Ben Sternhell November 8, 2015

Learning Places: Understanding the City Annotated Biblography: Draft

**Our topic is public transportation to the area around the Farragut Houses, specifically Vinegar Hill and downtown Brooklyn, and how rapid transit developed over time, affecting the development of Brooklyn and the entire city.**

General History

1. Feinman, Mark S. “Early Rapid Transit in Brooklyn, 1878-1913.” *nycsubway.org*, 17 Feb. 2001. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

This historical overview of the development of rapid transit in Brooklyn from the earliest steam lines that served the seaside resort of Coney Island to the signing of the “Dual Contracts” in 1913, the agreement that helped spark the subway system we know today, is a highly detailed close look at the growth of Brooklyn’s steam, elevated, and underground subway lines. It provides useful context for any study of public transportation in Brooklyn. The earliest services were “excursion” railways, carrying people to the beaches at Brighton and Coney Island. Even before steam, the Brooklyn, Bath and Coney Island Railroad began in 1864 as a horse-drawn line. This extremely detailed article provides almost a yearly description of transit developments, including the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge on May 24th, 1883, the first Brooklyn els operated by the Brooklyn Elevated Railroad (BER) in 1885, and the formation of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Corporation (BRT) in 1896. This early period of subway history ended with the Dual Contracts of 1913: an agreement among the city and the two independent subway companies, the IRT (Interborough Rapid Transit) and the BRT/BMT (Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit Corporation; a new name for the BRT, which fell out of favor after the disastrous Malbone Street Wreck of 1918), to undertake a massive construction project and and greatly expand the subway system to areas of the city not yet served by rapid transit.

1. “History of Public Transportation in New York City.” New York Transit Museum, Transit History, 2015. Web. 18 Sept. 2015.

# “New York City Transit—History and Chronology.” Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). *mta.info*, 2015. Web. 25 Sept. 2015.

These two brief introductions to transit history, one provided by the MTA itself and the other by the New York Transit Museum, which is run by the MTA, both offer useful information in easily digestible form. They present a quick compedium of key facts and dates. The Transit Museum site, intended for teachers and students, describes public transportation run by horses (first omnibuses, 15-passenger stagecoaches—instead of a bell or tape, passengers signaled the driver that they wanted to get off by pulling on a strap attached to his ankle—and then larger horsecars that ran on tracks); cable cars; streetcars; elevated trains; and subways, all with amusing and revealing details. According to the site, New York City and its suburbs are home to two-thirds of the nation’s “rail riders.” The MTA site is more detailed and technical, with a helpful listing of key events in New York City rapid transit history, including the opening of New York’s first official subway, the IRT, on October 27, 1904, and its expansion to Brooklyn in 1908. The New York City Transit Authority (TA) was created in 1953 and set up headquarters at 370 Jay Street in Brooklyn.

1. Hood, Clifton. *722 Miles: The Building of the Subways and How They Transformed New York*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, Centennial Edition, 2004. Print.

Clifton Hood’s well-known book is a scholarly study of the building of the New York City subway system and its importance to the development of the city. Hood is a professor of history at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY, with research expertise in New York City, the upper classes, and mass transit. His book *722 Miles* was originally published in 1993 by Simon & Schuster. The 2004 Centennial Edition, published by Johns Hopkins University Press, includes a new introduction discussing the city’s transit system as one of the last century’s greatest urban achievements. The book offers an academic history of the building of the subway, focusing on both engineering and political issues. Hood discusses everything from 19th-century horse traffic congestion to geology to mayoral politics to city finance. He demonstrates the crucial importance the creation of a subway network had on urban development, particularly on the growth of neighborhoods outside Manhattan, some of which were once considered wilderness.

Primary Sources: Newspaper Articles

1. “100 Miles of Subway in New City Project,” *The New York Times*, 16 September 1929.
2. “A Word for the Elevated Railroads.” *The New York Times*, 23 Feb. 1902. Web. 3 Nov. 2015.
3. “B.R.T. Getting Ready for the Tunnel Traffic.” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 6 Jan. 1908. *Brooklyn Newsstand*, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library. Web. 6 Nov. 2015.
4. “New Brooklyn Terminal: The Large, Light, and Airy Station Is Now in Use.” *The New York Times*, 30 Sept. 1895. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.
5. “With the B.R.T.” *Brooklyn Life*, 11 Jan. 1908. *Brooklyn Newsstand*, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library. Web. 1 Nov. 2015.

These newspaper articles dating from 1895 through 1929 offer provide glimpses of the historical record as it was being written. The earliest, from *The New York Times* in 1895, reports on the opening of a new Brooklyn terminal, the station of the “New-York and Brooklyn Bridge,” at High Street with entrances facing Washington Street and exit stairways facing Fulton Street. The glass and iron structure has been designed to reduce crowding, with 20-foot-wide platforms rather than the old 8-foot-wide ones. In 1902 we read a letter to the editor of the *Times* praising the elevated railroads for their remarkable hardiness during a recent storm, while people dependent on trolleys “were early left to their fate.” In 1908 both the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and *Brooklyn Life* are reporting on the B.R.T. The *Eagle* reports on the need for improved Brooklyn Rapid Transit schedules and an enlargement of the Borough Hall station to handle the increased volume of business sparked by the opening of a subway to the Battery. *Brooklyn Life* describes a series of improvements, including those affecting the Lexington Avenue Elevated, designed to alleviate rush-hour congestion. Two classes of els will now serve customers, the new express trains mainly handling traffic to and from Manhattan and locals, making all stops in Brooklyn. The 1929 article, again from the *Times*, reports on the planned “second system,” 100 miles of new track to cover four boroughs. These articles—and many, many more like them—are important not much individually, but because collectively they constitute our history.

