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PART TWO FROM FARMS TO SUBURBS: THE REAL ESTATE MARKETINDUCED SELLOUT AND THE RESISTANCE

Rome was not built in one day, nor can Brooklyn be.

— "The Progress of the Consolidation Commission," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, August 28, 1873



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5. COMPARATIVE DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BROOKLYN AND RURAL KINGS COUNTY

If there ever existed a city whose resources were undeveloped . . . it is Brooklyn. No other place . . . that possesses a tithe of its natural advantages suffers them to lie unimproved, when such rich returns would assuredly wait upon the expenditure of capital and enterprise. . . . But perhaps, after all, profit and interest is the best awakener, and when it is clearly seen that great improvements may be made to pay, they will be forthcoming.

— Walt Whitman, "The Future of Brooklyn," July 14, 1858

As employment in the New York metropolitan region grew in tandem with the expansion of manufacturing and a variety of services, and as the region's potential for population growth increased through immigration from abroad and internal migration following the Civil War, the demand for affordable housing increased as well. As the urban transportation system was extended outward into rural Kings County, the spaces available for housing not only became more attractive, but were increasingly tied to the salaries and wages that could be earned in the more densely populated sections of Brooklyn and Manhattan. All these factors tending to push up the rents on rural Kings County land — the city's attraction as a population center, its growth as a labor market, and the expansion of urban and suburban transportation — were dynamically interrelated and linked to the potential residential sites' proximity to Brooklyn and Manhattan in time and convenience.



Early on in Manhattan's explosive development, elites expressed concern about where the multitudes would be housed that a dynamic capitalist economy had to have at its disposal in rapidly varying quantities. In 1873, a few days before the election that approved the annexation by New York City of parts of Westchester County, the *New York Times* editorialized that "New-York cannot be depopulated, and it must therefore be extended." ¹

The following year the newspaper devoted an entire page to the "very important" question for "every man, woman, and child of the City of New York," of the availability of the suburbs for this extension. A year after parts of what are now the Bronx were annexed from Westchester County to the city in the first of its acts of territorial self-aggrandizement, the newspaper pronounced the "occupation of . . . suburban homes" to be the subject "which next to her commerce most directly touches the welfare of the Metropolis." The issue, however, was distinctly defined along class axes. "To a man of large material resources, New York is good enough to-day, as it will afford him an aristocratic town residence . . . and a Summer residence wherever he chooses to place it, so that he reaches his counting-room before noon" and could arrive home by six o'clock after a three-hour express train trip:

But New York is not made up of such men, nor does it altogether depend on them for its prosperity. That merchant would be powerless without the hundred clerks, porters, and messengers in his employ, and the important question is how are these, not merely of to-day, but of the next century, to be provided for. It is to the masses of the people, the tradesmen and the artisans that there is a particular interest in this question of suburban domiciliary occupation and facilitation.²

Given the existing "facilities of exit," the *Times* defined New York's suburbs as bounded by a fifteen- or twenty-mile radius from City Hall and extending to the north, east, south, and west to Yonkers, Flushing and Garden City, Staten Island, and Plainfield, New Jersey, respectively. Although Kings County was "almost as naturally within the suburban range as" Westchester, physically it was separated by a "considerable" water obstacle. Nevertheless, the "constant effort" of the county's "corporate Governmental capacities" and private enterprise had made it "more attractive and accessible than any part of New York City above Forty-second street." Indeed, the *Times*, viewing Kings and the other counties as "foreign local jurisdictions," worried over their stormy post—Civil War growth and the possibility that



nearly all of the 400,000 people who had moved there during the previous ten years "might have been retained to swell the population and wealth of the Metropolis, had an energetic and business-like policy been adopted by New-York capitalists, real-estate owners, politicians, and railroad corporations." Instead, the building of the Brooklyn Bridge, the "only rapid transit project" which the city was really pushing, was "calculated to check its growth." Unwilling, apparently, to propose additional annexations in all directions, the Times contented itself with predicting that: "Having all the advantages of ocean, bays, and rivers, of fertile fields and picturesque hills and valleys within easy reach of the commercial heart of the City, it promises well, ere a quarter of a century has elapsed, to become the most charmingly varied place of residence in the world." The prophesy that within 25 years New York City would undergo transformation was stunningly accurate: 24 years later consolidation assured its preeminence. Just as stunningly inaccurate, however, was the speculation that "fertile fields" would remain part of the city's attractions.3

