

# The Long Island Farmer.

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## BERMEL GAINED BY KISSENA GRAFT, GRAND JURY CHARGES

### IN PRESENTMENT MAKING BITTER ATTACK ON QUEENS BOROUGH PRESIDENT INQUISITORS SAY CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE BY HIS FRIENDS PREVENTS ACCUSATION BEING PROVED SUFFICIENTLY TO JUSTIFY INDICTMENT.

## REMOVAL OF OFFICIAL TO BE URGED AFRESH.

### BERMEL MOVED HIS BOOKS OUT OF COURT'S JURISDICTION, INVESTIGATORS REPORT—CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD CITY BY INFLUENCING BERMEL'S ACTION IS LAID AT DOORS OF SELLERS OF PARK LAND.

## \$20,000 OF GRAFT SUCCESSFULLY TRACED.

Practically accusing Borough President Joseph Bermal of being a conspirator against the public interest and a grafter, but asserting it is impossible to prove it legally because of a "conspiracy of silence" entered into by him and others, the grand jury which has been investigating the Kissena Lake Park purchase scandal made a presentment Saturday. It was handed to Justice Garretson in the Supreme Court in Flushing. Those who read it said it was unparalleled in the history of Queens County in its accusatory bitterness against a high public official and his associates.

With that presentment on record, if plans be adhered to, Attorney General Jackson and Special Deputy Attorney General Vidaver will proceed at once to urge on Governor Hughes the necessity of heading the demand previously made by the grand jury for the removal of Bermal from office. That demand was based on the ground that by his refusal to testify before the grand jury on the plea that to do so would incriminate and degrade him, Bermal admitted he had engaged in criminal acts.

Assertion was made that the Governor could not ignore this presentment, but would call on Bermal to explain his official conduct frankly and fully and take the consequences. Bermal's counsel denied he would resign. The presentment made public many new facts in relation to Bermal, one being that he had caused his books to be removed outside the jurisdiction of the court, and it was impossible for the grand jury to get hold of them for examination. After reviewing in a general way the history of the scandal and the fact that the jurors had made a careful investigation, the grand jury proceeded to reveal much that had been going on in the many weeks of the investigation.

### Two Companies Formed.

"It is in evidence before the grand jury that J. W. Paris and E. A. MacDougall, of Paris & MacDougall, organized two separate corporations, namely, the Queens Park Corporation and the Kissena Park Corporation," the presentment read. "The first consisting of Paris, MacDougall & Hencken, and procured the making of an agreement between these two corporations, which they controlled, that established a valuation of the lands which they had acquired. They then entered into an agreement with George L. Glaser, an attorney of this borough, according to which Glaser was to aid them to sell the lands for a price not less than that agreed upon between the two companies of practically identical ownership. The consideration to Glaser was the promise, contingent upon his success, of 20 per cent of the price obtained for the land. Glaser was employed by Paris & MacDougall, and promised such remuneration because of his influence with Joseph Bermal, the borough's representative on the Board of Estimate."

"Upon the representations made by Glaser to Bermal, the latter aided to secure the placing of the property upon the map of the city for park purposes. Bermal, as a member of the Board of Estimate, voted in favor of the acquisition of the lands of Glaser's clients for park purposes. It is in evidence that on the payment by the city for the lands Glaser received about \$60,000, and deposited it in a special account. Immediately thereafter he drew out of this account at most one-half of it in currency. Two days thereafter he went South, accompanied by Bermal and MacDougall, carrying with him the large sum, and he returned without said sum. He has not satisfactorily accounted to this grand jury for the disposition of the same. On the contrary, he has made conflicting and contradictory statements concerning the disposal of

this money by him, for the making of which this jury has indicted Glaser for perjury.

