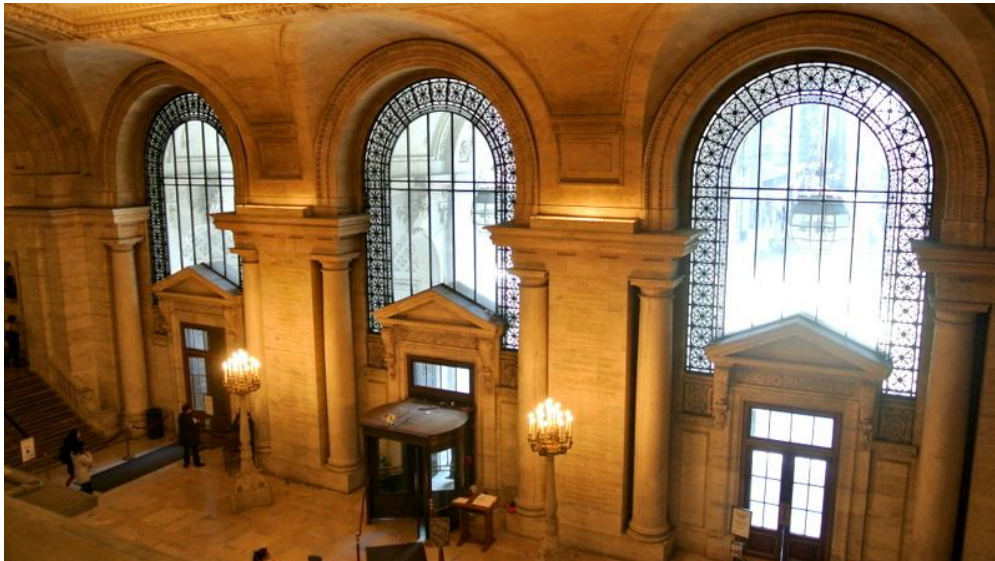


Learning Places Spring 2016

LIBRARY / ARCHIVE REPORT

New York Public Library - Stephen A. Schwarzman Building



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03.09.2015

INTRODUCTION

The class met at the New York Public Library - Stephen A. Schwarzman building in front of the Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division. From here the Librarian escorted the class to a wing of the library that is not accessible to the general public. When we arrived to the room, there were maps of Downtown Brooklyn ranging from the 18th century until the 1950s laid out on a large table. After the librarian briefly described each of the maps, the class was free to walk around the room to observe and photograph the maps.

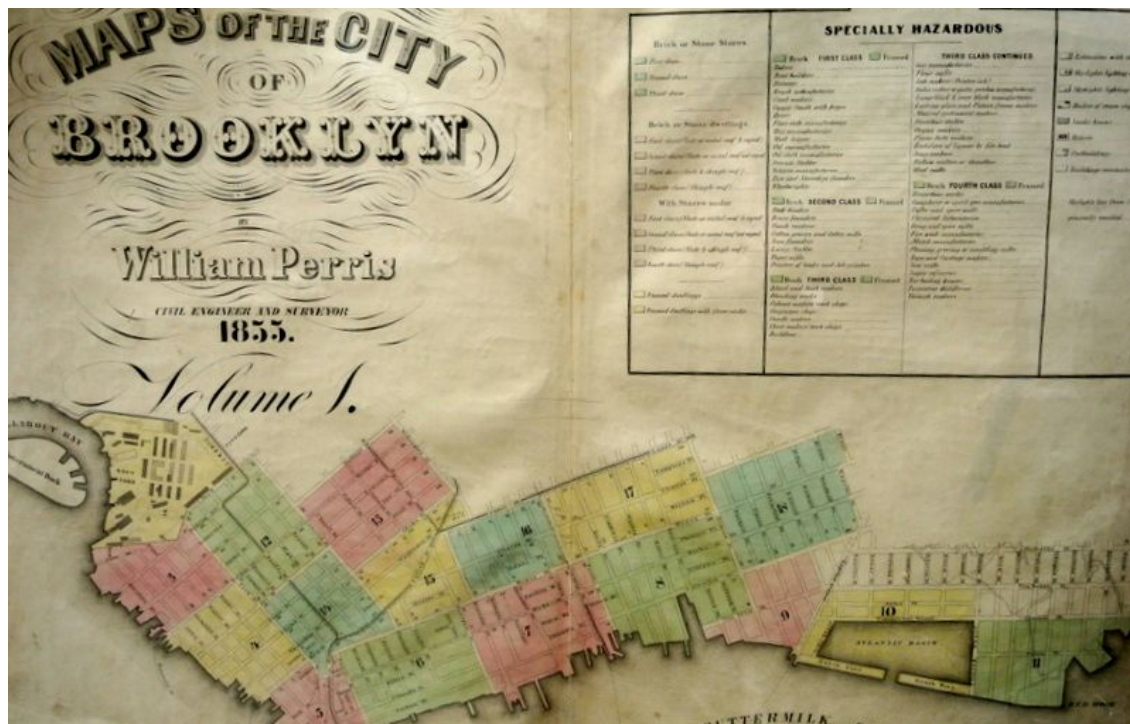
PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Since the class will be meeting outside the Map Division, room 117, I expect that we will be able to have access to a large collection of maps. For this reason, I hope that the maps shown will be very diverse. It'll be great to see maps that have been created for many different reasons. Each one showing something different about Vinegar Hill than the next.

