The Past is Never Lost

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Foreword

I grew up in Brooklyn, New York and like so many other children in that city I was the daughter of immigrants. My father left Norway at the age of 16, before World War II; my mother left in 1950. They met in Bay Ridge at one of the Scandinavian dance halls, like so many Norwegians did those days. They worked as superintendents while my father also worked on the harbor bringing cement up and down the Hudson River. Until they bought their first home in Bensonhurst in 1966 we lived in Bay Ridge, where "all the other Norwegians lived". When we moved my neighbors changed from Tjersland, Tønnessen, Hansen and Svennevik to Cohen, Wurtzel, Aiello and Kim. But, our social life remained centered around Bay Ridge and the Norwegian American community there.

I had a special bond with the country of my parents - my mother would take us to Norway every other year to spend summers in Bergen with "bestemor" and "bestefar". On rainy days my grandfather would sit me down at his desk and teach me to read and write Norwegian. Little did we know then that this would be the preparation I needed for what would become the biggest change of my life. For, in 1971 my parents decided we were leaving Brooklyn for good and moving to Norway.

Looking back I see where my fascination with writing developed. In order to keep in touch with my American roots I had to stay in touch with friends there. So I did and still do. For more than 30 years I was able to correspond with and visit my grade school teacher Mrs. Gelfand. I have kept in touch with my friend up the block, Mary, who eventually moved from the Italian ethnic community of her parents and grandparents, but who returns every week to visit. And, I am still friends with the children of other Norwegian immigrants who became life-long friends of my parents as they were all making lives for themselves in Bay Ridge. The letters I have received through the years have been precious gifts and I can only imagine the importance of letters to the early immigrants and their families.

Writing this thesis has been a long process. From its early beginnings as a term paper for an English course on The Immigrant Experience in 2003 to the finished product that these pages represent. Along the way I have become indebted to many people who have shared of their time, their expertise and their memories. Some of them I've known for years, others I have recently become acquainted with. Some have offered their thoughts and theories through scholarly works; some have sat down and told me their life story. Others have shared their experiences via e-mail and yet others have sent me their thoughts and contemplations through the mail. The amount of information I have received is tremendous. Unfortunately,

the richness of its abundance is not easily conveyed since I deal with specifics and not so much in generalities. Also, some have been quoted and others not, but it is important to remember that it is the sum of these experiences and memories that I have tried to convey. I strongly believe that it is based on this richness that I have been able to draw a portrait of a community which in my opinion still is traceable today. All contributions have been invaluable and I hope that the collective voice of my contributors can be heard throughout these pages even when their individual words are not.

A heart felt thank you to all who have contributed; to those who answered questionnaires or took the time to sit with me and share their thoughts, thank you. To the scholars who have paved the way for my own theorizing, I say thank you for those moments when an idea crystallized or a theory became graspable. To my advisor Lene Johannessen, thank you for your enthusiasm your patience and your sound advice. To Orm Øverland and Kenneth Luebbering, thank you for sowing the seeds that would eventually grow into a genuine interest for the immigrant experience. To my husband and children who have supported me throughout my endeavors to finish my studies; I could not have done it without you. And finally, to my parents who taught me that you can love two countries and two cultures with all your heart, thank you! Today, I could not tell you whether I am Norwegian or American, for I am both – one hundred percent both – Norwegian American and American Norwegian.

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Photo Cover Page: Courtesy of Bridgeandtunnelclub.com
<http://www.bridgeandtunnelclub.com/bigmap/brooklyn/bayridge/index.htm>

Introduction: Retracing the Past: the Norwegian Presence in Brooklyn - Uncovering the Layers of an Ethnic Community "in Palimpsest"

> ***We find the author (perceive, understand, sense, and feel him) in any work of art. For example, in painting we always feel its author (artist), but we never see him in the way we see images he has depicted. We feel him in everything as a pure depicting origin (depicting subject), but not as a depicted (visible) image. Even in a self-portrait, of course, we do not see its depicting author, but only the artist's depiction. Strictly speaking, the author's image is a*** contradictio in adjecto***. The so-called author's image is, to be sure, a special type of image, distinct from other images in the work, but it is an image and it has its own author who created it. (Bakhtin 109)***

I Remember Brooklyn

Like so many others, the Brooklyn I grew up in thrived on the idea that Norwegians had a unique role in making Brooklyn what it was. Certainly, it may be discussed whether this idea was a child's mere attempt to find her place in a multicultural world, or indeed the successful mythmaking of an ethnic group. Nevertheless, the fact remains that my childhood was colored by Norwegianness, long before I ever visited Norway.

Born in Brooklyn in 1960 I grew up very much aware of the fact that I was Norwegian. I knew I was American, but I also knew I was Norwegian. So, this was my identity; Norwegian and American, one hundred percent both, not half and half. Later, I became aware that I was a "norskamerikaner"; a Norwegian American, and by the time I started Public School 128 I spoke the language of both my countries. At home and with our Norwegian friends we always spoke Norwegian; anywhere else we would only speak English. In keeping with solid Norwegian immigrant tradition we attended church; the Norwegian Department of the First Evangelical Free Church in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.[1] As was the case in most Norwegian immigrant churches in Brooklyn at that time, services were still being held in Norwegian. We socialized with Brooklynites originally from Norway. We spoke Norwegian at home and at church, celebrated the 17th of May and opened our presents on Christmas Eve,

[1] The use here of department ("avdeling") is itself a sign of Norwegianness as it is common among Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn. Perhaps the word is a direct translation from the Norwegian "avdeling". It is widely used in written and spoken English and found in church bulletins and other local Norwegian American texts.

holding on to our Norwegian heritage as much as possible, yet careful not to offend anyone with our ethnocentricity; fully aware that we were Americans, my parents by choice, their children by birth.[1]

Ellen Willumsen Ryen's "Lapskaus Boulevard" (2004). "I entitled the painting Lapskaus Bouelvard as that is what it is a painting of - 8th Ave. in the 50s and 60s, with all the Norwegian things that were shipped over to the colony in Brooklyn from the old country" (Ryen E-mail). No doubt, the painting resonates with Ryen's own memories of an era passed. Whereas Siv Ringdal's Master's thesis deals with "finding America in Lista" this painting illustrates how deeply embedded Norwegian culture and heritage was in Brooklyn. Courtesy of Scandinavian East Coast Museum (SECM), <http://scandinavian-museum.org/8avepics/source/laps_blvd.htm>

When I became older my feeling of being different changed to one of being privileged. Of all the children in my class in Bay Ridge, I was one of the few to know the language of my

[1] Odd S. Lovoll discusses Norwegian Americans' extreme ethnocentricity in ***The Promise Fulfilled, A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today*** (1998).

grandparents and the only one who had actually visited the country of our origins. I was a second generation Norwegian American in a classroom of Chinese Americans, Italian Americans, German Americans, Polish Americans, African Americans and Puerto Rican Americans; all of whom were very much aware of our respective ethnicities, all of whom were very much American.

According to tradition I was baptized in the Norwegian Seamen's Church, and like so many others, my parents found their cultural and social home there. We attended all the social functions; the annual "juletrefest", Everybody's Birthday Party and bazaar, concerts and other festivities.[1] We were there when His Majesty King Olav V and other members of the royal family visited their "landsmenn" abroad. We frequented the reading room at "sjømannskirken" so that my parents could catch up on news from home, and until I was old enough to be allowed upstairs to watch the young sailors shoot pool, I would listen to my parents' quiet conversations with elderly men who expressed regrets for never having returned to "gamlelandet". Some of them had lost contact with family in Norway; others had kept in touch but never been back.

From the 1950s until the 70s the social and ethnic fabric of Brooklyn was undergoing enormous change which had repercussions well into the Norwegian American community. At church we found our Norwegian friends leaving Brooklyn one family after another. Some moved to the suburbs of New York, others to New Jersey or Connecticut and some moved back to Norway. So then, in 1970 it was official: our family also was moving to Norway. In immigration terms this is known as remigration. We called it moving home, despite the fact that both my parents were naturalized US citizens and had never intended to leave America. But times were changing – and so was my identity.

[1] Every Christmas there was a traditional Norwegian "juletrefest" with traditional Norwegian singing and dancing around the Christmas tree**.** Also, once a year there was a collective birthday party, "Allemanns gebursdagsselskap" organized by the Seamen's Church Choir ("Sjømannskirkens Musikkor").

Studying a Community in Palimpsest - the Practicalities of Research

> ***The identity and personality of the scholar are his or her most important tools. We are inevitably in our work as our work is in us. There are no objective interpretations of history, literature, or society; nor should we pretend that our choice of what we study is unrelated to our experience, our beliefs, and our values (Øverland, "Studying Myself" 23).***

The separation of entities, both visual and mental, is what allows us to focus attention on something and ignore something else (Zerubavel 1). Certainly, the perspective which crystallizes from this attention becomes a foundation for what we see, what we believe to be ***true*** and what we deem important. The same is true for research, for every researcher's frame of reference is unique; any methodological approach is grounded in it and findings are viewed through it. In his collection of essays, ***Tropics of Discourse***, Hayden White discusses this very point when he writes that "facts do not speak for themselves, but the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is–in its ***re***presentation–a purely discursive one (125)".

I do not purport that my approach to the material gathered for this thesis is that of a historian or a sociologist. At best, it is an interdisciplinary attempt to render a scholarly, retrospective glimpse of a place, a time and a community and hopefully illuminate one aspect of its hi***story.*** In White's opinion, every historical text is a "fiction of factual representation**"** (121-134). While he is dealing with the mode of description that historical writers use, any writer, he argues, historical or other will necessarily use tropes in their discourse as an interpretative operation (White 2). So then, my perspective and the language I use to report and explain my findings are unique to me. Inevitably, I create a story by which to accommodate the facts and findings of my research. White elaborates on this process, arguing that,

> …when it is a matter of trying to deal with past facts, the crucial consideration for him who would represent them faithfully are the notions he brings to his representation of

> the ways parts relate to the whole which they comprise…Novelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of a representation is a poetic process. Here the historians must utilize precisely the same tropological strategies, the same modalities of representing relationships in words, that the poet or novelist uses (125).

In no way does this view eliminate the responsibility of researchers to seek objectivity. Nor does it legitimize purposely distorting, concealing or manipulating facts. The goal of research should always be to present the findings in the most objective manner possible. However, it is of critical importance that we understand and accept the variables of research and the stories they allow us to access.

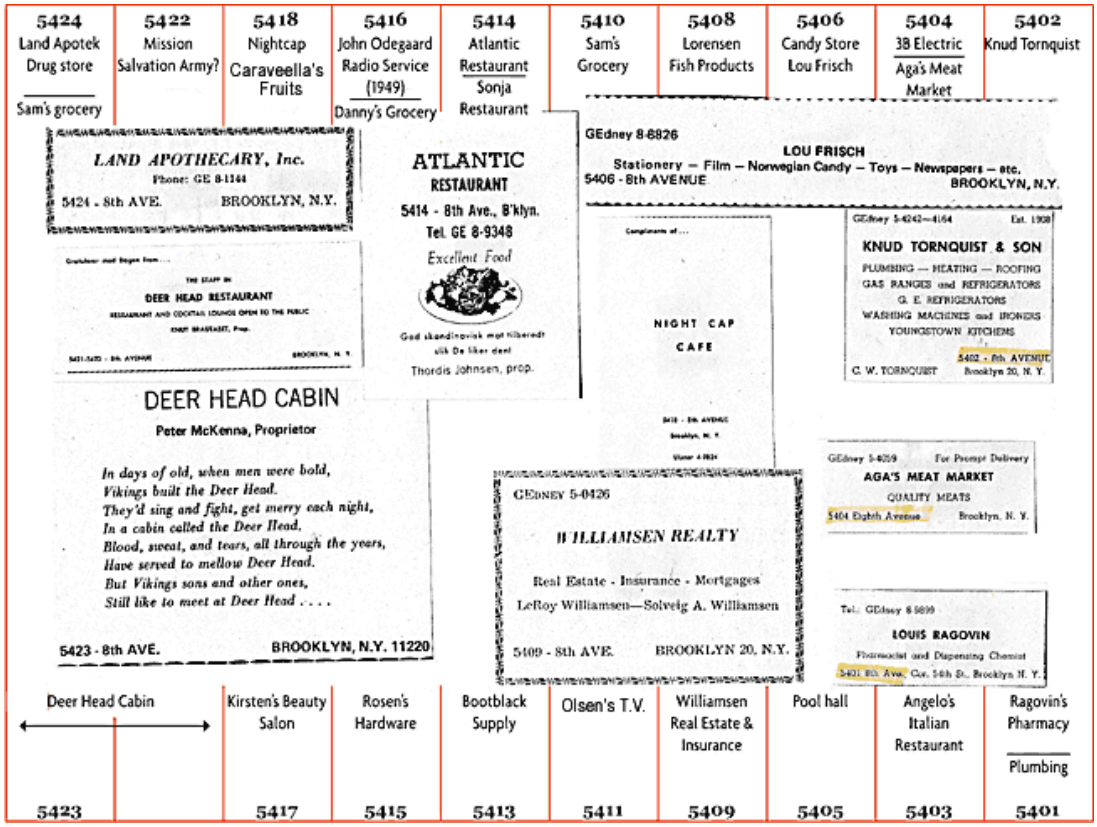
Contemporary cognitive research has long since shown that perception is highly individual, based on such factors as cultural background, religious upbringing, gender, and life experience, to mention some. As researchers then, our choice of subject matter, as well as the methodology we use to evaluate and analyze our findings, reflect both personal preference as well as academic training. In the end, the words we use to describe what we ***see*** are to a large extent our interpretation of the world around us. So then, the notion that objectivity in research and field work can be obtained without any form of a situated, subjective perspective on the part of a researcher seems unrealistic. Instead, the premise that all research is bound by variables, that our views are a product of our experiences and that our perspectives are filtered through these experiences seems a more realistic one. Objectivity should always be the goal, but we must be willing to admit that nuances, even discrepancies may occur wherever evaluation, analysis and interpretation are concerned. Even when two researchers' methodologies are classified within the same tradition their approaches may differ. This is especially true for the qualitative method which to a large extent is recognized for its

numerous roads in the quest for human understanding. Thus, openness toward pragmatism and open-ended results are characteristics of the qualitative method; qualities which promote a fluid and interactive approach toward the people and questions being studied. In turn such pragmatism and openness can only encourage a researcher to incorporate various methods within a particular project in order to maximize his or her understanding of a society. For, as Thomas R. Lindlof puts it: "qualitative researchers seek to preserve the form and content of human behavior and to analyze its qualities, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations" (21). Such is the basis for this project as well; "to preserve" and "analyze", or as Bellenger, Bernhardt and Goldstucker write: "to find out what people think and how they feel – or at any rate, what they say they think and how they say they feel" (quoted in Brennan 3). In light of this, and the fact that prior research on the Norwegian American community in Brooklyn is limited, a qualitative approach to my topic seems unavoidable.

Initially, the idea of writing a paper about the Norwegian colony in Brooklyn, N.Y. was introduced to me by Fulbright professor Kenneth Luebbering. The paper was for an undergraduate level course entitled "The Immigrant Experience" and was intended as a general presentation of the enclave during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. In addition, it set out to find indications as to why the community eventually lost its foothold and dispersed during the 1970s and 80s. As my research progressed the idea of continuing along the same lines for a Master's thesis emerged – albeit in a different form. Moving away from the broad and general topic of the Norwegian community this thesis has been narrowed down to focus on the ethnic palimpsest which undeniably has blurred the signs of Norwegian presence in Brooklyn today. In a sense, this project sets out to find Norway in Brooklyn, and to answer questions such as these: how visible was Norwegian ethnicity in Brooklyn, what traces bear

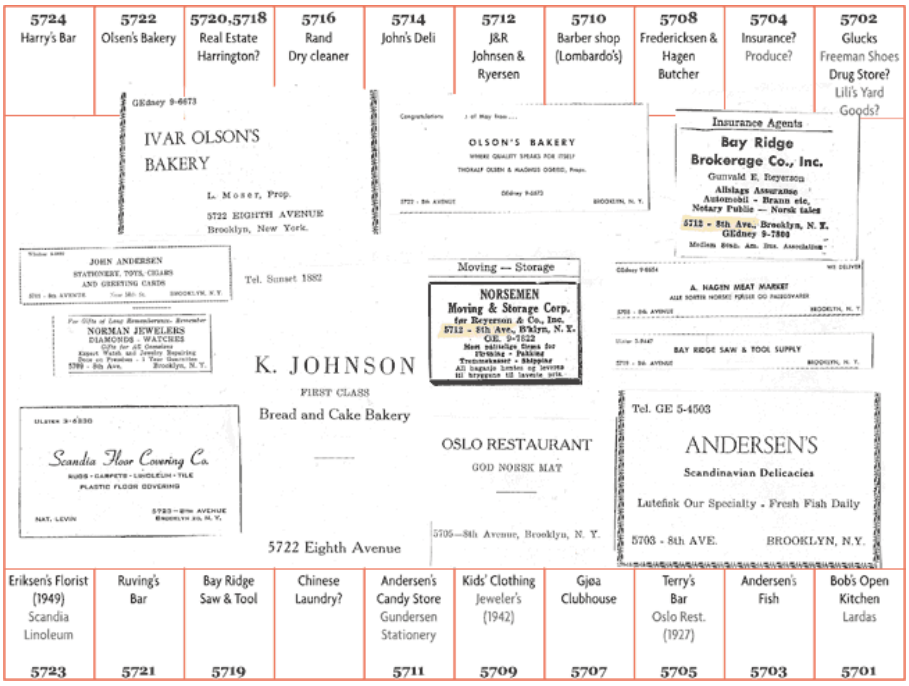
witness to the once so vibrant community? Where do we find these traces, and how have the changing patterns of history and ethnicity obscured this particular layer of the palimpsest?

A limited amount of prior research into the Brooklyn community has made it necessary to, among other, supplement with information from questionnaire respondents, interviewees, microfilm of the immigrant newspaper ***Nordisk Tidende*** (1891) from 1959 to 1971, as well as search the internet for data. Combined, these sources have illuminated the Norwegian American community of Brooklyn and demonstrated that this settlement was, well into the 1950s and 60s, sustaining an impressive amount of Norwegian culture and heritage brought over by the earliest settlers.

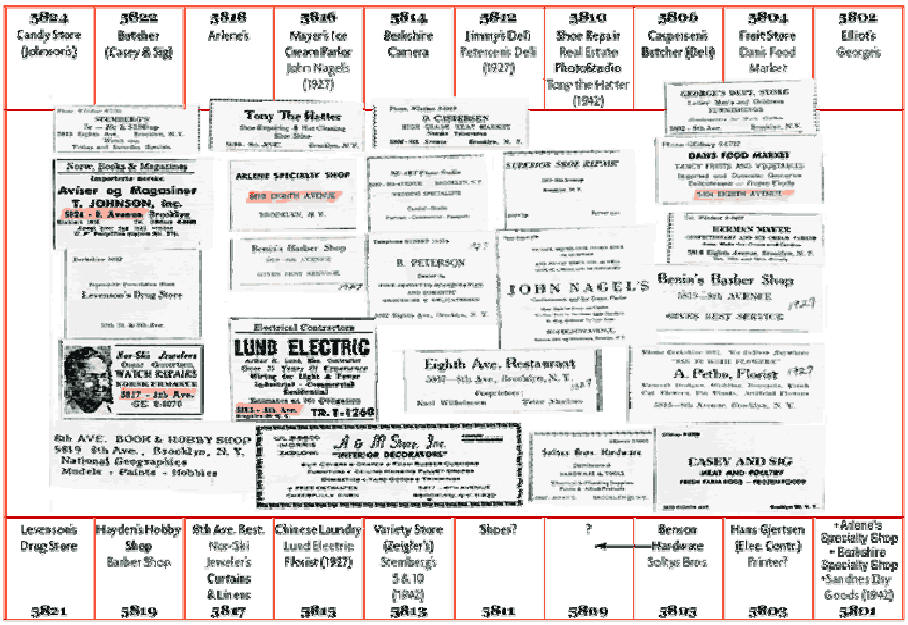


"Street maps" of old Eighth Avenue, a collection of old advertisements put together by Arnie Bergman 2003. Interspersed by other ethnic groups Norwegian and Scandinavian businesses lined the avenue from 1927 and well into the 1970s. Courtesy of Scandinavian East Coast Museum (SECM).
<http://scandinavian-museum.org/eighthave6.html>

For nearly two centuries the settlement thrived and continued to share in a cultural heritage uniquely its own and as late as 1950 the Norwegian colony in Brooklyn was still flourishing. Street maps of Eighth Ave. between 54th and 59th streets and advertisements going back more than 80 years disclose a notable amount of stores run by Norwegian Americans amidst ethnic diversity which, still today, characterizes Brooklyn.



<http://scandinavian-museum.org/eighthave3.html>



<http://scandinavian-museum.org/eighthave2.html>

The multifaceted nature of ethnic palimpsest prerequisites a discussion not only dealing with the layers of ethnicity but also the various ways immigrants who constituted the make-up of this community viewed themselves. This means that it is important to look for traces of Norwegian ethnicity in all areas of society, to compare what we find now with what has been, and see how these findings correspond with people's recollection of the past. In "Ethnic Palimpsest" Werner Sollors refers to texts, images and language when he discusses the idea of replacing something (or someone) with something (someone) else, an idea he conceptualizes as reuse (262-279). I have chosen to view the Brooklyn community as a palimpsest and its multiple layers of texts – letters, photos, statistics, interviews, literature etc – as accessible. Each layer tells a different story; I focus on reading and retelling the story dealing with the Norwegian immigrants. Thus, it is imperative for this study to investigate these various sources. Assessing language persistency within the colony, comparing photographs from the past with those of the present and discussing the reuse of buildings once important to this ethnic community are all means of bringing Brooklyn's Norwegian heritage to the forefront. Treating these sources as sorts of texts which spatialize and textualize individual as well as collective memory can help fill the gap in existing research of this field.

As this is new ground my theorizing takes its cue from other fields as I attempt to transpose the insights onto this particular parchment. A minimal amount of pre-existing research into this particular ethnic community has made it necessary to look to multiple disciplines in order to theorize around ethnic palimpsest. By transposing theory from fields such as history, archaeology, ethnology, sociology, and immigration studies I hope to effectively create a visual image of how the layers of a palimpsest can be restored. A street sign, the name of a park, websites and literature can all bear witness to an ethnic groups' presence in a community. Forgotten should not be mistaken for lost, for as David Lowenthal puts it: "The past is everywhere. All around us lie features which, like ourselves and our

thoughts, have more or less recognizable antecedents. Relics, histories, memories suffuse human experience…Whether it is celebrated or rejected, attended to or ignored, the past is omnipresent" (quoted in Van Dyke 1).

Uncovering the Layers of Meaning in Oral and Written Communication

The constructionist idea of learning by doing aligns with the qualitative method which perhaps could be described as a method of learning by observing. The idea that one can observe and then impart those observations through narrative writing, or even listen and learn through an interview situation is the qualitative approach. The retrospective topic and timeframe of this thesis complicates the issue of observation. However, by exploring supplemental paths in order to retrace the past it is possible to restore the palimpsest. The lack of source material calls for a qualitative approach, but instead of choosing between in-depth interviews or a questionnaire it is my contention that both be used to complement each other. Ultimately, as Anne Sofie Fink suggests, it is the experiences of individuals, offered in their own words which give meaning to the information we gather as researchers,

> …to consider the existence of deep—often hidden—meaning structures, to encompass the idea of truth in society and to accept the fact that scientists too are exponents of dominating beliefs in society, another paradigmatic understanding is demanded. This paradigm is described using words as post-positivistic, phenomenological, post-modern, etc.* Within this paradigm, the entity to be studied is the life world of human being as it is experienced individually. To study life worlds instead of an objective

* These words are not at all synonymous but they all refer to critique of the positivistic paradigm and thereby calling attention to the use of alternative research methods. (Footnote in original quotation.)

> reality also suggests another method of research with an interpretative approach—***qualitative research method*** (Fink par. 6).[1]

The individuals interviewed or answering a questionnaire for this particular research represent individual life worlds. Keeping in mind that these are influenced by the collective memory of whichever society to which we belong, it becomes important to view each such life world and its memory in light of the others and in light of the community's collective memory of what is or was important and what is or was true. In Brooklyn, ethnic identity figures into the equation and therefore there are, in a sense, two levels of collective memory, the one which existed within the confines of the inner circle of the community itself, the other represents the settlement's view of itself in the larger context of the borough of Brooklyn. In her article "Validity in Human Science Research" Marcia Salner holds that "it is within this matrix of intersubjective social meanings that the human science researcher operates" (49). Salner calls this the ***domain*** of human science and claims that research in this particular domain "must focus on the kinds of epistemological and methodological assumptions appropriate to inquiry into this domain" (Ibid.).

This thesis falls into Salner's human science domain, and consequently, in-depth and personal interviews seem the best approach to achieving the in-depth descriptions sought after. In a situation where interaction is the key to gaining information, setting is of great importance and could affect the outcome to where an interview is deemed successful or not. No doubt then, the atmosphere in which a conversation takes place is important. Liv Emma Thorsen points out the necessity of creating a setting where both interviewer and interviewee feel comfortable enough in each others company to carry out a conversation which eventually leads to storytelling on the part of the informant (25ff). Creating such a physical and mental

[1] The distinction made between quantitative and qualitative methods according to their belonging to a positivistic, respectively an interpretative based tradition is not original e.g. qualitative techniques can be used according to positivistic principles (Denzin & Lincoln 1994).

place can help informants recollect episodes and experiences which they otherwise feel tempted to rush through. In the end it may mean a more rewarding interview. Lindlof suggests that "unless special technologies or group seating arrangements are required, qualitative interviews can be conducted almost anywhere" (quoted in Thorsen 179). In general, the actual physical setting is of less relevance than the mental setting, but when both are stimulated they can create fertile conditions for communication and result in stories which can be of great importance to the outcome of a research project, especially in the social sciences. Storytelling opens up an entire spectrum of nuances that might not be easily detected through the more tangible material available to a researcher. At its best storytelling creates a backdrop by which to contextualize research material, adding yet another dimension to the portrait.

I spent one month in Brooklyn gathering information from the Brooklyn Public Library and its Brooklyn Collection, taking photographs of places once important to the Norwegian American colony and interviewing people who still consider themselves part of this ethnic community. Some interviews took place at the 66 Street Church reading room, others were conducted as conversations in various settings. In these situations, questions did not follow a set pattern, but were instead centered on the same topics formulated in a questionnaire which has been answered by thirty-one respondents. A total of ten people were interviewed in-depth while additional sources offered relevant information through spontaneous conversations at various events. As all researchers I have had to rely on what my respondents tell me, yet as mentioned earlier, at the same time I must view their stories in light of one another and in light of history. According to Regi Enerstvedt a common view is that natural science is "fact" without "meaning" and that social science is "meaning" without "fact". Nevertheless, he is quick to point out that there are no "meanings without facts and no facts without meanings" (154). "Thus, natural facts come into existence in natural history and

are interpreted in ***human*** activity…" (Ibid.). In other words Enerstvedt sees meaning as "constructed among individual human subjects – ***within collective human subjects***" (Ibid.). For this research project, as for others, meaning is what is sought after; a meaning which hopefully will emerge from the reading of each individual interview against the historical backdrop. If the following statement is true all the more reason to allow for various voices to be heard: "More than quantity of information, or seniority in a group, the key consideration is, Who has the relevant information? Or, Who can tell the most valuable stories?" (Gordon 178). The introduction to this thesis is a clear statement of my personal interest in this project. There can be no doubt that my own memories and personal experiences factor in with my research. Nevertheless, I have had every intention of letting the voices of others guide my selection of what is heard.

Making sense of one's material is an ongoing part of data collection. One important part of the sense-making is coding and categorization which allow for patterns of meaning to emerge as one's research progresses. Subsequently, the emerging patterns must be constructed into a framework which can communicate the essence of what the data reveals (Murphy). The essence of ethnic palimpsest encompasses many themes; among them are ethnic and national identity, ethnic pride, and loyalty **-** to the sending country as well as the immigrants' new home. The scope of these themes requires careful negotiation as to what I have chosen to include and what I have had to leave out.

Every researcher steps into his or her role with anticipation and fervor. However, the eagerness to glean hard facts and statistically sound numbers from data may cloud our vision to the minute yet significant findings that can be made in the meeting between interviewer and interviewee, observer and the observed; findings that often set a work apart and provide illuminating insights about human experiences. As in a court of law nothing in research should be pre-supposed or assumed, for things are not always what they seem. And yet, as

researchers we often have a sense of the truths we expect to uncover - what we hope to find - which makes the question of methodology even more important. For, in the heat of a research project it is essential that our work reflects a sound and ethical approach to whatever method we choose. As Alver and Øyen observe,

> The commitment of science is to be truth-seeking and tireless on the path toward new and better understanding and insight. Yet, research must necessarily bear evidence of being uncertain and venturesome; because the answers are not given in advance, and one cannot know what answers will be reached. If one knew the answers there would be no reason to investigate (15, translation mine).

From the moment a question begins to crystallize in the mind of a researcher until conclusions start taking shape there is an ongoing process where evaluation is the key: evaluation which at times requires revision and change. As for my personal approach I hope to find the following quote true, that: "Qualitative research expands the range of knowledge and understanding of the world beyond the researchers themselves. It often helps us see why something is the way it is, rather than just presenting a phenomenon" (Rolly).

Staking Out the Course

This thesis deals specifically with ethnic palimpsest and yet I write about many different things pertaining to the Brooklyn colony. I do so for several reasons. First of all, to establish that palimpsesting occurs in all areas of life and at all levels of a society. It can be seen in the homes as well as the streetscapes of an immigrant community. It affects ones preference for food and ones language and takes place whether we realize it or not. In order to show how palimpsest is a relevant theoretical tool it became important to establish the colony's legitimacy as a typical urban ethnic community. A condensed yet concrete and place-based history of the colony sheds light on its uniqueness but also on the common traits it shares with

other societies. In general, the experiences of people here have been and still are the experiences of other, immigrant communities, Norwegian and otherwise, especially when it comes to ethnic palimpsesting. More importantly, an historical overview illuminates the colony's role in the perpetual overwriting of Bay Ridge. Chapter one then, aims to give a broad and general overview of the colony's history focusing on its similarities with other Norwegian urban colonies in the United States and its ability to preserve ethnicity for as long as it has.[1]

Chapter two expounds on the term palimpsest using it in regard to ancient manuscripts. I transpose the theory onto this particular community so that I can show how the surface of an urban landscape also is overwritten in time by changing ethnicities, cultures, languages and heritages. The adaptation of theory and method from other scholarly fields has been essential in constructing a plausible framework whereby to studying ethnic palimpsest. A broad discussion of the topic has been beneficial in relating the intricacies of ethnic palimpsest and the many areas where it can be recognized. Specifically, chapter two addresses the ethnic succession and layering which has taken place over the last 40 years in Bay Ridge and reflects on how it has affected the Norwegian ethnic community. This was especially pertinent to understanding how ethnic changes have been internalized within the community. The notion of loss and the need to recover that which is believed to be lost resonates in this chapter. However, the notion that ethnic palimpsest represents permanent loss is ruled out. Instead, my findings are that ethnic palimpsest is a natural process where change indeed leaves room for traceable signs of previous cultures.

In chapter three I delve into the task of finding recognizable evidence of the palimpsesting which has taken place in Bay Ridge. Figuration is one way of capturing how

[1] For a more in-depth history of the colony and its maritime ties see, David C. Mauk's book ***The Colony that Rose from the Sea, Norwegian Maritime Migration and Community in Brooklyn, 1850-1910,*** A.N. Rygg's ***Norwegians in NY, 1825-1925"***, Christen T. Jonassen's "The Norwegians in Bay Ridge: A Sociological Study of an Ethnic Group," and "Cultural Variables in the Ecology of an Ethnic Group,". Also, Knight E. Hoover's "Norwegians in New York".

the community has dealt with its current position as minority in a changing neighborhood. The chapter presents various manifestations; the reuse of buildings, a transformed shopping district with new and foreign signage, changing social structures, even a soccer team can attest to the changing ethnicities of a neighborhood. Literature, the internet as well as a street scene are all valid representations of palimpsest. By treating these different representations as texts, since they reveal something about the layers of the Bay Ridge palimpsest, it became evident that I also should allow photos to tell their story. Thus, I include photographs within the text in order to bring to life the visual image of palimpsesting. Certainly, photographs can be considered historical sources which can add perspective to historical documentation. Sigrid Lien calls for a new perspective on the value of photographs in research and argues that every picture tells its own stories. Photos can be more than mere illustrations of the text; in fact they are a text (4). Unfortunately, this thesis does not do justice to the theoretical paradigms Lien and others in her field adhere to. Still, it is my belief that the images included add another dimension to the scope of this thesis. Some images were found on the internet, some are part of the Norwegian Historical Association and the Scandinavian East Coast Museum's online collections. Others were taken by me during my 2007 trip to Brooklyn, some were taken for me by others and finally I have supplemented with photos and images from our family collection.

