

Section I:

General Information

1. Proponent's Name: CHRISTIAN ZAINO
 1. Founder and President, Dyker Heights Historical Society
 2. Historian, Dyker Heights Civic Association
2. Proponent's Address:
 1. Permanent: 1126-84th Street Brooklyn, NY 11228
3. Proponent's Contact Information:
 1. Email address: historian@dykerheightscivicassociation.com
4. Proposed Public Area to be named: Southwest corner on 82nd Street and 11th Avenue.
5. Proposed name for the Public Area (see Figure 1):
 1. Walter L. Johnson Corner
 2. I am open to any variation on the above.
6. Does the Public Area currently have a name: No
7. If yes: N/A
8. If you propose that the Public Area be named after an individual or organization, please indicate which: Individual

Section II:

Requests for Namings after an Individual

1. Full name of the proposed 'Individual Honoree': Walter Loveridge Johnson (**see Figures 2 - 4**).
2. Date of death of the proposed 'Individual Honoree': 06/02/1953¹
3. Place of death of the proposed 'Individual Honoree': New Jersey
4. Cause of death of the proposed 'Individual Honoree': Unknown
5. Date of birth of the proposed 'Individual Honoree': 08/13/1873
6. Place of birth of the proposed 'Individual Honoree': Eastern Long Island
7. Relationship of proponent to proposed 'Individual Honoree': None
8. Has any other public area been named after the proposed 'Individual Honoree': NO
9. If yes:
10. Has the proposed 'Individual Honoree' ever been convicted of a crime: No
11. If yes: N/A
12. Has the proposed 'Individual Honoree' ever been accused of actions involving moral turpitude, unethical behavior or similar actions that could reasonable been seen by members of the community as tending to bring disrepute on the community if a public area is named after the Honoree?: No
13. If yes: N/A
14. Indicate if you claim the proposed 'Individual Honoree' meets any of the following criteria:
 - a. Member of a uniformed force killed in the line of duty: No
 - b. Died while engaged in a heroic act: No
 - c. Died under circumstances of crime, accident, social circumstance or the like that lead to greater awareness within society of the cause of death and a concerted effort to address that problem: No
15. If yes: N/A

16. If the proposed 'Individual Honoree' was a member of a uniformed force who died in the line of duty, please provide following: N/A
17. Did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' live in the community at the time of death:
No
18. If yes: N/A
19. Did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' maintain significant connections with the community as explained in the guidelines: Yes.
20. If Yes, please provide the address or addresses where the proposed 'Individual Honoree' grew up:
- a. Before he married Margaret May Booth on July 3, 1893, Johnson lived at 8205 11th Avenue with his parents and siblings.
 - b. It is believed that the Johnsons also lived in the Fort Hamilton section of New Utrecht before purchasing De Russy's Estate in 1888.
21. Did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' have close relative who lived here at the time of his or her death?: No
22. If yes: N/A
23. Did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' maintain significant connection with the community as explained in the guidelines: Yes
24. If yes:
- a. **Walter L. Johnson was the developer of Dyker Heights. He also donated the land on which St. Philips was built.**
25. Did the act leading to the proposed 'Individual Honoree's' death occur in the district: No
26. If yes: N/A
27. Was the proposed 'Individual Honoree' generally acknowledged in the community as having been the primary driving force behind the establishment or construction of the public area proposed to be named?:
28. If yes:
- a. **Walter L. Johnson was the developer of Dyker Heights.**
 - i. The first house built at the top of the hill (what is now Eleventh Avenue and Eighty-Second Street, at about 110 feet above sea level) was built in the late 1820s by Brigadier General René Edward De Russy of the United States Army (**see Figure 5**). De Russy was a military engineer who built many forts in the United States – from the Canadian border and the eastern seaboard to the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific coast – including Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn. Since this is the tallest natural point in southwest Brooklyn, De Russy built his homestead here – it afforded a clear view of the harbor and its defenses, especially Fort Hamilton which was complete by November of 1831. De Russy died in 1865 and his wife, Helen, sold the property in 1888 to the Johnson's – Frederick Henry and Jane Elisabeth Loveridge (**see Figure 6**).
 - ii. According to the *Brooklyn Eagle*, Frederick Johnson did “much toward developing the locality in which he resided. He was the author of the original New Utrecht Improvement Bill, and an ardent

advocate of the annexation of the Town to this City.”¹ The Town of New Utrecht was annexed to the City of Brooklyn on July 1, 1894. On January 1, 1898, the City of Brooklyn was annexed to the City of New York. Involved with real estate, Johnson was probably very aware of the real estate pressures on and potential of the real estate in New Utrecht. With this in mind, he most likely purchased the De Russy Estate with the intention of building an upscale residential neighborhood similar to Bensonhurst-by-the-Sea, built by James D. Lynch from 1880-1890 in the Bath Beach section of New Utrecht. At that time, *The Real Estate Record* claimed Bensonhurst-by-the-Sea was “the most perfectly developed suburb ever laid out around New York.”² The restrictions placed upon the property made Bensonhurst-by-the-Sea “a model settlement, where some of the most refined, intelligent and cultured of New York and Brooklyn’s citizens have built their homes.”³

