



# CARTES DE VISITE

*Photographs as Personal &  
Public Communication*

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**TEACHER'S GUIDE & MATERIALS**

## THE CIVIL WAR VOICES FROM BROOKLYN

This curriculum was developed in commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Civil War and highlights collections from Brooklyn Historical Society and Green-Wood Cemetery. These letters, cartes de visite, wartime illustrations, and broadsides document visual and print communication made by and for Brooklynites during the American Civil War.

The Civil War coincided with innovations in photography, print media, and postage systems. The primary sources highlighted in this curriculum speak to an explosion in personal communication between battlefield and home and to the rise of a mass culture meant to solidify national identity and patriotism. They have been paired with adaptable handouts and strategies for critical thinking across the humanities and social sciences, designed for grades 4–12.

The sources highlighted here and their accompanying critical-thinking strategies offer a rich entry point into the following topics and themes:

- Life as a soldier
- Life on the home front
- The draft in New York City
- Women and relief efforts
- Technological advancements in communication
- The use of propaganda

School groups in and around New York City can deepen their study of the Civil War through onsite programs at Green-Wood Cemetery and Brooklyn Historical Society. At Green-Wood, burial ground to many Civil War soldiers, they will unpack themes of commemoration and memory. At Brooklyn Historical Society, founded during the Civil War in 1863, they will explore archives and museum collections for what they contain as well as probe their omissions. Both this curriculum and visits to these institutions will push students to move past epic, patriotic narratives of the Civil War and to consider the powerful forces and personal experiences that defined this transformative era.

**The Civil War: Voices from Brooklyn** was created by Rebecca Krucoff in collaboration with the Education Departments of Brooklyn Historical Society and Green-Wood Historic Fund.

### Visit Us! Bring your class on a tour!

Contact us to schedule a tour or an in-class program.

At Brooklyn Historical Society:  
**education@brooklynhistory.org**  
**www.brooklynhistory.org**

At Green-Wood:  
**contactus@greenwood.com**  
**www.green-wood.com**

Education programs at Brooklyn Historical Society and Green-Wood Cemetery are designed to support the Common Core Learning Standards and the NYC DOE Scope and Sequence.

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# CARTES DE VISITE

*A close examination of these cartes de visite reveals a country entranced by the photographic portrait.*

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## CONTEXT

Cartes de visite — the first small, inexpensive photographs printed on paper — were invented in Paris in 1854. The technology arrived in the United States in 1859 and quickly became enormously popular. The number of photography studios in Brooklyn, most of which were located in downtown Brooklyn on Fulton Street, doubled between 1858 and 1864. Soldiers and loved ones wrote ceaselessly about cartes de visite throughout the war.

Photography had been commercially available since the 1840s, but earlier formats were expensive and fragile. Cartes de visite, by contrast, were light, portable, and cost only a few dollars per dozen. They were taken with a special 12-lens camera that allowed for 12 images to be printed at a time onto one sheet, much like the layout of today's school photos. This allowed the cartes to be cut and given out to more than one person. The small paper portraits democratized the photograph — and just in time for the Civil War, when hundreds of thousands of Americans of different economic means sought ways to capture the face of a departing loved one.

Americans exchanged cartes, collected them, and pressed them into albums. While likenesses of family members undoubtedly carried the most meaning, Brooklynites also collected cartes de visite of famous people. Together, pictures of loved ones in uniform and ubiquitous, mass-produced images such as one of Lincoln reading with his son Tad reinforced a common and nationalized narrative of patriotism and personal sacrifice.

For many black Americans, photography offered an opportunity to counter the racist images of African Americans produced by white people. Black soldiers, just like white ones, visited Fulton Street's studios to get their carte de visite taken. Only one of the cartes de visite in this lesson, however, features an African American likeness. It is the only known carte de visite of a black person in Brooklyn Historical Society's archives. The lack of African American faces in this collection reminds us that most 19<sup>th</sup> century libraries showed little interest in preserving black history until many years after the Civil War.



**CONTEXT**  
(cont.)

A close examination of these cartes de visite reveals a country entranced with the photo portrait. If you had a few dollars to spare, you could capture a soldier in his uniform; an elderly aunt or grandmother; sisters, spouses, and children in their Sunday best. Cartes de visite were collected and traded — much like baseball card collections — and even stored in specially made carte de visite photo albums.

