SHEEPSHEAD BAY
PROJECT PACKET

Name: ____________________________________________

Adaptation

Sheepshead bay is bordered to the north by Marine Park, to the east by Shell Bank Creek, to the south by Manhattan Beach and to the west by Gravesend. The area was the site of a large Canarsee Indian village and remained underdeveloped for more than a century and a half after the English settled Gravesend in 1645. Shortly after the Civil War, the area attracted visitors from the city during the summer looking for a cool ocean breeze and seafood. Although two hotels were built, there was no permanent growth until 1877 when a farm of 50 acres was subdivided and developed. The same fate also affected other farms, and by the end of the century the village had some 400 houses served by stores, churches and a post office.

During the 1870s John Y. McKane, the notorious political “boss” of Gravesend, facilitated the extension of several railroads and boulevards to Coney Island, making the whole southern shore more accessible than it had been before. Meanwhile, the Coney Island Jockey Club opened in Sheepshead Bay Race Track on a site of 2200 acres. This was replaced in 1915 by the Sheepshead Speedway which was demolished in 1923; the site was then subdivided into small building lots and developed.

In 1931 the city began to revitalize the area. Aging buildings were restored and Emmons Avenue was widened. When work was completed in 1937 the Brooklyn Eagle characterized the renovated neighborhood as “clean, tidy, and practically odorless.” The character of the neighborhood changed again after 1954 as wooden houses were replaced by six- and seven-story redbrick apartment buildings for middle-income residents. By 1960 Sheepshead Bay was the fastest-growing community in Brooklyn. It became widely known as the center of recreational fishing in New York City and a number of private boats moored at its 10 piers. In the 1980s the city announced new development plans for Sheepshead Bay that provided for the improvement of the piers, private residential and retain constriction. These plans remained unrealized for several years.

The population of the neighborhood in the early twenty-first century was mostly Italian and Jewish, though there were increasing numbers of people from Asia and Caribbean Islands. In the latter part of the century, immigrants from Russia, China, India, Pakistan Vietnam, Israel, the Philippines, and Poland have moved in.
DOCUMENT 1: Map of Brooklyn, 1877. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Locate Sheepshead Bay on the map. What other neighborhoods is Sheepshead Bay near?

2. Locate Coney Island Jockey Club Race Course. What do you think that was?

3. What ocean is Sheepshead Bay near?

4. Do you think it was easy to get to Sheepshead Bay via public transportation? Why or why not?
CLAIMS HE CHRISTENED SHEEPSHEAD BAY
And There Are Many Old Residents Who Support His Story.

One of the founders, if not the founder, of Sheepshead Bay is now visiting the place. He is Benjamin Freeman, 86 years of age, and came all the way from Saratoga, where he has lived for some years past, to visit Mrs. Ruth Lundy, who died a few days since. Fifty years ago Mr. Freeman built the first hotel, or inn, of the place. It is now occupied as a dwelling by Martin Purcell. Mr. Freeman claims that he gave Sheepshead Bay its name, in the following manner: When his hotel was built the question of a name came up for consideration. Because of the fact that sheepsheads were very plentiful in the bay he decided to name his hotel Sheepshead hotel, from which the bay took its name, and afterward the place. There are many old people in the town who say they remember their fathers telling the same story. Mr. Freeman says he remembers when John McKane, the father of John Y. McKane, started in the grocery business, on a capital of 15 cents.

Transcript

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to the article, in what year did Mr. Freeman build the first hotel in Sheepshead Bay?

2. How does Mr. Freeman claim to have named the neighborhood?

3. What is a Sheepshead?

4. Do you believe that Mr. Freeman named the neighborhood? Why or why not?
Sheepshead Bay came to prominence in the mid-1800s. It was known as a place with “good food and nice breezes.” People came to Sheepshead Bay for vacation. In 1867 the Brooklyn Daily Eagle wrote an article about the Sheepshead Bay Hotel:

**Transcript**

**Sheepshead Bay Hotel** – This popular establishment was opened for the season on Thursday evening. There was present a large and select company, and to the music of a fine band, dancing was continued unwearyingly until a late hour. The supper was excellent and included the usual side entertainment of songs, sentiment, and speech. The Sheepshead Bay Hotel is well maintained in all its departments, and its management constantly consults the comfort of the many guests who find it a pleasant summer resort.
TO TEAR DOWN LANDMARK

Famous Sheepshead Bay Hotel Makes Way for “Movies.”

