

The Bronx In History

By JOHN McNAMARA

Now and then readers ask for the name of Bronx history sources. As ours was Westchester territory for centuries, mention of early Bronx places are found only in the old "Histories of Westchester" by Bolton, Scharf and Lamb who were 19th Century historians. Books on Bronx history alone are few and far between, and the two best known are Stephen Jenkins' "Story of The Bronx" (1912) and the three-volume set called "The Bronx and Its People" by Wells, Haffen et al. (1927).

Some years back, a book that dealt with the Spuyten Duyvil

'World Beneath City' Gives Bronx Lowdown

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section appeared, entitled "North of Manhattan." Then a modest little book, written by Reverend Tieck of the Kingsbridge Historical Society appeared in print, entitled "God's House and the Old King's Bridge." All these books are available in libraries.

The contrast between the 19th Century writers and those of our times is marked. The earlier journals were not written for the general public but for a leisure class, and for long chapters the writers were "dry as dust." On the other hand, the modern books are far more readable, and have the advantage of accompanying

the text with interesting photographs.

The first history book I encountered in 1960 was partially on the Bronx, and vastly entertaining. It was written by a former Fordham College student named Robert Daley (class of '51) and in his quest for history he went underground, literally and physically, to tell a fascinating tale of our tunnels, conduits, subways, gas-mains and sewer lines. He begins with early Colonial attempts to run wooden pipelines underground, and gives a lively account of the

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political shenanigans that have plagued Our Town from Aaron Burr's times to the 1950s. Old copies of the N.Y. Times dating back to Civil War days gave Mr. Daley facts on a fantastic subway that even featured a grand piano, paintings and a fountain in its waiting room!

His book "The World Beneath the City" will interest five kinds of people, and most of us qualify in at least two categories: Those who like a bit of odd New York history, those who interest themselves in offbeat politics, those who are sidewalk superintendents, those who ride the subways, and those of us who just like to read a good book.

Books

Bolton, Scharf, Lamb
Histories of Westchester

Jenkins, Stephen
Story of The Bronx

Wells, Haffen
The Bronx and its People

North of Manhattan

Tieck,
God's House and Old King's Bridge

Daley, Robert
World Beneath the City

Communities

Spuyten Duyvil