

Learning Places Spring 2016

SITE REPORT

Vinegar Hill, Revisited



2

St. Anne's church, no longer standing

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INTRODUCTION

This site report will examine three buildings in the Vinegar Hill area that we visited. These building were sketched and examined in order to determine any architectural similarities. Further research into any changes in the architecture and building use were also conducted.

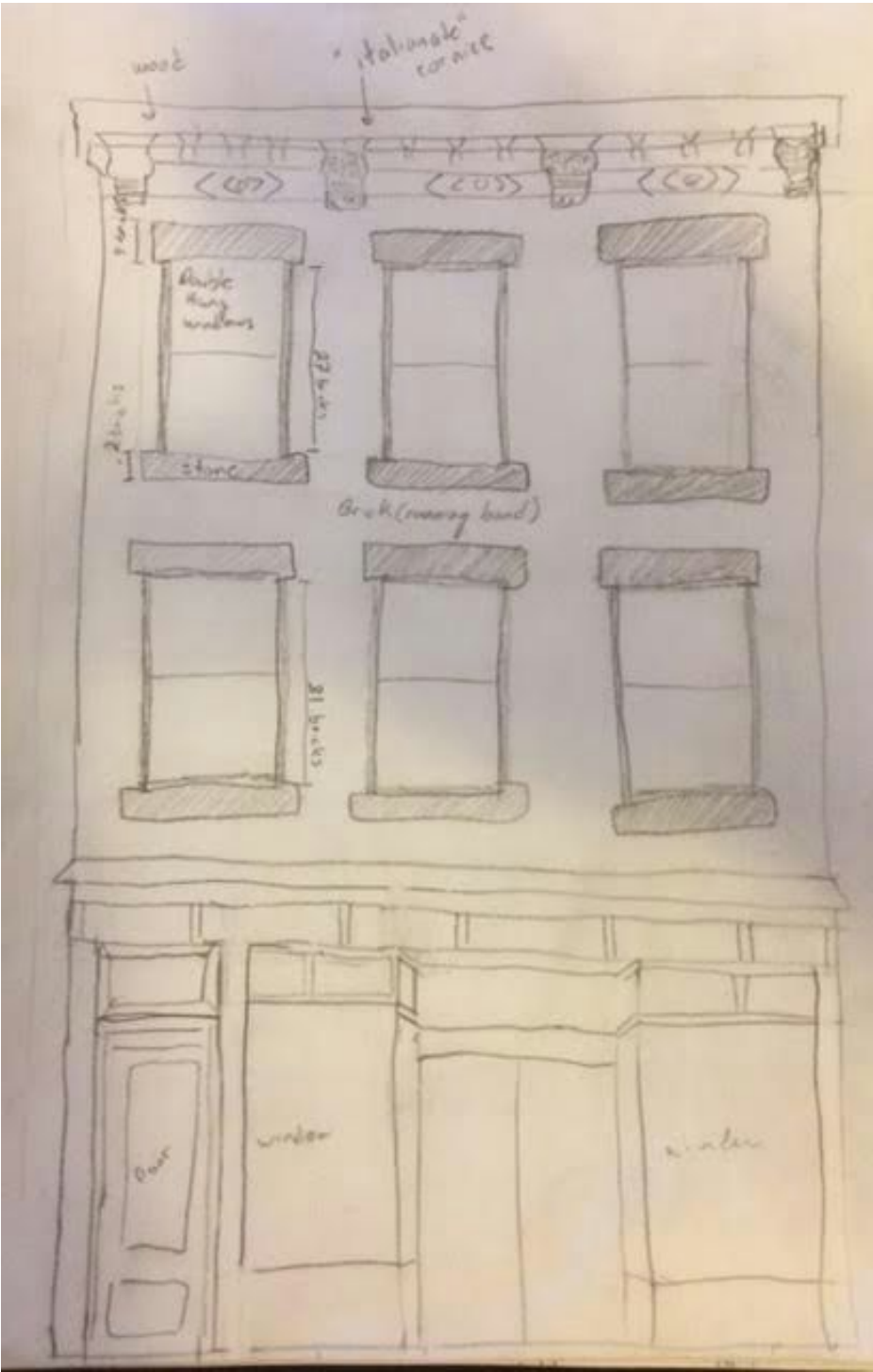
PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Coming back to Vinegar Hill, with more insight on the history behind the district, I wanted to find original elements on the buildings and examine the changes that may

