



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

HELL'S KITCHEN MANHATTAN





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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HELL'S KITCHEN

This area of Midtown Manhattan has been known over the past two centuries as “The Middle West Side,” “Hell’s Kitchen,” and “Clinton,” reflecting the shifting perception of the neighborhood. It is bounded roughly by West 34th and West 57th Streets, and from Eighth Avenue to the Hudson River, overlapping with Times Square, the Theater District and the Garment District.

The name Hell’s Kitchen, said to have been coined by a police sergeant, became the most frequently used to refer to the area, and even though it alluded to its poverty, crime and decay in the late-19th century, today it has been reclaimed to also acknowledge the area’s working-class values and unique character.

Despite being at the heart of the city, this was once a rural area well to its north, and remained so until the second half of the 19th century. With New York’s massive population growth, it grew into a densely populated section of industrial and shipping related industries, with residential areas a few blocks inland. After the Civil War, developers began building brick and brownstone rowhouses aimed at a middle or upper-middle-income population, soon followed by blocks of flats and tenements for the poorer population.

Living conditions began to deteriorate, as the Middle West Side became known as a complicated mix of docks, factories, railroads and substandard housing. This also brought a variety of social service providers and settlement houses to the neighborhood, such as Hartley House **(Site 8)**.

Though redevelopment has taken much of the area’s older building stock, significant portions still survive largely intact. The streets between Eighth and Tenth Avenues from roughly West 43rd to West 51st Streets retain much of their original building stock, many of them great examples of rowhouses **(Site 7)**, French flats **(Site 10)**, or tenements **(Site 9)**. Tucked among these residential buildings are a few surviving factories **(Sites 12a and 12b)**, public buildings **(Site 14)** and a number of religious structures, some of them maintaining their original use **(Sites 3, 13 and 15)**, while others have been adapted for new purposes and audiences **(Sites 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d and 4e)**.

South of 41st Street, the blocks of Ninth Avenue were once home to another staple of Hell’s Kitchen, and a destination within the greater New York City region, Paddy’s Market **(Site 1)**. Although it closed in 1938, its influence on the built environment continues to this day, reflecting the history of immigration to the United States in the late-nineteenth and early-20th century.

PADDY'S MARKET

9th Ave, between W 38th St & W 42th St

(ca. 1888-1938)

NR D

I



This stretch beneath the Ninth Avenue Elevated was home for half a century to one of the best-known pushcart markets in Manhattan, Paddy's Market. Its popularity and renown were reflected in the number of newspaper and periodical articles that appeared about it over the decades, including sketches, photos, songs and poetry.

Due to traffic needs of the newly constructed Lincoln Tunnel, the Market closed in 1938 and the Elevated was subsequently demolished. It relocated briefly to the side streets between Ninth and Tenth avenues, but never regained its strength. The storefronts and sidewalks, however, had become part and parcel of the market and many of them continued having their offerings on outdoor stands. Following World War II, the name "Paddy's Market" was used to refer to the international food stores and restaurants along Ninth Avenue, where the market used to be, and gradually extended north. It became representative of the history of working-class New Yorkers and immigrants in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, living in tenements with ground-floor storefronts.

Because of its significance, in 2022 the area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. *Photo courtesy of The New York Public Library.*

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

THE MCGRAW HILL BUILDING

2

330 W 42nd St
(1931, Raymond Hood)
NR P / NYC IL



This 35-story structure was the product of the gradual shift in architectural taste from the machine-age, abstract decoration of the Moderne or Art Deco, to the corporate-age utility of the International. Among its outstanding features are the two profiles (one being a stepped tower and the other a slab), the distinctive blue-green terra cotta facing, the horizontal window bands, and the entrance treatment.

It has been thought of as a key element to the revitalization of the West Side, although the motivations for its location were strictly practical and financial. The company's requirements influenced various aspects of the design, making it a unique example among New York's built landscape. It was designated as an NYC Landmark in 1979, and listed on the National Register in 1980. *Photo courtesy of The Museum of the City of New York.*

HOLY CROSS CHURCH

3

329 W 42nd St
(1870, Henry Engelbert)



Holy Cross was one of eight parishes that were formed in New York City in the 1850s, following the increase in Irish immigration to the US in the wake of the famine. The original Roman-style Church was heavily damaged by lightning in 1867, and was replaced by the current Italianate Gothic structure three years later.

The interior has an eclectic mixture of styles, including Georgian classical, Romanesque and Byzantine, with a cruciform ground plan. The nine stained-glass windows in the chancel were made by Mayer & Company of Munich, and the mosaics below the dome and in the sanctuary were designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany, who also designed the stained glass of the clerestory windows and wheel windows of the transepts.

