



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

HUNTS POINT

THE BRONX



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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HUNTS POINT

Before European colonization, the Hunts Point area of the Bronx was associated with the Siwanoy Native Americans, which were part of the broader Algonquian cultural and linguistic group. It was then known as Quinnahung, meaning “a long high place”, later taking its current name from 17th-century landowner Thomas Hunt Jr.

During the late-17th to early-19th centuries the area was known as West Farms, and was composed of rural estates owned by a few English families who relied on an enslaved labor force to cultivate the land. Vestiges of these early inhabitants can still be found in the Joseph Rodman Drake Park **(Site 14)**, with recent studies pointing towards the existence of an enslaved African people burial ground.

The arrival of the New York and Harlem railroad line, which crossed the Harlem River, brought a rise in population to The Bronx during the mid-19th century. Hunts Point, however, remained picturesque and undeveloped, attracting prominent, wealthy businessmen who purchased farmland and established grand country manors. Though most of the houses from this period have been demolished, the Peter S. Hoe House, known as Sunnyslope **(Site 12)**, is an unusual survivor of the neighborhood’s rural past. The construction of the Corpus Christi Monastery **(Site 17)** at the end of the 19th century was also motivated by this bucolic environment.

After the area’s annexation to New York City in 1874, a series of infrastructure improvements were implemented to increase transportation communication with Manhattan. The opening of IRT stations at Simpson Street **(Site 2)**, Prospect Avenue and Intervale Avenue, provided more immediate access to Hunts Point, boosting the neighborhood’s development. City services were also expanded, with new buildings for the NYPD **(Site 3)** and the FDNY **(Site 11)**, as well as the Joseph R. Drake Public School **(Site 13)**.

Industrial development was also fueled by the continuous improvements of transit to and from the area during the 20th century. Large companies like the American Bank Note **(Site 18)** established their operations in the area, also boosting residential development. One of the earliest examples of private homes for middle-class families are located in Manida Street **(Site 19)**.

Urban growth continued throughout the first half of the 20th century, with population increases marked by immigration waves. This had a strong effect on the neighborhood’s character, most notably during the 1950s and 60s, when it became a hub for Latin American culture. Some of the most influential venues in Latin music were established in former theatres located alongside Southern Boulevard **(Sites 6, 7 and 8)**, attracting crowds from all boroughs.

Community organizing has also been a constant element in Hunts Point, especially after the social and economic crisis of the 1970s and 80s. Organizations like Urban Health **(Site 4)** and The Point **(Site 20)** have had a strong impact in the neighborhood’s development, and continue to work towards its protection and improvement.

I

I LOVE THE BRONX MURAL

1026 Westchester Ave

(2012, Tats Cru)



The now iconic “I Love the Bronx” mural is one of the long-standing works of Tats Cru, a group of NYC-based professional muralists formed in the early 1980s, whose work has played a pivotal role in transforming and advancing graffiti art. Founding members Wilfredo “BIO” Feliciano, BRIM and MACK, Hector “NICER” Nazario and Sotero “BG183” Ortiz met as teenagers at James Monroe High School in the Bronx, and started painting subway cars together under the name T.A.T. CRU, changing it to TATS CRU in the early ’90s.

As they started to gain recognition, local businesses began hiring them to paint blank walls to prevent tagging or other unattractive vandalism. In 1994, they received their first big corporate commission by Coca-Cola, and soon after a campaign for Chivas Regal. Today, they work with musicians, nonprofits and corporations alike, creating prismatic and highly stylized murals.

One of their most well-known murals is the Big Pun Wall (910 Rogers Pl), a memorial created for the artist after The Cru learned about his death while they were working on the promotion of his first album. They have maintained a strong connection to the world of Hip Hop through their friendship with Fat Joe, and periodically revisit and revise the mural.

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

SIMPSON ST SUBWAY STATION & SUBSTATION #18

Westchester Ave at Simpson St
(1904, Heins & LaFarge)
NR P

2



This Station was part of the original 12 IRT elevated stations built on the Broadway and East Bronx, alongside eight substations. While the structural elements were completed by William B. Parsons, the architectural design was left to Heins & LaFarge, known for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan and buildings at the New York Zoological Gardens in the Bronx. They drew inspiration from the City Beautiful movement, which advocated for creating a built environment that would inspire people to a higher level of moral and civic virtue. Infrastructure was not the exception.

