

Riding the Peripheries

“History arrives in flashes,”
Walter Benjamin, *Passagen-Werk*



On May 27, 2020 we took leave of our Covid-19 lockdown pods to celebrate a friend's birthday. She wanted to bike the number of miles she was turning that day. It sounded like a challenging ride but I needed a break from my domestic routine after more than two months of waiting in long grocery lines, sewing masks, charting the peaks of the pandemic, news binging, Zooming for work, exercise, and social contact, and endless rounds of cards. The pandemic had a way of slowing down time so a day could be comprised of darning socks and organizing drawers while listening to the sirens and the clanging of pots. Animals took over town squares in Scotland, the rats in NYC were hungry and extra brazen. We ventured out at a slow clip to absorb the passage of time again.

I rode from Prospect Park to meet my friends at the base of the Manhattan Bridge. We coasted across an eerily quiet lower Manhattan with storefronts boarded up; masks and plastic gloves in the gutters—a ticker tape parade of medical supplies. We rode up the Hudson River Greenway to the George Washington Bridge. Getting from the river up to the bridge is a hilly and circuitous journey with the entrance to the pedestrian path on the bridge arriving like an afterthought.

This was one of the first warm days since the start of the pandemic and you could see that people were cautiously outside again, their vulnerable bodies moving hesitantly, taking in the breezes off the Hudson River. We stopped on the bridge for photos looking south at the progress we had made. Once across the bridge in New

Jersey, we went south to enter the Palisades Interstate Park and back under the George Washington Bridge—these elliptical entrances fill me with glee as if I have found a door to an unmarked universe. Making more space for socially distant activities for the confined citizenry, cars were banned from most of the roadways in the park. We were flying, riding up and down the rolling hills that traverse the cliffs of the Palisades with views of the river and the myriad spring streams pouring off the cliffs with big smiles plastered on our faces. We ended at the Kearney House for a picnic of peanut



butter and honey sandwiches and homemade birthday cookies looking across the Hudson at the city of Yonkers. I read later that the Kearney House was built in 1761 to ship goods by sailboat from the surrounding farms to NYC's markets.

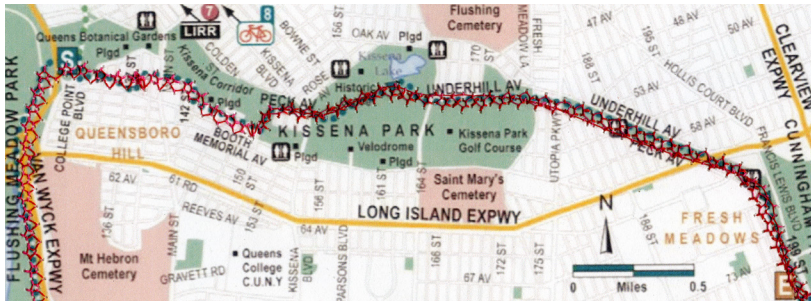
My neck was painfully stiff, but we were only halfway and had to head back. The Hudson River Greenway was now more crowded in the early afternoon. The winter skin on my arms was sunburned and my spine bent over the handlebars with my neck curved toward the horizon line was suffering from the static position, but we persisted, after sharing an ice cream at the lone ice cream truck near City Hall, wearily mumbling goodbye once over the sparsely populated Brooklyn Bridge. The last five miles up and over the hill to the south side of Prospect Park were

slow and painful and I went straight to the bath. But what an eyeful of my now quiet city. Having not left my neighborhood since March 13, the contours of this beautiful piece of land were apparent again. The topography—cliffs, rivers, streams—with various moments of the city’s history stamped in its architecture were stitched together like a crazy quilt. I ended up covering fifty-five miles which was the longest ride I had ever done at the time and also happened to match my age.

We decided to make this a weekly practice. Since the gyms were closed and travel was essentially banned, we were hungry to find new ways to see the world and fill our lungs and our spirits. We were four women in various states of uncoupling and recoupling with now grown children, looking for new road maps and pathways. Cycling the city matched the slowness of time during the pandemic and our arrival at middle age.

