

Crown Heights North

NYC
Landmarks Preservation
Commission



Crown Heights North

The Landmarks Preservation Commission has designated three historic districts in Crown Heights. This walking tour focuses on the first district, designated in April 2007, as well as several individual landmarks. Crown Heights is one of more than 113 historic districts located throughout the five boroughs.

The Crown Heights North Historic District runs along Pacific Street to the north; Dean Street, Prospect Place and St. Mark's Avenue to the south; Bedford Avenue to the west; and Kingston Avenue to the east. It includes approximately 470 buildings that were constructed between the 1850s and the 1930s and many were designed by prominent Brooklyn architects in styles ranging from the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne to Georgian and Renaissance Revival.

Much of Crown Heights was farmland until after the Civil War. In the decades that followed, the neighborhood developed slowly, first with freestanding houses, and later with row houses and apartment buildings. The arrival of the elevated railway on Fulton Street in 1888 accelerated the area's transformation from a quiet rural village to the lively urban neighborhood it is today.

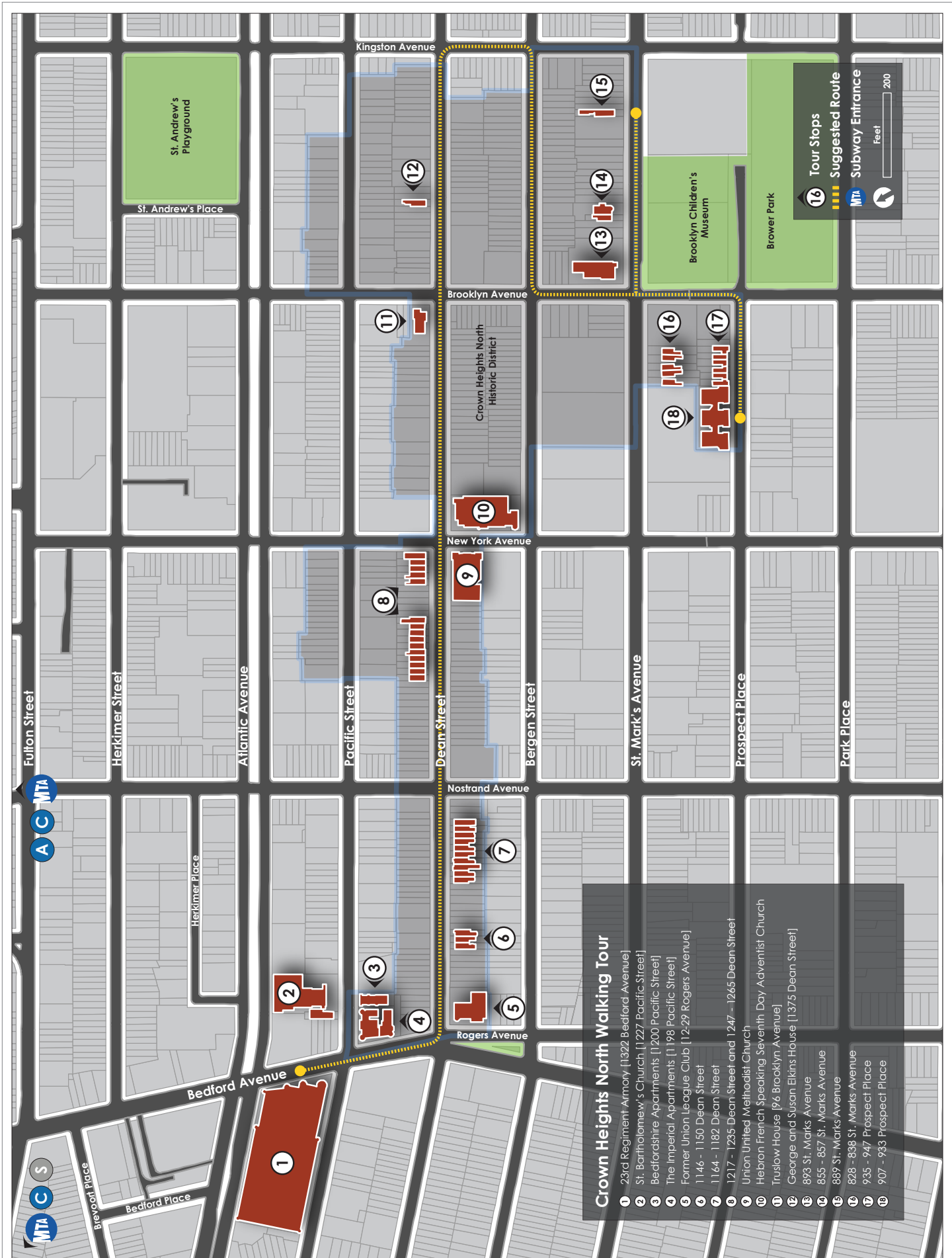
Cover Image | Brownstones on Dean Street. Image courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission



