



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

KINGSBRIDGE

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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KINGSBRIDGE

In 1693, Frederick Philipse constructed a bridge over the Spuyten Duyvil Creek which was called the “King’s Bridge”. It was the first bridge to connect Manhattan to the mainland, giving the neighborhood its name. By the 1700s, the Native American population had been largely driven out, and the main economic activity was subsistence agriculture. During the Revolutionary War, Kingsbridge became a strategic location in the New York Campaign, and subsequently in the British defense of the city, with General George Washington ordering the construction of outer defenses throughout the area. Two of those forts are now the sites of Fort Independence Park and part of Washington’s Walk Park **(Site 3)**.

Until the mid-19th century, Kingsbridge consisted primarily of large estates and farms. The Fordham Manor Church **(Site 10)** and one of the mansions of the Claflin Estate (currently the rectory at Our Lady of The Angels RC Church, **Site 4**) are unique examples of buildings tied to this period. St. James Church **(Site 15)** also organized at this time, with its picturesque Gothic revival building still standing at St. James Park.

Industrial growth was also happening in the Bronx, increasing the population significantly and requiring the construction of infrastructure like the Croton Aqueduct **(Site 12)** and the New York and Harlem Railroad.

By the turn of the century, the consolidation of the five boroughs prompted city agencies to build new headquarters for the NYPD **(Site 2)** and the FDNY **(Site 1)**. Private institutions also relocated to the area, like the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Blind **(Site 16)** and the House of the Holy Comforter **(Site 19)**. The large estates were gradually subdivided and sold for residential development, and a number of noted architects and builders designed remarkable examples of Revival style houses **(Site 8)** and apartments **(Site 18)**. As urban growth continued, the area shifted from a rural enclave to a dense up-and-coming middle-class neighborhood, with notable examples of Beaux Arts, Art Deco and Art Moderne buildings **(Site 7)**.

Today, Kingsbridge continues to host a vibrant and diverse community who have been active stewards of their built environment. Their commitment to maintain and protect the neighborhood was a key factor during the social and economic crisis of the late 20th century, allowing for their most emblematic structures to continue having a significant role in the area’s development. The redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory **(Site 11)** is one of these cases, with several community organizations continuously advocating for plans to include equity and sustainability as part of their design.

After the consolidation of the five boroughs in 1898, the existing firefighting companies were unified into the NYC Fire Department. This also meant the expansion and standardization of fire stations, with a large number of them being built in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

The original design for Engine Company 81 was reviewed by the NYC Art Commission in 1908, and featured a Beaux-Arts style façade and Queen Anne style hipped roof and a rear tower. It was the work of Alexander H. Stevens, the department's in-

house architect and Superintendent of Buildings, who is credited with designing seven firehouses while he served in this position, between 1903 and 1906. Three of them have been designated as NYC Landmarks.

It is unclear when and why the design was modified, but the building erected has more classical style influences and follows the three-story, three-bay wide pattern established by Napoleon LeBrun and others who had previously designed many New York firehouses. *Photo courtesy of the NY Historical Society.*



FDNY ENGINE 81 LADDER 46

3025 Bailey Avenue
(ca. 1908, Alexander Stevens)



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

KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER

2

Westchester Ave at Simpson St
(190I-02, A. J. Horgan & V. J. Slattery)
NYC IL



After the annexation, the 50th Police Precinct Station was created to serve the rapidly expanding area. It initially occupied a two-story frame structure on Verveleen Place, but conditions quickly became unsustainable and plans for a new building began in 1898. This coincided with the growing popularity of the City Beautiful Movement, and a general acknowledgement of the need to improve and modernize the design standards of municipal architecture.

The building is a remarkable example of Beaux-Arts, with a location,

ornamentation, scale and materials also representative of the style's principles. It was designated as a NYC Landmark in 1986.

In 1972, the 50th Precinct moved out from this location, and a campaign was started to have the City transform the building into a community center. The Kingsbridge Heights Community Center opened its doors in 1975, and through the years has provided educational and cultural activities for community members of all ages.

Kingsbridge was strategically important during the American Revolution, with General George Washington ordering the construction of outer defences throughout the area. Fort Four was built in 1776 to safeguard the line of the Harlem River, and was the largest of all fortifications in the area. It was destroyed by the British forces in 1779.

The site was acquired in 1895 by the city as part of the Jerome Park Reservoir project, and handed over to the

Department of Parks in 1913. The following year, the Daughters of the Revolution erected a flagstaff and a bronze tablet to mark the location of the Fort.

