

EARLY WATERFRONT For two centuries, NYC was almost exclusively maritime. This is the environment in which the city began and where the geography of the city has changed the most. Walks take place along the lower Manhattan and downtown Brooklyn waterfronts which emerged in Dutch colonial times.

If you have the time and the desire you could do both walks consecutively. In the order below they are separated by one stop on the A/C train.

Lower Manhattan

Start inside Castle Clinton (8:30AM-5PM), the War of 1812 fortification on the waterside of Battery Park (1,9 South Ferry or N,R Whitehall or 4,5 Bowling Green) and view the three historical dioramas just to the right of the entranceway. (Battery Park is under water at the beginning but filled by the second view; note landfill changes on the westside-the east side had already been filled; the changing technology of ships; elevated trains; the invention of the skyscraper; the crowding around teardrop-shaped Bowling Green.) Exit Castle Clinton and note Statue of Liberty. (What sentiments does the Statue of Liberty evoke-and for whom?) Leave Battery Park via main walkway passing the relocated World Trade Center spherical sculpture. To your left, on the waterside, is the southern edge of Battery Park City which itself is built on landfill from the original excavation of the World Trade Center. Walk to Bowling Green noting the rise in the land. From here appreciate the significance of the International Merchant Marine Co. Bldg, the Cunard Bldg. and the Customs House (F10, F16 and F20 in AIA, map on p.9) Leave Bowling Green via Whitehall St (Why this street name?) to the south, turning east (left) on Bridge St one block to Broad St. Here, in Dutch New Amsterdam, Bridge St provided a route over the Heere Gracht (Gentlemen's Canal) that the Dutch had excavated from an inlet into the Bay. Gaze up Broad St enjoying the width of the former canal that continued inland. How far? Continue along Pearl St- for the first colonists this marked the shoreline -to Coenties Alley, inspecting the archaeological exhibits. (F23 in AIA, p. 14). Coenties Slip is an example of "slips", narrow passages left for boats while the land around them was being extended by landfill. Later the slips themselves were filled as well. The area between Pearl and South Streets (including Water and Front Sts) was mostly filled between 1650 and 1800, thanks to laws that rewarded the new land to the waterfront property owners that filled it. Continue north along South St, passing Old Slip to Pier 11. (Notice how the 20th century FDR drive cuts off the waterfront much as the 19th century elevated trains cut off the waterfront in the Castle Clinton diorama.) Walk out on Pier 11 and get an idea of the places you can reach by ferry from here (Why here?) as well as the landmarks you can see. Turn left on Wall Street and walk up to Broadway noting the height and quality and owners of the buildings and the change in elevation of the street. (Wall St was the site of the wall that

defended New Amsterdam from the interior north. Why was this site chosen?} Stand in front of Trinity Church and look toward the harbor and contemplate the geographical relationship between the two. Head north on Broadway, noting the rise of land to Pine St and the drop at Maiden Lane. (Maiden Lane was a sizable stream in colonial times and beyond the Wall St wall the Dutch built). Turn right down Maiden Lane toward the water and then left (north) at Nassau St (where a weekday pedestrian mall begins- Why here?) and right again at John St. Follow John St down to Pearl St and walk on Pearl St north to Fulton St. Fulton/John marks a sharp transition in the land use of the land fill on the waterside of Pearl St. To the south, late 20th century office building towers dominate while to the north early 19th century maritime buildings are preserved in the South Street Historic District. (How are these two areas related?) Walk up Front St from Fulton to Beekman for a taste of the historic environment. and then back to Pier 17. Note the tall ships docked here for historical interest. (Tall buildings arose as tall ships were being replaced by long ones.. How are these facts related?) Go up to the waterfront third floor vista of the pavilion at Pier 17. (The outside staircases at the end of the pier are a direct route which avoids the shopping mall maze.) Enjoy the vista of the East River Bridges, the Verazzano Bridge and Brooklyn Heights perched above the BQE. If you leave by subway, the 2,3,4,5,A,C,J,M are all accessible from Fulton St between Broadway and William St.

