



## The Brooklyn Literary Pub Crawl

# Henry Street Ale House

### TOAST:

### GUIDE 1:

Good Afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen, and welcome to the Brooklyn Literary Tour! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and this is \_\_\_\_\_, and we will be your guides into the literary and alcoholic history of Brooklyn. We are going to spend the next couple of hours travelling through some of the more historic neighborhoods of Brooklyn, pointing out different sites where writers lived, worked and were inspired to create. We'll hit two other pubs after this, we'll share stories of the neighborhood, the writers that enriched them, and perform some snippets of their work.

### GUIDE 2:

This is our third year doing this tour, begun in sobriety in 2013 as a walking tour, and a pub crawl in 2014 and on. This is a spin off of the Greenwich Village Literary Pub Crawl that's been running for over 17 years, begun in 1998. That in turn was a spin off of the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl, begun in 1988. There are now literary pub crawls in London, Edinburgh and other areas as well.

### GUIDE 1:

We've found that everything runs the smoothest if you head straight for the bar as soon as we get there (assuming that you want a drink) and in the meantime, we'll find a relatively quiet spot to meet. When everyone is ready, we'll give you some history of the establishment, tell you about the writers who drank there and give you a sample of their work as well.

## **GUIDE 2:**

Much of our script also comes from people on the tour that have shared their own knowledge, research, or experience, so we encourage you to chime in if you know something, or if you were “there.” Or if you are the writer we are talking about, please give us a heads up. And if you should have any questions at any time, feel free to ask either \_\_\_\_\_ or myself, preferably \_\_\_\_\_, and we’ll try to answer. If we don’t know (and it happens once in awhile) we’ll probably just make it up. No but seriously if you are dying to know or if you are writing a paper or novel on any of our topics we will do our best to find an answer for you. I just wouldn’t recommend quoting a host from a pub-crawl in your research.

## **GUIDE 1:**

Brooklyn is quite arguably one of the most famous Boroughs in the world, certainly in States. To talk of Brooklyn, we will be touching upon 4 major themes. The Dutch, The Great Mistake, Robert Moses, and gentrification.

Brooklyn was originally inhabited by Native Americans, until the late 1600’s when the Dutch settled some areas, creating basically 6 original Parishes: Gravesend in 1645, followed by Breuckelen (where we are now, what is known as Brooklyn Heights), New Amerfoort in 1647 (now Flatlands), Midwout in 1652 (not Flatbush), New Utrecht in 1657 (now Bensonhurst) and Boswick in 1661 (Now Bushwick, Williamsburgh and Greenpoint) There is some debate as to the order and dates of settlement, but this is the generally accepted order.

## **GUIDE 2:**

Brooklyn eventually unified into it’s own unique city, separate from New York City and Manhattan. Emma Lazarus’ poem that was printed on the Statue of Liberty contains the lines **“her mild eyes command the air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.”** The twin cities being New York and Brooklyn. For a long time all travels in between the two were from ferry service. As Walt Whitman wrote in his poem “Crossing Brooklyn”

**Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,  
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,**

**Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,  
Others will see the islands large and small;  
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,  
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,  
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.**

### **GUIDE 1:**

In 1869 the building of the Brooklyn Bridge began, completed in 1883. It was the first suspension bridge in the world, and was originally the New York and Brooklyn Bridge, and also the East River Bridge, and wasn't until a letter to the editor at the Brooklyn Daily Eagle was published that it became referred to as the Brooklyn Bridge. The bridge brought more traffic and residents, and quickly led to what is still referred to as the Great Mistake of 1898.

### **GUIDE 2:**

Fearing that Chicago would quickly eclipse New York as the largest city in the country, a big push came to unify several of the outer communities- Queens County and Brooklyn in particular. There was a great and heated debate, and when the vote came through unification one, but by a very narrow margin. And Brooklyn has been complaining ever since about the Great Mistake.

### **GUIDE 1:**

Robert Moses was a controversial developer in NYC, creating many of the bridges and highways that both helped keep traffic moving and also tearing down much of what was unique and great about the city. One of the great losses for us was the Bohemian enclave in Brooklyn Heights, the February House at 7 Middaugh Street. Originally settled by publisher George Davis and recently divorced Carson McCullers, it soon had numerous residents all living together in the pre-war artists commune. Anais Nin, one of the residents gave the house the name February House as many of the residents had February birthdays. Residents included burlesque performer Gypsy Rose Lee (inspiration for the musical Gypsy), Salvador Dali, Kurt Weill, Lotte Lenya, Thomas Mann's entire family, Truman Capote, many others and loads of debauchery.

## GUIDE 2:

Picture this with us: over here was editor George Davis, probably playing piano in the parlor, sometimes naked; on the floor over here would be Carson McCullers, half-passed out on the floor with a bottle of something, oddly enough, Gypsy Rose Lee would probably be the most clothed one in the house; and in the back by the kitchen, W.H. Auden would be bellowing that dinner was about to be served, and that there were very strict dining hours, so those who didn't show up for food would not get to eat at all. . Depending on the year, Richard Wright might be holed up in the ground floor apartment, trying to escaped the incredibly obvious flirtations of Anais Nin (He was a strong man of fine moral character).