In the summer, we began to extend our frequent beach rides to Rockaway, Jacob Riis, or Fort Tilden to include Shirley Chisholm State Park via Canarsie Park, past the skate park, the cricket fields, the runners and bikers where there is a sneaky path that goes under the Belt Parkway along the Paerdegat Basin. The eastern peninsula of the Shirley Chisholm State Park has a beautiful, paved loop with native plantings looking out onto Jamaica Bay. Shirley Chisholm





was the first black woman elected to congress in 1969 and the first black presidential candidate. The park rests on decades of the city's garbage and looks out onto Spring Creek Park. With the paucity of planes during the pandemic going in and out of JFK, we could imagine moving quietly in a canoe with the shore birds in the land of the Lenape. After rejoining the belt pathway, a right through Howard Beach, Broad Channel, and the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge drops you in the heart of Rockaway Beach. This is where we would stop for a bagged lunch, a few dips in the ocean, in between watching the surfers and looking for the dolphin pods. We would return via the boardwalk to Riis Park, across the narrow Marine Parkway Bridge by Floyd Bennett Field, continuing on the bike path by the Belt Parkway on one side and the phragmites on the other to Plumb Beach. Shortly after Plumb Beach, bikes share the road through Sheepshead Bay and on Bedford Avenue across Midwood. Sometimes we would return via Marine Park and stop at the Hendrick I. Lott House, a traditional Dutch-American farmhouse

built in 1720. While currently closed, the sign outside says it was a stop on the underground railroad. Passing Brooklyn's high schools with photos of the graduates on their shuttered gates in place of in-person ceremonies read more like memorials than celebrations. In the winter, after watching the bobbing bufflehead ducks in the winter surf, this south Brooklyn ride often involved a Boston Cream Donut and a cup of coffee in front of Mike's Donuts on Fifth avenue in Bay Ridge.

While I was born in Manhattan and lived downtown in various lofts and apartments with bathtubs in the kitchens and in Stapleton on Staten Island as an infant and toddler, my mother and I left NYC when I was four for Vermont. She wanted to allow me more independence after I was found descending the fire escape with an armful of clothing looking for a policeman to help get me dressed. We lived in a few different communal, rural living situations and since then I have always thought of myself as a Vermonter. While we visited New York a few times a year to visit family or friends, I did not live in New York City again until just out of college. I spent my twenties in Williamsburg and then married. At the time, I expected to start and raise my family in Vermont but at each threshold, I wasn't ready to leave. My son learned to crawl and then walk and run on the gold-flecked linoleum tiled kitchen floor. By middle school, my kids had no desire to leave either. That said, I lived in my neighborhood, like it was one of the small farming villages Brooklyn once consisted of. Working from home, I rarely left and knew

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ANINDITO MUKHERJEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

'Rural Surge' in India

most of my neighbors by first name. One summer, my kids sold raspberries, zinnias, and cucumbers from our backyard garden on the stoop.

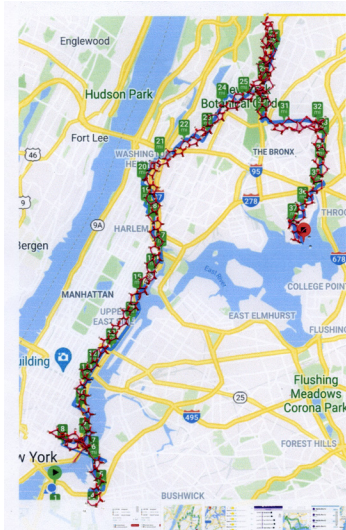
During the pandemic, riding the peripheries and the new bike paths, not only provided much needed social interaction and exercise, it also gave me the opportunity to rediscover my city. Broadway/Lafayette had been my axis point in the city for many decades, I had worked in the Cable Building, studied dance at Lezly Dance and Skate and Faretta, practiced Iyengar yoga in a loft unchanged from its initial residential occupation in the early 1970s, bought nice pens for my boss at Tanner Durso, and slept as a child high above Broadway below the drafty shuddering windows remaining from its sweatshop days. But now I was exploring the peripheries of the boroughs in keeping with this phase of my life which is past the meaty and fluid-filled phase of juggling children. We found ourselves on the far delicate edges of our lives, charting the new footing, testing the new expanse that seemed like it had the potential to be limitless.

