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Davis, Albert E.

The Borough beautiful; A Bronx  
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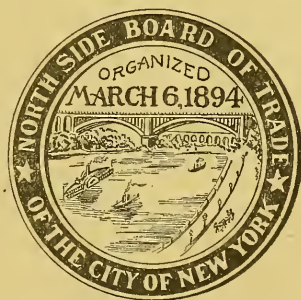
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# THE BOROUGH BEAUTIFUL; A BRONX OPPORTUNITY

By ALBERT E. DAVIS,

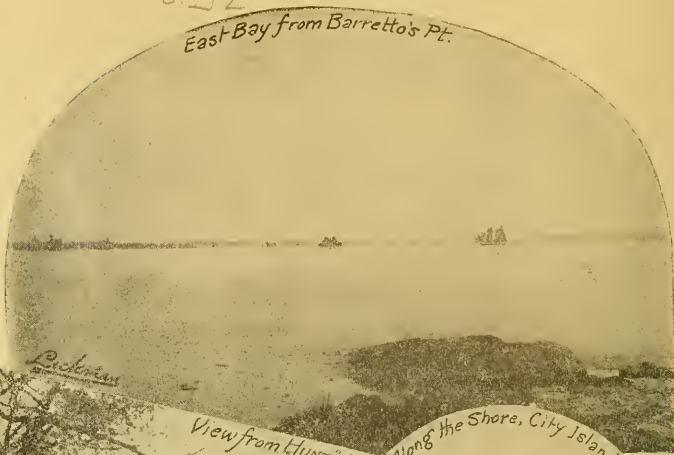
President of

THE NORTH SIDE BOARD OF TRADE.



Being a Paper Read Before The New York City Improvement Commission,  
at a Hearing in the Office of the President of The Borough  
of The Bronx, in Crotona Park, Third and Tremont  
Avenues, New York City, on July 27th, 1904

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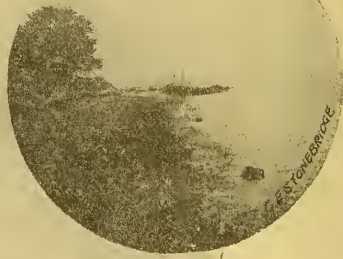
East Bay from Barretto's Pt.



Pickman's

View from HUDSON'S Pt.

Along the Shore, City Island



East Townside



"The Majestic HUDSON"

Pickman

NORTH FROM MT. ST VINCENT





## TO THE NEW YORK CITY IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION.

Gentlemen:—When, in 1807, a Commission consisting of Gouverneur Morris, Simeon De Witt and John Rutherford devised the present street plan of Manhattan Island from Houston to 155th sts. they wrote apologetically "It may be a subject of merriment that the Commissioners have provided space for a greater population than is collected at any spot on this side of China." And then they ventured this prediction: "It is improbable that for centuries to come, the ground north of the Harlem flats will be covered by houses."

Little did its chairman dream that his fine old estate, stretching fanlike from Harlem Bridge to Fordham and West Farms, would become a city in itself; yet in less than one century the northward march of development has swept past the Harlem flats and across the Harlem River until to-day tenements and factories have invaded the old Manor of Morrisania and the undreamt of City beyond the Harlem is teeming with a population four times that of the City of New York at the time he planned for its future.

That Commission stated that however much stars, circles, crescents and the like might embellish a plan, square sided houses were the cheapest to build and the most convenient to live in; hence the street system should consist of rectangular blocks. Yet, judging from results, who would claim to-day that the plan of Manhattan Island, with its monotonous grid-iron of parallelograms, was to be preferred to that of Washington, with its broad, tree-lined, diagonal boulevards, embellished by circles or parks at the intersections? For convenience of intercommunication between remote sections; for beautiful vistas; for opportunities for architectural effect, which are the essentials of a model city, we see at a glance the superiority of Washington.

