



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

STEINWAY VILLAGE

QUEENS





The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six 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.



**Council on
the Arts**

**NYC Cultural
Affairs**

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STEINWAY VILLAGE

Heinrich Engelhard Steinweg, a German piano maker, founded a small piano workshop in 1835. Facing limitations imposed by guild restrictions and an increasingly unstable political climate, he emigrated to New York City in 1850 with five of his sons, leaving the original company in the hands of his eldest son, Theodore. After settling in Manhattan, the family anglicized their name to Steinway and established *Steinway & Sons* in 1853, operating from a rented loft on Varick Street.

By 1870, *Steinway & Sons* had become the most prestigious piano manufacturer in the United States. Under the leadership of Henry's fourth son, William, the business experienced exponential growth. Seeking to expand the company's manufacturing capacity, William turned his attention to northwest Queens—a largely undeveloped area of farmland and woodland. Its affordability, access to the East and Hudson Rivers for shipping, and distance from Manhattan's labor unions made it an ideal location for expansion.

Steinway purchased more than 400 acres of land near Bowery Bay, across from what is now LaGuardia Airport. In 1873, the company built a new factory (**Site 11**) to house its lumber mill and foundry, soon followed by additional facilities. He also acquired a mansion built by Benjamin T. Pike Jr. (**Site 10**) as a summer estate.

To house and support his workforce, Steinway developed a series of residential (**Site 6**) and mixed-use buildings (**Site 7**) near the factory. He also established vital amenities, including a school (**Site 2**), a church (**Site 3**), a library (**Site 12**), a kindergarten, and even an amusement park at North Beach (later known as Bowery Bay Beach). By the mid-1870s, the company employed over 400 workers—primarily German-born tradesmen and their families—and the area became known as Steinway Village. Steinway also helped launch a ferry service, a streetcar line, and supported the construction of railways and tunnels connecting Queens to Manhattan. He encouraged other businesses to establish themselves in the area (**Site 1**), accelerating the transformation of Astoria into a major industrial hub.

Although the company eventually sold off large portions of its land, *Steinway & Sons'* legacy remains deeply embedded in the architectural and cultural identity of Steinway Village. Since its founding, the Greater Astoria Historical Society (GAHS) has worked diligently to preserve and promote the history of neighborhoods like Steinway across the borough through educational programs, exhibitions, research, and public events. In partnership with the Historic Districts Council, GAHS now seeks to explore new strategies for community-based preservation and to protect the neighborhood's built environment from out-of-scale development.

This brochure was developed by the Historic Districts Council in partnership with the Greater Astoria Historical Society. The featured sites offer a glimpse into this neighborhood's rich history, inviting you to explore further and support efforts to protect, preserve, and celebrate its unique legacy.

Originally built by the Astoria Silk Works, this four-story building was part of the company's expansion around 1915 and was used for dyeing and finishing, the most dangerous phase due to the use of highly flammable chemicals.

Established in 1888 by trustees Albert Miller (or Meyer), George C. Hollerith and William D. Keese, the company manufactured velvets, plushes and piece dyed silks, employing over 350 people. Its original facilities occupied most of the southern section of this block, and included a group of wooden structures that were

destroyed in a series of fires in 1889, and replaced by a large, one-story brick building. By 1915 the factory had expanded to the lots adjacent to 23rd Avenue, erecting a one-story brick building for winding and warping, and this reinforced brick and concrete structure.

Their success prompted the purchase in 1920 of the former West Point Foundry in Cold Springs, Putnam, but by 1932 they had ceased operations and were liquidating their assets. In 1938, the property was sold to the Metropolitan Electric Company, manufacturers of switch boxes and metal specialties.

Since the early 2000s it has hosted a series of offices and commercial spaces. The basement is occupied by Astoria SoundWorks, a rehearsal room rental and musical instrument retailer.



ASTORIA SOUNDWORKS

38-01 23rd Ave

(1910)



LEGEND OF DESIGNATIONS

National Historic Landmark	NH L
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

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P.S. 84 STEINWAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

22-45 41st St

(1904-05, Charles B. J. Snyder)



Built on land donated by Steinway & Sons, P.S. 84 is a three-story and basement brick structure with limestone and terra cotta trimmings. It was conceived as a 32-room school with a capacity for 1,600 pupils, with steam heat, mechanical ventilation and fireproof stairs.

