

Brooklyn Heights

History/Background

The area we know today as Brooklyn Heights was originally a Native American settlement of the Lenape tribe. They called the area “Ihpetonga” translated roughly as “High Sandy Banks”. This name was fitting as the area was indeed raised higher than the shoreline and touched the land along a shoreline that was, in fact, hilly, unlike Manhattan where the river and land are more level.

In the early 1600s, Dutch explorers colonized the land that is now New York State and named it New Netherlands. In 1625, on the tip of what the Native Americans called *Manhattana*, the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam was founded.

Some settlers were farmers who left New Amsterdam for the lush land that lay just a short rowboat ride across the river that ran along the colony’s east side. This settlement was named Breuckelen after a small town back in the Netherlands.

After the British took control of New Amsterdam in 1664, many of Brooklyn's Dutch place names would be anglicized, and Breukelen became Brooklyn.

By the time of the American Revolution in 1776, the waterfront was already an early industrialized site. Houses sprung up, including "Four Chimneys House," which George Washington commandeered as his headquarters during the Battle of Brooklyn, which we will talk more about on the tour.

After the war, wealthy families with names like Hicks, Henry, and Middagh, owned the land within today’s Brooklyn Heights borders. This is how the streets we will walk on got their names.

One wealthy landowner Hezekiah Pierrepont, subdivided his land into plots to sell to rich families living across the river in Lower Manhattan. This coincided with the launch of Robert Fulton’s East River Ferry service between the City of New York and the Village of Brooklyn.

In 1827, the Village was incorporated as the City of Brooklyn and within just 40 years, Brooklyn was the third largest city in America, with New York coming in first and Philadelphia second. Brooklyn was also a great industrial force and economically strong. Brooklynites did not feel overshadowed by nearby New York and Brooklyn developed a strong identity of its own.

Two factors contributed greatly to Brooklyn’s high self-esteem: One was its newspaper, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, which began publishing in 1841. Toward the end of the 19th Century, the Eagle was the nation's most widely read afternoon newspaper!

The other factor was that by 1883, they had their own baseball team, the Brooklyn Baseball Club. By 1895 fans had nicknamed the team the Brooklyn Trolley Dodgers, referencing the amazing skill shown by Brooklynites at “dodging” the city's large network of trolleys. The team dropped the Trolley and became simply the Brooklyn Dodgers. We will come back to them later in the tour.

Until the late 1800s, the Heights grew into a wealthy neighborhood with homeowners building huge stately homes in every architectural style: Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Victorian Gothic, Renaissance Revival, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival. It's one reason a walk in the Heights is endlessly fascinating.

Along with the wealth, came an influx of churches. For some, these were houses of religious worship, and for others a place to show off one's wealth. In the small Brooklyn Heights boundaries, they were at least six churches within an area of approximately 20 streets.

The most famous church in the Heights in the era before the Civil War was the Congregationalist Plymouth Church, which we will visit later in this tour. Dozens of more churches were built in the nearby neighborhoods such as Cobble Hill, Boerum Hill, and Park Slope. So many steeples dotted the Brooklyn skyline that it became known as the City of Churches.

In 1883, the Brooklyn Bridge was completed, and this made the City of Brooklyn and City of New York even more intertwined financially and socio-economically. It made little sense to have two major cities side by side and the push was made by politicians in both cities to consolidate. New York had already merged with parts of Staten Island and Queens.

In 1894, residents of Brooklyn voted by a slight majority in favor of merging with New York. This consolidation went into effect in 1898 and the City of Brooklyn became the Borough of Brooklyn.

With the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge and then the subways in 1908, there was an influx of working-class families and individuals. The docks at the waterfront brought in transient sailors, and the Heights changed from a wealthy enclave to a deteriorating neighborhood. The large townhouses were split up into small apartments or boarding houses. The neighborhood was eventually a slum.

In the 1950s, New York City, under the guidance of City Planning Commissioner Robert Moses, engaged in "slum clearance". This movement coincided with Moses's dream of a modernized city interconnected with highways. The cost of this modernization would be the demise of neighborhoods with unique character, and in the case of Brooklyn Heights, the destruction of historic homes some dating back to the Revolutionary War.

