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Stephen M. Samtur, Martin A. Jackson. *The Bronx: Lost, Found, and Remembered, 1935-1975.* Scarsdale, N.Y.: Back in the Bronx, 1999. vi + 248 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-9657221-1-7.

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By what authority does a boy from Brooklyn and a life-long resident of this special place which brought Jackie Robinson into history critique a book on the Bronx? Let me count the ways. This writer had a significant sojourn in the northern borough during the formative years. His radical mother would deposit him with an aunt while she made the revolution in Manhattan. Nurtured by his Bronx relatives, he parked in Crotona, "movied" (primarily) at the Loew's Elsmere, shopped on Tremont Avenue, roosted in the Coops, rooted at Yankee Stadium (where he also peddled peanuts and popcorn) and romanced a college co-ed (she was the moon over Mosholu Parkway) on Gun-Hill Road. Thus, when Pistol Pete Rollins suggested a critical study of Stephen M. Samtur and Martin A. Jackson's *The Bronx: Lost, Found, and Remembered 1935-1975*, he jumped at the chance.

The book starts on high ground with a view of Art Deco from the vantage of the Grand Concourse, the Bronx equivalent of the Champs Elysee. Then we go to the parks, beaches and pools. Not quite on par with Coney Island (what is?), Orchard Beach beckoned to the masses yearning to breath free salted air and eager to enjoy its bracing baptismal waters. No subways stretched to the blistering sands; so Bronxites were compelled to ride buses minus air conditioning. For those residents who could not make the trek (like my family), Crotona Park with playgrounds, diamonds and lake provided respite from the sweltering city. And who cold forget those voyages into the heart of darkness: the Bronx Zoo? For the more aesthetically minded crowd, the Bronx Botanical Gardens offered the best collection of flowers outside the Floriade of Holland. For Yankee fans, like this reviewer, the big ball orchard in the Bronx represented mecca. The "House that Ruth Built" became the home of such heroes as Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle, and Reggie Jackson. Those who came after 1975, Dave Winfield, Don Mattingly, Paul O'Neill and Derek Jeter to name some of the best, also merit mention for sustaining that glorious tradition. Here, in the absence of a chapter devoted to sports, one can question the authors' otherwise fine judgment. Where's the beef? After all, the Bronx created the dominant team in baseball. Yet, one looks in vain for reference to the Bronx Bombers who have captured 24 World Series titles and 34 American League pennants.

The Bronx also produced great baseball players who found fame with other teams. Hank Greenberg, Rod Carew, and Manny Ramirez spring immediately to mind. In football, the "seven blocks of granite" brought glory to the Fordham Rams of Rose Hill featuring the unconquerable Vince Lombardi. Basketball deserves mention too. The great CCNY team in 1950-1951 which won an unprecedented double victory in the NIT and NCAA had two Bronxites in the starting line-up: Ed Roman and Irwin Dambrot not to mention several like Joe Galiber who provided punch off the bench. That enigma wrapped in a riddle, Jack Molinas, a Columbia Lion, learned his basketball craft in the Creston Avenue playground as did North Carolina Tar-Hell star, Lenny Rosenbluth. The all-black team at Texas El-Paso which whipped an all white Kentucky five in the 1967 NCAA championship had Morris High School graduate, Nevil Shed leading the way.

Evidently, Samtur and Jackson prefer nosh and nostalgia to guts and glory in sports. How else could they justify entire chapters on the candy stores and restaurants of this benighted borough? Take the candy stores, please. The authors list the addresses and provide photos of and data for these vanished entities of confection. Such a voyage into the past no doubt resonates with the fifty and over crowd of mostly white ethnics in the Bronx. But it creates a "we-them" polarity which might repel the outsider looking at the borough "through a glass darkly."

When Samtur and Jackson get into street games, they draw us back in. With a veritable cornucopia of anthropological lore especially coupled with outstanding photographs, we are compelled into contemplation of Peter Bruegal's marvelous paintings of Flemish children at play. This chapter arises as a tour de force and is clearly

worth the price of admission.

Disappointment follows as the next chapter hopscotches from play to cuisine. Here, we are treated to a discourse on Daitch Dairy on Kingsbridge Road. Waiting in the wings is Krum's, a candy lover's cholem (dream). Jahn's Ice Cream Parlor completes the cycle of cholesterol mania, leaving the reader in dire need of a Questran coupled with a Bromo-Seltzer.