### Bermal's Deposit.

"It is further in evidence before this grand jury that about the time of the return of Joseph Bermal from his trip with Glaser and MacDougall, Bermal's account in the Corn Exchange Bank in Long Island City was increased by the deposit of a large sum in bills. Concerning this deposit, Bermal made a statement which he sought to corroborate by the testimony of a witness, who presented a written confirmation in the shape of a paper document, for the presentation of which this jury has already indicted the person who offered it as evidence. This jury now states that upon further attempts to procure evidence as to this document, and the allegations that had been made regarding it, three witnesses, including Joseph Bermal, declined to answer the questions put to them, on the ground that to answer might incriminate or degrade them. "In the opinion of this grand jury the facts as narrated above, all in evidence on the sworn testimony of witnesses, warrant the assumption that the parties who acquired the lands afterward sold to the city for park purposes engaged in a conspiracy in fact, if not a criminal conspiracy in the eyes of the law, to defraud the city of New York, first, with each other by means of a multiplicity of corporations and agreements, which had for their object to cloud the real ownership of the property they were seeking to sell, and to establish a fictitious valuation for the same; and later, with George L. Glaser to induce the action of the Borough President as a member of the Board of Estimate."

### The Jurors have been able, owing to a conspiracy of silence on the part of several witnesses, and the continued evasion of service by others, to do no more than inferentially demonstrate that the Borough President, Joseph Bermal, was a beneficiary of this conspiracy, but they have recorded their judgment that he is an unfit man to remain as President of this Borough by presenting to the Governor of the state a statement of his refusal to answer proper questions on the grounds of possible incrimination by such answers as evidence of that unfitness.

### Brings Out New Graft.

"Although this grand jury finds that it is not warranted, because of the reasons stated, in bringing indictments for criminal conspiracy and bribery against the persons named, it nevertheless feels that the public interests of the Borough of Queens demand that the court and the public be informed of the conditions and circumstances revealed in this investigation."

"In the interest of the public of Queens County this grand jury invites the attention of the court to certain further evidence exhibited in its minutes which indicates the connection of certain officials of this borough with the unlawful taking of moneys from corporations doing business in the borough presumably for favors shown said corporations, or in the nature of unlawful tribute from such corporations."

### \$20,000 Got by Bermal's Brother.

"We ask the attention of the court especially to the testimony as to the collection by Charles Bermal in December, 1907, of \$20,000 in currency on account of his brother, Joseph Bermal, the president of the borough, and by his instructions, from the secretary of the Degnon Contracting Company; the payment of about \$15,000 of the funds thus received by Charles Bermal to one Frost, and the payment of this sum by Frost to purchase stock in a

## BURGESS AGAINST GAMBLING.

The Bishop Writes a Forceful Letter to Senator Agnew.

At Albany on Wednesday the bill to abolish racetrack gambling had a Legislative hearing, and the gambling interests were so hard pushed that they retreated under a proposition for a compromise. Senator Agnew, who introduced the anti-gambling bill, gave out the following letter from Bishop Burgess, of the diocese of Long Island:

"To the Hon. George B. Agnew, Senate Chamber, Albany, N. Y.  
"My Dear Senator Agnew: The Governor's message to the Legislature has, in my opinion, made a great impression upon the clergymen and church people in this state on account of the paragraph in which he makes clear the violation of the Constitution by gambling carried on at the racetrack. It sometimes seems unfortunate that the church has to oppose the amusements of the people, but the clergy know better than the others the fearful results of the gambling craze when once it takes possession of the mind. The number of boys and young men who have been ruined by being brought within the influence of organized gambling can hardly be estimated. The church has no opposition to horse racing in and out of itself, nor do we believe that the breed of horses, any more than the manufacture of automobiles, will be affected by the abolishing of systematic betting within the limits of the racetrack. It is a specious argument which claims that poolrooms would be carried on in open defiance of the law, provided what is called the 'racetrack bill' were passed."

"I desire to express my great approval of the general provisions of this bill, and my conviction that, if the people of the state could really speak through their Senators and Legislators they would heartily endorse the Governor's message. I have already spoken of the matter two or three times publicly, and would be glad to do anything in my power to assist in this work."  
"Assuring you of my cordial sympathy in your effort, I am, very sincerely yours,  
"FREDERICK BURGESS,  
"Bishop of Long Island."

## VIDAVER ARRESTED.

Kissena Park Fraud Investigator Accused of Extorting \$500.

Nathan Vidaver, of Manhattan, Deputy Attorney General, who conducted the Kissena Park fraud investigation in this county before the grand jury, was arrested in Manhattan on Wednesday on a charge of extorting money from William R. Montgomery, former president of the Hamilton Bank. Vidaver investigated this bank in the panic and Montgomery was deposed from the presidency. The charge in substance is that Vidaver told Montgomery that if he should open another bank the Attorney General would close it forthwith unless he (Montgomery) paid to Vidaver \$500 as a retainer.