### DISTRICT OF CHESTER.

In the undeveloped portions of New York City opportunity is afforded to profit by the experiences of older communities and avoid their mistakes. Especially is this so in the territory east of The Bronx river—the District of Chester—which comprises about 14,500 acres, and is therefore larger than the whole of Manhattan Island. Of this great area it may be said that it is as broad as it is long, as distinguished from narrow, elongated Manhattan. This breadth at once suggests the need of diagonal streets or short cuts to bring its different parts into convenient access to each other as well as to the City below it.

Now naturally the trend of travel will always preponderate to and from Manhattan.

This is as fixed and unchangeable as the moving of the tides; and so plain that "he who runs may read." The best indication of it is the course followed by the old roads, the sole purpose of which was convenience of travel to and from New York. Thus we have the Old Boston Post Road, the Fordham and Pelham Road, the West Farms Road and Westchester Turnpike giving unmistakable evidence of the natural course or direction of travel. Logically the nearer that these could be paralleled in the intervening streets, for manifestly they are too irregular for City streets, the greater convenience to the greater number of people would result.

This was apparently recognized in the section known as Unionport; and the street system in this small section has been retained in its original form in the adopted map. Clearly the first essential of a street system is convenience of intercommunication. Yet strange as it may seem throughout the major portion of the district, the streets as laid out, would divert the bulk of travel in a direction at right angles to its natural course, two streets being run that way to every one toward Manhattan, in an apparent attempt to imitate what every one now recognizes as the vital mistake in the street system of Manhattan.

Consider how vastly easier the solution of the Rapid Transit problem would be for Manhattan to-day were the grid-iron twisted sideways, giving a greater number of longitudinal, and fewer lateral thoroughfares, the bulk of travel being up and down rather than across the island.

### EMBELLISHMENT OF PLAN NEEDED.

We ask your Commission to examine carefully the map or plan prepared by former Chief Topographical Engineer Louis A. Risse, which was approved by the Board of Public Improvements and had the enthusiastic endorsement of our Board and other civic bodies and representative citizens, and then compare it with the unsystematic arrangement of streets with zig zag diagonal roads devoid of any attempt at artistic effect or embellishment of the substituted plan.

### RIVER BANK RESERVATIONS.

Your attention is also called to the splendid opportunities for locating public recreation and picnic grounds by acquiring strips of land along the banks of the Bronx River from Williamsbridge to the city line and of Westchester Creek and Hutchinson River similar to the public reservations upon the banks of the Charles River as laid out by the Metropolitan

Park Commission of Boston. Now is the time to acquire these strips at small expense; the city will be the loser by delay. I refer especially to the upper portion of the Bronx River, and it will be noticed that provision was made for this in the Risse plan. Lovers of the picturesque and beautiful will have deep cause for regret if this opportunity is lost.

#### LAGOONS AND WATERWAYS.

The Chicago, Buffalo and St. Louis Fairs have demonstrated the artistic value and effect of grand basins, lagoons or waterways as surroundings for public buildings. Why not preserve some of these admirable ideas in permanent form? In the locating of civic centres I would suggest that in the new territory these features be incorporated.

#### A SUGGESTIVE PLAN.

Herewith I respectfully submit a suggestive plan for a street system for that part of the Borough of the Bronx lying east of the Bronx River and south of Pelham Bay Park of which the southerly boundary is the East River and the easterly Long Island Sound. It might not be desirable to have the streets only 200 feet apart, nor the intersecting streets so close together, but this will serve to illustrate the idea desired to be conveyed. In this plan a civic centre is proposed at the junction of Tremont ave. extended to the Sound, the Eastern Boulevard and Westchester Creek, the waters of the creek being diverted into lagoons and waterways upon which and upon the broad intersecting streets the public buildings would front, graceful bridges and statuary adding to the general effect.