Information from the Fourth Edition of the Official Guide to New York City Landmarks courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Foundation.



From start to finish, the tour lasts approximately 90 minutes. Start at the 23rd Regiment Armory, 1322 Bedford Avenue.



Tour Stops
 Suggested Route
 Subway Entrance
 Feet 0 200

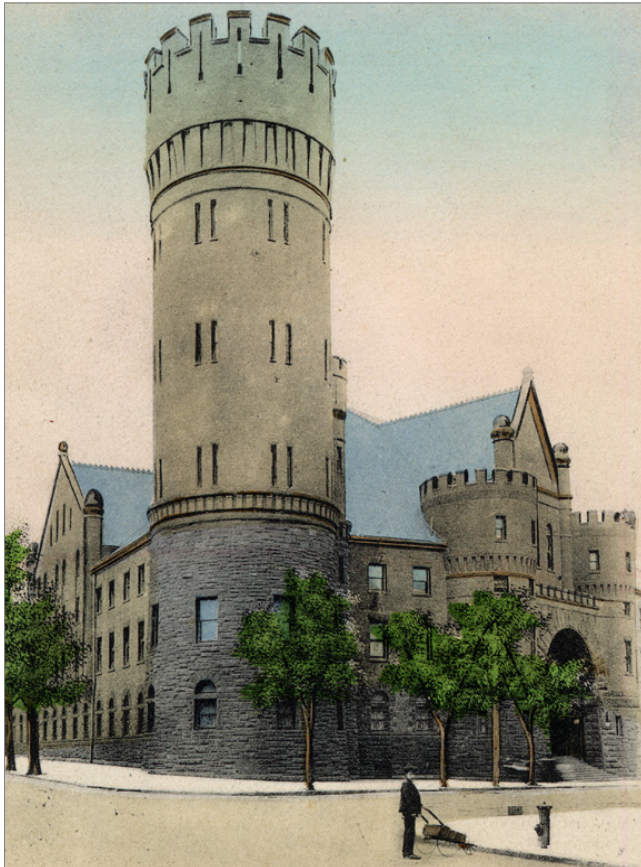
- ### Crown Heights North Walking Tour
- 23rd Regiment Armory [1322 Bedford Avenue]
 - St. Bartholomew's Church [1227 Pacific Street]
 - Bedfordshire Apartments [1200 Pacific Street]
 - The Imperial Apartments [1198 Pacific Street]
 - Former Union League Club [12-29 Rogers Avenue]
 - 1146 - 1150 Dean Street
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 - 1217 - 1235 Dean Street and 1247 - 1265 Dean Street
 - Union United Methodist Church
 - Hebron French Speaking Seventh Day Adventist Church
 - Truslow House [96 Brooklyn Avenue]
 - George and Susan Elkins House [1375 Dean Street]
 - 893 St. Marks Avenue
 - 855 - 857 St. Marks Avenue
 - 889 St. Marks Avenue
 - 828 - 838 St. Marks Avenue
 - 935 - 947 Prospect Place
 - 907 - 933 Prospect Place

1 23rd Regiment Armory 1322 Bedford Avenue

To better appreciate the structure's impressive size, walk to the east side of Bedford Avenue, pausing between Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Street.