After a brief foray into that ill-fated pleasure place, Freedomland, the authors provide a wonderful respite with photos of landmarks, thoroughfares and buildings: then and now. At this juncture, only the lonely stonehearted could remain unmoved by the juxtaposition of old and new. Certainly, one of the best chapters in this fine book deals with movies in the Bronx.

"Hey, Marty, what are we doing tonight?" "I dunno Angie, how about you?" The late Paddy Chayevsky captured the cadences of Bronx culture emergent in the Arthur Avenue section. Throughout the Bronx, movie theaters loomed as great make-out places and escape hatches from the ordinariness of everyday life. Flicks provided an exit from the evil of banality. Anything was possible in Hollywood's dream factory. Samtur and Jackson provide excellent photos of these palaces of pop culture and their neon marquees. Everyone whose life's odyssey carried him or her through the Bronx will identify with one or several theaters. Not only do I remember mama; I also fondly recall the Loew's Elsmere on 1926 Crotona Parkway. My relatives who favored Yiddish drama frequented the Ritz on East 180th Street. Going there on a Sunday was comparable to "putting on the Ritz." The movie that we watched in wonder were a far cry from the cynical Paul Newman potboiler, *Fort Apache*.

Neighborhoods, schools, shopping, transit systems, and religious worship add flesh to the bone and round out the picture. In their discussion of politics (pp. 155-64), the authors gloss over the political ideology of certain neighborhoods such as the radical persuasion of many residents in the Coops on Allerton Avenue and the vital contributions of trade unions in establishing the Amlagamated Houses, exemplary models of low-cost housing for working and middle-class members. Fortified with The Bronx Home News which later merged with The New York Post, Bronxites debated Stalin v. Trotsky, Truman v. Wallace, bossism v. reform on park benches. They discussed various isms: Fascism, Socialism, Communism, Zionism, Captialism un azoi veiter (et al.) on the stoops of buildings. Reformers did not–as the authors contend–demolish the Bronx Democratic machine. The spirit of Edward Flynn survived in the antics of Patrick Cunningham, a stooge of George Steinbrenner and in the scandals of Stanley "Bugs" Friedman, a convicted felon from the Koch era.

The book ends, however, on a happy note with celebrity interviews. While the choices–Red Buttons, Judd Hirsch, Mal Z. Lawrence, Dion, Robert Klein, Shari Lewis (alova sholem i.e. rest in peace), Geraldine Ferraro, Ed Kranepool, Regis Philbin, Lloyd Ultan (borough historian and author of an engaging history of the Bronx), Colin Powell, David Horowitz, Jerry Vale, Jan Murray and Marvin Scott–are judicious, indeed inspired–the results are uneven. The comedians, for example, do not convey their funniest lines. Despite the obligatory paeans to the old neighborhoods, the words fail to fly. Here, the authors missed a splendid opportunity to exercise creative writing and vital editorial skills. With only Colin Powell representing the African-American experience in the Bronx, an unintended impression is conveyed about the good old days bathed in a mythic, whitewashed past. The authors who write about and teach in the Bronx inadvertently give credence and comfort to the opponents of cultural diversity and our pluralist past. Even if Bronx Community College does not quite measure up to NYU's uptown branch which it has superceded, this institution of higher learning in concert with Lehman and Fordham continues to elevate the children of immigrants. And brings the American dream closer to fruition.

Stephen Samtur and Martin Jackson have performed a valuable service in producing this labor of love. In their sequel, tracing the odyssey of the sons and daughters of the Bronx, however, I urge them to please bring the narrative up to date. Devote a chapter to sports. Incorporate sports heroes like Hank Greenberg and Joe DiMaggio. Give the readers more comedy with a spotlight on the Marshalls: Garry and Penny. Demonstrate why Mal Z. Lawrence is one of the funniest comics in America. Show us how a capella doo-wop groups transformed American music on Belmont Avenue and on other less than "mean streets."

Imperfections aside, the book provides ample food for every palate and a powerful tug at each heart. Unlike most academic efforts, *The Bronx* is pithy without being pedantic, readable minus the footnotes, and delicious like the confections sold at the venerated local candy stores. Contrary to the patronizing sneer of Ogden Nash, the authors deserve kudos. In short, "thonks" for The Bronx.

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