



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

AUDUBON PARK MANHATTAN





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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AUDUBON PARK

The beginnings of the community now known as Audubon Park date back to 1841, when John James Audubon purchased fourteen acres and built a large mansion along the Hudson River shortly after publishing his famous work, *Birds of America*. Audubon named his farm, a pastoral landscape of woods, wildlife and rocky outcroppings, "Minnie's Land" in honor of his wife. After bringing back plant and animal specimens from his 1843 expedition to the American West, Audubon lived on this secluded estate until his death in 1851. Facing financial hardship, Audubon's family sold the land in small portions through the 1850s and 1860s. As early as 1854, the name Audubon Park was used for an enclave of ten large homes located on the former estate. Into the 1890s, Audubon Park retained a distinct identity from that of the rest of Washington Heights, remaining relatively secluded even as improvements in the street system and the introduction of cable cars and the Ninth Avenue elevated railroad brought residential development to its borders. In 1892, the city extended its fire limits up to West 165th Street, prohibiting new wood frame construction. The first masonry structures to appear within Audubon Park were a row of 12 three-story rowhouses constructed in 1896-98 on West 158th Street (site 19).

When the Interborough Rapid Transit subway line along Broadway arrived at West 157th Street in 1904, Audubon Park was ripe for explosive growth. In 1905, the first apartment buildings in the area were built just outside Audubon Park's boundaries at 609 West 158th Street and 3750 Broadway (site 4). However, most development occurred after the Grinnell family, which had controlled most of the former Audubon estate since the 1880s, sold its holdings to a syndicate of developers in 1908. Within a year, nine apartment buildings replaced most of the area's winding roads and wood frame villas. From 1905 to 1932, 19 apartment houses were constructed in what is now the Audubon Park Historic District. Elegantly designed in a variety of styles and equipped with modern amenities, these buildings were marketed for upper middle-class tenants. Anchoring this neighborhood was Audubon Terrace (site 3), a unique complex of educational and cultural institutions whose construction began in 1904 and included the Church of Our Lady of Esperanza and the Hispanic Society of America. The influence of Audubon Terrace on the surrounding neighborhood is reflected in the names of some of its apartment buildings, including the Cortez, Goya, Hispania and Velazquez (sites 6-8).

Audubon Park has served as the site of significant preservation battles throughout its history. Efforts to create a park out of the remaining undeveloped portions of the Audubon estate and to save the John James Audubon house as a museum were scuttled by the construction of a viaduct carrying Riverside Drive from 151st Street to 161st Street in 1928. With the imminent development of new apartment buildings, a local community group successfully moved the house, but it was eventually demolished despite these efforts. Fortunately, success stories can be found in the designation of the Audubon Terrace and Audubon Park Historic Districts in 1979 and 2009, respectively. Today, a group of residents working with the Riverside Oval Association is advocating for the protection of the aforementioned 12 rowhouses on West 158th Street, constructed in 1896-98.



The steep slope and bucolic landscape of Trinity Cemetery provide hints of Manhattan's natural topography. One of the few active burial grounds in Manhattan, the cemetery belongs to Trinity Church, whose graveyard in lower Manhattan was filled to capacity by the early 19th century, thus precipitating the 1841 purchase of a large swath of land from Richard F. Carman's uptown property. In addition to John James Audubon, other notable residents include John Jacob Astor, Alfred Tennyson Dickens (son of Charles Dickens and godson of Alfred, Lord Tennyson) and Mayor Edward I. Koch. The cemetery proved popular not only as a burial ground, but as a setting for leisurely strolling. A suspension bridge, designed by Vaux, Withers & Co. in 1872, once crossed Broadway to link the cemetery's eastern and western sections, but was demolished in 1911 to make way for the Church of the Intercession (site 2). In 1901, a plaque was erected on the cemetery's exterior wall to mark the site of a line of defense drawn by the Continental Army in September of 1776. After the British defeated the American troops that September in the Battle of Harlem Heights, Washington's army erected this line of defense just south of Fort Washington, the last stronghold in Manhattan under American control. After Washington evacuated most of his army to New Jersey, roughly 2,800 men were left to defend Fort Washington. The British attacked, surrounding the Continental Army until they surrendered, leaving New York under British control for the war's duration. Another plaque, located on "the Mound" in the cemetery's eastern section, was erected in 1920 to mark the site of "some of the fiercest fighting" of the battle.

