



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

CULTURAL LANDMARKS

CITYWIDE





The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period.

The six, chosen from applications submitted by community organizations, are selected on the basis of the architectural and historic merit of the area, the level of threat to the neighborhood, the strength and willingness of the local advocates, and the potential for HDC's preservation support to be meaningful. HDC works with these neighborhood partners to set and reach preservation goals through strategic planning, advocacy, outreach, programs and publicity.

The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources—its neighborhoods, buildings, parks and public spaces—are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council works to ensure the preservation of these resources and uphold the New York City Landmarks Law and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of assistance to more than 500 community and neighborhood groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach and sponsorship of community events.



**Council on
the Arts**



The Six to Celebrate is generously supported by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Additional support is provided by New York City Councilmembers Margaret Chin, Robert Holden, Corey Johnson, Ben Kallos, Stephen Levin and Keith Powers.



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CULTURAL LANDMARKS

New York City is known for many things: Art Deco skyscrapers, picturesque parks, the world's greatest theater district, venerable museums and educational institutions, not to mention bagels and pizza! But above all of these, New York is most important as home to some of the world's most fascinating and significant people and as the site of impactful and significant happenings throughout history. The city's cultural influence is, perhaps, its greatest contribution to the world, and its built environment stands as a grand scavenger hunt of clues waiting to be uncovered. Lucky for us, the city's Landmarks Law, passed in 1965, provides the legal framework for protecting the physical reminders of the city's cultural wealth. In fact, one of the stated purposes of the Landmarks Law is to "safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage."

In the first 50 years that landmarks were designated by the City, much emphasis was placed on the historic and aesthetic. In recent years, though, more consideration has been made for the importance of sites associated with people or historical events, rather than just for their architectural or historical value. In 2015, the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) designated the Stonewall Inn as an Individual Landmark solely for its association with the Stonewall Uprising of 1969. In 2018, the Commission designated the Central Harlem—West 130th-132nd Streets Historic District, describing it as "not only representative of Central Harlem's residential architecture, but the rich social, cultural, and political life of its African American population in the 20th century." Also, in recent years, Greenwich Village's Caffè Cino and Julius' Bar were listed on the National Register of Historic Places as significant and influential sites connected to the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBTQ) community, *The New York Times* profiled a historian giving tours of Muslim sites of significance in Harlem, and the City is commemorating some of our most storied and accomplished female citizens with the installation of statues in all five boroughs. Indeed, grassroots preservation activism around the city is also swelling around sites of cultural significance: Tin Pan Alley and Little Syria in Manhattan, Walt Whitman's house in Brooklyn, Arthur Avenue in The Bronx and a recently-rediscovered African burial ground in Queens, to name a few.

In response to this movement of interest in cultural landmarks, the Historic Districts Council undertook an initiative to highlight such places as one of its Six to Celebrate in 2018. The culmination of that effort was a conference in October 2018 entitled "Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Rethinking Sites of Cultural History." The conference convened preservationists, historians, artists, planners, place-makers and more to work together to clarify what cultural significance is and how it can work, how to document and create compelling narratives around cultural sites, and how to identify the specific challenges of cultural sites from a preservationist perspective.

This brochure provides just a sample of some of the city's cultural landmarks, organized thematically and representing all five boroughs. The list includes some sites that are legally protected — in some cases by more than one government body — and some that are unfortunately in danger of being lost. Preserving culturally significant sites that may not possess overtly aesthetic value often requires a particularly active and engaged form of advocacy to achieve protection from the wrecking ball. But, as long as there are interesting people making their mark on New York City and crucial events taking place here, that effort will never be in vain, since those stories are the lifeblood of this vibrant place.

LATINO

I

BRONX ACADEMY OF ARTS AND DANCE

2474 Westchester Avenue,
The Bronx
(1867-68, Leopold Eidlitz)
NYC IL, NR-P



The Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance (BAAD!) was founded in 1998 “[for] women, people of color, and the LGBTQ community to have a physical space in The Bronx to experience and/or create dance, theater, visual art, written work, and performance that is empowering to them free from the prejudices of society,” as described in BAAD!’s vision statement. Its founders are Arthur Aviles, a renowned dancer and choreographer, and Charles Rice-Gonzalez, a writer and activist. At the time of BAAD!’s founding, its mission to provide a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQ artists and artists of color was an extraordinary social advancement since the foundations of gay rights were still fragile in the late 1990’s. The academy continues to be a progressive force for good in The Bronx and beyond. Originally located in a south Bronx community center, BAAD! rented space in the American Bank Note Company Printing Plant in Hunts Point before moving in 2013 to its present location in the chapel of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Westchester Square. This part of The Bronx was once the town of Westchester, the county seat of Westchester County, which was formed in 1683. The Victorian Gothic-style chapel, designed by a former apprentice to Richard Upjohn (architect of Trinity Church in Manhattan), stands on the site of the town’s old courthouse. More information about St. Peter’s Episcopal Church is available in our 2018 *Westchester Square* guidebook.

