

Brooklyn Historical Society Visit the Othmer Library

Free admission for St. Francis students when you present your I.D.

More information online about searching the collections at www.brooklynhistory.org/library/search.html

Hours

Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 1:00-5:00 PM

Location & Directions

128 Pierrepont Street, 2nd floor
(corner of Clinton St)
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Appointments

You *do not* need an appointment to use books, periodicals, newspapers, maps and atlases, and a searchable database of our digitized images and oral histories.

You *do* need an appointment to use Archives and Manuscript collections. Please request appointment at least one week in advance by filling out our online form at <http://www.brooklynhistory.org/library/ask.html>.

Appointments are available only during open library hours. If you need to do extensive research in the collections, you may request an appointment outside of these hours; these requests will be accommodated on a case-by-case basis.

Library Rules and Procedures

Researchers must agree to abide by our reading room rules:

All researchers must fill out a registration form

All coats and bags must be checked. You may bring in a pad of paper, laptop computer, or digital camera.

Cell phones should be turned off or silenced. Phone conversations in the library are not permitted.

No food or drink allowed in the library.

Use pencils only; ink pens or other writing utensils that can leave a permanent mark on materials are not allowed.

Prior to handling fragile or rare materials, we may request that you wash your hands or wear gloves, which we will provide.

Please note:

There is no wireless Internet access and a limited number of electrical outlets available in the library.

The library is kept quite cool to aid in the preservation of our collections; you may wish to bring a sweater with you.

Library Collection

Historically the library collected materials, like many historical societies, donated by its members. The collection largely consisted of genealogies, biographies, church sermons, histories of New England, and war histories. Today, the library collections focus on the history of Brooklyn, its diverse neighborhoods, and many ethnic groups, and to a lesser extent Long Island, New York City, and its environs. Materials range from primary source materials such as directories, municipal reports and maps to secondary resources such as dissertations and published books.

Archives & Manuscripts Collection

The Archives and Manuscripts Collection at the Brooklyn Historical Society documents the history of Brooklyn and Long Island from European settlement in the 1600s through to the present day. These materials include personal and family papers; municipal records from the towns and villages that eventually consolidated to become modern Brooklyn; administrative records of businesses, churches, schools, and community organizations; as well as ephemera, architectural drawings, and genealogists' papers.

Strengths of the archives and manuscripts include family paper collections recording Dutch and English settlement on Long Island; documentation and records of commercial, residential, community and civic development of the emerging metropolis throughout the 19th century; extensive Civil War era holdings documenting Brooklyn residents involvement in the war as soldiers and in relief efforts on the home front; and 20th century materials documenting real estate, land use, urban planning efforts, cycles of neighborhood decline and gentrification, and neighborhood preservation and revitalization activities. We also hold an extensive collection of ephemera and other materials related to Brooklyn icons such as Coney Island, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Brooklyn Dodgers.

About the Oral History Collections

Begun in 1973, the BHS Oral History Collection currently contains interviews with over 300 narrators and continues to grow. The collection consists of both legacy projects conducted from 1973 - 1998, and new projects undertaken by the BHS Oral History Program instituted in 2006. The majority of interviews in the collection were conducted as part of projects centered on a specific theme, such as the **Neighborhood of Crown Heights, Puerto Rican Community, Brooklyn Navy Yard Workers**, or the **Williamsburg Giglio Festival**. There are also a significant number of individual interviews with Brooklynites that are not associated with a larger project.

Whenever possible, BHS gives researchers access to the audio/video of the interview, not just the transcript, because voice contains so much information that cannot be translated into text. Transcripts and recordings of interviews can be accessed in the library.

Photography Collection

The Photography Collection at the Brooklyn Historical Society documents the built environment of Brooklyn and Long Island from the 1870s to the present; an indexed portrait collection; family portraits and candid photographs; and notable events and activities.

Strengths of the photography collection are depictions of people and places by amateur photographers such as the artistic interpretations of Flatbush by Lucille Fornasieri-Gold; the gritty observations of Coney Island by Anders Goldfarb; the building of the Brooklyn Bridge from the East River by John Jay Pierrepont; Jewish weddings and Bar Mitzvahs by Harry Kalmus; the Blackout of 1977 in Bushwick; the construction of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank; and the unique and sundry *Faces of Brooklyn* by Nora Herting.