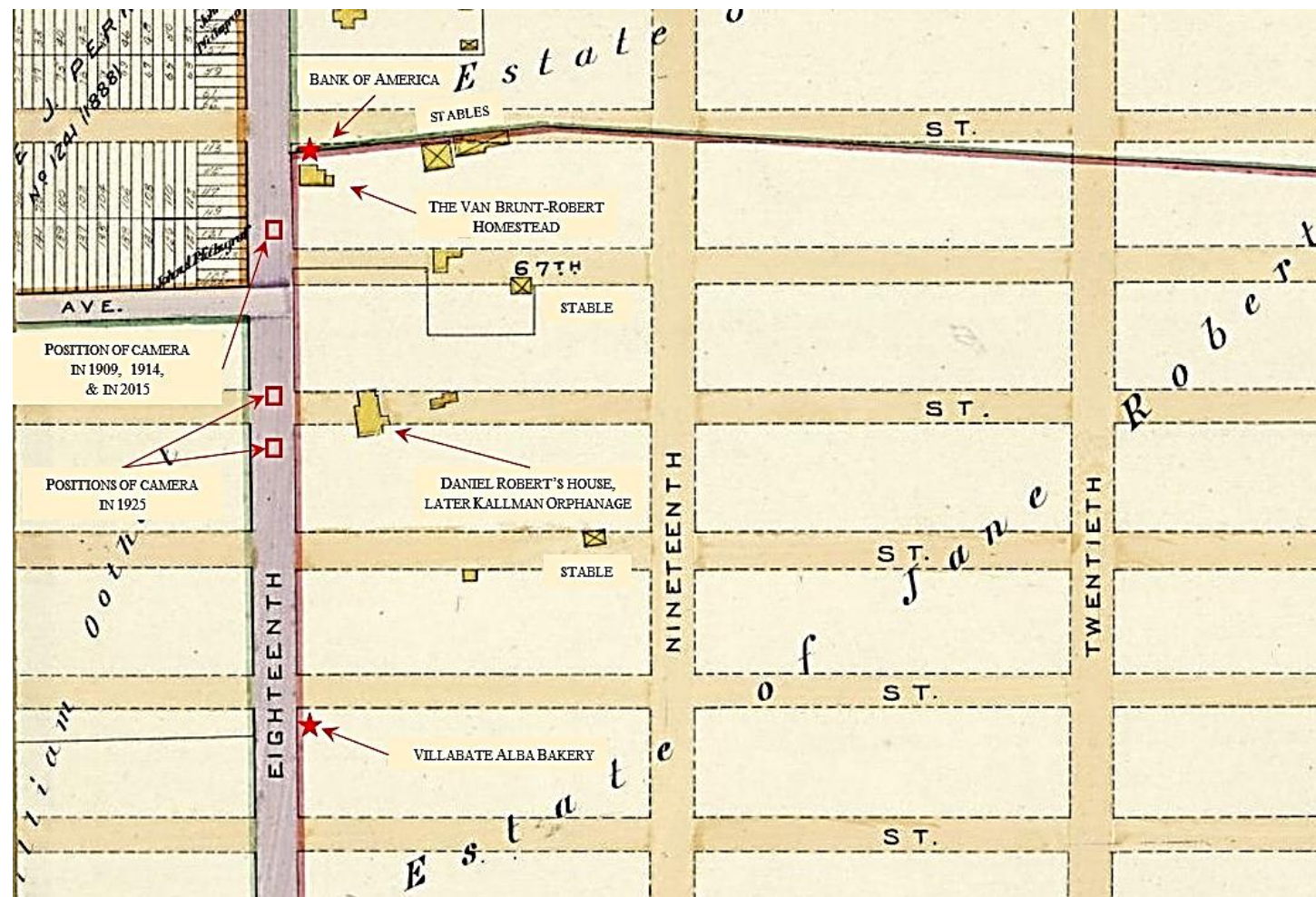
Van Brunt descendants

their spouses

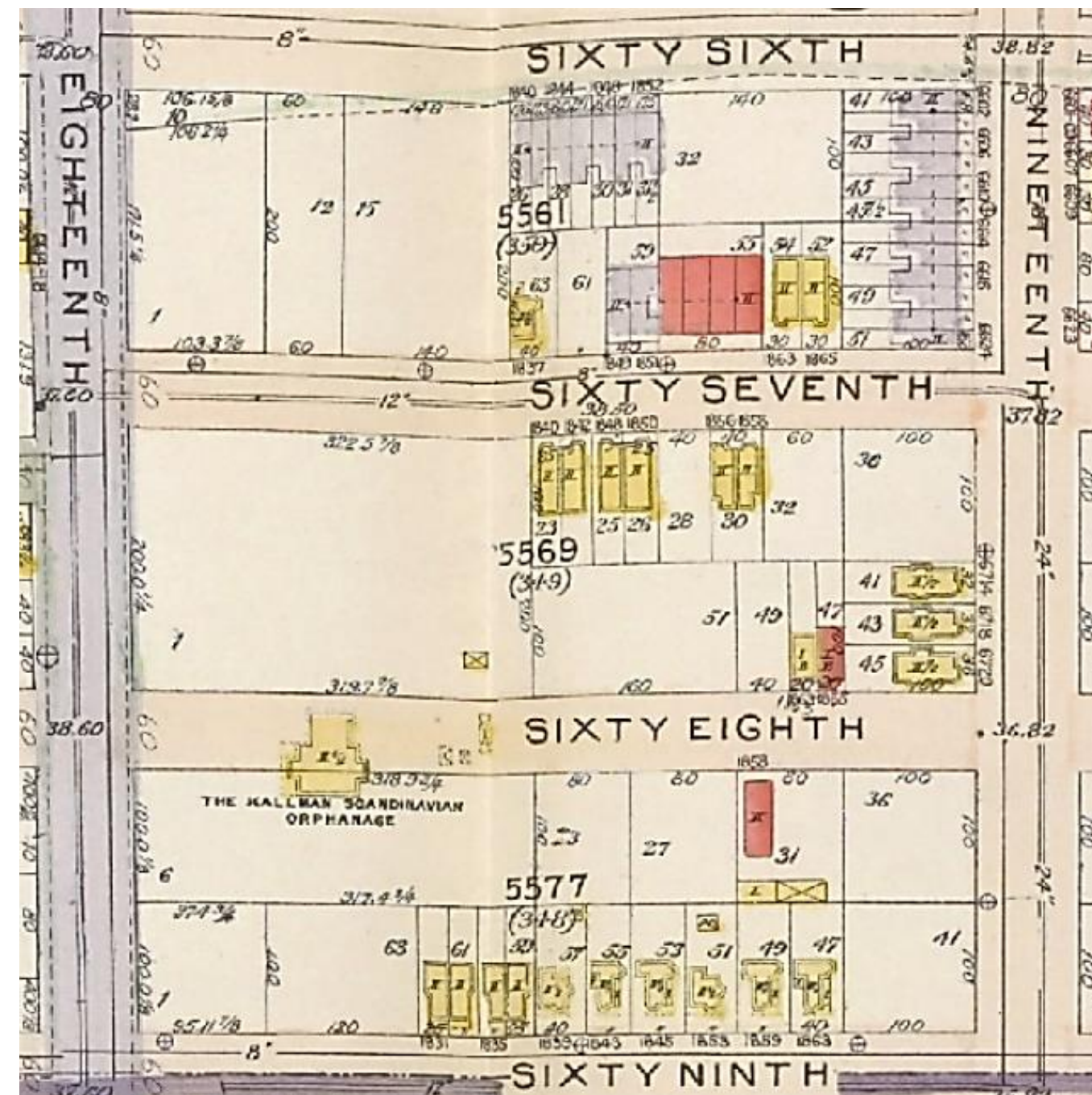








Portion of the Plate 15 of the Atlas of Kings County published by Elisha Robinson in 1890. The map shows locations of the buildings as well as points from where photographs were made in various years.



Portion of the Double Page Plate No. 16 issued in 1916 for the Atlas of the Borough of Brooklyn published by E. Belcher Hyde in 1917. Note the corner of 18th Avenue and 66th Street, the Van Brunt-Robert homestead was already demolished, but the Kallman Scandinavian Orphanage was still there.

**THE VAN BRUNT-ROBERT HOMESTEAD  
OF BROOKLYN IS NOW A BANK OF AMERICA**

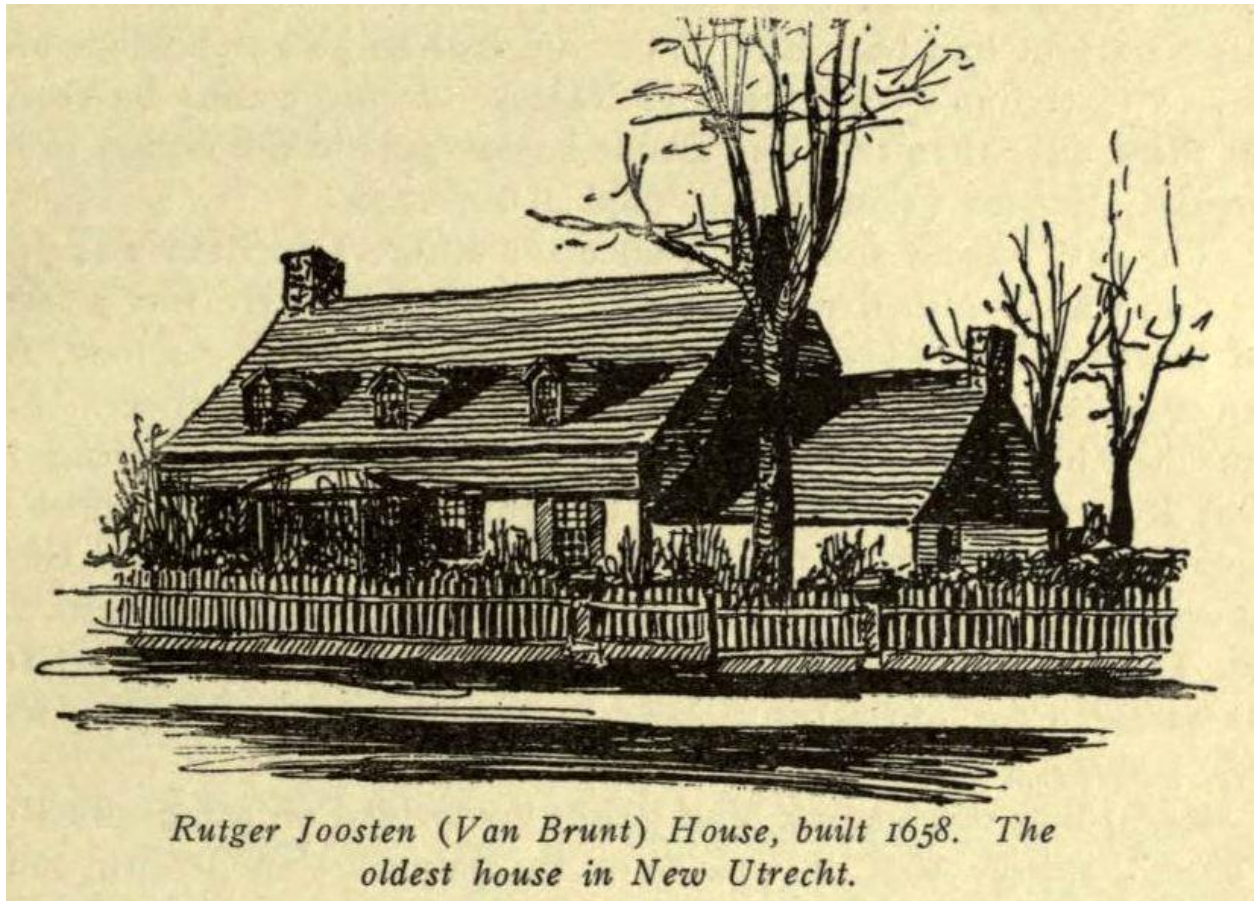
In January 2016, a newly constructed branch of Bank of America, located at 6601 18th Avenue, opened its doors to the residents of Bensonhurst. A century ago, this site was the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead. Built during colonial times, this moniker indicated the first (Van Brunt) and last (Robert) owners of the house throughout its 200 years of existence. The following is a history of the Homestead and its owners – from its first builder to its last resident.

## THE DUTCH COLONISTS

Rutger Joesten Van Brunt<sup>1</sup> emigrated from The Netherlands in 1653, when the Dutch were still in control of New Amsterdam. The British would take over the city and rename it New York in another eleven years. In the meantime, when Van Brunt arrived, the city, which was settled in 1625, was already crowded and busy with commercial life.