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

I

TRINITY CEMETERY

601 West 153rd Street

(James Renwick, Jr., 1843; re-design: Calvert Vaux,
1881)

— NR-P

REVOLUTIONARY WAR MARKER

West 155th Street & Broadway

(Sons of the Revolution in the
State of New York, 1901)



2

CHURCH OF THE INTERCESSION

550 West 155th Street

(chapel: Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue,
1912-15;

vicarage: Cram, Goodhue and
Ferguson, 1911-14)

— NYC IL, NR-P

This Gothic Revival style church was completed in 1915, but its Episcopal congregation was founded in 1846. Before its construction, the congregation occupied two other buildings: the first at West 154th Street and Tenth Avenue (later Amsterdam Avenue) and the second at West 158th Street and Broadway. In 1906, in need of a larger space but facing financial constraints, the parish entered into an agreement with Trinity Church, which owned the surrounding cemetery, to become a chapel of Trinity, which had been planning to construct a chapel in the cemetery anyway. The parish and structure would be known as the Chapel

of the Intercession until 1976, when the parish became independent once more. Its architect, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, was a partner in the firm of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, which was renowned for its ecclesiastical architecture, and this building is considered one of Goodhue's masterpieces. Goodhue clearly favored the building, as he is buried in a tomb in the church's north transept. The Tudor Revival style vicarage is connected to the church by a cloister surrounding a small courtyard.



3

AUDUBON TERRACE
*(Charles P. Huntington,
 McKim, Mead, & White,
 William Mitchell Kendall, Cass
 Gilbert, 1904-1923)*
 – NYC HD, NR-HD,
 Hispanic Society of
 America: NR-P

Located on a portion of John James Audubon’s former estate, Audubon Terrace is one of the country’s first planned cultural centers outside a university context. Archer M. Huntington, stepson of railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington, was fascinated by Hispanic culture, and founded the Hispanic Society of America in 1904. To design its headquarters, Huntington hired his cousin, Charles Huntington. Hoping that geographic closeness would encourage cooperation, Archer Huntington donated land to encourage the Church of Our Lady of Esperanza, the American Numismatic Society, the American Geographic Society and the Museum of the American Indian to locate here. Although the center’s construction spanned two decades and four architectural firms, the structures were all designed in the neo-Italian Renaissance style to create a unified setting. In keeping with the Beaux-Arts tradition, the buildings were all arranged around a central courtyard paved in red brick, enclosed by stone balustrades and filled with sculptures designed by Anna Hyatt Huntington, Archer’s wife, and others. Audubon Terrace has sustained some change, with additions and newer buildings necessitating the reorientation of the entrance from West 156th Street to Broadway. Today, the complex is occupied by the Hispanic Society of America, the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a campus of Boricua College.



4

AUDUBON PARK APARTMENTS
 3750 Broadway
(Schwartz & Gross, 1905)

Completed in 1905, the Audubon Park Apartments was one of the first apartment buildings constructed in the neighborhood. A 1906 advertisement for the building described the unspoiled nature of the area, promoting its location “on Washington Heights, Manhattan’s only section of natural beauty - adds the charm of country to the city house.” Offering unobstructed views of the Hudson River and surrounding countryside, the building’s “extra large” apartments boasted a “long distance telephone in each apartment.” Notice the building’s initials “APA” inscribed in the cartouche above the entrance. Many apartment buildings built during the subway boom of the 1900s were given names to lend them an air of prestige and distinguish themselves from their neighbors.

5

EDWARD M. MORGAN PLACE

Long before Riverside Drive wound its way to Upper Manhattan, the Boulevard (now Broadway) opened in 1880, linking present-day Columbus Circle to 155th Street near the entrance to Audubon Park. Around the same time, the city opened the Boulevard Lafayette, which curved northward from the terminus of the Boulevard at 156th Street to run along the Hudson River to Dyckman Street. When Riverside Drive was extended in 1911, it merged with Boulevard Lafayette at 158th Street and cut off the southernmost portion of the street. This one-block remnant of the “Boulevard” was renamed Audubon Place in 1909 and then Edward M. Morgan Place in 1926. Edward M. Morgan, who passed away the previous year, was the first postal employee to rise from the ranks of carrier to become Postmaster of New York City. He was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907 and oversaw the country’s first official airmail delivery on Long Island in 1911.



6

AUDUBON HALL
3765 Broadway
(George F. Pelham, 1909)

HISPANIA HALL
601 West 156th Street
(George F. Pelham, 1909)

– Both: NYC HD



Designed by George F. Pelham, Audubon and Hispania Halls are both primarily clad in brick with limestone and terra-cotta detailing that includes multi-story pinnacles and projecting scroll brackets.