LEGEND OF DESIGNATIONS

<i>National Historic Landmark</i>	<i>NHL</i>
<i>National Register of Historic Places - District</i>	<i>NR-D</i>
<i>National Register of Historic Places - Property</i>	<i>NR-P</i>
<i>New York City Historic District</i>	<i>NYC HD</i>
<i>New York City Individual Landmark</i>	<i>NYC IL</i>
<i>New York City Interior Landmark</i>	<i>NYC INL</i>

2

NUYORICAN POETS CAFÉ

236 East 3rd Street, Manhattan

Since its founding in 1973 by a group of Puerto Rican artists, poets and intellectuals, the Nuyorican Poets Café has become a cultural icon in New York City. “Nuyorican,” a word that blends “New York” and “Puerto Rican,” refers to the movement begun by Puerto Rican artists to battle social injustice and find empowerment through intellectual and cultural expression. The Café became a venue for displaying and digesting such creative expression, especially poetry and spoken word, but also theater, music, visual arts and film. Originally located in the living room of poet Miguel Algarín’s East Village apartment, the founders purchased this former tenement building in 1980. The Café, a highly respected nonprofit arts organization, continues to host an array of award-winning performances, educational programs and exhibits, and to provide support for fledgling artists and serves as an important cultural touchstone for the city.



3

THE CLEMENTE VÉLEZ CULTURAL & EDUCATIONAL CENTER

107 Suffolk Street, Manhattan

(1897, Charles B. J. Snyder)



This building was originally constructed as P.S. 160 and designed by C. B. J. Snyder for the NYC Board of Education, but after a fire in the 1970's, then Mayor Abraham Beame designated it for community use. In 1981, the community organization Solidaridad Humana began operating a school in the building for Spanish-speaking immigrants. After financial constraints led to the school's closure in the late 1980's, some of its former students started a theater here called Teatro LATEA (Latin American Theatre Experiment and Associates), which continues today. In 1993, Puerto Rican poet Edgardo Vega Yunque, Uruguayan actor/director Nelson Landrieu and Dominican actor Mateo Gomez acquired the lease and created the Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural and Educational Center. Named for the inspirational Puerto Rican poet and activist, the organization's initial mission was to nurture the work of Puerto Rican and Latin American artists in the Latino community of the Lower East Side known as Loisaida. While this remains a focus, for more than 25 years the Clemente has served as an exhibition and performance venue that reflects, cultivates and celebrates the neighborhood's rich cultural diversity.

4

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

1230 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan

(1921, Maynicke & Franke)

Artist and educator Raphael Montañez Ortiz and a coalition of Puerto Rican activists founded El Museo del Barrio in 1970 to combat the city's institutional indifference to Puerto Rican art and culture. Over the past five decades, El Museo has become a major institution celebrating and promoting Latin American art, with a permanent collection of over 6,500 objects spanning 800 years of history. El Museo also performs outreach and education for young people of Caribbean and Latin American descent to enhance their understanding of and pride in their heritage. El Museo's permanent home since 1977 is a building commissioned by philanthropists August and Anna Heckscher for the headquarters of The Heckscher Foundation for Children, and donated to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children as a shelter for abused and neglected children. Its interior features a series of tile murals on the ground floor depicting storybook tales and children at play, which El Museo restored in 2008-12, as well as the Heckscher Theater, which hosted performances for and by children. El Museo undertook a renovation of the theater in 1995-2000, renaming it Teatro Heckscher.



