

Learning Places Fall 2015

# SITE REPORT #3

## NYPL



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### INTRODUCTION

Our class assignment for this semester consists in exploring Vinegar Hill area where Farragut Houses are located. We took a look at the site and studied the past of this neighborhood, using different research tools. One research method was visualizing the map collection at NYPL (New York Public Library). On October 21<sup>st</sup>, we met in room 215 of NYPL and were shown several maps of Brooklyn that included Vinegar Hill. The oldest maps in the collection we saw were dated 1766. Another map from the category William – Perris was dated 1955. We also saw maps dated 1895, 1915, and 1950. One of the atlases had the document called “Mayor’s Committee on Property improvement” dated 1941. This document encloses justification of the demolition of some buildings on Fulton Street. The demolition was possible after two months of “survey” and by signing the “Urban Redevelopment Corporation Bill.”

## PRE-VISIT REFLECTION

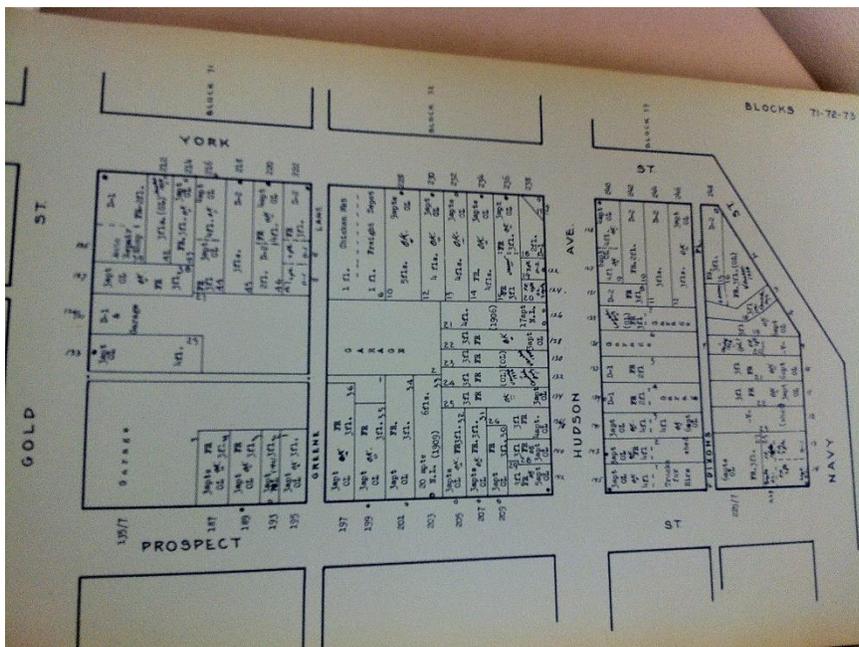
Besides being a place of study, New York Public Library, located in Manhattan at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues, also represents a touristic objective. This summer, I visited this place with my family as the building represents a great architectural attraction. It was a really impressive visit and I am looking forward to go there again tomorrow for a second visit.

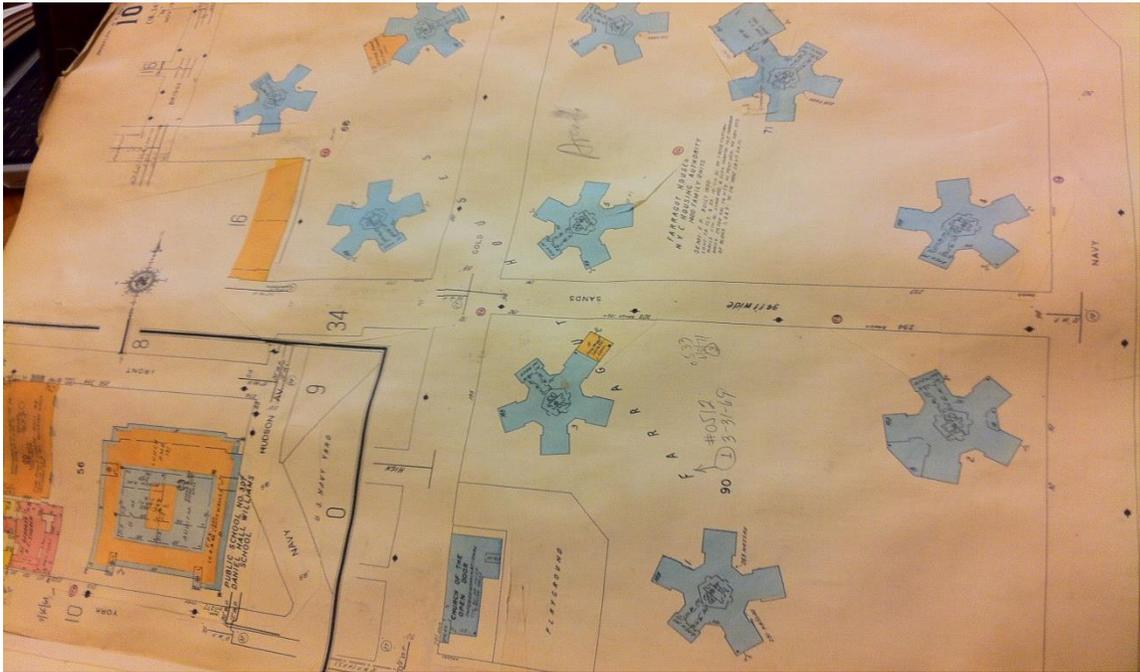
Our tomorrow's objective is to study the map collection from 10 am to 12:30pm. I am very eager to see some of them, as there is impossible to see the whole collection in such a short time. According to Knutzen, (2013) the collection includes 433,000 sheet maps. A better way to study more maps would be viewing them in a digitalized form.