For Richard Wright, the chaos eventually became too much to handle. A later addition to the February House in 1942, he and his family didn't last the year because, as Wright stated to his wife, the house was **“not a proper environment in which to raise a child.”**

## GUIDE 1:

W.H. Auden, who was already a well-established poet at this point, was initially hesitant to join in after George Davis invited him into the fold, but due to certain complications transferring funds from Britain to America, he was broke enough to want to take a room. When he first moved into the place, the house had no heat or hot water. Auden reportedly sent a poem to a friend at the *New Yorker*, which was accompanied by the frantic message:

**“Dear Harry, PLEASE sell this to the New Yorker as I am VERY VERY VERY poor... I STILL HAVE NO HOT WATER I STILL HAVE NO HOT WATER.”**

Ironically, the person who had his back the most when it came to discipline and responsibility was Gypsy Rose Lee. They often ended up playing mother and father to the odd family. The house finally fell entirely in 1945 as a casualty of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, but it left behind quite the legacy, including several books and recent Off Broadway play.

## GUIDE 2:

Across from us now, is Cadman Plaza, another creation of Robert Moses, which was supposed to be a beautiful family park and WWII memorial, and sadly missed the mark. There have been multiple attempts to renovate and clean up the park, but so far unsuccessful. What is now Cadman Plaza West was once Fulton Street in Brooklyn, and on what was the corner of Fulton Street and Cranberry street was a small publishing house run by the Rome Brothers, Andrew and James and is where the first copies of *Leaves of Grass* was published, which by many is considered to be the birth of American Poetry.

Originally the copy had only 12 poems, and didn't name the author. It was sold in 2 stores, one in NY and one in Brooklyn. He would eventually re publish it every few years, adding poems, and I find it fascinating as each new version basically captures the evolution of a nation as well as an individual, as his poems were both personal and very American. He is still considered quite possibly the greatest American poet.

## GUIDE 1:

But during his lifetime his poetry was universally panned. The *New York Times'* final review of *Leaves of Grass* simply stated that Whitman could never be a **“a great poet unless we deny poetry as an art.”** His poetry was often written off as being overly sentimental, unstructured, and too personal. The only reason *Leaves of Grass* ever truly became famous was due to Whitman's unflagging confidence and ability to self-promote. Any positive sound-bites about *Leaves of Grass* that got thrown around tended to be secretly from Whitman himself.

As I mentioned before, he self-published *Leaves of Grass*, and the practice was just as much looked down upon then as it is today. It would be the 19<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of printing out a Zine at the local copy shop and forcing it on all your friends and colleagues. There are many wonderful poems of his, but our favorite is a poem he wrote in response to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln at the end of the Civil War.

[Preferably memorized. But feel free to replace the poem with your favorite Whitman, just make it shorter if it's read, and no longer than O Captain]

**GUIDE 2:**

**O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;  
    But O heart! heart! heart!  
    O the bleeding drops of red,  
    Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
    Fallen cold and dead.**

**O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,  
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-  
crowding,  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;  
    Here Captain! dear father!  
    This arm beneath your head!  
    It is some dream that on the deck,  
    You've fallen cold and dead.**

**My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;  
    Exult O shores, and ring O bells!  
    But I with mournful tread,  
    Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
    Fallen cold and dead.**

**OR YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING POEM:**

**You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides! you distant ships!  
You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!  
You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!  
You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!  
You doors and ascending steps! you arches!  
You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!  
From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to yourselves, and now would impart the same secretly to me,  
From the living and the dead you have peopled your impassive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with me."**

Without further ado, let's commence!

**[Down Cranberry and Right on Hicks, quick stop at]**

**LOCATION: PLYMOUTH CHURCH**

**GUIDE 1: \*PLYMOUTH CHURCH/HARRY WARD BEECHER\***

This is Plymouth Church, which was an incredibly instrumental location during the Civil War and the Abolitionist Movement. The architect, Joseph C Wells founded the American Institute of Architecture. It was run by Pastor Harry Ward Beecher, brother to Harriet Beecher Stowe, the two of which have the distinction of being the two most difficult names to say in succession. They would frequently hold mock slave auctions to buy slaves' freedom from southern owners. Abraham Lincoln was a frequent attendant to the church services whenever he was in town. Harry Ward Beecher was involved in what was the most widely reported legal case of his time, as he was charged with adultery in 1875, having an affair with another man's wife. The trial ended with a hung jury but his reputation was tarnished. The statue of him in the courtyard is the work of Gustave Borglum who also worked on Mount Rushmore

**LOCATION:                    70 WILLOW STREET**

**GUIDE 2:                    \*TRUMAN CAPOTE\***

This extremely beautiful property broke records last year for selling at the highest price ever recorded for a property in this neighborhood. It sold for \$12 million. It should also be noted, for envy's sake, that the house has 11 bedrooms, a 2,500 sq foot garden, and a wine cellar. Properties in Brooklyn Heights in 2012 had a median price of \$454,383. One of the obvious draws of this particular property is that 70 Willow St was at one time the residence of Truman Capote. It was while he was living there that he wrote *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, among other works.

