

THE BOROUGH  
OF THE BRONX

1639 - 1913

ITS MARVELOUS  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND HISTORICAL  
SURROUNDINGS

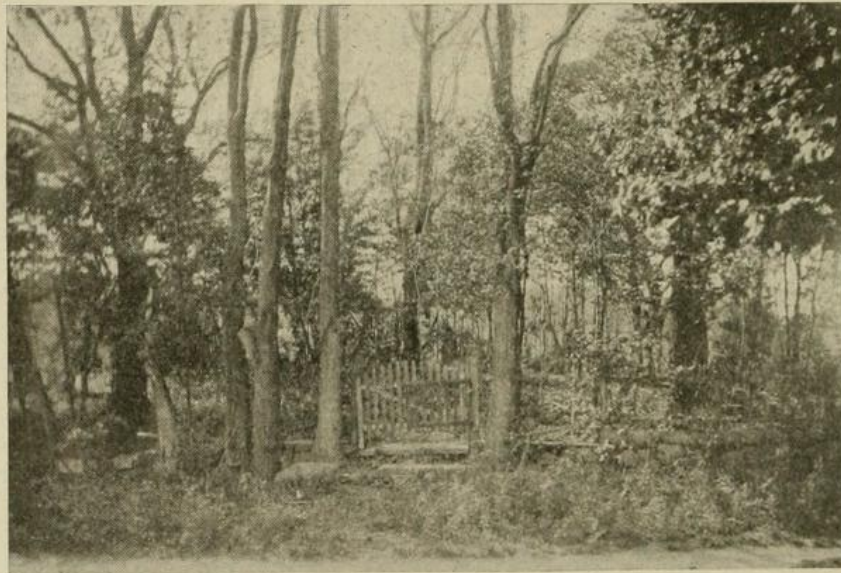
BY  
HARRY T. COOK

ASSISTED BY  
NATHAN J. KAPLAN

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR  
AT 1660 BOONE AVENUE, NEW YORK  
1913

the quaint little Hunt burying ground \* in which early settlers were interred and which is the last resting place of Joseph Rodman Drake.

Until Park Commissioner Higgins sent a force of men there in the summer of 1910 to clear away the over-grown weeds and brambles and to cement the broken pieces of headstones together, the repose of the little cemetery was rarely disturbed, and all summer long the birds and insects raised an unceasing song around the weed-grown graves of the forgotten dead; the winter spread a



HUNT'S POINT CEMETERY IN 1900

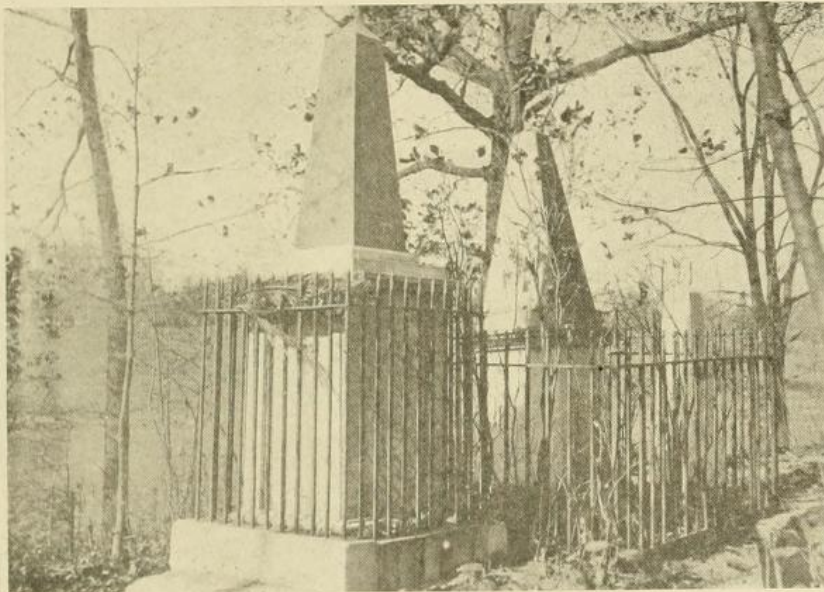
blanket of white snow over it which remained until spring came slowly and reluctantly to this upland resting place.

And so the seasons came and passed, leaving the finger marks of time and ruin. Yet on a summer's day the little knoll with its crumbling, weather-beaten old tombstones is really a delightful spot, and from its summit one can obtain an excellent panoramic view of the surrounding country.

\* The little "God's Acre" is less than half an acre in area and is located on the summit of a wooded knoll a short distance from the Hunt's Point Station on the New Rochelle branch of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad running from Mott Haven to New Rochelle.



Before you are the placid, rippling, flashing waters of the Sound dotted here and there by the white sails of pleasure craft; while in the distance rise the dim bluish outlines of Long Island. Toward the west lies the Metropolitan City of Greater New York in all its majestic splendor. Silhouetted against the sky are the outlines of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, St. Luke's Hospital, Columbia Library, and Grant's Tomb as well as the College of the City of New York and Columbia University with their many outlying buildings. The populous Bronx stretches northward, and



GRAVE OF JOSEPH RODMAN DRAKE

the green rolling slopes of Westchester extend toward the east. The evidences of vigorous life and progress viewed from this little resting place of those so long dead bring strongly to mind the achievements of our own era.

But when the wintry clouds scurry over the hill, and the rain beats down the withered weeds and dark graves, the burying ground seems weird and desolate. Years of wind and weather show plainly their imprints on the fifty or more tombstones scattered about, some of which, overspread with a coat of green moss, and sunken deep into the sod, date back nearly two and a half centuries.

Some of these grave stones may have been new and untarnished when Washington's Continentals in their retreat from Long Island, trudged along the old Colonial road which winds around the little hillock, and when Lafayette revisited this country in 1824. The noted French General, after crossing the famous "Kissing Bridge" which stood to the right of Southern Boulevard and Lafayette Lane, "paused in silent meditation at the grave of Joseph Rodman Drake," and then passed thru the narrow lane which was afterwards widened and named "Lafayette Avenue" in his honor.

Surrounding one plot in the old cemetery was attached a rusty iron chain. It has long mouldered away from all but one of its fastenings to which it still clung creaking and rattling like a dungeon fetter as the wind tossed it to and fro. Close by lay a shattered marble shaft which the angry winds had hurled from its pedestal and tall weeds and rank growth were blotting out its inscriptions. Decadence due to neglect was manifest everywhere in this ruined city of the dead.

Facing the entrance of the cemetery from the south stands a plain marble shaft seven feet high which marks the grave of Joseph Rodman Drake.

Whatever fitness there may have been in burying Drake in that particular spot, was lost in the neglect into which his grave was afterward permitted to fall.

In 1891 the Brownson Literary Union in appreciation of his genius restored the monument to a semblance of its former neatness. The inscription reads:

SACRED  
to the Memory  
of  
JOSEPH R. DRAKE, M.D.  
who died Sept. 21st  
1820  
Aged 25 Years  
None knew him but to love him,  
Nor named him but to praise.

RENOVATED BY THE  
BROWNSON LITERARY UNION  
July 25, 1891.



The little cemetery is also the final resting place of veterans of the various Colonial wars and of Continental soldiers, members of the Hunt, Leggett, Willett and allied families.

Directly opposite the Hunt burying ground is a small en-



SLAVE BURYING GROUND

closure in which the slaves of early residents were interred. It is also said that "Bill," the negro pilot of the wrecked British frigate *Hussar*, was buried there:

"After the voice of shrieking winds  
And tossing of the angry deep,  
In kind embrace of Mother Earth  
Resting, like child in quiet sleep."