

## Summary

The Crown Heights North Historic District contains some of Brooklyn's finest and most exquisitely detailed row houses, attached houses, freestanding residences, churches, flats buildings, and elevator apartment houses dating from the middle of the nineteenth century to the 1930s. A showcase for the work of architects who played an important role in Brooklyn's development, including Montrose Morris, George P. Chappell, Albert E. White, Amzi Hill, and Axel Hedman, the district is among Brooklyn's most architecturally distinguished areas, retaining some of the borough's most beautiful and well-preserved residential streets, and featuring a broad array of outstanding residential architecture in popular late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century styles, including the Italianate, neo-Grec and Queen Anne, as well as the Romanesque, Renaissance, Colonial, Mediterranean, Medieval, and Tudor Revival styles.

The area currently known as Crown Heights North lies within Crown Heights' northwestern portion, an area roughly bounded by Atlantic Avenue and Eastern Parkway on the north and south, and by Bedford and Albany Avenues on the west and east. Occupied at the time of European contact by the Lenape Indians, it was, in the early nineteenth century, a rural area located within the village of Bedford, in the eastern reaches of Brooklyn. Crown Heights North was located just southeast of the important crossroads of Bedford Corners, where the village's population—including the Lefferts family, a slaveholding family that was one of the area's major landowners—was centered. In 1854, the heirs of "Judge" Leffert Lefferts Jr. auctioned off most of the property that would become northwestern Crown Heights as "1,600 lots situated in the level, beautiful, and most desirable part of the Ninth Ward."

By the time of the Lefferts auction, improved transportation links with Fulton Ferry, including regular stagecoach and horsecar service, had made northwestern Crown Heights an increasingly attractive residential location. Suburban development, characterized by freestanding villas set on spacious lots, was underway by the 1850s, and while most of the houses from the neighborhood's early years would be swept away in subsequent waves of development, a few remain. Among these are the wood-framed, transitional Greek Revival/Italianate-style George B. and Susan Elkins House (c.1855-69, a designated New York City Landmark) at 1375 Dean Street, and the c.1870 Dean Sage house at the northeast corner of St. Mark's and Brooklyn Avenues. Built for a wealthy Brooklyn lumber dealer, the Sage House is a rare High Victorian Gothic residence in New York City designed by Russell Sturgis, who is considered one of the masters of that style.

In the 1870s, these villas were joined by speculative row houses constructed in anticipation of the 1883 opening of the Brooklyn Bridge. Among these are the Italianate-style frame houses constructed in the 1870s at 1208 to 1216 Dean Street, and the two-story neo-Grec-style brownstones at 1386 to 1394 Dean Street, built c.1876. No. 1450-52 Pacific Street, a transitional Italianate/neo-Grec-style residence designed by Geo. Damen and built c.1882, is a rare, extant, freestanding house from this period. One of the latest neo-Grec-style rows in Crown Heights North is the group at 98 to 104 Brooklyn

Avenue, constructed c.1885. Designed by Amzi Hill—a major figure in the design of neo-Grec-style houses in Brooklyn—these houses exhibit many design features typical of the style, including incised ornament, projecting bracketed window surrounds, eared lintels and door hoods, angular wood cornice brackets, and, at No. 98, a heavy cast-iron stoop balustrade and newel posts.

Large-scale residential development in Crown Heights North took off following the 1888 opening of the Kings County Elevated Railway, which ran through Bedford along Fulton Street, and terminated close to the Brooklyn Bridge. Between 1888 and 1893, hundreds of exceptionally fine freestanding, attached, and row houses were constructed in northwestern Crown Heights, primarily in the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles, which exhibit a greater freedom in their massing and more varied use of ornament than the neo-Grec. Among the district's most beautiful Romanesque Revival-style residences is the pair of houses at 855 and 857 St. Mark's Avenue, completed c.1892. Designed by Montrose Morris, who was one of the finest architects active in Brooklyn in the late nineteenth century, this pair is particularly notable for its full-height round tower capped by a bell roof, and centrally placed loggia with two columns, each enhanced by finely carved gougework designs. Other examples of the Romanesque Revival style include the rows at 1227 to 1235 and 1257 to 1265 Dean Street between Nostrand and New York Avenues; designed by Albert E. White and completed c.1892, these rows contribute to a block that is considered one of the loveliest in all of Brooklyn. One of the most extraordinary rows of Queen Anne-style houses in Brooklyn is that of 1164 to 1182 Dean Street, designed by George P. Chappell and completed c.1889. This group, mixing brick, limestone, imbricated shingles, Spanish tile, terra-cotta, and pressed-metal detailing, features Flemish-inspired stepped gables at its end houses, an unusual design motif for this early date.

In the 1890s, new balanced and subdued, classically inspired styles gained in popularity, due in part to the influence of the noted architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, and to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, which played a major role in making the public, and the architectural profession, aware of the grandeur of ancient and Renaissance architecture and planning. The c.1898-1900 mansion at 889 St. Mark's Avenue is the district's only pure example of Beaux-Arts architecture, but dozens of Renaissance Revival-style row houses were also constructed within Crown Heights North. These include the exceptionally fine and unconventional row at 1146 to 1150 Dean Street, designed by George P. Chappell and completed c.1891; and the group at 1374 to 1384 Dean Street designed by the prolific Brooklyn architect Axel Hedman, completed c.1909, and featuring an array of classically inspired ornament and balustraded front terraces.

Around the turn of the century, as it was becoming one of Brooklyn's most desirable residential areas, Crown Heights North came to be known as the "St. Mark's District." Four-story flats buildings—most in the Renaissance Revival style—sprung up throughout the district, joining the Bedfordshire and Imperial Apartments (a designated New York City Landmark) near Grant Square, which were designed by Morris and completed in the early 1890s. Among these were 95 Brooklyn Avenue, designed by

White and completed c.1902; and the Granleden at 1143 to 1157 Dean Street, designed by Axel Hedman and completed c.1906. The restrained, classically inspired group of three flats buildings at 71-75 Brooklyn Avenue and 1402 and 1404 Pacific Street was completed c.1905 and designed by Parfitt Brothers, one of Brooklyn's most prominent architectural firms of the time.

Serving the largely white, Protestant residents of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Crown Heights North were a number of churches and other institutions. These include the Romanesque Revival-style Union United Methodist Church, originally the New York Avenue Methodist Church, one of Brooklyn's largest and finest ecclesiastical structures, which was completed in 1891 by the major New York architectural firm of J.C. Cady & Company. The former Union League Club facing Grant Square is a Romanesque Revival-style building completed in 1890 to the designs of P.J. Lauritzen.

The opening of the IRT subway line along Eastern Parkway in 1920 kicked off a final wave of residential development in Crown Heights North, as many freestanding mansions were demolished and replaced by middle-class, six-story elevator apartment houses in the Tudor Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Medieval Revival, and Art Deco styles. This development was bookended by the Tudor Revival-style St. Mark's Garden Apartments, designed by William I. Hohauser and completed c.1924; and by the Art Deco apartment house at 907-33 Prospect Place, designed by Matthew Del Gaudio and completed c.1933. Little architectural development has occurred in Crown Heights North since the 1930s, but since 1950, the district has become home to a substantial West Indian and African-American community. Today, over a century after the major architectural development of Crown Heights North began, much of the area's historic character remains unchanged, and buildings of unusual distinctiveness fill the historic district, reflecting the innovative quality and beauty of Brooklyn's late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century architecture.