- iii. Following Frederick Johnson’s death on August 15, 1893 at the age of 52, his second son, Walter Loveridge Johnson, took over the real estate business and by October of 1895 Walter started Dyker Heights on his parents’ property (**see Figure 7**). Walter L. Johnson named his development “Dyker Heights” after the Dyker Meadow and Beach, which his development overlooks. The meadow and beach received their name from either the Van Dykes (an original New Utrecht family) who built the dykes to drain the meadow, or for the dykes that the Van Dykes built.
- iv. In 1895, Johnson, very much aware of the successful Bensonhurst-by-the-Sea, built three homes (**see Figures 8, 9, and 10**). His home was on the southwest corner of Eleventh Avenue and Eighty-Second Street (across the Avenue from the home of his mother), Albert Edward Parfitt’s home was on Eighty-Second Street next to Johnson’s, and the last, closest to Tenth Avenue, was the home of Arthur S. Tuttle who was Assistant Engineer of The Water Supply of The City Works Department of The City of Brooklyn. Parfitt was the architect of these three homes. Johnson’s house burned down before 1900, Parfitt’s was demolished by a developer in 1928 and replaced with seven, run-of-the-mill, fully detached, single-family homes, and Tuttle’s house was remodeled over 10 years ago and clad in bright-white and sky-blue brick.
- v. Walter L. Johnson was able to develop this portion of New Utrecht woodland into a residential community by making necessary improvements to it. In 1890, the only roads present were Kings Highway, Eighty-Sixth Street, Denyse’s Lane, and a small unnamed

1 *Brooklyn Eagle*, “Frederick H. Johnson’s Sudden Death.” August 15, 1893, p. 1.

2 Marc Linder and Lawrence S. Zacharias, *Of Cabbages and Kings County: Agriculture and The Formation of Modern Brooklyn* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), p. 275.

3 Linder and Zacharias, p. 275.

road near Tenth Avenue – none of which were paved and only Eighty-Sixth Street was a thoroughfare specifically planned as such. The remaining land was unimproved. Johnson continued Brooklyn’s street grid south with macadam pavement, graded the properties, installed gas, water, telephone, and electricity lines, and planted sugar maple trees – seven on the avenues and twenty along the streets.⁴ This opened over two hundred more building sites between Tenth and Thirteenth avenues as well as between Seventy-Ninth Street and Eighty-Sixth Street.

- vi. Johnson set very high standards for the community, the *Wall Street Journal* explained: “the property is carefully restricted against all nuisances and no building can be erected upon a plot of less than 60 feet in width by 100 feet in depth, and each building must cost at least \$4,000 and stand well back from the street.”⁵ These regulations, which were similar to those of Bensonhurst-by-the-Sea, were active until 1915. However, the most desirable feature of the area was still the “uninterrupted view of the lower bay from the Narrows to Sandy Hook and Atlantic Ocean, [which] is one of the most magnificent in the country, and nowhere else in the consolidated city is there anything to compare it with. From here can be seen a marine panorama hard to beat.”⁶ Dyker Heights was so desirable that important members of society flocked to it. The *Brooklyn Eagle* reported in December of 1899 that this “drain” on the more established social neighborhoods such as Brooklyn Heights and those in Manhattan, “almost threatens to lower the social tone of the neighborhoods where this universal exodus is effecting a gradual change in the character of the population.”⁷
- vii. For more information on Walter L. Johnson and Dyker Heights please read the Wikipedia article at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dyker_Heights as I wrote the article. Or you can check out the Dyker Heights Civic Association history page at <http://www.dykerheightsciviccassociation.com/> and download the Saitta Report as I wrote that as well.
- viii. It should also be known that in September of 1899, Johnson donated the 100x100 lot of land on which St. Philips was built. The *Brooklyn Eagle* wrote on September 20, 1899 that the church was organized in April of 1899.² The article explained that The Ladies’ Guild of the Church of St. Phillippe-by-the-Sea held a “weighing party” at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Moller, (NW corner of 85th and 11th Ave).³ Admission into the party cost one-half cent per

4 Johnson put in all the utilities with the exception of sewers.

5 *Wall Street Journal*, “An Ideal Spot for a Home,” October 24, 1899, p. 2.

6 *Wall Street Journal*, “An Ideal Spot for a Home,” October 24, 1899, p. 2.

7 *Brooklyn Eagle*, “Dyker Heights Development,” December 31, 1899, p. 28.

pound. The money was used for the building fund of St. Phillipe-by-the-Sea, which later became known simply as St. Philips.⁴

29. Did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' demonstrate an extraordinary and consistent voluntary commitment and dedication to the community over a prolonged period of time as explained in the guidelines?: No
30. If yes: N/A
31. Was the proposed 'Individual Honoree' an elective or appointed government official who resided in the community at the time he or she held office, whose tenure was distinguished by extraordinary accomplishment bringing great benefit to the district or whose accomplishments would reasonably be viewed as a great source of pride to our community as explained in the guideline: No
32. If yes: N/A
33. Did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' have accomplishment in business, philanthropy, the arts, the sciences, education, military, government, or otherwise of such extraordinary character as would reasonable be viewed be a great source of pride to our district: No
34. If yes to question 33, did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' live in the district at the time of death: No
35. If yes to question 33, did the proposed 'Individual Honoree' grow up in the district: No
36. If yes to question 33, please explain in detail and describe the evidence you intend to present to the board.
37. Was the proposed 'Individual Honoree' of world, state or local fame and renown whose professional accomplishments in business, the arts, the sciences, education, military, government, or otherwise are of such an extraordinary character that even in an absence of a direct connection to this community, it would be appropriate to honor his or her memory?: No
38. If yes: N/A

1 Personal Conversations with Nancy Hill Holguin, 2005. She is the granddaughter of Walter L. Johnson.

2 *Brooklyn Eagle*, "Will Soon Have a Church" January 21, 1900, page 9.

3 *Brooklyn Eagle*, "Weighing Party's a Success" September 20, 1899, page 18.

4 *Brooklyn Eagle*, "Weighing Party's a Success" September 20, 1899, page 18.