The design was developed during Charles B. J. Snyder's tenure as Superintendent of School Buildings for the New York City Board of Education. It features his innovative H-plan design, a mid-block location, and elements of English Collegiate Gothic style.

In 1889, the Trustees of the Steinway Church decided to sell their original building to accommodate the congregation's steady growth since its founding in 1879. Plans were made to construct a larger church at the corner of Ditmars Avenue and Albert Street (now 41st Street).

William Steinway purchased the old property and contributed \$2,000 (\$70K today) toward the new church's construction. His late brother, Theodor, allocated \$5,000 (\$170K today) in his will, and local real estate developer Luke Kouwenhoven donated an additional \$4,000 (\$140K today). Steinway also donated a Jardine pipe organ, previously housed in Steinway Hall, and hosted a concert for its dedication.

The cornerstone was laid in 1890, and construction was completed the following year. The French Gothic-style frame church featured steam heating and could accommodate 800 worshippers, along with 600 children in its Sunday School.

In 1891, the congregation voted to affiliate with the Reformed Church in America, recognizing the need for a more formal and consistent administrative structure.

The considerable population growth experienced by New York City during the second half of the 19th century prompted the Board of Education to begin a school-building campaign at the turn of the century. Plans for a new school at the Steinway Settlement were filed at the Queens Bureau of Buildings in 1904, replacing the neighborhood's first school, P.S. 08 (located on what is currently the Ditmars Playground).

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STEINWAY REFORMED CHURCH

4101 Ditmars Blvd

(1890)



4

PISTILLI GRAND MANOR

45-02 Ditmars Blvd

(1902, *Palmer & Hornbostel*)



The continued success of Steinway & Sons during the second half of the 19th century prompted the company to further expand its operation in Astoria, building a second factory in 1902 at Ditmars Boulevard.

The six-story structure was designed by Palmer & Hornbostel, one of the leading architectural firms in the United States at the time. A graduate of Columbia University, George Carnegie Palmer specialized in Beaux Arts-style civic and academic buildings. He partnered with Henry Hornbostel in 1897, and together they designed notable structures such as the campus of Carnegie Technical Schools (now Carnegie Mellon University), the Brooklyn Bridge Terminal Station, the Williamsburg Bridge, and the Queensboro Bridge in New York City. Several examples of their work have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

After World War II, Steinway & Sons consolidated their operations at the Steinway Place factory and sold this building in the 1950s to Stern's, a regional department store. By the early 1960s sales had declined, causing Stern's to close their New York stores and move their corporate headquarters to Paramus, New Jersey. After remaining vacant for decades, developer Nikos Kefalides purchased the property in the late 1990s and began plans for its conversion to residential use. Community members rejected the idea and Kefalides died in a plane crash in 1998, delaying the initiative for another 10 years. The Pistilli Realty Group of Astoria was eventually successful, converting it in 2008 to 200 one- and two-bedroom condominium apartments with commercial and retail space on the lower floors.

During the late 1920s, the growing number of people attending St. Joseph's Church on 30th Street prompted Reverend Joseph C. Schaeffner to begin a campaign to build a new parish in the northern section of Astoria. He established St. Francis of Assisi in 1930, and the construction of a church was completed by the end of the year. By 1931 a Rosary Society, Holy Name Society, and a Sodality of the Blessed Virgin were established, as well as Sunday school classes.

The complex was expanded in 1949 with the construction of a school, and once again in 1951 with the opening of a convent for the Sisters of Saint Dominic.

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI RC CHURCH COMPLEX

45-02 21st Avenue
(1930)

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HOUSES AT 41ST STREET

20-34 to 20-12 & 20-29 to 20-13 41st St,
41-20 to 40-12 20th Ave
(1874)

6



When Steinway & Sons moved to Long Island City there were very few services available for residents. Therefore, the family took it upon themselves to provide such amenities, taking inspiration from the “company town” model that was popular in New England.

In addition to housing for the workers, the company established a library, a public bathhouse and park at the end of 38th Street on the East River. They also organized a volunteer fire department, a kindergarten, and subsidized the teaching of music and

German in the public school. The Steinway Settlement proved to be a success, and developers soon began purchasing plots of land to build residential and commercial structures, consolidating the area over the next few decades.