These Renaissance Revival style apartment houses both feature gracefully curving façades sharply punctuated by two pairs of recessed bays. A Star of David can be seen in the design of the fence in front of Hispania Hall, perhaps reflecting the German Jewish refugee population that found a home in this neighborhood in the 1930s. These buildings were constructed by the Fleischmann Brothers Corporation, which was known for theaters, public buildings and residential structures throughout New York City. While Audubon Hall pays tribute to the neighborhood's origins as the Audubon estate, Hispania Hall references the nearby Hispanic Society of America.



Reflecting the presence of the nearby Hispanic Society, the Velasquez and Goya were named after two of Spain's most famous painters. The six-story apartment buildings were designed in the Renaissance Revival style by Denby & Nute for local builder James O'Brien. Two of the smallest apartment buildings in the historic district, the Velasquez and Goya nonetheless boast elaborate façades featuring detailed bay windows and masonry balconettes. Like those of other apartment buildings in the neighborhood, advertisements for the Goya and Velasquez boasted of their proximity to public transportation and cultural institutions, as well as scenic views. However, given their relatively low height, only those residing on the upper stories were likely to catch a glimpse of the Hudson River. These buildings were owned and marketed as a pair until the Goya was sold in 1948.

7

VELASQUEZ
605 West 156th Street
(Denby & Nute, 1909-10)

GOYA
611 West 156th Street
(Denby & Nute, 1909-10)
– Both: NYC HD

8

CORTEZ
625 West 156th Street
(Neville & Bagge, 1909)
– NYC HD



Named after the eponymous Spanish conquistador, the Cortez sits across the street from the Church of Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza and the Hispanic Society of America. Its Beaux-Arts façade has a tripartite composition, with a two-story limestone base, six-story red brick shaft and a free-standing brick parapet with an overhanging modillioned metal cornice. The limestone base is enhanced by a double-height entrance portico, while terra-cotta balconettes, lintels and string courses decorate the rest of the brick façade. At the time of construction, each floor of the Cortez featured two apartments with nine rooms and three baths per unit. One of its notable tenants was Agil Hanau, a founder and the first secretary of the Young Men's Hebrew Association of New York.

9

RHINECLEFF
788 Riverside Drive
(Schwartz & Gross, 1910-11)
– NYC HD

The 11-story Rhinecleff continues the cornice line of its southern neighbor, the Vauxhall, complementing it with a Beaux-Arts façade carried out in granite, light brick and terra cotta. The elaborate roofline is decorated with oversized brackets, cartouches and a cornice with arched pediments. One of the more expensive buildings constructed in the neighborhood, the Rhinecleff featured suites of four to six rooms, as well as duplexes of eight to nine rooms equipped with separate entrances for servants. The Rhinecleff shares its name with a town in the Hudson Valley, a popular summer destination in the 19th century. More recently, the Rhinecleff was featured in the 1989 filming of the teleplay, *The Hollow Boy*.



10

VAUXHALL

780 Riverside Drive
(George & Edward Blum,
1913-14)
– NYC HD



Named for the 17th century Vauxhall Gardens in London, this 11-story apartment house was distinctly designed in the Arts & Crafts style. Faience tiles are strikingly used to create colorful geometric patterns that stand out from the building's brown brick façade, and molded terra cotta was utilized in elaborately detailed cornices, window surrounds and balconettes. A projecting bay on the building's north side conforms to the irregular lot line formed by the sharp curve of the original Riverside Drive. Abutting Audubon Terrace, the Vauxhall boasted "permanent light and air" that was guaranteed by the low-rise museum buildings next door. While its views remained stable, the building itself evolved over time. It was one of several buildings in Audubon Park to convert to tenant-ownership in the 1920s, and in the 1940s the building's interior was comprehensively modernized.



II

RIVERSIDE DRIVE

(Extension: F. Stuart Williamson,
1911; Viaduct: 1928)



Frederick Law Olmsted designed Riverside Drive as a thoroughfare and linear park stretching along the West Side from 72nd Street on the Hudson River to a terminus at the Manhattan Valley near 125th Street. Its undulating curves created a picturesque setting that prompted the speculative development of luxury housing. Soon after completion, plans were put forward to bridge the valley and extend Riverside Drive to the old Boulevard Lafayette at 158th Street. This proposal was met with resistance by Trinity Church, which refused to cede land from its cemetery for the roadway's construction. A compromise sent Riverside Drive on a snaking diagonal that cut across Audubon Park, leaving the remaining villas in its shadow and inspiring the speculative construction of apartment houses along its route. Completed in 1911, the extension was quickly derided by drivers for its three sharp curves. In response, a more direct viaduct along the river between 155th and 161st Streets was constructed in 1928, leaving the John James Audubon house surrounded by elevated roadways.



