



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

GREENPOINT

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.

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A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1832, Neziah Bliss (1790–1876) and Eliphalet Nott (1773–1866), business partners in steamship production, began purchasing acres of farmland in Greenpoint and laying out streets. Spurred by a period of economic growth and an influx of European immigrants during the 1850s, more than a dozen shipbuilding firms moved across the river from Manhattan and turned the neighborhood into a major shipbuilding center. Franklin Street, named after Benjamin Franklin, was established as its commercial strip with shops catering to local industries. During the Civil War, the United States Navy commissioned several major ironclad war ships from the Continental Iron Works, which occupied a seven-acre stretch of the Greenpoint waterfront and employed 1,400 men. The first of these, the *Monitor*, famously defeated the *Merrimac*, a Confederate ironclad ship, in a standoff in Virginia in 1862, just a month after its launch. The *Monitor* was a source of pride for the neighborhood and is commemorated to this day by a monument in Monsignor McGolrick Park.

While shipbuilding declined after the Civil War, Greenpoint's other industrial enterprises, which included porcelain making, glass making and oil refining, continued to thrive. The influential Union Porcelain Works on Eckford Street helped shape American porcelain design. Its owner, Thomas C. Smith, purchased a tract of land on Milton Street in the 1860s and constructed a number of homes there, decorating some of their hearths with blue and white porcelain tiles. It was claimed they were the only tiles manufactured in the United States that could withstand such heat. The Greenpoint Glass Works, another local company, gained such acclaim that Mary Todd Lincoln commissioned table settings for the White House. Greenpoint and Williamsburg also formed a hub for oil refineries.

Greenpoint's residential development was closely aligned with its industrial growth, as workers' housing was built inland from the waterfront. Large, elaborate rowhouses were constructed for owners and managers, while modest rowhouses, tenements and apartment buildings were built for laborers. Much of this construction occurred during the second half of the 19th century, and the neighborhood still displays a variety of architectural styles popular at that time. Early rowhouses contain elements of the Italianate and Greek Revival styles, while later styles include French Second Empire, neo-Grec, Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival. Some of the neighborhood's later institutional buildings, such as the Greenpoint Savings Bank and the Mechanics and Traders Bank, were designed in the Classical and Renaissance Revival styles. The neighborhood also boasts many fine churches, designed in the Gothic Revival, Victorian Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles, among others.

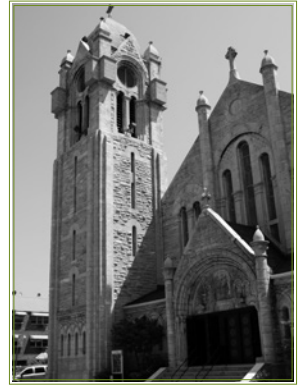
There are two historic districts in Greenpoint: the Greenpoint Historic District, located in the neighborhood's core, and the Eberhard Faber Pencil Company Historic District, which covers roughly one block. A section of the neighborhood is also a National Register of Historic Places District.

I. ST. CECILIA'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

84 Herbert Street

Thomas Henry Poole, 1891–93

The congregation of St. Cecilia's formed in 1869 and originally occupied a small wood-frame church built in 1871. Over the course of the 50-year leadership of Monsignor McGolrick (1857–1938), the congregation vastly grew and the church set out to construct a larger building. This structure, which can hold roughly 1,400 people, is constructed of Georgia marble and limestone, and its altar is made of a cream-colored, French limestone called Caen stone. It features an imposing corner bell tower, capped with a copper roof.



2. ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA VINCENTIAN FATHERS CHURCH

607 Humboldt Street

1903–04

This Gothic Revival church, with a capacity of 1,250 worshippers, houses the largest Polish Catholic congregation in Brooklyn. In fact, the flanking stretches of Humboldt Street and Driggs Avenue were renamed Pope John Paul II Square and Lech Walesa Place, who each made visits to the parish. The church's most marked feature is its spires that stand tall over the neighborhood. They are asymmetrical to one another, octagonal in shape and richly ornate.