This would be convenient and accessible from all portions of the new territory and the lower section of The Bronx as well as from Borough Hall at Tremont and Third aves. At the intersection of the diagonal streets, circles are contemplated, embellished with trees, flower beds, fountains and statuary. A Sound Shore Drive is provided similar to the Risse plan, as also the Eastern Boulevard; in fact this plan is modeled after the Risse plan with the exception of the turning of the streets in the direction of the bulk of travel.

#### ATTRACTIVE RAILROAD STATIONS.

As the railroad stations are places where many pass and re-pass daily, it has been considered that they should be made attractive by the location of circles at each of them. These stations and their surroundings should be made pleasing not only for the benefit of the regular passengers, but also to attract new comers, considering the indelible effect of first impressions. And while on this subject we would ask you to examine the plans for the proposed approaches to the N. Y. Central R. R. stations from Highbridge to Kingsbridge, especially that at Morris Heights, which the people of

that locality think will be unsightly and inconvenient.

Your Commission will confer a lasting benefit if in the easterly territory or District of Chester it can bring about the adoption of a more rational plan and one in which artistic embellishment would form a distinct feature instead of being eliminated entirely as in the more recently adopted plan. For the most part this territory is undeveloped and such development as there is, is mainly of frame construction of an inexpensive and largely temporary character. The land is nearly level, free from rock, low priced and well suited to a comprehensive scheme of development. We ask that this suggestion receive your most careful consideration.

#### SOUND SHORE DRIVE.

We would especially urge upon your Commission the wisdom of taking advantage of the splendid opportunities for drives or boulevards which will enable the community at large to enjoy the natural beauties of the Hudson and Sound shores of our Borough, which are now controlled by private estates.

As before stated, a beautiful shore drive, affording wide spreading marine views of the Sound from Ft. Schuyler to Pelham Bay Park, received the approval of the Board of Public Improvements and of our Board and other civic bodies and of other prominent citizens of this borough a few years ago. Its elimination from the map is ascribed to the objection of the private estates through which it would pass; but the owners of these will pass away and their children may not care to maintain them. Already some of them are offered for sale. Similarly the owners of large estates protested against Riverside Drive and the new parks we now so highly prize. Private interest must ever yield to public interest, and the City must plan for the future. We ask you to recommend that this Shore Drive be restored to the map.

#### PARKS AT POINTS OF VANTAGE.

We also ask that public parks, not small paved spaces, be laid out on Hunt's Point, Clason's Point and Old Ferry Point, so that the general public may have access to these beautiful points of vantage and because there will be need, in this great section, of more park area.

#### RIVERSIDE DRIVE TO YONKERS.

Along the Hudson in our Borough we urge the construction of the proposed Hendrick Hudson memorial bridge and the extension of Riverside Drive to the Yonkers line. It is the logical sequence of the extension now being made from the Manhattanville Valley to the Boulevard Lafayette which carries the drive to Dyckman Street or Tubby Hook.

#### SOUND TO HUDSON BOULEVARD.

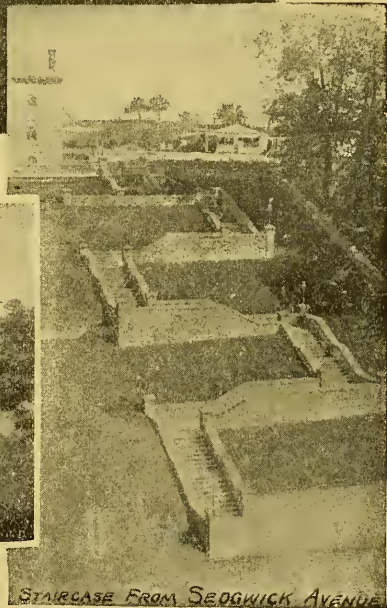
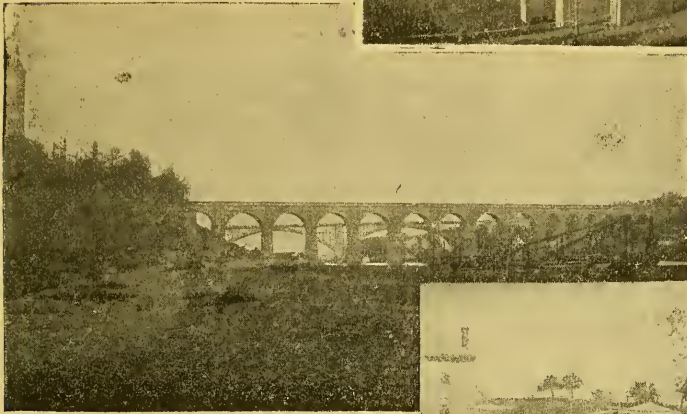
Another suggestion is the adoption of Chan-