SOURCES found

1. William Perris, "Volume 1 Index Map," *The New York Public Library*, Volume 1, 1855.
2. William Perris, "Plate 3: Map bounded by East River, Brooklyn Navy Yard, York Street, Bridge Street," *The New York Public Library*, Volume 1, 1855.
3. Unknown, "Map showing the original high and low grounds, salt marsh and shore lines in the city of Brooklyn: from original government surveys made in 1776-7.," *The New York Public Library*, Unknown, 1876.

DOCUMENTATION of site & resources (maps/archival documents/photos)



The

photograph above is William Perris' 1855 "Volume 1 Index Map." This map is a fire insurance map. The purpose of a fire insurance map is to estimate the fire risk of each building. The map legend separates lots by color as well as the amount of "x's" in each box. The center part of the legend that is labeled "Specially Hazardous" is the most important part of the legend. The hazard level is divided into the following classes: first class, second class, third class, and fourth class. Under each class is a list of occupations. For instance, bakers, brewers, and tobacco manufactories are labeled as first class hazards. On the map first class hazard lots will be a green color with one "x" inside. By examining the color and how many "x's" are in each lot, it may give insight to the purpose of each lot. Any brick or

stone dwelling with a storefront will be red in color. The symbol within each lot differs slightly from the standard “x” that is found in the purely residential, commercial, and industrial buildings.



Here is a photograph of the third

plate of the William Perris’ “ Plate 3: Map bounded by East River, Brooklyn Navy Yard, York Street, Bridge Street.” This plate follows the legend discussed above. On Gold Street there is a row of red lots

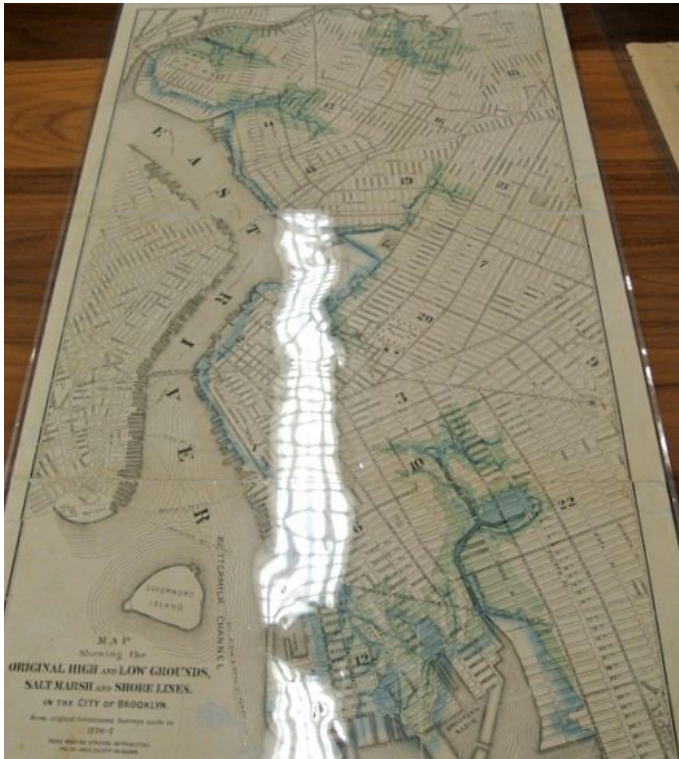
with “x’s” inside. Those are purely residential. The red lots directly across the street have a different symbol. Those are dwellings with storefronts on the first floor. The green lots are used purely for industrial or commercial purposes. While the lots do not specify what type of work is in each lot, it does give the viewer an idea of whether Vinegar Hill was a commercial center in the the mid-19th century.