In May 1657, Rutger married Tryntje Claesen, but the newlyweds did not stay in New Amsterdam too long. When on August 27, 1657, Director General Peter Stuyvesant, granted a petition to establish a settlement on the western end of Long Island, the Van Brunts took the opportunity and left the busy city. They joined eighteen other Dutch families as colonists of a new village of New Utrecht. One year after their settlement, the Van Brunts built a house close to what would later become a town center.<sup>2</sup>





*Rutger Joosten (Van Brunt) House, built 1658. The  
oldest house in New Utrecht.*

**1.** Sketch of the Rutger Joosten Van Brunt House made by Bangs in 1912.

In February 1660, Stuyvesant visited the village, “on which occasion he admonished the residents each to erect a suitable dwelling, to keep a man-servant able to bear arms, and also to [e]nclose the village with good heavy palisades.”<sup>3</sup> By the end of the year, there “were then eleven houses in the settlement,”<sup>4</sup> but to build the palisades, the villagers asked the Director General to send some slaves.<sup>5</sup>

New Utrecht grew slowly and with it, the Van Brunt family. Rutger and Tryntje had three sons, namely Nicholas, Cornelis and Joost. While his wife was taking care of the children, Rutger was busy as an officer of the court of justice of the peace.<sup>6</sup> When the English took over the colonies from the Dutch in 1664, they established an office of magistrate; Van Brunt was appointed to this office several times between late 1670s and 1680s. Such was the reputation of Rutger Joesten Van Brunt that he was able to hold office both during the Dutch and the English rule, so that the venerable historian Teunis G. Bergen considered him “one of the most influential citizens of the newly begun village of New Utrecht.”<sup>7</sup>

## THE HOUSE THAT JOOST BUILT

Like their father, all the Van Brunt children were involved in the progress of New Utrecht as a peaceful village. Their youngest son, Joost Rutgersz<sup>8</sup> Van Brunt, who married Aeltie Van Voorhees on April 16, 1687, held various offices in the village: a deacon and an elder of the church; ensign, captain, lieutenant colonel and colonel of militia; and supervisor of the town.

Joost also owned a considerable amount of property in New Utrecht. One of those tracts of land was a farmland on which Joost built a house that is the subject of this work. He modeled it after the one built by his parents in 1658. Charles Andrew Ditmas, the only historian to mention its existence in his writings, called it the Van Brunt-Robarts Homestead. He wrote:

Compared with the Colonel Jeromus Lott House erected previous to the Revolution, and to other landmarks of the pre-Revolution period, it was erected in the first part of the 18th century, as after 1750 the houses were given a higher foundation.<sup>9</sup>

According to Bergen, the earliest record of Joost owning land comes from “the assessment roll of 1693,” where “he is entered 1 head, 75 acres, 3 horses, and 6 cattle, but no house or barn.” In 1716, Joost Rutgersz was recorded to have owned 170 acres of land, to which in 1717, he was devised “considerable real estate” of his father, who died before 1713.<sup>10</sup>

To find the earliest date when the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead was built, it is necessary to look into an incident that took place on the farmstead. Bergen related that in 1715, about 30 individuals were indicted in Flatbush by the grand jury, “for assembling in the latter part of June last past, with arms...at New Utrecht, assaulting and wounding Joost Van Brunt, so that his life was despaired of; also for entering and breaking his close,<sup>11</sup> and cutting down and carrying away about 30 acres of his corn growing on the same.”<sup>12</sup>

Bergen wrote that neither the cause of the attack on Joost Van Brunt nor the result of the indictment have been preserved in the pages of history, but this incident provides the earliest probable date when the homestead was erected – 1714.

Joost and Aeltie had one son, Rutgert, who was known as "Ryke Bood" (rich brother). As indicated by his nickname, Rutgert's fortunes included even more properties than that of his father, who died in 1746. Rutgert was a farmer like his father and grandfather before him. In 1693, he served with his father in New Utrecht militia as ensign; and as captain in 1728. When Joost left his position as supervisor of New Utrecht in 1743, Rutger took over and held the office until 1758; "and at times [served as] a member of the consistory of the church."<sup>13</sup>

"Rich Brother" married Jannetje Van Dyck of New Utrecht and together they had five children, one son and four daughters. Their son John died before him, so upon his own demise in 1758, all of his daughters inherited Rutgert's properties. The land on which the homestead was built was allotted to the second daughter, Maria, upon the division of the estate of Rutgert Van Brunt on September 23, 1762. By then, Maria, having married Joris Lott in 1737, was already a widow, for her husband had died a month prior on August 26, 1762. The Lotts had two children, a son, John who died before his father, and daughter, Jannetje.





## THE BRITISH ARE COMING!

Jannetje Lott, born January 14, 1745, married a neighbor, Judge Nicholas Cowenhoven<sup>14</sup> at the age of 18, on September 14, 1763. She inherited "the farm on the road from the village of New Utrecht, to Flatbush...and about 40 acres of woodland" from her mother, Maria Lott, who died "a short time before the war of the revolution" in 1776.<sup>15</sup>

Writing in 1912, Brooklyn born historian Charlotte Rebecca Bangs, described the war period:

While New Utrecht bears the distinction of being chosen by the British for their landing on American ground August 1776, there were no desperate battle scenes close to the several villages comprising the township. Echoes of the British were, of course, on every side but no fierce fights occurred. The English confiscated and ruined much during their occupancy of the farmhouses and buildings in every section thereabouts.<sup>16</sup>

The Rutger Joesten Van Brunt House, built in 1658, was occupied by the British when they landed on the shores of Long Island. Though this is not an account of the Revolutionary War, it must be noted here that the British marched toward the American troops using two main routes. The first, Kings Highway, portions of which are still extant today under the same name. The second was 18th Avenue (originally "Road to Flatbush"), through which marched the troops under Major-General James Grant. Bangs noted in her book that the Van Brunt family members "were represented on the American side," so one possible reason the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead was spared confiscation or ruin because it stood away from the town center.<sup>17</sup> It would seem that the British marched right by the house with more pressing matters at hand rather than harass the Van Brunts.

However, it is also very likely that the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead was left intact because of the position of its then owner, Judge Cowenhoven, who prior to the landing of the British had attained the rank of Colonel of the Kings County militia. A meeting of The Committee of Safety was established

on August 27, 1776 and one of the outcomes of which was, based on the "reason to suspect that *Nicholas Cowenhoven*, Esq., has given intelligence to the enemy of the Resolutions of this Convention" "to apprehend the said *Nicholas Cowenhoven*" and present him before the committee for examination.<sup>18</sup>

The next day, Colonel Cowenhoven, was examined by the New York Convention, and their report read:

On the day that the enemy landed, as he was returning from the lines, he was taken by a party of the enemy; they treated him roughly, took from him his sword and cockade, and carried him to Head-Quarters; was politely received by General Howe, who asked him if he would stay home and send his produce, which he promised to do.<sup>19</sup>

After the war, Colonel Cowenhoven became the Chief Judge of the Kings County Court of Common Pleas, which would have been impossible had he been found guilty of treason. Rather, it is likely that due to his meeting with General Howe on the first day of landing, Colonel Cowenhoven had a rapport with the general allowing him to act on

behalf of the American prisoners with the British Commissary. Thus, sparing the confiscation of his property, including the Van Brunt-Robart Homestead.

