

Learning Places Summer 2019

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus Canal Walk



View of the Gowanus Canal from the Carroll Street Bridge

STUDENT NAME: Roma Ramawad

SITE OBSERVATIONS



Plants on the Side of Canal



Retractable Carroll Street
Bridge



Sewers

1. What are some general observations about the character of this neighborhood? What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel?

My first observation on this neighborhood was that it was different from other areas of Brooklyn. I've lived in New York my whole life, although I didn't live in Brooklyn, I have travelled to different areas of Brooklyn, where you can see different neighborhoods. Our walk started off in the Carroll Gardens area (originally known as South Brooklyn), which is considered a landmark area and is preserved by the landmark society and the community. The neighborhood consisted of brownstone facade houses with gardens. The looks and heights of the neighborhood are maintained and preserved. Some parts of the sidewalk were traditional New York State bluestone. As we are walking down the block, the house heights get lower as the we go down the hill. We arrive at Hoyt street (Western border of Gowana/ Beginning of Gowana) and continue walking. The neighborhood is combined with residential, commercial and industrial buildings. We continue walking. We walk past a bar/restaurant, which used to be a horse stable. Next, we arrive at Carroll Street Bridge overlooking the Gowanus Canal. The Gowanus Canal is a 1.8 long and 100 ft wide canal. The canal water looks green, filled with garbage. It looked very dirty. According to our tour guide, raw sewage flows through the canal everyday. We continue walking to Nevins Street and Union Street, where more commercial, industrial and residential buildings are combined. We continue walking back up to the Union Street Bridge (another bridge located above the canal). Where some boats were spotted and we learned, people buy boats to live on the canal and eventually they start sinking and people just leave them there. Also, on the other side, there is water being pumped in. And there is where our walk concluded. There are parts of the neighborhood that remind me of a classy place and other parts that consist of commercial and mostly industrial areas. The area made me feel different. There is so much diversity and differences in each piece of the area.

2. How is the natural world contained or shaped by human activity or architecture in Gowanus? In what ways does the natural world invade or disrupt human activity or architecture in Gowanus?

The natural world is shaped by human activity in Gowanus because the canal was once a creek. It was transformed into a canal because people saw the possibility for trade and industrial ships to pass and create an easy access to Brooklyn. The natural world is shaped by architecture in Gowanus because the architecture differs as we walk around the neighborhood in Gowanus. For example, the architecture in the neighborhood uses a brownstone facade on the residential buildings. Human activity has affected Gowanus because of the way people have treated and used the canal. For example, horse stables used to be around the area. When the horses would die, people would throw their dead bodies in the canal. Also, people used to buy boats and live on the canal and when the boats would start sinking, they would just leave them there.

3. What people did you observe in the neighborhood and what activities are they engaged in?

The people in the neighborhood were very friendly. The areas differ as one looks more richer and classier and the other is more industrial buildings. Most people were sitting outside taking sunlight or just enjoying the weather. People were also running, walking their dogs or just walking. As there were commercial and industrial buildings, people were also working. For example, people in the candle factory, the restaurant and the ice cream shop. Most of the factories have been converted to studios and areas for artist and film makers.

Reflect on a **specific** space you viewed in this neighborhood: Carroll Street Bridge

- a. who was the space designed for and what is its general purpose?

The Carroll Street Bridge is a retractable bridge (one of four in the world) located over the Gowanus Canal. The bridge is used for people to walk over, whether they are walking their dogs, running or just walking, and for vehicles to pass over.

- b. what are the implied rules of this **specific** space? How are people meant to interact with one another and with the environment?

The implied rules of the specific space are separated spaces for pedestrians and vehicles. People are meant to cross over the bridge or enjoy views of the canal.

- c. describe a possible creative reuse of this **specific** space for a theatrical event:

- a) Which areas are best for actors and which areas are good for observers? Do these spaces overlap? Mention specific objects and structures in your answer.

The best place for actors would be the whole bridge, almost like occupy the bridge. The whole bridge is the best place because I believe it will be the best to have their voices heard.

- b) Describe the potential audience. Who are they (workers? inhabitants? recreational users? tourists?) and why would they be passing through? Where are they going and where did they come from?

The potential audience would be workers and residential users of the area. They would be passing by or maybe they would hear about the performance as they walk by them and come help support the cause.

- c) Discuss how light and sound would support a theatrical event.

The sound of the crowd would support the theatrical event because the sound of the crowd would make the voices heard through the neighborhood. Light would help direct our community to help people come near and support us.

- d) What kinds of performance would work best (intimate or grand; processional or stationary; text and/or music; interactive or passive audience; etc.)?

The type of performance in this situation would be grand and interactive to the community and people supporting the cause, occupy all the bridges.

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. Write down questions that require further research to answer. These should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project; do not include questions you can answer with a quick google search.

1. If Gowanus continues to be neglected, how will it affect the community?
2. How are the EPA and SuperFund helping the Gowanus situation?
3. How can the Gowanus community help implement clean efforts for their benefit?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and revise one of your research questions for further research.

Revised Research Question:

How does the rezoning of the community help implement environmental efforts to clean up the Gowanus Canal?

Find a book or newspaper article that could help you answer your question.

MLA Citation for source:

“Gowanus Residents Demand Rezoning Wait until after Canal Cleanup.” *Brooklyn Eagle*, 28 Mar. 2019, brooklyneagle.com/articles/2019/03/27/gowanus-rezoning-wait-for-canal-cleanup/.

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

I selected this source because the newspaper article addresses that the community wants the canal cleaned before the rezoning. In which, the community feels after the rezoning the canal clean up will be forgotten about. It addresses part of my question because I am getting involved with the community.

Describe the process you used to find this source including any keywords and the search engine or tool you used to search.

In my process, first I started by typing keywords in my search engine. The keywords I used rezoning and clean up of Gowanus Canal. Then, I looked through several articles to read more about what is happening in the Gowanus and what the community feels about it. After, I began searching for newspapers that are interacting and providing support of the Gowanus Canal.

What other sources or further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for them?

To answer my question, I would have to look at the rezoning process. I would also have to ask additional questions. For example, how are environmental efforts being processed or why must rezoning be conducted in the area, why didn't they think about it before or does the community need to be more involved in the Gowanus Canal cleanup for their own benefit.