12

156-08 RIVERSIDE DRIVE WEST

(George G. Miller, 1930)

765 RIVERSIDE DRIVE

(Schaefer & Rutkins, 1931-32)

775 RIVERSIDE DRIVE

(George G. Miller, 1930)

– All: NYC HD

This set of six-story, Medieval Revival style apartment houses curves around the bend created by the divergence of the original Riverside Drive and its western extension. While designed by different architects, the three buildings were built by the Brandt Brothers and share common design features, such as castellated parapet walls and molded terra-cotta arched entryways. Upon completion, the group was collectively considered one of the largest apartment houses in the city, utilizing 1,600 tons of steel and boasting an oversized heating plant to counteract winter winds off the Hudson River. 765 Riverside Drive was the last of the apartment

houses built in the Audubon Park Historic District. Its construction was delayed due to a campaign to move the John James Audubon house, which was sited here. The campaign, led by 158th Street resident Reginald P. Bolton and ornithologist Harold W. Decker, was successful, but unfortunately the house was later demolished.

13

CHARLES AND MURRAY
GORDON MEMORIAL PARK

(1911, dedicated in 1925)



Charles and Murray Gordon Memorial Park, more popularly known as the Riverside Oval Park, contains the last survivor of a series of public fountains originally installed along the Riverside Drive extension in 1911. The park went unnamed until 1925, when a post of the Jewish War Veterans dedicated two plaques commemorating Charles and Murray Gordon, who died within three days of each other near the end of World War I in October of 1918. The park features 1920s plane trees and an empty fountain basin. While some early images depict a fountain topped by a statue of a mermaid, entitled "Music of the Waters," there are no definite records of when it was installed or removed. The statue's model was Audrey Munson, a silent film actress considered to be America's first "supermodel."

Since the 1980s, the park has been cared for by the Riverside Oval Association, a neighborhood organization that works to foster community pride and awareness of Audubon Park's history. Now primarily used as a community garden, the oval has been re-landscaped and surrounded by fences.

14

CRILLON COURT
779 Riverside Drive
(*Sidney H. Kitzler, 1926*)
– NYC HD



Designed in the Arts and Crafts style, the six-story Crillon Court is a buff brick building, adorned with terra-cotta and decorative brickwork. U-shaped in plan, the building is accessed through a long and irregular

court that leads to a portico flanked by paired Ionic columns. The building's name pays homage to the Hôtel Crillon, one of the world's oldest luxury hotels in the Place de la Concorde in Paris. Crillon Court, which once offered unobstructed views of the Hudson River, represented the defeat of the Washington Heights Taxpayers' Association in their fight to limit construction to the eastern side of Riverside Drive. Resting on deep pilings that stretch some forty feet down to the land's original elevation, Crillon Court marks the location on the Audubon farm where two streams converged to form a pond before continuing towards the Hudson.

Built at a projected cost of \$1.7 million, this 13-story building is both the tallest and most expensive structure in the historic district. The building sits on the former site of the Hemlocks, the home of the Grinnell family from the 1860s to 1910. The Riviera's Renaissance Revival style façade consists of a three-story limestone base and a brick façade with terra-cotta details and large Venetian windows at the top floor. Punctuated by courtyards that divided the façade into five wings, the Riviera could boast that every room was an "outside room." Bennett Cerf, the founder of Random House, moved into the newly built Riviera in 1911 at the age of 13.

15

RIVIERA
790 Riverside Drive
(*Rouse & Goldstone, 1909*)
– NYC HD



Tucked away on West 157th Street, Kannawah is arranged in a U-shaped plan with two wings split by an entrance courtyard. This pattern is echoed in the two recessed fire escapes on the street-

facing façades that split each of these sections into symmetrical halves. The Medieval Revival style, six-story apartment building features molded terra-cotta window surrounds and stylized pinnacles. Smaller and less expensive than its neighbors, the Kannawah retains its original configuration of seven families on each floor in suites of three to six rooms. The building was likely named after the Kanawha River in West Virginia, evoking the romanticism associated with the American West.

16

KANNAWAH
614 West 157th Street
(*Joseph C. Cocker, 1909*)
– NYC HD



17

GRINNELL
800 Riverside Drive
(*Schwartz & Gross, 1910-11*)
– NYC HD



Occupying the entire triangular lot formed by the intersection of the diagonals of the old Boulevard Lafayette and Riverside Drive, the Renaissance Revival style Grinnell has a dominating presence in the neighborhood. While only nine stories tall, its size is amplified by freestanding

cupolas topped by bell-shaped pediments that tower over each corner. Two-story granite arches flanked by duplex apartment units on either side serve as entrances to the building's large interior courtyard. Upon completion at the original terminus of the Riverside Drive extension, the Grinnell claimed to be the only building in Manhattan with both a Riverside Drive address and a subway station at one entrance. Early residents recalled how dances with a full orchestra used to be held on the roof every spring and gloved staff delivered mail to each apartment twice a day.

