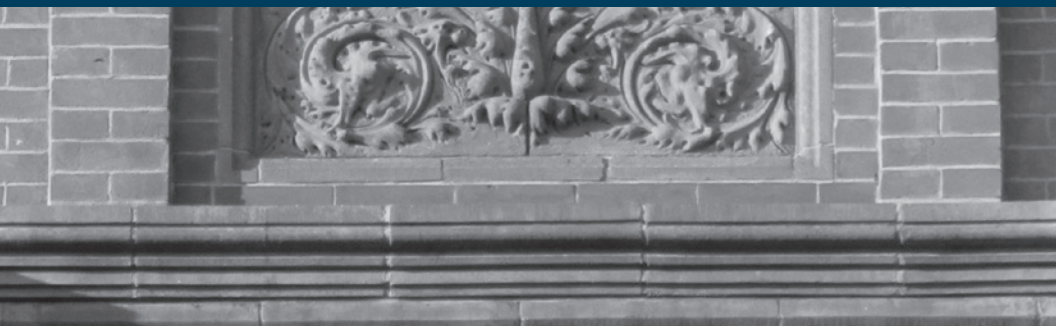




A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

MOUNT MORRIS PARK

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.

*Six to Celebrate is generously supported by
The New York Community Trust and HDC's Six to Celebrate Committee.*

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New York City Councilmembers Inez Dickens, Daniel Garodnick,
Vincent Gentile, Stephen Levin and Rosie Mendez.*



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A BRIEF HISTORY

The Mount Morris Park neighborhood is a residential area in central Harlem, bounded by 125th and 117th Streets from north to south, by Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard to the west, and by Marcus Garvey Memorial Park to the east. The park, known as Mount Morris Park until 1973, has always been the centerpiece of the neighborhood. Besides the park, the area is characterized by attractive low-scale rowhouses, townhouses and institutional buildings, including many churches. Stylistically, most of the architecture found in Mount Morris Park is Romanesque Revival, French Neo-Grec and Queen Anne, as well as Classical and Renaissance. There is also much transition among styles in the architecture here, which results in a charming, eclectic mix, and the neighborhood retains a strong turn-of-the-20th-century architectural character today.

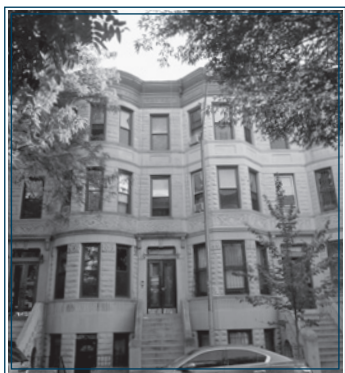
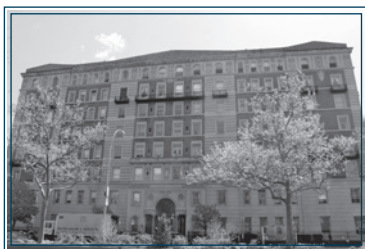
With the opening of the elevated transit line in Harlem in 1872, development in Manhattan pushed northward into former farmlands. Speculative building began in 1878, and several booms in Harlem real estate soon followed. New York City in the 1880s and 1890s saw some of the most elegant construction designed by prominent local architects, and this neighborhood was no exception. The row of houses that line Mount Morris Park West and face the park were compared with Fifth Avenue mansions in 1903 by the *New York Herald*. At the turn of the 20th century, German Protestants and Jews commissioned many church and synagogue buildings that survive today.

By 1920 the area had become a middle-class neighborhood of mainly Jewish, Caribbean and African-American families. The new residents acquired and adapted institutional and residential buildings to suit their religious and cultural needs, while some of the single-family houses were converted to multi-family. The neighborhood struggled during the Depression and ensuing decades, but the quality construction of earlier years remained remarkably extant. In 1971, New York City designated the Mount Morris Park Historic District, and in 1973 the district was placed on the National Register, with its boundaries expanded in 1996. Since that time, the area has been enjoying a revival thanks in part to the overall exceptional craftsmanship of the built environment.

I. GRAHAM COURT APARTMENTS 1923–1937

**Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard
Clinton & Russell, 1899–1901**

This complex was built by major Harlem landowner William Waldorf Astor as a luxury apartment house. Designed in the Italian Renaissance style, the complex features a grand gated-entryway leading to a large, landscaped interior court which provides an abundance of light and air as well as passive recreation space for the residents. Several years after this building was completed the architects designed a similarly luxurious sister building, the Apthorp Apartments, on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Graham Court was designated a New York City landmark in 1984.



