

Learning Places Spring 2016

LIBRARY / ARCHIVE REPORT

Brooklyn Historical Society



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INTRODUCTION

Our mission at the Brooklyn Historical Society is to use books, rare photos and documents based on our areas of focus for our Vinegar Hill final projects. At this point in the semester, we should have a clear idea of what our projects will entail, and our resources at the Brooklyn Historical Society will further us to that goal.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

I have never been to the Brooklyn Historical Society before. I am very excited to attend, as I know they have an extensive collection of sources that are accessible to members and visitors. It is a wonderful spot for students, professors, and just people in general looking to further their knowledge of Brooklyn.

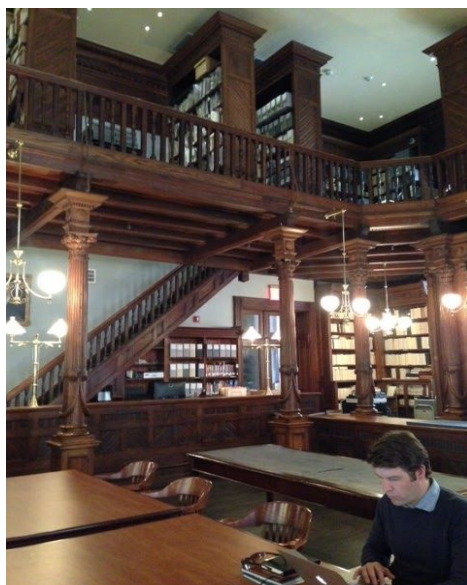
SOURCES found

1. Maps, directories, atlases
2. Photos, microfilm collection, artifacts

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

Inside the Othmer Library of the Brooklyn Historical Society. It really looks like something you see in a movie.

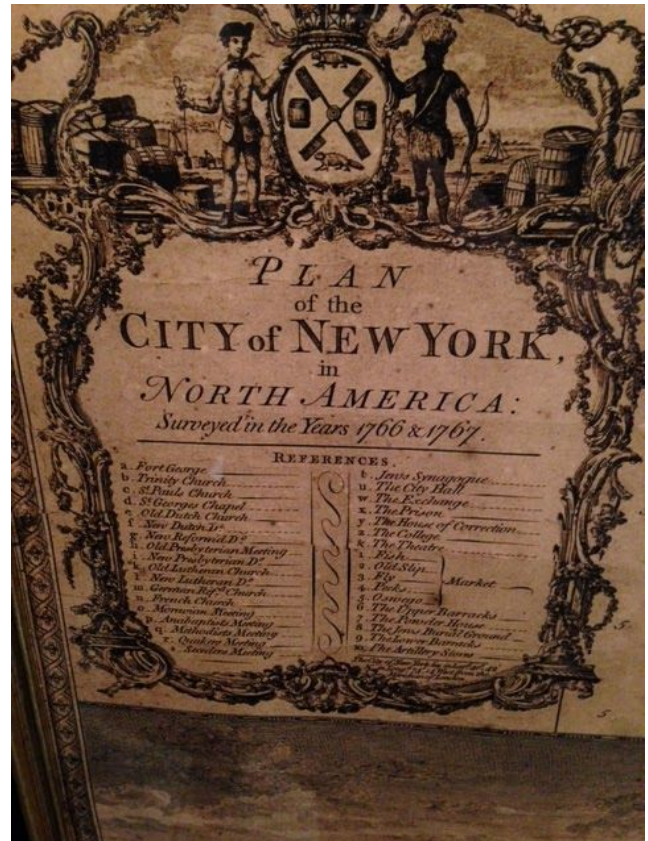
Absolutely beautiful.





(left) Another shot of the inside of the Othmer Library.

(below photos) I came across a map in another room as we were leaving, of Brooklyn during 1766. The map includes Brooklyn Heights, DUMBO, Vinegar Hill, the Brooklyn Navy Yard and other neighborhoods. It is hard to see the numbers on the map, but the numbers represent difference buildings like churches, parks, etc. Those places are referenced in the picture on the right.



DISCOVERIES

1. Neighborhood History
 - a. The Brooklyn Historical Society was once the Long Island Historical Society in the 1800s, and was changed to the Brooklyn Historical Society in the 20th century.
 - b. Hezekiah Pierrepont influenced the founding of Brooklyn Heights and Pierrepont Street.
2. Key Events / Historical Dates
 - a. Swill Milk Scandals
 - b. Whiskey Wars
3. Key Players
 - a. Hezekiah Pierrepont
 - b. George D Cunningham and William M Harris
 - c. Bradish Johnson
4. Relationship Key Players
 - a. Pierrepont - Bought Livingston's Distillery in the area of what is now Brooklyn Heights, produced Anchor Gin. Known as the "founder" of Brooklyn Heights.
 - b. Cunningham and Harris - Distillers in the DUMBO/Vinegar Hill area, subjects to being public nuisances for their pipes running through busy streets, and multiple deaths of teenage apprentices falling into the whiskey vats in their factory.
 - c. Johnson - Owner of Johnson's Distillery in Vinegar Hill, one of the distilleries raided in 1851 during the Swill Milk Scandals.
5. Public Perception of Key Events
 - a. Distillers sold milk from cows that were fed leftover mash from alcohol production, mixing the milk with plaster and chemicals to make it white, resulting in thousands of infant fatalities in a year.
 - b. Whiskey distilleries in Vinegar Hill raided after refusal to tax their alcohol.
6. Important Changes to Neighborhood
 - a. Prohibition
 - b. Changes in streets and neighborhood names.
7. Other Observations

- a. Inside of the Brooklyn Historical Society very old fashioned, staircase most likely in original but maintained condition.

TOPICS & KEYWORDS

Pierrepont Street, Joralemon Street, Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn Navy Yard, Pierrepont, Livingston, Cunningham, Harris, distillery, East River, Front Street, Johnson.

QUANTITATIVE DATA for Area of Study

Subject	Data
Land Ownership	Founded by Henry Pierrepont
Number of Blocks	one
# of Buildings on a Typical Block	Approximately 6-7
Materials	Maps, photos, atlases, journal entries,
# of Stories of Buildings	3-4
Residential Bldgs	Most likely apartments above commercial buildings
Empty Lots	0
Commercial Uses	Pharmacies, delis, salons
Industrial Uses	Unknown

Other Data	
Other Data	

QUESTIONS to Research Further

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Henry Pierrepont start/find the Brooklyn Historical Society?
2. What was Pierrepont Street named before it became that?
3. What inspired the Renaissance revival style for the building?

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

1. Question 1
 - a. As I am including a good amount the Pierrepont family into my final project, I can go to the books I have used to find the starting point of the BHS.
 - b. Wikipedia
 - c. BHS website
2. Question 2
 - a. Maps of Brooklyn, pre-1800
 - b. NYPL digital collection
 - c. Wikipedia
3. Question 3
 - a. Research George B. Post, the architect behind the Brooklyn Historical Society
 - b. BHS website

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

Overall, my experience at the Brooklyn Historical Society was eye opening and very informative.

Unfortunately, I did not request any resources to be available to me at the BHS, which I regret, but I think it was because I was not 100% positive on whether or not I wanted to do my final project on the Brooklyn distilleries. By the time we made our BHS visit, I had made my decision to go with that idea, but I was able to use the BHS computers and the directories to find the addresses of the 19th century distillers of Brooklyn Heights, Vinegar Hill and the Brooklyn Navy Yard, that way I can make 3D images of them on SketchUp, and make a historical timeline. I got more information than I was expecting, despite going into the BHS “empty handed”.