

Philadelphia, then and now



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Burton (Naudain St), Then and Now Naudain St, between 17th and 18th streets, doesn't differ much from the current typical residential Center City Philadelphia block. Row homes dominate the view, most of which are three story buildings, with the exception of 2 attached row homes towards the corner of 18th and Naudain, which are four story buildings. Part of the 7th ward at the end of the 19th century, this block has not changed much visually in the last 100 years. That is, to say, almost all the residential buildings of this block have undergone progressive physical renovation in the past century. The street itself, is a one way narrow road, on which parking is allowed on only one side of the street through less than half of the block.

On the other half towards 18th street, parking isn't allowed at all. Hence, the block still embodies the look and the feel of a late 19th century neighborhood. But is it in reality According to the 1896 map of the 7th ward by W. E. B.

DuBois, this block (Burton St back then) was populated primarily by African American working class people. In fact, the map shows about 6 poor families and over 20 (the majority of the residences) populated by the working class, or as DuBois explains, the fair and the comfortable. There was 1 residence of the criminal class, and also a few white families in the block. Although I have no physical picture of how this block looked in 1896, the fact that DuBois categorized African Americans in "the Poor" and "the Working People", I would assume this block's physical view has not changed as it still embodies the authentic family residential feel to it. Most likely, however, middle class now populates the block and even upper class people as Center City residential life costs have been almost unaffordable by other

classes. It is interesting to understand that this block is situated in an area which in 1896 was populated by people of a wide range of classes. Middle classmen lived only one block north of there, the poor only one block south, while criminals only one block west of it, between 18th and 19th street.

DuBois has found that such a cluster of classes happens from the criminals that had moved to this area from 7th and Lombard Streets.

Gamblers lived around the area as well as undetected prostitutes. As DuBois puts in his words "some undesirable elements have crept here" but still remains a centre of quiet, respectable families, who own their homes and live well. A similar story could be said today.

Almost the entire block is residential, with the exception of a small parking lot at the corner of 17th street. This is a small parking lot for the Philadelphia Center City Concierge and a local seafood store, which in fact are located on Lombard St (one block north). The houses are very well maintained. There was only one vacant residence in the middle of the block, the construction of which appeared to be somewhat different, resembling more of a store than a residence. The rest of the block consists of three story row homes and four story row homes, which according to their width and floor height, appear to be relatively small spaces of living. However, the bricks still look in good condition for the most part, most doors and windows have been replaced with high end modern models.

There are several trees in the block as well as pots of flowers on many of the residences. The block looks relatively clean, with the exception of one of the 2 small private lots at the corner of 18th street in which there is litter. There

are also two much newer residential buildings at the corner of 18th, which maintain the average floor height of the other row homes, but are much wider and also have 2 two car garages on the first floor. Their style differs a bit from the rest of the homes by being a little more modern. To summarize, Naudain St, between 17th and 18th streets in Philadelphia is a small typical Center City residential block, which still embodies the feel of a home lovers' neighborhood. Although its demographics might have dramatically changed from that of DuBois' findings in 1896, as cities have been constantly redefining themselves, the block's role has not changed much.

It still looks like a well-maintained block populated by people who love the idea of a home and its value. Minor differences have occurred in the block's layout, but its spatial majority is in fact, the same.