The house was actually owned by Oliver Smith, a Broadway producer who produced such shows as *On the Town*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Oklahoma!*, and *The Sound of Music*, and Truman Capote merely rented out the basement apartment. That didn't stop Capote from trying to pass off the entire mansion as his own. When guests, especially interviewers would stop by, he would meet them in the large foyer, making it seem as if it was all his. Post-*In Cold Blood*, Capote did move back to Manhattan to hobnob with the elite and throw his famous Black and White Ball, but before all that, he was particularly proud of his Brooklyn residence.

**GUIDE 1:                    \*ARCHITECTURE/ROW HOUSES\***

This is a great stop to point out different types of architecture. There were different styles of row house that were popular over the years, and you can learn to date a building when you learn the styles. [There are examples here of Greek Revival Style Row Houses, \(1830-1850's\) Federalist Row Houses \(1800-1835\), and Italianate Style Row Houses \(1840's-1870's\)](#) The fruit streets you'll see have an interesting story. There was a wealthy woman named Lady Middaugh who felt that all the streets named after aristocracy was pretentious, so she would cover the street signs with names of fruit. The city kept trying to take them down but eventually her persistence one. It should be noted that she never changed the name of Middaugh Street.

[Walk down Willow St]]

**LOCATION:                    155 WILLOW STREET**

**GUIDE 2:**

Arthur Miller lived in a lot of different homes scattered throughout Brooklyn Heights, though in my opinion this, 155, is one of the most picturesque examples. Arthur Miller had a pretty heavy admiration of Brooklyn Culture—at one point he and Elia Kazan even collaborated to make a movie all about Red Hook’s seedy culture. The movie was to be called *The Hook*, about gangsters and denizens of blue-collar Brooklyn, trying to rise above. When they pitched the film to studio executives, the studios loved the idea, with some minor changes: since everyone was at the height of the red scare, they asked that all the gangsters in the movie be portrayed as communists. Kazan and Miller, completely disillusioned, disbanded the project altogether, though versions of it existed in their later works: Kazan’s *On the Waterfront* and Miller’s *A View From the Bridge* are both versions of that original script. Given what transpired later in each of their careers, Miller speaking out against the McCarthy “witchhunt” with *The Crucible* and Kazan caving in and naming names, it’s an interesting origin story to say the least.

**GUIDE 1:**

Next door, 157, shows one of the more interesting secrets of Brooklyn Heights’ past. It’s a little less known now, but Brooklyn Heights is actually honeycombed with a number of underground tunnels, which were initially used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to connect various homes to carriage houses and stables. This one in particular had glass tiles put in to shed light when people were walking through. Brooklyn Heights has a fairly rich history with the underground railroad. Most of this history was deliberately not well-documented, but there’s a lot of speculation that these tunnels and passageways assisted in hiding slaves in the Civil War Era. There’s also infrequent discoveries by residents of this neighborhood of secret basement rooms boarded up and false walls. The network of “underground Brooklyn Heights” occasionally does cause modern-day problems however, as there have been multiple occurrences of sinkholes appearing out of nowhere.

[Turn Right onto Promenade]

## **GUIDE 2:**

Honestly, I wish I could find a specific literary reference to connect to the Promenade, but aside from a few mentions in Children's Books, they're pretty hard to come by. If any of you know classic literature connected with this spot, please enlighten me, because it's one of my favorite spots in this neighborhood. The big reason that we have to come out here, even if it's just for a block, is to give you a good view of the Brooklyn Bridge, that piece of architecture which so fascinated Whitman and Crane. Crane agonized to try and do the Bridge justice with his poem. Here's an excerpt of the piece, so you can judge for yourself whether or not he succeeded. I personally think he did.

## **GUIDE 1:**

**O harp and altar, of the fury fused,  
(How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)  
Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,  
Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,--**

**Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift  
Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,  
Beading thy path—condense eternity:  
And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.**

**Under thy shadow by the piers I waited;  
Only in darkness is thy shadow clear.  
The City's fiery parcels all undone,  
Already snow submerges an iron year...**

**O Sleepless as the river under thee,  
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,  
Unto us lowliest sometime sweet, descend  
And of the curveship lend a myth to God.**

**LOCATION: 1/5 MONTAGUE TERRACE**

**GUIDE 1: \*WH AUDEN PRE FEBRUARY HOUSE\***

Here is W.H. Auden's former address prior to moving in with the February House gang. This apartment was the reason he ended up over at the nonstop party... for one thing, Auden was flat broke. The rent that Auden was paying on this particular apartment would have covered the whole house on 7 Middagh Street. On top of that, his landlord was a bit on the nosy side. She used to regularly approach Auden to tell him that she like to keep an eye on her tenants, "make sure there's nothing *unsavory* going on..." As an out homosexual, Auden would not have taken comments like that lightly.

