

IN SEARCH OF BLACK BOHEMIA:

REPARATIVE PRESERVATION IN MANHATTAN'S TENDERLOIN

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GSAPP
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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PLEDGE TO (UN)REDACT THE FACTS

by Professor k. kennedy Whiners

This studio completed the Pledge to (un)Redact the Facts, developed by Professor k. Kennedy Whithers, and is the first graduate historic preservation course in the United States to do so. When individuals and organizations take the pledge, they commit to writing reparative narratives with what Professor Whithers describes as “(un)redacted grammar and language” (UGL) that clearly states who did what to whom to tell a fuller story for equity and healing.

The components of the Pledge that the graduate studio fulfilled:

- The students received a three-part lecture on restorative justice and reparative action, where (un)Redact the Facts is a reparative narrative writing tool.
- Accountability Measure No. 1: The faculty and the graduate students enrolled in this course edited the report and their presentation for compliance with the Tenets of (un)Redaction. This step was the accountability measure for incorporating the lessons learned in the lecture into their history communications.
- Accountability Measure No. 2: Professor k. Kennedy Whithers, the founder of the Pledge and the Tenets, served as the adjunct assistant professor for the course. The students consulted with her on their reparative narrative writing throughout the semester.

The Tenets of (un)Redaction (July 2025):

1- Use the Active Voice instead of the Passive

Why: What is the narrative harm this Tenet attempts to repair?

The passive voice exonerates the perpetrator of harm, removes any accountability from the perpetrator(s) by removing them from the sentence/story that describes the violent act/harm they committed. Therefore, in reparative narratives, the author identifies the person/people/institutions behind the violence in a sentence. Doing so reveals more facts, which in turn tell a fuller story.

2- No Euphemisms

Why: What is the narrative harm this Tenet attempts to repair?

Euphemisms minimize the impact of harm with flowery language. The word “plantation,” when used in the context of chattel enslavement, tends to bring to mind a beautiful, palatial estate, instead of a setting

for horrific violence and family separation, which was the reality for the enslaved Black and Indigenous people who worked at the sites of enslavement.

“Plantation” maintains the narrative perspective of the White enslavers, as a beautiful site, instead of the narrative perspective of the enslaved Black and Indigenous People as evidenced by the attempts by the enslaved to escape, to reunite with their loved ones, to live the free, autonomous life they knew they deserved to live. Euphemisms for White people, such as the “wealthy elite,” insulate White people from accountability for the harm they caused Black people in narratives about chattel enslavement.

3- Capitalize the First Letter of All Racial Identities, especially the “W” in White

Why: What is the narrative harm this Tenet attempts to repair?

White is a racial category, yet often, people do not view it as such, which minimizes the harm that the existence of “White” as the dominant, powerful race or caste has in relationship to other non-White races.

Business/marketing/communications researchers have shown through their research on corporate branding and logos that the use of all lowercase letters, lowercase words like “white” in the context of race, foster feelings like warmth, familiarity, and safety in the reader’s mind.

4- State Enslaved Black People / Enslaved Africans / Enslaved Black and Indigenous Peoples instead of Enslaved People

Why: What is the narrative harm this Tenet attempts to repair?

Despite the attempt to be inclusive with the words “enslaved people” and to emphasize the humanity of the people, Europeans/White people enslaved, “enslaved people” redacts facts of the historical period of chattel enslavement.

Beginning in the 1660s, many White-led governments in the US colonies codified chattel enslavement as a race-based system in “Slave Codes,” where non-White people could be in the “slave” caste. “Enslaved people” removes reference to the race-based history of this forced labor system. Plus, it removes a cultural connection to Black people who are descendants of enslaved African/Black people in the US to their enslaved Black ancestors.

5- Include Racial Identities, Such as “White” as an Adjective for People, Organizations, Governments, etc.

Why: What is the narrative harm this Tenet attempts to repair?

Omitting the word “White” as an adjective to describe a group of White people or a White person in sentences, aka the silent “White,” is very common in journalistic reporting and storytelling about the past.

Similar to Tenet 3, the silent “White” normalizes White people as the default person/people/human standard for comparison with non-White people.

6- Use “Systemic White Supremacy” instead of “Racism”

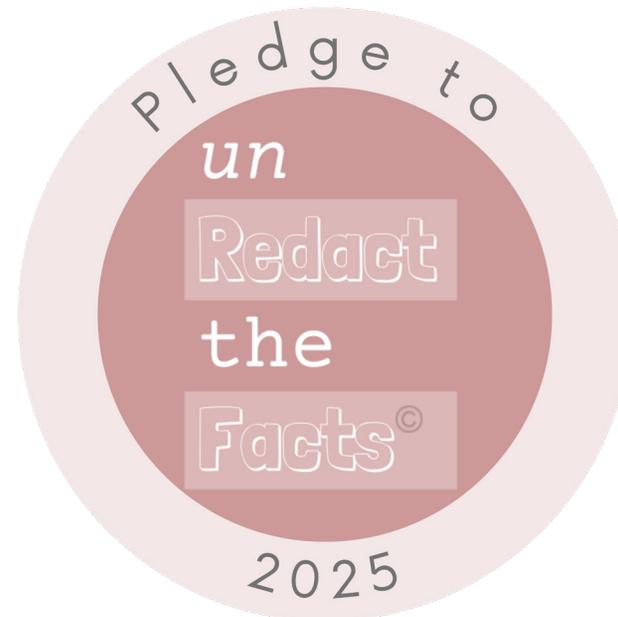
Why: What is the narrative harm this Tenet attempts to repair?

Racism is a euphemism that does not get to the crux of what is behind the motives of White violence against Black people. It does not get to the motivation of non-White people when they enact violent acts against Black people—anti-Blackness, which is in support of pro-Whiteness. Systemic White Supremacy more aptly describes the variety of White violence and slanderous narratives about non-White people that White people have used to assert their belief in their supremacy above all races and minimize their competition for resources.

7- Use “Chattel Enslavement” instead of “Slavery”

Why: What is the narrative harm this Tenet attempts to repair?

Chattel enslavement is when a person enslaves not only a woman but her children as well, and the enslavement is for a lifetime or until an enslaver or government frees a person from the forced, unpaid labor. Chattel enslavement more aptly describes the system of forced labor Europeans developed and supported specifically in the United States with their trading of Africans and later trafficking of them, from 1619 to 1865.



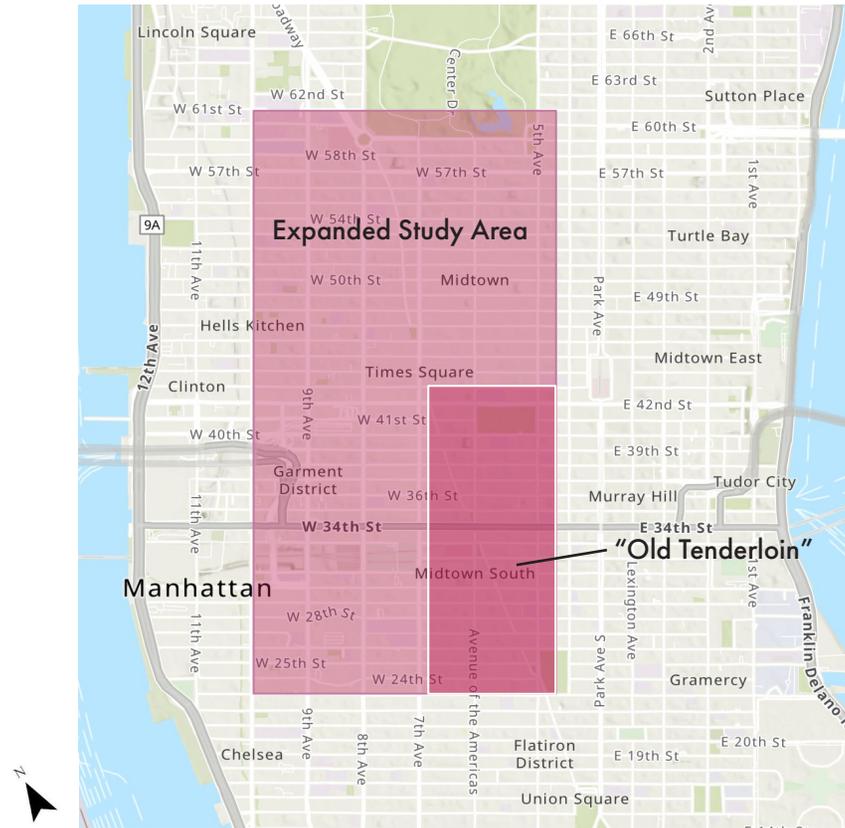
INTRODUCTION

A White police officer, Alexander “Clubber” Williams, coined the name “Tenderloin” in New York City. After being transferred to the district’s precinct in 1876, he declared, “I have had chuck for a long time, and now I am going to eat tenderloin,” referring to the copious bribes he anticipated receiving as a consequence of rampant corruption (New York Times 1917). This moniker stuck, as the city’s media began to use the nickname. The term “Tenderloin” spread beyond New York and became synonymous with low-income neighborhoods characterized by “vice,” most notably in San Francisco.

During this studio’s period of inquiry, from 1870 to 1920, the Old Tenderloin spanned from 23rd to 42nd Street bounded by Fifth and Seventh Avenues. The neighborhood expanded over time, northward to 59th Street and westward to Tenth Avenue. This larger expanse constitutes the studio’s study area.

Today, the Tenderloin, as it was 100 years ago, does not exist. This studio research suggests that the Tenderloin was never fully claimed by any one group or industry, even during the study period, when it was home to a significant Black population. Indeed, this neighborhood represents a space of integration and segregation, of conflict and negotiation, shaped by the forces of retail expansion, real estate speculation, industrialization, and racial injustice.

Historically, White media and government officials negatively portrayed New York City’s Tenderloin District through the use of disparaging names meant to underscore its association with immoral activities, such as “Satan’s Circus,” “Hell’s Cauldron,” and “The Modern Gomorrah” (Federal Writers’ Project 1939). The Sun’s Guide to New York, published for a predominantly White audience in 1892, referred to the Tenderloin as “The Burnt District” and “The Lava Beds,” characterizing the neighborhood as “the working-place and the amusement resort of thieves, gamblers, ‘loose’ women, and ‘fast’ fools in search of novelty, and some students of human nature.”



Study Area and Background Boundaries of the Tenderloin, 2025

Many of the worst of the dives with which New York was infested during these days of iniquity were in the area between Twenty-fourth and Fortieth Streets and Fifth and Seventh Avenues, a region of such utter depravity that horrified reformers called it “Satan’s Circus.” As late as 1885 it was estimated that at least half of the buildings were devoted to some form of sin, while Sixth Avenue, then the wildest and gayest thoroughfare in the city, was lined with dives, saloons and all-night dance halls, and was constantly thronged by a motley crowd seeking diversion and dissipation.

–Herbert Asbury, *The New Yorker*, 1927



The New Yorker, 1927, in an article characterizing the Tenderloin in the late nineteenth century, "Satan's Circus on Sixth Avenue--the mongrel mixture of humanity as it is seen promenading between 26th and 27th Sts. at 11 o'clock p.m."



An African American fancy dress ball on Seventh Avenue, 1872.
Source: Dodson, Howard, Christopher Moore, and Roberta Yancy. 2000. The Black New Yorkers. New York: John Wiley.

The Tenderloin was also home to a robust African American community who dubbed their home "Black Bohemia," because it also fostered Black artistic creativity, knowledge, and wealth. One of the earliest recorded uses of the term, "Black Bohemia," by the African American community in New York traces back to 1911. Black composers Will Marion Cook and Alex Rogers wrote a libretto entitled, "Black Bohemia or Darkydom," depicting "life as seen in the Negro cafes and rathskellers around New York City" (Cook and Rogers, 1911). In his 1930 retrospective book, *Black Manhattan*, the influential Black writer, artist, activist, and community leader James Weldon Johnson again used the name Black Bohemia when describing Black socio-cultural activity within the Tenderloin.

//

New York, the New York of the upper Twenties and the lower Thirties, was the business and social centre of most of the coloured men engaged in these professional sports, as it was also of the genuine Black-face minstrels, the forerunners of the later coloured performers; wherever their work might take them, they homed to New York. And because these men earned and spent large sums of money, there grew up in New York a flourishing Black Bohemia.

New York's Black Bohemia constituted a part of the famous old Tenderloin; and, naturally, it nourished a number of the ever present vices; chief among them, gambling and prostitution. But it nourished other things; and one of these things was artistic effort.

—James Weldon Johnson, Black Bohemia

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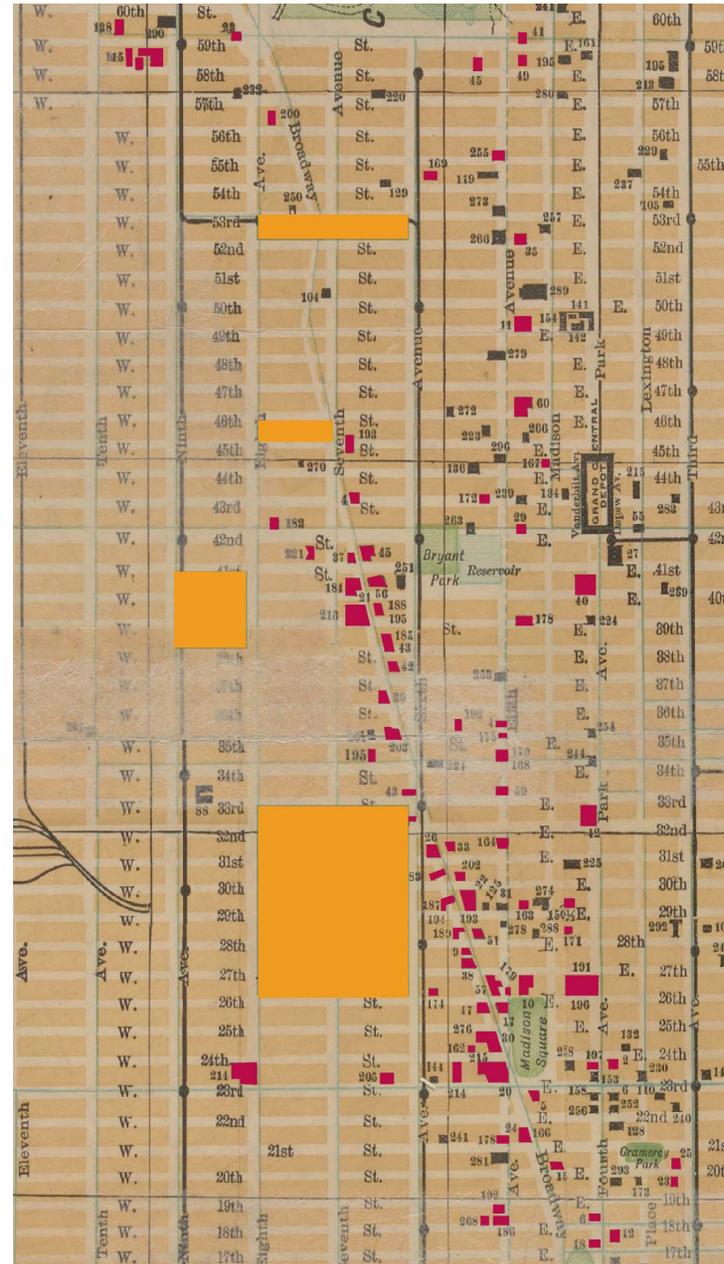
The studio team has intentionally chosen to use the term "Black Bohemia" in the title of this report as a reparative action that differentiates the community from the unsavory Tenderloin trope. This report expands on the Black history of this district with the name that Black community members, themselves, laid claim to in describing their own cultural spaces. While the studio team acknowledges that this historic name is more indicative of the Black athletes, artists, and businesspeople of the district, rather than working-class residents, it nonetheless was intended to reflect Black successes and prosperity

within the district. Thus, Black Bohemia provides a counternarrative to the disparaging characterizations that White media perpetuated.

Over the course of the studio's study period, the Tenderloin was known as New York City's most notorious entertainment district. Broadway between Union and Madison Squares became one of the first electrically illuminated streets in the nation by the 1880s, known colloquially as "The Great White Way." These electrically-lit venues staged everything from high-brow performances to burlesques, reflecting the district's blend of refinement and revelry. Spatially, one can see that these industries concentrated along a commercial corridor that spread outward from Broadway from the mid-twenties to the lower forties. Black men and women lived in close proximity to these businesses, dictating their access to housing and jobs, and their relationships with the district's majority White clientele.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Tenderloin was a majority White neighborhood, but one where many Black residents lived, worked, and socialized, sometimes in integrated spaces. White people often characterized this racial proximity as a threat. Police and reform groups actively targeted venues that served both Black and White patrons, especially spaces where Black men and White women interacted. The Committee of Fourteen, a private moral reform group of White adults, worked with police to monitor and shut down many integrated Black-owned businesses, under the claim of preventing vice.

The term "vice" is heavily loaded and historically racialized. In the research process, the studio team understood vice to exist on a spectrum from legal to illegal activities — from nightlife, gambling, and sex work to underground economies to the interaction of Black and White people in commercial and cultural venues of the day. Many of the businesses in the Tenderloin run by Black residents fell somewhere along this spectrum. However, due to racial prejudice, White observers and reformers often labeled all Black enterprises in this area as "vice," regardless of its legality or community value. Part of the studio's aim is to counternarrate this simplistic view by showing the complexity of economic and cultural life in the Tenderloin. Importantly, the studio team rejects the binary of legal/illegal, as it provides an insufficient framework for understanding these historical biases.



Map of centers of Black population alongside recreational or "vice" establishments

Matt Goff. 2025. Edited from Guide Map of New York. 1896. NYPL Digital Collections.



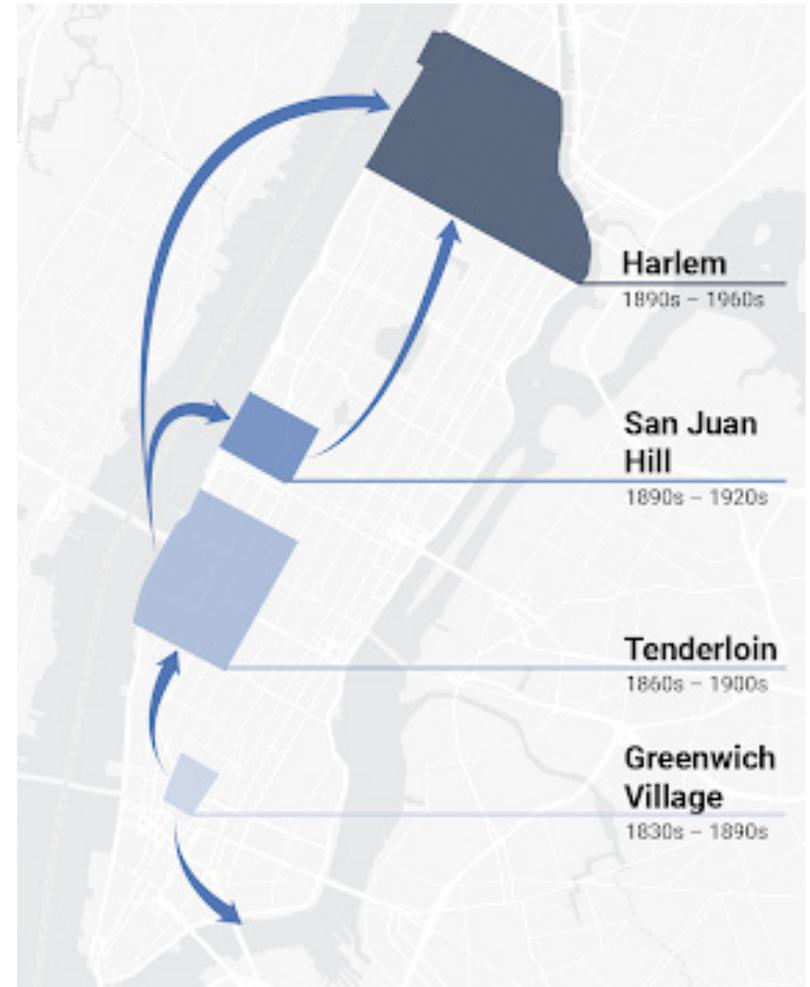
Policemen 1896

W.O. Lewin, c1909. Prints & Photographs Division

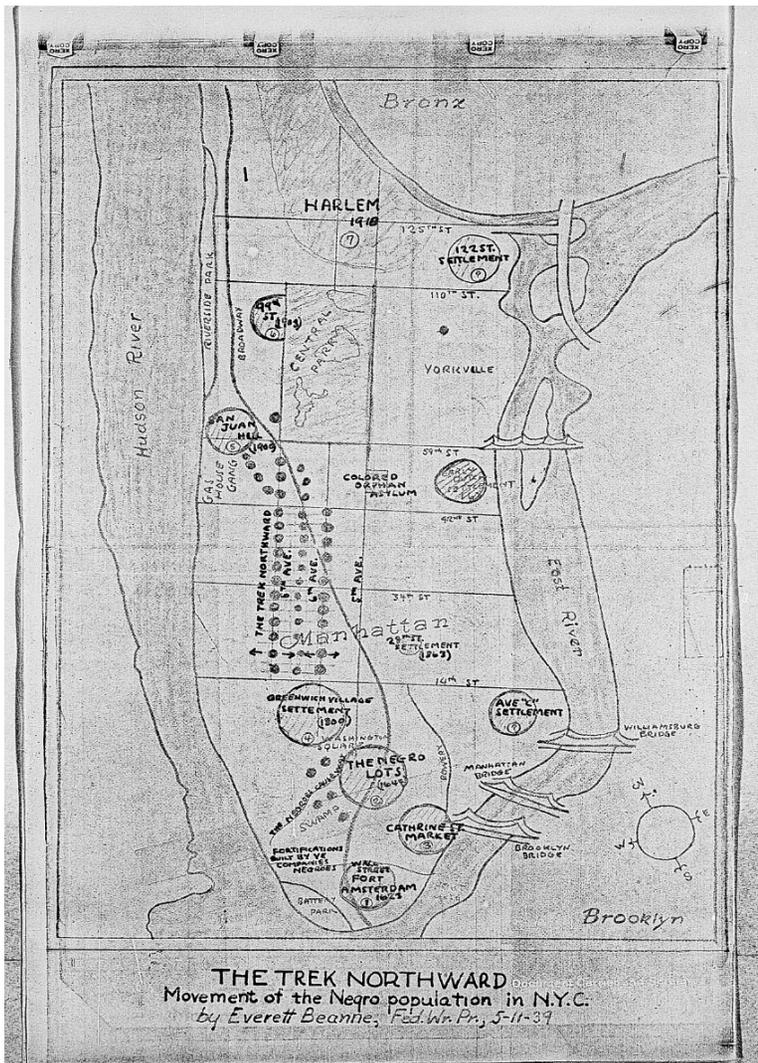
A Black Community within a Majority White Neighborhood

The Tenderloin was one site in the northward movement of the Black population in New York City, eventually culminating in Harlem as the center of Black Manhattan. This northward migration occurred during a period of urbanization, when many Black people arrived in cities from more rural areas. At the same time, large numbers of Black people from the South migrated North and West as part of the Great Migration, and many arrived in the United States from the Caribbean. This was in addition to Black people who had already lived in New York for generations (Ottley and Weatherby 1967).

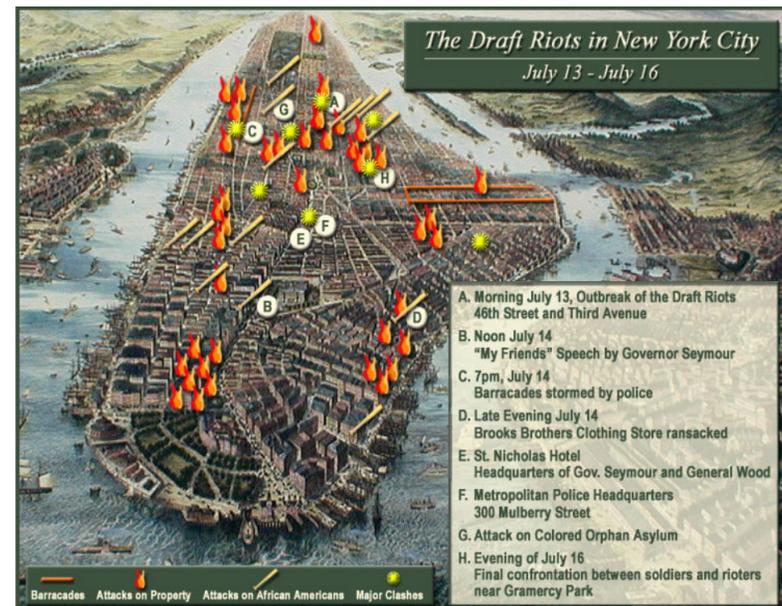
The Tenderloin was a center of Black Manhattan in the late the 1800s and into the turn of the century. However, a map from the 1939 Federal Writers Project, which tracked the northward movement of Black populations, does not even mention the Tenderloin by name (Federal Writers' Project 1939). This suggests that the Tenderloin area has traditionally been considered an intermediate step in the journey of Black Manhattanites, between the more permanent stops of Greenwich Village and San Juan Hill, and not as a distinct settlement of the Black community. Village and San Juan Hill, and not as a distinct settlement of the Black community. This studio sought to interrogate this underrecognized locale of Black history.



Interpretive map of the general northward movement of the Black population within Manhattan. Derived from "The Trek Northward: Movement of the Negro Population in N.Y.C." by Everett Beanne, Federal Writers Project, 1939. Graphic by A. Santana Miranda.



A map from the 1939 Federal Writers Project, which charted the northward migration of Black populations in Manhattan. Notably, the Tenderloin is not labelled as a distinct Black neighborhood. Map by Everett Beane, Federal Writers Project, 1939. Accessed through NYPL Digital Collections.



Map of the 1863 Draft Riots
 The Lehrman Institute



Lynching, physical violence, and property destruction during the 1863 Draft Riots
 NYPL Digital Collections

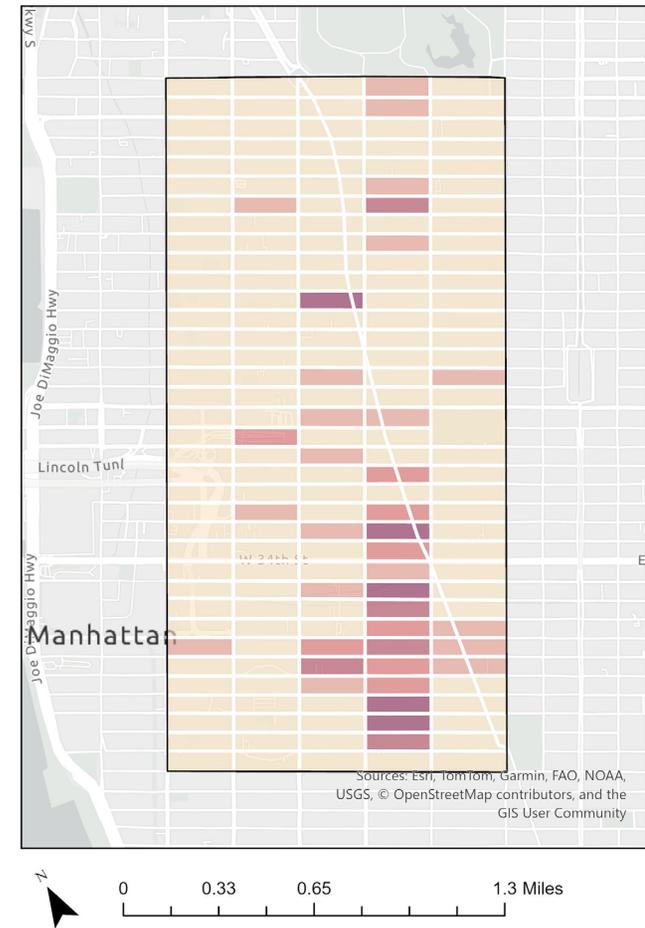


Destruction of the Colored Orphan's Asylum
during the 1863 Draft Riots
Harper's Weekly

A significant factor in the northward migration of Manhattan's Black communities was the 1863 Draft Riots, which influenced a turning point in New York's racial geography. The five-day riot began on July 11, 1863, as a White protest of mostly Irish Americans against the Civil War draft, but it quickly turned into a violent, racialized massacre targeting Black New Yorkers, especially in Lower Manhattan, where there was a significant Black community. One of the most horrific incidents was the burning of the Colored Orphan Asylum, located at 43rd Street and Fifth Avenue, where a White mob attacked a home for over 200 Black children. White racial violence pushed Black residents into new, often marginal spaces in the city, such as the Tenderloin.

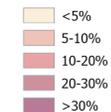
Research into Black populations during this period demonstrates the effect of this mass migration. Between 1860 and 1910, the Black population in the Tenderloin increased, and the White population decreased. The proportion of Black residents grew from four percent to eight percent of the overall population. At this time, the Black population in New York City as a whole was less than three percent. (Scheiner 1964, 6). This suggests that the Tenderloin represented a denser concentration of Black people than most of the city, meaning it was a Black community within a majority White neighborhood. In 1880, Black populations in the Tenderloin were initially clustered between 24th and 38th Streets, and between Sixth and Seventh Avenues.

Percent Black Population, 1880



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

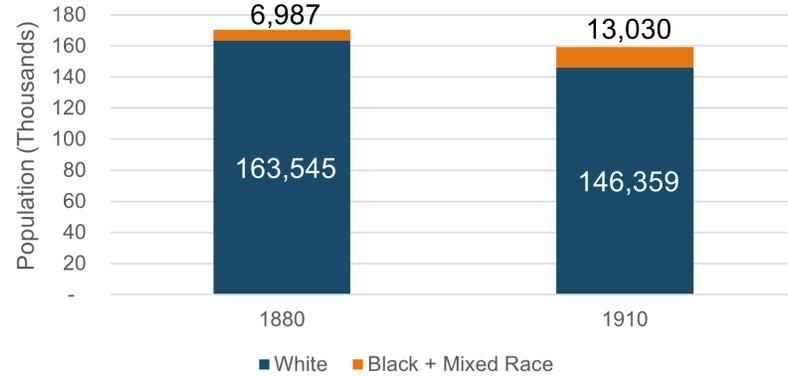
Percent Black Population, 1880



Map of the concentration of Black residents within the studio's study area.
Data sourced from Mapping Historical New York. Map generated by Sabina Busch.

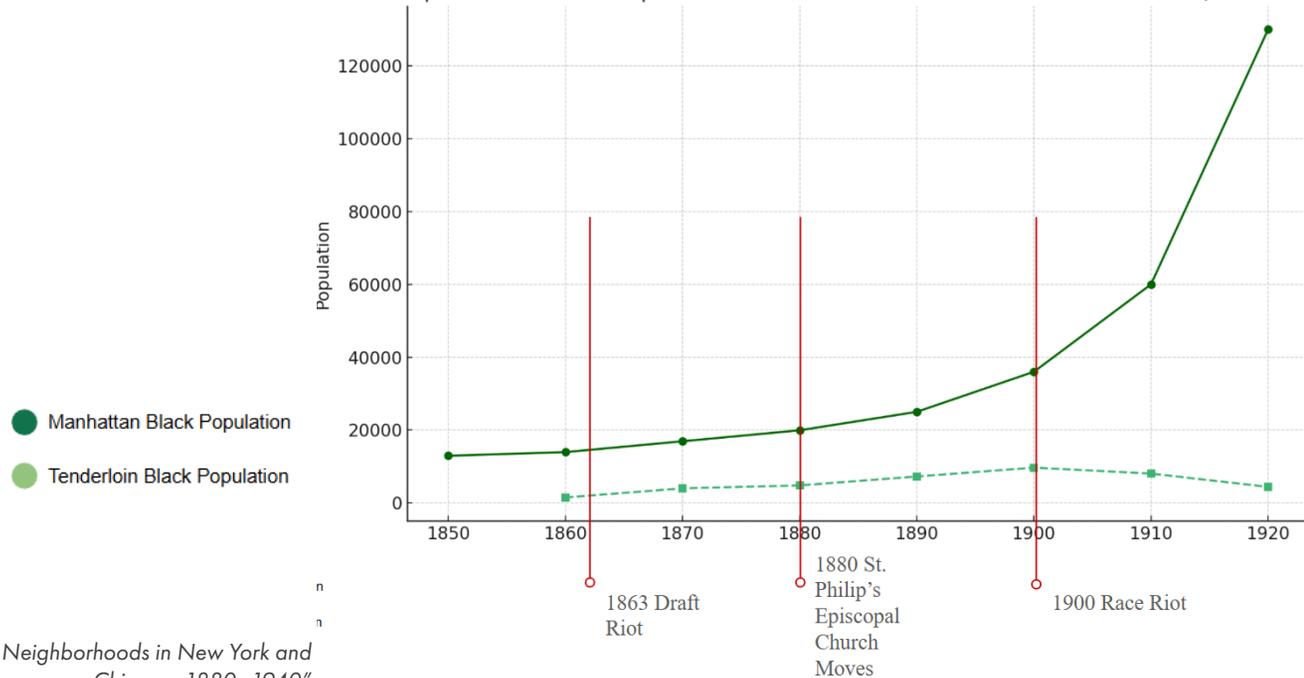
After the turn of the century, the Black population in the Tenderloin started decreasing; factors driving this will be discussed later in this report. But even as the Black population of the Tenderloin was decreasing, the overall Black population in Manhattan was growing rapidly. .

Population of the Tenderloin, by Race - 1880 vs. 1910

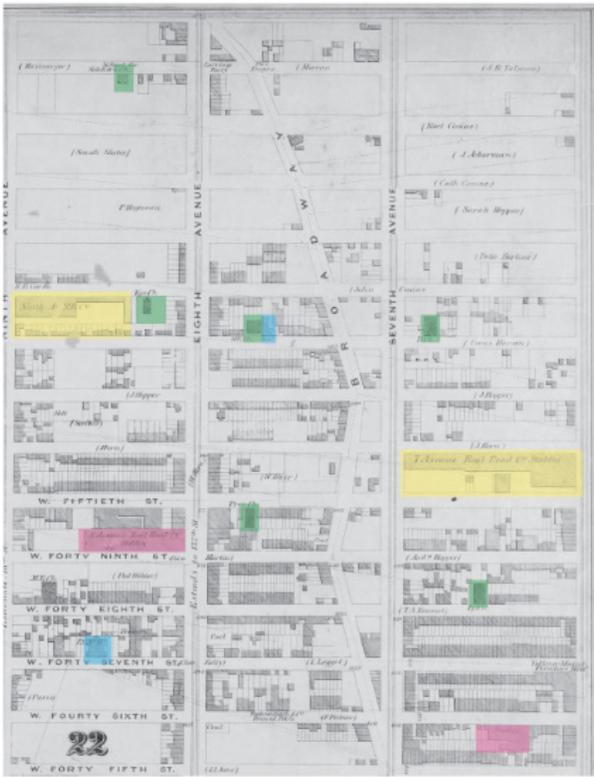


Graph of the Black and White population of the Tenderloin, 1880 vs. 1910. Data sourced from Mapping Historical New York. Graph generated by Noah Bronowich.

Comparison of Black Population Trends in Manhattan and the Tenderloin (1850-1920)



Data from: 'Emergent Ghettos: Black Neighborhoods in New York and Chicago, 1880-1940'



Left: 1867 Right: 1891
Land Use within the Tenderloin's northwest. Graphic by Elizabeth Kostina using Bromley Fire Insurance Maps. Elizabeth Kostina.

Land use was also a factor in the Tenderloin's evolving demographics. In 1867, much of the northern Tenderloin remained undeveloped. But by 1891, the northwest area of the Tenderloin was developed as a mixed-use district of residential, commercial, and entertainment establishments.

The introduction of New York City Zoning Laws in 1916 re-prioritized the Tenderloin as a major commercial core, particularly influencing and accelerating the development of the already rapidly expanding Garment District. This increasingly led to a clear segregation of land use in the neighborhood.



High-Rise Lofts in the Garment District, year unknown. Skyscraper Museum

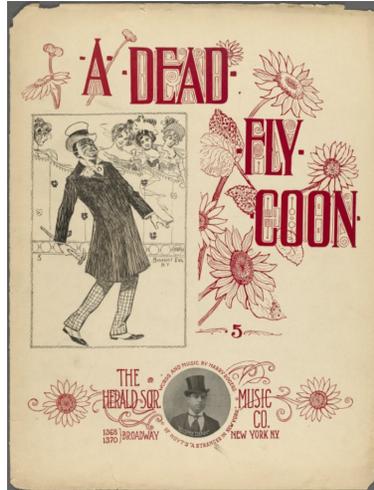
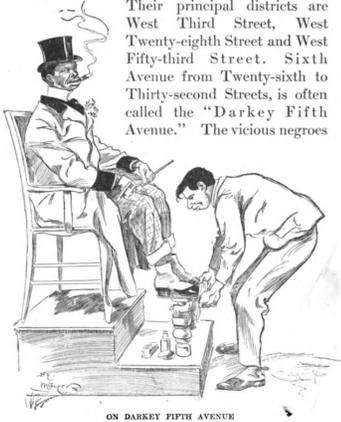


New York Board of Estimate and Apportionment, Use District Map Section No. 12, 1916 NYPL.

Naming Oppression Without Repeating Its Violence

They have also their vicious strata, and there are districts where the proverbial razor is a weapon to which frequent reference is made.

Their principal districts are West Third Street, West Twenty-eighth Street and West Fifty-third Street. Sixth Avenue from Twenty-sixth to Thirty-second Streets, is often called the "Darkey Fifth Avenue." The vicious negroes



Left: *The Real New York* Rupert Hughes 1904

Right: *A Dead Fly Coon*, *The Herald Sqr. Music Co.* 1898

In this report, certain historical terms and phrases—now recognized as offensive and unacceptable—appear only when directly quoted from archival documents, newspapers, or other sources. Their inclusion reflects an effort to expose the systemic oppression imposed by White structures upon Black communities in the Tenderloin and beyond. Preservation of original language, in these moments, allows the attitudes and power dynamics of the period to be made visible rather than erased.

Additionally, some of this historic terminology may conflict with our modern conceptions of racial identity. For example, census data from the study period described some residents' racial identity as "Mixed Race." Modern census records might instead characterize those same people as "Multiracial," however, the term Multiracial does not correlate perfectly with the historic term "Mixed Race," as the latter term was only used to refer to people with both White and Black ancestry (and not those with other multiracial identities). In the report, the term "Mixed Race" is used, to reflect the fact that census analyses in this report are based on historic racial categorizations, and not based on modern racial identities.

Engagement with histories of systemic White supremacy and injustice often involves encounters with unsettling language and imagery. Within the studio group, conversations around terminology related to race and identity have been approached with care and reflection. The process of navigating these choices remains ongoing, and further insight is welcomed as the work continues.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this studio integrated multiple modes of inquiry, including archival research, fieldwork, and stakeholder interviews. This triangulated approach allowed for a comprehensive analysis of both surviving and lost historic assets within the Tenderloin neighborhood. By overlaying documentary sources with contemporary observations and interviews, the studio not only explored what existed historically, but also investigated the processes through which significant places were erased, and the reasons behind that erasure.

Reparative Action Precedents

At the outset of the studio, students participated in a workshop focused on restorative justice in the field of historic preservation. The session explored how preservation practices might be mobilized to advance reparative goals. As part of this process, each student conducted independent research and presented a case study illustrating a specific form of reparative action. The examples examined a wide spectrum of approaches, including official statements of accountability, the creation of commemorative memorials, the development and implementation of repatriation policies, the commissioning of art installations and spatial interventions, and the transformation of public narratives through inclusive historical reinterpretation. These precedent studies helped establish a foundational understanding of how preservation can serve broader goals of social justice and historical redress.

Historic Context Themes

To guide the research and to challenge traditional uses of thematic studies within preservation, the studio faculty identified twelve distinct topics associated with the social-spatial dynamics of the Tenderloin. These themes were intended to push the boundaries of conventional preservation frameworks and to serve as interpretive lenses through which students could analyze and narrate the complex histories of the Tenderloin. The twelve themes were as follows:

- Housing
- Residents and Publics
- Entertainment
- Social Clubs, Community Organizations, and Activism
- Religion
- Health, Welfare, and Charitable Institutions
- Commerce, Industry, and Labor
- Education
- Racial Conflict and Solidarity
- Media and Representation
- Preservation
- Land Use

Using these themes as analytical categories, students conducted historical investigations and constructed place-based histories that foregrounded the lived experiences of the Black community in the Tenderloin.



Titus Kaphar's Paintings



Ashville, NC Community Reparations Commission



Native American Graves and Repatriation Act



Bruce's Beach



Tijuana Projection



The Sarr-Savoy Report



Buraku Liberation



The Waiting Room by Simone Leigh



Comfort women



The Emmett Till Interpretive Center



South Yard Dwellings at Montpelier



The Cloaking by Joiiri Minaya



Memorial to Japanese Americans Imprisoned in World War II



The Kamisan Action

Historic Assets and Their Associated Contexts

Through archival and thematic research, the studio identified a range of historic sites connected to Black history in the Tenderloin. These places, referred to as “historic assets,” included both structures that survive today and those that have been demolished or substantially altered. The identified assets were geolocated within the study area and visually mapped. Each asset was assigned a thematic category from the twelve identified context themes, and the mapping was color-coded accordingly to reflect each asset’s primary association.

Non Extant Historic Assets

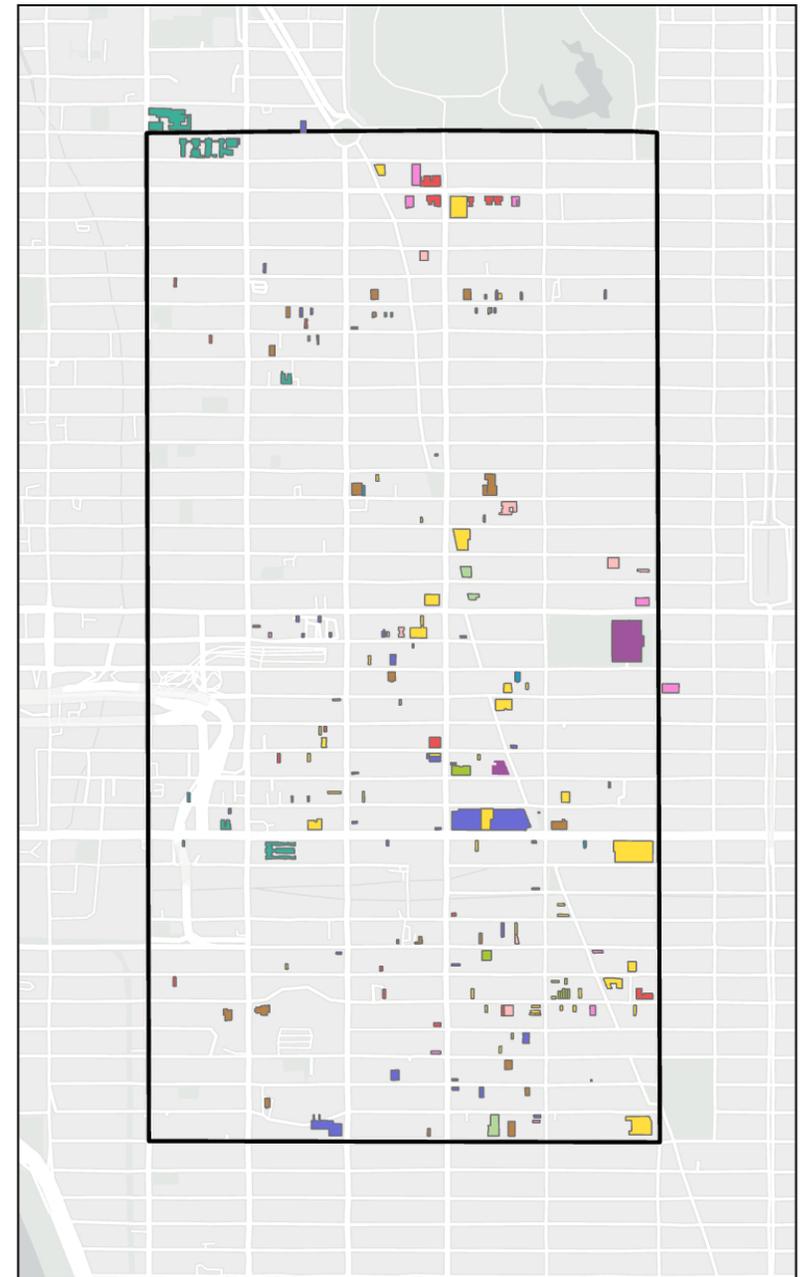
- Housing
- Residents + Publics
- Entertainment
- Social Clubs + Community Organizations
- Religion
- Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions
- Labor + Industry
- Education + Childcare
- Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity
- Media + Representation
- Landuse

Extant Historic Assets

- Housing
- Residents + Publics
- Entertainment
- Social Clubs + Community Organizations
- Religion
- Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions
- Labor + Industry
- Education + Childcare
- Media + Representation
- Preservation
- Landuse

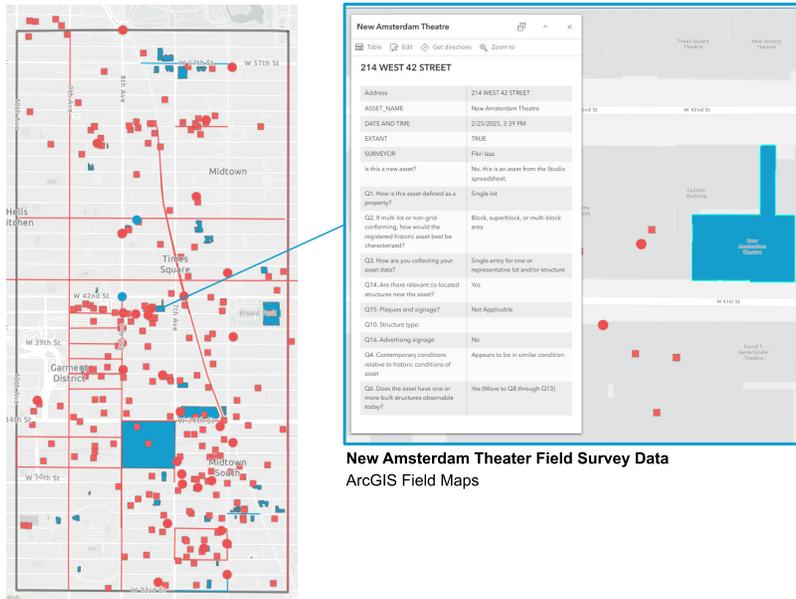
HP Studio II 2025

Historic Assets by Associated Historic Context



Field Survey of Historic Asset

In partnership with Dr. Bilge Kose and the students enrolled in the Digital Heritage Documentation course, the studio carried out a field survey using ArcGIS Field Maps. Students visited each of the identified historic asset locations to determine the current physical status of the buildings or sites. The survey recorded whether the original structure remained intact, had been altered, or no longer existed. This direct observation was a critical component in assessing the extent of physical survival and loss among sites significant to Black history in the Tenderloin.



New Amsterdam Theatre	
Table	Get directions
214 WEST 42 STREET	
Address	214 WEST 42 STREET
ASSET_NAME	New Amsterdam Theatre
DATE AND TIME	2/25/2025, 3:39 PM
EXTANT	TRUE
SURVEYOR	Felix Ives
Is this a new asset?	No, this is an asset from the Studio workspace.
Q1: How is this asset defined as a property?	Single lot
Q2: If multi lot or non grid conforming, has the asset the registered historic asset been deconstructed?	Block, superblock, or multi block area
Q3: How are you collecting your asset data?	Single entry for one or representative lot and/or structure
Q14: Are there relevant co-located structures near the asset?	Yes
Q15: Plaques and signage?	Not Applicable
Q16: Structure type?	
Q16: Advertising signage?	No
Q4: Contemporary conditions relative to historic conditions of asset?	Appears to be in similar condition
Q6: Does the asset have one or more built structures observable today?	Yes (Move to Q8 through Q13)

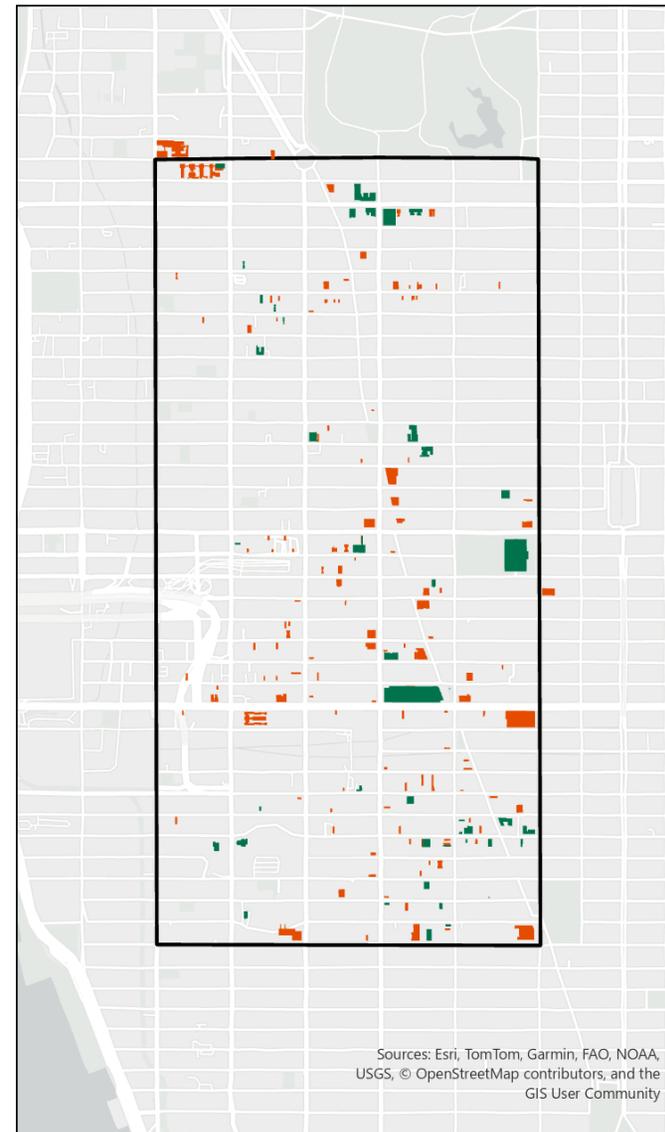
New Amsterdam Theater Field Survey Data
ArcGIS Field Maps

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Assessing Survival

The studio identified and surveyed a total of 293 historic assets. Of these, only 58 physically survive in any recognizable form. The results of this survey were visualized through mapping, which highlighted the location and survival status of each site, with surviving assets represented in blue. The map underscored the widespread and systematic loss of significant places associated with Black history in the study area, demonstrating the extent of historical erasure in the urban landscape.

Surviving Historic Assites and Non-surviving Historic Asstes within the Tenderloin Study Area



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

- Surviving
- Non Surviving
- Boundary Layer

HP Studio II 2025

3D Laser Scanning of Tin Pan Alley

As an extension of the studio’s fieldwork, students in the Digital Heritage Documentation course conducted a targeted survey of Tin Pan Alley, one of the key historic assets examined in the studio. Using a FARO 3D laser scanner, the team completed twelve high-resolution scans of the street’s facades. These scans were processed to generate a comprehensive three-dimensional digital model. The resulting model will be used to produce accurate measured drawings and to conduct façade condition assessments, contributing to the long-term documentation and preservation of this culturally significant site.

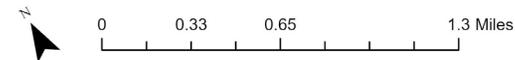
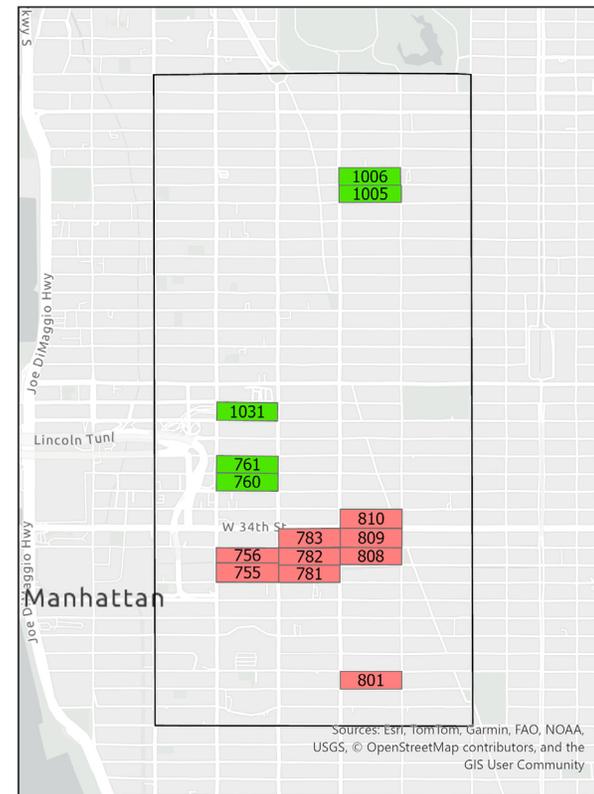


Digital Heritage Documentation

Identification of Representative Blocks

To contextualize demographic patterns and understand the historical presence and movement of the Black population in the Tenderloin, the studio analyzed census and population data from the study period. Based on this data, the team selected a series of representative blocks that demonstrated both a high population density and a high percentage of Black residents. These blocks served as focal points for characterizing patterns of settlement, displacement, and migration. They provided insight into the social and spatial dynamics that shaped the lives of Black residents and the factors contributing to their displacement over time.

Representative Blocks

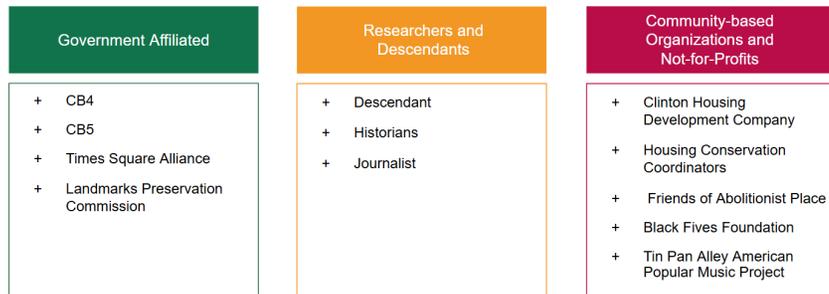


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Displacement
Increase in Black Population

Interviews with Community Stakeholders

As part of a co-learning and collaborative approach, the studio identified and contacted over forty organizations, institutions, and individuals whose work or experiences aligned with the themes explored in the project. From this outreach, seventeen individuals responded and agreed to participate in interviews. These interviewees represented a diverse array of sectors and perspectives, including those not traditionally associated with historic preservation. The interviews focused on identifying contemporary cultural assets, uncovering community concerns, and exploring opportunities for collaboration, as a means of connecting preservation efforts to a broader agenda of social action. These conversations were instrumental in supplementing the archival and field-based research with lived knowledge and present-day priorities.



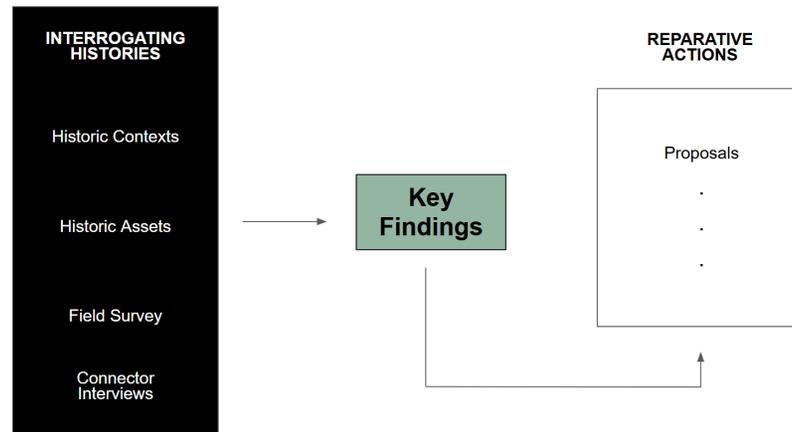
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Synthesizing Key Findings from Research

Following the completion of thematic research, field surveys, and stakeholder interviews, the studio synthesized its results into six key findings. These findings reflect the intersections and recurrent patterns observed across all twelve thematic categories. The synthesis aimed to articulate the structural issues, historical injustices, and contemporary needs that emerged throughout the research process. The conclusions served not only as a diagnostic tool but also as a framework for formulating forward-looking proposals.

Key Findings as the Basis for Reparative Action Proposals

The six key findings formed the basis for the development of reparative action proposals. These proposals were conceived in direct response to the patterns of erasure, displacement, and under-recognition identified in the research.

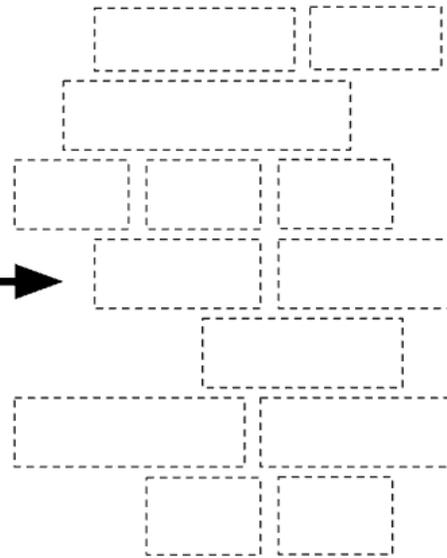


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12 HISTORIC CONTEXT THEMES

Housing
Residents + Publics
Entertainment
Social Clubs, Community Orgs., + Activism
Religion
Health, Welfare, + Charitable Institutions
Commerce, Industry, + Labor
Education
Racial Conflict + Solidarity
Media + Representation
Preservation
Land Use

RESEARCH EVIDENCE



6 KEY FINDINGS

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency/Black Space/Black Resilience

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces/Stories Today

HP Studio II 2025

KEY FINDINGS

From initial research into 12 historic contexts, interviews with connector organizations, and from field surveys, the studio team drew critical conclusions to understand the intersections and recurrent issues across all themes. The team organized the conclusions into six key findings:

- **Systemic White Supremacy**
- **Being Black in White Space**
- **Black Agency and Claims to Space**
- **Displacement**
- **Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin**
- **Encountering Black Spaces Today**

These key findings act as a distilled version of the studio team's work, which represents the pairing of critical conclusions with evidence-based case studies. The key findings are not a complete picture of the history of the Tenderloin given the constraints of a semester-long study. However, the analysis illustrates threaded issues and intersecting patterns that influence the representation of that history in the built environment and in the preservation canon.

Systemic White Supremacy

Across all of the historic context themes, the studio team found evidence of how systemic White supremacy shaped the lived experiences and built environments of Black residents. The nature of the Tenderloin as a majority White area meant that interactions between White and Black residents were frequent. This section of the report will break down the ways White people oppressed Black communities, including economic, social, and physical forms of violence.

Black Housing

White landlords who rented to Black tenants in the Tenderloin, and Manhattan in general, engaged in a repeated pattern of neglect, eviction, and demolition. White landlords neglected buildings rented to Black tenants and then, as soon as it was profitable, evicted those tenants and demolished their homes in favor of more profitable residential or commercial buildings. “The people who buy this class of houses are speculators,” claimed one White real estate man in 1889. “They try to get in at cheap figures, and then hold on until some one [sic] comes along to give them a profit” (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889).

In general, White landlords only rented dwellings to Black tenants if those dwellings were in some way deemed unsuitable for White tenants. In the Tenderloin, some buildings were deemed unsuitable because they had become associated with vice. One observer in 1889 described an area in the southeast corner of the Tenderloin, bound by 24th and 33rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, as illustrative of this dynamic:

Formerly this neighborhood was largely given over to houses of ill-fame and gambling, and there are still many left. When these were ‘pulled,’ or when the occupants were dispossessed, the landlords and agents found that they could not get any respectable white people to rent them, owing to their reputation. They found, however, that there were many colored people who would be glad to occupy them, as the prejudice was so strong against taking them in as tenants in respectable neighborhoods that they were forced to live in the most wretched places (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889).