LGBTQ



5

STONEWALL INN

51-53 Christopher Street, Manhattan

*(51: 1843; 53: 1846; 1930, combined façade: William**Bayard Willis)*

NYC IL, NYC HD, NR-P, NHL

The Stonewall Inn was the starting point of the Stonewall Rebellion of June 28-July 2, 1969, which began when customers at the bar refused to leave during a police raid — in the 1960's, it was illegal for a gay bar to obtain a liquor license and police routinely raided them. The uprising became a catalyst for the formation of organizations and groups across the country devoted to LGBTQ civil rights, and it's commemorated nationwide and around the world with Pride marches and the celebration of LGBTQ Pride Month. In 2015, the Stonewall Inn became the city's first Individual Landmark commemorating an LGBTQ site, designated entirely on the basis of its cultural, rather than architectural, significance. The area was designated as the Stonewall National Monument in 2016, the country's first U.S. National Monument dedicated to LGBTQ civil rights history. Further State and National designations have made it one of the most decorated and protected sites in the city. *Photo by Diana Davies/NYPL.*

6

CAFFÉ CINO

31 Cornelia Street, Manhattan
 (1877, Benjamin Warner)
 NYC IL, NYC HD, NR-P



Open from 1958-68, Caffé Cino is widely considered to be the birthplace of Off-Off Broadway Theater and was an important incubator space for gay theater. Its founder, Joe Cino, envisioned a café where artists could exhibit their work, and soon began hosting performances of experimental and low-budget theater. At the time, the depiction of homosexual subject matter on stage was illegal, but the café constantly worked around the police through clever advertising and by not requiring a cabaret license since they did not serve alcohol. As such, Caffé Cino became a platform for gay playwrights who had no other venue to experiment so freely. By 1960, it had become an important touchstone for the gay community, but also for unknown artists and playwrights who could not otherwise afford to stage their work. With the burden of theater fees and financial success lifted, creativity flourished and many important playwrights, directors and actors got their start here. The café was also a significant meeting spot for gay men at a time when such places were few. The café closed in 1968, a year after Joe Cino took his own life following the accidental death of his partner, Jon Torrey.

7

CHRISTINE JORGENSEN
CHILDHOOD RESIDENCE

2847 Dudley Avenue, The Bronx
 (ca. 1923, Jorgensen Realty and Construction Co.)



Christine Jorgensen (1926-89) was a transgender woman who famously underwent gender reassignment surgery in 1951-53, becoming the first person in the United States to be widely known for doing so. Upon returning home from Denmark, where the surgery was performed, she was mobbed by reporters both at Idlewild (now John F. Kennedy) Airport and at her childhood home in The Bronx, and became a household name. Jorgensen used her fame to advocate for transgender rights and saw herself as being at the forefront of the sexual revolution. Her story encouraged others to question gender as a set binary and was largely responsible for bringing the word “transsexual” into the American vocabulary. After her surgery, she became a well-known actress and singer into the 1960s and published an autobiography entitled “Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography” in 1967. Jorgensen’s childhood home was built by her father’s construction company and still stands today as a reminder of Jorgensen’s legacy and contribution to trans history. *Photo by Christopher D. Brazee/NYC LGBTQ Historic Sites Project.*



OSCAR WILDE MEMORIAL BOOKSHOP

15 Christopher Street, Manhattan

(1827, Architect unknown)

NYC HD, NR-P

8

Originally founded in 1967 in a storefront at 291 Mercer Street, the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop moved to the parlor floor of this rowhouse in 1973 until it closed in 2009. The shop was the country's first bookstore to cater to the LGBTQ community, selling LGBTQ literature and hosting book signings with LGBTQ authors. Its location in Greenwich Village, a prominent gay community in New York and the world, made it an important gathering place

for both local customers and international visitors. Its founder, Craig Rodwell, was a leader in the gay rights movement, volunteering in gay rights groups and organizing protests. He also participated in the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969 and organized the Christopher Street Liberation Day March, held one year later, which became the precursor for all future Pride Marches. The Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop was also the headquarters of Rodwell's organization, Homophile Youth Movement in Neighborhoods. In 1993, Rodwell sold the shop, passing away later that same year after a battle with stomach cancer. In 2006, the shop's long-time manager, Kim Brinster, took over, but soon had to close due to pressures from the 2008 financial crisis and the rise in online book sales.

JULIO RIVERA CORNER

78th Street & 37th Avenue,

Queens

9

On July 2, 1990, Julio Rivera, a 29-year-old Jackson Heights resident, was attacked by three gang members in the playground of P.S. 69 because of his sexual orientation. He died from his wounds at Elmhurst Hospital, and his death sparked a surge in LGBTQ activism in Queens. While there had been many more hate crimes toward gay people in Queens over the previous few decades, the vigil for Rivera on August 18, 1990, was considered to be Queens' first successful LGBTQ public demonstration. The vigil, organized by Rivera's family and friends and a coalition of LGBTQ activists and organizations, led to other advocacy efforts, including the formation of Queens Gays and Lesbians United, the Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club of Queens, Queens Pride House and the organization of two more demonstrations to pressure then-Mayor David Dinkins to publicly acknowledge Rivera's death. As a result of that advocacy, Rivera's death became the first gay hate crime to be tried in New York State. Since 1993, this corner has been included on the route of the Queens Pride Parade, and in 2000, a street sign was installed in honor of Julio Rivera.

