

The Spirit of Midwood: The Vitagraph Company of America and Its Special Relationship with the Borough of Brooklyn, 1897-1925

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Abstract : This work discusses the relationship between the Vitagraph Company of America (VCA) and the neighborhood of Midwood, Brooklyn, where the company's largest production studio was located. The relationship between VCA and the Borough of Brooklyn was unique from other production companies in that despite the nationwide popularity of Vitagraph's films, the content of the films produced by Vitagraph were directly influenced by the cinematic preferences of one specific urban center. In contrast to the national aspirations of the leading production companies of the period such as Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount, and Universal, who set out to attract the broadest audience possible, VCA's films were aimed to appeal to specific a niche group that embodied Brooklyn's conservative principles. As a result of the VCA's alliance with theater owners and movie spectators in Brooklyn, the Vitagraph studio in Midwood became one of the Borough's most recognizable cultural institutions, and through the production of Vitagraph's quality films Brooklynites had a significant means of sharing their unique cultural identity with the rest of the United States.

Keywords : Vitagraph Company of America, Midwood, Brooklyn, Vitagraphville, New York Motion Picture History, silent era, J. Stuart Blackton, Albert Smith

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