

Learning Places Fall 2017

Library / Archive REPORT

New York Public Library Visit



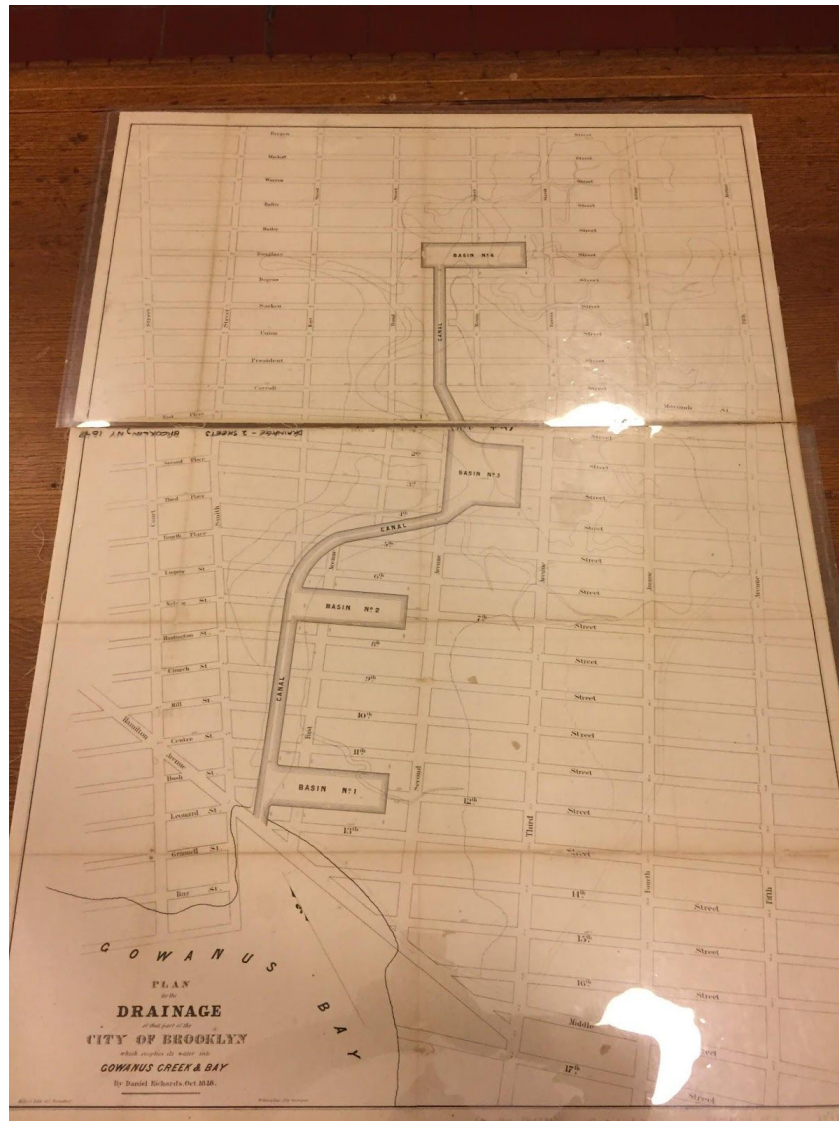
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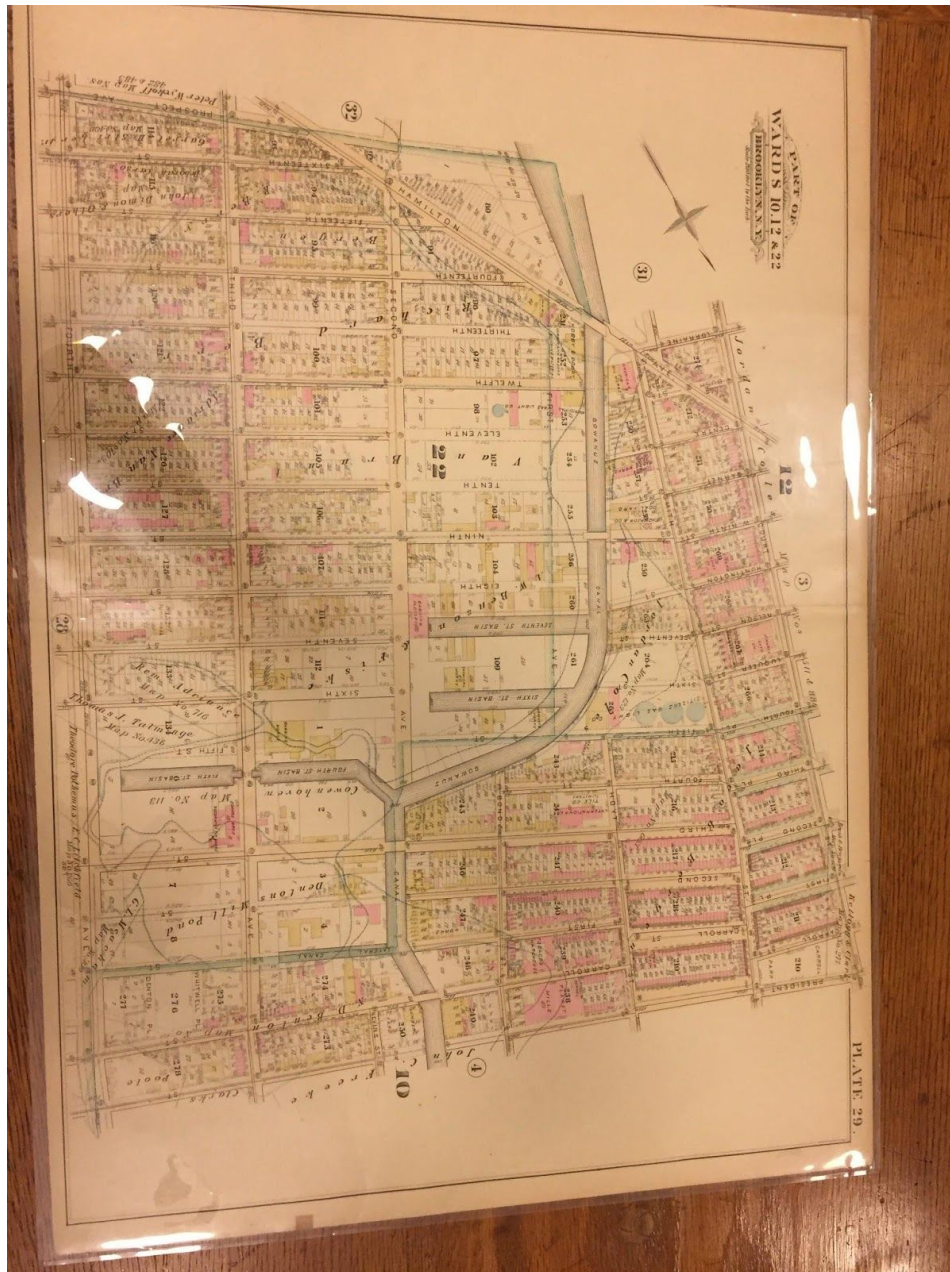
INTRODUCTION

