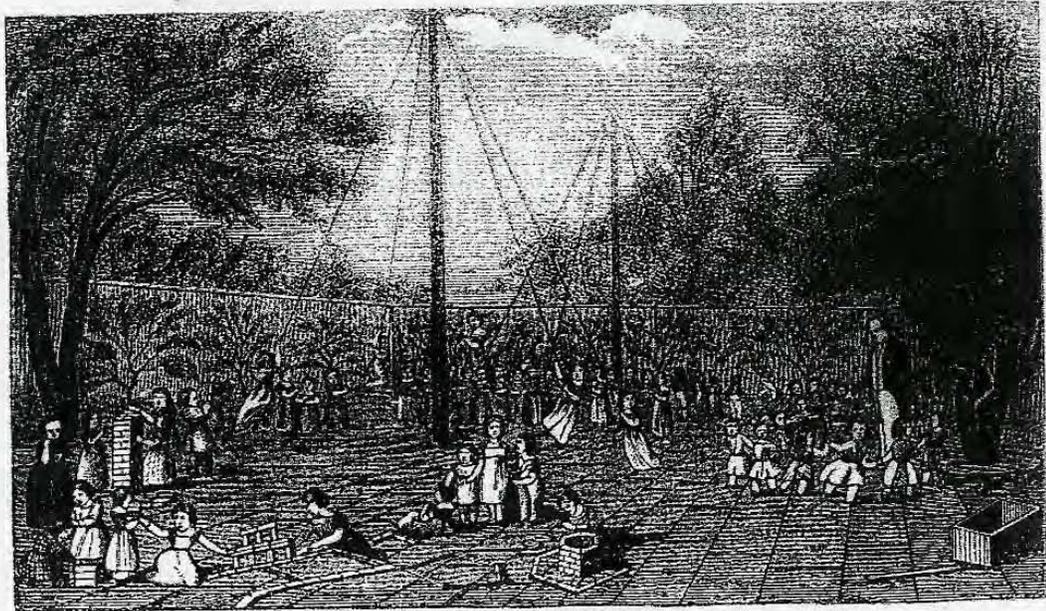


TOUR YOUR SCHOOL

A MAKE HISTORY! KIT

THE BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Play Ground for an Infant or Primary School.

TOUR YOUR SCHOOL

Looking for the physical evidence of history in your school

How old is my school?

Have you ever wondered about the history of your school? This pamphlet will help you find physical evidence of how your school has changed over time. It focuses on New York City Board of Education schools built between the turn of the 20th century and the 1950s. Depending on when your school was built, the amount of things on the list you find might vary. Using this list to guide you, look for any thing that strikes you as a sign of change. As you look, you may surprise yourself with what else you find.

Why this program?

The goals of this program are threefold: to teach historical content, to practice observation skills, and to awaken students' emotional connection to the history that surrounds them. As neighborhood institutions, schools provide a wealth of knowledge about the needs, values and challenges of a community. Because schools are large, expensive structures to build, any necessary changes are usually made within the structure rather than tearing the building down and starting from scratch. Thus schools display an interesting combination of old and new elements. By observing the remnants of the old as they exist side by side with new additions, students can find physical evidence of change.

Historians learn about the past by observing an object on multiple levels. Because they may not be familiar with an object, they observe it several times, each time bringing a new awareness and knowledge to what they see. Your school can be observed in the same way. Schools document a process of change. By looking at your school in a new light, students discover that history is all around them, and that something they know as well as their school can have a much deeper story to tell. The program helps students discover the historical significance of every day life. By making their own observations and drawing their own conclusions, students realize that they have the skills to be the interpreters of knowledge rather than merely its consumers. As students learn that they have the power to interpret the past, they learn that they have the power to affect the future.