The Jerome Hotel, at Shore road and Emmons avenue, an old landmark of Sheepshead Bay, facing on the water, is being demolished to make way for a more up-to-date hostelry and moving picture theater. This is an attempt on the part of Bert McLaughlin, the hotel proprietor, to win back the fame of Sheepshead Bay as a summer resort. As a pioneer settler put it, “Sheepshead Bay has gone to the dogs since racing was stopped.”

While racing was in its prime at the bay the Jerome was the rendezvous for the world’s greatest sportsmen. Prominent men in all walks of life, among them the late Mayor William J. Gaynor summered there at one time. Turf officials made it their headquarters and many thousands of dollars changed hands in the hotel. Bert McLaughlin, who is the proprietor of the Bayside Casino at the resort obtained a long lease on the property from Mrs. Adolphine Pillion, the owner. In a day or two the work of demolishing the structure will be completed. Mr. McLaughlin will erect a three-story brick hotel and moving picture theater on the plot which measures 200 feet by 150 feet. The rooms in the hotel will be equipped with all the latest improvements. The moving picture theater will have a seating capacity of 1,700. A good sized pier will be built out in the water in front of the hotel so that yachting parties can anchor and be accommodated to the resort. The home of the Tamaqua Boat Club, which is practically a new building will be left standing on the property.

Mr. McLaughlin expects to have the buildings completed by the middle of next summer.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to DOCUMENT 3a, why might people vacation at the Sheepshead Bay Hotel?

2. DOCUMENT 3a refers to the vacationers at a “select company,” who do you think that is in reference to?

3. What do you think The Jerome Hotel was like in its heyday? Why was it demolished?

4. How did the developers think they would get people to go to Sheepshead Bay?
By the turn-of-the-century, there were 29 million people working in the U.S., on average about 59 hours a week (about 11 hours a day). Most people had off Saturday and Sunday. When people didn't have to work, they wanted to enjoy themselves. Sheepshead Bay offered many options for fun.

**THE NEW RACE TRACK**

The Grand Enterprise of the Coney Island Jockey Club.

The Course at Sheepshead Bay well under way. A magnificent park opposite the beach-The grand stand, the field and the stables-An ornament to the neighborhood.

**THE NEW RACE TRACK**

Less than half a mile back of Sheepshead Bay, almost touching the little village of that name, the club purchased 112 acres for their new course. When they bought it last Winter the land was covered by a dense wood. To-day, it is as clear as a meadow, and upon it the track is already completed. A better site could not have been selected. The ground is cut out in oblong shape and affords ample space for its purpose. It touches Ocean avenue, one of Brooklyn's grandest drives on the east, while on the south it is bounded by Voorhees land and on the north and west by well kept farming lands. From it may be obtained a grand view of the Atlantic, of Sheepshead Bay and of Coney Island and Manhattan Beach with their long lines of stately buildings.

**EASY OF ACCESS**

Its main entrance is but 1,000 feet from the line of the Brooklyn, Flatbush and Coney Island Railway, and 600 feet from the Manhattan Beach Road. Driving parties can reach it by the Ocean Parkway and Ocean avenue. The Manhattan Beach Railway Company contemplate building a bridge across Sheepshead Bay, between the terminus of Ocean avenue and the Manhattan Hotel. It is proposed to run a marine railway over this bridge. The Coney Island, Sheepshead Bay and Ocean avenue Railroad Company yesterday filed their map in the Register's office. This road will run horse cars from the track of the Brooklyn, Flatbush and Coney Island Railroad at a point opposite the track, through Voorhees' land to Ocean avenue, thence to the entrance of the course and along Ocean avenue to Sheepshead Bay. This road is to be handsomely equipped and will undoubtedly be a popular line of travel. Mr. John McMahon is President of the company.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the author of this article describe the new race track?

