

Learning Places Spring 2016

# Vinegar Hill/Dumbo Site Report 1

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## INTRODUCTION

As a class we talked about the Vinegar Hill area of Brooklyn, how it was very historic neighborhood which was literally a ten minute walk from the NAMM building. The neighborhood was in parts untouched by modern architecture, and very unchanged. The name “Vinegar Hill” was apparently from a battle between England and Ireland in 16<sup>th</sup> century, that was very significant to the Irish immigrants who settled the area.

## PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

I've created an idea of the Vinegar Hill Neighborhood that has a real working class feel to it, old warehouses, old homes with long brownstone stoops, and old fashion street lights. I imagined most of the streets would still be modern asphalted. I think that there will be some homes that are landmarked and have historic significance.

## SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches)



This is a picture of some of the homes on Evens Street, they have a very early 20<sup>th</sup> century feel to them. I personally took notice to the wooden front doors, the fire escapes which I've found in my readings now gives the home more value if sold because of its authenticity. The long brownstone stoop is also a nice feature to the homes in Vinegar Hill.



This is a picture of Water St. in Dumbo, a cobblestone street that shows how little this neighborhood has changed. This is not the only cobblestone street in this area cobblestone streets are actually a very common sight in the area. Also in this picture you can notice the untouched Trolley lines which was one of the most effective ways of commuting before the car became the main source of travel in the city.

## QUALITATIVE SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. Neighborhood / Street Character
  - a.) Historic Neighborhood
  - b.) Cobblestone streets
  - c.) The neighborhood basically between the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges
  
2. Vitality of Neighborhood

- i.) It's a very quiet neighborhood during the day time.
  - ii.) The pedestrian activity during the day is very little, there are some people on the main roads working out of the old warehouses which have become office buildings.
  - iii.) The vehicular traffic that I saw was mostly industrial trucks being loaded in and out, and taxi cabs.
3. Age of Buildings (provide evidence for prediction)
- a. Most buildings we saw were homes built in the beginning of the 1900's, with brick finishes
  - b. We saw some old industrial warehouses that you can see fading painting on the outside of what the building used to be called in the early 1900's
  - c. I saw some other buildings with wooden shingles on the outside which was an indication that the buildings haven't been renovated on the outside for at least sixty plus years.
4. Relationship Between Buildings
- a. Most homes are next to each other with no space in between them.
  - b. Most corner buildings look like they were store fronts, and have not changed whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors are residential
5. Building Details
- a. The buildings have big front windows on the first floors.
  - b. Some of the buildings have fire escapes
  - c. The buildings I believe were originally factories on main roads
6. Relationship to the Waterfront
- a. The water front is the reason the area was originally built, easy for shipping and importing
  - b. The water front I believe makes the buildings around it more of value. The water front gives the whole neighborhood a more aesthetic look
7. Other Observations
- a. We noticed a lot of lot similarities from the map in 1855 to present
  - b. There were some lots from 1855 missing, that are not condos
  - c. There was an old firehouse that has since been decommissioned

## QUANTITATIVE DATA for Area of Study

Subject	Data
Street Names	Hudson Ave, Evans street, York Street, Plymouth street
Street Width	Average street width is about 60 feet
Street Pavement	Cobblestone on many of the streets some are asphalt due to gentrification.
Building Heights	2 to 4 floors high on residential buildings, 4-6 floors high industrial
Building Widths (Window Bays)	The residential building width is about 25 feet, with about three windows
Building Types/Uses	Factories and office buildings, residential brownstones
Empty Lots / Gardens	There is a park by the waterfront for walking under there Brooklyn bridge
Shops / Restaurants	There was a coffee shop, warehouse with a lot of movement on the outside some residential first floors have become small office buildings.
Industrial Shops	I noticed a hardware store, and a contracting business
Public spaces	There is public housing even further down Plymouth that changes the whole neighborhood..
Bridges	The whole neighborhood is directly under the Brooklyn bridge.

**QUESTIONS to Research Further**

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What is the story of the power plant on Plymouth and Hudson?
2. How was Vinegar Hill given its name?
3. When did the neighborhood Vinegar Hill become a historic neighborhood in the eyes of NY city?

**RESEARCH METHOD/SOURCE FOR EACH QUESTION ABOVE:**

1. Question 1
  - a. Research Con Edison electrical company online and find out about its branch in Vinegar

hill

- b. Try to look at old photos and see what use to be in place of that area before becoming a power plant
2. Question 2
- a. Research Wikipedia for the Neighborhoods history
  - b. Go to the citytech library and see if there are any books on the subject
3. Question 3
- a. Research New York state government websites on landmarks
  - b. Look up how the city signifies brown historic signs in these types of neighborhoods

## SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

This Neighborhood at the time it was thriving was very essential to commuting to Manhattan through the east river ferry before the bridge was built, which can explain how it is a lot less busy now. The site report was very productive for learning the area and all of its interesting intricate details. I would like to know more details about the homes in the area and who planned out the building process.