



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

BOWERY

MANHATTAN



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.

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A BRIEF HISTORY

The Bowery is one of New York's most storied streets with a rich and varied past that reflects the hurly-burly history of New York City itself. As Manhattan's oldest thoroughfare, the Bowery began as a Native American trail and originally extended the length of the island north to south. New York's early Dutch settlers widened the trail for their own use to connect New Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan with their farms, or bouweries, farther north. This "Bouwerie Lane" became simply "Bowery Lane" under the English in 1813 and the name has remained unchanged since.

By the 1830s, the Bowery was mostly developed into single-family Federal-style rowhouses inhabited by New York's wealthy merchant class. Remarkably, some of these buildings still survive today. Massive immigration to New York beginning in the 1840s led to new residents, and Germans became a large presence just east of the Bowery in an area which became known as Kleindeutschland. Many prestigious institutional buildings from this era survive today on the Bowery and reflect this German presence. As immigration continued to increase in the decades before the Civil War, the upper class who resided in the townhouses moved northward, and the rowhouses were then converted to multiple dwellings and businesses like beer halls and saloons.

By the end of the Civil War, the Bowery had become a primarily commercial area with little new residential development. To accommodate the waves of returning and homeless veterans, the area increasingly became home to flophouses and other types of cheap lodgings. During this period, it also became a major theater and nightlife district, where vaudeville and other popular entertainments were developed. The Third Avenue elevated line opened in 1878 and cast the street into deep shadow, further discouraging new residential development. Regardless, due to prevalence of affordable lodging, at the turn of the 20th century the Bowery was housing more than 25,000 men per night. With this large transient population came a host of social ills and during this period, the Bowery gained a national reputation as a "Skid Row" and a "Thieves' Highway."

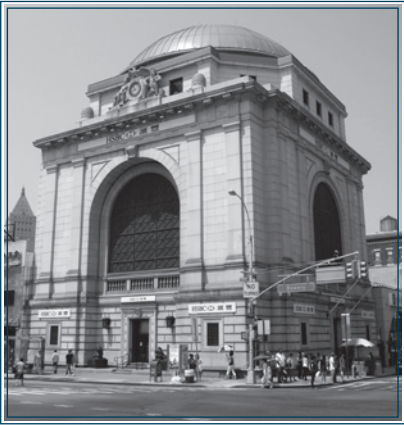
The area upheld this reputation until the Second World War, when the draft depopulated the area. The G.I. Bill and other social programs of the post-war era greatly reduced homelessness and the seemingly permanent transient population of the Bowery never returned to its early 20th-century peak. The street developed into a thriving light fixture and restaurant equipment district, although many of those businesses have recently closed in the face of new hotel and commercial development.

The Bowery remains an architecturally rich area with a unique mix of Federal-style rowhouses, grand institutional buildings, tenements and commercial loft buildings, each type speaking to a different era in the boulevard's storied history. Many of these buildings were spared because the elevated rail line, which was removed in the 1950s, deterred speculative development for decades. In recent years, however, new large-scale development has increased and is putting the built heritage of the Bowery greatly at risk.

I. 40–42 BOWERY

Unknown architect, 1807

These two Federal-style houses have stood on the Bowery for over 200 years. No. 40 was the headquarters for the Bowery Boys—a nativist gang—in the mid-19th century. The infamous July 4th, 1857, riot between the Irish gang of the Dead Rabbits and the Bowery Boys began in the saloon in No. 40 and lasted three days. These buildings retain original features such as Flemish-bond masonry, steeply pitched roofs with single peaked dormers on the front and back, gable-end chimneys and some stone lintels and sills that still remain.



