



## Satterlee Street and Biddle/Petersen House Memories

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The spectacular photo of the Biddle House dressed in winter snow brought back memories of growing up on Satterlee Street. To me, it is not the Biddle House but the Petersen family home, home of childhood friend and neighbor, Charles. Further down Satterlee towards Hylan Boulevard was the home of my girl friend and neighbor and still my BFF. Growing up in Tottenville in the 1940s and 50s was quiet but our family home on Satterlee Street provided us and several neighborhood children with a unique playground and opportunity for adventure.

Our playground was bounded by Amboy Road, Craig Avenue, Hylan Boulevard and the bluffs along Raritan Bay extending toward Ward's Point. Hours were spent playing on the Petersen property—running across the expansive lawn and testing our balance walking along the split rail fence. There was a garage, a barn, and a chicken coop. The chicken coop was like a club house. One winter we collected birds' nests and organized them on shelves in the coop. In warmer weather we collected box turtles. We would keep them for a day or so corralled in a wire enclosure but always release them back to where we found them.

Then there were the days we walked down Satterlee to explore the Conference House grounds, the bluffs, and beaches. I always enjoyed the Conference House grounds as I knew that as a child my grandfather, C.W. Hamilton, lived there. I felt a sense of ownership. Our exploring started at the bluffs adjoining the Russell Pavilion and moved towards Brown's Beach at the foot of Amboy Road. Often we never got that far. If Charles was with us we would climb the tall wooden staircase to his home. If not, we climbed the bluff and walked through the poison ivy infested woods to Tottenville Place and my house.

I developed my love of nature and observational skills during my Satterlee Street playground years. This plus the excellent education I received at PS-1 and Tottenville High School led me to Brooklyn College and a degree in Geology. I am pleased to see that my informal playground centered on the Conference House and Biddle/Petersen home is now incorporated into a wonderful park that includes history and an opportunity to observe nature as I did. I hope the schools include this park in their field trip plans.