PROCEDURE

Activities to do before your Tour:

1. Teacher Preparation
 - Read Schools as Historical Buildings
 - Explore your school looking for the items listed
 - Once you have found the most interesting aspects of your school, plan your walking tour route.
 - Make that your tour is a convenient length.
 - You may want to create a worksheet/checklist to help guide student's observation when they take their tour. See enclosed architectural detail worksheet for ideas.
2. Class introduction
 - Introduce the activity to the class
 - Historians learn through observation
 - The more you observe something the more you can see in it
 - Today we will be looking for evidence of how our school has changed over time

Ideas For Your Tour:

- Make a statement about the history of the building and then ask the class what they see that supports that statement. For instance, "I think that this wing of the school is newer than the others. Who can show me evidence that supports this?" "The lights are recessed. The paint/flooring is newer/a different color. This wing has modern technology."
- Pass out Barnard's principles of school architecture and have students rate the school according to his criteria.

Suggested activities to do after your Tour:

- Discuss whether or not the school building really affects students' ability to learn.
- Examine Barnard's principles of school architecture
- Discuss with students their opinions regarding Barnard's values.
- Have the class make a set of principles for an ideal school today.
- If possible and depending on the age of your students, present these ideas to the principal, PTA or school board.

SCHOOLS AS HISTORICAL BUILDINGS

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:	HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plaques and Corner Stones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the school was built (may include start and finish dates) • The architect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room labels and signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for multiple signs made out of different materials (i.e. Braille signs, brass plates, plastic signs) • Do the room labels match their current function? If not, the signs can indicate that the room has changed usage over time. • Look for old health rooms and deans offices • Special education and resource rooms often reflect this change of room use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transom windows above doors and closets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look carefully, these may be painted or boarded over. • These windows used to allow light to enter into the hallways before electricity was widely used. • Appear in schools built as late as 1953. • Fire marshals made schools seal them as the flow of oxygen also helped spread fire from room to room.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Education seal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for this outside above the main entrance and also on doorknobs • The school is part of the New York City Board of Education. • Shows a torch representing the light of knowledge. • The book surrounded by the laurel wreath is also the symbol of knowledge and learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amphitheaters and cafeterias 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows that the importance of community is built into the school itself. • Often set off from the main part of the school • More ornately decorated. • Serves as the public face of the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors', Nurses' and Dentists' offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice whether the room's label matches its function. Sometimes the Health office will have taken over a room formerly used for another purpose. What is labeled as the dentist's office may now have a different use. • Often schools provided for the needs of a community beyond educating its children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposed (external to walls) electric pipes running to light fixtures or sockets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These indicate the increase in the need for electricity since the school was built. • These are particularly evident in stairwells and computer labs.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Doors (doors that lead into stairwells or that section off hallways) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for ones that swing both ways as well as ones that only swing in one direction. • Fire doors that swing in one direction direct people toward the exits and away from the center of the building • Fire doors that swing both ways are located between two exits. They swing both ways so that you can choose which exit to use in the event of a fire.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpainted pipes and fixtures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This indicates newer fixtures, ones that have been added since the last time the school was painted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of original light fixtures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now most classrooms have fluorescent lights. • You can see if your school/room has evidence of the original fixtures remaining by looking on the ceiling for a pattern of five disks like the five dots on a six-sided die.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of diagonal holes on the wooden floor classrooms. Marks are about an inch and a half apart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desks used to be attached to the floor in rows. • This indicates a change in educational philosophy from teachers keeping students in rows to teachers having a choice of room arrangements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Entrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often more elaborately decorated than the rest of the school. • Usually the front entrance has brickwork modeled after an English, Roman or Greek architectural style. • Often there are stairs leading from the street level to the entrance to the building, which indicated the elevated status and importance of education to society at the time the building was built.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main staircase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often the main staircase is the only one in the school made out of marble. • It is more elaborate than the other staircases because this is the public face of the school. • Often Principal's offices were located on the second floor and the public would use the main staircase to get there, which represents the idea of education as an elevated pursuit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Window grilles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect schools from vandalism and theft. • Schools are no longer respected as the community institutions as they once were.

HISTORY OF SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE

Did schools always look the way they do today? You may be surprised to discover that the first schools (before the 1800s) were held in the homes of their teachers or in a local church building. Most school-age children in the neighborhood were in the same class no matter how old they were or what they already knew. However, children were not required to go to school, and often left school whenever they were needed at home. During harvest time, there were sometimes so few children that the school had to shut down until the harvest was over.

