

The boundaries of New York City neighborhoods are always in flux. Sections of what we refer to today as Gramercy, East Village, Union Square, Lower East Side, and Alphabet City, have all evolved on the land that Peter (Petrus) Stuyvesant (c. 1612-1672) purchased for his *bouwerie*, or farm, in 1651. Flash forward more than two hundred years to the 1960s and 1970s, the neighborhood that exists on the footprint of Stuyvesant's farm became the center of counterculture in New York as visual artists, poets, dancers, musicians, students, activists, and hippies moved to the area. It became a home base to many movements such as punk rock and the Nuyorican (New York Puerto Rican) literary arts movement. There was also protesting and rioting during the time, exposing local and national political tensions. This is the third edition of the St. Mark's Historic Landmark Fund's Bouwerie Tour. The series identifies sites on the footprint of Stuyvesant's original farm during different historical eras and explores how they influence the vibrancy of today's neighborhoods.

1. Begin at 551 East 12th Street between Avenue A & B. Built in the 1930s, the first floor of this building was home to Stanley's Bar from 1962-1966. It was run by proprietor Stanley Tolkin, who also ran The Dom at 19-25 St. Mark's in the 60s. This dive bar/music venue was an early site of hippie counter-culture downtown and held one of the earliest performances of the band the Fugs. Notable patrons included poets Allen Ginsberg and Ishmael Reed, and actors Louis Gossett and Cicely Tyson.

2. Walking eastward, you will find Loisaida Avenue which is the alternative name for Avenue C. The name originates from the 1974 poem of the same name by Bittman "Bimbo" Rivas, which plays off the Nuyorican pronunciation of "Lower East Side". The Lower East Side once referred to the area below 14<sup>th</sup> Street until the shift of poets, artists, and musicians from Greenwich Village began the trend of calling the area north of Houston street as the East Village. The Latino population of the area had grown exponentially in Alphabet City in the 1950s and 1960s and Loisiada Avenue, officially renamed by the City of New York in 1992, celebrates that heritage.

3. Next, walk west along 10th Street until you hit Tompkins Square Park named after Daniel Tompkins, the fourth governor of New York and sixth Vice President of the United States. The spirit of the many social and political demonstrations that occurred in the park in the 19<sup>th</sup> century spirit carried over into the 1960s as hippie counterculture took root in the park.

It was the site of Vietnam War protests, be-ins, love-ins, and community organizing activities. On Memorial Day 1967 police responded to a resident's complaint about a loud drum circle and a confrontation ensued. Protestors formed a body link barrier and the police responded with nightsticks, which sent nine people to the hospital and thirty-eight to jail. A few days later, Latino residents complained about the lack of Latin music performed in the park, sparking a conversation between local stakeholders, which led to the organization of a salsa performance the following day.

4. Walk to 1st Avenue and then head south to 7th street. Turn westward again and find 64 East 7th Street. Built in 1837 in the Federal style as a "brick dwelling house", it began serving as a church parsonage in 1899. In the early 1900s, the left-wing newspaper *Russky Golos* (Russian Voice) moved in. The paper may have had ties to Soviet intelligence, reinforced by a suspected terrorist arrested here for a 1920 bombing on Wall Street. In 1962 the cafe *Les Deux Mègots* opened and held weekly poetry readings. The readings later moved to *Café La Metro* in 1963, before their final destination at St. Mark's Church with the formation of the Poetry Project. The *Paradox*, an early "health food" restaurant moved to 64 East 7th Street and Yoko Ono and London Wainwright III were both employees. After the closing of the *Paradox* in 1967, it became *Books 'N Things*, specializing in books for intellectuals and radicals for 40+ years. After closing in the 1990s, the building was converted back a single use as a family residence. HD

5. Walk to 2nd Avenue and turn left, head to 105 2nd Avenue. This building was built in 1926 as a vaudeville theater as a part of 2nd Avenue's "Yiddish Rialto". Later, as the Loews Commodore Theater, it became a cinema. From 1968 to 1971, it was rock promoter Bill Graham's Fillmore East. Though short-lived, the venue was the site of numerous notable performances by acts such as Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon, Frank Zappa, Led Zeppelin, the Allman Brothers, and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. In 1997, it was converted to its present use as a bank and apartments. HD

