



hundred years ago, most of Red Hook, Brooklyn was tidal wetlands. Water and land met in a shifting landscape of branching creeks, marshy islands, and oyster reefs that jutted out from the western edge of Long Island. The Lenape called this place *Sagankotin*. They named the place *Sagankotin*. Dutch arrived in 1686 and began engineering waterways, building watermills to harnessing the rise and fall of the tides, and creating a red clay in the soil. They brought African labor with them as agricultural laborers to work the land, their labor made Brooklyn an agricultural center for the colonies of New Amsterdam. The Dutch and then the English, first by the Dutch and then the English, marsh stayed rural and wet, used for and gristmills and farming.

It remained this way until the nineteenth century, when there's a shift from agriculture to industry. The Brooklyn waterfront becomes a place to make and ship goods, which could travel across the Erie Canal. The marshy islands of Red Hook begin to be filled in with land taken from hills further inland in Brooklyn to build Atlantic Basin. The first of two docks, which is completed in 1841. Warehouses are built all over Red Hook, which store cotton, tobacco and sugar grown by unfree labor on southern plantations. Oil, chemical, and sugar refineries, manufactured gas plants, and glass, iron and machine works open, taking advantage of the shipments of raw materials coming in through the ports.

Erie Basin, the official terminus for the grain barges traveling through the Erie Canal, opened in 1884 on the southern edge of Red Hook, built by William Beard. By the 1920's Red Hook was the busiest freight port in the world. Beard built this man-made extension of the harbor on land, fill made up of ships ballast. Ships coming from Europe would dump their ballast in the harbor, then fill up with cargo and sail to their destination. In the process literally transplanting one part of the earth to another, over and over.





The 1946 opening of the Gowanus Expressway and the 1980 opening of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel cut the neighborhood off from the rest of the borough, and exposed residents to increased air pollution. Then the advent of the container ship caused the migration of the closing of the ports in New Jersey. Between the closing of the factories and the decline of the ports, much of the neighborhood emptied out, and weeds began to flourish in the vacant lots and abandoned waterfront warehouses.

Two years ago I saw an exhibition at P.S.125 by the artist David LaPlante. In the center of the gallery were small black bags filled with seeds, and several were labeled as urban weeds. One was a seed from a plant that came to New York as seeds buried in the hulls of the ballast of ships. Another was a seed from a plant that came to New York as a seed buried in the hulls of the ballast of ships. These seeds, then dumped along the waterfront, became part of the city's flora. As a living record of colonization, the transit of seeds at sea, New York was built on. New Yorkers have been making the shoreline for hundreds of years, often by creating real estate

weeds that grow from seeds, through landfill, and through the material of the city. Weeds are a kind of urban flora.

of humans. the earth, growing the advantage of enjoying the way land, empty lots, often grow back in. Weeds in urban thrive in harsh main form of

The late opening of the Governor Enseyway Tunnel and the 1900 opening of the Goshin Ensenway Tunnel cut the neighborhood off from the rest of the borough. Then the advent of the container ship caused the migration of the deep water container port to New Jersey, between the closing of the harbor and the decline of the ports, much of the neighborhood emptied out and reels began to flourish in the vacant lots and abandoned waterfront warehouses.

Weeds are defined by their context. A weed is a plant out of place, that place being defined by the humans cultivating the land. Weeds by their nature grow, or were you might say should be planted, in any and where no place should be planted, and are a part of a narrative we write, proper place is a boundary between culture and nature, between wilderness and domestication. Weeds are the plants that blur these boundaries.

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A.E.  
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Two years ago, I saw an exhibition at the...  
...the city as in the Rockaways and...  
...the 1940 opening of the Gowanus Expressway...  
...the 1960 opening of the Brooklyn Battery...  
...the borough cut the neighborhood off from the rest of...  
...air pollution, then the advent of the container...  
...ship caused the migration of the shipping industry...  
...ports in New Jersey. Between the closing of the...  
...factories and the decline of the ports, much of...  
...the neighborhood emptied out, and weeds began...  
...to flourish in the vacant lots and abandoned...  
...waterfront warehouses.

There are many ways to define a weed...  
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Weeds are defined by their context. A weed is a...  
...plant out of place that place being defined by the...  
...human culture. Weeds are defined by the...  
...grow where you would prefer other plants to...  
...grow, or where you would prefer other plants to...  
...and why. Weeds are defined by the place they...  
...place is a and where you would prefer other plants to...  
...wilderness and domestication. Weeds are the...  
...plants that blur these boundaries.

Weeds flourish in the company of humans...  
...They have followed us around the earth, growing...  
...where we clear the forests, taking advantage of...  
...our transportation networks, enjoying the way...  
...we have disrupted settled ecological patterns...  
...and neglected buildings. They often grow back...  
...healthier after we cut them down. Weeds in urban...  
...areas are hardy enough to survive in harsh...  
...environments, and are often a main form of...  
...urban nature.

1-2 20  
A.B.  
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Many of these benefits are especially important to a community vulnerable to climate change. As a low-lying neighborhood, Red Hook is a low-lying neighborhood, and like other waterfront communities, was one of the worst hit during Hurricane Sandy. Yet Brunt Street, Red Hook's main thoroughfare, became a raised river. In the coming decades, this neighborhood will become more vulnerable to flooding, and could be mostly underwater by the end of the century. The land under Red Hook Houses was originally marsh, and will become marsh again. Public housing residents are still waiting for some buildings to



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