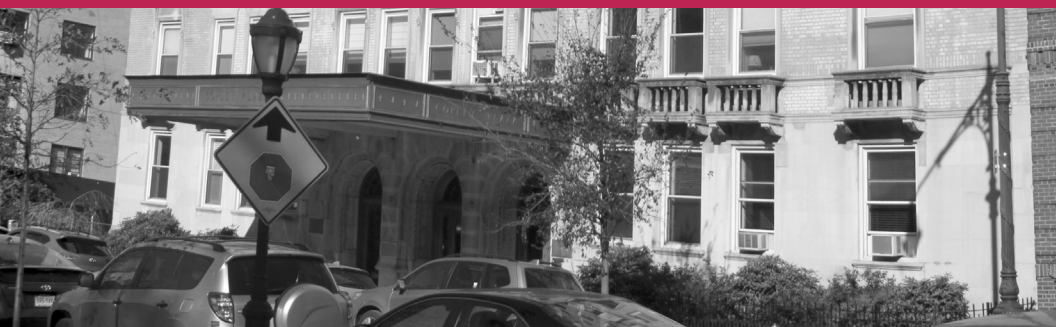




A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

PROSPECT HEIGHTS

BROOKLYN





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.



232 East 11th Street, New York, NY 10003
tel 212-614-9107 fax 212-614-9127
e-mail hdc@hdc.org
www.hdc.org

PROSPECT HEIGHTS

The Prospect Heights neighborhood is located immediately north of Prospect Park, bounded by Atlantic Avenue to the north, Eastern Parkway to the south, Flatbush Avenue to the west, and Washington Avenue to the east. The area was home to the Le-nape Indians at the time of European contact. During the 18th century, the land came into possession of a number of different owners, several of whom were slave owners. It was still predominately farm and wood lands until the middle of the nineteenth century. The two most important factors in the growth of Prospect Heights were transportation improvements—which included new links between Prospect Heights and the ferries along Brooklyn’s waterfront — and the development of Prospect Park.

The original design of Prospect Park, like the original design of Central Park, was the work of the civil engineer Egbert Ludovicus Viele. In his 1861 plan, the park extended as far south as 9th Street, and as far north as Prospect Place. It included all the land between the present Prospect Park West and Washington Avenue, bisected by Flatbush Avenue. The city acquired all the land to execute Viele’s plan, but the Civil War put the execution on hold.

In 1865, consultant Calvert Vaux proposed that additional land be purchased to the south (to 15th Street) and east (to Ocean Avenue), and that everything east of Flatbush Avenue be jettisoned. The City of Brooklyn agreed, and figured they would just sell off the extra land. Construction began on Prospect Park in 1866 and the park opened to the public in 1871, although it was not yet complete. During the 1880’s, the city sold off the land between Sterling Place and Prospect Place, which was developed with row houses that are now the Prospect Heights Historic District. In 1898, when the City of Brooklyn became the Borough of Brooklyn, Park Slope was largely urbanized. P.S. 9 and its Annex (both designated NYC Landmarks) stood at Sterling Place and Vanderbilt Avenue, the Brooklyn Museum had recently opened (only about a quarter as large as it is today), the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Memorial Arch was in place, and Frederick MacMonnies’s bronze quadriga had just been placed atop it.

Prospect Heights north of Sterling Place (Butler Street) was an established area, but not the “East Side Park Lands.” The land between Eastern Parkway and St. John’s Place was mired in litigation over title to the land, and remained undeveloped until well after the turn of the century. There were buildings along Plaza Street to the west of the oval plaza, but no buildings on Plaza Street to the east. By 1908, the Museum had more than doubled in size, but the East Side Park Lands remained empty. Meanwhile, Bedford-Stuyvesant was intensely developed.

This development delay led into the apartment house era. The 1920 opening of the IRT Subway extension under Eastern Parkway spurred the construction of six-story elevator apartment houses. This typology was an attractive choice for developers, as the NYC Building Code only required the first two floors of six-story buildings to be fireproof, as opposed to all floors of seven-story buildings. In 1915-16, the Martinique building, at 163-169 Eastern Parkway, was the first building to rise on the land. Many followed, making the East Side a rare example, especially in Brooklyn, of a central area developed with apartment houses from the start.