Despite many protests from the Brooklyn Heights Association and other preservationists, the city approved the construction of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway. However, a compromise was reached. Rather than running straight through the center of Brooklyn Heights, the expressway would be built further west, closer to the water. The design was a bi-level expressway above which a promenade would be built. Though dozens of historic homes were torn down, the Brooklyn Heights Promenade is one of New York City's crown jewels.

After the damage done to the neighborhood by the construction of the expressway, activists fought hard to force the city to designate Brooklyn Heights a historic landmarked district giving it protection from future destruction. No neighborhood had received such a designation.

But Brooklyn Heights, with over 600 structures that predate the Civil War, and more than 1,000 that predate the turn of the century, the city granted Brooklyn Heights the protection it deserved and it became the first Historic District in New York City.

In the early 1970s, a new generation of New Yorkers began moving into the Heights. Young starter families settled into this affordable and beautiful neighborhood with good schools and great views.

By the 1980s, Brooklyn Heights was on its way to becoming one of the most sought-after neighborhoods in New York City. This is where the fictional Huxtable family - of the Cosby Show - lived from 1984 until 1992 when the show ended. They lived in a brownstone on 10 Stigwood Avenue which in fact, does not exist. The exteriors of their brownstone were filmed in Manhattan in Greenwich Village at 10 St. Luke's Place.

The Heights today

Today, residents from all over the city head to Brooklyn Heights for recreation along the water, to walk the promenade, or stroll the historic streets. The neighborhood is again a 'suburban' haven for the wealthy as it was in the 1800s. Visitors to New York City likely have Brooklyn Heights on their itinerary, and if they don't, they should. We think you'll be very happy with your choice of discovering this neighborhood with our audio tour.

Brooklyn Borough Hall

Directions: The tour begins at the entrance to Brooklyn Borough Hall at 209 Joralemon Street between Court Street and Adams Street. You can take the subway via the $\frac{2}{3}$ train or the $\frac{4}{5}$ train to the Borough Hall Station.

When you arrive and are facing the entrance, you may want to go inside for a few minutes to their small visitor information room or walk left on Joralemon Street in the direction of the cars half a block to Court Street. When you reach Court Street, turn right and walk approximately 100 feet (30 meters).

On your right is a pedestrian plaza next to the back of Brooklyn Borough Hall, with a grand set of stone stairs that lead up to a balcony with Greek columns.

If you haven't already done so, this is a good time to sit on the stairs for a few minutes and listen to the history segment. There are also often small tables and chairs in the plaza where you can sit.

As mentioned in the history segment, Brooklyn incorporated as a city in 1827. This elegant Greek Revival building was built in 1847 to serve as Brooklyn's City Hall. When the City of Brooklyn consolidated with the City of New York in 1898, this building became Brooklyn's Borough Hall. Today it holds the offices of the Brooklyn Borough President's office and his staff as well as the Brooklyn Visitor's Center.

When you are ready, walk north in the plaza, toward the large decorative fountain. Walk past the fountain going toward the large old-fashioned looking subway entrance. Our destination is the TD Bank on the corner diagonally across from you. Cross Court Street toward the Duane Reade on the corner, and then cross Montague to the TD Bank.

Former Brooklyn Dodgers Headquarters

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The building that previously stood on this location was the headquarters of the Brooklyn Dodgers, the American baseball team discussed in the history segment of this tour. Today, they are known as the Los Angeles Dodgers.

After the Brooklyn Dodgers won the World Series in 1955, they demanded that New York City build them a new stadium. They were tired of playing at outdated Ebbets Field. The city didn't come through, but Los Angeles made the Dodgers a stadium and off they went in 1957!

Two years earlier, Brooklyn's newspaper, the Brooklyn Eagle, which we will discuss later, folded. The loss of its beloved baseball team and their renowned newspaper, Brooklyn suffered a blow to its pride. But Brooklyn has something else to be proud of which is its role in the fight for Civil Rights.

This plaque commemorates not just an important moment in baseball, but also in the American Civil Rights movement. It was here in 1945 that the Brooklyn Dodgers' president and general manager Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson, an African-American baseball player to the team, making him the first African-American player in major league baseball history.