Early Brooklyn Waterfront

Exit A,C train at High St, Brooklyn from west end of platform (near rear if coming from Manhattan). Note tile “Fulton St” sign on wall just before boarding escalator (why is train so deep?). Emerge at Cadman Plaza West. This park is a post-WW2 project which demolished the Fulton St elevated train and obliterated a stretch of Fulton St connecting the waterfront to downtown. Follow Cadman Plaza West down the hill paralleling the Brooklyn Bridge access road, then under the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) ramps. The world headquarter buildings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses sect hug the heights to the left. The Woolworth Building in Manhattan looms straight ahead.

Beyond the ramps, street signs with “Old Fulton St” appear. Continue straight ahead to the recreational pier with Barge Music (a chamber music concert venue) to the left and the River Café to the right. Plaques with history lessons are at your feet and Walt Whitman’s poetry is on the railings. Look across the East River to the lower Manhattan skyline and Pier 17 at the foot of Fulton St. Manhattan. Here was the early 19th century scheduled ferry connection made possible by Robert Fulton’s steamboat.

Access roads on BOTH sides of the river were renamed “Fulton”. Note new Water Taxi stop.

Backtrack a block and turn right (south) up the hill on Everitt St. This becomes Columbia Heights at the top. Note how the BQE at your left is assuming a layered structure. Continue on the right side to an overlook that leads to a walkway winding down to the formal Brooklyn Heights “Promenade” at Orange St. Walk the length of the Promenade to Remsen St. On your left are the backyards of homes on a block whose western side was demolished to build the BQE. The present three--layer structure of the BQE (north, south and Promenade) is an expensive compromise between the powerful Brooklyn Heights community who wanted no part of the BQE and the more powerful Robert Moses who wanted to demolish even more.

From the Promenade locate these landmasses: New Jersey, Governor’s Island, Ellis Island, Staten Island. And these structures: Statue of Liberty, Municipal Building, Woolworth Building, Jersey City Rail/Ferry terminal, Morgan-Stanley Building, 40 Pine St. Bayonne Bridge. The towers of the Verazzano Bridge (to the south) are twice as tall as those of the Brooklyn Bridge. Note the massing of newish office buildings along Water St in the foreground to the south of Pier 17 and the historic South St. Seaport buildings to the north. Look down at the Brooklyn piers now being demolished for a new park. At Montague St look down to a wooden pier with former rail access. (How did Brooklyn Heights folks get to Manhattan ferries?)

Exit west (left) at Remsen St. and view the fine brownstone houses. Look for parlor floors, stoops, above-ground basements, Some are five stories high. (Who lived here then? Now?) Turn right (south) at Hicks St. View stables and carriage houses converted to small homes in Grace Court Alley and also lower down on Hicks St. (What generally happens as you get lower?) Note the 1903 firehouse at #274 Hicks St. and the ten foot wide house at #306. Continue to Atlantic Avenue.

The original Long Island Rail Road (1830) used Atlantic Avenue as its right-of-way until it was forced off the streets and backed up to Flatbush Avenue but a narrow tunnel still exists under the street. A ferry connected Atlantic Ave. with the lower west side of Manhattan. Look west on Atlantic to the river then head east to downtown Brooklyn. The shopfronts date to the late 19th century when the ferry route was very important. The Arab community that located here was displaced by construction of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel in Manhattan. (What kind of businesses are locating here now?)

Turn left (north) on Court St. At State St view the Williamsburg Bank Bldg to the east (Why is that here?) At Joralemon St turn right (east) between Brooklyn Borough Hall

(formerly Brooklyn City Hall) and the Brooklyn Municipal Bldg. Continue down the block until you can see the beginning of the Fulton St Mall looking east across Adams St. (This section of Fulton St, part of the colonial Kings Road, heads east across Brooklyn and becomes Jamaica Ave near the Queens line.) Meanwhile, on the other side of Joralemon St., the wide walkway in the Civic Center Park to the (right) east of Borough Hall approximates the roadbed of Old Fulton St and you can follow it through parkland to Cadman Plaza West or use Borough Hall subways here.