# HIGH BRIDGE

CARRYING OLD AQUEDUCT  
ACROSS HARLEM RIVER

Photos. by Lickman and  
Stonebridge



STAIRCASE FROM SEDGWICK AVENUE



cellar MacCracken's plan for a Sound to Hudson Boulevard along the northerly border of the City. The greater portion of this the City already owns in Pelham Bay and Van Cortlandt Parks, which now largely abut against private property. Consider the effect if Central Park backed against yards of private property.

A broad boulevard here would form an ideal cross-town thoroughfare of some six or seven miles connecting the extreme easterly and westerly sections of the Borough. And its value would still further be increased when Yonkers, Mount Vernon and New Rochelle become a part of New York City as they should and assuredly will in time.

#### SEDGWICK PARKWAY.

A further suggestion is the widening to 100 feet and conversion of Sedgwick ave. from McComb's Dam Bridge to Van Cortlandt Park into a parkway, tree lined, with grass plats in the centre. This avenue, the most picturesque thoroughfare in our Borough, follows quite closely and but a short distance away the east bank of the Harlem by graceful curves adapted to the contour of the land, passing under the majestic arches of High and Washington Bridges and by the N. Y. University and University Park, the Webb Academy, the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum and the Jerome Park reservoir.

It affords many charming views of the Harlem, with its hills and valleys, and occasional glimpses of the Hudson with its world famed back-ground, the Palisades, and has been called the "Riverside Drive of The Bronx." It would form a fitting counterpart to the Speedway on the opposite bank of the Harlem. Through Van Cortlandt Park it should be extended along the high ground to the east, connecting at the Yonkers line with the Sound-to-Hudson Boulevard.

The logical and symmetrical extension of Crotona Parkway to the intersection of the Boston road as suggested by the East Tremont Taxpayers' Association is an improvement worthy of your favorable consideration, as is also the design of the bridges across the Harlem and approaches thereto.

All of the great park and driveway projects which are gradually making New York one of the most beautiful cities in the world, have been strenuously opposed at their inception as extravagant, and the antagonism of private, hence temporary interests has had to be overcome. And yet in every instance the result has been a good investment for the city in increased real estate values, not to speak of the added beauty and attractiveness of the city nor the pleasure given to its citizens, assets of incomparable value.

#### BEAUTIFY THE GATEWAY.

In conclusion I would respectfully ask your

attention to the possibilities as a civic centre of the main avenue of approach to the Borough of The Bronx by way of the Third Ave. Bridge from the Harlem River to the plaza at the junction of Third, Lincoln and Morris aves. and 138th st. Third ave. below the plaza widens out to 140 feet, a broad, open thoroughfare unobstructed by elevated tracks, affording fine vistas in all directions, and terminating in the bridge over the Harlem, and offers an ideal location for public buildings, such, for instance, as an armory, court house, fire house, market, police station, school, etc. One block away is one of the Carnegie libraries.

All of the various railroads of the Bronx centre here making it the most convenient and accessible point in our Borough from every direction. Property fronting on it is for the most part undeveloped, so that a comprehensive scheme of improvement could be carried out which would make a most attractive gateway to the Borough of The Bronx, combining beauty and utility and forming one of the show places of the city.