Before Jackie Robinson's time, the Brooklyn Dodgers were already a source of pride to Brooklyn. The team was founded in 1883 as the Brooklyn Baseball Club. By 1895 fans had nicknamed the team the Brooklyn Trolley Dodgers, referencing the amazing skill shown by Brooklynites at "dodging" the city's large network of trolleys. The team dropped the Trolley and became simply the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Now continue along this side Montague Street and stop on the corner of Clinton Street. This street was known in the early 20th Century as Bank Row and was home to Brooklyn's most prestigious banking institutions. This was before banks consolidated under the massive financial institutions we know today such as Citibank and Chase Bank. Stop when you reach the Citibank.

Bank Row

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The Citibank is in a building that housed The People's Trust starting in 1904. This building is unusual in that it combines elements of Greek, Roman, and Renaissance architecture.

But the real gem on Bank Row is the Chase Bank building. Just past the Citibank building is the Chase Bank building. This neo-renaissance masterpiece designed by York & Sawyer was modeled on a 17th-century palace in Verona, Italy. It was built and completed in 1916 for the prestigious Brooklyn Trust Company which was chartered in 1866. When the company merged into the Manufacturers Trust Company in 1950, the Brooklyn Trust Company had an impressive 26 branches.

If the bank is open, step inside to see the captivating interior with its enormous vaulted ceiling, three massive bronze chandeliers, grand arched windows, and a floor of intricately patterned marble mosaic. The inside looks much like it did 100 years ago because the Landmarks Preservation Commission granted both the exterior and interior of the bank landmark status meaning that there can be no unnecessary alterations to the building's original design and décor.

From the bank, continue on Montague Street to the corner of Clinton Street. You'll notice that the street signs are brown instead of green, which indicates that the street is part of a landmarked district. As discussed in History segment, in 1965, Brooklyn Heights was the first neighborhood in New York City to be given landmark status.

Cross Clinton Street and turn right walking in the direction of the cars. You will be walking along the side of a reddish brown gothic church. Stop in front of the large arched doorway. If the church doors are open, and mass is not occurring, you may step inside. Please be respectful and do not bring opened food or drink inside. You can take pictures if there are no worshippers.

St. Ann's and the Holy Trinity Church

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This neo-Gothic church is St. Ann's and the Holy Trinity Church, built in 1847. It was designed Minard LaFever, known for his Gothic revival churches around the Northeast United States. Four of his structures have been designated National Historic Landmarks including the this Church.

This church was topped by a 275-foot (84 m) steeple and was the most visible landmark in Brooklyn. Ships in the harbor could see the steeple from a distance and thus could navigate toward the shoreline. The steeple was removed in 1906 when it was feared that it might crumble and fall due to the construction of the newly developed underground subway trains.

The original Holy Trinity congregation dissolved in the 1950s and the building lay vacant until 1969 when a nearby congregation named St. Ann's, purchased the building. The St. Ann's congregation decided to keep the spirit of the church's original congregation alive by including Holy Trinity in the official building name.

Inside there is an elaborate suite of 54 stained glass windows designed by Jay Bolton who was way ahead of Tiffany! The windows are the very first stained glass windows installed in a church in America. They are considered so significant in American art that one suite of windows was removed and is on permanent display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Continue on Clinton Street in direction of the cars until you reach the corner of Pierrepont Street. Don't turn the corner just yet as there are a few people to say hello to on this side of the building.

Brooklyn Historical Society

Directions: Continue on Clinton Street in direction of the cars until you reach the corner of Pierrepont Street. Don't turn the corner just yet as there are a few people to say hello to on this side of the building.

This building is the Brooklyn Historical Society, founded in 1863. It is a museum, library, and educational center that preserves and encourages the study of Brooklyn's 400-year long history. It houses the largest collection of Brooklyn historical documents in the United States, with over 33,000 books, 1,600 archival collections, 1,200 oral history interviews, 50,000 photographs, 2,000 maps, 8,000 artifacts, and 300 paintings - all about Brooklyn.

The architect, George B. Post, was a dominant figure in late 1800s architecture. His most well-known buildings in New York City are the New York Stock Exchange and the first Williamsburg Savings Bank. Sculptor Olin Levi Warner lined the upper facade of the building with richly detailed terracotta busts of innovators throughout history.

