

## A WALKING TOUR OF THE HISTORIC FLATIRON DISTRICT

### (1) Fifth Avenue Building/ Toy Building/200 Fifth Avenue

Located at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street is the Fifth Avenue Building, designed by Maynicke & Franke in 1909 and better known until early 2006 as the Toy Center. Take note of the sidewalk clock, an individual New York City landmark, refurbished by Tiffany & Co. in 2011. In 1847, this site held one of the area's first commercial structures. Surrounded by farmland, Madison Cottage, a converted farmhouse, opened here as a stagecoach inn located "way up and out of town." It was followed by Franconi's Hippodrome (1853), a horse and chariot racing arena and then the elegant Fifth Avenue Hotel (1859) which gained instant success in 1860 when it hosted the visit of the Prince of Wales.

### (2) Madison Square Theatre

Adjacent to the Fifth Avenue Hotel on West 24th Street was one of the most beautiful and "modern" theatres of the late 1800s. It was the first theatre to install a double-decker elevator stage to speed the change of sets. The likes of Louis Comfort Tiffany, Candace Wheeler and Thomas Edison joined forces with its owner, Steele MacKaye, to create the interior of this innovative theatre.

### (3) 22 West 24th Street

Just slightly west of the theater is the site of the building that contained Stanford

White's notorious hideaway. It was here where he wooed the very young Evelyn Nesbit and where she entertained him on the "red velvet swing." Its hidden entrance at the time was through the back of the FAO Schwarz Toy Store on West 23rd Street.

(4) **O. Henry**, a fixture in Madison Square Park, where he often went for inspiration, lived at 47 West 24th Street, the one-time Martz Hotel.

### (5) Toy Building North

Cross 24th Street and return to Broadway and you are now in front of what became known as the Toy Building North. It was built by the architectural team of H. Craig Severance and William Van Alen. (Van Alen went on to design the Chrysler Building.) This site was originally home to two noted hotels, the Albermarle and the Hoffman House. The Hoffman House was designed by the architect J. B. Snook, designer of the first Grand Central Terminal and architect to the Astors.

### (6) The Townsend

### (7) The St. James

Crossing 25th Street, you will find yourself in front of two imposing office buildings between 25th and 26th Streets on Broadway. They were built within the same year and celebrated their 100th anniversary in 1996. They were designed by two prestigious architects of the time, the Townsend by Cyrus



Looking southeast over Madison Square, ca. 1912.

Eidlitz and the St. James by Bruce Price. They are joined together by a one-story structure known as a "holdout." Tenants included those in the arts and theatre-related businesses.

### (8) The Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava

This structure was originally built in 1855 as Trinity Chapel and designed by Richard Upjohn. It was here that Edith Jones married Edward Wharton in 1885.

From here there are two areas worth noting and taking the time to explore at your leisure — **The Great White Way**, the part of Broadway where you now stand, and **Tin Pan Alley**, located on 28th Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. The Great White Way, associated with Times Square, was coined right here in Flatiron, for it was here on Broadway between 23rd and 34th Streets that the first stretch of thoroughfare in New York City was illuminated by the Brush Electric Light Company in the 1880s.

Tin Pan Alley was on West 28th Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. It was during the last 15 years of the 19th century that New York City began to emerge as the center of popular music publishing. This short block was where most of the talent was and where one could track the trends in musical style.

### (9) Worth Monument

Cross Broadway to the small triangular plot in the middle of Broadway and Fifth Avenue between 25th and 24th Streets. This obelisk to Major General William Jenkins Worth honors his outstanding leadership in the Mexican War.

Notice the continuous motif of swords that create the fence. Worth was presented with several honorary swords for his heroic efforts. He is actually interred on this very site — one of just a few burial sites on a New York City thoroughfare. If you look south from this tiny parcel of land, you will have an uninterrupted view of the Flatiron Building. Continue north on Fifth Avenue crossing 25th Street and you are on a small trapezoid-shaped block between 25th and 26th Streets.

### (10) Gilbert Hall of Science

At 202 Fifth Avenue, this famous shop drew thousand of kids, young and old, to see the latest in Erector Sets and American Flyer model trains.