LEGEND OF DESIGNATIONS

National Historic Landmark:	◆
National Register of Historic Places—District:	★
National Register of Historic Places—Property:	☆
New York City Historic District:	*
New York City Individual Landmark:	✱
New York City Interior Landmark:	✿

3. MONSIGNOR MCGOLRICK PARK

Shelter Pavilion: Helmle & Huberty, 1910 *

John Ericsson Monument

(*Monitor and Merrimac*)

Sculptor: Antonio de Filippo, 1938

Originally called Winthrop Park, this park was renamed in 1941 in honor of Monsignor Edward J. McGolrick, the Pastor of St. Cecilia's Church. Its interior pathways are lined with shade trees, and its exterior perimeter is bordered by modest residential architecture. A highlight is the Shelter Pavilion, a Beaux-Arts comfort station that recalls the Grand Trianon at the Palace of Versailles. The structure features two end pavilions connected by a crescent-shaped open arcade of paired columns. In front of the pavilion is a statue commemorating the Greenpoint natives who lost their lives in World War I. Also within the park, the John Ericsson Monument is named for the engineer who built the *Monitor*, America's first ironclad warship, in Greenpoint in 1862.



4. PUBLIC SCHOOL 34,

THE OLIVER H. PERRY SCHOOL *

131 Norman Avenue

Samuel B. Leonard, 1867–70

Additions: James W. Naughton, 1887–88

Constructed by the city of Brooklyn to accommodate the influx of residents to Greenpoint in the mid 19th century, the architects of this Romanesque Revival school building were both Superintendents of Buildings for the Brooklyn Board of Education (Leonard: 1859–1879; Naughton: 1880–1898). The brick building features a gabled front façade with arched windows, a rusticated base, and an ornate brownstone entrance enframingent with pilasters and foliated brackets. The side wings along Norman Avenue were added in 1887–88 and feature shallow hipped roofs, arched windows and ornament that complements the style of the earlier building.



5. SIDEWALK CLOCK ★ *

753 Manhattan Avenue

Ca. 1860s

This is one of the city's few cast-iron sidewalk clocks introduced in the 1860s that remain today. The clocks were installed by store owners not only as conveniences for shoppers, but as advertisements for their businesses. Manufactured by the Boston-based E. Howard Clock Company, this clock has a rectangular base, fluted column, and double-sided face. No longer advertising a business, the clock features the word "GREENPOINT" in gold paint. Along with seven others across the city, the clock was designated an individual landmark in 1981.



6. GREENPOINT SAVINGS BANK ★ *

★ *

807 Manhattan Avenue

Helmle & Huberty, 1906–08

The Greenpoint Savings Bank, established in 1868, was housed in four different buildings in the neighborhood prior to commissioning this grand structure. Designed by the same firm responsible for the Shelter Pavilion in Monsignor McGolrick Park, this

neo-Classical, Roman-style limestone bank features a granite base, a recessed portico with four Doric columns topped with a triangular pediment, a large dome, and patterned slate shingles.

7. 133–135 OAK STREET ★ *

Philemon Tillion, 1901

137 OAK STREET ★ *

Theobold Engelhardt, 1887

133 and 135 Oak Street, mirror images of one another, were designed with Romanesque and Renaissance Revival elements. Architectural features include rusticated stone lintels, brick arches, full-height projecting bays, ornate iron gates and galvanized iron cornices. 137 Oak Street is an Italianate structure that originally served as the Greenpoint Home for the Aged. This building is set back from the street by a large front lawn surrounded by an iron fence, and its design incorporates decorative brickwork, Romanesque Revival arches, a central projecting bay with a triangular pediment, an iron balcony on the second story, and an ornate, bracketed iron cornice.



8. 128–132 NOBLE STREET ★ *
James H. Balston, 1868–69
UNION BAPTIST CHURCH ★ *
151 Noble Street
1863–65

128, 128A and 130 Noble Street form a trio of Italianate rowhouses designed by architect/builder, James H. Balston, who lived at number 128A. Number 132 was designed and built in the same style as its triplet sisters, but is slightly taller. Architecture as a profession did not fully emerge until around the time of the Civil War. However, even through the 19th century, many architects of Brooklyn rowhouses principally worked on interior layouts, as exterior design elements were often pulled from catalogs and entire façade designs were frequently repeated. Many of Greenpoint's rowhouses were developed this way, but are, nonetheless, very attractive in their uniform elegance. These houses

feature high stoops with cast-iron railings, entryways with wooden double doors and round-arch lintels, segmental-arch cast-iron window lintels and fanciful cornices. The Union Baptist Church, originally the First Baptist Church of Greenpoint, was designed in the Romanesque Revival style and features a central section with a steeply pitched roof flanked by projecting square towers. All are capped with a corbelled cornice and graced with arched window and door openings. The Romanesque Revival style was most popular in the 1850s, but lasted into the 1860s, when this church was built. It was favored by Protestant faiths, such as the Baptists, for its simplicity and lack of deeply-rooted symbolism.