This group of houses on 41st Street is one of the last remaining examples of the residences built by Steinway & Sons for their employees. They were built around 1874, featuring Neo-Grec and Italianate details in the treatment of the lintels and cornices. Despite some modifications, the two-story brick structures remain a cohesive group, maintaining a human scale that contrasts with the neighborhood's industrial use.

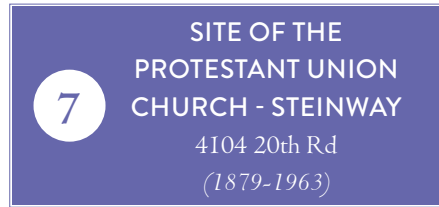
Due to its significance, the group was designated as a NYC Historic District in 1974. Unfortunately, community opposition and lack of knowledge about the NYC Preservation law led to this decision being rescinded.

Residents of Steinway Village initially gathered for worship at the neighborhood's first district school, which also served as a Sunday School. After a fire destroyed the building in 1875, the community formalized its congregation and began raising funds for a new church.

In 1879, the congregation was incorporated as the non-denominational Protestant Union Church. William Steinway donated two lots at the southeast corner of Albert Street (now 41st Street) and Bowery Bay Road (20th Road), and was elected President of the Church Trustees. That same year, a one-story frame church was constructed and dedicated, with several prominent clergymen involved in its organization and ceremony.

By 1889, the building could no longer accommodate the growing congregation. Steinway purchased the property and repurposed it as a free kindergarten and circulating library. By 1903, the building also hosted a branch of P.S. 08—Steinway's first public school—and continued to serve educational purposes for a few years, after which time both the school and library moved to new facilities.

By 1915 the former church operated as a kindergarten. It was converted into a Masonic Club by 1936, and remained in use as a club for several decades until the property was sold and the building demolished for residential development in 1963. *Photos: (top) Former Protestant Union Church, Ca. 1900. Courtesy of the Greater Astoria Historical Society. (bottom) View of apartment building at 20th Rd & 41st St.*



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STEINWAY ST. COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Steinway St, between 20th Ave and 21st Ave

(Ca. 1874)



After the establishment of Steinway & Sons' first factory, Steinway Street (then Avenue) became the neighborhood's main mixed-use corridor. By 1890, the street was lined with two- and three-story buildings that hosted restaurants, bakeries, butcher shops and grocery stores on the first floor.

Until the 1950s, No. 20-45 was the location of Continental Hall, a venue that began as a hotel and later accommodated musical performances. From 1898 until around 1910, No. 20-08 was a branch of the Daimler Motor Company. This prestigious independent British motor vehicle manufacturer was founded in London by H. J. Lawson in 1896 and provided cars to the British monarch until the 1950s.

Although altered, most of the buildings on the northern section of the street

are still extant, with some maintaining elements that are very similar to those of the houses at 41st Street (Site 6), like decorated cornices and projecting lintels and window sills.

The buildings located south of 20th Road, specifically Nos. 20-57 to 20-79 Steinway Street, were most likely designed by prolific New York architect Andrew Spence. In 1884, Steinway & Sons commissioned Spence to design 50 three-story double apartment buildings, which would be erected throughout the neighborhood to house their employees. The specific location of these buildings is unclear, but they were conceived to have storefronts on the first floor and be developed in groups of 10.

Spence established his practice in 1851, specializing in residential buildings primarily in Manhattan. Examples of his work can be found in the Upper West Side/ Central Park West, Hamilton Heights and Mount Morris Historic Districts, as well as in the Greenwich Village Historic District. He also designed for Steinway & Sons two three-story brick and stone buildings at the southwest corner of Steinway and 20th Avenue, built in 1886 and demolished by 1950. *Photos: (top) Buildings at No. 20-57 to 20-79 Steinway Street, (bottom) Buildings at No. 20-44 to 20-38 Steinway Street.*

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I.S. 141 THE STEINWAY

37-11 21st Ave

(1929, William A. Boyland)

Originally the Steinway Junior High School, this four-story brick structure was conceived as a 31-room school that would help relieve congestion at P.S. 84 and P.S. 85.

With a U-shaped plan, the building features simple details with Art Deco influences, such as terra cotta window surrounds, medallions between the second and third floors, and ornamental brickwork at the parapet.