Jannetje Lott and Judge Cowenhoven had two sons, John N. and George, but only the elder had children. The judge died on March 7, 1793, at which time his properties in New Utrecht were left to his son John Nicholas Cowenhoven.

Born on March 17, 1769, John N. married Susan Martense of Flatbush in 1802, who bore him two daughters: Maria and Jane. He died on November 3, 1806, and all his properties went to his daughters, who, according to Ditmas, "divided the land of their late father...on August 31, 1826."<sup>20</sup>

Maria Cowenhoven, who married Egbert Benson in 1820, inherited her grandfather's farmland that would become the original Bensonhurst (current neighborhood of Bath Beach).<sup>21</sup> And her sister, Jane Cowenhoven, inherited the Van Brunt farmstead of her grandmother, which is currently in the modern

Bensonhurst. One year after her inheritance, on June 27, 1827, Jane married Daniel Robert.<sup>22</sup>

The house, built by Joost Rutgersz Van Brunt sometimes before 1714, passed to his son, Rutgert "Ryke Bood" Van Brunt sometimes after 1746. In 1762, it was occupied by Rutgert's daughter, Mrs. Maria Lott, and then by her daughter, Mrs. Jannetje Cowenhoven, sometimes before the Revolutionary War. In 1826, Jannetje's granddaughter, Jane Robert (nee Cowenhoven) inherited the homestead.





3. Portion of the 1852 map of Kings County published by Dripps. Circled are the Egbert Benson property that would become the largest portion of the *Bensonhurst by the Sea*, and the two properties owned by Daniel Robert.

## THE LAST RESIDENTS

The longest residents of the house were its last owners, the Robert family. Jane Cowenhoven was born on February 1, 1805 in Flatbush, Kings County, and Daniel Robert on November 15, 1792 in Brookhaven, Suffolk County. They were married in 1827 by Rev. Mr. Strong of Flatbush in New York, where Daniel was practicing law. As his obituary stated, Daniel graduated from Yale College in 1810, "studied law at the Litchfield Law School and was admitted to the bar of New York City in 1815. In 1819 he was appointed by Gov. DeWitt Clinton, Judge Advocate of the First Brigade of Artillery, New York State Militia, a position which he held for several years. In 1822 he was licensed as a counsellor in chancery, and won a good position by his attainments." <sup>23</sup>

Even though Jane Robert had inherited the farmstead, she and her family did not live there right away. The Roberts had a total of five children, three boys and two girls; their first child, John Cowenhoven Robert, was born in Flatbush on May 26, 1828. Mary and Catharine were born in 1832 and



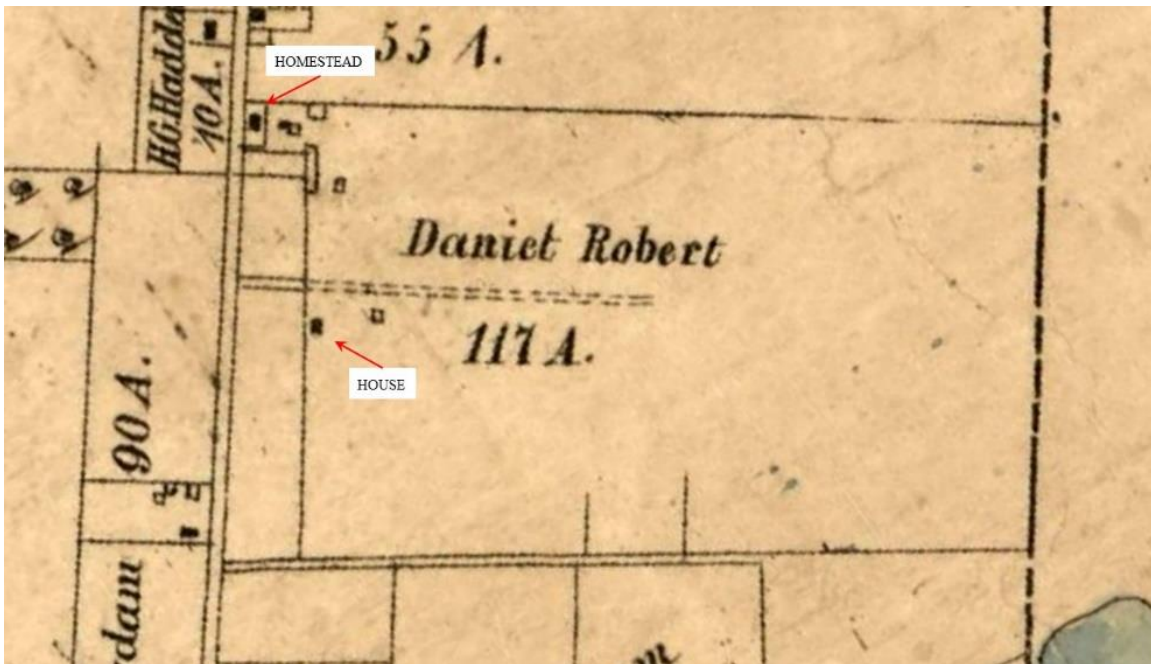
1834 respectively, and a son, Daniel Jr., in 1835, all in city of New York. According to Daniel Robert's obituary, "He continued to practice law in the city of New York with success, until the year 1836, when he retired to a farm in New Utrecht, on account of the health of his children; here he spent the remainder of his days in the quiet enjoyment of rural life, never holding any public office."<sup>24</sup> Their last child, Christopher, was born in Kings County, very likely at the homestead because although Daniel Robert was no longer practicing law, he was busy running a farm.

According to the 1840 US Census, Daniel Robert's household was comprised of his family and a dozen "Free White Persons" who were "Employed in Agriculture".<sup>25</sup> A decade later, as the 1850 US Census shows, Daniel Robert was living with his entire family on the farmstead with the Lotts and the Suydams as neighbors; he was reported to have "Value of Real Estate owned" equaled to a staggering amount of \$132,000.<sup>26</sup> On the Kings County map of 1852 published by Dripps (page 14), the size of the farm is recorded as consisting of 117 Acres and the woodlands of 43 Acres.

The cash value of Daniel Robert's farm was reported at \$20,000 on the 1860 Non-Population Census.<sup>27</sup> The farm had 4 horses and 10 Cows and produced 225 bushels of wheat, 500 bushels of Indian Corn, 3600 bushels of Peas and Beans, 1500 pound of butter and 40 tons of hay. "Daniel Roberts, who was listed as having the fourth-highest income in rural Kings County in 1870, was returned by the 1870 Census of Agriculture as operating a 119-acre farm the value of the output of which was \$5,000, but he reported himself as a lawyer to the Census of Population."<sup>28</sup>

In 1875, as the New York State Census shows, Daniel Robert was listed as "lawyer/farmer" but by then, at the age of 83, he was too old to do either. It is possible that Daniel did not completely separate himself from his past as a lawyer while living on the farmstead. Perhaps, as his obituary noted, some of his activities included "the quiet enjoyment of rural life" in a two story house he built for himself on the farmstead. Rarer than any accounts of the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead is one of Daniel Robert's house. In fact, there are no mentions of this house with the one exception of a caption on two photographs.

