

Learning Places Spring 2016

LIBRARY / ARCHIVE REPORT



NYPL Maps Collection

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INTRODUCTION

For this site visit, we went to see a portion of the New York Public Library's map collection, located at 5th Ave at 42nd St, New York, NY 10018. There were several physical maps on display for us to see, and in addition, directions to access the digital collection were given.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

I was expecting to see maps from several decades into the past. Fire insurance maps were the most common map I was expecting to see. I was also expecting to the archiving system used to inventory the maps themselves.

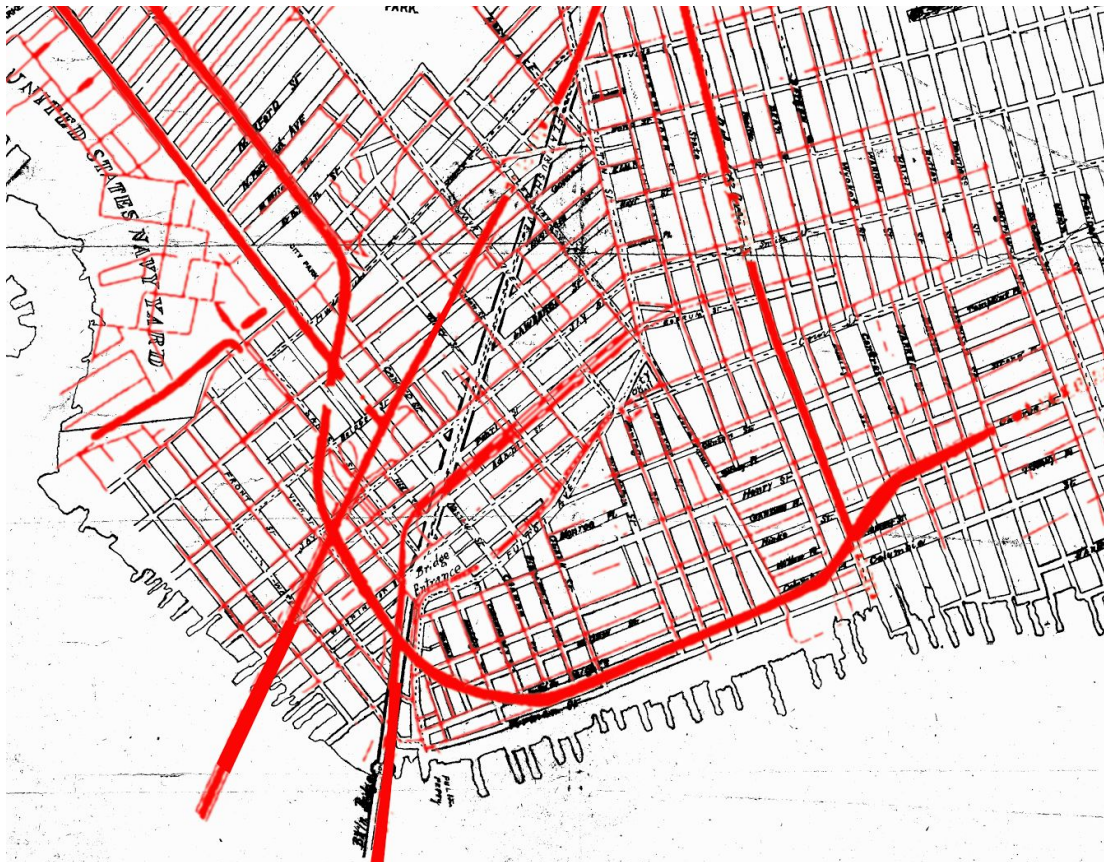
SOURCES

1. Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. (19--?). *Map showing proposed extension of Flatbush Avenue to Brooklyn Bridge*. Retrieved from <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/340c4540-d350-012f-2c90-58d385a7b928>
2. ZoLa Maps. NYC Department of Planning. (2016). [Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn, New York] [Street map]. Retrieved from <http://maps.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap/template?applicationName=ZOLA>
3. Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. (1875). *New map of the city of Brooklyn* Retrieved from <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/c3ef2a04-0592-7244-e040-e00a18061b53>
4. Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. (1849). *Map of the city of New York : with the adjacent cities of Brooklyn & Jersey City, & the village of Williamsburg* Retrieved from <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-f002-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

DOCUMENTATION



This map shows a proposed extension to Flatbush Ave to facilitate the movement of traffic towards the Brooklyn Bridge. This map was produced in the first decade of the 20th century, after the Brooklyn Bridge's construction. No date is discoverable, however, since the Manhattan Bridge is not shown, it must be from before 1909, when the Manhattan Bridge opened.



This next image is a portion of the prior map, except it has been desaturated. The red overlay is of modern streets (2015), obtained from ZoLa. I aligned the two maps, in order to see what streets have remained the same. Note, I focused the alignment around the Brooklyn Bridge entrance, therefore due to various reasons, such as aspect ratio, and the true proportionality of the maps, there may be lapses in alignment the further away from the central Brooklyn bridge entrance area.

