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LEFT BANK OF THE HUDSON

Jersey City and the Artists of 111 1st Street

By David J. Goodwin

"Drawing on interviews with resident artists, city officials, and community activists; archival research; and scholarly literature, the book reconstructs the story of one particular place and asks us to consider how it might shed light on wider trends. This close study of a specific arts community, forcibly disbanded, is useful both as an act of specific memorialization and as an exemplar of a wider phenomenon seen in cities across North America."

--Publishers Weekly

"Goodwin tells the gripping but sad tale of 111 First Street -- a Jersey City tobacco factory that found its second life as a thriving arts community. Along the way, we meet eccentric artists, Russian mobsters, corrupt cops, greedy developers, and this being Jersey City, dysfunctional politicians....But in the end, the story is a true tragedy. Goodwin questions the place of culture and history in a living city and in the process, carves out a piece of both for the reader."

--Helene Stapinski, author of *Five-Finger Discount: A Crooked Family History*

Gentrification. The very word elicits powerful emotions. For local politicians, it symbolizes an opportunity to bring amenities and opportunities to their cities. For developers it implies the chance to grow and make a lot of money. Unfortunately, for the early adopters—the trailblazers—the word is often synonymous with being displaced, evacuated, or exiled.

In **LEFT BANK OF THE HUDSON: Jersey City and the Artists of 111 1st Street** (Fordham University Press Trade Paperback Original, October 2, 2017, \$24.95) historian David J. Goodwin recognizes the full dynamism of gentrification and demonstrates the complex workings within this very real space of 111 1st Street in Jersey City, NJ.

Afflicted by deindustrialization, population loss, drugs, and crime, Jersey City limped through the second half of the twentieth century. Then, in the late 1980s, a small, yet dedicated band of artists rented studio space at 111 1st Street, the former P. Lorillard Tobacco Company warehouse near a derelict stretch of the Hudson River waterfront. Over the next two decades, several hundred artists lived and worked in this building, contributing to the rejuvenation of the surrounding neighborhood and Jersey City. The local arts scene flourished, igniting hope that Jersey City would emerge as the grassroots center of the art world.

However, a rising real estate market coupled with a provincial political establishment threatened the place of the artists in 111 1st Street. The resident artists found themselves entangled in a long, complicated, and vicious fight for their place in the building and for the physical survival of 111 1st Street itself.

The history of 111 1st Street and its community offers a window into the demographic, political, and socio-economic changes experienced by Jersey City during the last thirty years and the complex, often mischaracterized relationship between artists and gentrification. Goodwin has interviewed artists and residents who lived at 111 1st Street, as well as businesses, government officials, community activists, nonprofit and civic organizations. In **LEFT BANK OF THE HUDSON**, Goodwin addresses important questions, including:

- Why communities such as 111 1st Street are important to cities, and what we should do to prevent early adopters from becoming victims of gentrification.
- What the artists of 111 1st Street could have done differently, and what other towns can learn from some of the mistakes they made.
- The kinds of tools citizens and communities possess that can shape gentrification in a positive way.
- How gentrification works, and how residents can become proactive and retaining their power within the community.

111 1st Street presents an illustrative lesson to government officials, scholars, students, activists, and everyday citizens attempting to navigate the “rediscovery” of American cities and working toward ensuring both old and new urban residents maintain a right to their respective cities. **LEFT BANK OF THE HUDSON** serves as a powerful example of the complicated story communities throughout the United States are facing as emerging cities and towns are taken away from those who gave it life in the first place.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Educated at St. Bonaventure University, Drexel University, and Fordham University, **David J. Goodwin** works by day as a librarian at Fordham University School of Law. He is a past commissioner and chairman of the Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission. Currently, he serves as a board member of the Jersey City Landmarks Conservancy. He writes regularly at anothertownonthehudson.com.

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By David J. Goodwin, Foreword by D.W. Gibson

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