



Grace Lee Boggs (1915 – 2015)

Childhood in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst

Although Boggs was born in Rhode Island, she spent her childhood in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst in Queens. When Boggs was growing up in Jackson Heights, her family enjoyed a middle-class life in a neighborhood that was heavily Italian. However, Boggs wrote that because of Anti-Asian sentiment, her father had to purchase the land for their house in Jackson Heights under the name of his Irish contractor. Their home, which was located at 37-39 73rd Street in Jackson Heights, was the largest on the block and was spacious enough for her family to live comfortably on the 2nd and 3rd floors while renting out the downstairs flat. The downstairs apartment had 7 large rooms, and the 2nd and 3rd floors had 11. Their home had an adjacent fenced-in area that doubled as a short tennis court and hockey rink where Boggs, who called herself a tomboy, played ice hockey as a child with her brothers.

Boggs went to school at Newton High School in Elmhurst which was a mile from her home in Jackson Heights. Because she was unaccustomed to American lack of privacy, she wrote in her autobiography that she would often run home before gym class to change. All of her family's neighbors in Jackson Heights were immigrants from Europe, and in High School she spent most of her social time with Italians who she met through her Italian best friend. In the late 1920s, her family spent their summers in Island park in Nassau County on the South Shore of Long Island, just one mile from Long Beach. In 1929, her father had a second house built for the family on the beach. After college, Boggs lived in Jackson Heights with her mother for a while. While she was working with C. L. R. James Johnson and the Johnson-Forest Tendency inside the worker's party she also lived in New York.