

Learning Places Spring 2016

SITE REPORT

Field Visit: #1 Vinegar Hill



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INTRODUCTION

On this site visit we will study and observe Vinegar Hill in Brooklyn, NY. Vinegar Hill is located between Dumbo and the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Vinegar Hill was originally settled by Irish immigrants. This location spans a six-block area, but was larger before construction on the Brooklyn-Queens expressway. Our goal is to carefully observe the details in the area, such as architectural time periods, street names, grid development, and building relationships.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Prior to visiting the Vinegar Hill site, I expect to see a diversity of building developments. Some buildings will be from modern construction methods, with small windows, more floors, and a plain appearance. The older style buildings should have more decorative outer appearance, cobble stone mixed with brick, and larger lintel for windows. I also expect the streets to be narrower than modern

street grid development.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches)



This is a Three story building located at 72 Hudson Ave. The commercial space is on the ground floor, while residential spaces are located on the above floors. The building has a common bond brick pattern with wooden Bulkheads and display windows, as well as a decorative cornice. To the right of this building is 70 Hudson Ave., which has a wooden framed architecture with wooden siding. This wooden architecture style indicates that this building may date back to the 1830s.



Located on front street between Gold st. and Bridge st. This home appears to be dated between 1830 - 1850 based on the Greek revival Styles. There is rust on the cornice and window moldings. There is a mix of brownstone and brick facade. There is a high stoop with classical design patterns on the door.



This image depicts an old fire station that has been renovated into a residential living space.

The fire station at 227 Front St. has a unique design similar to an Italianate architecture style. It is three stories with rounded arched windows and brownstone sills. The cornice is bracketed and has

recessed panels with an arched fascia. The building should date back to around the 1840s and 1870s.



These blue colored window display images were taken at 67 Hudson Ave. They show Greek revival style design on the window frame and indicate it was built sometime between the 1830s through 1850s.



These images show a group of newly developed residential spaces and Harrison Alley.



In the first image you can see a more recently developed residential building 13 Evans Street. This building has indoor garages and is three stories tall. The building may have replaced a former alley. A street sign is visible pointing in the direction of the waterfront, indicating this alley once had a longer stretch. In the second image we see this alley is fenced off and no longer in use.

QUALITATIVE SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. Neighborhood / Street Character
 - a. Roads are built with cobblestone with some asphalt.
 - b. Some streets are narrow and aged, while other roads are better maintained where new construction has taken place.
 - c. There is a mix of private space, businesses and residential living space.

2. Vitality of Neighborhood
 - a. General Description
 - i. There are no major transportation service in the area, such as buses or trains.
 - ii. There was activity in some offices, but many of the businesses were not open at the time.(1:40pm)
 - b. Pedestrian Activity
 - i. Very low pedestrian activity, around six people traveling in the two hour site visit.
 - ii. Higher pedestrian activity was seen as we moved away from the waterfront in the direction of Front Street, walking towards Dumbo area.
 - c. Vehicular Traffic
 - i. Low traffic activity.
3. Age of Buildings (provide evidence for prediction)
 - a. 1820 - 1830 : Wooden frame houses
 - b. 1830 - 1860 : Many buildings in Vinegar Hill have different architecture styles such as Greek revival,Gothic, and Italianate.
 - c. 1900 - Present : Factories, storage space, modern homes
4. Relationship Between Buildings
 - a. On Hudson ave buildings are mostly three stories high and three columns wide with the ground floor being a commercial space.
 - b. Modern residential buildings have car garages built on the ground floor.
 - c. No visible gaps between buildings.
 - d. Mixed building developments (commercial, residential, parking lots, factories)
5. Building Details
 - a. Intricate cornice and window bay designs
 - b. Large Window Lintel
 - c. Medium height stoops
6. Relationship to the Waterfront
 - a. Vinegar Hill is located by the waterfront, but a large part of the view is blocks by a utility facility.
 - b. From Plymouth St. going to the waterfront, there is a declining slope.

QUANTITATIVE DATA for Area of Study

Subject	Data
Street Names	Hudson Ave, Evans St, Plymouth St, water St, Front St, Gold St, Bridge St
Street Width	Some streets have a width of two cars and others have a width of three cars.
Street Pavement	Mix between cobblestone and asphalt
Building Heights	Three to four stories high
Building Widths (Window Bays)	Three window bays across
Building Types/Uses	Residential, Commercial, Factory, Utility
Empty Lots / Gardens	There is an empty lot at the corner of Evans St. and Hudson St. About six unmaintained gardens in vinegar Hill.
Shops / Restaurants	Mostly Restaurants, coffee shop on Front St. and Bridge St.
Industrial Shops	Many throughout Vinegar hill

QUESTIONS to Research Further

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were some window moldings made of metal and others of stone or wood?
2. Why the con Edison utility factory was built by the water front?
3. Where was the natural waterfront line in Vinegar Hill ?

RESEARCH METHOD/SOURCE FOR EACH QUESTION ABOVE:

1. Question 1
 - a. The Olympia settlement in early Brooklyn, N.Y , Armbruster, Eugene L., 1865-1943
 - b. An Architectural Guidebook to Brooklyn, Francis Morrone
 - c. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, December 18, 2007
2. Question 2
 - a. PERMIT DESCRIPTION Con Edison - Hudson Avenue Generating Station

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/dardata/boss/afs/permits/261010004200044.pdf>
 - b. Popular Mechanics Apr 1938, page 144A, 541, The lights must not fail
3. Question 3
 - a. <http://www.brooklynwaterfronthistory.org/story/waters-edge/>
 - b. Brooklyn Village Map(1827), Long Island Historical Society

<http://bklyn-genealogy-info.stevemorse.org/Map/1827.Bk.Vill.html>
 - c. 1766 Plots

<http://bklyn-genealogy-info.stevemorse.org/Map/1766.Vill.Bklyn.html>

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

It was surprising to see a wide range of architectural styles from different time periods within a small area. There is little separation between residential and commercial space. Many of the older buildings are in need of renovation. Brick work has been poorly maintained over the years on some buildings or not properly replaced because older brick work can be seen in some areas. Brooklyn is undergoing rapid and large scale development. Without the designation of a historic district, these building may not have kept the same appearance or existed. The newly developed buildings take up a larger part of a block and may affect vinegar Hill grid layout in the future.