Rear House, 403 West 40th Street
Courtesy of Clinton Housing Development Corporation



"A Flat in the Pauper Barracks, West Thirty-Eighth Street, With All Its Furniture"
How the Other Half Lives, 1890

Many of the White residents moved out, and Black residents moved in. Within a few years, the street was known as a center of Black life, and was an unusual example of a district in which Black residents occupied housing of a better quality than they typically had access to in the Tenderloin. According to one author, "The elite among the black clergymen and professionals lived or led their social lives" around 53rd Street. "Of the black settlements in Manhattan, the West Fifty-third Street district was the most attractive and most culturally stylish. The tenements there were not as crowded or as unsightly as those farther down in the Tenderloin.

Landlords generally rented poor quality and older housing stock to Black tenants, reserving new builds and well-maintained buildings for White tenants. Noting that there was a recent movement among "private enterprise" to "build new improved accommodations for the unhoused population" in the wake of tenement reform efforts, one publication in 1900 made it clear that these new improved accommodations were not open to Black tenants:

There is one element of the tenement-house population for which speculative builders have shown no disposition to provide improved housing, and which has remained practically untouched by the public and private efforts so far made to ameliorate life in the tenements, and this element is the Negro population (Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide 1900).

The tenements' White landlords were willing to rent to Black tenants were less likely to include basic sanitary infrastructure. "As a rule, none of the Negro tenements contain improvements, not even ranges, beyond wash tubs." They were also more likely to be dilapidated and neglected (Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide 1900).

A writer in 1905 described some of the worst of this housing, a set of buildings around 28th Street: "around a central stone-paved court clustered... two-story tenements, half wood, half brick, all crazily out of plumb and in various stages of dilapidation." Rookeries like this one, said the writer, "used to abound near Thirtieth street, ruinous, unsanitary structures they were." She noted that, despite the dilapidated structures, "an atmosphere of refinement pervaded" the apartment she was visiting.

The Rise of West 53rd Street

In 1880, of the six blocks on either side of 53rd Street between Sixth and Eighth Avenues, five of them had very small Black populations, under 10 percent of the total. Three of those had Black populations under three percent. The only exception was the block on the south side of 53rd Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. In 1880, this block had a Black population of 23 percent. However, because the population for each block include residents who lived to the north and south of 53rd Street (i.e. 52nd and 54th Street) and on the adjoining avenues, this statistic is misleading.

A close analysis of census data shows that the vast majority of the Black residents residing on this block lived on 52nd Street—only two Black people lived on the south side of 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues in 1880, both of them working as live-in “servants” for White families. However, perhaps because of the installation of the elevated rail the year before, the north side of 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues was, in 1880, home to two all-Black households.

Still, of the 416 people living on 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues in 1880, only 15, or about four percent, were Black. 53rd Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues was similar—in fact, none of the Black population of the blocks on either side of 53rd Street resided on 53rd Street itself in 1880. Only the stretch of 53rd Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues housed more than a few Black people in 1880. Of the 118 Black people who lived on the blocks to either side of 53rd Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, 76 of them resided on 53rd Street itself.

By 1900, however, two significant demographic shifts had taken place. First, the total population of this stretch of 53rd Street had more than doubled, to 868 people. Second, the Black population had increased from 15 people in 1880, to 445 people in 1900—an increase of nearly 3000 percent. In 1900, more than half of the residents of this stretch of 53rd Street were Black.



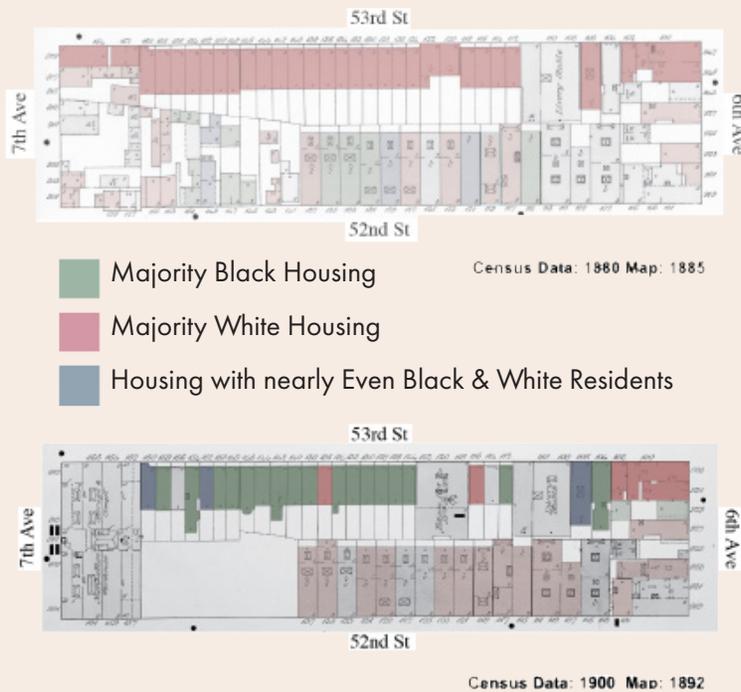
- Representative Block
- 6th and 9th Ave. Elevated Rails
- 53rd St. Elevated Rail

Elevated Rail Line Built on W. 53rd St.
Annotations to map by Abbey Francis.



Left: The “El” turning from Sixth Ave onto W 53rd St., 1938 NYPL
Right: Heading west on W 53rd St., from Seventh Ave, 1937 NYPL

In 1910, the total population of this stretch of 53rd street decreased slightly, to 730 people, but the Black population increased to 515 people, or 71 percent of the whole.



W. 53rd St. Majority Black in 1900. Annotations to map by Abbey Francis.

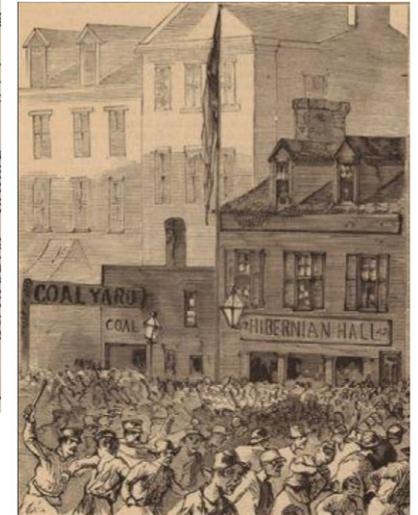


101-143 W 53rd St., 1927 NYPL

Other accounts say the same – that Black tenants of the Tenderloin made the best of even the worst buildings: setting the table for every meal, keeping potted geraniums in the windows, and hanging pictures of Black heroes, like Frederick Douglass, on the walls. And yet, there was only so much they could do. In this apartment, for instance, during or after a rain... the floor space was occupied with pans and wash basins, set there to catch the water which sometimes poured in from the leaky roof" (Worker of the New York Colored Mission 1905; Ovington 1905; Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide 1889).



Left: Between 28th and 29th Sts. Along Eighth Ave, 1880. Perris & Browne
Right: W 29th St. and Eighth Ave., 1871. NYPL



Ultimately, Black housing in the Tenderloin took a number of forms depending on the area and the period. The main commonality was that, when compared to housing available to White tenants, it was more poorly maintained, more expensive, and more crowded.

Some of this increase in density was due to the fact that Black tenants took on boarders at higher rates than any other group, in order to pay the extortionate rents. This was true at 126 W 53rd Street. In 1880, the building was occupied by one family of five White people. In 1900, that same building housed 12 Black people, 10 of whom were lodgers. 128 W 53rd Street shows another phenomenon – that density often increased because White landlords divided larger dwellings into smaller ones. In 1880, this building had housed five White people – three family members and two servants. In 1900, that same building housed 14 Black people spread across three separate apartments.

The Tombs

The studio team identified a block, bound by 32nd and 33rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, as one of several that was representative of the changes affecting the Tenderloin in this era. The block included an especially notorious tenement, nicknamed the “Tombs,” which is just one example of the grim and unsafe housing White landlords rented to Black tenants.

Officially called the “Florida” flats, the tenement’s nickname was a reference to another notorious building nicknamed the “Tombs”—the city prison. Both buildings featured a narrow passage flanked by high walls hung with balconies. The tenement, according to one contemporary observer, “is situated in the rear of the lot, and is entered from an alley way. Its only safety, from a sanitary point of view, is in the ventilation which it obtains from the court-yard running through the centre and the open space running nearly all round. The western wall is practically barricaded from the light, with the exception of small windows sufficient to give air to the sleeping rooms. The front rooms in the courts are almost pitch dark” (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889).



1880 Florida Flats Tombs map. Annotations to map by Abbey Francis.



- Majority Black Housing
- Majority White Housing

Census records from 1880 show the Tombs was occupied primarily by Black residents. Annotations to map by Abbey Francis.

The Tombs were also crowded. Described as a “beehive of humanity,” the two buildings contained 48 occupied apartments housing at least 180 people. This was typical of the era – Black housing, in the Tenderloin and elsewhere, was often more crowded than White housing. A stretch of buildings on 53rd street is illustrative of how Black and White occupancy differed, even in the exact same buildings. In 1880, when the stretch of buildings was occupied by White residents, the average occupancy of each address was six people. In 1900, when most of the buildings were occupied by Black residents or a mix of Black and White residents, the average occupancy of each address was 15 people.



- Representative Block
- The Florida Flats

Annotations to map by Abbey Francis.

RENTS UNDER WHITE TENANTS.			RENTS UNDER COLORED TENANTS.		
		Per Month			Per Month
Front—	1st floor (store, &c)...	\$21	Front—	1st floor (store, &c)...	\$21
	2d “	13		2d “	14
	3d “	13		3d “	14
	4th “ (and rear)...	21		4th “	14
Rear—	2d “	12	Rear—	2d “	12
	3d “	12		3d “	13
	4th “ (see front)...	—		4th “	13
Rear House—	1st “	8	Rear House—	1st “	10
	2d “	11		2d “	12
	3d “	9		3d “	11
	4th “	8		4th “	10
Total.....		\$127	Total.....		\$144

“Something About Our Colored Population,” Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide, January 26, 1889.

This chart accompanied an 1889 article in the Real Estate Record and Guide in which landlords touted the benefits of renting to Black tenants. The landlords noted that, because Black tenants rarely had other options, they would accept the worst kinds of housing and could be forced to pay higher rents than White tenants. A White landlord provided the chart to illustrate the rents he personally had charged when one of his buildings was all White, versus the rents he charged when that same building was all Black. He collected 13 percent more from the Black tenants.

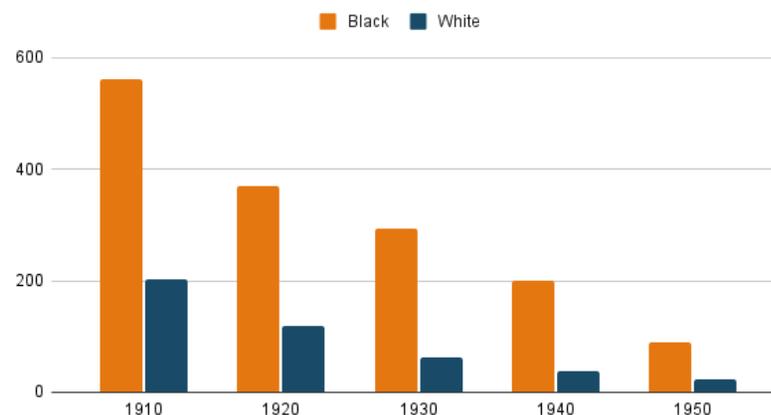
Black Healthcare and the Rise of White Male-Dominated Obstetrics

The health of Black residents was chronically compromised due to inadequate housing conditions. White landlords charged Black tenants higher rents, and there were few affordable housing options, which often meant living in cellars or rear buildings of tenements. These were damp, unventilated spaces that made people highly susceptible to disease. This contributed to Black residents having significantly higher mortality rates than their White neighbors (Drolet and Lowell 1952).

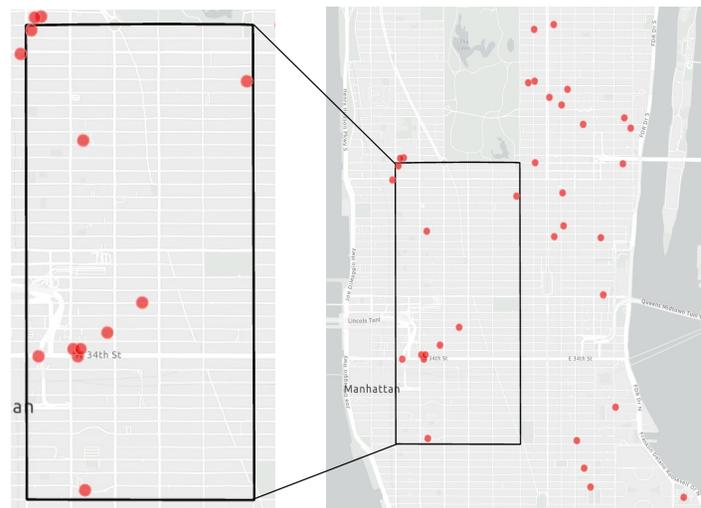
Access to healthcare facilities in the Tenderloin was limited, which further compounded health challenges in the neighborhood. Throughout the period, 1870-1920, there is a noticeable absence of new charitable hospitals being built in this area, whereas the east side of Manhattan had at least 17 hospitals at the turn of the century. In 1908, the Standing Committee on Hospitals of the State Charities Aid Association observed that “the Middle West side...was lacking. Roosevelt Hospital, in the far

northwest corner of the Tenderloin, was without doubt one of the busiest hospitals in the city with hundreds of patients being turned away every year for lack of room (State Charities Aid Association (N.Y.) 1908).”

Tuberculosis Death Rate Per 100,000 People



Leading cause of death among Black and White populations, 1910-1950. New York Tuberculosis and Health Association, 1952.



Hospitals and Clinics with the Tenderloin Study Area. Data from NYC Open Data and HP Studio II at Columbia University. Map authored by Heather Oakley.

In 1845, Dr. James Marion Sims, a White male gynecologist, embarked on a medical journey of exploitation and abuse of enslaved Black women and girls that formed the foundation of modern day obstetrics. Over the course of the nineteenth century, as the field and number of White male obstetricians grew, the role of midwives in childbirth came under attack by White doctors and nurses who sought to eradicate the profession. They led a systematic campaign against Black and immigrant midwives, labelling them as “dirty”, “ignorant,” and “dangerous” (Crowell 1906).



Robert Thom, J. Marion Sims: Gynecologic Surgeon, from “The History of Medicine”, Oil on canvas, 1952. University of Michigan Museum of Art.

In 1907, in New York City, midwives delivered approximately 43,000 babies. However, in that same year, “The Cities Committee of the Assembly was told that it was a menace to allow an army of midwives to ply their vocation without any inspection or regulation by the health authorities,” and the bill to regulate midwives proceeded unopposed (New York Times 1907). The attack on midwifery culminated in 1908 with the Department of Health’s new rules and regulations regarding the practice of midwives, which made it impossible for Black midwives to continue practicing and gave significant power to White male obstetricians and maternity hospitals.

During the studio’s study period, more and more women were told that institutions like Sloane Maternity Hospital, one of the few hospitals in or near the Tenderloin, were safer than delivering in their homes. However, Sloane charged \$25 to give birth there, which was equivalent to two months or more of rent for those living in the Tenderloin.

HEARING ON MIDWIVES’ BILL.

It Provides for Their Regulation by the Health Department.

Special to The New York Times.

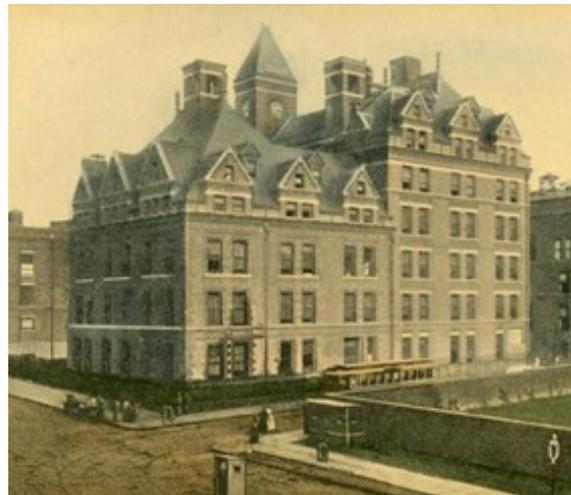
ALBANY, March 12.—“Of the 1,000 midwives in New York City, 800 are incompetent,” declared F. Elizabeth Crowell to-day before the Cities Committee of the Assembly. She appeared with Dr. Darlington on behalf of the Gluck bill to regulate midwifery, which provides that the New York Health Department may adopt rules and regulations for its practice.

It was further declared that at 43,834 births in New York last year midwives were called in. This is 42 per cent. of the births in New York for that year.

The committee was told that it was a menace to allow an army of midwives to ply their vocation without any inspection or regulation by the health authorities. There was no opposition to the bill.

Hearing on Midwives’ Bill. New York Times, March 12, 1907.

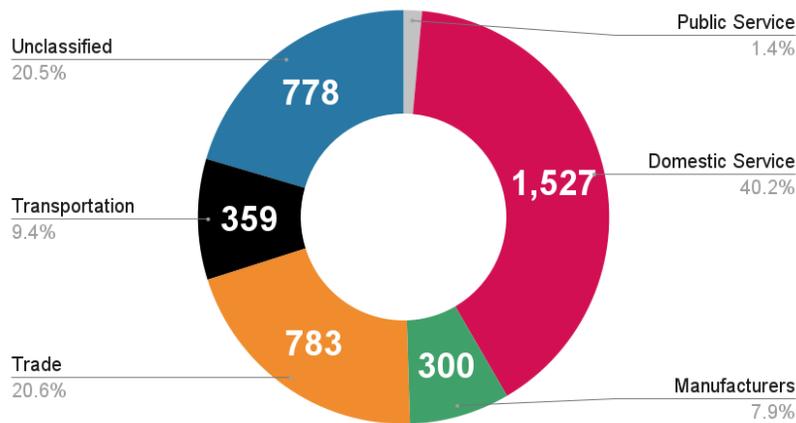
Those who had some income were expected to pay the Hospital’s \$25 fee, and if they were not able, mothers were expected to repay the hospital by working there for three months once the mother had recovered (New York Times 1894). The expectation of labor for labor perpetuated an era of “neo-slavery,” as White doctors continued to erode Black women’s control of the birthing process, harkening back to the experiences of enslaved Black women and girls.



Sloane Maternity Hospital, c. 1887
Courtesy of Columbia University.

Economic Segregation and Labor

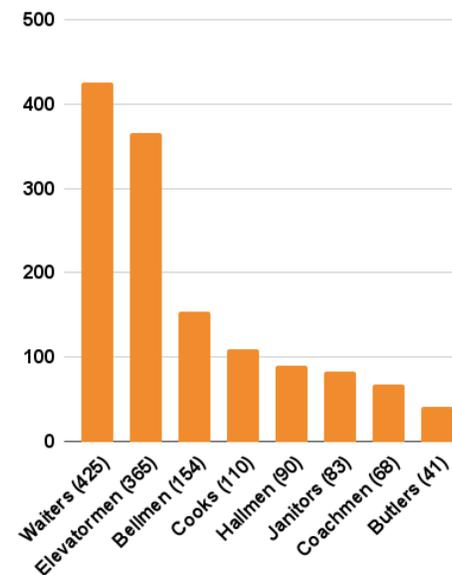
White people also used methods of economic violence to exclude Black laborers from certain industries. Despite their skill and intelligence, Black tradesmen found little employment due to coordinated segregation from their White peers. The same was true for industrial employment, where financial and racial preferences for the cheap labor of European immigrants kept factories ethnically White (Sacks 2006). Entrance into the industrial workforce often came only in the form of strikebreaking, where White employers preyed upon Black men’s need for work as a tool to bust labor organizing, thus intensifying racial tensions between the Black and White working classes. This segregation pushed Black workers into jobs the White working class had vacated for industrial positions, most abundantly in domestic or service work. Graduates of New York’s Manumission Society School for Negroes had observed this situation as early as 1865, noting that alumni left school with “every avenue closed against them and spoke of difficulties those who had trades encountered, many being forced to become waiters, barbers, servants, and laborers” (Haynes 1912).



Occupations of Black Men in Manhattan, 1905
Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912. Chart by Matt Goff.

Census data corroborates this historical evidence: between 1880 and 1920, the highest single profession among Black men in the Tenderloin were waiter positions, presumably hired by the many clubs, theaters, and restaurants of the district. Labor statistics of representative blocks

revealed that in each center of Black population the proportional share of waiters or hotel workers comprised between 30 percent to 40 percent of the total working male population (Census 1880; Census 1900). As reported by George Edmund Haynes, “the earnings in hotel service play such an important part in the income of males of the Negro group,” due in large part to the supplemental income earned from tips on top of normal wages—a base wage of \$5.00 a day, standard among other professions open to Black men (Haynes 1912). Due to the very informal and undocumented nature of tipping, no hard numbers exist as to how much income these workers accrued through tips. But Haynes qualifies that, “Negro men receive very inadequate wages in domestic and personal service except three or four occupations that afford ‘tips,’” further signifying the importance of tipped positions (Haynes 1912). Given the nocturnal nature of this work—an inversion of White preconceptions of the temporality of men’s labor—Black men’s presence in their neighborhoods during daylight reportedly gave “an appearance of idleness among the population” that reinforced racist White stereotypes of Black men as idle or “lazy” laborers (Ovington 1905, 25).



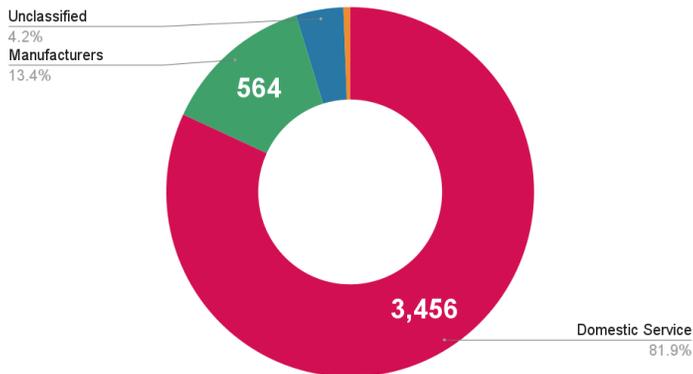
Male Service Occupations by Category, 1905
Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912. Chart by Matt Goff.



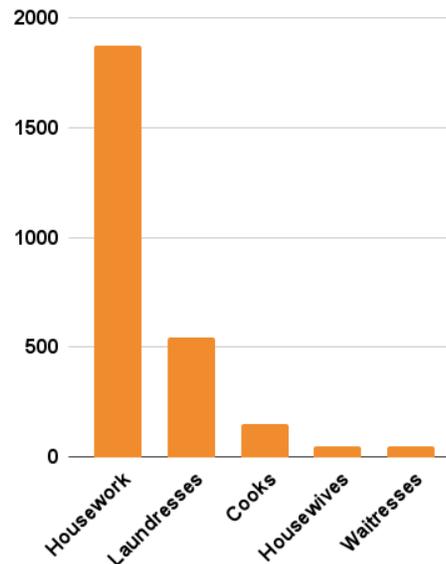
Hotelmen at 46th Street, 1913
Two men ('hallboys'?) on the roof of a building at 46th Street and Lexington. 1913. New York Heritage Digital Collections. William D. Hassler Photograph Collection.

The working lives of Black women were defined by their roles as servants, maids, or cooks in White homes throughout New York City. Unlike Black men, Black women mostly worked during the day away from their homes, this daytime absence leading to untrue White stereotypes that Black women were absent mothers and unfit to raise their children. All the while, White people fetishized Black women as prized rearers of White children. If not working in the homes of White families, a high proportion of Black women worked in their own homes, most frequently as dressmakers or laundresses. Speaking to the latter, Black female laundry workers were highly skilled and widely hireable, but the nature of this work often turned "her home into a workshop, and makes her few rooms hotter, more cluttered, more unhealthful" (Ovington 1905, 25). While this quote from social worker Mary White Ovington carries, perhaps, some paternalistic undertones as it continues to subtly question the fitness of Black working mothers as child rearers, it does shed light on the uncomfortable reality of having to make a living from one's cramped tenement. White employers' targeted exclusion of Black women from the industrial workplace caused this condition.

While White women found greater agency, growing economic independence, and community in the industrial workplace, these same White women actively excluded Black women from accessing the same opportunities. According to historian Marcy Sacks, "white women refused to work alongside black women and persuaded factory owners to preserve the racial homogeneity of the city's female-dominated workplaces," resulting in the high concentration of domestic service work among Black women in the Tenderloin.



Occupations of Black Women in Manhattan, 1905
Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912. Chart by Matt Goff.



Female Service Occupations by Category, 1905
Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912. Chart by Matt Goff.

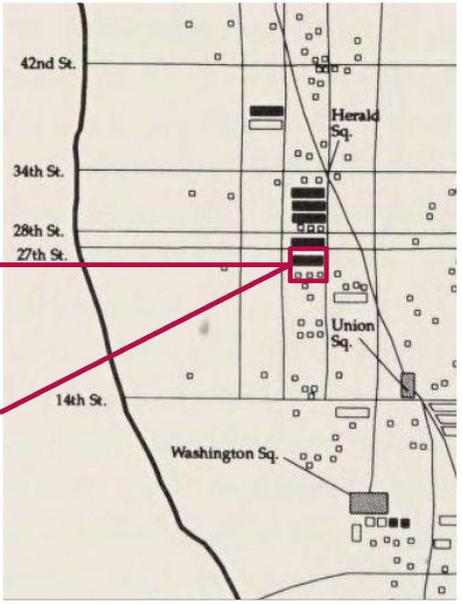


Emma, Servant to the Hassler Family of New York, 1913
 Emma ironing in the Hassler apartment at 150 Vermilyea Avenue, New York City, July 3, 1913. New York Heritage Digital Collections. William D. Hassler Photograph Collection.

It is perhaps unsurprising that a block of Black residences along West 25th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues where 70 percent of the women worked in domestic service – the highest rate in the studio’s study area – who earned an average wage of \$6 per week (three dollars less than the minimum livable income published by the city) would be referred to as the Tenderloin’s “center of Black sex work” (Gilfoyle 1992, 209). This alternative income was likely a necessity to round out these low wages. But this characterization of a devoted sex work district on West 25th Street must be taken with suspicion, as solicitation was often used by police as false pretense for arresting Black women. Nevertheless, if taken to be true, this reveals a near never-ending workday for some female workers. Domestic jobs in White homes had gruellingly long hours, reportedly as long as fourteen a day (Ovington 1905, 25). For those who continued to work in the employ of brothels upon returning home, these working hours could extend even further into the night.



Average Wage: \$6.00/week



Map of Houses of Prostitution
 Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992.



This photograph of Black women at Seventh Avenue and West 30th Street, 1903, stands in stark contrast to the depictions found in White media
 Museum of the City of New York

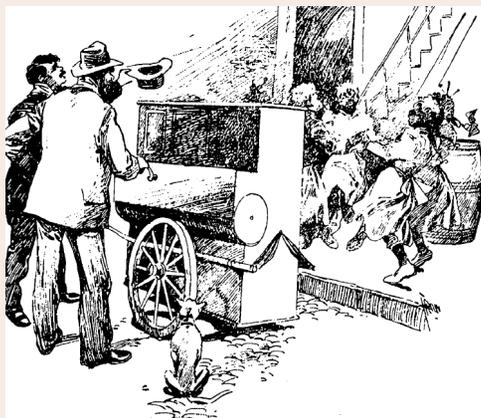
Stereotypes of Black Women

Racial bias overrode observable reality in the Tenderloin, linking Black residents to poverty and slum conditions and Black women to promiscuity and sex work. White media reinforced these stereotypes through descriptions and drawings that did not reflect reality. An 1895 article in *The New York Tribune* entitled, "The New Negro Quarter," sought to characterize the "sights and scenes among the poorer denizens of the 'Black Belt':"

//

It is the southwestern corner of the old Tenderloin that the negroes have marked out for their own...Always and invariably on 'dress parade' is the new quarter. How the most of the men support their wives and families is a mystery, for they seem to do nothing but lounge about street corners. The only explanation lies in the washtubs over which countless gayly turbaned 'aunties' and 'mammies' bend, making their apartments perpetual 'steam rooms.' The younger women, arrayed in gowns that are wonderfully good imitations of the fashions, though heaven only knows how they can afford them, walk in pairs and trios up and down Seventh-ave., flirting with every man they pass (*New York Tribune* 1895).

//



Derogatory depictions of Black women, shown flirting and carousing, in White media "The New Negro Quarter," *New York Tribune*, October 13, 1895

Law enforcement likewise perpetuated these misrepresentations of Black women, leading to harassment and arrests. As LaShawn Harris notes in *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy*:

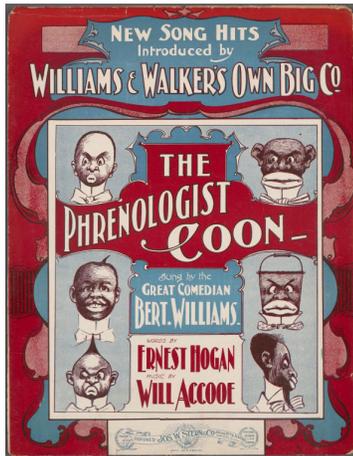
NYPD Commissioner William McAdoo...referred to some "Tenderloin Negro[es]" as "trouble some and dangerous characters [that] never work, or earn a living from a life of shame" [and] depicted black women as "vicious and drunken" ...Disparaging public portrayals leveled at urban African American women left female city dwellers...vulnerable to white brutality and to having their daily behavior and social patterns be deemed criminal. Whether strolling city streets with friends, visiting a relative's apartment, renting rooms to boarders, or operating legitimate businesses, black women faced police harassment and were arrested and convicted for a number of crimes, including possession of numbers slips, loitering and vagrancy, and prostitution (2017, 132).

Early White unions in New York also segregated their membership, such as the American Federation of Labor, with only five percent of Black New Yorkers listed as union members in a 1906 report written by Dr. William Bulkely. As his report reads, "While there are many unions that are, in their constitution, open to all men, there are others which bar the doors tight against any man with an admixture of African blood" (Bulkely 1906, 129). In spite of this segregation, Black laborers formed their own collectives to advocate for and reclaim agency of their labor.

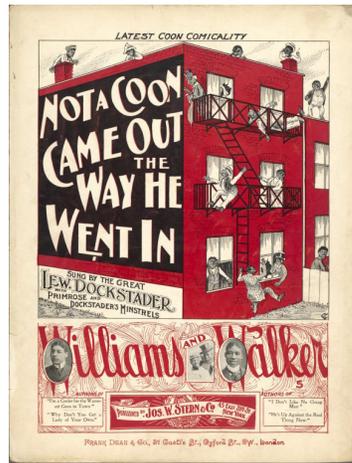


American Federation of Labor with Calvin Coolidge
Calvin Coolidge with Members of the American Federation of Labor. New York Heritage Digital Collections.

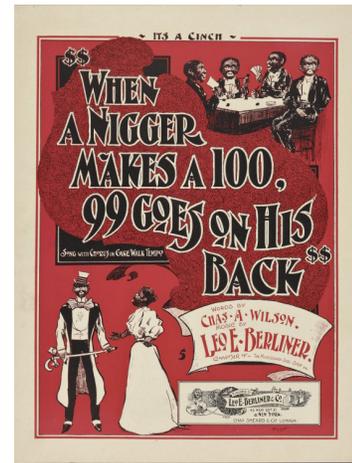
White companies published racist illustrations of African Americans on the covers of disparaging “comedic” songs that perpetuated harmful stereotypes. These promulgated the harmful racist idea of phrenology, and characterized African Americans as prone to unwarranted acts of violence and mismanagement of money. Despite the fact that Black entertainers, in part, created many of these songs, the systemic White supremacy entrenched in this industry and era, and that White publishers disseminated, is inherently clear. At this time, Black entertainers were forced to create and perform within racist stereotypes in order to have a successful career.



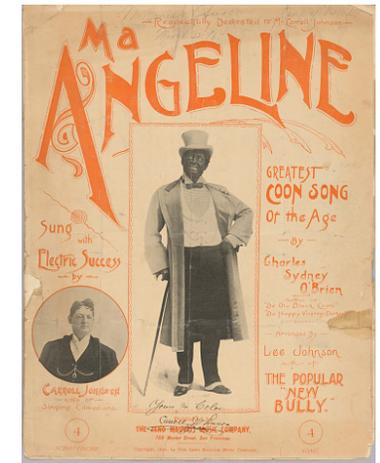
“The Phrenologist Coon,” Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1901. Words by Ernest Hogan, Music by Will Accooe. NYPL Digital Collections. “The Phrenologist Coon.”



“Not a Coon Came Out the Way He Went In,” Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1898. Written by Williams and Walker, Sung by Lew. Dockstader. NYPL Digital Collections. ”



“When a Nigger Makes a 100, 99 Goes on His Back,” Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Leo E. Berliner & Co., 1899. Words by Chas. A Wilson, Composed by Leo E. Berliner. NYPL Digital Collections.



“Ma Angeline,” Song Distributed by White Publishing Company Zeno Mauvais Music Company, 1896. Composed by Charles Sidney O’Brien. George Washington University Law School. Jacob Burns Law Library.

Blackface comedy was in demand by White audiences at Broadway’s theatres. Not taken seriously in the pursuit of other theatrical genres, Black actors and entertainers felt forced to demote their art to the expectations of the dominating White audiences’ low expectations of them. As one of the leading actors of the Ziegfield Follies, which first opened at the New York Theatre in 1907, Bahamian-born Bert Williams performed in blackface. The low-performance standard that blackface caricatures designed by White artists imposed on Black performers to gain entertainment employment in White-owned theaters forced Williams to darken his naturally lighter complexion. Submitting to these caricature roles allowed for some actors to attain enough footing in the industry to establish independent practices, slowly freeing themselves and future generations of Black actors of the racist expectations imposed by White companies.

The publisher of Dora Dean was Broder Schlam, a White-owned musicpublishing company based in New York, at 39 West 28th Street.

Dora Dean, written and composed solely by Black musician Bert A. Williams, was published in 1896. The same year, Ma Angeline, composed was published in 1896. The same year, Ma Angeline, composed by Charles Sidney O’Brien, was published by Zeno Mauvais Music Company in San Francisco. Believing Ma Angeline had copied parts of Dora Dean, Broder Schlam filed a copyright infringement claim against the Zeno Mauvais Music Company on Williams’ behalf (Music Copyright Infringement Resource n.d.). Although the court acknowledged that Ma Angeline was not entirely original, it dismissed the case on the grounds that Dora Dean contained obscene language. The judge objected to the word “hottest,” interpreting it as vulgar, despite the plaintiff’s explanation that it simply meant “grand” in the vernacular of Black performers (Cronin n.d.).This copyright disputeillustrates how early American copyright law systematically failed to protect the rights of Black artists whose creative expression did not conform to White norms (Music Copyright Infringement Resource n.d.).



Left: 3D Laser Scan image of Tin Pan Alley, 47 - 55 West 28th Street. Produced by Sabina Busch in collaboration with the Columbia GSAPP Digital Heritage Documentation Spring 2025 course.



Right: Tin Pan Alley in the early 1900s Freeland, David. *Automats, Taxi Dances, and Vaudeville: Excavating Manhattan's Lost Places of Leisure*. New York: NYU Press, 2009.

Racism and the Entertainment Industry

White people also used methods of economic violence to exclude Black laborers from certain industries. Despite their skill and intelligence, Black tradesmen found little employment due to coordinated segregation from their White peers. The same was true for industrial employment, where financial and racial preferences for the cheap labor of European immigrants kept factories ethnically White (Sacks 2006). Entrance into the industrial workforce often came only in the form of strikebreaking, where White employers preyed upon Black men's need for work as a tool to bust labor organizing, thus intensifying racial tensions between the Black and White working classes. This segregation pushed Black workers into jobs the White working class had vacated for industrial positions, most abundantly in domestic or service work. Graduates of New York's Manumission Society School for Negroes had observed this situation as early as 1865, noting that alumni left school with "every avenue closed against them and spoke of difficulties those who had trades encountered, many being forced to become waiters, barbers, servants, and laborers" (Haynes 1912).

During the late nineteenth century, music was primarily documented through sheet music. Tin Pan Alley, located on West 28th Street between Sixth Avenue and Broadway, became known as a district of sheet music publishers. The large majority of these publishing houses were White-owned, and similarly catered to White audiences' tastes. While Black-owned and -produced sheet music was on the rise during this period—Gotham Attucks Publishing, for example, emerged as the first Black-owned sheet music publisher in Manhattan—Black entertainers frequently had to tailor the titles and lyrics of their music to conform to White publishers' perceptions of White audiences' tastes to get their songs published.

The Tenderloin and “Slumming”

White people frequently patronized Black entertainment establishments, describing the trend as “slumming.” By calling themselves “slummers,” White patrons of Black establishments framed Black spaces as deviant while casting their own voyeurism as adventurous, preserving a sense of superiority despite participating in the same scenes they outwardly condemned. Slumming operated as an exploitative form of cultural tourism (Harvey 1905, 143). Non-New Yorkers paid to be guided through the so-called “Bohemia” of midtown Manhattan, “not realizing,” as one experienced tour guide remarked, that the peculiar characters they were entertained by were “[not] natives but [tourists] like themselves... on a quest exactly like their own,” (Sun 1918, 54).

Newspaper reports suggest that long-term New Yorkers, by contrast, often attempted more invasive forms of access. When White Blackface comedienne Gussie Hart died under unusual circumstances at an unnamed Black club at 269 West 35th St, friends testified she had been slumming in Blackface to prepare for a role (Evening World 1906). A decade earlier, police officers arrested White teenager Louis Foye en route from his upper-class, Upper West Side neighborhood, to the Tenderloin whilst wearing Blackface, claiming that a dime novel provoked him to tour the neighborhood’s Black resorts (New York Times 1893, 8).



23rd Precinct Station, 1911
Architectural Record



23rd Precinct Station, 2025
Photograph by Ashlyn Pause



“Young Sleuth’s Night Trail; or, The Slums of New York” Title Page of Dime Novel.

Citation: Northern Illinois University Rare Books and Special Collections



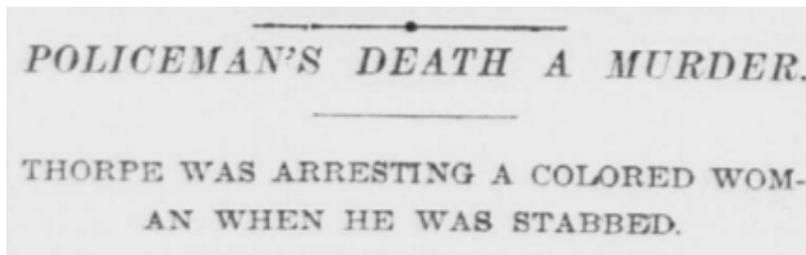
Arthur “Kid” Harris. Printed from a photograph in Evening World, August 16, 1900. “Almost a Riot at Thorpe’s Funeral,” Evening World (August 16, 1900).

White Violence as Class Control

White residents often escalated these racial tensions into actual violence. The 1900 Race Riot was an important event in the Tenderloin's history, and an example of how White people used physical violence to enforce segregation.

Starting on August 15, 1900, White people, policemen and civilians, attacked innocent Black residents wherever they found them (Thomas 2024). White rioters shouted the names of Black entertainers – maybe the only Black people whose names they knew – and called for them to be killed (Johnson 1930, 127). One woman, Lavine Johnson, was pulled off of a streetcar by White men and beaten on the street.

The contribution of the White police force to this riot can not be understated. Black survivors of the riot said police officers were responsible for the harshest beatings (Johnson 1930, 127). After the riot, a police-led investigation into police brutality exonerated the local officers of any responsibility, and largely placed the blame for the riot on the Black community (Citizens Protective League 1900, 4).



Headline from New York Tribune, August 14, 1900.



Headline from The World, August 16, 1900.

Assault of Arthur Harris and May Enoch: The Inciting Event of the 1900 Race Riot

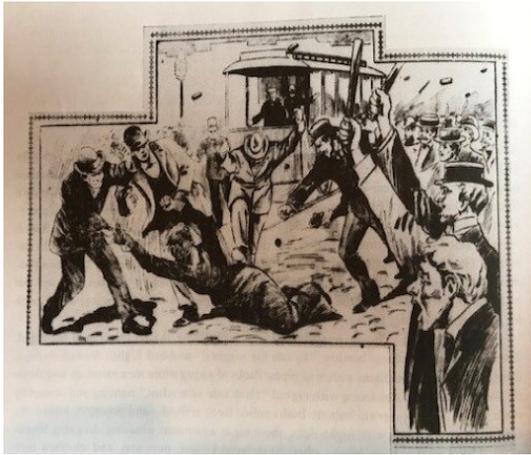
On August 12, 1900, Arthur Harris and his wife May Enoch (two Black residents of the Tenderloin) were moments from their home on West 41st Street. Mr. Harris stepped into a nearby bar to grab a drink with friends, while Ms. Enoch brought their groceries home (Johnson 1930, 126). Ms. Enoch later went by the bar to see what was taking Mr. Harris so long (Evening Times 1900, 1). While she was outside, White police officer Robert Thorpe grabbed Ms. Enoch and attempted to arrest her for "solicitation," a common charge White police officers used to harass Black women at the time. Mr. Harris emerged from the bar and attempted to free his wife from Mr. Thorpe's grasp; Mr. Harris did not know Mr. Thorpe was a police officer, as Mr. Thorpe was not wearing a uniform (Johnson 1930, 126). Mr. Thorpe responded by repeatedly beating Mr. Harris over the head with a club. Fearing for his life, Mr. Harris took out a small pocket knife, stabbed Mr. Thorpe until he was able to break free, and ran away (Hodes 2011, 61-89). The stab wound proved to be fatal (Evening Times 1900, 1).

Mr. Harris fled to family in Washington, DC, and was arrested at his mother's home on August 16th. While in jail, Mr. Harris recounted the assault to the Evening Times (Evening Times 1900, 1). Before Mr. Harris' recounting had been published, White media seized upon the story, demonizing Mr. Harris, and exaggerating the story. For example, on August 14th, the New York Tribune published that a "crowd of Negroes" had attacked Mr. Thorpe (New York Tribune 1900, 14). Even after Mr. Harris' account was widely disseminated, White media continued to falsify the story. On August 17th, the New York Tribune claimed that Mr. Harris and "another negro" had "literally slashed the policeman into ribbons" (New York Tribune 1900, 3).

POLICE WINK AT RIOT

Whites Incited by Officers to Attack the Blacks.

Headline from Washington Post, August 17, 1900. The 1900 race riot was reported in newspapers nationwide.



White men beating Lavine Johnson, Evening World, August 16, 1900. Lavine Johnson was pulled off of a streetcar by White rioters and beaten.

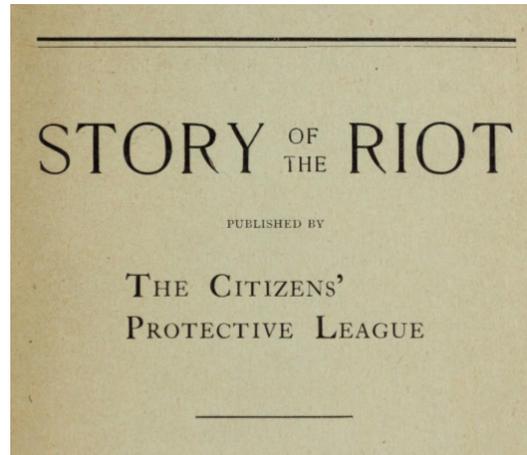


St. Mark's United Methodist Church in its location on W 53rd Street. Black community leaders gathered at St. Mark's after the 1900 race riot, and started the Citizens Protective League. Image from NYPL Digital Collections.

The Riot of 1900 was the fourth large-scale race riot White New Yorkers had used as an excuse to attack Black residents since the Civil War. James Weldon Johnson describes this pattern of violence as a symptom of the declining status of "the Negro as a citizen." Johnson proposed that, in the year 1900, Black people had less rights than they did at the end of the Civil War (Johnson 1930, 127-128).

As Black New Yorkers worked to heal and recover from the riot, local activists started the Citizens Protective League at St. Mark's United Methodist Church on West 53rd Street, with the goals of "mutual protection" and prosecution of the guilty (Citizens' Protective League 1900, 82). To a certain extent, though, the damage had already been done. White rioters had succeeded in terrorizing the Black residents of the Tenderloin, and local White police showed that they would not protect Black citizens.

The Riot of 1900 marked a decline of the Black population in the Tenderloin. White rioters made it clear that Black people could not live safely in White neighborhoods (Citizens Protective League 1900, 3). Black residents began to leave the Tenderloin.



Story of the Riot by the Citizens' Protective League (September 1900). The CPL recorded Black and (some) White survivors' accounts of the riot.

Being Black in White Space

In the Tenderloin, Black residents lived and worked alongside White residents. Yet closeness in proximity did not mean equality. Although Black people coexisted with White people in the Tenderloin, there was a clear power imbalance when it came to being Black in White-controlled spaces.

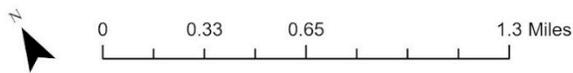
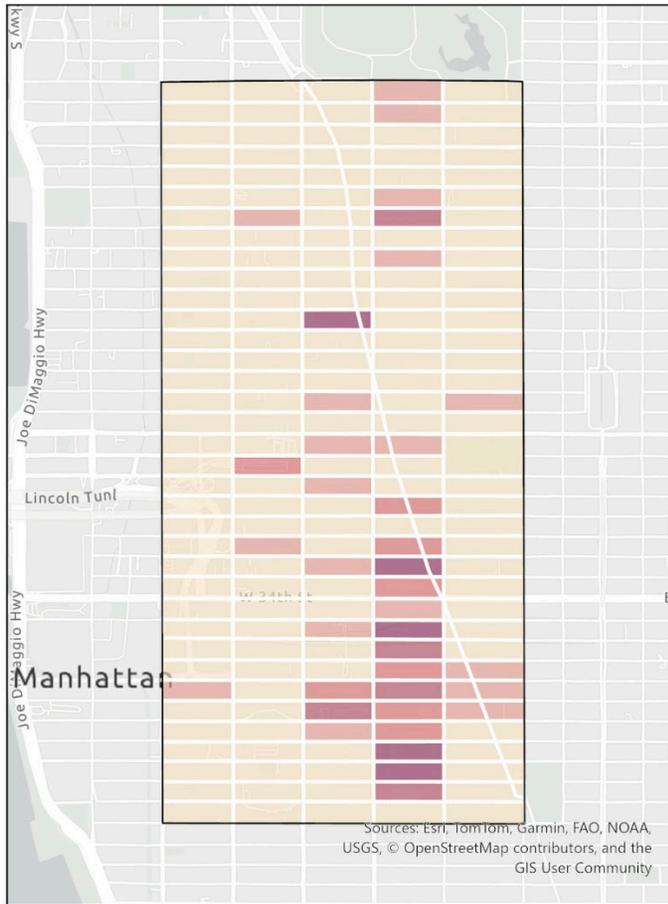
Residential Demographics

Many contemporary accounts describe certain blocks or specific areas within the Tenderloin as being occupied by a large majority, if not entirely by, Black residents. However, analyses of census data show that, even in those residential blocks with the greatest concentrations of Black residents, Black residents never made up more than 60 percent of the total population of a block. (A “residential block” is defined here as a block where at least one person lived, according to either the 1880 or 1900 U.S. Census.) The only exception to this rule was a single block which, in 1910, contained only five residents, all of whom were Black.

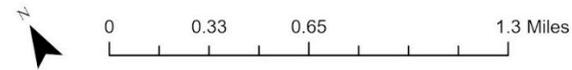
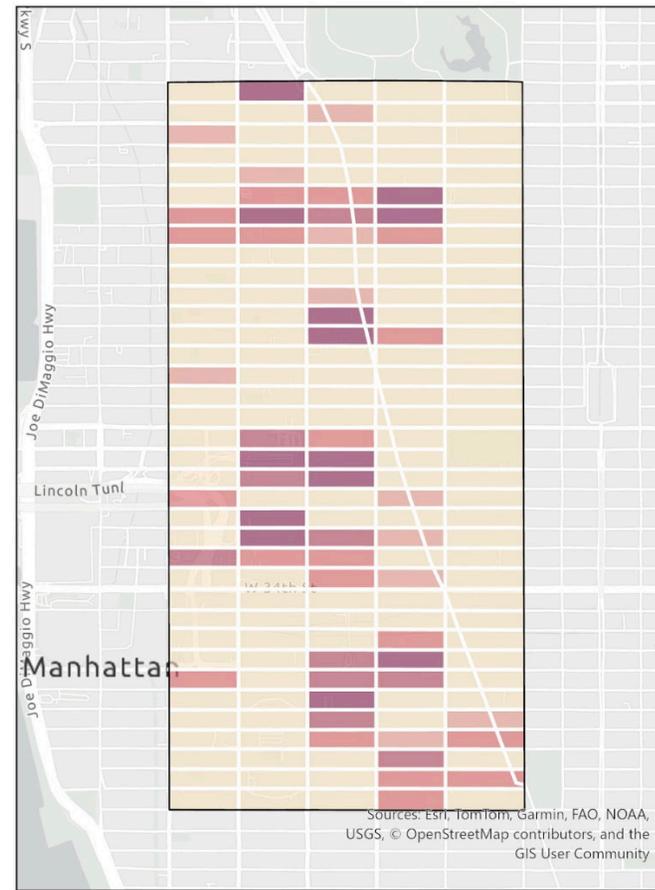
Census data also indicates that, while no blocks were more than 60 percent Black, the vast majority of residential blocks within the study area housed at least a few Black residents. Very few residential blocks—about four percent in 1880 and about 10 percent in 1910—were entirely White. However, most residential blocks had Black populations of 10 percent or less. In 1880, about 80 percent of the blocks in the study area fell into this category, while in 1910, about 60 percent did. Only 16 percent of blocks in 1880 had Black populations above 10 percent, while in 1910, about 29 percent did.

Because a more detailed census analysis is needed to contextualize this data, it is currently unclear in those blocks with small percentages of Black residents, whether Black residents were living in integrated households, integrated buildings, or as live-in employees of White households.

Percent Black Population, 1880



Percent Black Population, 1910



Percent Black Population

- <5%
- 5-10%
- 10-20%
- 20-30%
- >30%

Maps indicating the percentage of Black residents by block in the study area, according to census data from 1880 and 1910.

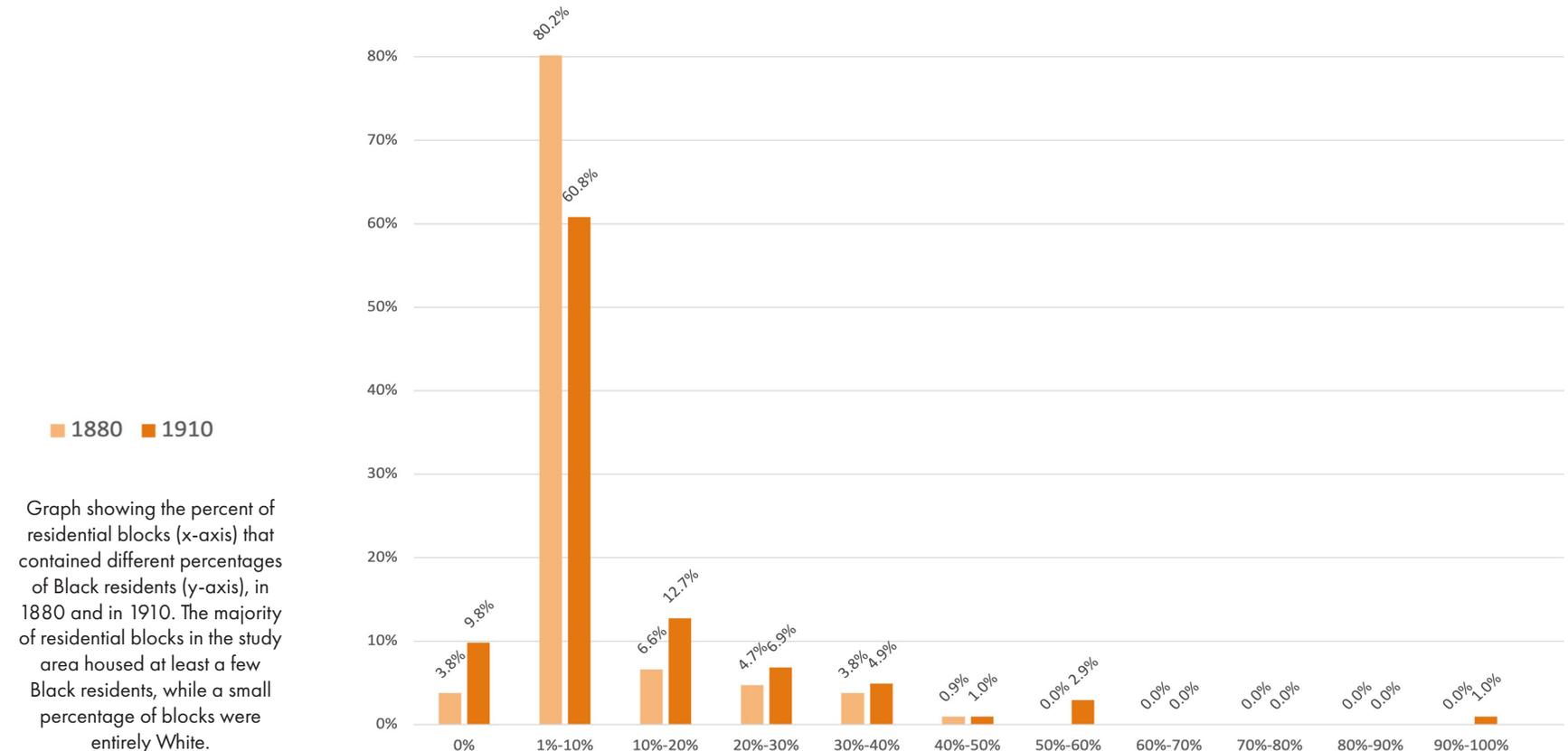
Census data indicates that, while Black and White residents of the Tenderloin lived alongside one another throughout the period, the Tenderloin was slightly more segregated at the end of the period than it was at the beginning. As mentioned above, the percentage of blocks that were entirely White increased from about four percent in 1880 to about 10 percent in 1910.

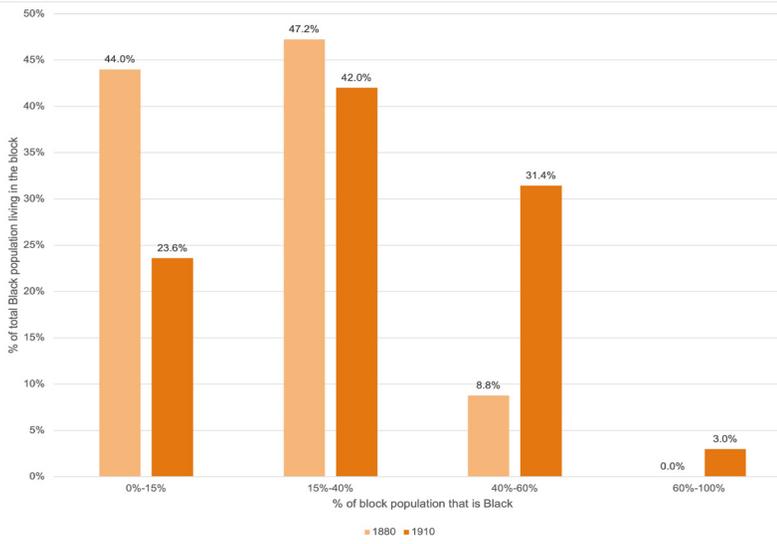
In addition, Black residents of the Tenderloin were more likely to live on a block with a very small percentage of Black residents (15 percent or less) in 1880 than they were in 1910. In 1880, 44 percent of the area's Black residents lived in blocks that were 15 percent Black or less, while in 1910, only about 24 percent did. Similarly, Black residents were much more likely to live on a block with a significant number of Black residents (over 40 percent) in 1910 than they were in 1880. In 1880, only about nine percent of the area's Black residents lived in blocks that were between 40 and 60 percent Black. In fact, at that time, no blocks in the study area were more than 50 percent Black. In 1910, however, about 31 percent of the area's Black residents lived in blocks that were between 40 and 60 percent Black (27 percent in blocks that were more than 50 percent Black).

However, in both 1880 and 1910, a significant proportion of the area's Black residents lived on a block that could be characterized as having a Black population somewhere between very small (below

15 percent) and significant (over 40 percent). In 1880, the number of Black residents living in Blocks with Black populations of between 15 and 40 percent was about 47 percent, while in 1910, this number was 42 percent. This indicates that, while the residential population of the Tenderloin was more segregated in 1910 than it was in 1880, many Black residents in both years lived on blocks that could be characterized as somewhat, but not significantly, Black.

Census analyses and historical literature agree that Black residents lived alongside White residents at the block level, but the existing histories generally claim that Black and White residents rarely, if ever, lived in the same buildings. They suggest that buildings "went Black" all at once, and stayed that way (O'Malley 2018, 123). However, a close analysis of census data suggests that this was not the case in those representative blocks analyzed by the studio team.





Graph showing the percent of Black residents (y-axis) that lived in blocks housing greater or smaller percentages of Black residents (x-axis), in 1880 and 1910. Different percentages of Black residents (y-axis), in 1880 and in 1910. Black residents were more likely to live on blocks with a smaller percentage of Black residents in the early period than they were in the later period.

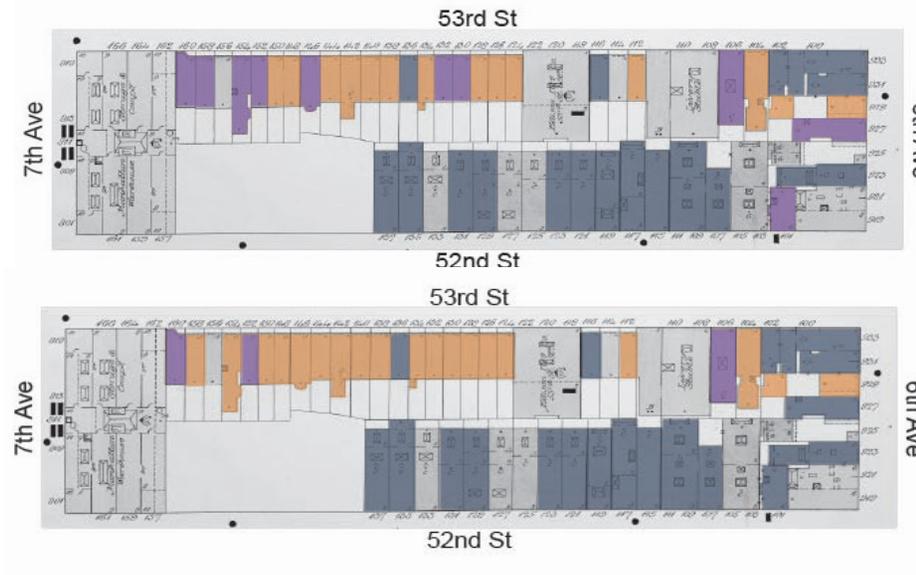
In one of these blocks, bound by 32nd and 33rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, several buildings were occupied by residents of both races. On this block, these “mixed” buildings were often large tenement buildings, which were either mostly Black or mostly White, but also included a few residents of the other race.

In another block, however, which is bound by 52nd and 53rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, the studio team identified not only buildings that contained a few residents of a different race than the majority of building occupants, only see mixed buildings that were are heavily skewed toward one race, but also mixed buildings that housed equal or nearly equal numbers of Black and White residents. This further upends the narrative that Black and White Tenderloin residents lived alongside each other, but not with each other.

Census data from 1900 shows that, on one of the studio’s representative blocks (bound by 53rd and 52nd streets and Sixth and Seventh Avenues), several buildings housed both Black and White residents (“Mixed” buildings in purple). While some of these buildings only exhibited slight mixing, other buildings housed equal or nearly equal numbers of Black and White residents (IMAGE 2. “Mixed” buildings in purple).

Annotations to map by Abbey Francis.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York (New York, N. Y.: Sanborn-Perris Map Company, 1892), Historical Information Gatherers.



White-Led Integration

Carnegie Hall hosted events organized by groups like the Afro-American Council and later the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as early as 1896, featuring speakers such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Reverdy Ransom. These leaders condemned racial violence, advocated for Black education, and called for federal protection of Black lives.