Throughout the fall, we frequently biked across the Manhattan Bridge, finding blankets and bok choy laying out in the sun in the pocket parks of Chinatown. Sometimes we would do the Central Park loop, or up the east side, stopping at the giant swings that swing you toward the Manhattan Bridge or through Queens to Randall's Island after a stop at Socrates Sculpture Garden, and then returning via upper Manhattan through street fairs on Pleasant Avenue setting up for Halloween, harvest festivals, or birthday parties,

neighborhoods trying to find a way to safely celebrate a new season and the passage of time.

In early October 2020, we biked to Nyack—43 miles each way. At that point, this was one of our most ambitious rides and the round trip too long for one day. I loved the idea of exiting the city with its tangle of expressways by bike and so we picked a motel in Nyack to

sleep. We had biked before but this time climb out of the 9W. We took a the town of Pier-that sticks far out where the tiny just left behind is rode along the riv- We biked up to Route 287, show- found a restaurant ner. Eating inside,



to the Palisades there was a steep park up to Route little detour to mont and its pier into the Hudson skyline we had visible and then er up to Nyack. our motel beside ered, and then in town for din- adjacent to the

open window felt like a forbidden act but so delicious after a day of climbs with our heavy backpacks and bikes loaded with supplies for the overnight. The next morning after getting a good cup of coffee with some fellow bike travelers, we rode across the new biking and walking path on the Mario Cuomo Bridge with protruding viewing stations along the wide stretch of the Hudson, and then hooked

up with the Westchester Rail Trail. This former rail trail, running through the backsides and backyards of towns and homes by small ponds and trickles of water with beautifully decorated bird feeders, gave the impression that we were slipping through unnoticed. The trail takes you into Van Cortlandt Park, by a golf course, and then dumps you at a busy intersection in the Bronx. We crossed the Broadway Bridge over the Spuyten Duyvil Creek into Inwood, biked by the Columbia University stadium, the strains of bachata and merengue coming from the outdoor restaurants setting up for the evening, and rejoined the Hudson Greenway. We stopped in the 70s and had our first QR-code contactless lunch beside the river. Crossing Bleeker street to reach the Manhattan Bridge, we felt like teenagers returning after running away from home, giddy with fatigue, listening to music from the speaker strapped to the lead bike, and squeezing in between cars and the temporary plywood restaurant structures.

Two days after Christmas, we decided to ride to Staten Island. It was early and the ferry was empty. Bikes were treated like the cars they used to allow on the Staten Island ferry. The police dogs sniffed our bikes and we waited in a separate area from the foot passengers. Once docked, we rode along Bay Street past the various eras of architecture and city planning including older town squares filled with boarded up shops and historic houses—like Alice Austen’s house (1866-1952), a lesbian photographer who documented the city and her own life. We coasted by Fort Wadsworth with the row of

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NEW YORK, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020

LEAVING HOSPITAL, TRUMP MINIMIZ



ANNA MONEYMAKER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

President Trump removed his mask at the White House on Monday after departing Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

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officer's houses to Midland Beach which we found by biking under the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and Verrazano Bridge. Crossing over Richmond Hill to the western industrial side of Staten Island with commercial ships and container yards that face New Jersey and then past Snug Harbor, the arts center that was once housing for retired seaman, we headed back to the ferry.

We did this ride again on March 21 (44 miles round trip). I would advise against bringing your brother's homegrown weed in your backpack to share with one of your friends because of the dogs that are sniffing for bombs, but you worry that the dogs might have had a previous assignment. We rode along the eastern flank to the end of Great Kills Park. An antique car show filled the parking lot. Men were buffing their cars and we wondered if they ever did the same to their partners. We rode to Historic Richmond town, the colonial village and museum, stopped for ice cream and then rode onto La Tourette Park with the flickering spring light filtering through the leaf-less young adamantine trees. We made a loop around Brookfield Park which was once the site of a solid waste facility. The signs on the tall fences warn pregnant women and children to stay on the trails. We headed back in the direction of the ferry and ended up doing some loops on the campus of CUNY College of Staten Island. This section involved carrying our bikes through junked cars and brambles and surprising a woodchuck emerging from his den. Crossing Clove Lakes Park back to the north side of the Island, we hugged the coast and ended up back at the ferry. Once back in



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NEWS ANALYSIS

Barrett Ducks Climate Issue, Raising Alarm

*Calls Global Warming
A 'Controversial Topic'*

By JOHN SCHWARTZ
and HERON TARBUCHI

During two grueling days of questioning over her Supreme Court confirmation, Judge Amy Coney Barrett did her best to avoid controversy. But her efforts to play it safe on the subject of climate change have created perhaps the most tangible backlash of her hearings.