I tie in the aspect of space, specifically, how we conceive of space, the human trajectories that take place within space and how space relates to the notion of communities as palimpsests. By so doing, the legitimacy of the comparison between community and palimpsest is solidified. Also, such a view of community and the individual life stories it represents adds an even greater potential for retrieving vestiges. Significantly, in the history of any declining ethnic community there comes a time when restoration and retrieval becomes central to survival. Therefore, this chapter also touches on the memorializing and

musealization which so often takes place within dwindling communities, and which is taking place in Brooklyn today. In a sense memorializing becomes indicative of community members' self-awareness and their desire to halt palimpsesting and preserve an era. Ultimately, by mapping the variety of manifestations we are able to create a visual image of a community in palimpsest.

Concentrating on the traces that specifically exist today, chapter four focuses on demonstrating what is left of the community's Norwegian heritage. Likened to the life-cycles of a person, community or city we come full circle when we have reviewed five major areas of the Norwegian American community: the Norwegian hospital, church, social life in Bay Ridge, ***Nordisk Tidende***, the Norwegian home for the aging and the Green-Wood cemetery. There can be no conclusion to this thesis other than a summation of the findings and a reflection upon them. The main objective has been to draw on established theory and current material to discuss the phenomenon of ethnic palimpsest and see how the Norwegian American community in Bay Ridge has been affected by it. My argument is that Norwegianness exists and that traces of Norwegian heritage can be found in Brooklyn today. Through the scholarly theories of historians, sociologists, linguists, geographers and others it is my hope that the following chapters will confirm those beliefs and illustrate my point.

This introduction began with my own personal memories of a community which today is no longer prominent. Memory is central to the theme of palimpsesting since it is through the contrast of past and present that we recognize its results. Also, there needs to be some form of reconstruction involved in order to uncover the various layers of writing and overwriting of a text, which in our case is a community. My personal memories form the basis for my approach to this theme since my own identity is so closely linked to this particular immigrant community. In a sense, this introduction, therefore, becomes a stepping stone to the various other aspects of an immigrant enclave because, in the end, they all tie in

with how the palimpsest is read. In my mind's eye, the Norwegian Bay Ridge of my childhood is not just a specific place but a specific kind of place, with a specific kind of people who shared specific kinds of lives. As a child I had a specific kind of identity because I was part of this community. Today, Norwegian Americans who reside in Bay Ridge must rely on their own memories, the memories of others and a shared collective memory in order to revisit, in their minds, a place which some claim no longer exists. It is my intention to establish that the palimpsest can still be read and that through its texts we can still find that community thought lost. Based on an interdisciplinary approach the following chapters suggest one way of restoring the palimpsest.

Chapter 1: Looking Back – the Brooklyn Colony in Retrospect

> ***What if space is the sphere not of a discrete multiplicity of inert things, even one which is thoroughly interrelated? What if, instead, it presents us with a heterogeneity of practices and processes? Then it will be not an already-interconnected whole but an ongoing product of interconnections and not. Then it will be always unfinished and open…This is space as the sphere of a dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations. It is always being made and always therefore, in a sense, unfinished (except that 'finishing' is not on the agenda) (Massey 107).***

Here, geographer Doreen Massey offers her fluid, progressive view of space, place and time as it transposes to maps and their representations of history and human experience. This fluid perspective is certainly a view which transposes to America and the experience of millions of immigrants there. More specifically it is representative of Bay Ridge as place, the Norwegians that settled there as immigrants in the past and our discussion of whether there still remain vestiges of their lives there today. Massey's notion is an emboldened symbol of the multiplex experience it is to become American while staying Norwegian, Italian, Russian or Polish, and the fluidity of her argument illumines how palimpsesting takes place and how a palimpsest should be read.

This chapter deals with both immigrant and American, but most specifically it deals with the Norwegian Americans of Bay Ridge: their experiences and memories, their ethnic pride and their gratefulness to a country which they believe gave them the opportunity to become Americans the Norwegian way. Theorizing around the never-ending enigma of the immigrant experience in America has seen a variety of approaches, oftentimes reflecting the changing winds of politics as well as society's view of immigration and new immigrants. Yet, the fact remains that most groups managed to incorporate the best of two worlds to which they belonged. So perhaps then, instead of thinking of the American as Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur does in ***Letters from an American Farmer***, as "a new man, who acts upon new

principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions" (644), perhaps we should think as Gertrude Stein does in ***The Making of Americans***:

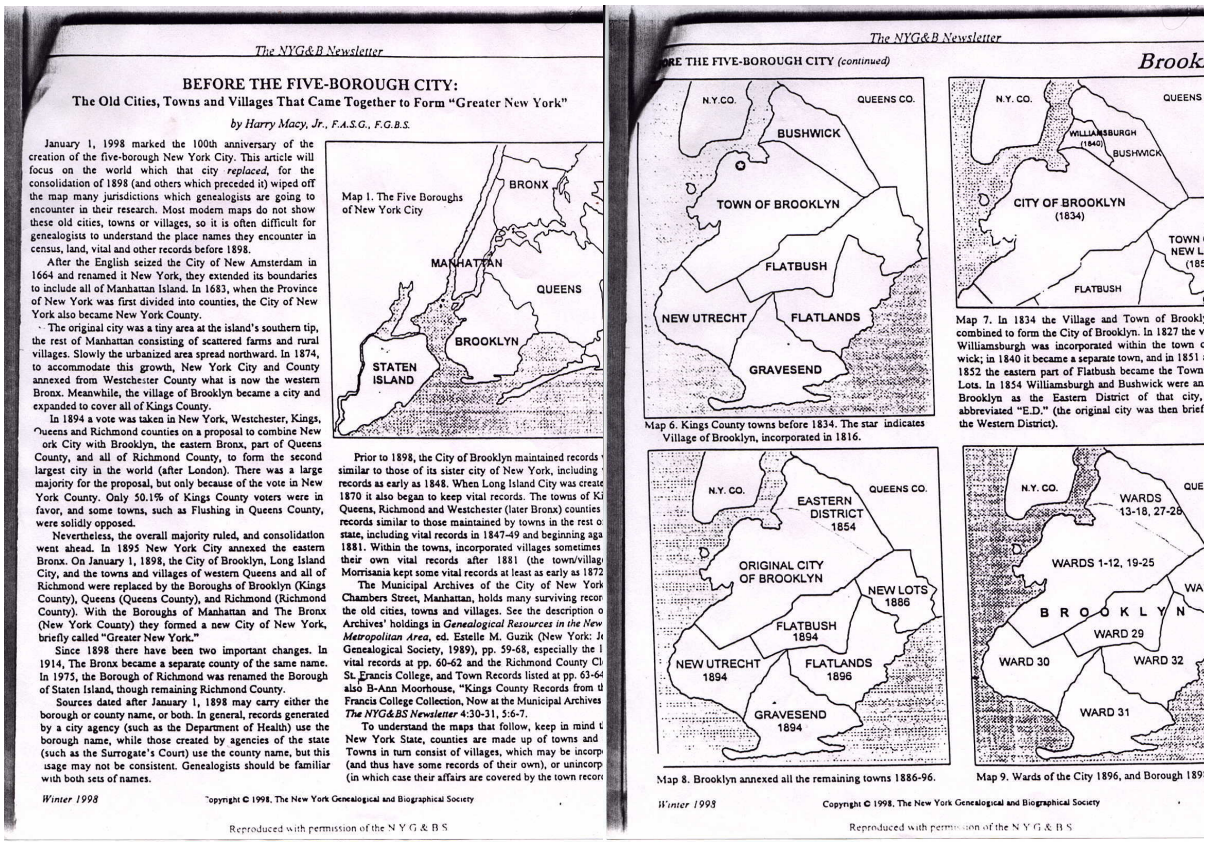
> Every one then is like many others always living, there are many ways of thinking of every one, this is now a description of all of them…Every one is one inside them, every one reminds some one of some other one who is or was or will be living. Every one has it to say of each one he is like such a one I see it in him, every one has it to say of each one she is like some one else I can tell by remembering. So it goes on always in living, every one is always remembering some one who is resembling to the one at whom they are then looking. So they go on repeating, every one is themselves inside them and every one is resembling to others… (1094).

While Crèvecoeur thinks transformation, a change which culminates in something new and finite, Stein sees a continuum where repetition reveals not only similarities but also patterns. As patterns crystallize texts emerge and we are able to read the stories and histories of others. Where patterns appear our vision tends to focus. Where detail exists dimension is added and historical perspective becomes less obscure. Through retrospection scholars of history, archaeology, anthropology and other social sciences have traditionally been at the forefront of recovering and understanding the past. Again, perspective becomes the issue as hindsight repeatedly has proven that the smaller events of history oftentimes have a greater impact than imagined. The very future of a neighborhood can be decided at the stroke of a pen.[1] Genealogists understand this importance of detail; we see it clearly in the article below. Yet, it is the opening statement in sentence two which caught this writer's eye since it expresses the idea of palimpsest so concisely:

[1] Robert Moses was the driving force behind some changes in Brooklyn which in hindsight are said to have had a major impact on the Norwegian colony. The demolishment of certain areas of Brooklyn to accommodate the Gowanus Expressway and the Verrazano Bridge are discussed on page 44 and 45 of this chapter.

> January 1, 1998 marked the 100th anniversary of the creation of the five-borough New York City. This article will focus on the world which that city replaced, for the consolidation of the 1898 (and others which preceded it) wiped off the map many jurisdictions which genealogists are going to encounter in their research. Most modern maps do not show these old cities, towns or villages, so it is often difficult for genealogists to understand the place names they encounter in census, land, vital and other records before 1898 (Macy Jr. 3).

Here, instead of texts having been scraped off the parchment we find Macy Jr. alluding to places being "wiped off the map" (3). In an attempt to recount the shaping of the five-



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BEFORE THE FIVE-BOROUGH CITY:
The Old Cities, Towns and Villages That Came Together to Form "Greater New York"

by Harry Macy, Jr., F.A.S.G., F.G.B.S.

January 1, 1998 marked the 100th anniversary of the creation of the five-borough New York City. This article will focus on the world which that city *replaced*, for the consolidation of 1898 (and others which preceded it) wiped off the map many jurisdictions which genealogists are going to encounter in their research. Most modern maps do not show these old cities, towns or villages, so it is often difficult for genealogists to understand the place names they encounter in census, land, vital and other records before 1898.

After the English seized the City of New Amsterdam in 1664 and renamed it New York, they extended its boundaries to include all of Manhattan Island. In 1683, when the Province of New York was first divided into counties, the City of New York also became New York County.

The original city was a tiny area at the island's southern tip, the rest of Manhattan consisting of scattered farms and rural villages. Slowly the urbanized area spread northward. In 1874, to accommodate this growth, New York City and County annexed from Westchester County what is now the western Bronx. Meanwhile, the village of Brooklyn became a city and expanded to cover all of Kings County.

In 1894 a vote was taken in New York, Westchester, Kings, Queens and Richmond counties on a proposal to combine New York City with Brooklyn, the eastern Bronx, part of Queens County, and all of Richmond County, to form the second largest city in the world (after London). There was a large majority for the proposal, but only because of the vote in New York County. Only 50.1% of Kings County voters were in favor, and some towns, such as Flushing in Queens County, were solidly opposed.

Nevertheless, the overall majority ruled, and consolidation went ahead. In 1895 New York City annexed the eastern Bronx. On January 1, 1898, the City of Brooklyn, Long Island City, and the towns and villages of western Queens and all of Richmond were replaced by the Boroughs of Brooklyn (Kings County), Queens (Queens County), and Richmond (Richmond County). With the Boroughs of Manhattan and The Bronx (New York County) they formed a new City of New York, briefly called "Greater New York."

Since 1898 there have been two important changes. In 1914, The Bronx became a separate county of the same name. In 1975, the Borough of Richmond was renamed the Borough of Staten Island, though remaining Richmond County.

Sources dated after January 1, 1898 may carry either the borough or county name, or both. In general, records generated by a city agency (such as the Department of Health) use the borough name, while those created by agencies of the state (such as the Surrogate's Court) use the county name, but this usage may not be consistent. Genealogists should be familiar with both sets of names.

Map 1. The Five Boroughs of New York City

BRONX
MANHATTAN
QUEENS
BROOKLYN
STATEN ISLAND

Prior to 1898, the City of Brooklyn maintained records similar to those of its sister city of New York, including records as early as 1848. When Long Island City was created 1870 it also began to keep vital records. The towns of Ki Queens, Richmond and Westchester (later Bronx) counties records similar to those maintained by towns in the rest o state, including vital records in 1847-49 and beginning aga 1881. Within the towns, incorporated villages sometimes their own vital records after 1881 (the town/villag Morrisania kept some vital records at least as early as 1872

The Municipal Archives of the City of New York Chambers Street, Manhattan, holds many surviving recor the old cities, towns and villages. See the description o Archives' holdings in *Genealogical Resources in the New Metropolitan Area*, ed. Estelle M. Guzik (New York: Genealogical Society, 1989), pp. 59-68, especially the vital records at pp. 60-62 and the Richmond County Cl St. Francis College, and Town Records listed at pp. 63-6 also B-Ann Moorhouse, "Kings County Records from t Francis College Collection, Now at the Municipal Archives *The NYG&BS Newsletter* 4:30-31, 5:6-7.

To understand the maps that follow, keep in mind t New York State, counties are made up of towns and Towns in turn consist of villages, which may be incorp (and thus have some records of their own), or unincorp (in which case their affairs are covered by the town recor

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ORE THE FIVE-BOROUGH CITY *(continued)*

Brook

N.Y.CO. QUEENS CO. BUSHWICK TOWN OF BROOKLYN FLATBUSH NEW UTRECHT FLATLANDS GRAVESEND

Map 6. Kings County towns before 1834. The star indicates Village of Brooklyn, incorporated in 1816.

N.Y. CO. QUEENS WILLIAMSBURGH (1840) BUSHWICK CITY OF BROOKLYN (1834) FLATBUSH

Map 7. In 1834 the Village and Town of Brookl combined to form the City of Brooklyn. In 1827 the v Williamsburgh was incorporated within the town wick; in 1840 it became a separate town, and in 1851 1852 the eastern part of Flatbush became the Town Lots. In 1854 Williamsburgh and Bushwick were an Brooklyn as the Eastern District of that city, abbreviated "E.D." (the original city was then brief the Western District).

N.Y. CO. QUEENS CO. EASTERN DISTRICT 1854 ORIGINAL CITY OF BROOKLYN NEW LOTS 1886 FLATBUSH 1894 NEW UTRECHT 1894 FLATLANDS 1896 GRAVESEND 1894

Map 8. Brooklyn annexed all the remaining towns 1886-96.

N.Y. CO. WARDS 13-18, 27-28 WARDS 1-12, 19-25 BROOKLYN WARD 29 WARD 30 WARD 32 WARD 31

Map 9. Wards of the City 1896, and Borough 189

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Courtesy of Brooklyn Genealogy: <http://www.bklyn-genealogy-info.com/Map/5bor.html>

borough city of New York he establishes the difficulties genealogists encounter in their research since place names have changed. Certainly, there is no arguing that over time the borders of these maps were drawn up, wiped away and drawn again. Yet the boundaries they

represent are harder to find. They could not be seen by the inhabitants of the wards of Brooklyn nor can they be retraced in the streets of today's borough. They are imaginary lines that serve economic and political purposes, and history abounds with examples of man-made boundaries that fail to reshape people's self-perception or sense of identity.

The Brooklyn Colony – a Typical Norwegian American Settlement?

By far, the study of Norwegian immigration to the U.S. has focused on the settlements of the Midwest. However, tens of thousands of Norwegian immigrants passing through the port of New York never moved west. Instead, they stayed on, a majority of them making lives for themselves in Brooklyn. Despite its size and longevity the Norwegian ethnic community in Brooklyn has been afforded little scholarly attention. Although some researchers have shed light on the colony, among them historians Odd S. Lovoll, David Mauk and Theodor Blegen, as well as longstanding editor of ***Nordisk Tidende*** Andreas N. Rygg, Norwegian American sociologist Christen T. Jonassen and Knight E. Hoover, little has been written about the colony's status after 1910.

According to Lovoll, most of the early immigrants on the East Coast lived in urban areas: "Although at mid-century there were Norwegians living in Boston, and later also elsewhere in New England and the Mid-Atlantic States, only in New York did they form urban colonies" (***Promise of America*** 269).[1] Hoover elaborates that,

> In the 1870's, the Norwegian population in New York began to migrate across the East River and to purchase houses in the relatively sparsely settled areas of Old South Brooklyn and Greenpoint. The former was located near the shipping activity in Red

[1] In ***The Promise of America, A History of the Norwegian-American People*** (1984) and its sequel ***The Promise fulfilled: A Portrait of Norwegian Americans Today*** (1999), Lovell offers brief accounts of the East-Coast settlers.

Hook, and the latter, farther north, was also the base of some maritime occupations. (223)[1]

Settled in the mid-1800s, the largest concentration of Norwegian immigrants was in Manhattan, New York. Later, the settlement made its way to the borough of Brooklyn, more specifically Red Hook, then on to Bay Ridge which became one of four Norwegian settlements in the Greater New York area. Until the late 1920s Chicago had boasted of having the largest urban group of Norwegian immigrants in the U.S. However, by 1930 the settlement in Brooklyn, counting 63,000 Norwegians, had grown to outnumber the Chicago colony of ***Little Norway*** by almost 7000 Norwegians, 60 percent of whom were born in Norway (Lovoll, ***Promise Fulfilled*** 19).

Norwegians came to Red Hook first, then to Park Slope, moved on to Sunset Park and by the 1920s the core of the colony was centered around Bay Ridge. In ***The Colony that Rose from the Sea: Norwegian Maritime Migration and Community in Brooklyn, 1850-1910,*** David Mauk gives an in-depth account of the Brooklyn settlement, tracing the longevity of organizations, associations, societies, religious and cultural institutions. Mauk ends his account around 1910 (although some information leads up to 1923) and remarkably few similar studies have been done of the years following the 1920s.[2]

Apart from, perhaps, its urban qualities, the Brooklyn colony seems in many ways representative of the "Norwegiandom" sought preserved in other Norwegian American communities in the United States during the past 181 years.[3] The following excerpt from "A Typical Norwegian Settlement, Spring Grove Minnesota" published in the journal ***Norwegian-American Studies and Records*** in 1936 describes Spring Grove between 1852 and

[1] See also Christen T. Jonassen's "Cultural Variables in the Ecology of an Ethnic Group" (34-39).
[2] Christen T. Jonassen and Knight E. Hoover have both done sociological studies of the Norwegian American Brooklyn colony rendering information on the colony's status into the 1950s.
[3] "Norwegiandom" is a term used in ***Nordisk Tidende*** and was especially common to the discussion on preservation of Norwegian language and religion.

1870. It could easily have been a description of Bay Ridge during the same period – or even 100 years later:

> The Spring Grove settlement – or, as it was previously called, "Norwegian Ridge" is perhaps the most exclusively Norwegian portion and has retained the language and customs of Norway longer than most of the others. The Norwegian language is today spoken commonly on the streets of the village of Spring Grove, and business continues to be transacted in both English and Norwegian. There is only one church in the township – a Norwegian Lutheran congregation. This settlement was one of the important distribution points for Norwegian settlement in the American Northwest, and there are hundreds of Norwegian-Americans in western Minnesota and the Dakotas whose ancestors stopped for a time in Spring Grove Township before going on farther westward (Qualey 2).

The similarities are striking: like Spring Grove, Bay Ridge became "the most exclusively Norwegian portion" of New York. The Norwegian language was "spoken commonly on the streets" and business was "transacted in both English and Norwegian." As in the Minnesota colony the Norwegian Lutheran church was also present in Brooklyn, and Brooklyn was a "distribution point" for settlers who "stopped for a time...before going on farther westward." In a letter to the editor of the ***Norway Times*** in 2004, long-standing resident of the Norwegian American community in Brooklyn Elsie Edwardson Willumsen's reminiscences of the 1940s elucidate these characteristics:

> I remember the churches on 59th and 53rd streets, the ice cream parlor for us young folks, Ivar Olson's Bakery, the fish stores, and delicatessen. Who could forget the Sørlandet and the Atlantic Restaurants? I also remember the 59th street paper store

> where my parents bought ***Nordisk Tidende*** every week, along with some chocolate (Firkløver) or a marzipan bar as a treat (Letter).

Willumsen's portrayal underscores the similarities between this urban colony and the rural colony of Spring Grove. Both communities are experienced as havens for Norwegian ethnicity:

> On all corners, clusters of men and women could be heard speaking in dialects from ***Sørlandet*** plus Northern, Western and Eastern Norway, as well as Swedish and Danish. And sure enough, there would be a little child pulling on her mother's skirt while pleading, "Are we going home soon, mamma?" (Ibid.).[1]

In ***The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn*** Kenneth T. Jackson and John B. Manbeck profile the various neighborhoods of New York as "a starting point for immigrants from around the world" (xvii). Herbert J. Ballon agrees. In ***Brooklyn Neighborhoods*** of 1942 he writes: "…Brooklyn was a logical stopping place for thousands of immigrants of many nations who came to these shores. This is reflected in its unusually high proportion of foreign-born residents" (3). Second generation Norwegian American (or first generation American depending on one's perspective) Elsie Edwardson Willumsen confirms Ballon's claim when she remembers her own group of friends in Sunset Park: "we were of Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Scottish, Italian and Irish descent. All of our parents came over the ocean as immigrants, as well" ("Images"). Like millions before her Willumsen's immigrant mother, Astrid Ingebretsen, came to America via Ellis Island. Sixteen years old she left her mother, father, two young brothers and a baby sister behind so she could come to Brooklyn to live

[1] In using the Norwegian "mamma" Willumsen demonstrates the well-know phenomenon of code switching which is especially frequent with bi-lingual children. Interestingly, in the preceding sentence when listing the various Norwegian dialects she uses the Norwegian word "Sørlandet" for Southern Norway. Metaphorically speaking these are manifestations of palimpsesting.

with her older sister. The year was 1913, and she would never again see her parents. As most Norwegian immigrants Astrid started her American life further downtown Brooklyn, in Carroll Park; later she moved to Sunset Park, closer to Bay Ridge (Ibid.).

Being included in the accounts of Jackson & Manbeck, Ballon, or the local newspaper ***Brooklyn Eagle***, as well as in literature or the recollections of other Brooklynites is in fact a sign of recognition. The larger community of Bay Ridge and Brooklyn does recognize that Norwegian and Scandinavian immigrants have been part of the make up of Brooklyn and does include it in their collective history. A visit to the Brooklyn Collection of the Brooklyn Public Library indicates as much. There one finds folders of clippings from a multitude of local newspapers, magazines, journals and other literary genres pertaining to the life and history of Norwegians in Brooklyn. Books dealing with Brooklyn's ethnic makeup include Norwegian immigrants as group. Historical accounts of Brooklyn's development as city also pay tribute to Norwegian Americans and their contributions. All of these accounts should be considered visible traces of Norwegian presence in Brooklyn since they give credence to the claim put forth by Norwegian Americans that: "we were here". In later chapters we will see that Norwegian Americans are still there and still visible to those who are looking.

The Looking Glass

The Norwegian community retained strong ties to the motherland due to a steady stream of new immigrants. Some came intending to stay. Others followed a long line of successors; great-grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, uncles, sisters and brothers. They came to work – to make money – then return home. Some began a lifelong commute, crossing the Atlantic Ocean time and time again in order to provide for their families in Norway.

For various reasons Norwegians seem to have been more successful than others in maintaining ethnicity: "...historically, Norwegian-Americans have been especially ethnocentric. Norwegian-Americans exceed both Swedish- and Danish-Americans… and are

perhaps more ethnocentric than all other Northern European nations…" (Lovoll, ***Promise Fulfilled*** 9-10). Helene Bakke's recollections of her early days in Brooklyn support the idea of a closely knit, almost exclusive community:

> Norwegians think they are the best in the world. I thought so too when I came from Norway in 1958. We didn't want anything to do with the Italians. We were convinced that the Catholics were lost. We didn't mingle with any other group. We kept mostly to ourselves in our own 'all-Norwegian' clusters (quoted in Sætre, translation mine).

In his article "Typisk innvandrere!" Simen Sætre depicts Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn in 2001. Although his visit is colored by the celebratory 17th of May, his is a meeting with a community that seems frozen in time: "Astrid Mordal, who came here 33 years ago, has a picture of the royal couple on the wall, Norwegian furniture, lace curtains and embroidered table-runners. She offers home made 'julekake'. Having coffee with her is like having coffee in rural Norway" (Sætre, translation mine). The simple preference of duplicating that which is remembered as being Norwegian is, in part, how ethnicity is preserved. Yet, for the Brooklyn colony Lovoll adds another explanation:

> The "nearness" to the homeland, a certain "birds of passage" migration, the many calls by Norwegian ships in the port, in addition to the many members of the colony who worked in shipping, preserved the connection with Norway. And the colony constantly received visits from prominent Norwegians who participated in programs and celebrations and in this way gave people in the colony a feeling of taking part in Norwegian social life" (***Promise of America*** 168).

In 1940 Theodore Blegen published a comprehensive volume entitled, ***Norwegian Migration to America: the American Transition***. There he writes: "One of the principle Norwegian-American economic, professional and cultural centers is to be found in Brooklyn. The eastern city… is a lively center of Norwegian institutional and social activity…it represents fresher contacts with Norway than do the settlements of the Middle West" (516). The nearness Lovoll and Blegen speak of is the same nearness Ringdal's informants express when they speak of "listalendinger" feeling conceptually closer to New York than to Oslo (Ringdal, ***Det amerikanske Lista*** 16-17). A sense of conceptual closeness coupled with the reciprocal benefits accessible for Norwegian Americans as well as the host society made Brooklyn a safe haven for commuters as well as immigrants.

During the past decade-and-a-half contemporary sociological research in the field of American immigration has reframed the immigrant experience from being merely a journey through foreignness - to assimilation - to attaining citizenship, to that of becoming what Kathleen D. Hall calls a more "multidimensional model of segmented assimilation" (110).[1] Previously it has been assumed that immigrants became Americans through "linear and irreversible stages of cultural 'acculturation' and social 'assimilation' into the host society" (Hall 110). Today, new economic sociological models are far less "straight-line" in their approach to assimilation, acculturation, educational and economic success among immigrant populations: "Contrary to models of the past, the segmented-assimilation theory stresses heterogeneity, within both the immigrant population and the host society itself" (Ibid.). The

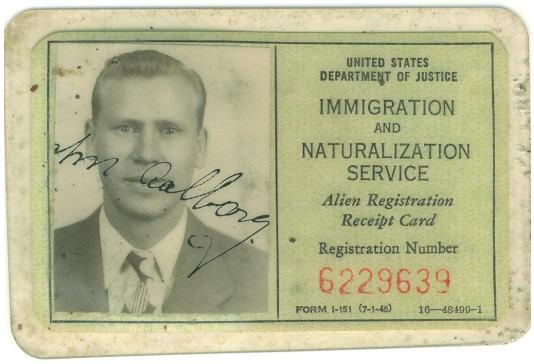
[1] Here, Kathleen D. Hall is quoting from Lisa Lowe's ***Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*** (1996). Hall explains her own approach to migration studies as follows: "The theoretical frameworks for migration research vary widely across the disciplines. I engage in this article with one among many theoretical approaches to the study of migration, the assimilationist paradigm, which, over the years, has informed both ethnographic and survey research. I consider this paradigm in particular because of the key role it has played in research into cultural change among members of the second generation, the central focus of my own ethnographic work (e.g., Gibson 1988; Portes 1997; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rumbaut and Portes 2001). For an overview of the wider range of theoretical approaches to migration across the disciplines, see Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield's edited volume ***Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*** (2000)" (Ibid.).

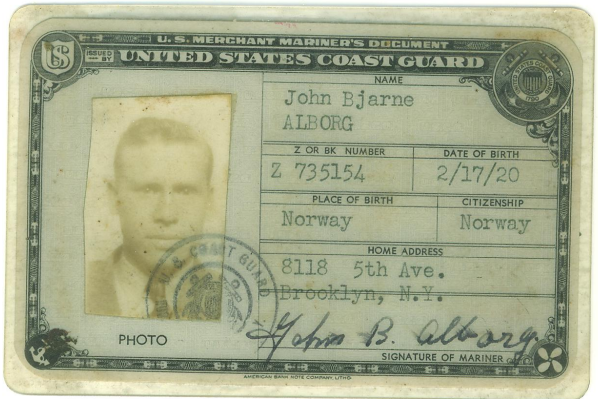
argument today is that immigrants (post-1965) can be distinguished along three dimensions critical to second-generation adaptation:

- (1) individual features or human capital, influenced by educational background, occupational skills, financial resources, and facility with the English language;
- (2) the host society's reception of immigrant populations, particularly in relation to governmental policies,
- (3) the composition of immigrant families…(Hall 110,111).

Preserving ethnicity is difficult, and no single, satisfactory answer exists as to why one immigrant group succeeds as opposed to another. Certainly, such factors as the passing down of distinct ethnic characteristics, patterns of settlement, religious loyalties, and ethnic biases help explain the persistence of Norwegian ethnicity in America. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Norwegian ethnicity, in general, has been widely accepted as a positive attribute, and Norwegians have been subject to few social restrictions or prejudices in America (Lovoll, ***Promise Fulfilled*** 12). Since 1825, Norwegian immigrants to New York in particular and the US in general have found favor in their new home of preference. For the most part they have enjoyed the benefits of a country in the making, where they were, to a large extent free to become the Americans of their choosing, namely Norwegian Americans.

During the 19th and the 20th centuries, the Brooklyn settlement thrived, and again in 1950 the flourishing Norwegian American colony found post-war Norwegians taking a renewed interest in America; this was the last steady trickle of settlers to come to the Brooklyn colony.





Courtesy of John and Ruth Aalborg

True to tradition, those who came were still emigrating from the southern parts of Norway; the men were still primarily carpenters or skilled and semi-skilled workers, while the women took mainly house-jobs.[1] This indicates that many of the same characteristics Mauk outlines as typical for the Norwegian ethnic community during the 1850s were still typical one hundred years later (33-35). In her Master's thesis ***Screendører og Kjøkkenmøbler***, ethnologist Siv Ringdal discusses chain migration and work migration from the Norwegian coastal town of Lista in specific, and the surrounding areas of Agder in general.[2] Her description of this particular type of migration, and her claim that certain migratory patterns had become an important tradition in these coastal communities supports the finding that such patterns were still typical as late as 1950. In light of this, one of the informants to the present thesis Sam Rodland, and his story are not unique. Speaking very little English, he arrived in Brooklyn in 1952 with less than 100 dollars in his pocket. Yet, he had an advantage. He had relatives and friends waiting for him, and he was from Kvinesdal:

[1] "House-job" was a typical term used by Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn in reference to domestic jobs.
[2] Chain migration and networks based on kinship and regional background are not unique to Norwegian immigrants: "In large cities like Philadelphia, so many people came from one region and even one town that each group comprised its own colony within the larger Italian area of settlement. This clustering within clustering formed natural networks as kin settled near others who spoke their own dialect" (Saverino 7, 8). Siv Ringdal deals with chain- and work migration from Lista in her MA thesis ***Screendører og kjøkkenmøbler. En undersøkelse av det amerikanske Lista***, and also in her book ***Det amerikanske Lista***.

> My uncle had a job for me, so I started working right away. I stayed with family for two weeks then got an apartment together with three friends from Norway. We lived in Bay Ridge, and that was very much a Norwegian community. There were a lot of carpenters from Kvinesdal to help us get jobs (Questionnaire).

