

LEARNING PLACES SPRING 2016

LIBRARY REPORT

LaGuardia CC & Wagner Archives



Alison Seuling

4/10/2016

Introduction

The Wagner archives at LaGuardia Community College were a bit difficult to get to (inside the building) but eventually we all found our way. Our class met inside the room and were greeted by a man who was passionate about his work in the archives. We were separated into two groups, and were given an intimate glimpse at the history of Harlem and parts of Queens during the 1930s to 1950s with the New York City Housing Authority developments. We were shown pictures, before and after, of the interiors of some apartments that were rundown and barely livable, to the renovated suites they were transformed into. After taking a tour into the archives themselves (the files and drawers

of rare blueprints, etc), we went to the computer lab and learned how to cite Wikipedia articles.

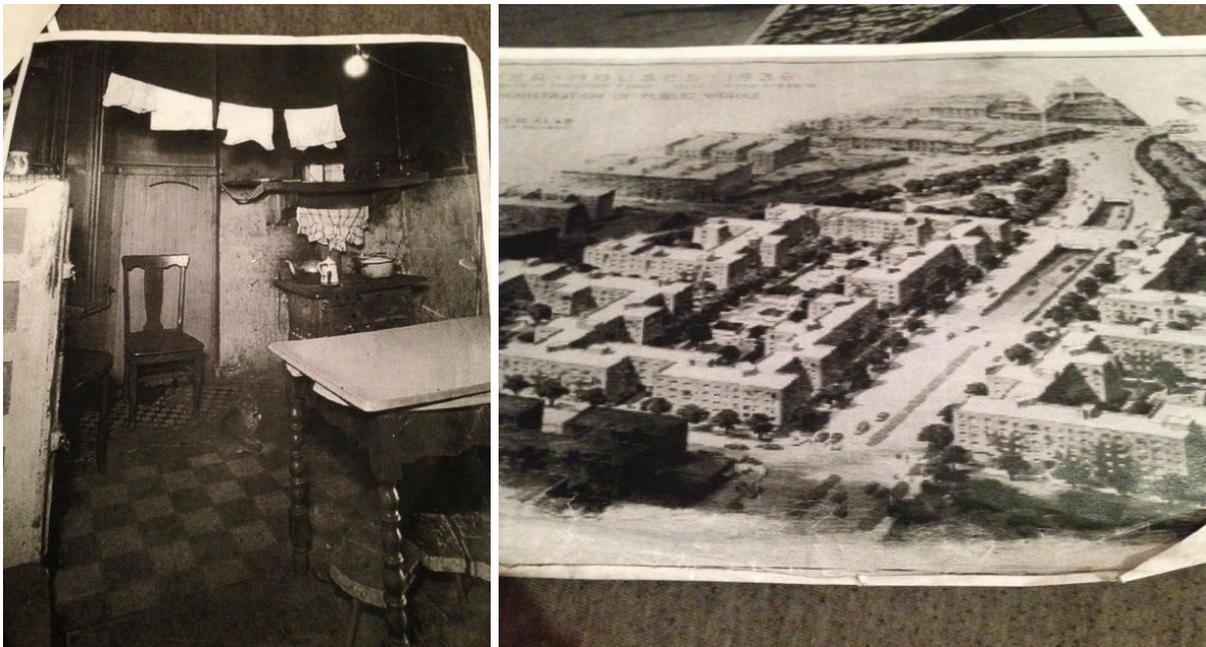
Pre-Visit Reflection

I have never been to LaGuardia Community College, but I have been to Long Island City so the commute should not be bad from where I live. I expect the Wagner Archives to be similar to the Brooklyn or New York Public Libraries, but archives have their own ways of organization and preserving important documents to their own standards, so I am excited to see what is in store.

Sources:

1. Photos of Harlem pre and post NYCHA projects of the 1930s, unknown photographer.
2. Photos of the NYCHA Farragut Houses, unknown photographer.
3. Blueprints of finished and unfinished NYCHA projects throughout Brooklyn and Queens.