### (11) Delmonico's

This most popular and elegant restaurant on the park stood at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 26th Street with additional entrances on Broadway and 26th Street. Open in 1876, it is where the popular dessert the Baked Alaska was created. In the early 1900s it was taken over by Cafe Martin, which continued to attract a similar notable crowd. It was on June 25, 1906 that Stanford White dined here at the same time as Evelyn Nesbit and her husband Harry Thaw. Later that evening, White would meet his untimely death at the hands of a very jealous Thaw.

### (12) Croisic Building

Crossing 26th Street, at the northwest corner of Fifth, is an elegant building originally planned as an apartment house. Upon its completion, it became a commercial office building with one noted residential tenant — the actress

Looking north from the Flatiron Building, ca. 1900.



Ethel Barrymore. Designed by Frederick C. Browne in the neo-Gothic style, it is topped with very elaborate architectural detailing and working gargoyles.

**(13) Gift Building**

Cross Fifth Avenue to the east and you are now at what was the Gift Building until the summer of 2004, when it was sold and converted into luxury condominiums. It was designed by the architectural team of Francis H. Kimball and Harry E. Donnell. Its predecessor, the Brunswick Hotel, an elegant establishment, attracted an English clientele. It was best known as the headquarters of the Coaching Club. Several of the club's members introduced the elitist activity of coaching to the general public for a modest price. They offered them excursions that left the Brunswick, taking small parties up to a hotel in Pelham for lunch.

If you stand at the northeast corner of 26th Street and Fifth Avenue and look north, you have one of the best vantage points from which to take a photo of the Empire State Building.

**(14) Lionel Train Company**

The office buildings on the north side of the park have been home to various showrooms. One of the most popular in the 1940s and '50s was the Lionel Showroom, at 15 East 26th Street. It boasted some of the most ambitious model train layouts, and every holiday season it became the favorite destination of almost every child. The building was designed in 1910 by Maynicke & Franke and built in the neo-medieval style. This design team maintained offices in the adjacent office building at 25 East 26th Street, which they designed in 1909 in the Beaux Arts style.

**(15) ASPCA** At the northwest corner of 26th Street and Madison Avenue you are in front of a building that was designed for the ASPCA in 1896 by Renwick, Aspinwall and Owens.

**(16) Baseball** was first played in 1845 on a vacant parcel of land at the intersection of East 27th Street and Madison Avenue. The rules of the game were created by members of the Knickerbocker Club.

**(17) Madison Square Garden**

Its first and second homes were located right here and covered an entire city block between 26th and 27th Streets and Madison and Park Avenues. The Garden was originally housed in an abandoned railroad station until 1889 when it was demolished. The architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White was chosen to design the new building, which stood here until 1926.

**(18) New York Life Insurance**

This building, designed by Cass Gilbert, now stands on the old Garden site. In 2000, the New York Life building was designated a New York City landmark.

**(19) Bella Apartments**

In 1878, Louis Comfort Tiffany designed his first interior for his home located on the top floor of the Bella Apartments

at 48 East 26th Street, where he lived with his wife and three children.

**(20) The Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company of New York** stood at the southeast corner of Park Avenue and 25th Street. These structures were restored for residential use.

**(21) Herman Melville** made his home at 104 East 26th Street for over 30 years. Here he wrote many of his works, including *Billy Budd*.

**(22) 69th Regiment Armory, N. Y. National Guard Armory** at 68 Lexington Avenue between 25th and 26th Streets. It was here in 1913 that the Armory Show introduced modern art to the American public for the first time.

**(23) Jerome Mansion**

Located at the southeast corner of 26th Street and Madison Avenue, it was one of the first palatial residential structures on the park. Built in the 1860s, it was home to Leonard Jerome, whose daughter Jennie grew up to marry Sir Randolph Churchill and soon thereafter became the mother of Winston Churchill. When vacated by the Jeromes, it became home first to the Union League Club, where the formulation of The Metropolitan Museum of Art was planned, and then to the Manhattan Club, where the famous Manhattan Cocktail was first served.

**(24) The Appellate Courthouse** at the northeast corner of 25th Street and Madison Avenue is a magnificent structure influenced by the work of the Italian architect Andrea Palladio. It was designed by James Brown Lord in



MADISON SQUARE NORTH HISTORIC DISTRICT/LADIES' MILE HISTORIC DISTRICT
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1900. Mounted on the building's facade and roof line are the works of many prestigious artists from the turn of the 20th century. Together they created these masterpieces for the courthouse under the watchful eye of the artist John LaFarge.