Just outside the boundaries of the Crown Heights North Historic District, this massive armory was designated a New York City landmark in 1977. It was built by the state of New York in 1895 to store arms and military equipment, to train soldiers, and provide services to veterans of the Civil War. Fowler & Hough were responsible for its medieval design, with assistance from Isaac G. Perry, who served as lead architect on the state capital in Albany. Taking up an entire city block, the 23rd Regiment resembles a brick fortress. The most prominent feature is the round crenellated tower, rising to a height of 136 feet. In addition, twin 70-foot tall towers flank the main entrance on Bedford Avenue, which incorporates an elaborate steel gate above the stairs. To the right of the archway is a bronze relief depicting a group of World War I soldiers in combat. This memorial plaque was created by the American sculptor J. Massey Rhind in 1922. A late work in this important sculptor's career, it vividly commemorates the sacrifices of Brooklyn's 23rd Regiment during the First World War.

Inside is an immense drill hall that is currently used as a shelter for homeless men. For a brief time during the mid-1920s, this vast space was leased to the renowned publisher and film producer William Randolph Hearst for silent film productions, such as the historical romance "Little Old New York," starring the Brooklyn-born actress Marion Davies.



23rd Regiment Armory, c. 1899. Image courtesy of the New York State Military Museum

2 St. Bartholomew's Church 1227 Pacific Street

Next, please turn left at the corner of Pacific Street, walk east, and stop in front of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, at 1227 Pacific Street. Lying immediately outside the district, it was a New York City landmark in 1974.

Set behind a small garden, this charming architectural ensemble consists of three picturesque structures: a church, rectory, and parish house. At the center of the group is the church, designed by Brooklyn architect George P. Chappell. Completed in 1890, this Queen Anne-style structure features a square tower and belfry, as well as a stained-glass window by Tiffany Studios, dating from 1932. The rectory, on the left side, was probably designed by the same architect, and the neo-Gothic style parish house, on the right, was added later, in 1930. It was designed by Montrose W. Morris, the architect of the next two buildings on our tour.



St. Bartholomew's interior, c. 1911. Image courtesy of the Brooklyn Public Library

3 Bedfordshire Apartments 1200 Pacific Street

Now, please turn around and look towards 1200 Pacific Street.

Apartment living first became fashionable in New York City during the 1880s. Though a handful of trend-setting examples were built in Manhattan, such as the Dakota Apartments, Brooklyn also had its share, with at least four fruitful collaborations between developer Louis F. Seitz and the gifted architect Montrose W. Morris. The Bedfordshire, completed in 1891, was their third effort. Designed in the Romanesque Revival style, this five-story building has a slender, tan brick and reddish terra-cotta facade with triple-height arcades, angled window bays, and an extremely prominent roof cornice.

4 The Imperial Apartments 1198 Pacific Street

For our next stop, please return to Bedford Avenue and cross to the opposite side, stopping in front of 1198 Bedford Avenue, at the corner of Pacific Street.

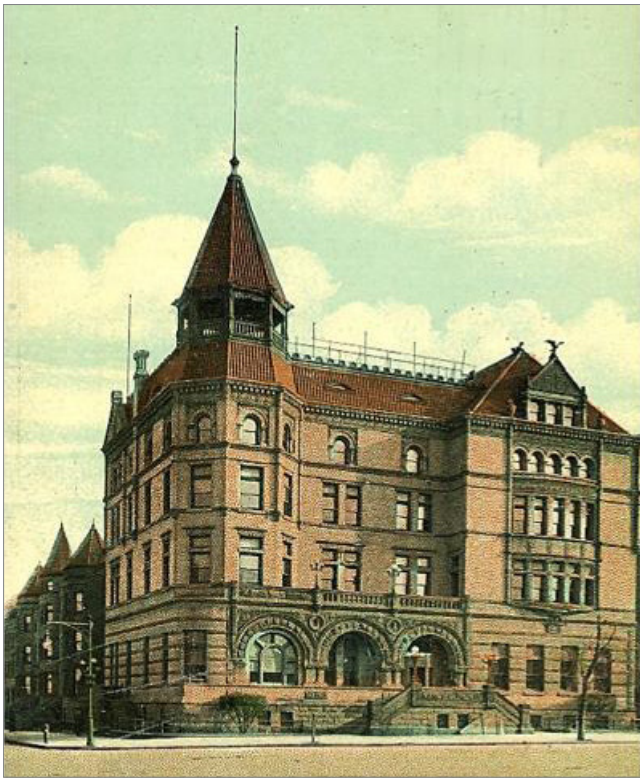
The cream-colored Imperial Apartments were completed shortly after the Bedfordshire, in 1892. Inspired by French Renaissance chateaux, such as those found in the Loire Valley, this richly-detailed structure was praised in the pages of the *Brooklyn Eagle* as one of Montrose Morris' finest works. Clad with Roman brick and terra-cotta, it originally contained 25 spacious, seven-room apartments that were lit by electricity and reportedly rented for \$60 per month. By the late 1970s, however, the building's condition had begun to significantly deteriorate and ownership passed to the city. Designated a landmark in 1986, it was carefully refurbished by ELH Management in 2006.