#### GREAT POSSIBILITIES.

Gentleman of the Commission: We heartily welcome your visit to this borough. We believe it is pregnant with great possibilities. We need your help. To use a homely comparison, the growing youth requires more careful attention than the mature man. A large part of our borough is as yet undeveloped. Its possibilities have not yet begun to be appreciated. If through your aid it can be made more beautiful, more nearly up to twentieth century ideas, you will place this borough and our common city under a debt of gratitude.

To remodel the older sections of the city is expensive—almost prohibitively so. To properly plan and shape the development of new localities is no more expensive than to improperly plan them and ultimately yields big returns to the city's tax budget.

It has been proposed to send a commission to Manila to devise some definite and rational plan for the development of that city. Why should we be more zealous to beautify Manila in a distant land, which may slip from our grasp than we are to take advantage of the opportunity at our own door to make the great City of New York the city beautiful, the pride of the land, attracting people here as they are now drawn to Paris, Venice and other Old World cities.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

ALBERT E. DAVIS,

President, North Side Board of Trade.  
Borough of The Bronx,  
July 27, 1904.







## THE RISSE PLAN

Submitted to and approved by civic bodies and citizens, and by a unanimous vote of the Board of Public Improvements, after two public hearings, on August 31, 1898. Awarded first prize at Paris Exposition, and exhibited at St. Louis, a comprehensive plan in harmony with the modern idea of the City Beautiful.





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Residence of  
HON. SAML. MAC MILLAN Morris Heights



MR. JOHN CLAFLIN Kingsbridge



MRS. EAMES

"Sedgwick Ave. + bordered  
with handsome residences + +  
of some of New York's wealthiest  
and most prominent citizens."

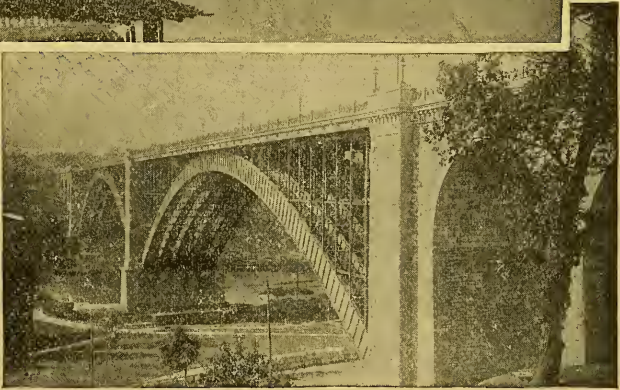
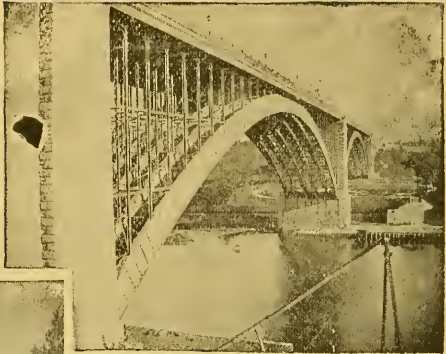


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Davis, J. C.	Roofing,	515 Courtlandt Ave.
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Fulle, John	Real Estate,	379 East 169th St.
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Gumbleton, Henry A.	Secretary to President, Borough of The Bronx,	Borough Building
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Haffen, John	Pres. Dollar Savings Bank,	644 East 152d St.
Haffen, Louis F.	Borough President,	Borough Building
Hager, Frederick W.	Band Master,	953 Trinity Ave.



