

Cypress Hills

History and Context Pack



Pratt Institute

PLAN 653 Land Use Studio

PR 621 Historic Preservation Studio

Cypress Hills, Brooklyn: Addressing Housing Development and Preservation Challenges

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Introduction

The Cypress Hills History and Context Pack (CHHCP) is a compilation of sources providing information on the historical development, context and present state of this neighborhood, in order to aid students of the Cypress Hills Planning – Preservation Studios (PR 621 Preservation Studio and PLAN 653 Land Use Studio) in their research and analysis of the study area.

The contents of the CHHCP consist of a selection of news articles, reports and excerpts from books, as well as images and maps, gathered from New York libraries (the New York Public Library, the Brooklyn Public Library, the Avery Collection of Columbia University Library and the Pratt Institute Library), the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation and online sources. These are listed below in the 'Sources' section, along with further sources which can be explored during the course of the studio.

Short History, Chronology and Context Description

1636-84	Brooklyn lands are transferred to Europeans from Indians
1646	Town of Brooklyn (Breuckelen) is chartered by Dutch West India Company
c1663	Cypress Hills is settled by Dutch, French, Huguenot, and English farmers and landowners and their African American slaves
1683	Brooklyn, Bushwick, Flatbush, Flatlands, Gravesend, New Utrecht are united as King's County
1698	First census of King's County occurs (2017 total population)
1704	Cypress Hills is referred to as 'New Lots of Flatbush'
c1807	Jamaica Plank Road (Jamaica Avenue) is built, Cypress Hills section of Fulton Street is laid out
1821	Union Race Course is constructed, spurring growth of Cypress Hills; the area is later called Union Place, Unionville and Union Course
c1835	First building lots are sold at eastern end of Cypress Hills; at western end, Connecticut merchant John Pitkin sets up shoe factory, attempting to develop East New York manufacturing center (he is thought to have lived in Cypress Hills)
1839	East New York Dutch Reformed Church is built on land donated by Pitkin, at corner of Fulton Street and New Jersey Avenue
1830s	Great Eastern Railroad branch of LIRR begins operation, helping make Cypress Hills more accessible along with Jamaica Plank Road; detached houses are built; commerce and industries develop along Atlantic Avenue
1848	Cypress Hills Cemetery is founded on former farm land (both the cemetery and neighborhood are believed to be named after the local trees), along with 17 other cemeteries in the vicinity
1852	New Lots, including Cypress Hills, is incorporated as a town
1862	Cypress Hills Cemetery is made part of National Cemetery System (it is the only national cemetery in NYC, and the resting place of Civil War casualties and various celebrities)
1886	Town of New Lots, including Cypress Hills, is annexed by City of Brooklyn, bringing on rapid infrastructure and suburban development;
c1880s	German and other (Italian, Irish, Polish) immigrants begin to move into area
1898	City of Brooklyn is consolidated into Greater New York
c1903	Ridgewood Reservoir and Highland Park are developed
1906	Arlington Branch of Brooklyn Public Library is built
1900s-20s	Rowhouse development occurs in area, much of it led by Price and Kampfe
1930s	Housing development continues, and population doubles
1943	War Memorial built at Libery Avenue and Eldert Lane
c1950s	African Americans, Central and South Americans begin to move into area
1960s-70s	Blockbusting, rioting and abandonment spread in East New York; Cypress Hills is less affected
1970-80	Radical demographic changes occur in Cypress Hills (younger, more Hispanic and Black) (Jackson and Manbeck 1998, Mulvihille 1988)
1990s	New housing added at western side of Cypress Hills
c2000s	Haitian, Jamaican, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Guyanese, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Korean, Chinese, Lithuanians begin to move into area

Today, Cypress Hills is served by Brooklyn Community Board 5, and described as a vibrant, multi-racial community, and a stable working-class neighborhood.

There are differing definitions and boundaries of the area; in one source it is cited as being bounded by Atlantic Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue and Eldert Lane; a broader definition takes in Highland Park at the northwest side and the City Line district at the southeast, while the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation working area further includes a two-block wide strip running south of Atlantic Avenue. Also, New Lots is historically the name of the greater region, while today it is only a more southerly section of East New York, which is currently the larger area. Highland Park is also used to refer to all or part of Cypress Hills. Thus, it is a good idea to keep these variations in mind during research. Liberty Avenue is cited by Jackson and Manbeck (1998: 88) as always having been the commercial center of Cypress Hills, while Fulton Street is cited similarly by Mulvihille (1988).