**GUIDE 2: \*THOMAS WOLFE IS AN ASS\***

Just two doors down is one of the former residences of Thomas Wolfe, where he ended up giving a particularly unfortunate interview later on in his career. Wolfe had a habit of alienating people (understatement of the century), which didn't help his reputation. Not to mention, looking at this building now, it looks pretty chic, but back when Wolfe was living here, the place was a rat trap, completely shabby, and probably not helped by Wolfe's own cleaning habits (or lack thereof). The reporter ended up painting a rather ridiculous picture of him in the article, as well as printing his official address in the piece so that Wolfe was plagued by harassers for the remainder of the time that he lived there.

**LOCATION: 49 REMSEN STREET**

**GUIDE 1: \*NORMAN MAILER HOUSE\* QUICK STOP.**

Former residence of Norman Mailer, he was living here when he finished writing *The Naked and the Dead*. He was living here with his wife Beatrice, the first of six, and incidentally, not the one he stabbed. His actual writing studio was down the street at 20 Remsen street; unlike most of the rest of his life, he liked to have peace away from people when he wrote

**LOCATION: 58 JORALEMON STREET**

**GUIDE 2:**

There have been plenty of properties on this tour worth fantasizing over. I pick out my future houses all the time on this tour (Dibs on Truman Capote's former residence). This particular house is not the former home of any literary idols; in fact it is no one's former home. It is complete fallacy, not a house at all, simply a façade to cover up a subway vent and emergency exit. There even used to be steam funneling out the top.

# MONTERRO'S

## **TOAST:**

I like the “Lying, Cheating, and Stealing” toast from Greenwich Village tour, but any toast here is good.

**We can take some time here, it's been a long walk. Keep an eye on where people are with their drinks.**

## **GUIDE 1:**

Monterro's is the ultimate Brooklyn neighborhood bar. I say that because it was opened by a married couple and it has remained in the family, it is rife with Brooklyn history, it survived Robert Moses, and it is beloved by it's regulars.

The bar was opened by Joseph and Pilar Montero in 1945. (Joseph died in 1999, Pilar in 2012). Pilar apparently spent some of her early childhood years in none other than Greenwich Village. But both Pilar and Joseph had a strong connection to the sea, as is obvious as you look around. Pilar's father worked on boats, and tugboats, and Joseph was a merchant marine for years. This bar was a longtime bar for longshoreman, back when the docks were used as actual docks. Monterro's would usually open at 8am for drinks, so that the overnight shifts could come in for their post shift drinks.

Pilar was an iconic figure here up until she passed in 2012. She new that this bar was a major stop for the seafarers coming through during Brooklyn's waterfront years, and she was a savvy business woman, as you can tell from this quote of her NYTimes Obit:

## **(DON'T NEED TO NECESSARILY READ THIS. CAN REFER TO)**

**“She read the shipping news very closely, and she had contacts down at the union hall who told her when a ship was coming in,” her son Frank said. And if a ship was coming, “we'd hear my mom and dad,” he said. “ ‘There's a Swedish ship coming in Thursday. We're going to need a couple of extra barmaids. Check this, check that.’ ” It was like readying for a show, he said.”**

## **GUIDE 2:**

The life preservers are all donated from the different ships that came in. Most of the décor came from regulars here. Apparently one of the life preservers went missing, someone stole. They never recovered it, but a lot of the regulars were pretty upset. They did some digging. According to the New York Times:

***NYT: The hook yielded no clues. The dust around it seems undisturbed. The sleuths in Montero's have developed profiles of the culprit. The perpetrator is described as being male, young, drunk, new to the bar and an idiot.***

Pepe, who with his wife runs the bar now, shared a story about a Greek and Armenian got into a pretty loud argument in bar. Each were from different ships, and they were arguing in their own languages. Turns out they were both the ships cooks and Pepe thought a big fight would break out. He suggested that they have cook off to see who's was better. The next day they both showed up with grills out in the street and had a huge impromptu block party. Everyone came out tried the foods, the street was filled with smoke. The cops came and almost broke it up. Pepe showed them the press and said "they could right an article about you breaking up a barbecue, or they could write an article about a rare and special afternoon." The cops helped themselves to some food and walked away.

## **GUIDE 1:**

Frank McCourt was a regular here. In fact for awhile he lived right above the bar. He described the place as "A gathering place for seamen off freighters and container ships and the ladies of the night who made them welcome to Brooklyn." Pilar rented it to him and help provide furnishings. She was willing to rent him the room because he claimed to prefer Spanish bagpipes to Irish bagpipes, and more importantly because, as he writes "I wasn't like the rest of the Irishers, who wanted to fight, fight, fight. That's all they wanted to do.

**I could never tell my classes how I lived over one of the last waterfront bars in Brookly, how every night I struggled to drown out the sounds of rowdy sailors, how I stufte cotton wool in my hears to muffle the shrieking andlaughing of women whooffered shore love, how the pounding of the jukebox in the bar below, the Village People singing "YMCA" jolted me nightly in my bed.**

## GUIDE 2:

Herbert Huncke, the beat writer was also a regular her, mainly because he often owed McCourt money. He lived nearby, long after his literary hey day. He hitchhiked to NYC in 1939, and for the next 10 years became an icon in Times square. His became a central figure in some of the early Beat movements, more by association and a natural ability as a storyteller. He experimented with drugs with Burroughs, and one of their early encounters is fictionalized in Burrough's "Junky." He had limited success publishing some of his notebooks of his stories and writing, with help from Diane Di Prima. He participated in the Kinsey sex studies, he hob knobbed with Charlie Parker and is the inspiration for the character Elmer Hassel in On the Road.