Behind the church, at 332 West 43rd St, is the Holy Cross School, designed in the Romanesque Revival style by Lawrence J. O'Connor, and built in 1887.

CHURCHES CONVERTED TO THEATRES

4a

WESTSIDE THEATER

407 W 43rd St
(1889, Henry F. Kilburn)



The Second German Baptist congregation was established in New York in 1855, and worshiped in a humble building on West 45th Street near 9th Avenue. Under the leadership of Dr. Rev. Walter Rauschenbusch, a fund was established in 1885 to build a new church and improve the living conditions in the neighborhood. Two plots of land were purchased in 1889 thanks to a donation from John D. Rockefeller, and this Romanesque Revival structure was erected the same year. It was regarded as the oldest German Baptist Church in Manhattan.

After financial difficulties, the congregation left the building during the 1930s. In the 60s it was converted into a nightclub, but in 1976 it became home to the Chelsea Theater and the West Side Arts Theater. It underwent renovations in 1991, including the opening of a central entrance, and is today known as the Westside Theater.

4b

NEW DRAMATISTS

424 W 44th St
(1903, John Boese)



This Gothic Revival structure was built for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, in what used to be the location of the United Presbyterian Church. The design includes a rectory and the church, whose entrances were subtly incorporated into the façade, divided into three sections marked by shallow buttresses.

The building would later become the Lutheran Metropolitan Inner Mission Society, and by the 1960s it was the All-People's Church. Currently, it serves as headquarters for New Dramatists, an organization founded in 1949 by Michaela O'Harra and other Broadway luminaries, and one of the country's leading playwright centers. The building's interior was renovated to accommodate auditorium-type spaces, with risers for readings, a library, and workshops.

ACTORS STUDIO

432 W 44th St
(1858)
NYC IL

4c



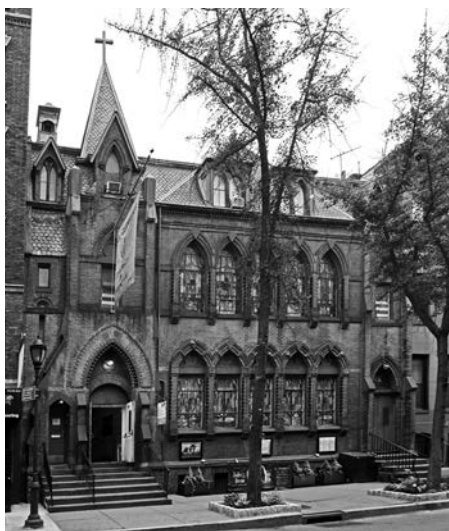
This former neighborhood church is a fine and rare example of a vernacular Greek Revival structure, a popular style in New York during the 1830s and 1840s. It was originally designed for the Seventh Associate Presbyterian Church, maintaining its original use for 86 years. In 1955, the building was acquired by the Actors Studio, a non-profit drama school known for training some of America's most distinguished actors, and its teaching of the "Method" technique. This acting system was created by Konstantin Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theater, and promoted in the US by Lee Strasberg, the school's longtime artistic director.

It was designated as a NYC Landmark in 1991.

ST CLEMENT'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

421 W 46th St
(1870-72, Edward D. Lindsey)

4d



This Victorian Gothic church was originally built for the Faith Chapel of the West Presbyterian Church, serving as its headquarters for 25 years. The building was then used by St. Cornelius Episcopal Church. In 1920, St. Cornelius merged with St. Clement's Protestant Episcopal Church, a congregation founded in 1830 in Greenwich Village.

In 1962, St. Clement's was reconfigured to include the Off-Broadway American Place Theater, which relocated in 1971, but the church continued a notable theatre ministry, experienced every Sunday through its "Mass in the Theater." This resulted in the church becoming New York's third oldest, continuously used, Off-Broadway theater.

ACTOR'S TEMPLE

4e

339 W 47th St
(1922, Sidney F. Oppenheimer)
NR P



In 1917, a group of Orthodox Jewish business owners established in Hell's Kitchen the West Side Hebrew Relief Association. Thanks to the work done by Rabbi Bernard Birstein, and later Cantor Louis Malamud, it became a place where Broadway actors could feel at home at a time when people in show business were not readily accepted in society.

