



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

# BEDFORD-STUYVESANT 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.

*Six to Celebrate is generously supported by  
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## A BRIEF HISTORY

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The Bedford-Stuyvesant community in northwest Brooklyn is a residential area, home to ornate rows of brownstones, early middle-class apartment buildings and several institutional structures. Bedford-Stuyvesant is characterized by its wide, tree-covered avenues and low-scale residences; generally only church spires and school towers rise taller than four stories. The majority of the buildings were constructed on speculation to house New York's growing middle class, generally between 1870 and 1920.

As late as 1869, Bedford-Stuyvesant was largely rural, with only some country houses and frame dwellings. In 1872 masonry rowhouses appeared when developer Curtis L. North commissioned 23 Italianate style rowhouses. From this point until the 1890s, development proceeded with many speculative builders and investors employing local architects to build residences; schools, churches and other institutions also appeared to serve the growing community. The Brooklyn Bridge opened in 1883, followed by the elevated line along Bedford-Stuyvesant's commercial artery, Fulton Street, in 1888. Easier access to downtown Brooklyn and Manhattan greatly increased real estate values in the neighborhood.

By the 1890s, speculative apartment houses debuted in Bedford-Stuyvesant, officially marking the change from a suburban to an urban area. The opening of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903 bolstered this urbanization, and Bedford-Stuyvesant was densely built up by the end of the 1920s. The 1930s marked a population shift for Bedford-Stuyvesant as it became an increasingly African-American neighborhood. When the IND transit lines connecting the area to Harlem opened in 1936, Harlem residents were eager to leave cramped quarters for newer, more spacious options in Bedford-Stuyvesant. By 1950 the area was 90% black, and it remains a thriving African- and Caribbean-American neighborhood today.

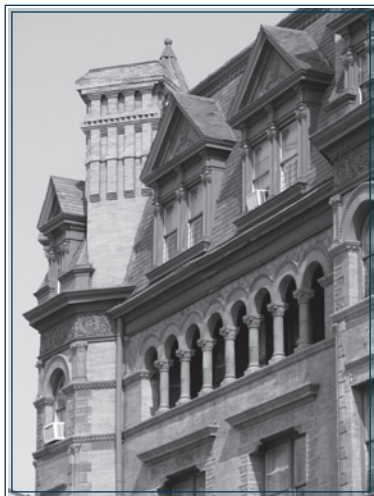
Bedford-Stuyvesant is an aesthetic gem of elegant residences. Many houses have yards with plantings surrounded by original cast-iron fences. Rowhouses are set back from the street and possess their original stoops and railings. The architectural style of buildings followed the trends popular during the area's development, including Italianate, Neo-Grec, Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, and, at the turn of the 20th century, Neo-Renaissance and Neo-Georgian appeared. The materials of the buildings also give an idea of their age; older buildings were constructed of brick and brownstone, while light-colored brick, terra-cotta and limestone became increasingly popular toward the turn of the 20th century.

Stuyvesant Heights in Bedford-Stuyvesant was designated a New York City historic district in 1975, and a large extension of its boundaries had a public hearing in 2011. Residents in other areas of Bedford-Stuyvesant, including Bedford Corners, Stuyvesant North and Stuyvesant East, are also advocating for the landmarking of their neighborhoods. The low-scale buildings on tree-lined streets share architects, styles and details, together making Bedford-Stuyvesant a distinctive piece of New York City.

## **I. 74 HALSEY STREET**

### **Rudolphe L. Daus, 1886**

Rudolphe L. Daus trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and was a prolific Brooklyn architect. He also served as Surveyor of Buildings in Brooklyn during 1899–1900. His most famous work in Brooklyn was the New York and New Jersey Telephone Building, an individual landmark at the corner of Willoughby and Lawrence Streets in downtown Brooklyn. This elegant Queen Anne house on Halsey Street features Romanesque details such as rusticated rounded arches. The house is a beautiful example of Daus's early work, as he shifted toward classicist styles after the World's Columbia Exposition in 1893 in Chicago.