From the corner of Clinton and Pierrepont, look up to the top of the building where you will see four busts of historical figures who believed in the importance of inquiry, knowledge, and learning. From right to left are William Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Johannes Gutenberg, inventor of the printing press.

Turn the corner to the front side of the Historical Society and again look up to the freeze.

On this side of the building, there are two more busts, Benjamin Franklin, without his spectacles. He too was a lover of knowledge. To the right of him is Christopher Columbus, whose quest for knowledge led him to explore uncharted territories.

Two other busts adorn the building just above the entrance. There is a Norseman and a Native American. Little is known about why Levi chose to include these busts. Some say that his prior travels to the American West led to Levi's interest in depicting Native Americans. Levi's use of terracotta allowed him to sculpt delicate features on the busts and if you stare deep into their eyes you may get the feeling that they are staring right back at you.

The Historical Society can be visited from Wednesdays through Sundays from 12 pm to 5 pm. Admission is on a suggested basis. They recommend \$10 for adults, \$6 for seniors and teachers, and free for students with I.D. and children under 12. The gift shop is free to visit and is open every day of the week from 12-5 pm. There are restrooms, but they are available only to those who visit the museum or gift shop.

Continue walking about 300 feet (91 meters) on Pierrepont Street against the traffic until you come to 102 Pierrepont Street.

Arthur Miller House

Directions: From the Historical Society, continue walking about 300 feet (91 meters) on Pierrepont Street against the traffic until you come to 102 Pierrepont Street.

This unassuming building may be bland on the outside, but what went on here was anything but bland. Just after World War Two, this building had two significant 20th-century authors living here, purely by coincidence.

Norman Mailer lived here briefly with his parents after World War II and he began writing his first novel, the controversial but critically acclaimed *The Naked and the Dead*.

The other author was Arthur Miller best known for his play *Death of a Salesman*. Miller was also the 3rd and final husband of Marilyn Monroe. Though there isn't much fact to back up the tales of rivalry between the two writers, according to the book *Literary Brooklyn*, Mailer once said of Miller after having met him near the mailboxes, "I can remember thinking, 'This guy's never going anywhere.' "

Continue on Pierrepont Street half a block to the corner of Henry Street. Before crossing, you may want to have your cameras ready to take a picture of the big, beautiful corner mansion. When you are ready, cross the intersection and stop in front of the building. Be sure not to block the sidewalk or entrance.

Herman Behr Mansion

Directions: Continue on Pierrepont Street half a block to the corner of Henry Street. Before crossing, you may want to have your cameras ready to take a picture of the big, beautiful corner mansion. When you are ready, cross the intersection and stop in front of the building. Be sure not to block the sidewalk or entrance.

This is the Herman Behr Mansion built in 1888 by a wealthy industrialist named, naturally, Herman Behr. He and his family lived in this stunning Romanesque Revival mansion. In 1919 the family relocated to upstate New York. The mansion was purchased and converted into the Palm Hotel, an addition to the Heights' small but successful hotel industry.

By the 1940s the neighborhood had taken a turn for the worse and was no longer attracting tourists, let alone people of wealth. The hotel transitioned into a brothel for some time, and in 1961 went in the completely opposite direction becoming a residence hall for Franciscan monks. In 1977, the Heights was once again attracting up and coming professionals and the Behr Mansion was bought by new owners who converted the building into rental apartments.

From the corner of the building now turn right on Henry Street, in the direction of the cars. Walk one block and make a right turn onto Montague street. Walk one block in the direction of the cars. Stop when you reach the corner of Montague and Hicks Street. Look across the street at the 14-story building on the corner, the Hotel Bossert.

Hotel Bossert

Directions: From the corner of the building now turn right on Henry Street, in the direction of the cars. Walk one block and make a right turn onto Montague street. Walk one block in the direction of the cars. Stop when you reach the corner of Montague and Hicks Street. Look across the street at the 14-story building on the corner, the Hotel Bossert.

The hotel was built in 1909 by Louis Bossert and was so luxurious it was known as "the Waldorf-Astoria of Brooklyn." It was here that the Brooklyn Dodgers' celebrated their only World Series victory in 1955. The Italian Renaissance Revival-style building had a glamorous two-level restaurant on the roof that provided diners with a breathtaking view of Manhattan.

