

# LIBRARY / ARCHIVE REPORT



Mayor La Guardia<sup>7</sup>



Mayor Wagner<sup>8</sup>

## LaGuardia and Wagner Archives: The New York City Housing Authority

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### INTRODUCTION

I missed this site visit, however, I was able to get digitized items via the archive's online portal. I searched for primary sources, photographs to be specific. In particular, I was looking for street photography in order to achieve a better understanding of how the neighborhood of Vinegar Hill has changed.

## SOURCES found (red entries are from the archive)

1. *PHOTO #:02.015.14880 [Photograph]. (n.d.). The New York City Housing Authority, La Guardia and Wagner Archive, Brooklyn. Retrieved April 5, 2016, from <http://www.laguadiawagnerarchive.lagcc.cuny.edu/> (Originally photographed 1934, February 1)*
2. *95-97 HUSDON AVE [Photograph]. (n.d.). DOF: Brooklyn 1980s Tax Photos, NYC Department of Records, Brooklyn In *Department of Finance 1980s Brooklyn*. Retrieved April 4, 2016. (Originally photographed 1983-1988)*
3. *Corner of York and Bridge Street, Brooklyn. Captured via Google Street view. Sept 2014*
4. *PHOTO #:02.003.06102 [Photograph]. (n.d.). The New York City Housing Authority, La Guardia and Wagner Archive, Brooklyn. Retrieved April 5, 2016, from <http://www.laguadiawagnerarchive.lagcc.cuny.edu/> (Originally photographed 1946, April 19)*
5. *Aerial 3D reconstruction, facing North-West, over brooklyn, via Google Earth. 2016*
6. *Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (I-278): Historic Overview. (n.d.). Retrieved April 5, 2016, from <http://www.nycroads.com/roads/brooklyn-queens/>*
7. *La Guardia, Fiorello H.. [Photo]. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Fiorello-H-La-Guardia/images-videos/Fiorello-H-La-Guardia/156561>*
8. *Wagner, Robert F.. [Photo]. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-F-Wagner-mayor-of-New-York-City/images-videos/Robert-F-Wagner/181614>*

## DOCUMENTATION



1

Place: 95 BRIDGE STREET-YORK STREET / VINEGAR HILL / BROOKLYN / NEW YORK

Date: February 01, 1935



2

Place: 95-97 Bridge Street, Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn

Date: 1983 - 1988



3

Place: 95-97 Bridge Street, Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn

Date: 2014

Concerning the three photographs above, change, over a period of approximately 80 years, can be seen. The most noticeable change, across the three time periods shown, is the structure on the corner of the block. The 1935 photo captions the structure as a “wood frame” house. In the 1980’s photo, this structure has been demolished, and had been replaced with a brick building. I surmise that the exterior wooden frame was more susceptible to the environment, which led to its deterioration and subsequent demolition. Between the 1980, and present day, the corner building has remained the same, albeit changes to the facade to incorporate glass panels.

The two building, to the left of the corner building have remained the same since the 1935. Their original brick construction has probably played a large role in preserving them through the decades between photos. Even the windows of the left, 2-story building have remained the same.



Place: FARRAGUT HOUSES / NAVY YARD / BROOKLYN / NEW YORK

Date: April 19, 1946



Place: FARRAGUT HOUSES / NAVY YARD / BROOKLYN / NEW YORK (digital 3D reconstruction)

Date: 2016

Comparing these two aerial photos, significant changes to both the Downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan cityscapes can be seen. On both land masses, a larger quantity taller building (i.e. skyscrapers, tall apartment complexes) have been constructed since 1946. Interestingly enough, there had been an increase in buildings on the Manhattan East river shoreline, while the Brooklyn shoreline has lost many structures, and appears flatter in general. The ConEd facility has lost its triple smoke stack, as combustible energy demand has decreased in NYC since the inception of nuclear power, and the Indian Point reactors construction in the interim time between 1946 and today. The construction of project housing is clearly evident in the modern day reconstruction, supplanting the original Farragut Houses. There has been significant construction along Flatbush Ave, where many high rise building have been constructed since the 1946.

The first similarity that caught my attention was the baseball diamond of Commodore Barry Park. It is remarkably well conserved between both photos. However, around it, there are many differences in both buildings and streets. Most obviously, is the Brooklyn Queens Expressway (BQE), which is missing in the 1946 photo. This makes sense, since much of the construction, especially for the elevated portions of the highway, did not commence until the mid-1950s and into the 1960s<sup>6</sup>.

Another striking difference is the amount of “green” seen in the newer reconstruction; there has been a significant increase in park creation since 1946 in the area. The original photo is in grayscale, but many areas, such as the area due north of the Commodore Barry park, were completely developed as either living or working areas. The area to the left of the Manhattan Bridges Brooklyn ramp, which is currently called Trinity Park, is completely developed with building in the 1946 photo. Those building seem to have been demolished for the BQEs construction, and the space not used for road infrastructure was converted into a park.

## QUESTIONS to Research Further

### QUESTIONS:

1. Was the buyout of property, which was demolished in the interest of the Manhattan Bridge construction, conducted fairly?
  - a. Look up auction records of the corresponding block numbers.
2. Concerning park construction, was there legislation passed that forced urban planners to place parks in area? Or were the parks placed at the request of residents?
  - a. Look up information about NYC parks
3. Why does the ConEd facility have less smoke stacks today?
  - a. Find out technical details of what the ConEd facility does today. See if there are any historic archives about the facility.

## SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

The LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, specifically the The New York City Housing Authority collection, contains a lot of primary source materials. I was very excited to find the photograph of 95-97 Bridge St, especially because I was able to find the associated 1980s tax photo of the same location (from the same vantage too!). Seeing areas undergo changes, throughout decades is a fascinating exercise.