5

Former Union League Club 19 - 29 Rogers Avenue

Please walk along Bedford Avenue until you reach Dean Street. Look diagonally across Grant Square, toward the former Union League Club at 19-29 Rogers Avenue.

The Union League was established in 1863 by members of the Republican Party who sought to support the Union cause during the Civil War. The Brooklyn chapter commissioned this clubhouse in 1889, a Romanesque Revival work by the architect Peter J. Lauritzen. Above the arched entrance portico are portrait medallions of Lincoln and Grant, leading figures in the Republican Party. Not surprisingly, club members also sponsored the Abraham Lincoln Monument in Manhattan's Union Square and the bronze equestrian statue of Civil War general and 18th U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant that stands nearby, on a monumental pedestal at the center of Grant Square. Unveiled with much fanfare on the anniversary of Grant's birth in 1896, it was created by the prolific American sculptor William Ordway Partridge. From 1914 to 1943, the building was occupied by the Unity Club, a prominent Jewish organization. Later operated as a school, it is currently used as a senior citizen's center.



The Union League Club, c. 1914.

6

1146 - 1150 Dean Street

Now, please cross Bedford Avenue, walking along the left side of Dean Street, stopping opposite the houses at 1146 to 1150 Dean Street.

The majority of the row houses in the historic district date from 1888 to 1893, including this fine-looking residential trio by George P. Chappell, who also designed St. Bartholomew's Church, the second stop on our tour. Though many architects employed Renaissance features during the 1890s, these tan-colored houses are particularly sophisticated, employing, not only incised and textured brickwork, but also striking played lintels and dramatic round-arched entrances marked by keystones with delicate reliefs.

7

1164 - 1182 Dean Street

Please continue walking east to the next stop of our tour, a group of row houses at 1164 to 1182 Dean Street.

George P. Chappell was also the architect of this unusual group of ten houses. Conceived as an ensemble, with Flemish stepped gables marking the far ends and a pair of prominent mansard roofs punctuating the center, this row was commissioned in 1889 by A. C. Brownell, a speculative builder, real estate agent, and member of the Union League Club. Arranged singly, in pairs, and groups of three, each house is distinguished by the architect's rich and varied use of materials, including brick, stone, terra cotta, wood shingles, and clay roof tile. Though alterations (especially paint and asphalt shingles) have somewhat diminished Chappell's original vision, these buildings are certainly among his most innovative works.



1164-1182 Dean Street. Image courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission

8

1217 - 1235 Dean Street and 1247 - 1265 Dean Street

Now, please proceed east along the opposite side of Dean Street, and stop midway between Nostrand and New York Avenue.

Brooklyn developer John A. Bliss commissioned these twenty Romanesque Revival row houses in 1891-92. All were designed by Albert E. White, a local architect who was active from at least 1890 to 1905. Arranged in groups of five, the colorful facades of these well-preserved residences display textured stonework and round arched window openings of varying size, as well as in some cases, box stoops. Built on speculation, Bliss marketed these upper middle-class homes through classified advertisements in local newspapers.