2. Why do you think Sheepshead Bay was a good location for the race track?

3. Why might the railway company be excited for the race track to open?

4. What kind of racing will take place at this track?
Brooklyn Jockey Club

Gravesend

TREMONT, BROOKLYN DERBY

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

Printed for the Brooklyn Jockey Club by The American Bank Note Co. of New York

STEWARDS
Mr. P. J. Dwyer
Mr. J. G. Follansbee
Mr. H. K. Knapp

Handicapper
Mr. W. S. Vosburgh

Starter
Mr. C. J. FitzGerald

Starting Judge
Mr. H. U. Homan

Clerk of the Scales
Mr. H. G. Crickmore

Judges at Finish
Mr. C. McDowell
Mr. C. H. Pettingill

Club Physician
Dr. E. H. Hoxsie

Timer
Mr. W. H. Barretto

Patrol Judge
Mr. J. L. Hall

Secretary

H. O. McInnis

Sixth Race

For Three-Year-Olds and Upward. Handicap. By subscription of $10 each, or $5 if declared, with $100 added, of which $250 to the second and $150 to the third. If declared.

One Mile and a Quarter

J. E. Madden
Cherry, White Hoops on Sleeves and Cap.

1. COL. BILL
Br. c. 2 by Wagon—Minnesota
102

2. C. T. Boots
Black, White Sleeves, Black and Red Cap.

3. VINCITOR
B. h. aged, by Brutus—Mollie H.

4. HIMSELF
Ch. c. 4, by Hinnery—Felicie.

5. G. F. Dwyer
Pink, White Cap, Gold Tassel.

6. ETHICS
V. c. 4, by Charaxes—Edith.

Franklin Stone

5. DAFFO-DOWN-DILLY
B. c. 4, by St. Andrew—Daffodil.

E. & T. W. Beck

6. Georgia Gardner
Drab, Pink Sleeves and Cap.

B. f. 4, by Rainbow—Princess Palatine.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the purpose of DOCUMENT 5?

2. Why does the document note that Gravesend is in Long Island?


4. What did people do at the race track?
**transcript**

**Sheephead Hails New Motordrome**

Civiv Board and Citizens Give Dinner to promoters of Enterprise

POUNDS SEES BAY REVIVAL

Announced That Old Racetrack Will Open as Sport Center Next October

Appreciation for the efforts of the Sheephead Bay Speedway Corporation, the backers of the movement to convert the Sheephead Bay Race track into a motor stadium was expressed by many residents of Sheephead Bay who attended the dinner last night at the White House hotel, by the Sheephead Bay Board of Trade to Anderson T. Herd and his associates, the promoters of the enterprise.

Francis T. Clarke acted as toastmaster and review the history of the Sheephead Bay Race Track from the organization of the Coney Island Jockey Club. J. Driscoll Tucker, president of the board, delivered the address of welcome and expressed the opinion that through the establishment of the motor race course, with additional features, Sheephead Bay would revert to its former renown.

The corporation plans to open the stadium early in October when it will conduct a 500-mile race with all the leading riders of the country in the field.

“In addition to the races we plan,” he said “to conduct aviation meets and promote other sporting activities.”
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is a motordrome?

2. When did the race track turn into a motordrome?

3. What did the author mean when he noted the developers hoped the new motordrome would bring Sheepshead Bay back to its former renown?

4. What other activities will take place at the motordrome?
DOCUMENT 7a: Ave X and Nostrand Ave. 1927.
**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Describe the photograph in **DOCUMENT 7a**.

2. Does the photograph look like it was taken in Brooklyn? Why or why not?

3. According to **DOCUMENT 7b**, what is being auctioned?

4. Using both **DOCUMENT 7a** and **DOCUMENT 7b**, why might there be auctions held in these neighborhoods, Sheepshead Bay in particular?
A year after the bombing of Pearl Harbor—which brought the United States into World War II—Brooklyn saw the opening of the largest United States Maritime Service training station at Sheepshead Bay. Built for $8,500,000 on old beach, bath, and amusement grounds once owned by John P. Day, the station was equipped to pump out 30,000 trained merchant seamen a year. The station was deactivated on February 28th, 1954. For years Robert Moses (who was known as NYC’s master builder) wanted the land for a parking lot. Eventually, the city purchased the land from the federal government for $1 and opened Kingsborough Community College in 1964.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What was the purpose of the training station? Who worked in the training station?