6. Turning back north, to St. Mark's Place walk west to 21-25 St. Mark's Place, townhouses built in 1831 by developer Thomas E. Davis. In the heart of Little Germany in the 1800s, #19 and #21 were combined for the German music society, the Arion Society. In 1887-1888, #23 was added to become ballroom and community hall, Arlington Hall. During the 1920s, the Polish National Home took over and added #25 for use by organizations as a restaurant and ballroom, referring to it as the *Dom* (Polish for "home"). In 1960, Stanley Tolkin kept the "the Dom" title for his bar in the basement and in 1966, the upstairs ballroom was sublet by Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey, who turned the space into a nightclub. *Continued on back*

## BOUWERIE TOUR: GROOVIE EDITION

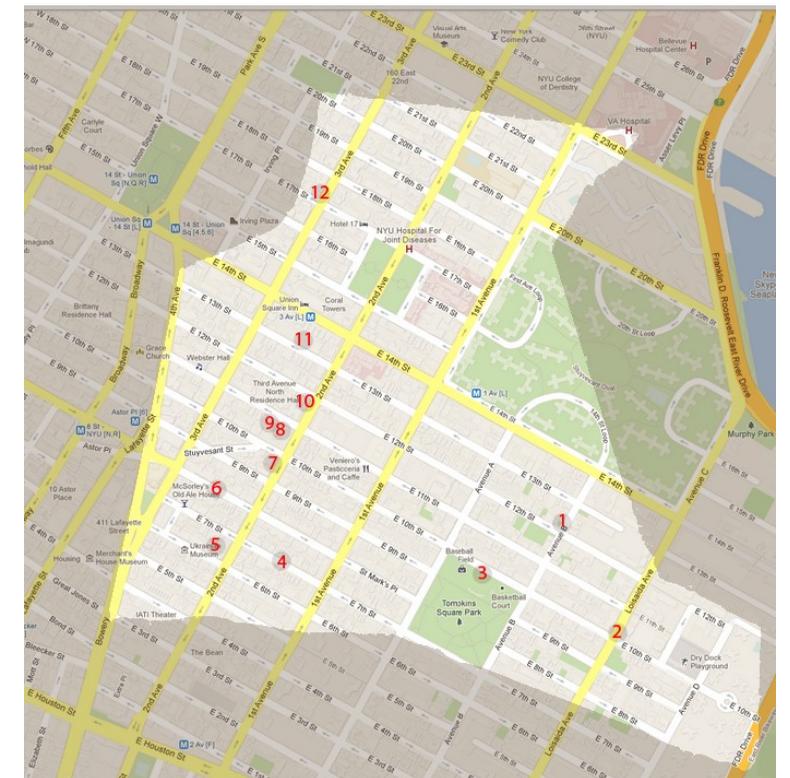
### TOUR KEY

The non-shaded area indicates the footprint of Peter Stuyvesant's original bouwerie.

**HD:** within an NYC historic district

**IL:** designated NYC individual landmark

Designation reports for NYC landmarks may be found at: [neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org/designation\\_reports/](http://neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org/designation_reports/)



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With the Velvet Underground as the house band, performances were accompanied by light projections, creating the “Exploding Plastic Inevitable” experience. In 1967 it became the Electric Circus Company, a psychedelic performance venue which boasted circus acts, a resident astrologer, and featured performances by John Cage, the Sun Ra Arkestra, and Sly & the Family Stone. On March 22, 1970 a small bomb exploded on the dance floor injuring 15 people accelerating the decline and closure of the club. During the 1980s and 1990s minister Joyce Hartwell administered the complex as an addiction treatment center and housing facility. In 2003 it was converted into apartments and retail space. HD