In the 1800s schools moved out of teachers' houses and into their own buildings. Joseph Lancaster, a teacher from England, created a new way of teaching students. Students who had reached a certain level became monitors and taught those who were still learning. This new style of teaching meant that more children could be taught for less money. In order to hold the larger number of students, classrooms were shaped like large, open lecture halls that could hold as many as 220 students. Lancaster's ideas were the beginnings of today's public school system in which large numbers of students receive an education at no cost to their families.

In 1851, a teacher named Henry Barnard toured some of America's schools. For the most part, he was not happy with what he found. The schools in New York were particularly bad. Of the 9,368 schools visited, 3,319 run down, 7,313 did not have a playground, and 6,423 did not have any bathrooms. He decided to write a list of rules for building new schools. This list helped people recognize how important schools and their buildings were to the community.

In the late 1800s, people began to think that there was a connection between what children learned and the way the school looked. People at this time were very concerned about preventing crime. They felt that schools could encourage morality and the school building became a silent teacher, showing children how to behave in such a beautiful and organized place. They hoped that students would carry this good behavior with them outside the school. These schools had a small number of students in each class so that they could have more of the teacher's attention.

Schools at this time were responsible for making sure that their students were healthy physically as well as morally. People felt that if children were healthy they could learn better. Schools were built so that each classroom had enough fresh air and sunlight. Schools also had doctors and dentist's offices to help the students stay physically fit.

The school became community centers as the number of services housed in the building grew. People from the neighborhood could go see the doctors and dentists even if they did not have children who went to the school. The school auditorium was used to hold public meetings. Most importantly, schools stood for community pride.

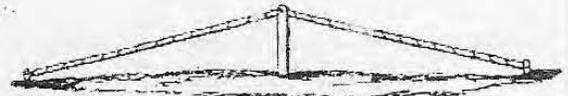
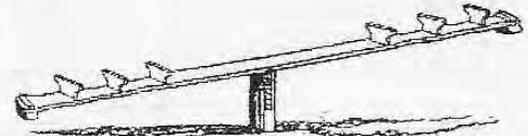
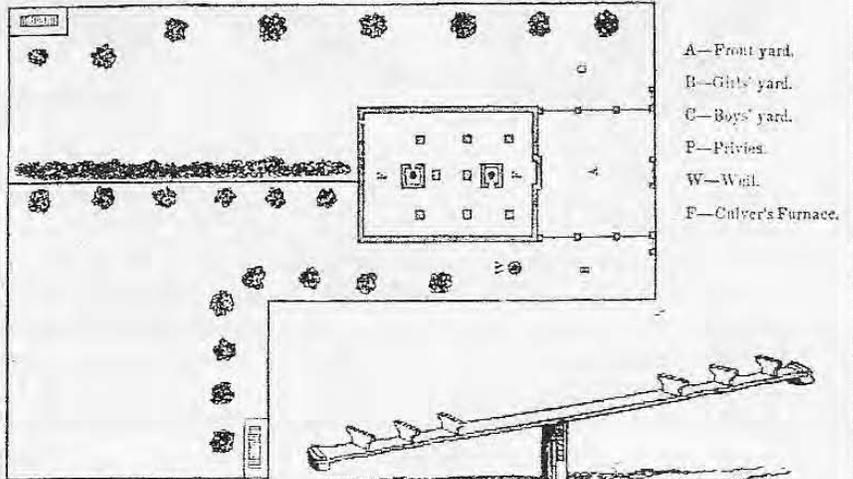
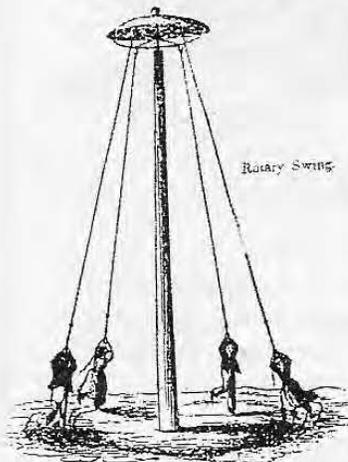
In 1898, the five boroughs merged to become New York City. The school systems of the different boroughs were also unified. The unified Board of Education became responsible for designing all new school buildings. C. B. J. Snyder, Superintendent of School Buildings from 1891-1923, influenced the design of these new schools. He introduced the Collegiate Gothic style (usually seen in universities) to school architecture. This style was used for over 20 years.

