

Learning Places Spring 2017

SITE REPORT #3



AYA MORSY

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INTRODUCTION

On March 13, the class visited the Brooklyn Public Library located at Grand Army Plaza. The librarian there helped each group find archives for the topic they were searching for. We were looking for archives such as newspapers and articles that were not yet digitized.

OBJECTIVES

During the class on March 8th, as a group we were trying to find articles, newspaper, maps or even diaries that helps us understand how Vinegar Hill was during the 1900s. Since our topic is Development and Preservations, we wanted to know about how was Vinegar Hill development or persevered. Also, we wanted to know what people thought of the neighborhood and their ideas about developing it.

PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

Prior to the visit, I expected to find newspaper articles and diaries that are very old and fragile. I expected all the documents to be encased and we wouldn't be allowed to touch it so it doesn't fall apart. I didn't expect to find much information about Vinegar Hill because it was very hard to find digitized documents about the neighborhood.

SITE DOCUMENTATION:



Map of Vinegar Hill 1855, showing what kinds of building there are. Pink for brick, and yellow for wood. Also shows the amount of factories that were there.

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Vinegar Hill

2.4 million people
 Four papers covering
 every corner of Brooklyn
 Imagine the possibilities!

Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Welcome Elizabeth Harvey May 14, 2004 Cover

Brooklyn SPACE

Factory Building In Vinegar Hill Declared Landmark

by Linda Collins (linda@brooklyneagle.net), published online 02-21-2004

with additional reporting by Abby Ranger



A factory building erected in Vinegar Hill in 1908, and noted for its terra cotta detailing, has been officially designated a landmark following a campaign spearheaded by local artist Nicholas Evans-Cato since 1998. Owners of the building had disparaged it as a rundown, ordinary industrial structure, but preservationists and architectural historians regarded it as quite extraordinary.

Robert B. Tierney, chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, announced the designation by the Commission on February 10.

"The Thomson Meter Company building [at 110 Bridge Street] is significant for its architectural construction and detailing as well as its rich history," Tierney said in a prepared statement. "It is a jewel in Brooklyn's streetscape."

The Thomson Meter Company factory was designed by architect Louis E. Jallade, according to the announcement. The Hennebique Construction Co. was general contractor.

"Reinforced concrete was employed in its construction, with the columns and walls poured at the same time. Spandrels were filled with tapestry brickwork, while the structure was terminated by radiant polychrome terra cotta above arched windows."

The Landmarks Commission announcement went on to say that Scottish-born inventor John Thomas founded the company circa-1890 in Brooklyn to manufacture his patented water meters and his success led to the construction of this four-story (plus basement) factory.

It was sold in 1927 to the New York Eskimo Pie Corp., a recently incorporated subsidiary of the Eskimo Pie Corp. of Louisville, Ky., and was used for the manufacture of Eskimo Pie products and as a milk-bottling distribution plant until 1966. Since then it has been used for a variety of commercial and industrial uses.

According to Department of Buildings and Brooklyn Economic Development Corp. records, the building is currently owned by the 110 Bridge St. Realty Corp., with

The article on the left helps with preservation because it shows that a factory was declared as a landmark in 2004 that was build in 1908.

Vinegar Hill

Historic Vinegar Hill church demolished

By Karen O'Shea
Brooklyn Paper Publications

p. 16.4.
Oct. 23, 1992

Despite the strenuous efforts of the surrounding community, St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church in Vinegar Hill has been completely demolished and now local residents are pushing to have their whole neighborhood designated a historic district.

The 131-year-old church on Front and Gold streets served as the centerpiece of this semi-residential community abutting the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It was sold by the Diocese of Brooklyn to a private citizen who had it torn down last month.

Local residents say they are heartbroken by the demolition, which they tried to prevent for five years after the diocese closed down the parish, merged it with nearby St. George's, and tried to sell the church building and property.

"It's been a traumatic experience for everyone who lives here," said Monique Denoncin, president of the Vinegar Hill Association. "For the people who were baptized here and for the later generation who were trying to revitalize the neighborhood, this has been a great blow."

Denoncin and other Vinegar Hill residents said the diocese promised them the building would never be torn down and they would be notified when it was being sold. She said church officials never contacted them after selling St. Ann's to Anthony Stallare this spring.

She said the residents found out about the

purchase only after the Department of Buildings issued a demolition permit. Stallare did not return repeated phone calls seeking comment.

Diocesan spokesperson Frank DeRosa said the bishop did not want to see the church demolished but could not find a buyer who wanted to keep it intact. He said he did not know if any promises had been made to Vinegar Hill residents.

It was this communication gap that doomed the church, Denoncin said. Had they known about the sale, they could have reapplied for landmark status for St. Ann's. However, once the demolition permit was issued, the Landmarks Preservation Commission's hands were tied, she said.

The community appealed to Councilman Ken Fisher's office. They went over the demolition permit with a fine-tooth comb looking for a mistake that would render it improper and free up Landmarks, said Fisher's chief-of-staff John Talmage. None was found.

"We'll do whatever we can to prevent this from happening again," Talmage said. He said Fisher will resurrect an old application for a historic district in the Vinegar Hill area.