Ironically, at the same time, boosters in the rural towns of Kings County bemoaned that the lack of rapid transit meant that they could not absorb even 1 percent of the 100,000 people crowded out of Manhattan each year. While villages and towns had "sprung up as by magic" along the railroad lines fifty miles into New Jersey, and land could not be bought for \$6,000 an acre in Westchester, land in New Utrecht could not be sold for \$700 per acre: "Men will not build homes here with the view of living in them, if they have to spend as many hours in getting to and from the city as they live miles from it." The Kings County Rural Gazette conjured up the image of steam power as annihilating distance and liberating time (also in its alter ego as money) as "an article available in the upbuilding of large and wealthy communities." 4

To contemporary writers the growth of nearby populations alone fore-shadowed the eradication of rural life in Kings County by the 1880s, but the question as to how the inevitable would occur was more complex. The increasing pace of population growth in Brooklyn, beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, has been attributed largely to its location as the terminus of roads branching from the New York ferries to the Long Island settlements. The population of Brooklyn barely exceeded 20,000 when it was incorporated as a city in 1834; its rapid territorial and demographic expansion resulted from the same economic influences that were propelling New York to national preeminence: the advent of the Erie Canal and the "phenomenal development of domestic commerce." As manufacturing enterprises prolif-



112

erated, "the wage earner was becoming a more important factor in Brooklyn, as in New York. The predominantly rural aspect of the place gave way, as large warehouses were built along the shore, and as factory buildings, extensive and costly for the period, appeared." Contrary to later notions that Brooklyn's growth was primarily due to its convenience as a "great dormitory, where thousands upon thousands of men doing business in New York sleep and keep their families," its advancing population resulted largely from the manifold forces of industrialization. Stiles was right in 1870 when he observed in his history of Brooklyn: "The oft-repeated saying that Brooklyn is only a large bedroom for the business men of New York, may pass for a joke, but as a fact it is not tenable, when we consider the immense amount of manufacturing which is here carried on."5

Brooklyn's inconvenience as a commuter suburb in the early part of the nineteenth century can be gauged by the observation of Nathaniel Prime, a historian of Long Island writing in 1845, that crossing the East River by ferry "was frequently more formidable than is now a voyage to Europe." The author himself had "waited from morning to night on the Brooklyn side, in a north-east storm, before any boat ventured to cross to the city. And frequently the passage was made with manifest hazard, and sometimes attended with serious disaster and loss of life." By the 1840s, however, the proliferation of steamboats had rendered the crossing, at any time of day or night, as safe as and faster than walking the same distance on land. Significantly, by midcentury farm wagons were the principal freight of the ferries between Williamsburgh and New York.6

Marked differentiation between the occupational structure of the populations of Brooklyn on the one hand and the rest of Kings County on the other appeared as early as the 1820 census, the first to publish data on this question. Whereas only 32 percent of Brooklyn's population was returned in agriculture and 60 percent in manufactures, the figures were reversed in the rest of Kings County: 71 percent were engaged in agriculture and only 27 percent in manufactures. In Flatbush and Gravesend, four to five times as many were engaged in agriculture as in manufactures.7

Brooklyn's incorporation as a city was itself emblematic of this shift toward industrial enterprise. Whereas a few years earlier "the interests of the urban and agricultural areas had seemed so diverse that a proposition to bisect the town into two separate jurisdictions had been seriously entertained . . . in the early thirties nothing was more certain than that the village streets would soon extend far into the countryside, and that the farms out-



side the corporation limits would shortly be divided into city lots." 8 Earlier in the nineteenth century:

Many of the Dutch landowners of the surrounding countryside, then comfortably living on rich farms, were in a position sooner or later to amass considerable fortunes through the appreciation of their properties, although it is probable that few of them then foresaw it. For generation after generation the acres which . . . surrounded the village in a wide half circle . . . had yielded their increase; and there was little in the apparent prospects of the time and place to cause the Boerums, the Remsens, the Schencks, the Vanderbilts, the Ryersons, the Bennets, and the Cortelyous to stake out imaginary streets or to anticipate profits from the sale of city lots.⁹

By the 1830s, however: "Farsighted owners of land in Brooklyn, eager to profit from this inevitable expansion, now comprehended that union with the village, under an adequate charter of government, was a matter of necessity." Within months of Brooklyn's incorporation, Abraham Schermerhorn sold his 170-acre farm in Gowanus, three miles from Brooklyn, for \$600 an acre. Speculation was so rampant that he regretted selling it so cheap despite the fact that the \$102,000 he received was more than five times as much as he had been willing to accept four years earlier. Nor was he alone at the time: others also became "immensely rich by the good fortune of owning farms of a few acres of this chosen land." 10

The national census of 1840 published more detailed data on occupational structure, which underscore the progressive differentiation between the cities of Brooklyn and Williamsburgh and the rural towns. Table 15 presents the number of persons employed in various sectors. In Brooklyn, which encompassed virtually the county's entire commerce and ocean navigation sectors, and Williamsburgh, which was even more heavily industrialized, manufactures accounted for 54 percent of the employed population, whereas agriculture accounted for only 16 percent. Their favorable location on the ice-free East River enabled these two harbor cities to secure considerable maritime commerce and helped propel their growth. Brooklyn's industrialization was accompanied by a further skewing of wealth and expansion of the class of "propertyless proletarians." 11

In the rest of the county, the proportions were reversed: agriculture accounted for 70 percent and manufactures and trades only 17 percent. Abstracting from Bushwick, which underwent urbanization sooner than the



other rural towns, and the anomalous and inexplicably high figure for Flatbush, fewer than 10 percent of the employed population in Flatlands, Gravesend, and New Utrecht were engaged in manufactures or trades. Another facet of the pronounced differentiation between the city and the rural towns was recorded for 1845: in Brooklyn and Williamsburgh, 38 merchants, manufacturers, and mechanics were returned for every agriculturist. In contrast, in the four rural towns, there were almost twice as many agriculturists as merchants, manufacturers, and mechanics, reaching a high of six to one in Gravesend. Indeed, only 16 merchants and not a single manufacturer was returned as living in the rural towns.¹²

The overwhelmingly agrarian character of Flatbush — in 1840 "most" of its 7,000 acres were under cultivation, "furnishing abundance of produce to Brooklyn and New York markets" and wealth to the farmers — especially in the property-holding classes, in the first half of the nineteenth century is revealed by the town's juror lists. In 1815, 97 percent of those subject to serve were "yeomen." By the 1830s, yeomen (or, as they were called from 1833 on, farmers) constituted three-fourths of all those liable to jury duty or selected from among the assessed on the assessment rolls: 75 percent in 1830 and 1833 and 74 percent in 1837. Farmers' share of selected jurors fell to 58 percent in 1840, but by 1846 their share rose again to 66 percent. Since the farmers during these years were almost all Dutch, the homogeneity of the property-based political power was also striking. ¹³

Gravesend's abiding agricultural character was highlighted by the occupations (which served as a basis for claiming an exemption) recorded in the enrollment list of all able-bodied male residents between the ages of 18 and 45 liable to military duty during the Civil War. Of 256 men, 29 percent were farmers and 32 percent laborers, in addition to 8 percent who were reported as fishermen or boatmen. Similarly, as late as the 1860 and 1870 Census of Population, 7 and 8 percent (114 and 184 persons), respectively, of the entire population of the most rural town, Flatlands, were returned as fishermen. In contrast, tailors were most frequently encountered in the most industrialized town, New Lots, in 1860.¹⁴