Montgomery put the matter in the hands of District Attorney Jerome, who put Detectives Fitzsimons and Rayne on the case. They sat concealed in Montgomery's house and heard Vidaver, they say, make demand for the money. Montgomery agreed to pay the money to Vidaver at the Astor House on Wednesday. Montgomery met Vidaver there and passed him five \$100 bills which Detective Fitzsimons had previously marked for identification. As soon as Vidaver put the money in his pocket the detectives arrested him. On their demand he passed over the marked bills.

Two years and six months at hard labor in state prison is the maximum penalty of the offense, if conviction follows.

Two Victims of the Iron Horse.

Charles De Mont was killed by a train on the Long Island Railroad at Rockville Centre on Monday morning. De Mont came to Rockville Centre to work at sinking wells to increase Brooklyn's water supply. His body was found near the track. He was 40 years old.

At 6:30 o'clock Monday evening Edward Blensknig, 25 years old, a laborer, residing at South and Jay streets, Jamaica, while walking on the Long Island Railroad track in Atlantic avenue at Dunton, was struck by a northbound train and killed.

Fell on Street; Broke Leg.

After alighting from a car of the Metropolitan car line, Glendale, at 12:45 Saturday morning, Ida Barr, 40 years old, fell on the street and sustained a fracture of the left leg.

Flushing-Jamaica Bay Canal.

Assemblyman De Groot, of Queens, has introduced a bill providing for a survey at the expense of the state for a canal connecting Flushing Bay with Jamaica Bay.

Queens Borough Mortality.

During the week ending February 29 there were 65 deaths, 142 births and 20 marriages in the Borough of Queens.

## NEWS OF THE CHURCHES.

What Is Going on Among the Denominations of Three Counties.

Rev. Arthur Newman, at the communion service Sabbath morning, concluded his twenty-fifth year of service with the Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church.

By a unanimous vote of the official board, the Rev. H. Sargent Scarborough, pastor of the First Methodist Church of Amityville, has been called for another year, with a substantial increase in salary.

The Rev. Walter W. Winans, pastor of the Methodist Church at Flushing, who declined an invitation to remain with the church another year, has received a second and urgent invitation, and has it under consideration.

Sunday promises to be a big day in the history of St. John's Hospital in Long Island City. It will be the occasion of the formal opening of the new wing of the institution. Bishop McDonnell will officiate at the ceremony and make an address.

The Rev. Charles Sneeder, of Brooklyn, who was recently extended a call to become rector of St. George Episcopal Church at Hempstead, has accepted the call. The salary will be \$2,000, an increase of \$500 above that received by his predecessor. The use of the historic parsonage, which has been fitted up with all modern improvements, goes with the position.

The chapel built at Evergreen, Newtown, by the First German Presbyterian Church, of Brooklyn, as a mission, was dedicated on Sunday. The service was in the German language. The building cost \$24,000. For the present it is to serve as Sunday school and church. Later a church edifice will be erected, to cost \$60,000.

Rev. H. D. Waller, rector of St. George's parish of Flushing, who has supervision over St. Paul's chapel in College Point, presided at the services there on Sunday evening. Mr. Waller announced the close of the connection of Rev. John C. McKim as vicar of the chapel, and announced that he would be succeeded by Rev. William A. Brathwaite, who has been rector of Emmanuel Church, Adams, N. Y. The new vicar will take charge the first Sunday after Easter.

Girl Says She Was Betrayed.

Isaac Jordan Sherratt, jr., organist in St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, in Brooklyn Manor, Woodhaven, was arrested Tuesday evening on a warrant issued by Magistrate Gilroy, in the Far Rockaway Court, to Martha Goldsmith, daughter of Henry H. Goldsmith, of Woodhaven, in which the girl charges the organist with having betrayed her. Sherratt, who is 20 years old, lives with his parents on Ferris street, Woodhaven, near the Goldsmith's home.

The warrant was served on Sherratt by Court Officer Wolf when he returned home from business Tuesday evening. He was taken to the Richmond Hill police station, where his parents furnished bail before Judge Humphrey, who accommodately traveled from his home in Jamaica to sign the bond.