In this library visit, we were to go to the New York Public Library (NYPL) and research into old maps of the Gowanus area. As soon as you enter the library you see the high ceiling and the air feels different. You are in a sort of like church of knowledge. I have been to Bryant Park before and have passed by the library but have never been inside it. Going there for the first time, I loved the architecture and aura of the place.

SITE OBSERVATIONS



Here in this image, you can see how the gowanus canal came to be built. Under the proposed construction of the canal, you can see how the swamp used to look like with all the small streams flowing out and into what are now city blocks. And by looking at the canal now and comparing it to this picture, you notice that those basins on the map are not there now and that's because they decided against it so they were never built.



In this image, it shows a sanborn map of the gowanus area. You can see that the buildings around the gowanus canal's edges are all wood buildings, the buildings around Smith, Hoyt, and Bond streets are mostly concrete buildings, and the buildings on the other side of the canal are mostly wood buildings.

What is the Genius Loci, or spirit, of this place?

The genius loci of this place is the same as the Brooklyn Library. Even though it is in the middle of Manhattan and attracts a lot of people, you can feel the aura of knowledge, power, calmness, peace, and quiet. Like I said before, it feels similar to a church.

What kind of archive or library is this? What kinds of materials / sources does this place collect?

This library collects many different things, like many libraries do, but they have a great historical collection of maps.

Who might use this collection and for what purpose?