2. 114, 116, 118, 120, 122 West 118th Street P. H. Lynch, 1897

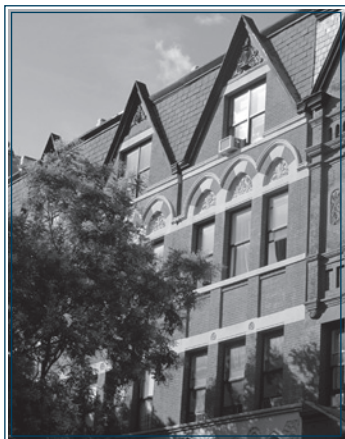
These five rowhouses along the south side of 118th Street have both Romanesque Revival and Neo-Renaissance style elements. The buildings are clad in limestone, which became fashionable in the 1890s, replacing brownstone as the favorite building material. The highly ornate buildings lay outside of the historic district's current boundaries.



3. I45, I47, I49, I51, I53, I55, I57 West II8th Street

Edward L. Angell, 1887–89

This row of structures features seven Victorian Gothic and Queen Anne rowhouses. Their architect, Edward L. Angell, was from New York City and designed many buildings throughout Manhattan that can still be found in historic districts. Despite the unfortunate removal of several stoops, the row retains original features including a mix of materials such as brick, brownstone and terracotta and a projecting gable crowning each facade.



4. I44 West II9th Street Alfred H. Taylor, 1896

This three-story residence with raised basement is a transitional Romanesque Revival/Neo-Renaissance rowhouse. It features its original limestone cladding with ornate carving, stoop and a pressed-metal cornice. The building's high level of architectural integrity is at risk, as it is not protected by the boundaries of the historic district.

5. II7, II9, I2I, I23, I25 West II9th Street

Theodore E. Thomson, 1896–97

These five transitional Romanesque Revival/Neo-Renaissance style rowhouses of brownstone are another fine example of the architecture that is not currently within the historic district but is still highly intact and even identical to buildings within the district.



**6. MOUNT OLIVET BAPTIST
CHURCH (Temple Israel)**
201–203 Lenox Avenue

Arnold W. Brunner, 1906–07

This Neo-Classical limestone building looks like a Roman temple, yet it was originally constructed as a synagogue. Arnold W. Brunner designed many synagogues, including Shearith Israel located on Central Park West, 10 years before this building, in 1897. If one looks closely, Stars of David can be found adorning the building. Mount Olivet, the first African-American congregation on Lenox Avenue, has occupied this building since 1924. The congregation was organized in 1878 and continues to worship at this site today. This building is an example of religious structures in Harlem serving different religions and cultures over time as residents change.



**7. 102, 104, 106, 108
West 121st Street**
Julius Franke, 1890

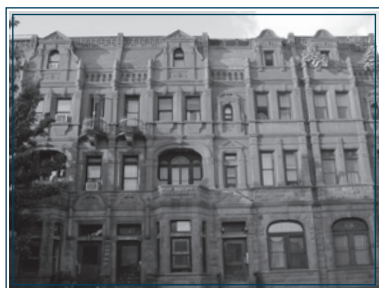
This handsome row on the south side of 121st Street is made up of five highly intact Queen Anne/Neo-Renaissance style houses. The buildings have the same architectural quality as buildings located in the historic district, and yet they are not presently protected.

8. 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143

West 122nd Street

Francis Kimball, 1885–97

These six Queen Anne rowhouses arguably make up the most beautiful such row in the Mount Morris Park area. The stoops and first stories are clad in rough-cut and carved brownstone, while the upper stories are a textured mix of red brick and highly ornate red terra cotta. Architect Francis Kimball was known for his highly detailed use of terra cotta, and these buildings attest to his talents. Kimball also designed several skyscrapers in Lower Manhattan, including the landmarked Empire Building located at Rector Street and Broadway and the Corbin Building on John Street and Broadway. The West 122nd Street rowhouses are not in the existing historic district.



9. LENOX LOUNGE

288 Lenox Avenue, 1939

This bar is renowned for its history as a performance venue in Harlem, hosting such greats as Billie Holliday, Miles Davis and John Coltrane and patrons such as James Baldwin and Langston Hughes in its famed Zebra Room. The exterior and interior contain hallmarks of the Art Deco style including the graphic signage on

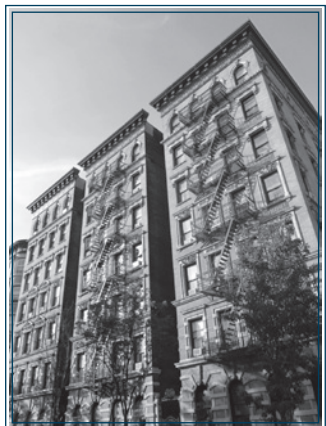
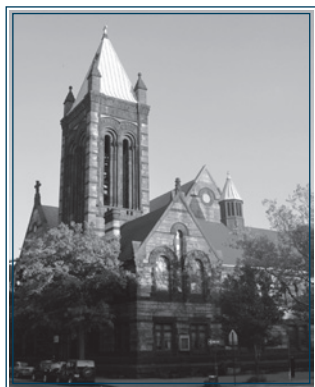
the front of the building. It has been used in numerous television shows, music videos and movies. The bar was restored in the late 1990s.

