

BOUWERIE TOUR: GILDED AGE EDITION

TOUR KEY

The light orange area indicates the footprint of Peter Stuyvesant's original bowery.
HD: within an NYC historic district
IL: designated NYC individual landmark

Designation reports for the NYC landmarks may be found at:
neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org/designation_reports/

In the Gilded Age (1870-1900), the area encompassed by Peter Stuyvesant's original 1651 bowery (or farm) was part of an area called Kleindeutschland, or Little Germany, named for its large German population. Prior to the influx of German immigrants it was known as the Dry-Dock neighborhood, coined for the Irish immigrants who lived in the area and worked in the local ship-building industry at the turn of the 19th century. Many of these immigrants were relatively well-educated and were able to quickly establish a strong foot-hold in the area. They worked in what came to be regarded as German trades: bakers, tailors, dressmakers, piano makers and brewers.

By 1855, New York had the third largest urban German population in the world after Berlin and Vienna. 30% of the overall population of the city was German, and the majority of that 30% lived in what are now Alphabet City and the East Village. German manufacturing shops, beer gardens, slaughterhouses, and social halls began to populate the previously Irish-dominated area. German-language churches, synagogues, banks and insurance companies also opened in the area. Not only did the national character of the area change, so did the size. By 1880, the 17th Ward alone had an approximate population of 230,000—almost equal to the entire 240,000 living on Manhattan Island in 1830. This increase in population and population density resulted in the creation of tenements in the area, as well as the establishment of public buildings, many of which catered specifically to the new German population.

The buildings on this tour show the diversity of the German-American Society that inhabited the area in the Gilded Age. It was a community with enough wealth to sponsor philanthropic institutions such as German-oriented clinics and public libraries, but also one with enough poverty to demand it. The cultural and political pursuits of the community are shown through the numerous social clubs, music halls and German-American societies. Meanwhile, the increasing number of residents, and rise in tenements foreshadowed the necessary shift of the community uptown as New York immigrant populations continued to grow and expand.

Inside the Bowerie

1. 129 East 18th Street: Pete's Tavern is one of the few remnants of Irish population that used to inhabit Kleindeutschland and is also one of New York's oldest surviving pubs, having opened in 1864. It was known to attract an artistic crowd, including the writer O. Henry who frequented this establishment as well as the nearby Scheffel Hall. O. Henry supposedly wrote "The Gift of the Magi" at Pete's Tavern, hence the sign declaring the street O. Henry Way. The pub is across the street from the site of the former Stuyvesant Apartments, one of the first genuine apartment buildings in New York which opened in 1871. **HD**

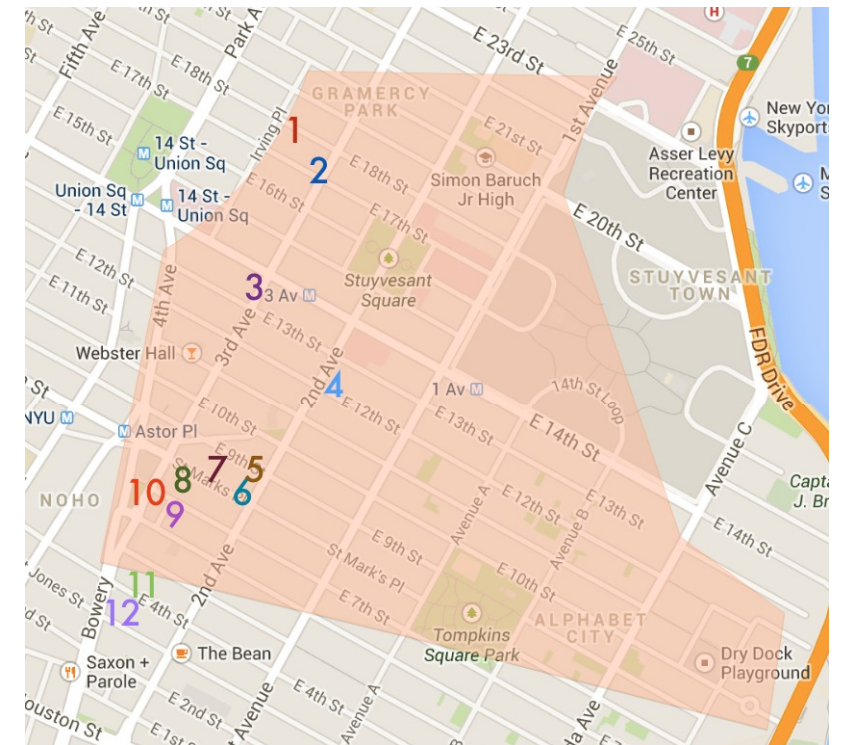
2. 190 3rd Avenue: Scheffel Hall/Allaire's. The next stop is O. Henry's other establishment of choice, a restaurant and beer hall originally known as Scheffel Hall. The building was constructed in 1894-95 in the German Renaissance Revival style and modeled after a section of Heidelberg Castle. The name for the restaurant came from German poet Joseph Victor von Scheffel. It was later known as Allaire's, then in the 1930s as the German-American Rathskeller. Writers such as James Huneker and O. Henry frequented this establishment, and O. Henry used Scheffel Hall as the setting for his 1909 short story "The Halberdier of the Little Rheinschloss" about a man hired to stand at the entrance of the restaurant in a full suit of armor. The building later served as the jazz club, Fat Tuesdays, and the Highlander Brewery. **IL**