Over the years, schools adapted to include new ideas about teaching and community. Even older buildings made physical changes. For example, long ago desks were nailed to the floor but now teachers can arrange the desks however they choose. School based health clinics no longer exist. Recently, some schools have experimented with designs that allow them to use one room for many purposes. Most schools today have a mix of old and new features that you can discover as you plan your tour.

General Principles of School Architecture

From
Practical Illustrations of the Principles of School Architecture
By Henry Barnard, 1851

- A **location**, healthy, accessible from all parts of the district; retired from the dust, noise, and danger of the highway; attractive, from its choice of sun and shade, and commanding, in one or more directions, the cheap, yet priceless educating influences of fine scenery.
- A site large enough to admit of a **yard** in front of the building, either common to the whole school or appropriated to greensward, flowers and shrubbery, and two yards in the rear, one for each sex, properly inclosed, and fitted up with rotary swings, and other means of recreation and exercise, and with privies, which a civilized people never neglect.



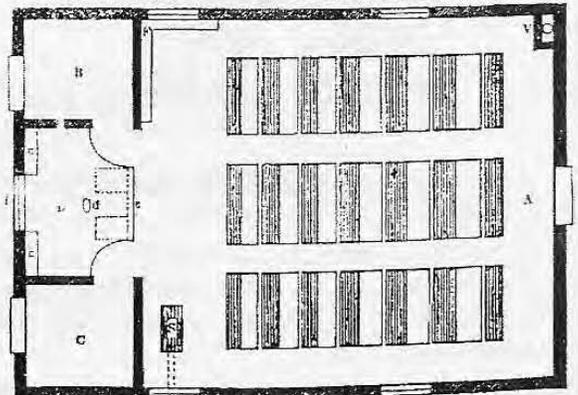
- **Separate entrances** to the school-room for each sex; each entrance distinct from the front door, and fitted up with scraper, mats, and old broom for the feet; with hooks, shelves, etc. for hats, overcoats, over-shoes, and umbrellas; with sink, pump, basin and towels, and with brooms and duster, and all the means and appliances necessary to secure habits of order, neatness and cleanliness.

- **School-room**, in addition to the space required by aisles and the teacher's platform, sufficient to accommodate with a seat and desk, not only each scholar in the district who is in the habit of attending school, but all who may be entitled to attend; with verge enough to receive the children of industrious, thoughtful, and religious families, who are sure to be attracted to a district which is blessed with a good school-house and a good school.

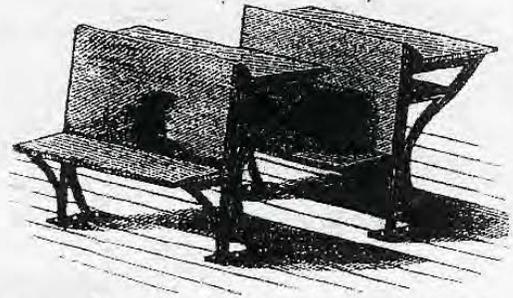
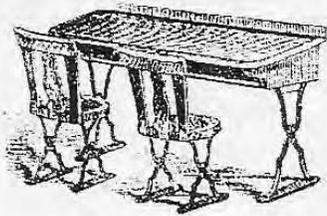
- At least one **spare room** for recitation, library, and other uses, to every school-room, no matter how small the school may be.

A—Front entrance.
 B—Girls' Entrance and lobby.
 C—Boys' do. do.
 D—Teachers' platform.
 E—Seat and desk, for the pupils.
 S—Mott's ventilating school stove.
 V—Flue for ventilation.

