

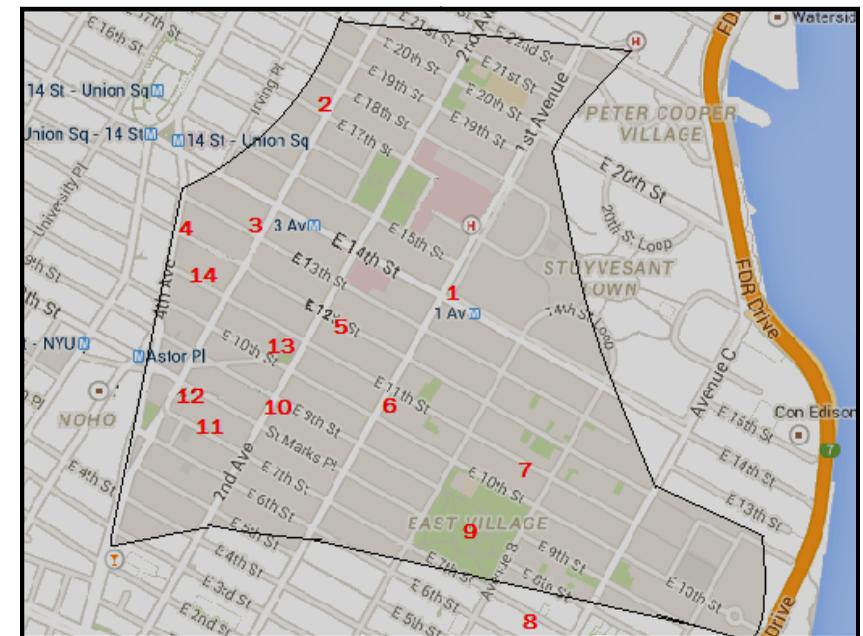
BOUWERIE TOUR: BEATNIK EDITION

TOUR KEY

- * Buildings designated as NYC historic landmarks
- + Buildings within a NYC Historic District

The darker area on the map below indicates the footprint of Peter Stuyvesant's original bouwerie.

Designation reports for buildings covered in this tour, as well as all other NYC landmarks may be found at:
neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org/designation_reports/



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The footprint of Peter Stuyvesant's bouwerie has witnessed many eras of change since he purchased the land in 1651. This fifth edition of the Neighborhood Preservation Center's Bouwerie Tour explores the footprint of his farm as it was during the 1940s and 1950s. These two decades, sandwiched between the rise and fall of 1920s and 1930s grandeur and the social movements and changes of the 1960s and 1970s, were a period of transition not only for the bouwerie, but for the country as well. We will explore the new wave of immigrants, rise of social movements, changes in industry, and rising war efforts during these two decades - all as they affected our neighborhood in Manhattan.

1. Our tour begins at **Stuyvesant Town** on the corner of 14th Street and First Avenue. A sought after modern housing development in the 1940s, this complex was planned in the post-World War II era and aimed at attracting newly returning veterans from overseas. The housing complex was built between 1945–47 and is comprised of 110 buildings and 11,250 private apartments. Stuyvesant Town was promoted by offering city living in a park-like atmosphere, replicating the feeling of “living in the country in the heart of New York.” Controversy surrounded the owners of the development – The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company – because African-American families were not able to rent units in the complex. It was not until 1950 that “qualified Black families” were allowed to rent, thanks to the efforts of many Stuyvesant Town tenants who picketed and protested segregation.

2. Walk west on 14th Street, then north on Third Avenue until you find **Scheffel Hall*** at 190 Third Avenue and 17th Street. This building is a lasting representation of *Kleindeutschland*, or *Little Germany*, a German-American community that defined this area in the late 19th century. Built in 1894-1895 and named after a German poet, Joseph Victor von Scheffel, the building's façade is a rare representation of the German Renaissance style. Historically serving as a beer hall and restaurant, the building was home to the German-American Club during the 1940s and 1950s, which operated both as a restaurant and social club. The restaurant, having a reputation for serving well-priced German dishes and imported beers, soon became a popular gathering spot for local college students. The building has since been home to a German-American Rathskeller, Fat Tuesday's Jazz Club, and Highlander Brewery.

3. Next walk southward on Third Avenue until you reach **The Penny Farthing** located at 103 Third Avenue. While standing on the southeast corner of E. 13th Street and Third Avenue, look up and notice the “13th St.” carved onto the stone of the north corner of the building. One may wonder what good it would be to carve the street number so high up, nearly impossible to see from street level. This carving, as well as the others you may notice throughout the city, is a remnant from an era when New Yorkers traveled above street level daily in elevated trains. The Third Avenue Elevated Train, otherwise known as the Third Avenue IRT when it came under ownership of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company in 1940, ran along Third Avenue from Chatham Square in Chinatown to 129th Street. Elevated trains became obsolete in NYC with the creation of faster modes of transportation, most notably underground subway lines, and outcries for cleaner, safer streets. Eager developers also spurred the movement to remove elevated train lines for good. In May 1955, the Third Avenue line was dismantled. It was the last elevated train to run in Manhattan, with its fellow Second, Sixth, and Ninth Avenue lines having been already demolished. Remnants of this engineering feat can still be seen if one only remembers to look up for markings on buildings while walking along any of the avenues that were once shadowed by these elevated train tracks.