The station is comprised of two platforms and two Queen Anne-style control houses, with covered stairs leading down to street level. The substation has a Beaux-Arts style façade. It was included in the National Register in 2004. *Photo by Robbie Rosenfeld.*

62ND POLICE PRECINCT STATION HOUSE

1086 Simpson St
(1912-14, Hazzard, Erskine &
Blagden)
NYC IL

3



Part of an ambitious building program for the Bronx, the design for this station reflected the vision of the City Beautiful movement. Although it was intended as a model for others by the city government, contemporary political reverses made it the only example of the architectural firm's work. It was submitted to the NYC Art Commission (itself founded in response to City Beautiful ideals) and received subsequent academic refinement in the architecture committee, headed by Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes.

The three-story neo-Renaissance style structure has a monumental ground-story arcade of bold, bull-nosed rustication, contrasting with smooth-faced ashlar limestone upper stories. The Simpson St. façade is surmounted by a richly ornamented terra cotta cornice and broad-eaved hipped roof (originally of green tile) evoking the 15th and early 16th century palaces of Florence and Rome.

In the 1970s, it became a symbol of the deterioration of the Bronx. The 1981 crime drama film "Fort Apache, The Bronx" is said to have been based on it. It was designated as a NYC Landmark in 1992.

FORMER URBAN HEALTH BUILDING

4

1070 Southern Blvd
(ca. 1900)



In 1967, Dr. Richard Izquierdo, a life-long resident of the South Bronx and a pediatrician/family practitioner, purchased this then abandoned building on Southern Boulevard and Westchester Avenue to create the San Juan Health Center. At the time there was a lack of primary care services in the area, and residents had grown accustomed to waiting out long lines in local hospital emergency rooms for routine medical care or for the treatment of acute medical conditions. Since Dr. Izquierdo was unable to meet the demand in his private practice, he wanted to expand it into an HMO-style practice that offered care in a consistent, cost effective and managed manner.

Seven years later, San Juan Health Center became Urban Health Plan, Inc., a federally qualified community health center licensed by New York State. Today Urban Health Plan is one of the largest health centers in New York State.

FORMER ART THEATER

5

1077 Southern Blvd
(1914, Paul B. LaVelle)



Located down the street from the Cecil Spooner and Boulevard Theatres, the Art Theater was the work of Swiss-born architect Paul B. LaVelle, who trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He would later employ and mentor Hilyard Robinson, the first African American to earn an architecture degree at Columbia University, who went on to become a leading architect in Washington, DC.

The Art was a hybrid building, combining a 600-seat theater with stores and an open-air theater with room for about 800 patrons. Its most distinctive architectural feature is its decorative busts on the façade.

It later became Teatro Art, a Spanish-language cinema, which in turn was eventually replaced by a Protestant church. Although some of the storefront space is actively used, the church left several years ago and the distinctive ornament is in a state of disrepair.

FORMER BOULEVARD THEATER

6

1030 Southern Blvd
(1913, Thomas W. Lamb)



This Beaux-Arts building was originally the Boulevard Theater, a vaudeville house that seated 2,200 people. It was designed by Scottish-born, American architect Thomas Lamb, who achieved recognition as one of the leading architects of the boom in movie theater construction of the 1910s and 1920s. He developed designs for Fox Theatres, Loew's Theatres and Keith-Albee, creating large, lavishly decorated structures known as “movie palaces”, which showcased the films of the emerging Hollywood studios.

The Boulevard was one of several Bronx theatres that Marcus Loew purchased from the Picker family. He renovated the interior in 1917, installing an organ to provide musical accompaniment for motion pictures, and again in 1932 to accommodate talking pictures. It continued having vaudeville shows into the 1950s, closing in the 1960s.

In the following years it reopened under independent management, hosting live shows and Spanish-language movies in the late-1970's. It finally closed in the mid-1980's, and converted to commercial space.

The interior has been altered to accommodate new uses, but the façade still retains many of its decorative details.

FORMER TRITONS CLUB

7

961 Southern Blvd
(1910)



Originally The Spooner Theater, this 1800-seat structure was built by actress and director Cecil Spooner to serve as her company's performing space. It was later purchased by Loews and renamed the Loews Spooner Theatre.

In the late 1950s, a group of friends from a local stickball team established the Tritons Club at this location, which became known as the “greatest after-hours club in the Bronx”. By the early 1960s, many of the biggest bands in Latin music were playing there regularly, with people praising the intimate atmosphere, which allowed for close contact with the musicians. Al Santiago, the owner of the Casalegre record store and Alegre records, managed to get many well-known bandleaders to play together at the Club every Tuesday, eventually becoming the Alegre All-Stars. It is also believed that this venue was key during the craze for the Pachanga style of dance.