## **2. & 3. ALHAMBRA APARTMENTS**

**500–518 Nostrand Avenue**

**29–33 Macon Street**

**Montrose Morris, 1889–90**

## **RENAISSANCE APARTMENTS**

**480 Nostrand Avenue**

**140–144 Hancock Street**

**Montrose Morris, 1892**

Montrose Morris, a Brooklyn architect, designed his own residence in Bedford-Stuyvesant and opened it to the public to advertise his services. His house attracted Louis Seitz, an investor, who then commissioned Morris to design these two apartment houses. The single-family rowhouse was the standard unit of housing for middle-class families at the time, while multi-family buildings were limited to often squalid tenements. Both of these apartment buildings are early examples of elegant multi-family dwellings designed to sway public opinion.

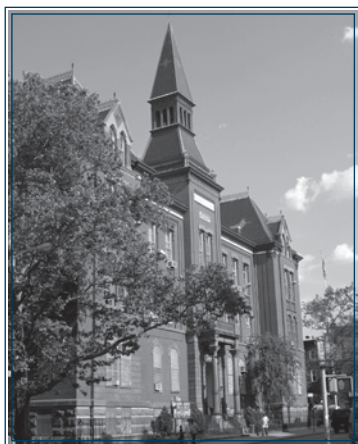


The Alhambra is a combination of Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles. It features rounded-arch



windows, carved brackets, open terra-cotta arcades and a slate-covered mansard roof. Its patterned brick and stone bandcourses and quoins create a polychromatic composition.

The Renaissance is reminiscent of a Loire Valley chateau with its corner towers, a steep mansard roof, monumental arches and surface treatment in buff-colored brick and terra cotta. These structures were designed with features to attract residents—parquet floors and other decorative materials that mimicked the neighboring brownstones. The Landmarks Preservation Commission described these individual New York City landmarks as the “most prestigious and impressive multi-family buildings in Brooklyn.”



#### 4. THE GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL 475 Nostrand Avenue

**James W. Naughton, 1885–86**

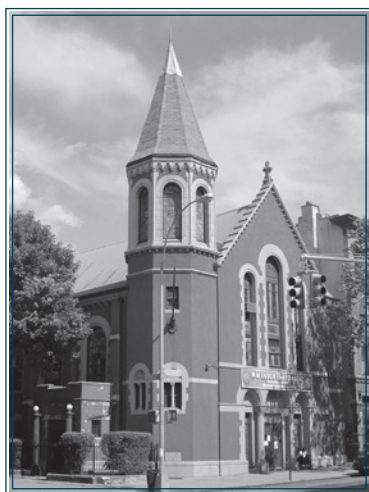
James W. Naughton immigrated with his family from Ireland to Brooklyn when he was eight years old. Naughton became a trained architect and was closely involved in Brooklyn politics, which led him to the position of Superintendent of Buildings for the Board of Education from 1879–1898. As superintendent, Naughton designed all schools constructed in Brooklyn. The Girls' School is the oldest surviving structure built as a high school in New York, and it served as the prototype for later high schools constructed in the city. A combination of Victorian Gothic and French Second Empire styles, the school is faced in red brick, terra cotta and contrasting stone. It is symmetrically massed, with a central towered entrance and three pavilions, each of which project and are connected by recessed sections. At the rear of the building is a large Collegiate-Gothic style addition designed in 1912 by long-time New York City Superintendent of School Buildings C.B.J. Snyder.

## 5. ENOCH GRAND LODGE

423 Nostrand Avenue

Heins & LaFarge, 1890

This exuberant building features a dominant corner tower, contrasting brick and terra cotta, finials, stylized capitals and stained glass from its days as the Reformed Episcopal Church of the Reconciliation. The building is notable for its architects. George Lewis Heins and Christopher Grant LaFarge met while studying at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and both trained under the renowned architect H.H. Richardson. A year after this church was completed, they won the design contest for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan. They later became the designers of stations and buildings for the city's first subway system, the IRT, in 1901.