In her responses, the nominee to take the place of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, an environmental stalwart, used language that alarmed some environmentalists and suggested rough going for initiatives to fight climate change, if as expected she wins confirmation and cement a 5-3 conservative majority on the court.

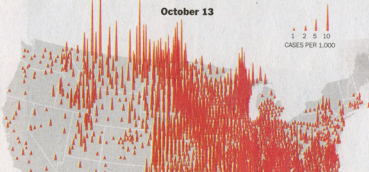
On Thursday, the last of four days of confirmation hearings, Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee set a committee vote on Judge Barrett's nomination. But they're 99 Senators to succeed a



U.S. Virus Cases Climb Toward Third Peak

The number of new coronavirus cases in the United States is surging once again after growth slowed in late summer. While the geography of the pandemic is now shifting to the Midwest and to more rural areas, new case counts are trending upward in most states, many of which are setting weekly records.

ARTICLE AND MORE GRAPHICS, PAGE A1



New York City Fights Covid-19 Block by Block

*Scattershot Approach
to Avert Full Closure*

By J. DAVID GOODMAN

At the Rego Center, a small mall in Queens, handwritten signs that were common during the early days of the pandemic have once again started to pop up: "We're closed! Exit now, please!"

But a short walk away, at the Queens Center, shoppers carrying heavy bags busily maneuvered through the four-story mall. Drivers sat at a first-floor Shake Shack.

The only difference was that the two malls were on opposite sides of a line on a map, hastily drawn last week by the office of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, that separated areas of Brooklyn and Queens where coronavirus cases have been dangerously spiking — red zones, he called them — from neighboring areas that had lesser risk.

Over the span of a few days, New York City has undergone a striking reversal of fortune. On the first day of October, restaurants had just reopened for indoor dining, subway ridership hit its

Late Edition

Today, cloudy, periodic rain, colder, high 63. Tonight, rain, some heavy, colder, low 46. Tomorrow, clearing after any early morning rain, high 58. Weather map is on Page A24.

WITH AID SPENT, POVERTY TRAPS MILLIONS MORE

'VERY CONCERNING' DATA

**The Cares Act Bolstered
Jobless Benefits but
Left a Vacuum**

By JASON DEPARLE

WASHINGTON — After an ambitious expansion of the safety net in the spring saved millions of people from poverty, the aid is now largely exhausted and poverty has returned to levels higher than before the coronavirus crisis, two new studies have found.

The number of poor people has grown by eight million since May, according to researchers at Columbia University, after falling by four million at the pandemic's start as a result of a \$2 trillion emergency package known as the Cares Act.

Using a different definition of poverty, researchers from the University of Chicago and Notre Dame found that poverty has grown by six million people in the past three months, with circum-

Manhattan, we flew up the east side to the city ferry and took it to Red Hook at Pioneer Street.

Randall's Island became a favorite destination—an athletic melting pot—in between the Harlem and East Rivers culminating in the whirlpool called Hell Gate. We traversed pathways under bridges with beautiful perspectival views of the bridges' supports, eyefuls of the water and the city including the brackish gem Little Hell Gate Salt Marsh. In Queens, we would coast through Astoria Park with its Olympic-size WPA outdoor pool (used for US Olympic Trials in 1936, 1952, and 1964), the new Queen's Public Library at Hunter's Point and Gantry Plaza State Park with native plantings and always hunting red-tailed hawks and peregrine falcons.

