



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

CROWN HEIGHTS NORTH BROOKLYN



The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period.

The six, chosen from applications submitted by community organizations, are selected on the basis of the architectural and historic merit of the area, the level of threat to the neighborhood, the strength and willingness of the local advocates, and the potential for HDC's preservation support to be meaningful. HDC works with these neighborhood partners to set and reach preservation goals through strategic planning, advocacy, outreach, programs and publicity.

The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources—its neighborhoods, buildings, parks and public spaces—are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council works to ensure the preservation of these resources and uphold the New York City Landmarks Law and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of assistance to more than 500 community and neighborhood groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach and sponsorship of community events.



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CROWN HEIGHTS NORTH

Described in the Crown Heights North Historic District designation report as “among Brooklyn’s most architecturally distinguished areas” and a “showcase for the work of architects who played an important role in Brooklyn’s development”, the neighborhood is a feast for the eyes. Its magnificent and varied residential architecture is peppered with grand religious and institutional buildings, and anchored by the picturesque Brower Park. The neighborhood’s northern and southern boundaries are Atlantic Avenue and Eastern Parkway, but its western and eastern boundaries are up for debate, though many consider them to be Washington Avenue and Ralph Avenue, respectively. The area’s three historic districts were designated between 2007 and 2015, and this brochure highlights some of the treasures found within and nearby those districts.

The neighborhood’s transition from farmland to suburban enclave began in 1854 with the auction of land parcels by the area’s principal landowner, the Lefferts family. At that time, this area was known as the village of Bedford, a name it retained for some time. The area’s epic transformation over the ensuing half century was enabled by a series of major transportation improvements. The first was the introduction of stagecoach and horsecar service between Fulton Ferry and Bedford, which inspired the construction of freestanding villas on the Lefferts parcels. With the announcement of the new Brooklyn Bridge, to be completed in 1883, speculative rowhouse construction began as early as the 1870s, but dramatically increased after the Kings County Elevated Railway was completed along Fulton Street in 1888. It is this latter wave of development that most strongly characterizes the neighborhood’s architectural significance today. When the subway reached the area in 1920, apartment building construction increased to accommodate a growing commuter population.

Around 1890, the area north of Sterling Place became known as the “St. Marks District”, but the moniker was short-lived, as many of the wealthy residents of St. Marks Avenue had moved away and their mansions demolished by 1920. Grant Square was also one of the most prestigious sections of Brooklyn at the turn of the century, second only to Grand Army Plaza in importance due to the prominent institutions on its borders, including the Union League Club (site # 1), St. Bartholomew’s Church (site # 3), and the 23rd Regiment Armory (site # 4). The name “Crown Heights” was used starting around 1910 to describe the area south of Eastern Parkway. The area north of the parkway was called “Bedford” well into the 20th century, since the area was considered part of Bedford-Stuyvesant. However, “Crown Heights” gained traction with its white population in the mid-20th century as a way to differentiate itself from Bedford-Stuyvesant, which many began to consider a black ghetto. While historians often refer to Crown Heights “North” and “South” due to their demographic, architectural, topographical, and historical differences, most do not make this distinction even today.

During its boom years, the population of Crown Heights North was of mainly European descent. By the mid-20th century, African- and Caribbean-Americans began to make up a significant portion of the population due to the 1936 opening of the Independent (IND) subway line, which provided direct access from Harlem, the center of the city’s black population. By the 1960s, Crown Heights had the largest Caribbean-American population in the city, and by the 1990s, was known as a major Caribbean-American hub in the entire country. Today, the neighborhood is changing yet again, with populations shifting as a result of rising rents throughout the city.

