BROOKLYN CONNECTIONS

HOUSING IN BROOKLYN
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET

Student Name
INTRODUCTORY READING


Before 1524, when Giovanni da Verrazano became the first known white man to sail up the Narrows into the lower bay, the place now known as Brooklyn was home to Munsee-speaking Indians called Lenapes or Delawareans. The Dutch West India Company established their first permanent settlement on Governors Island, and then in 1625 the Dutch moved their tiny community to Manhattan. In 1636 these newcomers turned their attention to Brooklyn, creating five towns in what is now Kings County.

The area around Brooklyn was primarily agricultural. As late as 1810, it was occupied mostly by farms, and its population was less than 5,000.

In the next four decades Brooklyn was transformed by new ferry lines to Manhattan. With its tree-shaded streets, pleasant homes, access to Manhattan, and general middle-class ambiance, Brooklyn attracted those who sought respite from the congestion of New York City.

Brooklyn was growing faster than New York City by 1820, and in almost every decade until the Civil War its population doubled. Even on the farthest outskirts of the built-up region, the increase of middle-class families soon became apparent. The Brooklyn Bridge, which opened in 1883, was a major contributor to the area’s growth. Brooklyn was gradually transformed from a suburb into a major city. Residential and industrial growth required funds for roads, sewers, schools, and mass transportation.

The first subway to Brooklyn opened in 1908, and over the next two decades tens of thousands of new homes and apartments went up in Flatbush, Gravesend, Flatlands, and New Utrecht. Brooklyn grew by 540,000 residents in the 1920s. In 1922 and 1923 Brooklyn led the nation in housing construction.

After World War II, Brooklyn began to decline both in population and in industrial development. Families moved to the suburbs in Nassau County, Staten Island, and New Jersey. But the huge number of veterans returning from war still required housing, and the New York City Housing Authority responded with temporary veteran housing as well as housing projects.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Brooklyn continued to lose families to the suburbs while poverty, rioting, and racial tension remained major issues within Brooklyn neighborhoods. However, a rise of neighborhood associations began an effort to fix up old houses, including historic brownstones, leading to social and economic revitalization of neighborhoods, as well as a rise in immigrants from the Caribbean, Middle East, and Soviet Union.


Caption: The Suydam house, [a small, two-story building] built by Leffert Lefferts on Bushwick Ave. near Woodbine St. about 1700, was occupied by a company of Hessians during the Revolution.
1. Observe Document 1a and Document 1b. List five things you notice about these houses:

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2. Based on your observations, what kinds of work do you think these people did for a living? Why?

3. Imagine you lived in one of these houses. Draw a picture of one of the rooms:
Caption: "Vacating the premises--Joseph Romon and his wife, Frances [on front steps], moving out of the slum building at 244 S. 9th St., owned by Mrs. Bessie Honig, 'the vulture landlady,' which was ordered vacated by the Health Department. Inspectors declared the Williamsburg house to be 'dangerous to life and unfit for human habitation.' William Duks, left, a Health Department inspector is supervising the removal of the tenants."
1. Observe Document 2a. Based on this photograph, which is titled “a slum in Brooklyn”, how would you define the word slum?


2. Observe the yard – the open area beside the building – in Document 2a. Based on your observations, what do you think the residents used this yard for?


3. Read the caption of Document 2b. Why are these two people moving out of the “slum building” that they live in?


4. According to the caption of Document 2b, who was in charge of deciding whether houses were good enough to live in?
RIVERSIDE BUILDINGS
IMPROVED DWELLINGS COMPANY.

BROOKLYN, 1890.
SITUATION.

The Riverside Buildings are situated on the slope from Brooklyn Heights to the East River, about midway between the Wall Street and South Ferries, and two minutes walk from either. The resident in the "Riverside" can reach the Second, Third, Sixth or Ninth Avenue lines of the New York Elevated Railroad, at the Battery, in eight to ten minutes. The horse car lines of the Brooklyn City Railroad, and the Atlantic Avenue Railroad Company, pass the doors of the "Riverside," and at the City Hall, five minutes distant, all the Elevated and surface Railroads in Brooklyn converge.