18

807 RIVERSIDE DRIVE
(*George F. Pelham, 1924*)

BERLER LEVY HOUSE
809-811 Riverside Drive
(*Moore & Landsiedel, 1920*)

– Both: NYC HD



Nathan Berler, a wholesale clothing manufacturer and real estate developer, built this apartment building and pair of attached houses in the Mediterranean Revival Style. The duplex was intended to serve as a prototype for an alternative to the apartment house typology dominating the area. It was equipped with an organ and flanked by one-story conservatories on each side. Its early occupants included prominent locals, such as Jewel Plummer, an African-American woman who worked as a biology teaching fellow at New York University. Four years later, Berler changed his mind and constructed an apartment house next door, using the same green roof tiles and red-brick as the duplex. Although smaller than its neighbors, it featured 52 units and boasted a private ballroom decorated with antique gold, polychrome and crystal chandeliers. By the 1930s, the ballroom was converted into a common space used by local organizations like the Washington Heights Actors Guild.



19

626-648 WEST 158TH STREET
(John Patrick Leo, 1896-98)

This row of twelve houses embodies the first wave of residential development that accompanied the proposed expansion of rapid transit service to northern Manhattan, predating the apartment house boom. Captain John Leo, a developer active in the area, designed and built Nos. 634-648 in 1896

before designing Nos. 626-632 for builder John Lilliendahl in 1898. Among the block's first residents was engineer Reginald Pelham Bolton (No. 638), a dedicated preservationist who spent more than two decades trying to save Audubon's house at 155th Street. These three-story houses with raised basements are faced with brick and limestone trim, and feature eclectic designs that borrow from the Renaissance Revival, Romanesque Revival and Beaux-Arts styles. Standing at the western end of the block, No. 648 stands out from the row for its Colonial Revival design that likely dates to an alteration around 1915. One of its most distinctive features is a pair of oriels on the western façade. Unfortunately, the house has fallen into such a state of disrepair that both oriels are being supported by wooden posts. Despite support from the local community and the historic connections between this row and the surrounding neighborhood, 626-648 West 158th Street was not included in the Audubon Park Historic District, raising concerns that developers could easily take advantage of current zoning to replace them with something much larger, thus erasing some of the only reminders of an important phase in the district's history. Community advocates are working toward securing legal protection of the houses.

Though outside of Audubon Park's original footprint, the Sutherland is significant as an excellent example of the Beaux-Arts style. Designed by Emery Roth, its

20

SUTHERLAND
611 West 158th Street
(Emery Roth, 1909-10)
— NYC HD

style was certainly influenced by its original owner, Floyd de L. Brown, an architect and contractor trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Nine stories tall, its orange brick façade is enlivened by a rounded corner bay and topped with arched terra-cotta dormers and a copper roof. Conforming to the bend of the original Riverside Drive where it curves to meet the old Boulevard Lafayette, the Sutherland's irregular I-shaped plan included light wells to provide every room with light and air. In keeping with the turn-of-the-century trend of giving apartment buildings British-inspired names, the Sutherland was likely named for a county in the Scottish highlands.



21

MORRIS-JUMEL MANSION
65 Jumel Terrace
(1765)
— NYC IL, NYC INL,
NR-P

While none of Audubon Park's villas remain as testaments to

the neighborhood's rural origins, the nearby Morris-Jumel Mansion dates back to the 18th century, when British families, like the Morrises, established comfortable country estates in Harlem Heights, attracted by its cool breezes and panoramic views. General George Washington used this two-story mansion as his headquarters during the Battle of Harlem Heights in September of 1776, evacuating that November before the Battle of Fort Mifflin. Remodeled in 1810, the mansion is a mix of the Georgian and Federal styles, boasting a Tuscan-columned portico, hipped roofs and wood boards and quoins imitating stone. The house and estate changed hands several times in the 19th century, but still retained its isolated nature until 1882, when the Jumel family subdivided the land and developed the two rows of wooden houses that still stand on nearby Sylvan Terrace. In 1903, a group of patriotic women petitioned the city to purchase the house and allow the Washington Headquarters Association, founded by the Daughters of the American Revolution, to operate it as a museum.