In March 1925, Eugene L. Armbruster photographed a house on the 18th Avenue from two different angles indicating "In 1857 to 1873 it was the residence of D. Robert, later it became the Kallman Orphanage".<sup>29</sup> When the gridiron plan was being considered for the development of New Utrecht, it was determined that a street would run through the house of Robert Daniel. The house was eventually demolished, but the mystery is in the dates provided by Armbruster; perhaps he did not know that the house may have been actually built as early as 1852 (image below) or that Daniel Robert lived until 1878.



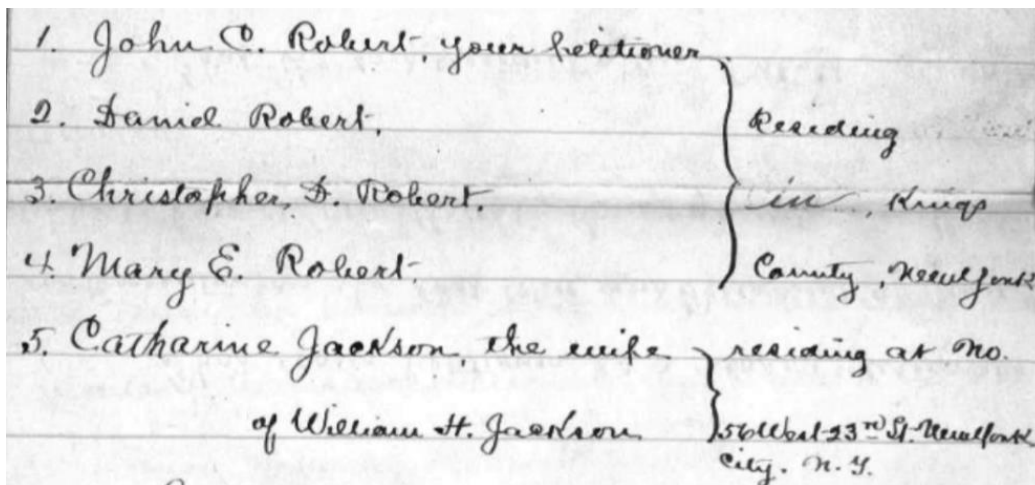
4. Portion of the 1852 map of Kings and Queens Counties published by M. Dripps. Zoomed in specifically to portion of Daniel Robert farm that indicates locations of the Van Brunt-Robert homestead and Daniel Robert's house.

Daniel Robert died on August 21, 1878 on the farm in New Utrecht and was laid to rest at Green-Wood Cemetery.<sup>30</sup> After his death, the records began showing the New Utrecht property as belonging to Jane Robert. The farm did not show any signs of decay with the death of Daniel. On the contrary, by the end of 1879, with 4 horses, 2 mules, 12 cows, 18 other animals and 14 drop calves, the output of the farm included 400 bushels of Indian corn, 600 bushels of oats, 250 bushels of wheat, 600 gallons of milk, 400 pounds of butter, and although considerably less than other farms in the neighborhood, 200 bushels of Irish potato; there were also 150 dozens of eggs produced by 100 poultry.<sup>31</sup>

By the time of the Tenth Census of the United States in 1880, Jane was living with three of her children, including Mary E. and Daniel Jr., both listed "at home", and John C. Robert, who was enumerated as "physician", and seven servants, all of Irish descent.<sup>32</sup> Her daughter, Catherine Robert, was living in New York, and son, Christopher D. Robert, in Gravesend, with their respective families.<sup>33</sup>

## GOING ONCE, GOING TWICE, SOLD!

Jane Robert died on February 16, 1885 in New Utrecht, marking almost fifty years of continuous residency at the homestead. All of her property was divided between five surviving children, who were scattered throughout various towns and villages of Kings and New York counties.<sup>34</sup> The 1880s were the time of rapid change in New Utrecht, as is evident from the development of the Bensonhurst by the Sea resort at the Benson farmsteads. In another decade, the same fervor would reach the area where Jane Robert's Estate was located with the demise of the last member of the Robert family.



5. Portion of Jane Robert's probate records showing her children as heirs to her estate.

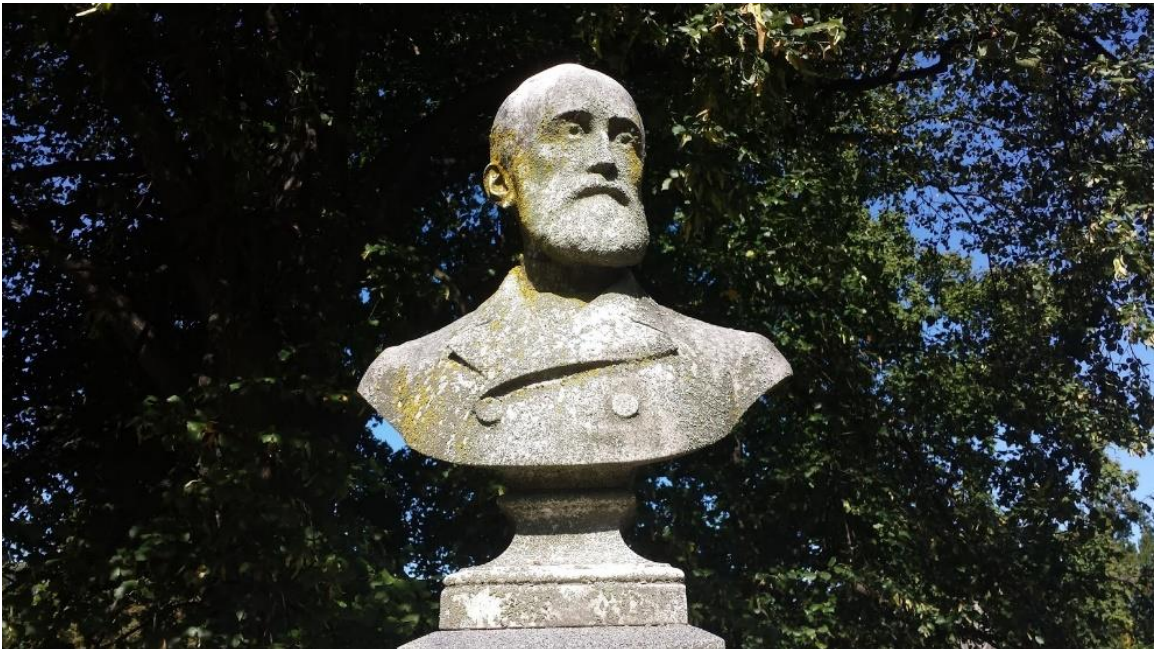
The November 4, 1893 issue of *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported the "Death of Dr. John C. Robert". He was, the obituary stated, "one of the oldest and best known physicians in the Town of New Utrecht, died at the Robert homestead on Eighteenth avenue, near the Sea Beach railroad, on Sunday, aged 66 years."<sup>35</sup> Four years after the death of Dr. Robert, the first advertisements were made in the *Eagle* for "The Greatest Auction of the Decade. 600 VALUABLE LOTS. JANE ROBERT ESTATE By Order of the heirs".<sup>36</sup> These were for the Fort Hamilton Avenue locations, the original "40 acres of woodland" inherited by Jannetje Cowenhoven from her mother, Maria Lott.