The Tritons' success prompted its eventual move to a bigger location on Longwood Avenue, but it closed soon after. The Spooner Theater was then converted into a movie house that remained open until the 1970s. Today, it is used as commercial space.

8

HUNTS POINT PALACE

1029 E I63rd St
(1911)



Built by the Morgenthau family, this dance hall hosted functions for the area's changing ethnic communities for over six decades. Early clientele included the Jewish, Italian and Irish communities, and by the 1950s it became a hub for the Latin community.

The Palace was a key performance spot for some of the biggest bands of the mambo era, mostly because it was one of the largest venues in the Bronx, holding 2,500

people and boasting a big bandstand. With ornate architecture and beautiful balconies, it had large and well-maintained dance floors, rivaling Manhattan's Palladium.

Stars like Tito Puente, Tito Rodríguez, and Machito often played here, as did Arsenio Rodríguez and jazz greats like Stan Getz and Dizzy Gillespie. Willie Colón and Rubén Blades also played at this venue, at a time when they started calling their music salsa. The term would gain currency when Fania Records used it to market these urban-edged sounds. After the ballroom closed in the 1980s, the building was converted to commercial and office space.

Across the street, at 932 Southern Blvd, a small bar opened in the 1950s catering to the musicians who played at The Palace. The Alhambra Supper Club provided them with opportunities to improvise and experiment with each other, even leading to the creation of new styles. The original building was demolished in 2015.

Raul del Valle was a Catholic priest that emigrated from Cuba to the United States in 1961, holding several parish and teaching assignments until he was made pastor of Saint Anselm Parish in 1976. After rehabilitating and revitalizing the church, he took on the deteriorated Church of Saint Athanasius in 1980, where he was a religious leader as well as a laborer. He was appointed Chancellor of the Archdiocese of New York in 1985, the first born in Latin America.

The land where this square is located was acquired by the City of New York in 1909, and was named Crames Square in 1923 in honor of Private Charles Crames who died in World War I. In 1991, at the request of Community Board 2, it was renamed after Monsignor del Valle, who had passed away in 1988. It remains a transportation hub and community staple, hosting a variety of activities for people of all ages.

9

MONSIGNOR RAUL DEL VALLE SQ.

Hunts Point Ave &, E I63rd St
(1909)



Due to subway development and population growth in The Bronx, the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad built this station in anticipation of an increase in demand for train service, connecting commuters to Grand Central. However, lack of passengers made it financially impossible to maintain and it was closed in the 1930s. It is one of several buildings designed by noted architect C. Gilbert, known for the Woolworth Building and the Custom House, among others.

FORMER AMTRAK STATION

10

910 Hunts Point Ave
(1909, Cass Gilbert)
NR P



After its closing, the French Renaissance structure was repurposed for commercial use, losing many of its polychrome terra cotta on the south façade, facing the Avenue. However, the north façade, where stairs once went down to train platforms, is largely intact. In recent years, a local entrepreneur has been working towards redeveloping it into an event & performance venue. It was listed on the National Register in 2022.

FDNY ENGINE 94 / LADDER 48 / BATTALION 3

11

1226 Seneca Ave
(ca. 1912, Frank Helmle)



After the city's consolidation in 1898, the various existing fire departments were unified into the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY). This led to standardization of fire stations, with early designs being developed by Napoleon LeBrun & Son. Later ones were made by in-house architects and outside firms.

Engine 94 was part of a group of 42 new firehouses commissioned in 1912 by the city as part of the modernization of their fire facilities, which now included motorized firetrucks. Superintendent of Public Buildings of Brooklyn, Frank Hemle, shared the contract with two other firms, and designed the Brooklyn Central Office Bureau of Fire Communications Building, a NYC Landmark.

The three-story brick structure features an open-air roof gallery with a mansard roof, and colorful terra cotta shields as embellishments. It was one of

the many projects reviewed by the NYC Art Commission.

Other notable examples of Hemle's work during his tenure are the Boathouse (1905) and Tennis House (1910) at Prospect Park, and shelters at Monsignor McGolrick Park and in Fulton Park. After leaving his position with the city, he returned to private practice and continued his successful career.

This unusual Gothic Revival manor house is a rare example of mid-19th century architecture in then rural Westchester County. The 14.6-acre estate belonged to Peter S. Hoe, from R.M. Hoe & Company, one of the most innovative and successful manufacturers of printing equipment in the nineteenth century.

