

**GEOGRAPHERS UTILIZE URBAN STUDIES TO DOCUMENT EVOLUTION OF
JOHNSON CITY, N.Y.**

The evolution of the Village of Johnson City is ripe for study. As with any urban environment, its evolution — its upswings and its downturns — can be studied in a myriad of ways. In the world of urban studies, one can look at the economy, architecture, sociological makeup, natural resources and demographics galore; the list of what can help determine why and how Johnson City began to languish is almost endless. And now, geographers from Binghamton University are gathering data to track the impact of Binghamton University’s Health Sciences Campus on the resurgence of the village, as it evolves yet again.

A collaborative of faculty, staff and students in the University’s Department of Geography, led by Distinguished Service Professor John Frazier, has created a “story map” of the area, examining various aspects of the Health Sciences Campus development zone. Unique because it has established a baseline of the economic, environmental and societal elements of the neighborhood from the beginning of construction of the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the Health Sciences Campus, the project will follow the changes that occur — the revitalization of the area — as buildings are renovated, more diverse residents move in, property values increase and businesses evolve. Through one-on-one interviews with business owners, residents and government officials; field work; aerial videos; mapping of crimes, housing, unemployment and poverty rates; tracking of property and land values; and demographics, a clear picture has been created of the current neighborhood to serve as a baseline for future comparison. Frazier and his team want to better understand how revitalization can and should be accomplished when there is state and University support for integration into communities.

This work providing the changing attitudes, conditions and view of the University in the neighborhood will continue as the Health Sciences Campus is fully realized over the next six to 10 years. It is hoped that the process will be replicated throughout the Triple Cities, including Binghamton and Endicott, demonstrating what has resulted from the impact of state dollars and Binghamton University assistance in growing the economy. Better understanding will inform multiple issues of significance to the entire state, such as for short-term housing, location of vulnerable populations and changing real-estate values, that can be centralized and include resources to address issues such as shelters, healthcare and the ability of the population to access those resources when needed. In addition, a number of benefits are being realized due to the study: New York state and Binghamton University priorities are supported as neighborhoods are revitalized and jobs are created; the practical applications of this project demonstrate what to do — or not to do — to realize economic revitalization, environmental and urban sustainability, and social equity; this process is replicable in other areas locally, regionally and nationally; and students are gaining practical experience working, developing them into highly marketable graduates able to engage in community projects in the public and private sectors.

For more: jc-redevelopment.binghamton.edu

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Binghamton University
Binghamton, NY 13902
Binghamton.edu/art-museum

U R B A N S T U D I E S

P H O T O G R A P H Y B Y N . J A Y J A F F E E

September 6–December 8, 2018

Binghamton University Art Museum



Snowstorm, NYC, 1947 (printed 1993)

URBAN STUDIES: PHOTOGRAPHY BY N. JAY JAFFEE

September 6 – December 8, 2018

“Photography gave me a broad sense of roots, not just in the community, but in my own social life as well.”ⁱ

Born in Brooklyn, Nathan Jay Jaffee (1921–1999) grew up the youngest of three children in a Jewish family who had come to America from Eastern Europe. Economic insecurity and his mother’s poor health caused the family to frequently move around the boroughs of New York, bringing him in to close contact with the sights, smells and sounds of widely varied neighborhoods. He could catch a bit of salt air on a road near the ocean at one location, while another address exposed him to the cacophony of street sellers offering their wares to passersby. These environmental qualities found expression in the values and textures of images that Jaffee would capture over several decades of photographing the world around him.

Jaffee purchased his first camera in 1947, a short while after returning from Europe as a WWII veteran. He had as a teenager received formal training in letterpress printing and worked in an established print shop in Manhattan prior to joining the war effort. While looking for work after the war he carried his new Kodak Monitor folding camera with him, keen to develop his skills, and soon found instruction at Local 65 of the Wholesale and Warehouse Workers Union. To his good fortune, his teacher was Sid Grossman, co-founder of the Photo League, a cooperative of photographers founded in 1936.

With a socially progressive agenda, the Photo League offered classes, lectures, critiques, discussions, and exhibitions to further members’ technical skills and address societal concerns. Heavily favoring documentary photography, members noticed the nuances of everyday life—gritty back alleys and busy storefronts, as well as the struggles and joys of ordinary people. Inspired by Grossman and others, Jaffee began to photograph his immediate surroundings. His instructor responded positively to *Snowstorm*, 1947, an image that does not romanticize snowfall in the city, but instead captures the drudgery of enduring winter’s worst. This was how Jaffee studied the people and places around him.

There are ways that anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists study a community; there are ways of sizing up a population and its space by relying on such factors as economics, density of space, age or ethnicity. Photographs can take yet another measure of a community. They can record a certain wear and tear on streets, buildings, and the faces of individuals. They can also capture resilience, confidence, and pride. Studies in the art world are usually preparatory: sketches in oil and pencil drawings allow an artist to contemplate a subject or dash down ideas like notes in shorthand to be referenced later. But studies can be ends in themselves. An artist’s quick rendering or, as we see in Jaffee’s case, the click of the shutter can perfectly capture a poignant moment.

N. Jay Jaffee often lived in the area he was photographing, giving him regular access to a wide range of environments. With sympathy, affection, and occasional tender humor, Jaffee photographed streets and neighborhoods undergoing change, as well as favorite beaches and local storefronts. His photographs also featured everyday experiences and unnamed individuals, whether they be businessmen sunning themselves

in Bryant Park or neighborhood kids grinning toward his viewfinder. Although a friend and colleague of working men and women, his empathetic feelings extended beyond his solidarity with day laborers and he felt sad when viewing his own image of a horse pulling a laundry wagon. Jaffee’s photographs resonate familiarity and encourage viewers to feel like they’re walking alongside him, sharing in the amusement of unintended shadows, the noise of a rattling subway, or the smell of an open market. They encourage the viewer to pause, lose themselves in an image of another time, and allow other senses to take over.

Diane S. Butler
Director

The exhibition features a recent gift from Cyrisse Jaffee '74 and Barry Anechiarico '73, as well as loans from The N. Jay Jaffee Trust. The exhibition was made possible by a grant from The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation.

For more on N. Jay Jaffee see njayjaffee.com.

ⁱ Jaffee quoted in Joshua Botkin, “Photographer Uses Camera as Therapy,” *The Long Islander* (6 July 1989).



Bryant Park, New York Public Library, NY, ca. 1953



Self-Portrait (Reflection), NYC, 1975



Lamp Post with Buildings, NYC, 1974



Man and Woman Embracing, Coney Island, 1972