1147-1255 Dean Street. Image courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission

9 Union United Methodist Church 121 New York Avenue

Please continue east on Dean Street, stopping at the corner of New York Avenue.

The intersection of Dean Street and New York Avenue boasts two extremely impressive churches. Built a generation apart, these religious buildings were constructed during the period when Crown Heights experienced rapid growth, attracting many affluent families.

The earlier of the two structures is the Union United Methodist Church, located on the left or east side of New York Avenue. Originally named the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, the congregation was founded in 1856. This block-long complex was erected in 1889-91 by J. C. Cady, the architect who oversaw the 77th Street expansion of the American Museum of Natural History. All of the buildings are faced with reddish orange brick. A square bell tower marks the entrance to the church, which incorporates a squat pyramidal roof above the arched sanctuary, which seats more than a thousand people. The church's organ was reportedly the largest in Brooklyn, with nearly four thousand pipes.



Union United Methodist Church, c. 1909. Image courtesy of the Brooklyn Public Library

10 Hebron French Speaking 7th Day Adventist Church 1256 Dean Street

The Hebron French Speaking Seventh Day Adventist Church, formerly the First Church of Christ Scientist, is located on the opposite side of New York Avenue. It was designed by the noted Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb in the neo-Byzantine style and was completed by 1910. Cobb was strongly influenced by the City Beautiful movement which spread throughout the United States in the 1890s and popularized the use of limestone and other light-colored building materials. The massing of the church is unusual and somewhat complex. Set behind a low curving arcade, flanked by identical entrance pavilions, the octagonal sanctuary is crowned by a soaring pyramidal roof.

11 Truslow House 96 Brooklyn Avenue

Please continue along Dean Street until you reach Brooklyn Avenue.

Our 11th stop is a large mansion, built for John and Elizabeth Truslow. Completed in 1887, it was designed by the Parfitt Brothers, one of Brooklyn's most successful architectural firms. Founded by three English-born brothers in the 1870s, their office produced many Queen Anne style buildings, including a number of early apartment houses in Brooklyn Heights. Faced with red brick and sandstone, the Truslow House was said to originally contain fifty rooms. John Truslow was a businessman who was active in the coal business and manufactured stoves. He also served for 16 years on the Brooklyn Board of Assessors, and was one of the organizers of the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church.

12 Elkins House 1375 Dean Street

Please cross Brooklyn Avenue and continue east along Dean Street. Stop across from the house at number 1375, between Brooklyn and Kingston Avenues.

1375 Dean Street, also known as the George and Susan Elkins House is one of the oldest buildings in the historic district. Sandwiched between two groups of subsequent row houses, it is probably the only free-standing frame structure surviving in the area.

George Elkins was involved in developing the local real estate market, and may have built this two-story house as early as 1855. Advertisements, published regularly in the 1860s, invited clients to visit him to acquire "desirable residences" and "villa sites." He lived in this building with his wife and four daughters during the period when Bedford, as the area was then called, was becoming a commuter suburb, connected by railroads, and eventually, elevated trains.

Though the architect and builder has not been determined, this sparsely-ornamented house shares much in common with the types of residences illustrated in mid-19th century architectural pattern books. Cubical in form, it displays both simple Greek Revival and Italianate features, including a striking wood cornice.

13 893 St. Marks Avenue

Return to Brooklyn Avenue, turn left, proceeding two blocks until you reach the entrance to the Brooklyn Children's Museum at 145 Brooklyn Avenue.

St. Mark's Avenue became one of Brooklyn's finest residential corridors in the second half of the 19th century. Adjoining Brower Park, it attracted many well-to-do families who built or purchased some of the finest houses in the historic district. Early residents included lumber dealer Dean Sage, who built the house across the street at 839 St. Mark's Avenue, as well as L.C. Smith, whose typewriter company was later known as Smith Corona, and James Adams Truslow, who is often credited with coining the term the American dream. The Smith and Truslow houses, now demolished, originally stood on the site of the Children's Museum.