Some sectoral shift is also visible for New Utrecht by the early 1860s. The same Civil War enrollment list showed that of the 603 prime-age enrolled men in 1862, 106, or 18 percent, were listed as farmers. Although the category "laborer" did not distinguish between those working on farms and elsewhere, presumably the vast majority of these 224 men (or 37 percent of the total) were agricultural. Even if all of them were farm laborers, 191, or 32 percent, of all military-age men in New Utrecht worked in nonagricul-



tural occupations such as merchant, storekeeper, clerk, shoemaker, coachman, lawyer, carpenter, bookkeeper, insurance, hotel, importer, wheelwright, barkeeper, waiter, physician, mason, and blacksmith. These occupations are not indicative of industrialization, but they point to a division of labor that had advanced beyond that of a closed agrarian economy. By 1874 New Utrecht boasted of a large steam-powered factory for manufacturing horse-drawn railroad cars.¹⁵

A sense of the spatial configurations of the Kings County towns can be gleaned from table 16, which reports on their area and population density in 1840. The urbanized towns, Williamsburgh and Brooklyn, had already achieved population densities 15 to 60 times greater than those of the rural towns. Even the latter were clearly differentiated: those most remote from New York City, Flatlands and Gravesend, were only one-third to one-fourth as densely populated as the other agricultural towns. As scarcely populated as most of the towns were, they were all so compact that Kings County's entire area of 76 square miles was smaller than several individual towns in the other Long Island counties, Queens and Suffolk.¹⁶

As late as 1845, more than 3,000 acres of improved agricultural land were located in the city of Brooklyn, amounting to 15 percent of the county total. Table 17 breaks out the acreage for all the cities and towns in Kings County. Flatbush accounted for more than one-fourth and New Utrecht one-fifth of the county total of almost 21,000 acres. Brooklyn farms were concentrated in the Eighth and Ninth Wards, which bordered on New Utrecht and Flatbush. In particular the Eighth Ward, Gowanus, had been an old area of settlement for Dutch farmers, who as late as the revolutionary period owned farms as large as 300 acres. Indeed, Jeremiah Johnson (1827–1898), a towering figure in the post—Civil War real-estate business, recalled in the 1890s that in the 1830s "nearly all residents of the outer wards of Brooklyn were farmers and market gardeners. Their produce and vegetables found ready sale in New York. By industry, prudence, and economy, they accumulated wealth." In the 1840s much of the Ninth Ward

was covered with forest trees, and owned in plots of from five to twenty acres by farmers who cut wood during idle times and carted it to their homes for winter use. . . .

If the wood plots . . . which . . . were almost valueless, had been disposed of as a whole to some wealthy capitalist and properly improved, in accordance with the inimitable methods of James D. Lynch, as shown in his . . . Bensonhurst developments, the location would have been one of



the most beautiful in the city, and lots instead of selling for a song would have commanded high prices.¹⁸

As late as 1865, Brooklyn still reported more than 1,100 acres of improved farmland, or 8 percent of the total for Kings County. Five years later, the city's population had increased by another 100,000, reaching almost 400,000, while its agricultural acreage had shrunk to fewer than 400 acres, or 3 percent of the county's total.¹⁹

Despite the sharp absolute and relative decline of Brooklyn agriculture between 1820 and 1840, "[u]rban Brooklyn clearly still had much farm land in 1841" — the only year during the second quarter of the nineteenth century for which its tax assessment records are preserved. Even in that year, when Brooklyn was the seventh most populous city in the United States, 5 percent of its wealthiest persons were farmers. This figure becomes more impressive in contrast with the occupational structure of the rich in other northeastern cities: in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, even earlier in the century, farmers failed to represent even 1 percent of the wealthiest.²⁰

By the time Bushwick and the city of Williamsburgh (which had become a village in 1827 and a town formed from Bushwick in 1840) were consolidated with Brooklyn in 1854, its population was well over 200,000, and by 1860 Brooklyn was the third-largest city in the United States after New York (which then consisted only of Manhattan Island) and Philadelphia. The town of New Lots was formed from Flatbush in 1852 and annexed to Brooklyn in 1886. In 1894 Flatbush, Gravesend, and New Utrecht were also annexed to Brooklyn; and when, in 1896, Flatlands was annexed, the city of Brooklyn finally became coterminous with Kings County. The annexation of Flatbush (5.69 square miles), New Utrecht (7.96 square miles), Gravesend (10.96 square miles), and Flatlands (12.79 square miles) more than doubled the size of Brooklyn, which had been 28.99 square miles. But Brooklyn retained its independent status only briefly, already in 1898 becoming a borough within consolidated Greater New York.²¹