10. ST. MARTIN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

230 Lenox Avenue

William A. Potter, 1887–89

St. Martin's is thought by many to be the finest example of Romanesque Revival architecture in New York City. Also of note, inside its tower are 42 carillon bells, only second in number in the city to those in Riverside Church. St. Martin's has long been an important hub of the African-American community here. During the picketing of 125th Street shops in 1933, Reverend John H. Johnson led successful protests against white-owned shops that refused to employ African-Americans during the Depression.



11. APARTMENT HOUSE

5 West 122nd Street

Warren C. Dickerson, 1899–1901

This large seven-story apartment house is an intact example of the multiple-family dwellings constructed in Harlem at the turn of the 20th century. This type of building would have been a step up from the tenement buildings that were also being constructed in this area at the time. This structure with its ornate cornices and window surrounds is architecturally intact in part because of its location within the historic district boundary.

12. HARLEM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

16–20 Mount Morris Park West

Thomas H. Poole, 1905–06

This church, now known as the Mount Morris Ascension Presbyterian Church, presents a striking face to the street with a granite façade and golden brick detailing. The church is designed in an eclectic Romanesque style and is somewhat incongruously topped by a dome. Thomas H. Poole designed several other houses of worship in the area, usually for Catholic congregations.



13. MOUNT MORRIS PARK WEST BROWNSTONES

6–10 Mount Morris Park West

James A. Ware, 1891

This row of brownstone houses has recently been restored and is in beautiful condition. The architect, James A. Ware, is most recognized for his development of the dumbbell tenement.



14. MOUNT MORRIS PARK WEST BROWNSTONES

1–5 Mount Morris Park West

Gilbert A. Schellenger, 1893

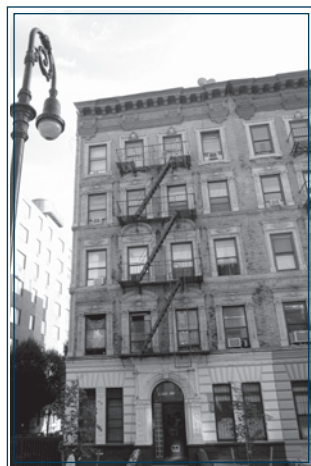
Like the buildings next door, this row of brownstones has recently been restored. Gilbert A. Schellenger was a prolific New York City architect who specialized in residential architecture at the turn of the 20th century, and more than 200 of his buildings remain in the Upper West Side alone.

15. TENEMENTS

8–14 West 119th Street

John Hauser, 1897

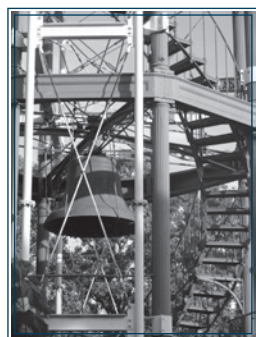
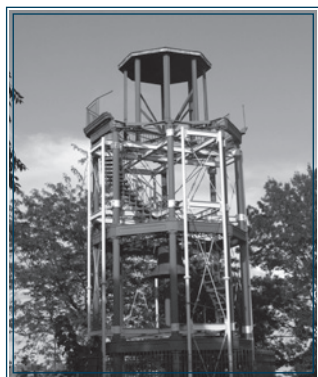
This row of Beaux-Arts style buff-brick and limestone dumbbell tenements is an example of housing that was constructed in this area at the turn of the 20th century other than single-family rowhouses and large apartment buildings. Dumbbell tenements get their name from the shape of the apartments, pinched in at the middle to allow for a light-and-air shaft.



16. WATCHTOWER, center of Marcus Garvey Park

Attributed to James Bogardus, 1855

The Watchtower, located in the center of Marcus Garvey Park, predates the Civil War and has been an individual New York City landmark since 1967. Four stories tall, the cast-iron octagonal tower includes a large alarm bell hanging from the second story. This structure originally was connected to seven other watchtowers in Manhattan via telegraph, and its bell was sounded to indicate in which district a fire was located. The structures' use was discontinued in 1878 after fire-alarm boxes were installed in Manhattan. This is the only remaining watchtower in New York City.



17. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY HARLEM BRANCH

9–11 West 124th Street

McKim, Mead & White, 1907–08

This branch library was one of 67 built in New York City between 1901 and 1923 by a grant from Andrew Carnegie. The limestone façade features Corinthian pilasters capped with stylized books that separate the building's name, "New York Public Library." It continues to serve the community as a library today.

18. 2002–2008 5th Avenue

Christian Brand, 1868

These Italianate brownstone houses are survivors of the early development that started in Harlem beginning in the 1860s but was temporarily halted because of the Panic of 1873 and the economic depression that followed. They predate the oldest buildings in the designated Mount Morris Park Historic District and are virtually intact.



MOUNT MORRIS PARK