Carnegie Hall in 2019
Epicsunwarrior, Ajay Suresh

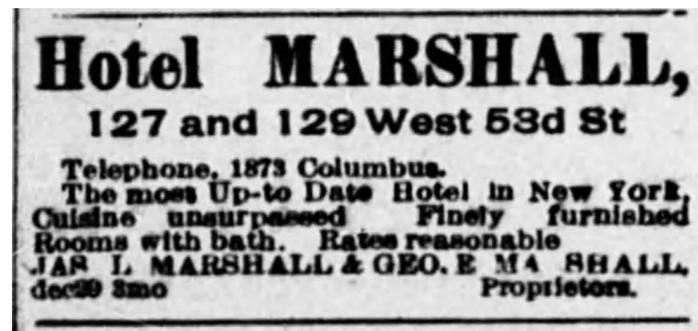
Unlike the hostile streets outside, Carnegie Hall offered a shared space where Black thought became visible to elite White audiences. White people permitted this integration for White-owned institutions, but not Black-owned spaces, reacting negatively and violently when Black-owned establishments attempted to integrate. The presence of Carnegie Hall as an integrated place thus reveals another side of the Tenderloin story, not just violence and policing, but also resistance through dialogue and claims to space.



In 1906, Carnegie Hall hosted an event for the Tuskegee Institute; this image shows Booker T. Washington speaking at that event.
Carnegie Hall

White Anxiety Over Racial Integration

Black and Tan clubs were integrated nightlife spaces where Black and White people could socialize, often featuring live jazz and dancing. These integrated clubs challenged the racial boundaries of the time. One example was the Hotel Marshall, owned by Black merchant James L. Marshall. A prominent hub for African American culture and social life it attracted notable Black artists and musicians, as well as Black and White patrons. The club became a target of anti-integrationists like the Anti-Saloon League and Committee of Fourteen, which used morality and vice laws as a cover for enforcing racial segregation. Under this pressure, White-led reform organizations eventually shut down Hotel Marshall.



Advertisement for the Hotel Marshall
Advertisement, *The New York Age*, June 8, 1905.



The Anti-Saloon League ca. 1915.
Prohibition A Film by Ken Burns & Lynn

Black Businesses and Labor

Black-owned clubs like the Tenderloin Club were not just nightlife venues; they were cultural and artistic landmarks. Authorities, particularly the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, viewed these spaces as dangerous to social order. This led to increased legal scrutiny and crackdowns. For example, in 1894, they stormed the Tenderloin Club with axes, targeting not only people but the space itself. Even the Reception Room, carefully decorated by artists, was destroyed. This scrutiny was not just about suppression of vice; it was about erasing Black cultural presence from the built environment.



"At Marshall's" by Charles Demuth, 1915.
Barnes Collection Online — Charles Demuth: At Marshall's.



New York Society for the Suppression of Vice
The Tenderloin Club. "The New York Society
for the Suppression of Vice."



Left: "At Marshall's" by Charles Demuth, 1917.
Demuth Foundation. "At Marshall's."



Right: "Marshall's" by Charles Demuth, n.d.
Art Oyster LLC. "Charles Demuth Marshall's Oil Painting."



Cork Room
The Tenderloin Club. "Cork Room."



No. 550 L.P. Hollander & Co. - Dreicer & Co. - West 46th St. - Pickslay, jeweler - No. 572 Budd, haberdasher. 1911. NYPL Digital Collections.

While Black and White people coexisted spatially in the Tenderloin, their social status within the district was unequal. Black men worked within White spaces in positions of servitude, most often as porters or waiters. This reinforced a racial hierarchy rooted in the White chattel enslavement of Black people. White employers tied race to service. For example, in an 1886 Chicago Tribune article, one White hotelier remarked that Black men were “waiters by nature, and are peculiarly adapted to servitude” (Garb 2014, 132).

And when working outside of the service industry, the identity of Black workers was often made invisible. White florist Charles Thorley hired an entirely Black staff of floral designers at his shop on Fifth Avenue, their work gracing the halls of elite establishments that these men would have been barred from entering as guests. For example, Black designers James Henry Williams and Herbert D. Cummings crafted floral displays at the Waldorf-Astoria in 1902, although their identities as the Black creators of the display were likely hidden (NYC Historic Floral Museum).



Gala at the Waldorf Hotel, 1902, designed by Black florists James Henry Williams and Herbert D. Cummings
“New York Black Florist History.” NYC Historic Floral District Museum.

The Nail Brothers

There were some individuals who were ethnically Black and had a skin color that was light enough to pass as White. These individuals thoughtfully took advantage of their lighter-skin color and the privilege it enshrined by leveraging it to make progress for the rest of the Black community. In many ways, their light skin allowed them to move through White-dominated spaces; something that darker-skinned Black business owners could not do. For example, the Nail brothers (John B. and Edward Nail), who were ethnically Black, operated a hotel and café in the Tenderloin during the early twentieth century. John B. Nail was influential in the Harlem real estate market, purchasing a row of five apartments, and replacing White tenants with Black ones (Johnson 1930, 149). White-passing Black businessmen, like the Nail brothers, were often the vanguard of opportunities for Black people.



Edward Nail, 1907; John B. Nail, 1907
"Hotel-Cafe of Nail Bros., New York; Ed. Nail; Dining room; John B. Nail; Billiard hall." *The Negro in Business*. 1907. NYPL Digital Collections.



Left: Black Porters at Penn Station, 1910
The Pennsylvania Station. NYPL Digital Collections.
Right: Derogatory Cartoon of a Black Waiter, 1906

"Black Waiters in White Restaurants." *Restaurant-ing Through History*. September 11, 2022.

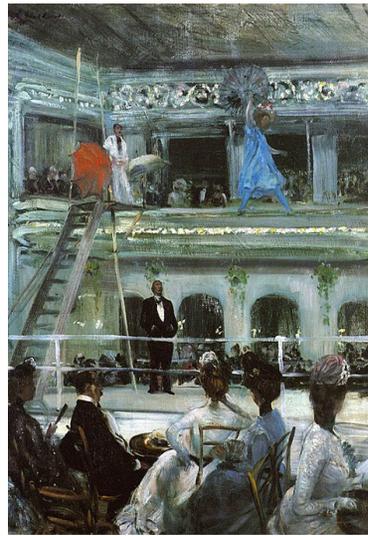


White Artists Erased Black People

In most depictions of the Tenderloin neighborhood created by notable White artists, African Americans have been conspicuously absent. These White artists portrayed the neighborhood as a hub for White entertainment, whether it be high-end shopping on Fifth Avenue or "slumming" after dark, creating homogenous interpretation of the neighborhood that did not reflect reality. This lack of Black representation suggests a larger trend of overlooking Black history and culture in this area. It also reflects how the Tenderloin neighborhood, which contained a relatively high percentage of Black residents at this time, was not necessarily considered a predominant "Black neighborhood" in the same way that Harlem would later be labeled.



Fifth Avenue, New York by John French Sloan (1911)
Private collection.



Hammerstein's Roof Garden, William Glackens (1901)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.



The Haymarket, Sixth Avenue by John French Sloan (1907)
Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY.

In the limited instances where White artists featured Black people in artworks they produced, the White artists often portrayed Black people as performers or entertainers. William Glackens' painting

Hammerstein's Roof Garden depicts a Black host and performers on stage at Hammerstein's Roof Garden; the subtle framing reinforces the general racial hierarchy maintained by White-owned venues such as Hammerstein's by centering its White audience at the foreground of the canvas (Berman 2015).

Cakewalk, illustrated by German artist Leo Rauth, reflects the international popularity of the dance—an art form rooted in Black performance culture and exported to Europe through the growing fame of Broadway theaters and entertainment venues like those in the Tenderloin district (Pomeranz n.d.). Moreover, the expressive artworks of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner reveal how Black entertainment influenced European avant-garde art more broadly. Kirchner's dynamic depictions of Black entertainers reinforces Expressionism's fascination with movement and performance (Powell 2021, chap. 1). His occasional references to "Bohemia" in titles suggest a broader network of influence, one in which Black culture becomes symbolically linked to the mystical ideals of Bohemianism (Kirchner 1924).

While Black entertainers undeniably shaped the aesthetics of the Expressionist movement, the systemic exclusion of Black artists themselves renders much of this White-produced art closer to appropriation than to genuine representation (Powell 2021).



Cakewalk, Leo Rauth (1913)
Rauth, Leo. Cakewalk. 1913. Mixed media on paper, 14.6 x 14.2 (37 x 36 cm). Private collection.



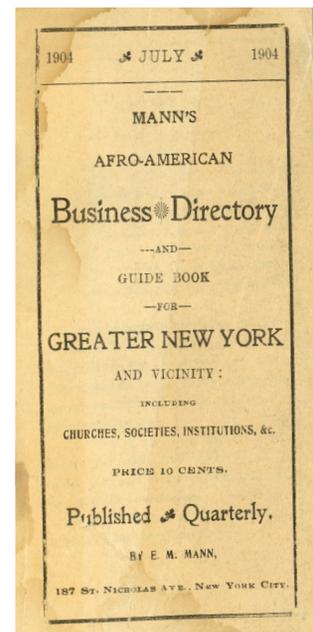
Tap Dancing Negro, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1914)
Kirchner, Ernst Ludwig. Tap Dancing Negro. 1914. Lithograph. Lothar-Gunther Buccheim collection.

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Black New Yorkers built their own spaces of dignity and resilience in the face of White oppression. From businesses and artistic ventures to churches, collectives, and protests, Black men and women asserted agency by claiming space throughout the Tenderloin's built environment.

Black-Owned Enterprises

In 1895, the White-owned New York Tribune published a newspaper article about Black residents of the Tenderloin that included the following quote: "All of the business of the quarter is in the hands of others. There is hardly a negro who has even the tiniest shop or store" (New York Tribune 1895). Historical evidence proves this claim to be utterly false. As early as 1892, the Black-owned New York Age, reported the addresses of dozens of Black-owned businesses in the Tenderloin where their paper was sold (New York Age 1892). Early Black business directories such as "Mann's Afro-American Directory and Guidebook for Greater New York," published in 1904, cite a multitude of business enterprises owned and operated by Black men and women in the Tenderloin (Library of Congress 2016).



Cover of Mann's Afro-American Business Directory and Guide Book for Greater New York and Vicinity, published 1904. Library of Congress, 2016.

WHERE THE AGE CAN BE HAD.

Copies of THE AGE are for sale weekly at the following places:
NEW YORK CITY.

Joseph Combach's grocery store, 228 Sullivan street.
Sexton Bethel Church, 218 Sullivan street.
Eldridge's newsstand, corner Bleeker and Carmine streets.
John P. Wharton's printing office, 251 Bleeker street.
McAnesty's news stand, cor. Bleeker and Carmine streets.
News stand corner Bleeker and Minetta streets.
The "Home" Book-store, 210 Bleeker street.
Zion Book Concern, 353 Bleeker street.
R. H. Bundy's barber shop, 29 Sixth avenue.
Jefferson Market Book-store, 123 West 10th street.
Meyer's news stand, 109 West 10th street.
Albert Williams, 42 West 10th street.
Robert Grant, stationer, 413 Sixth avenue.
Wm. H. Brown's store, 120 Clinton Place.

W. D. Brown's barber shop, 102 West 27th street.
Crumpton's barber shop, 128 West 26th street.
Chas. Moore's barber shop 115 West 30th street.
Chas. Thirl's barber shop, 136 West 30th street.

A sampling of businesses where the New York Age was sold, published in 1892. New York Age, November 19, 1892, p. 4.

The Tenderloin is more accurately characterized as a burgeoning Black business district. The studio team identified more than 80 Black-owned enterprises within the neighborhood. This emergence of Black business at the turn of the century – all in the face of systemic White oppression – represented the aspirational possibility that Black workers could claim a right to space and labor that had been both legally and bodily denied to them by White enslavers only a few decades prior. There was a great diversity in the types of Black-owned businesses that called the Tenderloin home, with 51 independent retailers – these being businesses such as barbers, undertakers, doctors, lawyers, or grocers; 20 bars, restaurants, or hotels; several labor organizations; and early Black corporations such as the New York Age.

While many of these businesses are mentioned only in advertisements and directories, there is rich historical evidence for some notable examples. Of the non-entertainment related businesses, undertaking represented a noticeable portion. The studio team discovered four Tenderloin-based funeral homes from advertisements in Black newspapers, although there were likely more. Morticians comprised one of the largest sectors of Black businessmen in the country, this industry emerging after the Civil War due to distrust of White undertakers in their respect for Black bodies. Booker T. Washington remarked that, save for catering businesses, no enterprise seemed “to be more numerously engaged or one in which they have been more uniformly successful” than funeral homes (Virginia Tech News 2016).

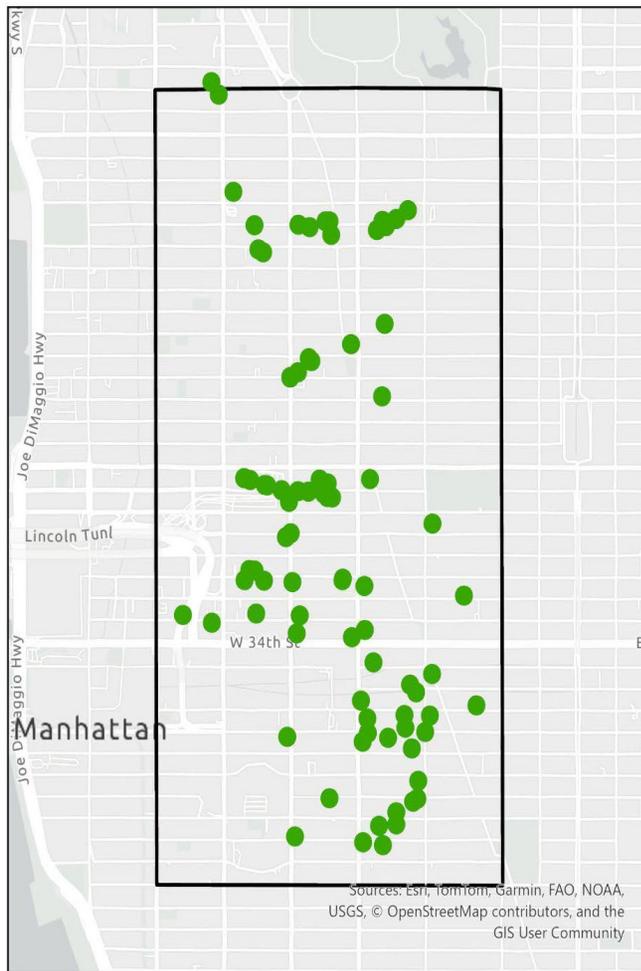
THE NEW NEGRO QUARTER.

COLORED PEOPLE MOVING UP INTO SEVENTH-AVE.

The mystery of how these people get along deepens as a closer view is taken of their life. All the business of the quarter is in the hands of others. There is hardly a negro who has even the faintest shop or store. Germans sell them their provisions.

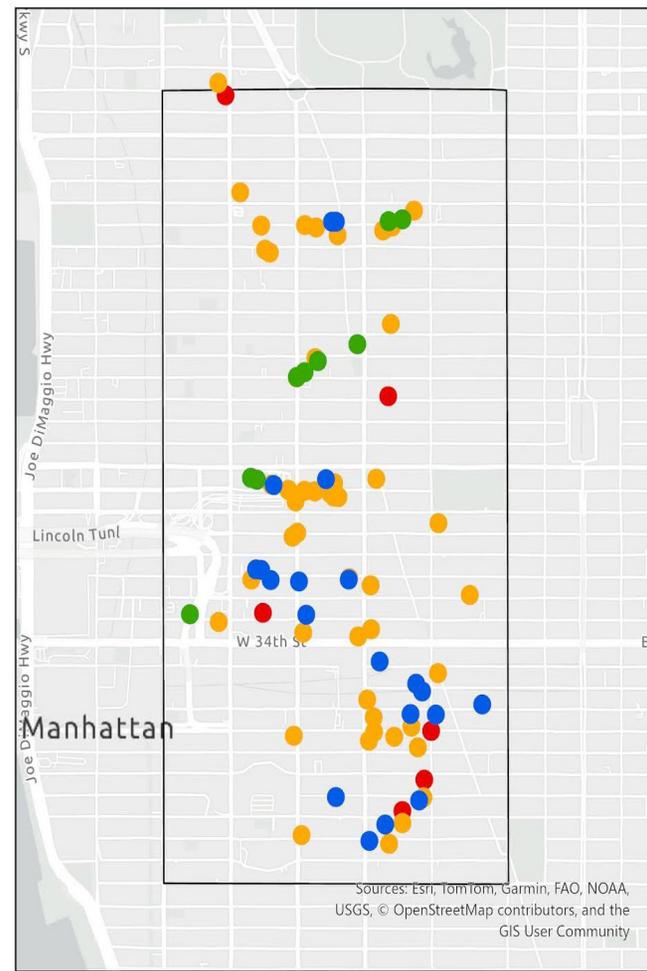
“The New Negro Quarter”
Source: New York Tribune, 1895

Labor Assets - Black-Owned



Map of Black-owned Businesses in the Tenderloin
Map created by Sabina Busch via ArcGIS Pro, 2025.

Black-Owned Businesses by Category



Map of Black-owned Businesses in the Tenderloin by category.
Source: Map created by Sabina Busch via ArcGIS Pro, 2025.

J.C. Thomas and the Origins of Black Undertaking in New York City

The origins of the Black undertaking business in New York City can be likely traced to a lone storefront in the Tenderloin. J.C. Thomas was “the sole Negro undertaker in the field” when he opened his doors at 480 Seventh Avenue in 1902 (Young 1939, 2). Booker T. Washington placed the growth of undertaking as a Black industry squarely upon the influence of Thomas, writing: “Where White undertakers had charge of the undertaking work of the various colored lodges and churches in New York before Mr. Thomas’ time, it is now handled almost exclusively by colored undertakers.” His pioneering business would prove highly profitable, a profile on Black businessmen in a 1904 issue of *The Colored American Magazine* citing that he did a yearly business of \$50,000 annually, and his building, that he both lived in and owned outright, was estimated to be worth \$85,000 (Moore 1904, 520). He was even regarded by some as the “the richest Negro in New York.” (Reuter 1918, 243). Thomas reportedly invested this fortune back into his community, as he “constantly employed a number of men and women” from the Tenderloin and trained aspiring business owners in funerary services (Washington 1907, 109). Training morticians was far from Thomas’s only investment – he was also the first president of the Afro-American Realty Company and was heavily leveraged in the firm (Washington 1907, 108). His founding partner, Philip A. Payton, would later grow the company to include expansive real estate holdings in Harlem, opening up new homes for Black residences and forever changing the racial demographics of the neighborhood. Thomas himself moved to Harlem not long after the completion of Penn Station only a few blocks from his funeral parlor in 1910. He sold the property for \$103,000; this price appears to have been valued unfairly as the deal’s White brokers resold the same plot for \$150,000 only a few years later (Young 1939, 3).



Portrait of J.C. Thomas, 1903
“Gotham’s Business Men.”
The Colored American.
Washington, D.C. November
21, 1903.

Madame J. L. Crawford and the Black Beauty Industry

Beyond undertaking, other future pillar businesses of Black New Yorkers have origins in the Tenderloin, most notably hairdressing. In 1908, Mme. J.L. Crawford, a Black hairdresser from Virginia, made history when she opened her hair dressing and beauty parlor at this site on West 59th Street, reportedly “the first Negro establishment of its kind in New York City” (Curtwright 1936-1941, 1). A craftswoman and inventor, Mme. Crawford formulated her own hair products ranging from styling creams and powders to wigs and toupees. Her business grew over the ensuing years—Mme. Crawford eventually supported a staff of five Black employees and her salon became a local institution of style. It will be shown later that Mme. Crawford’s move to Harlem in 1911 was critical to the history of Black enterprise in New York City.



Site of Crawford’s Parlor,
1929
Manhattan: 59th Street - 9th
Avenue. 1929. NYPL Digital
Collections.

John B. and Edward Nail: Pioneering Black Businessmen

The Nail Brother's Hotel-Cafe on 805 Sixth Avenue, founded by Black entrepreneur John B. Nail, was a popular neighborhood club celebrated for its lavishly decorated interior and diverse clientele. The income generated by this business gave Mr. Nail the capital to become a real estate speculator in Harlem, where he developed future apartments and homes for many Black residents of the Tenderloin. Black individuals and families that would later migrate to Harlem.



"Hotel-Cafe of Nail Bros., New York; Ed. Nail; Dining room; John B. Nail; Billiard hall." *The Negro in Business*. 1907. NYPL Digital Collections.



Portrait of J. Frank Wheaton
Brady, Tim. *Gopher Gold: Legendary Figures, Brilliant Blunders, and Amazing Feats at the University of Minnesota*. Minnesota Historical Society Press: 2007.



Frank Wheaton's Office at 357 West 54th Street, 1940
"357 West 54 Street." 1939. New York Municipal Archives. 1940s Tax Department Photographs.

Black Organizing and Activism

Black business owners also came from degreed professions, such as lawyers like Frank Wheaton. Mr. Wheaton graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1894, as the school's first Black graduate and the first Black man elected to the Minnesota state legislature four years later. He opened one of the only Black-owned legal practices in New York City in 1905, his office located at 357 West 54th Street. He represented Black victims of White racial violence and worked alongside James Curtis, the only other Black lawyer in the Tenderloin. Both originally Republicans, Mr. Wheaton and Mr. Curtis would later become important fixtures in New York City's Democratic party political machine, Tammany Hall. Mr. Wheaton unsuccessfully ran for a position in the New York State Assembly in 1919 as a Democrat. Although defeated, Mr. Wheaton was instead appointed to work in the city's district attorney's office. Mr. Curtis meanwhile, a staunch campaign ally of then-presidential hopeful Woodrow Wilson, was rewarded upon Pres. Wilson's electoral victory with an appointment as the American Minister to Liberia in 1915 (Brady 2007, 67-68).



Frank Wheaton Among His Law School Class, 1894
Brady, Tim. *Gopher Gold: Legendary Figures, Brilliant Blunders, and Amazing Feats at the University of Minnesota*. Minnesota Historical Society Press: 2007.

Black workers also resisted discrimination by forming their own unions to reclaim control of their labor. These ranged from dressmaker's collectives and hotel and bellmen associations to clubs dedicated to the growth of Black businesses and entertainment unions. Many of these organizations gathered at Lyric Hall between West 41st and 42nd Streets. This venue was also the location of Ida B. Wells' public anti-lynching testimony in 1892 against the South. Of these unions, one of the most successful and enduring was the New Amsterdam Musical Association, established in 1904 by a group of professional Black musicians after White members of the local chapter of the American Federation of Musicians denied their entry. The union, first led by composer James Reese Europe, considered by his friend and fellow musician Eubie Blake to be the "Martin Luther King, Jr. of American Music," proved so effective in its organizing that it forced the integration of the New York American Federation of Musicians in 1908 (Atlas Obscura 2016). The New Amsterdam Musical Association still exists today, no longer a union but a performance center and hub for Black musicians in Harlem.



Lyric Hall, 1927
Sperr, Percy Loomis.
Manhattan: 6th Avenue -
41st Street. NYPL
Digital Collections.



Photograph of the New Amsterdam Musical Association, 1910
New Amsterdam Musical Association, New York, U.S.A. 1910. NYPL Digital
Collections.

NAACP Roots in the Tenderloin

Founded in 1909, the NAACP is one of the most influential civil rights organizations in U.S. history. Its earliest organizational work likely took place in a building at 322 West 53rd Street. This was the office of Richetta G. Randolph, a Black stenographer and the organization's first office manager. According to NAACP co-founder Mary White Ovington, "It was [Randolph's] machine that in 1909 typed the original 'Call' to organize the NAACP."



Richetta G. Randolph and Mary
White Ovington
"Along the N.A.A.C.P.
Battlefront." *The Crisis*. March
1943.



NAACP, 1909
Library of Congress
(066.00.00) Courtesy of the
NAACP

A Parade of Silence, A Politics of Defiance

On July 28, 1917, over 10,000 Black men, women, and children marched down Fifth Avenue in silence. This was the first mass African American protest march in U.S. history, organized by the NAACP in response to the East St. Louis Massacre, where White mobs had brutalized and murdered hundreds of Black residents. This protest was not only about East St. Louis, IL, it was about the national pattern of racial violence. It was a powerful claim to space by the Black community of the Tenderloin, and garnered national respect from Black and White media alike.



1917 Silent Protest parade, by Paul Thompson

Source: 1917. NAACP Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

MEMORANDUM FOR N. A. A. C. P. BRANCHES MOTTOES USED IN THE NEGRO SILENT PROTEST PARADE, NEW YORK.

Mothers and Wives—Centers of American Culture?
 Make America safe for Democracy.
 Taxation without representation is tyranny.
 Thou shalt not kill.
 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
 We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.
 That they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. That amongst these are LIFE, LIBERTY and the pursuit of HAPPINESS.
 If you are of African descent tear off this corner.
 America has lynched without trial 2,867 Negroes in 31 years and not a single murderer has suffered.
 200,000 Black men fought for your liberty in the Civil War.
 The first blood for American Independence was shed by a Negro—Crispus Attacks.
 We have fought for the liberty of white Americans in six wars; our reward is East St. Louis.
 12,000 of us fought with Jackson at New Orleans.
 We fought with Perry at Lake Erie.
 10,000 of us fought in the Spanish-American War.
 From Bunker Hill to Carrizal we have done our bit.
 The world owes no man a living, but every man an opportunity to earn a living.
 We are maligned as lazy, and murdered when we work.
 We are excluded from the unions and condemned for not joining them.
 Repelled by the unions we are condemned as scabs.
 Suffer little children and forbid them not.
 Undo the least of these my brethren.
 2,000 Negroes fought for American Independence under George Washington.
 We helped to plant the flag in every American Dominion.
 Thirty-four Negroes have received Carnegie hero medals.
 Our music is the only American music.
 So treat us that we may love our country.
 India is abolishing caste; America is adopting it.
 Race prejudice is the offspring of ignorance and the mother of lynching.
 If fault is to be found with color, blame God and yourselves.
 Patriotism and loyalty presuppose protection and liberty.
 We have 1,000,000 farmers.
 We have 30,000 carpenters.
 We have 30,000 clergymen.
 We have 12,000 brick and stone masons.
 We have 30,000 teachers.
 We have 2,000 physicians.
 We own 250,000 farms with 20,000,000 acres of land worth \$500,000,000.
 We have Church property worth \$16,000,000.
 A square deal for every man.—T. R.
 The Negro has never betrayed the flag, attempted to assassinate the President or any official of this government.
 We have 60,000 iron and steel workers.
 We have 20,000 slaughter and packing house operators.
 Your hands are full of blood.
 Mothers, do lynchings go to heaven?
 The great contradiction—love of God and hatred of man.
 Color, blood and suffering have made us one.
 Pray for the Lady MacBeths of East St. Louis.

1917 Silent Protest parade, by Paul Thompson

1917. NAACP Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Education and Empowerment

Dr. William Bulkley was a prominent educator, civil rights advocate, and social reformer in early twentieth-century New York City. He played a crucial role in improving educational access and opportunities for Black communities during a time of deep racial segregation. In 1901, Bulkley became the principal of Public School 80, formerly known as Colored School No. 3, located in the Tenderloin district. Under his leadership, the school became a center not only for education but also for community uplift. Beyond his role in education, Bulkley was instrumental in founding the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of the Negro in New York (CIICNNY) – one of three organizations that eventually merged to form the National Urban League, a major force in the fight for racial equality and social justice. His work in the Tenderloin reflects broader efforts to empower Black New Yorkers through education and advocacy at a time when institutional support was limited.



Dr. William Bulkley
Courtesy of Rutgers University

In 1884, the New York City Board of Education officially removed the word "colored" from school names, but racial discrimination in education persisted. The doctrine of "separate but equal," still widely accepted before 1900, continued to limit educational opportunities for African Americans. Although schools were legally open to all, many White-led institutions quietly prevented Black students from enrolling, effectively reducing their options to just a few schools. Public School No. 80, located in the Tenderloin, eventually became an integrated school, but the student body remained predominantly African American. In

1905, William Bulkley, then principal of PS 80, established an evening school for students over the age of sixteen—many of whom worked during the day and studied at night. These evening classes, along with vocational training and literacy programs, provided working-class Black adults with critical access to education. By 1906, growing demand led the program to expand and relocate to the larger Public School No. 67. The curriculum included English, shorthand, mechanical drawing, bookkeeping, dressmaking, millinery, cooking, and carpentry.



PS 67

Source: NYPL Digital Collections



PS 80

Source: NYPL Digital Collections

Underrecognized Black Women

The contributions of many Black women to the Tenderloin have been more overlooked. In 1895, the NYC Department of Education denied Susan Elizabeth Frazier, a Black substitute teacher at P.S. 80, a full-time position due to her race. She sued the Department of Education and won, becoming the first Black teacher in a New York integrated public school. Ida B. Wells, a journalist, educator, and leading anti-lynching activist, co-founded the NAACP and dedicated her life to fighting racial and gender injustice. Richetta Randolph Wallace was an American administrator and the first staff member hired by the NAACP. Susan McKinney Steward was an American physician and author. She was the third African-American woman to earn a medical degree in the United States, and the first in New York State.



Passport photo of Susan Elizabeth Frazier
Source: Unknown author - National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)



Ida B. Wells
Source: University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center.



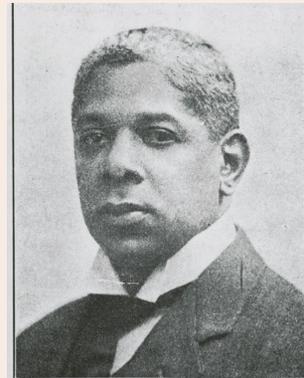
Richetta Randolph Wallace
Source: The Crisis - "The Horizon" The Crisis (August 1923): 177



Susan McKinney Steward
Source: Steward, T.G. (1921) Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry

Patrons of Black Athletics

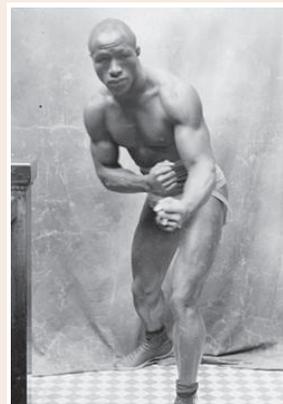
Barron Wilkins, owner of the Little Savoy Hotel at West 35th Street, used his earnings to advance Black athletes. He was the sole or primary benefactor of all of New York's Negro League baseball teams, and also sponsored Peter Jackson, one of the most successful boxers of his era. Jackson's portrait was displayed alongside other Black athletes at Ike Hine's, a Black-owned club on West 27th Street.



Barron Wilkins
NYPL
1906



Sam Crawford, Pitcher for the New York Black Sox
Seamheads
circa 1910



Peter Jackson
Chicago Daily News
1902

Black Religion

While early Black churches primarily centered on religious worship and education, they quickly evolved into multifunctional institutions that became central nodes of Black urban life. Between 1870 and 1900, as demographic patterns shifted, Black churches in the Tenderloin not only increased significantly in number but also achieved greater autonomy in governance and religious leadership. Simultaneously, their roles within the community underwent a profound transformation.

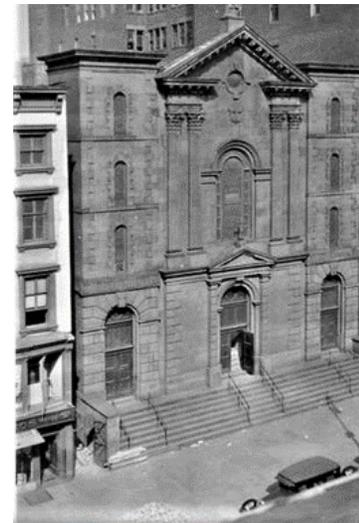
As James Weldon Johnson observed, the significance of Black churches extended far beyond the spiritual: they functioned as social centers, clubs, and arenas for self-realization, offering spaces in which African Americans—excluded from many facets of mainstream public life—could claim dignity, agency, and belonging. Churches provided a structured public environment where Black individuals could be seen, respected, and supported by their communities (Johnson 1930, 165).

As grassroots-oriented denominations such as the Baptists and Methodists increasingly replaced more formalist traditions like the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches, the functional focus of Black churches shifted away from education and moral instruction toward political advocacy, emotional expression, and cultural production. Church leaders such as Bishop H. C. Bishop of St. Philip’s Episcopal Church, which relocated to the Tenderloin in the 1880s, and Adam Clayton Powell Sr. of Abyssinian Baptist Church, which relocated to the Tenderloin in 1902, transformed the pulpit into a political platform, organizing mass protests, promoting civil rights, and directly confronting racial injustice (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 156–157; Sacks 2006, 184). Meanwhile, Methodist churches actively advanced voter education and civic engagement; pastors at institutions like St. Mark’s Methodist Episcopal Church were deeply involved in the activities of the NAACP and broader Black political organizing (NYPL n.d.; Miller 2020).

Baptist churches, in particular, emerged as cultural and spiritual hubs. They promoted gospel music and spirituals and attracted congregants through preaching styles rooted in oral tradition and improvisation (Sacks 2006, 180). For example, Reverend T. H. Gilbert’s attempt to introduce a more “intellectual” approach to preaching at Mount Olivet Baptist Church, which made its home in the Tenderloin from the late

1870s to 1925, was met with resistance from the congregation, who favored emotionally resonant modes of worship—demonstrating the community’s preference for expressive and effective engagement (Sacks 2006, 182).

This period of institutional growth was ultimately disrupted by the Uptown Movement. Rising rents, urban redevelopment, and structural racism compelled many Black churches to relocate, with some demolished to make way for large infrastructure projects such as Pennsylvania Station. Nevertheless, the institutional models, theological orientations, and community-based practices established by Tenderloin-era churches continued to shape the religious and cultural life of Black communities in Harlem and beyond (Johnson 1930, 165).



St. Vincent de Paul Church, New York City. Photograph. NYPL.



Dodson, Howard, Christopher Moore, and Roberta Yancy. 2000. *The Black New Yorkers*. John Wiley.

Black Media

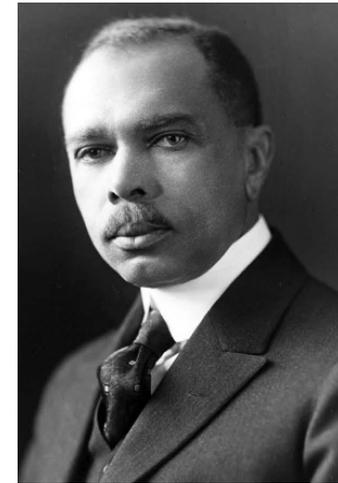
The NAACP provided an important source of Black media through its journal, *The Crisis*. First published in 1910, the journal's mission was to "set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested to-day toward colored people" (*Crisis* 1910). Richetta G. Randolph, the stenographer for the NAACP, likely typed the first edition of *The Crisis* at her office, located at 322 West 53rd Street (Hogans 1959).

Many of the cover photographs for *The Crisis* were captured by Cornelius M. Battey, who was, perhaps, the most notable Black photographer in New York at the time. The honest nature of photography was important to the Black community at a time when White media consistently spread racist illustrations and caricatures of African Americans. Mr. Battey was famous for his portraits of Black figures such as W.E.B. DuBois and Frederick Douglass, as well as his photographs of notable White people, including Sir Thomas Lipton and Prince Henry of Prussia (*Crisis* 1917). Around 1900, he opened an office at 509 Eighth Avenue with a White business partner (Herbert 2016). Mr. Battey used photography to depict African Americans with dignity and honor. Thus, *The Crisis*, so critical to the history of the Civil Rights Movement, was originally a product of the Tenderloin.

The *New York Age*, established in 1887, was a prominent African American newspaper in New York and nationwide. Many influential Black journalists wrote for *The Age*, including W.E.B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Victoria Earle Matthews, and Ida B. Wells (Wintz and Finkelman 2004). As early as 1892, Black-owned businesses across a wide area of the Tenderloin sold the newspaper. In 1909, *The New York Age* moved into an office on West 46th Street where they operated their own printing press (*New York Age* 1909).



Portrait of Victoria Earle Matthews.
Source: "Victoria Earle Matthews (1861-1907) | BlackPast.Org."



Portrait of James Weldon Johnson.
Source: Simba, Malik. "James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)."



Portrait of W.E.B. Du Bois
Source: Battey, C. M. (Cornelius Marion). "W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, 1868-1963." Still image, 1919.



Portrait of Ida B. Wells.
Source: Boomer, Lee. "Life Story: Ida B. Wells." *Women & the American Story* (blog).



Cover of the November 1915 issue of The Crisis, photographed by Cornelius M. Battey.

Source: National Museum of African American History and Culture. "The Crisis Vol. 11 No. 1."



Portrait of Cornelius M. Battey. Source: The Crisis, Vol. 14, Iss. 1, May 1917, p.32.

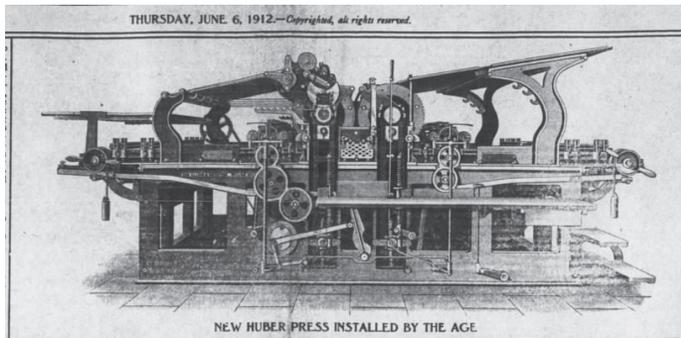
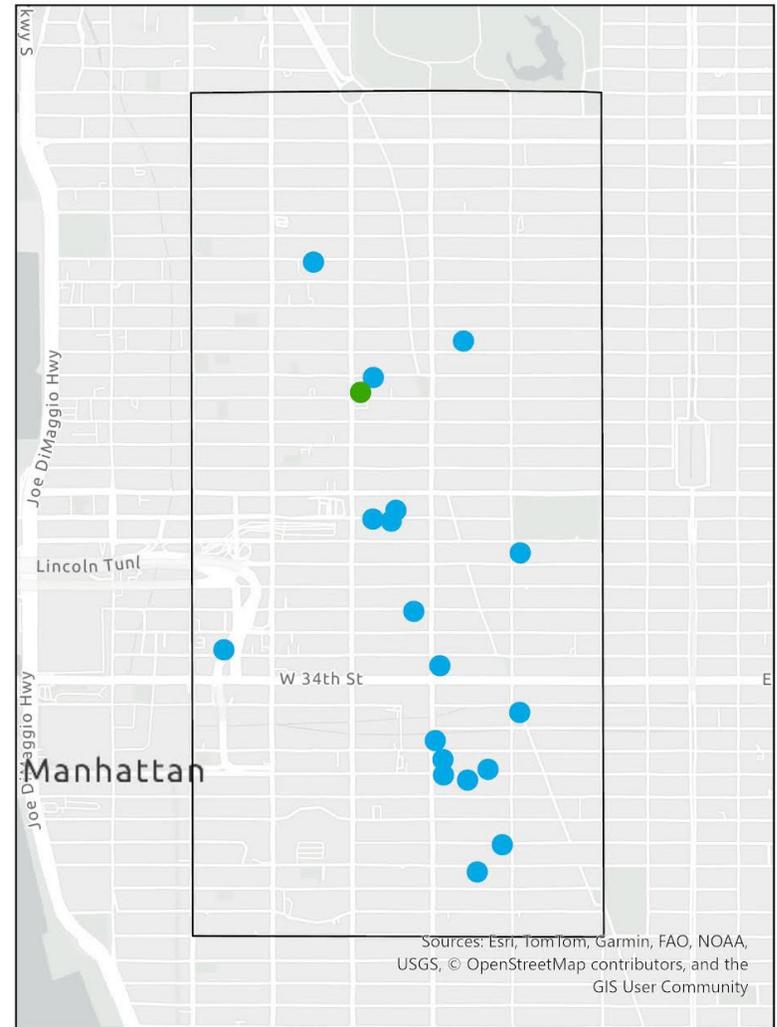


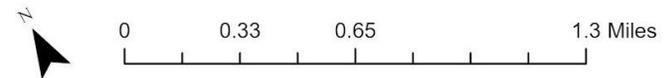
Illustration of a printing press owned by the New York Age, one of three presses owned by the company in 1912.

Source: The New York Age, June 16, 1912, p. 1.

Locations Where *The New York Age* Sold, 1892



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



Map of businesses where the New York Age was sold in 1892. The New York Age office and printing press at 247 W 46th St. is indicated in green.

Source: Data from the New York Age, November 19, 1892, p. 4. Map created by Sabina Busch via ArcGIS Pro, 2025.

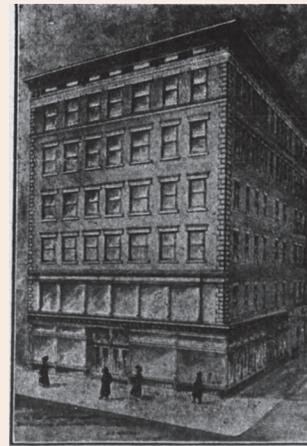
The Metropolitan Building

The New York Age's office, known as the Metropolitan Building, was of special importance to the Black community of the Tenderloin. In 1906, the Metropolitan Mercantile and Realty Company, a Baltimore-based joint stock company of entirely Black shareholders, purchased a four-story building at 46th Street and Eighth Avenue with "the intention of altering the structure into a department store and bank for Negroes" (New York Tribune 1906, 8). Local Black architect E.R. Williams drafted the designs for such a structure, specifically an expansion of the existing building from four to six stories. Based out of an office on Nassau Street, Williams was one of few practicing Black architects in New York City at the turn of the century and was the designer on retainer for the Metropolitan Company.

The Metropolitan Building opened in 1908, not as the department store originally envisioned but rather as offices for Black businesses. While its intended use may have changed, its symbolism remained potent: a structure financed by local Black investment built by and for Black people in a time and place where White discrimination made such an achievement seem an impossibility. Contemporary observers shared in this remarkability, heralding the building's opening as "the beginning of a new epoch of the race...an event which will ever be conspicuous in the annals of the history of Negro progress in the city of New York" (New York Age 1908, 2). Following some uncertain financial struggles, however, the owners could not meet their first mortgage of \$26,535 in 1910 and were forced to sell at a below-market foreclosure rate of \$45,000 (the additional two stories erected by the company alone cost \$50,000) (New York Age 1910, 1). Although no longer Black-owned, the building would continue as a bastion of Black business. The new owners, the White-owned Bauman Furniture Company, continued to rent to Black business tenants, at least as reported in Black newspapers (New York Age 1911, 7).



Media coverage of E. R. Williams and the Metropolitan Buildings
The Sun, February 15, 1907.

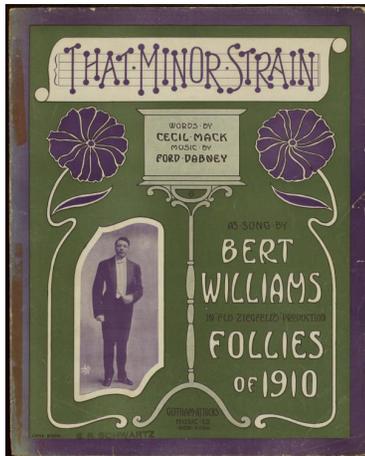


Artist's sketch of the Metropolitan Building
Source: "The Metropolitan Building."
The New York Age. January 18, 1908.

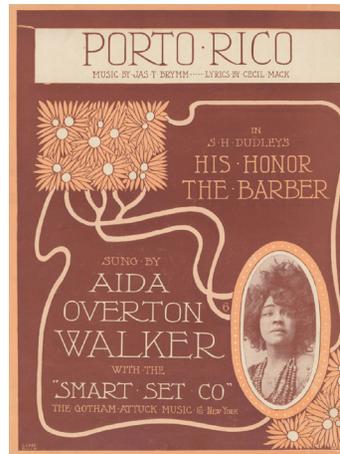


The Metropolitan Building, 1940
Source: "750-752 8 Avenue" 1939.
New York Municipal Archives. 1940s
Tax Department Photographs.

Through the establishment of the Black-owned music publisher Gotham-Attucks, Black musicians were able to liberate themselves from the racist imagery perpetuated by White publishing companies. Unlike White publications, which often featured derogatory caricatures of Black people, Gotham-Attucks favored photography to portray Black individuals. As mentioned, photography became a powerful tool Black people used to resist the distortion and dehumanization inherent in White artists' caricature illustrations of them.



Cecil Mack and Ford Dabney, "That Minor Strain: Ziegfeld Follies of 1910," published by Gotham-Attucks
Source: NYPL Digital Collections

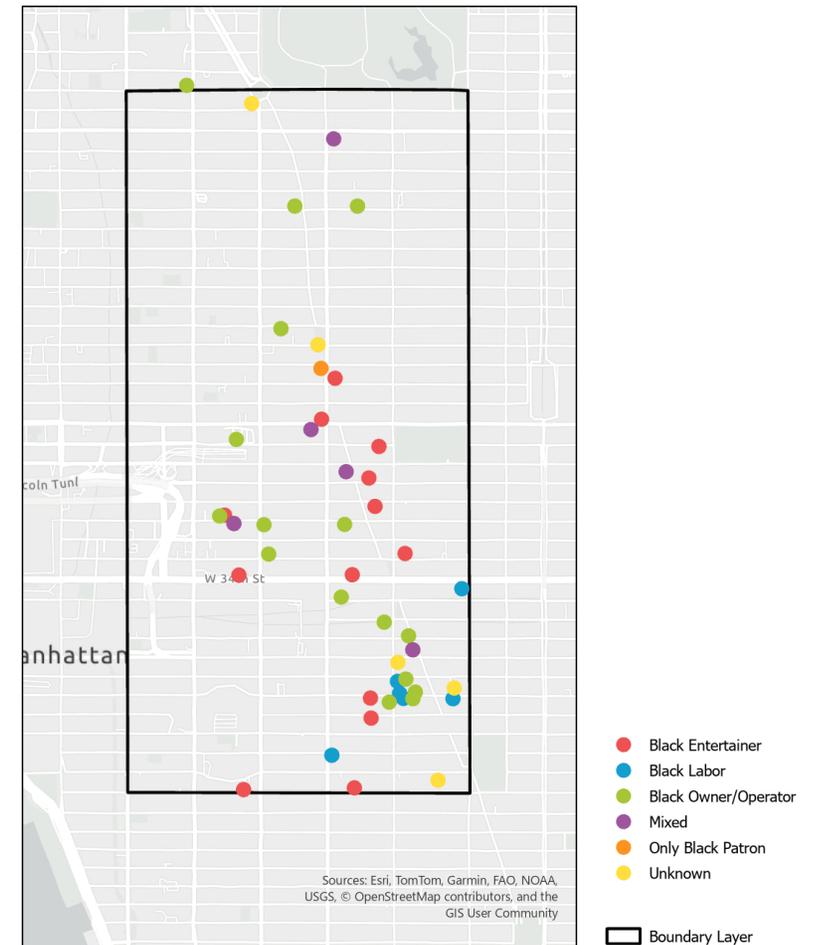


Jas T. Brymn and Cecil Mack, "Porto Rico," 1910, published by Gotham-Attucks
Source: Brown University Library

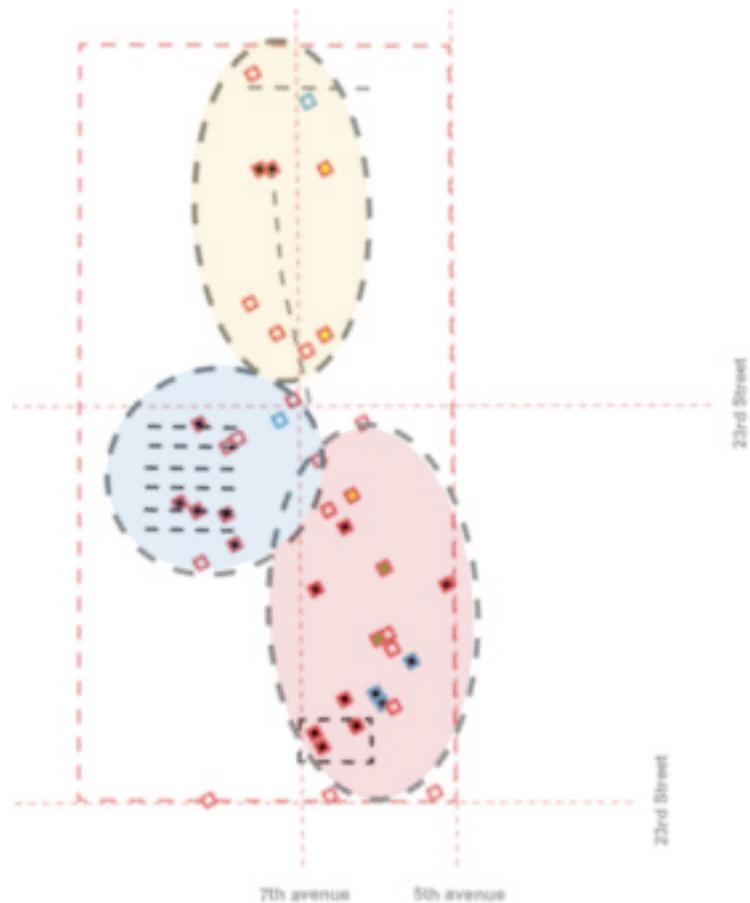
Black Creative Arts and Networks

A significant number of Black owners/operators and entertainers—composers, musicians, and other performers—characterized the creative arts industry in the Tenderloin, particularly in music-related enterprises such as publishing companies, saloons, and small performance venues like dance halls. The studio team identified a range of historic assets in various categories related to Black narratives, including 50 entertainment-related assets accounting for the largest portion of the total 229 assets. This data supports the broader argument that entertainment was central in understanding the Tenderloin as Black Bohemia. A vibrant cultural network known as the Marshall Circle, which extended to authors, poets, and other artists, evolved from and within the district.

Entertainment Types



Entertainment Historic Assets with the Tenderloin Study Area.
Source: Data sourced from NYC Open Data and HP Studio II at Columbia University.
Map authored by Ashlyn Pause.



Map Diagram of Black Entertainment Distribution in The Tenderloin. The red zone marks the rise of the music sheet industry, such as Tin Pan Alley, alongside numerous brothels and gambling houses. The blue zone centers around socially and historically significant sites, which also included several brothels. The yellow zone indicates a district of entertainers, social life, and performance, centered around the Marshall Hotel and Carnegie Hall.

Source: Data Sourced from HP Studio II at Columbia University. Map Authored by Fikri Izza

The Marshall Circle served as a vital cultural hub for Black artists who were largely excluded from mainstream theatrical spaces. It played a central role in shifting Black performance away from minstrel traditions shaped by White stereotypes toward Black Naturalism, a powerful mode of expression rooted in the lived experiences of Black Americans within a White-dominated society. This community brought together pioneering figures such as the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and performers Bert Williams and George Walker, along with activists like Alice Dunbar-Nelson (Daigle 2009, 633).



Vaudeville Musicians. 1920
Source: NYPL Digital Collections



Vaudeville Musicians. 1920
Source: NYPL Digital Collections



James L. Marshall



Paul L. Dunbar
Writer



Bert Williams
Performer



George Walker
Performer



Ada Overton Walker
Performer



J R Johnson
Musician



J W Johnson
Musician



Ernest Hogan
Performer

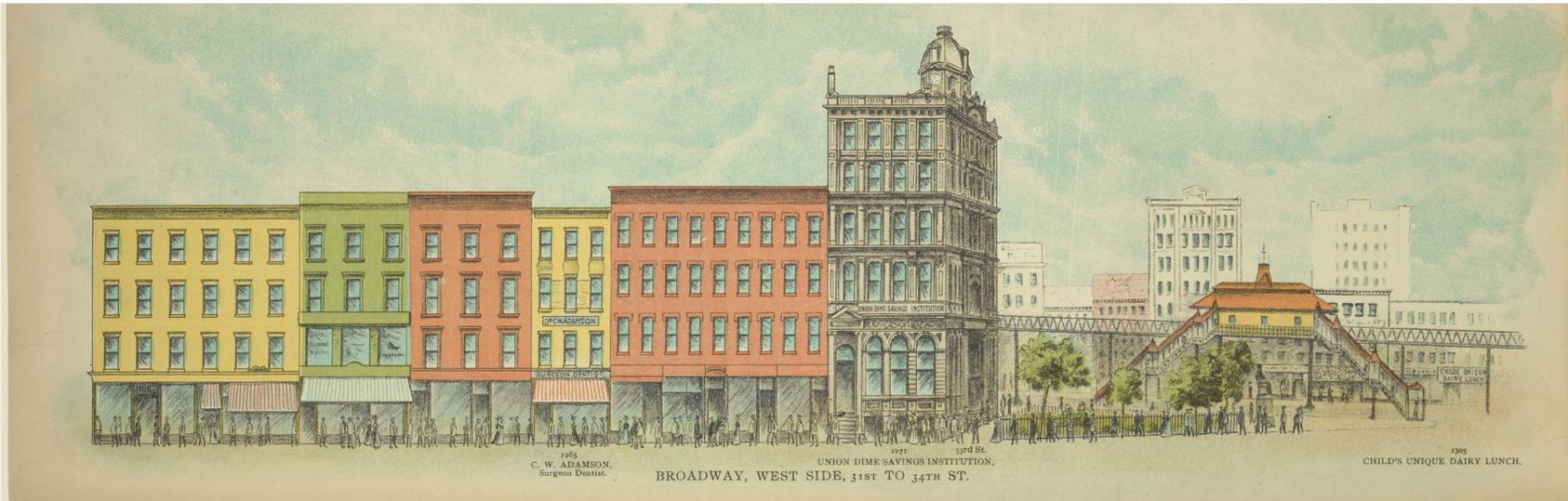


Alice Dunbar-Nelson
Activist

By the late nineteenth century, Black entertainers and artists – especially as individual performers – began to enter mainstream cultural arenas, including music and theater, with increasing visibility across both Black-owned and White-owned venues. The Grand Opera House, a major White-owned theater opened in 1863 at 265 8th Avenue, hosted *The King’s Koon-dom* in 1898 – a landmark production by Bob Cole’s Black-owned company that marked a significant expansion of Black-led theatrical presence in White-dominated spaces (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 117). Similarly, Madison Square Garden, located at 4 West 24th Street and opened in 1865, became a key venue for Black performers such as M. Sissieretta Jones, one of the nation’s most prominent Black divas. Alongside Flora Batson and Marie Smith Selika, Jones rose to national prominence following her appearance at the Jubilee Spectacular and Cakewalk in 1892 (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 114). This upward momentum continued in 1896 when Selika, already acclaimed for her performances across Europe and the United States, performed before a standing-room-only audience at Carnegie Hall. She is now recognized as America’s first Black concert coloratura soprano (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 114).

The push for Black cultural independence also found ground in community-run spaces. In 1890, Charlie Moore established the Douglass Club at 120 West 28th Street. Known informally as the “Greasy Front,” It became one of the first venues dedicated to Black entertainers, nurturing a self-sustaining cultural ecosystem that featured influential performers like Nat Morton, Diamond Flossie, and Aida Overton Walker (New York Age 1939). Beyond individuals and venues, the Marshall Circle also contributed to the formation of lasting Black cultural institutions. Among them was the Clef Club, founded by Black composer and band leader James Reese Europe and initially organized at the Marshall, which served as both a booking agency and a union for Black musicians (Johnson 1930, 142). Similarly, Gotham-Attucks Music emerged as one of the first Black-owned publishing companies in Manhattan, giving Black composers and lyricists access to the music industry on their own terms (Sampson 2014, 37).

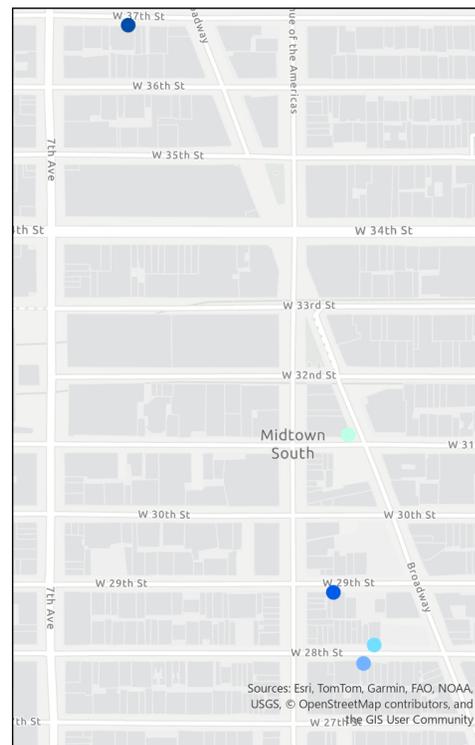
These overlapping networks of performance, resistance, and self-organization laid the groundwork for a broader cultural transformation, positioning Black performers not just as entertainers but as cultural leaders reclaiming the narrative of Black life in Manhattan.



Broadway, West Side. 31st to 34th St.
 NYPL Digital Collections, 1899.



Left: 42 W 28 ST, 1940 Tax Photo.
 Source: NYC Municipal Archives.



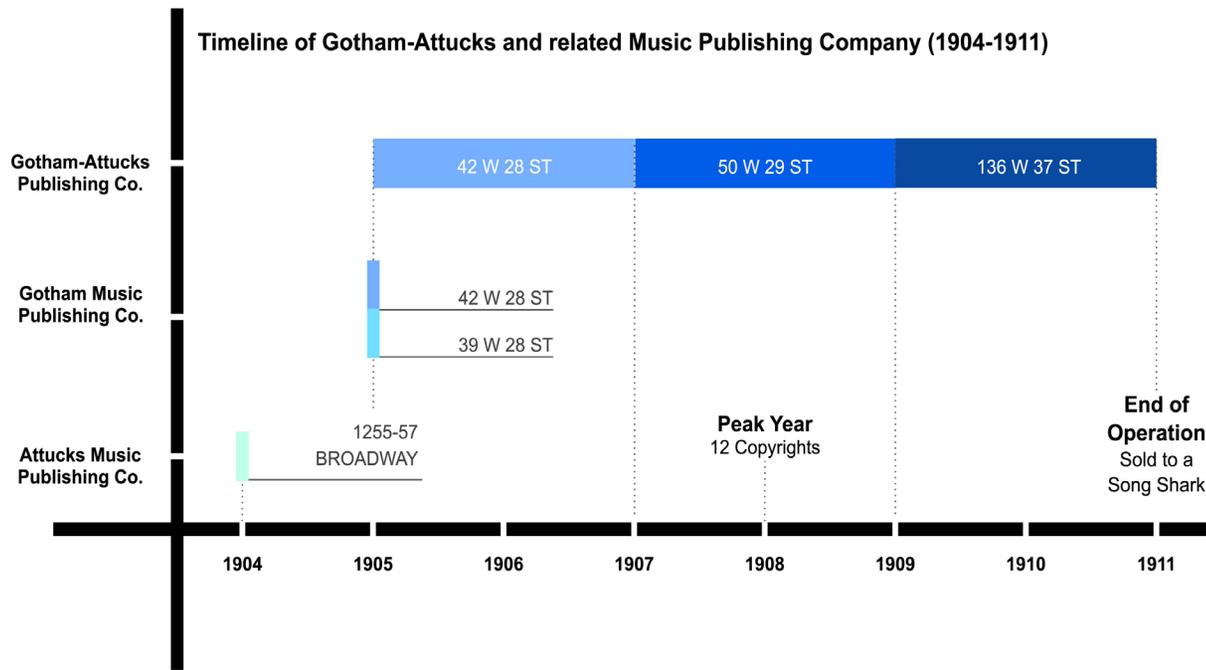
Gotham-Attucks Locations

- 1255-57 BROADWAY, 1904
- 39 W 28 ST, 1905
- 42 W 28 ST, 1905
- 50 W 29 ST, 1907 - 1909
- 136 W 37 ST, 1909 - 1911

▭ Boundary Layer

Movement of Gotham-Attucks Publishing Company.

Source: Data Sourced from HP Studio II at Columbia University. Map by Ashlyn Pause.



