

Learning Places Spring 2017

SITE REPORT 1

Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn



Jeferson Castro

02.13.2017

INTRODUCTION

On February 6th, the class visited Vinegar Hill for our first site as a class. As a whole, we learned more about one of the neighborhoods that surround our school. We got to see, first hand, historical sites in Vinegar Hill, as well as the new sites that were built recently. We saw the transition from old to modern housing in the area. Some sites seemed deserted and there weren't many people in the neighborhood, giving the time of the visit they may have been at work or school.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Walking over to Vinegar Hill was a new experience for me. I've visited a different part of Brooklyn that I didn't even know existed. I found it a bit odd that the site we were visiting was next to a power plant. What I found peculiar was that I didn't see many people as I walked over to the meetup point.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketch



Here we have Hudson Ave and Water Street. Notice that the street signs are brown rather than green. Since the signs are brown, that means they're part of a historic district. It seems as if they are renovating the house in this picture and the store on the first floor is empty or not operating. Walking a bit more up Hudson Ave, you'll find an empty lot.



On the corner of Bridge Street and Front Street, there are new lofts located in what used to be an old factory building. We also learned that Bridge Street is what separates DUMBO and Vinegar Hill. This picture goes to show how people are putting old factories to use rather than tearing them down.



In the first picture we can see the Commandant's house. The house is gated to keep away unwanted guests but can also be seen as a way to isolate oneself from society. The house has a lot of land as well as a good view of the neighborhood and the navy yard. In the picture on the right, you can see that an old fire house but now it's been turned into a home. Finally in the last picture, you can see the transition from society to factory. You can visually see the factory in the background and how much space it's taken away from the neighborhood.

OBSERVATIONS

1. During middle of the day, there weren't many people out in the neighborhood.
2. Lots of store fronts seem to be closed and not renovated.
3. The community garden seemed as if it had not been taken care of.
4. There were train tracks that were hidden underneath the sidewalks in certain areas.
5. When walking down Sands Street, I saw a car with a shattered window
6. The power plant takes up a huge portion of Vinegar Hills.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Subject	Data
Gated Homes	I saw two gated homes, one being the Commandant's house and the other one was by an abandoned lot on the same block.
Closed Store Fronts	Most of the store fronts seen on Hudson Avenue seem as if they've been out of service.
Residential Fire House	I saw one fire house in the area and it had been turned into a residential area.

QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was the plant built in vinegar hill?
2. What can be done to bring the community together?
3. How can people preserve these historical landmarks?

HYPOTHESIS:

1. The power plant may have been built along the waterfront to provide energy for the navy yard. Also, building a power plant in the center of a city may not be ideal just in case power companies want to expand their plants space. It would be easier to expand along the waterfront rather than being in the middle of a city.
2. Community events such as the community garden can help bring people together. If these

events could be funded and organized it would successfully bring people together.

3. A way to preserve these landmarks would be for the residents to fight against change, if change is proposed.

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

Visiting Vinegar Hill shined a new light on my knowledge of the city and it's sparked my curiosity on how the area has been planned out. I'd also like to figure out what used to be at the power plant before Con-Ed took over. Seeing the transition from old to modern is always an interesting sight and that is what Vinegar Hill Provided.