2. CITIZEN'S SAVINGS BANK
54–58 Bowery

Clarence W. Brazer, 1924

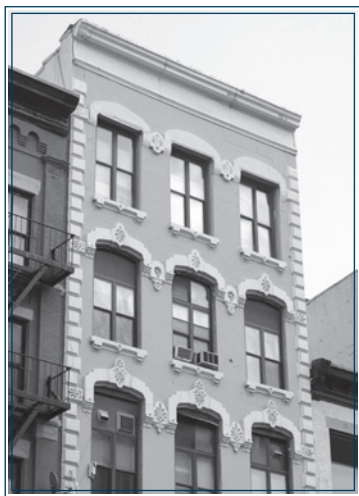
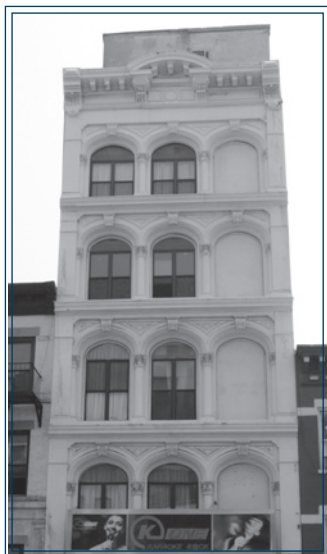
This grand bank dominates the corner of Canal and Bowery, and references the Manhattan Bridge's access across the street in design and materials. This Beaux-Arts beauty features a bronze dome, carved stone ornamentation, arches, pilasters, scrolls, keystones, a classical entablature and a balustrade. The Bowery façade possesses a clock that is flanked by Native American and seamen figures and is topped with an eagle. The building still serves as a bank today. It was designated a city landmark in 2011.



3. 97 BOWERY

Peter L.P. Tostevin, 1869

This early Italianate loft building is an example of cast-iron architecture that is rare on the Bowery. This building reflects the Bowery's transformation from a predominantly residential neighborhood to a commercial area after the Civil War. Its façade is almost completely intact, with the exception of the replacement and missing windows. It features Corinthian columns and a classical cornice, and it has been a New York City landmark since 2010.



4. 101 BOWERY

William Jose, 1875

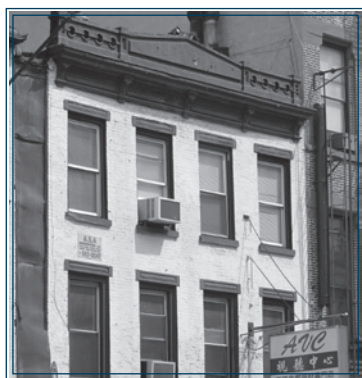
This six-story commercial building once was home to “Mr. Worth’s Renowned Museum of Living Curiosities,” a testament to the Bowery’s vaudeville past. This Neo-Grec structure has intact architectural details like stone quoins, incised stone lintels, sills and window surrounds.



5. BOWERY BANK

124–126 Bowery/230 Grand Street York and Sawyer, 1901

Architects York and Sawyer were bank- and hospital-design specialists, whose prolific work in Manhattan includes this bank building. This colossal Beaux-Arts structure is flanked by its neighbor, the Bowery Savings Bank, which was designed by McKim, Mead and White. Interestingly enough, York and Sawyer were trained in McKim, Mead and White's office. This monumental building is clad in limestone and features highly ornamental Renaissance façades and copper cornices supported by heavy stone brackets.



6. 133 BOWERY

Unknown architect, ca. 1813

This originally was a Federal-style building that housed a soap and candle manufacturing business. It lost its peaked roof in 1874, when the roof was raised to create a third story. The original Flemish-bond brickwork can still be seen on the second story. The cornice was removed in 2011.

7. 135 BOWERY

Unknown architect, 1819

This three-story-with-attic building is wood frame construction, with a brick façade laid in Flemish bond. Its peaked roof has twin gabled dormers and an original end chimney. This building was home to a number of businesses, including a milliner, gambling dive, barbershop, pawnbroker and a jewelry store, all reflective of the diverse businesses in the Bowery over time. Unfortunately the building was drastically altered in 2012.



8. 134–136 BOWERY

Unknown architect, 1798

New York City has a small collection of 18th-century buildings, and these two survivors are part of it. They retain Federal features such as their steeply pitched roofs, twin pedimented dormers, Flemish bond, and No. 134 possesses an end chimney. These buildings also share an early wrought-iron fire escape. Sculptor Eva Hesse (1936–1970) had a studio in the half story of No. 134.