Right: Timeline of Gotham-Attucks and Related Music Publishing Company, 1904-1911.
 Source: Data Sourced from Shirley, 1987.
 Diagram by Chuyan Zhou.

Black businessmen Shepard N. Edmonds and Richard Cecil (R. C.) McPherson founded and owned Gotham-Attucks Music Publishing Company through the merger of two companies, the Gotham Music Publishing Company and Attucks Music Publishing Company. The Attucks Music Publishing Company was named for Crispus Attucks, a Black man who is considered one of the first to die for American freedom in the Revolutionary War. This suggests that the name “Attucks” carries historical significance related to themes of freedom and African American heritage. The founder of the Attucks Music Publishing Company was Shepard N. Edmonds, who managed the company starting in 1904. Meanwhile, the Gotham Music Publishing Company was founded by R. C. McPherson, also known by his pseudonym “Cecil Mack” (Shirley 1987, 79–82).

The earliest site for the Attucks Music Publishing Company was the corner of 31st Street and Broadway, as illustrated in an 1899 drawing. 42 West 28th Street initially served as the office for the Gotham Music Publishing Company for several months, and later became the first known location of the merged Gotham-Attucks company in 1905 (Shirley 1987, 84). The building on this site is still extant today, though the facade has been significantly altered, as shown in the 1940s tax photo.

The merged company shifted locations several times within the Tenderloin, beginning at 42 West 28th Street and moving to 50 West 29th Street, then finally to 136 West 37th Street. Its peak came in 1908 when it deposited 12 works for copyright in a single year (Shirley 1987, 84). Gotham-Attucks ceased operating as a reputable publisher in 1911, when it was sold to a known “song shark,” White composer Ferdinand E. Mierisch, who used the company’s established name to fraudulently solicit aspiring musicians (Shirley 1987, 88).

Scott Joplin

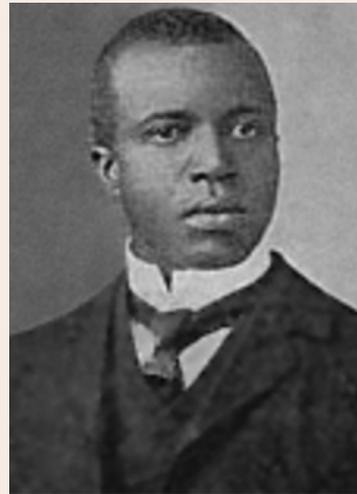
Scott Joplin is a key example of both a Black owner, operator, and entertainer active in the Tenderloin during the early twentieth century, later widely known as the “King of Ragtime.” Joplin arrived in New York in 1907 and lived at 128 West 29th Street, right at the heart of the Tenderloin and Tin Pan Alley (Berlin 2016, 210). After Joplin shifted his focus to New York, he published a number of original compositions through Seminary Music Co., including Paragon Rag and Euphonic Sounds, which both registered in 1909 and dedicated to the Colored Vaudeville Benevolent Association (CVBA), reflecting Joplin’s close ties with the Black theatrical and musical community in New York at the time (Berlin 2016, 223–38).

Yet, Joplin’s aspirations extended beyond ragtime piano music. He was committed to producing grand opera rooted in Black life and uplift, and in 1911, he self-published the full score of his opera Treemonisha (Berlin 2016, 248). Before doing so, Joplin had approached multiple publishers, but none accepted his work for publication. While Joplin’s ragtime music had found a market, no one believed an opera by a Black composer on a Black theme would be commercially successful (Berlin 2016, 248).

These repeated rejections underscored the limitations Black composers faced in the mainstream music industry and helped motivate Joplin’s next step in forming his own publishing company. In 1913, while living at 252 West 47th Street, Joplin established his own music publishing company with his common-law wife, Lottie Stokes (Berlin 2016, 290). This allowed him to retain ownership of his work and publish without relying on discriminatory publishers.



“3 Great Rags...Seminary Music Co.”
Source: *The New York Age*, May 19, 1910.



Portrait of Scott Joplin.
Source: Freedom From Religion
Foundation

Worth's Museum

Worth's Museum, located at Sixth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, marked a turning point for Black performers in American stage history. It was the first venue where Black performers could receive professional dramatic training and stage experience (Johnson 1930, 97).

Bob Cole, a pioneering composer and playwright, once was the stage manager of the Worth's Museum and headed the Worth's Museum All-Star Stock Company (Johnson 1930, 98).

In the mean time Worth's Museum, at Sixth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, had virtually become a Negro stock theatre, the first place where a group of coloured performers were able to gain anything approaching dramatic training and experience on the strictly professional stage. The company was composed of twelve to fifteen performers, both men and women, and was

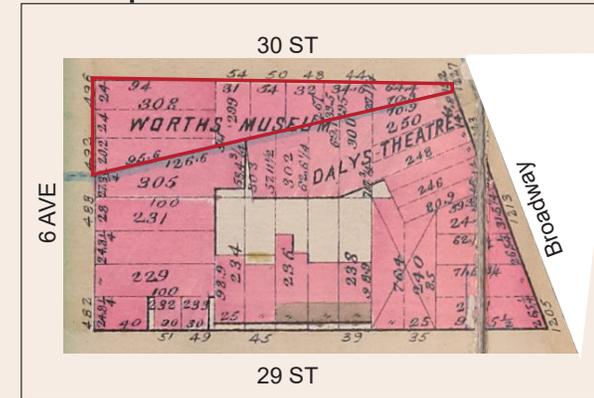
for a period headed by Bob Cole, who had been a member of the Creole Show. He was both playwright and stage-manager and provided a series of sketches and plays that made Worth's Museum All-Star Stock Company very popular. At this time Bob Cole was about twenty-six years old, but he was already evincing the powers which were to make him the greatest single force in the middle period of the development of the Negro in the American theatre. He was the most versatile theatrical man the Negro has yet produced: a good singer and an excellent dancer, and able to play several musical instruments. He could write a dramatic or a musical play — dialogue, lyrics, and music — stage the play, and act a part. In his role as a tramp he received the highest praise of the critics. Moreover, he was educated and a serious student of the whole history of the theatre and the drama.



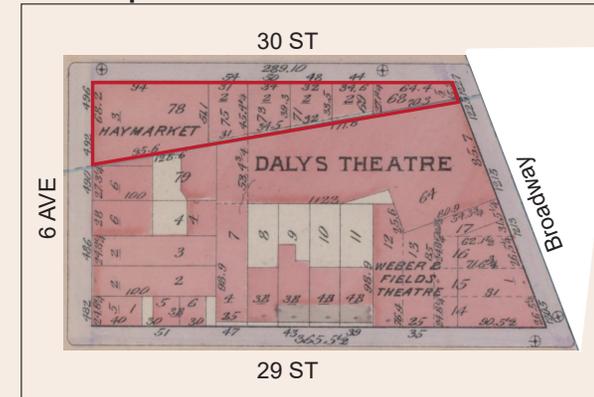
Portrait of Bob Cole.
Source: Library of Congress.

Worth's Museum.
Source: Johnson, James Weldon. 1930. "Black Manhattan." Internet Archive. A. A. Knop.

1891 Map:



1899 Map:



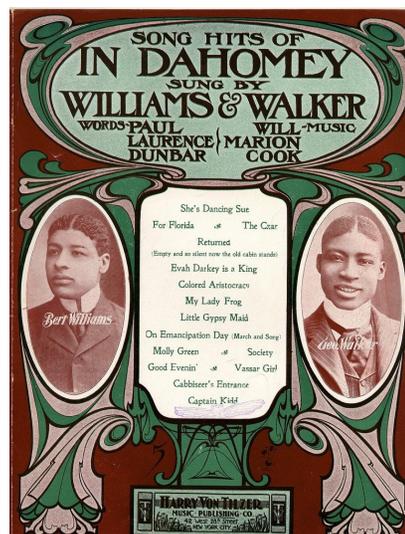
1891 & 1899 Map.

Base map from NYPL Digital Collections. Revised by Chuyan Zhou. Although Worth's Museum and the later Haymarket had no direct connection, historical maps reveal that they occupied the same site: the 1891 map identifies it as "Worth's Museum," while the 1899 map shows it had become the "Haymarket." According to *the New York Times*, the Haymarket dance hall operated until 1911 before its eventual closure in the face of redevelopment and moral reform campaigns (New York Times 1920).

In 1903, *In Dahomey* became the first full-length musical on Broadway written and performed entirely by African Americans. Although some characters were still in blackface, the production included more realistic Black characters and criticisms of African imperialism. Performers George Walker, Bert Williams, and Aida Overton Walker led the cast. Black composer, pianist, orchestrator, lyricist, violinist, and choral director Will Marion Cook arranged the music, and Black poet, novelist, and short story writer Paul Laurence Dunbar wrote the lyrics. *In Dahomey* was first performed at the New York Theater on West 44th Street.



The New York Theater (formerly Hammerstein's Olympia), photographed 1898.
Source: Museum of the City of New York

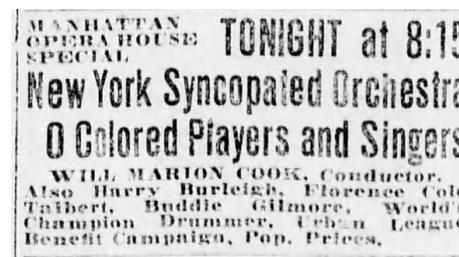


Sheet music from "*In Dahomey*," featuring photos of Bert Williams and George Walker.
Source: Kurt Ganzl. "'In Dahomey': One Of The First American Black Musical Hits." Operetta Research Center, June 10, 2020.

Established in 1919, Will Marion Cook's New York Syncopated Orchestra reclaimed the narrative of African American music. Made up entirely of Black musicians, the orchestra performed music from various eras of African American culture, and was even advertised as 'educational' for the public, both White and Black (Rye 2010). They performed across Manhattan, notably at the Manhattan Opera House and the 44th Street Theater. Later renamed the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, the group brought their performances to the United Kingdom in the early 1920's. Although the group disbanded in 1921, their legacy lives on in the rich tradition of Black music in the UK.

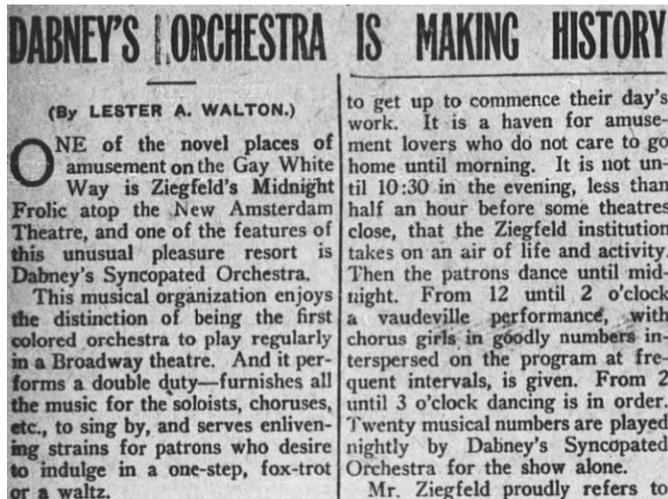


The New York Syncopated Orchestra at a London venue, ca. 1920.
Source: Magazine, Harlem World. "The Legendary Southern Syncopated Orchestra, Founded By Strivers Row Resident Will Marion Cook, 1919-1921." Harlem World Magazine (blog), October 11, 2022.



A newspaper advertisement for a New York Syncopated Orchestra performance at Manhattan Opera House, 1919.
Source: Brooklyn Eagle. "Manhattan Opera House Special: New York Syncopated Orchestra." February 23, 1919.

Another Black entertainment group that claimed space on Broadway was Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra, conducted by Ford Dabney, a founding member of the Clef Club. In 1916, Dabney's Orchestra made history as the first Black musical group to perform regularly in a Broadway Theater, the New Amsterdam Theater and rooftop garden. Their music was an important frontrunner of African American innovation in jazz music.



A 1916 New York Age article clipping describing Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra's performances at the New Amsterdam Theater.

Source: Lester A. Walton. "Dabney's Orchestra Is Making History." *The New York Age*, December 21, 1916.



Portrait of Ford Dabney
Source: Gioia, Ted. "He Might Have Been the First Jazz Star..." February 18, 2024.

Breaking Racial Barriers in Healthcare

Black-led healthcare was limited during the study period. The first African-American to receive a medical degree in New York City, Dr. Eugene Percy Roberts, established his practice in the Tenderloin in 1894. Though he was called the "Dean of Harlem Physicians" later in life, Dr. Roberts had several office locations on West 53rd Street where he practised for twenty-three years before relocating to Harlem in 1917 (New York Medical n.d.).

In addition, Black nurses like Elizabeth Tyler, Edith Carter and Jessie Sleet Scales, served communities throughout New York City, including the Tenderloin. They established trust and brought empathy and compassionate care to their patients.



Portrait of Dr. Eugene Percy Roberts, 1949
New York Times

Displacement

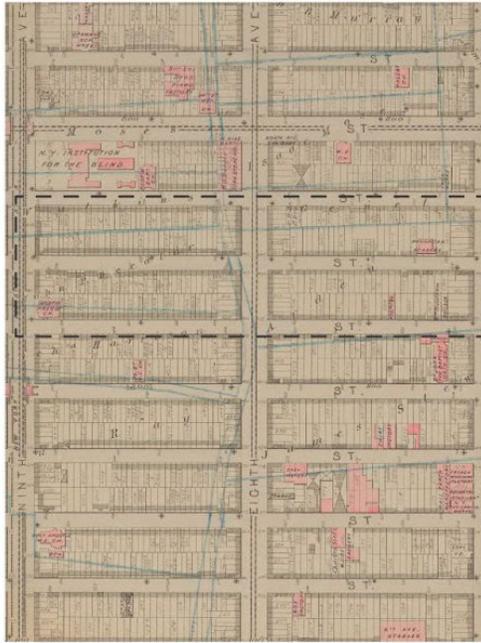
A repeated pattern of White planners and developers displacing Black populations clearly emerged in the Tenderloin neighborhood. This displacement culminated in the decline of the Tenderloin as the center of Black Manhattan. By the time the Black population in New York City had been forced into the Tenderloin area in the early 1870s, the Tenderloin district was already branded as the city's hotbed of vice by White media. Settling in the Tenderloin, a neighborhood characterized by vice, furthered the racist depictions of Black people in New York City as an "immoral" people. Still, it was one of few residential areas available to Black people in the city due to White people's segregationist real estate practices.

An 1899 New York Times article titled "Prejudices of Landlords" wrote that Black people were "hedged in by the prejudice to particular locations...about twenty-five thousand colored residents of New York City [are] concentrated in two districts remote from one another on the east and west sides of the city, in the meanest tenement districts. The great majority reside on the west side between the lines of the Sixth and Ninth avenue elevated roads...and the numbered cross streets between Sixth and Eighth avenues from Twenty-fifth to Thirty-fifth and Forty-seventh and Fifty-third streets" (New York Times 1889). And despite being charged higher rents than their non-Black peers, Black people living in the Tenderloin faced similar conditions as in earlier settlements, living mostly with Italian and Irish immigrants in cramped tenements (Sacks 2006, 75). Poverty and crime "centered in the Tenderloin between the late 1880s and early 1890s," erupting in a race riot in 1900, which prompted another migration from the Tenderloin to "the west of the San Juan Hill neighborhood and the Hundreds — both east and west—of Harlem" (Scheiner 1964, 305). This migration reflects the forced relocation of Black residents.

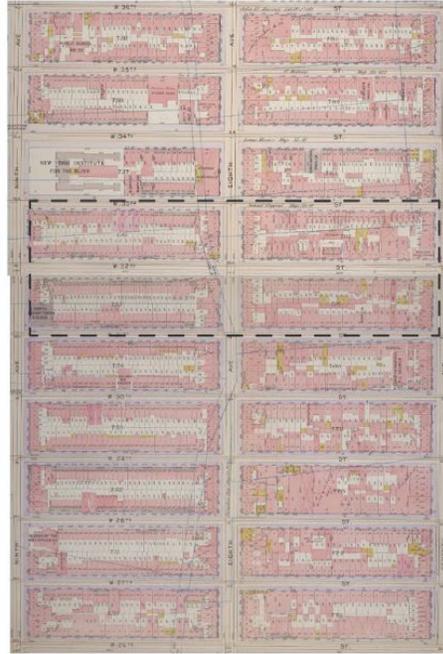
Transit Development

As the city expanded, so did its transportation network. Moving from horse-drawn streetcars to elevated railroads and subways, the construction of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad in 1878 and the early twentieth-century expansion of the subway system made areas like the Tenderloin more accessible. The construction of the 53rd street elevated line in 1878 connected 6th and 9th avenues, creating noise referred to as the "din of the elevated" and shadows on the street. By developing

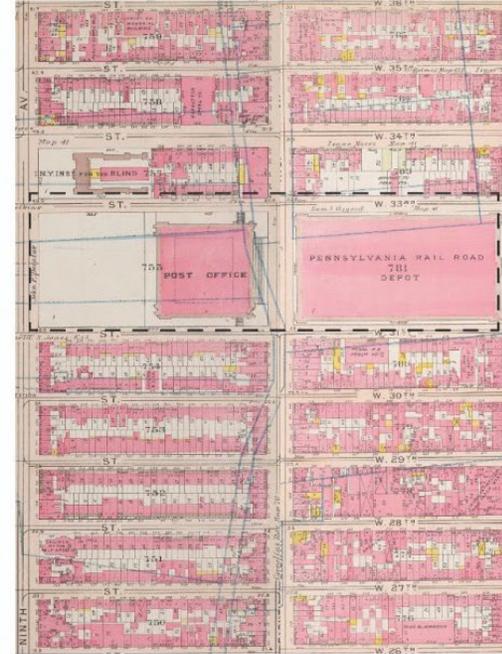
1879



1902



1911



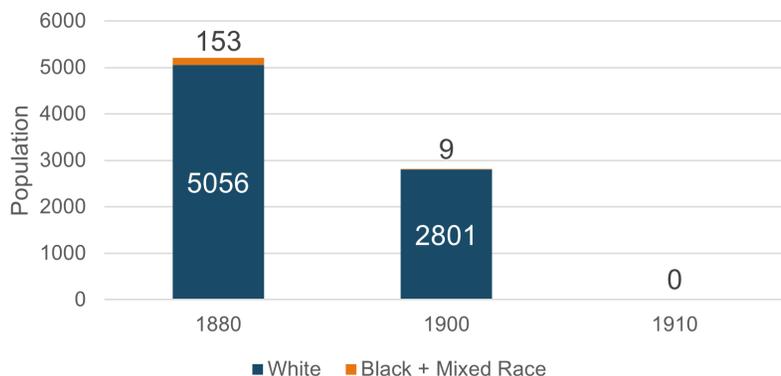
Visualization by Elizabeth Kostina old Penn Station's location across four blocks in the Tenderloin district using Bromley fire insurance maps.

The four-block target area that became home to Penn Station was home to a mix of residential tenements, small businesses, and entertainment establishments, most of which catered to the district's working-class and African American residents. These four blocks were also the site of a large Black population in the Tenderloin before PRR and their general contractor George A. Fuller, Co. built Penn Station—home to a mix of residential tenements, small businesses, and entertainment establishments. While PRR's ledgers do not record the owners of these parcels, just the parcel of land and its cost assumed PRR paid to each owner, one can assume that the majority of landowners in this area were not Black, based on the studio team's census data research. This implies that PRR displaced the Black residents of this area without any financial recourse.

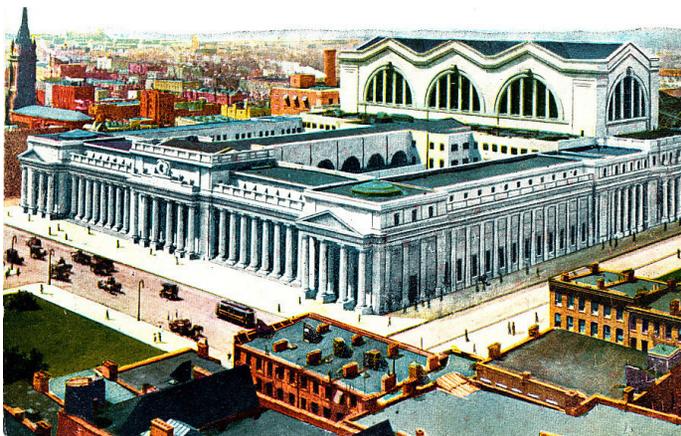


Pennsylvania Station, 1911. Source: Museum of the City of New York.

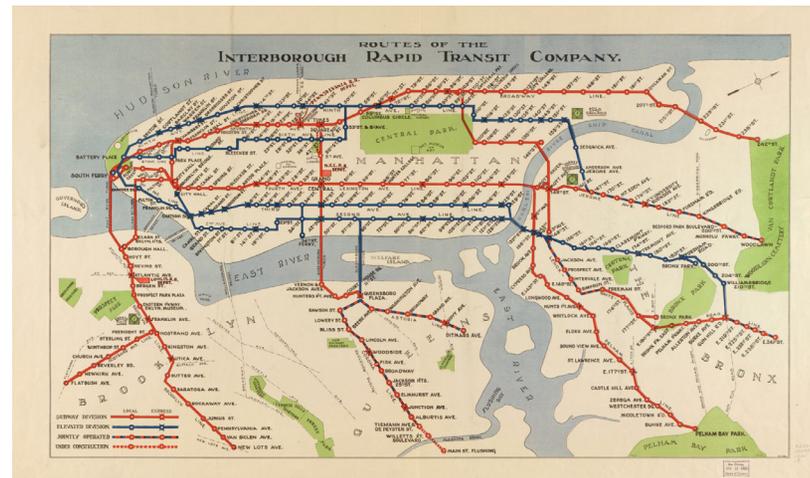
Population Changes at the PRR Site, by Race - 1880, 1900, and 1910



Graph of the population of the Penn Station site, 1880, 1900, and 1910. 1880 and 1910 data sourced from Mapping Historical New York. 1900s data sourced from Ancestry Library census archive. Chart by Noah Bronowich.



Postcard of Penn Station, 1926
Source: NPYL Digital Collections



Routes of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, 1924.
Source: Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

By 1924, the development of the Seventh Avenue line cut through the district, further integrating it into the city's growing transit web. Transit lines cutting through the area likely facilitated commercial growth and population density but may have disrupted existing industries, such as the stables that once dominated the landscape, that landowners and developers slowly replaced with garages. This, in turn, facilitated commercial growth and contributed to further displacement of Black residents to the north.

While the construction of Penn Station displaced relatively few Black residents, it began to change the Tenderloin from its announcement alone. A 1903 quote from the New York Herald shows that White reformists pinned their dreams of eradicating vice squarely upon Penn Station:

With the advent of the Pennsylvania's big station and tunnel in the heart of the old Tenderloin, that famous landmark of vice and blackmail passes into history...Smart shops and resplendent bazaars will line the new streets and plazas of the old Tenderloin site. Here, the wealth and fashion of the metropolis will mingle with crowds from the country, thronging the grand corridors of the palace station (quoted in Freeland 2009, 118).

Commercial Development

In 1902, Macy's built a new flagship store in Herald Square; its expansion "displaced a large part of the red light district of the Tenderloin – now pushed farther west – and anchored the area as a newly open retail space" where the wealthy could shop, pushing the clandestine trades further West (Mathieu 2017, 200). Although built before the completion of Penn Station, this move northward by Macy's was preemptive. Its proximity to the future site of the railyard is of little coincidence – it was likely a deliberate decision to draw commercial traffic from this future transportation hub.



The new location of Macy's near the site of Penn Station, under construction
Source: Byron Company. "Excavations for Penna. R.R. Co. Terminus, N.Y. City." 1906. Museum of the City of New York.

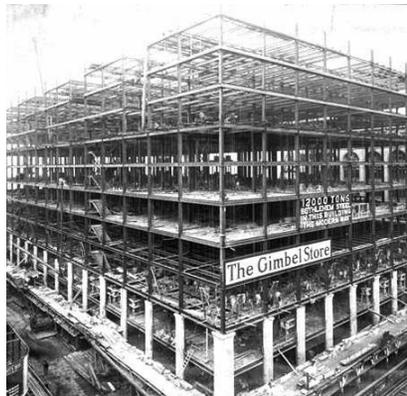
The subsequent move of Gimbels and Sak's, Macy's primary competitors, from locations downtown to sites nearby their rival cemented this change in commercial character. The resulting shift in the district's White clientele from a night-time, pleasure-seeking crowd, to a daytime flock of shoppers led many of the district's theaters, bars, and hotels to close as well. These displaced institutions were the primary employers of many Black people, especially men. While Macy's hired Black workers and served Black customers, this was not always true of the other department stores. For example, Sak's staff refused a Black shopper's request to try on a hat on account of her race, sparking outrage in the Black press. The article in the New York Age that broke this story, titled "Another Incident," implies that discrimination in shopping was becoming a more frequent occurrence, and that the Tenderloin was becoming an environment more hostile to Black residents (New York Age 1913).



Theaters and businesses at the future site of Gimbel's, 1909.
Source: Brown Brothers. Manhattan: 6th Avenue - 32nd Street. 1909. NYPL Digital Collections.



White Shoppers Along Broadway, 1921
Source: Street Scenes-Shoppers and crowds. 1921. NYPL Digital Collections.



Gimbel's Under Construction, 1910
Source: "A New York Opening for Gimbel's." *The New York Times*. 2015.



Macy's and Sak's, 1903
Source: New great department stores in Herald Square. 1903. NYPL Digital Collections.

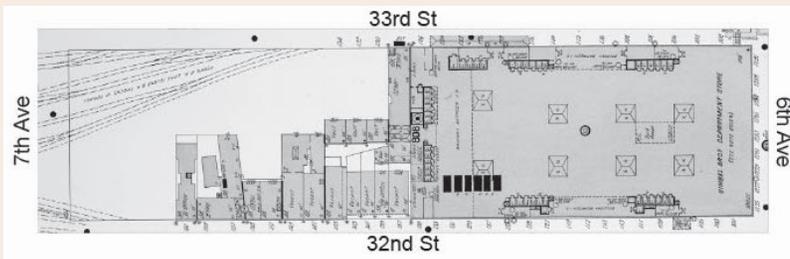
Gimbel Brothers Department Store Displaced Many Black Residents



Maps from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlases of 1899 and of 1911 demonstrate the spatial change that White developers enacted on the previously Black blocks of the Tenderloin.

Before the construction of Gimbels, this block was a small-scale residential neighborhood where many Black and White people lived. In this map of the historic fabric from 1899, the block is full of row houses. Note: Majority Black residences are in orange, and majority White residences are in blue. Grey indicates a non-residential or vacant building.

Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, 1899. Map edited by Abbey Francis.



After the construction of Gimbels, few row houses remain, and those that do are vacant. Where this block once featured a cemetery and a theater, it is now half-vacant, and half-Gimbels. After the construction of Gimbels, the block completely transformed, from a residential neighborhood where many Black people lived into a commercial district that was hostile to Black shoppers. The sheer force of White-led development had all but erased the historic fabric of the Tenderloin.

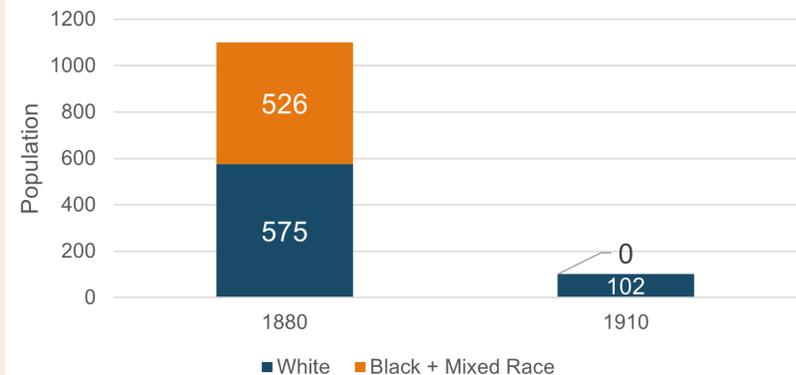
Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, 1911. Map edited by Abbey Francis.



The Realization of an Ideal

Erasure of existing fabric was one of the stated goals of the White developers of department stores like Gimbels. The ad from *the New York Times* labeled “Gimbels - The Realization of an Ideal” exemplifies this goal (*New York Times* 1910, 7). The developers of Gimbels were proud that their department store replaced an entire residential block - that was their “ideal.” This was part of the process of transforming areas of the Tenderloin into daytime shopping centers that cater to White people.

Population Changes at Gimbel's, by Race - 1880 vs. 1910



The studio team identified the construction of the Gimbel Brothers’ Department Store as the development project that displaced the greatest number of Black people, within the Tenderloin, during the studio’s period of study (Baics et al. 2021). This data is represented in this graph comparing the populations at the site of Gimbels, in 1880 and 1910. As a result, the construction of Gimbels displaced 526 Black residents. By 1880, this block was 48 percent Black. In 1910, after Gimbels’ construction, not a single Black resident remained.

Source: Data sourced from Mapping Historical New York. Chart by Noah Bronowich.

Industrial Development

The Garment District's rise in the early twentieth century was closely tied to the decline of the Tenderloin. By 1910, garment manufacturers began moving in, replacing brothels, saloons, and theaters with factory lofts near the Ladies Mile.

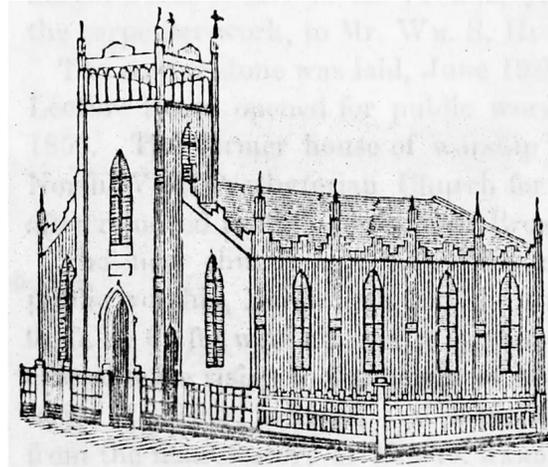
By 1910, the garment industry made up 46 percent of the city's industrial workforce. As discussed earlier, high-rise loft buildings, built in response to 1916 zoning laws, replaced tenements and row houses (Montero 2022). By 1926, the Garment District was New York's fastest-growing area, and by 1931, it became the largest clothing manufacturing center globally. This growth, along with the development of Penn Station, effectively ended the Tenderloin's existence as a neighborhood.

Loss of Black Clubs, Organizations, and Churches

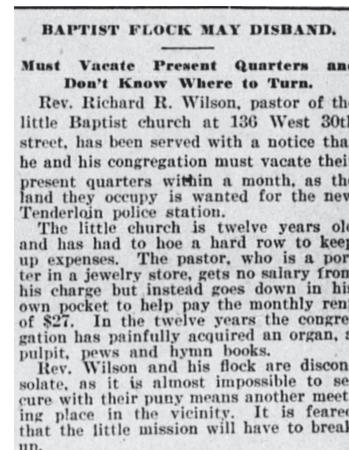
Black institutions, like the Black residents of the Tenderloin, also suffered from White-led displacement. These maps highlight the displacement of Black social clubs and organizations in the Tenderloin from 1870-1920. Black organizations faced strong oppression from the White elite. Black clubs often operated informally and struggled to maintain historical records. In contrast, elite White clubs had strong institutional backing and extensive documentation. The distribution maps show the historical presence of these Black social clubs and how, despite their importance to the community, they were largely erased over time.

White-led urban development in the Tenderloin forced several Black churches to abandon their original locations as their properties were repurposed or demolished for new construction. This pattern reflected a broader structure of racial displacement embedded in city planning and infrastructure expansion.

For instance, in 1903, North Presbyterian Church at 374 Ninth Avenue was compelled to sell its property to accommodate the expansion of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. The church subsequently relocated to 525 West 155th Street, at the northern edge of Harlem (New York Times 1901). Similarly, Little Baptist Church at 136 West 30th Street was forced to disband when the city requisitioned its land for the construction of the new Tenderloin police station (New York Age 1905).



William Howland
Source: Manual of the
North Presbyterian
Church, in the City of
New-York, no. 1. New
York, 1858



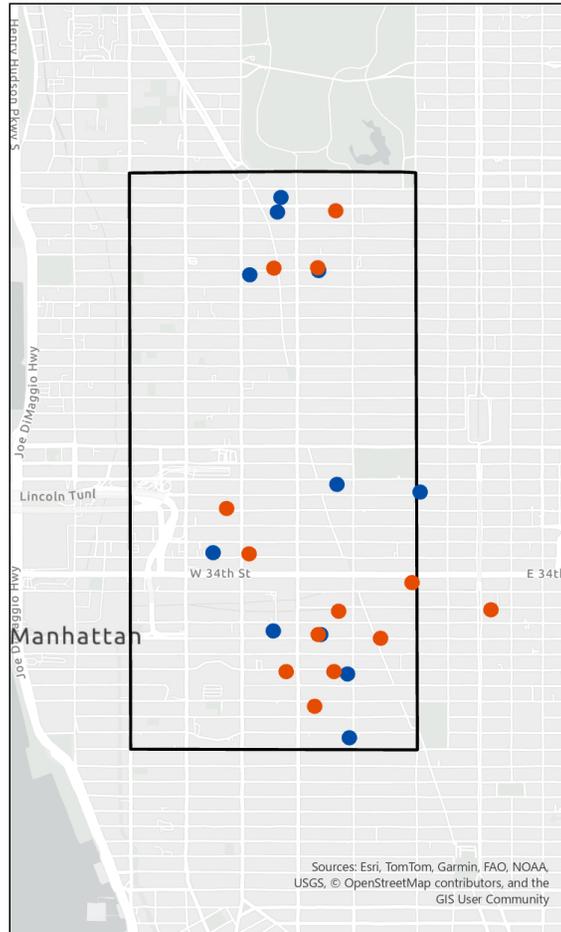
"Baptist Flock May Disband: Must
Vacate Present Quarters and Don't
Know Where to Turn."
Source: *The New York Age* 1905

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These Black churches often moved to other parts of Manhattan, such as Harlem, after White people displaced their Black congregation. Their relocation will be discussed in detail in the following section (“Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin”).

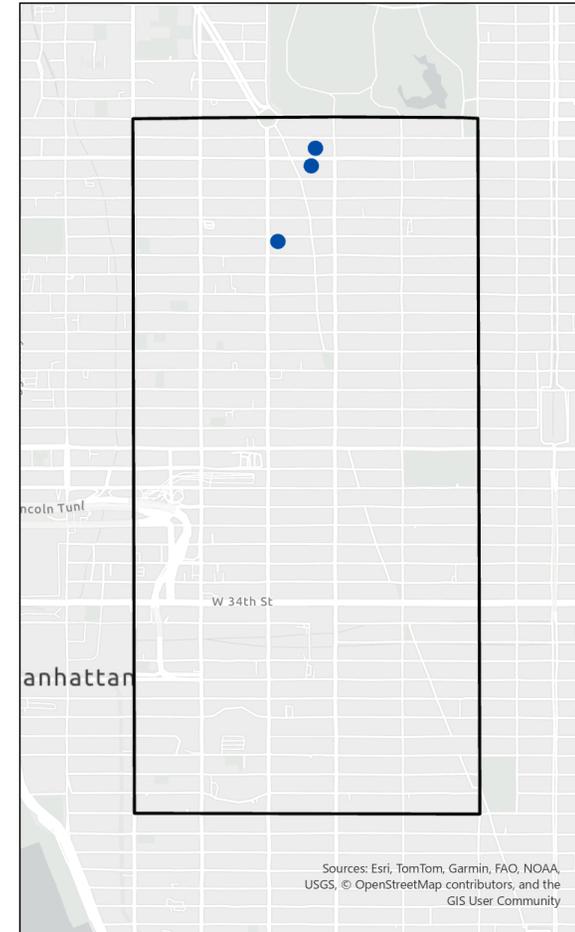
Social Clubs and Organization 1870



- Entertainment and Cultural Clubs
- Professional and Mutual Aid Organizations
- Boundary Layer

1870 Distribution map of various clubs and organizations in the Tenderloin area.
Source: Images created by Ashlyn Pause

Social Clubs and Organization 1920



- Professional and Mutual Aid Organizations
- Boundary Layer

1920 Distribution map of various clubs and organizations in the Tenderloin area.
Source: Images created by Ashlyn Pause

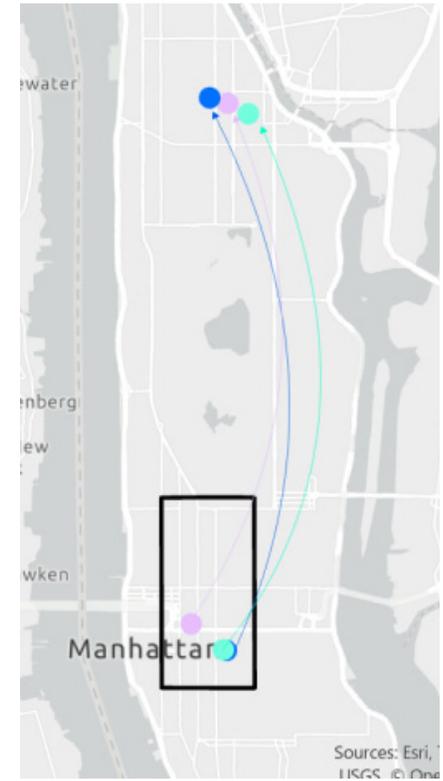
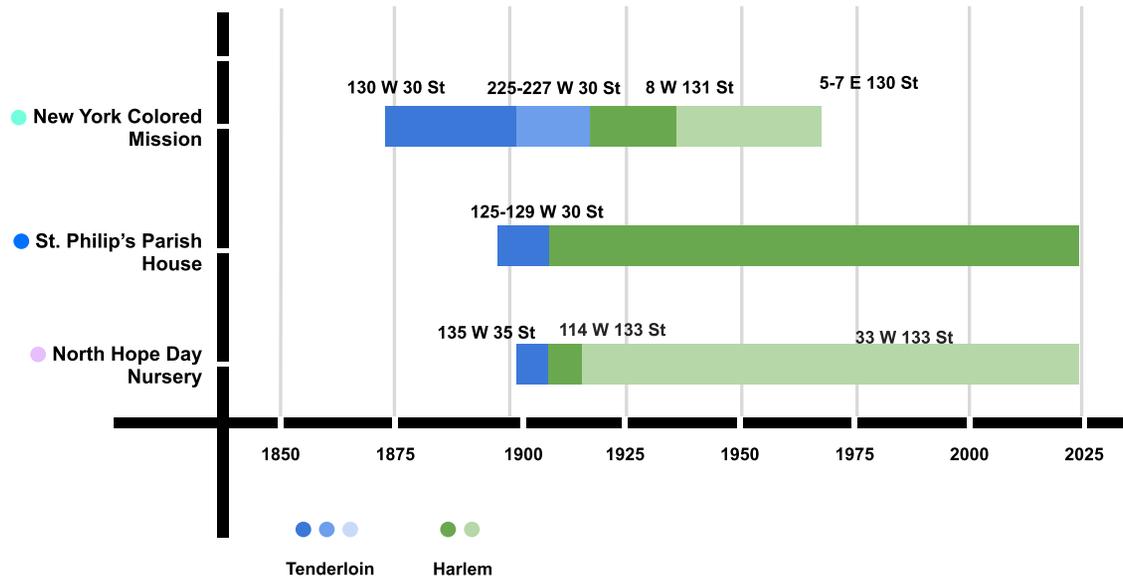
Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Discussions of Black people's progress in New York City have often overlooked the social, financial, and institutional achievements of the Black communities of the Tenderloin; emphasis is often placed only on the successes of Harlem in the twentieth century. Much of the existing Black institutional fabric of Harlem, from churches and social organizations to pillar industries and businesses, can be traced to beginnings in the Tenderloin and lower Manhattan. While the physical structures of many of these nascent institutions no longer exist today, their legacy survives uptown.

Social and Welfare Organizations

Several social organizations were integral in the formation and endurance of the Black community and played an essential role in community uplift. The New York Colored Mission, founded by White Quaker women, opened its doors at 135 West 30th Street in 1868. The primary goal was to educate members of the community so they could move into positions of independence and self-sufficiency. Over time, they shifted more focus to women, providing young single women from the South with lodging accommodations. Within ten years, they were providing 3,969 lodgings annually (New York Times 1887, 9). There was a focus on morality and religion evident in the Sabbath School and Temperance League, though they also had an employment bureau that, in 1877, secured jobs for 338 people (New York Times 1887, 9). Though a modest building, the New York Colored Mission played a critical role in the heart of the Tenderloin.

Through eminent domain, the city seized the building owned and occupied by the New York Colored Mission. The Mission relocated in 1901 one block down to 227 West 30th Street, where they continued to serve the community. In 1917, they moved to 8 West 131st Street in Harlem and continued work there until 1966.



Map of Migration North of Social Services. Data sourced from NYC Open Data and HP Studio II at Columbia University. Map by Ashlyn Pause.

The purpose-built Parish house of St. Philip's Episcopal Church focused on services for children, particularly boys, providing a gymnasium with recreational activities, a glee club, acting classes, and industrial training. Unlike the Colored Mission, whose focus was primarily centered on women, which underscored the "familial, social and employment duties of Black women over expectations of men," St. Philip's Church obtained a reputation for being more lenient with male behaviors such as smoking and playing cards (Larson 2024). St. Philip's place in the Tenderloin was particularly significant because, unlike the Colored Mission, St. Philip's parish house—and their church on West 25th Street—were Black-owned. Their ability to leverage land ownership to develop black-owned housing was unique for a class of residents that had to endure exploitation by White landlords (Ovington 1905). St. Philip's Episcopal Church followed their congregation to Harlem, buying property and building their new parish house on West 133rd Street in 1908. Their current church, on 213 West 134th Street, is still active today.

In addition to these social services, there was a critical need for childcare for Black families in the Tenderloin. As Black mothers were able to secure jobs outside of the home, they became reluctant to leave for long hours, especially if they had small children to raise, for fear they would be neglected by a caretaker.

Safeguarding their children meant taking in laundry at home, and though she might be nearer her children, the mother's wages were often less (Ovington 1905). The lack of nurseries and the expense of the White ones in the neighborhood were prohibitive for parents. Some White employers allowed servants to bring their infants to work; however, this was generally a short-term arrangement. In one case, Annie Holland's employer no longer allowed her daughter to be with her at work. This restriction imposed on her by her White employer forced Annie Holland to board her six-year old daughter Ella at the Riverdale Orphan Asylum in 1892. The crowded asylum quickly caused Ella to fall ill from tuberculosis and pneumonia; she died less than one month after her arrival (Sacks 2006).

Formalized childcare opportunities for Black families first opened up in the Tenderloin during the early 1900s. In 1902, a group of Black women founded Hope Day Nursery, on 325 West 35th Street. Ms. E.E. Greene, a Black graduate nurse, led the project with the support of Mrs. Arthur Dodge, a White woman who actively promoted and financed nurseries for the poor in New York City (Ovington 1906). Hope Day Nursery was essential to the Black community. The nursery eventually relocated to Harlem; first to 114 West 133rd Street, then, in 1914, to a donated building at 33 West 133rd Street (Robertson 2016).

The role that these organizations played in the Tenderloin was vital, given that so few institutions existed for the Black community specifically. Their service to the Tenderloin was invaluable, yet cut short. While these social organizations had all left the Tenderloin by 1920, their relocation afforded them new opportunities to continue supporting the Black community in Harlem for decades to come.

Compounding this pressure, mothers were often the breadwinners for the family. Increasing job competition from waves of immigrants arriving in New York prevented Black men from accessing job opportunities in most industries. While some Black men found employment as laborers, many were in service roles.

Prevented from accessing more skilled labor opportunities, many Black men had no choice but to work long hours on the railroad or ships, and away from families for lengthy periods of time, though often this was seasonal work. (Sacks 2006).

The limited job opportunities made accessing food and clothing even more challenging. Those in the tenements would have to shop for the day only with limited space to cook or store food and likely lacked sufficient food and clothing (Sleet 1905). This was particularly evident in the winter time, when there were far fewer labor opportunities and sickness often resulted in debt. "The New York Colored Mission, one of the few philanthropic organizations in the city serving Black people, regularly reported near penury during the winter months. Wood yard tickets that allowed black men to work for a day or two in exchange for economic assistance were 'most thankfully received, especially where there has been a wife and little children to support, and no steady employment during the severe months of the winter'" (Sacks 2006). It was no wonder that the Black community struggled to keep their health up when there was limited food, resources, and recovery time. More often than not, there were persistent health problems, which tragically had become daily life for so many Black people in this period.



The New York Colored Mission from the Annual Report, 1877
Source: NYPL



St. Philip's Parish House, 125-129 West 30th Street, Byron Company, ca. 1897.
Source: Museum of the City of New York

St. Christopher Club

The St. Christopher Club, founded in 1896, is an example of how Black athletes played a crucial role in their communities. Originally a Bible study group aimed at keeping young African American men away from the vices of the Tenderloin, the club shifted focus in 1905 to form a basketball team. They were a pioneering team during the Black Fives Era, when the National Basketball Association was open to White players only. The St. C's, as they were known, dominated local basketball competitions. Their success not only helped pave the way for the development of organized sports for Black athletes but also highlighted their growing influence both on and off the court.



St.Christopher Club's Basketball team(1912)

Source: The Black Fives: The Epic Story of Basketball's Forgotten Era



St.Christopher Club's Basketball team(1919)

Source: The Black Fives: The Epic Story of Basketball's Forgotten Era

The National Urban League, founded in 1910, was an important organization that aided the migration and settlement of Black Southern migrants into New York City. To better serve Black migrants, they later moved from the Tenderloin to Harlem.



Harlem The National Urban League Office
Source: "New National Urban League Headquarters in Harlem." Architect-US.

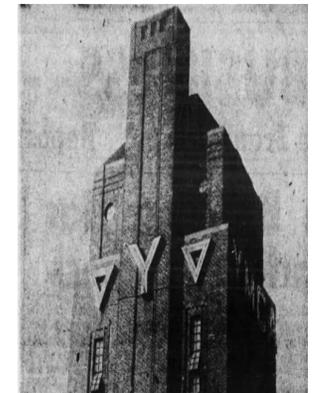


Previous The New York Colored Mission
Source: The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine. "Methodist Publishing and Mission Building, New York."

The migration of Black people to New York City and the northern movement of Black communities within Manhattan led to a shift in the location of various Black service organizations. As shown in the accompanying chart, the timeline highlights the longevity and presence of several key organizations, such as the St. Christopher Club and the Colored YMCA. Over time, a clear migration pattern emerged—these organizations were founded in the Tenderloin and subsequently relocated to Harlem.



Harlem The St. Christopher Club
Source: St. Christopher Club



Previous colored YMCA 1910
Source: "Society." *The New York Age*

Black Churches

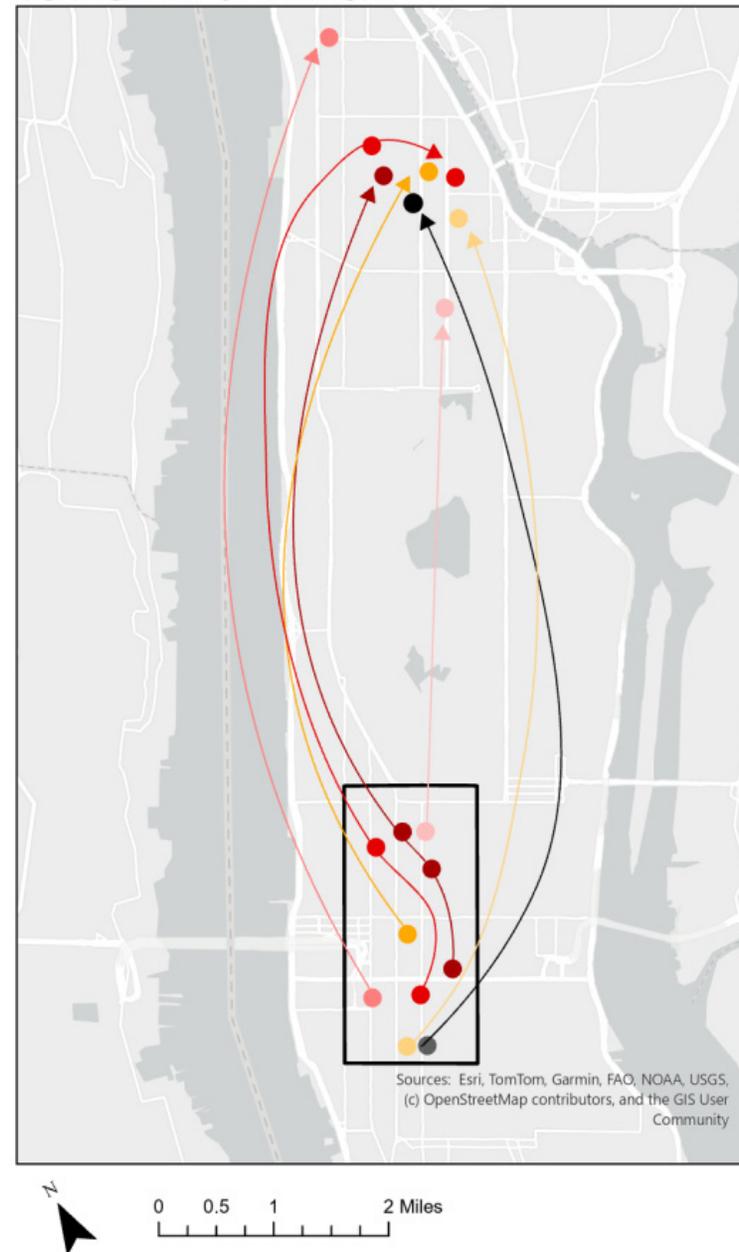
As a result of White-led displacement of Black populations, Black communities experienced “community dislocation.” As White people displaced Black people throughout Manhattan, Black community churches struggled to keep up with their constituents. Even when a church proactively planned to relocate with its congregation, practical considerations often delayed this process. Purchasing a new church with proximity to one’s former neighbors was not an easy process. In many cases, Black people travelled from their newer homes to older community organizations, until those organizations were able to catch up. Black people would have to travel to worship at the churches that were once their neighbors.



Movement of Black churches from the Tenderloin to Harlem.

Source: Data sourced from HP Studio II at Columbia University. Map by Ashlyn Pause. One can see from the accompanying map of the movement of the Tenderloin’s churches that many of the Tenderloin’s churches later ended up clustered in Harlem. The movement of Black churches to and from the Tenderloin mirrors the repeated dislocation of Black residents.

Movement of Churches from the Tenderloin to Harlem





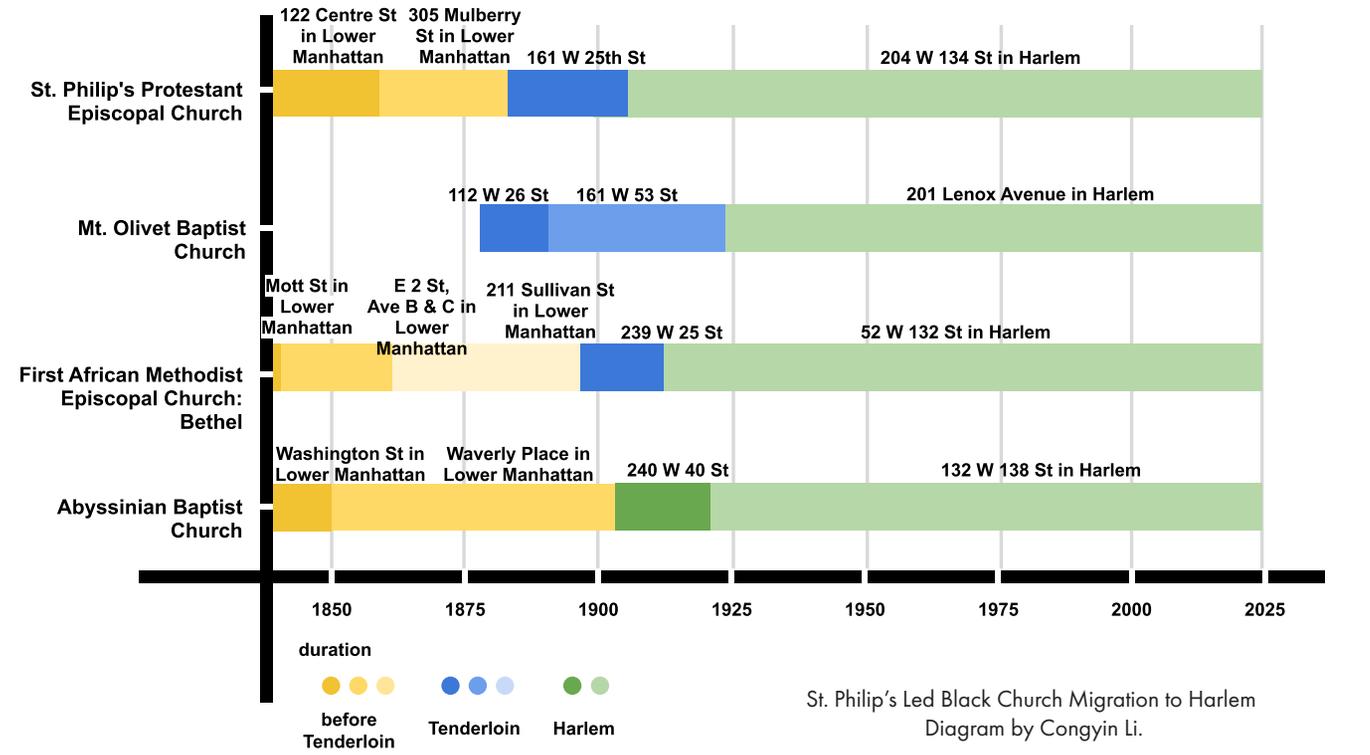
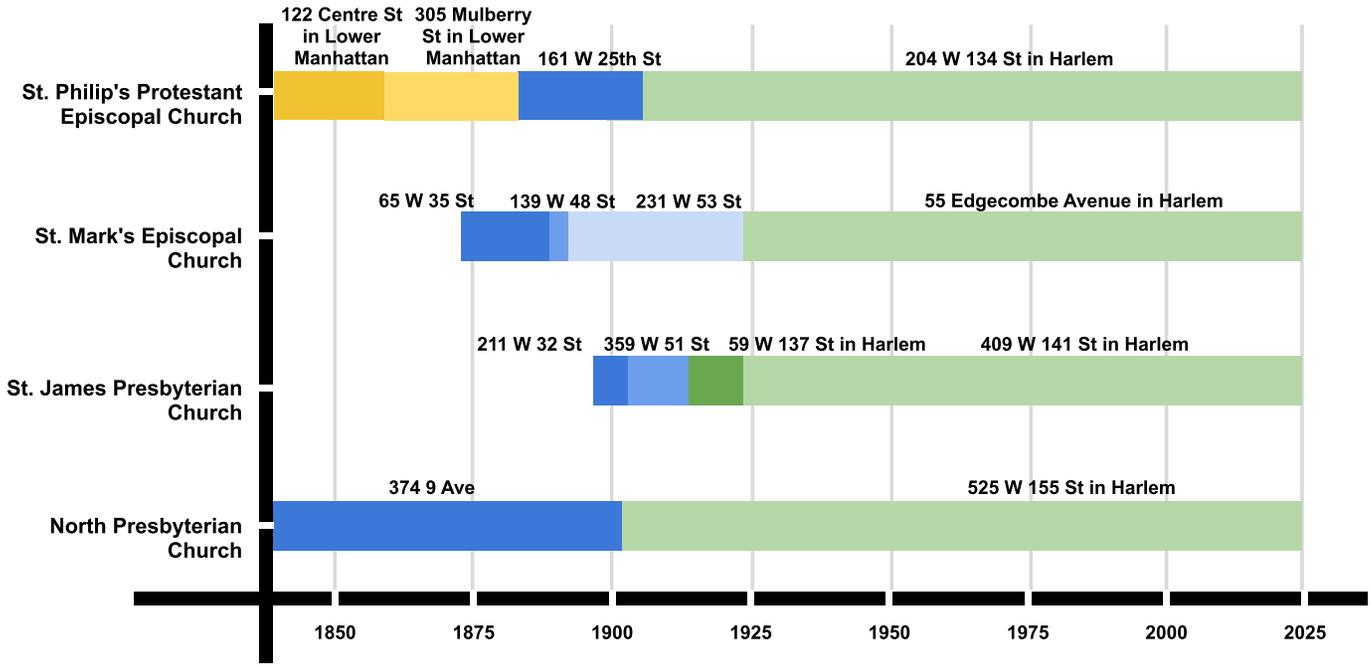
Historic Image in the Tenderloin

Contemporary Image in Harlem



Historic Image in the Tenderloin

Contemporary Image in Harlem



St. Philip's Led Black Church Migration to Harlem
 Diagram by Congyin Li.

St. Philip's Episcopal Church, the city's oldest African American congregation, was originally established at 122 Centre Street in Lower Manhattan. Facing mounting racial discrimination and space constraints, the church relocated to 305 Mulberry Street between 1856 and 1857. During the Draft Riots of 1863, the Mulberry Street building was seized for military use, further underscoring the community's vulnerability. In response to demographic shifts and the need for greater security, Rev. Dr. Hutchens Chew Bishop led the congregation's move to 161 West 25th Street in the Tenderloin in 1889 (Black Presence in the Episcopal Diocese of New York. n.d.). Continuing to follow its members northward, St. Philip's ultimately relocated to 204 West 134th Street in Harlem in 1900, becoming one of the first major Black churches to establish a permanent presence there (Dunlap 2004, 242-43). By establishing itself in Harlem early on, St. Philip's not only followed its displaced members, but also played an active role in encouraging the northward migration of other Black churches into Harlem (Save Chelsea n.d.).

The First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel was founded in 1819, initially worshiping in a rented classroom on Mott Street. As the congregation grew, it moved to East 2nd Street between Avenues B and C, but declining Black presence and limited transportation access soon made the location less viable. In 1862, Bethel acquired a new site at 214 Sullivan Street, and by 1894, in response to demographic shifts, it moved again to 239 West 25th Street in the Tenderloin (First Bethel Harlem n.d.). Reflecting broader patterns of Black migration, Bethel relocated to 52–60 West 132nd Street in Harlem in 1913, reinforcing the neighborhood's emerging role as a center for African American life (Miller 2020).

The Abyssinian Baptist Church, established at 40 Worth Street in Lower Manhattan, faced significant economic challenges in the mid-nineteenth century, culminating in the forced sale of its property in 1854. After temporarily worshiping on Thompson

Street during the Civil War, the church moved in 1864 to 164–166 Waverly Place, within "Little Africa," then the heart of New York's Black community. However, rising immigration, subway construction, and real estate pressures soon dispersed the Black population from Greenwich Village. Aligning with the broader northward shift, Abyssinian sold its Waverly Place property in 1903 and relocated to 242 West 40th Street in the Tenderloin (Winchell 2020). Continuing to follow its expanding congregation and to establish a more prominent presence within Harlem's growing African American community, Abyssinian Baptist Church relocated once again in 1923 to a newly constructed building at 132 West 138th Street (Moore and Dolkart 1993).

St. James Presbyterian Church similarly traced the northward trajectory. Initially located at 211 West 32nd Street, the church moved to 359 West 51st Street by 1903. As its congregation grew alongside Harlem's rising Black population, St. James relocated to 59 West 137th Street in 1915 and, later, to 409 West 141st Street in 1927, responding to the spatial demands of its expanding membership during the Harlem Renaissance (New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists n.d.).

St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church followed a comparable path. After acquiring the Church of the Resurrection at 65 West 35th Street in 1873, St. Mark's moved to 139 West 48th Street in 1889 and again to 231 West 53rd Street in 1895, both within the Tenderloin vicinity. By 1926, reflecting the demographic transformation of northern Manhattan, the congregation relocated to 55 Edgecombe Avenue in Harlem (New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists n.d.).

Mount Olivet Baptist Church, originally based at 159 West 25th Street in the Tenderloin, relocated in 1925 to 201 Lenox Avenue (Malcolm X Boulevard) in Harlem. The move reflected the broader pattern of religious institutions following the migration of their congregants into Harlem's vibrant new Black cultural landscape (Harlem One Stop n.d.).

