Looking north from the Flatiron Building, ca. 1900.

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 was home to two noted hotels, the Hoffman House and the Hoffman House. The Hoffman House was designed by the architect J. B. Snook, designer of 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.

(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 F.WO 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 Marx 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 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.

(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 25th 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...
Ehle 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 Madison Avenue 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 Jermomes, 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...
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 1836 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 1866. 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’Neills and Siegel-Cooper department stores on Sixth Avenue, and McCreerys, Serrns and Best & Company on 23rd Street. It was designated a historic district in 1899. 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 Serrns 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 Musee
At 55 West 23rd Street, stood the Eden Musee, 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
heroic actions at the battle of Mobile Bay — leading his men with the famous words, “Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.”

(45) 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 Quincey 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 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.

Twenty-third Street looking east from Sixth Avenue.