The park was opened to the public in 1934, and it underwent renovations in 1988 and in 1998. It is believed to be among those developed through the New Deal, a series of programs, projects and reforms enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt between 1933 and 1939 to aid in the recovery of the economy after the depression.

OLD FORT FOUR PARK

3

Reservoir Ave & University Ave
(1776 - Fort, 1934 - Park)



After the Civil War, merchant Horace B. Claflin purchased around 100 acres of land in the Bronx for a summer retreat. Although some of it was seized by the city for the Jerome Reservoir, his estate extended from north of W Kingsbridge Rd to Sedgwick Ave and Reservoir Ave. After his passing, the company fell into hardship and the property was divided into 495 lots and put up for auction in 1919.

The property located between Webb and Claflin Avenues was sold to Fred T. Burchell, who had reportedly been living at the Queen Anne style mansion for some time. It was then purchased by the Congregation of the Passion, a group of Catholic priests who established the St. Patrick's Monastery in 1920. They relocated to Riverdale in 1923, and the property was transferred to the Archdiocese of New York. The recently established congregation of Our Lady of the Angels set up their parish rectory in the former mansion and built their first church on Sedgwick Avenue.



OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS RC CHURCH COMPLEX

4

2859-2860 Webb Ave.

2865 Claflin Ave

(ca. 1890 - Rectory, ca. 1928 -

School, 1958 - Church & Convent)



In 1928, the Sisters of Charity opened a school at Claflin Avenue. The four-story Collegiate Gothic stone building hosted the Our Lady of the Angels School until 2013, and currently serves as PS/MS 315 The Lab School.

The first church was destroyed by a major storm in 1931, and all activities were relocated to the school auditorium. In 1958, a new Neo Colonial style church was completed, alongside a convent on Webb Avenue.

Photos: (top right) Rectory, (middle right) PS/MS 315, (middle left) Our Lady of the Angels RC Church, (bottom left) Convent.

WALTON HIGH SCHOOL

5

2780 Reservoir Ave
(1930-32)



Founded in 1923 by Mary A. Conlon, this was one of the first junior high schools for girls in New York City. It was named after Mary Walton, who operated a school for girls during colonial times and was married to General Lewis Morris, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

The school relocated in 1932 to this three-story reinforced concrete building with a “H” shape layout. It features tan brick and decorative terra cotta components in the façade, including a water table and modest cornice. It continued as an all-girl school until 1976, and was known as the largest in the country. Its students were often inducted into the Arista honor society, and graduates went on to Ivy League colleges and universities.

During the 2000’s, Walton’s prestige decayed and it was eventually closed in 2008. The building now houses a group of smaller schools: Discovery High School, Kingsbridge International, Celia Cruz High School for Music, International School of Liberal Arts, and the High School for Teaching and the Professions.

P.S. 86 THE KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS SCHOOL

6

1030 Southern Blvd
(ca. 1927, William H. Gompert -
addition 1937, Walter C. Martin)



Located at the southern end of the area known as “Education Mile”, this five-story brick clad building has restrained Georgian Revival features, including a two-story high portico, belt courses, keystones over windows and decorative terra cotta panels with swags. It is the work of Superintendent of School Buildings William H. Gompert, successor to Charles B.J. Snyder, who was tasked with implementing an extensive school construction program in the mid-1920s due to serious overcrowding.

In order to tackle this, Gompert implemented a series of changes to the overall process, which included standardizing design, employing general contracts instead of individual ones, and instituting double shifts to shorten construction time. This, however, generated criticism and questioning regarding the quality and safety of the buildings, causing him to resign in 1927. Reports issued in 1928 by The Board of Education’s Joint Committee of Architects and Engineers dismissed these claims.

During his nearly five years in office, Gompert was credited with overseeing the design and construction of over 170 new schools and additions.

APARTMENTS AT UNIVERSITY AVENUE

2751, 2727-2725 & 2685

7

University Ave

(1936, Edward W. Franklin –
1937, Horace Ginsberg – 1927,
G.C. Miller)



During the 1920s and 30s, the Bronx experienced a construction boom prompted by the extension of subway lines and financial incentives for new residential buildings. Although the largest examples are located in Grand Concourse, a few notable ones can be found at University Avenue, representative of the preferred styles at the time and by noted architects.

The six-story apartment building at No. 2751 was built during the second wave of development, and is a remarkable example of the principles of the Art Deco style. The façades feature tan brick with decorative orange and brown brick detailing that reinforce the verticality. Fire escapes are also part of the building's ornamentation, with rounded ends, and the main entrance is emphasized by terracotta detailing.