have occurred since they were first constructed. I intend to study the transition of the use of the buildings, have they changed from commercial to residential or vice versa.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches)

Building 1 Sketch: 55 Hudson Avenue



Building 1 Photo : 55 Hudson avenue



(Captured Jan 2013, Google Maps)

The building at 55 Hudson Ave which is located between Evans Street and Plymouth Street falls towards the North boundary of Area III of the historical district designated by LPC in 1997. According to ZoLa, the three story building at 55 Hudson Ave it is estimated to have been constructed in the 1920's. The double large bay windows and double door entrance suggests the ground floor was intended as a store space. Relative to building at 49 Hudson Avenue (examined in the first site visit) the building at 55 Hudson Avenue appears to have been constructed later and shows elements of the Italianate style with brick bulkheads, steel-framed large windows, and stone lintels. According to Landmark Preservation Committee (LPC) designation report¹, this building originally dates back to the 1850's as a two story wood building, the third story and brick facade appear to be changes that occurred later in the 1860's to 1880's.

My curiosity about the original use of the building lead me to visit the NYC Municipal Archives at 31 Chambers St. in Manhattan. I was able to use the microfilms of the 1930's tax photos to find a photo of the building. The photo shows the storefront, residential door entrance and window lintels have remained relatively intact, albeit some cosmetic changes. The 1930's photos shows the bottom store was a Bar, Grill and Restaurant with small horse statues displayed in the large windows bays. According this photo, the neighboring building, at 53 Hudson Avenue, which also had retail space on the ground floor was only a two story building, but is currently a three story building.



1930's tax photo



1980's tax photo

Building 2 Sketch: 69 Gold Street

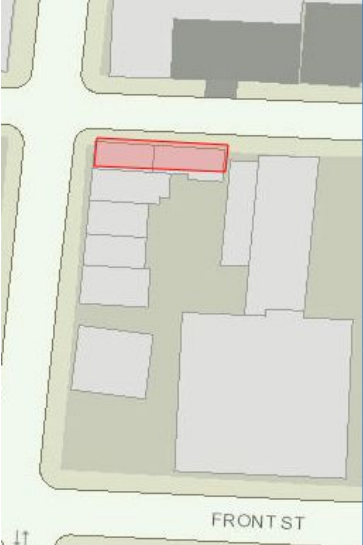


Building 2 Photo: 69 Gold Street



Captured Jan 2013, Google Maps

Building 2 ZoLa Building Information: 69 Gold Street



Borough: BROOKLYN **Block:** 43 **Lot:** 10
Police Precinct: 84
Owner: RAZOR, JENNIFER

Address: 69 GOLD STREET 11201
Lot Area: 1280 sf
Lot Frontage: 16' **Lot Depth:** 79.92
Year Built: 1925 (estimated)
Number of Buildings: 2
Number of Floors: 4
Gross Floor Area: 4,160 sf (estimated)
Residential Units: 1 **Total # of Units:** 1
Land Use: One and Two Family Buildings
Landmark: No
Historic District: Vinegar Hill

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Links to More Information

- [Address Translator](#)
- [Building Profile](#)
- [Building Registration/Violation](#)
- [Census Fact Finder](#)
- [DOF Digital Tax Map](#)

The building at 69 Gold Street which is at the corner of Gold Street and Water street falls on the North East boundary line of Area II of the historical district designated by LPC in 1997. This is a four story brick building was built in the 1840's and has a rear addition with wooden garage doors. The cast iron center column, focus on the double door entrance can be considered elements of Greek Revival architecture. Similar to 49 Hudson Avenue, the ground floor entrance of this building, suggests it served as a retail or restaurant space. According to the LPC designation report, the building at 69 Gold Street was a liquor store in the 1970's owned by Michael O' Connor. The 1930's tax photos from the Municipal Archives confirm that in the mid 1900's, the ground floor of 69 Gold Street was still a liquor store.