It was built during Walter C. Martin's term as Superintendent of Schools Buildings, with plans under the supervision of then Associate Superintendent William A. Boyland. A New York City native, Boyland graduated from St. Francis Xavier College, New York University and Fordham University. He was appointed as the first President of Brooklyn College in May of 1930.

Steinway & Sons was founded in 1853 by German immigrant Henry Engelhard Steinway, initially occupying a Manhattan loft on Varick Street. By the late 1800s, the company had opened Steinway Hall on East 14th Street, as well as a London showroom and a Hamburg manufactory.

In order to expand their manufacturing of pianos, they bought a large tract of land in the northern section of Long Island City in 1870, mostly due

to its proximity to the waterfront. Log rafts were floated down from New England, and they ended up in a large lagoon that used to be located behind the factory. The complex occupied 11 acres of land, and included a foundry for making Steinway's patented cast iron plates. Over the years, the factory has undergone a series of modifications to include new facilities and technology, but it maintains the tradition of building pianos one at a time, applying skills that have been handed down from master to apprentice for generations.

A second factory was opened in 1902 on Ditmars Avenue (Site 4), with each being responsible for different parts of the piano building process. However, after World War II, the company's operations were consolidated into their Steinway Place site.

Still active today, Steinway & Sons is the preferred choice for concertizing artists, and it is considered a music and cultural staple worldwide.

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STEINWAY & SONS FACTORY

I Steinway Pl

(Ca. 1871)

Benjamin Pike Jr. was a manufacturer of philosophical and optical instruments. He joined his father's optical, scientific, and engineering business in 1831, leaving to form his own firm in 1843. Pike quickly gained recognition, winning several awards for both the quality and use of his many instruments.

He built this 27-room mansion in 1857. At the time, the area was mostly rural, and the property's location allowed for ample views of the river.

Resembling an Italianate country villa, the two-story stone structure has an asymmetrical floorplan, with a striking four-story tower on the west side. Decorative details of different styles are combined throughout the building, such as cast-iron Corinthian columns supporting the main entrance porch, double arched and round-arched windows on the main hall and tower, and rough surface stonework. It was originally surrounded by tennis courts, stables, lawns and orchards.

The Pike family resided here until Benjamin's death in 1864. His widow sold the house in 1870 to William Steinway, who occupied it until the 1920s. Jack Halberian purchased the property in 1926, and took on major upgrades and renovations that caused him serious financial distress. As a way to maintain it, he converted it into a four-family home. In 1976, Halberian's son Michael inherited the property and also began extensive restoration and renovation work. After his death in 2010, the house was put up for sale, prompting community members to organize and attempt to acquire the property for conversion into an educational facility. Unfortunately, these efforts were unsuccessful, and the house was sold in 2014 to attorney Philip Loria and his business partner Sal Lucchese.

The new owners undertook an ambitious restoration project, which included reconstructing the grand balcony. However, parts of the surrounding land were sold and developed into commercial warehouses, leaving the mansion partially obscured and on a fraction of the original land. *Photos: (top) Current main entrance, (bottom) Steinway Mansion in 1881, courtesy of the Henry Z. Steinway Archive.*

STEINWAY MANSION

18-33 41st St

(1857)

NYC IL / NR P



John Spring, an American-born Polish immigrant, began working at his uncle's iron foundry in 1924. He then opened his own business in 1932 on Astoria Boulevard, relocating in 1947 to what used to be the carriage house of the Steinway Mansion.

Spring established close relationships with the artists that he worked with, which included Jose de Creeft, Jacques Lipchitz, Louise Bourgeois, Gaston Lachaise, Joan Miró, Alexander Archipenko, and Isamu Noguchi. The quality of his work granted him widespread recognition, especially for limited edition pieces usually intended for museums and galleries.

Unlike most foundries, Modern Art utilizes the lost-wax casting method for producing its large-scale work, which yields an exact bronze replica of the artist's original model.

Currently under the administration of Spring's descendants, the Modern Art Foundry receives private and public commissions, produces gallery and museum exhibitions, and provides conservation and restoration services. It has been ranked among the top three foundries in the country. *Photos: (top) Modern Art Foundry Inc. building. (bottom) Former Steinway Stable, n.d., Courtesy of Modern Art Foundry Inc.*

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MODERN ART FOUNDRY INC.