For decades, "chain" migration had made the transition from rural Norway to urban Brooklyn easier for many immigrants (Mauk 39-40). Ruth Aalborg sailed from Bergen in 1950. Her father's brother had immigrated to Iowa and his sister had moved to New York. She recalls that, "I went to visit my aunt in Brooklyn. I was going to stay for a year, but ended up staying twenty-one years" (Questionnaire). Following in the footsteps of so many others, she became a part of the Norwegian ethnic community. She socialized with other Norwegians, went to the Norwegian "department" of the 66th Street Church, she married within her ethnic group and raised her children bilingually.

Variations on a Theme

Chain migration was of course not unique to the Norwegian American community of New York. According to Joan L. Saverino chain migration was an important factor in the formation of the Italian American communities of for instance Pennsylvania as well:

> The system of chain migration functioned in Reading as elsewhere in Pennsylvania's growing Italian communities. Information traveled back and forth between Italy and the United States among relatives about places to live and potential employment. Newly arrived immigrant families tended to live near their places of employment and to move together whenever possible (7).

In her article "'Domani Ci Zappa'": Italian Immigration and Ethnicity in Pennsylvania", Saverino explains: "The metamorphosis from immigrant to ethnic American was a long

process. The peak of white ethnic pride in the 1960s and 1970s had a history behind it. The public and private expressions of Italian ethnicity, as they exist today, began with the immigrants' roots in Italy and the communities they created after their arrival in the United States" (28).

Certainly, the same can be said for the Norwegian immigrants to Brooklyn as well. They formed a community which nourished and fortified their heritage and values, and they provided newcomers with a network that downplayed the daily frustrations of being a foreigner. Although the community contained clusters within the cluster based on regional roots, the overall colony bore great resemblance to Norway and Norwegian customs the group as a whole were familiar with. In short this Norwegian urban ethnic community was much like the Italian communities Saverino describes:

> [t]o increase their chances of survival, members of the immigrant generation relied on one another for assistance and lived in neighborhoods with other Italians, near kin whenever possible. They depended on help, based on the southern Italian ideal of social reciprocity, from an informal network of people to secure jobs, find housing and provide emotional sustenance. Most important in this network were the nuclear family and members of the extended family. Familial interdependence was regarded as the key for economic survival by the immigrant generation (Saverino 10).

Immigrants and immigrant groups are as different as Norwegians and Italians, the point of course being, that they are only as different as their similarities. For, more often than not immigrant groups tend to have similar kinds of social networks and strategies for ethnic preservation in their host country. Often, the most notable differences between them exist in the societies they leave behind and the conditions offered them by their new host. Saverino's observations concerning the Italian immigrants of Reading consequently have much in

common with observations of urban Norwegian immigrants in Brooklyn, and the assumption could be made that the similarities extend to other immigrant groups as well:

> Life for immigrants in the small towns and rural areas of Pennsylvania was often significantly different from the "little Italies" in large cities. In the crowded tenements of the cities, Italian communities could exist more insularly, easily self-sufficient with their own family-owned businesses, fraternal organizations, and ethnic parishes, each with its annual religious festival. Many immigrants lived their entire lives in their immediate neighborhoods surrounded by native villagers. They were drawn together through chain migration, a system in which new immigrants depended on previously settled kin and paesani (fellow townspeople) to help them find jobs and housing, and to provide an instantaneous social network (Saverino 5).

Throughout the history of Brooklyn's Norwegian colony the combination of adventure and profit have been important factors for emigrating and settling. Early on, transient seamen profited from the economic opportunities in the port of New York and made Brooklyn their home ashore (Mauk 5-9, 221). Later, ship's carpenters and dock builders seized the same opportunities, and eventually the colony moved from being a "haven for maritime transients" to becoming a "self-sustaining entity" where immigrants assumed responsibility for "the transplanted institutions" that had cropped up (Mauk 44-58, 186-187).[1] Historically then, Rodland's reasons for going to the States namely "to make money, visit family and see what the US was like" are representative ones also for emigrants of other nations. They certainly resonate with how Saverino describes the Italian immigrant, as typically being,

[1] Mauk refers to the institutions organized in New York and Brooklyn as "transplanted" since many of them were organized, staffed and financed through Norway (see Mauk p 15-16, 95, 216).

> a young, unskilled man from a rural area who intended to earn enough money to return to his home village, purchase land, and comfortably live out his days there. Also, those who emigrated were not usually the poorest of the poor, for they could never manage the fare. Many were seasonal migrants (referred to as "birds of passage") who returned to Italy several months out of the year (2).

George Hansen caught "America fever" in Molde just after World War II. Abounding stories of wealth and success in America's Midwest enticed him to accept an offer to come "over there" to work. Hansen soon found the success stories to be greatly exaggerated. On his way home to Norway he stopped in Brooklyn to visit relatives "but…", he recalls, "when I got to Brooklyn so many young people had come over from Norway that it became exciting to stay in Brooklyn. Then I met my wife and that was it" (Questionnaire 2003, translation mine).

Throughout the 1950s Norwegians were still living, shopping, socializing and worshipping within their sections of the city, despite the fact that new ethnic groups were changing the face of many Brooklyn neighborhoods. In January 1959 an average edition of ***Nordisk Tidende*** would advertise for numerous Norwegian businesses, institutions and organizations. ***E. Danielsen Delikatesseforretning***, ***Det Store Bakeri*** and ***Norske Delikatesse*** were just a few of the Norwegian stores that were still importing foods from "gamlelandet". The half-page business directory reflected Norwegian ethnicity with names like ***Hansen***, ***Askeland***, ***Nilsen***, and ***Vang.*** Norwegian businesses offered unlimited services and "vi snakker norsk" was still well worth advertising.[1] Sætre notes that, "If you talk to Norwegian Americans who experienced Brooklyn during the 50s they'll remember how you could walk down the street without hearing anything but Norwegian being spoken. Everywhere, there were Norwegian bars and stores" (Sætre, translation mine).

[1] A typical cross-section of businesses advertising in ***Nordisk Tidende*** in 1959 includes hair specialists, electrical stores, a saw-filing shop, motor service, construction companies, a driving school, a roofing business and a watch and clock repair shop (***Nordisk Tidende*** 01 Jan. 1959, no.1 vol. 69).

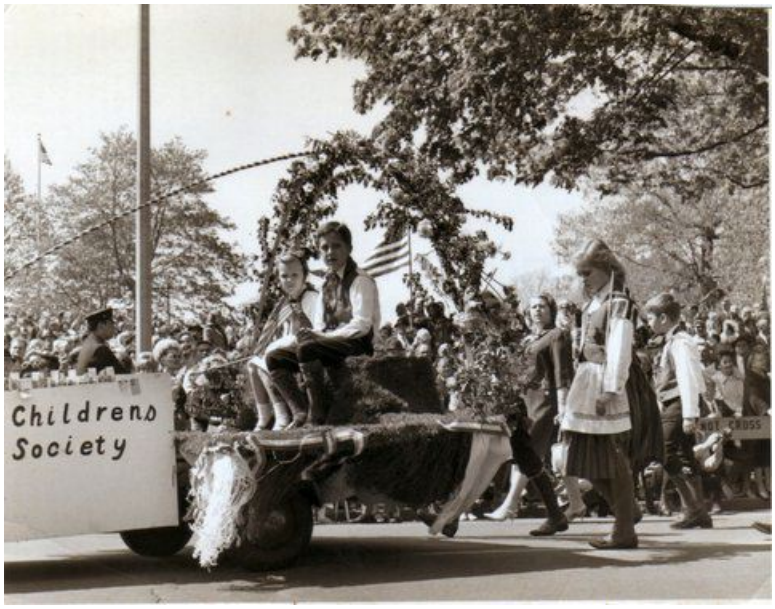
Societies such as ***Bondeungdomslaget***, ***Sønner af Norge***, ***Selskapsforeningen Østlandet***, ***Trønderen Society of Brooklyn***, ***Nordmændenes Sangforening***, ***Scandinavian-American Business Association*** and ***Normanns Forbundet*** all announced their meetings, bazaars, picnics and other social activities in the Norwegian newspaper. ***The Norwegian Children's Home Association, Eger Norsk Luthersk Gamlehjem***, ***The Christian Home for Children*** and the ***Norwegian Christian Home for the Aged*** reflected the Norwegian ethnicity of Bay Ridge; moreover, they attested to a persisting involvement in the community, an involvement originally initiated by Norwegian settlers a century earlier. Walter Swanson, a second generation Norwegian American, points to his own family's involvement in these organizations and societies:

> Ostlandet, a social club in Bay Ridge, whose members were immigrants from Norway…began in 1937 and my Uncle Norman Klemmetsen was its first President, followed by my Dad, Eugene. It was a gathering place for those who had acclimated to their new country but still sought to maintain their customs and language. During its heyday they contributed financially to a number of Bay Ridge charities including both the Norwegian Old People's Home and Children's Home. Club membership diminished over time and the Club disbanded in the 1980's ("Family History").

Swanson's account of ***Østlandet*** corresponds with many other Norwegians' memories of a still vibrant community during the 1950s. Ray Johnsen, for instance, was born in Brooklyn in 1943. Some of his fondest memories include being a member of the Viking Junior Band from 1957-1961: "We marched in every May 17th parade, greeted ships of the Norwegian Line, played at Wagner College and the life boat races on the narrows." (Johnsen).

Viking Junior Band, 1954. Photo: Courtesy of SECM.
<http://scandinavian-museum.org/vikingband.html>

Mona Øyangen-Faggione, who was born to Norwegian parents in Bay Ridge, has similar memories: “We were members of the 59th Street church and my older brother and I were folk dancers under Melvin Logan in the Norwegian Children’s Dance Society…Norwegian was my first language and we didn’t speak English in the house until we moved upstate when I was nine.” (Faggione).



Norwegian Children’s Dance Society, 1965. Mona Øyangen (5) atop their float. Photo by Finn’s Photo which was located at 6007 8th Ave., Brooklyn, NY. Courtesy of Mona Øyangen-Faggione and SECM
<http://scandinavian-museum.org/8avepics/sourse/17thmay4.htm>

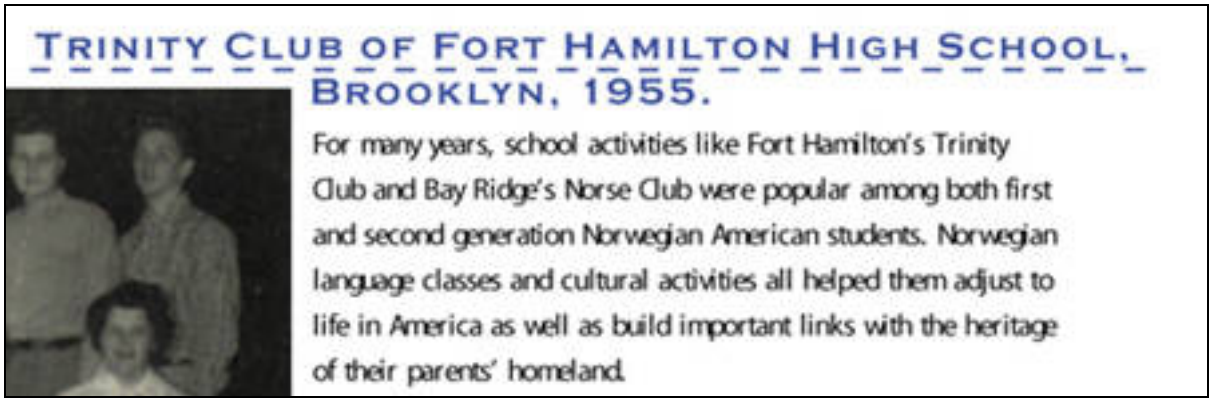
The conclusion seems reasonable: during the 1950s and 60s Brooklyn was still a haven for Norwegian ethnicity as culture, language and religion were still being preserved, and institutions and societies were teeming with activities. Swanson expresses the same sentiment:

> My brother Gene and I were born in Bay Ridge in obviously a truly Norwegian household. We spoke 'Norsk' and ate a food style nourished by the many Nordiske Vare 8th Ave. food stores. I probably hit my twelfth birthday before I found out that Syltetoy wasn't an English word! (Questionnaire).

A majority of the Norwegian Brooklynites who have contributed to this thesis with their personal memories seem to regard the 1950s and 60s as Brooklyn's golden age. Quoting a remigrant friend, Hansen agrees: "never in a million years would I give up my youth in Brooklyn, it was fantastic" (Questionnaire 2003, translation mine). Surely, such a notion reflects a nostalgic reminiscence of yesteryears. More importantly, it reflects the social benefits of a closely knit community. It also reflects the prosperity of many middle-class Americans during this period; more specifically, the rising economic status of many Norwegian Americans. So then, did the socio-economic boom of the 1950s spawn the migration out of the Brooklyn colony? It was certainly only one of several contributing factors. Swanson offers his explanation to the undeniably complex question of why Norwegians moved:

> From the time of my parent's marriage, until they died, they lived in Brooklyn…8th Ave. was the whole universe for Norwegian-Americans. It extended from Sunset Park to about Leif Ericsson Park…As we grew up we found New Jersey, particularly the Lake areas, an advancement of life style over Brooklyn. Our universe expanded further! Eventually many of us settled in New Jersey (Questionnaire).

Perhaps the case could be made that it is the moving away from such havens of ethnicity that makes it harder to maintain the outward expression of one's heritage? As long as the Øyangen family lived in Brooklyn the parents held on to their Norwegian language. When they moved upstate New York English entered the home and became the preferred language.



Courtesy: Norwegian Immigration Association (NIA). <http://niaresearchcenter.cdmhost.com/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p3002coll2&CISOPTR=59&REC=3>

Viking Princess and the 17th of May parade some time during the 1950s or 60s. Photo: Courtesy of SECM. <http://scandinavian-museum.org/8avepics/source/viking_princess.htm>

The Times They Are A-Changin'

The question of what initiated and later perpetuated the migration away from Brooklyn demands a multifaceted answer. Certainly, acculturation, assimilation and economic prosperity were contributing factors. However, racial and ethnic tensions are factors which should not be ignored. In association with The Brooklyn Historical Society and historian Barry Lewis, Public Broadcasting Service's channel thirteen of New York has created an online history of Brooklyn ("A Walk Around Brooklyn"). Here, they point to the increased mobility between hitherto more or less segregated parts of the city and how this caused tensions to become more accentuated: "Between World War I and the 1930s, thousands of southern Blacks filtered into Brooklyn's neighborhoods...When the A-train was extended from Harlem to Brooklyn in 1936, thousands of African Americans left Harlem in search of better lives and less expensive housing" ("A walk" 4). Later, the integration policies following the Supreme Court ruling in Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) had an enormous impact on Brooklyn's neighborhoods. In fact, it has been suggested that Norwegian parents resented the busing of their children to schools outside the community and that this contributed to Norwegians moving out.

No doubt, the ethnic make-up of Brooklyn was changing as "thousands of Puerto Rican immigrants also settled in Brooklyn" ("A walk" 4). Hansen adds another dimension to this historical perspective: "…many Spanish [speaking] were moving in and lots of people didn't want to live with them – so they moved out. When it came to Norwegians, they had similar feelings – they didn't like living with all the Puerto Ricans…"[1] (Questionnaire 2003, translation mine). When Aslaug Johansen came to Brooklyn with her family in 1948 she was 15 years old. The family lived in a predominantly Norwegian neighborhood, patronizing Norwegian stores, joining a Norwegian church and socializing with Norwegians. These are

[1] Here, [speaking] has been added to clarify the meaning as ***variety of Spanish.***

her recollections of the changing face of Brooklyn: "It became a whole new neighborhood during the 60s and 70s. For instance, the house that we had lived in now had iron bars on the windows and doors. We never needed that. The Norwegian stores were replaced by Vietnamese and Chinese ones" (Questionnaire, translation mine). Racial and ethnic tensions, socio-economic changes and a rise in crime were perhaps subjacent causes of the massive move. However, to interpret this migration from a solely politico-racial view, exclusive of the sociological model of "ecological succession" or the broader scope of Brooklyn's economic history would be a grave oversimplification (Foner, Rumbaut & Gold 425).

Another factor is the waning of Brooklyn's industrial energies during the 1950s and 60s: "Heavy manufacturers began to move to cheaper locations in other cities, and the ports became less active as large container ships, requiring deep harbors, began to dominate the shipping trade" ("A Walk" 5). However, Victoria Hofmo, founder and president of Brooklyn's Scandinavian East Coast Museum (SECM) claims that the community was also "being chipped away and eroded by monumental government decisions that had a devastating effect on the Norwegian community."[1] She elaborates that,

> First and foremost was the Port Authority decision to transfer the port of New York to New Jersey. This decision was made for practical reasons, container shipping had taken over and there was no upland property available for a container port on the Brooklyn side of the harbor. However, this had a devastating effect on the Norwegian population (Hofmo, "Why?").

[1] The Scandinavian East Coast Museum (SECM) was formerly the Norwegian-American Collection. In 1993, Victoria Hofmo applied for a grant from the Norwegian Emigrant Fund to work at Norsk Utvandrermuseum in Hamar to gather ideas on how to establish a museum in New York. In 1994, the exhibit ***Det Norske Amerika in New York and the Contributions It Made*** was held at the Norwegian Seamen's Church in New York. After the exhibit people began forwarding artifacts to Hofmo. SECM was incorporated in 1996. For more on SECM see: <http://scandinavian-museum.org/index.htm>.

Thus, much of the colony's century-old maritime tradition, livelihood and link to Norway shifted. As the port moved, the Gowanus Expressway was expanded, a feat for which Robert Moses, chief of the New York state park system, was both honored and criticized. In his 1974 biography of Moses, ***The Power Broker***, Robert A. Caro holds that Moses' highway created a "Chinese wall," which accelerated the process of deterioration that began two blocks west, along the waterfront terminals (quoted in "Gowanus").[1] Although the parkway was built atop pre-existing pillars from the elevated Third Avenue Subway more land was required for a wide roadway and entrance-exit ramps. Hofmo claims that Moses' decision "resulted in the demolishment of a mile-and-a-half worth of businesses" and that,

> The government, in its infinite wisdom, knocked down every single building on the East Side of Third Avenue…creating a gapping eyesore and impediment between the community and the waterfront. The Expressway continued along 65th Street ripping down the First Evangelical Free Church (which moved across the street to 66th Street and is now known as 66th Street Church) and a Sons of Norway Club House ("Why?").

Around the same time Robert Moses was working toward connecting Staten Island and Brooklyn by bridge. There was an outcry from the community against this as well but in the end the bridge was constructed:

> Instead of designing the entrances and exits, along the existing Belt Parkway, which runs along the waterfront, they chose to place another highway (a cut) through the middle of the neighborhood. This eliminated an entire street lined with houses on both

[1] A web site dedicated to the history of New York City roads writes: "this required the demolition of many homes and businesses along Third Avenue, a tightly knit block of Northern and Western European immigrants" (www.nycroads.com). There, Robert A. Caro mentions the residents' fight to have the highway placed closer to the waterfront in order to protect the neighborhood.

sides and running almost 3 miles. I have heard that 2,000 people lost their homes in Bay Ridge, many of them Norwegians (Hofmo, "Why?").[1]

Clearly, the construction of the Gowanus Expressway and the Verazzano Bridge had implications reaching far beyond those pertaining solely to the Norwegian American community, and yet these events shed light on the colony's perception of self and also its struggle to gain a rightful place in the history of an immigrant society. The importance placed on bearing witness to the Norwegian community's achievements as well as becoming a recognized part of the ethnic fabric of Brooklyn is perhaps best exemplified by the Leif Erikson Society's ardent commitment and ultimate success in having part of Belt Parkway named Leif Ericson Drive; one of several traces of Norwegianness in Brooklyn.

Ethnic Persistence, the American Dream - or Both?

For whatever reasons the 1950s, 60s and 70s marked the beginning of the end for the once so vibrant colony. Norwegians moved to the suburban areas of Long Island and Staten Island. They moved to rural upstate New York, into neighboring New Jersey and Connecticut, while Florida became a haven for retirees. Like so many immigrants to America, Norwegian Americans also were driven by a desire to better their lives. Historically, betterment has been measured in economic growth, and this seems to be an area where Norwegian Americans have adapted well to American society. After having traveled throughout the United States interviewing Norwegian Americans for his book, ***Innfridde løfter: Et norskamerikansk samtidsbilde*** historian Odd Lovoll was surprised to find how materialistic people's goals were as opposed to being culturally orientated: "Now we can move back home to Norway, because now we can have two cars there too" (quoted in Sætre, translation mine).

[1] "To add insult", Hofmo continues, "the bridge was named the Verazzano after the Italian explorer, even though the Scandinavian community advocated for it being named the Leif Ericson Bridge." According to Hofmo, the final blow came when Bay Ridge was separated along the expanded Expressway. "Lapskaus Boulevard, Lutheran Medical Center (Sister Elizabeth Hospital) and many other Norwegian institutions became Sunset Park, as well as a Designated Poverty Area, a very undesirable name" ("Why?").

For some, betterment equaled job security, while others believed the American dream best could be fulfilled in the suburbs. Among the many, personal reasons Norwegian Americans may have had for leaving Brooklyn there are still some very specific ones that stand out in the collective memory of this enclave. For instance, Sam Rodland attributes Norwegians' migration to the simple fact of progress, a seemingly well-founded claim. The farmland of Long Island and Westchester was undergoing great development and many rural communities surrounding New York were being suburbanized (Swanson and Fuller 4). Some also believe that the easy availability of government-sponsored housing loans "spurred the middle classes to leave their old neighborhoods for the suburbs. Hundreds of thousands of white middle class residents abandoned Brooklyn for Queens, Long Island's Nassau County, Staten Island, and New Jersey" ("A Walk" 5).

The obvious explanation for moving could possibly be summed up as post-war progress; a general economic upswing, massive housing developments (e.g. Levittowns) in the surrounding areas of urban New York and accessible housing loans. The complex explanation factors in the racial dimension of, for instance, redlining urban neighborhoods or the theory of neighborhood life-cycles:[1]

> The neighborhood life-cycle or 'stage' theory, an evolving real estate appraisal concept used as a basis for urban planning decisions in the United States. The life-cycle theory was revived by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development after the urban riots of the 1960s and used by local planners to encourage the 'deliberate dispersal' of low-income and African-American urban neighborhoods, followed by the eventual reuse of abandoned areas (Metzger 7).

[1] Manuel B. Aalbers defines redlining as a form of place-based and oftentimes race-based exclusion. In his article "Place-Based and Race-Based Exclusion from Mortgage Loans: Evidence from Three Cities in the Netherlands" Aalbers compares race and place-based redlining in Arnhem, The Hague and Rotterdam with the same practices in US cities like New York. According to Aalbers, "discussions on redlining have taken place primarily in the United States and have been connected to debates on the causes of segregation and forms of racial discrimination" (2).

The post-war years saw great progress in the United States and many states were facing a massive expansion of their urban centers. Numerous immigrant workers became part of this economic and developmental boom, and as trade unions gained considerable influence wages climbed ("Wages"). Being mostly skilled workers, Norwegians had a decent chance at financial prosperity. This economic boom allowed Norwegian Americans to move closer to the work place and leave long, daily commutes behind. Rodland recalls how "a lot of Norwegians moved out in the '60s. They moved to Long Island, Westchester, Connecticut; that's where all the work was, and to cut down on traveling time they moved" (Questionnaire). According to respondent George Hansen "[Norwegians] could get so much more house for their money in the countryside" (Questionnaire 2003, translation mine). And once again, the integral advantages of community ties, communal spirit and skilled craftsmanship became evident. Norwegians who had already managed to invest in cabins in the countryside (Sound Beach, Long Island; New City, New York and Norseville, New Jersey) gave Norwegian carpenter-friends the job of remodeling them to suit permanent residency.[1] Others, who had been able to invest in inexpensive acreage in the suburbs, invited Norwegian carpenters to build their homes (Ibid.).

As the rising socio-economic status of Norwegians led families into the suburbs it also led families back to Norway. In 1963 ***Nordisk Tidende*** reported that several hundred Norwegian Americans had moved back to Norway between 1953 and 1963, a trend found in other urban settlements such as Chicago as well: "Many Norwegians head back home for good, even from sunny California…surprisingly many want to go home to 'little Norway', even though they've been here for years, even thought they've made it good, own their own homes, have paid for their cars, and have money in the bank" (July 20 1961). From 1959 to 1971 "life in Norway" was afforded extensive coverage in ***Nordisk Tidende***. Great attention

[1] Norseville, New Jersey was founded as a Norwegian colony in 1926 and had strong ties to the Lutheran Norwegian Seaman's Church and Lutheran Brethren Church (59th St. Church).

was paid to the enormous social and economic changes taking place and the newspaper reported regularly on the benefits of socialized medicine, economic growth, education and religion. For sure, headlines such as: "Norwegian workers among the highest paid in the world," recurring stories of the increasing availability of commodities and luxuries (television, automobiles and telephones), the close monitoring of infrastructural developments and an emerging oil-industry changed Norwegian-Americans' perception of Norway. Memories of a poor country with struggling, destitute Norwegians were replaced by the image of a modern nation. To Norwegians who had left before World War II - or even the immediate years after WWII - it was almost incomprehensible that Norway now was becoming a prosperous and modern nation with social benefits exceeding those of the United States. Norway as oil nation was incomparable to the agrarian Norway so many had left behind in search of better living conditions. In his article "Typisk Innvandrere!" Simen Sætre interviews Norwegian-born immigrants who in 2001 were still living in Brooklyn. Here he recounts how Thorolf Tobiassen recalls the dawn of the oil-age:

> He and his wife Margit listen to Norwegian radio every day. One day the report was that oil had been struck in Norway. Tobiassen called his friend and said: "Now we'll see a new era in Norwegian history" and so also a new era began in Bay Ridge, for straight away people started moving back (Sætre, translation mine).

Detailed accounts of a nation rapidly shedding its pre-war status spurred a rising interest for visiting the homeland. By 1960 air-travel was becoming more accessible, air- and sea-fares were more affordable, and ***Nordisk Tidende*** was diligently promoting Scandinavia as a tourist attraction. When Cappelen published its four volume ***Norge***, ***Nordisk Tidende*** referred to it as "…a work about Norway, a beautiful, modern country" (Aug 18 1966,

translation mine). Although immeasurable, such factors should not be dismissed, for they may very well have been a catalyst in the remigration of Norwegians to Norway.

Memories – the Tapestry of Ethnic Palimpsest

By the late 1960s, Norwegians who had remained within the colony were still preserving Norwegian heritage and the many institutions and associations founded during the formative years between 1874 and 1910 were still playing a vital role in the community (Mauk IV, 232-234). The Norwegian Seamen's Church (1878) was one of many such institutions. Early on it played an important role mainly in the lives of Norwegian mariners abroad. As it continued to fulfill its commitment to the well-being of a slowly decreasing number of sailors, the reading room with its Norwegian newspapers and freshly made "vafler, the "juletrefest" and other social activities gave impetus to the social and cultural lives of many Norwegians. For many it became a home away from home and a link to the fatherland, especially for those who never returned and to those who sought a "genuinely Norwegian rather than immigrant American" church (Mauk 122). Today the church caters to new groups: students, au pairs, Norwegian officials and dignitaries as well as Norwegian tourists and Norwegian American visitors. From being a social and religious center for Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn, "Sjømannskirken" has become a church for Norwegians in New York.

In 1963 ***Nordisk Tidende*** was one of only six surviving Norwegian immigrant newspapers in the United States. The weekly paper was still located in Brooklyn and it was still primarily Norwegian. By 1990 the number of immigrant papers had been halved and ***Nordisk Tidende*** had changed its name to ***Norway Times*** (1980). In 1994 the paper moved to Manhattan, and today 90 per cent of all articles are published in English. ***Norway Times*** caters to second and third generation Norwegians and according to former editor-in-chief, Espen Tjersland, 70 percent of its readers are above the age of sixty and many subscribers are long-time readers ("Readership").

This thesis can hardly do justice to the multitude of organizations that impacted Norwegian society in Brooklyn. The list of churches, societies, organizations and sporting clubs which have existed and which were still preserving ethnicity between 1950 and 1970 is far too extensive to adequately account for their role in the community in this thesis. Still, the conclusion may be drawn that the individuals behind these organizations, and their tireless efforts to create a haven for Norwegiandom were largely successful. One example of this is the 59th Street Church. In 2003, nearly 103 years after its founding, the Lutheran Brethren Church was still preserving Norwegian ethnicity and is said to have been the last church to conduct regular Sunday services in Norwegian (Hansen, Personal Communication). Much the same way, Norwegian-Americans in Brooklyn continue to preserve their cultural heritage through the benevolent society ***Sønner av Norge*** (1895), as the ***Færder*** and ***Brooklyn*** lodges remain active. The Norwegian Constitution Day Parade has also kept a certain heritage alive providing an outlet as well as a showcase for the pride so essential to maintaining Norwegian ethnicity in a foreign country. Organized for the first time in 1894, it remains by far one of the largest and oldest Norwegian events in this ethnic community. Annually it draws thousands of Norwegian Americans of all ages from near and far.

A certain degree of ethnic preservation is at some point important to most immigrant groups and the success of ethnic and cultural persistence depends, among other, on whether a settlement is urban or rural, whether it remains secluded or not, cohesion within the ethnic community, religious ties and to what generation one belongs. Race and socio-economic status are factors which also come into play. But, more important perhaps is one's sense of identity. In relation to the American frontier and the grappling of different groups to define their identities, Andrés Reséndres, discusses "how Spanish-speaking frontier inhabitants, nomadic and sedentary Native American communities, and Anglo Americans who had recently moved to the area came to think of themselves as Mexicans, Americans or Texans, or

adopted some other national or ethnic identification" (1,2). It becomes apparent how fluid identity can be.

To some extent Brooklyn and cities like it are catalysts for both an individual and a group identity. For some, living amidst a conglomerate of ethnicities can sharpen ones personal sense of identity. Through difference we become aware of the similarities we share with a specific group and it gives us a place to celebrate sameness. Yet, at the same time identity can be of a dual nature and the immigrant especially can feel like two persons in one. Norwegian American singer Sonja Savig has dedicated her career to performing Norwegian folk songs with translations and family anecdotes. This is how she described her own sense of double identity to ***Nordisk Tidende*** in 1959: "I'm two people – in the U.S. the Norwegian stands back and observes the American and in Norway the opposite is true" (May 14 1959). Austrian Henry Grunwald who came to America with his family in 1940 at the age of seventeen concurs: "Every immigrant leads a double life. Every immigrant has a double identity and a double vision, being suspended between an old and a new home, an old and a new self" (1). It would appear then, that it is this sense of doubleness which in fact is the foundation for any new identity. Psychiatrist Robert Coles speaks of those who "straddle worlds and make of that very experience a new world" (quoted in Grunwald 1). For nearly two centuries this is exactly what Norwegians in Brooklyn have done, and it is this new world, which has become buried between the layers of other ethnicities today we are retracing.

Being a foreigner - on the outside - is at the crux of this thesis since it is the immigrant groups' response to their own foreignness that eventually shapes how they perceive their identity and place within a society. The stronger the ethnic identity the slower the rate of palimpsesting, since it is resistance to change that curbs our appetite for new tastes, so to speak. Also, the more an ethnic community has been institutionalized with its own schools,

hospitals, churches and other organizations the long it will remain self-contained. Likewise, communities that stimulate and satisfy the cultural preferences of its members will increase their loyalty to the community. Strong social structures within a society are grounded in strong social institutions. Orm Øverland, an authority on Norwegian-American studies poses two ways immigrant groups in America have responded to their status as foreigners:

> One obvious response to this was to try to shed all that made one a foreigner and to become a new person, an American. Such attempts were seldom successful and rarely led to an enthusiastic welcome into the American family. Another response was to affirm the Old World identity and to insist that it too was American. Neither response was without problems. Although the first could alienate individual immigrants from their own identities, the other could alienate them from their progeny. Immigrants who deliberately denationalized themselves in their attempts to become "real" Americans were less reliant on the immigrant community and its many organizations, institutions, and publications than those who felt more comfortable with what we now call an ethnic identity (***Immigrant Minds,*** 1-2).