Photo by Christopher D. Brazee/NYC LGBTQ Historic Sites Project.



WOMEN



AUDRE LORDE RESIDENCE

207 St. Paul's Avenue, Staten Island
(1898, Otto P. Loeffler)
NYC IL, NYC HD

10

From 1972 to 1987, acclaimed African-American lesbian writer and activist Audre Lorde (1934-1992) lived in this neo-Classical house with her two children, Elizabeth and Jonathan, and her partner, Frances Clayton. Lorde accomplished a great deal while living here, including the publication of numerous

influential books, poems, articles and essays that dealt with the issues of civil rights, feminism and lesbianism; held positions as professor of English at John Jay College and as the Thomas Hunter Chair of Literature at Hunter College; spoke at the 1979 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights; co-founded Kitchen-Table: Women of Color Press and was bestowed with many honors, including the Borough of Manhattan President's Award for Literary Excellence in 1987. From 1991 until her death from liver cancer the following year, Lorde was the New York State Poet Laureate. *Photo by Sarah Moses, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.*

II

EMMA GOLDMAN RESIDENCE

208 East 13th Street, Manhattan
(1901, Charles Rentz)



From 1903 to 1913, this tenement was the home of the anarchist and revolutionary Emma Goldman (1869-1940), a Jewish immigrant from Lithuania (then part of the Russian Empire). Goldman wrote and lectured in support of women's rights, birth control, free speech, sexual freedom and labor unions. Beginning in 1906, she published a monthly periodical from this residence entitled *Mother Earth*, in which she and other radical thinkers and artists expressed their ideas. Her lectures, given all over the country, drew large crowds, and her activism led to multiple arrests, the last of which would be for her anti-draft activism at the beginning of the United States' involvement in World War I. She and her long-time partner and fellow-anarchist, Alexander Berkman, were imprisoned for two years. After her release from prison in 1919, the federal government, under the Anarchist Exclusion Act, deported Goldman and 248 others, including Berkman, back to Russia. She continued to write and support her causes, spending time in England, Canada, France and Spain before she died in 1940 in Toronto, Canada.

12

MARGARET SANGER CLINIC

17 West 16th Street, Manhattan

(ca. 1846)

NYC IL, NHL



From 1930 to 1973, this Greek Revival style townhouse was home to the clinic of birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger (1879-1966). Sanger moved to New York City in 1911 and began working as a nurse on the Lower East Side, where she treated women with frequent births, miscarriages and self-induced abortions. At the time, birth control, a term she popularized, was not available in the United States, and the federal Comstock law of 1873 prohibited the distribution of information on the topic. She founded a monthly newsletter entitled *The Woman Rebel* in 1914, and was indicted for sending “obscene” material through the mail. In 1916, Sanger opened her first clinic in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and in 1921 she helped found the American Birth Control League, which later became known as the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. In 1930, she established a more permanent home for her Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau here at 17 West 16th Street, where research was performed, patients were treated and instructed on contraceptives, and medical professionals from across the country were educated about sex, contraception and disease. The building, today a private residence, still stands as a reminder of Margaret Sanger’s groundbreaking work to advance women’s health and quality of life.

Photo courtesy of Emilio Guerra.

**JANE JACOBS RESIDENCE**

555 Hudson Street, Manhattan

(1842, attributed to John Cole)

NYC HD

13

From 1947 to 1968, this was the home of author, urban theorist and activist Jane Jacobs (1916-2006). While it is not certain that she wrote her 1961 seminal work “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” here, she did often reference her home in Greenwich Village while extolling the virtues of thriving urban settings with bustling sidewalks and small-scale, mixed-use buildings —like 555 Hudson. She wrote and spoke out against the then-rising practice of slum clearance and urban renewal, and was instrumental in the fight to save the South Village, SoHo and Little Italy from

Robert Moses’ Lower Manhattan Expressway. Her work heavily influenced contemporary urban thought, despite urban planners who, at the time, criticized her lack of formal education. Today, her legacy is celebrated every May with Jane’s Walks — volunteer-led walking tours in urban neighborhoods — throughout the country.