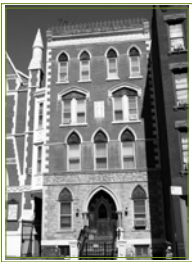
9. KERAMOS HALL ★ *
857–86I Manhattan Avenue
Thomas C. Smith, 1887

This Swiss chalet-style structure, which originally housed commercial enterprises, offices and space for civic organizations, was constructed by Thomas C. Smith, the owner of the Union Porcelain Works. The blue and white tiles on the risers of the entry stairs were produced by Smith's company and were most likely installed to advertise his business. The fanciful building had fallen into disrepair and had long been clad in vinyl siding until a restoration to its original appearance, which included the recreation of its central tower, was completed in 2013.



**10. ST. ANTHONY OF
PADUA CHURCH ★ ***
862 Manhattan Avenue
Patrick Charles Keely, 1875

With its 240-foot spire, St. Anthony of Padua is a dramatic neighborhood centerpiece, especially when viewed from Milton Street. Designed in the Victorian Gothic style, it is the most impressive of the many churches in Brooklyn designed by Patrick C. Keely, a prolific ecclesiastical architect whose works spanned the country. Decorative features include original carved tympana in the three arched entrances, keyed stone enframements, carved stone and Minton tile bandcourses and diamond panels, and pediments with clock faces at the base of the spire. Flanking the church is the modest convent at 878 Manhattan Avenue and the Gothic Revival rectory at number 862, which features pointed-arch windows with carved tympana and a cornice with iron cresting.



II. ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

155 Milton Street

Theobold Engelhardt, 1891–92

GREENPOINT REFORMED CHURCH

138 Milton Street

Thomas C. Smith, 1866–67

119–125 MILTON STREET

Thomas C. Smith, 1876

122–124 MILTON STREET

Theobold Engelhardt, 1889

139–151 MILTON STREET

Thomas C. Smith, 1894

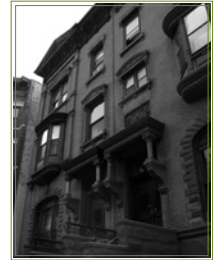
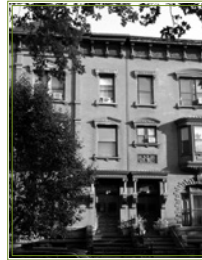
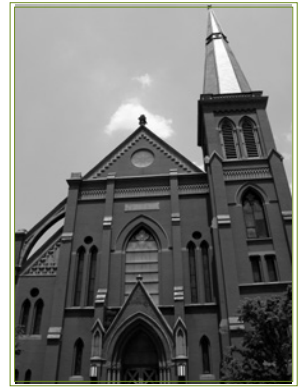
★ * (all)

Milton Street between Franklin Street and Manhattan Avenue is one of the neighborhood's most picturesque blocks, with rows of houses designed in the neo-Classical, Queen Anne and Italianate styles. The block features two lovely churches:

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church (*top*) and Greenpoint Reformed Church (*middle*).

St. John's was built in the German neo-Gothic style of brick with terra-cotta ornament. It features a flying buttress at its western corner, lancet windows and a plaque above the central arched window carved with the church's name in German. Its architect, Theobold Engelhardt,

also designed numbers 122 and 124 across the street (*bottom left and right*), the latter of which now serves as the St. John's parish house. Designed in the Queen Anne style as near twins, their rich brownstone and ironwork details differ slightly, lending visual interest and dimension. The Greenpoint Reformed Church was originally the Greek Revival home of Thomas C. Smith, owner of the Union Porcelain Works and a local architect/builder. On this block, Smith is also responsible for numbers 119–125 and 139–151, which is a particularly distinctive row with arched, recessed loggias at the third floors.