By the next year, the first advertisements were reported in the same newspaper for the sale of 1840 lots that were part of the Jane Robert Estate between the 18th to 22nd Avenues and 66th to 73rd Streets. The lots were announced to be auctioned off on the 4th of July by Jere Johnson Jr. Auctioneer "on the premises".<sup>37</sup>

The next day, after the holiday auction, the *Eagle* published another announcement:

Despite the inclemency of the weather, over 600 lots were disposed of at the Auction Sale on July 4, by order of the devisees of Jane Robert, deceased.<sup>38</sup>

The remaining lots that made up the old Van Brunt-Robert farmstead were sold off over the next few decades. There were foreclosure announcements as late as 1930s, and with 617 more lots to go, the effects of the Great Depression were visible on the rate of real estate sales.



**6.** The bust of Dr. John Cowenhoven Robert as it was erected upon his tombstone by his wife, Marie Verel Robert, in the Green-Wood Cemetery.

## THE WRECKING BALL

If one were to examine the photographs made in 1904 by Daniel Berry Austin or in 1922 by Eugene L. Armbruster of the original Van Brunt House built in 1658 and compare them to the hand-colored gelatine photo-gravure from Charles A. Ditmas' publication in 1909, one might mistake them as being one and the same (see insert).

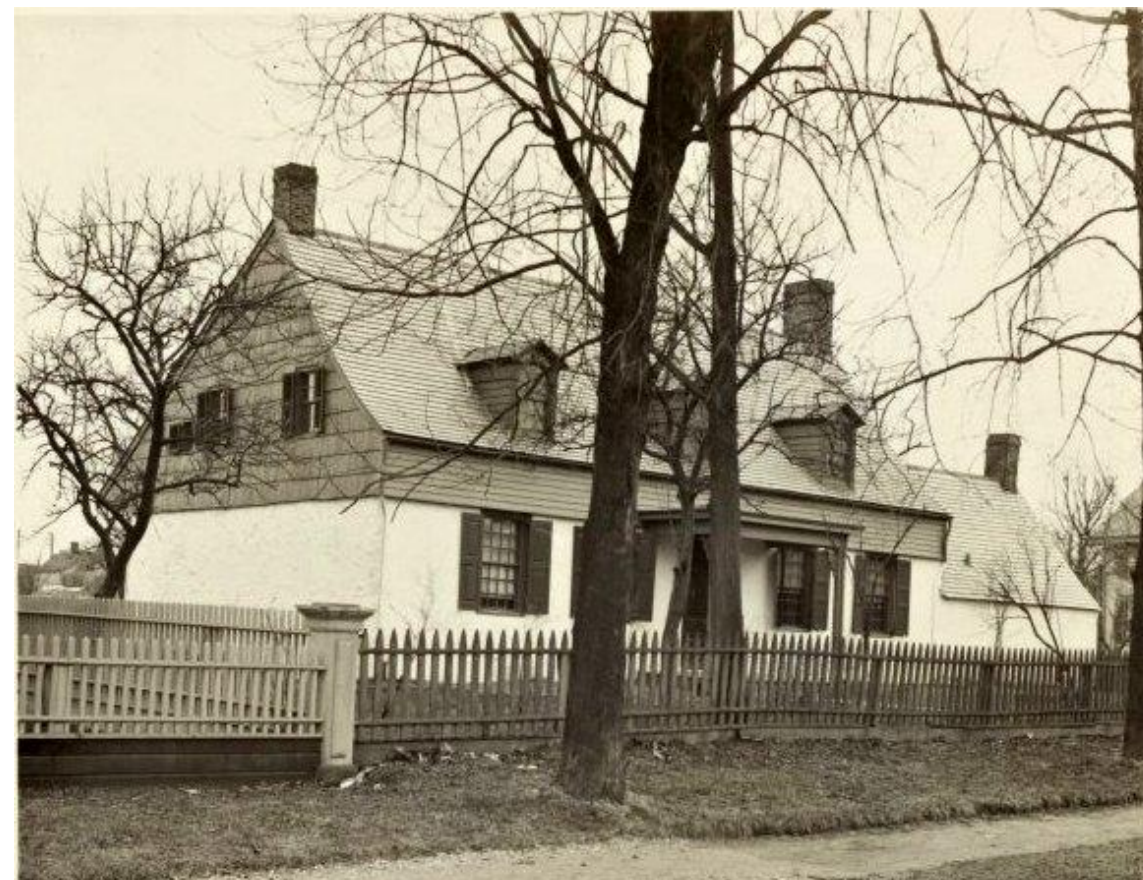
Both houses consisted of two structures, the larger one having the entrance in the middle flanked by two windows on both sides of the door, and a smaller structure (perhaps a kitchen and storage room) attached to the right of it. The roofs of both houses had three attic windows, and three smokestacks (two on main building and one on the attached structure).