Like the Behr Mansion, the Bossert suffered from the decline of the neighborhood. It was converted into an apartment building, whose owner let the building fall into disrepair. In 1983, the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose headquarters were located in nearby Dumbo, purchased and renovated the Bossert to be used as a residence hall and hotel for their missionaries.

In 2013, the Jehovah's Witnesses moved their headquarters to Warwick, NY and they have been selling off millions of dollars' worth of property acquired over the course of a century. As part of the exodus, the Witnesses sold the Bossert to private developers for a rumored 90 million dollars. The Bossert is once again a boutique hotel with a rooftop bar.

Continue one block on Montague Street until you reach Pierrepont Place. Cross Pierrepont Place and to your right you will see two very large private brown townhouses. These are Number 2 and 3 Pierrepont Place.

2 and 3 Pierrepont Place

Directions: Continue one block on Montague Street until you reach Pierrepont Place. Cross Pierrepont Place and to your right you will see two very large private brown townhouses. These are Number 2 and 3 Pierrepont Place.

There was previously a Number 1 Pierrepont Place at the intersection of Pierrepont Street. Perhaps you can guess who lived in that mansion? Yes, the Pierrepont family, whose patriarch was Hezekiah Pierrepont, the primary developer of Brooklyn Heights.

It was demolished in 1946 and replaced with a playground. The Pierreponts were happy to sell the land next to their mansion and in 1857 two of Brooklyn's most distinguished families moved into the twin Italianate-style mansions.

In No. 2 lived Alfred Treadway White, a hugely successful businessman and philanthropist whose cause was to design and promote public housing for the poor that was "humane", with light, fresh air, and green space.

No. 3 was occupied by the Low family, first by Abiel Abbot Low who made a fortune on the Chinese tea trade and then his son Seth Low, who served as the mayor of Brooklyn and later, as mayor of the newly consolidated New York City.

Next to Number 3 Pierrepont is the entrance to the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, discussed in the history segment. Walk on the path but stop at the small gated patch of trees with a flagpole and large rock with a copper plaque, now green with age and oxidation.

Four Chimneys

Directions: Next to Number 3 Pierrepont is the entrance to the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, discussed in the History segment. Walk on the path but stop at the small gated patch of trees with a flagpole and large rock with a copper plaque, now green with age and oxidation.

You are standing at one of the most important but lesser known sites in American History. A house called "Four Chimneys" once stood here and it served as General George Washington's Brooklyn headquarters in the first weeks of the Revolutionary War.

Shortly after the colonists declared their independence on July 4, 1776, the British began a massive campaign against this rebellion. Having suffered defeat earlier in Boston, the British headed to the most strategic port in the colonies - the City of New York. In July, a large British fleet arrived off the coast of New York. On August 22, the British troops came ashore on Long Island and began their siege of New York.

The ensuing battle came to be known as the Battle of Long Island, but much of the fighting took place in southwestern Long Island which is now Brooklyn. Today the battle is often referred to as the Battle of Brooklyn. The British Army was succeeding in forcing the Continental Army out of Long Island. By August 27th, 1776, General George Washington and his troops found themselves trapped between the East River waterfront and the advancing British troops.

While Washington's permanent headquarters were in Lower Manhattan, just a short sailboat trip across the East River, his Long Island headquarters were located here, in a home called Four Chimneys. It was here that Washington made one of the most significant decisions of the war. With British troops closing in on his troops with their backs to the river, Washington decided that a stealth evacuation during the night was the only way to avoid a probable defeat and massive casualties.

On the night of August 29, 1776, in silence and under the cover of a sudden heavy fog, 7000 soldiers were shuttled from Brooklyn to Manhattan on anything that could float. The undertaking was so successful that the nearby British troops knew nothing of the evacuation until the following morning. Had this retreat failed, Brooklynites might be speaking with a British accent today!

Walk on to the promenade, and after you have caught your breath from the stunning view, walk to the railing and let us tell you about some of the buildings and landmarks you can see.

The Brooklyn Promenade

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Look out into the harbor to the left. You will see an island with a short white rectangular building. That is [Governor's Island](#), a public recreational space that is worth a visit if you have extra time in your schedule.

