

Exploration 14

What's in a Name?

The act of naming has power and significance. Giving something a name helps define it. A name can be used to identify, clarify and nurture. Names can be used to reflect a quality perceived as already present, or chosen to imbue the thing to be named with a hoped for quality or attribute.

For this exercise, to name something is to understand it. Begin with speaking with your students about the importance of naming. This could include a review of the meaning of their names and a discussion of named objects. For example, many people have a name for their car. Build up to the idea of why buildings might have a name.

Materials:

- Something to write and draw on
- Something to write or draw with
- Images of Flat Iron buildings
- Floor plan and site plan of the Flat Iron Building
- Image of a flat iron or a flat iron

Objective:

After exercises in which they transform text to image and image to text, students will demonstrate their understanding of the relationship of a name to a building through an analysis of an image and plan of the Flat Iron Building in Brownsville.

Standards:

- Arts: NA-VA 1, 3, 4, 6
- English: NL-ENG 4, 7, 12
- Mathematics: NM-GEO 2,4; NM-PROB 3
- Science: NS 5, 6, 7
- Social Studies: NSS-G 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

Procedures:

- Frank Lloyd Wright gave Fallingwater its name. The house he designed for the Hagan family is called Kentuck Knob. Ask your students to discuss what images these names evoke. What about Wingspread, Graycliff, or Hollyhock House? Discuss how the name describes a quality that is unique to the building. Ask them to make a sketch of what one of these looks like.

Points to Ponder: Where would it be located? What would surround it? What would it be made of? Would it be big or small? Would you want to live there?

- Using resources below, show your students an image of the Flat Iron Building, the location of the Melega Art Museum in Brownsville. (The term *flat iron* refers to the shape of the building and the triangular lot it was built on, so called because it was shaped like a clothes iron) Ask them:
 - What do you notice first about this building?
 - What shape is it?
 - Where is it located?
 - Of what is it made?
 - Who designed it?
 - Who built it?
 - Who uses it, now and in the past?
 - What would you call it?
 - Why?

- Show your student a floor plan and site plan of the Flat Iron Building. Ask:
 - What do you notice first about it?
 - What shapes do you see?
 - Show them an image of a flat iron. Or bring one into your classroom if you have one. Ask them to compare the plan shape to the object shape.
 - From looking at the plan, how do you think the building is used?
 - How would you enter it?
 - How would you move through it?
 - How would you exit it?
 - Where is located?
 - What would you call it? Why?