One clear difference can be observed in lack of "kitchen" windows on smaller building of the 1658 house. Also, the Van Brunt-Robert homestead seems to have an additional window on the left side of the main building which faced the 18th Avenue. Ditmas, when describing the house and its residents, noted "Those who have owned this place, when making

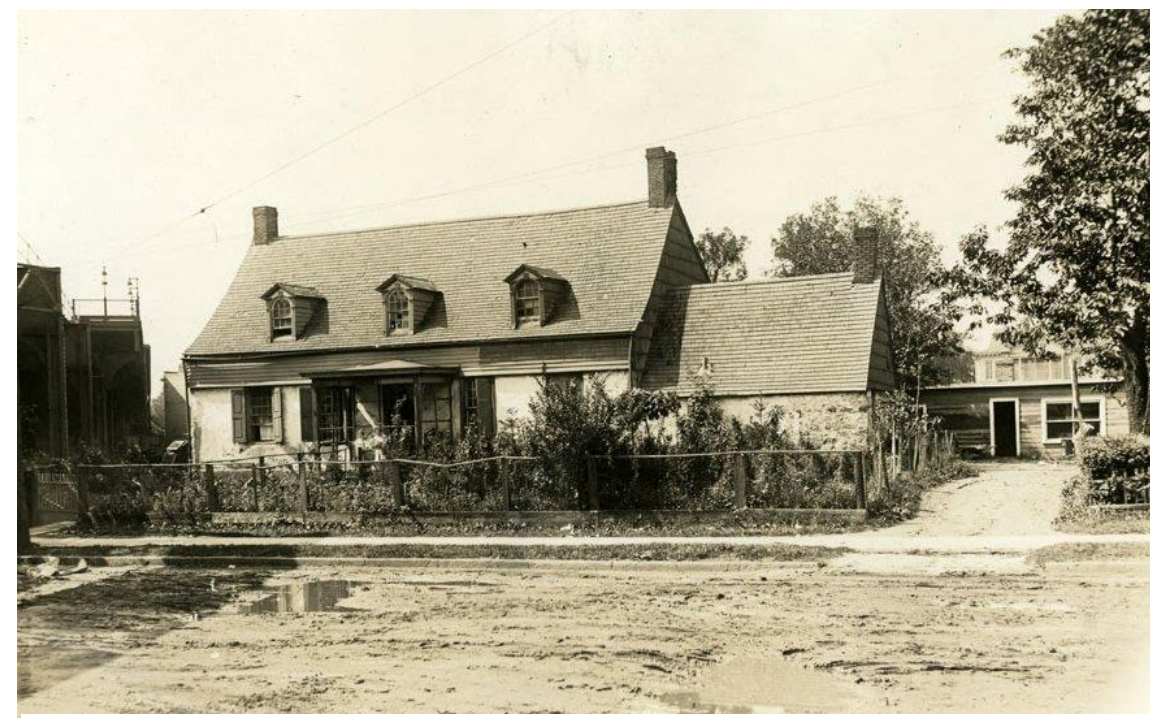




Photo-gravure of the Van Brunt-Robart Homestead made by [Charles Andrew Ditmas in 1909.](#)



Rutger Joesten Van Brunt House as photographed by [Daniel Berry Austin in 1904.](#)



Rutger Joesten Van Brunt House as photographed by [Eugene L. Armbruster in 1922.](#)



alterations, have wisely kept near to its original design.”<sup>39</sup>

Bangs devoted considerable number of pages to the Van Brunts in her book, describing in detail some of the homesteads of the family. She also included three drawings of the houses, possibly having sketched them herself, including one of the Rutger Joosten Van Brunt House (page 3). She noted, “It is likely the Van Brunt family on the whole, have more old homesteads to its credit than any other of the Colonial families of the Township. And at the present time two of the oldest are still in existence.”<sup>40</sup> However, Bangs made no mention of the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead anywhere in the book, for by the time of her publication in 1912 the house was no longer in the possession of the Van Brunts or their heirs.

*The Daily Standard Union*, in their July 2, 1905 issue published a photograph of the Van Brunt-Robert house, lamenting on the disappearance of the Old New Utrecht Homesteads.<sup>41</sup> In the same way, Ditmas opened his publication in 1909:

In these days of commercialism, we are forgetting the historic and the beautiful; the past is seldom considered until the march of progress destroys some landmark which history has made famous. Then, after the usual newspaper articles have appeared, the place is lost sight of in the possibilities of the future.<sup>42</sup>

While portions of the Jane Robert Estate were being sold off one lot at a time, the Van Brunt-Robert homestead was nearing its own demise. In 1911, the West End Democratic Club obtained the lease to the homestead and held their regular meetings and events there.<sup>43</sup> The club house played a small role in the early development of the area; acting as polling place for the residents who were registered to vote or fighting for new public schools in the neighborhood. But by the end of 1916, the club moved out of the homestead to another location only few blocks away; their last recorded meeting was held on November 3, 1916.<sup>44</sup>

After more than 200 years of existence, the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead was demolished sometimes at the end of 1916. Charles Andrew Ditmas wrote in his closing sentence about the Van Brunt-Robert homestead:

Should we not honor this house which silently watched and waited while history was being made, doing its duty silently and faithfully, housing its occupants unto the present day?

One only hopes that 100 years after it was destroyed, this work will serve as some token of memory of the homestead and that the new generation of owners have some appreciation of history.



DUPLICATE

Nº 28005

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN  
BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

**CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**

(ISSUED PURSUANT TO ARTICLE I, SECTION 5, BUILDING CODE)

BROOKLYN, N. Y.,

192

This is to certify that the NEW BUILDING

Located at

6605-6619, 18th Ave S of 66th.

Has been COMPLETED substantially according to the approved plans and specifications and the requirements of the BUILDING CODE, and PERMISSION is hereby granted for the OCCUPANCY of said building for the following purposes:

1st floor store, 2nd floor are family

(Eight Slaps)

Permit No.

1293

WORK COMPLETED

8/21/24

President of Buildings

7. 1924 Certificate of Occupancy issued to row of houses at 6605-6619 on 18th Avenue, Brooklyn. Thus, by 1924, the homestead was certainly demolished.



**8.** Courtesy of [Brooklyn Museum](#). The original caption reads, "Van Brunt Roberts House previous to renovation," but no date is given. The sign on the left wall of the house reads "West End Democratic Club", who moved in sometimes in May 1911.



9. Photograph of the Van Brunt-Robert Homestead made in 1916 by Eugene L. Armbruster, who recorded: *This building was demolished in late 1916 or early 1917.*





**10.** *Original Caption:* Eighteenth Avenue, east side, at 68th Street. When 68th Street joins Eighteenth with Nineteenth Aves., this house will be demolished, as the street will run through the house. In 1857 to 1873 it was the residence of D. Robert, later it became the Kallman Orphanage. March 1925, Eugene L. Armbruster.



**11.** see image 10.





**12.** Prince Furniture on 18th Avenue and 68th Street; further into the block (where the third card is parked on photo) is the approximate location of the Daniel Robert House which was built sometimes in early 1850s. It was still standing in 1931, when the Kallman Orphanage moved to another location.



**13.** Approximate location from where the Van Brunt-Robart Homestead photographs were made in 1909 and 1916; view from 18th Avenue looking at the corner of 66th Street. Photo taken on October 10, 2015.



## Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> The name is sometimes spelled as Rutger Joosten, where the first part is Dutch equivalent of Roger. The “en” attached to middle name is a patronym, so Joesten/Joosten means “son of Joest/Joost”. Bergen gives it incorrectly as George, because Joost is actually Dutch for Joseph.

