

Many visitors may recall seeing the [Nicholas](#) and [Jan](#) Schenck homes on display, as part of the Museum's fourth floor period room collection. These two houses provide a fascinating window into the life of early Brooklyn settlers. While we are fortunate for the Schenck households to have survived, they are the exception to the rule. The majority of the colonial homesteads were razed around the turn of the 20th century, providing needed space for a rapidly growing city. Although lost, we have glimpses of how they looked thanks to the documentary works of late 19th century photographers. Many such photographs are housed by the [Museum's Library and Archives](#) collection and are currently being [digitized](#) as a facet of the *Cultural Heritage Access Research and Technology project* ([CHART](#)).



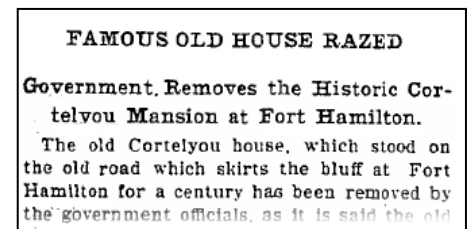
[Schenck Homestead](#)

As a CHART project intern, one of my roles is to provide context to these photographs through research. For buildings, such as colonial homesteads, one important fact we try to uncover is location. But how do you locate a house demolished over a hundred years ago? Fortunately, recent digitization projects have made vast historical knowledge only a few mouse clicks away. The Brooklyn Public Library's [Daily Eagle newspaper archive](#) is one such resource we use, providing insight into daily Brooklyn life around the turn of the century.



[Cortelyou, Simon Homestead](#)

For example, Cortelyou is a well-known Brooklyn family name. We have a number of images of homes owned by members of the Cortelyou family including the Cortelyou/Simon homestead, but where exactly did it stand? Using the Daily Eagle archive I found references to the Cortelyou house in an article about the expansion of Fort Hamilton. The paper details that the 1668 homestead was located on the bluff of Gravesend Bay, which gets us closer but still not perfect.



[Daily Eagle Clipping, October 10, 1901](#)

What we need is a map, from the late 1800's no less. Luckily, the New York Public Library has a recent [digital project](#) to digitize historical maps and make them available online. Browsing their archive I located a [map of the area](#) of interest from 1890. Zooming in to the Fort Hamilton area we find a hand written note locating the old Cortelyou homestead! This map had been rectified, meaning it has been geographically matched with a modern map, allowing us to know the [exact location](#) where the house used to stand.



[Robinson's Atlas of Kings County, 1890](#)

Utilizing such resources we are able to strongly link the past with the present. In doing so we are able to better understand the rich cultural heritage of our city, and place ourselves in that history.