F—Seats for classes at recitation.
 d—Teacher's desk.
 e—Library of reference in front of teacher's desk.
 c—Closets for school library and apparatus.
 f—Fence dividing back yard.

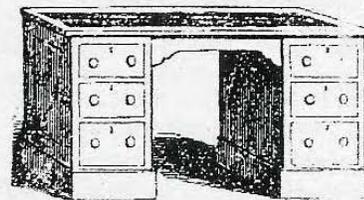


- Accommodations for a **school library** for consultation and circulation among the pupils, both at school and as a means for carrying on the work of self-education at their homes, in the field, or the workshop, after they have left school.
- A **chair or bench** for each pupil, and in no case for more than two, unless separated by an aisle, with a seat hollowed like an ordinary chair, and varying in height from ten to seventeen inches from the outer edge to the floor, so that each pupil, when properly seated, can rest his feet on the floor without the muscles of the thigh pressing hard upon the front edge of the seat, and with a support for the muscles of the back, rising above the shoulder-blades.



- A **desk** with at least two feet of top surface, and in no case for more than two pupils, inclined towards the front edge one inch in a foot, except two to three inches of the most distant portion, which should be level, and covered with cloth to prevent noise—fitted with an ink-pot (supplied with a lid and a pen-wiper,) and a slate, with a pencil-holder and a sponge attached, and supported by end-pieces or stanchions, curved so as to be convenient for sweeping, and to admit of easy access to the seat—these of varying heights for small and large pupils, the front edge of each desk being from seven to nine inches (seven for the lowest and nine for the highest,) higher than the front edge of the seat or chair attached.
- An arrangement of the seats and desks, so as to allow of an **aisle** or free passage of at least two feet around the room, and between each range of seats for two scholars, and so as to bring each scholar under the supervision of the teacher.
- **Arrangements for the teacher**, such as a separate closet for his overcoat, etc., a desk for his papers, a library of books of reference, maps, apparatus, and all such instrumentalities by which his capacities for instruction may be made in the highest degree useful.

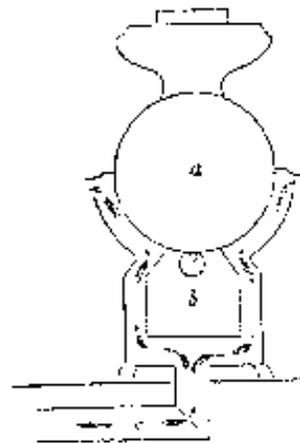
WALES' TEACHERS' ARM-CHAIRS
No. 20.



TEACHER'S DESK.

- While making suitable accommodation for the school, it will be a wise, and, all things considered, an economical investment, on the part of many districts, to provide **apartments** in the same building, or in its neighborhood, for the teacher and his family. This arrangement will give character and permanence to the office of teaching, and at the same time secure better supervision for the school-house and premises, and more attention to the manners of the pupils out of school.

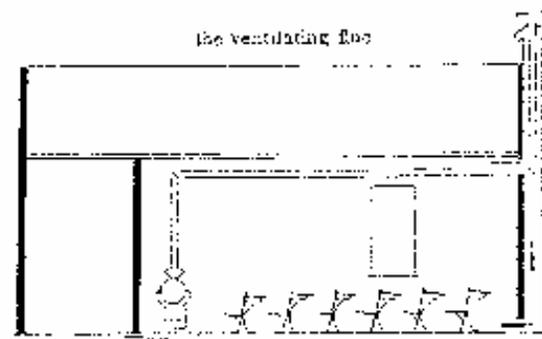
- An arrangement of the **windows**, so as to secure one blank wall, and at the same time, the cheerfulness and warmth of the sunlight, at all times of the day, with arrangements to modify the same by blinds, shutters, or curtains.
- A shed, or covered walk, on the basement story paved under foot, and open for free circulation of air for the boys, and an upper room with the floor deafened and properly supported for **calisthenic exercises** for the girls, is a desirable appendage to every school.
- **Apparatus for warming**, by which a large quantity of pure air from outside of the building can be moderately heated, and introduced into the room without passing over a red-hot iron surface, and distributed equally to different parts of the room.



Warming Apparatus.