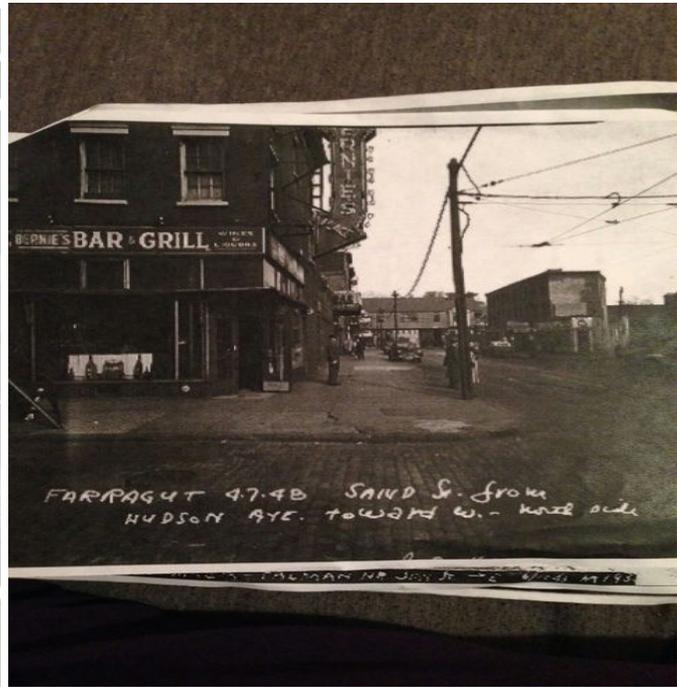
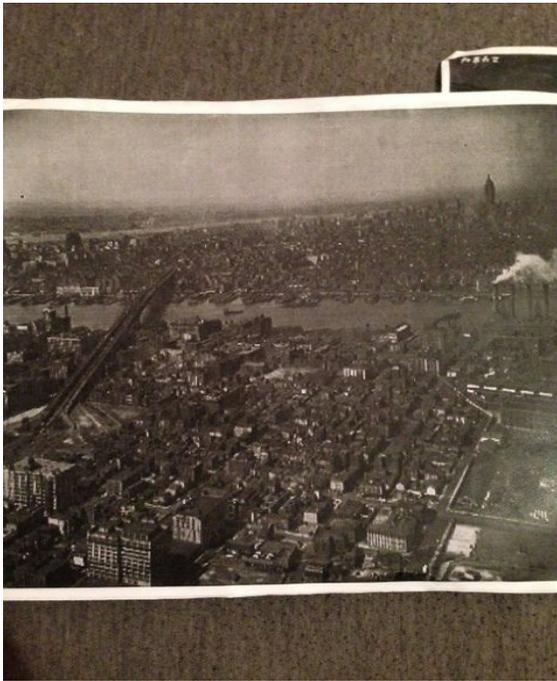
DOCUMENTATION (photos):



(Left) The interior of a pre-renovation apartment in Harlem, NYC. (Right) Aerial view of Harlem NYCHA projects.



(Left) Photograph from possibly a courtyard in the Harlem River Houses. (Right) Another view at the housing from a courtyard of the Harlem River Houses: May 19, 1939.



(Above left) Aerial view of DUMBO, Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn Navy Yard, Manhattan Bridge, year unknown

(Above Right) Beginning of Farragut Housing development, Sands Street at Hudson Street, Vinegar Hill.

DISCOVERIES

1. Neighborhood History
 - a. NYCHA projects and development plans for residents in unsatisfactory living conditions.
 - b. NYCHA begin planning for Farragut Housing in Vinegar Hill.
2. Key Events:
 - a. 1929-1939 - Great Depression era

-
- b. Harlem, Manhattan - 1930s-1940s - Harlem River Houses transformed from rundown apartments to livable conditions for low-income families.
 - c. New York City Housing Authority - 1934
 - d. 1940s-1950s - Urban renewal in Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn - Farragut Houses.
3. Key Players:
- a. New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)
 - b. Fiorello LaGuardia - Mayor of New York City (1934-1945)
 - c. Robert F. Wagner - Mayor of New York City (1954 - 1965)
4. Relationship to Key Players:
- a. NYCHA encouraged NYC government to fund and get involved with improving housing for NYC residents, and new building projects.
 - b. Mayor LaGuardia - Activist and advocate for new projects and modernization of NYC housing. Wanted to rejuvenate the area of Vinegar Hill with Farragut Houses.
 - c. Robert F. Wagner - Got involved with the construction of housing, parks, roadways, and schools. Sponsored the creation of City University of New York.
5. Public Perception:
- a. Working families benefitted from urban renewal and housing improvements. Better living conditions and safety.

Key Words and Topics

NYCHA, Harlem River Houses, Farragut Houses, Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn Navy Yard, Urban Renewal, Government, Downtown Brooklyn

QUANTITATIVE DATA FOR AREA OF STUDY - Farragut Housing

Land Ownership	New York City Housing Authority
Number of Blocks	3-4
# of Buildings on Block	10-12 buildings
Materials	Brick
# of Stories in Buildings	Some are 2 stories, most more to 12-14
Type of Buildings	Residential, few commercial
Empty Lots	None
Commercial Use	Bars/Taverns
Industrial Use	Brooklyn Navy Yard

QUESTIONS TO FURTHER RESEARCH

Questions:

1. Why are the Farragut Houses built in the location they are today?
2. Were the Harlem River Houses the jumping off point for the future of NYCHA projects? Were there any major projects before that, not under the NYCHA?
3. Who was in charge of the NYCHA?

Research Method for Questions

Question 1:

1. Wikipedia
2. Search the City Tech library
3. Dig deep into the Wagner Archives

Question 2:

1. NYCHA website
2. City Tech library
3. NYC.gov

Question 3:

1. NYCHA website
2. NYC.gov
3. Wikipedia

Summary / Post - Visit Reflection

I had never been to LaGuardia Community College but I am glad that I know how to get there in case I ever want to go back and visit the Wagner Archives. The school itself is full of life and a lot of student involvement with clubs/fairs (When we left, there was a job fair going on with many students). I thought our visit to the archives was very informative, I liked that they first put us into two groups to give us knowledge of the NYCHA projects and the early housing developments in Manhattan and Brooklyn. I really liked the way the archives were organized with the sliding shelves and in a certain order where it is easy to find specific documents. The drawers with the unfinished blueprints and blueprints of projects that were never started was really interesting. I liked that even though those buildings were never started, the ideas for them were saved.