Bearing in mind that Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn preserved much of their Norwegian culture for nearly more than 150 years it seems reasonable to postulate that this colony falls into Øverland's second category of immigrants – those who felt comfortable with their ethnic identity. In a sense, it is this preservation of Norwegian ethnicity that makes Bay Ridge a palimpsest, for only when something has been sufficiently preserved can it be recovered. Bay Ridge becomes the parchment on which ethnic groups write their histories and the retrieval of these ***writings*** is the task at hand.

In ***Immigrant Minds, American Identities. Making the United States Home, 1870-1930,*** Øverland points to how homemaking myths become an important tool for most immigrant

groups in America as they seek to shape a new American identity which can embody their unique ethnic heritage.[1] Norwegian immigrant newspapers, ***Nordisk Tidende*** included, have been instrumental in preserving culture and ethnicity in America and have provided a forum for the ethno-cultural ideas and interests of the broader Norwegian American community. By reporting on the heroic actions of Norwegian-Americans during the Civil War, World War I and World War II; the quest to legitimize Leif Ericson's true role as discoverer of America, and Norway's undisputable impact on democracy in the United States, ***Nordisk Tidende*** contributed to the homemaking myths so essential to ethnic persistence within immigrant groups. Ethnic recognition perpetuated this mythmaking when Brooklyn Borough president signed the annual declaration stating the importance of the 17th of May Constitution Day celebration. Pointing to the spiritual, cultural, civic and economic contributions of Norwegian-Americans he confirmed that Brooklyn was grateful for their "good citizenship and devotion to American ideals and principles" emphasizing that it should "never be forgotten that during World War II, thousands of Brooklyn citizens of Norwegian ancestry served in the Armed Forces of our Nation…" (***Nordisk Tidende*** May 7 1959).

Although homemaking myths originate within ethnic groups, they are, at various occasions proclaimed by fellow Americans. No doubt, mythmaking was evident when Governor of New York, Nelson A. Rockefeller claimed that: "No race has produced more pioneering explorers than that which gave birth to Eirik or Leif" (***Nordisk Tidende*** Sept. 7 1963). It was obvious when Senator Humphrey's Norwegian heritage was heralded in 1964, and ***Nordisk Tidende*** captured his 17th of May speech to a festive crowd at Leif Ericson Park in the headline: "The Norse Constitution One of the World's Great Enduring Documents of

[1] Øverland distinguishes between three types of homemaking myths typical to "American ethnic groups of European origin: myths of foundation ('we were here first or at least as early as you were'), myths of blood sacrifice ('we fought and gave our lives for our chosen homeland'), and myths of ideological gifts or an ideological relationship ('the ideas we brought with us are American ideas')" (19).

Human Freedom." It was perpetuated when state senator, William T. Conklin praised Norwegian heritage during the Norwegian Constitution Day celebrations in 1966:

> You gave us the dignity of Norway's proud and friendly people. I think it can be truthfully said that many of our forefathers emigrated [sic] to America to seek a better life. But, in the case of the Norsemen, I believe it can also sincerely be said that many came here to bring a better life (***Nordisk Tidende*** 19 Mai 1966).

Such recognition of an ethnic group adds credibility to their myths which, according to Øverland, should be understood as "…particular constructions of ethnic memory to ensure and improve an ethnic as well as an American future" (***Immigrant Minds*** 21). The goal of homemaking myths then is to prove that immigrants "are not strangers in this country" (Ibid.).

At the same time, the many forms of celebration of ethnicity mythmaking also serves to underscore a particular immigrant group's right to consider themselves American.[1] In her book ***Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American through Celebration*** April R. Schultz looks at the 1925 Norwegian American Immigration Centennial as a means of constructing identity through ethnic celebration. According to Schultz anthropologists categorize festivals or celebrations two ways: oppositional or institutional (92). Transposing this theory onto ethnic societies the idea is that festivals reaffirm cohesion within the group all the while indicating the group's position within the larger community (Ibid.).[2] Viewing celebrations as dialogues – first of all between the participants of a group, but also a dialogue between the ethnic group and its surrounding community – illuminates their bi-functionality. The bonds within a group are strengthened whether a celebration has an oppositional or an

[1] Historically, anthropologists have valued the importance of ethnic rituals, carnivals, and rites of passage when examining communities, nations, and peoples. Today the importance of ethnic celebrations has also become a valuable source of information for scholars of history, cultural studies, American studies, ethnic studies, literature and such areas as performance studies (Yeh 279).

[2] In her discussion of oppositional and institutional festivals April R. Schultz refers to Marianne Mesnil's "Place and Time in Carnivalesque Festival", in Falassi's ***Time Out of Time (***190). Both Mikhail Bakhtin and Mircea Eliade are referred to in this discussion.

institutional nature. And yet, the outcome of that same dialogue, between a group and the society to which it belongs depends on several things. Does the group have a favored, even privileged position in the larger community? Does the group share the same or similar values and are these values shared by the host community? Does the history and politics of an ethnic group's homeland resemble that of the host country? If not, is it a regime from which the group needs protecting? The more frequently the answers are yes to such questions, the better the dialogue between an ethnic minority and its surrounding community. Øverland brings the discussion of immigrant identity to a new level when he argues that the "amateurish history writing that has been called 'filiopietistic' because it invariably tells of the past excellence or greatness of a particular nation" is indeed one of immigrants' most profound means of laying claims to their home of choice (***Immigrant Minds*** 8). Norwegian Americans who stayed in Brooklyn (and even those who moved) thus pride themselves in the many important contributions they made in building a community, a borough, a city and a nation away from home.

Rigmor Swensen's extensive listing which follows becomes an expression of both mythmaking and ethnic celebration. Since the passage has twofold significance: one, it exemplifies and verifies Øverland's claim, and two, it exemplifies and verifies this thesis; that there are traces of the Norwegian American community and its influence in Brooklyn (and Greater NY), I allow myself to quote at length:

> Among the giants who contributed to building the infrastructure of the world's greatest city was Ole Singstad. As the chief engineer for the New York Tunnels Port Authority, he was in charge of the construction of the Holland Tunnel, for which he designed a unique system of ventilation. Singstad followed the same pattern in the building of the Lincoln Tunnel, the Queens Midtown Tunnel, and the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel. Aksel Andersen was in charge of making calculations, estimates and designs for the

George Washington Bridge. He also worked out the preliminary design and estimates for the Outer Bridge Crossing and the Goethals Bridge.

Two Norwegian immigrants, Gunvald Aus and Kort Berle, were responsible for the engineering work on the Woolworth Building. They also prepared the engineering designs for the US Custom House and the US Post Office in New York, the New York Life Building, and the Columbia University Library, to name a few. Gustav Dahm served on the Board of Transportation and earned the reputation of being the world's foremost subway designer, for a system that carried 2,000,000 passengers a day. In 1888, Carl Michael Eger of the Hecla Architectural Iron Works designed and installed a double spiral iron staircase inside the Statue of Liberty, one for ascending, the other for descending. The 100 foot high staircase is still in use today, including 12 landings with resting places. Every year millions of visitors make the 22-story climb to the top of the statue, but few know that the sturdy staircase underfoot was the inspiration of a Norwegian immigrant.

Such achievements were complemented by other talented Norwegians. In academe, Bryn Hovde served as president of the New School in New York City, a bastion of experimental thought. The artist and carpenter Bernhard Berntsen became famous for his paintings of Norwegian-Americans laboring at construction sites. Another immigrant, Sister Elisabeth Fedde, founded the Norwegian Lutheran

Deaconesses' Home and Hospital, later known as the Norwegian Hospital and operated today as the Lutheran Medical Center. Carl Soyland, famed editor of Nordisk Tidende (the dual-language newspaper...), was renowned for his interpretation of the lives and times of his readers ("Norwegian Immigrants" 2, 3)

The unique and important function these homemaking myths have taken on becomes evident also in the Norwegian American Ellis Island exhibit of 2000. Nevertheless, this particular

celebration was not founded on a shared sense of unity within a community, nor in the need to validate their status or right to be called true Brooklynites, but rather in their desire to be included in the collective memory and historical account of the many who have shaped the borough of Brooklyn. According to Swensen, a wistful discussion among friends resulted in a grassroots effort to chronicle the lives of Norwegian immigrants who came to New York and who stayed there. In short, the effort was "to document a gap in American immigration history" ("Norwegian Immigrants" 1). Swensen explains: "that the Ellis Island Immigration Museum agreed this was a tale waiting to be told, and offered the venue gratis, gave official sanction to the effort. At last, the reticent Norwegian immigrants stepped forward to present worthy documentation of their history" (Ibid.). Creating myths and identities unique to ones ethnic group is part of the contextualizing that takes place throughout the various stages of a community. When the Norwegian community's contributions to New York's history were sanctioned, as here, it should be considered one of the many traces that makes retrieving the palimpsest possible

Chapter 2: Palimpsest – Loss and Recovery

The ***Oxford English Dictionary*** (OED) defines palimpsest (/**pal**impsest/: **noun)** as a parchment or other surface on which writing has been applied over earlier writing which has been erased. The second definition is of something reused or altered but still bearing visible traces of its earlier form, for instance, "the house is a palimpsest of the taste of successive owners". The origin of palimpsest is from the Greek ***palin*** 'again' + ***psestos*** which means "rubbed smooth" (Compact Oxford English Dictionary).[1]

The fundamental idea behind palimpsest is the overwriting of parchment in order to write a new story, or convey new truths. The process was used in a time where parchment, vellum or papyrus were scarce; it was done out of necessity. Ethnic palimpsest alludes to the same overwriting – Sollors refers to it as reuse – the idea being that a neighborhood becomes the palimpsest, the parchment whereon ethnic groups (often immigrant) write and rewrite their histories. The parchment – the community – is reused according to ethnic, cultural or economic changes.[2] Such reuse can entail the change of place names or use of buildings, foods, music, even language.

There is a sense of loss attached to palimpsest, both literal and conceptual. It is this sense of loss that spurs ethnic communities in palimpsest to rekindle their culture and traditions in search of a lost communal identity. The realization that traces of ones ethnic heritage no longer are visible in society can be a painful one, and the fear of "…becoming a mere afterthought, a parenthesis, …" seems a disconcerting thought to ethnic minorities all

[1] The OED offers several definitions for palimpsest. One definition indicates that a palimpsest is designed to be reusable. This coincides with the extended idea of urban communities being palimpsest. For more see: <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50169691?query_type=word&queryword=palimpsest&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=2E9Q-DrQGHA-1636&result_place=1>

[2] The "ecological succession" model in social sciences is based on a model in ecology which contends that the progressive replacement of one community by another brings about a gradual and orderly process of change in an ecosystem. Similarly, the model is said to typify immigrant settlement, stating that new immigrants concentrate in ethnic ghettos or low-cost housing areas. As they improve their socio-economic position in the host society they move to better neighborhoods (see Foner, Rumbaut, Gold 425).

over the world (Swensen "Norwegian Immigrants" 1). For, just as ancient manuscripts allow us to peer inside past cultures and societies, so also it would seem that a neighborhood should reflect the ethnic identity of its past inhabitants. This feeling of being left out of a collective memory was precisely what spurred a group of Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn to retrace their ethnic heritage in 1995:

> Five years ago, when some friends sat in a Brooklyn restaurant, sighing over their coffee cups, reminiscing about the good old days, there was valid cause to lament. It was not so much about the changing neighborhood, where vibrant new immigrants had settled, but about the absence of most indications that Norwegians had ever been present in the area at all (Swensen "Norwegian Immigrants" 1).[1]

The fear of lost ethnic identities, lost communities, lost cultures or languages, and even worse – the loss of memory is – a powerful motivator and also the guiding force behind the researcher's relentless desire to unveil and decipher century-old palimpsests. Where literary palimpsests are concerned modern technological advances have proven that much of what once was thought lost can be retrieved. Through for instance multi-spectral imaging and deciphering texts are being recovered and history made more complete. Although the tools may differ there are processes for recovering the figurative palimpsests of ethnic communities as well. Websites, oral and written interviews, censuses, church records and other historical accounts add perspective and depth as we piece together the fragments and attempt to

[1] The desire to be included in the collective memory and historical account of those who shaped Brooklyn culminated in the commemorative Ellis Island exhibit: ***Norwegians in New York 1825-2000, Builders of City, Community, and Culture***, an exhibit which fits well within the ethnic celebration so typical for marginalized groups in America. The following quote summarizes the motivation and background for the Norwegian American Ellis Island Exhibit 2000. "Just the other evening I watched a documentary on the first half of the 20th century in New York City. The film depicted the Irish, Italian and Jewish neighborhoods. It showed the immigrant kids we played with and went to school with. In passing, the narrator mentioned, 'There was also a Scandinavian presence in Brooklyn.' We were thunderstruck. Clearly we had to make a statement soon and celebrate our heritage, or risk becoming a mere afterthought, a parenthesis, in a documentary film" (Swensen "Norwegian Immigrants" 1).

understand ethnic palimpsests. And yet, much like in artful three-dimensional stereograms, it is only when we readjust our focus that photos and news articles, street names and signs allow us to look beyond the obvious and see the hidden images.

In his article "Ethnic Palimpsest" Werner Sollors opens by telling the story of "The Red Man's Greetings" (262). Originally, this lamentation was written as a rebuke of the white man by Chief Simon Pokagon, whose father once owned the land being used for the 1893 Chicago World Fair. Invited to speak at the fair Pokagon renamed his rebuke "greeting":

> Where these great Columbian show-buildings stretch skyward and where stands this 'Queen City of the West' once stood the Red Man's Wigwam; here met their old men, young men and maidens; here blazed their council fires. But now the eagle's eye can find no trace of them (quoted in Sollors 262).

Pokagon's insightful words capture the essence of palimpsest, both ethnic and literal, and the key to his analysis is the idea of reuse. Unfortunately, in his own words there is no trace left of his once so vibrant culture. The landscape is changed, the people are gone and any evidence of Indian heritage has been erased.[1] Notwithstanding, the historical fate of the American Indian can not compare to that of any other ethnic group in multicultural America and surely the dismal mood of Pokagon reflects this displacement. And yet, today we see that retrieval of ancient Native American culture is possible and that traces exist on multiple levels, place names being but one example. At times and for various reasons a palimpsest may be more or less decipherable. Depending on a culture's acceptance into the greater society there may be eras which are robbed of cultures treasures, and yet we find that retrieval is possible and can result in restoration all the while attesting to the past presence of a group.

[1] On a deeper, almost paradoxical level the reused words of "The Red Man's Rebuke" epitomize the essence of palimpsest as they become "The Red Man's Greetings".

Although the ideas and emotions enounced above clearly are at the core of palimpsest, Pokagon's finite view of a place and time forever lost certainly restricts any notion of the past being retraceable. Yet, embedded in the idea of the palimpsest is the potential for retrieving. It is that recovery process which is at the heart of this thesis. For, unlike Pokagon's somber view of a culture lost, Norwegian Americans can revel in a culture still within reach. Uncovering some of the layers may bring clarity to an otherwise obscured image of what remains of Norwegian ethnicity in Brooklyn. It can also elucidate what role ethnic Norwegians have played in Brooklyn's past.

"Palimpsest can be written or experienced, but all layers of palimpsest define its totality… The palimpsest must be read in all of its complexity, and all stories honoured in meaningful ways" (Green 13). Although Joyce Green is referring to Canada's indigenous population and how Canada deals with including aborigine culture in an otherwise multicultural society her point is interesting. Palimpsest is the scraped parchment laboriously reused to impart new aspects of history. It is the worn toy from a bygone century or the ruins of an historical site. They are all fragments of the past, revealing a story often thought to be lost. Much the same way, Matthew Frye Jacobson compares ethnicity to a tablet, "whose most recent inscriptions only imperfectly cover those that had come before and whose inscriptions can never be regarded as final" (142). Whether we are able to capture the hidden texts embedded within the layers of history depends on a variety of things. For the scientist working on the Archimedes palimpsest it might depend on scientific technology; to the genealogist, the availability of records. Ultimately, where we look and what we look for will determine how our stories read. By widening our search from the traditional, for instance, texts, maps, photos and statistics, to include architecture, landscapes, web sites, and even semiotics, we increase our chances of conserving and restoring the palimpsest – which in its own right is an original, trapped between Brooklyn's multiple layers of ethnic palimpsests.

In her article "The Past as Palimpsest" Teresa Halikowska-Smith touches on the same idea of reuse and retrieval when she discusses the change of direction in Polish literature and Polish prose writers of the so-called Gdansk school in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She holds that their unity can be found in their engagement in "the ongoing process of reappraising recent history expunged from the Communist historiography in Soviet-occupied Poland:"

> History is seen as a palimpsest in which one text is supplanted by another, according to the needs of the moment. History is being used by both the victor and the vanquished. It serves to select what is remembered: to either preserve memory or to erase it (Halikowska-Smith).

Her claim adds perspective to the sense of need immigrant groups have of placing themselves within the collective memory in order not to be erased. Although Halikowska-Smith is dealing with palimpsest in literature the parallels to physical place are striking: "While the official version of history insisted on homogeneity when dealing with the past of the region [...] writers of the younger generation have engaged in redefining the cultural identity of their homeland by rediscovering its multicultural past" (Halikowska-Smith). Her discussion is of a particular group of writers' attempt to bring to the surface repressed recollections of the past and thereby "create" a new collective memory within an historical context:

> The reconstruction of the past, so often alluded to by these writers, required a great effort of imagination: learning to read and interpret the faint traces of a past which is constantly being eroded and overlaid by the present. Most fundamentally, it required a basic understanding that there is ***more than one story in history;*** an awareness of the multiple pasts conjugated in the present (Halikowska-Smith).

Halikowska-Smith's premise is precisely the premise of this thesis; that traces of a Norwegian presence in Brooklyn exist, that these traces can be detected in numerous ways and various places, and that combined they tell a story. Although the majority of those claiming Norwegian roots have moved away from Brooklyn they have left their mark on the streets, the parks, the buildings, the memories and history of a neighborhood which has become home to countless new immigrant groups over the years. Hence, the task of finding traces of a Norwegian presence in Brooklyn is based on an underlying belief that Norwegian immigrants to Brooklyn in fact left an imprint on the place they came to call home. The questions become: what imprint did they leave, where do we find these impressions today, and how clearly can they be detected in the palimpsest layers of ethnicity still being written?

Tracing the Traces

Ethnic palimpsest is indeed experienced, and its manifestations are manifold. Sollors sees it as loss of identity; when that which was familiar becomes foreign; as when a Synagogue becomes a Baptist church, for instance.[1] For, someone's loss will almost always be someone else's gain. When Stanley K. Johannesen describes the Norwegian community in Brooklyn in his short story "The Artist of the Prayer Room" he captures the essence of Brooklyn's intertwined ethnic community, but also the reuse so characteristic of ethnic palimpsest:[2]

[1] From November 2006 through January 2007 The Brooklyn Historical Society hosted the photography exhibit: "From Synagogue to Church: Converted Brooklyn Houses of Worship." Curators were Ellen Levitt and Howard Dankowitz. Although this exhibit did not include the transformation of any ethnic Norwegian church it illustrates how ethnic palimpsest is manifested in the reuse of buildings.

[2] "The Artist of the Prayer Room" has been published in an anthology of fiction: ***Mixed Messages.*** As a professor of history Johannesen has spent much time reflecting upon and writing about the Scandinavian community in Brooklyn. His father was a Norwegian immigrant who settled in Brooklyn after many years as a sailor. He had three sisters already living in Brooklyn. "My father lived in boarding houses with other young Norwegian men", Johannesen explains. "A brother-in-law helped him find work, and he learned a trade and managed to fit in" (Johannesen Questionnaire). Although Johannesen's mother was not Norwegian the household was heavily influenced by the Norwegian ethnicity which was still prevalent in Brooklyn during Johannesen's childhood. He was born in 1939 at the Norwegian Hospital and grew up in Sunset Park. His family was active in various Norwegian Pentecostal chapels, missions and churches.

> The building used by the church for meetings was a former synagogue, the ornate wooden ark left in place at the front and serving now to house the baptismal tank, and JESUS in large gothic letters in gilt added to its pediment...through the walls on Sunday evenings, from the community centre next door, which the Jewish congregation had retained when they sold the synagogue, could be heard the muted noise of laughter, and dancing, and the minor-key orientalism of a klezmer band (184).

The interludes of change within urban immigrant communities, and their interplay with the host society add texture to the ethnic fabric of a neighborhood. Ethnic communities bring flavor to a neighborhood while they exist there and leave their mark on it when they move on. To a greater or lesser extent they co-exist alongside their neighbors – other immigrant groups – distinguishing themselves in a variety of ways and in varying degrees.

In 1883 Sister Elisabeth Fedde who came from Norway to minister to Norwegian seafarers, founded two Lutheran hospitals, one in Brooklyn (Norwegian Deaconess' Home and Hospital), and one in Minneapolis (Lutheran Deaconess Home and Hospital of the Lutheran Free Church). These days Brooklyn is still home to the Norwegian Hospital although today it is recognized as the Lutheran Medical Center.[1] Initially, the hospital ministered to Norwegian immigrants, but Fedde extended her work to include Irish Roman Catholics as well. In her article "A good place to do God's work" Julie B. Sevig writes: "Sister Elisabeth removed those ethnic lenses, even if her Norwegian colleagues thought there should be a limit to her ministry of healing" (Sevig 1). Today the Lutheran Medical Center ministers to the various immigrant neighborhoods in Brooklyn, and as Sevig suggests, even Fedde might be surprised to find:

[1] The colloquial name for the Norwegian Deaconess' Home and Hospital in Brooklyn was simply the Norwegian Hospital.

> …a prayer room inside the hospital for Islamic employees and patients, and a Sabbath elevator that stops at every floor from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday so orthodox Jews don't have to break Sabbath by pushing elevator buttons. And she might be amazed to hear some 75 languages spoken at one time or another in the hospital halls - or that the new president and CEO's last name is Goldstein (Ibid.).[1]

Bob Walsh, senior vice president of Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn reflects on this very point: "We've gone from Norwegian and English being spoken in the hallways to Spanish and Yiddish," (Ibid.). Sevig is matter-of-factly in her description of the changes that have taken place at the hospital, and the community which it has faithfully served over the years. And yet her article has a nostalgic tone as it captures the ongoing ethnic changes of a community in palimpsest:

> The community that LMC serves continues to be immigrant land. But now those immigrants are predominately from Puerto Rico and Mexico, many of them poor and without health insurance. Add to that large Chinese, Russian and Arab populations, and it's obvious why the new hospital signs are in eight languages (Ibid.).

In "Traces of Norwegian influence in the development of social services in Minnesota, USA, 1890–1920" Mari-Anne Zahl and Janice Andrews explore areas where Norwegian Americans contributed to the burgeoning social welfare system being established in Minnesota between 1890 and 1920. Here, as in New York traces abound of the social structures founded or influenced by Norwegian immigrant participation. A brief list from 1935 discloses the similarities between missions, social institutions and health services

[1] Sevig's historical account of the Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn coincides with Johannesen's memories of a hospital conceptually Norwegian even after Norwegian was removed from its official name. In fact, as a child I can only recall it being referred to as ***det norske hospitalet*** and I remember the childish pride I felt in knowing there was a Norwegian hospital not far from us. Certainly that had to mean we were important to (and in) the community?

provided by Norwegians to Norwegians in need of aid. Zahl and Andrews focus on four major institutions in Minnesota, "Lyngblomsten Alderdomshjem" The Lutheran Girls' Home, the Deaconess Hospital in Minneapolis and the Lutheran Welfare Society. With the exception of the Lutheran Welfare Society, these societies have, or have had, their equivalents in Brooklyn (Norwegian Christian Home and Health Center, "Det Norske Barnehjemmet" and Lutheran Medical Center) (Zahl & Andrews 161). So then, Norwegians in Minnesota and Norwegians in Brooklyn left their mark on the community through social institutions and organizational structures. Over the years the organizations have changed but they still reflect the founders and their distinct philanthropic ideals. Some organizations have outplayed their role, while others cater to new groups of immigrants, as we will see in chapter four. Either way, they are the visible traces of Norwegian social commitment toward one's own ethnic group as well as the extended community.

If Walls Could Talk

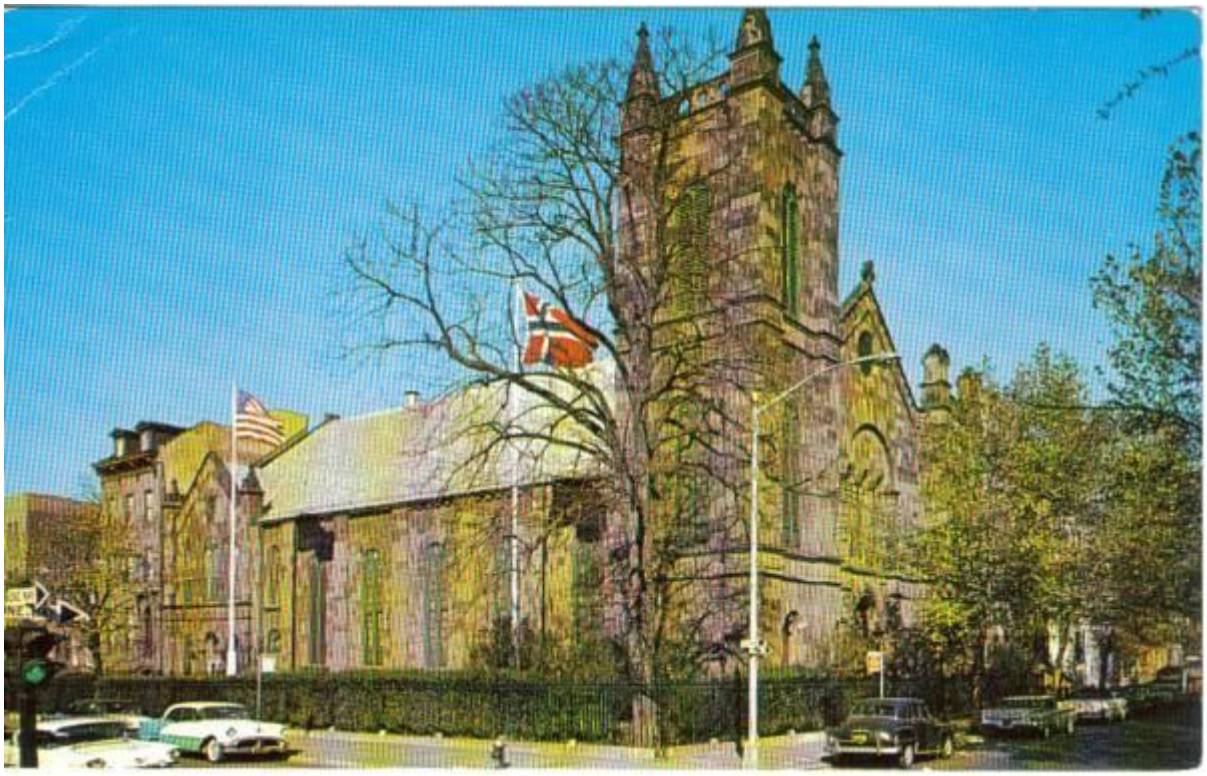
If walls had ears they would probably also have voices and those voices could tell the stories of people who dwelled the corridors of the Norwegian Hospital, or the living rooms of Norwegian immigrants in Bay Ridge and Sunset Park. This notion of attaching human qualities to the walls of a building may seem absurd and yet it is an integral part of how we understand the world around us. According to Sollors it is in fact an important part of ethnic palimpsest (268). When a home, a church, or any other community center is imparted emotional significance it takes on another dimension in our subconscious. On some level it becomes an extension of ourselves (our bodies). Sollors recognizes the fragility of ethnicity in our lives and the idea that it "affects our dreams of permanence and fears of impermanence" (267). Posing the question of whether life can be equated with a house, and death thus with its ruins is certainly befitting our discussion (Ibid.). This is not only because of the prevailing assumption that ethnic replacement within a community constitutes the death

of whatever group is dwindling, but also because it means that buildings will change hands and take on a new life.

Scholars in the field of cognitive theories of metaphor and metonymy have successfully shown that metaphor and metonymy are embedded in our view of the world and our use of language.[1] In short, this means that when we speak of a relationship being off track, or a dead-end street it is because we conceptualize LIFE AS A JOURNEY (metaphor). When we speak of having bought a Picasso it is a realization of the metonymy AUTHOR FOR WORK. The deeply entrenched feelings that characterize our view of community as an extension of our own being seem only to validate these scholars' findings. So then, when Norwegian American Brooklynites see their ethnic community as dying they do so because of specific mental strategies (mappings), or a linguistic conceptualization of what a community is and how it functions. Similarly, metonymic conceptualizations give us referential access to understanding for example a community as a living entity in metonymies such as PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION, INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE or the double metonymy A PLACE FOR AN INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE. Thus, we talk about a church, a community or a colony when we really mean its inhabitants. Attributing human traits to a community then, and viewing it as something that can live or die, seems only natural. In short, our experiential knowledge of the world shines through in our language.

The Norwegian Seamen's Mission in New York was started out of Bergen in 1864. Fourteen years later, in 1878, the mission bought a church from a Methodist congregation on Pioneer Street in Brooklyn and the Seamen's Church in New York was established. This

[1] In short, "Metaphor (based on similarity) is the cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain is partially "mapped", i.e. projected, onto a different experiential domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one"(Barcelona 3). The domain which is mapped is the source domain and the domain onto which the source is mapped is the target domain. When it comes to metonymy (based on contiguity) Barcelona explains it as: "a conceptual projection whereby one experiential domain (the target) is partially understood in terms of another experiential domain (the source)" (Barcelona 5). Obviously, metaphor and metonymy are similar mental strategies, the main difference being that while with metaphor both domains must belong to different superordinate domains, in metonymy they belong to the same experiential domain (Barcelona 5).



Postcard of the Norwegian Seamen's Church in Brooklyn dating back to sometime during the 1950s and 1960s. Origin unknown.

would remain home to the congregation for the next 50 years until the colony outgrew the facilities in 1928 and moved to 33 First Place. The cathedral-like building which was once home to the Norwegian Seamen's Church in Brooklyn is today a converted, high-priced condominium property. In 1983, when the Seamen's Mission in Norway decided to relocate to Manhattan the church on First Place was sold and typical urban renewal and architectural reuse lead to a reconstruction of the interior, leaving the facade largely intact. However, this was not the first time the building had undergone change. Constructed in the mid-1850s the building was originally home to the Westminster Presbyterian Church. In 1928 it changed denominational hands and became the Norwegian Seamen's Church. The Seamen's Church became a landmark in the minds of Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn and its importance in the community far exceeded its role as mere church. For many it became a tangible link to Norway, for others a link to the past. In his discussion of ethnic palimpsest Sollors poses the question: "Is there a palimpsest taboo in our gaze at buildings? Our wish to identify them

'permanently' with just one set of people – and, if that changes, do we feel that their 'authenticity' is lost and that they might as well be 'bulldozed down'?" (268). I would say yes, but with one important qualification: only where there is a sense of loss will this kind of architectural reuse spur nostalgia. When the colony was growing and a change of venue was necessary there was no emotional loss connected to the move. When the colony began to wane a second move came to symbolize a kind of death. The following passage from the memorial volume ***Den Norske Sjømannsmisjonen 120 år Julen 1984*** resonates with these themes and I therefore quote the authors at length:

> "Exit Brooklyn" reads the sign along the highway ramp driving from Manhattan toward Long Island. Throughout the years thousands have taken that exit making their way to the seamen's cathedral in Brooklyn. Song and music from church activities at Christmas or any other occasion could always be heard. Then it all stopped. So many things change, shipping and the population basis. Eventually the venerable, British styled church changed hands once again. Anything can be bought for a price in America, even churches. No doubt, tears are being shed over in Bay Ridge, just as they are elsewhere in the world. There are still those, like Mrs. Salvesen who would often ride home with me after church events, who have never been as far as Manhattan. Not because of the distance in kilometers which is indeed short, but rather because of another distance. The alienation felt regarding this giant metropolis. Brooklyn was just the right size for modest, Norwegian immigrants. However, this marks the end of a chapter rich in interaction between the most religious of our "colonies", the Brooklyn-colony, and the seamen's church of 1928 (Tronsen 14).

The Mission's decision to move to Manhattan was based on a dwindling congregation, dwindling ports of call and a wish to be more accessible to Norwegian visitors in New York.