4. Continue west on 13th Street and then turn south on Broadway. **Strand Bookstore** on 828 Broadway represents one of the original used booksellers of New York. Though the Strand has been a fixture in the secondhand book industry for over 80 years, the store is no longer in its original location. In 1956, the bookstore moved from 81 Fourth Avenue to its current location on Broadway. Forced out by rising rents, the Strand was the first shop from the historic “Book Row” to move to another location for this reason. Book Row, stretching from 8th to 14th Streets along Fourth Avenue, consisted of forty-eight bookstores the Strand's former location was bulldozed in the late 1950s in favor of 85 Fourth Avenue, a yellow brick apartment building. With the demise of the rest of Book Row from the 1960s onward, the last bookstore left is Alabaster Books, a used bookstore at 122 Fourth Avenue, which opened in 1977 and remains open to the public today.

5. Now head east on 12th Street until 302 E. 12th Street. Opened in 1908 by Italian immigrants John Pucciatti and his wife (affectionately known as Momma John), **John's of 12th Street** is one of the last remaining old world Italian eateries of the East Village. In the 1950s, Danny Pucciatti took over management of the restaurant from his parents until 1973 when he sold it to long-time patrons Mike Alpert and Nick Sitnycky. A wax candelabrum, started from the wax of the candles that burned on the tables at the end of the prohibition era, is still on public display inside. The candelabrum has been added to throughout the years, and occasionally it must be trimmed down when it reaches the ceiling above.

6. Walk east on 12th Street then turn south on First Avenue until you reach **DeRoberti's Pasticceria & Caffè** at 176 First Avenue. Originally known as Caffè Pugliese & Pasticceria, DeRoberti's is a fourth generation family-owned café and has been an East Village fixture since its opening in 1904. The same original tile floors welcome all visitors craving authentic Italian pastries. Members of the mob frequented this hang-out during the 1950s and gave it a reputation of being a safe mafia hangout of numerous members, such as Charles “Lucky” Luciano and Joseph “Joe Piney” Armone (the latter being a sworn-in member of the Gambino crime family). Having sworn an oath of secrecy when joining the mob, Armone used to sit in DeRoberti's, hardly saying a word to anyone who frequented the pastry shop, using the space as his office. In subsequent decades, wire taps placed in the café sent numerous mobsters to prison on various charges because of conversations held there. The DeRoberti family was not charged in relation to any of these arrests or illegal activities that happened inside their bakery and continue to claim innocence.

7. Keep heading east on 11th Street until you reach 538 E. 11th Street. There was a need for public baths in New York City at the turn of the 19th century because, at that time, a majority of the population lived in small, cramped, and unsanitary tenement buildings. In response, a New York State law was created in 1895 that mandated the construction of free baths accessible to the public. The **E. 11th Street Public Bath*** opened in December 1905, becoming the fifth bath house to open in the city. The Neo-Italian Renaissance building made of Indiana limestone is decorated with motifs of fish and other symbols of the sea, all of which symbolized its cleanliness. As modern buildings were outfitted with bathing facilities and running water, public bath houses were no longer frequented. The E. 11th Street bath closed in 1958, just one of the three still remaining at that time. Despite renovations since its closing, the building's façade retains the historic fabric that identifies its history as a public bath house.

8. Head east on 11th Street to Avenue B, then south until 7th Street, heading west. In the 1950s, the Lower East Side saw the beginning of a movement that would define the neighborhood for decades to come. Allen Ginsberg, photographer and one of the most renowned poets of this generation, began calling the East Village home in the early 1950s. It was at **206 E. 7th St.** where he took some of his best-known photographs of the Beats. This generational group was based on its rejection of the cultural norm, while exploring its inspirations through art, drugs, sex, and style. Those associated with the “Beatnik” movement documented their ideals and experiences through writing and poetry, many of which inspired future movements and are still studied today. One of the most well-known photographs credited to Ginsberg is from 1953, showing his good friend and fellow Beat poet, Jack Kerouac, walking past the Samuel S. Cox statue in Tompkins Square Park.

9. Walk back west on 7th Street. A fixture in the Lower East Side since the 1830s, **Tompkins Square Park** has long provided much needed green space to neighboring residents. By the 1930s however, the park was showing signs of its age and constant use. Under Robert Moses, Commissioner of the Department of Parks for New York City, the park underwent renovations beginning in 1936 using funds from the New Deal. This era of renovation saw the park being sectioned off with designated areas for specific recreations: the northern section was for active sports (handball, shuffleboard, horseshoes, etc.), while the southern half was for quiet strolling and contained more greenery. The entire park was re-opened by 1942, but due to World War II, some projects were not completed. This included a plan to redesign the southernmost section with green space, benches, and strolling paths. Complaints began pouring in from neighboring residents that they were not able to enjoy the park because it was becoming a center for gangs and drug deals in the late 1950s. A band shell, along with additions of benches, game tables, and greenery helped bring the park back into public favor.

