

The Old Town Hall

By WAYNE S. BERRY

WHEN I moved to Flushing, Long Island, in 1932 I often heard the natives tell how beautiful the town used to be before the subway was extended from Manhattan. I could visualize the early scenes from their descriptions, for landmarks were still in existence.

One of these, the Town Hall, adjacent to the green, is now used as a Magistrate's Court. Across the green is an old Quaker Meeting House which has been in use from the time of John Bowne, one of the early Friends, whose residence, dating back to 1661, is the oldest house in New York City.

I used to think that the old Town Hall was one building that should be replaced with a modern structure. Now I would be sorry to see it go. What caused the change in my attitude? Perhaps you can guess.

In 1936 — one of the luckiest years of my life—I received a postal card announcing the Fundamental Course offered by the Henry George School. This was the first class ever to be conducted in Flushing. By coincidence it was held in the Y.M.C.A., only a few blocks east of the Town Hall.

After exploring *Progress and Poverty* I read other books by Henry George and also the biography written by his son, Henry George, Jr. I treasure this book very much as my copy is autographed by the late Anna George de Mille, youngest daughter of Henry George.

Near the end of the book is an account of the election campaign George conducted when he was running for mayor of New York. Imagine my delight when I read that the last speech made by this famous man was in the Town Hall in Flushing on October 28, 1897, the night before he died.

In *The Life of Henry George*, the author quoted Dan Beard, father of the Boy Scout movement, who presided at the meeting: "I escorted Mr. George from the reception room to the stage and bowed to the audience, as the only way that the applause would permit me to introduce him. Mr. George took a few steps, faced the side of the stage, looked upward for a moment, and raising his right hand as if addressing someone overhead, said, 'Time and Tide wait for no man.' His arm fell to his side, his head fell forward, the chin on his breast, and he stood as if lost in thought."

Several years ago an old neighbor told me that she was sitting in the front row near the stage on that fateful night, and she too heard Henry George say, "Time and Tide wait for no man."

I have been teaching extension classes in Flushing for six or seven years and am still constantly inspired by the thought that not only am I teaching great truths, but I am teaching them close to the spot where the author of them had to stop. I consider that there is no place where I could more appropriately rededicate myself to continuance of this great philosophy.