Single Ride Must Be Five Cents.

The Public Service Commission in the Second District announced Friday that it had ordered the New York & Long Island Traction Company to limit its rate to ten cents for a continuous ride in either direction over its entire line, and five cents for a single ride, not exceeding five miles in either direction along its road. The company has been charging ten cents between Hempstead and Freeport, where the distance is less than five miles.

Will Welcome the Knights.

The committee in charge of the arrangements for the entertainment of the thousands of delegates who will attend the annual state convention of the Knights of Columbus, to be held at Far Rockaway on May 12, 13 and 14, has begun work.

It is proposed to hold a ball during the convention and also to give a theatrical performance for the entertainment of the delegates and visitors who will be at Far Rockaway during the convention week.

## TAXPAYERS MAKE A KICK.

Increased Assessments Arouse the People of Richmond Hill.

Over four hundred taxpayers assembled in Richmond Hill on Tuesday night to protest against what they declared to be an unfair assessment of property in the Fourth Ward. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Board of Trade.

President Bullard read figures showing how the assessments of some of the wards of Queens have increased disproportionately. The assessed value of the Second Ward in 1907 was \$47,276,370; Third Ward, \$29,575,075, and the Fourth Ward, \$48,816,370. In 1908 the Second Ward is assessed \$59,444,000, the Third Ward \$48,000,000 and the Fourth Ward \$77,650,000. Mr. Bullard called attention to the fact that most of the borough officials reside in the Second Ward.

Frank L. Entwistle and Mr. Schwartz addressed the meeting. The latter declared that the assessment of Manhattan is based on 75 per cent of the forced sale price of property; in the Bronx it is 50 per cent of the asked price, but in the Fourth Ward of Queens it is 90 to 100 per cent.

Arick H. Man, a large property holder, believed that the Fourth Ward had been discriminated against. The Man property was assessed last year at \$300,000, he said, while this year the assessors have valued it at \$700,000. In the Fourth Ward the assessors apparently took as a basis for valuation the high prices that were obtained for property at the height of an unreasonable boom that has petered out.

Is there a man in Richmond Hill or elsewhere who will sell his property at the assessed value? If not, he will get no relief from the assessors. But if the disparity in the percentage of assessment, borough for borough, is as stated, the charter is violated and relief can be had by appeal to the Supreme Court. We do not expect such action to be taken. The increase in the Fourth Ward is warranted by the advance in land values, as demonstrated by sales, and the advance in building values is warranted because the ward has grown in values equal to that of all the rest of the borough. Mr. Man is right when he says that the increase is due to an unreasonable boom "that has petered out," but the assessors had to take notice of it and of the prices quoted. We do not doubt that all that speculators falsely inflated figures, but that is one of the plagues the people have got to contend with.

Found Dead in Swamp.

Michael White, a farmer, living near Riverhead, was found dead Sunday morning in a few inches of water in a swamp hole with his wagon overturned on him and his mired team standing knee deep in the morass. It is supposed that White's team blundered into the swamp hole, and when White made an effort to turn about he crumpled the wagon and it went over, carrying him down and drowning him. Later evidence changed the views of the authorities. It was discovered that White was accompanied by Joseph Novack, whom he had employed as a farmhand a few days before. They were drinking on Saturday night in Riverhead.

Novack has disappeared. White had \$25 with him before starting home. When his body was found there was only some small change in his pockets.

Plan Double Racing Day.

For the first time in years in this state there will be a double racing day. On Decoration Day, in the morning, the United Hunts' Racing Association will hold a steeplechase meet at its new course opposite Belmont Park, at Queens, while in the afternoon will be the regular four stake event programme of the Westchester Racing Association at the Belmont Park track.

Put a Bullet in His Breast.

Frank E. Kerr, 30 years old, and married, a teacher in Public School 33, Flushing, shot himself in the left breast at his home Monday morning. He was removed to the Flushing Hospital.

Mr. Kerr came to Flushing from New Jersey six months ago. He has been in poor health of late and was threatened with nervous prostration.

Thieves Get Shoes and Jewelry.

Thieves stole eighty-five pairs of new shoes from the store of H. Orner in Long Island City early Thursday morning.

The home of Mr. Eberle, at Evergreen, was entered by sneak thieves Tuesday evening and clothing, a gold watch and two rings, valued at \$200, were taken.