Much of the impetus for these consolidations came from a desire to eliminate the duplicative and inefficient governments of the county and individual towns. The officers of the town of Flatbush, for example, included a supervisor, town clerk, tax collector, three assessors, three auditors, five justices of the peace, a board of health, three excise commissioners, three commissioners of highways, and a sealer of weight and measures. The other towns boasted similar cadres. In the view of many, the almost comically



crooked towns had, as the *New York Daily Tribune* put it, all "been governed by corrupt gangs and rings." The *Eagle* was even less restrained in characterizing Flatbush, Flatlands, Gravesend, and New Utrecht as "an expense, a confusion, a complication, a scandal and an abomination. . . . This double system of government . . . is a satire on civilization. It is a parody on justice. . . . It is an obstacle to order." Annexation of Gravesend, which was autocratically run by John Y. McKane, rescued from "barbarism" people who, according to the *Eagle*, had been governed by "a despotism of robbery, violence and lies meaner than captives ever experienced from Algerian pirates or from cannibals of darkest Africa, because exercised within the forms and sanctions of law." Much of the opposition to annexation stemmed from "Brooklyn's rascally politicians," who stood to lose many "profitable places and jobs," for widespread corruption also characterized Brooklyn city government for much of the nineteenth century.²²

With Kings County, New York City finally had at the disposal of its over-flow population an area, as the *New York Times* editorialized, "several times greater than that below Central Park, which is not crowded, and much of which is not occupied at all." In particular, the colonization of Brooklyn provided New York with material and ideological benefits in the struggle for the pacification of the working class — "land for manufacturing interests, with cheap homes for employees far from the tenement districts, that will develop a stronger, healthier, and more industrious manhood than it is possible to develop in the closely-packed sections of the city where cheap homes only are now obtainable." ²³

That the population of Brooklyn grew much faster than that of rural Kings County during the nineteenth century is obvious from table 18. Whereas Brooklyn at the first national census in 1790 accounted for only 36 percent of the population of Kings County and was only 70 percent larger than Flatbush, a century later the city of Brooklyn contributed 96 percent of the county's population and was 65 times more populous than Flatbush. The population of Flatbush, Flatlands, and Gravesend each took almost a half century to double; the next doubling after 1840 was not completed until after the Civil War. New Utrecht grew somewhat faster. The smaller absolute populations of Flatlands and Gravesend — these two outer towns were nowhere contiguous with the city of Brooklyn — were also reflected in considerably lower population densities. In 1850, the population per square mile in Gravesend and Flatlands was 93 and 81, respectively — lower than that prevailing in parts of Queens and barely higher than in western Suffolk



County. Population density in Flatbush and New Utrecht was several times higher.²⁴

As modest as the population of Flatbush was in the nineteenth century, the census returns vastly overstated it. In 1870, the institutionalized population of the Kings County Lunatic Asylum, Alms House, Nursery, and Hospital, which were located in Flatbush, but the vast majority of whose inmates had doubtless been residents of Brooklyn, accounted for more than two-fifths of the entire population of Flatbush; without these extraterritorial expatriates the town would have numbered only about 3,600 inhabitants. Able-bodied pauper inmates of the "county farm" were required to break stones or cultivate the grounds; in 1860 the Kings County Farm produced 3,200 bushels of potatoes, \$1,000 of market garden produce, and was the biggest producer of corn. The vast expansion of this exclave population is visible in the fact that in 1850 the Work House, Alms House, and Lunatic Asylum housed only 609 people, or about 19 percent of the town's population, which without them numbered a little over 2,500, while in 1860 the 1,248 residents of these institutions accounted for 36 percent of Flatbush, which without them numbered 2,223, or fewer than the noninstitutionalized in 1850.25