HEALTH IS EVERYTHING.

There are no such guarantees of good health as plenty of fresh air and sunlight, and there are no buildings erected in any large city in the world, for the same class of tenants, in which these primary blessings are so freely afforded as here.

The buildings are only two rooms deep (see plans), instead of six rooms as apartment houses are usually built. Every room is thus an exterior room, with a large window on the Park or on the street, and each apartment controls a through ventilation from front to rear. There is also an abundant supply of water to each.
1. Document 3a shows the Riverside Buildings. Make three observations about this building:

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2. Read Document 3b, Situation. According to this document, where are the Riverside Buildings located?

3. Read Document 3b, Health is Everything. According to this document, why are these buildings a healthy place to live?

4. Look at the map shown in Document 3b. What streets are shown around the buildings?

5. What year is Document 3a and 3b from?

Summary: View of the Riverside Apartments, a large, five-story, apartment complex located on Columbia Place and Furman Street between Joralemon Street and State Street. Four of the nine buildings were later demolished during the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.
1. Document 4a is a map from 2018. Locate Columbia Place, Joralemon Street, and Furman Street. Describe what you see at that location:

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2. Based on your observations of Document 4a, and reflecting back on Document 3b, what would you infer happened to the Riverside Buildings?

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3. Observe Document 4b. What building is shown in this photograph? What year is this photograph taken?

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4. Read the summary for Document 4b. According to this summary, what happened to the Riverside Apartments?

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### Temporary Veterans Emergency Housing Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N.Y. City Housing</th>
<th>Brooklyn Projects</th>
<th>Ulmer Park</th>
<th>Jamaica Bay</th>
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<td><strong>Federal City Housing</strong></td>
<td><strong>N.Y. State</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Projects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>7631</td>
<td>7964</td>
<td>1182</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Rooms</td>
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<td>1320</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>182</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population (Est.)</td>
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<td>2517</td>
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<td>1260</td>
<td>104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prefabricated Blks.</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q. Huts</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>781</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. Rent per Acre</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3338</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>82.82</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes 104 Cottages at Manhattan Beach.

**Statistics supplied by N.Y. City Housing Authority.**

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1. Observe the photograph in Document 5a. List three things you notice about these buildings:

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2. According to the title of Document 5a, these buildings are called “Quonset Huts”. Look for Quonset Huts on Document 5b. How many are located in Brooklyn?

3. According to the title of Document 5b, what were Quonset Huts used for?

4. Look at the date on Document 5a. When were these Quonset Huts used? Why do you think they were needed at this time?
1. Document 6a is a photograph. Make three observations about the brownstone houses you see in this photograph, and the street they are on:

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2. Based on your observations, who do you think lived in these houses when this photograph was taken?

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3. Document 6b is a photograph of the same brownstone houses from Document 6b. How many years were there between the two photographs?

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4. List five differences you notice between Document 6a and Document 6b:

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Caption: An Architect’s drawing shows the layout of the various buildings which will be included in the projected Gowanus Houses, to be built on a site bounded by Hoyt, Wyckoff, Bond, and Douglass Sts. The development will provide apartments for 1,141 families in low-income groups.
1. Document 7a is an atlas page. Describe what you see: list street names, building names, and any general observations about how full or empty this atlas page looks.

2. On Document 7a, yellow squares represent wooden buildings, and red squares represent brick buildings. What do you mostly see on this atlas page?

3. Document 7b is a plan for new housing. Find the street names around the edge of the plan. Are any of these streets on Document 7a?

