

NEIGHBORS

WHAT'S UP NEXT DOOR AND AROUND THE CORNER

Gibson: the man and the community



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IT ONLY LASTED FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, but part of Valley Stream's history saw the light of day on Friday, December 1, 2000. Workman installing new siding on the building housing Il Bagatto Ristorante on the corner of Roosevelt and Rockaway Avenues removed the old facade, exposing the words etched in wood, **THE GIBSON CORPORATION**.

By **JOAN M. DUFFY**

An historic event occurred on December 1. Workmen preparing to install new siding on Il Bagatto Ristorante at the intersection of Roosevelt and Rockaway Avenues removed the old facade of the building. There on the top of the building, etched in wood, was the old sign, "The Gibson Corporation." This was W. R. Gibson's first sales office.

William R. Gibson, a carpenter who had emigrated from Ireland and had built a large number of houses and 68 other buildings in different parts of Queens, decided

in 1922 to purchase 700 acres of land in South Valley Stream. His intention was to build a community that would have a country flavor but city advantages. He purchased land from the Norumbega Real Estate Company and the Queens Water Corporation. According to Jack Mahoney, Gibson became the builder for the Lord, Day and Lord Real Estate Company.

His original houses were on Roosevelt Avenue and the side streets off it. Lillian Weaver lives in a house on Berkley Street that was built by Gibson in 1923. Lillian said that her style of house was subsequently discontinued because it only had two bedrooms upstairs.

At that time, 1923, the houses on the south side of Avondale, Berkeley, Derby and Elmwood were built and those on the north side of Roosevelt Avenue came later. Evelyn McQuade noted that her father bought her house on north Cambridge Street 76 years ago in 1924. At that time, Evelyn said, everyone knew the area as "Old Gibson." The houses closer to Munro Boulevard were to become "New Gibson." Evelyn and her friend, Olga Motley Hopkins, reminisced that their parents were delighted to be able to come out from New York City and buy houses; it was the fulfillment of a dream.

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