To the right of Governor's Island, you can see the [Statue of Liberty](#). She looks small from here but she is much more impressive in person. You may want to consider visiting her.

To the right of the Statue of Liberty is the very tip of Manhattan. Quite a lot of the skyline is rectangular, in what is known as the International Style II, with many buildings dating from the late 1950s to 1970s when that was the popular architectural style.

Continue scanning to the right until you spot a white-ish building resembling a tiered wedding cake. This 30-story building is 120 Wall Street, a beautiful Art Deco gem from 1931. The "wedding cake" style is known as a set-back building.

Due to zoning regulations established in 1920, buildings of a certain height had to be constructed with many distinct tiers, each set back from the one below resulting in a shape like a wedding cake. The most famous building in the setback style is the Empire State Building.

After the 1950s, the set-back restriction was repealed and many Lower Manhattan buildings ended up as somewhat bland rectangles.

To the right of 120 Wall Street is a greenish all-glass facade 41-story building at 180 Maiden Lane. It was built in 1983 in the Post-Modern style popular in the early 1980s.

Peeking out from behind this building you can see what looks like a hypodermic needle atop a white-ish set-back building. That is 40 Wall Street, also now known as the Trump building. Built in 1930, its pinnacle reaches 927 feet (282 meters) and was very briefly the tallest building in the world - that is until it was surpassed by the Chrysler Building in Midtown Manhattan, also completed in 1930. To learn more about the competition between these two buildings to be the tallest in the world, see our post at <https://freetoursbyfoot.com/visit-the-chrysler-building/#lobby>.

Continue scanning the skyline til you spot One World Trade Center. It is quite impossible to miss! With a height of 1,776 feet tall (541 meters), One World Trade Center is, as of 2018, the 7th tallest building in the world.

To learn much more about this building and how to visit its observation deck, see our post, <https://freetoursbyfoot.com/freedom-tower-tickets/>.

Now look to the right of the tower and way down you will see a short building with a green triangle top. This is the Woolworth Building. When it was built in 1913, it was the tallest building in the world. Its height is 792 feet (241 meters). It was the tallest building in the world for 17 years until 40 Wall Street was completed in 1930.

But height isn't everything. The Woolworth Building is a New York icon, and one of the most beautiful buildings in the city, if not the world. To learn more about the Woolworth Building and how you can take a tour of it, see our post, <https://freetoursbyfoot.com/woolworth-building-tours/>.

Directly to the right of the Woolworth Building is a shimmering silvery building that appears to have a ripple. This is 8 Spruce Street, created by world-famous architect Frank Gehry. Standing 870 feet tall (265 meters), this is one of the tallest *residential* towers in the world.

Last but not least is the [Brooklyn Bridge](#), beloved by New York ever since it was completed in 1883. Walking over the Brooklyn Bridge is a Must-Do activity. Make time in your itinerary to do this. In fact, at the end of this tour, you will be near the pedestrian pathway that leads you onto the bridge.

You can also join us for a pay-what-you-like evening tour or use our audio guide and self-guided tour of the bridge.

Stroll along the Promenade in the direction of the Brooklyn Bridge. Take some time to enjoy the promenade, take some photos, perhaps grab a spot on a bench.

Please do not walk to the very end of the promenade as we will be heading back to the street before then.

When you are ready to leave the promenade and continue with our tour, walk off the promenade via Pineapple Street. Unfortunately, the paths that lead off the promenade are not marked by name. Look for the path that has an old-fashioned lamp post on its right as shown in the picture.

Also on its right is the back of a 5-story red house with cast iron balconies. On the left of the path is a modern red brick 8-story apartment building. The path is slightly sloped. Walk 100 feet (30 meters) until you reach the sidewalk. You will be at the intersection of Columbia Heights and Pineapple Street.

Cross Columbia Heights and walk half a block on the left-hand side of the street until you come to 13 Pineapple Street. You cannot miss it. It is the large grey shingled private house in the middle of the block.

13 Pineapple Street

13 Pineapple Street is a private residence and a pristine example of a Federal style house, a style that was in fashion in the 1820s-30s in early American cities like Boston, Philadelphia and New York. Federal style houses typically are 2 ½ stories tall with an attic space ventilated by 'dormers', which are windows that project from a sloping roof.