Also from this second era is the apartment building at No. 2727, which features the elements of Art Moderne, also a popular style at the time. The façades feature tan, brown, and orange brick, with horizontal brick work that highlights the windows. The main entrance is framed by decorative sandstone.

The seven-story building at No. 2685 is the earliest of the group. Designed in the Beaux-Arts style, it also has Tudor and Moorish influences, and features decorative terra cotta elements at the main entrance and in the building's roofline.

Photos: (top) 2751 University Ave, (middle) 2727 University Ave, (bottom) 2685 University Ave.

HOUSES AT CLAFLIN AVENUE

8

2721-2729 Claflin Ave
(1925, Horace Ginsbern)



These three lots are among the first ones developed after the auction of the Claflin Estate in 1919. Each with a detached two-story brick house and a garage, they feature Mediterranean Revival influences and ornamental brickwork.

They are part of the early works of New York architect Horace Ginsbern (or Ginsberg), who is better known for his apartment house designs in The Bronx, especially the 1931 Park Plaza Apartments on Jerome Avenue (NYC Landmark and listed on the NR). His firm was responsible for several dozen buildings on or near the Grand Concourse and was asked to be one of the architects of the Harlem River Houses, New York City's first federally funded public housing project. Other notable works by Ginsbern are the Fish Building on the Grand Concourse, the Security Mutual Insurance Company, and the Rockefeller University's Faculty House apartments.

LUISA PINEIRO FUENTES SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND DISCOVERY

9

124 Eames Pl
(ca. 1920, extension 1959)



The Kingsbridge Heights Jewish Center was established in 1924 by a group led by Rabbi Ben Zion Rosenbloom, and erected this building soon after. He was succeeded in 1941 by the recently ordained Rabbi Israel Miller, who served until 1968. He would then begin a second career at Yeshiva University, and became head of several major Orthodox or American national Jewish organizations, most notably the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. He was an advisor to presidents Johnson, Ford and Reagan, and led the organization that oversaw the reparations made by Germany and Austria to Holocaust survivors and related institutions.

In 1959, an extension was added to the synagogue, but in the 1980s and 90s, the congregation dwindled as middle-class families started to move to Riverdale and other suburban areas, and the Center closed its doors in 1999. It currently houses PS 307, the Luisa Pineiro Fuentes School of Science and Discovery. *Photo courtesy of the NYC Municipal Archive.*

10

FORDHAM MANOR CHURCH

2705 Reservoir Ave
(1940)



This area was once part of the Manor of Fordham, owned initially by Dutch settler John Archer. In 1696, a church was organized by the Reformed Protestant Dutch congregation, who met at private residences until 1706, when they built a church on what is now Devoe Park. This structure was destroyed by British troops during the Revolutionary War, and the congregation relocated in 1801 to a new building near Kingsbridge Road, on land donated by Dennis Valentine.

The second church served the community until 1849, when a new brick and wooden Georgian-style structure with a four-story wooden steeple was built next to it. In 1940, the corner plot on which the church and manse stood was sold to a developer, who razed the structures to erect an apartment building. The cornerstone for the current church was laid on October 6, 1940. Built in the Georgian style on a plot very near where the old one stood, it faces Reservoir Avenue and includes a parish house and manse. *Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

II

EIGHTH REGIMENT ARMORY

29 W Kingsbridge Rd
(1910, Lewis Pilcher)
NYC IL / NR P



One of the few remaining in New York City, the Kingsbridge Armory was built to house the New York National Guard's Eighth Coast Defense Command (258th Field Artillery Regiment since 1921), which relocated from Manhattan in 1917.

The complex occupies almost the entire five-acre block, which was initially meant to be the eastern basin of the Jerome Park Reservoir. The main building is a nine-story red brick structure with a curved sloping metal roof, which gives the appearance of a medieval Romanesque-style fortress with its massive towers and crenelated parapets. Its brickwork and ornamentation have been widely praised, earning a NYC landmark designation in 1974 and listing on the National Register in 1982.

Its military use ended in 1996, when it was turned over to city management. Since then, it has hosted a variety of shows and exhibitions, serving also as production space for the film industry. It has, however, remained mostly vacant. Several proposals to redevelop it have been brought up by city officials and the community, but none of them have been implemented.