**(25) Metropolitan Life Building**

Continuing south along Madison Avenue you will next come to the imposing setback structure of what was until 1996 part of the two-block Met Life complex. Now leased to Credit Suisse and housing the upscale restaurant Eleven Madison Park at 24th Street, this striking structure was designed by the firm of Harvey Wiley Corbett and D. Everett Waid, and built over a period of 21 years, from 1929–1950. Appearing as one cohesive building, it was built as three separate entities, each able to fully function independently. As each third of the building was completed, the corresponding floors were joined.

**(26) Met Life Tower**

Directly across 25th Street is the imposing tower designed by Napoleon LeBrun with its enormous clock and gold lantern. It is said to have been modeled after the Campanile of St. Mark's Square in Venice.

**(27) National Academy of Design**

Located at the northwest corner of Park Avenue and 23rd Street, the Academy was a noted art institution and art school. It moved uptown when this corner was acquired for the Met Life complex. The original Academy's facade was preserved and worked into the facade of Our Lady of Lourdes, a church located at 474 West 142nd Street.

**(28) The Kenmore Hotel** is located at 145 East 23rd Street. It was built in 1927 and was the first hotel to boast an indoor pool. It provided low to moderately priced accommodations in the Gramercy Park area. Drugs and violence led to its decline in the 1980s and '90s, but it was successfully renovated and converted in 1999 to supportive housing. The hotel attracted several literary notables during its early history. Nathanael West, who worked as the hotel's night manager, based portions of his novels *The Day*

*of the Locust* and *Miss Lonelyhearts* on relationships formed here. Dashiell Hammett wrote *The Maltese Falcon* during his tenure as a hotel guest. Prior to the hotel's appearance, but on the very same site, Stephen Crane wrote *The Red Badge of Courage*.

**(29) Madison Avenue**

Head back to the southeast corner of Madison Square Park where Madison Avenue begins. A pin oak tree from the Virginia estate of President James Madison, for whom the park and street are named, was planted in the park in 1936 by the Fifth Avenue Association to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the opening of Madison Avenue.

**(30) Sotheby Parke Bernet**

Continuing along the southside of the Park going west, you will come to the Madison Green apartment complex built in 1983. This building stands on the site that was once home to the American Art Association Galleries from which emerged Sotheby Parke Bernet in the late 1880s.

**(31) The Hotel Bartholdi**, which

stood at the corner of Broadway and 23rd Street adjacent to the galleries, was named after the sculptor of the Statue of Liberty. A devastating fire destroyed the Bartholdi in 1966. Twelve firemen lost their lives when the floors gave way.

**(32) Flatiron Building**

Crossing Broadway, you will find yourself in front of the Flatiron Building, designed by the architect Daniel Burnham and built for George A. Fuller in 1902. Its triangular shape is definitely a sculptural piece. Enjoy walking around the entire building. It is probably the only skyscraper in the city that allows you to do so. Take note of its decorative terra cotta and limestone facades.

The Flatiron stands at the northernmost end of the Ladies' Mile Historic District, a shopping district in the late 1800s and early 1900s that was basically bounded from north to south by 23rd and 14th Streets, and from east to west by Broadway and Sixth Avenue. It included such stores as Lord & Taylor

and Brooks Brothers on Broadway; Macy's, O'Neils and Siegel-Cooper department stores on Sixth Avenue, and McCreerys, Sterns and Best & Company on 23rd Street. It was designated a historic district in 1989. At the point of the Flatiron, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue cross at 23rd Street, you are upon the very site where the phrase **23-skidoo** was coined. Upon the completion of the building the wind currents were so strong, an officer was assigned to this very spot to break up the crowd of oglers who stopped to admire an upturned skirt and exposed ankle.

**(33) Western Union Building**

Across Fifth Avenue at the southwest corner of Fifth and 23rd Street is a striking red brick structure originally built as Western Union's uptown offices. It was designed by the architect Henry Hardenbergh. Here the sculptor Jacques Lipschitz maintained a studio for about 10 years, until it was destroyed by fire on January 5, 1952.