I

**FORMER UNION LEAGUE CLUB
OF BROOKLYN**
19 Grant Square
(*Peter J. Lauritzen, 1890*)

GENERAL GRANT STATUE
(*William Ordway Partridge, 1896*)
– NYC HD, NR-D



This handsome Romanesque Revival style building was constructed as a social club for the Union League, established in 1863 by Union supporters and members of Brooklyn’s Republican Party. The Grant Square façade abounds in Union iconography, most significantly in the brownstone busts of Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant above the entrance arches and a grand eagle supporting the second floor bay window. The building’s rich terra cotta trim includes a plethora of Byzantine leaf, popular in the 1880s and

1890s. The structure’s roofline suffered major alterations in the 1970s, including the removal of Spanish tiles, a turreted observation tower, and a gabled roof with a large dormer. In the early 20th century, after the boroughs were consolidated, the club merged with the Manhattan branch. In 1914, the building became home to a Jewish organization called the Unity Club until 1943, and was subsequently converted to a Yeshiva. The building currently houses the Bhraggs Grant Square Senior Citizens’ Center. The Union League Club commissioned the bronze statue of Grant that sits within the adjacent square, and donated it to the city in 1896, when it was unveiled on Grant’s birthday.

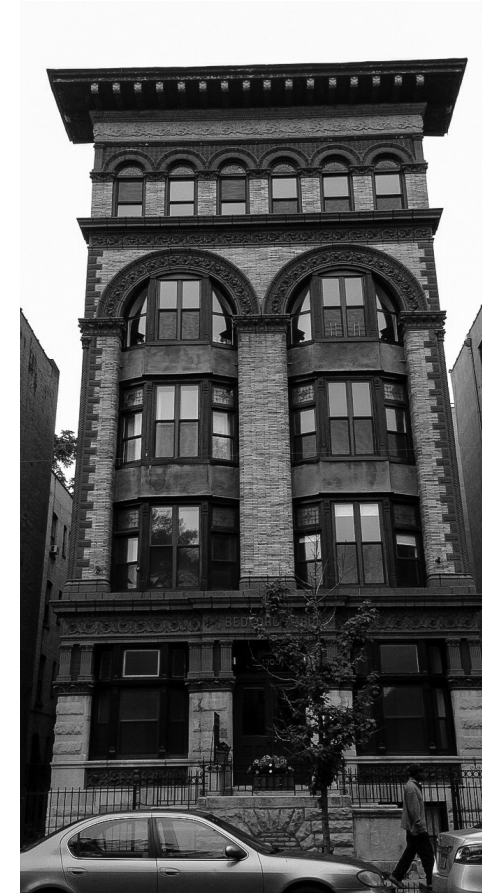
LEGEND OF DESIGNATIONS

National Historic Landmark:	NHL
National Register of Historic Places—District:	NR-D
National Register of Historic Places—Property:	NR-P
New York City Historic District:	NYC HD
New York City Individual Landmark:	NYC IL
New York City Interior Landmark:	NYC INL

2

THE IMPERIAL APARTMENTS
1198 Pacific Street
(*Montrose W. Morris, 1892*)
– NYC IL, NYC HD, NR-D

THE BEDFORDSHIRE APARTMENTS
1200 Pacific Street
(*Montrose W. Morris, 1891*)
– NYC HD, NR-D



These two striking apartment buildings were designed by Montrose W. Morris, one of the most prominent Brooklyn architects of his day. The Imperial resembles a French château, with Renaissance Revival style details that include grand arches supported by fluted Corinthian columns and pilasters, conical turrets, and a slate mansard roof. Its window bays are faced in copper, whose green patina forms a nice contrast to the Bedfordshire’s brownstone ornament, which has more recently been painted red. The Bedfordshire also features grand arches supported by pilasters, and its top story is graced with small arches and a projecting cornice. The Imperial was considered to be the finest apartment building in Brooklyn when it opened, and was even compared to The Dakota in Manhattan. It fell into disrepair in the late 20th century and was boarded up until a major renovation and restoration in 2006 that revived the building’s status as a showpiece for Crown Heights North and converted it into affordable housing.