7. Next, return to 2nd Avenue, make a left and walk north until 149 2nd Avenue. Built in 1849, this Greek Revival building is the oldest on the block and one of the only houses along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue that has retained its original stoop. It also avoided being converted into a tenement during the era of heavy immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries like many others on the street. In the late 1890s until the 1910s, it was the House of the Holy Comforter, a hospital for “destitute Protestant women and children... suffering from incurable diseases.” In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a notable use was as the beat poetry reading spot, Cafe Le Metro from 1963-1965. Among the famous poets that frequented this establishment were Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, Amiri Bakara and William S. Burroughs. In 1965, the poetry readings moved to St. Mark’s Church because of political tensions with the owner of the café and were formalized as the Poetry Project.

8. Continue north on the 2nd Avenue until you reach St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery at the intersection of 10th and Stuyvesant streets. It is the oldest site of continuing worship in New York City. In the 60s and 70s several arts projects began residencies at the Church under Rev. J.C. Michael Allen. The first was the Poetry Project, which started in 1966 under the leadership of Frank O’Hara, Paul Blackburn and W.H. Auden. In 1967, Ralph Cook and Sam Shepard established one of the first off-off Broadway companies in Theater Genesis. Barbara Dille and Larry Fagin started Danspace in 1974 as an affordable and experimental performance venue. Richard Foreman’s Ontological-Hysteric Theater came to the campus in 1992. Its successor, the Incubator Arts Project (begun in 2010), remains today. The Poetry Project, Danspace and Incubator Arts currently have offices and run programs out of the Church and its Parish Hall.

9. Taking a look into the West Yard of the Church along 10th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, the landscaping of this space, with its ivy covered mounds, cobblestone pathways, and swaying trees, was transformed by the Preservation Youth Project and Work Training Program, beginning in 1968. Part of the mission of the project was to provide a safe and fun environment for neighborhood children to play, to improve conditions of the site, and also to train young people in preservation trades. Once the yards were completed in 1975, church officials decided to make the program into a year round training program. The PYP worked on many projects including the Church steeple in 1975, rebuilding the church after a devastating fire in 1978, and the 1989 restoration of the Ernest Flagg Rectory at 232 East 11th Street.

10. Return to 2nd Avenue, turn north and walk to 12th street. 181-189 2nd Avenue was built in 1925-26, a Moorish, Byzantine style. The Louis N. Jaffe Art Theater was built to house the Yiddish Art Theater company and became a central site for Yiddish theater from 1926-1945 and again during the 1970s and 1980s. During the mid-1960s, it was briefly NYC’s only burlesque theater and as the Eden Theater from the late-1960s to the 1970s, it was the site of the premieres of notable Off-Broadway shows “Oh! Calcutta” (1969), “Grease” (1972) and “Best Little Whorehouse in Texas” (1978).

11. Continue walking north on 2nd Avenue until 13th street. Turn west and walk to 226 East 13th street. This dumbbell-shaped building was a site for the 1975 Martin Scorsese film, Taxi Driver. Built in 1901, the scenes in the movie featuring the building reflect the seediness and grit of the area in the 60s and 70s.

12. Walk west on 13th street until 3rd Avenue, turn right, and walk north to the corner of 17th street and 3rd Avenue. This was built in 1894-95, as is a rare example of the German Renaissance Revival style in NYC and a reminder of the German-American *Kleindeutschland* community in the area. It’s named “Scheffel Hall” in honor of the German poet and novelist Joseph Victor von Scheffel who had written a collection of student songs, scenes from which decorated the walls. In 1909, O. Henry used Scheffel Hall as the setting for his short story “The Halberdier of the Little Rheinschloss”, describing its “smoky rafters, rows of imported steins, portrait of Goethe and verses painted on the walls.” In April of 1979 the 80-seat jazz club, Fat Tuesdays opened. Jazz luminaries like Betty & Ron Carter, Stan Getz, Les Paul and Dexter Gordon played here for nearly two decades.

*\*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 were based on the usage in our sources.*

# PEG-LEG PETE’S



## BOUWERIE TOUR: GROOVIE 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.*