*Washington  
Bridge*



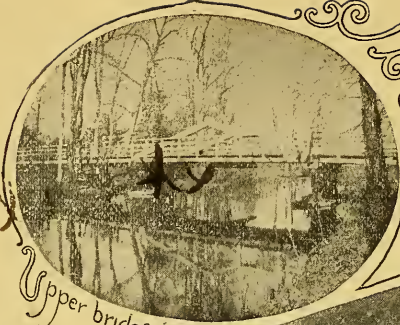
Haebler, Theo.	Brewer,	St. Ann's Ave. and 156th St.
Hall, Alfred	Steel Engraver,	Beech Terrace and 143d St.
Hall Ernest,	Attorney and Counsellor,	1087 Boston Road
Hall, H. B.	Steel Engraver,	990 Trinity Ave.
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Harrington, M. J.	Concrete Contractor,	114 East 23d St.
Heintz, John C.	Eichler Brewing Co.,	169th St. and Third Ave.
Hiers, W. F.	Cashier,	350 Alexander Ave.
Hirshkind, Max	Clothing,	Mt. Vernon, N. Y.
Hennessy, Joseph P.	Lawyer,	Boston Ave. and 169th St.
Hollerith, Geo.	Builder,	1421 Prospect Ave,
Hollerith, Henry	Builder,	1421 Prospect Ave.
Holmes, J. S.	Metropolitan Life Ins. Co.,	Westchester and Third Aves.
Holmes, D. B.	Lawyer,	290 Broadway
Hottenroth, Fred'k W.	Attorney and Counsellor,	160 Broadway
Hupfel, Adolph G.	Hupfel Brewing Co.,	161st St. and Third Ave.
Howe, Lucius W.	Stenographer,	Williamsbridge
Harper, Harry	Paint Supplies,	2698 Third Ave.
Hitchcock, Fred.	Fish Market,	2726 Third Ave.
Isaacs, Isidor	Publisher,	2796 Third Ave.
Johnson, Frederick	Real Estate,	East 156th St.
Judge, J. Tangney	Inspector,	2804 Third Ave.
Jones, Dr Israel C.	Supt. Home for Incurables,	Fordham.
Kuntz, Louis	Real Estate	879 East 169th St.
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Keil, Francis	Hardware Manufacturer,	683 East 163d St.
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Kiesling, Chas.	Printer,	623 East 148th St.
Knoepfel, John H.	Upholsterer,	1345 Franklin Ave.
Kountze, Luther	Banker,	120 Broadway
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Lawson, Chas. B.	Pianos,	146th St. and Mott Ave.
Lawton, Newbury D.	Attorney and Counsellor,	40 Wall St.
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Levy, Chas' A.	Westchester Clothing Co.,	2714 Third Ave.
Levy, Louis E.	Bostonian Department Store,	164th St. and Third Ave.
Lipps, Jr., Henry	Contractor,	Williamsbridge
Livingston, Philip	Attorney and Counsellor,	141 Broadway
Lorenze, Jr., A. H.	Insp'ctor,	1651 Bathgate Ave.
MacMillan, Samuel	Builder,	105 Havemeyer Bldg.
Marshall, Fielding L.	Attorney and Counsellor,	32 Nassau St.
Martin, Edwin K.	Real Estate,	290 Broadway
Marx, Samuel	Bronx Dep't Store,	145th St. and Third Ave.
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McGuire, Eugene	Hotel Proprietor,	608 East 138th St.
McOwen, Anthony	Real Estate,	515 Wales Ave,
McLaughlin, Walter	Real Estate,	3418 Third Ave.
McQuay, B. Frank	Real Estate,	Third Ave. and 148th St.
Meyerhoff, Chas, A. D.	Proof Reader,	149th St. and Bergen Ave.
Meyer, Henry	Coal,	137th St. and Rider ave.
Montgomery, Wm R.	Hamilton Bank,	765 Tremont Ave.
Morris, Dave H.	Broker,	68 Broad St.
Morris, Alfred H.	Broker,	68 Broad St.
Morris, Henry Lewis	Attorney and Counsellor,	16 Exchange Pl.
Morris, Fordham	Attorney and Counsellor,	16 Exchange Pl.
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Mott, Jordan L.	Iron Works,	2122 Fifth Ave.
Mohr, Wm. F.	Furniture Mfr.,	135th St. and Willow Ave.
Nelson, William	Iron Works,	1023 Washington Ave.
Niles, W. W.	Attorney and Counsellor,	11 Wall St.
Ott, Geo.	Retired,	35 Kelly St.
O'Connell, Ed. R.	Tile Contractor,	929 East 151st St.
Oliver, Francis V. S.	Attorney and Counsellor,	220 Braadway
Phelps, Walter E.	Manager, Lawyers' Title Insurance Co.	2792 Third Ave.
Peck, Wm. D.	Attorney and Counsellor,	80 Broadway