12. GREENPOINT TERMINAL MARKET COMPLEX

West Street between Greenpoint and Calyer Avenues

Ca. 1890s

Originally home to the American Manufacturing Company, the largest nationwide manufacturer of maritime rope in its time, this complex of 16 buildings was once Brooklyn's second largest industrial enterprise. As industry moved out of the area in the 1980s, the buildings fell into disrepair, and by the 1990s, became overrun with squatters and wildlife, gaining the moniker "Forgotten City." Much of the complex was destroyed in 2006 by one of the worst fires in the city's recent history, with 350 firemen called to contain it. The surviving buildings were repurposed as artists' studios, office space and start-up businesses. Along West Street, note the wooden block pavers—a once ubiquitous paving material rarely seen in the city today.



13. EBERHARD FABER PENCIL COMPANY HISTORIC DISTRICT *

98 West Street

Ca. 1870

100–106 West Street

Ca. 1860s

37 Greenpoint Avenue

S.A. Valentine, 1881

47–61 Greenpoint Avenue

Frederick H. Klie, 1923–24



The Eberhard Faber Pencil Company, which introduced America to the German method of mass-producing lead pencils, moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn after a fire destroyed its factory in 1872. It remained in Greenpoint until 1956, becoming one of Brooklyn's most prosperous companies and employing hundreds of workers, most of whom were women. The complex, which encompasses almost the entire block, contains eight buildings, mostly designed in the German Renaissance Revival style. 98 and 100–106 West Street, the latter of which is the oldest building in the complex, were purchased in 1872. 37 Greenpoint Avenue, acquired in the 1880s, features brownstone window lintels

incised with the company's star logo, which is in keeping with the neo-Grec style popular at that time. The Art Deco-style 47–61 Greenpoint Avenue, the newest and most prominent building in the district, features massive glazed terra-cotta pencils at the upper floors of its six stories, proudly exhibiting the building's legacy.

I4. FORMER MECHANICS AND TRADERS BANK ★ *

I44 Franklin Street

Alonzo B. Jones, ca. 1895

This Renaissance Revival structure features a rich texture comprised of rough-cut brownstone at the base and brick and red terra cotta on the upper floors. Its bays consist of impressively scaled arches separated by equally monumental pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Separating the arched bays from the bracketed cornice is an ornate frieze. Attention is drawn to the Greenpoint Avenue façade, whose central bay is flanked by oval windows that further accentuate the building's Renaissance inspiration.



15. 94–100 KENT STREET

Builder: James R. Sparrow, Jr., 1863–64
114–124 KENT STREET

Builder: James R. Sparrow, Sr., 1867–68
130 KENT STREET

Builder: Neziah Bliss, 1858–59
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

121–129 Kent Street

Henry Dudley, 1865–66

ST. ELIAS GREEK RITE CATHOLIC
CHURCH

149 Kent Street

Church: William B. Ditmars,
1869–70

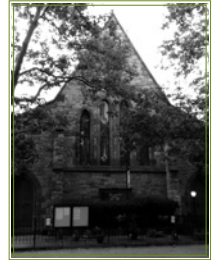
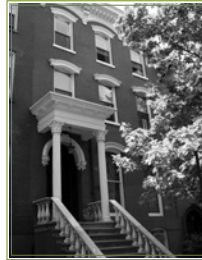
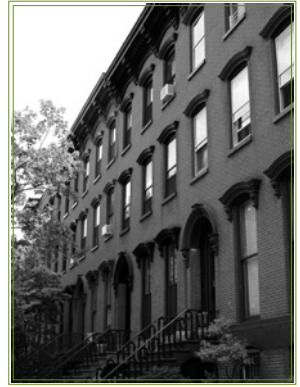
School: W. Wheeler Smith, 1879

★ * (all)

Another of the neighborhood's most notable blocks, this street features rowhouses in a variety of styles, including Italianate and French