He struggled with drug addiction most of his life, loved to hang out with sailors and prostitutes, so it's no surprise the Montero's became a haunt of his, and a friendship with McCourt struck up. Periodically he would stop by McCourt's classroom to ask for money, often showing up at the door of the classroom "chalk white, cadaverous, and stoned."

McCourt described him thus "

**Alcohol is not his habit but he'll kindly allow you to buy him a drink at Montero's. His voice is deep, gentle and musical. He never forgets his manners and you'd rarely think of him as Huncke the Junkie. He respects law and obeys none of it.**

**He's done jail time for pickpocketing, robbery, possession of drugs, selling drugs. He's a hustler, a con man, a male prostitute, a charmer, a writer. He is given credit for coining the term Beat Generation. He uses people till he exhausts their patience and money and they tell him, Enough, Huncke. Out, out already. He understands and never carries grudges. It's all the same to him.**

With that let's head off to our final stretch.

**LOCATION:       HENRY STREET AND STATE ST.**

**GUIDE 2:       \*PAULA FOX DESPERATE CHARACTERS\*\***

By now, Brooklyn Heights has a bit of a different vibe—Thomas Wolfe’s old house is no longer a rat-trap, Sands Street is sans brothels, and while the February House may no longer be standing, Middagh Street is definitely a more upscale spot. This is what’s known as the real estate circle of life, one that I’m sure all city dwellers are familiar with... a broken-down neighborhood gets inhabited by poor artists, the poor artists bring culture into the area, the culture ups the street cred, and suddenly those same artists that made the area cool are priced out. Tale as old as time. And while we’re not saying that Brooklyn Heights is completely bereft of artists (quite a few well-known modern authors live in the area today), times have definitely changed. Let’s just say you can be an author living around here, but you probably aren’t a struggling author. One of the characters in Paula Fox’s book *Desperate Characters* gives a particularly witty and snide account of the hypocritical real estate of New York City, and in doing so heavily namedrops Henry Street:

**They turned up Henry Street. Otto noted with satisfaction that there was as much garbage here as in their own neighborhood. He wouldn’t consider buying a house on the Heights... horribly inflated prices, all that real-estate grinning in dusty crumbling rooms—think what you could do with that woodwork! – everyone knowing it was a put-up job, greed low belly greed, get it while we can, house prices enunciated in refined accents, mortgages like progressive diseases, “I live on the Heights...”**

**[Left on State Street, stop at the corner of State Street and Clinton Street]**

**LOCATION: STATE AND CLINTON**

**GUIDE 1: \*PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH\***

So this again is two stops in one. First off, if you look a little further down State Street, number 153, the house with the bright blue shutters, that is the house where author Norton Juster and illustrator Jules Feiffer lived, and where they wrote *The Phantom Tollbooth*, one of the best children's books the world has ever seen (there will be no debate on this point.) If you have not had a chance to read *The Phantom Tollbooth*, I don't care how old you are, your inner child is dying right now, so you need to go read it.

**GUIDE 2:**

This house on the corner here, with the creepy dead vines climbing the walls, was the only New York residence of H.P. Lovecraft. Nearing the end of his marriage, he and his wife moved in to this apartment—and perhaps it was because the marriage didn't last long after that, or perhaps because the building was apparently a hell-hole at the time, attracting all manners of creepy crawly things, or perhaps it was because the neighborhood was fairly diverse back then and Lovecraft had a touch of agoraphobia, but whatever the reason, Lovecraft hated it here. He used to talk about buying the cheap, 5-cent mousetraps to set out on the floors, because that way he didn't feel bad about throwing them out without having to remove the "corpus delecti". This far south, at that time, the neighborhood was pretty abominable.

His massive disappointment in Brooklyn manifested itself in other ways as well... while here, he wrote quite a few short stories, notable the story "A Horror in Red Hook," where a Hellmouth opens up in the neighborhood. Not exactly subtle there, sir. Here's a little excerpt from the story, to give you a window into Lovecraft's opinions of the borough:

**Red Hook is a maze of hybrid squalor near the ancient waterfront opposite Governor's Island, with dirty highways climbing the hill from the wharves to that higher ground where the decayed lengths of Clinton and Court Streets lead off toward the Borough Hall... it is a Babel of sound and filth, and sends out strange cries to answer the lapping oily waves at its grimy piers and the monstrous organ litanies of the harbor whistles.**

## **GUIDE 1:**

So, we gave you a little taste of Thomas Wolfe when we showed you his house on Montague Street... at that point Wolfe was already quite famous, but it was there in that narrow little refurbished carriage house that Thomas Wolfe got his start. Wolfe was an obsessive writer, would lose sleep writing late into the night and wake ridiculously early in the morning so he could get a couple of hours' writing time in before work. Even that wouldn't be that extreme, until you got to hear the details of his writing process. Wolfe was a giant... he stood about six feet six inches tall, and in such cramped quarters, the way he felt most comfortable writing was to stand in front of an old Frigidaire, and use the top of it as a desk, writing in big long strides in old ledger books. He was, understandably, considered something of a spectacle in the neighborhood at the time.