Early in January 2021, we biked to the New York Botanic Gardens in the Bronx. Crossing the upper west side, we entered the Zombie apocalypse—no vehicles parked or moving, very few pedestrians. Climbing St. Nicholas Avenue, down the hill from City College, I noticed one lone Mennonite family descending the steps of a Brownstone with cartons of eggs and fresh baked goods. We biked through Highbridge Park, past the Morris-Jumel Mansion which was built in 1765 for a British Colonel Roger Morris and his family as a summer house on 135 acres. In 1776, the family fled, and George Washington and his officers occupied the house for a few months. We then traversed High Bridge, the city's oldest bridge built in 1848, once used to support the Croton Aqueduct, across the Bronx to the NYBG. We stopped for soup and a bathroom break,

and returned via Corona Avenue to Prospect Avenue, ducking through industrial blocks to a secret passage to cross the Bronx Kill to Randall's Island and returned hugging the shoreline.

In April, we did a version of this ride again, heading this time to the Bronx Greenway, and found that the gate connecting the Bobby Wagner Walk and the Harlem River Drive, under the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge was open. Work had begun to remove the detritus and smooth the land. The new path took us under the Willis Avenue and Third Avenue Bridges. From there we wound our way up to Coogan's Bluff which involved carrying our bikes up 110 steep, stone stairs to the 155th Street Viaduct and once again over High Bridge that spans the Harlem River and the Major Deegan Expressway. We wound through the Bronx along several miles of the Grand Concourse, past the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage, to the Bronx River Forest along the Bronx River and Parkway to 230th street stopping for lunch on a bridge overlooking the river adjacent to the flowering Redbud trees. We circled back where the path ended and headed toward the Soundview Ferry Stop via the Pelham Parkway pathway and then south along the Hutchinson River Parkway under and around the confluence or scrambled nest of three highways to the Zerega Avenue Bridge through Pugsley Creek Park to Clason Point Park. During the hour-long ferry to Wall Street along the East River past Riker's Island, Laguardia, and the entire eastern flank of Manhattan, we studied the contours of the shore we had just traversed. A second ferry took me to Red Hook. Biking home,



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Late Edition

Today, mostly cloudy, windy, afternoon rain, high 39. Tonight, heavy evening showers, windy, clearing, low 45. Tomorrow, sunny, windy, high 53. Weather map, Page 28.

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A patient arriving at an emergency room in El Paso, where hospitals are straining as the number of Covid-19 cases keeps jumping.

DEATHS CLIMB FAST AS HURDLES LOOM FOR VACCINE PLANS

**States Aren't Ready
to Distribute Shots**

**'Horrible' Toll Seen
in Coming Months**

By **ABBY GOODNOUGH**
and **SHEILA KAPLAN**

This article is by **Sarah Mervosh**,
J. David Goodman and **Julie Bosman**.

With the prospect that a coronavirus vaccine will become available for emergency use as soon as next month, states and cities are warning that distributing the shots to an anxious public could be hindered by inadequate technology, severe funding shortfalls and a lack of trained personnel.

While the Trump administration has showered billions of dollars on the companies developing the vaccines, it has left the logistics of inoculating and tracking as many as 20 million people by year's end — and many tens of millions more next year — largely to local governments without providing enough money, officials in several localities and public health experts involved in the

By the time Doug Rayshy's wife was allowed to enter his hospital room, it was too late to be sure whether he even knew she was there. After a feverish fight with the coronavirus, he lay unconscious on the bed. His wife cried through an N95 mask, while a computer tablet flashed a video stream of his children saying goodbye.

For weeks, as coronavirus cases spiked across the United States, deaths rose far more slowly, staying significantly lower than in the early, deadliest weeks of the nation's outbreak in the spring. New treatments, many hoped, might slow a new wave of funerals.

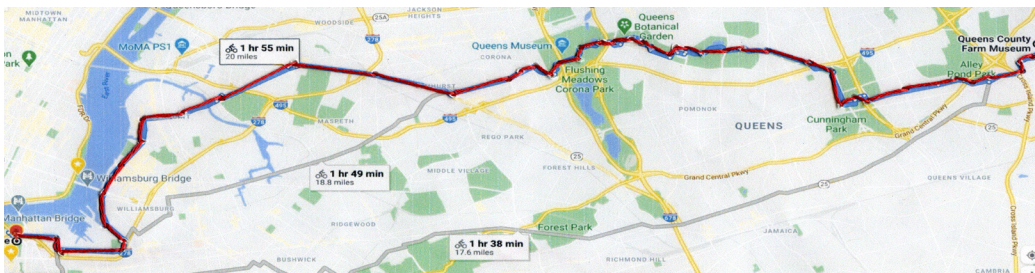




the drawbridges over the Gowanus Canal were open for a sailboat passing through. Cars, bikes, and mopeds all stopped unusually patient while the bridges lifted and lowered.