The cartes de visite included in this lesson are all from the collections of one man — Colonel John Woodward. Woodward served as a private and then colonel during the Civil War and fought in the Battle of Gettysburg. He resigned as colonel in 1866 and was appointed major general of the Second Division of the New York State National Guard in March of 1869. He would go on to become inspector general of New York State in 1875, and adjutant general in 1879. Woodward's wartime correspondence is also featured in the "Letter Writing" section of this curriculum.

Woodward's personal interests are evident in the photographs he chose to collect. Many of the images in his collection are of officers of various rank, primarily, but not entirely, depicted in their dress uniforms. You will notice that someone has handwritten the names of many of the officers on the front of the card. This might indicate the writer's familiarity with the specific officers depicted, or that she or he was interested in collecting the particular card for the role the officer played in the war. In addition to the collection of officers, we find in Woodward's cartes de visite two images of Abraham Lincoln and one of Ulysses S. Grant. These cards have printed names at the bottom, indicating that they were mass-produced and technically "collector's cards," much like Pokémon cards or baseball cards today. Students may consider why people would choose to collect cards of famous figures such as Lincoln and Grant, and to think about which side (Union or Confederate) would have collected these cards.

Finally, Woodward's collection includes two cards that are not of famous figures or officers in the army. One card has on the back a handwritten label of "Aunt Clara." This suggests a familiarity with the sitter and a card of a more personal nature. Perhaps the card was meant as a memento, which was a common use for them, particularly with people separated by the war. The other card depicts an anonymous young African American boy standing and wearing an apron. At the bottom of the card are printed the words "W. Richardson, Williamsburg, LI." Both cards suggest that they were taken at the photography studio of W. Richardson in Williamsburg (in today's Brooklyn). Many of these studios existed in Brooklyn and elsewhere expressly for the purpose of making cartes de visite. It is unclear who the boy in the photograph is, and his connection to Woodward and his carte de visite raises intriguing questions about Woodward's collection. Was he someone Woodward knew? Was the card an advertisement for a portrait studio? Did the boy commission his own portrait, or was he asked to pose by the photographer? How and why is this carte in Woodward's collection?

## TIPS FOR TEACHING WITH THESE LETTERS

Cartes de visite are formal portraits. They depict a person out of his or her natural context and instead show a view of how the person wants or is asked to be portrayed. This is very different than 21<sup>st</sup> century digital photography, with images often taken with phones in candid and informal settings. Students may compare cartes de visite with their school portraits or other posed studio photographs.

Questions to consider when looking at a carte de visite:

- ***How is the person in this image posed?***
- ***What is he or she wearing?***
- ***What objects are in the image?***
- ***How would the image be different if the person were posed a different way?***
- ***What might the clothing and objects tell us about this person?***
- ***How do you think the person wanted to be represented?***
- ***Who might want to own this carte de visite?***

# LESSON PLAN **CARTES DE VISITE**

**1 HOUR**

**AIM**

How do cartes de visite help us understand American culture during the Civil War and the war's impact on soldiers and civilians?

**THEME**

Private and public communication

**BIG UNDERSTANDING**

- Advances in photographic technology allowed for ordinary people to send, receive, and collect portraits for the first time.
- Cartes de visite could be used to share images among friends and across the nation.
- Photographs are a powerful way to commemorate loved ones and public figures.

**OBJECTIVES: SWBAT**

- Consider how photography connects people through visual communication.
- Closely analyze a primary source, drawing observations and inferences from it.
- Make generalizations from a group of sources.
- Use a source to provide evidence for their ideas.
- Gather information about the Civil War and Brooklyn in the 1860s by examining a set of cartes de visite.

**MATERIALS**



- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b> Woodward's collection of cartes de visite</p> | <p><b>2</b> Copies of Observation and Inferences handout, one per student</p> | <p><b>3</b> Copies of Examining Cartes de Visite handout, one per student</p> |
|---|---|---|

**VOCABULARY**

**Carte de visite, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, portrait, pose, portray**

# LESSON PROCEDURE

## INTRODUCTION

Ask students if they ever post or view photographs online to Facebook, Instagram, or Flickr. What do they post photos of? Who do they hope will see the photos? Why do they post them? What do they look for when they look at the photographs? What do they hope to learn? If they could only take and/or own a handful of photos, what would they want those photos to depict?

Explain that as a culture we value the information that photographs can provide us — they make things real, they connect us to loved ones far away, etc.

Ask students to imagine that someone 150 years from now has stumbled upon a Facebook or Instagram page. What might that person learn about life in the early 2000s? If relevant to your students, discuss senior portraits as well — these are traded and inscribed much like cartes de visite. Discuss student answers.