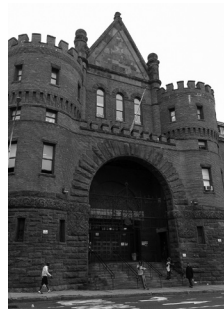
3

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH
 1227 Pacific Street
(church and rectory:
George P. Chappell, 1886-90
parish house:
 Montrose Morris Sons, 1921)
 — church: NYC IL
 church and rectory: NR-P

Set back from Pacific Street by a low fence, wrought iron gate a front yard, St. Bartholomew's Church was designed in the Arts and Crafts style and features a round-arched stained glass window designed by Tiffany Studios in 1930, making it one of the studio's last commissions, and a large square tower and belfry. The church played a significant role as one of the venerable institutions near Grant Square catering to the area's Episcopal population. While the church itself is an individual landmark, neither the rectory to the east nor the parish house to the west are designated. The rectory is believed to have been constructed at the same time by the same architect, while the neo-Gothic parish house was added in 1921.

4

**FORMER 23RD REGIMENT
 ARMORY**
 1322 Bedford Avenue
*(Fowler & Hough and Isaac
 Perry, 1891-95)*
 — NYC IL, NR-P



This grand, fortress-like structure was constructed by the State of New York for Brooklyn's 23rd Regiment, which formed in the 1860s and served briefly in the Civil War. This was the regiment's second home, after it outgrew its first armory on Clermont Street, built in 1872-73. The armory was used to train soldiers and store equipment, but also as a military club for soldiers and veterans, so in addition to a vast drill hall, the interior also had a library, company rooms, and dining rooms. The imposing brick, stone, and terra cotta exterior has eight crenellated towers, the tallest of which rises to 136 feet. The main entrance on Bedford Avenue is located within a rusticated round archway with a decorative iron gate. Terra cotta friezes display the regimental motto and coat of arms. To the right of the entrance bay is a bronze plaque sculpted by J. Massey Rhind in 1922 to commemorate the regiment's sacrifices during World War I. In 1905, the vast drill hall was home to Brooklyn's first automobile show, and in the mid-1920s, it was leased to William Randolph Hearst as a silent film studio. The armory remained in operation until 1982, when the building was converted to a men's homeless shelter.

5

1146-1150 DEAN STREET
(George P. Chappell, 1891)

THE GRANLEDEN APARTMENTS
 1149-1153 and 1155-1157
 Dean Street
(Axel Hedman, 1906)

1164-1182 DEAN STREET
(George P. Chappell, 1889)

— all: NYC HD, NR-D



1146-1150 Dean Street is unusual for the architectural character of Crown Heights North. The Renaissance Revival style buildings are bold in their horizontality, with unified cornice lines above the first floor and roof, thin rows of rough-faced brick with terra cotta bands at every fourth course, and horizontal striations at the parlor floor. The trio is arranged in an A-B-A pattern, but is not symmetrical, which is most apparent in the placement of the stoops. Across the street is a pair of flats buildings called The Granleden Apartments. Constructed in the early 20th century when multiple dwellings were becoming more popular and economically beneficial, each building has eight apartments (two per floor). Its rich Renaissance Revival style façades have retained much of their original terra cotta ornament, as well as their fanciful bronze grille doors and wrought iron fire escapes. Further down the block is an unusual group of ten houses in a variety of material textures and rooflines, including Flemish stepped gables on the far ends and prominent mansard roofs in the center.

6

BEDFORD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1200 Dean Street

(Arthur Bates Jennings, c. 1897;
expansion: Dodge & Morrison with
Kenneth M. Murchison, 1906)
– NYC HD, NR-D



This Romanesque Revival style church was completed in two phases about 10 years apart by different architects. The northern section facing Dean Street is the original building, while that facing Nostrand Avenue was added later. The church dominates the intersection with its romantic massing, including gables, conical and pyramidal turrets, and a campanile bell tower, as well as decorative features like round arches with rough-faced stone lintels, leaded glass windows, and slate tile roof. The church retains the neighborhood's original name, Bedford.

7

**1217-1235 AND
1247-1265 DEAN STREET**

(Albert E. White, 1891-92)
– NYC HD, NR-D



On the north side of Dean Street between Nostrand and New York Avenues is a fine collection of 20 Romanesque Revival style rowhouses, all designed by the same architect for upper middle class families. The colorful and remarkably intact houses are arranged in groups of five, and feature textured stonework and round arched window openings.

