

Brooklyn began here ...

The land that became Boerum Hill was part of the town of Breuckelen, one of the six original Dutch towns that made up what is now the borough of Brooklyn. These original towns were, in the order of their incorporation:

1645, Gravesend settle by English Anabaptist leader Lady Deborah Moody under Dutch patent. (The only American colony founded by a woman.)

1646, Breuckelen, after the ancient village of the same name in Holland

1647, Nieuw Amersfoot, became Flatlands

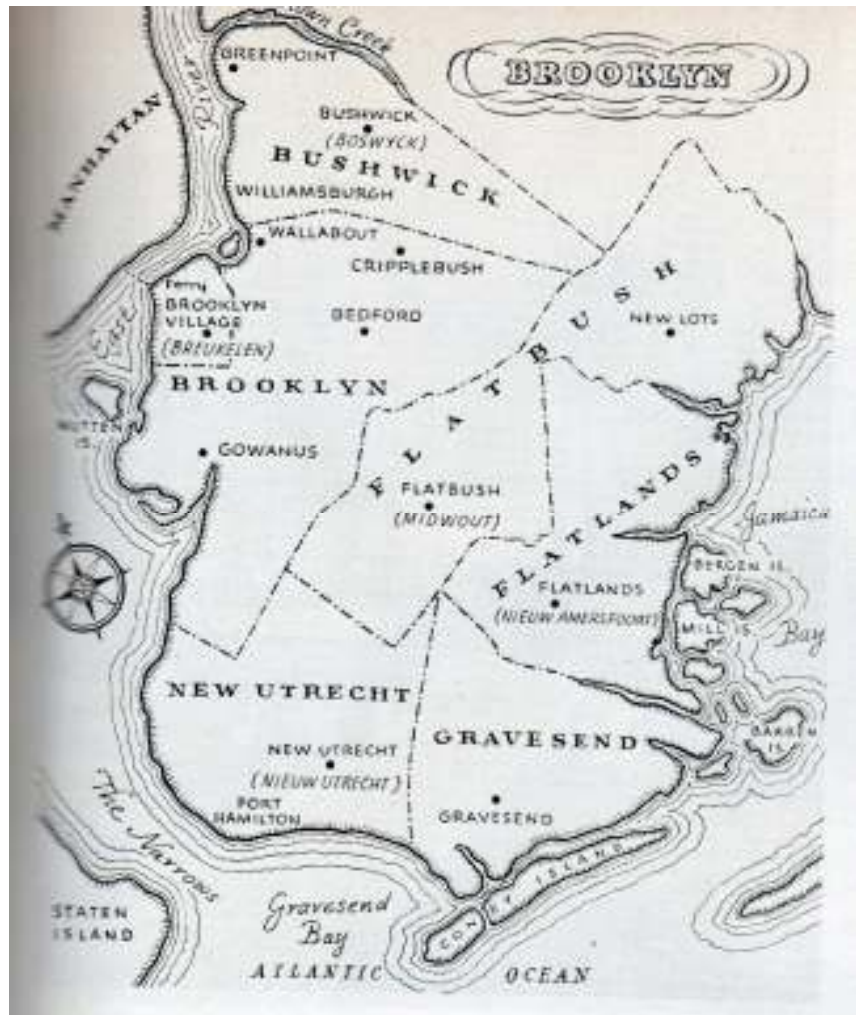
1652, Midwout, became Flatbush

1657, Nieuw Utrecht, after the city of Utrecht, Netherlands

1661, Boswijck, became Bushwick

Breuckelen may have been nearly the earliest incorporated town (earlier even than the capital of the Dutch West India colony located across the East River on the tip of the island of the Manhattoe tribe, New Amsterdam, which was incorporated in 1653) but it was not the first settlement.

That distinction goes to the village of Gowanus, founded in 1636 when agents of the Dutch West India Company purchased nearly 1,000 acres along and south of what is today called the Gowanus Bay, from Gowane, a leader of the Carnarse Indians. Coincidentally, the Dutch word for bay is gouwee. A fact which serves as the foundation for an argument over how Gowanus got its name. The approximate outline of the original village of Gowanus, Long Island's oldest European settlement, can be seen as a green box on the composite map below.





The Boerum Hill neighborhood has in the past been referred to as North Gowanus - the area north of the village of Gowanus which extended as far north as Gowanus creek. Boerum Hill was also (and sometimes is still) referred to as South Brooklyn - the area south of the village of Breuckelen (which extended as far south as Atlantic Avenue) or the southern section of the incorporated town of Brooklyn.

Brooklyn, like the rest of NYC, is a city of neighborhoods. The original 1646 town of Brooklyn is now made of 19 officially designated neighborhoods: Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Heights, Clinton Hill, Downtown Brooklyn, DUMBO, Fort Greene, Fulton Ferry, Navy Yard, Vinegar Hill, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Columbia Street, Red Hook, Gowanus, Park Slope, Sunset Park, Bedford – Stuyvesant, Tompkins Park North, Stuyvesant Heights.

Boerum Hill was created and named in 1964 by Helen Buckler for a Dutch colonial family whose farm extended over a large part of the neighborhood. As for the “Hill” portion of the name, you may have noticed that words such as “hill” and “heights” can be found in roughly one out of every three neighborhood names in the list above. I guess for a long time we’ve been claiming that the best views, the cleanest air and the most elevated status can be found in our neighborhood! Even so, a slight grade can be detected if biking from the south to the north of Boerum Hill.

Look for regular additions to the Boerum Hill history page in the future. If you'd like to contribute to Boerum Hill History or have a historical question about the neighborhood that you want investigated, please use the "Contact Us" tab on the Home page.