AQUEDUCT WALK PARK

2201 Aqueduct Avenue East

(ca. 1930-40)

NR P / NH L

12

The Croton Aqueduct or Old Croton Aqueduct was a large and complex water distribution system constructed for New York City between 1837 and 1842. It was built to provide clean water to the growing population of the city, and was among the first in the United States. It carried water by gravity from the Croton River in Westchester County to reservoirs in Manhattan, and although it was largely superseded by the New Croton Aqueduct built in 1890, it remained in service until 1955 and was permanently closed in 1965.

The Aqueduct dramatically improved domestic hygiene and transformed the design of buildings and public space. Baths and running water were made available in the private homes of wealthy New Yorkers, and public bathing facilities were constructed for the masses. It was listed on the National Register in 1974, and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1992.

A portion of the Old Croton Aqueduct was developed into a park during the 1930s and 1940s, spanning over two zip codes and two Bronx Community boards. It included paved paths, game tables, benches, handball courts, shuffleboard courts, restrooms and three playgrounds.



The opening of the Armory and the IRT Jerome Line station in 1917 quickly shaped Kingsbridge Road into a commercial and services corridor. The earliest structures south of Jerome Ave that still remain are a group of 12 three-story mixed use brick buildings, which date from circa 1910. The upper floors retain many of their original features, but the wooden porches were mostly lost during the 1940s.

Development at the north of Jerome Ave happened around 1930. Unlike the

previous block, these one-story brick structures were conceived only for commercial use, with an open-floorplan concept and ample storefronts. Parts of the original cornices are still visible, which feature brickwork and ornamentation with Art Deco influences.

Recent rent increases have caused many businesses in these blocks to relocate or close permanently. While a few still remain, their future is uncertain as some have been turned into residential use, and new plans for the Armory have yet to be announced.

COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AT KINGSBRIDGE RD

2-24 W & 2-32 E Kingsbridge Rd

(ca. 1910-30)

13



14

HOUSES AT MORRIS AVE, ROMANA JAVITZ FAMILY HOME

2642-2650 Morris Ave

(ca. 1910)

This group of six three-story brick structures is an interesting example of early-20th century single-family houses of the area, maintaining several of its neo-classical style elements, such as a wooden porch. Among the early residents was the family of Russian born artist and librarian Romana Javitz, who lived at No. 2642 for over 30 years. They had immigrated in 1906, and lived at the Upper West Side before settling in The Bronx in the 1920s. Her mother was a hat milliner, her father maintained an import/export business, and her older brother was an engineer.

While studying at the Art Student's League, Javitz began working part-time in the NYPL's Children's Room in 1919, and later at the Picture Collection. In 1926 she was appointed Superintendent and instituted important innovations to the library's processes. She also assisted the Curator of the Library's Division of Negro History, co-created the Index of American Design, and helped to establish standards for the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress. In 1967 she was awarded the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

This area once was low, marshy land, which was built-up by the Department of Parks in order to open this park in 1897. Over the years, it has expanded its facilities to meet the needs of the community, such as a music pavilion erected after a successful series of music concerts held in 1903, or tennis courts installed in 1904 at the request of local players. It now includes more courts, a playground and a Recreation Center with services for seniors, adults, and children.

At the south west corner of the park is St. James' Episcopal Church, a picturesque Gothic Revival

stone building, designed for a then rural parish in Westchester County. The design reflects the mid-19th century philosophical movement known as Ecclesiology, which advocated for the clear and honest use of materials, as well as interior spaces being expressed on the exterior in a clear and straightforward manner. The congregation added a parish house in 1891, designed by Henry Kilburn. It was designated as a NYC Landmark in 1980.



15

ST JAMES PARK & ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2500 Jerome Ave

(1864-65, Henry Dudley - Church)

NYC IL



The Society for the Relief of the Destitute Blind was founded in 1868 by Reverend Eastburn Benjamin, who had served as Assistant Minister of St. Ann's Church for Deaf Mutes in New York from 1864 to 1868. At the time, the City had established a residential school to educate blind children since the 1830s, and the Society was an effort to provide support and a means for the adult blind, whether schooled or not, so they could earn a living.

Early homes for the organization were brownstones and existing buildings, but in 1886 they opened their first facility at the southwest corner of Tenth (later Amsterdam) Avenue and 104th Street in Manhattan. By 1916 they were at full capacity, and plans were made to build a new Home in the Bronx. About twenty blocks were purchased by the Society to build this three-story brick building, with a budget of \$400,000.