I4

MARGARET CORBIN DRIVE AND CIRCLE

Fort Tryon Park, Manhattan

Margaret Cochran Corbin (1751-1800) was the first American woman to receive a military pension for her service during the Revolutionary War. When her husband, John Corbin, enlisted in the army to fight for the colonists, Margaret decided to go with him as a “camp follower” to cook, do laundry and nurse the wounded. On November 16, 1776, Corbin assisted her husband in operating a cannon during a Hessian attack on Fort Washington (today’s Fort Tryon). When John was fatally wounded, Margaret heroically took over his post and continued to fire at the enemy. Before the four-hour battle was through, she was severely wounded and nearly lost her left arm. In 1779, the Continental Congress awarded her a lifelong pension equivalent to half that of a male veteran. She died at age 49 and was buried in Highland Falls, NY, but in 1926, the Daughters of the American Revolution had her remains moved to the post cemetery at the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, where she is the only Revolutionary War soldier buried on the academy grounds. Today, a plaque in Fort Tryon Park honors her bravery and both the park drive and circle are named for her. *Photo courtesy of The New York Public Library.*

I5

USTA BILLIE JEAN KING NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park,
Queens



In 2006, the USTA National Tennis Center was rededicated as the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, in honor of King’s remarkable tennis career and her activism for women’s and LGBTQ rights. Between 1961 and 1979, King won 39 Grand Slam titles, including a record 20 Wimbledon titles. Both during the height of her career and after, King fought for equal prize money for women, who were paid considerably less than their male counterparts. In 1973, she formed the Women’s Tennis Association and was its first president. As a result of her advocacy, the U.S. Open became the first major tournament to offer equal prize money. In 1981, King was publicly outed as a lesbian in a palimony suit and lost all of her endorsement deals, yet she continued to fight against discrimination, and was elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1987 and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 for her advocacy work. The USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center is a major attraction in the last weeks of summer, when international crowds flock to Queens for the U.S. Open, one of the most prestigious tennis tournaments in the world. *Photo by Ajay Suresh.*

I6

AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

290 Broadway, Manhattan

*(2004-07, Memorial: Rodney Leon and
Nicole Hollant-Denis, AARIS Architects)*

NYC HD, NR-P, NHL



During the 18th century, when New York City was second only to Charleston, South Carolina, for its population of enslaved Africans, a roughly six-acre site north of present-day City Hall Park, then just outside the city's northern border, was an African burial ground for an estimated 15,000 people, both free and enslaved. In 1794, the city closed the burial ground and leveled the hilly terrain with landfill to make way for development, thus preserving the burials below. Over time, the area was developed and the burial ground forgotten, much like the history and contributions of the African community itself. In October 1991, the General Services Administration (GSA), a federal agency, announced the rediscovery of intact burials and the remains of more than 400 people on the site of a planned federal office building at 290 Broadway. The GSA was criticized for its handling of the archaeological study and control was handed over to a team at the historically black Howard University. Because of strong activism by the African-American community, Congress passed and President George H. W. Bush signed a law to prohibit construction on the site where remains were found and to fund a memorial. The memorial opened in 2007 and a visitor center within 290 Broadway, run by the National Park Service, opened in 2010. The African Burial Ground is considered the largest colonial-era cemetery for enslaved African people, and in addition to being of great historical and spiritual significance, is a major resource for the study of the African diaspora. *Photo courtesy of the National Parks Service.*



I7a

**FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST
CHURCH**

144-146 West 131st Street,
Manhattan
(1883, William J. Merritt)



I7b

**HOUSE OF FRIENDSHIP
COMMUNITY CENTER**

170 West 130th Street, Manhattan
(1884, William J. Merritt; 1928, altered by Vertner
Woodson Tandy)
NYC HD

Originally constructed for the Baptist Church of the Redeemer, this freestanding Romanesque Revival style building is of great cultural importance to the city for its ties to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's-60's. After changing hands several times, it was sold in 1936 to the Friendship Baptist Church, founded by the Rev. Dr. John Iverson Mumford. From the beginning, the church supported Civil Rights. Its second pastor, Dr. Thomas Kilgore Jr., was an associate of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who delivered a sermon here in 1955. Among Rev. Kilgore's other local and national Civil Rights efforts, he led the church to found the House of Friendship Community Center, which, in 1963, became the National Headquarters for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, organized by Bayard Rustin. The congregation, still active today, was deeply involved in organizing the Harlem community's participation in that historic March. In addition to its social and political significance, 170 West 130th Street's façade is architecturally significant as the work of Vertner Woodson Tandy, the first African-American architect registered in New York State.