At the time, Hunt's Point was part of West Farms, a quiet area of estates and manor houses. Sunnyslope was designed in the mid-19th century picturesque tradition, which produced many of the finest estates in New York City. A square, compact, high-style stone villa, it holds great resemblance with several of the designs by Calvert Vaux, the English-born associate of Andrew

Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted. Although Peter Hoe sold Sunnyslope in 1864, it remained a country estate for the next several decades, even after New York City's annexation in 1874 of West Farms and the rest of the West Bronx. Eventually, like most Bronx estates, the acres surrounding Sunnyslope were sold off and developed, but the house survived and is currently home to the Temple AME Church. It was designated as a NYC landmark in 1981.

SUNNYSLOPE MANOR

12

812 Faile St

(ca. 1860)

NYC IL



JOSEPH R. DRAKE PS 48

13

1290 Spofford Ave

(1914-16, CBJ Snyder -

renovations 2006-08, Nelligan White)



Designed in the Collegiate Gothic style, this prominent five-story structure was built of solid brick exterior walls with limestone and decorative terra cotta details. Its floor and roof are concrete slabs supported on concrete encased steel beams that are, in turn, framed into the masonry.

Despite more than a dozen upgrades over the course of a century, deterioration and water infiltration required for more extensive repair work to be done in 2006. This also included a complete replacement of the building's masonry enclosure with a modern masonry curtain wall assembly.

In 2013, a group of students and teachers made headlines when, as part of a class project, they identified an area outside the cemetery at Joseph Rodman

Drake Park as the likely site of an enslaved African burial ground. Their theory was proved by a team of scientists from the Department of Agriculture, and the Park renamed to acknowledge these findings.

The Hunt family were among the first English settlers that farmed the area during the 18th century. In 1729, they established a cemetery at the entrance to Planting Neck (Hunt's Point), which was soon shared with other families associated with the settlement and development of the Bronx. Elizabeth Hunt's marker is the oldest surviving one in the cemetery, and the last known interment was of William Whitehead (family association unknown), in 1852.

Across the road from the main cemetery there is a small burial ground for enslaved African people. While no above-ground evidence remains, a preliminary ground-penetrating-radar survey suggests that burials may remain.

During the late-19th century, both cemeteries became overgrown and fell into disrepair. Proposals were made to develop the land, but the public rallied against it and in 1909 the City acquired the property. The park was named in honor of Joseph Rodman Drake in 1915, a celebrated author of poems such as "The Culprit Fay" and "The American Flag". A NYC native, he was a friend of the Hunts and was buried in the family cemetery. His grave is marked by a seven-foot-high marble shaft installed by the Bronx Society of Arts and Science in 1915, which includes a poem by his friend Fitz-Greene Halleck.

Over the years, the park has undergone a series of restoration efforts, including repairs to stones and the fence, new plantings, and the creation of pathways throughout it.

J. R. DRAKE PARK & ENSLAVED AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

I4

Drake Park South &, Hunts
Point Ave
(1915)



This popular waterfront park is named after Francis J. Barretto, a 19th-century merchant and State Assemblyman of Westchester County who owned an estate in the area. During the area's development in the early-20th century, the site was used as a sand and gravel operation, and an asphalt plant. Between 1954 and 1978, fill was placed on it, increasing the size of the upland and raising the grades significantly. It was completely abandoned, and designated a brownfield due to years of industrial use and illegal dumping.

NYC Parks acquired the land from the City's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in 2001. They worked together to decontaminate the area and remediate it for public use, becoming a community hangout with music performances and food vendors known as La Playita.

In 2005, construction began for a new park design. The layout and orientation capture the privileged views to the Manhattan skyline, as well as North and South Brother Islands. The park's undulating promenade borders a large central lawn, with a large stone and grass amphitheater and stage. Its main feature is the Floating Pool Lady, a seven-lane, 25-meter pool designed from a decommissioned river cargo barge. *Photo by NYC Parks.*

15

BARRETO POINT PARK

Viele Ave. at Tiffany St.

(2006)



16

FUFIDIO TRIANGLE

Spofford Avenue & Tiffany St

(ca. 1910)



Walter Fufidio was a Hunts Point native who lived on Casanova Street and attended the Manhattan School of Aviation, before going to work for his father at the Esdorn Lumber Company. He was seventeen years old when WWII started in 1939, and enlisted in the Marines in 1944. Fufidio participated in the Pacific campaign from 1944 to 1945, and was killed in the battle of Iwo Jima when he was only 21 years old. He was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross Medal, the highest honor for a veteran marine, for his brave charge towards a Japanese bunker.