In 1969, the Society for the Destitute Blind merged with the New York Infirmary, becoming the Beekman Downtown Hospital. The building is currently home to Public School 246, the Poe School.

16

P.S. 246 POE CENTER

2641 Grand Concourse
(1919-21, M.L. and H.G. Emery)



EDGAR ALLAN POE COTTAGE

2640 Grand Concourse

(ca. 1812)

NYC IL – NR P

17



This one-and-a-half story wood frame farmhouse is one of the few surviving examples of this typology in the Bronx. Originally a laborer's dwelling, from 1846 to 1849 it was the residence of noted poet Edgar Allen Poe and his wife Virginia, who was suffering from tuberculosis. During this time, Poe wrote "The Bells", "Anabel Lee" and "Eureka", while spending time at nearby St. John's College (now Fordham University). Virginia died in 1847, but Poe remained at the cottage until his death.

When the widening of Kingsbridge Road threatened the cottage in 1895, members of the New York Shakespeare Society lobbied to relocate it across the street and to establish a public park. Poe Park opened in 1902, but the cottage wasn't moved until 1913. In the early 1970s the building fell into disrepair, and The Bronx County Historical Society became its permanent custodian. A Visitor Center was opened at the park in 2008, designed by Toshiko Mori. It was designated as a NYC landmark in 1966 and listed on the National Register in 1980.

The “Grand Boulevard and Concourse” was conceived as a link between the park systems of Manhattan and the Bronx. At the time of its completion in 1909, it featured bicycle paths and pedestrian sidewalks, in addition to a central vehicular speedway, but residential construction lagged behind the rest of the Bronx. In the 1920s, the opening of the Jerome Avenue subway line and tax exemptions for apartments helped spark a period of intensive residential development, making the five- and six-story apartment house the dominant building typology.

The Renaissance Revival structures at this block are representative of this first period, which reflected the fashions of Manhattan, featuring brick and terra cotta ornamentation and Chicago School cornices. They were the work of noted architectural firms responsible for many residential and commercial buildings in all NYC, including several Historic Districts.

No. 2665 was designed by Margon & Glaser, whose work includes religious and manufacturing buildings and is represented in the Upper West Side/Central Park West and the Riverside-West End Historic District. They are best known for the 1931 El Dorado Apartments (with Emery Roth as consultant), a designated New York City Landmark.

Brockman Manor (No. 2701) and McAlpin Court (No. 2825) were designed by prolific architect H. I. Feldman, who is credited with over 4,000 residential and commercial buildings, including many hotels and apartment houses. Many of his Art Deco style apartment buildings can be found in the Grand Concourse Historic District, the Riverside-West End Historic District, and the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District.

Photos: (Top) 2665 Concourse Ave, (middle) 2701 Concourse Ave, (bottom) 2825 Concourse Ave.

APARTMENTS AT GRAND CONCOURSE

I8

2665, 2685 & 2701 Grand
Concourse
(1922, Margon & Glaser -
ca. 1927, H. I. Feldman)



19

CONCOURSE HOUSE

2751 Grand Concourse
(1916, John B. Snook)



By the turn of the century, charitable homes began to relocate to The Bronx as land costs were lower and there were many available sites with desirable features such as hilltop views or prominent locations on major thoroughfares. The House of the Holy Comforter, founded in 1876, relocated to this four-story brick Colonial Revival structure in 1917, and provided residential medical facilities for those with chronic diseases. It originally served only Protestant women and girls, but was later opened to all creeds.

In 1986, the organization moved to

Westchester County and sold the building to the Fordham Bedford Housing Corporation, a community group which supervises the operation of hundreds of affordable apartment buildings throughout the Northwest Bronx. Their headquarters have remained at this location to this day, and in 1991, they founded Concourse House, a transitional housing facility for women with infant children.

Located behind Concourse House, this three-story brick building was part of the Hospital's facilities and served as the Minister's family residence. It features elements of the neo-Renaissance style, such as a rounded projecting bay, and a wooden porch with classical revival style influences. It was likely to have been erected at the same time as the Hospital, attached to a one-story commercial building.

It currently serves as headquarters for the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, an organization created in 1974 by clergy leaders and community members as a response to The Bronx's social and economic crisis. Their work through the years has promoted federal reinvestment and local leadership, while building non-profit community-centered housing corporations to safeguard and expand affordable housing. They also advocate for energy-efficiency, quality education, safety, health, and community-lead economic development.

NW BRONX COMMUNITY AND CLERGY COALITION

20

103 East 196th Street
(ca. 1917)