During our site visit, I noticed this building had been recently maintained and upgraded as a high end residential building. According to a September 26, 2014 Daily News article titled *'Vinegar Hill gets sweeter: DUMBO'S quiet neighbor may be headed for a real estate boom'*, the building was fully renovated with a roof terrace and full gym basement. It seems the recent developer wanted to attract the same recent high end residential clients that are now common to DUMBO, just a few blocks away. There are some differences between DUMBO and Vinegar Hill:

"The area is far from the nearest subway, the forlorn F stop at York St., and housing projects and the Navy Yard surround the 10-block neighborhood, which is bound by Front St. and the East River and Bridge and West Sts."



This is a 1980s tax photo of 69 Gold St., however it is a vantage from Water St. The rightmost taller structure is the back side of the images displayed prior. The garage structure seen is present in every photo since 1930. Note that the building has been painted brick red since.

Building 3 Sketch: 239 Front Street



Building 3 Photo: 239 Front Street



Captured Jan 2013, Google Maps

Building 2 ZoLa Building Information: 239 Front Street

BROOKLYN Block: 42 Lot: 40

Hide Additional Information...

- Zoning
- Additional Zoning Information
- Building & Property Information**

Borough: BROOKLYN Block: 42 Lot: 40
Police Precinct: 84
Owner: SCHICKLER, DOUGLAS

Address: 239 FRONT STREET 11201
Lot Area: 2100 sf
Lot Frontage: 21' Lot Depth: 100
Year Built: 1899 (estimated)
Number of Buildings: 1
Number of Floors: 3
Gross Floor Area: 3,100 sf (estimated)
Residential Units: 3 Total # of Units: 3
Land Use: Multi-Family Walk-up Buildings
Landmark: No
Historic District: Vinegar Hill

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The building at 239 Front Street which is located between Bridge Street and Gold Street falls in Area I of the historical district designated by LPC in 1997. This structure has undergone changes since the 1980s. Most apparently, the brickface has been sanded down (or repainted) to a red-brick color. The cornice of the building seems to have been repainted as well, however its construction remains the same. The same applies for the window lintels and sills. The front door pediment seems to have been replaced or refurbished; the modern day pediment is more ornate, with a three dimensional extrusions, whereas the 1980 photo shows a flush, capitol pediment.



QUALITATIVE SITE OBSERVATIONS

QUESTIONS to Research Further

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was St. Anne's church not part of Area I of the historical district designated by LPC in 1997?
 - a. Read the LPC report closer. It is a very long report.
2. I've noticed that many buildings have been repainted, or sanded, to a brick-red color. Why has this been done?
 - a. Not very sure how to approach this question. This may not be a researchable question either. I'll look into the LPC report further.
3. Why are some pediments flush, and some extruded?
 - a. An architecture text may have more information about this.

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

Seeing the development of the historic district of Vinegar Hill, through the decades, is a fascinating exercise. I am glad that the LPC exists, and that it strives to preserve certain areas. It would be a shame to see these areas vanish, like much of the non protected areas in Vinegar Hill.

OTHER SOURCES

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2. Brooklyn Eagle. (1911) photo of exterior. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.
3. 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>
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5. 55 HUSDON AVE [Photograph]. (n.d.). DOF: Brooklyn 1930s Tax Photos, NYC Department of Records, Brooklyn In *Department of Finance 1930s Brooklyn*. Retrieved April 12,, 2016. (Originally photographed 1930s)
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7. 55 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)
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9. 239 FRONT ST [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)
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