



**BROOKLYN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**  
150 YEARS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY COMPLETES PROCESSING THE EVERETT AND EVELYN  
ORTNER PAPERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS**

*Archives from pioneers of the “Brownstone Revival” preservation movement  
are now available to researchers and the general public*

November 9, 2016 Brooklyn, NY— Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) announces the opening of a new collection of papers and photographs from the estate of Everett and Evelyn Ortner, the couple credited with spurring the “Brownstone Revival” in Park Slope. The collection, which consists of over 50 linear feet of manuscripts, photographs, organizational records, correspondence, posters, films, and digital files dating from 1873 to 2012 documents the Ortners personal and professional lives, especially their involvement in the historic preservation movement and Brooklyn cultural organizations. Researchers, journalists, authors and others interested in historic preservation, gentrification, and the changing character of Brooklyn neighborhoods from the mid-20th century to today will find a wealth of resources in the collection.

The Ortners married in 1953 and lived in the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn in the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1963 the couple purchased an 1882 four-story brownstone at 272 Berkeley Place in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn. The Ortners soon became active in a variety of community organizations. They lobbied local banks to provide mortgages to prospective Park Slope home-buyers at a time when lenders had "red-lined" the neighborhood. They also encouraged the Brooklyn Union Gas Co. (now National Grid) to purchase and transform a dilapidated brownstone on Berkeley Place into a modern two-family home featuring a variety of gas appliances. These buildings became known as "Cinderella homes" and were used in advertising to entice new residents to the neighborhood.

Of particular note are the collection’s photographs. Everett was an amateur photographer and he extensively documented 19th century architecture throughout the city. In addition to documenting the city’s built environment, the collection includes photographs of community activities, such as block parties, the Atlantic Antic street festival, and the Giglio Feast in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. Many of these photographs were featured in lectures the Ortners delivered on Brownstone architecture and preservation. The photographs complement BHS’s existing photography collections that document the borough’s architecture,

such as the John D. Morrell Photograph collection and the Morris Slotkin collection of Eugene L. Armbruster photographs of Williamsburg.

The Ortner's were the recipients of numerous awards and honors, including the Brooklyn Union Gas Company's Cinderella Award (1978), the Preservation League of New York State's Excellence in Historic Preservation Award (2002), and the New York Landmarks Conservancy's Lucy G. Moses Preservation Leadership Award (2005). The couple was also a leading force in the designation of the Park Slope Historic District in 1973. Evelyn Ortner died at 272 Berkeley Place on September 19, 2006 at age 82. Everett followed on May 22, 2012, at age 92.

The collection was processed and described as part of the project, "Preserving Park Slope: A Chronicle of Community Activism and Neighborhood Revitalization in Brooklyn," funded by the New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program.

A guide to the collection is available to researchers online via BHS's finding aid portal:  
<https://specialcollections.library.nyu.edu/search/brooklynhistory>

The Othmer Library at Brooklyn Historical Society is open Wednesday through Saturday, from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. To make an appointment to view the collection, please contact: [library@brooklynhistory.org](mailto:library@brooklynhistory.org).

### **About Brooklyn Historical Society**

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement and community outreach.

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