## **GUIDE 2:**

Many of the buildings on Verandah place were old stables and liverys, as you can probably guess from looking at the buildings. Apparently #22 and 24 were combined as one, and had 5 horses kept in the basement, carriages on the first floor, and 12 more horses on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor. The coachmen and the family lived on the top. A fire broke out and the family survived but sadly none of the horses did. The cause of the fire is suspected to have been a drunken stable man who returned a horse, and had some issues trying to light his pipe.

**POINT OUT COURT STREET AND THE WHITMAN POST.**

# BROOKLYN INN

**TOAST: ANY OLD TOAST IF YOU CAN**

**THE MUSIC CAN'T BE TURNED DOWN (YET. GIVE US SOME TIME) THE MIDDLE ROOM IS GREAT BUT CAN GET REALLY LOUD, ALL THE NOSE BOUNCES AROUND. SOMETIMES AROUND THE POOL TABLE IS BETTER.**

**THIS STOP NEEDS TO BE SOMEWHAT QUICK, DEPENDING UPON THE CROWD. LEAN TOWARDS QUICKER...**

**GUIDE 2:**

Welcome to our final stop. On our journey we've travelled through several different Brooklyn neighborhoods. We began in Brooklyn heights, crossed Atlantic Avenue into Cobble Hill, and then after crossing Court Street into Boerum Hill. These areas have definitely seen the changes both positive and negative from gentrification. It's been interesting to see how often these neighborhoods have risen and declined in popularity. As has also been mentioned, there are certain authors that hold Brooklyn in high, idealistic, Whitman-esque esteem, and then there's the Paula Davises and the Lovecrafts of the world who saw Brooklyn from a little bit of a jaded viewpoint. We here like to think that it's a little bit of both.

Another one of our more recent Brooklyn literary denizens (sadly recently departed to LA), Jonathan Lethem, had similar ideas. His novel, *Motherless Brooklyn*, both managed to expose the seedy underbelly of Brooklyn and exult in it all the same. Here's a quote about the great divide between Cobble Hill and Boerum Hill:

**GUIDE 1:**

**This was Court Street. And Court Street, where it passed through Carroll Gardens and Cobble Hill, was the only Brooklyn, really—north was Brooklyn Heights, secretly a part of Manhattan, south was the harbor, and the rest, everything east of the Gowanus Canal (the only body of water that was ninety percent guns), apart from small outposts of civilization in Park Slope and Windsor Terrace, was an unspeakable barbarian tumult.**

## GUIDE 2:

Lethem's book is truly a terrific read, beyond just his embracing Cobble Hill and Brooklyn culture thoroughly. It's a private detective book, told from the point of view of a man with Tourette's Syndrome. He magnificently evokes a strong interpretation of what the symptoms of Tourette's could be like, along with telling a fun private eye tale, and evoking both a spirit and culture of Brooklyn as well. Here's an excerpt where the main character talk's about his boss, Minna's favorite Brooklyn Bar.

## GUIDE 1:

**A block east, on the corner of Bergen and Hoyt, was an elegantly renovated tavern called the Boerum Hill Inn, with a gleaming antique inlaid-mirror bar, a CD jukebox weighted toward Blue Note and Stax, and a Manhattanized clientele of professional singles too good for bars with televisions, for subway rides home, or for the likes of the Men. Only Minna ever visited the Boerum Hill Inn, and he cracked that anyone who drank there was someone else's assistant: a district attorney's, an editor's, or a video artist's. The dressed-up crowd at the inn gabbled and flirted every night of the week until two in the morning, oblivious to the neighborhood's past or present reality, then slept it off in their overpriced apartments or on their desks the next day in Midtown. Typically a few parties would stagger down the block after last call and try to engage an L & L car for a ride home-sometimes it was a woman alone or a newly formed couple too drunk to throw to the fates, and we'd take the job. Mostly we claimed not to have any cars.**

The Boerum Hill Inn that is referred to is actually the Brooklyn Inn, where we are now. We are still digging up information on the place, but it is casually known as Brooklyn's oldest bar. The building is mid 1800's and so far what we've learned is that the bar and much of the décor was imported from Germany in the 1870s. We are still trying to source out what the German Bar might have been.