**(34) Edith Wharton**

Continue to walk west along 23rd Street and you will pass the site of the childhood home of Edith Wharton at number 14. The present building was designed by Hardenbergh in 1882 for McCutcheons, a fine linen store. At 32-36 West 23rd Street you will pass the old Sterns Department Store building, today Home Depot, and at number 60, what was Best & Company.

**(35) Booth Theater**

At the southeast corner of 23rd Street and Sixth Avenue stood the Booth Theater, a venture of the actor Edwin Booth, brother of John Wilkes Booth. It was erected in 1869. It was replaced by another megastore of the time — McCreerys.

**(36) The Masonic Building**

The 19-story office building, at 71 West 23rd Street, was designed by the architect Harry P. Knowles, and built between 1911 and 1913. Masonic members gather in the Grand Lodge Room, an auditorium for 1200, and have the use of a dozen two-story elaborately decorated ceremonial meeting rooms. Continue walking east on the north side of 23rd Street and you will

pass a number of noteworthy buildings, the first of which is the Horner Furniture building designed by J. B. Snook in 1877 at number 61-65.

**(37) Eden Musée**

At 55 West 23rd Street, stood the Eden Musée, a wax museum and one of the first houses of entertainment to showcase regular film presentations.

**(38) FAO Schwarz** stopped here on 23rd Street on its march uptown and was located at numbers 35-41. This structure was quite important to Stanford White, since it was through this building that he was able to gain access to his famed pied-à-terre on West 24th Street. This private entrance is featured in the movie "The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing."

**(39) William Seward**

At the southwest corner of the park is the statue of William Seward, installed in the park in 1876 and created by Randolph Rogers. Seward was Lincoln's Secretary of State and known for the purchase of Alaska.

**(40) Eternal Light Memorial**

**Flagpole** Walk north on the west side of the park and you will see the memorial flagpole, installed in 1923, commemorating the return of troops from World War I. It was designed by Thomas Hastings of Carrère and Hastings, architects of the New York Public Library.

**(41) Site of the Statue of Liberty**

**Arm and Torch** When you are just opposite the Worth Monument out on Fifth and Broadway — you are just steps away from where the Statue of Liberty's arm bearing the torch once stood in the park. It was installed here in 1876, for several years while the rest of the statue was being completed.

**(42) Farragut Monument**

At the center of the north end of the park stands one of the most important pieces of outdoor sculpture in New York City. Installed in 1881, the Farragut sculpture is by Augustus St. Gaudens, while the bench-like pedestal upon which Farragut stands is by Stanford White. This monument honors Admiral David Glasgow Farragut for his





Twenty-third Street looking east from Sixth Avenue.

heroic actions at the battle of Mobile Bay — leading his men with the famous words, “Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.”

**(43) Chester Arthur**

To the right of the Farragut is the statue of Chester Arthur, installed in 1898. It is a work by George Bissell. Arthur became 21st President of the United States upon the assassination of James Garfield.

**(44) The Pin Oak Tree**

Start walking south on the east side of the park. You will notice midway through on your left the Pin Oak tree from James Madison’s estate.

**(45) Roscoe Conkling**

Continue walking south and take note of the circular fountain restored to its original 1870s design as you approach the statue of Roscoe Conkling designed by John Quincy Adams Ward in 1893. Conkling was a Republican United States Senator representing New York State and was felled not far from this spot in the notorious Blizzard of 1888 and died soon after from exposure.

**(46) Star of Hope** Walking west, along the southern end of the park you will see to your left, the Star of Hope, which stands as a reminder of a tradition started in Madison Square Park. It was during the holiday season of 1911 that a Christmas tree was displayed, for the first time, in a public park.



The Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Business Improvement District, formed in 2006, is a non-profit organization whose mission is to enhance the area’s reputation as one of New York’s most vital and exciting neighborhoods. This is accomplished by maintaining a clean and safe environment for the district’s businesses, residents and visitors; by spearheading area improvement projects; and by marketing the diverse business and retail options in this vibrant and historic neighborhood.

Please visit our website at [www.discoverflatiron.org](http://www.discoverflatiron.org) to learn more and to register for electronic updates.

To learn more about Madison Square Park and its environs you can read Miriam Berman’s book, *Madison Square, The Park and Its Celebrated Landmarks*.

Brochure researched and designed by Miriam Berman



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