<sup>2</sup> This house was still standing in 1928 at 1752 84<sup>th</sup> Street, when it was demolished. In 1930, a new building was erected on the site made of brick, which is currently occupied by the Bath Beach Florist Shop.

<sup>3</sup> Bergen, [page 3](#).

<sup>4</sup> Bangs, [page 20](#).

<sup>5</sup> Bangs, [page 21](#). In March, 1660, after he was appointed councilor of New Netherlands, Nicasius de Sille, one of the original settlers of New Utrecht, made an official request to Stuyvesant, “that your Honors will please send over, as promised, some negroes” to assist in developing the village. This in effect is the earliest date of appearance of slaves in New Utrecht.

According to Teunis G. Bergen, [Rutger Joesten Van Brunt](#), the immigrant, had 2 slaves in 1693 and 5 slaves in 1698, while his second son, [Cornelis Rutgersz Van Brunt](#), was reported to have had 1 slave in 1693, 6 slaves in 1698, and 3 slaves in 1716, and the third son, [Joost Rutgersz Van Brunt](#), who built the Van Brunt-Robert homestead, had 4 slaves in 1698 and 3 slaves in 1716. Bergen gave extensive details about some of the Van Brunt heirs and inventories of their estates, which included persons as part of their properties.

<sup>6</sup> “On the establishment of a court of schepens (justices of the peace) in the town of New Utrecht on the 22d of Dec., 1661, Jan Tomasse (Van Dyck), *Rutger Joesten*, and Jacob Hellekers (Swart) were appointed to the office, which position *Rutger Joesten* held in 1665.” (Bergen, [page 3](#))

<sup>7</sup> Bergen, [page 1](#).

<sup>8</sup> Here again, the “sz” in Rutgersz indicates name of the father, thus Joost Rutgersz was Joost son of Rutger; or Joseph son of Roger. See 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ditmas, [page 82](#).

<sup>10</sup> Bergen, [page 7](#).

<sup>11</sup> The word “close” in this sense means a private property which is enclosed by palisades in order to protect structures standing within its confines. The main type of structure would be a house, but would also include a stable or a barn.

<sup>12</sup> Bergen, [page 7](#).

<sup>13</sup> Bergen, [page 7](#).

<sup>14</sup> Name is also spelled Kowenhoven, Kouvenhoven, Covenhoven and even Conover.

<sup>15</sup> Bergen, [page 25](#). Jannetje’s inheritance made a considerable addition to what Judge Cowenhoven already owned in the southeast of New Utrecht bordering Gravesend, a tract of land that was to become the *Bensonhurst by the Sea* in 1880s.

<sup>16</sup> Bangs, [page 48](#).

<sup>17</sup> Bangs, [page 57](#).

<sup>18</sup> Peter Force, ed., *American Archives containing a documentary history of the United States of America from the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776 to the definitive treaty of peace with Great Britain...4th series* (Washington, DC: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force) [Volume 1: cols. 1545-1546](#), in American Archives Documents of the American Revolutionary Period, 1774-1776

<sup>19</sup> <sup>19</sup> Peter Force, ed., *American Archives containing a documentary history of the United States of America from the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776 to the definitive treaty of peace with Great Britain...4th series* (Washington, DC: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force) [Volume 1: col. 1554](#), in American Archives Documents of the American Revolutionary Period, 1774-1776

<sup>20</sup> Ditmas, [page 82](#).

<sup>21</sup> On the origins of “Bensonhurst” see [Bensonhurst: from farmland to a neighborhood](#)

<sup>22</sup> Sometimes spelled *Roberts*, or as Ditmas and Bergen would have it, *Robarts*

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- <sup>23</sup> ["Daniel Robert"](#). *Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale College deceased from June, 1870, to June, 1880. Presented at the Annual Meetings of the Alumni, 1870-1880.* New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor, 1880. Page 330.
- <sup>24</sup> [ibid](#)
- <sup>25</sup> "Daniel Roberts" in 1840 *United States Federal Census, New York, Kings County, Town of New Utrecht*. Retrieved from Family Search website: [pages 818-819, line 13.](#)
- <sup>26</sup> "Daniel Roberts" in 1850 *United States Federal Census, New York, Kings County, Town of New Utrecht*. Retrieved from Family Search website: [page 47, line 18](#)
- <sup>27</sup> "Danl Robert" in U.S. *Federal Census Non-Population Schedules, 1850-1880*. 1860, New York, Kings County, New Utrecht, retrieved from Ancestry website.
- <sup>28</sup> Linder, Marc and Lawrence S. Zacharias. *Of Cabbages and Kings County: Agriculture and the Formation of Modern Brooklyn*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999. Page 422.
- <sup>29</sup> ["Brooklyn: 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue - 68<sup>th</sup> Street"](#) by Eugene L. Armbruster from Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History and Genealogy, The New York Public Library.
- <sup>30</sup> Lot 22761, Sections 153/154
- <sup>31</sup> "Jane Robert" in U.S. *Federal Census Non-Population Schedules, 1850-1880*. 1880, New York, Kings County, New Utrecht., retrieved from Ancestry website.
- <sup>32</sup> "Jane Robert" in 1880 *United States Federal Census, New York, Kings County, Town of New Utrecht*. Retrieved from Family Search website: [Enumeration Dist. 262, page 18, line 26.](#)
- <sup>33</sup> Catherine Robert married William Henry Jackson on June 30, 1857 in Christ Church of Bay Ridge by Rev. Mr. Paul.  
Christopher D. Robert married Ellen A. Johnson on June 1, 1871 in St. Paul's Church of Flatbush by Rev. Dr. Van Kleeck, and lived in Gravesend until his death in 1892.
- <sup>34</sup> "Jane Robert" in *New York, Kings County Estate Files, 1866-1923*. Retrieved from Family Search website: [1885](#)
- <sup>35</sup> ["Death of Dr. John C. Robert."](#) *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 14 Nov 1893, page 12.
- <sup>36</sup> ["Real Estate At Auction."](#) *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 21 September 1897, page 11.
- <sup>37</sup> ["Real Estate At Auction."](#) *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 5 June 1898, page 26.
- <sup>38</sup> ["Real Estate At Auction."](#) *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 5 July 1898, page 10.
- <sup>39</sup> Ditmas, [page 82.](#)
- <sup>40</sup> Bangs, [pages 137-138.](#)
- <sup>41</sup> ["Old New Utrecht Homesteads Are Rapidly Disappearing."](#) *The Daily Standard Union*. 2 July 1905, page 6.
- <sup>42</sup> Ditmas, [page 7.](#)
- <sup>43</sup> ["To Have New Home: The West End Democratic Club"](#) *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 7 May 1911, page 54.
- <sup>44</sup> ["Mapleton Taxpayers Report Results of Agitation"](#) *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 4 November 1916, page 20