In the minds of many Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn such a move was almost incomprehensible; after all, in the vernacular the church had gained status as "sjømannskirken i Brooklyn". The intense debate that followed the move in 1983 attests to its deep roots in the Brooklyn colony. Today the church caters to new groups; students, au pairs, Norwegian officials and dignitaries as well as Norwegian tourists and Norwegian American visitors. From being a social and religious center for Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn, ***sjømannskirken*** has become a church for Norwegians in America (i.e. New York).[1]

Apart from its architecture there are no visible signs to indicate that 111 Pioneer Street was ever home to the Norwegian Seamen's Church. Later, the building has housed congregations from other ethnic groups, it was desanctified and became a factory and is presently home to a group of artists known as Amorphic Robot Works. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007).

Having some knowledge of how our understanding of the world is motivated by our cognitive senses, and how this extends to our use of language, opens the door to

[1] Several Norwegian American Brooklynites have suggested that they no longer were the patrons of choice for the Seamen's Mission, an assumption which led to hard feelings toward the church's administration in Norway. For some, it seems that the move has cast a shadow over the many good memories from this era. Evidently, it was, and still is, a topic of great significance to those I interviewed, both those who have left Brooklyn and those who have stayed. It was a topic my informants returned to repeatedly throughout our interviews. There seemed to be a great desire (i.e. need) to express the hurt felt by Brooklynites of Norwegian descent; in a sense the church's move had not been forgotten and, by some, may never be forgiven.

understanding the nostalgia we so often encounter in immigrant recollections of that which was. I would also argue that it explains why ethnic and racial succession in urban neighborhoods conjures up such images and language as invasions, territory, barricades and war zones.[1] In such a setting change is equivalent to loss, and the loss of neighborhood is like the loss of a friend, a part of ourselves, or even the loss of life. More often than not such loss is deemed permanent and irreversible. When asked how Eighth Avenue had changed Signy Ellertsen reflects,

> It used to be all Scandinavians...When I first came to Brooklyn, everyone spoke Norwegian. You could shop at every store and use the Norwegian language. I felt comfortable and safe. I didn't lock a door or a window. I could take a cot and sleep on the porch (quoted in Hofmo, "Last Norwegians").

Ellertsen's recollections correspond with so many others' and are tinged with the sentiment that, in Brooklyn, all things Norwegian have been lost. Some experienced the exodus of Norwegian Americans during the 1950s and 60s as abandonment where only the most tenacious remained. No doubt the nostalgia of Ellertsen's voice is the same nostalgia we encounter on the web site for the Greater New York Centennial Celebration where family histories express some of the sentiments associated with ethnic palimpsest,

> Whenever I return to New York, I often visit the streets where my mother grew up. There are different accents and smells now, but I still hear the echo of another time. My biggest fear is that the neighborhood will be razed to make way for new construction. I hope that that day never comes, for it would erase a piece of history... ("Family")

[1] See Foner, Rumbaut & Gold's discussion on ecological succession.

NYC100 <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/imm_stories/stories/story7.html>

Although Ellertsen's and Norma's nostalgia spring from the same notions of neighborhoods being at risk, and ethnic changes and urban renewal posing a threat, there is an important difference in their nostalgic perspectives. While Ellertsen has experienced the palimpsesting of a neighborhood firsthand, Norma's nostalgia is based on her mother's experiences. Experiences have been passed down to the next generation and have become part of a new collection of memories; the sights, the sounds and the urban landscape. They have transcended the bounds of personal experience and become a reality in their own right. The stories have, in a sense, resulted in a social memory, described by Ruth M. Van Dyke and Susan E. Alcock as "the construction of a collective notion (not an individual belief) about the way things were in the past" (2). According to Lowenthal, "Memories are not ready-made reflections of the past, but eclectic, selective reconstructions..." (quoted in Van Dyke 3). In other words:

> People remember or forget the past according to the needs of the present, and social memory is an active and ongoing process. The construction of social memory can

> involve direct connections to ancestors in a remembered past, or it can involve more general links to a vague mythological antiquity, often based on the re-interpretation of monuments or landscapes (4).

Reading the Signs

Much of what Jerome (Jerry) Krase does as a Spatial Semiotician and Visual Sociologist is to document signs of class and ethnicity in urban neighborhoods. He compares his work to an intellectual version of a childhood game he used to play. The rules were simple, he explains:

> After we had left the room one of my playmates placed an object in 'plain view' somewhere in the room. Then, we would come back in and look for it. It always amazed me how much trouble we had finding something that was literally staring us in the face ("Revealing Pictures" 1).

Krase reads the signs in urban communities in order to learn more about the urban landscapes they represent, and in "Visualizing Ethnic Vernacular Landscapes" he notes: "Because the main focus in urban studies is 'space', explaining how these actual and virtual spaces are used, contested, and transformed by different social groups is a crucial task" (20). He continues by pointing out that "some semiotics are obvious, while other signs are much more cryptic." (Ibid.). I agree, but would like to add that sometimes that which is obvious to some might be cryptic to others.

As late as in 2004 a "Lute Fisk" sign was still hanging in a run-down storefront in Brooklyn's new Chinatown. Krase refers to it as "one of the last traces of 'Scandinavian' Bay Ridge" (16). It is fair to assume that by this time most passers-by did not understand the meaning of this sign, if they even noticed it, that is. Norwegian Americans sharing in a particular heritage knew what it meant and Krase and his students might have known, but the new groups of immigrants moving into the area most likely did not. For our objective, the

"Lute Fisk" sign is but one more trace of Norwegian heritage in Bay Ridge, but only the informed understood what "Lute Fisk" was. We can only imagine the cognitive depths such a sign has tapped into with Norwegian immigrants throughout its years in that store-front window.

"Lute fisk" sign in store window anno 2004 versus same store front in Bay Ridge today. Photo: Jerry Krase, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College. <http://www.brooklynsoc.org/revealingpictures/KRASE01.html>.

Reading the signs of any ethnic neighborhood involves more than literally reading signs and signage, especially where ethnic palimpsest is concerned. A certain amount of cultural knowledge is cardinal. Krase affirms this point in his summary of "Visualizing Ethnic Vernacular Landscapes," claiming that "substantial residential concentrations of ethnic groups can be missed" if we lack such knowledge (21).

Although many of the Eastern Europeans who once dominated the area left the neighborhood, their mark still remains as they try to hold on to their sense of community in Sunset Park

This caption emphasizes the need for both cultural references and knowledge when dealing with cultural semiotics. The Edw. C. Halvorsen Funeral Home on 8th Ave. in Bay Ridge was the funeral home of choice for many Norwegian Americans. This picture was taken in 2000. In 2007 the funeral home had been sold to Chinese Americans who have kept the name but have taken down the Norwegian flag. Photo: Courtesy of ***Sunset Park – A New Perspective,*** Baruch College.[1]

Showing how we "falsely assume the ethnic character of a neighborhood by reading the symbolic environment of its commercial streets" Krase elaborates his point using Brooklyn's Eighth Avenue in Sunset Park as an example:

> Even though Chinese dominated the residential scene for at least a decade it became a virtual "Chinatown" only after the stores on the commercial strip announced their hegemony. Ironically, whereas at first the Chinese were invisible in Sunset Park, other Asians (Burmese, Cambodian, Korean, Laotian Pakistani, Turkish, and Vietnamese) who share some of the territory with them now merely blend into the background. Similarly, in 2000 there were well over a half a million Latinos in Brooklyn. Seeing "differences" among Spanish-speaking people from let us say Mexico and The

> Dominican Republic in the barrios they share, can be as easy as deciphering Productos Mexicanos from Productos Dominicanos. Recognizing the national flags, cultural emblems, and religious effigies such as those of La Vergine de Guadalupe are more challenging (Ibid.).[1]

So then, the ethnic communities we think we recognize might very well be more complex and palimpsested than we realize. Offering an explanation of the symbiotic relationship between ethnic enclaves and the community they exist within Krase writes:

> Ethnic enclaves are products as well as sources of both social and cultural capital. When immigrants alter the territory allowed to them, they simultaneously become part of the transformed urban landscape. The images they create eventually come to represent them and in the process they lose their autonomy. In some cases, the enclave comes to symbolize its imagined inhabitants and is also commodified (18).

By commodified he means the "Little Italys", "Little Norways" and "Chinatowns" around the world, as well as the festivals, carnivals, parades and other festivities by which ethnic enclaves celebrate and commoditize their ethnicity. His argument is that "'traces of home' and 'material spatial practices' are transformed via 'representations of space' into 'spaces of representation'" (Ibid.).[2] April Schultz refers to this as "ethnicity on parade" and Odd Lovoll recognizes it in his discussion of Norwegian American's patriotic use of buttons and pins during Norwegian festivities. Typically, such representations provide an outlet, a framework wherein it is acceptable to practice one's ethnicity within a community. At the same time

[1] It should be noted that Krase here is referring to the urban landscape of Eighth Avenue as it appeared after heavy immigration from Asian countries, in other words, he is referring to Sunset Park after the Norwegian community had moved south into Bay Ridge, and after the colony's monumental decline had started.

[2] For more on spatial semiotics see Henri Lefebvre's ***The Production of Space*** (1991). J. Krase, "Traces of home" in ***Places: A Quarterly Journal of Environmental Design***, 8(4), 46–55 (1993). J. Krase, "The Spatial Semiotics of Little Italies and Italian Americans" in ***Industry, Technology, Labor and the Italian American Communities***. M. Aste et al (Eds) (pp 98–127) (1997).

they are the outward marks left behind by ethnic communities when they disappear. In other words, the tides of change in urban immigrant communities often result in ethnic spaces becoming symbolic places where dispersed members of a former community still can feel at home. This is why Brooklyn still feels like home to Norwegian Americans who for decades have lived elsewhere, this is why Bay Ridge is still home to the 17th of May parade (Norwegian Day Parade), and why it conceptually remains a colony even today.

Until the early 1980s ***66th Street Kirken*** (1897) was still conducting services in Norwegian. Today, a glance at the church's web site bears witness of a church that has embraced the changes within the community. No longer is there an English and a Norwegian department; instead, services are held in Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Spanish. The Norwegian reading room is the only living reminder of an era passed. For more than 180 years Norwegians who came to Brooklyn could speak their own language, eat Norwegian food and listen to Norwegian music, sharing a culture and heritage uniquely their own, all the while "becoming American." For, to some extent, acculturation took place the moment they set foot on American soil:

> You could tell by their clothes when someone had just come to the US from Norway…I remember in 1951, a man came to the US… He came straight from Norway and was wearing a beret, leather hiking boots and knickers! People turned and stared when he walked by. It didn't take long before he had new clothes; a gray hat, a suit and tie and walking shoes (Abrahamsen 168, translation mine).

Acculturation has many levels and various stages. Each one is an overwriting; of our private and public personas, and the parchment we call community. Each layer represents a stage in the life of a society. They exist whether we see them or not – whether we acknowledge them, accept them, welcome them – or not. When Jerry Krase focuses his camera on a view it is his

attentive eye that captures the details of what really exists in the picture. Only a scrutinizing look at today's Brooklyn reveals its Norwegian American heritage. As part of his sociology class Krase included a field trip to various ethnic communities in Brooklyn. This is what one of their trips revealed as far as Scandinavian heritage is concerned,

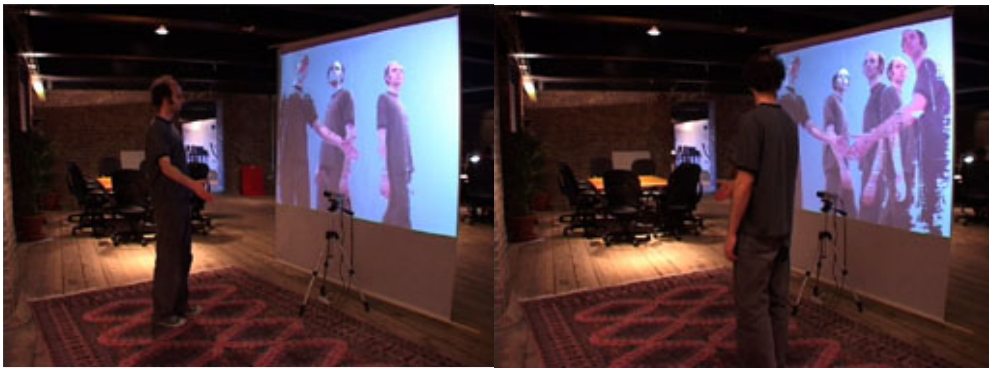
> Today one has to search very hard to find signs of their eighty-year long dominance. …signs of this senior ethnic group are the Protestant (Lutheran) churches in the neighborhood that, now in Chinese characters or in ***Espanol***, announce religious and other services. In a few instances, students also found Scandinavian names such as "Larsen" displayed in the front of neatly landscaped single-family houses on some of the side streets (Krase, "Lute Fisk").

When Krase points to social scientist Anthony D. King's claim that cities are texts which should be read he adds to that conclusion that "Ethnic Vernacular Landscapes are crucial, yet often ignored parts of that text" (8). As we search for the traces of Norwegian ethnicity in Bay Ridge today let us focus our attention on the texts left to us by Norwegian immigrants of the past.

Chapter 3: The Trajectories of a Community in Palimpsest

> ***Palimpsest might be thought of as capturing and conveying the intersections of mobile humans with a particular point in space over an extended period of time. Increasing the persistence of these intersections raises awareness of the social history of a place and allows the viewer to witness the human crowd that has passed through a seemingly quiet and empty space. Even if totally alone, a passer-by is able to "transcend time" and become a part of this community, and to interact with its members (including oneself!)*** (Piper & Agamanolis).

Between 2001 and 2005 an interdisciplinary team of MA-level researchers explored the future of human relationships as mediated by technology. Through Media Lab Europe and the Human Connectedness group Ben Piper and Stefan Agamanolis put together what they describe as "a layered video manuscript of social interaction" (Piper). They called their installation ***Palimpsest*** because it superimposed layers of video-recorded social interaction and presented them as a single image. In short, ***Palimpsest*** facilitated chance encounters between different points in time by recording images of passers-by or participants who entered the interaction area.



Courtesy of Media Lab Europe**.** **<**http://web.media.mit.edu/~stefan/hc/projects/palimpsest/>

The images were then extracted from the background and layered into a video loop which repeated itself every several seconds.[1] In an abstract way, I choose to see the Norwegian

[1] The video loop enabled passers-by to see themselves entering the space. Depending on how long they lingered there they became part of the new layers generated by other passers-by from earlier points in time. As the layers accrued over minutes, hours, even days, they created a unique visual that collapsed time and compressed recent social goings-on of that given space (Media Lab Europe). See also: <http://web.media.mit.edu/~stefan/hc/ > or <http://web.media.mit.edu/~stefan/hc/projects/palimpsest/>

American community, or any community, in much the same way; a multi-palimpsest of lives, events and social interaction layered over time, interconnecting at various points in space and creating a multi-dimensional visual of hi***stories***. In editorial- and literary theory palimpsest has become an important term as far as understanding a text in relation to the process of authorship, the various versions a text might assume, the editing involved and the rewriting which results. If we see this thesis as one of many texts on the subject - a layer in the palimpsest of texts on this particular Norwegian American community - then a richer visual of that community appears. For, this text is in no way all-encompassing and is best understood when read adjoining other writings which have already offered a glimpse of how immigrants who made Brooklyn and Bay Ridge their home lived their lives.

The Journey - Observations from the Outside in - and the Inside Out?

In many ways, this thesis has been a journey through space and time. Certainly it has been a personal journey – but on a less abstract level it also became a physical journey – back to a community which held so many strong memories and that I kept hearing "no longer existed". The Seamen's church and Norway Times' move out of Brooklyn seemed to have been the final blow, leaving the community abandoned, with basically the 17th of May Parade as its sole surviving attraction. The personal interest underlying thesis warranted a personal mind-trip and therefore, for one month during the summer of 2007, I brought my mother along to revisit the Bay Ridge of our memories.

Without a doubt, in the thirty-six years since we left, the Norwegian American community has dwindled dramatically. It is true; there are no Norwegian restaurants left along Eighth Avenue, nor are there many Norwegian, or Scandinavian stores for that matter, left along Fifth Avenue. When the Berkshire movie house closed it became home to the areas many Sons of Norway lodges. By the early 1970s the building was converted into a mosque, reflecting the ethnic changes of the neighborhood (Bergman). Today, Norwegian Americans

jokingly refer to themselves as living in “Bei-rut” (instead of Bay Ridge) and Eighth Avenue is no longer “Lapskaus” Boulevard, but Chinatown. The changes are visible and obvious. To some they might even seem dramatic. And yet, there are remnants of the Norwegian to be found, although the colony per se no longer exists. There is still a Norwegian presence - observant eyes can see the signs. Every Norwegian flag that waves off the front stoop of a row house, or the name plate announcing the abode of Pedersen or Sorensen bears witness of Norwegians who remain, and who are proud of their heritage.[1] Bay Ridge has changed, but the hopes and dreams of its residents have not. It is still a conglomerate of immigrants from all over the world,

In the heart of Bay Ridge it is not uncommon to see the Norwegian flag flying alongside the American flag. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

congregating and segregating at their own accord. Nevertheless, the Bay Ridge I remember, with its sizable Norwegian population, its churches, stores and social institutions has taken on the air of other cultures. Today, new immigrant groups are setting their stamp on the

[1] Contrary to what seemed the norm, on several occasions during random walks in Bay Ridge I encountered name plates on the front doors of families of Norwegian descent. I did not see other nameplates announcing family names in this manner.

Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

neighborhood. Fifth and Eighth Avenues are still bustling, but the storefronts have new signage in new languages and new faces are peopling the streets.

Norwegian ethnics who stayed in Bay Ridge verbalize feelings of foreignness to their own neighborhood. According to Thorolf Tobiassen: "Today, being in Bay Ridge almost feels like being in a different world. When you've been here as long as I have; practically grown up here, there is something sad about the changes, something has been lost" (Personal Communication). Commenting on the changes since he came from to Bay Ridge from Feda in 1937 Tobiassen acknowledges the nostalgia connected with remembering the Norwegian community during the flourishing 1950s and recognizes that perpetual changes are part of a city like Brooklyn.

When Olava Jurgens came from Grimstad in 1951 she already had a sister living in Brooklyn which made the transition fairly easy. She went to work for Borum & Pease, a book binding company in downtown Brooklyn where "there were many Norwegian girls working",

she recalls. Jurgens still remembers the comment she made to her sister the first time they walked along Eighth Avenue: "I can't believe I'm in America, everything is so Norwegian.

Celebrating the 17th of May, this picture is most likely taken sometime during the late 1960s or early 1970s. Worth noticing is the store signage with the names Hagen and Karlsen. Photo: Courtesy of SECM. <http://scandinavian-museum.org/8avepics/source/parade_boy.htm>

Eighth Avenue today – new immigrant groups have made Bay Ridge their home. Well into the 1950s Norwegians were still emigrating from Norway, but immigration was in its final stage as the laws changed in the early 1960s. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

Today, I'd rather not go to Eight Avenue," she says. "It is sad, but everything is different than it was, and it feels so foreign" (Personal Communication).

On the same note, George Hansen remembers meeting an old friend at a Salvation Army concert during the mid-90s. Hansen commented on how long it had been since they had seen each other. Jokingly his friend replied: "I had to make a decision, either I had to move, or I had to learn Chinese – I chose the easiest and moved to Pennsylvania". Hansen explains:

> My friend lived at 56 Street and 8th Ave. (8th Ave. was main street to us Norwegians), but now Chinese have taken over and there is only one Norwegian store left on all of 8th Ave and it is mostly closed because no Norwegians come to 8th Ave. anymore. So here you see what happened when everyone moved out of Brooklyn. Now there are only a few dozen Norwegians left in Brooklyn (Questionnaire 2003).

In ***Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History,*** Jon Gjerde discusses the same feelings of foreignness but focusing on a California suburb. During the mid-80s, the ethnically mixed and culturally diverse suburban neighborhood of Monterey Park was rapidly changing. Although fifty-six percent of the city's 60 000 residents were of Asian origin it had become known as a prime example of a multi-ethnic, immigrant-welcoming, All-American suburban melting pot. "Nicknamed "City with a Heart," it took great pride in being a diverse and harmonious community (Gjerde 476). A decade after the arrival of affluent and well educated Chinese immigrants the face of the city had changed: "New ethnic-oriented businesses sprang up to accommodate them: nearly all the business signs on Atlantic boulevard, the city's main commercial thoroughfare, conspicuously displayed Chinese characters with only token English translations" (Ibid.).

> **"I Don't Feel at Home Anymore!"** […] Many long-time residents felt they were not welcomed by new businesses because they were not Chinese…Avanelle Fiebelkorn,… told the ***Los Angeles Times***: "I go to the market and over 65 percent of the people there are Chinese. I feel like I'm in another country. I don't feel at home anymore." Emma Fry,…agreed: "I feel like a stranger in my own town. You can't talk to the newcomers because many of them don't speak English, and their experiences and viewpoints are so different. I don't feel like I belong anymore. I feel like I'm sort of intruding." (482).

According to Gjerde, "More than anything else, it seemed, the change that long-time Monterey Park residents resented most was the unsettling presence of an unfamiliar language…Business signs display Chinese characters, Chinese is spoken in the streets, and Chinese music is piped through public address systems in many businesses" (483). Similarly, residents of the longstanding Norwegian community in Bay Ridge express this sentiment of foreignness to their present surroundings as well:

> The lilt of Norwegian, taste of fish cakes, and sight of Norwegian seamen strolling along Eighth Avenue, have been replaced by the high-pitch of Chinese, taste of egg cakes and sight of thousands of Chinese shoppers scurrying to gather their groceries" (Hofmo "Last Norwegians").

Sociologist Kevin Keagon claims that "symbolic contexts and social identity are often rooted at the local level and must be built up over many years; therefore, these cultural formations may become quite resistant to change" (230). When we know that language is an important factor in preserving ethnicity we can deduce that it has played a role in the longevity of the Norwegian American community. Bay Ridge Norwegians were able to hear, speak and see Norwegian in the streets of their own community. But ***resistance*** as Keogan

uses the term bears the mark of duality. For, certainly a community in palimpsest is both resilient and resistant in its dealings with change. If we look at a fairly established definition of community in Joseph P. Fitzpatrick's article "The Importance of 'Community' in the Process of Immigrant Assimilation", we see that community is based on both the physical and the socio-psychological:[1]

> (a) physically by reference to a specific geographical area; and (b) socially and psychologically by what he called "community sentiment." This latter provides the basis for group solidarity: (i) ***role-feeling***; the awareness of a definite set of roles to fulfill in the group, (ii) ***we-feeling,*** a sense of belonging to ***this*** community, of sharing its customs and traditions; its total unique culture; (iii) ***dependency-feeling,*** the perception of the community as a necessary condition of one's life, as a "refuge from the solitude and fears that accompany that individual isolation so characteristic of our modern life (6,7).[2]

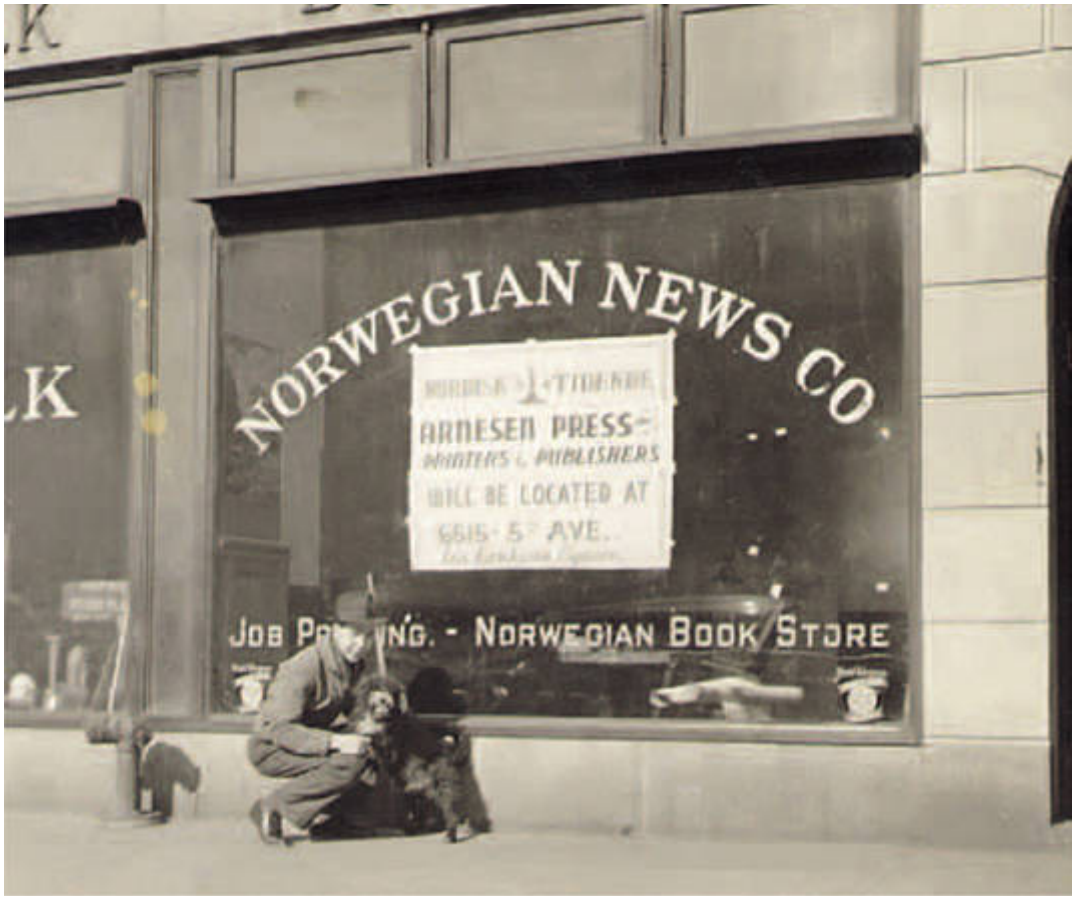
Based on this definition the function of community is instrumental in the lives of its individuals, perhaps even more so for those who still regard themselves as immigrants. In chapter one the infrastructures for migration from Norway (especially the southern parts of Norway) were found to be similar to the infrastructures of other nations with high immigration numbers. We saw how Italians more often than not emigrated for the same reasons as Norwegians did, having the same networks for finding jobs, housing, etc. In his qualitative study of the social organization of Mexican migration to the United States,

[1] The definition used in Fitzpatrick's article "The Importance of 'Community'…", was originally put forward by the late sociologist and political scientist Robert R. MacIver in ***Society, an Introductory Analysis*** (McIver, Robert R. and C. Page. New York: Rhinehart. 1949. (Ch. 1 and 12).

[2] Fitzpatrick's article is also indicative of my conclusions on the new role the Norwegian American community has taken on in the lives of Norwegian Americans in Greater New York and the Tri-State area.

Douglas S. Massey points out the same patterns and network developments among Mexican migrants to the US. Massey calls migration a "social process" by which "human basic relations are adapted to play new roles in the migratory enterprise":

> The familiar relations of kinship, friendship, and "paisanaje" are woven into a social fabric that provides migrants with a valuable adaptive resource in a strange new environment. Through networks of interpersonal relations, people and information circulate to create a social continuum linking communities in Mexico with daughter settlements in the United States (Massey 213).



Printer Herby Zetterstrom with Carl Søyland's dog outside the ***Nordisk Tidende*** offices at 4808, 4th Ave. The photo is taken in the late 1940s, just before the newspaper moved to larger facilities at 6515, 5th Ave. During the 1960s the newspaper changed its focus and became a national paper connecting its readers, not only to Norway, but to Norwegians all over the United States. Conceptual connectedness of this kind, and highly visible signage were both instrumental in solidifying the presence of the Norwegian ethnic community in Bay Ridge. Photo: Courtesy of Signy Zetterstrom Ahlman and NIA. <http://niaresearchcenter.cdmhost.com/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT =/p3002coll2&CISOPTR=73&CISOBOX=1&REC=7>

Massey's observations are clearly applicable to Norway's immigration "enterprise" of the past. Just as Mexicans' networks are "strengthened by a variety of institutional mechanisms today, Norwegians' social networks have provided "aspiring migrants with food, housing, transport, work, and a social life in the United States" in the past (Ibid.).

The Norwegian American colony was always relatively small and it was clustered among other small immigrant groups which, more often than not, had similar backgrounds (and even similar languages, for instance Swedes and Danes). Respondent Alice Johansen explains: "A family had many of likewise immigrant status around them which kept them not missing their background too much and also able to enjoy being in the new America" (Questionnaire). Rigmor Swensen agrees that in the midst of other immigrant groups the community was a viable "capsule where we met Norwegians, but others too" (Personal Communication). Eleanor Bensen writes: "Even though there were many Italian, Irish, Finnish and Jewish immigrants in our neighborhood all my parents' friends tended to be Norwegian, and my friends were their friends' children – of course in school we had friends from other groups (Questionnaire). When asked if it was hard to stay Norwegian Kåre Jacobsen answered: "Not at all. Public schools were often predominantly Norwegian. Many public schools encouraged entire student body to sing the Norwegian anthem. Many Team sports identified as Norwegian. In the minds of some residents then "…Bay Ridge was like a small Norwegian 'landsby'" (Hansen Questionnaire 2007).

In fact, I would argue that any segregation on their part was most likely voluntary and due to dissimilarities in religious and social activities, and that Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn (as well as other immigrant communities in America) for the most part, were economically and occupationally mobile and in these areas integrated fairly quickly. Historically, New York's immigrant population (Norwegians included) has had the advantages of "positive spatial symbols of immigrants" and has therefore "come to

understand their particular ethnic histories in terms of a common, proimmigrant narrative, and this symbolic past is commemorated through prominent landmarks such as Ellis Island and The Statue of Liberty, as well as through a variety of ethnic neighborhoods, parades and festivals" (Keagon 229).

A Sense of Identity

Today, the perseverant community has dwindled to the point of being a minority within a fairly new, but major immigrant group (the Chinese). Even though Norwegian Americans in Bay Ridge still have a certain sense of community and are tightly knit they may very well have lost what MacIver called the "we-feeling" in its relation to the larger community. Their neighbors have changed, the language has changed, the urban landscape around them has changed; the culture is not only different but to a large extent foreign. Ellen Ryen captures that foreignness when she says: "[Brooklyn] has always been a melting pot – but the newer cultures are very different than Europeans" (Questionnaire). Here she expresses her own sense of identity and its link to the Norwegian American community in Bay Ridge:

> It was my identity being Norwegian American. We were surrounded by Irish, Italians and Greeks, so it was our form of belonging to something. Although we spoke little Norwegian in my childhood home, I had the background and culture of growing up with "lapskaus", "fiskeboller", "brunost", "nøkkelost", chocolates from Norway, etc. The Lutheran church with its pastors from the mid-west with heavy Norwegian accents in their English sermons, confirmation class with all Norwegian last names. Fort Hamilton High School's 1968 graduating class had many Olsens, Hansens and other Norwegian last names. I knew most of those fellow students. We had a

> common bond - "Norskies." I learned Norwegian songs of the times, made my own "bunad", marched in the 17th of May parade yearly waving my flag…(Ibid.).

I quote Ryen's lengthy description of what it was like growing up in Bay Ridge for several reasons. First of all it gives insight into the close-knit community she was part of. Second, it attests to the Norwegianness which once permeated this community. Lastly, it renders concrete the palimpsesting which has taken place over the last 40 years.

Norwegian Americans continue to move away from Brooklyn. They tend to be first and second generation Americans who either find Brooklyn's housing prices too high or prefer the suburbs, or they are elderly immigrants who have stayed in Brooklyn as long as possible before eventually moving to be closer to family. Despite the community's decline there is still a resilient fragment left who are steadfast. For the most part, the aging population (whether first or second generation immigrants) who have remained in Bay Ridge are there for the duration. Elsie Willumsen sums up her own feelings about staying: "I am still here - and love it" (Questionnaire). Willumsen is the daughter of Norwegian immigrants. She was born in Bay Ridge, married a Norwegian immigrant and has lived in the community all her life. Similarly, George Jensen has lived in Bay Ridge all but 2 years of his life. He moved back to Bay Ridge in 1960 and responds: "[I] still live here with no intentions of moving away" (Questionnaire).