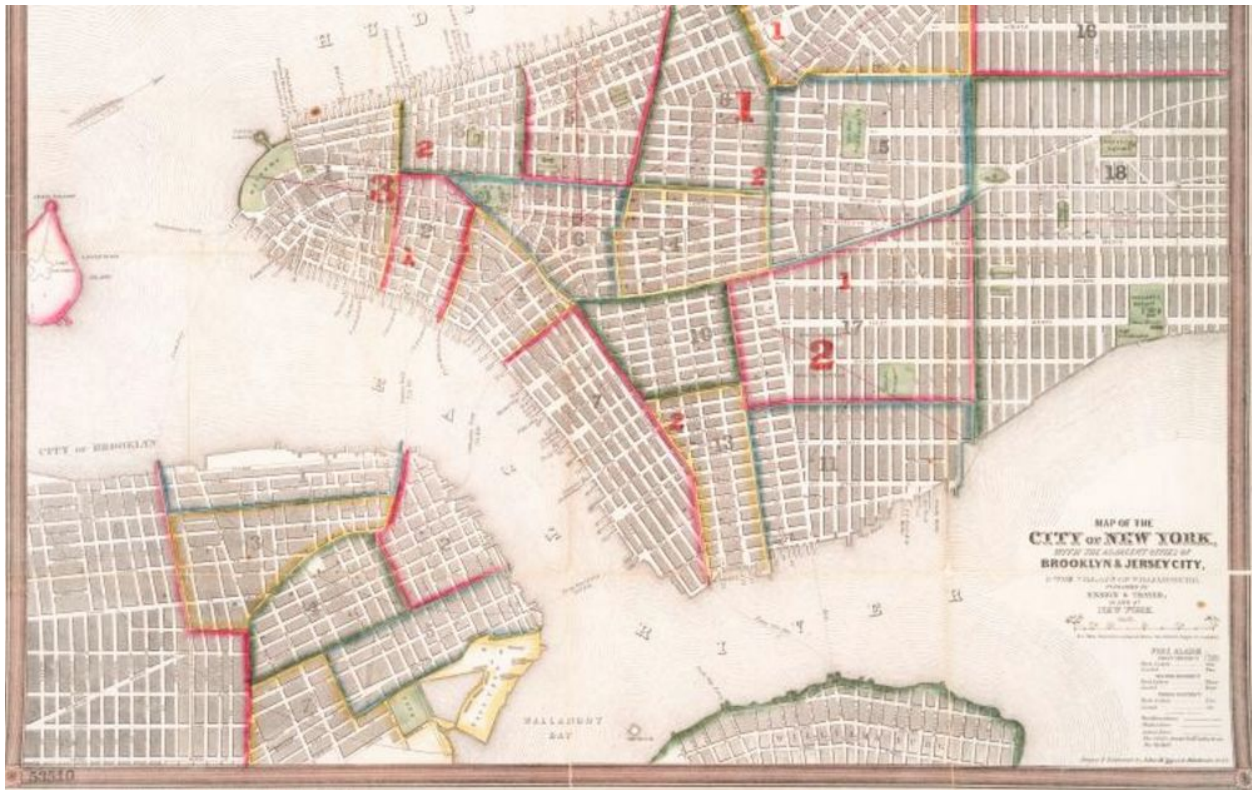
First of all, the proposed change of Flatbush Ave. was indeed carried out, as the proposed routes on the older map correspond with modern streets (See dotted streets in black and white background). However, not all of the proposed change exists today. Flatbush Ave has been diverted to head towards the Manhattan bridge today, and not towards the Brooklyn Bridge as shown in the older map. In regards to the Manhattan Bridge, there has been a lot of restructuring of the urban plot due to it. Whole areas approaching the river have been intersected by the new Flatbush Ave and Manhattan Bridge on ramp.

Some of the best matching areas were those left untouched by the Manhattan bridge's construction in Vinegar Hill. As you can see, the streets have been most remarkably conserved in the last century. This is no doubt related to the Historical district designation given to certain areas of Vinegar Hill, explored in my prior site report.





The two images above are from a city planning map from 1875, before the bridge's construction. The second image is a blown up area surrounding the Brooklyn bridge, which at the time was just labeled "suspension bridge." The Flatbush Ave extension is not present in this map, as it precedes the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge, and the construction of the Manhattan Bridge.



This map is from 1849, a while before any bridges spanned the east river. Again, much of the Vinegar Hill areas street planning remains the same to this date.

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

1. What were the longest bridges before the Brooklyn Bridge, in the whole world?
 - a. Lookup suspension bridges in an encyclopedia.
2. Did Brooklyn's population increase after the bridges construction?
 - a. Look up census data of Brooklyn, and look for a trend.
3. Did the Brooklyn Bridge's construction directly influence the construction of later East River spanning bridges?
 - a. Do research on Manhattan and Williamsburg bridges.

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

After visiting the library, I was intrigued by the sheer scale of the maps collection. The presentation given was adequate as well. I especially enjoyed the online portal to the maps collection that contains those maps that have been digitized. Access to these maps is of utmost importance if one is to get any idea of the urban planning of any NYC area through time.