I

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

West wing: 1895-97, central section and dome: 1900-05, east wing: 1904-06, staircase: 1906, remainder (not visible from Eastern Parkway): 1913-15, McKim, Mead & White
 NYC IL, NR-P



Charles Follen McKim was the original architect of what was conceived as a much larger museum than was actually built. Even in its reduced state, it ranks as one of the largest and finest museums in the country. Originally, the building featured a monumental staircase, built in 1906 and removed, under the direction of William Lescaze, in 1934-35. In 2004, Polshek Partnership Architects, with permission from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, added a dramatic, multi-tiered, curving new entrance of metal and glass to the building. *Photo courtesy of Brooklyn Museum.*

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

THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT

125 Eastern Parkway
(1923)



This handsome six-story apartment house, 100 feet wide on Eastern Parkway, has a limestone base, with brick above. In the center bay, the limestone covers two stories, with a quartet of fluted Corinthian pilasters and a pedimented and canopied entrance. Noted residents include *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* cartoonist Max Fleischer, who later moved to animated films and hit it big with Betty Boop and Popeye. He and his family (including his son Richard, who would become the successful Hollywood director of ‘The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing’ and ‘Soylent Green’) moved into the Theodore Roosevelt around 1930. The building was built and named in the year in which the Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace opened to the public, amid great publicity, at 28 West 20th Street, in Manhattan.



3

TURNER TOWERS

135 Eastern Parkway
(1927, Sugarman & Berger)

Built by the Turner Brothers Building Company of 50 Court Street, Brooklyn. The enormous Turner Towers extends 201 feet on Eastern Parkway, and 170 feet back to 364 Lincoln Place, also built by the Turner Brothers Building Company. In 1927, the famous World War I fighter ace Clinton DeWitt Burdick and his wife moved from Carroll Street and Eighth

Avenue, in adjoining Park Slope, to Turner Towers, which gives some sense of the residential mobility patterns the new Eastern Parkway buildings served.

Architect Morris Henry Sugarman was born in Odessa, Ukraine, in 1889. He died in Manhattan in 1946. He attended Columbia University and worked for the important Manhattan apartment-building architect J.E.R. Carpenter for eight years. Albert Berger (1879-1940) was born in Hungary and worked for Schwartz & Gross and for Starrett & Van Vleck. Sugarman and Berger formed their firm in 1926. They also designed the nearby Plaza Lane and Park Lane on Plaza Street, and 1 Plaza Street (at St. John's Place, 1928).



4

THE MARTINIQUE

163-169 Eastern Parkway
(1915-16, Clarence L. Sefert)

This was the first building built on the north side of Eastern Parkway between the plaza and Washington Avenue, standing in isolation amid open lots across the parkway from the Brooklyn Museum. Its all-limestone façade signified a luxury building, setting the tone for the

development that followed. The building's name may be seen as prophetic: When it was built, there were few if any Caribbean immigrants in the neighborhood. In later years, many immigrants from Martinique would call the neighborhood home.

Ads at the time highlighted the location of this apartment building as unsurpassed, "at the highest point in Brooklyn," "directly opposite the Museum of Arts," close to Prospect Park. Transit facilities consisted of four car lines, with the new subway station at the corner. Architect Clarence L. Sefert designed the similar, though less elaborate and less expensive, 1040 Park Place (ca. 1915), located in the Crown Heights North Historic District. He also designed the lovely Colonial Revival carriage house (1903) at 5220 Sycamore Avenue in the Riverdale Historic District in The Bronx.

5

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON

175 Eastern Parkway
(1921-22, Charles B. Meyers)

Built by Kellner Bros. & Sons, this six-story building, with a fantastically irregular plan, takes full advantage of its awkwardly trapezoidal corner site. It greets the intersection of Eastern Parkway and Washington Avenue with a sweepingly concave façade fronted by an unusually generous garden.



The design for the main entrance corridor was highlighted by *Real Estate Record and Guide* in 1922 as "(...) one of the finest in New York City.... It will be in the Italian Renaissance style and constructed of vari-colored marble in a buff tone, graduated from a white Botticino base to columns and pilasters, seats and trim in rosato marble. The caps of the pilasters and columns and the cornice will be highly decorated in scagliola."

Charles Bradford Meyers (1875-1958) attended City College and Pratt Institute. He designed many renowned institutional buildings, as well as Adelphi Hall (1923), the apartment building directly across Washington Avenue, at 201 Eastern Parkway.