Explain that just as a future person might look at our Facebook and Instagram pages, we can look at photographs from the past and learn a lot about that time period. Explain that cartes de visite emerged just before the Civil War when photography was still an innovation. Explain the role and purpose of cartes de visite and emphasize their novelty and increased affordability as compared to today, when pictures are very common. This will help students recognize how precious images were. Explain that we will be examining a series of cartes de visite from the Civil War era to learn about the past.

## MODELING

Project an image of one of the cartes de visite at the front of the room. Ask students to write down any observations they have about the person in the image and any inferences they have about this person using the Observation/Inference handout.

Discuss students' observations and inferences and any questions they have.



## LESSON PROCEDURE

(cont.)

### APPLICATION

Explain that students will be examining a set of cartes de visite collected by a man named John Woodward, who fought in the Civil War and became a colonel. Woodward collected these photographs, and they were eventually donated to Brooklyn Historical Society.

Seat students in pairs. Give each pair a folder with copies of the Woodward cartes de visite, or give each pair a laptop to view the images online. Give each individual student an Examining Cartes de Visite handout.

Give students sufficient time to examine the cartes de visite and to fill out the handout.

### DISCUSSION

Bring students together to discuss any of the following questions. You may also ask students to write or think-pair-share about any of them.

- **Who did we see depicted in the cartes de visite?**
- **What did we learn about these people from how they were portrayed?**
- **Who do you imagine might have collected these kinds of photographs?**
- **Why might someone have such a variety of cartes in their collection?**
- **How important do you think these photographs were to people during the Civil War? What makes you say that?**
- **How well do you think these photographs capture someone's personality? Do you think that about photography today?**
- **What are these photographs telling us about soldiers during the Civil War?**
- **What would be the equivalent of these photographs today?**

## PRIMARY SOURCES



### Woodward Collection of Cartes de Visite → PAGE 17

circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.275, series 3; Brooklyn Historical Society

## HANDOUTS



### OBSERVATIONS & INFERENCE → PAGE 12

This strategy encourages students to closely examine a visual source. It helps students distinguish between what is a factual observation and what is an inference interpreted from facts observed. Make sure students study their artifact for several minutes and that they write down as many observations and inferences as they can. When students first use this strategy, they often tend to rush through it. You will need to encourage them to slow down their looking.

These strategies align to the following Common Core Standards:  
**CCRA.R1, CCRA.R6**

### EXAMINING CARTES DE VISITE → PAGE 13

This strategy asks students to examine a collection of photographs, first to get the gist from the whole group, and next to closely examine one image at a time. Once students have observed the images, they are asked to make inferences and analyze what they observed through leveled questioning.

These strategies align to the following Common Core Standards:  
**CCRA.R7, CCRA.W8**

## EXTENSIONS



### WRITING A MUSEUM LABEL → PAGE 16

Ask students to imagine that they are going to create an exhibition of these photographs for a museum. Have them write an introductory label that explains what these photographs are and why it is important to see them, and include a few interesting details about them. Use the Writing Your Museum Label handout to help students to create their labels.

### CREATING A CLASS COLLECTION OF CARTES DE VISITE

As a class, create a collection of new cartes de visite. Students can think about how they want to be represented: What props might they have? What would they wear? What is their facial expression? Teachers (and students) can use sepia filters on smartphones or tablets to create an antique look if they want. They can print out their cartes de visite or keep them in digital form.

# GLOSSARY

**Abraham Lincoln**—16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, who served from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865; was president during the conflict called the Civil War

**Accurate**—free from mistakes or errors, recording factual evidence

**Artisan**—a craftsperson in a skilled trade, often someone who makes things by hand

**Broadside**—a large, one-sided poster advertising or announcing information

**Brooklyn Academy of Music**—a major performing arts venue in Brooklyn, founded in 1861

**Brooklyn and Long Island Sanitary Fair**—a successful fundraising event in support of soldiers and families of the Union, organized by women's civic groups in Brooklyn in February and March of 1864

**Caption**—words next to a picture that describe what it shows

**Carte de visite**—a small paper photograph mounted on a card, popular in the 1860s and notable for its low cost and easy accessibility

**Cavalry**—troops mounted on horseback

**Citizen**—a person who legally belongs to a country and has the rights and protections of that country

**Citizenship**—the fact of having the status of a citizen

**Civil War**—an armed conflict that took place between 1861 and 1865 in the United States, between the Northern and Southern states to determine the survival of the Union or the independence of the Confederacy