A few of my favorite rides involved eastern Queens. One day we biked to the Queens County Farm Museum where my children had gone on school trips. On the way there, we went the direct and flat route along Atlantic and Hillside Avenues. It was Sunday so we could hear the singing from the storefront churches and see the Covid testing lines. We passed through Rufus King Park that holds the King Manor, a beautiful yellow farmhouse in the Village of Jamaica. King was a framer and signer of the Constitution, friend to Alexander Hamilton, and vocal anti-slavery advocate. Once at our destination, we stopped for hot chocolate and our bag lunches and explored the grounds—the sheep, goats, and llamas on the 47-acre working farm before we headed back.

On the return, we found Alley Pond Park and then the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway where it seemed we had found a hidden path to another secret universe. The road was built in 1906 by a Vanderbilt as a raceway but then was used both as a fast track for the wealthy New Yorkers to get to their Long Island estates and then during Prohibition for bootleggers. It still has a secretive quality as the raised road takes you over the houses and city streets below. One bridge was closed so it entailed carrying our bikes over a fence and through the brush on a steep embankment. This path led us to Cunningham Park on a wooded path to Kissena Corridor Park by



the Kissena Velodrome and Lake to Flushing Meadows. By now, it was late and cold, so we soldiered onto the Queens Boulevard bike path and across Ridgewood back to Brooklyn as the wind built and the light diminished. A 48-mile ride.

Next time we did this trip again but started by climbing up to Highland Park and Ridgewood Reservoir, which was once the reservoir for all of Brooklyn but now holds a young forest. From there you can see the Rockaways and the Atlantic Ocean. After some windy, shoots-and-ladders shared roadways through the many cemeteries around the Jackie Robinson Parkway, you arrive in peaceful Forest Park with its stands of oak trees. This day, the park was filled with small groups of walkers and kids learning to bike; car traffic had been stopped in the forest drives because of the pandemic. It did not feel like a sculpted Olmstead park, but he did design the gentle Forest Park Drive that runs through it.

Once Forest Park ends, we had to navigate around the Grand Central Parkway to get to Flushing Meadows Corona Park. We found a pedestrian bridge, but it led to a muddy trail through the phragmites to Willow Lake. We considered persisting but we crossed paths with another biker who confirmed that the path petered out and redirected us over the pedestrian bridge to the paved path along Meadow Lake. That day it was windy and had been raining so the lake was overflowing and we had to ride through deep, cold puddles. After passing the Unisphere, we made our way by the Queens Botanical Gardens and found a place to get some warm soup on



Main Street in Flushing. We were cold and so grateful to find some homemade soup. After ordering indoors and lingering as long as we could to warm up, we sat out front in the café chairs in the windy sun, my carefully printed-out maps of the Brooklyn-Queens Greenway Guide blowing away under the parked cars. We persisted and made it to the Vanderbilt Parkway but not as far as Fort Totten which was our original goal. We went back more directly through Corona and Elmhurst and then Ridgewood via Grand Avenue. This was a 50-mile ride in a cold, persistent wind and we were all frozen and catatonic as we parted.

On March 6, a blustery day in the 30s, we headed to the Vander Ende-Onderdonk House built in 1709. It is the oldest Dutch Colonial stone house in NYC and lies on the border of Bushwick and Ridgewood. We returned via Highland Park and Ridgewood reservoir to Eastern Parkway. It was cold and windy again and we had the bike path to ourselves except for a few dog walkers and sabbath strollers.