Dean Sage's corner house dates to about 1870. Among the oldest and most important buildings in the district, it is a rare surviving residence by Russell Sturgis, the architect who is probably best-remembered as editor of the multi-volume *Dictionary of Architecture and Building*. Sturgis favored the Gothic Revival style and embellished the building's muscular reddish sandstone facades with light-colored stone window enframements.

In the 1930s, the house became a convent and was used as a residence for Catholic nuns who taught at Bishop McDonnell High School on Eastern Parkway. A blocky rear addition, faced with tan brick, dates to 1948. It is currently used as a home for mentally ill adults.

14 855 - 857 St. Marks Avenue

Continue east along St. Mark's Avenue until you stand opposite numbers 855-857.

This exceptional pair of attached houses was designed by Montrose W. Morris in 1892. Built for two generations within the same family, these houses share a wide front porch and richly-decorated elevations that contrast thin Roman bricks with blocks of smooth and textured limestone. Some of the more distinctive features include a recessed loggia topped by a central gable and a large corner turret, crowned by a bell-shaped roof. To the rear of the property, at the right, is the building's original stable, a rarity in Brooklyn. It, too, was likely designed by Morris.



15 889 St. Marks Avenue

Continue east, stopping in front of 889 St. Mark's Avenue.

Our 15th stop is a Beaux-Arts style mansion. Planned in the 1890s, it was not completed until 1903. The architect was P. J. Lauritzen, who designed the Union League Club, one of the previous stops on the tour. Four stories tall, the street facade is faced with limestone and has a ground-floor entrance, a novelty at the time. At the second story is a dramatic, oversized Palladian-style window, crowned by an elaborately-carved cartouche. Though little is known about the original owners, a later resident, surgeon William Linder, served as president of the Kings County Medical Society.



889 St. Marks Avenue. Image courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission

16 828 - 838 St. Marks Avenue

Please turn and now proceed west, crossing Brooklyn Avenue, until you reach 828-838 St. Mark's Avenue.

These five charming neo-Georgian style dwellings are somewhat hidden between larger neighboring structures. Built in 1919-20, they were among the last private dwellings constructed in the historic district. Set behind deep front yards, a rare feature in older sections of Brooklyn, these red brick houses have modest neo-classical details and share driveways that lead to garages at the rear. Slee & Bryson were the architects, a Brooklyn firm that specialized in mostly residential work, including houses in several historic districts in the borough, as well as the 1937 Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court in Brooklyn Heights.

17 935 - 947 Prospect Place

Now, please return to Brooklyn Avenue and turn right. Continue one block to Prospect Place, and turn right.

The next stop is 935-947 Prospect Place. Arts and Crafts-style houses like these are extremely rare in New York City. This attractive group was built by a Long Island-based real estate developer named Thomas H. Fraser in 1920-22 and was designed by the Brooklyn architect A. White Pierce, who built many free-standing houses in Prospect Park South and Ditmas Park. Treated as an ensemble, the stuccoed facades are connected by a continuous, steeply sloped, slate roof. Like Forest Hills Gardens in Queens, they draw on English medieval sources, and reflect the increasing popularity of the automobile, especially among members of the middle class. The garages, located at the rear of the houses, are reached through exceptionally narrow archways.



935-947 Prospect Place. Image courtesy of the Landmarks Preservation Commission

17 907 - 933 Prospect Place

Continue west, stopping across from the Pierre Apartments at 907-933 Prospect Place, our last stop.

In 1920, subway service was extended along Eastern Parkway, reaching both Nostrand and Kingston Avenues. Though a small number of multiple dwellings had existed in Crown Heights during the late 19th century, transit improvements led to the construction of an increasing number of elevator buildings along St. Mark's Avenue and adjoining streets.

Most examples were built in historical styles, but a few, like the Pierre was influenced by the new and fashionable Art Deco style. Constructed between 1933 and 1936, this modest six-story building is faced with colorful brickwork laid in geometric patterns. It was designed by Matthew W. Del Gaudio, who specialized in large-scale housing during the 1930s and 1940s. Though much of this architect's work displayed a similarly modern character, he occasionally looked to the past for inspiration, building a Tudor Revival style apartment house around the corner at 840-850 St. Mark's Avenue in 1926.

Acknowledgements

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