**Colored citizen**—a term that referred to African-Americans during the time of the Civil War

**Confederate**—someone who fought for or allied themselves with the Confederacy during the American Civil War

**Confederacy**—the organization of Southern states that seceded from the Union during the time of the Civil War

**Depict**—to show something in a painting, photograph, print, or drawing; to show something in words in a story

**Document**—a paper, map, image, or other source about something that provides evidence

**Draft**—a system for selecting men for required service in the armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines)

**Economic**—relating to the system of how goods and services are produced or bought; relating to the role of trade and money in society to purchase and produce goods and services

**Engineer**—a person with science training who designs and builds complicated machines, systems, or structures

**Enlist**—to sign up to join the armed services

**Ephemera**—collected materials such as posters, tickets, flyers, and more, which were expected to be discarded after use

**Fortified lines**—defensive positions that have been reinforced by man-made or natural protection, such as hills, mounds of earth, or walls

**Gallatin Rifles**—a group or company of Union soldiers that was

organized by Major Theodore Lichtenhein, a New York merchant, internationally known chess master, and recent Prussian immigrant; the Gallatin Rifles joined other ethnic companies to form the 58<sup>th</sup> Regiment, New York Infantry

**Gender roles**—cultural standards that determine how males and females should think, dress, act, etc.

**Historical actor**—someone who lived in the past

**Illustrated print**—an image, often created by hand, and meant to be reproduced multiple times through printing it

**Illustrator**—someone whose job it is to draw pictures or create prints in order to describe events or ideas, such as a story-book illustrator, cartoonist, or print-maker

**Image**—a statue or picture that is made to look like a person or thing

**Immigrant**—someone who comes to a new country with the intention of living there

**Inferences**—conclusions made from facts and evidence; what you think about what you see

**Mobilize**—to bring people together for action

**Observation**—what you see; a statement you make based on what you notice; facts about something, as opposed to an inference

**Objective**—factual

**Picket**—a soldier or group of soldiers assigned to stand guard

**Primary source**—a first-hand account or document made at the time period you are studying

**Portrait**—a painting, drawing, or photograph of a person

**Portraiture**—the art or practice of making portraits

**Race**—a culturally constructed way of grouping people by physical characteristics such as skin color or facial features

**Recruit**—to find and encourage people to join a group, such as the armed services

**Recruiter**—someone whose job it is to recruit people to the armed services

**Regiment**—a military unit generally made up of groups of soldiers and led by a military officer

**Secession**—the act of separating from a nation or state to become independent

**Subjective**—one's personal opinion, based on feelings rather than fact

**Transcription**—a typed, word-for-word copy of someone's words; used with handwritten letters and interviews

**Truce**—stopping fighting (as in a war)

**Ulysses S. Grant**—the commanding general of the Union Army during the final years of the American Civil War; later the 18<sup>th</sup> president of the United States

**Union**—the term used to describe the states fighting to preserve the union of Northern and Southern states in the American Civil War, located primarily in the northern and western sections of the country

# OBSERVATIONS & INFERENCE

## DIRECTIONS

Choose one carte de visite and answer the following questions

### OBSERVATIONS

Describe what you see in the carte de visite you chose.

### INFERENCE

What guesses/assumptions can you make about the carte de visite, its creator, the technology of the time, or the time period based on those observations?

**Questions** Now that you've looked at this document, what new questions do you have?

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# EXAMINING CARTES DE VISITE

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Look at all of the cartes de visite together. Making general observations, answer the questions below:

**Who is depicted in these cartes de visite? What is your evidence?**

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- 2 Choose **THREE** cartes de visite to closely examine. Record your observations about the objects, clothing, pose, and words written (if any) in the spaces provided below. Make inferences by answering the questions that follow.

### Carte de visite #1

<b>OBJECTS</b>	<b>CLOTHING</b>	<b>POSE</b>	<b>WORDS</b> (if any)
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**Who do you think this person is? What evidence in the photograph makes you say that?**

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**Based on the poses, clothing, and objects, what do you think the photographer was trying to communicate about this person (personality, status, etc.)?**

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# EXAMINING CARTES DE VISITE

## Carte de visite #2

OBJECTS	CLOTHING	POSE	WORDS (if any)
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**Who do you think this person is? What evidence in the photograph makes you say that?**

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**Based on the poses, clothing, and objects, what do you think the photographer was trying to communicate about this person (personality, status, etc.)?**

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## Carte de visite #3

OBJECTS	CLOTHING	POSE	WORDS (if any)
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**Who do you think this person is? What evidence in the photograph makes you say that?**

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**Based on the poses, clothing, and objects, what do you think the photographer was trying to communicate about this person (personality, status, etc.)?**

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## EXAMINING CARTES DE VISITE

Reflecting on all of the cartes de visite together

**1** Why might these people choose to be portrayed in this way?

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**2** Who do you imagine would have collected these cartes de visite? Why?