North Presbyterian Church experienced a somewhat different trajectory, shaped more directly by external urban development pressures. Originally located at 374 Ninth Avenue, the church was forced to sell its property in 1903 due to the expansion of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In 1905, it relocated north to 525 West 155th Street, on the border of Harlem and Washington Heights, aligning indirectly with the general northern shift of Black congregations during the period (New York Times 1901).

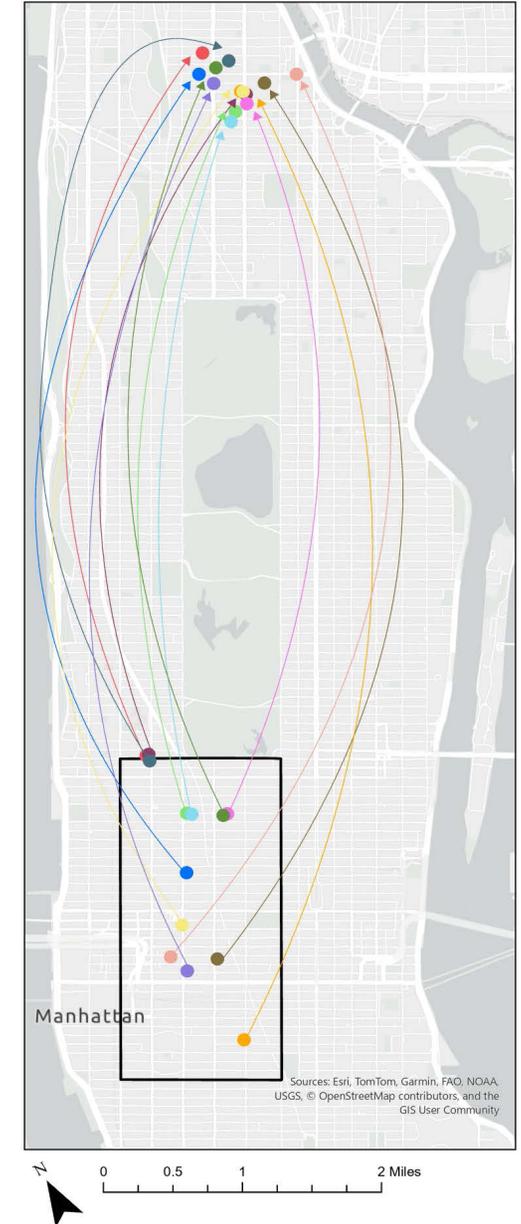
Black Businesses

Many Black-owned businesses and organizations moved north as well. Of the 81 Black businesses identified in this study, more than 15 percent relocated to Harlem by the late 1910s, and further research will likely uncover more examples. While Harlem is often credited as the birthplace of Black business in New York City, the Black business development of the Tenderloin receives no such recognition, despite this clear evidence to the contrary.

These businesses that started in the Tenderloin would go on to define the commercial character of Harlem, the hairdressing industry being one notable example. As mentioned previously, Madame J. L. Crawford opened the first Black hair salon in the Tenderloin. She was also the first Black hairdresser to move to Harlem, opening her doors at 466 Lenox Ave in 1911. By 1918, Black business directories cite well over a hundred hairdressing establishments in the neighborhood, with some historians attributing this growth to Mme. Crawford (NNBL 1918). J. L. Crawford laid the foundation for future hair culturalists in Harlem like Madam C. J. Walker and her daughter A'Leia Bundles.

- Barron Wilkens
- C Franklin Carr
- Dr. James A. Banks, Surgeon Dentist
- E.P. Roberts
- J.C. Thomas Undertaker
- Mme. J.L. Crawford
- Nail and Parker Real Estate
- New Amsterdam Musical Association
- Norman B. Sterrett Jr.
- The National Waiter's Restaurant
- The New York Age
- Tom Diggs
- W. David Brown Undertaker
- Boundary Layer

Labor Assets Movement to Harlem



Map of Business Movement to Harlem
Source: Data sourced from HP Studio II at Columbia University. Map by Ashlyn Pause.

NEW YORK—CONTINUED

42 The National Negro Business Directory

Joseph, Mrs. D., 251 West 142d Street.
 Lawton, M. S., 233 West 134th Street.
 Lee, Mrs. A. D., 8 West Ninety-ninth Street.
 Lewis, Mrs. J., 223 West 140th Street.
 Lewis, Lydia J., 248 West 138th Street.
 Lewis, Miss Vergie, 151 West 140th Street.
 James, Mrs., 133 West 143d Street.
 Jeanette, Mrs., 143 West 140th Street.
 Jeffries, Bertha, 14 West 132d Street.
 Jeffries, Lillian E., 225 West 133d Street.
 Johnson, Mrs. M., 30 West 135th Street.
 Johnson, Cayette, 14 West 133d Street.
 Jones, Mrs. E., 52 West 134th Street.
 Mackay, Mrs., 92 West 133th Street.
 Major, Blanche, 274 West 141st Street.
 Miller, E., 143 West 140th Street.
 Motley, Miss S. J., 145 West 143d Street.
 Munford, M. L., 135 West 142d Street.
 Murray, Mrs. E., 2263 Seventh Avenue.
 Murray, Emma J., 2224 Seventh Avenue.
 Murray, Mrs., 241 West 143d Street.
 Murphy, E. B., 42-44 West 137th Street.
 McPherson, Louise, 108 West 144th Street.
 Nelson, Cecelia, 452 Lenox Avenue.
 Owens, E. L., 150 West 136th Street.
 Owens, Annie, 318 West Fifty-ninth Street.
 Sighe, Mrs. M., 229 West 140th Street.
 Indo Laboratories Corporation, 2257 Seventh Avenue.
 Bradley, R. W., 146 West 133d Street.
 Branson's Beauty Parlors, 145 West 131st Street.
 Bell, Mrs. Emma L., 140 West 141st Street.
 Braxton, Mrs. P. A., 108 West 143d Street.
 Brooks, Mrs. John, 2373 Seventh Avenue.
 Carrol, Mrs. E. E., 224 West 133d Street.
 Page, Eva, 116 West 141st Street.
 Parker, Edna, 53 West 137th Street.
 Parker, Mrs. C. E., 203 West 140th Street.
 Peckington, Mrs., 241 West 143d Street.
 Perry, Minnie, 6 West 136th Street.
 Cassey, Madame Helah, 217 West Sixty-third Street.
 Carter, Mrs. Annie L., 216 West 133rd Street.
 Jones, Mrs. Catharine, 46 West 131st Street.
 Cox, Mrs. Lottie, 200 West 140th Street.
 Crawford, Mrs. J. L., 466 Lenox Avenue.
 Day, Mrs. Candis Q., 42 West 139th Street.
 Dolansy, Mrs. Mayne E., 2412 Seventh Avenue.
 Elite Hair-Dressing School, 201 West 134th Street.
 Mrs. Ellen, 231 West 134th Street.
 Alma Beauty Parlor, 31 West 135th Street.
 Flye, Mlle. Gertrude C., 438 Lenox Avenue.
 Gibbs, Hattie, 102 W. 137th Street.
 Hill, Mrs. C. O., 159 West 143rd Street.
 Hill, Mrs. Ellen I., 308 West 135th Street.
 Ains-Hoffman Beauty Shop, 434 Lenox Avenue.
 Jones, Madam M., 101 West 140th Street.
 Kelley, Mrs. V. M., 142 West 135th Street.
 Laine, Mrs. L., 70 West 133rd Street.
 Latimer's Antiseptic Method of Hair Culture, 2449 Seventh Avenue.
 Lee, Mrs. Lula, 126 West 143rd Street.
 Llewellyn, Mrs. M., 78 West 132nd Street.
 Minor, Mrs. Zander E., 104 West 130th Street.
 McDowell, Grace B., 2247 Seventh Avenue.
 Moody, Mrs. S. J., 142 West 131st Street.
 Norman, Mrs. S., 433 Lenox Avenue.
 Pearsall, Mrs. R., 90 West 134th Street.
 Phinsee, Mrs., 429 Lenox Avenue.
 Quast, Lillian V., 202 West 143d Street.
 Randall, Lillie M., 2374 Seventh Avenue.
 Randolph, Lucile Green, 120 West 133th Street.
 Reynolds, Mrs. Jessie, 208 West 143d Street.
 Reynolds, Mrs., 115 West 140th Street.
 Richardson, Louise, 109 West 138th Street.

Erson, Mrs., 129 West 142d Street.
 Robinson, E. A., 216 West 141st Street.
 Robinson, Mrs. T. R., 122 West 135th Street.
 Roach, Lulu, 546 Lenox Avenue.
 Rodgers, Mrs., 164 West 141st Street.
 Romont, Mrs. J., 168 West 141st Street.
 Ross, Mrs., 2209 Seventh Avenue.
 Ruffin, Lottie, 130 West 134th Street.
 Sampson, M., 109 West 135th Street.
 Seaton & Claxton, 202 West 131st Street.
 Simmons, Margaret, 131 West 130th Street.
 Sherlock, L., 143 West 140th Street.
 Scales, Madame, 207 West Sixty-second Street.
 Smith, Mrs. Beadie, 225 West 142nd Street.
 Tait, Mrs., 123 West 137th Street.
 Tate, Miss Emma, 205 West 128th Street.
 Taylor, Mrs., 194 West 134th Street.
 Taylor, Anna, 173 West 135th Street.
 Taylor, A. R., 2411 Seventh Avenue.
 Templeton, R., 270 West 141st Street.
 Thompson, Catherine, 54 West 135th Street.
 Thompkins, Gertrude, 208 West 140th Street.
 Tucker, Mrs., 147 West 132d Street.
 Tyrell, Mrs. C. H., 158 West 142d Street.
 Stewart, Ethel H., 210 W. 138th Street.
 Trapp, Mrs. E. D., 224 West Sixty-second Street.
 Vassal, Mrs. M., 204 West 141st Street.
 Vaughn, Daisy, 147 West 143d Street.
 Vaughn, H., 2101 Fifth Avenue.
 Walker, T., 218 West 145d Street.
 Walker, T. A., 61 West 124th Street.
 Wallace, Mrs. S. B., 2420 Seventh Avenue.
 Warren Beauty Parlor, 424-426 Lenox.
 Wells, Mrs. E., 133 West 140th Street.
 Williams, Lulu, 228 West 141st Street.
 Williams, Mrs. Mary, 29 West Ninety-ninth Street.
 Williams, J., 106 West 137th Street.
 Woodson, A., 133 West 142th Street.
 Wiley, Laura, 101 West 135th Street.
 Williams, Mrs. Nellie Y., 67 West 139th Street.
 Wilson, Mrs. Rose A., 425 Lenox Avenue.
 Yeldell, Lucile, 108 West 144th Street.
 Young, Anna, 155 West 135th Street.
 Young, Mrs. Ida, 144 West 141st Street.
 Young, Marie, 457 Lenox Avenue.

JEWELERS

Chambers, Larry, 247 West 134th Street.
 Lynch, James N., 215 West 140th Street.
 Vilet, Chas. F., 114 West 134th Street.

LADIES' & GENTS' FURNISHINGS

Nick's Toggery Shop, 620 Lenox Avenue, 72 West 135th Street.
 Stubbs, L. S., 78 West 132nd St., 2224 Seventh Avenue.
 Parrish, Mrs. E. L., 146 Lenox Avenue.
 Vaughn & Gibbs, 33 West 135th Street.

LAUNDRIES & LAUNDRESSES

Aston, Ida, 41 West 125th Street.
 Wilson, Alice, 68 West 134th Street.

MUSIC STORES & ASSOCIATIONS

Gray's Musical Studio, 2533 Seventh Avenue.
 Harmon Music Shop (Glorace Setley), 2306 Seventh Ave.
 Lenox Music Parlor (Elder, C. J.), 445 Lenox Avenue.
 McGinnis and Shaw Musical Instruments, 452 Lenox Ave.
 New Amsterdam Musical Association, 137 W. 139th St.
 Pace and Handy Music Co., Inc., 1547 Broadway.
 Paton and Brown Song Shop, 131 West 136th Street.



C. J. Walker's home and salon designed by Black architect Vertner Tandy, the first registered architect in New York State.
 Source: Byron Company. "Robinson, Mrs., Beauty Parlors (for Colored People)." 1915. Museum of the City of New York.

List of Harlem-based Hair Culturists, 1918

Source: The National Negro Business Directory. 1918.



Madam J. L. Crawford's Harlem hairdressing studio.
 Source: New York Municipal Archives. 1940s Tax Department Photographs.

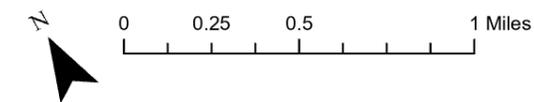
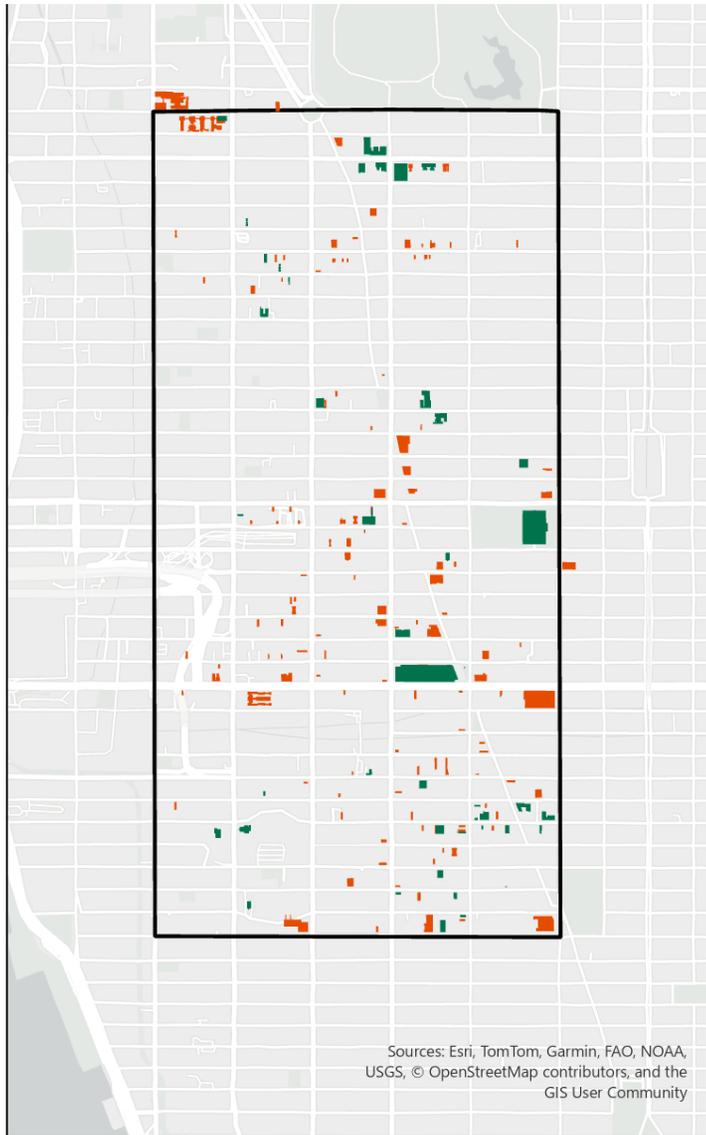
Encountering Black Spaces Today

An analysis of contemporary preservation policies and practices explored how the places important to the Tenderloin's Black history are encountered today and how the Black narrative has been recognized and/or underrepresented by the preservation enterprise. Most Black spaces, as identified by the studio team, have been lost, and the designation and listing of historic buildings and districts in the Tenderloin include limited mention of the neighborhood's Black legacy.

The Tenderloin's boundaries were never fixed, but were continuously reshaped by the development of surrounding districts like Hell's Kitchen, the Garment District, Chelsea, and Broadway's theater corridor. These adjacent areas exerted commercial and political pressures that fragmented the Tenderloin. Contemporary preservation policies continue to echo these same patterns as the same incentives that have facilitated large-scale commercial development across Midtown have contributed to the demolition of other historic sites, especially those tied to Black history. In this sense, preservation in the Tenderloin – today's Midtown – functions as both a protective and extractive force.

To understand the representation of Black history in preservation action and policy today, the studio analyzed the data of nationally- and locally-recognized properties and historic districts to compare to the studio's historic assets. In total, this study identified 290 total historic assets related to Black history within the established boundaries of the study area. Selected by each of the 12 historic context themes, the historic assets vary in use from residential buildings to parade routes. Of these 290 historic assets, only 58 survive within the built environment today, meaning 80 percent of these places have been lost to demolition. Therefore, only 20 percent of the studio team's historic assets are physically accessible for spatial encounters today.

Surviving Historic Assets and Non-Surviving Historic Assets within the Tenderloin Study Area



Surviving Historic Assets and Non-Surviving Historic Assets Within the Tenderloin Study Area (April 2025).
Map by Ashlyn Pause.

- Surviving
- Non Surviving
- Boundary Layer

Press Release

For Immediate Release December 10, 2019
Contact: lpccpressoffice@lpc.nyc.gov, 212-669-7938

LPC Designates Five Historic Buildings Associated with Tin Pan Alley

Together, these buildings represent Tin Pan Alley's significant contributions to American culture and popular music.



Press Release for the Landmarks Designation of Tin Pan Alley (December 2019).
Source: NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The preservation community is working to tell Black histories in both traditional and nontraditional ways. Regarding these traditional preservation methods, a few local designations have been used to highlight these narratives and locally protect their associated structures. An example is the 2019 NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission's (LPC) designation of the five row houses on West 28th Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenues, known as Tin Pan Alley (Moses 2019). This local designation highlights the place where American popular music was created by both Black and Jewish Americans (Moses 2019). These designations are an example of successful preservation action and recognition of marginalized narratives.



Members of the Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project at the Naming Ceremony of Tin Pan Alley, 2022).

Source: Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project.



(Former) Colored School No. 4 (1940)

Source: 1940s NYC.

This history continues to be represented by a local organization known as the Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project. In addition to their advocacy work and support of the 2019 LPC designation of Tin Pan Alley, the organization has also headed the effort to subname West 28th Street to “Tin Pan Alley” and continue to host events which recognize the Black narrative in music history (“Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project” 2023). This clear community interest in telling the stories of

Manhattan’s Black history has been reflected in the recent movement to landmark the (Former) Colored School No. 4 building, led by historian and Harlem resident Eric K. Washington. Following community advocacy, Community Board 4 unanimously supported the recommendation, and the LPC approved the individual landmark designation in 2023 (Hurley and Noonan 2023).



Black Fives with Nike at Poster House (February 2025).

Source: Black Fives Facebook.



Black Fives Commemorative Shirt for the Big East Conference (February 2025).

Source: Seton Hall University Instagram.

Additionally, individuals and organizations continue to tell Black histories in the Tenderloin and beyond through shared pastimes, such as basketball. The Black Fives Foundation has recently collaborated with Poster House on 23rd Street, as well as the College Basketball Big East Conference, to share the legacy of the Black Fives era. Although basketball is a nontraditional vehicle for preservation, it can serve as a means of educating people about Black history.

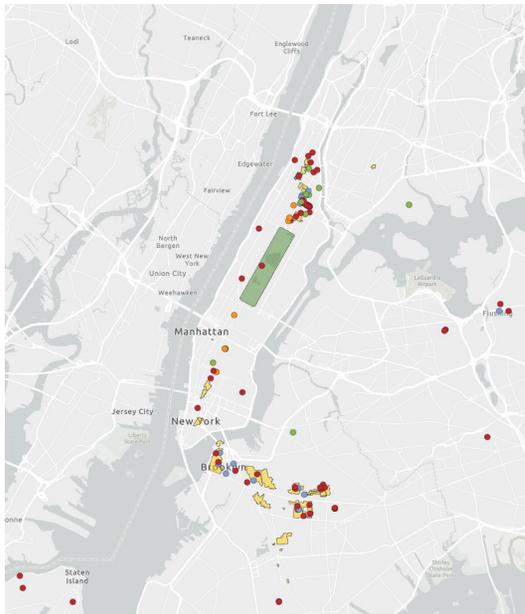
New York City Landmarks

Through the utilization of new heritage documentation technology, the LPC created a digital ArcGIS StoryMap titled “Preserving Significant Places of Black History.” This resource attempts to centrally document and highlight locally designated properties related to Black history (Kose and Dieg 2025). It does not include every property significant in New York’s extensive Black narrative, but only those that LPC has officially designated as a local landmark. This provides a central location for these reports and permits further accessibility of these resources to the public. This is a positive feature and platform, but it also highlights LPC’s lack of preservation-related documentation of Black histories in certain areas of New York. Within the Tenderloin specifically, the interactive map shows only six LPC-designated properties, one of which falls outside this studio’s study period. The remaining five are the Tin Pan Alley rowhouses.

Interactive Maps

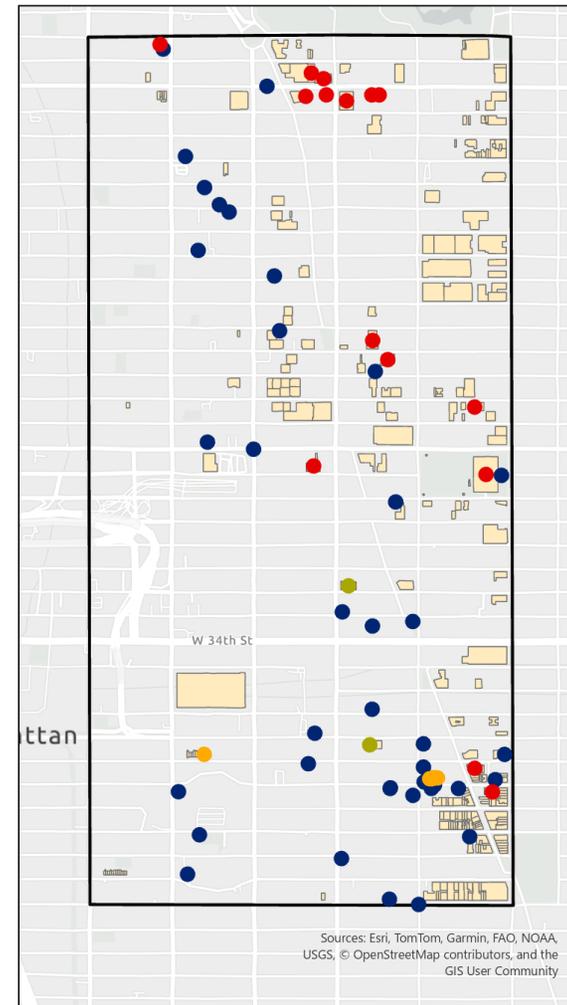
Click to see designations by resource type:

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NYC Landmark Preservation Commission’s ArcGIS Story Map titled “Preserving Significant Places of Black History” (February 2025). NYC Landmark Preservation Commission.

NYC LPC - Landmarked Buildings vs. Surviving Historic Assets



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

- Focus on Black history
- Mention Black history
- Do not mention Black history
- Non Listed Assets
- LPC Designated Buildings
- Boundary Layer

NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission Total Landmarked Buildings vs. Surviving Historic Assets (April 2025). Map by Ashlyn Pause.



Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava, 2014.
Source:Wikimapia.



Church of the Holy Apostles.
Source: Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen.

Despite these positive preservation efforts and successes within the Tenderloin, the need for inclusive and representative storytelling is still apparent. This is a challenge for reparative preservation action. Through the analysis of the 172 LPC-designated buildings and their corresponding designation reports within the study area, the studio team found that only eight reports mention Black history, which includes the five associated with Tin Pan Alley. This disparity underscores the profound lack of historically designated sites in the Tenderloin and how the preservation enterprise overwhelmingly emphasizes White narratives.

Similarly, the team analyzed the LPC-designated properties related to the 58 historic assets that survive today, to see if there were overlaps. Of the existing assets, 21 are designated as landmarks. These include the eight historic assets that recognize Black history.

Missed Opportunities for Recognizing Black History

Thirteen of 21 NYC landmarked historic assets do not include information about the property's historical association with Black populations in the Tenderloin, and illustrate a missed opportunity for recognizing important Black heritage. These include sites of important Black cultural events such as Carnegie Hall and the New Amsterdam Theater, as well as significant religious sites related to Black history such as the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava and the Church of the Holy Apostles ("Trinity Chapel Complex" 1968; "Church of the Holy Apostles" 1966).

The 37 surviving unlandmarked historic assets also serve as potential subjects for reparative preservation action to tell the Black narrative. These assets are an opportunity for restorative justice but they are also currently unprotected and unrecognized through local preservation policies. As a result, they are vulnerable to major changes in their building fabric or demolition. Considering these properties for local designation would be one pathway toward protecting the spatial narrative of the Tenderloin's Black history.

National Register of Historic Places

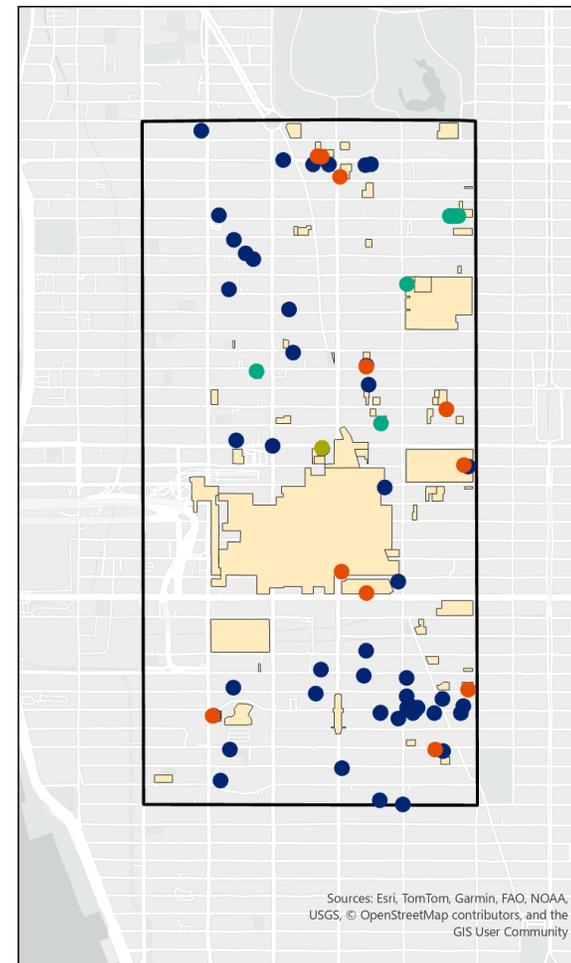
There are 414 National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listed buildings within the study area. Of the 58 surviving historic assets within the study area, only 12 are listed on the National Register. Of these 12 properties on the National Register that the studio team identified as relevant to the Tenderloin's Black legacy, only one nomination report briefly mentions Black history. This was the New Amsterdam Theater report, which briefly mentions the "Black Bottom Dance" without highlighting the Black history or Black performers from which the dance originated (Pearson 1979). This nearly complete exclusion of Black history from the National Register contributes to the underrepresentation of these Tenderloin stories and narratives on the national level.



39 West 28th Street, 1940.
Source: 1940s NYC.

Considering the lack of surviving assets today and preservation's heavy reliance on designations and listings, these disparities in the narrative can also result from limited options for storytelling and spatial encounters in the built environment. This is true for 39 West 28th Street on Tin Pan Alley, the first location of the Gotham Music Company, whose story is briefly acknowledged in the Tin Pan Alley reports but generally overlooked due to its demolition. The history of 39 West 28th is not explored beyond this brief mention and serves as an example of the challenges facing reparative preservation.

Historic Assets on the National Register of Historic Places with Reports that mention Black History



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

- Landmarked Assets that mention Black History
- Landmarked Assets that do not mention Black History
- Non Asset Reports that mention Black history
- Non Listed Assets
- National Register Listed Buildings
- Boundary Layer

Historic Assets on the National Register of Historic Places with Reports that mention Black History, March 2025. Map by Ashlyn Pause.

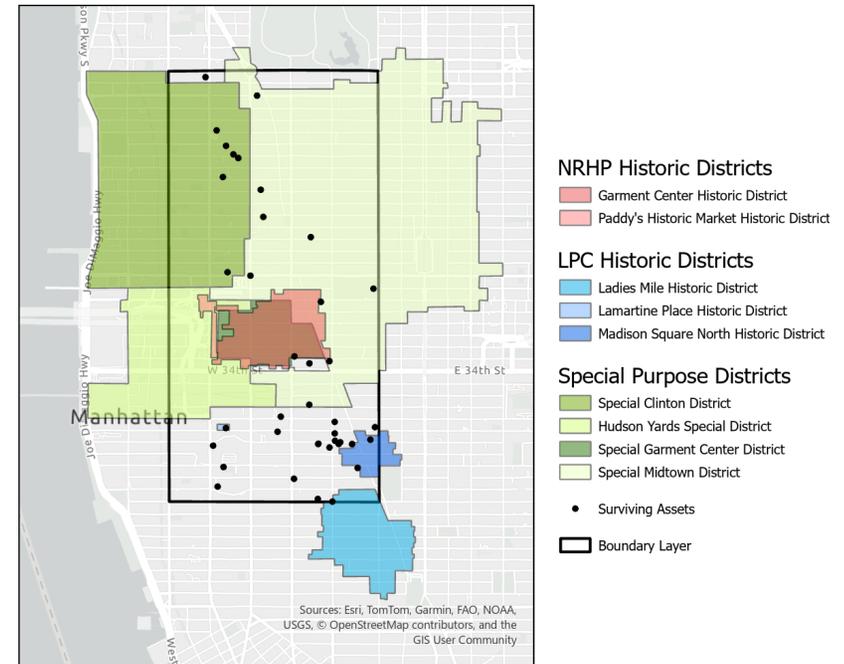
The demolition of historic assets directly affects the associated research and documentation of the building or property. Without the presence of a physical building, their associated narratives are often ignored or forgotten altogether. The implications of demolition include the erasure of both the physical spaces, the elimination of opportunities for spatial encounters and learning, as well as the corresponding history of the building and those who occupied it. Therefore, the challenge of preservation, as a form of study which heavily relies on spatial encounters and narratives, is to tell these histories creatively and in a way which revives the spatial narrative without utilizing the physical space.

Districts

The survival or lack thereof of historical assets can also be attributed to the various districts within the study area. Interestingly, 32 percent of surviving historic assets are located in historic or special purpose districts. There are a total of ten districts overlapping the study area that range in local, national, and special purpose associations. These districts have each contributed to the contemporary preservation of the built environment through their different preservation policies and regulations. Of these categories, the special purpose districts have been the most influential in preserving the built environment within the Tenderloin.

In terms of local designations, three local historic districts have been designated within or overlapping the study area. Most notably, the Lamartine Place Historic District is the only locally designated district fully within the boundaries and consists of a series of row houses on West 29th Street. This district is an example of inclusive storytelling through their incorporation of abolitionist history and the district's role in the Underground Railroad. The other two historic districts, which overlap the study area, are the Ladies' Mile Historic District and the Madison Square North Historic District, neither of which mention Black history within their designation reports.

Surviving Assets in Historic Districts and Special Purpose Districts

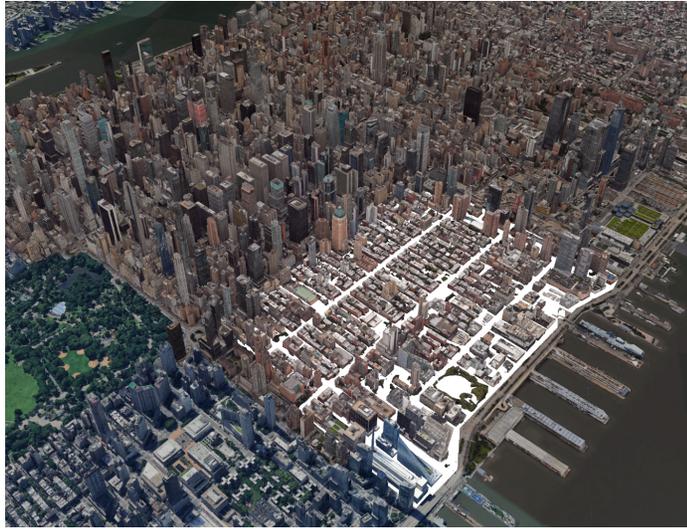


Historic Districts and Special Purpose Districts, April 2025. Map by Ashlyn Pause.

There are only two nationally recognized historic districts within the study area. These are the Garment Center Historic District, designated on the grounds of significant manufacturing and industrial history, and Paddy's Historic Market Historic District, whose nomination form focuses primarily on Irish history. Despite this, it is of note that the Paddy's Historic Market Historic District nomination form does briefly recognize the presence of the Black community within the area. In contrast, the Garment Center Historic District nomination form does not mention this history whatsoever.

While there is some representation of the Black narrative within these designation reports and nomination forms, this history is

more often excluded than included. Further, of the 58 surviving historic assets, only three of them are located within these local and national historic districts. Therefore, the presence of these historic districts have not largely contributed to the survival of historic assets. In fact, a majority of the historic assets within historic districts have been demolished. Therefore, the designation and nomination of historic districts within the Tenderloin has not been effective for the survival of Black history sites.



Building Heights within the Special Clinton District (April 2025).
Image by Google Earth and Ashlyn Pause.

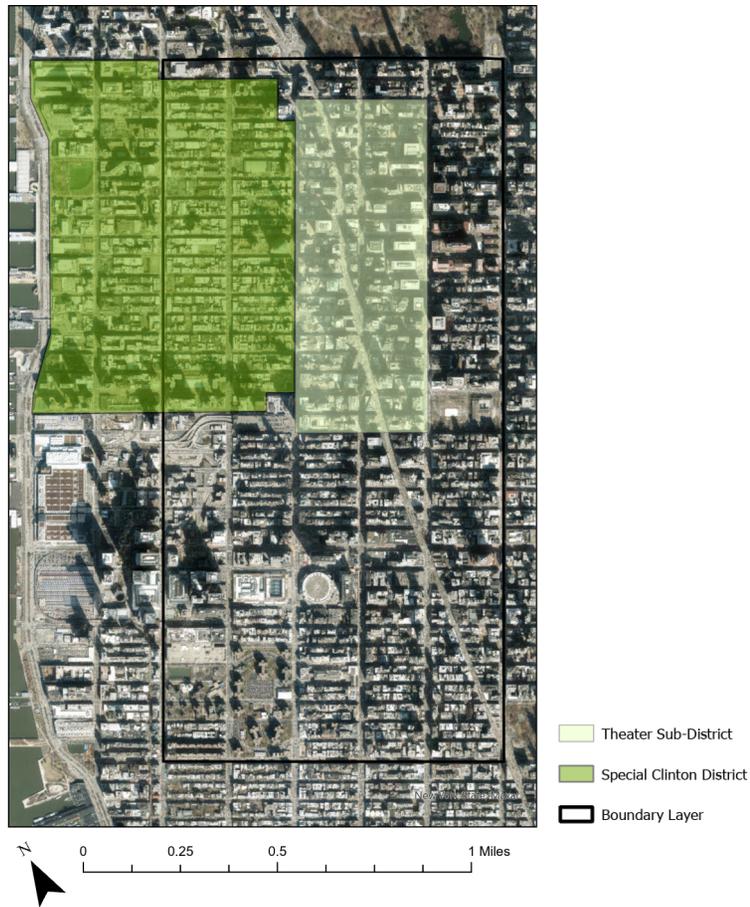
Implemented in 1967, special purpose districts are preservation-related actions that were first established by the New York City Planning Commission to “achieve specific planning and urban design objectives” (New York City Planning 2025). The four special purpose districts which overlap into the Tenderloin are Special Clinton District (CL), Special Garment Center District (GC), Special Midtown District, and Special Hudson Yards District. Most significant to the preservation of the Tenderloin, Special Clinton District was specifically established in 1974 to preserve small-scale building characteristics and combat new development within the area (New York City Planning 1974). This has and continues to allow for both the direct and indirect

preservation of historic assets related to Black history as a result of their founding principles, as well as the preservation and maintenance of building heights (New York City Planning 1974). In total, six historic assets survive as a direct result of the Special Clinton District, including sites of small Black businesses such as the office of Black lawyer Frank Wheaton. This speaks to the power of preservation action and the tools preservationists are equipped with that go beyond the individual designation of buildings.

On the other hand, Special Midtown District was established in 1987 with a heavy focus on the management of new developments and facilitating large-scale growth. The founding documents only briefly include the importance of preservation of historic architectural styles and the Theater Subdistrict. Despite this, eight historic assets survive within the district, ranging from significant Black religious sites to sites of local Black businesses. These survivals are significant considering the district’s key focus on developments and the large amount of historic footprint lost to development within the district. Considering the size of the district, which is nearly double the size of the Special Clinton District, the survival rate of historic assets is low. This speaks to how the prioritization of different narratives can negatively impact one narrative while elevating another.

Of the two remaining special purpose districts, the Special Garment District and Hudson Yards Special District, only one surviving historic asset is located within the Special Garment District. There are no surviving historic assets within the Hudson Yards Special District. In total, only 15 surviving historic assets are located within the special purpose districts and the remaining 43 are located outside of these districts. Despite significant historic asset survival in special purpose districts, it appears that more historic assets actually survive outside of special purpose districts.

Special Clinton District and the Theater Sub-District



Special Clinton District and the Theater Sub-District (April 2025). Map by Ashlyn Pause.

The Theater Subdistrict and its revolutionary use of Transferable Development Rights (TDR) was implemented in 1998 and plays a significant role in the preservation of many of the theaters within the study area (New York City Planning 2016). While many of these theaters were constructed after the studio's study period, this zoning resolution has likely benefited theaters which have historically celebrated Black history and Black performers. This is a positive element of preservation action and regulations, which has directly preserved historic fabric and use. This allows the community today to experience a similar spatial encounter to the study period. However, the transfer of air rights from theaters to developers has facilitated the expansion of large-scale development within the district and contributed to the loss of historic building fabric related to Black history. Therefore, the Theater Subdistrict has both been used as a tool for preservation and sustaining existing organizations while also indirectly contributing to the loss of historic assets within the Tenderloin.

Community Perspectives

The studio team interviewed 17 individuals representing historians, activists, and community-based organizations, to discuss the Tenderloin and explore potential reparative actions. These listening and learning sessions reinforced many of the issues that arose through the studio team's historic context research, and raised new ones.

First, the studio team encountered a lack of awareness about the Black history of the Tenderloin. Many of the interviewees knew of the Tenderloin, but most did not consider the Tenderloin when thinking about the larger narrative of Black history in New York City. Most spoke to Harlem or San Juan Hill as historically Black neighborhoods. This suggests that the Black history of the Tenderloin has been erased over time and that there is little awareness of the neighborhood, even amongst preservation professionals today.

Secondly, interviewees suggested the limited awareness about the Black history of the Tenderloin could be the result of the area lacking place-based interventions that focus on its history. This is especially true for many underrepresented and marginalized histories within the Tenderloin's history (such as the history of Black florists). Storytelling tools such as community centers, installations such as historical markers, and museums that pertain to the Tenderloin do not exist, which may explain the lack of awareness. More place-based interventions within the Tenderloin can serve as both a reparative action and a practical tool for community engagement and education.

Third, several interviewees spoke about their experiences in promoting a more complete narrative of Black histories in New York City. Research into the history of the Tenderloin can help to form more authentic and complete narratives surrounding Black history in New York City.

Finally, community board contacts suggested that typical preservation tools often prioritize facades over stories and focus on the architectural fabric of the neighborhood rather than the histories that took place. This narrowed lens often complicates efforts to acknowledge Black stories that have been largely erased from the built environment. Because so much of the architectural fabric of the Tenderloin has been lost, LPC should consider the stories and narratives of these communities to be as important as the architectural side of preservation. This represents an extension of the traditional preservation toolbox to include a broader definition of preservation. By expanding these tools to focus on underrecognized publics and their narratives, preservation as a field is better equipped to deal with erased histories.

As part of the studio team's key findings, these takeaways suggest several shortcomings and potential challenges faced by change actors who intend to emphasize the history of the Tenderloin. Together, these key findings were informative as the studio team developed proposals for reparative action.

PROPOSALS

The following proposals represent potential reparative actions that change actors could undertake following this report. These proposals all represent a claim to space for the narrative of the Tenderloin. Some represent permanent claims to space; some represent temporary claims to space, for the duration of an event; some represent claims to digital space. These claims to space are reparative actions. Manhattan today features few surviving assets from the Tenderloin; claiming space for the Tenderloin is one way that change actors can repair that imbalance. Furthermore, a claim to space is a key reparative action in relation to Black communities. As the studio's research showed, White people frequently restricted Black people's claims to space – through limiting housing opportunities, restricting employment, or demolishing Black places of assembly such as churches, just to name a few. A claim to space for Black history is a reparative action that directly addresses the harm White people have caused.

Some of these proposals move beyond typical preservation tools. As community interviews indicated, traditional preservation tools, such as designating and regulating extant buildings, are often poorly equipped to deal with histories that have been erased from the built environment. The studio team's proposals extend the scope of preservation as a way to bring justice to those whose histories have been erased. In particular, in absence of any remaining historic fabric, these proposals often focus on the stories associated with the history of the area, and endeavor to create a spatial encounter with that narrative. This emphasis on narrative is another reparative action, which allows erased Black histories to still be a part of the preservation discussion.

List of Proposals

Permanent Space

- St. Christopher Club Commemorative Basketball Court
- Community Center for the History of the Tenderloin
- Airing Black Bohemia
- Silent Protest Commemoration: Physical Memorials and Educational Campaign
- 23rd Precinct Station Restorative Justice and Accountability Center

Temporary Space: Installations

- We Have Come, Treading Our Path - A Walking Tour of the Lost Black Churches of the Tenderloin
- E.R. Williams: "The Well-Known Architect of New York" - Exhibition at Port Authority
- Worth's Museum and Haymarket

Occupying Space: Events and Programs

- Roots & Blooms: Flowering Histories of West 28th
- Reclaiming the Narrative Concert Series
- Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School Program
- Legacy In Play: MLB Store Fundraiser & Installation in Honor of Barron Wilkins
- Presentations and Resources for Community Boards 4 & 5 Committees

Digital Space

- Adding Significant Places of Black History to Digital Maps
- Re-mapping Memory: Interactive Storytelling Maps of Tenderloin

PERMANENT SPACE



St. Christopher Club Commemorative Basketball Court

Sabina Busch and Yuhan (Alex) Shi

Key Findings Addressed

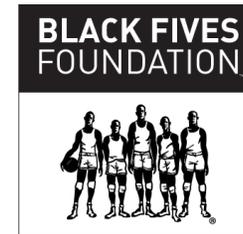
Systemic White Supremacy
 Being Black in White Space
 Black Agency and Claiming Black Space
 Displacement
 Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin
 Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

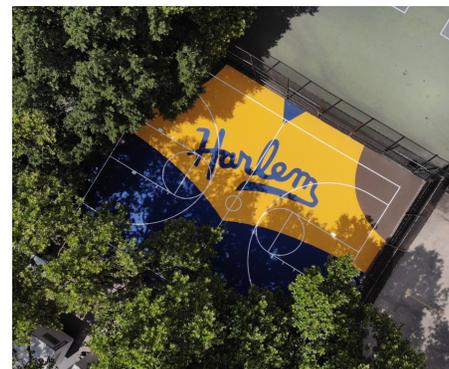
The St. Christopher Club was one of the earliest and most successful Black basketball teams during the Black Fives Era. Though their legacy is often associated with Harlem today, the team originally formed and played in the Tenderloin at St. Philip’s Parish House at 125 West 30th Street. Yet this foundational history remains unrecognized in the neighborhood’s landscape. This proposal seeks to reassert Black historical presence by leveraging basketball, a community-centered and culturally powerful medium, as a vehicle for storytelling. Establishing a commemorative court is an act of restorative justice, reclaiming public space and embedding the Black narratives of the Tenderloin into everyday life. Additionally, this intervention tells the story of pioneering Black athletes during the Black Fives Era: a time where African Americans formed their own league because White people barred them from the national leagues. Many American basketball fans do not know this history, but the Black Fives Foundation is helping to change this. New York City has a unique opportunity for place-based interventions: telling the

stories of Black Fives’ history in the neighborhoods where they actually took place.

The St. Christopher Club Commemorative Court initiative would align closely with the Black Fives Foundation’s current efforts. In 2024, the Foundation launched a court restoration project in Harlem, painting the basketball court at Howard Bennett Playground with the Harlem Rens’ logo in celebration and remembrance of the team (Black Fives Foundation Press Release, 2024). The location of the public basketball court was selected because of its close proximity to important venues in Black sports history in Harlem. This installation was carried out through a collaboration with NYC Parks through their “Art in the Parks” initiative, and with funding from SLAM, a basketball magazine. The Tenderloin installation would expand upon the project in Harlem, creating a meaningful spatial connection between its living legacy and the forgotten athletic histories of the Tenderloin.



Black Fives Foundation Logo
 Source: Black Fives Foundation. “Home.” Black Fives | Make History Now! Accessed April 29, 2025.



Harlem Rens Commemorative Court, 2024.
 Source: Black Fives Foundation. “Our New On-Court Mural In Harlem Honors The Legendary New York Rens | Black Fives.” Black Fives | Make History Now!, June 26, 2024.



Informational Panel at the Harlem Rens Commemorative Court, 2024.
 Source: Black Fives Foundation. Black Fives | Make History Now!, June 26, 2024.

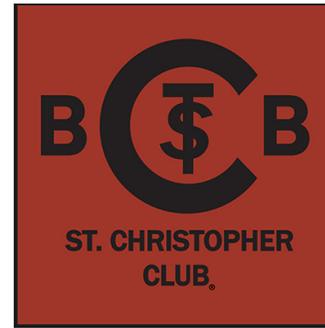
Description

This proposal involves partnering with the Black Fives Foundation and NYC Parks to create a commemorative public basketball court at Chelsea Park, the closest active court to the former site of the St. Christopher Club's original games at St. Philip's Parish House.

This project would include the following, designed intentionally visible, to invite the public engage more with this hidden history:

- Painting the basketball court with the St. Christopher Club logo
- Installing interpretive signage
- Telling the story of the team and its role in Black Fives history
- Potential QR codes linking to a digital archive maintained by the Black Fives Foundation

While the Harlem court installation did include a brief informational panel, this proposal would provide a more in-depth history of the St. Christopher Club team, the Black Fives Era, and the injustice of racial segregation in sports during this time. This would reinforce the intention of reparative action: not only to celebrate the overlooked team, but also to educate the public about the inequity that existed in this period of sports history.



St. Christopher Club Logo
Source: "St. Christopher Club | Black Fives."



St. Christopher Club Team
Source: HOMAGE. "St. Christopher Club."

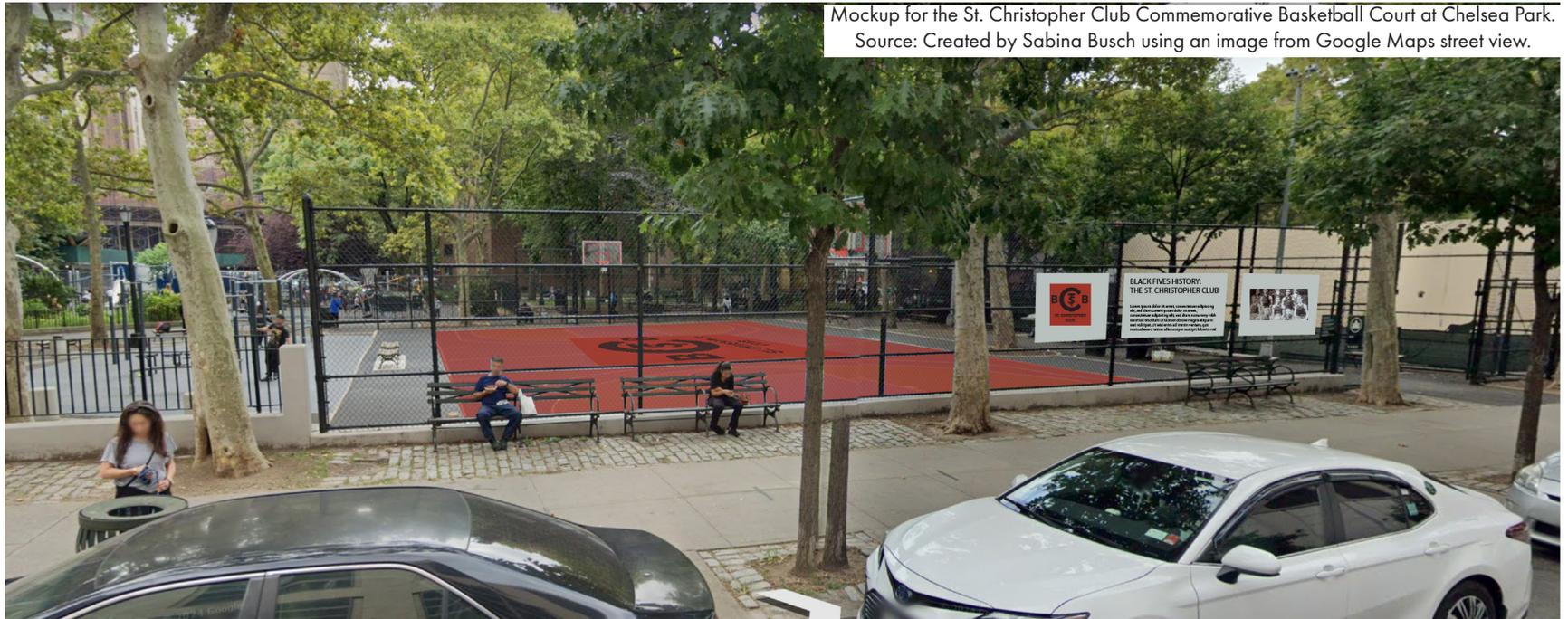


St. Christopher Club Team
Source: HOMAGE. "St. Christopher Club."



Map showing former location of St. Philip's Parish House (red) and proposed location of installation at Chelsea Park (orange).
Source: Created by Sabina Busch via ArcGIS Online.

Mockup for the St. Christopher Club Commemorative Basketball Court at Chelsea Park.
Source: Created by Sabina Busch using an image from Google Maps street view.



Implementation

The Black Fives Foundation runs the Black Fives Nonprofit, which could potentially take on the administrative and organizational aspects of this proposal. The Foundation itself is run by Claude Johnson, who authored the 2021 book, *The Black Fives: The Epic Story of Basketball's Forgotten Era*. Informational panels at the site would draw from Mr. Johnson's published research. As Chelsea Park is under the purview of the NYC Parks Department, it would have to grant permission for the painting of the court. NYC Parks would manage access restrictions during the painting process and would monitor the court for future maintenance needs. Likewise, Black Fives Foundation and NYC Parks would have to collaborate to generate and approve the painting design for the court. As there is already a precedent for partnership between the Black Fives Foundation and NYC Parks to execute a similar project in Harlem, there is an existing relationship between the organizations. This suggests a higher likelihood of successful implementation of this project.

The Black Fives Foundation has established many successful collaborations with outside organizations to fund their initiatives, so there are many potential funding sources. Some of the most feasible past sponsors are SLAM (the organization which funded the painting of the Harlem Rens court), Puma, and Nike. Once funding is secured, the Black Fives Nonprofit and NYC Parks would coordinate on hiring workers to execute this project.



NYC Parks



SLAM Logo

Source: "Download New SLAM Cover Zoom Backgrounds." Accessed April 29, 2025.

Left: NYC Parks Logo

Source: "New York City Department of Parks & Recreation." Accessed April 29, 2025.

Community Center for the History of the Tenderloin

Noah Bronowich

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today



Collaborators gather at Lefferts Historic House for Peace Over Prejudice, a “community sip + paint” hosted in collaboration with Prospect Park Alliance and the 67th Precinct Clergy Council. Source: @prospect_park on X.com, February 24, 2025.

Background, Significance, and Rationale

The work of this studio has noted that the Tenderloin is currently lacking place-based interpretations of its history. This proposal recommends the establishment of a community center, which would focus on telling the story of the Tenderloin, and engaging with community members in further research into its history.

Establishing a history-focused community center at the modern site of the Tenderloin is a reparative action because it can help reclaim Black space and Black histories of the Tenderloin. This claim to space directly attempts to repair the harm White people who demolished Black community centers and gathering spaces during the study period caused. A community center is also a practical tool to educate the public about the history of the Tenderloin; it is a place where the story of the Tenderloin can be told. These spatial encounters with historic narratives are a form of preservation.

Implementation

The upcoming redesign of the Port Authority Bus Terminal would be an excellent opportunity to develop a Tenderloin-focused community center. Initial permits for the Port Authority Terminal redesign were approved in December of 2024, and the Terminal itself is not expected to be completed until at least 2032. The plan includes both designated space for “Street facing retail” and “deck-overs that will be converted to publicly accessible open space once the Terminal is completed” (Port Authority NY NJ 2024).

According to the Port Authority NY NJ, the redesign “reflects public feedback from extensive community outreach” (Port Authority NY NJ 2024).

Given the Port Authority’s community-centric approach to the redesign, a community center reflecting the history of the surrounding area would fit the project well. Several key events in the history of the Tenderloin, such as the Assault of Arthur Harris and May Enoch, took place near or on the current site of the Port Authority Terminal. This project would be an opportunity for Port Authority Terminal’s stakeholders to engage in reparative action,



One angle of the proposed redesign for the Port Authority Bus Terminal. The high visibility of the interior to passerby would benefit the community center in drawing visitors in.

Source: Courtesy of New York City Department of Planning, and accessed through New York YIMBY, June 1, 2024.

and to develop a historically-sensitive intervention that could be incorporated into its new design. Port Authority Bus Terminal could also assist the project with community engagement and fundraising efforts.

Several potential collaborators could assist with the management of the community center. Many different Harlem-based, preservation-focused groups could contribute positively to the community center. For example, Save Harlem Now! is a non-profit advocacy organization that supports preservation of Black historic sites, and collaborates with local organizations to educate the public about historic preservation. Additionally, East Harlem Preservation, Inc. is another Harlem non-profit that primarily works with “low-income and working families in East Harlem/El Barrio and surrounding areas,” but also lends resources to local activists, and focuses on promoting social justice (East Harlem Preservation n.d.). Neither of these organizations have a public-facing physical space from which to operate. In this way, the community center could also focus as a public face for any number of Black-history-focused organizations, who would in turn assist the community center in obtaining the initial lease, and in managing the space.

While these organizations primarily focus on the history of Harlem, the direct connection between the histories of the Tenderloin and of Harlem, as described previously in this report, would serve as a basis for this collaboration; the histories of the Tenderloin that would be discussed in the community center could be directly paired with histories of Harlem.



Logo for East Harlem Preservation, Inc.
Source: East Harlem Preservation website.



Preserving Our History & Architecture

Logo for Save Harlem Now!
Source: Save Harlem Now! website.

Description

The term “community center” was chosen as the descriptor for this proposal, to reflect the many potential uses of this site. For example, the community center would include a permanent gallery space, where rotating exhibitions relating to the history of the Tenderloin could be displayed. The community center could be the site for future events related to the history of the Tenderloin; it could be the starting point for walking tours pertaining to the Tenderloin; it can serve as the office for a team of researchers who would dig deeply into the history of the area.



Left: Collaborators gather at Lefferts Historic House. A community center can function as a physical space which enables in-person education and conversation about the history of the Tenderloin.

Source: @prospect_park on X.com, February 24, 2025.

Right: The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center is an example of a museum focusing on Black history, and which attempts to engage visitors with that history in a personal and emotional way. They intend their work to “inspire visitors to recognize modern injustices that stem from slavery and take action toward an equitable society” (Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center n.d.). This mission is in line with the studio’s focus on restorative justice. Looking to other Black history museums which deal with restorative justice can help change actors design authentic and complete exhibitions for the community center.

Source: I Love NY.



The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture serves as an exemplar of an educational and research center for Black history. The Schomburg Center can inform and inspire the function of a Tenderloin-focused community center, to include educational and research resources regarding Black history.

Source: Davis Brody Bond, 2024.

Ideally, the community center would engage with visitors at multiple levels. Commuters passing through Port Authority might stop by for a few minutes, and be exposed to the erased histories of the Tenderloin. Manhattanites who might feel more connected to the history of their city could spend more time there; local high schools could visit and engage with events, for example. At the deepest level, people who feel connected to the story of the Tenderloin – ancestors, near and far – could contribute their perspectives, their own stories, and potentially even perform further research into the history of the Tenderloin.

Airing Black Bohemia

Fikri Izza

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy
Being Black in White Space
Black Agency and Claiming Black Space
Displacement
Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin
Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

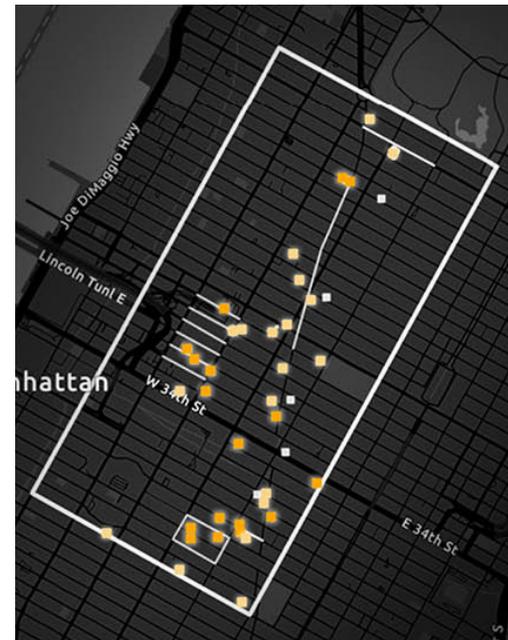
This studio interrogated the history of Black communities in the Tenderloin District because of a significant gap in mainstream historical narratives, one that often overlooks or marginalizes their presence in this part of Manhattan. Over the course of five months, research revealed that, contrary to the dominant narrative, substantial evidence of Black cultural life in Manhattan, south of Harlem and before its renaissance, existed: through journals, photographs, posters, music sheets, and other archival materials. These records demonstrate that Black presence in the Tenderloin was not only real but richly documented. However, the absence of a cohesive, actively maintained historical narrative suggests that while traces remain, there has been little effort to collect, assemble, and reframe these materials into an accessible public memory.

Spatially, the studio team mapped these traces through the documentation of historical assets scattered across the district, emphasizing how physical spaces still hold silent testimony to Black Bohemia's legacy. This pattern of neglect points to a broader issue: within the mainstream history of New York City,

Black experiences are often treated as secondary narratives. It raises a critical question: is this erasure the result of a lack of scholarly interest, or has there been an active suppression of these histories over time?



Full Scale Airing Bohemia Illustration.
Source : Fikri Izza



Airing Bohemia Installation Plan.
Source: Fikri Izza from HP Studio II's Entertainment Historical Assets

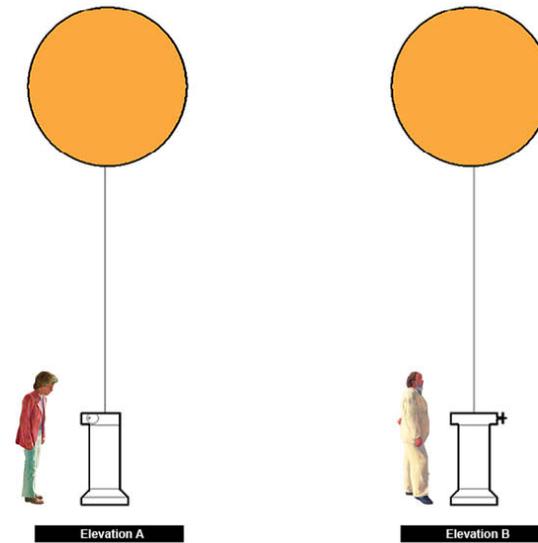
Airing Black Bohemia emerges as a response to this historical amnesia. Black Bohemia was a vibrant cultural and artistic community centered in Manhattan’s Tenderloin District during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, now largely erased from the city's visible and cultural memory. Through a network of interactive, site-specific installations, the project seeks to restore visibility to these forgotten narratives. At a time when public memory often privileges dominant histories, *Airing Black Bohemia* positions Black cultural legacy as an enduring, spatially present feature of New York City.

Rather than relying on static monuments, the project adopts a kinetic, participatory form: floating balloons tethered to the ground, rising or falling in relation to public engagement. This dynamic method highlights the fragility of memory and the active responsibility required to sustain it. *Airing Black Bohemia* is both a work of restorative justice and a long-term social experiment—challenging how urban spaces commemorate marginalized histories while inviting collective stewardship over the narratives that define the city’s future.