In 1953, this triangular-shaped park was renamed Corporal Fufidio Square to further honor him. The property was known formerly as Garrison Square,

after the prominent Hunts Point family. In 1955, the Army Veterans 38th Post erected a stone monument dedicated to all United States citizens who perished in war.

The oldest Dominican monastery in the United States, Corpus Christi is a branch of the community of contemplative nuns founded by St. Dominic de Guzman in Prouilhe, France, in 1206. The monastery was first established by Mother Mary of Jesus (Julia Crooks of New York City) in 1880 in Newark, NJ, but with the growth in the number of novices, the Archbishop of New York suggested they relocate to New York.

In 1889, land was purchased for the construction of a monastery in the Bronx, where the sisters established a contemplative community with the special purpose of praying for the seminarians and priests of the Archdiocese. The four-story gothic style structure holds the nuns' living and working quarters and it's surrounded by tree-filled grounds and gardens, which are not open to the public. The chapel was dedicated in 1893 by Archbishop Corrigan, who chose to consecrate both the outside Chapel and Nuns' Choir.

17

CORPUS CHRISTI MONASTERY

1230 Lafayette Ave

(1889-91, William Schickel)



In 1908, the leading producer of money, securities, and other types of printed and engraved products, the American Bank Note Company, moved their administrative and sales functions to a new building in the financial district. Shortly after, they started developing plans for a new plant at Hunts Point, with a layout that was representative of the shift towards designing spaces to accommodate engineered production lines.

Upon its completion, the Printing Plant was considered one of the most complete facilities of its kind in the country, allowing for the expansion of the company's services and reducing production costs. It consisted mainly of three interconnected buildings: the Lafayette wing, with the main entrance at the base of an imposing tower, the Garrison wing and the Barretto wing.

The Company closed its operations in 1986, after which the building hosted a variety of uses. In 2007 it was purchased by developers and renovated into commercial and office space. It was designated as a NYC Landmark in 2008.

18

THE BANKNOTE BUILDING

1231 Lafayette Ave

(1911, Kirby, Petit & Green)

NYC IL



Due to its strategic location, Hunts Point became a hub for industrial activities in the early 20th century. Soon, improvements were made to public transportation and new manufacturing operations were established, prompting an influx of skilled workers with well-paid jobs. This motivated residential development, which continued to grow steadily for the next couple of decades.

The area of the Manida Street houses was part of 523 lots purchased by the George F. Johnson's Sons Company in 1907. A section was sold in 1908 to the American Bank Note Company for construction of its printing plant. That same year, 18 lots were sold to builder James F. Meehan and another 12 to the Manida Company, for the development of row-houses. Meehan operated both companies, but served as architect only for those located on the west side.

The 42 semi-detached brick structures were executed in a modest Renaissance Revival style, some combined with elements of the Flemish Revival style. They have rounded projecting bays and mirror-image façades. The east side of the street, designed by Daube & Kreymborg, features more restrained ornamentation, while the west side has more embellishments including parapets and varied classical motifs.

Early residents were primarily of Russian Jewish descent, as well as several German households. A few Irish and Italian immigrants also settled in the area, and by the 1920s many first-generation Americans continued as stewards of the residences. Despite the drastic changes experienced in The Bronx during the twentieth century, Manida Street remains a thriving mixed-use neighborhood, and a rare example of Hunts Point's early residential development. It was designated as a NYC Historic District in 2020.

MANIDA STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

19

814-868 & 810-859 Manida St
(1908-09, James F. Meehan, Daube &
Kreymborg)
NYC HD



THE POINT

940 Garrison Ave
(ca. 1911)



Located in what used to be part of the American Bank Note Building Printing Plant, The Point is a Community Development Corporation founded in 1994 by Bronx residents to help strengthen and revitalize their neighborhood through arts and culture. At the time, much of the housing that had been lost in the area during the crisis years had been rebuilt, but there were few jobs nearby and very little commercial or financial services.

The main entrance leads onto a 4,000 square-foot atrium used as exhibit space, which connects to a 125-seat black box theater. The courtyard hosts the graffiti murals of the aerosol art collective Tats Cru, part of The Point since 1995, and around the perimeter of the atrium are located small shops and workshops designed to foster local entrepreneurship.

With The Bronx's high percentage of residents under the age of 18, The Point's arts-driven mission and programs

have helped engage them and celebrate the cultural life of the South Bronx. They have also contributed to the area's resurgence after decades of socio-economic struggles, developing an array of environmental and business-oriented services.

It has become a celebrated destination, and a remarkable example of successfully transforming an area through community involvement.