3. 109 3rd Avenue: Kiehl's. This building was originally the site of the Brunswick Apotheke, opened in 1851 by German immigrant Louis Brunswick. His store was open for approximately 30 years before another apothecary, Englehardt and Huber, took its place. John Kiehl, a first generation German immigrant in his early 20s, came to apprentice at the Englehardt and Huber apothecary in the 1880s. Kiehl worked at the apothecary, eventually taking ownership, until his own apprentice, Irving Moskovitz, a Russian-Jewish immigrant, took over in 1921.

4. 307 East 12th Street: This building, constructed in 1892, was originally called The Elizabeth Home for Girls, an outpost of the Children's Aid Society. It was a home for homeless, orphaned, and "wayward" girls, and housed job training in typewriting and sewing for its residents. Architect Calvert Vaux designed the building, which is notable for its Dutch-style stepped gable roof, a detail meant to reference the Dutch history of the city. At 295 E. 8th Street the Society opened a similar home for boys in 1887, known as the Newsboys and Bootblacks Lodging House. In 1930, 307 E. 12th street was sold to Dr. Benedict Lust, a German immigrant and a pioneer of the "water cure." **IL**

5. 137 2nd Avenue: This building was constructed in 1883 and designed by William Schickel as a dispensary for the German hospital uptown — what is now Lenox Hill Hospital. It primarily served German walk-in patients who didn't have, or couldn't afford regular doctors. In 1888 alone, 28,000 patients visited the German dispensary according to that year's charity directory. In 1905, the dispensary moved uptown, following the movements of New York City's German population. The building was given to the neighboring German Poliklinik (another local dispensary), which was renamed the Stuyvesant Polyclinic during World War I and was later part of the Cabrini Medical Center until 2005. **IL**

6. 135 2nd Avenue: The Ottendorfer Branch of the New York Public Library was also built in 1883. It became known as the *Freie Bibliothek*



The St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund gratefully acknowledges and thanks Amanda Blair, Elizabeth Meshel, Claudius Ramdhan, and Catriona Schwartz for their work on this project and Deacon Worrell for his illustration of Peg-Leg Pete. This guide uses sources from The New York Times, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Lower East Side Preservation Initiative, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, and New York Public Library.

und Lesehalle meaning “the free German public library.” The library was sponsored by Anna and Oswald Ottendorfer, wealthy German-Americans who also ran the German newspaper *New-Yorker Staats-Zeitung*. Built to help the nearly 150,000 Germans living in the area to assimilate into American culture, the library’s collection contained an estimated 16,000 books, half German language works, the other half English. **IL**

7. 19-23 St. Mark’s Place: This building was originally constructed as three separate row houses in the early 1830s. In the 1870s two of the three buildings, #19 and #21, were acquired by the Arion Society, a German music club. At #23 there was William Schwind’s Costume Shop which sold period, theatrical, and ballroom costumes. In 1887, the Arion Society moved uptown and George Ehert, a German immigrant in the brewing industry, bought all three buildings. Ehert converted the three buildings into Arlington Hall, which housed several ballrooms and community halls. Theodore Roosevelt spoke at the Hall 1895 as did Police Commissioner William Randolph Hearst in 1905.