Perlhefter, John R.	Retired,	1129 East 156th St.
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Piser Abraham	Furniture,	150th St. and Third Ave.
Press, T. Channon	Attorney and Counsellor	10 Wall St.
Pfister, John	Hotel,	2645 Third Ave.
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Saward, F. E.	Editor Coal Trade Journal,	Times Building
Schaefer, Edward C.	President Germania Bank,	Third Ave. and 155th St.
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Schilling, F. A.	Botanical Garden,	Bronx Park.
Sil'eck, H. G.	Lumber,	Foot East 135th St.
Singhi, H. W.	Builder,	184th St. and Jerome Ave.
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Smith, John T.	Real Estate,	671 East 135th St.
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Stark, George	Lumber,	Gerard Ave. and 138th St.
Steeves, J. F.	Lumber,	Mott and Park Aves.
Stern, Benjamin	Drv Goods,	32 West 23d St.
Steiger, Frederick	Plumber,	3346 Third Ave.
Stephens, Olin J.	Coal,	444 East 138th St.
Steurer, Chas. D.	Publisher,	148th St. and Bergen Ave.
Stoughton, Chas. W.	Architect,	1655 Washington Ave.
Stonebridge, Ceo. E.	Collector,	4143 Park Ave.
Stutchbury, W. H.	Manager, Edwards & Co., Electricians,	409 East 144th St.
Sicker, A. T.	Lawyer,	3608 Third Ave.
Shipway, John H.	Marble,	Foot E. 136th st.
Timpson, Thos. W.	Cashier,	12 Spruce St.
Ten Eyck, Wm. H.	Aqueduct Commissioner,	679 East 135th St.
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Tiffany, George F.	Real Estate,	Westchester Ave. and So. Boulevard
Trimmer, Wesley H.	Coal,	133d St. near Third Ave.
Trull, Wm. C.	Attorney and Counsellor,	206 Broadway
Von Vollenhoven, A.	Upholsterer,	Mott Ave. and 138th St.
Weiber, W. H.	Builder,	76 E. 86th St.
Walter, Martin	Real Estate,	706 Tremont Ave.
Walworth, Jno. C.	Walworth Institute,	149th St. and Third Ave.
Warren, Samuel	Watson Estate,	260 Church St.
Webber, Richard	Packing House,	Third Ave. and 120th St.
Weiffenbach, Geo. W.	Attorney and Counsellor,	155 Broadway
Weiner, Alphonse	Jeweler,	2693 Third Ave.
Wells, James L.	Real Estate,	141 Broadway
Westergren, H. F.	Metal Works,	433 East 144th St.
Wilcox, F. A.	Attorney and Counsellor,	1 Broadway
Wiegler, Chas. H.	Metropolitan Dye Works,	West Farms
Williamson, Wm. J.	Real Estate,	147th St. and Third Ave.
Williams n, John W.	Hotel,	Westchester and Prospect Aves.
Wilkeas, Ernest A. W.	Physician,	284 Alexander Ave.
Winter, Julius	Pianos,	137th St. and So. Boulevard
Wood, Robert C.	Banker,	30 Broad St.
Wright & Son, Wm. H.	Builders,	148th St. and Third Ave.
Watson, J. C.	Grain,	135th St. and Mott Haven Canal
Wable, Chas. G. F.	Lawyer,	1239 Franklin Ave.
Zeltner, Wm. H.	Zeltner Brewing Co.,	170th St. and Third Ave.



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