

PROPOSED DUMBO HISTORIC DISTRICT BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

The proposed DUMBO historic district is one of the most significant industrial areas along the East River waterfront. The DUMBO area was essential to Brooklyn's rise as a major American industrial center and was the home of some of the most important industrial firms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century America including Arbuckle Brothers (coffee and sugar), J. W. Masury & Son (paint), Robert Gair (paper boxes), E. W. Bliss (machinery), and Brillo (steel wool). The buildings in the district reflect the extraordinary diversity of Brooklyn's industrial development, with manufactured and processed goods including coffee, tea, sugar, machinery, paint, varnish, paper boxes, shoes, soap, ale, and steel wool. By the early twentieth century, Brooklyn was the fourth largest manufacturing center in the entire country and a significant portion of this manufacturing was done in DUMBO.

The area first developed as a residential district, however, by the mid-nineteenth century houses were being replaced by factories, attracted by the area's location on the East River. By 1900 the area had become exclusively industrial and the buildings in the proposed district reflect important trends in industrial design in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The earlier buildings in the proposed district are representative of the slow-burning construction popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These buildings have brick facades with massive wooden posts and beams. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, terra-cotta floor arches and steel frames began to appear and, more significantly, factories of reinforced concrete were erected. These reinforced-concrete factories, erected by the Gair Company and by other firms, were among the earliest large-scale reinforced-concrete factory buildings in America.

The proposed DUMBO historic district is also significant for its dramatic streetscapes. One of the most prominent visual features of the neighborhood is the Manhattan Bridge, which soars over the area. The anchorage and support piers of the bridge, with their boldly-detailed arches spanning streets and sidewalks, are a major presence and provide a series of Piranesian vistas. Equally important to the area is the presence of original street paving, sidewalks and railroad tracks.

The proposed DUMBO historic district is one of the most significant reminders of Brooklyn and New York City's industrial heyday and an excellent example of the different types and styles of American industrial architecture.