9. 140 BOWERY

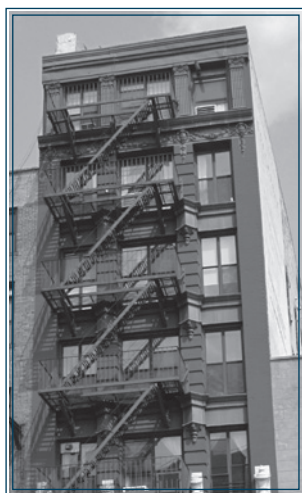
Unknown architect, ca. 1799

This Federal-style building may be another 18th-century survivor. Records show that from 1799–1802 a butcher occupied this address. It retains original features such as its steeply pitched roof, and, if one looks closely, paneled stone lintels on the second story. Unfortunately, its twin pedimented dormers were removed in 2011.

10. 161 BOWERY

William Dilthey, 1900

This ornate, seven-story building was originally a factory and commercial space. The building is Renaissance Revival and Neo-Classical in style and features a carved limestone front that extends to the second story. The stonework incorporates pilasters with unfluted shafts and Italian Renaissance capitals, which are capped with vases. The seventh story possesses fluted pilasters treated in the same style.



11. GERMANIA BANK BUILDING

190 Bowery/1–3 Spring Street

Robert Maynicke, 1898–99

Beginning in the 1840s, the area east of the Bowery was called Kleindeutschland because of the enormous German population. By the end of the 19th century, many of these immigrants had well-established institutions in their neighborhoods, and the built environment reflected this. The Germania Bank was one such building, and its architect, Robert Maynicke, immigrated to New York from Germany and trained at Cooper Union, just north of this building. This structure remained an operating bank until 1966, when it closed because of dwindling economic conditions along the Bowery. Photographer Jay Maisel purchased the building for \$102,000 that same year and continues to live with his family in this 79-room, 35,000-square-foot structure today. *New York* magazine called this purchase “the greatest real-estate coup of all time.” This opulent limestone and granite Beaux-Arts bank-turned-residence is virtually intact—though badly scarred by graffiti—and has been a New York City landmark since 2005.



12. 206 BOWERY

Unknown architect, ca. 1810

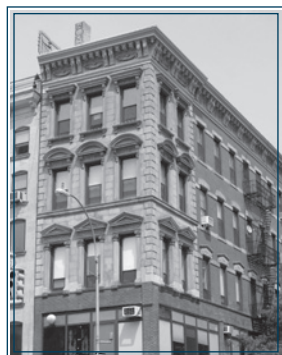
No. 206 Bowery remains very intact, especially compared to its next-door neighbors, which originally matched it. These buildings were constructed as a group around 1810 and are connected by one-foot-thick masonry party walls. No. 206 retains a gambrel roof and a pair of pedimented gable dormers.

13. NEW AMSTERDAM BANK/ GERMANIA BANK

215 Bowery

Charles Kinkel, 1872

This limestone-faced building was built for the New Amsterdam Savings Bank in 1872, which failed by 1876. It then became Germania Bank, reflective of the large German population near this area at the end of the 19th century. This building was constructed on an irregularly narrow lot, and the heavy stonework and quoins enhance its narrow façade.



14. ALABAMA HOTEL

219–221 Bowery

James E. Ware, 1889

The Alabama Hotel was a flophouse that stayed in business until 1967, when it was converted to artists' lofts. This building retains most of its original features and possesses a distinguished Queen Anne façade. It was designed by James E. Ware, most famous for developing the dumbbell tenement.



15. YOUNG MEN'S INSTITUTE BUILDING OF THE YMCA

222 Bowery

Bradford L. Gilbert, 1884–1885

This was the first YMCA to open in New York City and originally was called the Young Men's Institute. It was built to provide young men with shelter and physical and social enrichment as an alternative to the overcrowded flophouse accommodations that dominated the Bowery. It remained a

YMCA until 1932, when it was converted to lofts/residential space subsequently inhabited by many world-renowned artists. It is not common for an institutional building to be designed in the Queen Anne style—a style usually reserved for domestic architecture. This building has been a New York City landmark since 1998.

