



Hudson Avenue near the Navy Yard

Site Report 1: Vinegar Hill: P.S. 307

What was the previous landscape like?

This may seem like an irrelevant question to someone who's already knowledgeable about Vinegar Hill, but this question is a fundamental inquiry and starting point that will prove to be beneficial in providing as much of a thorough understanding about many subcategories that would lead to an insightful and meaningful report. Some of the subcategories may be about politics, economics, sociology, demography, agriculture, urbanization, business, transportation, culture, heritage, emotional, psychological, etc. The relevance will be in the application to the driving forces behind the history and changes involved within the Vinegar Hill final report.

My report isn't simply aim towards calculations and numbers. It is focused on the human, as well as the environmental, nature of a specific time and place in history. Although we may try to find and explain a single subcategory that is relevant to a specific time period, events and circumstances are "intertwined" and connected to each other. There is a very dynamic, yet less obvious, interplay amongst "players" who are catalysts towards societal and environmental changes.

I will seek out all of the necessary and relevant information and details in order to "paint" as clear of a "picture" as possible. I aim not to please the reader(s) of my report, but to seek out the truth

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so that we can learn from history, so we can avoid or at least reduce our risks or recreating and reliving our past mistakes.

Of course, my report will be focused on a specific topic, such as the decision behind the cutoff of Hudson Avenue, but for the causes to be accurately assessed and a correlation or cause to be shown as a significant driving force or motive, I need to “dive” or delve deep as much as reasonable possible, time limiting, into the subcategories. It is only when I am successful in uncovering the truths that my final report will shed more “light” on our understanding of the history of Vinegar Hill.

There is, in a sense, no illegitimate starting point in a research report. As long as it is relative to the subject matter, it will eventually lead to some significant factor that will contribute to the greater, utilitarian good, of which any self-respecting researcher should desire form his/her final report. So, again, I ask: **What was the previous landscape like?**

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Farragut Houses on the left and P.S. 307 on the right

Site Report 2: Vinegar Hill: Inside the perimeter of Gold St., Sands St., Bridge St., & Concord St.
What were the driving forces behind the urban renewal project(s)?

Finding answers to this question is more complicated and requires more effort than the previous question, but still, the answers and information from the previous question will provide a foundation that will provide leads and more insight into this topic of “driving forces.”

The term “renewal project” and “urban development” can and may simply serve a purpose of identifying or describing an era, but this, by itself, will not fully explain the context of the driving forces. Although this added search for the explanation behind the driving forces may be more challenging or even difficult to discover, we must not disregard the power of its effects in molding a society, its values and culture, which would ultimately affect, negatively and positively, the past, the present, and the future of a community. In this case, “community” is referring to Vinegar Hill.

How much and what, if any, external driving forces were there? For instance, did the people, politicians, businesses, etc. in Manhattan have any influence? An in-depth search into the archives and a critical assessment of the demographics within the time period of my report should lead to answers to

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my inquiries, and I will try to find, ideally, cause and effect relationships, but I may be forced in some instances to settle for correlatives if leads eventually “run out” or send me in wrong directions.

However, I will not let this more difficult task in my research to deter me. It is actually the difficulty that should prove to have the most rewards, intrinsically if not outwardly meaningful or valuable. The key is to try to understand the motives that were truly responsible for the changes in question, to find new or missed correlations that add to our understanding of the true history of Vinegar Hill. Even if the previous correlations are proven to be the sole motives, the end results will not be due to wasted time, but a further confirmation, verification, or “solidification” of the details of the history. Think about this as a review or accuracy check.

In the case where new leads result in new insights into the driving forces, there will be further enrichment into the understanding of the history of Vinegar Hill. The least that I can “come away” with is a wealth of knowledge and experience in researching a historical event/place, which will still be invaluable in application to my other academic pursuits.

So in trying to understand the driving forces behind the history of Vinegar Hill’s Hudson Avenue. I will not only look at facts and numbers, but I will also investigate the philosophy that is also relevant to explaining historical events and in placing significant value and truth in their understanding and meaning. Now, I will continue my research by asking this critical question: **What were the driving forces behind the urban renewal project(s)?**



Mural (graffiti) on the outer wall of the Navy Yard at the intersection of Hudson Avenue and Navy Street

Library/Archive Report 1: Brooklyn Public Library:

What happened to all of the people who were displaced to make room for the urban development?

Most of the time that I have read about historical events, information about the demographics of the time explained a lot about the plight and struggles of the underprivileged people, which proved to contribute the most meaningful of all of the knowledge gained from understanding historical events.