Thus, the intricacies and complexities of immigration, assimilation, identity formation and the sharing of space within the larger community become apparent and one finding does not necessarily exclude another. A sense of foreignness does not preclude feeling at home, just like feeling Norwegian does not prevent us from being American. The difficult decision to emigrate from one's native country is not necessarily a sign of disdain, nor should the love of a new homeland be seen as rejection of the old. So, while Norwegian Americans feel bonded within their community, they also feel alienated. While they revel in their Norwegian

heritage they are secure in their Americanness. Free to speak Norwegian amongst themselves, Norwegian Americans will seldom hear it spoken on the streets of Bay Ridge anymore. Although they are proud of their Norwegian heritage they love their new home, America, and even though some say their heart is in Norway they will never move back. These are the paradoxes of immigrant life. They are the complex, intertwined emotional realities; that intriguing conundrum of being of immigrant stock.

Musealizing the Past into the Future

Characteristically, the feeling most often expressed by the Norwegian Americans during my visit to Bay Ridge was their sense of loss and feeling of being a foreigner in their own neighborhood. However, on a less emotional level, those who remain seem, for the most part, to accept the fact that they are no longer a colony. With practically no immigration from Norway and no gentrification or reclamation by new immigrants many seem to believe that the future of the Norwegian community is in the hands of those committed to preserving its traces through musealizing. In "Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities", Sociologist Sharon J. Macdonald expands on anthropologist Richard Handler's claim that 'having a culture' is the mark of being a bona fide 'people' and argues that identity should be viewed in broader terms than mere nationalism or politics:

> Although this idea has become globally assumed, it is itself historically and culturally specific. It is based on a notion that the philosopher Charles Taylor calls 'expressive individuation': the idea not just that each national identity is different from the next, but that this distinctiveness is deep-seated and that we have a kind of 'calling' to express it. Taylor is in fact writing of personal identity but he notes that national identity was conceptualized by analogy. For nations, culture is their means of such expression: it is the outward sign of distinctive 'inner depths'. Museums, already

> established as sites for the bringing together of significant 'culture objects', were readily appropriated as 'national' expressions of identity, and of the linked idea of 'having a history' – the collective equivalent of personal memory (Mcdonald 3).

It is not my contention that the Norwegian Americans of greater New York (i.e. New York New Jersey and Connecticut) are expressing nationalistic tendencies through their wish to musealize their heritage. Rather, I believe it is a logical expression of loss and detachment, and of the before mentioned mythmaking so vital to immigrant societies. In one sense it reflects a new stage in the community's history. Some might call it the final stage, where culture is frozen in time for the sake of memorializing. Others see it as preservation, the leaving of a legacy for posterity. When the history of immigrant-city Brooklyn is recorded Norwegians want their story to be told.[1]

Recreating a piece of Norway in Bay Ridge – incorporating the past into their future. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley 2007

[1] One extension of this musealizing is perhaps genealogy, and the desire to record individual lives as histories, a hobby which seems to have become a national pastime in America. There are many ways in which people connect to their past: family genealogy, visiting museums, collecting coins or reading history books. According to Rosenzweig & Thelen: "past-related activities can be divided into two groups: activities that interpret historical information constructed by others; films, books, museums, photos", and by "constructing, recording and conserving personal histories; taking photos, reunions, writing journals, collections, participation in a group interested in the past. Popular historymaking, i.e. preservation of the past by individuals and groups (non-scholarly) requires research; the same kind of research that is used in the social sciences. Questionnaires, microfilms, old newspapers, birth and death records, wills and Civil War pension files, courthouse records and cemeteries are all places where history is preserved" (Rosenzweig & Thelen 25).

Figuratively, the desire to memorialize a community's legacy reconciles with how Susan Sarandon's character Beverly views marriage in the American version of the motion picture, ***Shall We Dance***: "We need a witness to our lives. There are a billion people on the planet...in a marriage, you're promising to care…You're saying 'Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go un-witnessed because I will be your witness'." (Wells 2004).

The artifacts on exhibit at Heritage Hall at the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Center (NCHHC) were part of the 2000 exhibit at Ellis Island and are today a permanent fixture at NCHHC. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

The desire (i.e. need) to have ones life witnessed can certainly be transposed to immigrants' dealings with the past. I believe it is the key to why the Norwegian community put together the exhibit at Ellis Island. In 1995 the Norwegian Emigrant Museum listed the exhibit with the Norwegian Social Science data Services (NSD). The following is an excerpt from the project summary:

> Some 200.000 Norwegians and Norwegian-Americans once lived in Brooklyn. They created an urban ethnic culture, different from the rural Norwegian-American culture in the Midwest. Today the Brooklyn "colony" is much smaller than during the early years of this century, and its descendants have spread into the entire tri-state area and beyond. As the Norwegians leave Brooklyn, the entire record of their presence in New York City is fast disappearing. That record should be preserved for posterity... ("Exhibition – Project")

Within the group, immigrants bear witness to each other, but often there is a desire to have their lives witnessed by the sending country, as well as by those who stayed behind. Certainly, in time it becomes the goal of immigrant groups to have their lives witnessed (and acknowledged) by the host society. The Ellis Island exhibit fulfilled all these premises bearing witness to the lives and accomplishments of the community's forebears' and to the community's past.

A Belated Study

Had this thesis been written fifteen years ago – even ten years ago – the findings would have been far more explicit, and visually discernable. Another stage of the palimpsesting would have emerged; the stage where Norwegian ethnicity began interrelating and mixing with new arrivals of immigrants creating those fusions that transcend the cultural boundaries found in most communities. It is at this stage we see the fluidity of such boundaries and the cultures they seek to preserve, as when the restaurant WeeKee served Norwegian food on its otherwise Chinese meny. The theme of interrelationship is precisely what Lars Anderson ponders in his article "In Bay Ridge the Tides of Change Roll In":

> Perhaps the strangest result of this mixing of cultures has been the creation of a Chinese-Norwegian-American restaurant called WeeKee's. "When the Oriental owner

> bought the restaurant from the Norwegian owner four years ago, we kept the Norwegian cook so she could teach us how to prepare Norwegian meals", said Fanny Kam, the restaurant's manager. In a melding of cuisines, patrons can have wonton soup and fish pudding at the same meal (Anderson.).[1]

At this particular time it would have been possible to take photographs documenting this stage of the palimpsest, as restaurants, stores and neighborhoods still bore the visible signs of a Norwegian American community interrelating with new surroundings. In a sense, the present thesis is an "after the fact" study where the highly colloquial expression "a day late and a dollar short" seems most appropriate; all the more reason to study this community, before all its traces are opaque beyond recognition. I use the words opaque and recognition here intentionally for I am convinced that the traces will never really be lost. In time they will, however, become fewer and farther apart, and definitely less obtrusive.

When we liken the Norwegian colony in Bay Ridge to a palimpsest, there are stages it must undergo in order to be reused. First, it must be found worthy of reuse. In an attempt to sum up the legacy of the Norwegian colony in Bay Ridge sociologist Jerry Krase had this to say:

> As far as their contributions go I would point to the obvious yet most ignored contribution: "they established a neighborhood which is still being preserved. They laid the foundation for people coming after them. Their churches are still there catering to new immigrant groups. In short, they created a neighborhood that others aspired to move into (Personal Communication).

So then, the parchment has been found worthy and now it is being scraped, for this is the next stage of palimpsesting. I would argue that this is the current state of the Norwegian ethnic

[1] This article is one of many in the Norwegian American files in the Brooklyn Collection at the Brooklyn Public Library. There was no recorded date on the clipping.

community. It is being scraped of its Norwegianness in order to be reused as a neighborhood by other immigrant groups. However, a shortage of vellum sometimes makes it necessary to begin the recording of new histories alongside the scraping. Thus the parchment at this point holds multiple stories which are still legible. The final stage occurs when the vellum has been entirely scraped and reused. The original text is no longer obvious and the story it contains reads like new. And yet, there is no finality in the reuse of parchment, not even when texts seem lost or destroyed. For, when we rub our pencil across the page of a notepad it reveals the text of a previous page. It is not lost, only invisible until highlighted. Similarly, we cannot deny the existence or reality of a text and what it once represented and promulgated.

The contributions of every individual who constituted this Norwegian American community can never be lost; neither can their contributions as group. They are like the trajectories Doreen Massey envisions when reading a map:

> You can't go back…trajectories are not, in fact, reversible. That you can trace backwards on a page/map does not mean you can in space-time…You can't hold places still. What you can do is meet up with others, catch up with where another's history has got to 'now', but where that 'now' (more rigorously, that 'here and now', that ***hic et nunc***) is itself constituted by nothing more than – precisely – that meeting-up (again) (125).[1]

The lives of Olava Jurgens, Thorolf and Margit Tobiassen, Norma Andreassen, John Strand or Eleanor Sollie cannot be erased; the narratives their lives represent will always exist in space and time and in the memories of those who knew them, and those who learn of them. They are like the utterances Mikhail Bakhtin speaks of in his philosophical discussion of literary theory - they can never cease to exist once they have been spoken (***Speech Genres*** 170).

[1] In her book ***For Space,*** geographer and social scientist Doreen Massey sees maps as selective representations encoded with the cartographer's perspective which tends to represent space as surface (106). Massey's view lends itself to my view on space and the Norwegian colony's place in it.

Figuratively speaking, if we view the Norwegian American community as an urban landscape, and the lives of its immigrants as trajectories within that space, then we can see the community as a map in the making, a visual representation of eternity.

Cartography's manipulation of "'space' as a flat surface, a continuous…completed product...a coherent closed system…completely and instantaneously interconnected; space you can walk across", and how this space relates to time and place, is of major concern to Doreen Massey in "For Space" (106). Massey's poignant argument against the highly recognized assumption that space is a surface and a completed, horizontal sphere is of great value to our discussion of the Norwegian American colony and its placement in the past, the present and the future. Transposing her rationale – that maps are selective representations of geographical landscapes – and that they tell the selective stories of its cartographers aligns with several of our conclusions. Foremost, that Brooklyn's Norwegian American community cannot be erased from that map of representation which is history, since it exists beyond space and time. Hence, a history of Brooklyn without the story of Norwegian Americans is merely a one-dimensional, incomplete retrospection of the past. Also, that how a story is told will always depend on the perspective of the story teller, and finally, that the lifespan of a community is not necessarily limited to a specific place or time. This last view is crucial to my argument that the Norwegian colony still exists, albeit in a new capacity. Bay Ridge has become a center where Norwegian Americans gather to celebrate their heritage. It is the place where memories are kept alive through musealization, and where people, societies, buildings, parks and monuments still attest to their legacy. Norwegian Americans who now reside in other parts of New York still come back to Nordic Delicacies in Bay Ridge to purchase ethnic foods. Yes, the community has changed – even dwindled, but it does still exist.

In Massey's opinion, when the metaphor of palimpsest is viewed only as surface with an accretion of layers added over time, it becomes "too archaeological" and limited. Her

argument is that this view refers to the history of space "rather than to its radical contemporaneity" and therefore does not establish coevalness: "The gaps in representation (the erasures, the blind spots) are not the same as the discontinuities of the multiplicity in contemporaneous space; the latter are the mark of the coexistence of the coeval" (110). However broadly imagined, the focus is primarily on text and "stays within the imagination of surfaces – it fails to bring alive the trajectories which co-form this space" (Ibid.). Instead, Massey envisions space as encompassing the unexpected:

> The specifically spatial within time-space is produced by that – sometimes happenstance, sometimes not – arrangement-in-relation-to-each-other that is the result of there being a multiplicity of trajectories. In spatial configurations, otherwise unconnected narratives may be brought into contact, or previously connected ones may be wrenched apart (111).

She calls this the chance of space, the "accidental neighbour," where "different temporalities and different voices must work out means of accommodations" (Ibid.).

Massey's arguments add depth and dimension to the analogy of the Norwegian colony as palimpsest and the lives of its immigrants as texts as well as the idea that theirs is an urban landscape shared by many. Krase alludes to this when he envisions the Coney Island Avenue bus as metaphor for Brooklyn:

> …how is it possible for people who are different from each other to live together in relative cooperation?... in order to get what it is that you want, if you want prosperity, if you want education, if you want a decent place to live, if you want safety, if you want security, what you must do is you must cooperate with other people... Sociologists would call it "Exchange Theory." What we say is that people engage in social relationships in order to benefit from them...And so that's why the metaphor of

> the bus works...What makes it possible is that there is something that both, or many group's need; they need to get from one place to the other. There is only one thing providing the possibility of them getting from one place to the other. They must use the same bus (quoted in Clamage).

Certainly, Massey and Krase touch on a multitude of sociological issues ranging from urban landscapes, ethnicity, identity formation, immigration and assimilation, all of which are relevant to the discussion of ethnic palimpsest. Nevertheless, for our objective the bus becomes a metaphor for the ethnic layering which takes place within urban communities over time, specifically Norwegian American Bay Ridge. For most Norwegian Americans who still live in Bay Ridge the bus could probably be seen as a metaphor for the journey of a lifetime through multicultural Brooklyn. Along the way they have rubbed shoulders with other immigrant groups. They have adapted to the ways of the land all the while learning to live with and preserve their unique and double identity. Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn are adding a layer to the palimpsest they so fervently call home. The next chapter will show how Bay Ridge still bears witness to the Norwegians who chose to stay.

Chapter 4: Cycles of Life – The Realities of Palimpsest

> ***Urban landscapes of today's cities are a chaos of forms and elements, created as collective palimpsests of all time. To understand the urban landscape as it appears today it is necessary to know how it was formed. The urban layers, the footprint of each society, can in part be identified in the urban form. The city is a mirror of the people that inhabit it and have inhabited it: their values, culture and history. To understand the city, it is essential to examine its history*** (Kristjánsdóttir 2).

Unlike previous chapters which have taken a theoretical approach to the question of ethnic palimpsest, this chapter takes stock of the traceable vestiges still evident in Bay Ridge today. After more than forty years of palimpsesting the neighborhood still bears the mark of a proud Norwegian heritage. Throughout, my argument has been that traces reveal themselves through various sources: in photographs, newspaper writings, literature, buildings, landscapes - urban or otherwise, and in memories. When processing the remaining testimonies a twofold perspective unfolds; we get a clear picture of the Norwegian settlement as it was in the past – and at the same time we see elusive traces of this settlement today. The first perspective far outshines the other, but it is the second perspective which is of interest, for its sum reveals the state of this community and its function today.

This chapter furthermore presents a community in palimpsest as it emulates the lifecycles we so often recognize as universal. Just as human lifetimes have cycles, so also the life of a neighborhood, a city, even a country tends to be cyclical. Hoping to reflect these cycles - birth, life, aging and death - and the affiliations a lifespan tends to produce it seems logical to start our search for traces at the Norwegian Hospital, which was the starting place for so many second generation Norwegian Americans in Bay Ridge. As we have seen in previous chapters the everyday-life of Norwegian immigrants and their progeny was greatly influenced by local Norwegian religious- and social institutions. The state of such organizations is of utmost value to the examination of today's Bay Ridge colony.

In his study of small Jewish communities in Canada Sheva Medjuk, discusses the importance of "institutional structures that support ethnic identification". Recognizing the works of Breton and Pinard on ethnic relations he writes:

> The greater the extent to which an ethnic group has its own structures to serve the needs of the group, the more likely the group is to be able to maintain a high sense of group identification and to counter integration into the larger host society" (Medjuk).

According to Medjuk, Breton calls this "institutional completeness, that is, the degree to which the ethnic group can provide for its own needs from within the community" (Medjuk). For nearly a century the Norwegian American colony was able to provide a well-functioning network for its members and Breton's and Medjuk's theorizing is helpful in understanding the lifespan of this particular colony: "If an ethnic group can provide all services to its members, such as education, work, and entertainment, its membership is less likely to seek these services within the larger host society" (Medjuk). As we continue our search for traces we visit the Norwegian home for the aging and our study ends at Brooklyn's largest cemetery. In a sense both places become metaphors of the final stages of a life as well as a community.

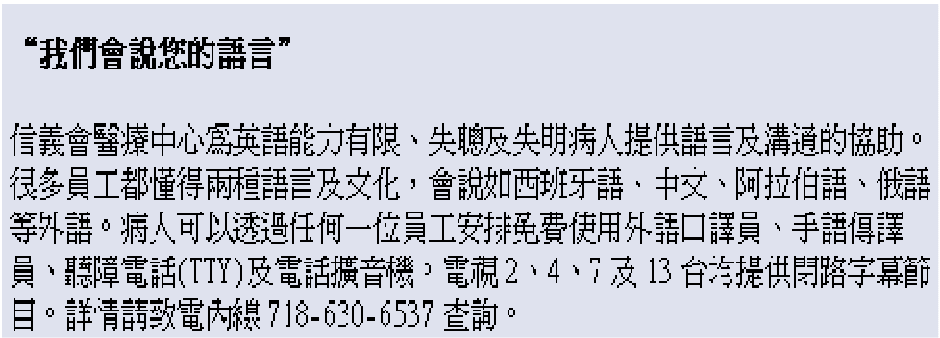
The Hospital – A Point Of Departure

Approaching the information desk at the Lutheran Medical Center I immediately detected that characteristic accent I was so accustomed to hearing while growing up in Bay Ridge. "***Er du norsk*",** I chanced? The reply was spontaneous – "***Ja!***" Edith Rasmussen is a volunteer at the Medical Center and has been for the last 14 years. She came to Brooklyn in 1952 from Haugesund and like most Norwegian Americans in the community she quickly became a member of a local Norwegian Lutheran church (Our Savior's) as well as the ***Færder*** Sons of Norway lodge. Rasmussen's sentiments about present-day Bay Ridge proved reconcilable with those of other Norwegian Americans I had spoken to since my arrival: Brooklyn was not

the same, but there were still Norwegian Americans left and they were still involved in the various community services historically initiated by Norwegians. My search for Norwegianness at the hospital had brought me to Edith Rasmussen and now she suggested I talk to Bonnie Olsen, Administrator for Voluntary Initiatives.

Bonnie Olsen is married to a Norwegian American from Brooklyn. After living in Brooklyn for years they moved to the suburbs, but maintain their ties to the community through involvement at the hospital, family and friends. "When I go to the shopping district it's astounding the changes that have taken place. Last time my husband went he was amazed at how far into the 70s the Arab community had permeated", she says. "Growing up, most of his friends were Norwegian" (Personal Communication). [1]

One hundred years ago Sunset Park was home to Norwegian immigrants; "today, Lutheran Medical Center serves new immigrant groups," Olsen explains. "Demographics have changed, but the mission is the same, to provide care for the sick and the poor" (Ibid.). In 1883 the majority of those "sick and poor" were Norwegian immigrants; today, sixty percent of the hospital's patients are Puerto Rican Americans. The community is home to immigrants from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, China and Russia. Lutheran Medical Center is reaching out to new ethnic groups with new cultural needs and different languages. "We Speak Your Language", says the sign. English, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Russian are among those languages – Norwegian is not.


"我們會說您的語言"

信義會醫療中心爲英語能力有限、失聰及失明病人提供語言及溝通的協助。很多員工都懂得兩種語言及文化，會說如西班牙語、中文、阿拉伯語、俄語等外語。病人可以透過任何一位員工安排免費使用外語口譯員、手語傳譯員、聽障電話(TTY)及電話擴音機，電視 2、4、7 及 13 台均提供閉路字幕節目。詳情請致電內線 718-630-6537 查詢。

[1] Here, the 70s is in reference to the street numbers in this neighborhood.

خدمات لغوية واتصالاتية

"تكلم لغتك"

يلتزم مركز لوثرين الطبي بتقديم المساعدة في اللغات والاتصالات للمرضى الذين لديهم قدرة محدودة في تكلم وفهم اللغة الإنكليزية، وللمصابين بالصم والعمى. يتميز كثير من موظفينا بثنائية اللغة / ثنائية الخلفية والثقافة، ويتكلمون لغات مختلفة منها الأسبانية والصينية والعربية والروسية. ويتوفر مجاناً عن طريق الاتصال بأي موظف لرعاية شؤون المرضى كلاً من خدمات المترجمين الشفهيين ومترجمي لغة الإشارة، وأجهزة هاتف "نص الكلام" TTY ومكبرات الصوت. كما تتوفر شبكة نص الكلام المغلق ("كلوزد كابشن") على أقنية التلفزيون 2 و 4 و 7 و13. للحصول على مزيد من المعلومات يرجى الاتصال بالتحويلة رقم 718-630-6537.

Courtesy of www.lutheranmedicalcenter.com

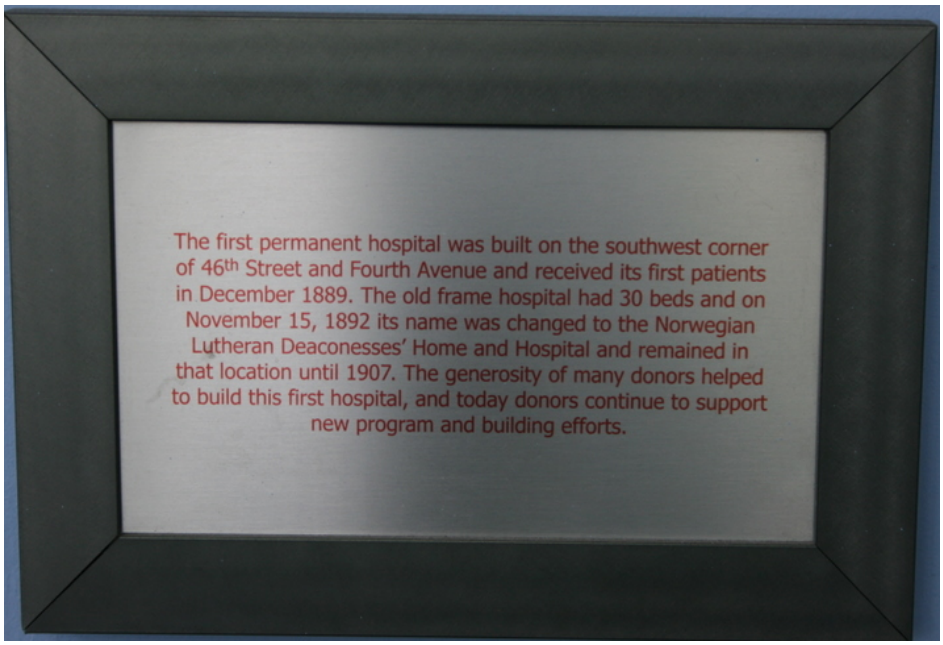
Nine ambulatory centers including Brooklyn-Chinese Family Health Center and Caribbean-American Family Health Center attest to the ethnic changes Norwegian Americans have witnessed. And yet, during my brief visit with Olsen she was able to introduce me to two more volunteers of Norwegian descent while speaking warmly of the hospital's recent attempt to reintroduce its Norwegian heritage to the community and celebrate its origins accordingly.[1]

Festspill – proudly presenting Norwegian heritage.
Courtesy of Lutheran Medical Center.

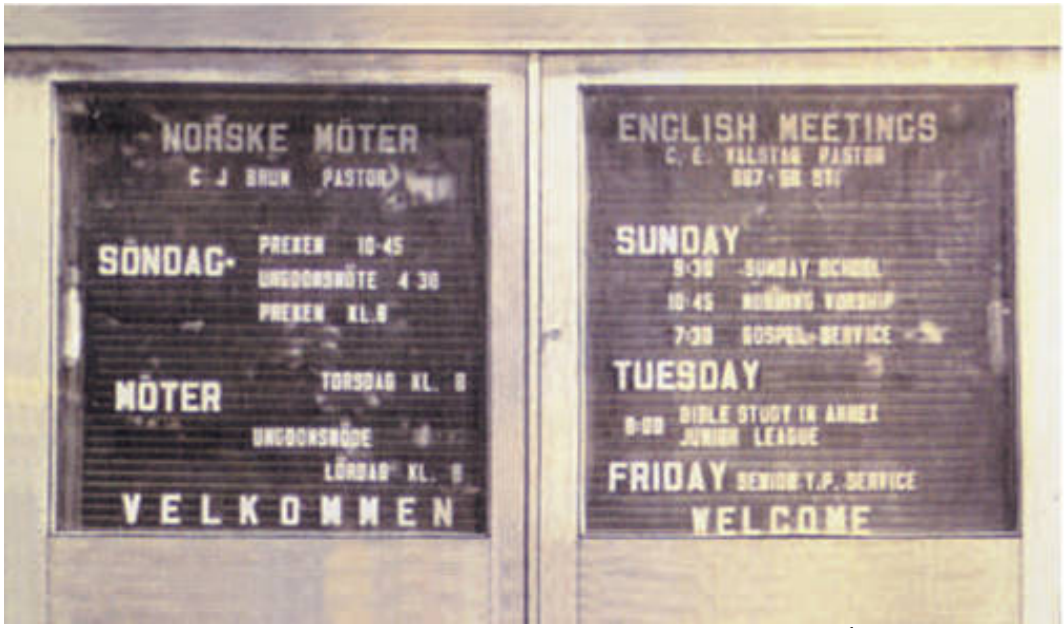
She recalls that, "one day during ***festspill*** a high school boy from a catholic boy's school was in line for ***vafler*** and ***syltetøy.*** I overheard him telling his friend about waffles so I asked if he had tasted Norwegian waffles before. He explained that his girlfriend was of Norwegian descent and that he was very familiar with Norwegian foods" (Olsen Personal Communication).

[1] In 2006 Lutheran Medical Center held ***festspill*** to highlight the hospital's Norwegian history and heritage. This is planned as an annual event. ***Festspill*** focused on the history of founding of the hospital by Norwegian immigrants, Norwegian ethnic foods, music and national costumes.

Yes, the hospital has changed its name, but its history cannot be changed. Among a myriad of ethnicities, signs such as a continued involvement by Norwegian Americans, ***festspill*** and sporadic encounters with Norwegian sounding employees and volunteers may very well go unnoticed, but they are still the traces of ethnicity that I had come searching for.



Plaques at Lutheran Medical Center offer a synopsis of the Norwegian heritage of the hospital. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)



This is how I remember the bulletin board at First Evangelical Free Church (66th Street) during the 1960s. Photo: Courtesy Greta Lafayette and NIA, <http://niaresearchcenter.cdmhost.com/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p3002coll2&CISOPTR=50&REC=19>

Church – Still the Center of Social and Religious Activity

Ethnic facilities such as the church play an important role in preserving and maintaining ethnic identity. Medjuk refers to Lenski, Sklare and Greenblum and the theory that "ethnic life has two major components: one that revolves around the group's religious institutions, and another that revolves around the communal, non-religious life of the group" (Medjuk).[1] Along the same lines Eugene L. Fevold discusses the importance of the church and church-life for Norwegian immigrants to the US.[2] As has often been the case the article focuses on immigrants to the Mid-West, but Fevold holds that although not all Norwegian immigrants came under the religious-ethical influence of the church, sizable numbers did. Even those families not formally affiliated with a particular church were within the sphere of the churches (Fevold). The same seems true of the Bay Ridge community, where church tended to be a

[1] Gerhard Lenski, ***The Religious Factor*** (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1961), 36-37 and Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, ***Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in the Open Society*** (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1979).

[2] Fevold delivered his paper: "The Norwegian Immigrant and His Church" at the triennial meeting of the Norwegian-American Historical Association in May, 1966. <http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume23/vol23_1.html>

cohesive institution, not only the immigrant churches but also the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

The same is reflected in Stanley Johannesen short story "The Last Norwegian Restaurant in Bay Ridge". When Johannesen fictionalizes the role of church affiliations he does two things. For one, he points to the abundance of churches and denominations:

> There were in Bay Ridge, State-Church Lutherans and Free Church Lutherans. Norwegian Salvation Army and Norwegian Baptists. Norwegian Pentecostals and Norwegian Methodists. And this is painting with only the broadest brush strokes: People freely went to meetings of all the others… Each of the regular sort of churches had out-riggers, in the form of missions, in which there was a certain circulation of people from every kind of group. Even the state church had a church-within-the-church that operated the well-known Seamen's Church … (7).

Secondly, he emphasizes the lifelong commitment church affiliation represented to Norwegian Americans:

> I have discovered in people I meet from the old days in these Norwegian Pentecostal circles, a fierce loyalty to their membership and to one another. It was in fact a belief, an article of their creed—one that separated Scandinavian, and particularly Norwegian, Pentecostals from all other Pentecostals—that once you were a member of a 'local church' (this was our term), you could never be a member anywhere else… You carried membership with you for life. And to this day, people regard themselves as members of a church which does not exist any more, whether or not they attend another church, or even believe much of anything any more (9).

Yet, more importantly Johannesen recognizes the ethnic succession which takes place in urban immigrant communities. In the following excerpt he describes the ethnic palimpsest of another immigrant group which was highly visible in Bay Ridge during the 1940s and 50s; a group which, similar to Norwegian Americans, also had strong ties to the church.

> Naturally the social processes of the city in the last forty years have transformed O.L.P.H [Our Lady of Perpetual Help]. As the Irish died off or left, the priests acquired Spanish names. O.L.P.H. got re-named Nuestra Dama de Socorro Perpetuo, and upgraded by special dispensation of the Pope from ***iglesía*** to ***basilica***. The great Romanesque porch now echoes to the tap-heels of little brown girls in first-communion dresses, while in the lower chapel, a small remnant of the Irish, now bent and elderly, are ministered to by their own priest, himself elderly, in a soft Irish murmur (6,7).

The similarities between congregations such as the Irish Catholic Our Lady of Perpetual Help and today's dwindling Norwegian American congregations in Bay Ridge are obvious. Surely, this is the destiny of many northern European immigrant churches. One participant of a Bay Ridge internet discussion group recognizes these changing demographics as well when he writes:

> The congregations of a lot of these Bay Ridge churches are very elderly, dwindling and dying off. I notice the Danish Lutheran church on Ovington is now Arabic and that the Plymouth Church on 77th Street on Fourth is Korean, and Christ Church Bay Ridge has oriental signs up as well outside ("Community: It's official" 1).

Ethnic palimpsest occurs at many levels. When ethnicities change so does the urban landscape. For one, buildings change hands:

I grew up in a Norwegian Pentecostal sect in Brooklyn… Salem, the larger of the two Pentecostal churches… met first in a rented hall above shops on Fifth Avenue. Then it occupied a former nickelodeon on Seventh Avenue and 54th Street, and then a Jewish Reformed Temple on Fourth Avenue and 54th Street, whose congregation had moved elsewhere. (The Jews kept the community hall next door, until they sold it to Puerto Rican Adventists; while the Jews remained we could hear klezmer music through the wall during prayer meetings (Johannesen 8)

The construction of a new church building for the congregation at ***66 Street kirken*** (FEFC) began October 14th 1962 and was finished in April 1963. Due to the Gowanus Expressway and the Verrazzano Bridge the original building was torn down. The new church was designed with two separate wings to accommodate two full congregations (the Norwegian and the English departments). Original photo hangs in the sanctuary of what was once the Norwegian department of the church. In the background is part of Leif Ericson Park. Photo: Source unknown, Courtesy of First Evangelical Free Church.

Today, the First Evangelical Free Church (66th Street) is spiritual home to various immigrant congregations The largest one being Chinese. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

In the 1940s and 50s Norwegian immigrant congregations were still expanding whereas today churches like Trinity Lutheran and First Evangelical Free Church (FEFC) in Bay Ridge are opening their houses of worship up to new congregations with new heritages to preserve. Fifteen years ago the reading room at ***66 Street Kirken*** was still bustling. When the church celebrated its 90th Anniversary in 1988 there was still a sizeable Norwegian department. In the anniversary pamphlet ***90 Years and Growing*** we read:

> The Norwegian department continues to serve the still large Scandinavian community in Brooklyn and the greater New York area. It is probably the strongest Norwegian ministry in the region. Its Sunday afternoon fests draw large numbers from throughout the metropolitan area, including Long Island, New Jersey and Connecticut.

The various ethnic congregations at 66th Street Church use a variety of different languages, including a limited amount of Norwegian among Norwegian Americans who remain in the community. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

Once a flourishing Norwegian immigrant church the 59th Street Church (Lutheran Brethren Church) offers today's congregation Sunday services in Chinese, Cantonese, Mandarin and English. The only indication that this was ever a Norwegian immigrant church is in fact the few remaining Norwegian Americans who maintain this as their church home. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley.