ADDISLEIGH PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

18

Queens
NYC HD



This suburban neighborhood of approximately 650 homes in southeastern Queens, developed in the 1910's-30's, was a formerly race-restricted area that became one of the city's premier enclaves for African Americans. In the 1930s and 40s, restrictive covenants were in place to keep African Americans from buying property in specific neighborhoods. In 1947, this covenant was tested in two court cases in which neighbors sued homeowners who sold to African Americans. Although in both cases the covenants were upheld, in the case of *Kemp v. Rubin*, the judge acknowledged that there were already 48 African-American families living here, and a number of amicus briefs were filed in support of selling to African Americans. The following year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against racially restrictive housing covenants in the Missouri case of *Shelley v. Kraemer*. Despite the covenants, starting in the 1930s, Addisleigh Park's prominence as an African-American neighborhood grew, attracting African-American luminaries seeking a suburban home, such as Ella Fitzgerald, Jackie Robinson, W. E. B. Dubois, James Brown, Lena Horne, Roy Campanella and Count Basie, among others. Addisleigh Park's fascinating social history and association with the abolition of race-restrictive covenants continue to shape its sense of place.



HUNTERFLY ROAD HOUSES (WEEKSVILLE)

19

1698 Bergen Street, Brooklyn
(1840-1880)
NYC IL, NR-P

Weeksville was home to about 500 residents in the 1850s, and served as a refuge for black families during Manhattan's violent Draft Riots of 1863. The village was named for James Weeks, an African American stevedore from Virginia who purchased a tract of land here in 1838, 11 years after slavery was abolished in New York State. The community boasted a number of churches, schools and other institutions, as well as one of the first African American newspapers, the *Freedman's Torchlight*. As Brooklyn grew, the village became absorbed into the greater neighborhood of Crown Heights and its memory faded, but in 1968, a Pratt Institute workshop led by historian James Hurley rediscovered the Hunterfly Road houses and a new mission was launched to preserve Weeksville's memory. That same year saw the formation of The Society for the Preservation of Weeksville and Bedford-Stuyvesant History (or "The Weeksville Society"), which, under the leadership of Joan Maynard, purchased the Hunterfly Road houses in 1973 for a museum. The houses, built between 1840 and 1880, are all Individual Landmarks and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

BAYMEN'S COTTAGES

20a

565 & 569 Bloomingdale Road,
Staten Island (ca. 1887-98)
NYC IL



REV. ISAAC COLEMAN & REBECCA GRAY COLEMAN HOUSE

20c

1482 Woodrow Road, Staten Island
(ca. 1850s)
NYC IL



ROSSVILLE AME ZION CHURCH

20b

584 Bloomingdale Road, Staten Island
(1897, Andrew Abrams)
NYC IL



ROSSVILLE AME ZION CHURCH CEMETERY

20d

Crabtree Avenue, Staten Island
(est. 1852)
NYC IL



In the 1830s, Staten Island's south shore, known as Sandy Ground, became home to a thriving community of free black oyster traders who moved from Maryland after that state passed a series of laws limiting free blacks' freedoms. The community prospered from Staten Island's rich oyster beds, and boosted the local economy, but the rise of industrial pollution and overfishing led to the closure of the beds in 1916 and Sandy Ground's heyday came to an end. Calamitous fires in 1930 and 1963 destroyed many of its buildings, but there are several architectural remnants, including four Individual Landmarks: the Baymen's Cottages, housing constructed for oyster traders and their families; the Rossville AME Zion Church, the Coleman-Gray House, home to the Rossville AME Zion Church's sixth pastor; and the Rossville AME Zion Church Cemetery. The church and cemetery are perhaps the most important survivors, as they provide spiritual connections to this community that was defined by its people more than its geography. Founded in 1850, the church was the center of Sandy Ground's spiritual and cultural life, and served as a stop on the Underground Railroad. While the original church no longer stands, its adjacent cemetery contains graves of some of Sandy Ground's original residents, and the new church, constructed in 1897, remains active today. Sandy Ground's history is displayed, interpreted and celebrated by the Sandy Ground Historical Museum, located just around the corner from the church on Woodrow Road. *Photos by Peter Greenberg.*