Usually, the underprivileged are “new-comers” from other parts of the country and/or immigrants from other countries. Some of these immigrants were fleeing hardships and oppression, and some were seeking better opportunities and an improved quality of life for their families. Also, at different times, different demographics had various histories in the same locality; for instance, the Irish population had its own unique experiences at Vinegar Hill.

But, in this case of Vinegar Hill, I am not merely interested in the immigrant status and heritage of the people who were forced and/or compensated to move in the name of manifest destiny. I want to investigate the economic and social gains and losses. I want to see if the urban renewal was actually an improvement. Is it today, the way that the developers envisioned? I want to understand the politics. Is it true that politicians can convince the people that their ideas are legitimate, and do they really have the power to “ruin” or improve lives? If so, to what extent justifiable? What are the, if any, consequences?

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Did people try to fight? Were they powerless? I know that the Whiskey Wars involved communities banding together against the government soldiers. But, was there any community action against the government during the urban renewal era?

Today, we read about the Whiskey Wars, and our interests are “peaked,” and in this similar way, my interest is peaked. I strongly believe that an understanding behind the treatment of people of a nation by their government can shed light into the true ideals of their laws, beliefs, culture, politics, etc. To ignore a population that was directly affected by its government, is to support fraudulent historical record keeping. The true meaning of keeping records of history is to learn about ourselves, us as humans, to avoid past mistakes, to learn about our cultures, and the list goes on.

To only include the information involving the main characters, contributors, “players,” and celebrities will absolutely give pride to a nation, but that is only one purpose of keeping historical record and artifacts. To truly gain from history is to include as many aspects as possible about a topic. Only then can we truly and more fully benefit from historical records, from research reports. So now I will ask:
What happened to all of the people who were displaced to make room for the urban development?

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Looking down Gold St. with an onramp on the right where an entire neighborhood block was relocated

Library/Archive Report 2: New York Public Library:

Who, exactly, made the plans for the urban renewal development?

Now I will try to find information about the key people who were involved in this push towards urban renewal. Were their motives truly utilitarian? Did the population support their decisions? Did they care about the “oppressed” and underprivileged? Were there any financial gain from their city planning endeavors? How far up the governmental “ladder” did the support for urban development come from. Did they actually give the people what they promised them? Did any politician overstep his bounds in office? Did any politician neglect its responsibilities or make compromises? Is he/she truly a hero or was his/her efforts uneventful, only to later be noticed for the significant gains and contributions? A most valid but seemingly nonacademic question that needs to be asked is: Was he/she a villain/tyrant/criminal? Will there be any new insight into the real functions of the government, its departments? Is the consensus, past and present, in total agreement about the urban development?

I have encountered some key characters/politicians such as Mayor LaGuardia and Robert Moses. Will I find information that is contrary to popular belief? Will their past actions be affected by these potential conflicting details? How much did they and other characters during that era influence change? How do these changes affect us today? How are they beneficial, detrimental, positive, and/or negative?

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How many more characters were involved in this urban renewal development of Vinegar Hill? How much did relate to each other? Can we learn something about them that can lead to further insight in my research?

What scientific domain is irrelevant for a research report? This research report seems to be “geared” towards the sociological domain, but are there some questions that should not be asked in a research report? Do you think that learning about the character will at least allow me to speculate about the true or alternate intention of politicians? Should philosophy be ruled out of research or is there more meaning, knowledge, and understanding that comes from it? If research is void of philosophy, is it more relevant? Can we avoid philosophy in research? Are facts obscured by philosophical views? In conducting my research, I will be true to discovery and I will try to “leave no stone unturned.” I may seem to be not as focused on my topic, but all of my questions will not only lead me to answering the topic of interest, but it will also provide all of the credibility to the answers that will come from linking as much of the details obtained from all of the answers from the seemingly less focused questions. When a topic is being researched, yes, your view should be narrow and focused towards a single point, but you must conduct as thorough a research as possible in order to substantiate your results. This means asking as many questions that may seem irrelevant at the start. Remember that you must prove irrelevance, not in the name of commonsense, but by acquiring “hard” and undisputable facts.

Will I have a better understanding of historical events when my research report is complete? How will I use this knowledge? Will I be able to make better decisions? Will I be able to predict the future, or at least know where we are going as a nation or as a member of a small community, such as Vinegar Hill? The initial question from my library/archive report actually “opened up” or lead to a large number of related questions. The journey in trying to find answers to these questions can lead to another underrepresented segment of historical record that needs to be made aware to everyone. History isn’t simply or only about the good. It isn’t supposed to be biased. So, in researching, investigating, and trying to find answers, not only for obvious ones, no associated detail should be ignored or considered irrelevant. It must be proven irrelevant by the researcher; otherwise, the research is inherently biased and ultimately flawed. With this in mind, I will ask: **Who, exactly, made the plans for the urban renewal development?**