8

**HEBRON FRENCH SPEAKING
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH**

100 New York Avenue

(Henry Ives Cobb, 1909-10)
– NYC HD, NR-D



This striking church is the area's only example of neo-Byzantine style architecture. It features unusual massing, an octagonal sanctuary, a pyramidal roof, round arch openings, identical entrance pavilions on New York Avenue connected by a curving, blind arcade, and intricate stained glass with floral and figural motifs. Originally constructed for the First Church of Christ Scientist, it was designed by noted Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb, who was famous for his design of the Fisheries Building at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

9

**UNION UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SCHOOL AND PARSONAGE**

121 New York Avenue

(Josiah C. Cady & Co., 1889-91)
– NYC HD, NR-D



This monumental building was originally constructed for the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. Its Romanesque Revival style design was the work of Josiah Cady, who was known for his use of the style, especially for churches, but which he also famously employed for the south wing of the American Museum of Natural History. The red brick and sandstone church does not feature a lot of ornament, but its solid and complex massing, arched openings, and detailed brickwork are masterfully arranged. Its tower was intended to have a pyramidal roof, but was never completed. The tower was designed with an elaborate air ventilation system, whereby fresh air was drawn through pipes and ducts to cool the building in the summer and warm air from the furnace was funneled upward to warm the building in the winter. The basement once contained a bowling alley.

10

STUYPARK HOUSE

77 New York Avenue
(John Louis Wilson, Jr., 1975)



While not a particularly distinguished architectural contribution to the neighborhood on first glance, StuyPark House, a senior housing complex, holds an important cultural significance to Crown Heights North. Its architect, John Louis Wilson, Jr., was the first black architect to graduate from the Columbia University School of Architecture. Throughout his 50-year career, he served as a mentor to black architects, helping many to get their start in the field. In the mid-1950s, he founded the Council for Advancement of Negroes in Architecture, which eventually merged with the American Institute of Architects (AIA). In 1984, the AIA honored Wilson with the Whitney M. Young Jr. citation. His most famous work was the Harlem River Houses at 151st Street and the Harlem River Drive in Manhattan, the first federally financed housing project, completed in 1937.

II

FORMER GEORGE B. AND SUSAN ELKINS HOUSE

1375 Dean Street
(c. 1855-69)
– NYC IL, NYC HD,
NR-D



This lovely wood-frame house with Greek Revival and Italianate details stands as a reminder of the early development of Crown Heights North, when freestanding villas were built during the neighborhood's transition from farmland in the mid-19th century. George Elkins was a real estate developer specializing in the sale of sites similar to this one in this burgeoning commuter suburb.

12

789 ST. MARKS AVENUE
805 ST. MARKS AVENUE
828-838 ST. MARKS AVENUE

(Slee & Bryson, 1919-20)

839 ST. MARKS AVENUE
(Russell Sturgis, 1869-70)

855-857 ST. MARKS AVENUE
(Montrose W. Morris, 1892)

889 ST. MARKS AVENUE
(Peter J. Lauritzen, 1898-1903)

– all: NYC HD, NR-D



St. Marks Avenue between New York and Kingston Avenues is home to a number of interesting structures. Beginning in the 1890s, the avenue was considered one of the wealthiest in Brooklyn and certainly the most fashionable in this area. The avenue had a number of freestanding mansions set in landscaped gardens, as well as nice groupings of attached rowhouses. While most of the freestanding mansions were demolished to make way for middle class housing with the arrival of the subway

in the early 20th century, one of the most impressive mansions survives at number 839. Originally the home of lumber dealer Dean Sage, the rock-faced brownstone mansion was designed in the High Victorian Gothic style and features wrought iron and terra cotta trim. The house originally had a large front porch, which was removed in the 1930s, when the house was converted to an institution for the developmentally disabled. Number 889 is notable for its grand Beaux-Arts style.

