

PLACES I REMEMBER

by Larry Racioppo

"There are places I remember
All my life, though some have changed
Some forever not for better
Some have gone and some remain."
-The Beatles

These lyrics describe Brooklyn, the New York City borough where I was born and photograph most often. Unintentionally I have become a chronicler of change - of neighborhoods, of institutions, of buildings and people. I have spent the last 25 years photographing throughout the city, but keep coming back to Brooklyn. The loss of manufacturing jobs and gentrification have caused some neighborhoods to change rapidly, while others evolve more slowly. I appreciate these changes but sometimes I am glad to discover places that remain the same.

I photographed at the Domino Sugar Plant in the mid 1970's when it was a working plant. I had to wear earplugs because the noise was deafening. The Plant was built in 1884 and closed in 2004. Returning to an empty and silent building was eerie. There are current plans to create housing on this Williamsburgh site right on the East River.



The Domino Sugar Plant Exterior



The Domino Sugar Plant Interior



The Domino Sugar Plant Interior

Watching movies in huge ornate theaters was a big part of growing up in Brooklyn. Very few have survived in their original form, but many have been repurposed. I have been lucky to gain access to some before work began. Opened in 1929, the Loews Pitkin had almost 3000 seats. It closed in 1969, and in 2012 was converted to Brownsville Ascend charter school.



Loews Pitkin Movie Theater Exterior



Loews Pitkin Movie Theater Interior

The Bushwick Theater (formerly the Esquire) opened in 1911 and also closed in 1969. In 2004 it was converted to the Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology. It is located on Broadway, the dividing line between Bushwick and Bedford Stuyvesant.



Bushwick Movie Theater Exterior



Bushwick Movie Theater Interior

In recent years Catholics in New York City have been fighting a losing battle to keep their parish schools open. Increasing costs and dwindling enrollment have resulted in the consolidation or closing of many schools. Holy Rosary School in Bedford Stuyvesant closed in 1995 and is scheduled for conversion to housing.



Holy Rosary School Exterior



Holy Rosary School Classroom



Holy Rosary School Classroom Detail

I went to a similar school, St. Michael the Archangel in Sunset Park, which also has been closed.



St. Michael the Archangel Classroom

I had my first savings account at the Williamsburg Savings Bank, a Brooklyn landmark. Located in Fort Greene and built in 1929, this Art Deco building no longer has an active bank. It now features a mixture of luxury residences and older offices. The lobby is a rental venue.



Williamsburg Savings Bank Lobby

Originally the Dragon's Cave, the Spookhouse was one of Coney Island's original 'dark rides'. It stood vacant and gated for years until its demolition in 1998.



Spookhouse Interior

Ferdinando's Focacceria Italiana opened in Carroll Gardens in 1904. My family took me there in the 1950's, and I have been going ever since. My grandsons live a block away, and now I take them



Ferdinando's Interior

Opened in the early 1900's, the Three Jolly Pigeons Pub in Bay Ridge is an old style Brooklyn bar. Drinks are inexpensive, and it is not crowded during the day.



Three Jolly Pigeons Interior