Later, on April 3, a frigid morning in the 30s, we made it to Fort Totten with its Civil War fort via Sunnyside Gardens and 34th avenue which was thankfully that day part of the city's Open Streets program. We crossed the Grand Central Parkway and then rode along the greenway on Flushing Bay which was once part of Flushing Meadows but now cut off by the Robert Moses parkways and expressways. A small bridge dumped us in downtown Flushing next to a funeral home with a line of black cars ready to make their



way to the cemetery. After looping around Fort Totten, we followed the pathway that runs along the Cross Island Parkway and Little Neck Bay to Alley Pond Park with a fabulous, paved undulating path through the forest to Vanderbilt Parkway and then directly to Forest Park, Ridgewood Reservoir, and Highland Park. That day, the path across the reservoir was open and we took advantage of the warming sun to stop for a snack and watch the dog walkers and the selfie-takers. We took Fountain Avenue straight to the Belt Parkway Path and returned via Canarsie Park and Avenue I. Another 50-mile ride.

We began extending the lengths of our trips to prepare for our ride to Montauk on May 1. In early April, we were shooting for 75 miles. Starting at Grand Army Plaza, we did a loop into Manhattan across the Williamsburg Bridge and then back across the Queensboro Bridge. We biked across Long Island City to Sunnyside. Bathroom breaks are a challenge during the pandemic, but we were lucky to find an open one at the Thomas P. Noonan Jr. Playground. A Zumba class was in progress on the asphalt play space. We then connected with the Queens Boulevard bike path and went straight out to its end near the Jamaica Train Station where the smell of urine mixed with the Halal butchers was overwhelming. We passed a group of teens painting over graffiti on a wall protecting the sidewalk from the train yard. We crossed the Sunrise Highway to Long Island stopping for lunch in a vacant lot next to a man set up selling cantaloupes and watermelons from his truck. We rode through



Valley Stream and Baldwin to Long Beach and circled back to Atlantic Beach, Rockway, and then our familiar path back along the boardwalk and across Brooklyn.

May 1, as planned, we met at the Atlantic Train station at 7:30 am and took the train to Patchogue after switching in Jamaica. The wind was strong that day from the northwest with gusts and back eddies. We took as many side roads as possible on our way to the Montauk lighthouse but had to share the road with trucks on the Montauk Highway much of the way. We passed through the Shinnecock Indian Reservation with signs for cigarettes and lobster rolls. We arrived at the Montauk lighthouse at 4:30 and then back to the hotel in town—80 miles! The offseason hotel with its narrow beds and views of the ocean was home for the night. We shared wine and then coffee in the morning watching the surf and the cormorants. The next morning the wind was against us but we were determined to reach 100 miles. We biked around Montauk without our backpacks and then picked up our belongings and headed to Springs to see the Pollock/Krasner house. After lunch at the local sandwich shop with the osprey coming and going from their raised nests, we found the Springs-Amagansett trail system that led us eventually to the Amagansett train station. The sandy trails revealed the backyards of the mammoth architectural domestic spaces. Back in Brooklyn, we parted in the warmth of the city. 33 additional miles.

Biking a city's paths is like looking for and finding new rooms in your house, in your timeline, in your life. New pathways, new



VERDICT REACHED, CHAUVIN

pocket parks, new public spaces, new angles. Given my own myriad and layered history in the boroughs, I thought about all the layers of personal history piled like historical strata. The pandemic had slowed time down and the speed on a bike allowed for the absorption of the details and the particularities. I would sometimes catch a child's eye over my mask and try to smile extravagantly and reassuringly with my eyes. Small details remain, a masked family descending the steps of their apartment with their carts of laundry; the lines for Covid testing, for food at supermarkets, food pantries, and Caribbean bakeries; the masked faces that wish you a good morning or a happy new year with so much cheer given the historically grim circumstances; a young child racing you with his scooter on the sidewalk; and the sounds of music emanating from storefront churches on Sundays. Biking offers time to absorb the realization that so many children have learned to crawl and walk on the crooked floors of the old apartments, learned to bike on its patchwork of sidewalk slabs, while the aging population learns to navigate the uneven edges and the emerging tree roots. So much struggle, mourning, and joy layered on top of each other like coats of paint. The pandemic underscores this struggle and the hope and piece of sanity that public trails and parks give to the survivors and the grieving.

Meighan Gale

Brooklyn, 2021

Typeset in Caslon