18-70 41st St

(Ca. 1857)



Unlike most company towns, housing in Steinway Village was not developed exclusively by Steinway & Sons. Over the years, several other investors purchased plots of land and built single- and multi-family homes, appealing to an ever-increasing number of working-class people who moved to the area.

Around 1925, a significant number of houses were built on the blocks west of 20th Road, between 31st and 46th Streets. A unique example is a group of about 120 two-and-a-half-story single-family rowhouses (**Site 13a**) concentrated around 31st, 32nd and 33rd Streets. The brick structures are set back from the street and display four variations of the mansard design, helping to create a varied roofline.

Another group was built in 1926 by the Atlantic Coast Builders Inc., who developed a semi-detached brick model house that featured embattled parapets and arched lintels on the second-floor windows. Clusters of these buildings can be found on 46th and 35th Streets (**Site 13b**), as well as on 20th Road, between 36th and 37th Streets (**Site 13c**).

The blocks on the eastern section of 20th Road were developed around 1935, with single-family two-story rowhouses continuing to be the predominant typology (**Site 13d**). Façade design included elements of Tudor Revival, such as half-timbering, steeply pitched-roofs and stone details. South of Steinway Street, there are some sections with one-story houses (**Site 13e**), also contributing to a heterogeneous roofline. *Photos: (top) Houses at 33rd Street, (middle) Houses at 20th Road, (bottom) Houses at 35th Street.*

HOUSES AT 20TH ROAD

31st to 33rd St, between 21st Ave & 20th Rd

33rd St to 37th St, between 20th Rd & 20th Ave

42nd St to 46th St, between 20th Rd & 20th Ave

(1935-1960)

I3



John Lawrence came from England to America with his family in 1635 and initially settled in Massachusetts. He was granted land in Hempstead and Flushing, and relocated to New Amsterdam in 1658. Lawrence became a prosperous merchant and had a series of high-profile appointments throughout his life, including Mayor of New York in 1672 and again in 1691. His family was among New York's wealthiest, with several members involved in politics and playing significant roles in American history.

The Lawrence Family Graveyard dates from 1703, and it is one of two remaining cemeteries owned by the Lawrences in New York. The half-acre plot is enclosed by a brick wall with an iron fence, while the main entrance features a low stone wall with an iron gate. It holds 89 graves that include high-ranking military officers, major political figures, and, most notably, that of Major Jonathan Lawrence. A distinguished soldier, Lawrence took part in several military expeditions and cooperated with General Washington in obtaining additional forces for the Revolutionary Army at Brooklyn. The last interment dates back to 1956 and was that of Miss Ruth Lawrence, the last member of the Lawrence family to live in Astoria. It was designated as a NYC Landmark in 1966.

The second Lawrence Cemetery is located at the corner of 216th Street and 42nd Avenue in Bayside, and was landmarked in 1967. *Photos: (top) Main entrance, (bottom) Graves at the Lawrence Cemetery, 1927. Courtesy of the NYPL.*

LAWRENCE FAMILY CEMETERY

35th St at 20th Rd

(1703)

NYC II

I4



15

QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY - STEINWAY

21-45 31st St

(1954-55, Adolph Goldberg)

As part of the amenities provided to his workers, William Steinway established a free library at the former Steinway Reformed Church in 1890, at the southwest corner of 41st Street and 20th Road. Furnishings and utilities were provided by the company, and half of its catalog of books was written in German. At the time, there were seven local libraries in Queens. In 1896, the Steinway, Astoria and Long Island City libraries became the Long Island City Public Library system,

which was later renamed to Queens Borough Public Library.

By 1915, the library had relocated to a building at the southeast corner of 42nd Street and 23rd Avenue. In 1930, it was combined with a community library and moved to 31st Street near Ditmars.

The current mid-century modern building was erected in 1954, with designs by architect Adolf Goldberg. The two-story, 12,500-square-foot brick structure has a cellar and two above-grade levels. It features flat roofs, Roman brick in stacked and running bond patterns, horizontal bands of windows and limestone and aluminum trim elements. It underwent extensive renovation work in 2021, including a new glass elevator tower at the reading garden and the reconfiguration of the second-floor reading rooms and lounge areas.

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