Before being called Brooklyn Inn, the place was a restaurant called Hubert's. Restaurant was upscale in a way that's common now but was SUPER rare back then... Hubert's moved to Manhattan, and in my research, the one upscale-ish Hubert's I could find was on Park Avenue btw 62<sup>nd</sup> and 63<sup>rd</sup>, and was eventually replaced by Park Avenue restaurant. Fun fact! Hubert's is name dropped in American Psycho (movie- will double check w/ book but I doubt it). Brooklyn Inn featured in Harvey Keitel film "Smoke"

## **GUIDE 2:**

Jonathan Ames was and periodically is still a regular here. Ames is known for quirky, sometimes off color stories and novels. The TV show *Bored to Death* was based on his writings, and he was a major contributor for the show. It was beloved by fans, but not enough to keep it on the air beyond 3 seasons. When it was cancelled, Ames held a funeral for the TV show at Brooklyn Inn. He made an announcement that he would buy drinks for all his fans. By the end of the funeral, Ames had purchased \$1,600 worth of drinks for fans and a few Brooklyn-ish celebrities, including John Hodgman.

To give you a sense of his style of humor, he once commented on how the Williamsburg bank was so phallic in shape, that he held a competition for the most phallic building in the world. The winner was located in Michigan, but below is an excerpt of the article he wrote about the Williamsburg Bank.

## **GUIDE 1:**

### **Article Ames wrote for Slate, July 2003:**

**When it first pops out of the ground, you can see, on your right, the ocean and the Marlon Brando-ish docks; on the left, you can see, dominating the Brooklyn skyline, the Williamsburg Bank building, which is the most obviously phallic building I've ever seen. It's so penislike it's embarrassing. Some clever lesbian Internet gal in Park Slope—a Brooklyn neighborhood with a healthy Sapphic population—should design a Williamsburg Bank dildo, market it over the Web and make a fortune, since all New York-themed trinkets are in demand.**

**I have to say, the eye is always drawn to this bank-penis. Living in Brooklyn is like being in a locker room with Shaquille O'Neal. You can't help but stare.**

## **GUIDE 1:**

With that, we'd love to say thank you. If you enjoyed the tour, please spread the word, this is a new tour and we find word of mouth the best form of advertisement. If you are interested in our T-Shirts, we do periodically have some if you'd like. We are on Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, and Tripadvisor, so please look us up, as well as our Greenwich Village Tour. We'd love to send you off with one other quote, of perhaps my generations greatest Brooklyn Artists and poets:

**Beastie Boys:**

**We got a safe in the trunk with money in a stack**

**With dice in the front and Brooklyn's in the back.**

**No sleep till-**

**No sleep till Brooklyn! No sleep till Brooklyn!**

Good night!!!!

## **Cut Stuff (in here as an FYI)**

**[Head Further up Henry, Left on Middagh St, stop at]**

### **7 Middagh St**

Here, again, is another instance where Robert Moses destroyed a historical landmark, this time to build the Brooklyn Queens expressway. Though, to be fair, at the time this section of the neighborhood was considered rather seedy at the time. Oh, how times have changed. Here once stood 7 Middagh Street, which, in the early 1940's housed a revolving door of the who's-who of the Literary set: Carson McCullers, Richard Wright, Jane and Paul Bowles, Benjamin Britten, Anais Nin, W.H. Auden, Gypsy Rose Lee, Salvador Dali, Kurt Weill, Lotte Lenya, Thomas Mann's entire family, Truman Capote, the list goes on. Since it is now long gone, we need to use our imaginations a bit to picture what the scene was like here. Picture this with us: over here was editor George Davis, probably playing piano in the parlor, sometimes naked; on the floor over here would be Carson McCullers, half-passed out on the floor with a bottle of something, oddly enough, Gypsy Rose Lee would probably be the most clothed one in the house; and in the back by the kitchen, W.H. Auden would be bellowing that dinner was about to be served, and that there were very strict dining hours, so those who didn't show up for food would not get to eat at all

Nicknamed the February House by Anais Nin for all the residents who lived there with February birthdays, it was started by editor George Davis, literary editor of *Harpers Bazaar*, one of those people whose name you don't know but probably should for all the careers he started.

W.H. Auden, who was already a well-established poet at this point, was initially hesitant to join in after George Davis invited him into the fold, but due to certain complications transferring funds from Britain to America, he was broke enough to want to take a room. While there he did take pains to make the place a bit more orderly, though it was often an uphill battle. When he first moved into the place, the house had

no heat or hot water. Auden reportedly sent a poem to a friend at the *New Yorker*, which was accompanied by the frantic message: “**Dear Harry, PLEASE sell this to the New Yorker as I am VERY VERY VERY poor... I STILL HAVE NO HOT WATER I STILL HAVE NO HOT WATER.**” Ironically, the person who had his back the most when it came to discipline and responsibility was Gypsy Rose Lee. They often ended up playing mother and father to the odd family. They set strict meal times, and Auden insisted that no politics be discussed at the dinner table, though apparently that rule was frequently broken.

For Richard Wright, the chaos eventually became too much to handle. A later addition to the February House in 1942, he and his family didn’t last the year because, as Wright stated to his wife, the house was “**not a proper environment in which to raise a child.**”

The house finally fell entirely in 1945, as we mentioned before, as a casualty of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, but it left behind quite the legacy.