In terms of preservation status, there are two individual city and national register landmarks (PS 65K and PS 108) in the CHLDC area, as well as the New Lots Reformed Church (city and national landmark) which is located south of the CHLDC area; there are no city or national register historic districts, although there are studies made on potential districts for registration (included in the CHHCP).

Recent news features on the area mention issues such as regular burials and property problems at the Cypress Hills Cemetery, heated election campaigns and lobbying for better school facilities. The Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation has been active in such campaigns and diligently pursuing housing and other improvements in the neighborhood.

Sources

Required Reading (included in CHHCP):

News articles:

- 4 selected Brooklyn Daily Eagle articles (spanning 1889-1902)
- 16 selected New York Times articles (spanning 1996-2006)

Books and Reports:

History and General Description:

- Jackson, K. and Manbeck, J. (2004). *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*. (pp. 83-88). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Landesman, A. F. (1977). *A History of New Lots, Brooklyn to 1887 : including the villages of East New York, Cypress Hills, and Brownsville*. (pp. 3-19, 153-156,). Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat. [Also with maps and illustrations, and list of landmarks.]

Preservation/ Historic Buildings:

- Dolkart, A. (1998). *Guide to New York City Landmarks*. (pp. 205-06). New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission; John Wiley & Sons.
- Mulvihille, J.E. (1988). *Historic Preservation Report: Cypress Hills, Brooklyn, New York*.
- White, N. & Willensky, E. (2000). *The AIA Guide to New York City*. (p.190-96). New York: Crown. [Focus on history in early chapters.]

Housing and Planning:

- --. (2007). *Census Tracts Served by Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation*. [Memo.]
- Armistead, P. J., & Wexler, M. B. (1997). *Community Development and Youth Development: The Potential for Convergence*. (pp. 15-24). Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation.
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. (1988). *A Housing Plan for the Cypress Hills Community*. [report.]
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. *FY 07-09 Strategic Plan*. [Report.]
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. *Annual Report 2003*. [Also available at: <http://cypresshills.org/downloads/annualreport.pdf>]
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. (n.d.). *Proposal to the Enterprise Foundation*
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. (n.d.). *Proposal to the Deutsche Bank*
- Mathelier, E. (2006). *An Examination of Affordability of Low-to-Moderate Income Housing Developments*
- New York City Department of City Planning. (1995). *Neighborhood land disposition plan: East New York/North Core*. (pp. 1-10, 39). New York: The Department.
- New York City Department of City Planning, (2003). *Community District 5 Brooklyn Profile*, New York: The Department. Retrieved January 10, 2007. [Also available at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/lucds/bk5profile.pdf>.]
- Slum Clearance Conference for Brownsville, East New York and Ocean Hill. (1939). *Brownsville, East New York and Ocean Hill housing projects*. Brooklyn: The Slum Clearance Conference.
- Thabit, W. (2003). *How East New York Became a Ghetto*. (pp. 1-54). New York: New York University Press.

Supplemental Reading (included in CHHCP):

News articles:

- 5 selected Brooklyn Daily Eagle articles (spanning 1899-1898)
- 16 selected New York Times articles (spanning 1996-2006)

- --. (2001). [Press Release of Congresswoman Velazquez attending Small Homes Ceremony]. [Also available at <http://www.house.gov/velazquez/PressReleases/2001/PR081301a.htm>]
- --. (2005). News item on Affordable Housing. [Available at www.brownstoner.com]
- --. (2006). News item on Cypress Hills house being destroyed. [Available at www.brownstoner.com]
- Amon, R. (n.d.). 'The Cemetery Belt' in *Newsday*.
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. [Selections from Old Press Clippings]

Books and Reports:

- --. (n.d.). *Advancing All Alone Along Arlington Avenue*. [Report.]
- --. (1992). *The WPA Guide to New York City: The Federal Writers' Project Guide to 1930s New York*. New York: The New Press.
- --. (2007). *Gotham Gazette – Information on City District 37*. [Also available at <http://www.gothamgazette.com/city/district/37>]
- New York State Education Department. (2007). Information on Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. [Also available at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/repcrd2004/schools/331900010089.shtml>]
- Barrett, P.L. (n.d.). [Album on Historic Buildings of Cypress Hills No. 1.]
- Barrett, P.L. (n.d.). [Album on Historic Buildings of Cypress Hills No. 2.]
- Barrett, P.L. (n.d.). [Album on Historic Buildings of Cypress Hills No. 3.]
- Benardo, L. & Weiss, J. (c2006). *Brooklyn by name: How the neighborhoods, streets, parks, bridges, and more got their names*. (pp. 117-35) New York: New York University Press.
- Cullinan, J. (n.d.). [Community Report].
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. *Beguiling Cypress Hills*. [Guide Booklet.]
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. [Selections from flyers]
- Heidenreich, F. J. (1948). *Old days and old ways in East New York, an historical narrative*. Brooklyn(?).
- Kraska, K.T. (198-?). *The History of Cypress Hills Cemetery and its permanent residents*. New York: Woodhaven Cultural and Historical Society.
- Landesman, A. F. (1971). *Brownsville; the birth, development, and passing of a Jewish community in New York*. (pp. 17-18). New York: Bloch.
- New York Landmarks Preservation Commission. (1981). *Public School 108, 200 Linwood Street, Cypress Hills, Borough of Brooklyn*. New York: The Commission.
- New York Landmarks Preservation Commission. (1981). *Public School 65K, 158 Richmond Street, Cypress Hills, Borough of Brooklyn*. New York: The Commission.
- Preservation League of New York State. (1993). *The National register of historic places in New York State*. (pp. 72-73). New York: Futhermore Press; Rizzoli.
- Protestant Council of the City of New York. Dept. of Church Planning and Research. (1956). *East New York and neighboring communities [of] Brooklyn*. Chicago: National Lutheran Council, Divisions of American Missions.
- RBA Group. (1990). *Fulton Street Reconstruction Design Investigation Report*.
- Snyder-Grenier, E. M. (1996). *Brooklyn! An Illustrated History*. (p.9). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Willensky, E. (1986). *When Brooklyn was the world, 1920-1957*. (p.83-84). New York: Harmony Books.
- Tilley, R. (2005). *A Brief Tour of Cypress Hills National Cemetery*.

Images and Maps (included in CHHCP):

- Selection of photographs (9) found in the Brooklyn Public Library online collection
- Aerial photograph showing CHLDC boundaries. [With notes attached.]
- Maps (5) showing CHLDC activity and focus points
- OASIS map with borders marked according to one of the general info websites below
- (Several maps are also found in the PDF files of scanned sources)

Online sources:

General neighborhood/ Community Board information

- <http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=280791>
- <http://www.cypresshillsbrooklyn.com/>
- <http://www.forgotten-ny.com/NEIGHBORHOODS/brownsville/brownsville.html>
- <http://www.gothamcenter.org/discussions/viewthread.cfm?ID=480&ForumID=31>
- www.census.gov

Cypress Hills Institutions

CHLDC

- <http://cypresshills.org/index.php>
- http://www.unhny.org/member/agency_detail.cfm?ID=6515
- <http://www.ots.treas.gov/docs/4/48356.pdf>
- <http://www.federalreserve.gov/events/publicmeeting/19980625/panel11.htm>

Schools/ Education

- <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/SES/ApprovedProvidersSpring2005/OrgDetails/CypressHillsLocalDevelopmentCorporation.html>
- http://www.greatschools.net/modperl/browse_school/ny/2829
- <http://dmbinteractive.com/DMB2004/PortMat/cypress/p/Parents.html>
- <http://www.prattcenter.net/arch-cypress.php>
- <http://gothamgazette.com/community/37/news/148>

Other

- http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=163
- <http://www.house.gov/velazquez/PressReleases/2002/MA032102b.htm>

Cypress Hills Cemetery

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cypress_Hills_Cemetery
- <http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems/nchp/cypresshills.asp>

Real Estate Sites

- http://www.bobvila.com/RealEstate/City/Cypress_Hills_NY_USA.html
- <http://brooklyn.ny.house.info/4845-house-sale>
- http://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Cypress_Hills-Brooklyn/5080/
- <http://newyork.backpage.com/rentals/classifieds/ViewAd?oid=oid%3A1431320&name=apartments%20for%20rent>

Further Sources (not included in CHHCP):

Books and Reports

- Armbruster, E. L. (1912). *The Eastern District of Brooklyn*. Brooklyn: [s.n.]
- Armbruster, E. L. (1942). *Brooklyn's Eastern district*. Brooklyn: [s.n.]
- Schuchman, J.F. (1981). *Cypress Hills, to build a future : a development history and historic preservation analysis of a Brooklyn neighborhood*. Cornell University. [MA thesis.]

Archives and Online Sources

- More searched on New York Times and Brooklyn Daily Eagle archives
- Municipal Archives (for tax lot photographs, atlases and street indexes, directories etc)
- Archives of the Museum of the City of New York, the New York Historical Society, the Brooklyn Historical Society, etc.
- Websites and newsletters issued by the offices of the Community Board, City Councilperson and State Senator representing the neighborhood and Borough President.