

OLD TUNNEL ELUDES POLICE EXPLORERS

**Spurred On by Mystery Letter,
They Vainly Search Atlantic
Av. Cellars for Entrance.**

FIND PLENTY OF LEGENDS

**Hunt to Be Resumed Today
for Reputed Pirate Haunt,
Sealed Up in 1859.**

Out of the Atlantic Avenue catacombs in Brooklyn at 4 P. M. yesterday climbed a police and press safari—dog-tired, dusty, but still determined, after three hours of weary search, to find an entrance to the long-abandoned Atlantic Avenue tunnel, century-old abode of legend and mystery.

Just what they were searching for, the intrepid hunters could not say. All they had to guide them was an anonymous letter from Massachusetts, addressed to the District Attorney, that said, "If you inspect the old tunnel you might find something interesting."

Murder victim? Bootleg still? Counterfeiters' den? One guess was as good as another. Captain John J. McGowan of the homicide squad, who has loved safaris since his boyhood days in Bay Ridge, got his men behind him and left Brooklyn Police Headquarters at 1 P. M.

At Atlantic Avenue depot, last outpost on the way to the tunnels, the party picked up William McCarthy, Assistant District Attorney; Joie George, a scout, and Sergeant Edmund Unger and his emergency squad, sent from the Hamilton Avenue post. The squad had lights and crowbars.

Before the safari crossed the last green light at Fourth Avenue, the reporters stopped for one last ice-cream soda, laid in a supply of copy paper and nickels for coin booths, and plunged in the general direction of Atlantic Avenue ferry, far down the hill.

On the way Safari Leader McGowan related the history of the lost tunnel. It was built in 1832 for the Brooklyn-Jamaica Railroad, chiefly to carry passengers and freight from the ferry up Cobble Hill to where Atlantic Avenue terminal is now.

Sealed Up in 1859

In 1859 the tunnel was sealed at both ends. Old inhabitants declared it was because the river pirates took refuge in the tunnel and fought off the police. Another legend had it that counterfeiters had cut entrances through the tunnel walls into houses along Atlantic Avenue.

"The place," said Bwana McGowan, fanning himself with his helmet, "is supposed to be alive with rodents [he got that from Ray Honan, department scholar] big as behemoths. We may have to fight our way through, men, but we're prepared."

The first descent was in the cellar of an old four-story brick tenement at 122 Atlantic Avenue. The detectives tapped the walls, listened for hollow sounds, but heard nothing. They climbed out again.

Under the Aurora Café, at 55 Atlantic Avenue, down nearer the ferry, the party plunged into another cellar, tapped some more and did not so much as raise an echo. It was nice and damp, though, and the lads hated to leave.

At 43 excitement rose to fever pitch, and not an ounce of quinine in the crowd. The emergency men discovered a staircase leading to a subcellar. Floundering over boxes, brick mounds and debris, they reached the walls, tapped—nothing.

On the way out they encountered John Santora, 28 years old, a native boy. He told Captain McGowan that when he was a lad of 8 or 10 he and his playmates used to get into the tunnel through an opening in the subcellar at 66 Columbia Place.

"On, men!" cried the safari leader and they rounded the corner to No. 66, Santora leading. The Chinese laundryman on the first floor stared at them as they vanished into the cellar, then went on with his ironing, nibbling reflectively at a lichee nut.

Reporters with handkerchiefs bound 'round their heads to catch the perspiration and cobwebs waited with pencils poised as the Unger crew pounded the walls with crowbars. No echo. No hollow sound. The party lumbered out into Columbia Place, shins scraped, clothes dusty.

Party Camps for Night

At 4 P. M., when the sun glared hotly from behind the ferry house, the party had visited and tapped every cellar in lower Atlantic Avenue, with no luck. Captain McGowan called a halt, announced he would consult the Highway Department records for a plan of the tunnel and resume the hunt today.

Last night an unofficial observer got in touch with Sahib T. B. Lineburgh, inspector in the Engineering Department of the Transit Commission, in his home at 737 Quincy Street, in Brooklyn, and asked him about the tunnel. He entered it in 1916.

"First of all," said Mr. Lineburgh, "there are no exits from the tunnel into any house on Atlantic Avenue. The tunnel walls are made of granite, four feet thick and fourteen feet high, and the arch is made of brick and concrete just as thick.

"I had men bore into it at Court Street and at Henry Street. Their drills bit the arch at two feet. We put ladders down and went down, carefully, because we'd heard all those legends about poison gas, and pirates' dens and rats big as cats.

"It was bosh—all of it. The tunnel is bare. They said we'd find a locomotive. Why, they even took up the tracks and ties when they abandoned the place in 1859. The air was fresh and sweet and we didn't see a single rat though we explored from the river to Boerum Place—the full length of the tunnel."

Mr. Lineburgh made his survey as Superintendent of the Highway Department in Brooklyn, it seems, when a telephone crew, laying cable, hit the tunnel in 1916 and asked department permission to work through. He said there was a full report of his findings on record.