

Arterial Scrapbook No. 36



PARK GETS SHORT REPRIEVE - Bergen Park, which will disappear under concrete lanes of the new east-west section of the Amsterdam downtown arterial system, has been given a demolition reprieve for the summer. When the coolness of fall

prevents further enjoyment of the trees and benches, the remainder of the big trees will come down. The park was named in memory of Lt. James T. Bergen, who was killed in World War I. (Donlon)

Little Bergen Park in Path of Arterial

What in recent years has been known as "Bergen Park" had its origins in the past century when this tract at the corner of West Main and Pearl Streets was permitted to remain green as new structures appeared to the west and along Pearl Street.

There was a small house that stood close to the street intersection, the home of Augustus Clark and officially listed as at 47 West Main St. To the townspeople, it was the "General Clark Home" that occupied only a small section of the lot, 189 feet on West Main and 235 feet on Pearl. Trees abounded.

About 1900, this property was sold by the Clarks to George Kellogg who lived on the easterly corner of West Main and Pearl. A stable deluxe was erected at the northerly end of the lot in 1901 and the little Clark home at the southerly end was razed in further improvement of the sylvan scene.

For the next few years the situation was status quo and then on May 7, 1918 the Kelloggs sold the land to the City of Amsterdam for \$28,000 of the \$31,000 asking price. A combined park and firehouse site was in

mind of Mayor Seely Conover and the alderman . . . some of the aldermen, including F. S. Belotti, Charles F. Hagaman, Martin I. Hartley, John Hunger-schafer and Edward S. Whitlock.

Alderman D. C. Hewitt, John Humler and James F. Sheridan didn't think much of the proposed acquisition. It was "too close to the steam and electric railroads and to the motoring turnpike," and it would cost too much to remodel the Kellogg garage into a fire station. The mayor held that Architect Leland Niles said it could be done for between \$6,000 and \$8,000, the vote was taken and the City of Amsterdam had its one and only public park in the downtown area.

Became "Bergen Park"

Another three years, 1921, and the name of the park underwent change to "Bergen Park." The change was made official at the Jan. 1, 1921 meeting of the Common Council.

Purpose of the meeting was to honor the memory of Lt. James T. Bergen, Amsterdamian and member of Co. H of the 105th Infantry, 27th Division,

who lost his life on a World War I battlefield.*

Objections of the dissenting aldermen were confirmed many times through the years by those who sat on the park benches along the New York Central. It was noisy and the view across the Mohawk was not particularly picturesque. But among unfulfilled predictions were the warnings that it would be a hazard for the children because few of the younger generation went there.

As parks come, it wasn't much, but it was better than nothing. As parks go, this one was doomed by the arterial designers who wanted a straight line between the Market and Main corner and the Wall Street intersection of West Main Street. As the wreckers began to thin out the trees, protests were heard. Those standing were given a reprieve until such time as they have shed their leaves and the barrenness of approaching winter season brings the equally cruel winds whose howls will drown out the Chorus of Protest. Concrete lanes will bury the evidence.