To the left is a photograph of the East River Waterfront adjacent to Vinegar Hill. I was unable to find the name of the

cartographer or the year the map was created, so this map has not been cited above. When I was studying the ferry routes, I discovered that one of them leads directly to Vinegar Hill. The Roosevelt

Street Ferry seems to be situated on the edge of Bridge Street.



The map to the left was created in 1876. The map is based off of governmental surveys that were taken in 1776 and 1777. When I observed the map I was fascinated by the blue and green coloring. This map shows the original water lines of Brooklyn. The colored areas is of the marsh land and shorelines that existed in the 1776. By the time this map was created, the water and marsh land had been filled in to create solid ground. The purpose of filling the colored portions in with land was probably to create ground that is solid enough to build upon.



Here is a zoomed in version of the map in the above photograph. This photograph focuses on the waterfront of Vinegar Hill. The Navy Yard was at one point almost entirely water. Vinegar Hill was mostly water until Water Street. This observation is important because this map shows that the pieces of land protruding into the East River are man-made. A question I had from my Brooklyn Library Site Report revolved around finding out if those pieces of land were man-made and what their purpose was. Because this map shows the original shoreline, I can see that all the land that extends further than John Street has been filled in by people.

DISCOVERIES

1. Neighborhood History
 - a. Once known as “Irishtown” because of its high Irish population, Vinegar Hill had become a home for families immigrating from many different countries. Vinegar Hill’s openness towards immigrants was a reason why the neighborhood had its highest residential population in the 1880s.
 - b. Vinegar Hill was a bustling neighborhood from the mid-19th century until the turn of the 20th century. The neighborhood was filled with industry, residences, and commercial storefronts. The adjacent Brooklyn neighborhoods were dependent on Vinegar Hill’s industry and wares. Following the completion of the Manhattan Bridge, the vitality of Vinegar Hill diminished.
2. Key Events / Historical Dates
 - a. The Roosevelt Street Ferry on Bridge Street was established in 1853.
 - b. Vinegar Hill was at its residential and commercial peak in the 1880s.
 - c. The Manhattan Bridge was opened to the public in 1909.
3. Residential Influence on Vinegar Hill
 - a. The large influx of immigrants moving to Vinegar Hill required neighborhood planners and builders to build residential buildings that would be capable of housing many people. When looking at old maps, the residential lots are narrow and fully attached. The narrow width was ideal for being able to fit as many residential houses on a block as possible.
 - b. Vinegar Hill’s large population meant that employment was in high demand. Industrial work was prevalent throughout Vinegar Hill. Many of the residents worked in the factories, warehouses, and storefronts located throughout the neighborhood. Increased numbers in population gave rise to increases in commercial activity.
 - c. Vinegar Hill’s residents in the 19th century were from a Christian religious background. This factor influenced the type of religious centers that were built. St. Ann’s Roman Catholic Church on the corner of Gold Street and Front Street was built for the Catholic population. In addition, there was a methodist church on the corner of Gold Street and York Street, which suggests that there was a methodist population large enough to influence the creation of a church.
4. Importance of the East River Waterfront
 - a. The East River Waterfront was where many of the industrial factories and warehouses were situated. The gas works, coal yard, and lumber yard were all on the waterfront. The East River made water transportation for shipping and receiving goods possible

for these industries.