## 6. 259 JEFFERSON AVENUE

John G. Prague, 1886

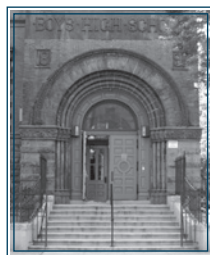
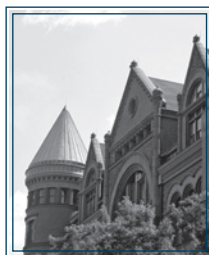
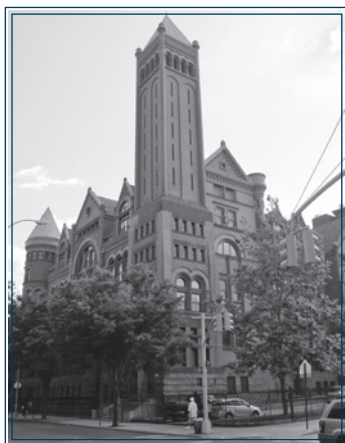
This handsome Queen Anne and Renaissance Revival house was first owned by William J. Howard, who lived here with his family from 1886 until his death in 1919. Howard was a glove manufacturer and founder and owner of the Howard Estates Development Company. By 1914, having accumulated over 500 acres of land, Howard developed streets, water and gas mains, and 35 residences in Howard Estates, which became the present-day Howard Beach.

## 7. THE BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

832 Marcy Avenue

**James W. Naughton, 1891–92**

The monumental Boys' School was designed in the Romanesque Revival style and features quintessential design elements, such as rounded-arch windows and doors, dormer windows, gables, terra-cotta ornament, smooth brick façades and a rough-cut ashlar stone foundation. The imposing corner towers create a picturesque silhouette between this massive structure and the sky. Along with the Girls' High School, it was the first public secondary school in New York City, and both were designated New York City landmarks in 1983.



## 8. THE JOHN C. KELLY HOUSE

247 Hancock Street

**Montrose Morris, 1880s**

This impressive house, one of relatively few free-standing structures in Bedford-Stuyvesant, was designed and built for the well-to-do Irish immigrant John Kelly. Completely clad in brownstone, this three-story Renaissance Revival mansion features first- and second-story projecting bay windows; a recessed rounded-arch entry; stone stoop and railings; and belt courses, carved panels, pilasters and a stone cornice and balustrade. The house's sheer size, triple the width of most single-family structures in Brooklyn, coupled with the ornate stone cladding, results in a monumental and handsome residence.

## 9. BIRTHPLACE OF THE TEDDY BEAR

**404 Tompkins Avenue**

**Unknown architect, 1880s**

No. 404 Tompkins is a typical red-brick tenement building with a pressed-metal cornice. It also happens to be the birthplace of the teddy bear. At the turn of the 20th century, the ground-floor commercial space was occupied by Rose and Morris Mitchom, Russian-Jewish immigrants who became another great New York City success story. President Theodore Roosevelt was known for his near-fanatical hunting hobby, but in 1902 he spared the death of a baby bear. Political cartoons depicted the bear in the newspapers, and the Mitchoms turned the bear into a stuffed novelty toy. They received permission from the White House to use the term “teddy bear” for their creation. The toy became so popular that full-time production was eventually devoted to making it. The Mitchoms’ invention was the symbol of the Republican Party in 1904, and their business eventually grew to form the Ideal Toy Company, which remained in the family until the 1970s. The original teddy bear survives and can be viewed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C.