Flatbush boosters maintained that all county residents were acutely aware of the physical presence of these county buildings — on "the county farm is a Stygian pool, on the banks of which lie, festering in the summer sun, the excreta of Brooklyn's poor, filling the air with sickening malaria" — holding them responsible for deterring people from moving to the town and depressing property values. In the early 1880s, the Rural Gazette was still issuing recriminations against Brooklyn for making a "dumping ground" of portions of, and causing a "stigma" to attach to, Flatbush. Complaints were also frequently voiced that the institutionalized paupers were being used to vote unlawfully in local elections.²⁶

The impact of deagriculturalization on Flatbush, Gravesend, and New Utrecht during the 1880s is manifest: while Brooklyn grew by 42 percent, their populations rose by 62, 89, and 87 percent, respectively. The 1890s, marked by annexation of the rural towns to Brooklyn in 1894 and 1896 and consolidation with New York City in 1898, witnessed even more explosive demographic growth: whereas the city of Brooklyn (within its pre-1894 borders) grew by an additional 35 percent, Flatbush, Flatlands, Gravesend, and New Utrecht recorded increases of 120, 102, 111, and 179 percent, respectively. The differential growth rates between the old wards of Brooklyn and



the newly annexed towns continued after consolidation. Between 1900 and 1905, the population in the four towns increased 55 percent compared to only 13 percent in the rest of Kings County. At this early stage, however, the former farming regions were still uncongested. In Flatlands, which at the time of annexation the press called "a farming town" and an "agricultural district," the density was, despite a 60 percent population increase, still only one person per acre.²⁷

A visually powerful reminder of the huge demographic and developmental gaps between Brooklyn and the rural towns jumps out from nineteenth-century maps. Figure 10 displays a county map from 1868 on which a thick street grid abruptly comes to an end where Brooklyn's borders meet those of New Lots, Flatbush, and New Utrecht. Instead of streets, farm lines mark off hundreds of farms, the names of whose owners are prominently displayed. Through these otherwise white spaces run only a few transportation arteries, such as the horse-drawn Coney Island Rail Road (from the brandnew Prospect Park to the Atlantic Ocean), dating from 1863; the Brooklyn, Bath and Coney Island Railroad from Greenwood Cemetery, opened in 1864, and the Brooklyn and Rockaway Beach Railroad, which opened in 1865 and ran through the village of Canarsie in Flatlands (the rural county's only two steam railroads); and a few unidentified farm roads. Two decades later, the street grid, at least on paper, has been extended even to the outer towns of Flatlands and Gravesend.²⁸

The relative economic magnitudes are put in perspective by noting that Kings County's agricultural sector was dwarfed by Brooklyn's manufacturing. In 1880 the total value of all farm productions on the county's 406 farms was \$1,211,000, whereas the products of the city's 5,201 manufacturing establishments were valued at \$177,223,142. Table 19 compares manufactures in the city of Brooklyn and rural Kings County (i.e., Kings County without Brooklyn) in 1880 and 1890. The gap between Brooklyn, the country's fourth-largest manufacturing center, and rural Kings County was huge. In 1880, when Brooklyn's population was 17 times larger, its manufacturing establishments were 65 times as numerous, produced 90 times as much with 39 times as many employees to whom it paid 59 times as much in wages. By 1890, when Brooklyn's population was 25 times larger, the gaps had grown two- to fivefold: 265 times as many establishments produced 171 times as much with 209 times as many workers paid 200 times as much. The rural towns' manufacturing sector shrank by all indicators during the 1880s largely because New Lots was annexed to Brooklyn in 1886 — to the point