8. 12 St. Mark’s Place: This building which formerly housed the German-American Shooting Society was built in 1885 and design by William C. Frohne. It features a symbolic target with crossed rifles on the façade and the words *Einigkeit Macht Stark* meaning “unity is strength.” The name of the club is also emblazoned across the façade above the second story: *Deutsch-Amerikanische Schuetzen Gesellschaft*. The club aimed to improve its members’ marksmanship and foster a sense of community. It was home to twenty-four different shooting societies. After 1920, the building changed hands a number of times, and was home to institutions such as the Ukranian Culture Center and the St. Mark’s Bookshop. **IL**

9. 15 East 7th Street: On the next block south, we find McSorley’s Old Ale House, another remnant of the Dry-Dock era Irish population of the East Village. Despite the sign indicating that the pub was established in 1854, the lot was actually empty at that time. The pub most likely opened in the early 1860s. McSorley’s maintains much of its old New York charm, and some of the paraphernalia decorating the walls is from the turn of the century. It is said that the wishbones that hang above the bar were left by soldiers of various wars, including the Civil War and World War I, to be taken down when they returned safely home. The bones that remain represent those who didn’t return from the battlefield. **HD**

10. 110 2nd Avenue: This building is the last on the tour that falls within the bowery. It was constructed in 1837-38 as one of four adjoining row houses. The original owner was David H. Robertson, a prominent merchant and ship broker of the time. From 1870 until today, 110 2nd Avenue has been home to the Women’s Prison Association, one of the oldest halfway houses for women released from prison in the nation. WPA

was founded in 1845 by Isaac Hopper and his daughter Abigail Hopper Gibbons, a Quaker abolitionist and advocate for prison reform. Like the Elizabeth Home for Girls, the WPA building demonstrates the commitment to social reform that existed in the neighborhood during the Gilded Age. **IL**

Outside the Bouwerie

The neighborhood of Kleindeutschland did not neatly conform to the boundaries of Stuyvesant’s bowery. It extended further south as is shown by these last two buildings on the tour.

11. 66-68 East 4th Street: The Manhattan Plaza Building was originally two separate buildings, constructed in 1832. The two buildings were combined in 1871, as indicated by the inscription on the cornice, and were converted into Turn Hall, a club owned by the New-York Turnverein, a German-American Society. Interestingly the Turnverein Society was something of a gymnast incubator and trained several members of the US Olympic gymnastics team throughout the 20th century. **HD**

12. 62 East 4th Street: The Duo Theatre is the final building and is one that encapsulates the evolutionary nature of the East Village. The first thing to notice about the building is the prominent central column which is actually a rare exterior spiral fire escape. The building was constructed in 1889 as a social hall, and notably hosted meetings for John Philip Sousa, an American composer, who founded New York City’s first musicians union there. Around the turn of the century, the space came to reflect the national character of the neighborhood and was converted into a German music hall known as Astoria Hall. By the 1930s, the neighborhood was changing yet again, and the meeting space was converted into a theatre that served a number Yiddish theatre companies. Later it was also used as one of the United States’ first television studios. **HD**

Other facts of the Gilded Age

The Gilded Age was a period characterized by enormous economic and population growth, as well as great poverty and corruption. Kleindeutschland was somewhere between these extremes, geographically and socio-economically. While its residents did not have the wealth of their Park Avenue neighbors, neither did they have the poverty of their neighbors on the Bowery and in the Five Points.

During the Gilded Age, First and Third Avenue were dominated by elevated railways that were reported to have brought noise and filth raining down on pedestrians below.

PEG-LEG PETE'S



BOUWERIE TOUR: GILDED AGE EDITION



St. Mark’s Historic Landmark Fund is committed to the preservation of the landmark St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery site and sponsorship of the Neighborhood Preservation Center.