13

BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

145 Brooklyn Avenue
(Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates,
1977; expansion: Rafael Viñoly, 2008)



Despite the Brooklyn Children's Museum's contemporary design, the institution itself is believed to be the oldest children's museum in the country. It has been located on this site since 1899, when a mansion on this property – the William Newton Adams House – was converted into a children's museum. It proved to be a huge hit, so the museum expanded into the L.C. Smith House next door. By 1967, the museum had outgrown both mansions and began planning for a new building on the site, which was completed in 1977. The museum's current iteration was mostly constructed in 2008, but its design is in fact an expansion of the 1977 structure, which was largely subterranean. The expansion, whose wavy design and primary color palette are in stark contrast to the character of the neighborhood, is clad in 8.1 million yellow ceramic tiles. The expansion roughly doubled the building's size to 102,000 square feet.



14

BROWER PARK
(est. 1892)



Crown Heights North's only public park was established in 1892, when the City of Brooklyn purchased what is now the southern portion and named it Bedford Park. The northern portion was acquired in 1923, the same year the park was renamed for former Parks Commissioner George V. Brower, who died in 1921. Brower was a strong parks advocate who was instrumental in creating many parks in Brooklyn, including Sunset, Red Hook, and Fort Hamilton Parks. A resident of the neighborhood, Brower loved Bedford Park, and even built his mansion at the corner of Park Place and Kingston Avenue (it was later replaced by the Shaari Zedek Synagogue, site # 18). The park's classically-inspired comfort station was built in 1905, and a World War I memorial was erected in 1919. In 1936, drinking fountains and a playground were added and paths were reconfigured. The park was extended in 1947 to include the portion between Prospect Place and St. Marks Avenue, including land for the George V. Brower Elementary School. The school opened in 1958, at which time the portion of Prospect Place that ran through the park was grassed in. The Friends of Brower Park formed in 2009 to care for the park.

15

935-947 PROSPECT PLACE

(A. White Pierce,
1920-22)
– NR-D



907-933 PROSPECT PLACE

(Matthew W. Del Gaudio,
1933-36)
– NR-D



This row of six Arts and Crafts style stucco houses was built in the early 1920s, just as the automobile was gaining traction, as evidenced by the three narrow archways that lead to attached garages in the rear. Architect A. White Pierce was known for his work on suburban residential architecture, including many houses in Prospect Park South and Ditmas Park. True to his specialty, these six lovely houses were designed in a human-scale, with charming touches like steeply pitched gables, dormers, arched openings, and a sloped slate roof that unifies the row. Next door, a much different kind of housing is found at 907-933 Prospect Place, a grand Art Deco style apartment building adorned with colorful, geometric brickwork.

16

**FORMER BROOKLYN METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH HOME FOR
THE AGED AND THE INFIRM**

920 Park Place
(Mercer Thomas, 1888-89;
extension: William Kennedy, 1911-13)
– NYC HD, NR-D



Perhaps the most unusual and picturesque site in Crown Heights North is the former Methodist Home for the Aged, an enormous freestanding complex. Originally located in Bedford-Stuyvesant and established in 1883, the institution was founded by the Methodist Church in Brooklyn to provide housing and care for its elderly parishioners. As the original structure quickly became too small, this grand building was constructed in the Romanesque Revival style just five years later. A new wing and Gothic Revival style chapel were added in 1911-13. The home, evolving into a nursing facility, moved again in 1976 to a more modern structure, and this building was left abandoned for several decades. Today, part of the complex is operated by the Hebron French Speaking 7th Day Adventist School, a bi-lingual elementary school, but much of the complex is in a state of disrepair. This is a sad situation for an important building that stands not only as a beautiful architectural tableau, but as one of the few institutional buildings left in Crown Heights, which was once home to a large number of hospitals, asylums and homes for indigent populations.

17

**ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF
ST. GREGORY THE GREAT**

999 St. John's Place
(Church: Frank J. Helmle, 1915-16;
School: Helmle & Corbett, 1921;
Rector: Helmle & Corbett, 1922)
– NYC HD, NR-D



This magnificent church has a strong presence in the neighborhood due to its richly decorated, seven-story campanile.