2. Why do you think the training station was opened near the water?

3. Why did the training station close?

4. What is on the site of the training station today?
The Wyckoff-Bennett House is rectangular in plan with an extension on the north side containing a kitchen and a room said to have been used as a milk house. In the late 1890's, when the land was divided into lots and streets were laid out, the one-and-one-half-story house which had faced south was turned westward and placed upon a brick foundation. Dormers were added at this time, along with six slender columns on the existing full-length west porch to support the roof which sweeps down over the veranda in a gentle curve. The wood-frame structural system of the main part of the house and the extension on the north are sheathed by shingles except the front elevation of the former which is covered by clapboards. Two chimneys in the main house and one in the extension service the structure.

Much of the handsome 18th century panelled woodwork is intact including panelled closets flanking the parlor fireplace, notable too, for several original Dutch tiles. The structure also contains original sash windows and panes, and a horizontally divided front door penetrated by two original, thick, bluish-green bulbs eye glass windows.

In the two centuries of its existence, only two family names are associated with this house. In 1835 the farm, consisting of about one hundred acres and certain meadows and woodlands, as well as pew number sixty-two in the old Gravesend Dutch Reformed Church, were bought by Cornelius W. Bennett. The land was farmed by the family until the turn of this century. Four generations of the Bennett family have lived in the house since it was purchased from the Wyckoffs.

From an inscription found cut in a beam in the old barn, we can assume that the house was standing in 1766. It is believed the farmhouse was built by Henry and Abraham Wyckoff. During the American Revolution, Hessian officers were quartered there. At least one of them recorded a lasting impression on the four-by-seven window panes with a sharp instrument, possibly a diamond. Two of these original panes are carefully preserved by the owners of the house. One is inscribed with the name "Toepfer Capt. of Regt. de Ditfurth" and the other "M. Bach Lieutenant Hessen Hanau Artillerie."
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where is the Wyckoff-Bennett house located?

2. When do you think the house was built?

3. Why do you think the house was landmarked? When was it landmarked?

4. Using the description, sketch what you think the house might look like:
Rose Maggio is very upset. At 85, she cannot imagine moving from her Sheepshead Bay home, where she raised her son, where she watched her grandchildren grow into adults and where she still tends to her flower garden.

After calling 30 Dooley St, home for more than 50 years, Maggio has to cope with the fact that her house—in the heart of New York City’s premier fishing community—may be condemned to make way for a huge waterfront redevelopment project in Brooklyn.

"I am very upset. I will be dead before I get out of here. The aggravation is too much for me," Rose said, tears in her eyes as she spoke.

Fears takeover

"I do not think it is very good, especially since the city wants to take my house and turn it over to a developer," said Rose’s son, John Maggio.

The Sheepshead Bay redevelopment plan calls for 63 condominiums, 30,000 square feet of retail shopping space and 380 parking spaces. It also includes a floating restaurant, museum boat and a terminal for commuter and excursion ferry service.

"Basically, the concept is what the community is looking for," said Kolodin, adding, "It is light on parking."

The city plans to develop 80,000 square feet of land along Emmons Ave. between Dooley St. and E. 21st St. and at the foot of Ocean Ave.

The land will be leased by the city for 60 years to two developers—the Grenadier Realty Corp., a subsidiary of the Starrett Housing Corp., and the Catco Group Inc.

During the first 20 years, the city hopes to generate $15 million in lease payments and taxes.

"We are not changing the flavor of Sheepshead Bay. This is for the good of New York City at large," said De De Gotthelf, president of Catco Group Inc. "Parking is a major, integral part of the scheme. We are providing 380 parking spaces."
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is Rose Maggio upset?

2. What are developers planning to build where Rose's house stands?

3. What do the fishermen think of the development plan?

4.*Extra Credit: Use Google Maps to see if Rose Maggio’s house is still there or if the developers got their way and built condominiums.
GLOSSARY:

**Latter**: situated or occurring nearer to the end of something than to the beginning

**Notorious**: famous or well known, typically for some bad quality or deed

**Renown**: the condition of being known or talked about by many people; fame

**Revitalize**: something with new life and vitality

**Sheepshead**: a medium-sized saltwater fish of the Atlantic Ocean

**Subdivided**: divide (something that has already been divided or that is a separate unit)