16. BOWERY MISSION

227 Bowery

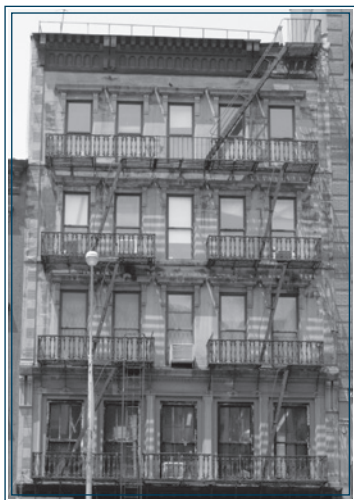
William Jose, Marshal L. and Henry C.

Emery, Diffendale and Kubec, 1876;

alterations 1908–1909;

renovations 2001

The Bowery Mission was organized in 1879 and at the time was the third rescue mission in America. It was organized as a response to the rampant homelessness on the Bowery after the Civil War. The mission moved to the five-story building (which originally was a coffin factory) in 1909, and President William Taft visited later that year. After 1909 this building received upgrades including fireproofing, and it also received a new chapel and façade. The Tudor Revival style was chosen because it is emulative of an English inn, suggesting a welcoming public place. The stained-glass windows depict the parable of the Prodigal Son and are attributed to Tiffany-trained artist Benjamin Sellers. The three-story building next to the mission is a circa 1830 Federal-style house. It was modified in 1895 to the Italianate style it retains today and was unified with the mission next door in 1980.



17. 268 BOWERY

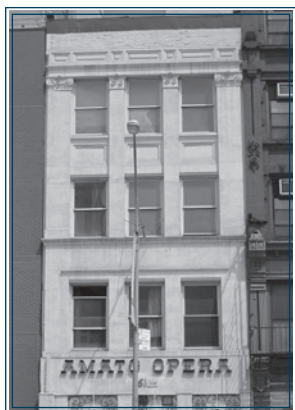
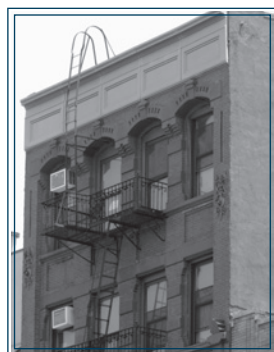
J. and D. Jardine, 1871

This five-story Italianate building is unusual and stands out on the Bowery because of its yellow color. The yellow façade is clad in Dorchester stone, a sandstone from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada, that was especially popular in the 1870s and 1880s. This building retains many original features, such as its window hoods, brackets, cornice and ironwork. The building was used as a dwelling and store until the early 1880s, when it became the Great Northern Hotel and later the Windsor Lodging House, which was notorious for thieves.

18. 317 BOWERY

F. W. Klemt, 1883

Originally only three stories, this building gained an additional three stories in the 1880s by H. Bruns, the owner of the building. He incorporated his initials as decorative elements that can still be seen on the second story and on the fire escape. It was a lodging house in the 1880s and continues to lodge men today, as it is home to the Bowery Residents' Committee.



19. 319 BOWERY

Julius Rockwell & Son, 1899

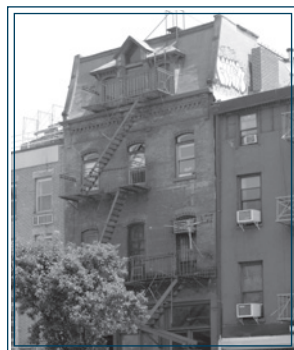
This four-story brick building was a cigar factory from 1899 until 1926, when it became Holy Name Mission. The mission served the homeless until 1962. In 1964 it became the Amato Opera and saw 61 seasons before it closed and went up for sale in 2009.

20. GERMANIA FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY BOWERY BUILDING

357 Bowery

Carl Pfeiffer, 1870

This building is another vestige of the once large German population in the Bowery area. It is also reflective of the necessity for fire insurance in the 1870s, when fires were common and a major problem in dense urban areas like New York. This building is a smaller-scale example of insurance-company building styles of the 1870s, the design of this building having been inspired by more prominent insurance-company buildings. It was fashionable during this time, especially for insurance buildings, to possess mansard roofs, dormers, cast-iron storefronts and high basements, as this building has. The building today is completely residential and is a New York City landmark.



BOWERY

