



by Blythe Roveland-Brenton, Ph.D. '00G

The postwar decade of the Roaring '20s brought in the exuberance of the jazz age and New York City's growing status as the undisputed cultural capital of the U.S. and Western Hemisphere. It also brought in Prohibition, bootleg liquor and gangster-affiliated speakeasies.

The ensuing 15 years caught the city like a gigantic mood swing, as the hardship of the Depression-laden '30s gave way to World War II and Allied triumph. Economic prosperity and communist fears dominated the second postwar era through the mid-1950s.

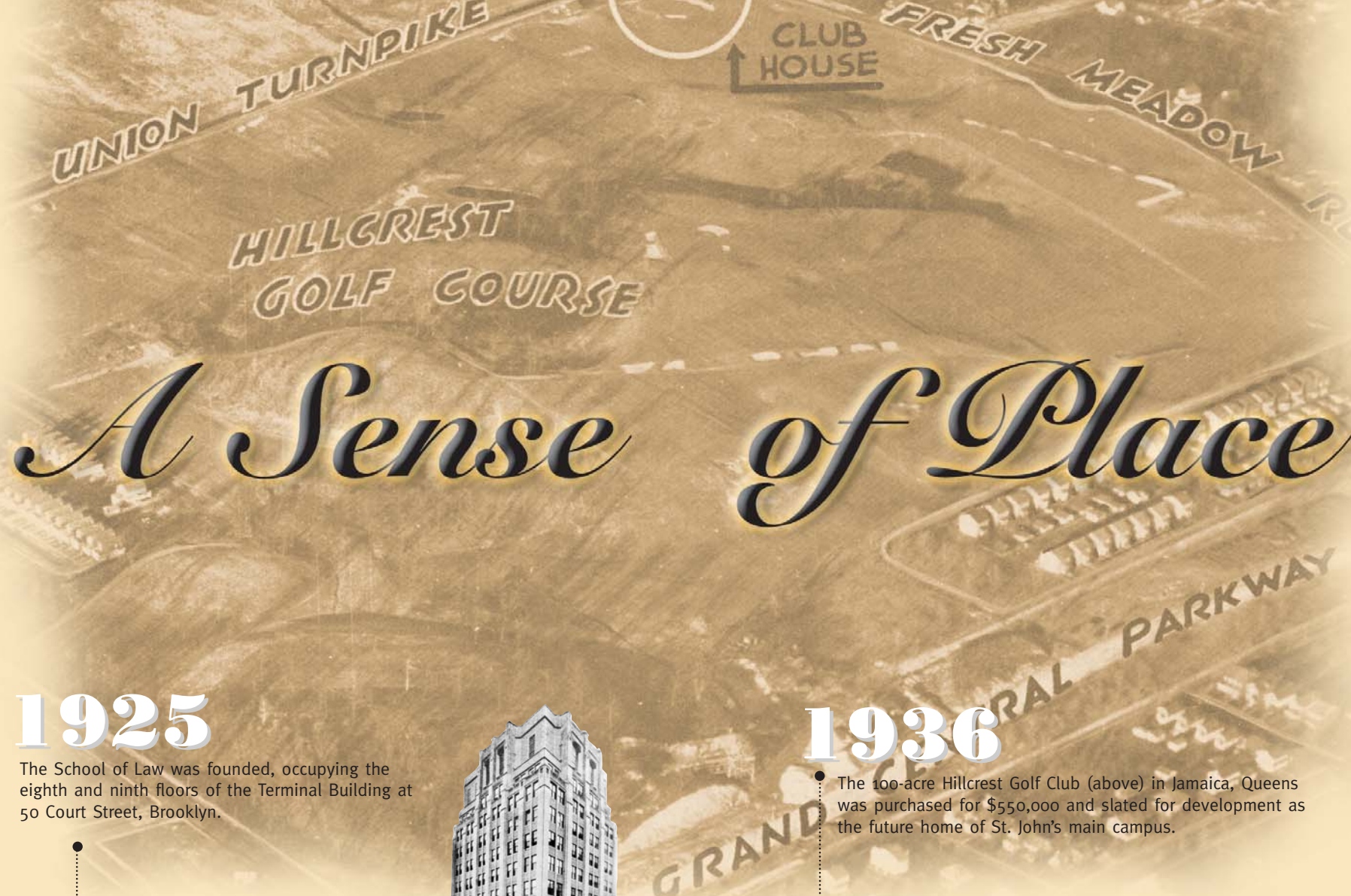
As the world and city around it changed ever so swiftly, St. John's experienced its own, rapid metamorphosis. The Hillcrest Golf Course in Queens was purchased in the mid-1930s as the site for a future main campus, spelling the beginning of the end for the Lewis Avenue campus whose inter-borough transfer of operations would be complete by 1958.

As the initial move to Hillcrest in 1955 signaled the dawn of a new era for St. John's, it also marked the end of a 30-year run that saw the establishment of three new schools, a new Brooklyn Center on Schermerhorn Street and two official name changes.

Sources: University Archives; *The New York Times*, "100 Years of New York City" (1998).

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This is the second in a three-part series that celebrates a century of St. John's in honor of its 130th birthday this year.



A Sense of Place 1945



In honor of St. John's 75th year, the Diamond Jubilee was at once a celebratory and solemn occasion as alumni and students who died in World War II were remembered. General Omar N. Bradley (pictured, center) was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science in Military Science and Tactics as (l to r) University President William J. Mahoney; University Chancellor and Bishop of Brooklyn Rev. Thomas E. Molloy; and Rev. Raymond A. Kearney, Auxiliary to the Bishop of Brooklyn Laws, look on (man on the far right is unidentified). In that year, the first postwar incoming class of St. John's College was predominantly comprised of veterans.

1925

The School of Law was founded, occupying the eighth and ninth floors of the Terminal Building at 50 Court Street, Brooklyn.



1936

The 100-acre Hillcrest Golf Club (above) in Jamaica, Queens was purchased for \$550,000 and slated for development as the future home of St. John's main campus.

1928



Legend has it that a wooden cigar store Indian (above center) was "kidnapped" from outside a local store and brought to the college. Its legs were chopped off the concrete base, and the new mascot for St. John's sports teams was placed on a pedestal and summarily dubbed "Chief Red Jacket." While the football team had been called "The Big Red Team" (later shortened to the "Redmen" because of their bright red uniforms), the introduction of the mascot now gave the nickname a new connotation.

1929

St. John's purchased land in Brooklyn at the corner of Schermerhorn Street and Boerum Place to serve as the future home for the Schools of Law, Accounting, Commerce and Finance, and the Borough Hall Division of the College of Arts and Sciences. Financed by the mortgaging of several Vincenzian properties, the 12-story Gothic-style building at 96 Schermerhorn Street (above) was opened for classes in September and hailed as the largest law school building in the country at the time. In this year, the School of Pharmacy was also established.

1933

The Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York voted to amend St. John's charter officially changing the name of St. John's College to St. John's University, Brooklyn. The same year, the first applicants for the Ph.D. degree were accepted.



1943

Basketball coach Joe Lapchick led his teams to National Invitation Tournament titles in 1943 and 1944 before leaving to coach the New York Knicks from 1947-1956. He then returned to St. John's to coach again until his retirement in 1965.

A year after the closing of Hillcrest Golf Club as a public course, University officials broke ground on construction of the Queens campus' first building, the \$3 million St. John Hall classroom. The name officially changed again to St. John's University, New York.

1955

St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences were relocated from Lewis Avenue to the newly-completed St. John Hall on the Queens campus. School of Commerce and School of Education courses were also offered in the new building.

1954