6

856 WASHINGTON AVENUE

The currently standing 14-story modern apartment building (2018, Kutnicki Bernstein Architects) replaced the Green Point Savings Bank (1928, Francis George Hasselman) pictured here, a handsome classical bank that stood as a neighborhood landmark for nearly a century—and the demolition of which sparked a vigorous but unsuccessful campaign to have it designated as a landmark. *Photo Courtesy of Brooklyn Public Library.*



LINCOLN HALL

364 Lincoln Place
(1926-27, Sugarman & Berger)

7



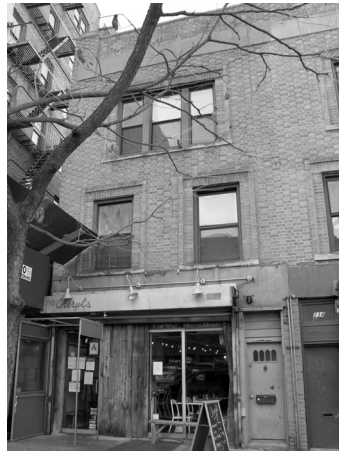
Lincoln Hall was built by the Turner Brothers Building Company directly behind Turner Towers, in the same year. The building has six stories and extends 200 feet on Lincoln Place, matching the width of Turner Towers on Eastern Parkway, but goes back only 63 feet — compared to the 170 feet of Turner

Towers. With 51,000 square feet, Lincoln Hall has an outstanding design in brown brick laid in a diamond pattern with Romanesque-style corbeling along the top of the first story, a Tudor-arched entrance, a crenellated parapet, and fluted brick piers. Its low-slung horizontality, along with that of other buildings on this block, provides superb enclosure to narrow Lincoln Place.

8

236 UNDERHILL AVENUE (1920)

This small apartment building is representative of another popular typology in Prospect Heights. It currently houses the popular neighborhood restaurant “Cheryl’s Global Soul Restaurant”, which opened in 2008. Operated by chef Cheryl Smith, a Food Network star, it specializes in “soul food” from around the world, from Asia to North Africa. The casual ambience, moderate prices, and multi-cultural nature of the food has made the restaurant a treasured part of the Prospect Heights community.



9

314 ST. JOHN'S PLACE

This three-story brick building has been abandoned and stood empty for many years. Enter art impresario and neighborhood resident Jeff Beler, who beginning in 2015, had the idea of gathering accomplished street-mural painters to create, in situ, works on boards affixed to the façade of 314 St. John's Place. Beler develops a theme such as album covers, or "The Urban Jungle" and changes displays twice a year. According to Shanell Culler-Sims on the BKReader web site, Beler "likes the art to be expressive, fun, and loving but nothing controversial like religion or politics, because he wants it to bring happiness and positivity for all in the community. The neighborhood loves it and always gathers to watch the transformation as artists of all stripes show off their personal style — from graffiti art to realism, from conceptual art to comic art and even wood carving."



10

THE RULIAN

295 St. John's Place
(1923-24, Shampan &
Shampan)

Built by the Rulian Construction Company, this six-story building has a façade of Vermont marble, terra cotta, and brick laid in a diamond pattern. The Rulian is 150 feet wide on St. John's Place, with a recessed central section that features a long cloth canopy extending from an entrance set within the lower of two stories faced in marble. The materials and the discrete classical details make this one of the most elegant buildings in the district.

It is neatly flanked by the Vernona (285 St. John's Place, 1924) and the Belnord (315 St. John's Place).



II

THE GRAND PLAZA

60 Plaza Street East

(1939-40, Philip Birnbaum)

This striking Art Moderne apartment building is contemporary with the Central Library (1937-41), and is in a similar style, injecting a note of midcentury modernity that is nonetheless compatible with its classically designed neighbors. The exceptionally wide (211 feet) building follows the curve of Plaza Street and echoes it in the gently curved

corner cantilever balconies. Philip Birnbaum (1907-96) was one of the most prolific apartment building architects in New York history. He attended Stuyvesant High School and Columbia University, and his many credits range from the lushly landscaped Forest Hills South development in Queens, to One Lincoln Plaza (1971) on Broadway and 63rd Street. He also designed the nearby Vanderbilt Plaza (1956) at 34 Plaza Street.

I2

THE PARK & PLAZA LANE

36-50 Plaza Street East

(1925, Sugarman & Berger)

These 12-story apartment buildings are in the classic New York style of their era, with limestone-fronted ground floors yielding to modestly ornamented brick shafts rising to strong cornices. As is appropriate on the oval of Plaza Street, the buildings have subtly concave façades.



I3

14-34 BUTLER PLACE

(1916, Shampan & Shampan)

This row of four-story apartment buildings features ground floors faced in light stone yielding to light-hued brick above. There is well-executed classical ornamentation, Juliet balconies with their original iron railings, and, best of all, the original cornices.