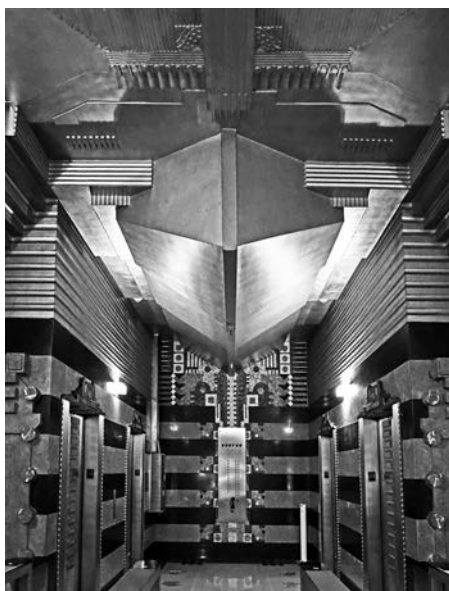
The design employs classicism in its balanced façade, the Roman arch form in the center bay and in its use of classical entablatures and cornice moldings. At the interior, the sanctuary had originally separate galleries for men and women, which were removed in 1954 and replaced with the present-day auditorium-style balcony. It also features stained-glass memorials and bronze plaques dedicated to many show business luminaries of yesteryear, including comedian Joe E. Lewis and singer Sophie Tucker.

It was listed on the National Register in 2005.

FILM CENTER BUILDING

5

630 9th Ave
(1928-29, Ely Jacques Kahn)
NYC INL



The Film Center interiors were designed by one of the city's most prominent architects working in modernist styles in the early-20th century, and it is one of the finest surviving Art Deco style interiors anywhere in the city. The relatively small spaces are transformed into a highly decorative formal entrance through Kahn's treatment of walls and ceilings, like woven plaster tapestries, and polychromatic individual elements (such as elevator doors and mailbox) and decorative additions (elaborate mosaics and stylized movie cameras).

The building was originally a support facility for the motion picture industry centered in Times Square to the east. Although much of that industry has departed, the Film Center remains with its interior spaces as rare survivors from the high point of the industry's history in Times Square.

It was designated as a NYC Interior Landmark in 1982.

INFRASTRUCTURE CONVERTED TO THEATERS

6a

FORMER DAVENPORT THEATER

354 W 45th St
(1915)

This five-story structure was built by the United Electric Light & Power Co. as an alternating current (AC) power substation, catering to Broadway theatres and Times Square signs, at a time when most theatres had direct current. Although AC was eventually adopted as the norm, Edison absorbed United by 1935 and the substation was decommissioned. It then became a Masonic Lodge, with emblems and inscriptions in Spanish still visible over the entrance. Later uses include a recording studio and a theatre, and in 2014 it was leased by producer Ken Davenport, who renamed it after his great-grandfather, producer, publicist, and author Delbert Essex Davenport. In 2019, part of the building was converted to a dance hall, and in 2022 it reopened as the AMT Theater.



PUERTO RICAN TRAVELING THEATER

6b

304 W 47th St
(1888, Napoleon LeBrun & Son)
NYC IL

The former Fire Engine Co. No. 54 is an excellent example of this firm's numerous mid-block firehouses, reflecting their attention to materials, stylish details, plan and setting. It has a large central opening flanked by smaller doorways, like most late 19th-century NYC firehouses, and the design incorporated elements of the Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival styles.

In the late 1970s, the building was converted to a permanent 194-seat theatre and offices for the award-winning Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. The group was founded in 1967 as a means of bringing free theater to the streets of New York's Latino neighborhoods, helping launch the Spanish bilingual theater movement in the United States. It was designated as a NYC Landmark in 2008.



BROWNSTONES FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

7

W 43rd St, W 46th St, W 47th St &
W 51st St
(ca. 1860-1880)



The single-family row house, imported initially from England, became the most common house type in 19th-century Manhattan, as well as in Brooklyn on an even grander scale. Most are three stories tall over a high basement, with an entrance approached by a tall stoop, though in many cases they were later removed. The houses are generally faced in brownstone or, less commonly, brick.

Most of them date from the later 1860s and early 1870s and are Italianate in style, with a cluster of neo-Grec examples which date from the 1880s. The great bulk are found on the blocks from West 43rd to West 47th streets, with a few more examples as far north as West 51st Street.

