

Learning Places Spring 2016

LIBRARY / ARCHIVE REPORT #3

LaGuardia's Wagner Archives NYCHA Collection



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INTRODUCTION

The LaGuardia and Wagner Archives was constructed to preserve primary material documenting the social and political history of New York City. It is located at Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College and holds papers and microfilm of Robert Wagner, Edward Koch, the New York City Housing Authority and More. Our focus will mostly be the housing documents of brooklyn specifically the NYCHA Photograph Collection. We will be looking at the Urban renewal of Vinegar Hill and different housing structures in Brooklyn.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Going to LaGuardia Community College Archives I expect to Maps in the of the area, maybe before and after construction on these housing projects. There should be documentation of proposing some of these Urban Renewal projects. In the Brooklyn Public library archive there was a collection of

newspaper articles, so I believe there should be some clipping related to the housing developments in the LaGuardia Community College Archives.

SOURCES found

1. Berenice Abbott, New York City Housing Authority, Talman Street in the shadow of the Manhattan Bridge, Pre-construction Sites, June, 1943
2. Housing Authority, SAND STREET FROM HUDSON AVENUE, New York City Housing Authority, Page or Volume, April 07, 1948

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



This photo captured by Berenice Abbott from the 1930's, shows Talman street. It shows the exterior of buildings and the area that will be cleared to make way for the Brooklyn Queens Expressway. This street is no longer in existence, so this photo is an important piece of history for Vinegar Hill. You can see the wood framed houses with scrap wood as a fence and an empty lot. What interesting is that the street is not cobble stone, but asphalt. We also see a cast iron lamp post hovering above the street.



TENEMENTS FAMILY SLUM CLEARANCE, February 27, 1948 (NYCHA collection)

This photo shows a woman and her child in a kitchen in the slum near the Navy Yard. The building is in bad shape with cracks on the walls and a large section of the ceiling is exposed. Almost everything in the home is comprised of wood from the floor and walls to the ceiling. An oven can be seen in the corner with cloth hanging above to dry. These buildings were cleared away to construct the the 1952 Farragut Houses. This photo gives a unique perspective in the lifestyles and living conditions of these residents before demolition.



A photo of Sands street from Hudson Avenue of Bernie's Bar and Grill in 1948. The purpose of this photo is to record the conditions before the construction of the Farragut Housing. The Farragut

Housing project spanned 16.61 acres and was completed in 1952.



Sands street is composed of cobble stone road and trolley rails can be seen embedded in the road. Above the road are the cable that powered the trollies. Off In the distance we can see the entrance to the Navy Yard that is mark on some of the earlier maps. It seems like a building was constructed with an underpass to access into the Navy Yard. This street is much smaller in width than it is today.



This is a photo of the cold room in LaGuardia college, which contains photos, documents and news clippings and artifacts in a temperature controller environment. We were able to view golden boxing gloves belonging to Mohammed Ali, Bobby Wagner's Mets jacket from 1986 and NYCHA blueprint. Some of these blueprints are of projects that were never built. The proposals ranged from small to vast housing projects. In some cases Architects Renderings could be seen along with the plans. Looking at these plans you can see the architects were trying to build communities around parks and open space. They were not only providing living space, but a way to enrich the lives of the residents.

DISCOVERIES

1. Neighborhood History
 - a. Before 1950s: Slums of the Navy Yard
 - b. After 1952: Farragut Houses complex
2. Key Events / Historical Dates
 - a. Late 1940's Urban Renewal
 - b. 1946 Brooklyn Queens Expressway construction
 - c. Slum displacement and demolition
3. Key Players
 - a. New York City Housing Authority: provide housing to low to medium income families.
 - b. Robert Moses proposed a "Brooklyn-Queens Connecting Highway"
4. Relationship Key Players
 - a. Robert Moses the master builder, proposes redevelopment of brooklyn transportation.
5. Important Changes to Neighborhood
 - a. Construction of the Farragut Housing complex lead to the formation of three super blocks and high rise buildings.
 - b. Construction of the Brooklyn Queens expressway first proposed by Robert Moses. Streets and blocks were erased and replaced by on and off ramps to the BQE.

TOPICS & KEYWORDS

Urban Renewal, New York City Housing Authority, Trolley, Farragut Housing, Navy Yard slum, Brooklyn Queens Expressway

QUANTITATIVE DATA for Area of Study

| Subject | Data |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Land Ownership | New York Housing Authority |
| Number of Blocks | Three super blocks, which can fit four regular blocks |
| # of Buildings on a Typical Block | ten buildings Block 1: Three buildings, fourteen stories high Block 2: Three buildings, fourteen stories high Block 3: Four buildings, fourteen stories high |
| Materials | Brick Buildings |
| # of Stories of Buildings | Thirteen to fourteen stories high |
| Residential Bldgs | Ten |
| Empty Lots and Public space | There are many empty lots surrounding the Brooklyn Queens expressway Within the Farragut Housing area there are many grass areas |
| Commercial Uses | No commercial areas within the complex |
| Industrial Uses | Most Industrial space is located closer to the waterfront |

QUESTIONS to Research Further

QUESTIONS:

1. Where did the people displaced by the Farragut Housing project move to?
2. When did Brooklyn install lamp posts on the streets?
3. When did the trolley service stop operating on Sands street?

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

1. Question 1
 - a. Review: Brownstone Brooklyn, The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York by Suleiman Osman
 - b. Eastern Parkway Coalition records, 1952-2007
 - c. The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City
2. Question 2
 - a. Landmarks Preservation Commission, June 17, 1997; Designation List 282
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/lampposts.pdf>
 - b. The City Record: Official Journal, Volume 47, Part 2
 - c. Charter of the City of Brooklyn: Passed June 28, 1873
3. Question 3
 - a. The Wheels That Drove New York: A History of the New York
 - b. Brooklyn!: An Illustrated History

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

I was surprised at the amount of photographs they had of the Vinegar Hill area. One of the photographs were taken from inside the home of the family displaced by urban renewal. I was amazed when seeing the living conditions of the family before the demolitions. It was interesting to see how the landscape appeared before the mass demolition of buildings to make room for the Brooklyn Queens expressway and NYCHA Projects.