Project Description

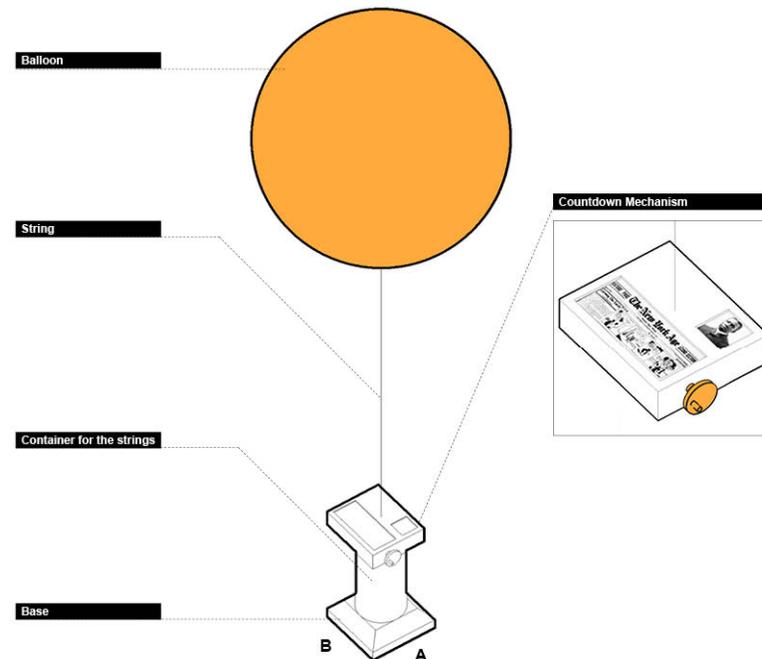
Airing Black Bohemia is a radical, multidisciplinary public art project conceived as a permanent spatial intervention. Composed of site-specific information installations scattered across the Tenderloin District, it invites residents and visitors of New York City to engage with a long-overlooked cultural narrative. By restoring the historical visibility of Black Bohemia—a community and legacy White people and White-led institutions sidelined and erased—the project seeks to inscribe Black cultural memory into the contemporary urban fabric.

This work is both an act of memory and a demand for justice. In a city where physical traces of Black Bohemia have been erased and its histories forgotten, this installation offers a means to reanimate that presence in the skyline and streetscape. If these histories were once silenced, they will now be elevated, visibly and metaphorically.



Installation Schematic Elevation Drawing.
Source : Fikri Izza

Background, Significance, and Rationale



Installation Axonometric Drawing.
Source : Fikri Izza

The project welcomes cross-disciplinary collaboration with artists, architects, designers, historians, community leaders, engineers, policymakers, funders, and institutions. More than a memorial, it becomes an interactive tool to measure public engagement with collective memory. These stories already exist—oral, visual, spatial, and textual—but have long awaited an active effort to reassemble and preserve them.

Background, Significance, and Rationale

Each installation comprises five key physical components:

- **Balloon:**

A helium-filled balloon, printed with quotations and archival references, hovers above a specific historical site.

- **Transparent Cable:**

A nearly invisible string links the balloon to the pedestal below, connecting sky and ground—presence and memory.

- **Countdown Mechanism:**

A central interface featuring a turning handle and digital display. As users engage with the historical content by rotating the handle, the balloon slowly descends. In periods of inactivity, the balloon gradually ascends, symbolizing neglect.

- **String Container:**

A built-in storage system that coils the cable as the balloon moves.

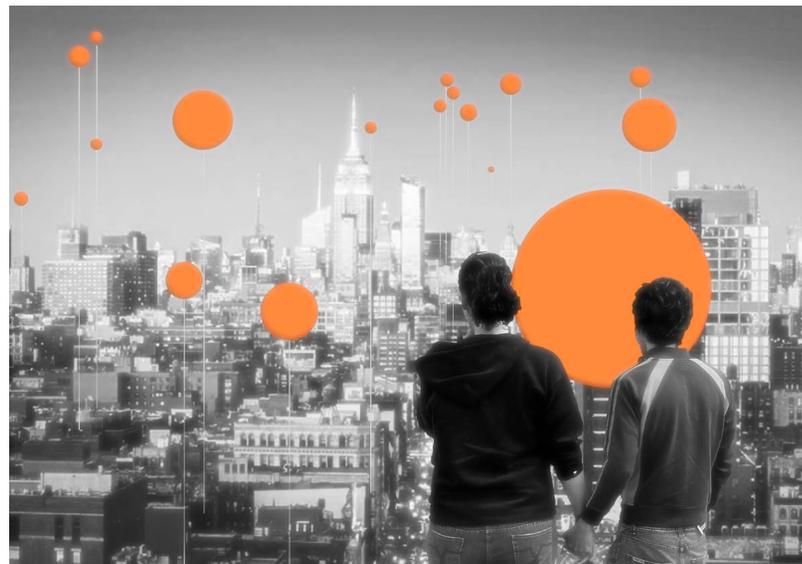
- **Foundation Pedestal:**

Anchors the structure while providing contextual information about the associated historical site and Black cultural figures.

Each unit operates as a hybrid between sculpture, archive, and spatial experiment—bringing memory into motion.

Conceptual Manifestation

The installations collectively form an abstract map of Black Bohemia, reinserted into present-day Manhattan. Floating balloons mark spaces once vibrant with Black creativity and community, now absent in public consciousness. Though ambitious in scale and complexity, the project is not merely to be assessed by its feasibility, but by its conceptual power.



Full Scale Airing Bohemia Illustration. Source : Fikri Izza

If realized, Airing Black Bohemia will signal a cultural turning point—a New York actively committed to embedding Black history within its visible landscape and this installation act as an advocacy platform and a sustained social experiment—measuring collective responsibility for historical memory through the physical condition and public interaction with the installations. However, If unrealized or still evolving, the project remains a participatory prompt—an engine for public awareness and discussion.

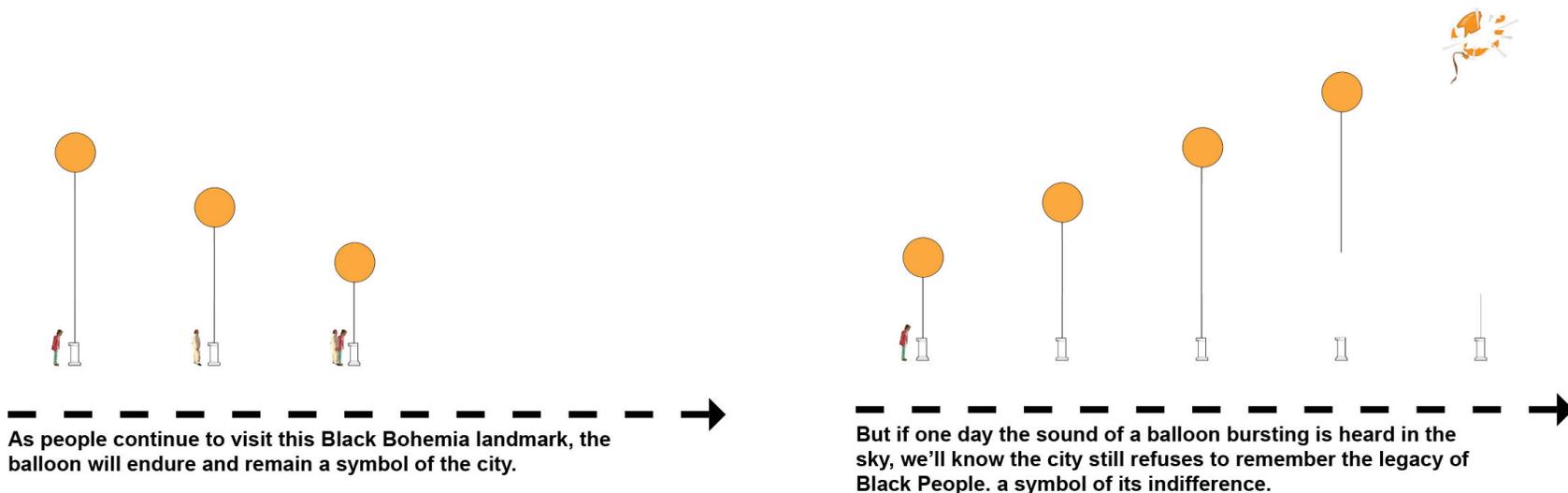
Milestone Overview

Each of these milestones corresponds to specific goals and tangible outputs, marking the project's progression toward its long-term vision:

Short-Term: Launch a physical pilot installation at a selected site in Manhattan, serving as a proof of concept and a platform for public engagement.

Mid-Term: Develop and launch an Augmented Reality (AR) application enabling users to visualize the complete network of installations digitally throughout the city.

Long-Term: Implement the full-scale installation across multiple sites, combining lessons learned from the pilot and AR phases to create a hybrid, permanent spatial intervention.



Design Scenario Illustration. Source : Fikri Izza

Short-Term Milestones: Pilot Installation in Times Square (0–10 Years)

- Launch a public-facing website for documentation, education, and crowdfunding engagement. (inspired by Pluspool.com).
- Design and construct a working prototype of the installation, including testing material durability and interactive functionality. (collaboration with ARUP like what PlusPool did)
- Establish partnerships with media outlets, museums, and cultural institutions to amplify the project’s visibility and historical importance and conduct a more in-depth historical research on each significant Black Bohemia site. (collaborate with : MAAAP, Schomburg Center, Tin Pan Alley Popular Music Project, and other organization that wanted to contribute their research to this project)
- Install a single-site pilot project in Manhattan and evaluate its impact through public feedback (collaborate with : Time Square Alliance, Community Board 5 for project feasibility and approval) (inspired by NYC’s massive public art experiments like pluspool.com, Agnes Denes’ Wheatfield public art in 1982, and Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s The Gate Installation in 2005).

Mid-Term Milestones: Augmented Reality Installation (10–50 Years)

- Evaluate and refine the pilot installation based on community response and user engagement data.
- Publish comprehensive documentation and analysis of the first 15 years of project development.
- Exhibit the project and its findings at major international forums, such as the Venice Architecture Biennale or the Venice Art Biennale.
- Conduct extensive feasibility studies in collaboration with policymakers, community boards, and city agencies to prepare for large-scale implementation.

- Develop and deploy an immersive Augmented Reality (AR) application allowing users to digitally experience the installation network across the city, viewable via smartphones, augmented reality headsets, or future wearable vision devices.

Long-Term Milestones: Full Scale Installation (50–100+ Years)

- Install 50+ balloon-pedestal units across the Tenderloin District to mark key historical assets of Black Bohemia.
- Transition the project from an advocacy platform into a sustained social experiment—measuring collective responsibility for historical memory through the physical condition and public interaction with the installations.
- Integrate the installations into New York City’s urban legacy, ensuring Black Bohemia’s memory is not only revived but made an enduring civic feature.

Silent Protest Commemoration: Physical Memorials and Educational Campaign

Yixuan (Jess) Chen

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

The 1917 Silent Protest Parade holds profound historical significance, yet remains under-recognized in New York City's public landscape. Unlike other landmark civic events, there are no dedicated memorials or interpretive installations along Fifth Avenue, where over 10,000 African Americans marched in dignified silence to protest racial violence and injustice. Fifth Avenue, as a globally symbolic corridor, offers a unique opportunity to embed this history within the city's urban fabric. A network of thoughtfully designed physical memorials, paired with a robust educational campaign, will honor the marchers, deepen public awareness, and affirm the city's ongoing commitment to racial justice and historical truth-telling.



1917 Silent Protest parade, by Paul Thompson

Source: 1917. NAACP Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

Description

- Physical Memorial Network:

1. Embedded Street Inscriptions:

Bronze or stainless steel plates would be installed flush with the pavement along the original parade route—particularly between 57th Street (the starting point) and 23rd Street. Each plate would feature historically accurate slogans from the protest parade (e.g., “Mr. President, Why Not Make America Safe for Democracy?”, “Mothers, Do Lynchers Go to Heaven?”). These inscriptions would function as tactile, everyday reminders for pedestrians, similar in concept to the Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) in Europe, but on a larger civic scale.

2. Interactive Digital Displays:

At key nodal points—such as near Rockefeller Center, the New York Public Library (Bryant Park), and Madison Square—freestanding interactive digital kiosks or slim LED panels (styled to match NYC's existing urban infrastructure) would display looping archival images, oral histories, newspaper headlines, and timelines related to the parade.

These screens would incorporate motion sensors to activate content as pedestrians pass by, along with touch screens or QR codes that link to a digital archive and educational platform.



Silence Protest parade proposal conceptual picture
Source: Yixuan Chen



Design Considerations and Precedents

The design takes inspiration from existing urban commemorations, such as:

- The etched pavement steps commemorating the Selma to Montgomery March.
- The sidewalk-embedded markers at the New York Public Library honoring writers and civic figures.
- The digital storytelling kiosks used by the NYC Department of Transportation’s “CityBench” or “LinkNYC” programs.

All elements would be designed in consultation with artists, historians, and descendants of parade participants, ensuring cultural sensitivity and historical accuracy.

Educational Integration:

QR codes at each physical site would lead to a central, mobile-friendly website that includes:

- A detailed history of the 1917 Silent Protest Parade
- Interactive maps showing the full march route
- First-person accounts and archival footage
- Lesson plans and educational materials for schools
- A space for public contributions and community stories

To inaugurate the memorial installation and educational campaign, a public opening ceremony titled “Echoes of the Silent Protest” would be held on Fifth Avenue. The event will include a symbolic re-enactment of the 1917 march, inviting community members, students, civic leaders, and descendants of original participants to walk silently along the same route—from 57th Street to Madison Square—holding replicas of the original protest signs.

Implementation

- NAACP (New York Chapter) – As the original organizer of the 1917 Silent Protest Parade, the NAACP brings historical authority and mission alignment. Their involvement would lend credibility and offer connections to descendants, archives, and ongoing racial justice campaigns.
- New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) – DOT oversees sidewalk and streetscape infrastructure. Their approval is necessary for any embedded markers or alterations to the public right-of-way.
- Bryant Park Corporation – These local stewards of public space near key parade sites (e.g., 42nd St area) have experience managing historical markers and public installations.
- Grand central partnership
- NYC DOT Art Program

23rd Precinct Station Restorative Justice and Accountability Center

Yixuan (Jess) Chen

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy
Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space
Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin
Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

The 23rd Precinct station—a site of historical racialized policing, particularly during the 1900 Race Riot—offers a powerful opportunity for adaptive reuse. Rather than ignoring this building’s past, transforming it into a Restorative Justice and Accountability Center (RJAC) would both memorialize past harms and facilitate present-day healing and justice-building.



23rd Precinct Station, LPC Report
Source: Landmark Preservation
Commission Report

Description

Adaptive Reuse Inside the Police Facility:

The RJAC would occupy a designated portion of the 23rd Precinct building, while retaining the possibility for limited NYPD presence through integrated programming. This approach is modeled after successful precedents, such as the Transformative Justice Hub inside the 42nd Precinct in the Bronx, which co-locates youth programs, legal support services, and NYPD Community Affairs initiatives. Inspired by that model, the RJAC would contain:

1. Historical Accountability Gallery

- Curated exhibits on the 1900 Race Riot, the Tenderloin district, and racialized policing in New York.
- Archival photos, documents, and testimonies from affected communities.
- An installation featuring protest slogans and community demands through time, with digital interfaces allowing visitors to record reflections.

2. Community Dialogue and Training Rooms

- Space for restorative justice circles, conflict resolution training, and intergenerational storytelling events.
- Rotating workshops in partnership with groups like Common Justice and Columbia’s Justice Lab.

3. Youth Justice Studio (in collaboration with NYPD Youth Strategies Division)

- A dedicated program for “at-risk” youth focusing on leadership, conflict mediation, and creative expression (murals, spoken word, podcasting).
- Operated in tandem with NYPD’s Youth Coordination Officers and Community Affairs Bureau, building accountability while maintaining critical dialogue.

4. Legal Aid and Survivor Advocacy Space

- Drop-in hours with civil rights attorneys.

- Confidential meeting rooms for survivors of police violence or racial harassment to report and seek resources.

Implementation and Phasing

Phase 1: Site Negotiation

Work with DCAS and NYPD to formally designate interior zones of the 23rd Precinct for RJAC use, with long-term license or joint stewardship model.

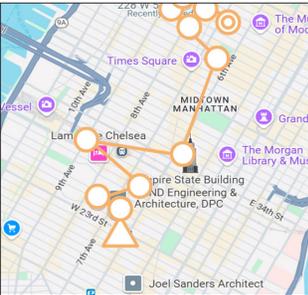
Phase 2: Design and Co-Programming

Convene working groups with Common Justice, Center for Justice Innovation, Columbia Justice Lab, and select NYPD Community Affairs Officers to shape programming logistics and spatial design.

Phase 3: Launch and Accountability Framework

Host a pilot season of workshops and community listening forums prior to formal opening. Establish a Community Oversight Panel with representation from local organizers, legal experts, and youth leaders.

TEMPORARY SPACE: INSTALLATIONS



We Have Come, Treading Our Path - A Walking Tour of the Lost Black Churches of the Tenderloin

Congyin Li

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

This proposal approaches historic preservation as the activation of collective memory and community identity, rather than merely the protection of physical structures, and frames this approach as a reparative response to the systemic displacement of Black communities. To ground this approach, historic contexts trace the resilience of Black religious institutions across Manhattan, following their movement before, during, and after their time in the Tenderloin neighborhood.

These contexts first examine the churches' origins in Lower Manhattan, where racial discrimination, spatial constraints, and economic pressures prompted their relocation northward to the

Tenderloin. They then follow their subsequent migration to Harlem, documenting the establishment of new sites and their eventual recognition through landmark designation. Within this larger historical arc, the Tenderloin emerges as a critical nexus connecting the dynamic geographic shifts of Black churches throughout Manhattan.

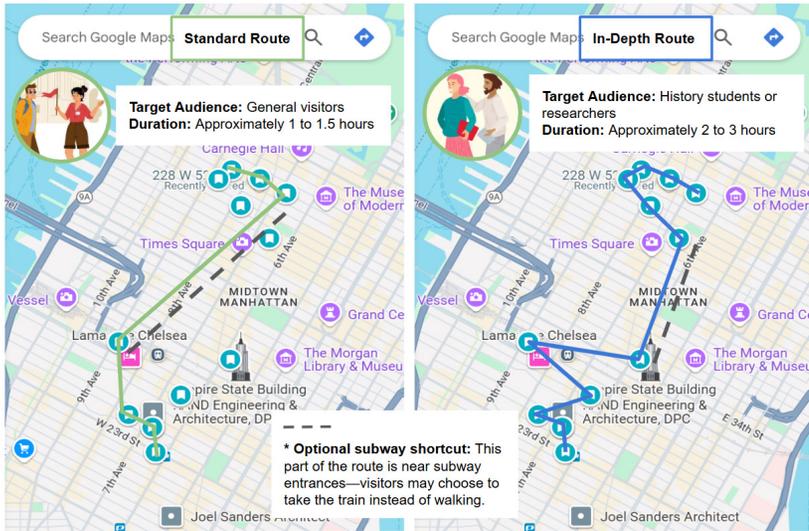
Centering the Tenderloin as the primary site of memory activation, this proposal seeks to revive the collective memory of twelve former Black churches once located in the neighborhood. Simultaneously, it aims to reconnect these vanished sacred spaces with Harlem's present-day congregations that trace their lineage to them, fostering renewed awareness of the historical and ongoing resilience of Black religious communities.

Description

Walking Tour App

To begin, the proposal envisions developing a city walking route through the Tenderloin, accessible via platforms such as Google Maps or a custom-built app, and highlighting twelve historical Black church sites. Recognizing the varying interests and needs of potential visitors, the project offers two distinct route options. The Standard Route, designed for general visitors, lasts approximately 1 to 1.5 hours and selects sites based on proximity, accessibility, and the historical representativeness of the churches. The In-Depth Route, intended for history students and researchers, extends to approximately 2 to 3 hours, covering a broader range of sites for a more comprehensive engagement.

In planning both routes, careful consideration was given to the spatial distribution of church clusters. Although the distances between clusters remain within a walkable range, starting points were strategically chosen near subway entrances to offer visitors greater flexibility. This approach allows participants to adjust their journey if needed, either by continuing on foot or opting for a short subway transfer between clusters.



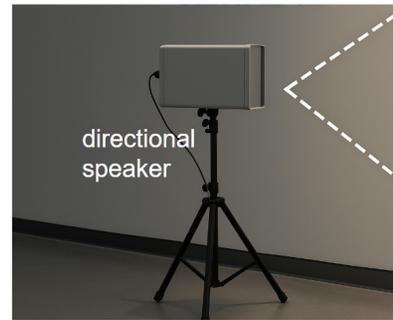
Routes

Source: Map created by Congyin Li using a base map from Google Maps.

Augmented Reality Reconstructions

At former church sites in the Tenderloin, the project proposes using augmented reality (AR) technology to digitally reconstruct lost architectural features and associated community activities. Depending on existing physical conditions, AR interventions may include full building reconstructions where necessary or focus on recreating historical scenes of preaching, gospel music, and public gatherings.

Each site would be equipped with a physical interpretive plaque providing historical context, a QR code linking to the AR experience, and a directional speaker broadcasting location-specific soundscapes, such as sermons, gospel music, or protest chants. These elements would be designed to facilitate layered, multisensory engagement with the historical significance of each location.



Augmented Reality

Source: Composite Image of Mount Olivet Baptist Church Site. Site photograph by Heather Joy Oakley, created for the Tenderloin Project, 2025. Includes historical illustration: New York City – Colored Refugees from Arkansas Awaiting Transportation to Liberia at the Mount Olivet Baptist Chapel, April 24, 1880, The NYPL Digital Collections. Includes historical building photograph from The NYPL. Composite created by Congyin Li.

Harlem Connections and Public Programming

The project also proposes developing public programming centered on Harlem-based congregations descended from displaced Tenderloin churches, as a means to reconnect past and present communities. These activities aim to integrate the Tenderloin walking tour and orienteering events into the congregations' regular programming, reviving their historical ties to the neighborhood. While these events would primarily be organized and led by the participating congregations, they would remain open to the broader public, fostering wider community engagement.

Proposed events may include on-site storytelling gatherings, gospel performances, and orienteering activities. Audio recordings from these events would be archived in the AR app, linking public programming back to the broader digital platform established through the project. This integration ensures that the

programming not only revives the churches' historical presence but also contributes to an evolving, publicly accessible repository of memory and interpretation.



Orienteeing
Source: Map created by the author using a base map from Google Maps.

Implementation

The implementation of this proposal would rely on collaboration with a range of organizations and stakeholders that possess the necessary technical capacity, funding resources, and community connections.

Kinfolk would serve as the primary partner for augmented reality (AR) development and digital interface design. Their expertise would be central to the creation of immersive, site-specific AR content integrated into the walking tour experience.

The Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY) and the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund are potential funding partners. ICNY works to overcome prejudice, violence, and misunderstanding by activating the leadership of grassroots religious and civic communities across the city. Its mission aligns well with initiatives focused on African American churches, particularly in the areas of planning and community-based

reconciliation efforts.

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, supports initiatives across four core areas: capital projects for the preservation of historic buildings, organizational capacity building, project planning, and programming and interpretation. With its emphasis on community-led heritage work at historically Black religious sites, the Fund's priorities closely align with the goals of this proposal, especially in supporting AR-based interpretive strategies and public programming tied to displaced congregations.

Save Harlem Now! would act as a connector organization, helping to build bridges between Harlem-based communities and the Tenderloin sites. Their long-standing advocacy work and familiarity with Harlem's preservation networks make them well-positioned to support community outreach and narrative development.

The Harlem congregations descended from displaced Tenderloin churches would be the central organizing and implementing bodies. As the spiritual and institutional successors of the historic churches, these congregations hold the symbolic and cultural authority to lead programming efforts, interpret church-specific histories, and reestablish presence in the Tenderloin.

Implementation may require coordination with municipal agencies for public programming permits, and potential review of regulations related to placing interpretive signage, audio installations, and AR components in the public realm.

E.R. Williams: “The Well-Known Architect of New York” - Exhibition at Port Authority

Matt Goff

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

This proposal expands upon a finding made by this studio of the historic construction of the Metropolitan Building at the corner of West 46th Street and Eighth Avenue in 1908. Designed by local Black architect E.R. Williams, this office building, home to famous Black businesses such as the New York Age, was one of the earliest known works of a Black architect in New York City. Amidst racist White aspersions that no Black businesses existed in the Tenderloin, the Metropolitan Building stood as a symbolic and structural counter, an example of the Black community’s industry, resilience, and aspirations for progress.

Unfortunately, the structure no longer remains today, and acknowledgement of its importance and architect have all but faded into obscurity. Once referred to by the Black press as the

“well-known architect of New York,” E.R. Williams has been largely forgotten, only recently discussed as one of the country’s pioneering Black designers. A prolific architect, Williams’ work concentrated primarily in New York and New Jersey and his designs shared a then progressive ethos of ownership—that Black people could own homes, own business, and own their history. Although unbuilt, his most famous design envisioned a memorial and museum of the Black experience in Washington D.C.

The upcoming redesign of the Port Authority Bus Terminal then presents a unique opportunity to reintroduce the work of E.R. Williams to the public. Design documents state a commitment to public-facing art installations for travelers, a perfect canvas for displaying Williams’ designs of built and unbuilt works. Situating these designs in one of the city’s primary arteries for travel would allow commuters to experience and recognize the important yet unsung work of a Black architect in shaping the places they call home.

Description

Large scale, high resolution prints of a collection of E.R. Williams designs would line the corridors of the bus terminal. Each image would be accompanied by a caption explaining the design, but also include a QR code that when scanned directly routes to the site where this building still stands or once stood. While many are in the New York or New Jersey area, several designs exist for structures around the nation, such as the previously mentioned museum in Washington D.C.

An introductory display would feature a photograph of Williams himself, a biography and explanation of his impact, and a map of the United States graphically pinned with sites of built and unbuilt works. Large title text would read: E.R. Williams: “The Well-Known Architect of New York.” This title serves a dual purpose—showcasing the irony that history has forgotten Williams despite this sentiment and the aspiration that he can become well-known once again.

Implementation

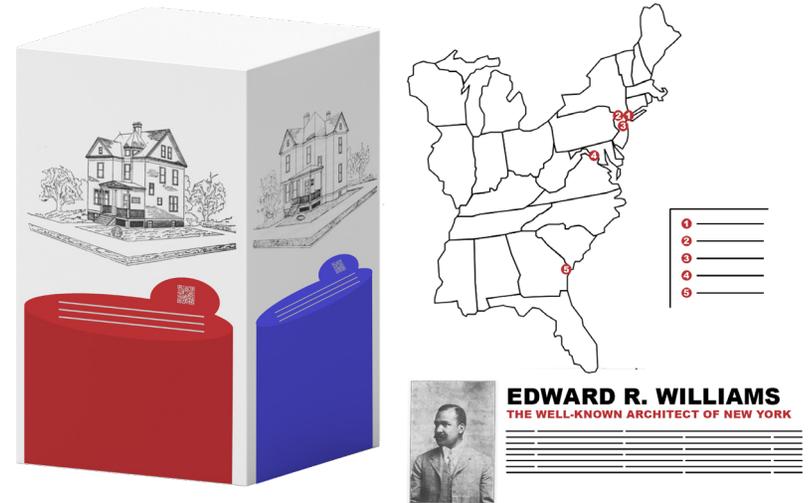
Currently, a small collection of renderings have been sourced from publications such as the *New York Age* and *The Colored American Magazine*, but many more exist in archives in both New York and New Jersey. Funding would be required for further research including site visits, permissions, and high-resolution digitization of drawings, articles, and photographs related to E.R. Williams' work. This effort would be supported through collaboration with local historians and archival institutions, and informed by partnerships with organizations committed to the preservation and advancement of Black architectural history such as Save Harlem Now.

This project would build upon strong Port Authority precedent for including public-facing displays in transit centers. A partnership between Port Authority and the Jersey City Arts Program established a comprehensive "Art in Transit" program to celebrate local artists and beautify stations throughout New Jersey. Displays range from murals to dedicated "commuter gallery" spaces, encouraging thoughtful interaction with art through a variety of spatial encounters. The ongoing redesign of Terminal 6 at the JFK International Airport offers precedent for such work in New York City. Through collaboration with the Public Art Fund, a nonprofit committed to providing free and accessible public art to New Yorkers, the Port Authority commissioned works from 18 artists that "represent both local neighborhoods as well as national and international communities" to be architecturally integrated within the new space.

While the proposed exhibition would be more historical in nature, these prior works can still serve as prescriptive examples as to how such a display could be realized. Moreover, community engagement presentations for the Port Authority Terminal redesign reflect these precedents, stating an imperative for public art to give commuters a "sense of place." The agency's continued commitment to inclusive installations aligns with this exhibition's aim to make Black architectural history visible within public

spaces, making the Port Authority a fitting host and principal partner.

Another potential key partner to guide the curatorial lens and design of this project could be the Black Reconstruction Collective (BRC)—a group of architects, designers, and scholars dedicated to reimagining and reclaiming Black spatial narratives. This partnership would help ensure that the exhibition is not only visually compelling but also critically contextualized within broader conversations around race, space, and memory.



Display of house designs by E.R. Williams
Source: Goff, Matt. 2025.

Map of buildings by E.R.
Source: Goff, Matt. 2025.

Worth's Museum and Haymarket

Chuyan (Charlotte) Zhou

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

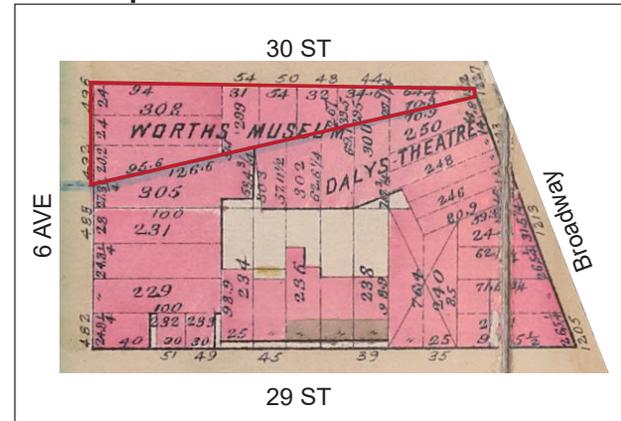
This proposal addresses the key finding that significant Black cultural histories in Tenderloin are not encountered in today's urban landscape. It activates restorative justice by reclaiming and publicly reinserting the memory of Black performers who trained and worked at Worth's Museum, a rare space for Black dramatic arts training during the late 19th century (Peterson 1997, 12). As Laurajane Smith emphasizes, "heritage is "not a 'thing', a site, building or other material object," but a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering (Smith 2006, 44). In this sense, the erasure of Worth's Museum from New York's urban landscape represents not just the loss of a physical structure but the disruption of a living cultural memory.

Background, Significance, and Rationale

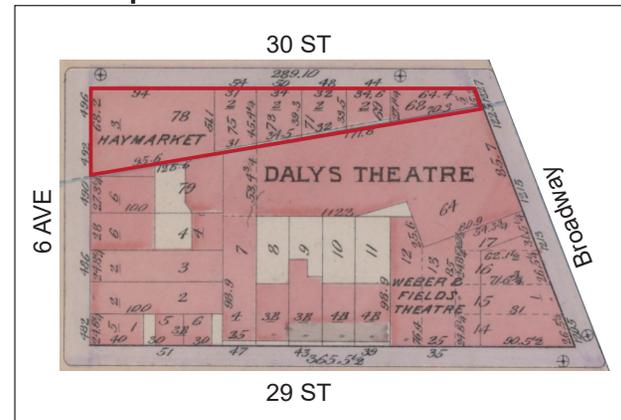
The Worth's Museum was located at Sixty-sixth West Thirtieth Street, a brief transformation in between 1890 to 1897 of the Haymarket Dance Hall period from 1872 to 1911 (New York Times 1920). During this time, Worth's Museum became one of the first venues where Black performers in New York could receive professional stage training and dramatic experience (Johnson 1930). At a time when even successful Black performers were

often forced to conform to demeaning minstrel stereotypes and blackface traditions, Worth's Museum offered a rare space where Black artists could organize, train, and perform outside the direct control of white managers (Hill and Hatch 2003, 156). This history, though critical, remains largely undocumented and invisible in the current urban fabric.

1891 Map:



1899 Map:



1891 & 1899 Maps.

Base map from NYPL Digital Collections. Revised by Chuyan Zhou.



The Haymarket
 Source: The Gilded Hour. <https://thegildedhour.com/the-tenderloin/>



Current View of 66 West 30th Street
 Source: Google Maps.



The Haymarket, Sixth Avenue by John French Sloan (1907)
 Source: Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY.

Although the Haymarket building no longer exists, the building directly across the street at 65 West 30th Street, constructed in 1955, provides an unexpected visual continuity with the historical streetscape. Its proportions, storefront rhythm, and masonry

surface echo characteristics visible in historical photos and the painting by John Sloan. This presents an opportunity to honor and revive the site's cultural significance without altering the present-day occupied building. Using this nearby facade offers a respectful and creative solution to spatial limitations, allowing for the restoration of cultural memory in a visible and accessible manner.

Description

The proposed plan is to apply projection mapping onto the facade of the Sixty-fifth West Thirtieth Street, as a means to reimagine the history of the streetscape of the Worth's Museum and Haymarket. The projection could include historical figures, architecture elements and related venue signages. The activation would be designed to be low-impact, reversible, and aligned



Mock-up Collage.
 Source: Base image via Google map. Revised by Chuyan Zhou.

with city regulations governing public art and signage. Projection mapping can reinsert historical narratives into the present-day streetscape, helping to reinforce community identity and belonging (Smith 2006, 56-57).

Another important stakeholder would be the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program (DCLA). It would play a central role in providing regulatory guidance. Early in the project, DCLA would help navigate the necessary permitting processes for public art installations and ensure compliance with citywide public art criteria (NYC Department of Cultural Affairs 2025).

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) would also be consulted early during the planning phase to provide historical validation and assist in gathering archival resources related to Worth's Museum and the broader Tenderloin history. Although the original site is no longer standing, collaboration with LPC would ensure that the historical narratives conveyed through projection are accurate, respectful, and appropriately contextualized.

Manhattan Community Board 5 (CB5) would serve as a community liaison, providing consultation, neighborhood feedback, and local advocacy for the project. Their endorsement would help facilitate public acceptance and smooth the project's integration into the urban fabric.

The property owner of 65 West 30th Street would be one of the most critical stakeholders. Their role would involve granting permission for the use of the building facade as the projection surface, and the interior space for cultural exhibition and a shop. In the early negotiation phase, agreements would be established regarding the timing, duration, maintenance, and potential liabilities associated with the projection installation. Their cooperation would be essential not only for logistical feasibility but also for building a positive relationship that could allow for potential future programming expansions.

A specialized projection technology company would be contracted to implement the technical aspects of the facade projection mapping. This stakeholder would be responsible for equipment provision, installation, calibration, and ongoing

weather-resistant performance throughout the activation period. Coordination between the projection company and NAMA/LPC would ensure that the visual content aligns accurately with the architectural features of 65 West 30th Street, delivering an immersive and historically resonant public art experience. Potential partners could include local firms such as ATD Audio Visual, which has extensive experience in projection mapping installations across New York City.



Current View of 65 West 30 ST
Source: Image Via Google Map.

OCCUPYING SPACE: EVENTS AND PROGRAMS



**Presentations and
Resources for Community
Boards 4 & 5 Committees**

Ashlyn Pause

Roots & Blooms: Flowering Histories of West 28th

Heather Oakley, Ashlyn Pause, and Matt Goff

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

Research conducted by this studio and knowledge gained through conversation with local floral designer James François-Pijuan revealed the importance of Black workers in the Tenderloin's burgeoning floral industry during the studio's period of study. Shops such as Charles Thorley's at 562 Fifth Avenue employed Black staff and their designs graced the halls of the district's high culture establishments, like the Waldorf-Astoria hotel. The legacy of the floral industry continues in this same area of Manhattan today, however, the importance of Black florists and employees in this district's history has only recently begun to be discussed. Florists occupied retail space in some of the historic buildings in Tin Pan Alley, recently landmarked buildings historically associated with the Black entertainment and music publishing industry. In addition, the former Grammar School No. 48 at 120-128 West 28th Street, is today occupied by numerous flower wholesalers and florist studios.

Right: Gala at the Waldorf Hotel, 1902, designed by Black florists James Henry Williams and Herbert D. Cummings Source: "New York Black Florist History." NYC

Left: Historic Floral District Museum. A mockup of the proposed flower installation at Tin Pan Alley using processed laser scan data (April 2025). Ashlyn Pause and Sabina Busch.



Description

This proposal aims to promote Black florists through the creation of floral installations on historically significant buildings within the Tenderloin. Through partnerships with New York City's Historic Floral District Museum and Black florists, this project aims to highlight the significance of the floral industry in the Tenderloin and the role it played in Black culture while promoting the work of contemporary Black florists. As a central location within the floral district, the buildings located on West 28th Street (Tin Pan Alley) are the ideal location for these installations and associated event.

The purpose of these installations is to connect the broader public to Black florists today as well as to the history and contributions of Black men and women in the floral industry of New York City during our study period of the Tenderloin, 1870-1920. This project seeks to address the harms and injustice inflicted upon Black florists and other Black contributors to the industry during the study period. Black florists from New York City will create installations on a historically significant building and receive compensation for their time and effort. Compensation and marketing of Black florists is a requirement for the success of this project.

In addition, the installation would be accompanied by an event that aims to inform the public on the history of Black florists in the Tenderloin. The event will involve the closure of the section of West 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue. It would include local flower-related vendors and supply historically accurate food based on the historic menu from the former cafe and saloon owned by the Nail Brothers. It would also include an interactive element where the public can learn about the Black history of the Tenderloin and the contemporary Black florists who created the flower installations. The event would be managed through the use of timed, free tickets.

Goal

- Promote the artistic skill and talent of Black florists today by providing places of significance in the Tenderloin upon which to create public-facing installations.
- Bring awareness of and attention to places of significance for the Black community in what was known as the Tenderloin (c. 1870-1920) and promote the stories of talent, fortitude and contribution of Black florists of the past, drawing up There is the documented link between florists and the Black community during the Tenderloin's time period.
- Undertake reparative action for these narratives that have gone unrecognized, and supply ample pay and marking for contemporary Black florists in recognition of their work and talent.

This proposal addresses the forgotten narratives associated with the physical buildings selected for this project as former sites of Black florists and other sites of Black history within the Tenderloin. The incorporation of these buildings into the proposal and hosting a corresponding event would afford an opportunity to spatially encounter these historic places, offering an engagement beyond just passing them on the street. This project would allow viewers to interact with physical buildings while learning about their history and those who previously inhabited and/or occupied them. Although not considered physical preservation of the structures, this is preservation of their history, narrative, and significance.

Implementation

This project would be implemented through a partnership with New York City's Historic Floral District Museum, and its founder James François-Pijuan, as the associated non-profit organization. Through this partnership, the project would be logistically organized. Additionally, the New York City's Historic Floral District Museum would be the organization under which this project would apply for grant funding and sponsorships. The ideal primary funding source for this project would be the Humanities in Place grant at the Mellon Foundation.

Implementation Steps:

- Meet with connector organizations (NYC Historic Floral District Museum)
- Select a date for event
- Create a budget
- Finalize proposal
- Connect with local building owners and receive approval to use building facades
- Design event logo and flags
- Prepare the Mellon Foundation grant application
- Seek additional funding through sponsorships
- Connect with local City Council members to confirm project logistics and permits
- Issue an RFP for Black artists to submit their portfolio for consideration to participate in the event
- Secure catering of historically accurate food based on the Nail Brother's menu
- Organize and confirm market vendors
- Secure flower supply from local vendors and/or farmers
- Develop website for marketing
- Secure location for VIP and donor experience (Hotel partner on West 28th)
- Contact local emergency responders to notify them of street closure
- Organize free ticketing with established times for crowd volume control

- Reach out to local and national news outlets
- Pick up or receive local flower shipment
- Plan and supervisor installation day(s)
- Step up for event

Opening Event

This studio has likewise identified the extant building at 805 Sixth Avenue as the historical location of John B. Nail's saloon. Although a flower shop today, around the turn of the twentieth century, Mr. Nail's establishment was a cultural pillar and important community gathering place for Black men and women in the Tenderloin. By this same coin, its current use as a flower shop, and one partnered with the NYC Historic Floral District Museum no less, makes for a compelling case to host opening festivities at this historic location.

Research into historic Black newspapers and interviews with Mr. Nail's descendant, Ms. K. Melanie Edwards, has unearthed dinner menus from Mr. Nail's restaurant that once stood across the street, the location now a high-rise apartment complex. Leveraging existing relationships between the NYC Historic Floral District Museum and local caterers, this proposal includes a dinner event hosted outside 805 Sixth Avenue with cuisine recreated from or inspired by these menus to celebrate the enduring culinary legacy of Black New Yorkers.



Mockup of Outdoor Dining Event
Source: Goff, Matt. 2025.

As envisioned, food could be served to attendees in either of two models non-exclusive of each other:

1) seats at the dinner service would be purchased via donation, with invitations set aside for participating floral artists, businesses, etc. and/or

2) vendors would sell this food directly to attendees on the opening day of the floral display. Proceeds from these donations and sales would go towards the purchase of 42 West 28th Street as a permanent home for the NYC Historic Floral District Museum. This building itself carries cultural weight in the neighborhood as it was the former office of the Gotham-Attucks Publishing Company, one of the few Black-owned sheet music publishers in the historic Tenderloin. Undesignated today, this building's reactivation as a museum would serve not only to make visible the Black history of the Tenderloin, but steward one of the few surviving buildings representative of this history.



The logo for the NYC Historic Floral District Museum. James François-Pijuan.

**NAIL BROS.
RESTAURANT
450 Sixth Avenue
Lincoln's Birth Day Dinner**

With Claret Wine
50 Cents **From 3 to 8 P. M.**
Oyster Soup **Family Style**
German Cold Slaw
Fried Pillet of Sole **Tartar Sauce**
Pommes Julerime
Rabbit Stew with Rice
ENTREE
Apple Cobbler **Custard Sauce**
Philadelphia Capon with Currant Jelly
Cauliflower in Cream
New String Beans
Potato Croquettes
Roman Punch
Cafe Noir

50 Cents

Menu for Lincoln's Birthday Dinner, 1909
Source: *The New York Age*. February 4, 1909

**Nail Bros' Restaurant, 450 Sixth Avenue
New York
Sunday, February 23rd.**

T' De Hote Dinner with Claret Wine
50c. from 2 till 8:30 50c.

SUPP
Gumbo, De Volaille, ala d'Orleans
POTISSON
Sea Trout, Sauce Hollandaise
Pommes De Terre, Parisienne
ENTREE
Vol au Vent Des Huitres
Ala Colombes
ROAST
Prime Ribs of Beef, Au Jus
Philadelphia Capon, stuffed, Brown Gravy
Currant Jelly
Mashed Potatoes Baked Macaroni
Boiled Rice Southern style
Early June Peas
DESSERT
Neapolitan Bricks **Cake**
50c Coffee 50c

Menu for T'De Hote Dinner, 1908
Source: *The New York Age*. February 20, 1908

Reclaiming the Narrative Concert Series

Sabina Busch and Elizabeth Kostina

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

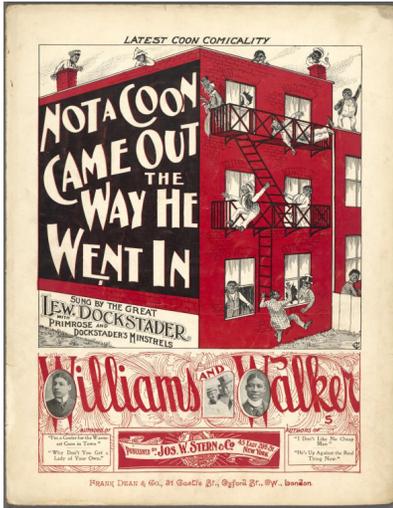
Reclaiming the Narrative concert series would honor and amplify the music of Black composers and performers whose contributions have long been overshadowed in mainstream historical narratives, while simultaneously celebrating the work of modern Black musicians. During the study period, White audiences and publishers limited the creative freedom of Black artists, often forcing them to work exclusively within demeaning racist stereotypes in order to be commercially successful. Despite these limitations, Black creatives produced incredible pieces of original work in the styles of ragtime, orchestral, and jazz music, nearly all of which are now in the public domain. This concert series represents reparative action to the descendant community of these Black musicians in New York City by allowing them to honor and reimagine the works of their predecessors. The participating musicians would perform the historical compositions, but would be encouraged to exercise creative freedom by reinterpreting the works to express their own musical style.

The concerts would feature works from In Dahomey, the New York Syncopated Orchestra, and Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra. Performances would also include instrumental pieces that emerged from minstrel traditions and racist tropes to recontextualize these works. Additionally, the participating artists would be able to give input on other music from this era that they might like to reimagine, drawing on the precedent of reinterpreting 'traditional works advanced by organizations like Lincoln Center in their rendition of Parable of the Sower in 2023. The program would illuminate the genius and resilience of Black artists who shaped genres under the weight of systemic racism, serving not only as musical experiences but as acts of correcting the historical record.

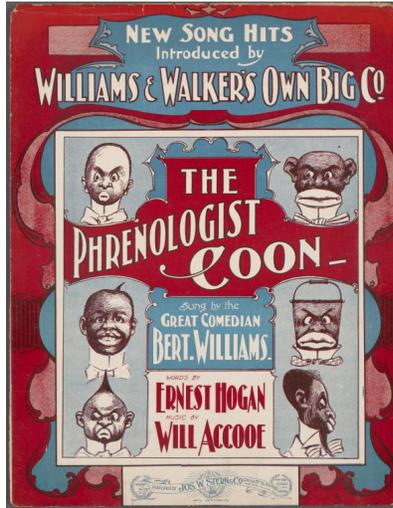


The New York Syncopated Orchestra, ca. 1920.

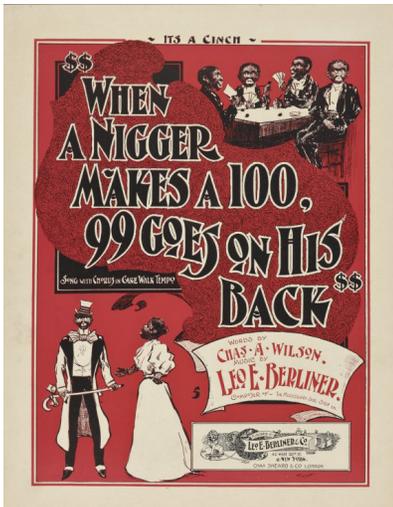
Source: Magazine, Harlem World. "The Legendary Southern Syncopated Orchestra, Founded By Strivers Row Resident Will Marion Cook, 1919-1921." Harlem World Magazine (blog), October 11, 2022.



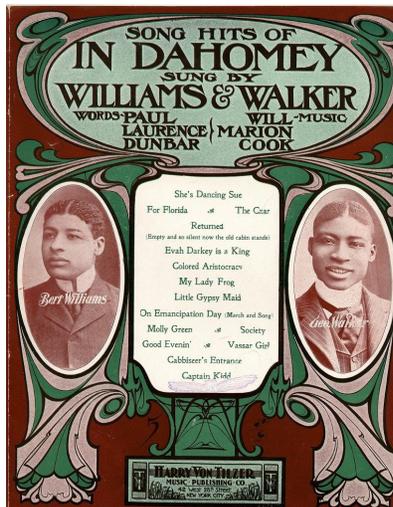
"Not a Coon Came Out the Way He Went In," Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1898. Written by Williams and Walker, Sung by Lew. Dockstader. Source: NYPL Digital Collections.



"The Phrenologist Coon," Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1901. Words by Ernest Hogan, Music by Will Accooe. Source: NYPL Digital Collections. "The Phrenologist Coon."



"When a Nigger Makes a 100, 99 Goes on His Back," Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Leo E. Berliner & Co., 1899. Words by Chas. A. Wilson, Composed by Leo E. Berliner. Source: NYPL Digital Collections.



Sheet music from "In Dahomey," featuring photos of Bert Williams and George Walker. Source: Kurt Ganzl. "In Dahomey": One Of The First American Black Musical Hits." Operetta Research Center, June 10, 2020.

To put on the concert series, this proposal suggests partnering with Carnegie Hall during Black History Month. On February 13, 1893, this historical venue hosted its first Black musical performer, Ms. Sissieretta Jones (known as "The Black Patti"), accompanied by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. The integrated White-owned venue continued to host Black musicians thereafter, including the Clef Club Orchestra, as well as hosting civil rights advocates, including Booker T. Washington. Today, Carnegie Hall continues to celebrate Black history and culture through annual Black History Month celebrations, with concerts, speakers, and community gatherings. Thus, this venue provides a strong link between historical and modern Black music and culture.



Carnegie Hall

Source: Carnegie Hall. "Press Photos." Accessed April 29, 2025.



Carnegie Hall Auditorium

Source: Carnegie Hall. "Press Photos." Accessed April 29, 2025.



Mme. Sissieretta Jones, "The Black Patti."

Source: "Overlooked No More: Sissieretta Jones, a Soprano Who Shattered Racial Barriers - *The New York Times*."



Booker T. Washington speaking at Carnegie Hall, 1906.

Source: Carnegie Hall Archives. "Benefit: Tuskegee Institute, Featuring Speaker Booker T. Washington," January 22, 1906.

The concert series would also include a historical installation in the galleries of Carnegie Hall's Rose Museum, which opened in 1991. The Rose Gallery showcases the Hall's history through concert programs, photographs, autographed posters, musical manuscripts, and videos. The Rose Museum is open to the public Monday through Saturday, 11 AM–4:30 PM. While the Rose Museum does a commendable job of discussing Black performers and orators who have graced the stage at Carnegie Hall,

including Booker T. Washington and Sissieretta Jones, this proposals seeks to add to the Museum by creating a special temporary exhibit on the significance of Tin Pan Alley, Broadway theaters, and the networks of Black musicians who worked within and around them.

The exhibition would include historical photographs of Black performers, as well as covers of sheet music that illustrate the aforementioned tropes. Audio installations would also be included, with available recordings of songs from *In Dahomey*, Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra, and the music of James Reese Europe available for visitors to experience.

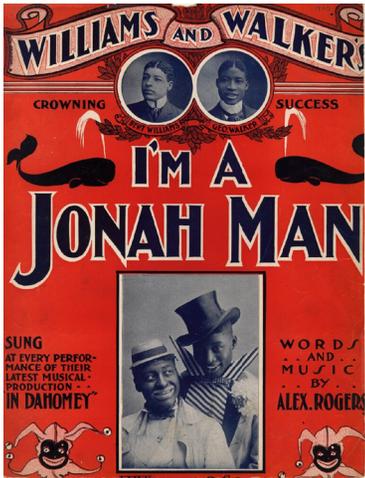


Lead performers of "In Dahomey," including George Walker, Bert Williams, and Aida Overton Walker, ca. 1903.

Source: The Gilbert and Sullivan Archive. "In Dahomey."



Recording of Dabney's Orchestra. Source: Ford Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra - Sweet Man O' Mine / Doo Dah Blues, 1922.



Cover of sheet music from "I'm a Jonah Man," performed by Williams and Walker. Source: Duke Digital Collections. "I'm a Jonah Man; In Dahomey / Historic American Sheet Music,"



Vuyo Sotashe
Source: SoundCloud. "Vuyo Sotashe,"
May 25, 2016



Brandee Younger
Source: Venues, Denver Arts &
"Brandee Younger | Denver Arts &
Venues." Accessed April 29, 2025.



Interior of the Rose Museum at Carnegie Hall.
Source: Carnegie Hall. "Rent the Rose Museum."



Interior of the Rose Museum at Carnegie Hall.
Source: Carnegie Hall. "Rent the Rose Museum."

Implementation

This proposal aims to partner with Carnegie Hall to curate and host this concert series and temporary exhibition. Additional collaborating organizations include the Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project, whose archival expertise and public history initiatives will provide essential historical context for the performances. Additionally, the New York Jazz Workshop could access discounted practice spaces for the performers, additional community arts funding, and extend the project's reach through educational programming and workshops. The New Amsterdam Musical Association (NAMA) is also an ideal collaborator, as the organization was active in the Tenderloin, supporting Black musicians in the nineteenth century before moving to Harlem.



New Amsterdam Musical Association Logo
Source: Goodman, Jack. "New Amsterdam Musical Association for African-Americans." History Of Rock Music



Carnegie Hall Logo
Source: Carnegie Hall. "The Carnegie Hall Monogram."



New York Jazz Workshop Logo
Source: YouTube. "New York Jazz Workshop."



Members of the New Amsterdam Musical Association, 1910.
Source: New Amsterdam Musical Association, New York, U.S.A. 1910. NYPL Digital Collections.



Tin Pan Alley American Popular Music Project
Source: Tinpanalley.nyc.

Funding through a combination of public donations and private grants that focus on arts, culture, and racial equity would be pursued. Potential sources include the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the Mellon Foundation, which recently launched a jazz fellowship called Jazz Giants in 2025, which could be included on the roster of performers, and the Ford Foundation. Funding and collaboration could also be pursued through contacting established New York City jazz clubs such as The Village Vanguard and The Blue Note to discuss sponsoring the event and recommending local Black musicians to perform.



Blue Note Jazz Club
Source: Blue Note New York. "Group Reservations."



Village Vanguard jazz club
Source: "Village Vanguard Facebook Page."

In conclusion, the Reclaiming the Narrative concert series would address the harm that White producers and audiences caused to Black musicians in the Tenderloin by limiting their creative freedom. This concert series provides reparative action by making this history known through the historical installation, celebrates the work that these musicians created, and empowers the descendant community of local Black musicians by giving them a platform to showcase their creativity in a reimagining of historic compositions.

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School Program

Abbey Francis and Yuhan (Judy) Wang

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

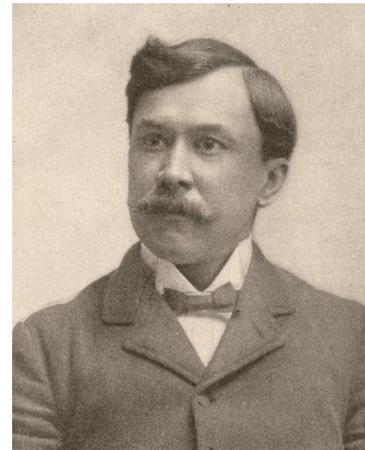
Encountering Black Spaces Today



Caption: Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School (October 2013), Beyond My Ken

Background, Significance, and Rationale

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School, formerly Public School 67, stands as a rare surviving landmark of Black agency and community action in the Tenderloin. As one of the few extant buildings still serving its original purpose, it offers a unique opportunity to tie reparative action to a physical site of Black history. Under the leadership of Dr. William Bulkley, who became principal in 1906, the school was a hub of opportunity for the neighborhood's Black residents. By day, PS 67 operated as an elementary school; by night, it opened its doors to children and adults seeking literacy and vocational skills. Bulkley established the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of Negroes in New York City (CIICNNY). He was involved in founding the NAACP and the National Urban League. Both groups continue their missions today. In 1909 and 1910, he operated these organizations out of PS 67.



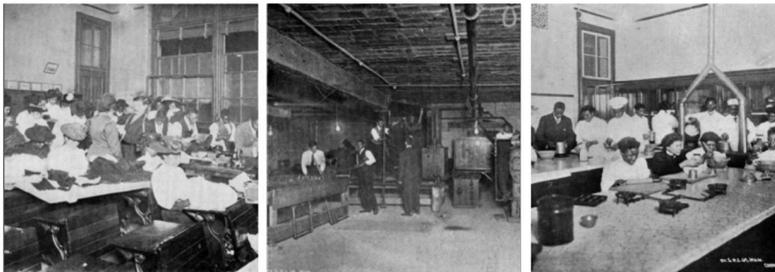
William Lewis Bulkley,
NYPL Digital Collections

Today, few physical traces of the Tenderloin's Black history remain. Exposing this history to school students provides a meaningful opportunity for an act of restoration: reconnecting a community to a nearly forgotten history of resilience and achievement. By launching Black History Month 2026 at Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School, we aim to encourage students to research and creatively reinterpret the school's history.

Connecting educational content to students' own lives, histories, and cultural backgrounds can enhance their ability to engage with and retain knowledge.

Description and Implementation

While the project might take a variety of directions, this proposal seeks to create spaces for students to shape the forms and messages of their own interactions with history. For example, one possibility is a student-led immersive installation that transforms selected classrooms into "time travel spaces." These rooms would be designed to evoke the environment of Black night classes at schools in the early twentieth century. Incorporating archival photographs, reenacted teaching materials, oral histories, and soundscapes would allow the building's hidden past to speak physically and emotionally.



Left: Tailoring Class

Middle: Steamfitting and Boilermaking Class

Right: Cooking Class

Source: New York City Municipal Archives, Courtesy Peggy Norris

The project could lead to the creation of a signage system, similar to historical markers, which draws inspiration from projects such as the 34th Street Partnership's "Know NYC." The project uses plaques and markers to tell the story of Midtown Manhattan's transformation and community development. Through archival research, writing, and design, students would interpret the building's significance in the context of Manhattan's black history and fight for public recognition.

Or, the students could organize a speaker series featuring experts in the history associated with the building, for instance Peggy Norris, the author of the only biography of Dr. Bulkley.

To support the implementation of the project, this proposal suggests a partnership with the Black Education Resource Center (BERC) at Teachers College, Columbia University. BERC has extensive experience in curriculum development, intergenerational learning, and school-based programs.

Ideally, the students would find an approach, not even suggested here, that is unique to them and that helps them build some of the skills we hone here at Columbia. Engaging the students in this way—acknowledging their autonomy as engaged members of their community, who are fully capable of taking action to improve it—is in itself a way to honor the legacy of Bulkley, who exemplified community engagement and activism in his own era.

Legacy In Play: MLB Store Fundraiser & Installation in Honor of Barron Wilkins

Yekaterina (Kat) Nestser

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy
Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

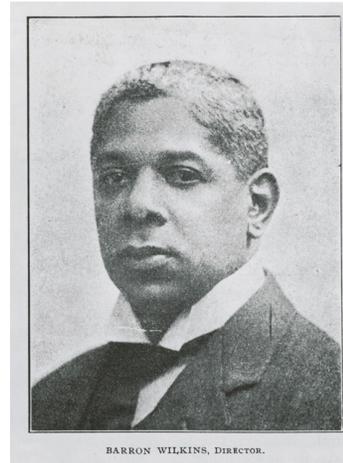
Displacement

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Background, Significance, and Rationale

Barron Wilkins was a Black entrepreneur who operated the Little Savoy Hotel and Barron's Café at 235 West 35th Street, a site within the cluster of streets that was once the center of Black life in the Tenderloin district. Wilkins was not only a hospitality figure, but a key benefactor of early twentieth century Black culture in New York, particularly music and athletics.



Portrait of Barron Wilkins

Source: Colored American Magazine. 1906. "Barron Wilkins, Director." Colored American Magazine 10 (2): 114. Digitized by NYPL.



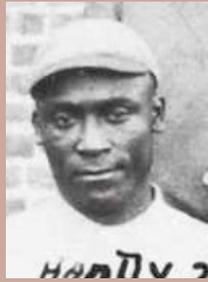
Jack Johnson in 1909.

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica. 2025. "Jack Johnson, 1909."

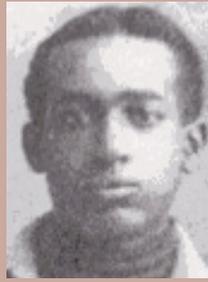
More significantly, Wilkins was the principal financier of nearly every Black baseball team in New York and parts of New Jersey (New York Times 1924, 1). He lived to see the formation of the Negro Baseball League in 1920, but his premature death means he did not witness its eventual dismantling during desegregation, when Black players were absorbed into Major League Baseball (MLB). This so-called integration came at the cost of institutional erasure, as the Negro League's legacy has been under-recognized.



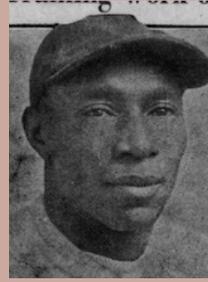
Big Bill Smith of the New York Black Sox.