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**3** Why might someone have such a variety of cartes de visite in their collection?

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# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of E. Apfelbaum,  
circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers,  
ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society

## JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of Aunt Clara,  
circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers,  
ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society



# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of Captain Young,  
circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers,  
ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society

# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of young African American boy, circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society



# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of General Gillmore seated, circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society

# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of General Gillmore standing up, circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society



# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of General Doubleday, circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society

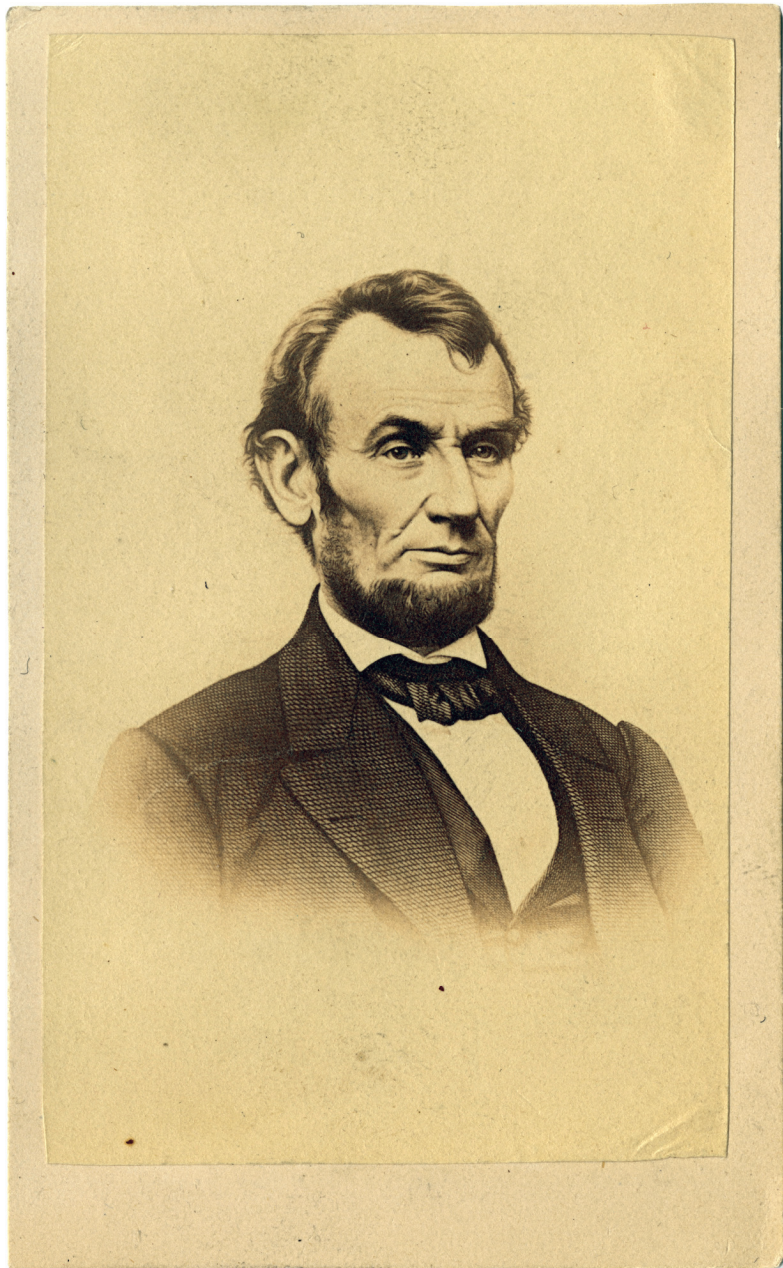
# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of Ulysses S. Grant, circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society



## JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of Abraham Lincoln,  
circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers,  
ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society

# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of Abraham Lincoln and son, circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society



# JOHN B. WOODWARD COLLECTION



Carte de visite of W.J. Irwin, Sergeant Major 13<sup>th</sup>, circa 1860–1865; John B. Woodward papers, ARC.245; Brooklyn Historical Society