Primary Sources: Maps

1. 1912 BRT Route Map. [1912 BMT Route Map (PDF)](http://images.nycsubway.org/maps/bmt_1912.pdf). Historical Maps. *nycsubway.org*, 2015. Web. 13 Sept. 2015.
2. 1924 BMT Subway-Elevated Map. [1924 BMT Subway-Elevated Map (Color)](http://www.nycsubway.org/perl/caption.pl?/img/maps/bmt_1924.gif). Historical Maps. *nycsubway.org*, 2015. Web. 13 Sept. 2015.
3. 1937 IND Map. [1937 IND Map (PDF)](http://images.nycsubway.org/maps/ind_1937.pdf). Historical Maps. *nycsubway.org*, 2015. Web. 13 Sept. 2015.
4. 1951 Route Map. [1951 Route Map (Bottom Half - Brooklyn, lower Manhattan)](http://www.nycsubway.org/perl/caption.pl?/img/maps/system_1951_b.jpg). Historical Maps. *nycsubway.org*, 2015. Web. 13 Sept. 2015.
5. Poulos, James. *Brooklyn Manhattan Transit: A History as Seen Through the Company’s Maps, Guides and Other Documents: 1923-1939*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011. Print.
6. “Subway Map.” Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). *mta.info*, 2015. Web. 13 Sept. 2015.

All of these maps are fascinating because as a group they show the development of the city’s rapid transit system and how it changed in the neighborhood we are studying. The 1912 BRT Route Map—later renamed the BMT—show several elevated lines that no longer exist today. For instance, Bridge Street station, served by the Myrtle Avenue El, the Lexington Avenue El, and the 5th Avenue El, has been gone since the 1940s. The 1924 BMT Subway-Elevated Map shows much further development, as several underground subway lines have been added since 1912, including Lawrence Street, now part of the Jay Street–Metrotech complex. The 1937 IND map for the first time shows the York Street and High Street stations, the most convenient stations to the Farragut Houses today. This map just shows the IND line; the BMT was owned by a different private company. While Lawrence Street still exists on the BMT line, this map now shows Borough Hall for the first time—also now part of Jay Street–Metrotech. The 1951 Route map, showing the system the year before the Farragut Houses were opened, now depicts the entire New York City subway system. The three once-separate systems—the IRT, the IND, and the BMT—are now all owned by the city. This map shows a clear distinction between the three lines by color. The Myrtle Avenue El still exists, stopping at Navy Street and Myrtle Avenue, about three blocks from the Farragut Houses, as it has since the 1880s. It also shows the Myrtle Avenue station on the BMT, which no longer exists. York Street and High Street were both served by the IND. On today’s modern subway map, of course, the Myrtle Avenue El is long gone; Lawrence Street is gone, simply part of Jay Street–Metrotech; and York Street and High Street are now the only stations serving the Farragut Houses. The MTA, to simplify the map, includes major streets and labels neighborhoods like DUMBO, Fort Greene, and Brooklyn Heights, but in the area of Vinegar Hill and the Farragut Houses, the only label provided is Navy Yard. The James Poulos book, *Brooklyn Manhattan Transit: A History as Seen Through the Company’s Maps, Guides and Other Documents: 1923-1939,* is useful because it contains a wide range of additional maps, making it easy to trace the evolution of the subway system more closely. The additional documents include service guides, maps of trolley and bus routes, track maps, and promotional materials, all useful primary sources.

Contemporary Sources

## “Map: Subway and Development, More Than Crime, Affect Home Prices in Brooklyn.” *Brownstoner: Brooklyn Inside and Out*, 7 Nov. 2015. Web. 8 Nov. 2015.

This is a brief recent article from the Brooklyn website *Brownstoner* demonstrating the centrality of public transportation to a city’s health **and** wealth. A vibrant rapid transit network is the lifeblood of a city. This post, on a website focused mainly on real estate, argues—and illustrates with a neighborhood by neighborhood map—that rising and falling real estate prices are directly linked to subway development. The interactive map shows the change in the median price per square foot of homes between 2004 and 2014. According to *Brownstoner*’s analysis, poor subway service is “one of the most powerful factors driving the most dramatic decreases in property prices in Brooklyn neighborhoods.” Improved public transit, on the other hand, leads to price hikes. This is only one piece of data, but it provides a striking illustration of the importance of a vibrant transportation network in urban development. It also suggests that if poor public transit can so sharply impact wealthy home buyers, it must be equally—or more—crucial for the less wealthy, like the residents of the Farragut Houses, who rely on public transportation every day.

1. Schwartz, Sam, and Daniel Frankfurt. *BBP: Brooklyn Bridge Park Transportation + Access Study*. Downtown Brooklyn Waterfront Local Development Corporation, 2008. Web, 3 Nov. 2015.

The *Brooklyn Bridge Park Transportation + Access Study*, a 45-page report prepared for the Downtown Brooklyn Waterfront Local Development Corporation in 2008, is an extensive exploration of possible measures to expand access to the park without relying on private automobiles. The researchers looked at bus routes, bicycle routes, pedestrian access, shuttle bus service, and water transit. The one subway option considered was the possibility of creating a new entrance at Furman Street as part of the existing Clark Street station, but this was dismissed as too difficult, posing significant engineering challenges, and far too expensive. The proposal, a pedestrian tunnel extending from the Clark Street 2,3 Station to Furman Street, was considered technically difficult and possibly unsafe, with a preliminary cost estimate $226 million in 2010 dollars. The extension and increased service on bus routes, however, was considered a reasonable option. While Brooklyn Bridge Park isn’t itself the neighborhood we’re studying, it is close enough to be a useful case study. One thing this research report makes clear is the needed for improved subway service to many parts of Brooklyn.