## 10. FIRST A.M.E. ZION CHURCH OF BROOKLYN

**54 MacDonough Street**

**George C. Chappell, 1889**

When it was constructed in 1889, what was originally built as the Tompkins Avenue Congregational Church was the largest structure of its denomination, with seating for over 2,000 people. This massive brick-and-granite structure presides over a corner lot, and its 140-foot-tall campanile dominates

the block. In 1942 the congregation merged with and moved to the Flatbush Congregational Church, and the First African Methodist Episcopal Church took title to the Italianate style structure.

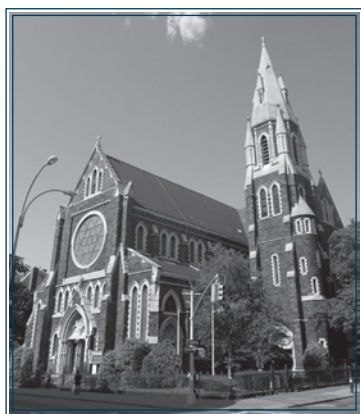


## 11. GRAND UNITED ORDER OF THE TENTS

87 MacDonough Street

Unknown architect, 1863

This villa-style house is one of the oldest surviving structures in the neighborhood and a remnant of Bedford-Stuyvesant's more rural days. It was constructed in 1863 for William A. Parker, who was a local hops and malt merchant. The house was later occupied by James McMahon, the founder and president of the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank. Since 1945 this structure has been occupied by the United Order of the Tents. The order was founded as part of the Underground Railroad and, after the Civil War, was officially organized as a charity and lodge. It is one of the oldest lodges for African-American women in the nation.



## 12. OUR LADY OF VICTORY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

583 Throop Avenue

Thomas Houghton, 1891–1895

The parish of Our Lady of Victory was first organized in 1868. When this church was erected to replace a smaller wooden structure, it was heralded by the Brooklyn Eagle as one of the most beautiful churches in the city. The Gothic style building is constructed of contrasting Manhattan schist and limestone, and its western façade features a stained-glass rose window. The interior includes a number of original features, such as the white marble altar designed by Thomas Houghton

and decorative painting by Philadelphia artist Ferdinand Baraldi.

### 13. 336–338 MACDONOUGH STREET

#### Unknown architect, 1872

This building is one of only four timber-frame houses in the Stuyvesant Heights Historic District, the oldest structures in the area. The free-standing house is also unusual for its construction as a two-family dwelling. It was designed in the French Second Empire style and possesses many original features, including its third story mansard roof, segmental arched entries and front porch.



### 14. 339 and 347 MACDONOUGH STREET

#### Unknown architect, 1871

This free-standing house at No. 339 is another timber-frame survivor from this area's early beginnings of development. The large single-family house, built in the French Second Empire style, retains its mansard roof and front porch. No. 347, across the street, was constructed the same year but has undergone several alterations, including the enclosure of its front porch.



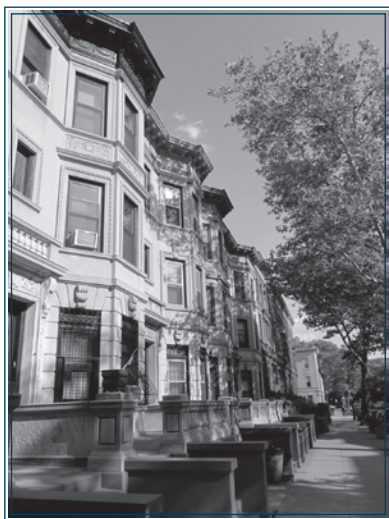
## 15. STUYVESANT AVENUE HOMES

391–399, 402–410, 411–419

Stuyvesant Avenue

William Debus, 1910

These houses were part of the final wave of row-house development in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The elegant Neo-Classical structures with their light limestone cladding stand in bright contrast to their brownstone-and-red-brick neighbors. The choice of limestone as a material indicates the amount of affluence that was present in this neighborhood in the early 20th century.



# BEDFORD-STUYVESANT