With 3 stories and an added modern garage, 13 Pineapple is unusually large. It does, however, have the common elements of federal houses: a raised foundation, double-hung sash windows arranged in symmetrical rows, clapboard siding, and shutters.

In 2018, it was sold for \$18 million. Relative to the price of luxury apartments in Manhattan, it is actually a pretty good price to have a private house with a backyard in one of the loveliest neighborhoods in all of New York City!

Walk past 13 Pineapple to the corner which is Willow Street. Make a left turn and walk halfway down the block to the 3-story free-standing brick house, Number 70 Willow.

This is known as the Truman Capote House.

Truman Capote House

Directions: Walk past 13 Pineapple to the corner which is Willow Street. Make a left turn and walk halfway down the block to the 3-story free-standing brick house, Number 70 Willow. This is known as the Truman Capote House.

This brick house is one of the largest remaining Greek Revival style houses in New York City. Its original occupant was a prominent lawyer. After changing hands a number of times, it was bought in the 1950s by the award-winning Broadway stage set designer Oliver Smith, who created the sets for *West Side Story*, *On The Town*, and *My Fair Lady*. The most well-known tenant was Truman Capote. Contrary to popular belief, Capote never owned this house.

As a fledgling writer in the 1950s, he surely could not afford such a marvelous house (now valued at \$12 million). He was, however, very fortunate to have been friends with Smith. Smith was popular in the 1950s artistic crowd and often had parties and guests visiting from out of town. When Capote asked Smith if he could stay for a few weeks while apartment hunting, Smith naturally said yes. Capote showed up – and stayed for 10 years! Smith gave Capote his own private studio on the basement level where he wrote *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Continue on Willow Street one ½ blocks to Cranberry Street. Stop at the corner and look diagonally to your left to the three-story large red townhouse on the corner.

24 Middagh Street

Directions: Continue on Willow Street one ½ blocks to Cranberry Street. Stop at the corner and look diagonally to your left to the three-story large red townhouse on the corner. This is the Moonstruck house. It appears in the 1987 movie with Cher and Nicolas Cage. Only the exterior was used and several scenes you can see characters either walking towards the house or even walking up the stairs.

Continue along Willow Street to Middagh Street and turn right on to Middagh and stop in front of the wooden house on the corner.

This is 24 Middagh Street. It is the oldest *unmodified* house in Brooklyn Heights, and although other homes on Middagh street are dated circa the 1820s, only 24 Middagh has remained unaltered from its original state.

Along Hicks Street, you see the side of the house with its former carriage house on the right (now a separate apartment unit), a garden area and then the back of the house. The front of the house reveals just how perfect an example of a Federal style house this is, from the dormer windows at the top to the boot scrapers on the sides of the stairs leading to the entrance.

In 1824, the mode of transportation was by horse. Those boot scrapers came in handy.

Turn away from the house and look at the expressway. It was in this part of Brooklyn Heights where many of the 19th-century houses were torn down to make way for the building of the Brooklyn Queens expressway discussed in the History segment of this tour.

If you can imagine that, instead of this eyesore, the view was of charming wood frame houses along tree-lined streets. One of those houses belonged to Washington Roebling, son of John Roebling, the architect of the Brooklyn Bridge. The Bridge construction began in 1869, and

early on John Roebling became ill and died. His son Washington took over the massive endeavor.

When Washington Roebling developed caisson disease, now known as the Bends, he was bedridden. He sat in his house here where he could oversee the work with binoculars. As he became sicker and sicker, his wife, Emily, carried his messages to and from the workers on the bridge, and ultimately she became an engineer and was then in charge of the Bridge construction.

That a woman would be the head of such an enormous project was unthinkable in that time. Her contribution is recognized on a plaque on the bridge dedicated to her, as well as her husband Washington and his father John Roebling. In May of 2018, the corner of Columbia Heights and Orange Street was co-named for Emily Roebling.

To find out more about the Brooklyn Bridge consider joining one of our tours, <https://freetoursbyfoot.com/walking-the-brooklyn-bridge/>.