**[Head Further down Willow St, quick stop on]**

### **Willow and Cranberry St**

This address here, 19 Cranberry St, is the house where the film *Moonstruck* was set. In the movie, the whole house was owned by one specific family, and the joke was that the reason he could afford it was because he was a plumber who knew how to charge. The movie was written by the fantastic New York playwright and screenwriter John Patrick Shanley, who also wrote *Doubt*, *Women of Manhattan*, *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, and also the classic film, *Joe Versus the Volcano*.

### **110 Columbia Heights/Hotel Margaret**

This particular stretch of street has had its share of literary history... Just across the street is the former location of the Hotel Margaret, where Betty Smith wrote the majority of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. We would talk more about her landmark novel, but the whole thing takes place in what is now Williamsburg, which is a long walk from

here (it's where the hipsters live). H.G. Wells was also a frequent guest at the hotel, during his New York visits.

This address here is 110 Columbia Heights, and the original building here was once occupied by both John Dos Passos and the poet Hart Crane. Hart Crane, while staying here, was working on what would become his seminal work, a long epic poem titled "The Bridge". Though Whitman may have been wanting for literary fans in life, Hart Crane would more than make up for that after Whitman's death. As I mentioned before, as the years went on and Whitman's post-mortem fame grew, the favored gossip in literary circles was what poet would rise up through the ranks to take his place as the Great American Poet. Hart Crane was probably the most favored nominee at the time. He had a major love affair with Brooklyn, and as the title of his poem suggests, he had an especially large fascination with the Brooklyn Bridge. He even rented the same room that bridge designer Washington Roebling rented, after the Roebling had been immobilized with the bends and needed a place to observe construction. Hart Crane deliberately sat his desk in the same window as Roebling, hoping to draw inspiration.

However, inspiration was slow coming with Hart Crane, and Hart Crane was a notable depressive, sensitive man. He had been suicidal in the past, and as creative a spirit as he was, a feeling of writerly inadequacy was too much for him to handle. One night in the middle of his epic battle with writer's block, he was coming back from a heavy-duty bender in the city with friend and writer Sam Loveman, when the ultimate insult occurred: the cabbie, confused as to where he was going, took the Williamsburg Bridge instead of the Brooklyn Bridge. Hart Crane insisted they stop, so he could pee on the bridge. By the time they managed to actually get back to Columbia Heights, Hart Crane was in enough of a rage that he flew out the cab as soon as it was parked (he was relying on Loveman to pay the for the taxi), and ran straight up to the roof. Loveman was only just able to run after him and catch him before he jumped. Later on in the evening, after Crane calmed down somewhat, he reportedly told Loveman, **"I'm not writing, so why live?"**

Hart Crane eventually did finish *The Bridge* in 1929, but eventually in 1933 he did manage to accomplish what he'd attempted so many times before: shortly after his father, Clarence Crane passed away, while on a ship coming back from Mexico, he jumped to his death off the bow of the boat.

Marianne Moore wrote: "Brooklyn Bridge is synonymous with endurance.....a stern triumph."

**[Double Back and Turn Right, stop on]**

OTHER CUT STUFF

Clay Lancaster called Brooklyn Heights "America's first suburb." While much of Brooklyn was farmlands and villages Brooklyn Heights was quickly incorporating the architectural styles and vibe of Manhattan. It has been said that early on Brooklyn Heights had a stronger connection with Manhattan than it's own borough.

In 1991 Brooklyn Heights had over 700 buildings that pre-date the Civil War. I'm not sure if that stat remains true.

There was a common phrase in 1870: "Brooklyn is only a large bedroom for the businessmen of New York."

L. J. Davis wrote in the New York Times:

Once one gets off the main commercial streets, one finds that the 19<sup>th</sup> century city is surprisingly intact and, in parts, it is unusually handsome, with low skyline and big old trees and rows of sculptured houses in brick and brownstone....

(he goes on to say) Compared to Manhattan, housing is relatively inexpensive and considerably more spacious..

He even wrote a manifesto about it, entitled *Brooklyn Is My Neighborhood*. It tells you all you need to know:

**I live in Brooklyn. By Choice.**

Those ignorant of its allures are entitled to wonder why. For, taken as a whole, it is an uninviting community. A veritable veldt of tawdriness where even the noms de quartiers aggravate: Flatbush and Flushing Avenue, Bushwick, Brownsville, Red Hook. Yet, in the greenless grime-gray, oases do occur, splendid contradictions, hearty echoes of healthier days. Of the seeming mirages, the purest example is the neighborhood in which I am situated, an area known as Brooklyn Heights. Heights, because it stands atop a cliff that secures a sea gull's view of the Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges, of lower Manhattan's tall dazzle and the ship-lane waters, breeding river to bay to ocean, that encircle and seethe past posturing Miss Liberty.

**\*Optional Point out 31 Grace Court**

Down the road here was another house once owned by Arthur Miller, incidentally, the house where he finished *Death of a Salesman*. He ended up selling the place to W.E.B DuBois, who was having trouble finding anyone willing to rent to him because even though he was W.E.B. DuBois, he was still black. Not only that, but at that point in his life DuBois was also considered old guard by the current civil rights activists at the time, so DuBois was ostracized from multiple angles. Arthur Miller, who knew something of this on the Red Scare end of things, sympathized and endeavored to help him out.