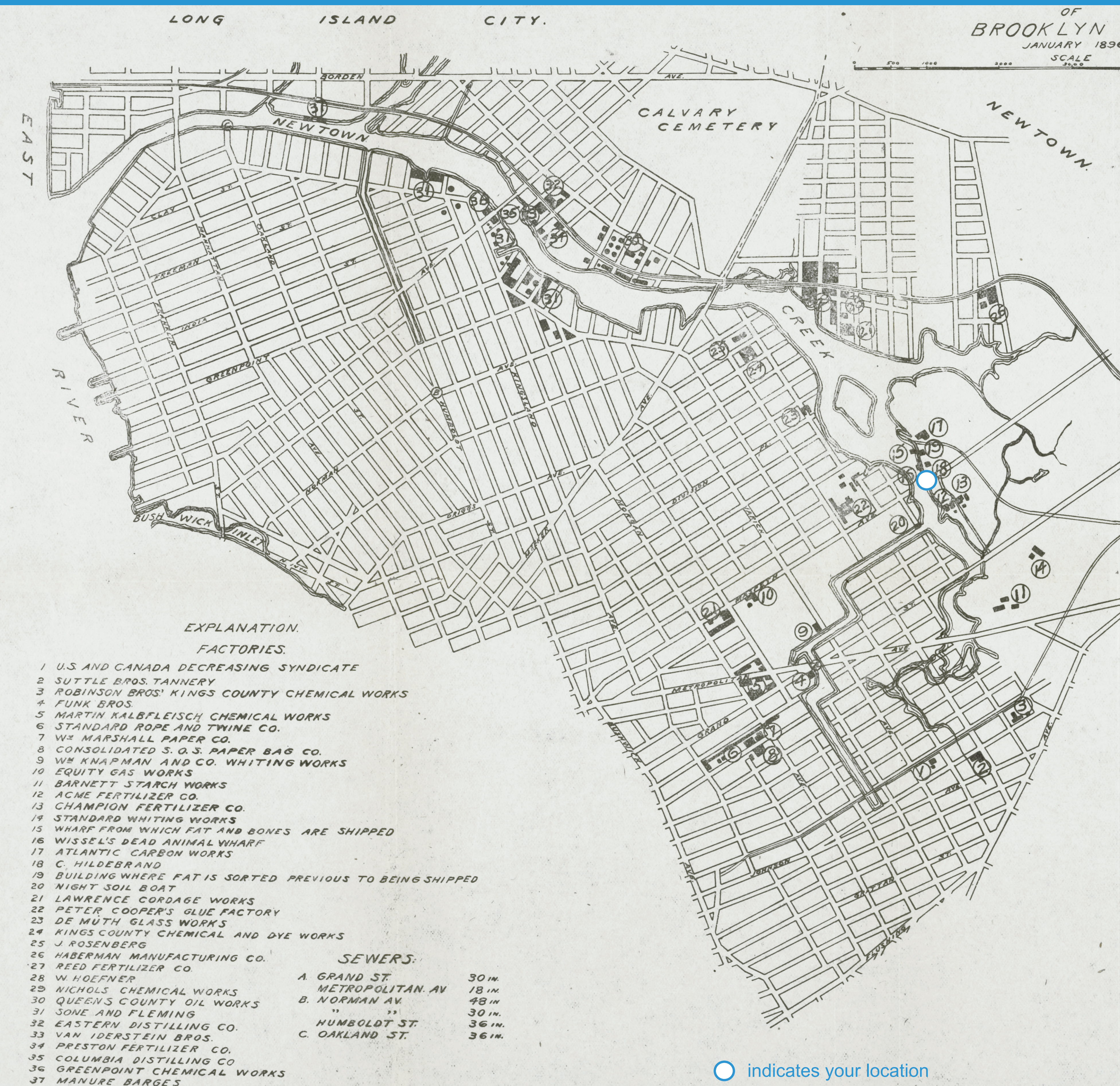


# Maspeth Avenue Plank Road



Map of Newtown Creek and Vicinity Prepared by the Department of Health of Brooklyn, N.Y. January 1896. Courtesy New York Public Library.

This site represents the remnants of the Maspeth Toll Bridge Company's Plank Road, which crossed Newtown Creek in the 1800's running along what is today 58th Road in Queens and Maspeth Avenue in Brooklyn.

The bridge connected the early communities of Maspeth and Newtown, across what was Furman's Island to bring products to market in Williamsburg and, via early ferry service, to Manhattan. Built in 1836, the toll bridge was decommissioned and removed in 1875 with the building of the adjacent Grand Street Bridge, yet portions of the decayed wooden pilings still remain in the water today and show the footprint of this once historic crossing.

In the 19th century the surrounding shorelines contained a number of industrial operations that helped sustain the growth of New York City. Manufactured goods and waste products processed in the area included fertilizers, chemicals, glues, ropes, dyes and a variety of petroleum-based fuels (see the historic 1896 map to the left).

Before the 18th century Newtown Creek sustained a vibrant ecosystem and salt marsh environment including plentiful amounts of fish and shellfish harvested by native Lenape tribes and early European colonialists. Early maps reflect this environment, notably with the presence of Mussel Island - a shoal of native ribbed mussels that was later dredged and used as landfill to connect Furman Island to modern day Queens. Yet, the expanse of industrial activity has erased much of the native landscape and left a legacy of contamination still present within the bed of the creek. Nevertheless, just as signs of the old bridge footings still exist into the 21st century, so can one find signs of wildlife returning to Newtown Creek. Numerous coastal bird species such as cormorants, herons, egrets and kingfishers can often be seen here hunting for fish in the waters.

**NOTICE:** Newtown Creek is a federally designated Superfund site. Due to poor water quality and contamination of the sediments within Newtown Creek, it is NOT advisable to swim, wade or consume fish or shellfish at this location. Please help keep this site clean by not littering or dumping debris.

This signage was produced by the Newtown Creek Alliance with permission from the NYC Department of Transportation. For more information visit: [newtowncreekalliance.org](http://newtowncreekalliance.org)



New York - New Jersey  
Harbor & Estuary Program  
[www.harborestuary.org](http://www.harborestuary.org)