Staying on the same side of the street, walk down one block to Hicks street. Cross the street and turn right walking along Hicks Street against the traffic. We are walking to the last stop on this tour, Plymouth Church.

Walk on Hicks two blocks to Orange street and make a left turn. Walk halfway down the block until you come to a gated courtyard in front of a large but short red brick building which belongs to Plymouth Church.

Plymouth Church

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The church was built in 1849 and was a hub of the anti-slavery movement in the 1850s and 60s, with a large and influential congregation vehemently opposed to slavery led by a charismatic preacher, Henry Ward Beecher. Despite Beecher's fame in his own time, not many people today have heard of him.

You may have heard of his sister though, Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of one of the most important books ever written about slavery and which helped awaken people to the horrors of slavery, Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Beecher was considered the most famous Christian minister in the United States for more than three decades. He was quite controversial as well. Beecher's sermons were fiery and one sermon was especially outlandish. Beecher conducted mock slave auction and was able to raise money from the congregation to buy the freedom for a young slave named Sarah.

He was so famous that Abraham Lincoln, not yet president, came to hear Beecher speak out against slavery and the need to abolish it. The congregation fully backed Beecher and

Plymouth Church became secretly known as the Grand Central Depot of the Underground Railroad because, in the 1860s, it provided refuge to so many runaway slaves from the south.

When you reach the church's courtyard, stop. If the gates are open you may walk in.

Here you will see a larger than life statue of Beecher flanked by two runaway slaves sculpted by Gutzon Borglum, best known for creating Mount Rushmore. To the left of the statue is a plaque commemorating Abraham Lincoln's visit to the church.

Walk just beyond the courtyard toward the red brick building with four white columns. This building is Plymouth Church. Just before you reach the church, look on your left behind the gate for a large placard that goes into more detail about Henry Ward Beecher and his contributions to the fight against slavery.

This completes your tour of Brooklyn Heights.

Closing

You are at the corner of Orange Street and Henry Street. The nearest subways are the 2/3 trains and the A/C trains. For the 2/3 trains, make a right turn on Henry Street and walk two blocks with the flow of traffic and you will come to the Clark Street Station.

If you want the A/C trains, turn left onto Henry and walk one block to Cranberry Street. Cross Henry Street, careful to watch the traffic as there is no stop light. Here among the short brick private apartments, you will see a public walkway, walk straight along it for about 200 feet (61 meters). When you come to the end of the walkway you will be on the sidewalk of Cadman Plaza West and see the entrance to the subway right there.

Consider a walk over the Brooklyn Bridge as a perfect way to end your Brooklyn Heights tour. To get to the pedestrian walkway from Plymouth Church, make a left onto Henry Street and walk two blocks against the cars. When you get to Middagh Street, turn right and cross Henry Street. Now walk one block on Middagh until you come to Cadman Plaza West, a big 4-lane avenue.

When you have the light, cross the avenue and right in front of you is the entrance to Cadman Plaza Park. There is a walkway that leads into the park and curves to the left. This is the pedestrian path that leads onto or off of the Brooklyn Bridge. You will notice many people following this path, so if you are not sure if you are heading the right way, feel free to stop and ask someone. Most Brooklynites are friendly!

We HIGHLY recommend that you use our [Guide to the Brooklyn Bridge](#) which will help you make the most out of your walk to Manhattan.

If you want to get food now, Henry Street is lined with restaurants and cafes. We recommend these all of which are within 3 blocks of the last stop on the tour:

- Heights Falafel at 78 Henry Street is delicious Middle Eastern food and very inexpensive.
- Fascati Pizza at 80 Henry Street. They make excellent pizza here and slices are very inexpensive.

- Cranberries at 48 Henry Street. They serve delicious bakery items, coffees, and sandwiches. There is nowhere to sit inside but there is a bench outside.
- Henry Street Ale House at 62 Henry Street. This is a long time favorite in the neighborhood. They serve a wide selection of ales and beers along with American pub food. It is moderately priced.
- Iron Chef House at 92 Clark Street is a very casual Japanese Sushi restaurant. It is also moderately priced.

Another option for an activity after this tour is to walk a few blocks to [DUMBO](#) and get some pizza at the famous Grimaldi's pizzeria or its main competitor, Juliana's pizzeria.