Bill Handy of the New York Black Sox.



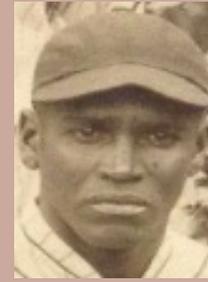
Billy Matthews of the New York Black Sox.



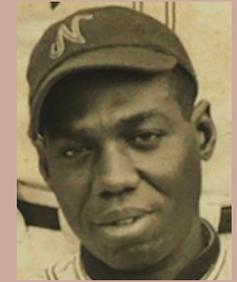
Charlie Mason of the New York Bacharach Giants



Charles O'Neil of the New York Bacharach Giants



Country Brown of the New York Bacharach Giants



Dick Lundy of the New York Bacharach Giants



Dick Jackson of the New York Bacharach Giants



Dick Redding of the New York Bacharach Giants



Fats Jenkins of the New York Bacharach Giants



Frank Duncan of the New York Bacharach Giants



Fred Hutchinson of the New York Bacharach Giants



George Shively of the New York Bacharach Giants



Harold Treadwell of the New York Bacharach Giants



Jim York of the New York Bacharach Giants.



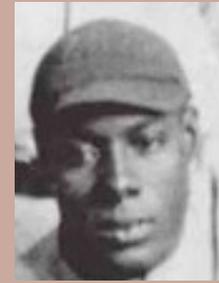
Jessie Briscoe of the New York Black Sox.



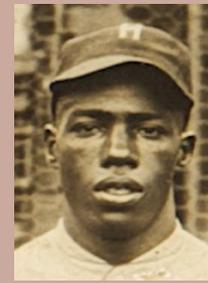
Johnny Hill of the New York Black Sox.



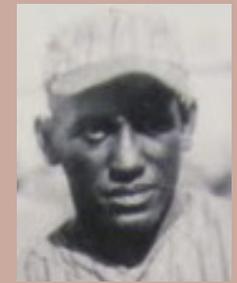
Julio Rojo of the New York Bacharach Giants.



Leroy Grant of the New York Black Sox.



Nip Winters of the New York Bacharach Giants.



Oliver Marcell of the New York Bacharach Giants.



Ramiro Ramirez of the New York Bacharach Giants.



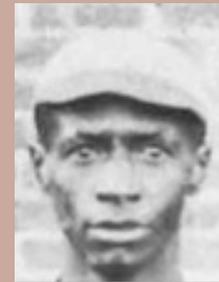
Robert Hudspeth of the New York Bacharach Giants.



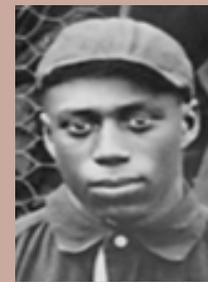
Roy Robert of the New York Bacharach Giants



Sam Crawford of the New York Black Sox.



String Bean Williams of the New York Bacharach Giants



Wallace Gordon of the New York Bacharach Giants

Source: Images courtesy of Seamheads. 2025. Negro Leagues Database.

In recent years, the MLB has faced growing criticism, being pressured to fully address its history. In 2020, athletic advocate Ernesto DiStefano wrote to MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred, calling for reparations to descendants of Negro League players. A year later, Manfred announced that 3,400 Negro League athletes would be added to the League's official record books. In May 2024, the MLB expanded financial support for surviving Negro League players through its pension program, important but overdue measures that remain insufficient. These efforts, while meaningful, benefit only the few players still alive today and leave unaddressed the broader generational harms experienced by their descendants.

Description of Project

The proposal recommends that the MLB develop and sell a line of limited-edition merchandise commemorating Barron Wilkins and the Negro Baseball League. Although the original hotel building no longer exists, the products would be sold exclusively at the New York City MLB flagship store--located within the identified boundaries of the former Tenderloin district--thereby drawing attention to the store's location on the historic site in the Tenderloin.



235 West 35 Street View in 2025.
Source: Google. 2025.

The campaign would include custom designs by a contemporary Black designer, amplifying Black artistic and commercial voices. Revenues generated from these sales would directly support the descendants of Negro League players, as originally urged by DiStefano. In result, this project flips the store's consumerist function into a philanthropic platform, reconnecting it with the very community whose displacement made such a retail transformation possible.

Implementation

This proposal would require collaboration between key figures and organizations already engaged in reparative efforts related to Black baseball history and beyond. Ernesto DiStefano, could be re-engaged as a community advocate and a connector to authority figures like MLB commissioner Rob Manfred.

The Baseball Assistance Team, a nonprofit that provides aid to players facing financial or medical hardship, and the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association could assist with logistics of financing Black individuals and descendants. The Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and Seamheads – institutions dedicated to preserving this history – should be consulted as primary historical resources.

The MLB would oversee the production of the merchandise, which would be sold exclusively at its flagship location. For the design component, a contemporary Black designer should lead the creation of the commemorative merchandise. Haitian-American designer Ouigi Theodore, founder of Brooklyn Circus, is one example. His work centers Black cultural legacy through fashion, describing his designs as “inclusive to all but centered around Black culture, and our journey in the Americas and the world” (Black-Owned Brooklyn 2018). In November 2024, his brand collaborated with Puma to release a collection blending sportswear and activism in tribute to Caribbean-American communities (Wightman-Stone 2024).



Brooklyn Circus and Puma Collaboration:
Look 1
Source: Midgley, John. BKC x Puma
Collection. Photographed for Brooklyn
Circus.



Brooklyn Circus and Puma Collaboration:
Look 2
Source: Midgley, John. BKC x Puma
Collection. Photographed for Brooklyn
Circus.



Brooklyn Circus and Puma Collaboration:
Look 3
Source: Midgley, John. BKC x Puma
Collection. Photographed for Brooklyn
Circus.



Brooklyn Circus and Puma Collaboration:
Look 4
Source: Midgley, John. BKC x Puma
Collection. Photographed for Brooklyn
Circus.

Alternatively, this opportunity could be extended to Black students from the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), an institution that represents the Tenderloin's transition into the Garment district and aligning with Wilkins' legacy as a patron of emerging Black talent. Period newspaper accounts describe the interior of Wilkins' club in rich detail, noting burgundy burlap wallpaper, "shaded brass chandeliers,"

and other lavish design elements (New York Age 1907, 7). These archival references could inform both the merchandise design and the physical commemorations within the MLB store, such as incorporating these visual motifs or recreating the iconic quote—"NO ONE ENTERS THESE PORTALS BUT THE TRUE IN HEART SPORTS"—above the store's entrance.



Proposed Design for MLB Store Entrance
Source: "Major League Baseball Flagship Store." Modified by
Kat Nestser.

As this project seeks to elevate the lesser-known history of Wilkins' original Tenderloin location, it should engage with those already invested in preserving his legacy. The team behind Welcome to the Savoy, a digital reconstruction project centered on Wilkins' later Harlem club, should be consulted as both collaborators and experts (Welcome to the Savoy 2025).

Unlike the Harlem location, Wilkins' Tenderloin establishment has received minimal public recognition. While a commemorative plaque, organized by volunteers, marks the former site of the Harlem Savoy (though, not Barron himself), no such marker exists at 235 West 35th Street, the current site of the Henn Na Hotel (Savoy Plaque). This proposal recommends the installation of a second plaque to ensure that Wilkins' contributions to the Tenderloin district and his sponsorship of the Negro League teams and other cultural figures receive proper historical acknowledgment. Yvonne Marceau and Jun Maruta, co-organizers of the Harlem plaque, should be consulted in this process (Savoy Plaque).

Presentations and Resources for Community Boards 4 & 5 Committees

Ashlyn Pause

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

Description

Inspired by the studio's discussions with community board members, this proposal's goal is to present the work of this studio and supply supplemental resources to specific committees at Community Boards 4 and 5, as the historic Tenderloin area is located within their boundaries. The research of this studio, particularly the key findings and preservation statistics, would be presented by four to five students during a 20 to 30 minute presentation. Following the presentations, the committees would receive a shortened text with graphics of the studio report, which would be given to new members of the committee as an orientation to the history of the community they are both representing and serving. The Committees would also be given the list of the surviving historic assets currently unlandmarked. The Committees for which this information would be most applicable are Community Board 5's Landmarks Committee and Community Board 4's Chelsea Land Use Committee or Executive Committee.

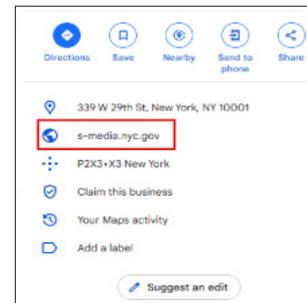
Background, Significance, and Rationale

The goal of this proposal is to inform members of the community who are actively participating and contributing to the change and preservation decisions happening within the study area today. As members of the community who play an influential role in decisions like the designation of local landmarks, presenting this research to the Committees would provide information to these community members about the Black history and narratives of their community districts, if they are not already familiar. This could potentially result in more advocacy for designations of the historic assets identified by the studio as related to Black history within the Tenderloin. This could lead to the preservation of many of the studio's surviving assets through landmarking, therefore, preserving more of the spatial narrative related to this history. This is an important effort considering the 80 percent loss of historic assets associated with Black legacies within the studio's study area.

Implementation

This proposal would be implemented by a volunteer group of students who participated in the studio. They would create an abbreviated version of the ¾ Review Presentation and use this information to create a corresponding orientation packet that outlines the studio's key findings and associated imagery. The presentation would be presented during each selected Community Board Committee meeting. A PDF version of the orientation packet would also be provided to the Committee Head for continuous use and access for future Committee members.

DIGITAL SPACE



**Re-mapping Memory:
Interactive Storytelling
Maps of Tenderloin**

Yuhan(Alex) Shi

Adding Significant Places of Black History to Digital Maps

Ashlyn Pause

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy

Being Black in White Space

Black Agency and Claiming Black Space

Displacement

Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin

Encountering Black Spaces Today

Description

This proposal is inspired by the restorative justice workshop the studio completed at the beginning of the semester with Professor k. Kennedy Whiter's' (un)Redact the Facts Wiki-a-thon "(un)Redact-a-thon" exercise of editing Wikipedia. The proposal aims to submit historical landmark suggestions on digital mapping platforms. By submitting locations of surviving historic assets for historic landmarking identification, Black histories would be more readily recognized on digital mapping platforms. Further, historical resources and preservation-related documentation can be submitted with each suggestion. This includes designation reports or historic tax photographs. Through the inclusion of these spaces on everyday digital platforms, these histories would be easily accessible to the public and could spark further interest in the topic by people simply looking for directions.

The intention of this proposal is to directly address the exclusion of Black history from placemaking tools and to reverse the harm caused by their exclusion. By adding these places to widely used navigation tools, these histories would be available digitally on platforms where they previously received no representation. Through using platforms like Google Maps where user edits can be easily suggested, this proposal can be done quickly and efficiently by any person. This allows people to play an active role in reversing the eraser of this narrative and bring to light the significant businesses, events, and homes of the Black community.

Background, Significance, and Rationale

White people and White-led institutions and agencies have historically excluded Black history narratives from many written and digital records. This proposal attempts to reverse this exclusion by highlighting the places associated with these narratives. As members of the digital age, recognition of historic places through the use of technology has become a way to preserve a spatial narrative. Considering the limitations of physically adding plaques and similar examples of physical acknowledgment of history on privately owned buildings, recognizing these histories online is a way around these limitations. It also increases accessibility to those who do not have the ability to visit the physical location. In this way, narrative inclusion on digital platforms is significant from an accessibility and inclusion standpoint.

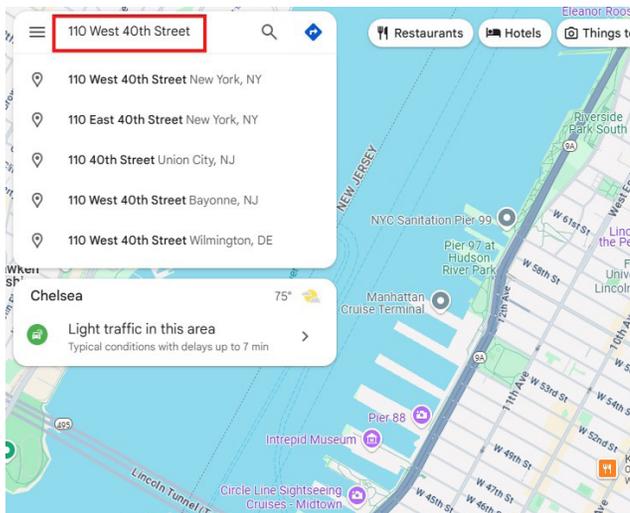
This proposal is also significant from a physical interaction perspective. Through reading about these places and simultaneously using Google Maps, users passing the building can physically interact with the building and recognize its history. This informs the visitor and enhances the spatial encounter. Through this simple utilization of technological advances, preservation information can be more accessible and widely used by the public. Therefore, this proposal is significant as a step towards this progression.

Implementation

This proposal has already been implemented for various surviving historic assets within the study area. The Hopper-Gibbons House, 23rd Police Precinct, Nail Brothers' Cafe, Wunderlich's Saloon, and the National Urban League Office have all been suggested and approved for historic landmark recognition on Google Maps. As of May 2025, these five historic landmarks have received 1,239 views from Google Map users. This proves the effectiveness of this proposal and the argument for user accessibility to preservation resources.

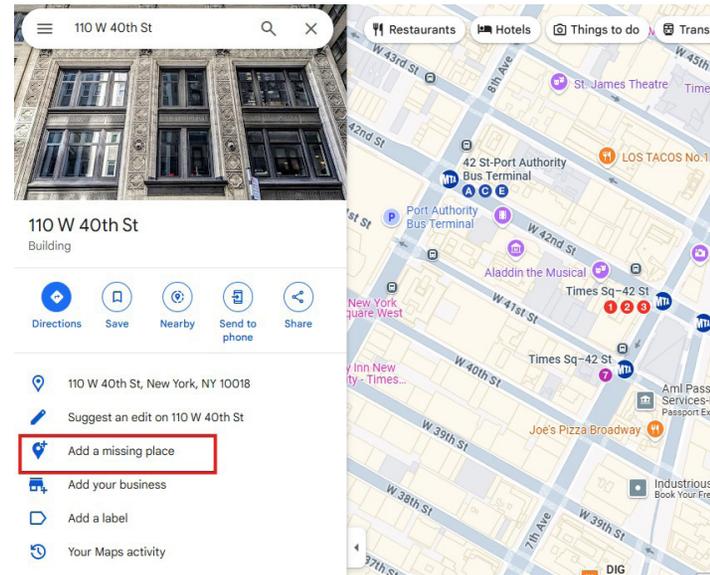
The implementation of this proposal is, and was intended to be, very simple. In order to suggest a historic landmark on Google Maps, please follow the steps below:

1. Create or log into your Google Account
2. Type "Google Maps" into the Google search bar and click the website
3. Type the address of your historic asset into the Google Maps search bar



Step 3: Where to type in the building address on Google Maps (April 2025). Ashlyn Pause and Google Maps.

4. Click "Missing place"



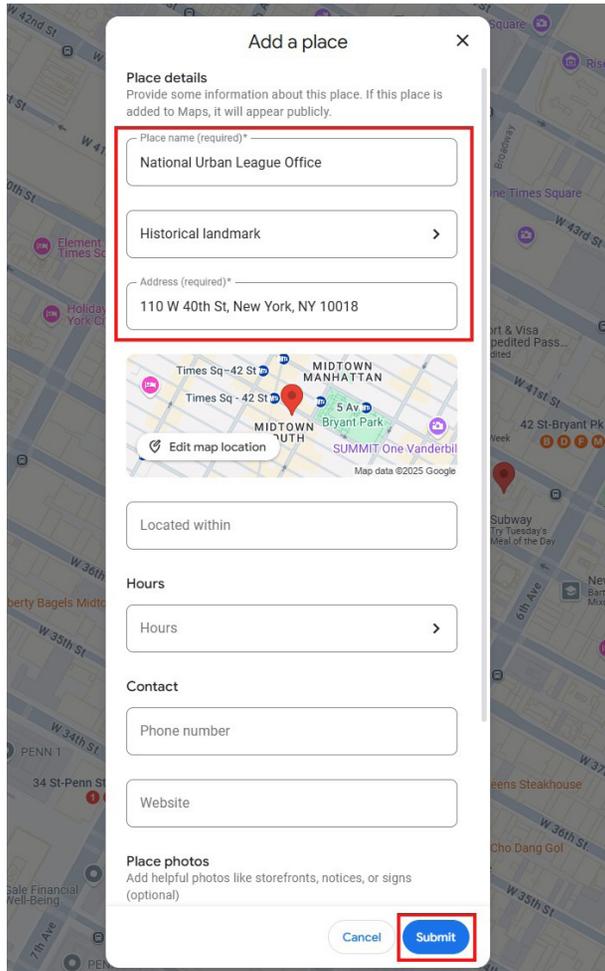
Step 4: How to add "missing place" on Google Maps (April 2025). Ashlyn Pause and Google Maps.

5. Fill in the necessary information (include as much as possible)

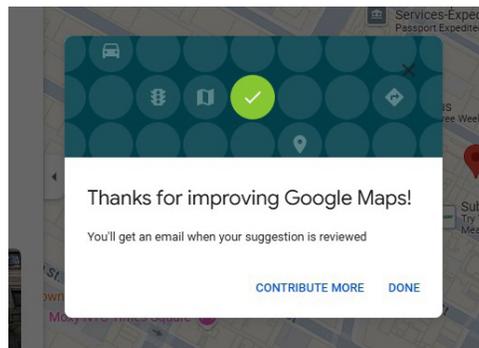
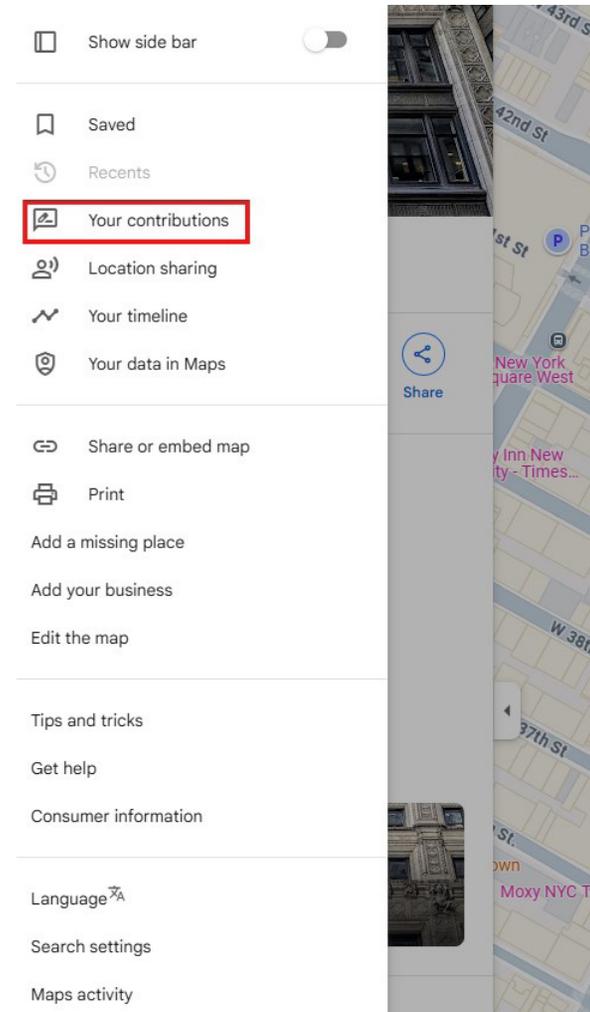
Where to fill out required information when suggesting a historic landmark on Google Maps (April 2025). Ashlyn Pause and Google Maps.

Under "Category (required)*" type in "Historic Landmark". If it is an LPC Landmarked building, you can include the designation report link within the "website" bar. LPC designation reports can be found at the following link: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/lpc/designations/designation-reports.page>

6. Once all necessary information has been entered, click "submit"

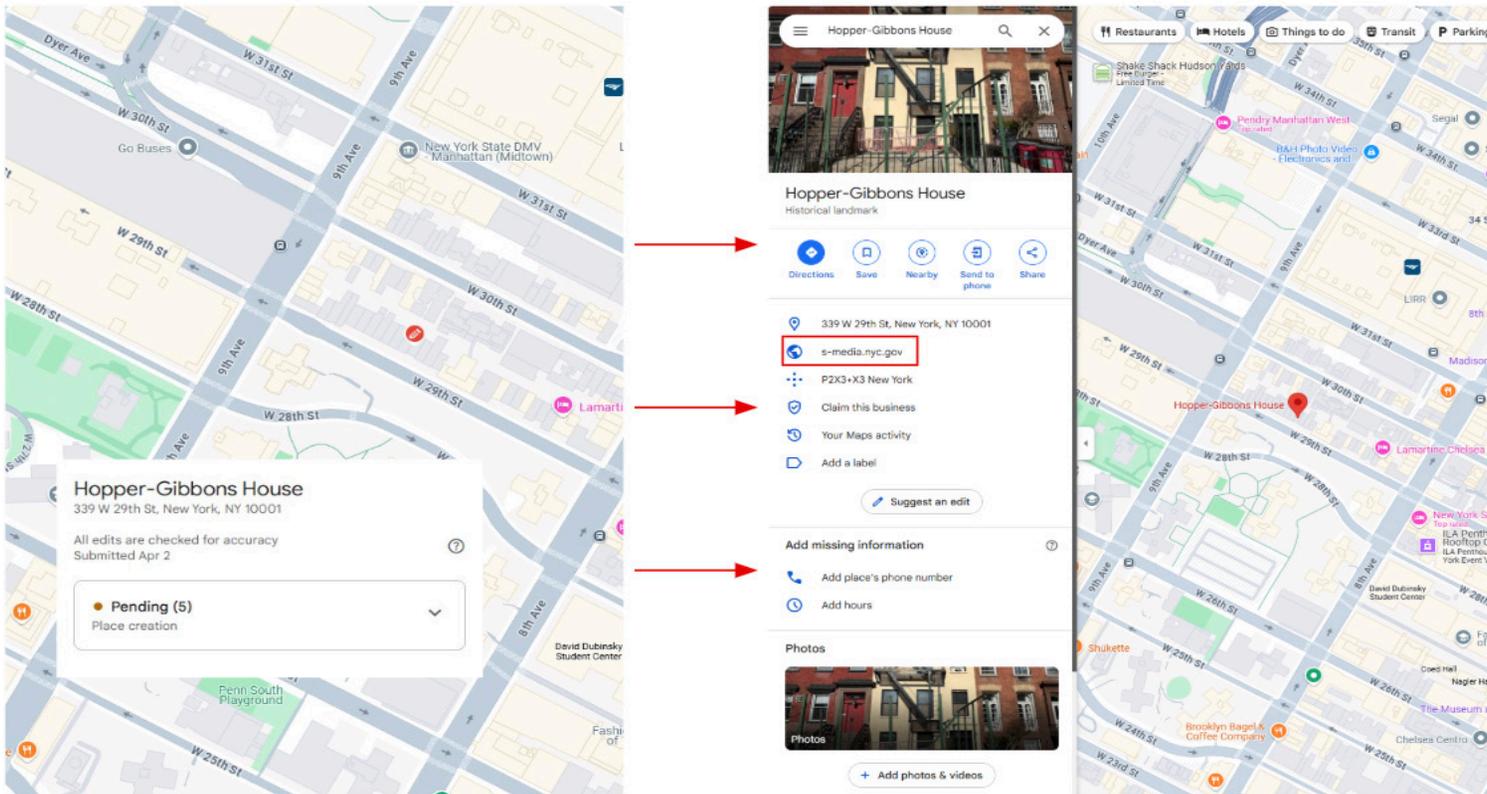


Once these steps have been completed, the historic landmark suggestion has been completed. The suggestion will go through a brief review process and will likely be approved within 24 hours. In order to check the status of a suggestion, go to the three horizontal bars next to the Google Maps search bar and select "Your contributions" then "Edits." Through the completion of these six steps, a Google Maps user has made this historic place more accessible.

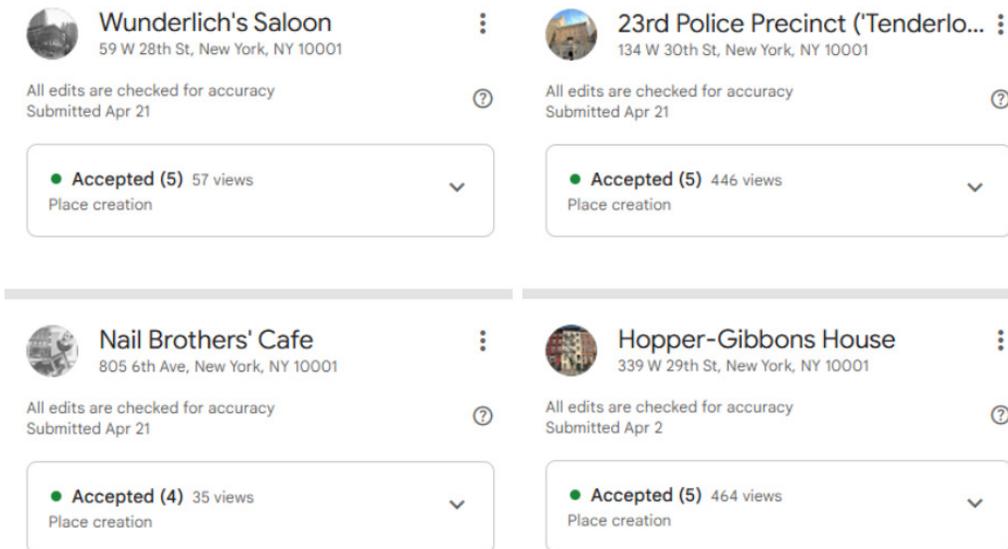


The Google Maps pop-up that confirms your suggestion has been successfully submitted (April 2025). Ashlyn Pause and Google Maps.

How to navigate to your personal contributions on Google Maps (April 2025). Ashlyn Pause and Google Maps.



Example of a “pending” and then “approved” historic landmarks suggestion on Google Maps (April 2025).
Google Maps.



The four approved examples of historic landmark suggestions that relate to Black history (April 2025).
Ashlyn Pause and Google Maps.

Re-mapping Memory: Interactive Storytelling Maps of Tenderloin

Yuhan (Alex) Shi

Key Findings Addressed

Systemic White Supremacy
Being Black in White Space
Black Agency and Claiming Black Space
Displacement
Black Institutions Seeded in the Tenderloin
Encountering Black Spaces Today

Background, Significance, and Rationale

The Tenderloin once held a vibrant landscape of Black life—churches, social clubs, hospitals, and businesses—which have since been erased from both the physical and public memory. Today, few spatial markers remain to indicate that these places ever existed. This proposal aims to repair that absence through an interactive storytelling map that brings these hidden sites back into public consciousness.

Unlike a traditional monument, this platform allows for movement, context, and voice. Users would be able to virtually walk through the historic Tenderloin, encountering points of interest enhanced by archival maps, photographs, and oral histories. Each stop becomes an invitation to listen, reflect, and understand the dynamic legacy of Black life that once flourished in the area.

Description

The core of this proposal is a map-based digital storytelling platform designed to visualize the lost geographies of Black Tenderloin. Features include:

- **Interactive Map Layering:** Overlay archival maps with contemporary streetscapes
- **Embedded Media:** Audio stories from descendants and historians; historic photographs
- **Highlight Sites:** Social clubs, churches, business hubs, and civic institutions
- **Virtual Engagement:** Users “walk” the neighborhood from their devices and explore layered histories on their own terms

This initiative is not just about mapping, it is about claiming space through memory. It offers a platform where the community can narrate its own story, in its own voice.

Over time, the map could evolve into a more immersive platform by integrating:

- **Augmented Reality (AR)** street overlays
- **Spatial audio** soundscapes that simulate historic street life
- **Interactive walking routes** tied to physical markers in the city

Implementation and Collaborators

- **Community Partners:** such as descendants, oral historians, and churches with deep roots in the Tenderloin neighborhood, who can contribute personal histories, perspectives, and guidance on cultural context.
- **Technical Partners:** including digital humanities labs, augmented reality developers, and UX designers, to support the interactive platform’s design, mapping features, and user engagement tools.
- **Archival Institutions:** such as the NYPL Schomburg Center, Columbia University Archives, and Black Gotham Experience, which offer access to historical documents, photographs, maps, and narratives that can be integrated into the platform.

This proposal also has the potential to be supported by Black in Historic Preservation (BiHP), which has expressed interest in acting as a potential collaborator and grant applicant for this initiative.

HISTORIC CONTEXT APPENDICES

Historic Context Themes

- Land Use
- Residents and Publics
- Housing
- Commerce, Industry, and Labor
- Entertainment
- Social Clubs
- Social Welfare and Healthcare
- Religion
- Education
- Racial Conflict and Solidarity
- Media and Representation
- Preservation

LAND USE

Elizabeth Kostina

Historic Context

The Tenderloin district in Manhattan is a part of the larger New York City story. Manhattan's topography of marshes, streams, and schist outcroppings was transformed by the implementation of the Commissioners' Plan of 1811, which laid out the city's grid, and the development of the elevated rail line in 1868, which encouraged more people to travel to and develop land northward in Manhattan. By the early 1870s, the growing White and middle-class population forced Manhattan's Black population into the Tenderloin area. The Tenderloin district had already been branded as the city's hotbed of vice by popular media; theatres, night clubs, and brothels were bountiful. The Tenderloin was one of the few housing areas available to Black city dwellers due to racist real estate practices, although it was not strictly a residential neighborhood. The land use of the Tenderloin primarily consisted of entertainment and hospitality industries, with housing and businesses spread throughout the area, all intermingled. In other words, there was no clear division of business, entertainment, and housing. With the Pennsylvania Railroad Company's (PRR) construction of Pennsylvania Station (beginning in 1900), its private development of land intended for "public" use took over, and PRR completely leveled blocks West of Broadway. PRR's demolition of these blocks displaced the blocks' large concentration of Black people, forcing them further north. PRR used several real estate companies as a front to purchase properties within four city blocks. From East to West these blocks were Seventh Avenue to Ninth Avenue, and from north to south, 31st Street to 33rd Street. Deeds from these companies were then transferred to PRR. By about 1905 on, the Black population once housed in the Tenderloin had begun to make its way North to Harlem.

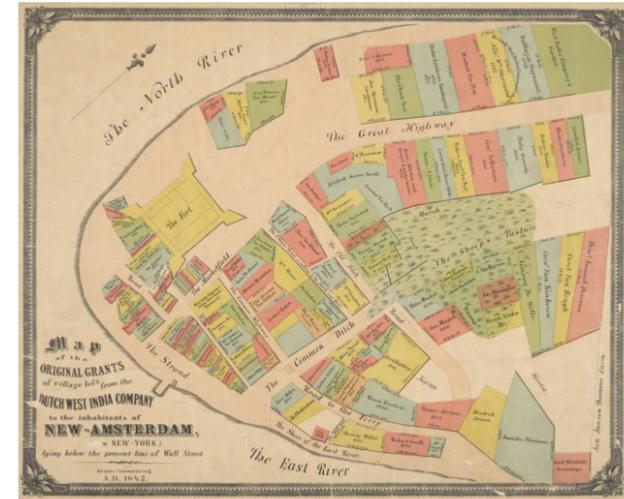
This historic context statement explores how the land uses in the Tenderloin were shaped by natural geography, transportation, and shifting industrial uses by way of private buying powers and real estate speculation.

The Tenderloin before 1870

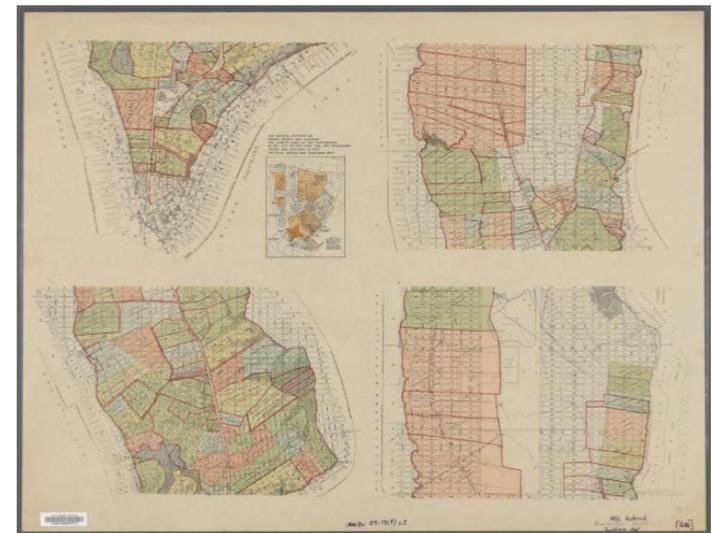
The island of Manhattan was once characterized by a diverse topography of “over twenty ponds, sixty-six miles of streams, and, it has been estimated, three hundred springs” (Sanderson 2009, 81). As Sanderson writes, “Mannahatta enjoyed a sparkling necklace of streams, brooks, and small rivers—more than sixty-six miles of laughing waterways... storm drains before they had been invented” (Sanderson 2009, 137). These natural features were remnants of the island’s geological history, which included the formation of Manhattan schist, a bedrock that would later support the city’s towering skyscrapers. The schist outcroppings, along with Fordham gneiss and Inwood marble, were the result of ancient geological processes, the Laurentide glacier sheet, which scraped away the land and deposited the bedrock (Rogers 2013, 9). These watercourses were vital to the Lenape peoples, the island’s Indigenous inhabitants, who used the land for fishing, hunting, and seasonal agriculture.

Beginning in 1609 with the arrival of Henry Hudson, Dutch and later English colonial settlers forced the Indigenous People and Nations from the island, which was renamed Manhattan. Whereas proximity to water sources was notable in the colonial settlement of the southern part of Manhattan, the limited water sources in the Tenderloin proved to be an asset in different ways. According to Egbert L. Viele’s 1865 Map of Manhattan’s natural features and land, the area was nearly all meadow before its development. Only one stream, De Voor's Mill Stream, passed through the Tenderloin, ending in a pond between current-day Lexington, Madison, and 40th Street (Pollack 2006). This meant that the undeveloped land of the Tenderloin was firm because of its bedrock foundation, solid because of its meadowlands, and so, excellent for building and tunneling through. Carlos Villarreal in his article, “Where the Other Half Lives: Evidence on the Origin and Persistence of Poor Neighborhoods from New York City 1830-2011,” finds that there was a general “aversion to historical marsh locations from 1830 through 1940, which appears to

persist as high-income earners increasingly prefer locations away from the poor neighborhoods located on historical marshes” (Villarreal 2013). This is consistent with the development of the Tenderloin as the quality of its land, away from marshes, made it ripe for development, and so, its later acquisition for use by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in 1901.



Map of the Original Grants of Village Lots from the Dutch West India Company, 1642.



ca. 1897. Map by Henry Dunreath Tyler. The NYPL Digital Collections.

Black people claimed land in Manhattan, pre- and post-abolition, in different ways. The Dutch colonization of Manhattan in the early seventeenth century included the trafficking of enslaved Africans and the establishment of the slave trade in New York (Harris 2014, 35). The Dutch relied on enslaved African labor to build infrastructure, clear land, and work on farms, called “bouwerijs,” or “boweries,” the Dutch word for farm. These boweries were established first along the trading path used by the Lenape, what we call “the Bowery” today, and along the eastern and western shores of Manhattan (Alexiou 2018).

The Dutch West India Company would grant “half-freedom” to some enslaved Africans in New Amsterdam beginning in 1644 (Kruger 1985, 49). Half-freedom usually included the allocation of land grants, and these early land grants became the foundation of one of the earliest Black communities in Manhattan, called the “Land of the Blacks,” in what is now Washington Square Park, close to Collect Pond and Minetta Creek, two sources of both freshwater and fresh fish (McManus 1966, 17).

Land grants allowed enslaved and “freed” Africans to establish farms and build homes, creating a growing community of Africans in what became known as “Little Africa” in the present-day Lower East Side area. Manhattan’s urban development accelerated during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The boweries and African communities that had been supported by the “tillable and fertile” soil of the meadowlands that Viele had noted in his 1865

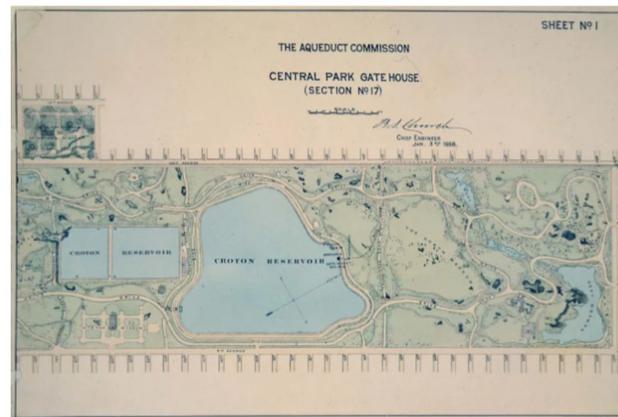
map had been worked over (van der Donck 1656, 148). The streams and waterways that had supported early settlement were filled in to make way for streets and buildings, even before the Manhattan grid was created, in forceful attempts to displace the Black community that had thrived early on because of the access to fresh water. Most of these early African residents and their descendants thus moved northward, settling near or in the modern-day Tenderloin district.

Water Systems and Settlements

The co-location of the Black community in Greenwich Village with a freshwater source was vital to its development. Later, however, communities did not need to locate near water sources with the development of water infrastructure within Manhattan, such as the Croton Distributing Reservoir.



Proposal of Central Park Gate House Drawing, 1888. The rectangular reservoir on the left was part of the original Croton system, and the New Receiving Reservoir on the right was constructed between 1857-1862. NYPL Digital Collections, New York Public Archives.



NYC Water Archives.

The construction of the Croton Distributing Reservoir reflected the advances in engineering and sewage technology that would allow for the vast and dense development of Manhattan, significantly altering the landscape. Despite being surrounded by water, Manhattan suffered from a scarcity of fresh, potable water, as the Hudson River and surrounding waterways were brackish, not fresh. Therefore, the city had to rely on groundwater that it extracted from wells and sourced by streams and ponds. Reservoirs provided a centralized water supply that reshaped settlement patterns because of their reliability and their hygienic nature; ponds were contaminated, but reservoirs were tightly controlled. Built even before Central Park, and first known as the York Hill Receiving Reservoir, the old reservoir, part of the original Croton system, which made up the Croton aqueduct and where the Great Lawn now is in Central Park, had a capacity of 150 million gallons.



Croton Aqueduct's Distributing Reservoir, also known as Murray Hill, on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, looking southwest, New York City, 1899. Photo by Robert L. Bracklow, Robert L. Bracklow Photograph Collection, The New York Historical.

The reservoir, historically located in current-day Bryant Park, was the distributing reservoir, a smaller tank that would directly distribute water to homes and hydrants. The Croton system was named after its source, the Croton River in northern Westchester County. These reservoirs in Central Park and Bryant Park were demolished as they became obsolete with the expansion of the

Croton water system and engineering advances that made it easier for fresh water to be transported south into Manhattan, consequently eliminating the need to keep water as proximate to people on the island. With the construction of larger reservoirs upstate, like the New Croton Reservoir north of Manhattan (completed in 1905) and later the Catskill and Delaware systems, water flowed more freely, which meant people could also settle more freely.

By 1902, the cornerstone for the New York Public Library in Bryant Park was laid, replacing the Croton Distributing Reservoir. Part of the foundation of the reservoir is still visible today within the Bryant Park library.



NYPL, 5th Avenue and 42nd Street, New York City, 1911. Old NYC.

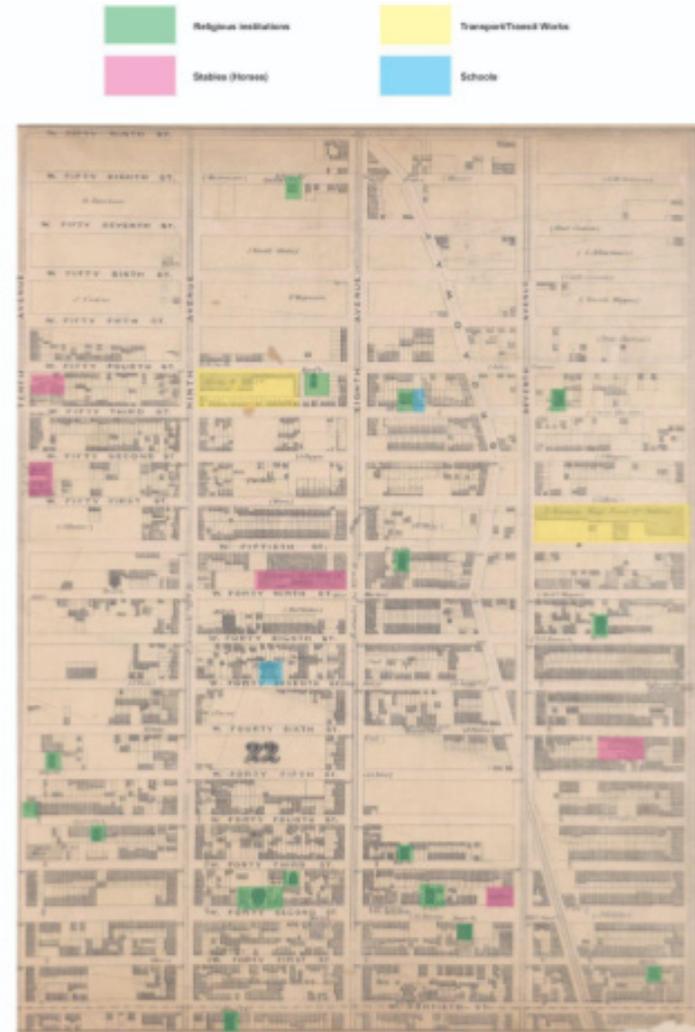
The Grid Influences Development

The Commissioners' Plan of 1811 consisted of a "rectilinear matrix of 12 major avenues and 155 cross streets," and marked a turning point in Manhattan's development (Rose-Redwood 2003, 124). The naturalist landscape of Manhattan, with its hills, wetlands, streams, farmlands, and estates, was to be converted into a "life-size Cartesian coordinate system" that is commonly referred to as "the grid plan" (Rose-Redwood 2003, 124). John Randel Jr. was hired to survey Manhattan, resulting in the creation of the

Randel Farm Maps (Randel 1821), an incredibly detailed view of Manhattan’s landscape before the grid, which showed both the existing farmland and the proposed grid plan overlaid (Rose-Redwood 2003, 124). The grid plan, necessitated by New York’s growing population, “caused undeveloped land prices to rise... [causing] property owners to view the open land that remained in terms of its development, rather than agricultural value” (Tremante 2016, 269). In addition to leveling Manhattan’s natural hills, streams, and marshes, the city’s growth was a key rationale for facilitating real estate development.

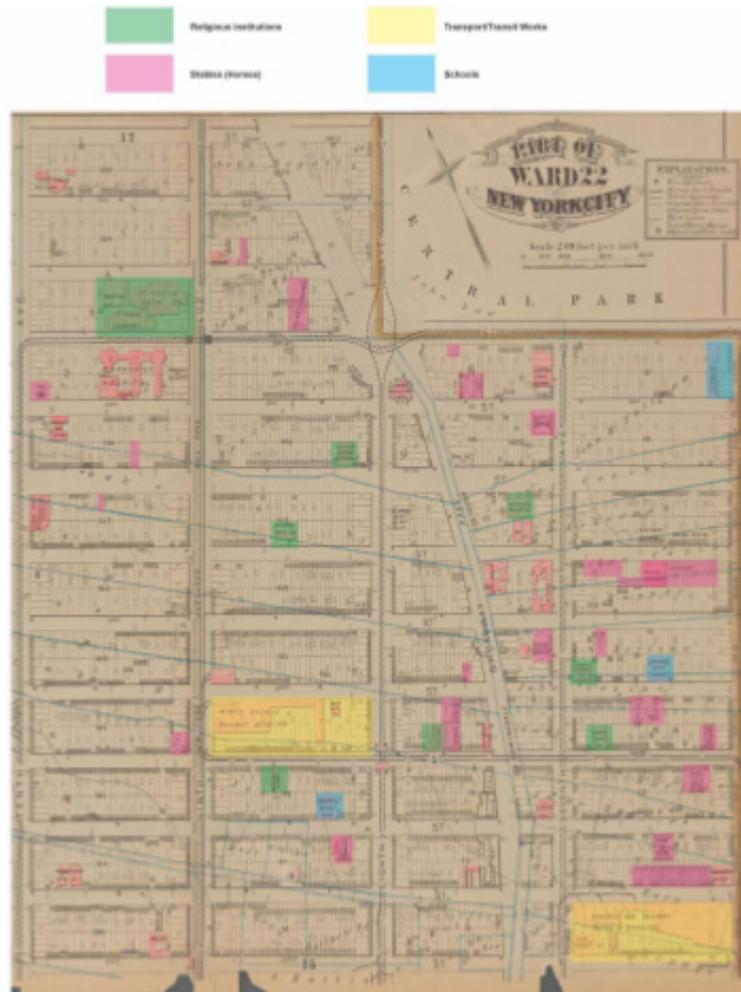
As the city expanded northward, the grid’s predictable layout allowed for the efficient construction of elevated railroads and for developers and individuals to buy parcels of land they knew would be developed next along the grid or would be near planned public transportation. An 1867 map of New York from 40th to 59th Streets demonstrates the lack of development in the northern part of the Tenderloin before 1870; several tracts to the West of Broadway around 44th Street were completely undeveloped, as were most of the tracts north of 51st Street. Tracts that had some land development, which mostly consisted of tenement-style residential buildings), still had empty parcels. Bromley maps from 1879 of the same area show the presence of railway depots, livery stables, and churches. These institutions dominated the still sparse development in the northwest tip of the Tenderloin, indicating the migration and rooting of industry. However, by 1891, while these three typologies still existed (and even expanded, which is most evident in the case of the Seventh Avenue Railroad Depot), nearly the entirety of the northwest region of the Tenderloin had been fully developed into a mixed-use area, heavily taken over by stables, with little housing visible — the reason for this is discussed below, in the Transportation section.

1867 Bromley Map and Industries in NW Corner of Tenderloin



Land Use within the Tenderloin's northwest corner, 1867. Bromley 1867 fire insurance map with annotations by Elizabeth Kostina.

1879 Bromley Map and Industries in NW Corner of Tenderloin



Land Use within the Tenderloin's northwest, 1879
Bromley 1879 fire insurance map with annotations by Elizabeth Kostina.

1891 Bromley Map and Industries in NW Corner of Tenderloin



Land Use within the Tenderloin's Northwest corner, 1891.
Bromley 1891 fire insurance map with annotations by Elizabeth Kostina.

Water Systems and Settlements

While Manhattan underwent unprecedented changes to its natural landscape and demographics, another industry was also rapidly growing: the entertainment industry. Manhattan's pre-Civil War nightlife existed around the Bowery and the Rialto districts below 14th Street. While real estate development was "driven by rising land values," it was the development of "a few key anchor hotels" near Broadway between West 29th and West 30th Streets and the "industrialization of garment manufacturing that forced prostitution uptown, along with entertainment, residential, and other less profitable land uses" (Gilfoyle 1992, 199). As Lucy Sante notes in *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*, "the Tenderloin set what was probably the city's all-time standard for vice in one district" (Sante 1991). The City's vice industries traveled north from their Civil War origins, and one could find "a literal progression in price and quality as one moved uptown, from the houses near and on Canal Street that catered mostly to sailors to the luxurious establishments around Clinton Place" (Sante 1991, 152). Gilfoyle reinforces Sante's point but also notes that the Tenderloin was not just a hotbed of easy sex, and that brothels "usually shared their space with ordinary commercial enterprises and working-class residents," with sex work typically being performed inside the tenements themselves and alongside local businesses (Gilfoyle 1992). Maps from Gilfoyle (included in the Entertainment Historic Context analysis in the Appendix of this report) provide an overview of brothels in this neighborhood from 1900-1919, and show that the distribution and number of brothels grew and clustered around Broadway.

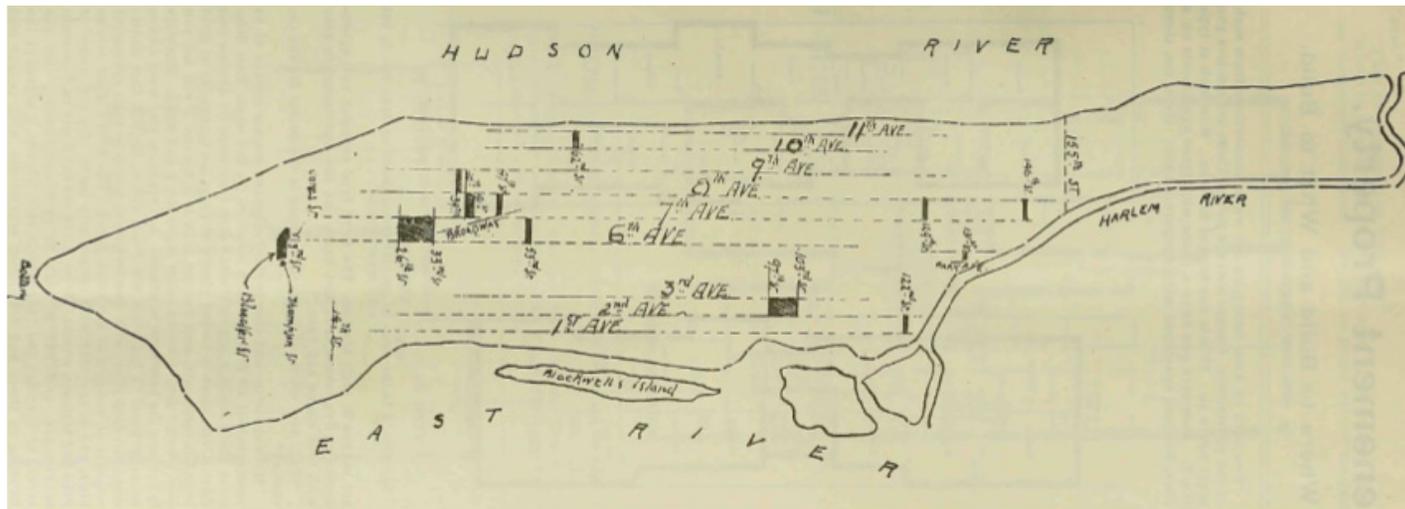
The mixed-use living Gilfoyle points out followed earlier and future trends of migration where Black people experienced a change in their neighborhood of residence, "moving northward into the Tenderloin district, San Juan Hill area, or Harlem" (Scheiner 1964, 305). An 1899 *New York Times* article titled, "Prejudices of Landlords," wrote that Blacks were:



Exterior of the Rialto Theatre on Broadway, New York City, 1917. Old NYC

...hedged in by the prejudice to particular locations... about twenty-five thousand colored residents of New York City [are] concentrated in two districts remote from one another on the east and west sides of the city, in the meanest tenement districts. The great majority reside on the west side between the lines of the Sixth and Ninth avenue elevated roads...and the numbered cross streets between Sixth and Eighth avenues from Twenty-fifth to Thirty-fifth and Forty-seventh and Fifty-third streets (*New York Times* 1889).

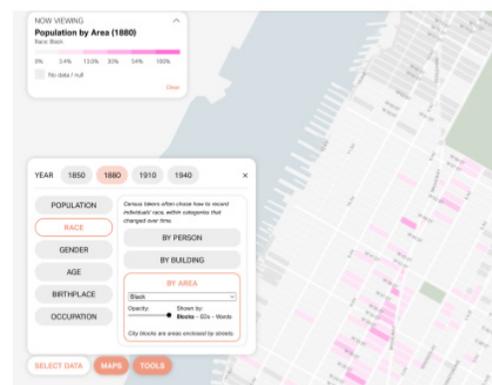
A copy of the *Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* confirms this, where the majority of the Black population "is located on the West Side, between 26th and 33d streets, 6th and 7th avenues...in other sporadic West Side blocks flanking the fine residential, retail business, and hotel, theatre and club-house section" (*Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* 1900). And despite being charged higher rents than their non-Black peers, Blacks living in the Tenderloin faced similar conditions as in earlier settlements, living mostly with Italian and Irish immigrants in cramped tenements (Sacks 2006, 75). The 1900 *Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* notes that Black individuals:



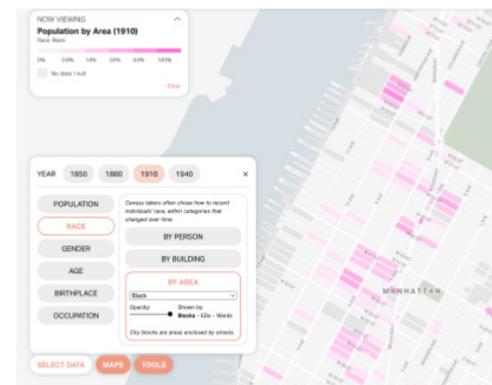
Map of Black Settlements in Manhattan, 1900.
Real Estate Record and Guide, May 5, 1900.

...pay a higher rent for the same accommodation than whites [sic], for the reason that they have very little choice in the matter of housing... none of the [Black] tenements contain improvements, not even ranges, beyond wash tubs. For such accommodations, tenants pay \$9 to \$15 for three rooms, and \$15 to \$20 for four rooms, according to the location" (Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide 1900).

Poverty and crime "centered in the Tenderloin between the late 1880s and early 1890s," and erupted in a race riot in 1900, which prompted further migration from the Tenderloin to "the west of the San Juan Hill neighborhood and the Hundreds — both east and west—of Harlem" (Scheiner 1964, 305). Maps from Mapping Historical New York (MHNY) show the population density of Black residents in the Tenderloin in 1880 and 1910, which supports this claim. Before 1880, there were no Black residents north of 59th Street. In 1910, MHNY maps demonstrate that there was a large Black population now residing between 60th and 63rd Streets, the San Juan Hill area.



Screenshot of Mapping Historical NY showing population density by Race, 1880.



Screenshot of Mapping Historical NY showing population density by Race, 1910.

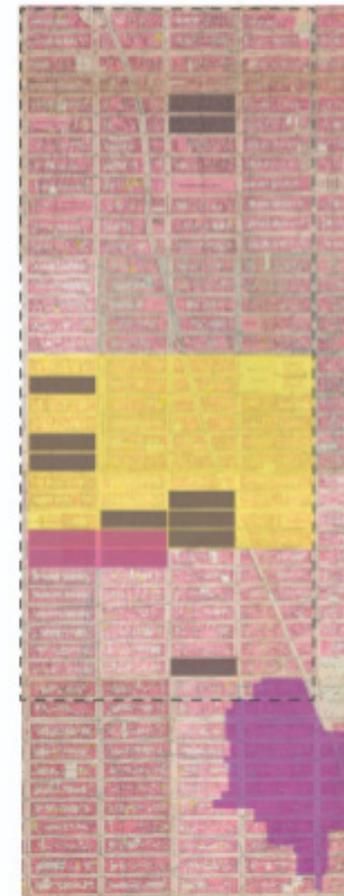
Sanborn maps from the 1880s reveal that while housing remained sparse and nearby tracts underpopulated, stables and heavy manufacturing filled the landscape of the Tenderloin. Only in the 1911 Bromley map does one see the northernmost part of the Tenderloin fully developed, including a mix of industry, large residential complexes, and entertainment venues such as billiard clubs. Timothy J. Gilfoyle notes that in its early stages, the Tenderloin “truly had no center,” but by 1885, it had coalesced around Herald Square, where Broadway, “alight in a blazing sea of illumination,” earned the nickname the Great White Way (1992).



Times Square and Its Neon Lights, New York City, 1910. SeeOldNYC

The arrival of transit and electrified street lighting spurred denser development, marking a shift from an industrial landscape to a bustling entertainment and commercial district. Around the same time, in the 1890s, an important and “respectable” shopping area emerged that co-existed within proximity to other, “not-so-respectable” businesses in the Tenderloin. Present-day Madison Square overlaps the southern tip of the historic Tenderloin district.

The Tenderloin and its Intersections



Visualization of competing neighborhoods within the Tenderloin using Bromley fire insurance maps from 1911. Annotations by Elizabeth Kostina.



Looking Down Broadway Towards Herald Square, New York City, 1911. SeeOldNYC

Sixth Avenue — which vertically bisected the Tenderloin — was lined “with respectable boutiques and retailers active during the day,” earning it the moniker of ‘Ladies Mile’ (Mathieu 1907, 200). At night, “Sixth Avenue became a different sort of ladies’ mile after dark, turning into a well-known walkway for sex workers” (Mathieu 2017, 200). In 1902, the Macy’s company built a new flagship store in Herald Square; its expansion “displaced a large part of the red light district of the Tenderloin — now pushed farther west — and anchored the area as a newly open retail space” where the wealthy could shop, moving clandestine trades further West (Mathieu 2017, 200).

Transportation

Public transportation in New York City began with horse-drawn omnibuses in 1827 and was replaced by steam and electric-powered carriages by the late nineteenth century. An 1891 article by Lewis M. Haupt notes that “the horse-car era began in New York in 1834, with two lines carrying annually 6,835,548 passengers, which was only thirteen times the population (515,547)” and “in 1860, when six lines were in operation, this ratio was still further augmented to forty-seven” (1891). Transit improvements made the city more accessible, encouraging population growth and economic expansion and by the late nineteenth century, technological advances such as steam and

electric power replaced horse-driven transportation — Haupt writes that the “number of horses employed in Brooklyn is only 8,620 as compared with the 15,111 required in New York, giving 7.23 horses to the car instead of 8.99 for the latter city,” which at least explains the large number of stables visible on Bromley maps through 1891 (Haupt 1891).



McGraw-Hill Building, from 42nd Street and Ninth Avenue, Looking east, 1936. The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The NYPL.



Looking Down Broadway Towards Herald Square, New York City, 1911. SeeOldNYC

Although public transportation was entirely privately owned in its early years, discrimination was common, with vehicles explicitly restricting Black passengers. One of the earliest challenges to this discrimination came in 1854 when a White streetcar conductor forcibly removed Elizabeth Jennings Graham, a Black school teacher and organist, from a streetcar operated by the Third Avenue Railroad Company (New York Transit Museum, 2025). Her legal battle, argued by future U.S. president Chester A. Arthur, resulted in a landmark victory that helped pave the way for the desegregation of New York's public transportation. Despite this progress, White people continued to racially discriminate against non-White people. It was not until the New York State legislature passed the Civil Rights Act of 1873 that a law existed to protect non-White people against segregation in public transportation (Robinson 2019).