Second Empire. Highlights include the Italianate brick houses at numbers 94–100, a row of four with round-arch entrances and mansard roofs; numbers 114–124 (*top*), a row of six dwellings with cast-iron lintels and sheet metal cornices; and number 130 (*middle left*), with an elaborate cornice and portico with fluted Corinthian columns supporting an entablature and a round-arch entrance. Church of the Ascension (*middle right*), a granite structure

with brownstone trim, evokes a small country church. Its architect was a famous proponent of the Gothic Revival style in America, of which this church is an early example. St. Elias Greek Rite Catholic Church, formerly the Reformed Dutch Church of Greenpoint (*bottom*), combines elements of the Romanesque Revival and Victorian Gothic styles, both popular in the post-Civil War period. Its brick and stone façades have round-arch openings, polychromatic ornament and a columned portico entrance. Its polygonal Sunday school building mimics a medieval Italian baptistry, but another Victorian touch can be found in the handsome wooden porch on its east end.



**16. THE ASTRAL APARTMENTS *
184 Franklin Street
Lamb & Rich, 1885–86**

This ornate Queen Anne–style apartment building looks like it was built for the wealthy, yet its significance derives in part from its construction as workers’ housing for Charles Pratt’s oil refinery in Williamsburg. In the mid 19th century, housing conditions were very poor, with people packed into tenements with little light and air. This building’s amenities included kitchens and toilets in each apartment, bathing facilities in the basement, a lecture hall and library, ground-floor cooperative stores, and removable “buttoned” windows in the stairwells and rear courtyards for ventilation, all of which was added without legislative pressure. Pratt, Brooklyn’s wealthiest man, a prominent philanthropist and funder of Pratt Institute, believed that healthy environments foster healthy individuals and thus productive citizens. He commissioned the prestigious firm of Lamb & Rich to design the building, drawing upon examples of humane workers’ housing in America and Europe. The brick and brownstone Queen Anne–style building features stepped gables, projecting bays, chimneys and arched windows along its top story. The projecting central entrance on Franklin Street rises to the full height with a round-arched four-story recess. Two imposing cornices—one in terra-cotta at the fifth story and a corbelled one at the top—add to the building’s grandeur.



**17. PUBLIC BATH
139 Huron Street
1903**

In 1895, after a lengthy movement to provide bathing facilities for the poor, the state legislature passed a law requiring municipalities of 50,000 or more to offer free bathhouses. Between 1901 and 1914, 16 such facilities were built across the city, including this one. As baths became more common in the home, their use dwindled, and this one ceased operation in 1959; it is now home to artists’ studios. The building features elements of ancient Greek and Roman architecture, including Ionic pilasters and a terra-cotta frieze with Greek key motif.

18. HARTE & COMPANY BUILDING

280 Franklin Street

Ca. 1930

This Art Moderne factory building makes a striking contribution to this streetscape and the fabric of Greenpoint. Its distinctive curved corner at the intersection of Commercial and Franklin Streets was built of glass block. The company name, which wraps around the curve, still graces the building, though its manufacturing days are over.



19. GREENPOINT MANUFACTURING AND DESIGN CENTER

1205 Manhattan Avenue

1868

The former Chelsea Fiber Mill, a complex of four buildings, was constructed by Standard Oil just after the Civil War to manufacture rope and textiles for the U.S. Navy. By 1891, four more buildings

were added, and many Greenpoint residents worked here, especially during the two World Wars. In 1974, the buildings went into foreclosure, and the city leased the space to artists until the mid-1980s, when the North Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation purchased the complex. In 1994, it was acquired by the Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center, a non-profit whose mission is to rehabilitate vacant manufacturing buildings for use by small companies. It is now home to roughly 75 small businesses and artist tenants.

20. NEWTOWN CREEK WASTE-WATER TREATMENT PLANT

The largest of the city's 14 wastewater treatment plants, the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant was constructed in 1965–79 and underwent a vast upgrade and expansion in 2009. It features futuristic buildings with swooping roofs and a series of immense, stainless steel, egg-shaped “digesters.” The 3.5-mile Newtown Creek, a major industrial waterway in the second half of the 19th century, forms part of the border between Brooklyn and Queens. As one of America's most polluted industrial waterways, it was designated a Federal Superfund site by the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection in 2010. Along with the plant's modernization, a nature walk around the creek was laid out and the plant established a visitors' center that runs monthly tours of the facility. The nature walk, from which visitors can get a good view of the egg digesters, begins at the eastern edge of Paidge Avenue.



GREENPOINT