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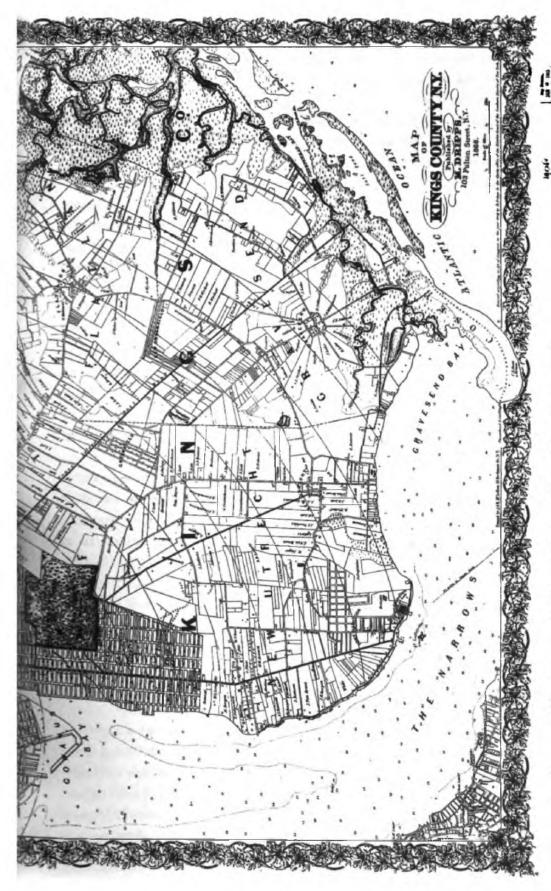


FIGURE 10. Farmline map of Kings County, 1868. From M. Dripps, "Map of Kings County N.Y."

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at which the value of its output only marginally exceeded that of the farms. Because the city generated so much more wealth per inhabitant than the rural towns, it became increasingly useful to have access to the areas of Brooklyn where the bulk of manufacturing and commerce was located. This relationship acted as a kind of centripetal force on the population until measures were taken to bring the outlying areas closer to the industrial centers.²⁹

Similar orders of magnitude separated Brooklyn and rural Kings County with respect to assessed valuation of property taxed. Table 20 shows the major indicators for 1880 and 1890. The property valuations (the vast majority of which were of real estate) for Brooklyn not only overshadowed those for the rural towns, but also increased more rapidly during the 1880s. On a per capita basis, assessed valuations actually fell in three of the four towns. Regardless of the ratio between assessed valuation of real property and its "true valuation" — estimates reported to the Census Office ranged between 45 percent for Gravesend and 70 percent for Brooklyn — per capita taxable wealth in Brooklyn surged ahead of that in rural Kings County. Since Brooklyn occupied about one-half of the county, the relative densities of the urban and rural halves can be gauged by the fact that the city's assessment was 25 to 30 times greater.³⁰

A longer series of the assessed valuation of real estate alone reveals a similar gap. In 1855, the assessed valuation of Brooklyn's real estate was \$84.5 million, or 20 times greater than the \$4.1 million valuation in the rural towns; 30 years later, the city's valuation had risen to \$311.3 million, or 23 times greater than the towns' \$13.5 million valuation. By the latter half of the 1880s, however, the rural towns, developing toward annexation, experienced a considerably steeper rise in the assessed valuation of their real estate than the city of Brooklyn. From 1886, the year in which New Lots was annexed and its valuation shifted to Brooklyn's, through 1893, the year before the other towns (except Flatlands) were annexed, real-estate valuation in the four towns rose almost 160 percent from \$10.4 million to \$27 million. In contrast, Brooklyn's real-estate valuation rose by only 43 percent.³¹

Differences in the capacity to produce values and accumulate capital of this magnitude were not merely quantitative: they were also reflected in the economic relationships between the farm towns and Brooklyn's nationally prominent industrial and financial firms. Emblematic of Flatbush's dependence, for example, was the fact that "during the two hundred and fifty years of its history Flatbush . . . had no banking institution until . . . 1899" because "while it was mainly a farming section, the great wagons of produce made



frequent trips to Brooklyn, where most of the business was done." The vegetable farmers' failure to forge the kind of dynamic agricultural sector that could sustain its own credit institution in rural Kings County strongly suggests that the ultimate economic dominance there would flow from the city of Brooklyn, which, at the appropriate time, would finance residential development rather than modernization and expansion of farming.³²