Ironically, the loss of the church could make it harder to secure the designation.

Landmarks spokesperson Traci Rozhon said the existing application dates back to the 1970s but has not been acted on. She said the most important criteria for a historic district is "a sense of place."

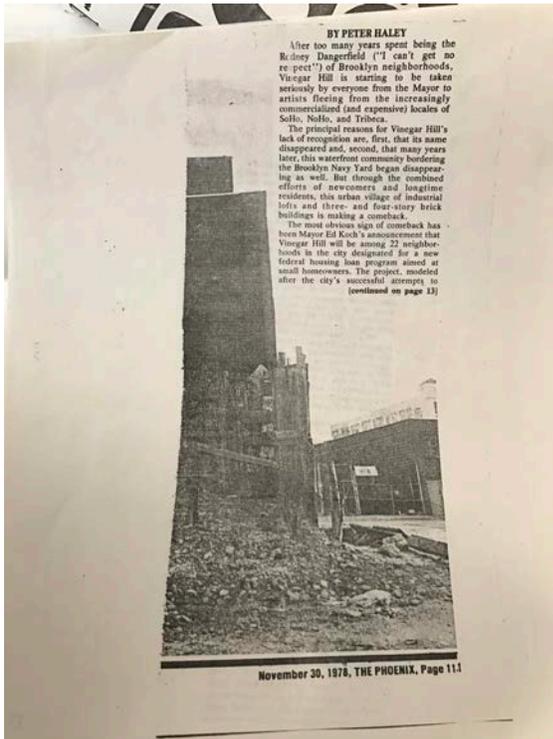
"You need to know it when you've gotten there and when you've left," she said. There are 55 historic districts in the city, Rozhon said.

Bonnie Parsekian, a local resident and architectural preservationist, said Vinegar Hill is desperately in need of historic district status.

"My understanding of why Landmarks has not approved it is that there are too many of what they call missing teeth here. A lot of buildings have disappeared," she said. "But at the same time there are significant areas that are substantially complete. The reason we'd like to be included in a district is so they'll stop knocking our teeth out."

Parsekian noted Vinegar Hill's unique industrial bent. "There's not another area like this where the buildings date from the turn of the century and the streetscape looks exactly like it did then except that modern trucks drive up and down," she said.

"I've never met a person who's come down here and not been completely overwhelmed," she said. "You have the skyline of Manhattan as the backdrop and these incredible bridge spans coming over you, and cobblestone streets, and original train tracks and turn-of-the-century fire call boxes."



This article is talking about how Vinegar Hill was forgotten but after the industrial lofts and brick buildings it started to be recognized.



This article shows that Vinegar Hill might be developed someday.

SITE OBSERVATIONS: One or 2 general notes about the Brooklyn Collection, and 2-3 specific observations about how the primary sources you found are connected to the topic of your investigation

1. Not much information about my group topic, or even Vinegar Hill.
2. Mainly recent documents and its mostly about Fulton St.
3. Maps in the Atlas boom dated 1855 helped understand the kind of buildings and industrial that were in Vinegar Hill
4. The article about the Church helped us understand how people felt about the demolition of it.
5. The article about the development of Vinegar Hill, helped us get an idea of how some people view Vinegar Hill and the residents of it. It mentioned that most of the people lived in Vinegar Hill been there for decades.

QUANTITATIVE DATA:

Subject	Data
Newspaper	6
Articles	15
Maps	3

QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS Consider the primary sources found during your visit and review the material you included so far in this report.

QUESTIONS:

1. Does the development of DUMBO affect Vinegar Hill?
2. Why were there many factories in 1855?

HYPOTHESIS: From the questions you wrote above, select the most important question for your own research topic. Propose an explanation made on the basis of the evidence you have so far as a starting point for further investigation.

1. The development of DUMBO affects Vinegar Hill negatively. It makes it a forgotten neighborhood since DUMBO is highly developed and attracts a lot of tourist
2. The use of the waterfront and navy yard made the neighborhood industrial.

SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION / NEXT STEPS?

I thought the visit was very interesting because we got to see the amount of archives they had. I never really thought that such articles, newspaper, and maps were preserved for that long and people were still able to view it. I expected to find diaries but there were none. I was kind of disappointed because we weren't able to find much information about Vinegar Hill. It was mostly about Downtown Brooklyn and Fulton mall. As a group, our next step is to use the information gathered to help us with our hypothesis. Also, I think we should learn about the demographics of the residence to know the age range, that would help us understand their way of thinking.

PRELIMINARY REFERENCES FOR PRIMARY SOURCES:

1. Atlas of the City of Brooklyn, Volume 1, 1855, Vinegar Hill map, Brooklyn Public Library.
2. Daily News, 2014, September 26, 2014, Page 2, "Quietly, Brooklyn's Vinegar Hill is poised for a real-estate boom", Brooklyn Public Library.
3. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 2004, March 6, 2004, "Fate of Old Buildings with Religious", Brooklyn Public Library.
4. Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 2004, May 14, 2004, "Factory Building in Vinegar Hill Declared Landmark", Brooklyn Public Library.