Flatiron Building
Brownsville

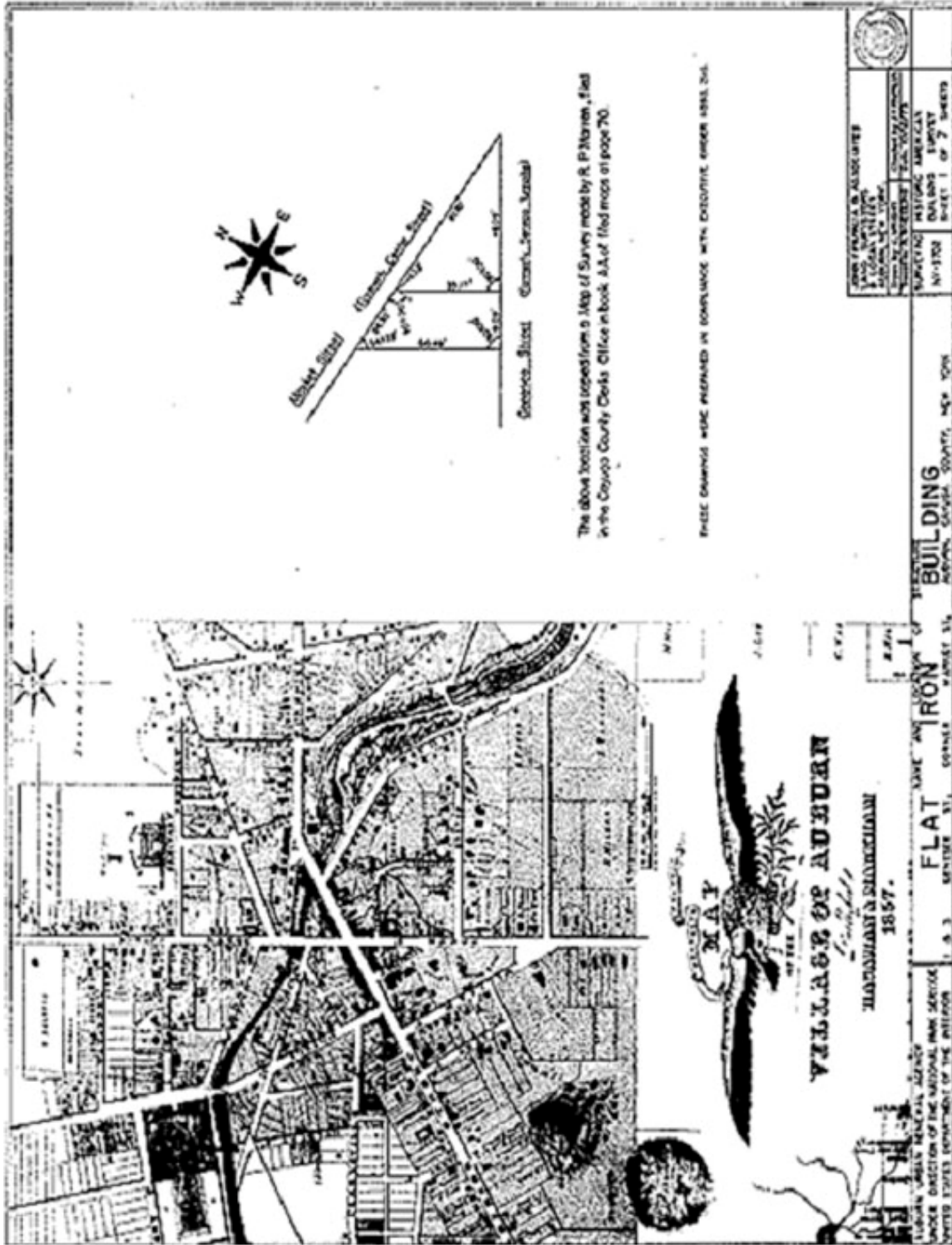
According to former Brownsville mayor Norma Ryan, Brownsville's flat iron building was advertised in the newspapers as the building with the round corner through the 1800s. When the Fuller Building was built on a triangular island block in New York City in 1902, the New York Times dubbed it the "Flat Iron" building, stating that it looked like an old fashioned clothing iron. It was a little later in time that the local building picked up that 'tag'.



Flatiron Building
New York City

It is interesting to note that New York's Flatiron is also said to have helped coin the phrase "[23 skidoo](#)" or scam, from what cops would shout at men who tried to get glimpses of women's dresses being blown up by the winds created by the triangular building.⁵

⁵ Andrew S. Dolkart. [The Architecture and Development of New York City: The Birth of the Skyscraper - Romantic Symbols](#), Columbia University, accessed May 15, 2007. "It is at a triangular site where Broadway and Fifth Avenue—the two most important streets of New York—meet at Madison Square, and because of the juxtaposition of the streets and the park across the street, there was a wind-tunnel effect here. In the early twentieth century, men would hang out on the corner here on Twenty-third Street and watch the wind blowing women's dresses up so that they could catch a little bit of ankle. This entered into popular culture and there are hundreds of postcards and illustrations of women with their dresses blowing up in front of the Flatiron Building. And it supposedly is where the slang expression "23 skidoo" comes from because the police would come and give the voyeurs the 23 skidoo to tell them to get out of the area."



Site Plan
Flat Iron Building
Auburn, New York



Flat Irons