BAILEY FOUNTAIN

14

(1932, Egerton Swartwout, architect, Eugene Savage, sculptor)
NR-P

This wonderful fountain — one of too few elaborate fountains in New York City — is located in the secluded oval, thickly framed by trees, directly to the north of the arch. It is a riot of extravagant, grotesque figuration and mythological and allegorical allusion. Bronze figures of a man and a woman representing Wisdom and Felicity form the centerpiece, though a fantastically surly Neptune steals the show.



SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS MEMORIAL ARCH

15

(1889-92, John Hemenway Duncan)
NYC IL, NR-P

The bronze quadriga, *The Triumphal Progress of Columbia*, by Brooklyn-born Frederick W. MacMonnies, was installed in 1898, followed in 1901 by MacMonnies's *The Army: Genius of Patriotism Urging American Soldiers on to Victory*. The spandrel sculpture is by Philip Martiny, and the inner walls of the arch are

graced by bronze reliefs bearing equestrian portraits of Abraham Lincoln (the only known equestrian depiction of the sixteenth president) and of Ulysses S. Grant, by Thomas Eakins and William R. O'Donovan. Architectural historian Henry Hope Reed said this is the “finest triumphal arch of modern times, second only to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris,” and one of America’s greatest works of art.

16

UNION TEMPLE HOUSE

17 Eastern Parkway
(1925, Arnold W. Brunner Associates)

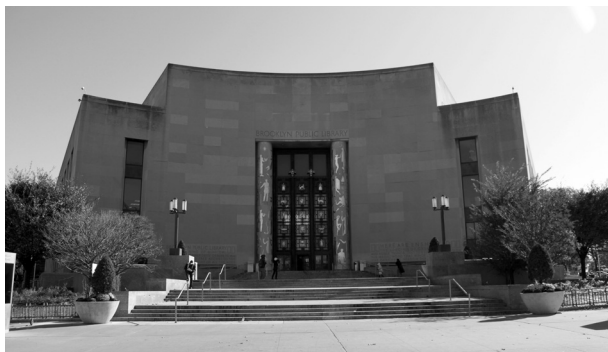
The Union Temple House was an eight-story building to be constructed next to a synagogue that was never built. The design was a classical-style structure that would have complemented Raymond Almiraal's Brooklyn Public Library and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch to bring classical grandeur to this end of Eastern Parkway. The project was never executed, and the land remained vacant until 2008, when Richard Meier designed and built 1 Grand Army Plaza. *Photo courtesy of Brooklyn Public Library.*



I7

**CENTRAL
LIBRARY
BROOKLYN
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

*(1937-41, Githens &
Keally)*
NYC IL, NR-P



In 1908, the Brooklyn-born, École des Beaux-Arts-trained architect Raymond Francis Almirall was commissioned to design a central library in an elaborately classical style to complement the Brooklyn Museum to its east and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch to its west. However in 1913, following excavation of the foundation and the beginnings of construction, the project was halted for lack of funds. Work did not resume until 1937, at which time Alfred Morton Githens and Francis Keally, making use of Almirall's footprint, gave us a monumental library that may be termed either Art Moderne or stripped classical. Sheathed in Indiana limestone, its sweeping concave façade relates beautifully to the plaza it faces. The entrance is adorned with gilded reliefs by Carl Paul Jennewein, and a metal screen by Thomas Hudson Jones, bearing charming images drawn from literature. Inside, the wood-walled catalogue room, recalling the work of the Swedish architect Erik Gunnar Asplund, is one of the finest monumental interiors in the city, if not the country.



I8

THE COPLEY PLAZA

41 Eastern Parkway
(1926, Shampán & Shampán)

This 12-story apartment building may be the stateliest apartment building on Eastern Parkway. Though it is sheathed from top to bottom in beige brick, with touches of terra-cotta trim, it sports an unusually emphatic wood and metal canopy over a triple-arched entrance, with three double-doored doorways, in an extravagant surround of vermiculated limestone and elaborate terra-cotta moldings. A quartet of splendid lanterns completes the beautiful composition, which for sheer luxuriousness may have no match in Brooklyn.

The brothers Joseph and Louis Shampán formed their firm in Brooklyn in 1907. Their credits include the nearby Colony House (225 Sterling Place, 1937), the Rulian at 295 St. John's Place (site 10), and 14-34 Butler Place (site 13), and the exceptional Temple Beth El (15th Ave., Borough Park, 1920-23), one of the grandest synagogues in New York City. In 1930, rents ranged from \$1,200 to \$5,600 a year. That's equivalent to \$1,500 to \$7,000 a month today.