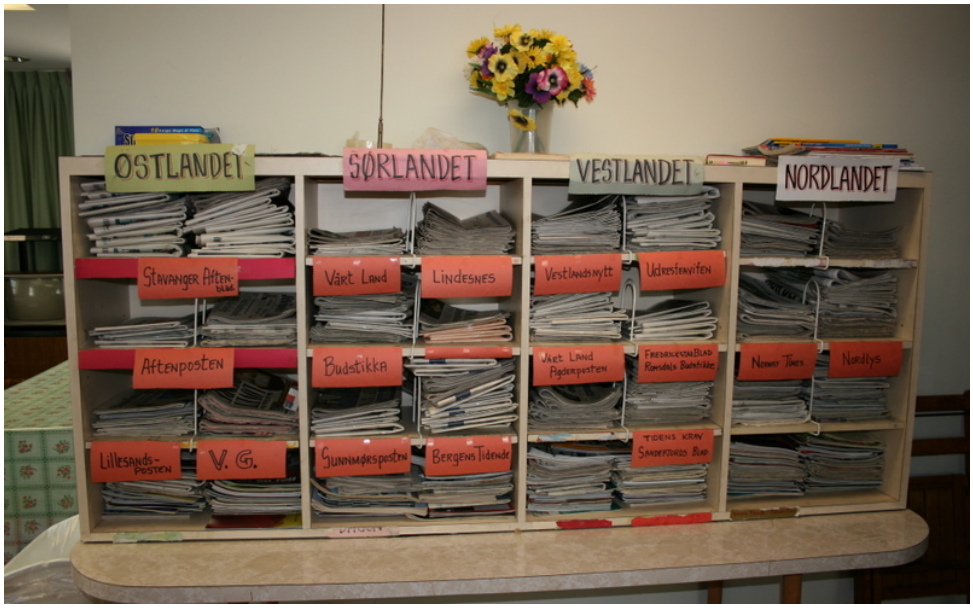
The Norwegian ministry also covers the greater metropolitan area through a weekly radio broadcast, and through an international, short-wave broadcast, to Norwegian sailors all across the Atlantic and as far as Norway. The Norwegian Radio Ministry just celebrated its 25th year of outreach. Twice weekly the Norwegian Reading Room draws dozens of people for fellowship (9).

Today, Norwegian American Norma Andreassen does well if she can gather a dozen Norwegian American Brooklynites for coffee on a regular Tuesday or Thursday at the reading room. Even during this year's "festgudstjeneste" on the eve of "syttende mai" there were no more than 50 persons attending, a dramatic decline from the 1960s and 70s. And yet, for the faithful this is still a place where heritage is nurtured. The remnant of this immigrant society still congregates their churches and spends their time and money supporting church affairs. To them, church still functions as an important religious and social institution. However, for purely pragmatic reasons their allegiances seem to have shifted; today many of the remaining

Setting off the foreign signage outside ***66.Street Kirken*** a time-weathered, familiar sign welcomes Norwegian Americans to the reading room for ***andakt***, news from home and to just ***slå av en prat.*** Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007).

Norwegians attend the 66th Street Church since it maintains a Norwegian reading room and aims at inviting Norwegian speakers twice a month (a goal which, according to respondents, seems harder and harder to meet).

A typical Tuesday at ***leseværelset*** (***66. Street Kirken***). Here, the fusion of things Norwegian and American is easily spotted and extends to such things as menu, décor as well as language. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007).



Keeping up on Norwegian national and local news is still an important means of maintaining one's cultural heritage. The reading room at First Evangelical Free Church was started as a substitute for the reading room at the Seamen's Church after it relocated to Manhattan. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

New York and Brooklyn in general and Bay Ridge in particular have been crisscrossed with the tracks of Norwegian activity.[1] These tracks are slowly being covered by the footprints of others. But, as we see, somewhere beneath the surface the original tracks remain. At some point in time Norwegians covered the tracks of those before them, or as Eleanor Sollie pondered: "Norwegians must have displaced someone when they first came to Brooklyn" (Personal Communication). Signs of ethnicity can be found everywhere. The choice of flowers in a garden (Italians have contributed fig trees and grapevines to the backyards of Brooklyn and in our own backyard in Bensonhurst there were grapevines left by the previous owners(photo: courtesy John and Ruth Aalborg)), language and music; they all help to identify "who was here before". Sometimes one has to know the signs to be able to detect them, but according to Jerry Krase they are there (Personal Communication). Born and raised in Brooklyn he has spent his entire life in the borough. Through his work as a sociologist specializing in ethnic groups he still remembers the Norwegian flavor of Bay Ridge and how his mother preferred to buy Norwegian baked goods at Norwegian bakeries: "They were known for their high quality. If people had a little extra money to spend they would go to the Norwegian bakeries," he reminisces (Ibid.). In his opinion, every ethnic group has a legacy they leave behind: "This is part of what older Brooklynites will remember about Norwegians: they were hard working and quiet people, upholding a clean and safe neighborhood" (Ibid.).

[1] This phrasing is borrowed from art critic Lawrence Alloway and his discussion on mass culture in ***The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*** where he speaks of a "symbol thick scene, crisscrossed with the tracks of human activity" (quoted in Menking).

Eat, Drink and Be Merry – Life in Bay Ridge

From its beginnings just north of Sunset Park, the Norwegian colony expanded into Bay Ridge. Bound together by origin and culture, the New York Norwegians made the neighborhood their own. They opened stores and restaurants, built churches and founded fraternal organizations, social clubs and philanthropic institutions. Odd Lovoll claims that historically, Norwegians have proven to be among the most ethnocentric groups of immigrants in America. He argues that the reasons for such ethnocentricity are largely traced back to Norway's relatively recent sovereignty (Lovoll, ***Promise Fulfilled*** 10). Raymond Breton's idea then of "institutional completeness" may not offer a comprehensive explanation of the complex mechanisms at work in ethnic communities. However, in terms of the everyday, it does identify certain traits which make it easier to understand the role of immigrant communities in preserving the heritage of its members.

Leif Ericson Park after the parade "syttende mai" 1960.
Photo: Courtesy of John and Ruth Aalborg

Norge Travel Bureau, 8104, 5th Ave. This picture was taken in 1991. Photo: Courtesy of Peter Syrdahl and NIA. <http://niaresearchcenter.cdmhost.com/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p3002coll2&CISOPTR=67&REC=15>

These days the store front houses a pawnbroker. Photo: Everett Halvorsen (2007)

When historian David Mauk documented the early immigrants of Brooklyn in ***The Colony That Rose from the Sea*** he lists chronologically the many institutions and associations

that were founded between 1874 and 1910 (232). The list includes religious, cultural, medical, social, economic and political groups which all created a haven for Norwegian ethnicity. By the 1950s religious and social institutions were still playing a vital role in the community. However, in 2007 the list is very different as many institutions have outplayed their role in a dwindling community. Needs have changed and new organizations are being founded to ensure that these are met. There is still a desire to stay connected to one's Norwegian heritage and there is still a drive to be visible in the community. Let us look at some of the societies and organizations that are still sustaining this ethnic community and fulfilling the need to belong to a group.

A common denominator for most contributors to this thesis is the sensibility that Brooklyn was a good place to grow up and a good place to live. Although Norwegian Americans contributed to the greater community; worked in American businesses, went to American schools and enjoyed American popular culture, they also reaped the benefits of their encapsulated community within a community. In Bay Ridge they were free to be Norwegian as well as American, and for the most part contributors to this study agree that they have had the best of both worlds:

> Ever since arriving to the United States this country has been exceptionally good for my parents, accepting them, providing work and opportunities to them. Providing me, the son of poor, hard working parents an opportunity to go to college in appreciation for my serving the nation during the war. Letting me grow up in a "Norwegian" ghetto and become successful far beyond the dreams of my parents (Thompson Questionnaire).

By far, Thompson's sentiments are representative of most respondents who see their own generation as having benefited by grandparents' or parents' decision to immigrate. This also

coincides with historians' claims that in the colonies of "Brooklyn, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Seattle, Norwegians interacted with the multi-cultural environment of the city while constructing a complex ethnic community that met the needs of its members" (Lovoll "Norwegian Americans"). Eleanor Sollie typifies this generation Norwegian American. She was born in the Norwegian part of Brooklyn by Norwegian-born parents. In fifth grade her family moved to Westchester, New York, but the family returned regularly to participate in church and social activities in Brooklyn. Sollie returned to Brooklyn to go to nursing school and has since then had her carrier at the Norwegian Christian Home. Today, living in the heart of what was once considered Norwegian Brooklyn Sollie knows at least 17 families of Norwegian descent in her apartment building alone.

Those who joined the community as young adults during the 1940 and 50s found their social lives enriched either by church or by an exciting array of social activities, or both. Dancing at the Finn Hall or the Danish Club became a popular pastime for many, and the romantic relationships begun at such venues were considerable. Whether at work or play the local community provided an outlet for most interests among ethnic Norwegians. In addition to churches and dance halls there were folkdance societies, ski clubs, soccer clubs; all of them replicating life in Norway.

The society most frequently listed in my questionnaire as prominent in Brooklyn during the 1950s, 60s and 70s is the fraternal benefit society Sons of Norway. In 1975 Norwegian King Olav V visited Brooklyn to mark the 150th anniversary of the first organized emigration from Norway to America. Reporting for the ***New York Post***, Peter Freiberg concluded that although many had moved away over the years the King found that Norwegians retained a strong presence even though they were a minority in the middle class community: "Those who remain in Bay Ridge include a high proportion of senior citizens. Still there are enough left of all ages to maintain five Sons of Norway lodges in Bay Ridge,

Norwegian singing and folk dancing societies and an array of other cultural clubs" (Freiberg). According to Sons of Norway's official records there have been ten lodges in Brooklyn dating back to 1911 when Færder was founded. Today, Færder and Brooklyn are the only two left. Until recently Færder owned their own building but due to a steady decline in membership the property was sold and as with Brooklyn Lodge they now rent. Interestingly, both lodges rent from Scandinavian societies; the Swedish Sporting Club Gjøa and the Danish Athletic Club, which have deep roots in the community.[1]

Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

What's in a Name?

Resident Norwegian Americans have put their stamp on Brooklyn in other ways too, and the naming of public spaces is specifically interesting since it represents traceable vestiges of the Norwegian presence. Still, it is important to note two things: firstly, that it is only when we recognize the traces as uniquely Norwegian that we are able to place them in a larger context. Secondly, that these traces may at any time be changed by the influences of new ethnic groups who have the same desire and need to create a conceptual space of their own, a space which resembles their old home as much as possible.

[1]This indicates that there is still a tendency to support the traditional ethnic community. It should also be noted that newer lodges such as Nansen on Staten Island are still maintaining a fairly high level of activity. Wherever Norwegians moved as a group they tended to plant new affiliates in order to construct comparable social networks to the ones they left behind in the original churches and societies.

Fredheim Café during the 1950s. Courtesy of anonymous lender to NIA. <http://niaresearchcenter.cdmhost.com/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p3002coll2&CISOPTR=37&REC=7>

The Atlantic Restaurant in 1970. Courtesy of SECM. <http://scandinavian-museum.org/8avepics/source/atlantic.htm>

To underestimate this would be to reject the importance of emulative surroundings and the significance placed in a name – the ***Atlantic*** and ***Fredheims*** of the past, the ***Taj Mahals*** and ***Great Walls of China*** of today. But, Norwegian heritage has had an even greater impact on the more lasting landscapes of urban Brooklyn, not only the fleeting storefronts along Fifth and Eighth Avenues.

A tangible mark on a community is the naming of buildings, parks, squares, streets and roads. In a sense they become the incarnations of the Little Norways and Little Italies

Courtesy of Forgotten NY, "Street Scenes". A series of apartment buildings on 57th Street between Second and Third Avenues in Sunset Park feature chiseled names with Scandinavian themes above their doors.
<http://www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/norwegians/norway.html>

people conceptually live in. Gustav Court[1], Skansen and Viking are all names of apartment buildings in Brooklyn. Clearly they attest to a general Scandinavian heritage rather than a purely Norwegian one, nevertheless, they point to one of the many ways immigrants put their stamp on a neighborhood. On occasion the name assigned to a building may even alert later generations as to a street's original name in the past ("Leifs").[2] From Sunset Park to Bay Ridge these buildings and others like them testify to (ethnic) palimpsest. That Sunset Park had a thriving Scandinavian settlement, that the Finns of Finn Town introduced the first cooperative housing projects and that a part of the neighborhood once was known as Little Norway are historical facts which find representation in the vestiges these groups left behind.

In some way the urban spaces of Brooklyn bear the visible marks of its inhabitants, from the flowers in a garden to the walls around a front yard.[3] Every ethnic group has contributed to the amalgam of facades which comprise the streetscapes of Brooklyn. As early as 1914 the Norwegian community in Brooklyn was creating their own legacy. Some historians have suggested that the early Norwegian immigrants felt at home in Brooklyn because of its proximity to the sea, others point to its rural qualities. Certainly, today's Brooklyn looks nothing like Brooklyn during the 19 century. However, even today it is clear that Brooklynites guard the green lungs that do exist, and some may very well exist due to homesick Norwegians' desire to emulate Norwegian landscape.

In 1925, Norwegian community leaders in Bay Ridge persuaded City Hall to create a new public park on five vacant, city-owned blocks from Fourth Avenue to Fort Hamilton Parkway between 66th and 67th Streets. The land had been named for Ericson and according to New York City Department of Parks & Recreation "a crowd of 15,000 attended the park dedication, at which Mayor John F. Hylan, Norwegian Consul General Hans Fay, and ***Nordisk***

[1] Gustav Court is located at 86th Street in Bay Ridge <http://www.forgotten-ny.com/SIGNS/apartmentnames/housenames.html>

[2] According to <www.forgotten-ny.com> buildings in Brooklyn were sometimes named after the street. Today, certain street names have since been changed and the names of the buildings mean little to passers-by.

[3] See Jerry Krase's article "Visualizing Ethnic Vernacular Landscapes".

Tidende editor A.N. Rygg spoke" ("Valhalla"). It would take nine years before the Department landscaped and equipped the park and another five before Norwegian Crown Prince Olav V would dedicate a monument to Leif Ericson at the Fourth Avenue entrance. Even today, the park still features a Norse theme in honor of Leif Ericson "and the local Scandinavian-American community" ("Valhalla").

Photo: Courtesy of Forgotten NY, "Street Scenes".
<http://www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/lief/lief.html>

More than eighty years later, in 2007, 1.4 million dollars was allocated to a complete renovation of the park preserving and enhancing its Norse theme ("Playground").

The importance of Leif Ericson as symbol of a Norse heritage to the Scandinavian population and Norwegian immigrant community is further evident in their tireless efforts to have a parkway named after the discoverer. In 1969 the City Council acknowledged the large Scandinavian population in Bay Ridge by renaming Shore Parkway Leif Ericson Drive ("Leif Ericson"). For as long as they stand parks, roads, streets and buildings are monuments of the

contributions of ethnic communities. They belong to the residents of a community and in time these residents are displaced or replaced by new ones. Today, Leif Ericson Park and Square are shared by multifarious groups and the layers of ethnicity are rapidly changing. One example is the first annual Arab American bazaar: "Three years ago, the City of New York designated July 9th through 16th as Arab American Heritage Week. This year, the Arab-American Association and the Arab-American Muslim Federation decided to mark the occasion in Bay Ridge with a Bazaar, held at Leif Ericsson Park" ("First Annual").

Courtesy of Forgotten NY, "Street Scenes" <www.forgotten-ny.com/STREET%20SCENES/lief/lief.html>

This is what defines ethnic palimpsest. When Norwegian Americans take their children to Leif Ericson Park today they know their children will be sharing the playground with immigrants from around the world. And yet, the park can still symbolize that connection to the past that their forebears were trying to recreate.

Keeping up on News

In connection with ***Nordisk Tidende***'s 75th anniversary in 1966, Karsten Roedder's two volume "saga" provided a year by year account of the main events, lead stories, reader discussions and general concerns that had been allotted space in the immigrant paper during this time period. Explaining the importance of such an account Roedder writes:

> Life as it is lived by a Norwegian group of people in America has yet to be the focus of sociological academic studies. A newspaper which is published by and for such a group must be seen as part of the source material for this kind of study. In part, the history of a newspaper also becomes the history of a group (Roedder 4, translation mine).

The function of an institution such as the immigrant press is manifold, and yet there seems to be a general consensus that it has been and still is an important part of every day life for most ethnic groups. Fevold argues that, "[n]ext to the church the immigrant press was one of the more influential social forces. One area where the church seems to have exerted little direct influence but where the press was powerful was in the shaping of political views" (Fevold). Although he is referring to the early immigrants of the late 1800s one may assume that the immigrant newspaper ***Nordisk Tidende*** also had a certain influence on the lives of its readers. How the paper's political agenda's directly influenced its readers and the ethnic community is itself a worthwhile study. However, for our objective it will suffice to point to the paper's unifying effect through its use of Norwegian which bonded Norwegian immigrants, its function as bridge between the old country and the new, as outlet for ethnic celebration and in the capacity of creating a haven for Norwegian culture and heritage extending far beyond the boundaries of Brooklyn.

The importance and role of immigrant newspapers has been of recurring interest to scholars because of its bearing on questions such as "community, identity and incorporation" (Blau 21). Three main views acknowledge immigrant newspapers as either:

1. "a mechanism of social control in ethnic communities" which helps to accelerate assimilation.

2. an affirmation of "national origins by allowing groups to maintain ties with the old country and, thereby, to assert their identities in a diverse, and sometimes, chaotic, new environment."

3. serving welfare needs for new immigrants, such as supplying them with practical advice and with assistance about housing, jobs, and schools to ease the transition to America (Ibid.).

There is no major contradiction as to the aims of these three strategies, only in their approach, for all of them focus on easing the immigrants meeting with the host country. The immigrant press has had different functions at different times for various ethnic groups in various places. For our objective it is more interesting to note the importance immigrant papers may have had in the lives of immigrants, especially how they changed to accommodate an ever changing group of readers.

The first Norwegian American newspaper was published in 1847 and by 1946 Norwegian American scholar Olaf Morgan Norlie listed 570 Norwegian immigrant publications in ***Norwegian-American Papers 1847-1946*** (Tolfsby).[1] The number increased steadily until a decline set in during World War I. Today, only two Norwegian American papers remain, ***Norway Times*** and ***Western Viking.*** According to my respondents ***Nordisk Tidende/Norway Times*** is the Norwegian American newspaper read by those who still keep up on ethnic news: in response to the question, "Have you/do you subscribe to any Norwegian (Norwegian American) newspaper?" More than half of those asked reported subscribing to ***Nordisk Tidende*** or ***Norway Times.*** This indicates that both papers – the original version and its transfigured (palimpsested) version – have been important to individuals as well as the community.

[1] National Library of Norway hosts the website ***The Promise of America*** which is a joint venture between Oslo College–Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Sciences, National Library, Oslo Division and National Library, Rana Division, as well as Norwegian Emigrant Museum and Hamar Norwegian Directorate for Public and School Libraries. The website is home to The National Library's Norwegian-American Collection.

The most obvious signs of ethnic palimpsesting in relation to ***Nordisk Tidende*** were connected to language and of course the eventual name change. The shift in language from Norwegian to English began as early as World War I. According to Judith Gabriel Vinje the war lead to a sharp decline in the use of foreign languages among immigrants, including Norwegian, and all over America "the number of Norwegian-language newspapers dropped correspondingly" ("Loyal Citizens"). However, tenacious Norwegian Brooklynites held on to their language and when the 1917 presidential order requiring "all editors of non-English periodicals to file an English translation of all political stories and editorials with their local postman" ***Nordisk Tidende*** complied and demonstrated "an entire community's unswerving loyalty to the United States, as well as a determination to preserve and maintain the language and culture of its readers" (Ibid.). When immigration from Norway dwindled to a trickle, during the 1920s and 30s, the Norwegian language "declined with the passing of each generation … but not in Brooklyn" (Ibid). During World War II the newspaper saw a substantial increase in circulation as "Nordisk Tidende became the semi-official mouthpiece of the Norwegian resistance and the exiled government" (Vinje, "Norway hearts"). By 1946-47 the Brooklyn Norwegian immigrant community was at its largest "but as the community dispersed during the post-war decades, the paper changed, extending its coverage and its readers in all directions, from coast to coast. By the end of the 1960s, Nordisk Tidende – Norway Times – was becoming a national publication" (Vinje, "Big City").

My mother takes me for a stroll in Bay Ridge in 1962. In the background is ***Nordisk Tidende*** at their 5th Ave. location, blocks away from the 66th Street Church. Photo: Courtesy of John and Ruth Aalborg

In 2007 the building still stands but is now home to a car dealership. Photo: George Hansen (2007)

By the 1980s the shift toward English had resulted in the majority of articles being printed in English. Today the paper is primarily in English with one page allotted to Norwegian:

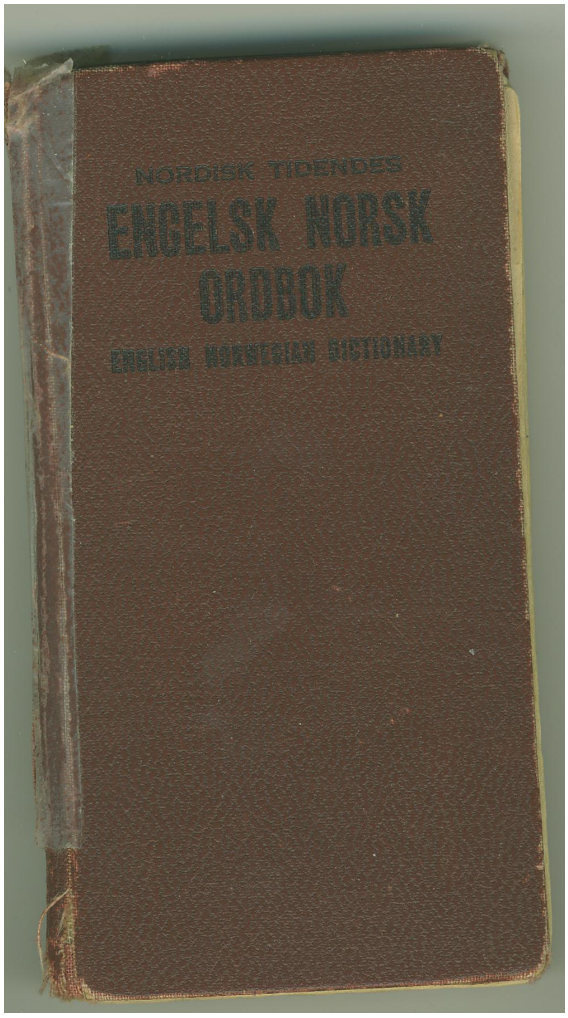
> Norway Times has reflected the changing needs of its readership over the years. While the use of the Norwegian tongue gradually fell into disfavor among the younger generations, for the immigrants, the language had been vital, expressing the way they thought, and evoking thousands of unexpressed memories (Vinje, "Rescuing Treasure").

Nordisk Tidende and ***Norway Times*** were influential in the collective lives of a community such as Norwegian Bay Ridge, but also in the individual lives of hundreds of thousands of Norwegian Americans.

> …the early Nordisk Tidende was a colorful, integral part of the tapestry woven by the immigrants, recording milestones in their lives, and fostering the growth of the community. It was a re-assuring bridge to the homeland at the peak of immigration; and it has gone on, week after week, decade after decade, to connect new generations with their living heritage. And it is still thriving as a vibrant cultural treasure, read by Norwegians and Norwegian Americans throughout the continent-readers who, like the editors and journalists who put it out, go about their lives "with Norway in their hearts (Vinje, "From Seaboard").[1]

Whether serving as guide to American life for "those stepping off the ship more than 100 years ago with their wooden trunks", as mouthpiece for Norwegians on both sides of the Atlantic during World War II or link to Norwegian heritage for "today's jet-setters

[1] "With Norway in their hearts" was a term coined by sociologist Christen T. Jonassen. Based on Jonassen's research Norway Times writes that "Norwegians became assimilated, proudly adopting American ways and watching their children forego much of the mother tongue, they went about their new lives 'with Norway in their hearts,' a phrase that summed up, the blend of memories and sentiments that they experienced on the deepest level.



Worn and torn - my parents' pocket dictionary. The dictionaries were Norwegian-English/ English-Norwegian and were published by the Norwegian News Company, ***Nordisk Tidende***

with their lap-tops" ***Nordisk Tidende*** now ***Norway Times*** has adapted to the needs of its readership. The issues discussed, the language used, even the people working at Norway Times today reflect these changes. Editors of the past include names such as Emil Nielsen, Andreas N. Rygg, Hans Olav Tønnesen, Carl Søyland and Sigurd J Arnesen. Today's editor-in-chief is Marianne Onsrud Jawanda whose name suggests the ethnic diversity that more and more Norwegian Americans are part of as new generations marry outside the ethnic group. Some may disagree with my conclusion that there are still traces of Norwegianness in Brooklyn, especially if relying only on the responses of informants who have been encouraged to reminisce about yesteryear. When standing at the intersection of Bay Ridge past and Bay Ridge present it is easy to conclude, as one respondent does, that: "Eighth Ave. is gone, the last to go was Halvorsen's Funeral Parlor" (Willumsen Questionnaire). And yet the same respondent agrees that there is still a sense of community among Norwegian Americans who remain in Brooklyn. When we are willing to scratch the surface we find that there still exists a vestige of things Norwegian in Bay Ridge. Today, stepping into Norway Field to watch a soccer game played by the Gjoa Norsemen, or recognizing the Norwegian name of 24 year-old goal- keeper Karl-Anders Knutsen; reading about the Norwegian Federation's donation of 80,000 dollars toward

<http://soccerpatch.com/NY/P_SCGJOANY.html>

building a soccer field for underprivileged children in Red Hook in 1994, all resound the presence and preservation of Norwegian culture and heritage (Cooper).[1] Even dinner at the Danish Club, where Norwegians still relish the home-cooked ethnic foods of their forebears, affirms that their cultural heritage is still being embraced.

The Sporting Club Gjøa, 17th of May 1962 in Bay Ridge. Founded in 1911 the club still plays a key role in the Bay Ridge community. Photo: Courtesy of SECM

[1] A list of Gjøa players traveling to compete in Norway in 1931 contains such names as: Nils Andersen, Fin Carlsted, Gunnar Endresen and William Enger: <http://www.sover.net/~spectrum /year/1931.html>. In 2007 a random list of youth players proves that remnants of Scandinavian ancestry still exist, but that palimpsesting is evident in the choice of American first names: Preston Norgaard, Tyler Larson, Brody Danielsen, Thomas Arend, Kara Hanson etc.
<http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:YhmQqJUh3HsJ:mitchellparksandrecreation.com/programs/soccer%2520teams%2520%26%2520practices07s.pdf+GJoa+Fall+SOCCER+TEAMS+%26+PRACTICE+SCHEDULE+2007&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1>

Sporting Club Gjøa during Norwegian Day Parade 2007. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley

The Golden Years

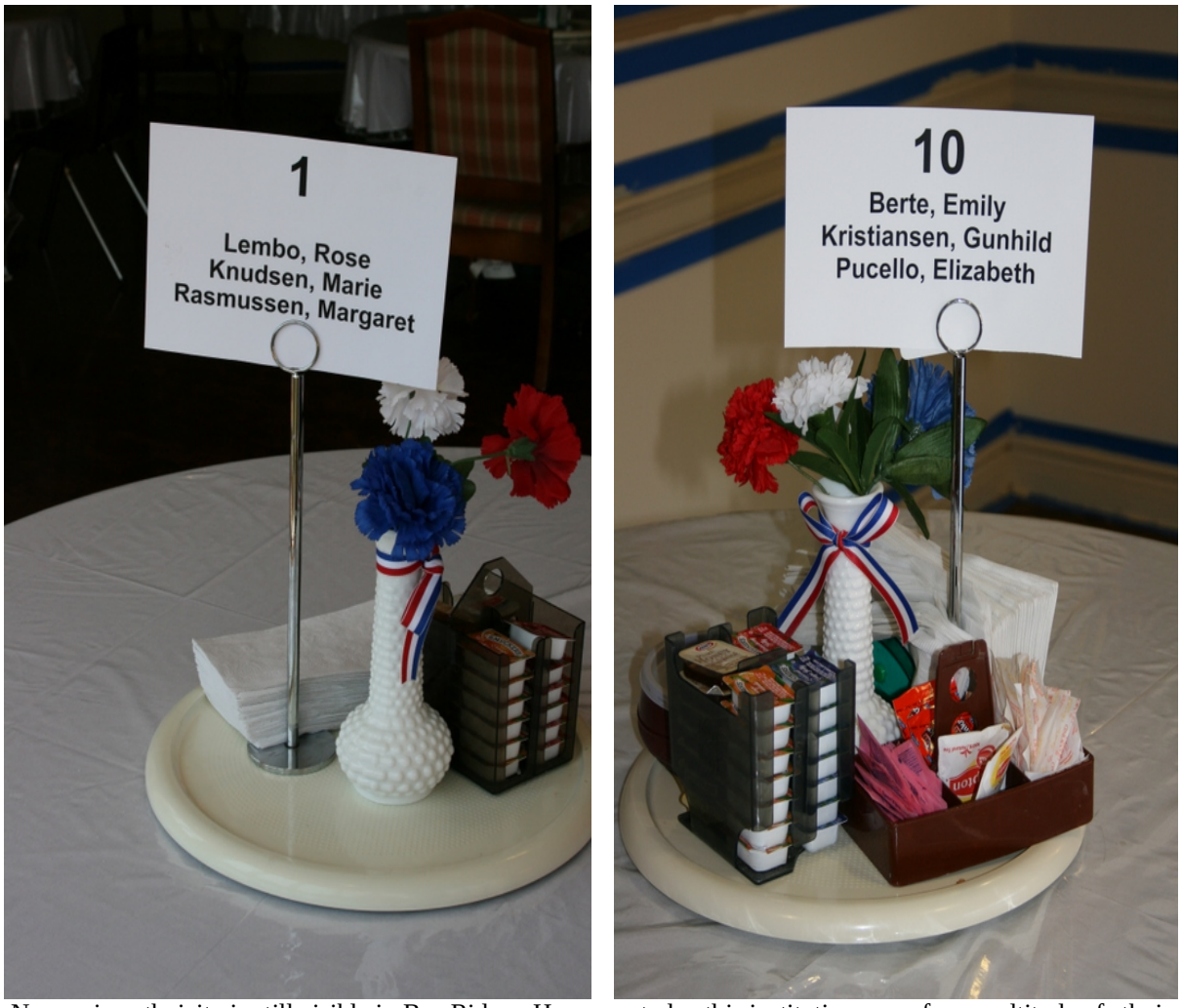
NCHHC web banner at <http://www.nchhc.org/>

Stepping into the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Center it is hard not to acknowledge its distinct Norwegian feel. Here, vestiges are apparent and not concealed. Norwegian handicraft, paintings of Norwegian landscapes, the Norwegian flag and Heritage Hall's celebratory exhibit welcomes visitors to a place where the memories of Norway are intertwined with the contemporary realities of America. Leaving Norwegian in the name is another indication that Norwegian heritage is being preserved here.

From small beginnings accommodating five elderly Norwegian women, today the home is a modern facilty serving a multicultural community.
Courtesy: <www.nchhc.org>

The home was opened in 1903 and began taking care of a small group of elderly women. In 1911 the home was opened to men and the name was changed to the Norwegian Christian Home for the Aged. In 1973 the present name was adopted and today, the ever changing ethnic composition of Brooklyn and Bay Ridge is reflected in both staff and residents. Nevertheless, the Fossen's and the Askeland's confirm that Norwegian ancestry

still exists. Seated between the Pucello's and Lembo's Norwegian Americans are spending their remaining years where they've spent their lives.



Norwegian ethnicity is still visible in Bay Ridge. However, today this institution cares for a multitude of ethnic groups. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

The volunteers here, as at the Norwegian hospital, are oftentimes of Norwegian descent: name tags with Bergman, Larsen and Johansen indicate as much. In 2003 the home opened its facilities to parts of the 2000 Ellis Island exhibit and thus became instrumental in the growing initiative to contextualize, preserve and display Norwegian cultural heritage in Bay Ridge and the greater New York. This musealizing is one more way of reversing a sense of loss by creating new spaces of representation.

