

NEIGHBORHOOD LIVING – PART 2

From 1670, the land that later became the neighborhood of Morrisania was from the estate of the Morris Family and was originally part of Westchester County. In 1790, Lewis Morris, owner of the estate and signer of the Declaration of Independence, proposed this land as the site of the federal capital. Morrisania was sparsely populated until 1840, when Gouverneur Morris Jr., son of the famous congressional delegate and grandson of Lewis allowed a railroad to be built across the property. In 1846, a division of the town of Westchester created a new town, called West Farms. In 1848, Gouverneur Morris sold the land next to the rail line for the development of the town called Morrisania Village. In 1855, the town of Morrisania was created from part of West Farms, Pelham, Yonkers and Eastchester along the rail line. The political center was the original 1840 village.

By the late 1860's it was generally assumed that the towns on the mainland would be annexed by New York City as it expanded northward. In 1868, Morrisania numbered its streets to make them conform to those of the city, and in the following year the municipal parks department was given control of the bridges over the Harlem River and the streets leading to them.



**St. Augustine Church,
built in 1895.**

Morrisania, Kingsbridge and West Farms were annexed to the City of New York by the legislature in 1874. These were all west of the Bronx River. This area was known as the Annexed District. Before this point, the City of New York consisted solely of Manhattan. In 1888, the 3rd Avenue elevated line was extended to 132nd Street, precipitating the most rapid growth The Bronx had ever seen. Morris High School was the first public high school in The Bronx, and was opened in 1897.

City Island is a small island approximately 1.5 miles long by .5 mile wide. At one time, it was part of Pelham, Westchester County.

The Siwanoy band of Lenape Indians originally inhabited the island. In 1642 English settlers led by Anne Hutchinson, seeking religious freedom, settled in an area nearby on the river now known as the Hutchinson River. In 1954, the area became part of the estate bought by English nobleman Thomas Pell.

After changing hands several times, in 1761 the island at that time known as Minefer's Island was bought by Benjamin Palmer. There were only a few homes and farms on the island and had a population of about 1,000 people. Palmer had the vision of developing the island into a port, which could rival that of New York. He

knew that ships heading north and south passed City Island using Long Island Sound as a safe inshore waterway. He envisioned shipyards and stores that would cater to the ships. He had the island mapped out with different areas designated as shipyards, docks, businesses, farms, houses, schools, houses of worship, streets and access routes. Mr. Palmer appealed to the British Crown and received a patent covering the ownership of waterfront properties 400' out from the high tide mark under water and around the perimeter of the Island. The patent was known as the "Palmer Grant" and was unique to City Island. It has been contested in court many times but the grant has always been upheld. Palmer also changed the name of the island from Minefer's Island to City Island in anticipation of things to come. His vision never materialized. The American Revolution halted all progress, and the war depleted the capital of Mr. Palmer and his investors. It would be 60 years before the island started to be developed again. Eventually shipbuilders, Hell-Gate Pilots and oystermen arrived to introduce these industries.

City Island, a part of The Bronx, is located at the extreme western end of Long Island Sound, south of Pelham Bay and east of Eastchester Bay. There is a body of water between City Island and a smaller uninhabited island named Hart Island known as City Island Harbor.