\$550 for Nassau Hospital.

About \$550 was realized from the fair and supper held Tuesday afternoon and evening in Bryant Hall, at Reay's, for the benefit of Nassau Hospital at Mineola.

New Deed Commissioners.

The Board of Aldermen has appointed the following Commissioners of Deeds: James Barker, Richmond Hill; William B. Parsons, Flushing; Charles C. Robesch, Queens.

## THE WEEK'S FIRE RECORD.

Two Families Made Homeless at Merrick—Damage in Other Places.

Fire was discovered Saturday noon in the cellar of a two-story frame building at First street and Warburton avenue, Bayside, owned and occupied by Bridgett & Smith, causing damage of \$100.

At 7:30 o'clock Sunday evening fire occurred on the first floor of the dwelling at No. 40 Park View avenue, Glendale, owned and occupied by Frederick Wolf, causing damage of \$50 to building and \$300 to contents.

At 3:30 o'clock Saturday morning fire of incendiary origin occurred in the unoccupied dwelling at No. 234 South street, Jamaica, owned by Morris Siegel, causing damage of \$5,000. A quantity of excelsior, saturated with kerosene oil, was found in the dwelling by the firemen.

At 7:30 o'clock Saturday evening fire occurred on the top floor of the dwelling in Beaufort street, Dunton, owned and occupied by Augustus Pau, causing damage of \$2,000 to building and \$800 to contents. The fire extended to the adjoining house on the east side, owned and occupied by Edward Bell, causing damage of \$1,000 to building and \$400 to contents. The fire also extended to the house on the west side, owned and occupied by Henry Heddendery, causing damage to building of \$200.

Fire at 2:30 o'clock Saturday morning destroyed the two-family dwelling in Merrick owned by Mrs. Sophie B. Cornell, a widow, and occupied by her three children and Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Wachtel and three children. The house, a new one, was discovered to be on fire by Mrs. Cornell. Wachtel was away doing night duty and did not know his home was burned until he went off duty next morning. After arousing her own children Mrs. Cornell awakened Mrs. Wachtel, and the two families were forced to flee from the burning structure in their night clothes. The loss is \$7,000.

Lawyers Keep Courts Idle.

Justice Garretson, in the Supreme Court at Flushing on Monday, charged the grand jury for the March term of court. Henry T. Weeks, of Bayside, was sworn in as foreman.

"There is no matter to which I will call your attention especially," said Justice Garretson. "You will have to consider largely the routine business that usually comes before a grand jury."

Justice Garretson gave the usual charge about keeping the proceedings of the grand jury secret and directing the jury to proceed in their investigations without fear or favor. After stopping for a moment to get the full attention of the jury, Justice Garretson added significantly:

"No grand juror can be called to account outside for what he does in the line of his duty in the grand jury room."

Although there were fourteen cases on the calendar, Justice Garretson found upon calling it that not a single case was ready, and he said some harsh things to the lawyers and dismissed several of the cases. Both parts of the court were compelled to adjourn for the day after the calendar was called.

Boy Sent to a Reformatory.

Otto Verino, 16 years old, living with his parents at No. 150 Washington street, Jamaica, was committed to the City Reformatory by Magistrate Gilroy at Far Rockaway on Monday. The boy was arrested on complaint of his father, and when arraigned pleaded for one more chance. Verino said his son did not want to work, remained out all night and kept bad company. He was placed in the custody of Probationary Officer Sullivan, but broke his parole and was re-arrested.

Dentist to the Sessions.

Counsel for William Davenport, a dentist, of No. 394 Fulton street, Jamaica, waived examination for his client before Magistrate Gilroy at Far Rockaway on Monday and was paroled for the Court of Special Sessions. Davenport was arrested, charged by Mrs. Sadie D. Bennett, a boarding house keeper, of No. 104 Flushing avenue, Jamaica, with having defrauded her out of several months board.

Bell—Richmond.

Miss Edith Richmond, elder daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Edwin Richmond, and Walter Irving Bell were married Wednesday evening at the parsonage of the First Baptist Church, Jamaica. The ceremony was performed by the father of the bride, pastor of the church, and was witnessed only by the immediate relatives of the bridal couple. Mr. and Mrs. Bell will reside in Jamaica.

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