4. What do you think needed to happen for the plan in Document 7b to be built? Why do you think this plan was made?
Caption: Homes for 1,141 Families: Edmond B. Butler, chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, has announced plans are complete for another low-rent project, Gowanus Houses, to be built on a site bordered by Wyckoff, Douglass, Bond and Hoyt Sts. This State-aided development will cost $6,738,000. The architects are Rosario Candela, Ely Jacques Kahn and William T. McCarthy.
Summary: View of housing project under construction at site bounded by Hoyt, Bond, Douglass, and Wyckoff Streets; completed fourteen-story building at left; completed six-story building in center; half completed building at right; steam shovel, construction debris, and workers in foreground.
1. Document 8a shows a completed public housing project. According to the caption, what was the name of this housing project?

2. According to the caption for Document 8a, how many people could live in this housing project?

3. According to the caption for Document 8a, how much money did it cost to build this?

4. Document 8b shows the same housing project under construction. According to the caption, which streets is this housing project near?

5. Who do you infer lived in these housing projects? Why would you infer that?

Draw what you imagine a room inside these housing projects looked like when it was first built. You could choose to draw a bedroom, living room, or kitchen.
Caption: Tieing Up Traffic: Protesting a rash of traffic accidents around the Gowanus Housing Project, a group of 40 women staged baby-carriage demonstrations at two points in the area today and tied up traffic for 20 minutes. Here they are at Warren and Bond Sts. It was only after a great deal of pushing and shoving that the demonstrators were persuaded to return to the sidewalk.
Residents of Gowanus Houses waiting for the frequently broken elevators. The Housing Authority is due to replace the system by 1981. (Phoenix Photo by Ades)

Gowanus Housing Projects Still Troubled Despite Upgrade Plan

BY ELIZABETH ALVAREZ

Two years have elapsed since the Gowanus Housing Project in Boerum Hill received $5,727,000 in state funds from the Authority Transfer Program (ATP) to upgrade the physical conditions of the 16 building complex housing approximately 4,000 people. According to Marvin Teitelbaum, District Chief of the Gowanus Project at the New York City Housing Authority, a date for completion is not expected for another two years.

Residents of the Gowanus Housing Development have complained at recent tenant meetings that little visible improvement can be seen, since the ATP program went into effect on July 1, 1977. To date only one item of the proposed list of 13 long term projects, the painting and sealing of the top floor of the buildings to prevent seepage, has been completed, while the installation of closet doors is presently underway. Before 1980, Teitelbaum claims that some work will have begun on the electrical upgrading and construction of a new boiler, however, a majority of items outlined for the ATP contract will not even be started until included in the contract for physical repairs for the 30 year old housing project, is the placement of formica tops on kitchen cabinets, installation of closet doors, vandal proof hallway fixtures, exterior lighting, and vanity and medicine cabinets in the bathrooms. The plan also calls for the replacement of all windows, upgrading of the heating unit, electrical improvements, installation of a new elevator system, renovations of the community center, painting and ceiling work and roof repairs.

Installation of the closet doors for the Gowanus project will cost approximately $140,000 and the painting and waterproofing an additional $80,000 out of the $5,727,000 allotment. Among the largest expenses to be incurred for repairs is $1 million for a boiler replacement and $1,311,000 for the replacement of the steel casement swing out windows with the energy saving double glazed type.

According to Teitelbaum, the time schedule for rehabilitation of the Gowanus Development compares favorably with the 16 other City Housing Authority projects where similar restorations are taking place. New windows have been installed in the Lincoln project in Manhattan, the Astoria Queens project also has received new windows and most closet doors have been installed, while the elevator of the Marcy project in Brooklyn, is near completion.

Attendance at the tenants meetings has grown to about 150 members since Thomas Greene, former Tenant Association President for 8 years, returned to office in February, 1979. Greene said he "wanted to see something started." Progress to date, according to Greene is "slow but sure," but not as rapid as he and other tenants would like. Greene meets monthly with Shenton, the Housing Authority Manager of the project and the District Chief, Marvin Teitelbaum. "Pressure must be put on them to see that things keep to schedule" according to Greene, which is one of the reasons he gave for resuming his old position as President.