- b. Being on the East River Waterfront played a major role in transportation and providing access to Manhattan. During the mid-19th century, the Roosevelt Street Ferry transported Vinegar Hill's inhabitants to and from Roosevelt Street in Manhattan. In 1883 the Brooklyn Bridge was built on the East River Waterfront, thus allowing easier access from Downtown Brooklyn to Manhattan. Access to Manhattan increased again in 1909 when the Manhattan Bridge was completed.
5. Public Perception of Key Events
 - a. As mentioned earlier, Vinegar Hill was a neighborhood with a substantial Irish immigrant population. Until the 20th century people of Irish descent were not looked at favorably by the general population. The prejudice against the Irish, as well as immigrants in general, probably crossed over into the public's perception of the neighborhood.
 - b. When the Manhattan Bridge was created, the population was able to access Manhattan with more ease. The people living in Brooklyn became more interested in visiting and shopping in Manhattan.
 6. Important Changes to Neighborhood
 - a. One of the most important changes to Vinegar Hill was filling in the marsh areas with soil. The extension of the shoreline played a large role in expanding the industry in the area. It allowed for docks to be built, provided access to ferries, and provided room for more warehouses to be built.
 - b. Towards the end of the 19th century, the construction of the Manhattan Bridge had a major impact on Vinegar Hill. Many houses and warehouses had to be demolished for the bridge to be built. It was a major factor in the decline of Vinegar Hill's economy.
 7. Other Observations
 - a. When looking at William Perris' map of Brooklyn, I noticed that there was a small street called United States Street. This street was adjacent to the Navy Yard and branched off of Little Street. During my field visits to Vinegar Hill I never saw United States Street.
 - b. The map shows that there was only one primary school and a lecture room as of 1855.
 - c. The lots tended to be grouped by usage. Blocks with residential buildings would be almost entirely residential with one or two industrial buildings. Blocks with factories and warehouses tended not to have many residences on them. If the block had both factories and houses, they were still not intermingled. The houses would be grouped together on one side of the block and the warehouses would be on the opposite side.

TOPICS & KEYWORDS

“Roosevelt Street Ferry”, “Bridge Street Ferry”, “Bridge Street”, “United States Street”, “Public Primary School”, “East River Waterfront”, “Docks”, “Lecture Room”, “Gold Street”, “St. Ann’s Roman Catholic Church”, “Manhattan Bridge”, “Industry”, “Commerce” “19th century”, “turn of the 20th century”.

QUANTITATIVE DATA for Area of Study

Subject	Data
Land Ownership	Frederick Morris, Valentine G. Hall, P.C. Kelley, and Michael O’Connor.
Number of Blocks	Approximately 20 blocks in Vinegar Hill.
# of Buildings on a Typical Block	Around 26-30 buildings on each block.
Materials	Wooden frames, brick, stone, and iron. Most buildings were built using a mix of the mentioned materials.
# of Stories of Buildings	Residential buildings: 2-4 stories. Industrial buildings: 1-2 stories.
Residential Bldgs	Approximately 200 residential buildings.
Empty Lots	Several empty lots.
Commercial Uses	Arbuckle Coffee House and many unspecified storefronts.
Industrial Uses	Gasometers, People’s Coal Yard, Hook & Ladder, storeyard, Slaughterhouse, Hendrickson & Rolph Wood Yard, Schulty and Striker Lumber Yard, Ice House, lumberyard, ship carpenter, ship builder, chemical works, gold refinery, candle manufactory, etc.
# of Ferries	One: The Roosevelt Street Ferry

Schools	Two: Public Primary School and a lecture hall on Gold Street.
Churches	Two: Methodist Church and St. Ann’s Roman Catholic Church.

QUESTIONS to Research Further

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was United States Street demolished?
2. Was the lecture room on Gold Street used for academic purposes?
3. How did the Roosevelt Street Ferry affect Vinegar Hill’s industrial and commerce activity?

RESEARCH METHOD/ ADDITIONAL SOURCES NEEDED TO ANSWER EACH QUESTION ABOVE:

1. Question 1
 - a. Observe maps of Vinegar Hill that were created after 1855 to determine when United States Street was removed.
 - b. Research whether the United States Street granted access into the Brooklyn Navy Yard.
 - c. Compare the 1855 map that shows United States Street with a more modern map to determine what replaced the street.
2. Question 2
 - a. Utilize the resources at the Brooklyn Historical District to search for any source that discusses education in Downtown Brooklyn.
 - b. Read Donald G. Presa’s “Vinegar Hill Historic District Designation Report” to see if he discusses the original use of the building labeled “lecture room.”
3. Question 3
 - a. Look at maps to determine where in city the Roosevelt Street Ferry made stops.
 - b. Research whether the Roosevelt Street Ferry was solely for passenger transport or a mix of transporting both passengers and wares.
 - c. Research how long the Roosevelt Street Ferry was open for.

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

I enjoyed the visit to the New York Public Library. Even though most of our trip was spent in a room observing and photographing the maps, we were still able to walk through parts of the library and look at the beautiful architecture of the building. While I enjoyed having access to such a wide array of

maps, I think that written documents are more useful to my research. I did really enjoy looking at the map that showed the original shoreline and marshes in Vinegar Hill. Being able to study the map and compare it to other maps has been helpful. It has confirmed my assumption that the East River Waterfront in Vinegar Hill is in fact man-made.