10. Now head west on St. Mark’s Place (8th Street) and then north on 2nd Avenue until you reach 144 2nd Avenue. A staple in the community for over fifty years, **Veselka** represents the lasting Ukrainian influence and presence on the bowery. Opened in 1954 as a small newspaper stand and candy shop, Veselka was a new beginning for its owner and Ukrainian immigrant, Wolodymyr Darmochwal. The East Village during the late 1940s & 50s saw a wave of immigrants escaping the turmoil of World War II. The East Village, at that point considered the Lower East Side, had European cultural influences from the previous waves of immigrants that had settled the area in the last century. Therefore, immigrants escaping the devastating effects of the war settled here as those had before, seeking the familiar sense of home. Veselka, now an East Village staple, is one reminder of these post-war immigrants and the lasting Ukrainian community that is still alive and well today.

11. Now go south on 2nd Avenue and head west on 7th Street. A fixture on the Stuyvesant Bouverie since the 1850s, **McSorley’s Old Ale House** at 15 E. 7th Street is the longest continuously operating saloon in New York. The various changes in management and ownership in the early 20th century brought on some hard times for the saloon. But the 1940s saw a resurgence in popularity, thanks to a daring reporter and frequent visitor, Joseph Mitchell. A journalist for the New Yorker, Mitchell visited McSorley’s and wrote an article on the traditions and characters that defined the bar, titled “The Old House at Home”. In 1943, this article was published into a book, “McSorley’s Wonderful Saloon”, along with Mitchell’s other articles and writings of characters and observations he made throughout the bowery. With the quirkiness of this East Village staple publicized, LIFE Magazine took notice and published a photographic

article on McSorley’s, also in 1943. At the bar’s 100th anniversary celebration in 1954, accolades were given for the 1940s resurgence to Joseph Mitchell for keeping its history and place in the East Village alive and well.+

12. Keep heading west on 7th Street and then turn north on 3rd Avenue until you reach the **Hamilton-Holly House*** at 4 St. Mark’s Place, which was built in 1831 as a single-family townhouse. Its name evolves from the days when Colonel Alexander Hamilton and his sister Eliza Hamilton-Holly — children of the former US Secretary of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton — resided in the house from 1833 - 1842. By 1955, the building was no longer a single-family dwelling, but had instead taken up multiple uses throughout the years, including that of a musical instrument shop, club, apartments, auditorium, art gallery, and other miscellaneous stores. With the rise of off-Broadway theaters opening in the East Village during the 1940s & 50s, the Hamilton-Holly House would also join the movement of providing a space for experimental theater, contemporary dance, and underground film screenings. The Tempo Playhouse opened in 1955 as a non-profit theater, receiving one of the very first Obie awards from the Village Voice, given in 1955- 56 for best experimental theater. In 1958, the Pyramid Art Gallery opened in the front space of the Hamilton-Holly House and the theater was subsequently renamed the Pyramid Theater.

13. Now head north on 3rd Avenue and east on 10th Street until you reach **St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery***. The church has been a host to important public events since its opening in 1799. One of the most well-known events from the 1940s & 50s was the annual celebration of the blooming tulips in the gardens of St. Mark’s Church, otherwise known as Tulip Fête. Started in 1945, this springtime festival celebrated the neighborhood’s Dutch roots with traditional Klompen dances - complete with wooden clogs - and the selling of traditional Dutch wares such as cakes, cheeses, candies, pottery, dolls, and of course, tulips. The revenue from the annual festival benefited St. Mark’s Church. In 1954, the Stuyvesant family tomb underneath St. Mark’s was sealed with the death of Augustus van Horne Stuyvesant Jr., the last known direct descendant of the former Dutch governor.+

14. Finally, head west on 11th Street until you reach **Webster Hall*** at 119 E. 11th Street. Historically serving as a meeting hall, Webster Hall was established in 1887. In the 1940s, the building began serving as a concert and meeting hall for social reformers until a devastating fire damaged much of the building in 1949. After extensive repairs and renovations, the building was re-opened in 1953 to house RCA Victor Records, who opened a legendary phonograph recording studio in the building. Thanks to the large space that was able to fit a full orchestra, as well as have the remarkable acoustics that could only be found in a grand hall, RCA studios produced recordings of hit Broadway shows such as *Peter Pan* (1954) with Mary Martin, *The Boyfriend* (1954) with Julie Andrews, and *Flora, and the Red Menace* (1965) with Liza Minnelli.

Note: The spelling transition from the Dutch “Bouwerie” to modern “Bowery” in the street name, neighborhood, and church was not uniform. The two different spellings used in this tour are based on the usage in our sources.

PEG-LEG PETE'S



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