In addition to the difficulty in getting the state funded renovations executed, tenants face numerous other problems, for which there may not be any available funds, including a garbage overflow resulting from the law banning incinerator use, lack of an intercom system and a backlog of repairs.

1. Document 9a is a photograph. What do you see happening in this photograph?

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2. According to the caption for Document 9a, why are these women standing in a group on the street?

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3. What year is Document 9a from?

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4. According to the caption of Document 9a, what housing project did this occur at?

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5. Look at the caption on the photograph in Document 9b. According to this caption, what is the problem? Where is this problem occurring?

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6. Make three observations of the photo in Document 9b: what is the interior of this building like? Who lives there?

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RUTH DIAMOND DISCRIMINATES AGAINST NEGROES

Two weeks ago a real estate agent at Majestic Realty Co., acting for Mrs. Diamond told Lionel Greaves, a Negro that Apt. 4 at 315 Eastern Parkway (owned by Mrs. Diamond) was rented. One half hour later he accepted a deposit for this same apartment from a white CORE member.

One week ago Mr. Greaves again applied for an apartment at 315 Eastern Parkway and was told there were no vacancies. One half hour later the broker (acting for Mrs. Diamond) accepted a deposit for Apt. 4 from another white CORE tester.

When approached by a representative from the Commission on Human Relations on Friday, August 24, Mrs. Diamond accepted a deposit from Mr. Greaves for the Apt. which was still vacant. After accepting his deposit, Mrs. Diamond informed Mr. Greaves on Monday, August 27, that she had rented the apartment to someone else.

COHR (The Commission on Human Relations) now has 8 cases of discrimination pending against Mrs. Diamond.

PROTEST! this blatant discrimination against Negroses.

ANTI-SEMITISM and DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NEGROES are partners in SHAME!

CALL Mrs. Diamond to register your protest at HY 6 - 9294

CALL the Boro President's Office to protest that Mrs. Diamond should be able to flout the law this way! - TR 5 - 7100

BROOKLYN CONGRESS OF Racial Equality 662 Classon Avenue

* Labor Donated
[Midwood Homes by Molo Discriminates Against Negroes.]

Civil Rights in Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.
1. Look at Document 10a. What kind of document is this? How was it made? Where would you find something like this?

2. Ruth Diamond is a landlord. According to Document 10a, what did Ruth Diamond do?

3. Document 10a was created by an organization called Brooklyn CORE (Congress of Racial Equality). With this document, what did they ask people to do about Ruth Diamond?

4. Document 10b shows a photograph. What problem is the man in the photograph concerned about? What is he doing about that problem?
CORElators who noticed in the last issue the photo and story of Brooklyn (N.Y.) CORE's successful rental office sit-in, will be pleased to know that the group has won a second time. On this occasion, the sit-in and picket line—involving 30 CORE members—lasted eight hours and involved the Lefrak Organization, one of New York's major builders. It resulted in Rose Beverly's taking title to an apartment in the company's Brooklyn College Park development. She had been turned away previously because she is a Negro.

Document 11a – [Untitled newspaper clipping.] Civil Rights in Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

1. Document 11a is a newspaper clipping about Brooklyn CORE (Congress of Racial Equality). Read this clipping. According to the text, what did Brooklyn CORE organize?

2. According to Document 11a, what was the outcome of the work that Brooklyn CORE organized?

3. Document 11b is a newsletter from Brooklyn CORE. This article is about a picket line. From reading the article, what do you think a picket line is?

4. According to Document 11b, what was the result of Brooklyn CORE organizing a picket line?
GLOSSARY

Agricultural: farming, or related to farming

Brownstone: a type of reddish-brown stone used for building; this word is often used to refer to a type of home built from this stone

Congestion: crowding

Debris: garbage

Decline: to become less and less

Rash: a series of things of the same type, usually unpleasant or unwanted, occurring one after the other within a short space of time.

Respite: rest

Slum: an overcrowded and poorly maintained housing area

Veteran: a person who has served in the military