

Guide to the Charles A. Ditmas collection ARC.196

Finding aid prepared by Robyn R. Hjermsstad

Developed with grant funds from the U.S. Department of Education

Underground Railroad Educational and Cultural (URR) Program.

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

May 27, 2011

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Brooklyn Historical Society

April 2011

128 Pierrepont Street

Brooklyn, NY, 11201

718-222-4111

library@brooklynhistory.org

Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>Biographical/Historical note</u>	5
<u>Scope and Contents</u>	5
<u>Arrangement note</u>	6
<u>Administrative Information</u>	7
<u>Related Materials</u>	7
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u>	8
<u>Other Finding Aids note</u>	9
<u>Collection Inventory</u>	11

Summary Information

Repository	Brooklyn Historical Society
Creator	Ditmas, Charles A., 1887-1938
Title	Charles A. Ditmas collection
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1908-1935
Date [inclusive]	1687-circa 1935
Extent	0.42 Linear feet in 1 manuscript box
Language	English
Language of Materials	Materials in English. Materials in Dutch are accompanied by translations.
Abstract	<p>The Charles A. Ditmas collection contains manuscripts, correspondence, programs, images, and ephemera pertaining to Charles A. Ditmas's work at the Kings County Historical Society as a historian and genealogist. While the collection spans from 1687-1935, the bulk of the collection is dated between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to manuscript materials, this collection also contains a souvenir album entitled <i>Brooklyn's Garden Views of Picturesque Flatbush</i>, photographs, and a transcription of a 1664 deed for Barrian Island between the Native Americans and John Tilton Senil and Sammuell Spicer of Gravesend. The majority of the research, notes, images, and manuscripts in this collection pertain to historic homesteads and families in Kings County (N.Y.).</p>

Preferred Citation

Identification of item, date (if known); Charles A. Ditmas collection, ARC.196, Box and Folder number;
Brooklyn Historical Society.

Biographical/Historical note

Charles Andrew Ditmas (1887-1938) was a descendant of the Lott family of Brooklyn, whose common ancestor was Pieter Lot, who emigrated from the Netherlands in 1652 and settled in Flatlands, Kings County. Charles Ditmas was the son of Andrew Ditmas, the son of Bergen Lott (1819-1873) and Charles Burr Ditmas (1813-1852). Ditmas was a serious historian and genealogist, and was the founder and president of the Kings County Historical Society, which served as the central historical society for Kings County from 1911 until sometime in the early to mid-twentieth century; at that time many of the Kings County Historical Society's collections were transferred to the Long Island Historical Society (now the Brooklyn Historical Society). Ditmas also served as Assistant Librarian of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, and was editor of the society's publication, the "New York Genealogical and Biographical Record" during the early 1900s.

Ditmas published numerous genealogies and histories of families and important places in Brooklyn, especially Flatlands. Among his many publications are: *Auto trip Through Historic Brooklyn: Many Points of Revolutionary Interest may be Visited in Afternoon Journey: Monuments and Tablets tell of Battle of Long Island* (1926), *Historic Homesteads of Kings County, Brooklyn, N.Y.* (1909), *The life and service of Major-General William Alexander also called the Earl of Stirling* (1920), *The Small Beginnings of Literature in Kings County* (1922), *History of Amersfort Place (Flatlands, Kings County, N.Y.)* (1963, with Harriet Stryker-Rodda), and *Genealogical Memoranda, Mainly from Church and Family Records: The Antonides Genealogy* (1919, with Teunis G. Bergen). In addition to his devoted career as a historian and genealogist, Charles A. Ditmas was deeply involved in social, academic, and political endeavors in the Brooklyn, New York, and surrounding area communities.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains two primary sets of materials: documents pertaining to the Kings County Historical Society, and manuscripts written by Charles A. Ditmas, spanning the years from 1687-1935. Also within this collection is a souvenir album entitled *Brooklyn's Garden Views of Picturesque Flatbush* (1908), containing tinted/colored prints prepared by Ditmas. The album, printed by Albertype Co., Brooklyn, contains images of various places of interest in Flatbush, such as the Dutch Reformed Church, the Boat House at Prospect Park, and various residences and avenues. In addition to the vast majority of historic and genealogical material types is a 1909 transcript of a 1664 Barrian Island deed between Native Americans and John Tilton Senil and Sammeull Spicer of Gravesend and its 1681 assignment. Barrian Island is an island in Jamaica Bay off the western tip of the Rockaway Peninsula. Its name was eventually changed to Barren Island, and again to Floyd Bennett Field, which is now a historic airfield and recreational area that is part of the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area.

The photographs in this collection document the blizzard of 1888 in Brooklyn, the Suydam-Ditmas and John H. Ditmas Houses, an interior image exhibiting some of Ditmas's achievements in his home on Amersfort Place, and an image of a display case at the Kings County Historical Society.

Material relating to the Kings County Historical Society includes correspondence and notes pertaining to Ditmas's genealogical and historical research, and the preservation of historic Dutch farmhouses in Brooklyn. Among the correspondence is a thank you letter from Theodore Roosevelt (1911) to Ditmas for a catalog; and a Dutch letter from 1678 (with translation), the contents of which pertains generally to family well-being, but also makes reference to the ruined churches in France, perhaps referring to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), which attempted to force the Huguenots (members of the Protestant reformed church) to convert to Catholicism, which resulted in mass numbers of Protestants leaving France to seek religious asylum in other countries. There is also a good deal of ephemera pertaining to Charles Ditmas's professional relationships through the Kings County Historical Society, such as 18th century commemorative medals (coins), hand-drawn logos for the Kings County Historical Society, an 1888 published report entitled "New York in the Blizzard: March 12, 1888," a subway dual contract celebratory dinner program, and a Grover Cleveland inauguration ball souvenir. Additionally, numerous programs (1883-1913) demonstrate Ditmas's deep social and professional involvement with many elite groups in the New York area.