Frank J. Helmle, was a prominent Brooklyn architect who also designed the Prospect Park Boathouse (1905), the Shelter Pavilion in Monsignor McGolrick Park (1910), and the Brooklyn Central Office, Bureau of Fire Communications (1913). Harvey Wiley Corbett, with whom Helmle collaborated on the church's school and rectory, is well-known for his work in developing designs for setback, streamlined skyscrapers. The design of St. Gregory is inspired by Rome's oldest basilicas, the fifth-century San Clemente and Santa Maria in Trastevere. While its bell tower dominates the rear of the church, the front is graced with a portico entrance of Ionic columns topped by a setback story that features a wheel window and shell niches housing sculpted figures. The school and rectory are far simpler, designed in the neo-Classical style to complement the church.

18

FORMER SHAARI ZEDEK SYNAGOGUE

221 Kingston Avenue
(Eisendrath & Horowitz,
1923-25)
— NYC HD



Formed in 1902 and originally located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Shaari Zedek Synagogue relocated here after the congregation merged with the Brooklyn Synagogue of Eastern Parkway in 1922. The synagogue and community

house were completed in 1925 to the designs of Eisendrath & Horowitz, who had also been responsible for Temple Beth Elohim in Park Slope, Temple Beth Emeth in Prospect Park South, and Temple B'nai Israel in Sunset Park. All of these, like Shaari Zedek, were designed in the Colonial Revival style, which was popular for American synagogues in the early 20th century. The limestone and light grey brick building features a grand entrance portico with Ionic columns, a triangular pediment, and an entablature that reads “Gates of Righteousness,” the English translation of “Shaari Zedek.” An impressive standing-seam metal, octagonal dome sits atop the structure. When it was completed, the synagogue bore the distinction of housing the city’s largest Conservative Jewish congregation. In 1969, the building was sold to the First Church of God in Christ of Brooklyn.



19

REVERE PLACE

(Albert E. White, 1897)
— NYC HD

HAMPTON PLACE AND VIRGINIA PLACE

(Irving B. Ells, 1899-1902)
— NYC HD

Short, mid-block streets inserted into the existing street grid, usually called “places”

for through streets and “courts” for dead-end streets, were constructed in Brooklyn beginning in the late 19th century. The construction of these mid-block streets allowed developers to fit more houses onto a smaller parcel and created private enclaves desirable for home buyers. These three feature picturesque rows of houses of varied heights, many of which are lower rise than the rest of Crown Heights North. Revere Place, the earliest of the three, features houses in the Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival styles, while the houses on Hampton Place and Virginia Place were designed in the Colonial Revival style, perhaps to evoke their street names. The novelist Richard Wright and his wife Ellen lived at 11 Revere Place in 1941-42, when the neighborhood began to shift to a majority African- and Caribbean-American population.

20

“SUPERBLOCKS”

(I.M. Pei and
M. Paul Friedberg/
Bedford Stuyvesant
Restoration Corporation,
1966-69)
— NYC HD



On Prospect Place and St. Marks Avenue were envisioned as a way to break the monotonous street grid and provide opportunities for recreation, respite, and an improved pedestrian experience. On Prospect Place, the sidewalks were widened and intersections were narrowed to slow vehicular traffic. More trees were planted and street furniture was added to create a serene environment. By contrast, St. Marks Avenue, an already wide street with a history as a play space, was blocked off to traffic in the middle with the creation of a mid-block park, complete with a fountain, wading pool, and furniture. The superblocks were the pilot project of the BSRC, and were deemed a success, fostering the formation of community maintenance groups, brownstone restoration, and increased real estate values.

21

EASTERN PARKWAY

(Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux,
1870-74)
— NR-P, Scenic Landmark



Eastern Parkway, the world’s first six-lane parkway and one of only 10 scenic landmarks in New York City, was laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. The parkway, a term that Olmsted himself coined, featured broad green medians with rows of trees and paths for pedestrian and equestrian promenading. These medians were flanked on either side by service roads for carriages. Though it was narrowed over the years, the parkway retains this layout today. Eastern Parkway was designed to extend the picturesque character of Prospect Park, also by Olmsted and Vaux, eastward into the expanding residential neighborhoods of Brooklyn. It was also intended to encourage first-class residential construction, which was certainly a success in Crown Heights. Today, this “shaded green ribbon”, as Olmsted called it, forms the boundary between Crown Heights North and Crown Heights South.