Gathering memories: Heritage Hall at the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Center (NCHHC).
Photo: Courtesy of NCHHC

By the mid-1970s restrictive immigration laws and an increasingly prosperous Norway was phasing out any new arrivals to Brooklyn and the United States. An exchange program for Norwegian nursing students organized by Eleanor Sollie while she was Director of Nursing at NCHHC was eventually discontinued. Nevertheless, the Norwegian Christian Home still participates actively in maintaining its ties to Norway. In collaboration with the Norwegian Immigration Association, the Norwegian Seamen's Church, Sons of Norway lodges and other Norwegian American organizations Heritage Hall quite regularly becomes the scene of cultural events with performances by visiting Norwegian performers.

All in all Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn continue to be involved in what they consider their own community. They still belong to the immigrant churches and Sons of Norway lodges. They continue to volunteer their time at the Lutheran Medical Center or the Norwegian Christian Home and Health Center. They sponsor the Scandinavian East Coast

Museum, the Leif Ericson Society and they march in the 17th of May parade. Some maintain the connections of their Norwegian roots through regular visits to the old country, others through the Seamen's Church in New York. They attend exhibits at Scandinavia House in Manhattan and rekindle their roots through folk societies or taking lessons in "rosemaling". Like Doris Holvik Jensen who discovered "rosemaling" on a visit to Norway during the mid-1970s. Upon perfecting her skills she started teaching the technique and went on to become president of the Mid-Atlantic Rosemaling Society (Brown 1). In 1995 the exhibition "Norwegian Folk Art: The Migration of a Tradition," opened at the Museum of American Folk Art in Manhattan. At the time it was deemed the most comprehensive assemblage of Norwegian folk art ever presented (Rief 1). According to museum director Gerard C. Wertkin: "[i]n Norway, contemporary folk art is a rarity. In America, where folk art has mostly been the product of a middle-class society, it continues to thrive (quoted in Rief 1). Guest curator Marion John Nelson explained: "The emphasis in the folk art revival in America is not so much on creation as on re-creation" (in Rief 1). "While folk artisans don't directly copy anything, they cling to the past in their search for a personal identity" (Ibid. 1). Accordingly, ethnic palimpsesting is evident in folk art; particularly rosemaling has proven to be an area characterized by fusion. In her report from the exhibition Rita Rief wrote:

> Increasingly, Norwegian-Americans are experimenting with changes in folk art, Mr. Wertkin said. This trend is most apparent in the production of rosemaling (pronounced RO-seh-mah-ling), the exuberant, vivid paintings of flowers on wood, a 19th-century craft that resembles the earlier painted French tinware called tole. So far, he said, artists are uncharacteristically combining flowers and techniques from different parts of Norway in a single piece ... While folk art does travel with immigrants, sometimes it fuses traditions with striking results: Anderson's pheasants look more like American decoys than anything Norwegian, and the chip-carved surface of a 1991 wooden bowl,

> by Miles V. Lund of Boise, Idaho, was inspired by the painting on an Acoma Indian pot … One form of expression mirrors another cultural form. Maybe that's what American folk art is all about (1, 2).

Whatever approach Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn are taking to preserve their heritage they are seeking to retain the uniqueness of being of Norwegian descent, and yet the expression of that heritage takes on the coloring of the cultures they share their surroundings with.

Examples of rosemaling at Heritage Hall. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007).

"More than a century after Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur posed the question: what then is the American, this new man? A lesser know Romanian immigrant, Marcus Eli Ravage answered the question by describing immigrants in what has come to be accepted as a more realistic analysis of the problem of acculturation (102):

> The alien who comes here from Europe is not the raw material that Americans suppose him to be. He is not a blank sheet to be written on as you se fit. He is not sprung out of nowhere. Quite the contrary – he brings with him a deep-rooted tradition, a system

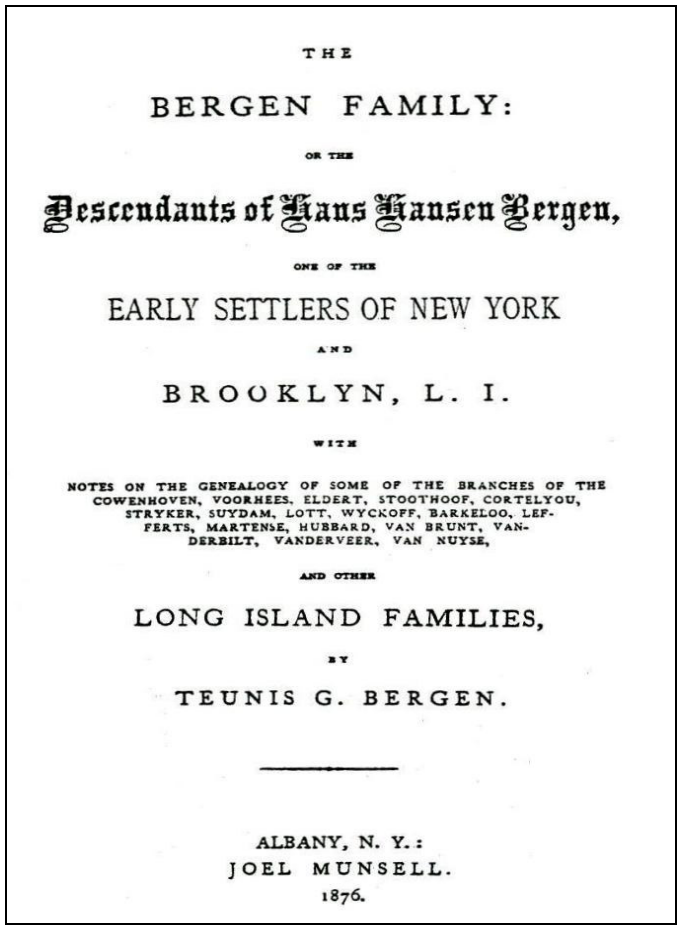
of culture and tastes and habits – a point of view which is as ancient as his national experience and which has been engendered in him by his race and his environment (Ibid.)

A Final Resting Place - Green-Wood Cemetery

The symbolism of a cemetery came to me as I walked among the thousands of tombstones in Green Wood Cemetery. It came to represent the end of a journey – the end of a journey for me because it was the last place I planned to look for traces of Norwegian's existence in Brooklyn, and the end of a journey for the thousands of Norwegian immigrants before me, because it represents their final resting place. Hoping to find some last visible traces of Norwegianness the cemetery seemed an emblematic terminus for my journey through Norwegian Brooklyn.

Note the typical Italian name Pettorino in the background. Italians and Norwegians have lived side by side in ethnic enclaves throughout Brooklyn, but for the most part they did not mingle. Also, note the name Myers on the Martinsen family tombstone which indicates intermarriage and ethnic palimpsesting at some point in time. Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007).

Upon arrival at the nearly 478-acre burial grounds my hopes of finding any significant number of tombstones with Norwegian-looking names seemed dismal considering that more than half a million individuals are interred there. Yet, in minutes I had found my first inscription – a trace of Norwegian presence dating back to 1876. According to historians the town of Breuckelen was chartered in 1646 by the Dutch West India Company. The earliest signs of Norwegian settlement in Bruekelen and New Amsterdam date back to 1633 when Hans Hansen Bergen arrived from Holland after having emigrated from Bergen, Norway. Also, in 1646 there are records of Claes Carstensen marrying in New Amsterdam. Both received ***Noorman*** as a middle name to distinguish that they were ***Norwegan***. When Hans Hansen Bergen married the Dutch Sarah Rapelie in 1636 the Bergen family palimpsest began.[1]



THE

BERGEN FAMILY:

OR THE

Descendants of Hans Hansen Bergen,

ONE OF THE

EARLY SETTLERS OF NEW YORK

AND

BROOKLYN, L. I.

WITH

NOTES ON THE GENEALOGY OF SOME OF THE BRANCHES OF THE COWENHOVEN, VOORHEES, ELDERT, STOOTHOOF, CORTELYOU, STRYKER, SUYDAM, LOTT, WYCKOFF, BARKELOO, LEFFERTS, MARTENSE, HUBBARD, VAN BRUNT, VANDERBILT, VANDERVEER, VAN NUYSE,

AND OTHER

LONG ISLAND FAMILIES,

BY

TEUNIS G. BERGEN.

ALBANY, N. Y.:
JOEL MUNSELL.
1876.

[1] Information on Hans Hansen Bergen has been gathered from various sources on the internet, among them: The Ancestors of Maria Hoagland <http://www.stipak.com/hoagland/maria/MariaHoagland.HTM>, <http://ohler.com/FamilyTree/ps01/ps01_061.html>, <http://www.concentric.net/~pvb/GEN/hhb.html>.

FIRST GENERATION.

1. HANS HANSEN BERGEN, the common ancestor of the Bergen family of Long Island, New Jersey and their vicinity, was a native of Bergen in Norway, a ship-carpenter by trade, and removed from thence to Holland. From Holland he emigrated, in 1633, to New Amsterdam, now New York, probably arriving at Fort Amsterdam in April of that year with Wouter Van Twiller, the second Director General, in one of the vessels of the fleet, consisting of

Courtesy of <http://www.concentric.net/~pvb/GEN/bergen.pdf >[1]

Unfortunately, attempts at establishing whether John S. Bergen and the DeHart family are direct descendants of Hans Hansen Bergen and Sarah Rapalie have been unsuccessful. What can be established though is that inter-marriage between Norwegian, Dutch, French, German and other immigrant groups during the early years of settlement in Breukelen created palimpsests that are still being overwritten today.
Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007).

[1] More on the genealogy of Hans Hansen Bergen can be found at: <http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:dZK6nukGJyEJ:www.u.arizona.edu/~terp/genealogy.html+Hans+Hansen+Bergen&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=5.>

Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007).

Immigration and ethnic palimpsest are both the result of any ethnic groups' movement from one place to another, whether it is geographical or conceptual. Oftentimes, it is the deep-rooted wish to be unique and insulated which is at the core of enclaves in urban communities. Paradoxically, that same desire is relinquished once and for all when we are laid to rest alongside the very neighbors who seemed so foreign to us. . At Green-Wood palimpsesting is in a sense suspended in a moment, for there will be no rewriting of these headstones. Weathering may erode their surface but they will not be overwritten.

Conclusion: "Nothing is Absolutely Dead: Every Meaning will have its Homecoming Festival."[1]

> ***Time in its irresistible and ceaseless flow carries along on its flood all created things and drowns them in the depths of obscurity...But the tale of history forms a very strong bulwark against the stream of time, and checks in some measure its irresistible flow, so that, of all things done in it, as many as history has taken over it secures and binds together, and does not allow them to slip away into the abyss of oblivion (Comnena 1).***

Perhaps our perspective of the past needs readjusting. Perhaps, instead of thinking of the past as that which is gone, we should think of it as that which has passed by on the continuum of time; that which still exists. This would broaden our perspective as we sift through the countless sources of information available to us. Certainly, it would enable us to see one immigrant group's history as a continuation of the one before and a prelude to the ones to come. To the outsider it may seem as though the Norwegian colony in Brooklyn is gone. Closer to the truth, perhaps, would be to suggest that the colony has taken on a new role in the lives of Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn, Greater New York and along the Eastern Seaboard. Today, it is a junction where the past meets the present, where memories are welcomed and memorializing is encouraged. Today, Bay Ridge is a place where Norwegian Americans come to celebrate their roots, whether they make the trip from Long Island every Friday to stock up on Norwegian favorites at Nordic Delicacies or return from New Jersey once a year to celebrate the 17th of May.

A dominant theory in urban sociology literature on immigrant incorporation is how ethnic enclaves and ethnic neighborhoods provide a "port of entry" or "context of reception" for newcomers in order to facilitate incorporation into the host society. In this regard the Norwegian American colony in Brooklyn has outplayed its role and yet it is clear that there is still a need for the supportive social networks that an ethnic community can provide. Members may no longer need survival language skills or help finding accommodations or

[1] From ***Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*** (Bakhtin 170).

jobs, but they do need to belong to and to have a sense of community. Some of the colony's former institutions have managed the transition from being culturally monolithic to becoming culturally pluralistic, others have not. Some have expanded their outreach to include the surrounding community. Others, such as the reading room, remain a vestige of Norwegian culture, albeit an Americanized one. New organizations emerge and seem to focus on that broader, conceptual community. Today Scandinavian East Coast Museum and Norwegian Immigration Association aim to preserve Norwegian (American) culture in Brooklyn.

To Norwegian Americans within the community this is still home, physically, spiritually and sometimes even conceptually (as home away from home (Norway)). It is still a haven for ethnicity, but today Norwegian Americans in Brooklyn commemorate their ethnicity in diversity: "we co-exist with new groups of immigrants including Palestinians, Russians, Chinese, Polish, Mexican and older groups of hybrid Americans whose roots hail from Germany, Italy, Ireland and others" (Hofmo, "Why?"). Although the settlement's core membership is substantially reduced, those who have stayed are vigorous in their efforts to keep the history of "Norwegians in Brooklyn" alive through exhibitions and educational programs (Ibid.). Faithfully, they observe and memorialize a culture and an era no longer conspicuous.

Change is inevitable in any society. It is a fact of life and is indeed crucial to the preservation of life. Ultimately, stagnation represents death. Ethnic communities in Brooklyn are constantly changing, from the inside out as well as from the outside in, and, for each change the palimpsest becomes more layered. Where changes are embraced, or at least accepted, metamorphosing can result in such inclusive venues as the Norwegian hospital, the home for the aging and the new multi-ethnic churches originally founded by Norwegian immigrants. Some say the Norwegian ethnic community is gone - lost forever. I say it is not. Instead, it is merely an era in the history of this colony which has passed. Certainly, the

pattern of settlement among Norwegian Americans in New York has changed, but not the sense of community among them. Although some have retired to other parts of the country their roots, their loyalties and their hearts remain in Brooklyn. Kåre (Kaare) Jacobsen captures these heartfelt loyalties when he describes the sentiments of more than 200 Norwegian Americans, who converge in Boca Raton in Florida every winter:

> We are bonded for life via confirmation, via teenage years, via our Norwegian heritage. And each Wednesday evening in a club house with over 200 folding chairs we meet to sing and fellowship so it does not stop. We are all hooked and the glue that binds is mostly our heritage in the Norwegian Colony of Brooklyn (Questionnaire).

The colony exists. It exists in the minds and the memories of each of my respondents, those who stayed and those who have left. It exists to the people of Lista whose own history is so steeped in this particular community, and to everyone who has ever had a connection to the colony. Certainly it exists as part of the history of Brooklyn. It exists because the past can never be lost. It may be forgotten for a while, but it can be conceptually recalled, retraced and retrieved.

All research is bound by variables, especially when dealing with human experience. This thesis indicates tendencies rather than definite conclusions. Here, it provides an image of Brooklyn filtered through the eyes of many, colored by perspectives, language and memories, but where opinions coincide and sameness appears a pattern takes form. Consistencies add validity to findings, yet still I choose to view the inconsistencies of my research as validating. For one, they remind us that we are dealing with people, their lives and their memories. Secondly, the notion that life is complex and that the memories of immigrants and their progeny reflect this complexity adds a certain depth to what must be

seen as a thesis barely scratching the surface of a multiplex immigrant community. It would be erroneous to suggest that all respondents have been in absolute agreement as to the importance of the Brooklyn colony in their own lives or well as the lives of their parents. Just as it would be wrong to claim that everyone has a romanticized, nostalgic memory of the community. To view the Norwegian American colony or any other immigrant community as unified and in one accord would be an oversimplification. Variable responses should hardly be interpreted as negative toward heritage. Instead they reflect the dichotomy that exists within any person and any community. Yes, there was cohesion, social bonds and networks that made it easier and most often a good place to grow up and make a life for oneself, but history also reveals aspirations to move out and to shed one's heritage. For some the boundaries of Bay Ridge were too constraining, as for Liz Andresen: "I never thought that Brooklyn was a destination, even when I was young. It always seemed to me to be a stopping place on the way to something better" (Questionnaire). Andresen's parents came to America in 1958 looking for what she calls: "a new life and a decent future for the kids. (Ibid.). Job advancement took them from Brooklyn to New Jersey and later to upstate New York. Today Andresen lives in Manhattan and has this to say about staying in touch with her roots: "I have never really been involved in the Norwegian community. In fact I know very few Norwegians!" (Ibid.). She has no affiliation with Norwegian American institutions; she has not found it important to keep up on current events in Norway and therefore does not subscribe to any Norwegian American newspapers. Yet, when asked if she is proud of her Norwegian heritage, whether it is important to her, and if she fills in her ancestry on the US census form she writes: "Yes, yes and yes!" (Ibid.).

One informant whose Norwegian father married outside the ethnic group explains how he chose to hold on to very few aspects of his heritage. Basically, her knowledge of things Norwegian limit themselves to memories of sporadic gatherings with the Norwegian side of

the family, a few stories from her father's childhood, a few bland Norwegian recipes and a vocabulary of two or three Norwegian words. And yet, in a small box in her bedroom she treasures the few photos and yellowed letters he left behind. They are pictures of his family in Norway and an old letter from his grade school teacher when he first moved to America at the age of nine. Aware of how much these meant to him they have taken on special meaning in her life as well. They have become a link to his past and to her own heritage. Just as the ebb and flow of immigrant waves is constantly shifting so also the idea of what constitutes a true American identity is being constantly redefined. Having moved away from the historical notion that ethnicity is something to be overcome, today's immigrants are more likely to find acceptance for holding on to their own cultural heritage while embracing that of America. Obviously, assimilation need not mean loss of ethnic pride since ethnicity means different things to different people, and how we choose to deal with our cultural heritage varies. For sure, the list of respondents who openly express pride in their heritage is much longer than for those who do not.

Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

Significantly, Brooklyn Norwegians often moved in groups, recreating the affiliations and organizations of the Brooklyn enclave and forming what we might call satellite communities. The link to Bay Ridge was strong, especially since so many had left parents, grandparents, friends and church family behind. Gravitating toward Brooklyn became an important way of staying connected to ones cultural heritage. Along with the core membership's strong resistance to forgetting the past, connections such as these are, in my opinion, what sustain the colony today. We see then that

community is not necessarily restricted to place, but can accommodate constituents according to their needs at different times and in different places.

I submit that there can be no conclusion to this study only that this ethnic community is retraceable through the lives and efforts of its members; the constructions, social institutions, place names, parks, and memories that they have left behind. A quick look in the phone book under any Norwegian name reveals that Norwegian ethnicity is still alive. Some names have been Americanized (palimpsested) for the sake of pronunciation but their origin is plain to see: Myhre, Tonnesen, Svennevik, Berentsen og Gustavsen. Today, uncovering the layers reveals a colony much changed but still viable. It reveals a community still contributing to the ethnic palimpsest called Brooklyn and to that great experiment called America. In the future we may have to peel away more than one layer of this palimpsest, but it will always be possible to read the life stories of the men and women who made Brooklyn their home but who kept Norway in their hearts.

Photo: Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007)

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire 2003[1]

Appendix 2: Questionnaire 2006/7

Appendix 3: Consent Form

Appendix 4: Original quotes translated in text

[1] Questionnaire 2003 was the original questionnaire answered by informants for a term paper in Professor Luebbring's class "The Immigrant Experience". The source material for this thesis is based on both questionnaires, and some respondents have answered both.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire: The immigrant experience! Norwegian immigrants in Brooklyn during the 1950's, 60's and 70's (and today).

1. When did you first come to the US (if you were born in the US, when did your parents come?
2. Where did you (your parents) come from in Norway?
3. What was your purpose for coming (money, new life, adventure…)?
4. Did you stay with relatives/friends when you first came?
5. Did you have a job waiting for you before you came?
6. Did you have contacts that were able to help you find work?
7. Did you seek out the Norwegian community in Brooklyn?
8. Did you become involved in the "Norwegian" community, if so how?
9. What Norwegian-American organizations were most prominent in Brooklyn when you lived there?
10. How long did you live/have you lived in Brooklyn?
11. If you have moved, what were the reasons for moving out of Brooklyn?
12. To your knowledge, did many of the Norwegian immigrants move out of Brooklyn during the 60's and 70's?
13. Do you know why they moved and to where?
14. If you moved, did you stay involved in Norwegian-American activities in spite of moving?
15. Which Norwegian-American institution has mean the most to you, and why?
16. Have you/do you subscribe to any Norwegian (Norwegian-American) newspaper?
17. Has it been important for you to keep updated on current events from Norway?
18. Do you visit Norway? If so, how often?
19. Are you proud of your Norwegian heritage?
20. Has the preservation of your Norwegian heritage been important to you? If so, how did you go about this preservation (e.g. speaking the language, going to Norwegian-American/Lutheran church, Sons of Norway, etc)?
21. Has it been hard to "stay Norwegian" in America? If so, why?
22. Have you felt like an immigrant during your years in America? If so, how?
23. Do you feel that being Norwegian has had a positive effect on your life in America? If so, how?
24. Do you consider yourself to be American or Norwegian, or perhaps Norwegian-American?
25. In your opinion, what does it mean to be American?
26. What has "the American dream" meant to you?
27. Do you feel that you and other Norwegian immigrants of your time have achieved "the American dream"?
28. Do you have anything you would like to add to this questionnaire?

Please feel free to reminisce about "the good old days", or in other ways comment on issues which might shed light on the immigrant experience in Brooklyn. This might in turn add valuable information to this research project. Finally, thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Name:
Date:

Appendix 2:

Questionnaire – Master' s thesis for Vivian Aalborg Worley (2007):
Retracing the past; the Norwegian presence in Brooklyn - uncovering the layers of an ethnic community "in palimpsest".

Part I: Your/your ancestors personal background

1. When did you first come to the US (if you were born in the US, when did your parents/grandparents, etc. come?).
2. Where did you (your parents/grandparents, etc.) come from in Norway?
3. What was your/their purpose for coming (money, new life, adventure…)?
4. Did you/they stay with relatives/friends when you/they first came?
5. Did you/they have a job waiting for you/them before you came?
6. Did you/they have contacts that were able to help you/them find work/living accommodations, etc?
7. Did you/they become involved in the Norwegian community and in Norwegian American activities in your new community? If so, which ones?
8. What Norwegian American organizations were most prominent in Brooklyn when you/they lived there?
9. How long have you lived/did you live in Brooklyn?
10. If you have since moved, what were the reasons for moving away from Brooklyn?

Part II: Ties to Brooklyn and to your Norwegian heritage

11. To your knowledge, did many of the Norwegian immigrants move out of Brooklyn during the 60s and 70s?
12. Do you know why they moved and to where?
13. If you moved, did you continue to stay involved in the Norwegian community in Brooklyn in any way? If so, how?
14. Which Norwegian American institution(s) have/has meant the most to you, and why?
15. Have you/do you subscribe to any Norwegian (Norwegian American) newspaper? If so, which one(s)?
16. Has it been important for you to keep updated on current events from Norway? If so, why?
17. Do you visit/have you visited Norway? If so, how often?
18. Are you proud of your Norwegian heritage and is it important to you? For instance, do you fill in your nationality on the US census form; do you mention to others that you are Norwegian, etc?
19. Has the preservation of your Norwegian heritage been important? If so, how did you go about this preservation (e.g. speaking the language, teaching it to your children, going to Norwegian-American/Lutheran church, Sons of Norway, etc)?

Part III: ethnic palimpsest and preserving ethnicity

20. If you have moved away from Brooklyn, have you ever been back? If so, when, and on what occasion(s)?
21. Apart from the common nostalgic feelings of being back in a familiar place, what thoughts, feelings or emotions did your visit bring to the surface?
22. Had ***your*** Brooklyn changed? If so, how?
23. Despite these changes, were you able to see any traces of ***Norwegianness*** in the area? Were there things, such as buildings, streets, stores, etc. that reminded you of a ***Norwegian era*** in Brooklyn (the Norwegian presence) even though things had changed?
24. In your opinion, is the history of Norwegian immigrants to NY, and today's Norwegian Americans in NY (particularly Brooklyn) important in the broader contexts of Norwegian and American history?
25. How do you believe these histories are best documented (literature, museums, exhibits, word of mouth), and is such documentation important/valid?

Part IV: reflections on being (Norwegian) American

26. Has it been hard to ***stay Norwegian*** in America? If so, why?
27. Have you felt like an immigrant during your years in America? If so, how?
28. Do you feel that being Norwegian has had a positive effect on your life in America? If so, how?
29. Do you consider yourself to be American, Norwegian, or a little bit of both (Norwegian American),
30. In your opinion, what does it mean to be American?
31. What has ***the American dream*** meant to you?
32. Do you feel that you and other Norwegian immigrants of your time have achieved ***the American dream***? How?
33. Do you have anything you would like to add to this questionnaire? Please feel free to reminisce about ***the good old days***, or in other ways comment on issues which might shed light on the immigrant experience and ethnic palimpsest in Brooklyn. This might in turn add valuable information to this research project. Finally, thank you for taking the time to answer this questionnaire.

Name:
Date:

Appendix 3:

Consent form

To whom it may concern:

Before you answer this questionnaire it is important that you read this letter of consent so that we are in agreement on how the information I gather will be handled. It is important that you are aware of, and feel comfortable with, the fact that what you write in this questionnaire will be used in a Master's thesis at the University of Bergen. The information will be used to shed light on the Norwegian colony in Brooklyn and the retracing of its past.

My endeavor is to see if there are identifiable remnants of what was once a strong Norwegian ethnic community in Brooklyn, NY. Hence the title: **Retracing the past; the Norwegian presence in Brooklyn - uncovering the layers of an ethnic community "in palimpsest".** A ***palimpsest*** is a manuscript page, scroll, or book that has been written on, scraped off, and used again. The word palimpsest comes through Latin from two Greek roots (***palin*** + ***psEn***) meaning "scraped again." For the purposes of this thesis the idea of ***ethnic palimpsest*** is used in a figurative way and relates to the layers within all ethnic communities, and how such layers can tell us about the past. In ethnic communities these layers change with each ethnic group, but are they lost? This is the question. Also, there are certain feelings connected to ethnic changes in a community, be it the change of restaurants, stores, churches etc. For this thesis it is important to see how such changes have been internalized by Norwegian Americans who have lived, or still live in Brooklyn.

It is important that we agree, ahead of time, that any information although it is recognizable to others may still be disclosed (unless otherwise agreed upon). Should you want parts of the material generalized and made unidentifiable it is important that you clarify this ahead of time. Should we agree that certain materials or statements are of a sensitive nature they will be handled with the utmost care, and will be anonymitized. Should you prefer total anonymity then it is important that you let me know this ahead of time, as well. It is my personal opinion that it is expedient to all research that facts be presented, but first and foremost when such facts are directly relevant to the research at hand. It is also important that there be a mutual sense of trust between an interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, should you have any hesitations as to the use of materials or statements you have provided, it is important that you feel free to let me know this as soon as possible. This is especially important if you are uncomfortable with being accredited certain quotes. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that quotes and information can be anonymitized so that they are still

able to be used, but cannot be traced back to one person. Thus, we are able to use the information and make the contributor anonymous.

This in mind, it is my opinion that this Master's thesis, in general, does not deal with sensitive materials so there should be no need for anonymity. It is still important that we both are aware of our roles as interviewee and researcher. When we agree to work together we both agree to show mutual respect toward one another and to trust that whatever information we work with will be treated with the utmost respect. As a researcher, it is important for me to remember that I am asking you to talk about your memories, and that these memories are important to you. Sometimes, your memories will coincide with other people's memories and sometimes your memories will be unique. Hopefully, your memories, together with other informant's memories, will shed light on an important period in the history of Norwegian Americans in New York.

Whenever this project is finalized it is my wish to store all materials (transcripts, audiotapes, written materials etc.) in the archives of the Department of Art History and Cultural studies. In this way, should there be any interest in using these materials for a doctoral dissertation at a later date, it will be possible to do so. All persons who have access to the archives are sworn to confidentiality and your name will be stored separately from the questionnaire/audiotape/transcripts of interview(s). Should you object to such storage and/or any of the procedures described above, please do not sign the consent form at the end of this letter.

Finally, I wish to inform you that this project has been reported with the Privacy Issues Unit. This committee reviews the storage and reuse arrangements for identifiable personal data used in research. "The Privacy Issues Unit is to review research projects against the privacy and license requirements of the Personal Data Registers Act. General license agreements are established for the Research Council of Norway as well as the ten universities and university colleges, and for the former regional colleges."
(http://www.nsd.uib.no/english/privacy/)

Sincerely,
Vivian Aalborg Worley

Consent form:
I agree to answer the questionnaire and have my information published in Vivian Aalborg Worley's Master's thesis. I also agree that any information/materials I offer her (written, audio and photographs) may be stored in the archives of the Department of Art History and Cultural studies when this project is completed. I agree that the material gathered may also be used at a later date for other research purposes.

Signature: _____date:_____

Appendix 4:

"En kunne se det på klærne at noen nettopp var kommet til USA fra Norge...Husker en gang i 1951 at der kom en mann over til USA…Han kom jo rett fra Norge og hadde på seg alpelue, høye lærstøvler og nikkers! Folk snudde seg og så etter han på gaten. Det varte ikke så lenge før han skiftet til andre klær. Grå filthatt, dress, slips og lave spasersko." (Alexander Abrahamsen)

"Vitenskapens forpliktelse er å være sannhetssøkende og utrettelig underveis mot n yeller bedre forståelse og innsikt. Men forskning må nødvendigvis bære preg av å være usikker og risikofylt, fordi svarene ikke er gitt på forhånd, og en kan ikke vite hvilke svar en når fram til. Dersom en kjente svarene, var det ingen grunn til å forske." (Alver & Øyen)

"…men, da jeg kom til Brooklyn var det kommet så mange ungdommer fra Norge at det blev så kjekt å bli i Brooklyn. Så møtte jeg min kone og så blev det Brooklyn." (George Hansen)

"så mange spanske flyttet inn og så mange ville ikke bo sammen med dei – og så var det å flytte ut. Når det gjaldt dei norske så hadde dei lignende følelser, dei likte ikke å bo sammen med alle puertorikanerne." (Hansen)

"…dei kunne få så mye mere av hus for pengene der på landet." (Hansen)

"The American Dream var at vi kunne reise fra krigsherjete Norge og kjøpe det vi ville uten rasjoneringskort." (Aslaug Johansen)

"Det ble et helt nytt nabolag i 60-70 åra. For eksempel, det huset som vi hadde bod i var det sett gitter for vindu og dør. Vi behøvde aldri det. De Norske forretningene ble erstattet med vietnamesere og kinesere." (Johansen)

"et verk om Norge, et vakkert, moderne land." (***NT.*** 18 Aug. 1966 no.33, vol. 76)

"Livet slik som det leves i en Norsk folkegruppe i Amerika har hittil ikke vært gjenstand for sosiologisk vitenskapelige undersøkelser. En avis utgitt innen og for en slik folkegruppe må betraktes som en del av kildemateriale for denne art undersøkelser. Avisens historie blir delvis også folkegruppenshistorie." (Karsten Roedder)

"Nordmenn tror de er best i verden. Det trodde jeg også da jeg kom fra Norge i 1958. Italienerne ville vi ikke ha noe med å gjøre. Vi mente katolikkene var helt fortapt. Vi blandet oss ikke med noen andre grupperinger. Vi holdt oss mest for oss selv i våre egne helnorske grupper." (Simen Sætre)

"Snakker du med norskamerikanere som har opplevd 1950-årene, vil de huske at de kunne gå ned hele denne "streeten" [sic] uten å høre annet tungemål enn norsk. Overalt var det norske barer og butikker." (Sætre)

"Dette er mitt første Amerikaminne: Vi kom inn med Amerikabåten, og det var forretninger der, og de solgte frukt, og jeg sa til onkelen min, som bodde her fra før, at "vi må kjøpe noe frukt!". Men onkelen lo og sa: "Her i Amerika får man frukt hver dag, her." (Sætre)

“Han og kona Margit hører på norsk radio hver dag. En dag ble det meldt at det var funnet olje i Norge. Tobiasen ringte til en kamerat og sa: ’Nå begynner en ny epoke i Norgeshistorien.’ Slik begynte også en ny epoke i Bay Ridge, for straks begynte folk å flytte tilbake.” (Sætre)

“Astrid Mordal, som kom hit for 33 år siden, har kongeparet på veggen, norske møbler og blondegardiner og broderte løpere. Hun byr på hjemmebake julekake. Å være hos henne er som å være på kaffebesøk på landsbygda i Norge.” (Sætre)