Ditmas's manuscripts include four versions of *Illustrated Lectures on Old Houses and Families of Kings County* (published version: presented by G.A. Baker and Co. December 1938), "Church and State in Flatlands, 1783-1843," and a lecture containing descriptions of lantern slides created by Adrian V. Martense (1852-1898), an amateur photographer whose subjects of interest included Flatbush and the Blizzard of 1888 (see related archival material).

"Lectures on Old Houses and Families of Kings County" contains descriptive genealogies of the families that lived in various historic homesteads in Kings County, including Bergen, Martense, Lott, Ditmars, Suydam-Ditmas, Cortelyou, Vanderveer, Story, Van Brunt-Robarts, Van Pelt, Voorhees, Stillwell, Lefferts, and Van Nuys. Some versions of this manuscript include hand-colored prints of the houses, and detailed descriptions of the land and physical property. A portion of this manuscript is available online at <http://www.bklyn-genealogy-info.com/Town/Homesteads/index.html>. The Ditmars Homestead section of this manuscript describes the home and inhabitants' relevance during the Revolution, telling a detailed story about "young Ditmars" putting out a fire in a barn, and being almost smothered to death with his mother by British "ruffians" who tried to steal his gold coin collection. He and his mother were rescued by their slaves, Cominey and Cuff. This manuscript also describes the history of Bergen's Island in relation to the Native Americans, who called it "Wimbacoe," where they manufactured their shells for wampum.

Arrangement note

This collection was originally composed of numerous independent accessions, which have been combined to form the present collection. The materials have not been separated from their respective original

accession, rather, they are arranged alphabetically according to association: album collection, Barrian Island Indian deed, Kings County Historical Society, and manuscripts.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Brooklyn Historical Society April 2011

Conditions Governing Access

Open to researchers without restriction.

Conditions Governing Use note

Materials in this collection are in the public domain.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

The Brooklyn's Garden album was a gift to the Long Island Historical Society (now the Brooklyn Historical Society) from Charles A. Ditmas. Many of the notes on illustrated lectures were a gift from G.A. Baker and Co. The source of the rest of the collection is unclear, but much of it was found at the Society in 1963. It is believed that this portion of the collection came with material donated by the Kings County Historical Society.

Processing Information note

This collection was processed by Robyn Hjermsstad in April 2011.

The collection combines 8 accessions: 1973.091, 1973.092, 1973.101, 1973.239, 1977.091, 1977.142, 1977.223, and V1986.020.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Brooklyn Historical Society holds two lantern slide collections related to this collection:

The Adrian Vanderveer Martense collection (call number ARC.191), Series 1, contains lantern slides and photographs taken by Martense documenting Brooklyn during the last quarter of the 19th century, in particular Flatbush, Brooklyn and the Blizzard of 1888. Martense's work is referred to by Ditmas in this collection.

The Charles Ditmas lantern slide collection (call number V1974.018) includes slides attributed to Charles Ditmas, some of which may have been used in connection with Ditmas's presentations, the notes for which are found in this collection.

Separated Materials note

About 5 photo negatives and 7 postcards from the collection were separated and transferred to the image collection in 1996.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Kings County Historical Society.

Family Name(s)

- Cortelyou family
- Ditmars family
- Lefferts family
- Lott family
- Martense family
- Stillwell family
- Van Brunt family
- Van Nuyse family
- Van Pelt family
- Vanderveer family
- Voorhees family

Genre(s)

- Correspondence

- Ephemera
- Genealogies
- Manuscripts (document genre)
- Photograph albums
- Photographic prints
- Printed ephemera
- Programs (documents)
- Research notes
- Souvenirs

Geographic Name(s)

- Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
- Flatbush (New York, N.Y.)
- Flatbush (New York, N.Y.) |x History
- Flatlands (New York, N.Y.)

Personal Name(s)

- Ditmas, Charles A., 1887-1938
- Martense, Adrian V., (Adrian Vanderveer), 1852-1898
- Roosevelt, Theodore, 1858-1919 -- Correspondence
- Story, William H.

Subject(s)

- Deeds |z New York (State) |z New York
- Families |z New York (State) |z Kings County
- Historic buildings |z New York (State) |z Kings County
- Historic districts |z New York (State) |z Kings County
- Historic preservation |z New York (State) |z Kings County
- History |x Societies, etc.
- Indians of North America |z New York (State)

Other Finding Aids note

The images in the album *Brooklyn's Garden: Views of Picturesque Flatbush* have been digitized and can be viewed in the BHS library's image database, under Object ID V1986.20.

Collection Inventory

	Dates	Box	Folder
V1986.020 Album Collection, <i>Brooklyn's Garden: Views of Picturesque Flatbush</i>	1908	1	1
Barrian Island Indian deed (typescript transcription of documents dated 1664, 1681)	1909	1	2
Kings County Historical Society, correspondence	1911-1935	1	3
Kings County Historical Society, Dutch letter	1687- circa 1910	1	4
Kings County Historical Society, miscellaneous material	1869-1925	1	5
Kings County Historical Society, notes	circa 1910-1935	1	6

Kings County Historical Society, programs	1883-1913	1	7
Kings County Historical Society, Theodore Roosevelt letter	1911	1	8
Manuscripts, "Church and State in Flatlands, 1783-1843"	1915	1	9
Manuscripts, <i>Illustrated Lectures on Historic Homesteads</i>	circa 1909	1	10
Manuscripts, lectures and notes on historic homesteads and families in Kings County (4 folders)	circa 1935-1938	1	11-14
Manuscripts, outline of lantern slide presentation	circa 1910-1935	1	15
Photographs	1888-1912	1	16