One of the most famous group of brownstones is located on West 46th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues. Known today as Restaurant Row, this area was once part of the 119 parcels of real estate left by William Backhouse and Margaret Armstrong Astor to their youngest son Henry Astor III. He was believed to have been disowned after marrying Malvina Dinehart, the daughter of a farmer and gardener who lived near the Astor family's summer residence at Red Hook. On the contrary, he lived off the rents from the properties he inherited. In 1874, the Astor trust leased these plots on West 46th Street to developers who erected a long row of brownstone-fronted Italianate houses. They were used as private residences and rooming houses, and in the late 1920s some renovations included restaurants in the basement.

Photos: (left) Rowhouses at 46th Street, (right) Rowhouses at 51st Street.

HARTLEY HOUSE

8

413 W 46th St
(ca. 1850)



Before the Civil War, a group led by Robert M. Hartley formed the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP). In 1897, his descendants opened Hartley House in a converted rowhouse, which would soon expand into the two adjoining houses, with a rooftop addition. The result is a building complex that retains the look of a 19th-century settlement.

Early programs in Hartley House included cooking and sewing classes, lectures on hygiene and child care, housekeeping instruction and a work-exchange program. It is one of Hell's Kitchen earliest and best-known settlement houses, and continues to offer programs and services for the community.

Another notable example of community services in the neighborhood is Fountain House, a national mental health non-profit organization founded in the late 1940s. They are located at 425 W 47th St, in a five-story Georgian style building, constructed in 1963.

The earliest known tenement in Hell's Kitchen dates back to 1870, and the latest to 1913. It is the most common typology in the neighborhood, and only a few were built after the Tenement House Law of 1901, known as "new law" tenements.

Old-law tenements typically occupy as much as 80 percent of the lot, have five or six stories, each with two or more small apartments, and a store at ground level. Despite their size, old-law tenement apartments could be occupied by as many as eight people, meaning that a typical midtown block could have up to 10,000 residents. Such conditions led to passage of the Tenement House Law, but these new buildings could be just as crowded as their predecessors. The main improvement was the implementation of the "dumbbell" floor plan, which allowed a little more light and air into the apartments.

Architectural styles followed the trends visible in the row houses, in somewhat more modest versions. Though generally faced in brick rather than brownstone, the tenements of the early and mid-1870s were almost all Italianate in style. In the late-1870s and early-1880s a version of neo-Grec appeared, followed in the late-1880s by the Queen Anne, and in the 1890s by the neo-Renaissance and neo-Romanesque styles. The few new-law tenements of the early-20th century were in neo-Federal style.

Photo: Streetscape at 50th Street.

TENEMENT STREETSCAPES

9

316-358 W 47th St, 408-412 W 48th
St & 48-456 W 50th St



10

FRENCH FLATS

353 W 51st St, 435 W 43rd St, 347-351 W 44th St & 358-360 W 45th St.

The four-story flats, or “French Flats”, were often designed in similar styles as row houses, but differed from tenements as they had only one apartment on each floor, each with its own facilities. The only common space would be an outer hallway and stairway leading from floor to floor.

In Hell’s Kitchen, groups of flats were built on both the side streets and the long avenues. The earliest examples date to 1868, and continued being built well into the 1890s. Early examples are in the Italianate style, with brick and brownstone fronts. An example is the building at 353 West 51st St. designed by D.&J. Jardine and built in 1877.

Elaborate designs might have also been used to differentiate flats from tenements. A notable example is at 435 West 43rd St. by George F. Pelham in the neo-Grec style, built in 1882, with columns supporting an elaborate overdoor at the entrance, and fanciful abstract floral ornamental trim in ceramic panels on all floors. Equally elegant is a group of six back-to-back neo-Renaissance flats at 358-360 W 45th St., with carefully designed stone ornament, by John Hauser. *Photo: French Flat at 43rd Street.*



ST BENEDICT THE MOOR’S CHURCH

342 W 53rd St
(1868-69, R. C. McLane & Sons)



Established in 1883, this was the first Black Catholic mission parish north of the Mason Dixon line. It was named after St. Benedict the Moor, a 16th century African-born Franciscan friar. The congregation initially purchased a church on Bleecker Street, but after changes in demographics they relocated to this building in 1898.

A modest, Victorian version of a Greek temple, it was built by the Second Church of the Evangelical Association. It features a classic triangular pediment with a circular window, modillioned cornices, brick corbels and thin pilasters flanking the tall arched openings. In 1933, fourteen artists created murals for the interior as part of the President’s Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee.

During the 1930s, Black residents moved to Harlem and the area became largely Hispanic. St. Benedict’s was reassigned to the Spanish order of Franciscans in 1954, and renamed the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. It was deconsecrated in 2017, and sold to a nonprofit in 2023.

INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

FORMER R.M. BENT & CO. PIANO FACTORY

I2a

500 W 52nd St
(ca. 1890)



Built in the late 19th century, this building was one of nineteen piano factories that existed in Hell's Kitchen, and was owned by piano maker R.M. Bent & Co. Through the years it had a variety of industrial uses, including LeNoble Lumber and A&B Leather Findings in 1969. That year, it was condemned by The City of New York and included in the Clinton Urban Renewal Area, serving as headquarters for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's local Neighborhood Preservation office.

Since the late 1970s, it has been home to individual artist studios, theater companies and an after-school program. It is also the temporary relocation site of INTAR Theatre and Nakanami Carpentry.

THE HILL

I2b

469 10th Ave
(1912, Goldwin, Starrett, & Van
Vleck)



This twelve-story terra cotta Classical Revival building was notably designed for the Hill Publishing Company, using then-current structural technology to be vibration and sound proof. Its façades feature large, multi-paned metal windows, providing much needed sunlight to the printing establishments, and terra cotta entablatures divide the building horizontally into seven sections.

In 1917, it became the first headquarters of the recently merged Hill and McGraw Publishing Companies. They would later relocate in 1931 to 330 W 42nd St. The building now houses commercial space. *Photo by Brian Weber.*

SACRED HEART OF JESUS

R.C. CHURCH

457 W 51st St

(1884, Napoleon Le Brun & Sons)

13



Founded in 1876, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church initially met in the former Plymouth Baptist Church at 487 West 51st Street. They would later build this Victorian Romanesque structure, with deep red brick and matching terra cotta, light-colored stone arches and band courses and copings. It is one of the largest churches in midtown.

In 1965, the church's interior was reconfigured to reflect the requirements of the Second Vatican Council. It was most likely at this time that the great rose window was bricked up. The entrance doors would later be replaced with glass panels with modern etched designs.

Today, the Church continues to be an important staple in the community, serving a diverse neighborhood.

NYPL COLUMBUS

BRANCH

742 10th Ave

(1901, Babb, Cook & Willard)

14



The Columbus Branch of NYPL is one of 65 libraries built in the early 20th century with funds contributed by Andrew Carnegie. It was designed by the same firm selected by Carnegie himself to design his new home on East 91st Street at Fifth Avenue (now the Cooper Hewitt Museum). The elegant Renaissance Revival, Indiana limestone building opened in 1909, and was renovated in 1960.

From the 1970s until 2004, the library operated only on the first floor, after it was closed for a complete restoration and modernization. Although the interior public service areas were redesigned, and the second floor was restored and reconfigured, the renovation retained many of the building's historic elements, including the original iron-railed staircase and the oak-panelled entrance vestibule.



STs. KYRIL & METODI BULGARIAN EASTERN ORTHODOX DIOCESAN CATHEDRAL

15

552 W 50th St

(ca. 1890)

Formerly the site of an Old Law Tenement, records show this plot was occupied in 1899 by the German Lutheran Christ Church. In 1911, the recently formed St. Clemens Mary Polish Catholic parish had rented the building while their own church was erected at 40th Street. In 1913, Croatian Franciscans founded a Catholic parish and renovated the building, purchasing it the following year and dedicating it to Saints Cyril and Methodius, ninth century Greek brothers recognized as saints by the Catholic Church in 1881.

The congregation remained at this location for 60 years, moving to St. Raphael's Church at 502 West 41st Street in 1974, merging both parishes. Five years later, the building was purchased by the Bulgarian Eastern

Orthodox Church, which retained the dedication to the Slavic patron saint, changing only the spelling. The congregation had been at 101st Street for forty years, with the new Cathedral becoming the headquarters of the Dioceses of the United States, Canada, and Australia. The interior of the church was renovated in 1982, and it was re-consecrated in 1984.

THE LANDMARK TAVERN

16

626 11th Ave

(ca. 1850)



Situated at what used to be the shores of the Hudson, the Landmark Tavern opened in 1868 as an Irish waterfront saloon. It was owned by Patrick Henry Carley, and catered to workmen from the surrounding factories or on the waterfront. The second floor of the building served as the Carley family home, and the third floor had several small rooms for rent. During prohibition, it functioned as a speakeasy but was eventually closed and remained boarded up until 1933.

In 1989, the building was converted to "eating and drinking" on the first and upper floors. It was briefly closed in 2004, but was reopened a year later by Michael Young and Donnchadh O'Sullivan. It is one of the oldest continually operating establishments in the City today, retaining many of its original features like the original bar, carved from a single hunk of mahogany wood.