- A chamber, or tank, of wood.
- A revolving grate, that, on motion, by which the tubes are easily detached and adapted to distribute the air to the room.
- A handle, by which the draught can be regulated, and the stove made as bright as desired.
- Flues, or pipes, under the floor, by which fresh air can be put in circulation under the grate, the stove, and introduced in the direction indicated by the arrows.

- A cheap, simple, and efficient mode of **ventilation**, by which the air in every part of a school-room, which is constantly becoming vitiated by respiration, combustion, or other causes, may be constantly flowing out of the room, and its place filled by an adequate supply of fresh air drawn from a pure source, and admitted into the room at the right temperature, of the requisite degree of moisture, and without any perceptible current.



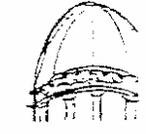
- Whenever practicable, the **privies** should be disconnected from the play-ground, and be approached from a covered walk. Perfect seclusion, neatness and propriety should be strictly observed in relation to them.
- A **design in good taste** and fit proportion, in place of the wretched portions of architecture, which almost universally characterize the district school-houses of New England.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

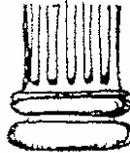
ARCH A curved construction which spans an opening.



DOME A curved roof structure that spans an area.



BASE The lower part of a column.



GARGOYLE A waterspout that projects from a building. It is often carved into a grotesque figure.



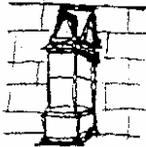
BAY WINDOW A window that protrudes from a building.



LINTEL A horizontal member (such as a beam) across the top of an opening.



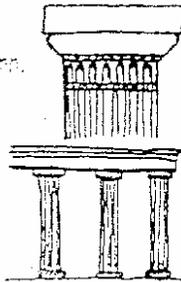
BUTTRESS An exterior mass that supports a wall.



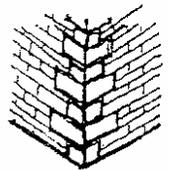
PEDIMENT In Classical architecture, the triangular end of the roof.



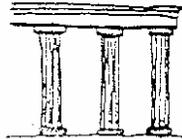
CAPITAL The topmost part of a column.



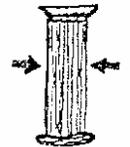
QUOIN Stone used to reinforce the corner of exterior walls.



COLONNADE A number of columns arranged in a row.



ESTAFI The portion of a column that is between the base and capital.



COLUMN A rounded support consisting of a base, shaft, and capital.



ENTABL A horizontal member at the bottom of a window or door.



CORNICE The exterior trim of a building at the very top.



STOOP A small flight of steps leading up to a house.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL, ALSO TRY:

- Observe the types of materials out of which the building is made. Compare the types of materials used throughout the building. Noticing when the architect chose to use one material over another can give you clues as to the purpose and meaning of the detail you are observing. For instance, main staircases that are the public face of the school are often made out of marble whereas interior staircases that serve a more utilitarian purpose are made out of metal. Two different types of materials used near each other for the same purpose may also show how the building has changed. If there is a new wing in your building, you may see drywall and brick forming two different walls of the same room.
- Ask the custodian to show you the old plans of the school—look for anything that has changed
- Take a walk around your school and see it again for the first time. Are there any details that you have missed? What other details do you notice? (i.e. old thermostat fixtures or signs) Can you tell if anything has been added or removed? Ask around. Is there anyone who might have old school records, documents, and class photos?

RELATED LINKS ON THE WEB:

<http://students.washington.edu/dclang/archist.html>
<http://wwwed.sturt.flinders.edu.au/iej/ARTICLES/v2n2/dillon/begin.HTM>
<http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/lpc/home.html>
<http://www.hti.umich.edu/>
<http://www.ipl.org/reading/books/>
<http://www.preserve.org/hdc/>

CREATED BY MIKI'ALA JACOBS, EDUCATION COORDINATOR
THE BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
REBECCA KRUCOFF, EDUCATION CURATOR
SPECIAL THANKS FOR THIS PROGRAM GOES TO TAMAR LAKS