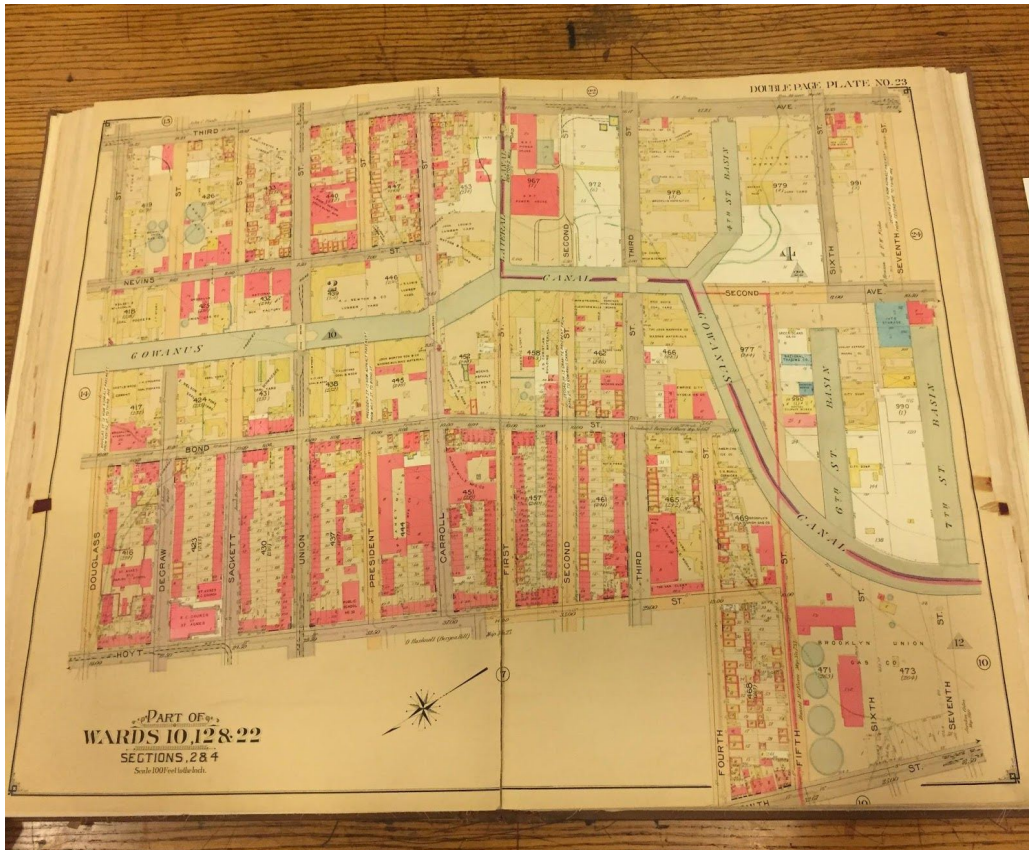
Anyone who is looking to make historical connections from how New York City used to look in the past and wants to compare it to how it looks now, they would probably find awesome sources here. For example, they have a few sanborn maps from the 1900s and you can probably compare it to a more recent sanborn map and see how the city is changing over time.

Are there any special rules for using or accessing material?

The only rules we were told were to turn off our flash when we take pictures so it doesn't mess with the quality of the map. There was one book/map that is very revised on (the people who made the map keep on gluing new stuff onto the map and therefore the map looks very worn out) and the library tour guide told us to ask her for help when looking through the book because they didn't want the book to get any more damaged than what it already was.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #1: Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. (1884-). *Brooklyn Double Page Plate No. 23 [Map bounded by Douglass St., Hoyt St., 7th St., 3rd Ave.]*



1. What is this source and what is its purpose?

This source is a sanborn map of the gowanus area. Its purpose is to provide us fire insurance information but it results in telling us how the area was built during its time period and by that we can guess how the neighborhood and general areas looked like.

2. Who created it and who was it created for?

Fire insurance companies created this map and they created it for themselves or other fire insurance companies.

3. What does this source tell us about the place we are studying? What themes or subtopics does

it relate to?

This source tells us how the area was built at the time. We can see that around the edges of the canal, all the buildings were wood buildings not concrete. This was probably a huge mistake that they realized much later when flooding occurred or when a fire occurred in a nearby industrial building. Sure the canal was there to somewhat stop the fire a small bit, but with all the industrial buildings they should have realized that they were going to need the buildings to be more fire resistant.

4. How might it be integrated into a research project? What question could it be used to help answer?

It can be integrated into anyone researching gentrification or how the land was being used because you can see what attracts people to certain places and it depends on how the land around them is being used.

CITATION for ARCHIVAL SOURCE #2 : Authority, T. B. (1941). *Gowanus improvement: November 1, 1941*. New York, NY: New York, N.Y. : The Authority.



1. What is this source and what is its purpose?

This source shows all the different industrial uses the land around the gowanus was proposed to be used for.

2. Who created it and who was it created for?

Triborough Bridge Authority created this and they are one of the many corporations that Robert Moses was a part of. They created it for the city to purpose how they were going to change the area and what businesses would boom with their planned changes.

3. What does this source tell us about the place we are studying? What themes or subtopics does it relate to?

This source tells us how the industrial businesses really came about in the gowanus. They could have made the gowanus into a commercial and residential area and there would probably be much less environmental damage to the canal than there is now. To me, it seemed like Robert Moses and his ideals took over and once people were realizing that the gowanus was already kind of industrial, they just wanted to invest into that kind of business around the gowanus which in turn solidified the industrial zoning that it now has and has had for decades.

4. How might it be integrated into a research project? What question could it be used to help answer?

It can be integrated with anyone studying zoning. Could help answer the question : why did the gowanus become industrial.

GENERAL NOTES:

- The gowanus was supposed to have basins which never came to fruition.
- The gowanus was largely wood based buildings on one side and concrete based on the other side.
- Robert Moses probably had a hand in turning the Gowanus Industrial.
- Library has a huge collection of historical maps.

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. Why did the Gowanus Canal become Industrial?
2. Why are the buildings around the Gowanus wood buildings?
3. What would happen if we completely eradicate the industrial zoning and buildings and turn the gowanus commercial/residential?