In "Unbinding the Atlas: Moving the NYPL Map Collection beyond Digitization," the author informs us that the process of digitalization was started in 2000. The purpose of digitalization was to grant access at the global level to the maps. (Knutzen, 2013) On line availability of maps was done through a long and complicated process. It was a combined effort of map librarians, GIS professionals, and other experts.

I am looking forward to enrich my knowledge with the map collection. I also hope that we will get a quick overview on accessing maps in the electronic version. Although there will be an extremely short time for our visit, I expect to learn more about this library, the sources it has and how to access them.

## SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos/sketches)







## SITE OBSERVATIONS

1. The oldest maps we saw were dated 1766.
2. Most maps were wrapped in plastic.
3. Atlases had pieces of paper glued on the original maps to make the maps more accurate.
4. There were 5 Churches in the area of the projects before Farragut Houses were built.
5. There was a Church located on the same spot where the projects are now.
6. There were 3 schools in the area of the projects before Farragut Houses were built.
7. There were about 35 houses per block in the area of the projects before Farragut Houses were built.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA

Subject	Data
Number of Churches in Vinegar Hill area before Farragut Houses were built	5
Number of Churches on the same land piece where Farragut Houses were built	1
Number of Houses that existed on the same piece of land where Farragut Houses were built	30-40 houses in a block
Number of schools that existed on the same piece of land before Farragut Houses were built	3
Number of YMCA- Navy Branch that existed on the same piece of land before Farragut Houses were built	1
Number of Tutti Frutti MFG that existed on the same piece of land before Farragut Houses were built	1
Number of sheet maps in the map collection of NYPL	433,000
Number of books and atlases	20,000
Number of atlas maps sheets	18,000

## QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

### QUESTIONS:

1. What is the date limit to digitalize a map?
2. Does NYPL have maps in the collection as old as 1766?
3. Why were there pieces of paper glued on the maps in the atlases?
4. What is the date on the oldest maps visualized at NYPL?
5. What happened to all the buildings that existed where the projects are located now?
6. How long was the process of analyzing the area before demolition?
7. What happened with the people who lived in the houses that were demolished

### HYPOTHESIS:

1. Maps dated 1920 or older cannot be digitalized as it can affect the document.
2. The map collection at NYPL includes maps as old as 1766.
3. There were pieces of paper glued on the maps in the atlases to make the images more accurate.
4. The oldest maps are dated 1776.
5. Those buildings were demolished.
6. The area was surveyed for two months.
7. Those people had to leave their houses.

## SUMMARY / POST VISIT REFLECTION

Today our class met at New York Public Library in room 215 to visualize a map collection. It was very impressive to learn that the collection includes maps as old as 1776. Although these precious sources of information are a great benefit for historical studies, some of them cannot be digitalized to be accessed online. The librarian informed us that the maps older than 1920 are not and cannot be digitalized.

We were shown map sheets and atlases made from 1776 to nowadays. Most maps we were able to visualize in room 215 were carefully arranged with book marks for us to study our area of interest: Vinegar Hills. One atlas in particular dated 1941 had an introductory word that showed the plan of the City of New York to demolish buildings on Fulton Street.

Today's visit was very instructive. I was able to learn how to access maps online. I also got a library card today. It was a very easy and fast process. In less than five minutes, I received my card. The librarian guided me in the electronic study of maps and explained me this is a difficult research process. He e-mailed me a link for a quicker access.

## REFERENCES TO EXPLORE HYPOTHESIS

1. Retrieved 10/23/2015 from [http://maps.nypl.org/warper/maps/17423#Export\\_tab](http://maps.nypl.org/warper/maps/17423#Export_tab)
2. Knutzen, M. m. (2013). Unbinding the Atlas: Moving the NYPL Map Collection Beyond Digitization. *Journal Of Map & Geography Libraries*, 9(1/2), 8-24.
3. Mayor's Committee on Property improvement" 1941