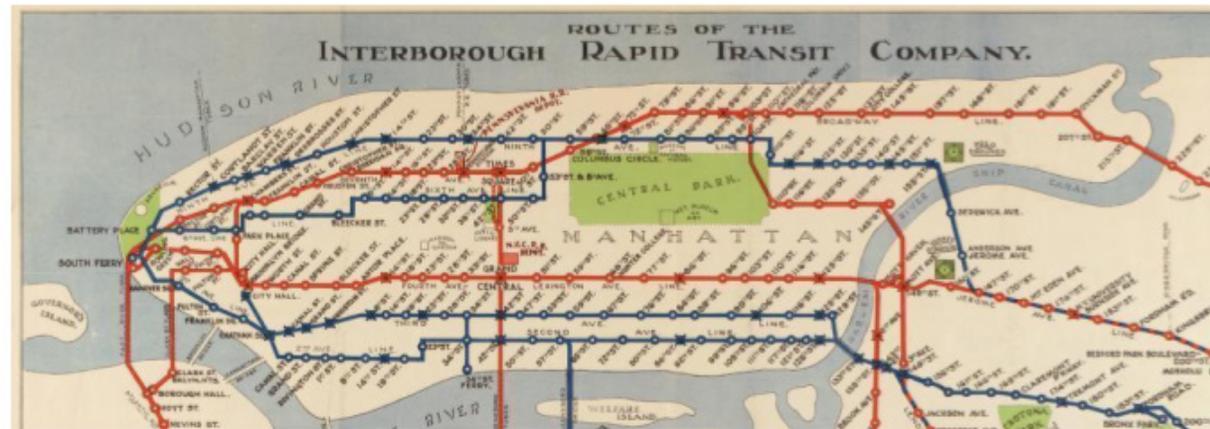
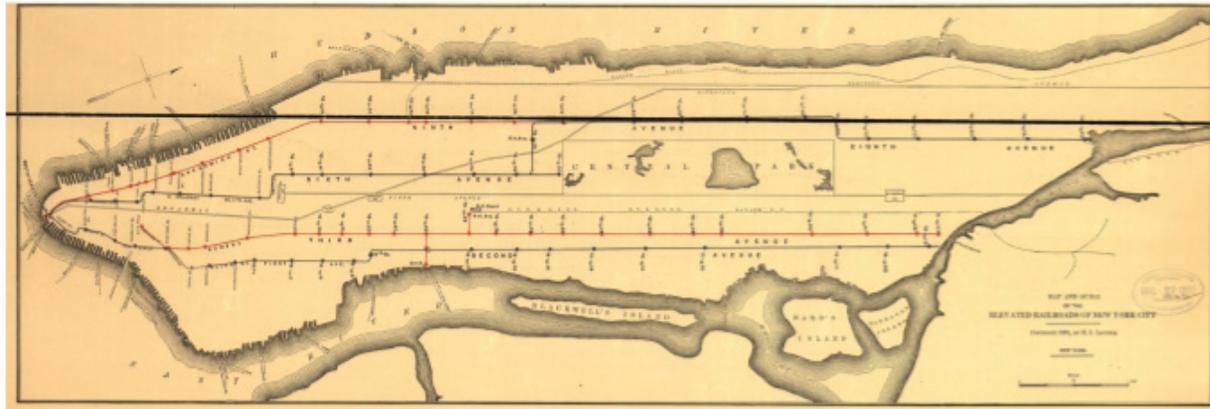


5th Avenue at 43rd Looking North, Cars, Wagons, Pedestrians, Hansom Cab, Driver in Top Hat, New York City, 1910s. SeeOldNYC

As the city expanded, so did its transportation network, moving from horse-drawn streetcars to elevated railroads and subways; the construction of the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad in 1878 and the early twentieth-century expansion of the subway system made areas like the Tenderloin more accessible. Yet, it contributed to demographic shifts and the displacement of Black communities. The first subway lines, such as those on Sixth and Ninth Avenues, largely bypassed the Tenderloin. As transit developments



Map of Lower Manhattan showing streetcar lines, 1879. Reproduced in Twelve Historical New York City Street and Transit Maps from 1860 to 1967. Wikipedia.



Upper: Map and Guide of the Elevated Railroads of New York City, showing 6th and 9th Av. elevated trains, 1881. Latimer, H.I. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.
 Bottom: Routes of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company, Interborough Rapid Transit Company, 1924. Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

bypassed the area, residents and businesses may have faced rising property values without direct mobility benefits, potentially leading to displacement without improved access. The construction of the 53rd Street elevated line in 1878 connected Sixth and Ninth avenues, creating noise referred to as the 'din of the elevated' and shadows on the street. The development of these transportation networks contributed to demographic shifts where White communities moved away from the noise and dirt created by the elevated rail, and Black communities moved in, as discussed in more detail in the context statement on housing.

By 1924, the development of the Seventh Avenue line cut through the district, further integrating it into the city's growing transit web. Transit lines cutting through the area likely facilitated commercial growth and population density, but may have disrupted existing industries, such as the stables that once dominated the landscape, which were slowly replaced by garages. By the early twentieth century, public transit had become vital to daily life, with private companies like the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) and the Brooklyn Rapid Transit (BRT) struggling to keep up with soaring demand.

Pennsylvania Station

By the turn of the twentieth century, when the plans of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company (PRR) to build a 'gateway' to the city were uncovered, it became evident that the Tenderloin was about to go through major land-use changes. The New York Times published an article on December 11, 1901, noting that the PRR "may construct a tunnel under the North River... A statement to this effect was made yesterday by a member of the firm of Kuhn, Loeb & Co., who are fiscal agents for the [PRR]" (New York Times 1901). The location of the tunnel, as the article writes, is "supposed that the terminal would be near the terminal of the Long Island Railroad tunnel" and that the "recent purchases of real estate near that locality had been made with a purpose in view" (New York Times 1901).



Penn Station Under Construction, 1909. SeeOldNYC

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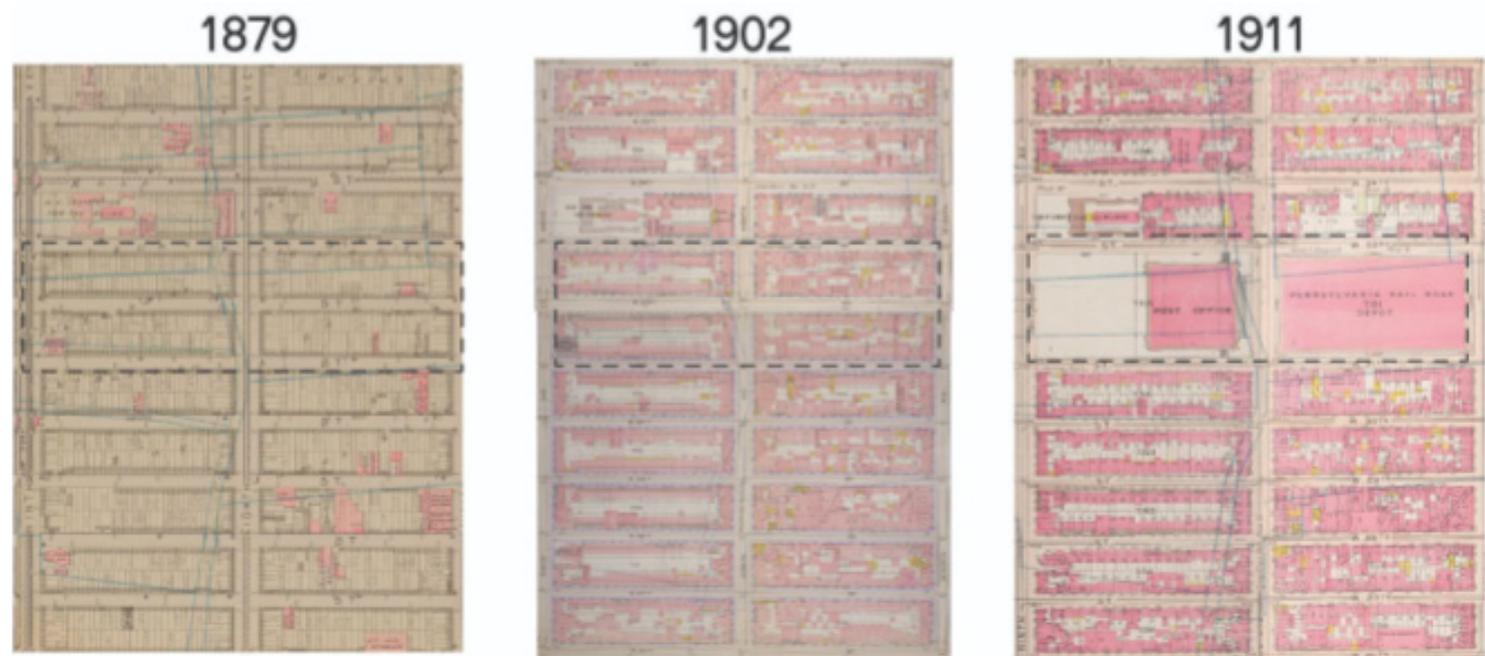
is "supposed that the terminal would be near the terminal of the Long Island Railroad tunnel" and that the "recent purchases of real estate near that locality had been made with a purpose in view" (New York Times 1901).



Looking east from Ninth Avenue at the razed blocks of the Tenderloin neighborhood, the future site of Penn Station. July 14, 1904. "Old Penn Station in Pictures: Before the Glory and After the Fall." *The New York Times*, April 24, 2019.

The PRR's four-block target area was home to a mix of residential tenements, small businesses, and entertainment establishments, like in all other parts of the Tenderloin, most of which catered to the district's working-class and African American residents.

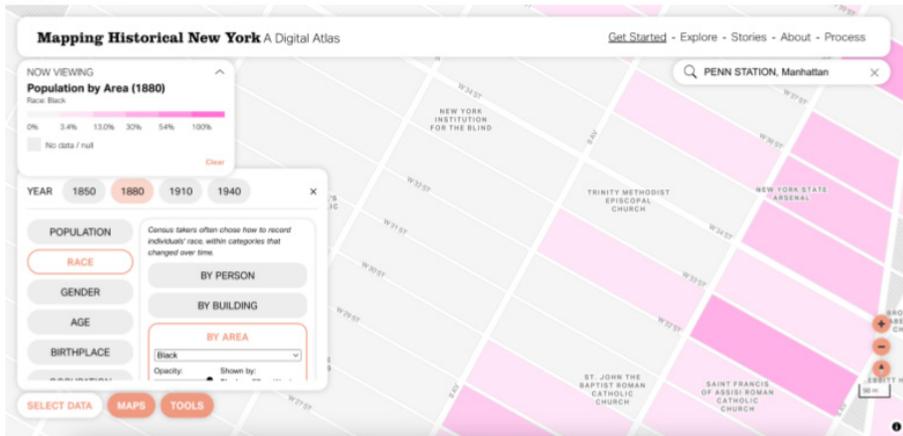
Penn Station Blocks



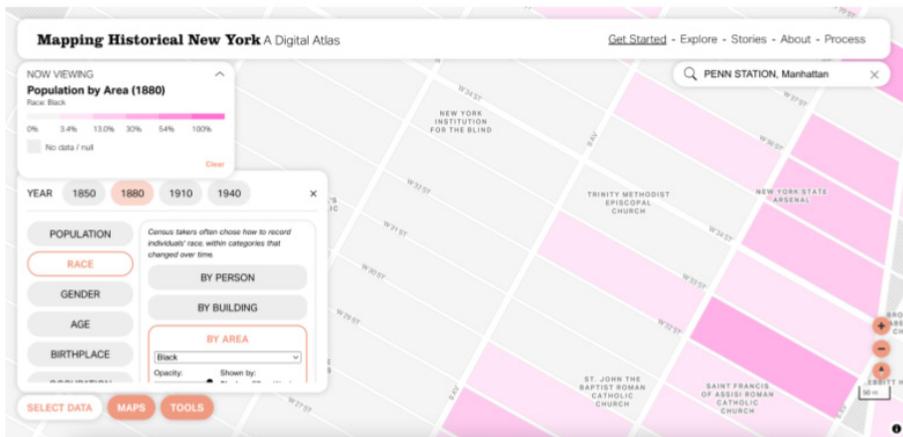
Visualization of the 4 blocks where old Penn Station was located in the Tenderloin district using Bromley fire insurance maps. March 7, 2025. Annotations by Elizabeth Kostina.

Under the leadership of Alexander Cassatt, the seventh president of the PRR who first joined the company as an engineer, the first intended site was “the derelict yards of the New York & Harlem Railroad Company at West Thirty-third Street on the river,” but this proved to be impossible to engineer (Jonnes 2007, 66). Instead, PRR and Cassatt cast their eyes on a rundown site which was described as “given up to the French and negro colonies, to much manufacturing and to buildings that grow more and more shabby as they approach the river, finally degenerating into a slum... This section is today one of the most troublesome in New York” (Jonnes 2007, 66). The classification of this area as a ‘slum’ was just one part of the justification for buying out residents and razing all property on this site.

Over the next two years, the PRR, working with Douglas Robinson — a real estate agent who managed the holdings of the Astor family — and his team of three men, systematically determined the names of the owners and worked to obtain each property, speedily carrying cash and contracts through the Tenderloin, scooping up “shabby houses and stores and warehouses, for \$6,000 here, \$40,000 there” (Jonnes 2007, 74, 82, 84). In the first month of acquisitions, the PRR had successfully purchased 68 parcels of land in the neighborhood for \$2,398,750 (Jonnes 2007, 83). On November 15, 1903, a New York Times article proclaimed that “Pennsylvania’s Site Is All Purchased,” the last paragraph noting, “[w]hat led the railroad authorities to the selection of these particular blocks has never been made known... these blocks...[have] a central location with moderate land values” (New York Times 1903). This acquisition posed a



Demographic data for 1880 indicates that only about 126 people, or 7.8% of the population within the four Penn Station blocks, were Black — only one block was settled. Screenshot of Mapping Historic NY showing population density by Race around Penn Station Blocks, 1880. Accessed March 8, 2025.



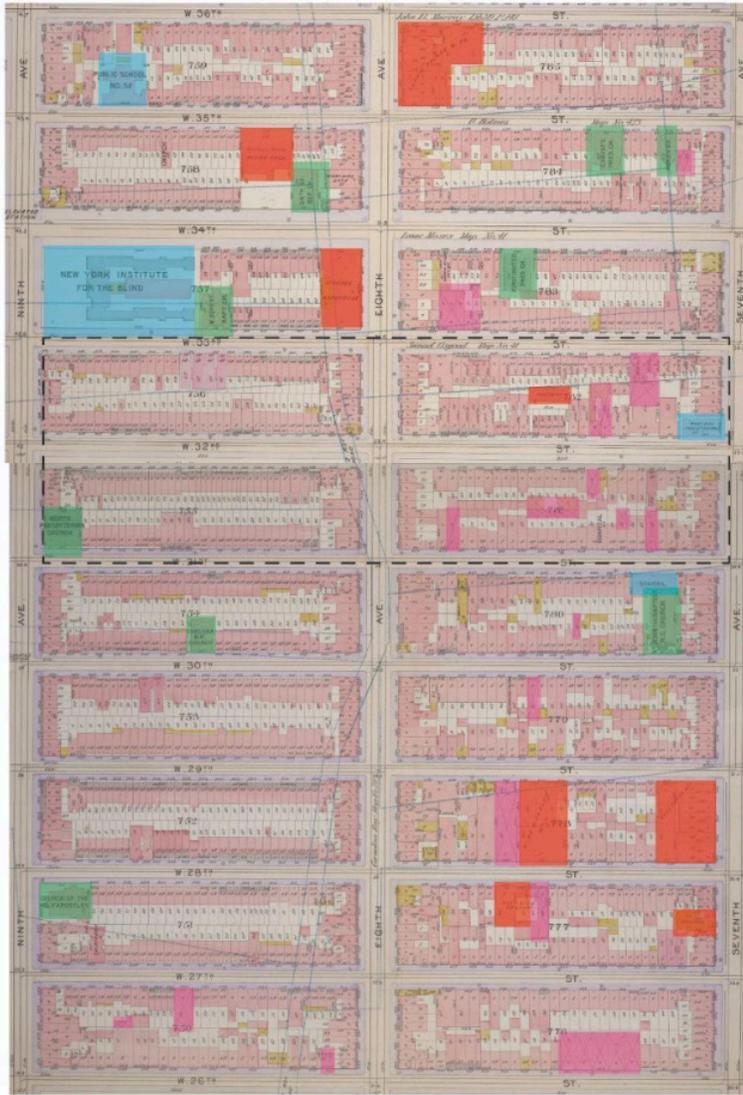
Screenshot of Mapping Historic NY showing population density by Race, Penn Station Blocks, 1880. Accessed March 8, 2025.

historical wrinkle: while the parcels of land had been legally purchased by the PRR — and thus did not constitute a use of eminent domain because the PRR was a private company — it is unclear if Black residents monetarily profited from the sale of these buildings. However, it seems unlikely because records indicated that Black families were renters, and Census records from 1900 suggest that very few Black individuals lived in the four blocks targeted by the PRR. Additionally, ledgers from PRR subsidiaries such as the Stuyvesant Real Estate Company do not denote race, or the name of the individual from whom the property was purchased, only the amount paid for the lot. In the image below, the amount paid is visible on the far right-hand side of the page. The description in the center of the image outlines the purpose of the transaction. In the second image, from October 31, 1903, text reads “for amount paid on contracts for purchase of the following properties, said contracts having then transferred to the Owner N.Y. L. P.R.R to underdate of August 31, 1903. #408 Seventh Ave. New York City, \$6,217; 358 W. 32nd St., \$1,000; 320 W. 32nd St., \$1,000; 330 W. 33rd St., \$10,000; and 386 W. 32nd St., \$1,000.”

The 1900 census records of the same block indicate that 28 Black individuals lived there, but in the adjacent West block, only one Black individual was listed as residing there — Anna King from Virginia, born 1867, who was listed as an “employee.”

The 1910 census records indicate that on Block 783, which was partially turned into the entrance of Penn Station, four Black individuals lived and worked as servants in three houses on West 34th and West 33rd streets. The other blocks had been razed and turned into Penn Station.

Penn Station Blocks 1902



Visualization of the industries around the demolished Penn Station blocks using Bromley fire insurance maps from 1902. March 7, 2025. Annotations by Elizabeth Kostina.

The first building to go would be an “unprepossessing lodging house,” the first of 700 to go — and the “eerie urban wasteland of cheap brownstone double-decker lodging houses, shuttered saloons, dance halls” became even quieter (Jonnes 2007, 117). Historic maps of the four blocks slated for demolition provide further insight into their character at the time of PRR’s acquisitions; fire insurance maps suggest that these four blocks were densely built with a high concentration of lodging houses and small-scale commercial establishments — outlined in a dashed line in the diagram below, it was mostly houses and stables that were destroyed, not other forms of manufacturing around the area, at least in 1902. The razing and digging of the four Penn Station blocks led *The Sun* to write, “the ugliest looking patch of Manhattan Island today is that long rectangle of devastation... [w]here only three or four years ago something like 400 houses, shops, and other structures stood... today there is nothing but earth and rock and devastation” (*Sun* 1905). But by 1908, Penn Station was rising, and the tunnels underneath the Hudson were nearly complete, the tunnels opening to the public 35 years after their construction started.

With the construction of Penn Station and its surrounding rail yards, the Tenderloin ceased to exist in its previous form. The district’s transformation was emblematic of the broader forces shaping New York City at the time—industrial expansion, infrastructure development, and the relentless push of real estate speculation. Yet, while Penn Station stood as a symbol of modernity and progress, its construction also underscored the social costs of urban development. The erasure of the Tenderloin was not just the removal of a vice district but the displacement of its Black community.

The Garment District, 1919 and Beyond

The Garment District's emergence in the early twentieth century was also closely tied to the transformation and eventual erasure of the Tenderloin district. Garment manufacturers had begun taking over the district as early as 1910, with factories opening near the prestigious Ladies Mile with garment developments rapidly replacing brothels, saloons, and theaters with loft factories.

These redevelopments brought an influx of immigrant workers, particularly Eastern European Jews. Montero writes that the Tenderloin became the Garment District when "hundreds of thousands of immigrant garment workers were 'pushed' into the area, and effectively quarantined, by the powerful Fifth Avenue Association, a group comprised of some of the country's wealthiest and most influential citizens, who were of one purpose: to rid Fifth Avenue of industry and its unpleasant by-products, namely its immigrant workers" (Montero 2022). By 1910, the garment industry employed 46% of the industrial labor force in the city, and by the 1920s, the district had been developed with high-rise loft buildings that responded to the 1916 zoning laws. Buildings like the Garment Center Capitol (1919–1921) exemplified the shift from mixed-use residential neighborhoods to dense industrial enclaves. These high-rise loft buildings, designed to maximize factory floor space, replaced the tenements and row houses that had previously defined the Tenderloin, reinforcing the area's transition from a working-class residential district to an area purpose-built for mass production.

The expansion of public transit further solidified the district's role as a manufacturing hub. In 1918, new BRT and IRT subway lines on Broadway and Seventh Avenue connected the Garment District to Brooklyn and the Bronx, making it more accessible for workers (Gotham Center for New York History n.d.). Simultaneously, Penn Station's development made it easier for out-of-town buyers to reach the district, with nearby hotels, theaters, and entertainment venues catering to them. The construction of garment lofts and showrooms multiplied after 1920, with 120 massive high-rise



Bricken Textile Building, designed by Buchman & Kahn, 1929. "Bricken Textile Building." *Architectural Forum*, June 1930. Collection of The Skyscraper Museum.

buildings erected north of 35th Street between 1920 and 1928 (Gotham Center for New York History n.d.).

By 1926, the Garment District had become the fastest-growing area in the city, and by 1931, it had the largest concentration of clothing manufacturers in the world. Along with Penn Station's development, the growth of the Garment District had dealt the final blow to the Tenderloin's notorious vice industries, even as one 'undesirable population' had been swapped for the other (Montero 2022). The Garment District would go on to become an economic powerhouse, solidifying New York City's role as the center of American fashion manufacturing but the rise of this district both reshaped the city's labor economy and cemented patterns of segregation: industry and immigrant labor were deliberately funneled into specific areas as wealthier and Whiter populations reconsolidated their control over Midtown real estate.

Historic Assets



Penn Station was a transformative infrastructure project that reshaped the Tenderloin district. The Pennsylvania Railroad Company's acquisition of land for the station led to the displacement of the area's predominantly Black and working-class residents.

Broadway & 'Great White Way', By 1885, Broadway had become a center of entertainment in the Tenderloin, known for its illuminated theaters and nightlife.

De Voor's Mill Stream was one of the few natural water features in the Tenderloin, signifying that the land was firm and well-suited for building projects like Penn Station.

The Garment District became an industrial and commercial hub, replacing the former residential and working-class community; garment lofts were constructed between Broadway and Ninth Avenue from 35th to 41st Streets.



Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad built in 1878, this elevated railway system made the Tenderloin more accessible and contributed to the migration and displacement of Black residents as real estate prices increased.

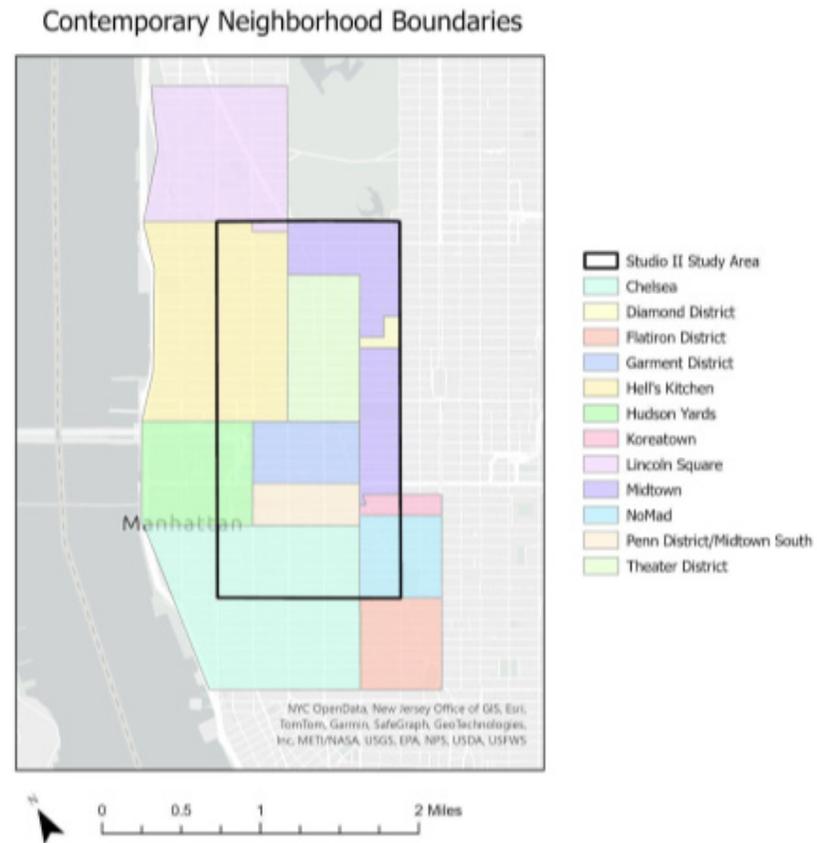


Herald Square, the southern tip of the Tenderloin overlapped with Madison Square, an area that transitioned from a nightlife and vice district into a more respectable commercial and entertainment zone.

Garment Center Capitol, built between 1919 and 1921 on Seventh Avenue, flanking 37th Street, the Garment Center Capitol was a massive cooperative venture housing showrooms, offices, and factories.

Historic Change and Analysis

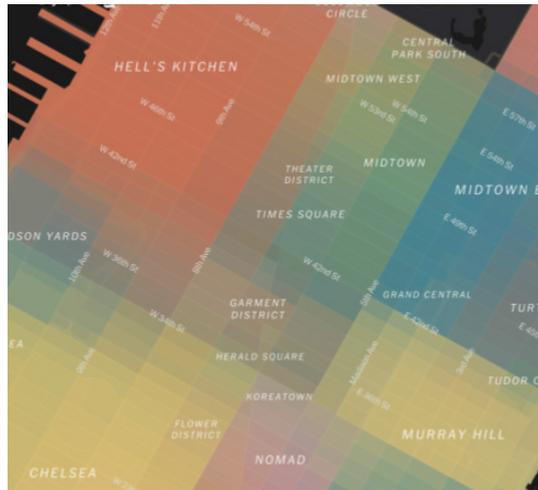
Patterns of land use, as discussed above, show that the Tenderloin was never fully claimed by any one group or industry. Instead, it existed as a space of conflict and negotiation, shaped by the competing forces of retail expansion, real estate speculation, industrialization, and racial displacement. The Tenderloin's transformation mirrored the broader patterns of land use change across New York City. As the rural landscape of meadows, streams, and scattered settlements gave way to the rigid geometry of the Manhattan Grid, the natural topography was flattened, and open land was rapidly converted into dense, urbanized corridors. The construction of large-scale infrastructure projects such as Pennsylvania Station, along with the increasing centralization of industry in districts like the Garment District, marked the shift from mixed-use neighborhoods to specialized commercial zones. And, the transition from horse-drawn streetcars to elevated rail and, eventually, the subway system, reshaped the city's accessibility and population distribution, removing stables and converting them into garages where cars soon became popular. Where once small businesses, residential enclaves, and vice districts coexisted, the pressures of modern urban planning and real estate speculation redefined land use.



Map of the Tenderloin with contemporary neighborhood boundaries intersecting it. Map courtesy of Sabina Busch.

As surrounding areas took shape — Hell's Kitchen to the Northwest, Ladies' Mile to the South, Broadway's theater district, Chelsea in the Southwest, and eventually the Garment District in the center—the Tenderloin was frequently redefined, reimagined, and eaten away at, often to suit external commercial and political interests. This instability meant that the boundaries of the Tenderloin were never fixed, unlike other neighborhoods in Manhattan. As neighboring districts developed, they exerted pressures that reshaped the Tenderloin's land use and population, especially by driving out districts of vice. For example, the eastern portion of the Tenderloin, near Ladies' Mile, experienced pressure

from department stores and high-end retail, displacing vice-related businesses further west. Broadway's rise as a theater and entertainment district further fragmented the area, turning it into a mix of mainstream and underground culture. Hell Kitchen's working-class tenements and industrial sprawl encroached from the west, while the construction of Pennsylvania Station in 1901 accelerated the displacement of Black and immigrant communities that returned to the area in the 1910s when the Tenderloin was largely overtaken by the Garment District. Many of these areas that overtook the Tenderloin still exist today: the Theater District, Garment District, and Herald Square are famous twentieth-century remnants. Neighborhoods in New York seem to rarely have firm boundaries — something that is even visible today. A New York Times project that mapped New York City's many neighborhoods in 2023 shows the general complexity of strictly defining any area as one distinct neighborhood. Boundaries are especially fuzzy to define, as the various gradations in the accompanying image.



Screenshot of the *New York Times*' New York Neighborhoods Map around the Tenderloin district. *New York Times*, October 29, 2023.

RESIDENTS AND PUBLICS

Noah Bronowich

Historic Context

The Tenderloin was a historic enclave of Black spaces in Manhattan. During the period of study (1870 -1920), the Tenderloin had a significantly higher proportion of Black residents than the rest of New York City as a whole. This suggests that much of the local Black community was concentrated in this area of Manhattan. Between 1880 and 1910, the White population of the Tenderloin decreased, while the Black population increased. This increase included many Black people from the South, who fled White Southern racial violence during the Reconstruction Period and beyond. In this way, the history of the Tenderloin is indicative of the broader pattern of mass migration of Black people to Northern cities.

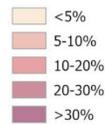
During the study period, White-led violence and displacement efforts forced many Black Tenderloin residents to leave their homes. The studio team identified nine blocks of the Tenderloin that indicate a significant decrease in Black residents from 1880 to 1910. The area of the Tenderloin where Black populations were most concentrated also changed. The studio team identified four blocks that show an increase in the Black population from 1880 to 1910. These blocks correspond to qualitative descriptions of the most concentrated areas of the Black community in the Tenderloin. Analysis of census data from these blocks can help to characterize the residents and publics of the Tenderloin. Today, these blocks, which once housed the Black residents of the Tenderloin, have been completely transformed by large-scale development. Little evidence of historic fabric remains, and the area lacks a comprehensive spatial interpretation of the Black history of the Tenderloin.

Black Demographics

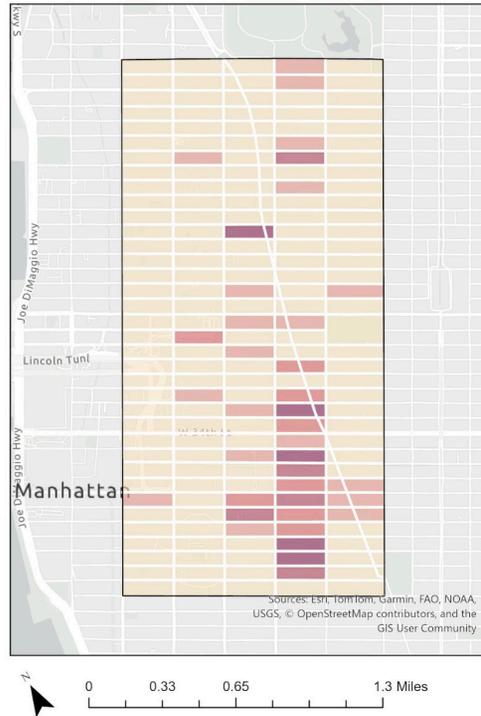
Using census data from 1880 and 1910 (accessed through Mapping Historical New York), the studio team compiled overall population statistics for the Tenderloin (Baics et al. 2021). The

Using the census data organized by block in Mapping Historical New York's Digital Atlas, the studio team mapped the density of Black residents in the Tenderloin in 1880 and in 1910 (Baics et al. 2021). These maps represent the initial enclaves, as well as the northward shift of Black residents within the Tenderloin, across the study period. Map generated by Sabina Busch.

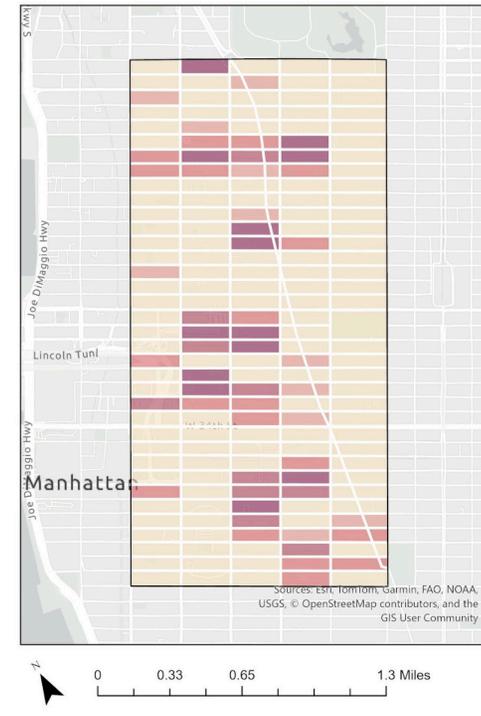
Percent Black Population



Percent Black Population, 1880



Percent Black Population, 1910

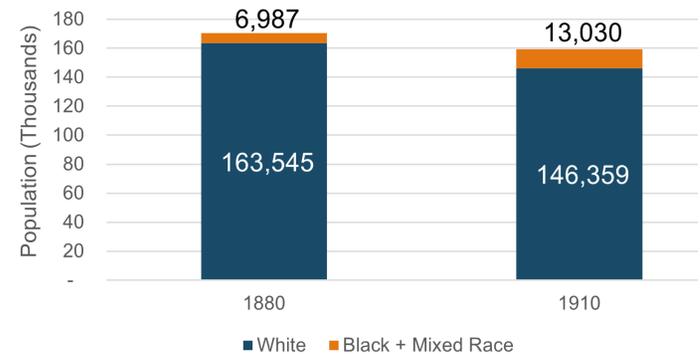


overall census data indicates how the Black population changed in the Tenderloin between those two decades.

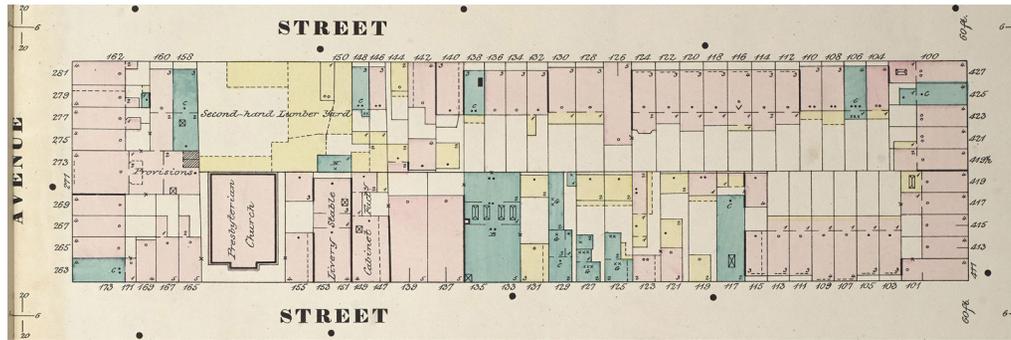
Population statistics suggest that in 1880, the Tenderloin was four percent Black. By 1910, the Tenderloin was eight percent Black. Comparing these numbers to population statistics for New York City as a whole indicates just how concentrated the Black population was in the Tenderloin. In 1865, Black people made up only 1.9 percent of New York City's population; by 1920, the end of the study period, they accounted for 2.7 percent (Scheiner 1964, 6).

From these figures, one can also determine that, along with the overall population in the Tenderloin decreasing between 1880 and 1910, the proportion of Black to White people increased. Additionally, while the White population decreased, the Black population increased.

Population of the Tenderloin, by Race - 1880 vs. 1910



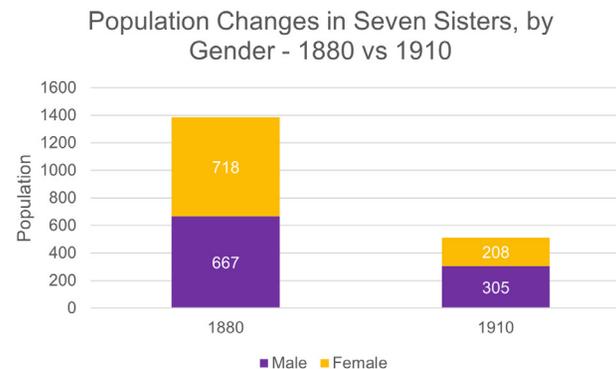
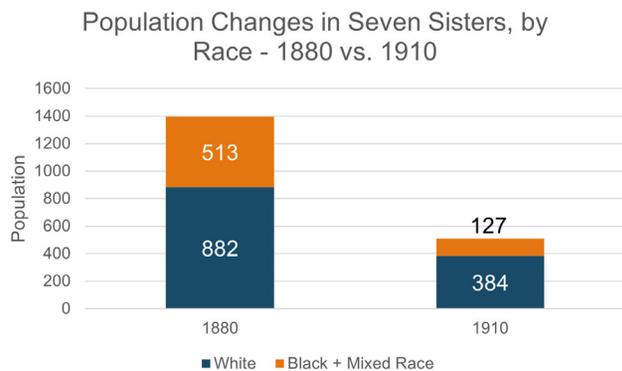
Population Changes in the Tenderloin, by Race - 1880 vs. 1910. Data from Mapping Historical New York.



Block 801 from Perris and Browne maps, 1880.

These population statistics were used to identify several “representative blocks” – areas of the Tenderloin that experienced large increases or decreases in Black population, and were also highly populated. Analysis of these representative blocks serves as a case study for the larger patterns of displacement seen in the wider Tenderloin area.

One example block, which showed a significant decrease in Black population between 1880 and 1910, was Block 801, between West 25th Street, West 26th Street, Sixth Avenue, and Seventh Avenue. The large decrease in the Black population makes this a useful block to study the displacement of Black populations. This block was also anecdotally identified as the center of Black sex work in the Tenderloin area from 1880 to 1900, known as the Seven Sisters (Gilfoyle 1992, 208). Per the Perris and Browne maps from the year 1880, this block was almost entirely row houses (Perris & Browne 1880). According to 1880 census data, these row houses had a majority of female residents. Approximately 37 percent of residents were categorized in the census as Black or Mixed Race; compared to the Tenderloin as a whole, which had a reported Black and Mixed Race population of four percent. It appears that Block 801 had a higher-than-average concentration of Black residents. The relatively high concentration of Black people (and of women) does, theoretically, match the narrative that this was an area where Black women performed sex work. Reports on brothels from the period suggest that they were often operated out of row houses, which matches the depiction of the area seen in the Perris and Browne map (New York Times 1870, 11-12).



Population Changes in Seven Sisters, by Race - 1880 vs. 1910. Data from Mapping Historical New York.

Population Changes in Seven Sisters, by Gender - 1880 vs. 1910. Data from Mapping Historical New York.

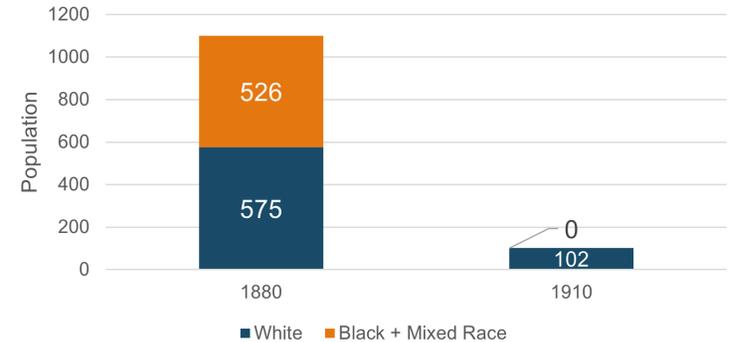
However, it is also important to consider other potential narratives regarding this block of row houses. Many working-class Black men and women lived in the row houses of the Tenderloin, with a number listed as “Service Workers” in the census. The large population of Black men and women living on block 801 is therefore also consistent with the narrative of the Tenderloin as a working-class neighborhood.

These two narratives of Block 801—as a red light district and as a working-class neighborhood—are not mutually exclusive. The degree to which one prioritizes either narrative when describing the Tenderloin is therefore an important decision. The studio team’s goal is to uncover and amplify underrepresented and erased narratives, both as a reparative act and as a way to provide a more complete picture of the Tenderloin.

Research into census records revealed several blocks with a large decrease in the Black population between 1880 and 1910. This supports the idea that, soon after White people forced the displacement of Black people into the Tenderloin, they forced Black people out of the Tenderloin. One reason for this displacement was that White developers replaced residential blocks of row houses with large-scale commercial development. Black areas of the Tenderloin were often targeted for redevelopment, as they had lower property values, yet remained in a central location (New York Times 1903). One representative block, which the studio identified as the site of a White-led development that displaced many Black people, was Block 808, bound by West 32nd Street, West 33rd Street, Sixth Avenue, and Seventh Avenue. In 1880, Perris and Browne maps show this block as mostly narrow row houses (Perris & Browne, 1880). In the same decade, the block’s population was 47 percent Black, which was higher than the Tenderloin average of four percent. By 1910, White developers had completely removed the Black community from Block 808. Census records from 1910 indicate that there were no Black residents on that block. Perris and Browne maps demonstrate the spatial changes enacted by White people as part of this displacement. By 1911, the block had

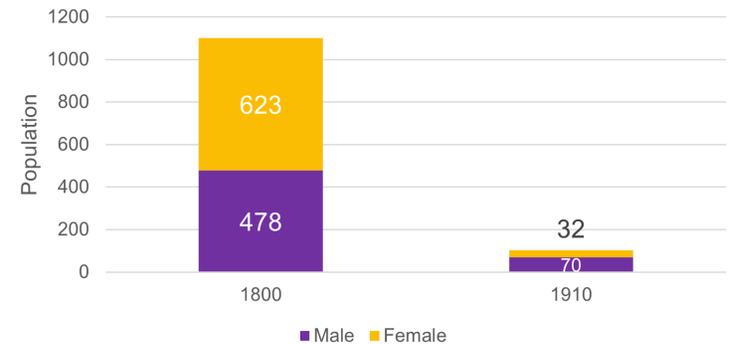
been completely transformed (Sanborn Map Co. 1911). Only a few (unoccupied) row houses still stood. Half the block was taken over by Gimbel Brothers Department Store. The other half was vacant.

Population Changes at Gimbel's, by Race - 1880 vs. 1910



Population Changes at Gimbels, by Race - 1880 vs. 1910. Data from Mapping Historical New York.

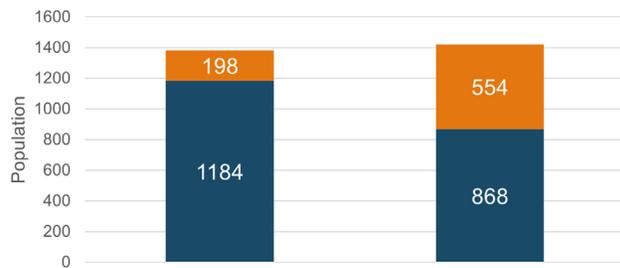
Population Changes in Block 808 (Gimbel's), by Gender - 1880 vs. 1910



Population Changes at Gimbels, by Gender - 1880 vs. 1910. Data from Mapping Historical New York.

As White people forced Black populations into different areas of Manhattan, the area of the Tenderloin with the densest population of Black people changed. A few blocks of the Tenderloin were identified as having a higher Black population in 1910 than in 1880. One example includes Blocks 1005 and 1006, together bound by West 52nd Street, West 54th Street, Sixth Avenue, and Seventh Avenue. James Weldon Johnson describes West 53rd Street as the “center of the coloured population” in 1900s Manhattan; only 10 years earlier, it had been farther south in the “upper Twenties and lower Thirties” (Johnson 1930, 59). Census data supports Johnson; the Black population living on these two blocks increased from 14 percent in 1880 to 39 percent in 1910. During this same period, the overall population of the two blocks only increased by 1.2 percent. This is representative of a large influx of Black residents as well as an exodus of Whites.

Population Changes in Blocks 1005 and 1006 (Increase in Population), by Race - 1880 vs. 1910



Population Changes in Blocks 1005 and 1006 (Increase in Population), by Race - 1880 vs. 1910. Data from Mapping Historical New York.

Black Migration to the Tenderloin

Soon after the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, Black people began to leave the Southern states en masse. The reasons for this process – commonly referred to as the Great Migration – are diverse and varied. Waves of migration came and went as economic conditions and the political environment in the South changed. Some key commonalities can help explain why so many Black families left the South during this time.

First, the South was facing widespread economic hardship after the end of the Civil War. Black people were disproportionately affected and treated as second-class citizens in the South. Additionally, they lacked generational wealth, a direct result of enslavement, as White slavers had kidnapped their ancestors from their home country and forced them into slavery. The 1910s “Southern depression” was the height of these economic problems – migration to the North spiked at the same time (Scheiner 1964, 11).

While the South’s agricultural economy was faltering, the explosion of industrialization and urbanization in the North opened up many job opportunities in urban centers, especially for low-wage laborers. Black women in particular found roles in domestic services (Ottley and Weatherby 1967, 64).

Near the end of the study period (in the lead-up to World War I), the United States greatly restricted immigration. By reducing the immigrant laborer population, these acts forced White employers to hire Black workers. White employers consistently took advantage of their Black employees. Given that Black people had fewer job opportunities on average, employers could give them longer hours and pay them less. White employers also segregated their Black employees into the less-desirable urban industries (Ottley and Weatherby 1967, 64).

In the late nineteenth century, White-led employment agencies recruited many Black women from the South to Northern cities like New York, promising job opportunities and high pay (Parris 1971, 4). These “businesses” would trick Black men and women into unfair employment contracts. This was especially rampant in the South (Kellor 1905). White-led employment agencies sought out Black people (especially younger Black people) from the South who were struggling with poverty and promised them riches in the North. The employment agencies offered “free” passage to Northern cities for these young hopefuls. On arrival in the North, White employment agents told their Black “employees” that their passage to the North was not free – that they were now deeply in

debt. The employer seized the Black individual's bags and forced them to work for whomever the employment agency contracted them out to. With no money, no friends or family in the North, and no possessions, these Black emigrants were essentially prisoners. Frances Kellor, social worker and commentator, said "no vestiges of slavery existing in the South are more absolute, more real," than the employment agency (Kellor 1905, 80).

Additionally, White Southerners chased Black people out of the South using a pattern of racial violence. For example, convict leasing was a massive problem for Black people, especially Black men, in the South (Blackmon 2009, 1-10). The local police force of White men would seize any Black person in the South, arrest them on fake charges, and send them to prison to work as a convict laborer. The farms that once leased enslaved Black and Indigenous laborers from plantations, i.e., forced labor camps,, now leased Black and Indigenous prisoners from forced convict labor camps. This was a period of "neoslavery," during which many White men continued to force Black people to work for the same White people who previously claimed to own them, in much the same conditions (Blackmon 2009, 1-10). At the same time, more and more White people participated in racial violence against Black people (Equal Justice Initiative 2020).

New York State was a destination for many of those migrating north, and New York City especially. In 1870, 35.4 percent of the Black people living in New York State resided in New York City; that ratio increased to 49.5 percent by 1890. The 1898 incorporation of Brooklyn into New York City further increased the proportion of Black people residing in the city. By 1920, 77 percent of the Black New York State population were residents of New York City (Scheiner 1964, 7).

As a result of White-led segregation efforts Black people clustered in the southern portions of Manhattan, between Canal and Cedar Streets (Logan, Zhang, and Chunyu 2015; Scheiner 1964, 15).

Early Black Residential Settlement in NYC

Gradually, a settlement began to develop in Greenwich Village and the surrounding area (now SoHo). In 1850, the majority of Black people in New York City lived in the "southern portion of Greenwich Village and the area immediately south of it." Despite this concentration, at this stage, Black people were a population minority in all of Manhattan's wards – "they did not constitute more than 8% of any ward's population" in the 1860s (Scheiner 1964, 15-16).

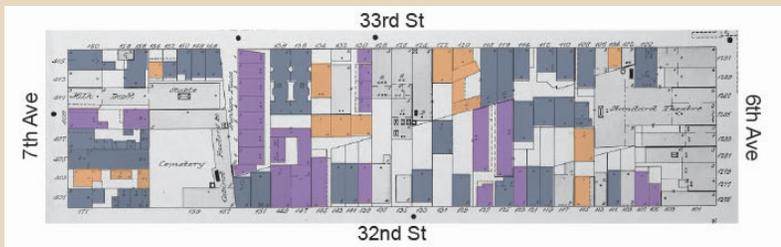
White-led segregation efforts forced Black Manhattanites farther and farther north. By 1890, almost 80 percent of the Black population in New York City lived North of 14th Street. "Little Africa," their former enclave in Greenwich Village, now had a majority Italian population. Local newspapers such as the *New York Age* commented on this shift. Some White commentators, such as social worker Mary White Ovington, suggested that Black people chose not to live beside "chattering foreigner[s]." In reality, White people used many tactics (including poor housing, racial violence, and eminent domain, to name a few) to force Black people out of Greenwich Village.

The Tenderloin had a reputation as a bad neighborhood before it became a hub for the Black community, and was notorious as a site of "prostitution, gambling, and thievery" (Scheiner 1964, 26). This negative reputation meant White landlords often struggled to find White tenants willing to rent homes in the area. This led White landlords (with suggestion and assistance from Black community members and landlords) to rent to Black tenants – a condition which White landlords greatly profited from and exploited (Anderson 1981). Living conditions in the Tenderloin were deplorable. The *New York Age* reported that "even the most necessary sanitary appliances ... were lacking" (Scheiner 1964, 26). Multiple families crowded into single-family homes, and Black people were eager to move to better conditions whenever they could (Anderson 1981).

White landlords found potential in exploiting the market of Black people hoping to move to urban areas in the North. White landlords could charge Black people higher rents for lower quality housing. They could ignore maintenance of their Black tenants' apartments, again, because Black people did not have other options. Jacob Riis estimated that Black people had to pay "from \$1 a month [more] to twice what the white [sic] man's rent would be" (Scheiner 1964, 32). See the Housing Historic context analysis in the Appendix for a more complete description of White landlords' exploitation of their Black tenants.

The Tenderloin was a Majority White Neighborhood

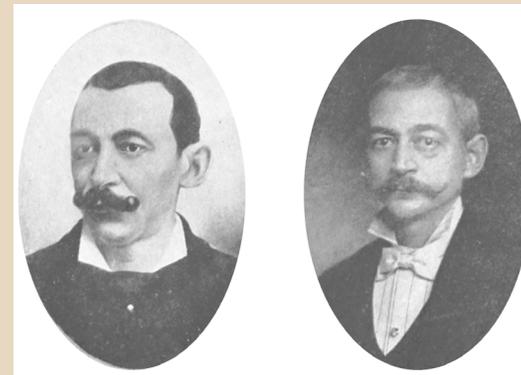
Notably, during the study period, the Tenderloin was a majority White neighborhood, in which clustered populations of Black residents lived. This multiracial character meant that interactions between Black and White residents were frequent and unavoidable.



The integration of Black and White residents was at the building level. Studio team members generated this map of the block that was demolished to construct Gimbels Department Store, using a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1880, as well as 1880 Federal Census data. Buildings in dark blue on the map represent entirely White residences, while buildings in orange represent entirely Black residences. Buildings in purple had both Black and White residents. In the year 1880, this block had 526 Black residents (48 percent), and 575 White residents (52 percent) (Baics et al. 2021). Map annotated by Abbey Francis.

Leveraging Whiteness Within the Tenderloin

Within the majority White neighborhood of the Tenderloin, Black residents who could pass as White often did, leveraging their Whiteness to participate in White business networks in ways that darker-skinned Black residents could not. In some cases, White-passing Black residents acted as an intermediary between White resources and Black people. For example, the Nail brothers (John B. and Edward Nail), Black business owners and leaders in the field of Black-owned real estate, were light-skinned enough that they could participate in White spaces in ways that other Black residents could not. John B. Nail was influential in the Harlem real estate market, purchasing a row of five apartments and replacing White tenants with Black ones (Johnson 1930, 149). White-passing Black businessmen, like the Nail brothers, were often the vanguard of opportunities for Black people.



The Nail brothers, Edward (left) and John B. (right), 1907. Images from *The Negro in Business*, accessed through NYPL Digital Collections (Washington, 1907, 55).

Decline in the Black Population of the Tenderloin

Around 1900, Black population in the Tenderloin reached its peak (Baics et al. 2021). Migration further north to San Juan Hill and Harlem, and the improved conditions they afforded, contributed to this decline. As one example, James Weldon Johnson states that the “trek to Harlem” was an opportunity for Black residents to find better housing--the same reason, Johnson claimed, for the northward migration of Black residents to West 53rd Street prior to the 1900s (Johnson 1930, 147). An excess of speculative development in Harlem left the area with many vacant buildings. While White landlords initially did not plan to rent these homes to Black residents, they found they had no other option. Black landlords like Philip A. Payton were instrumental in this process; they acted as a middleman between White landlords and Black tenants, both selling White landlords on the idea of renting to Black tenants, and connecting them with Black people looking for housing (Johnson 1930, 147-148).

Further analysis of the conditions of subsequent sites of Black migration is out of the scope of the studio, as these were studied in previous studios on San Juan Hill and Harlem (reports available at <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/>). When considered together with this study of the Tenderloin, they provide a foundation for comparative analysis.

The studio team uncovered some of the events from within the Tenderloin that caused Black residents to leave (including many deliberate, White-led efforts to displace Black residents). One reason that seems to have led to the decrease in the Black population was the repeated pattern of White racial violence enacted by the White residents of the Tenderloin. The Race Riot of 1900 was a significant event in the history of the Tenderloin, which corresponds temporally to the decline that began in 1900. Starting on August 15, 1900, White people (policemen and civilians) attacked innocent Black residents wherever they found them (Thomas 2024). White rioters called out the names of Black entertainers – maybe the only Black people whose names they

knew – and called for them to be killed (Johnson 1930, 127). One woman, Lavine Johnson, was pulled off a streetcar by White men and beaten on the street.

The role of the White police force to this riot cannot be understated. Black survivors of the riot said police officers were responsible for the harshest beatings (Johnson 1930, 127). After the riot, a police-led investigation into police brutality exonerated the local officers of any responsibility and largely placed the blame for the riot on the Black community (Citizens Protective League, 1900, 4).

The Riot of 1900 was the fourth large-scale race riot that White New Yorkers used as an excuse to attack Black residents since the Civil War. James Weldon Johnson describes this pattern of violence as a symptom of the declining status of “the Negro as a citizen.” Johnson proposed that, in the year 1900, Black people had less rights than they did at the end of the Civil War (Johnson 1930, 127-128).

As Black New Yorkers worked to heal and recover from the riot, local activists started the Citizens Protective League at St. Mark’s United Methodist Church on West 53rd Street, with the goals of “mutual protection” and prosecution of the guilty (Citizens Protective League, 1900, 82). The riot, along with the larger pattern of declining rights for Black citizens, and White peoples’ repeated violent attacks on Black people, seemed to lead to a rise in Black-led civil rights and community protection organizations, like the Citizens’ Protective League. James Weldon Johnson notably claimed that “the riot of 1900 woke Negro New York and stirred the old fighting spirit” (Johnson 1930, 129). But much damage had already been done. White people continued their violent attacks on Black individuals: White people had lynched, tortured, and mutilated 1,665 Black people in the decade leading up to the riot (Johnson 1930, 128). White rioters had succeeded in terrorizing and injuring the Black residents of the Tenderloin. Moreover, White police officers in the Tenderloin showed that they would not protect Black citizens; instead, they, too, would

attack Black people.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which White racial violence directly caused Black people to leave the Tenderloin. Many other White-led efforts to displace Black residents had more concrete, quantifiable effects. For example, one can determine from census data that the developers of Gimbels Department Store purchased and demolished a block of row houses where 526 Black residents lived (Baics et al., 2021). However, some commentators have described the potential danger of living in a majority White neighborhood as one of the reasons that Black people moved to Harlem. In 1930, James Weldon Johnson described that Harlem had “more than two hundred thousand Negroes” in an “area of less than two square miles ... more to the square acre than in any other place on Earth” (Johnson 1930, 147).

The studio team also identified White-led development efforts as directly responsible for displacing Black tenants within the Tenderloin. Plans to construct Penn Station earmarked that area of Manhattan as a future commercial center, leading large department stores such as Gimbels and Sak’s to flock to the area, demolishing residential blocks to build their new buildings. While Penn Station’s construction itself seems to have displaced comparatively few Black residents (out of 5,209 residents before construction began in 1880, only 153 – less than three percent – were Black), it marked the start of a pattern of replacing residences in that area with commercial development. These blocks of the Tenderloin were targeted for the development because, despite their central location within Manhattan, they had low property values and would be cheap for developers to acquire (New York Times 1903, 25). Additionally, many of these low-value properties had been neglected by their White landlords to the extent that they could be condemned by the city before purchase, allowing Pennsylvania Station to acquire much of its property at a low cost. Spurred on by the plans to construct Pennsylvania Station, White developers transformed an area that previously had homes for Black residents into a shopping district that was often hostile to Black shoppers, reducing the

already limited opportunities Black people had for housing in the Tenderloin (New York Age 1912).

Historic Assets

The primary historic assets that relate to the residents and publics of the Tenderloin are the representative blocks identified through census research. As discussed above, these blocks were chosen as representatives of the Black community in the Tenderloin at large. It must be emphasized that this is not a complete analysis of the population of the Tenderloin. Instead, this limited research can serve as a foundation for a more in-depth study of the histories of the Tenderloin.

The research team selected nine blocks as representations of the displacement of Black people. Some blocks the team identified through historic reports about their development. For example, the studio team identified the construction of Penn Station as a large development project in the area and period of study. Research into the development of Penn Station indicated that the project involved clearing four blocks of housing (New York Times 1903). These four blocks were then chosen as a case study for the analysis of displaced populations.

The studio also reviewed spatialized historic census data using Mapping Historical New York, allowing the team to compare 1880 and 1910 population statistics to identify other blocks from which people and institutions displaced many Black people. This helped to indicate other development projects that displaced Black people during this period, including the Gimbal’s, Sak’s, and Macy’s department stores (Blocks 808, 809, and 810).

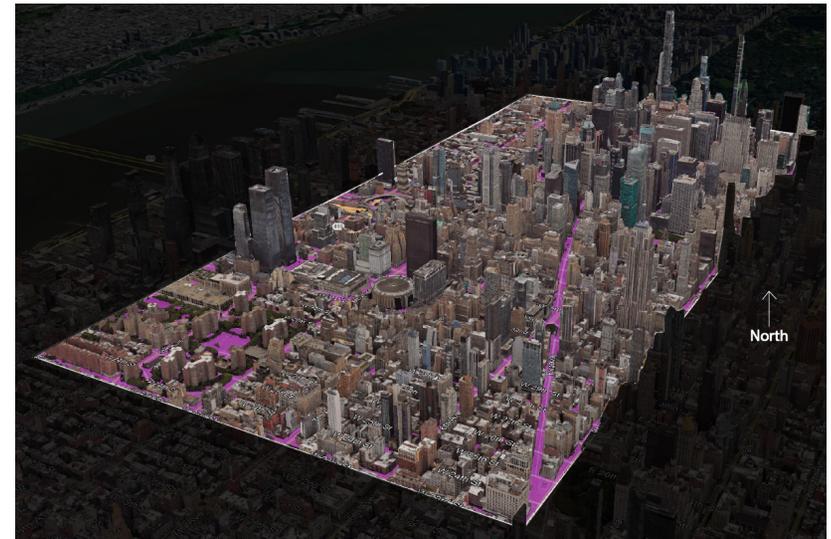
The studio team identified five blocks where the Black population increased from 1880 to 1910. Four of these blocks were correlated to qualitative descriptions of dense concentrations of Black people in these areas. This correlation supports the qualitative descriptions of the Tenderloin and references the studio team’s process in identifying blocks that qualify as historic assets.

Additionally, the studio team identified the addresses of the homes of several significant individuals who lived in the Tenderloin during the study period. For example, the home of John B. Nail, the owner of Nail's Saloon, appears to still stand at 807 Sixth Avenue (now occupied by a home and garden center).

Finally, several historic assets the team identified have a close relationship with the residents of the Tenderloin. For example, the route of the funeral march of Lieutenant James Reese Europe, famous composer and early organizer of the Black-owned music industry, passes through the Tenderloin, from Columbus Circle to St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church on 53rd (Library of Congress n.d.; New York Age 1919). The New York Age, a period Black-owned newspaper, described Lieutenant Europe's funeral as "one of the largest ever held in New York for a member of the race" (New York Age 1919).

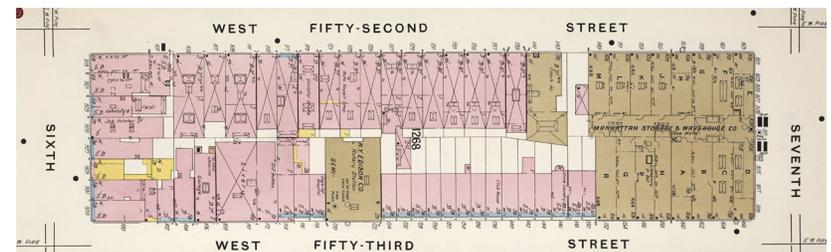
Historic Change and Analysis

The modern site of the historic Tenderloin area shows significant variation in building height and typology. The north-eastern region of the Tenderloin (occupied by Times Square and Carnegie Hall) features the tallest buildings by far. The Tenderloin area also covers a wide range of different neighborhoods and districts across midtown (See Historic Context: "Land Use" for a further description of the variation in development in the modern site of the Tenderloin). It appears that large-scale development of the Tenderloin, which began in the study period with the construction of Macy's, Gimbel's, and Sak's department stores, is still continuing in parts of the area today. As a result of this large-scale development, very few identified historic assets remain. These highly developed areas also feature no spatial interpretations of the history of the Tenderloin.



Oblique view of the Tenderloin area, with building heights. From Google Earth, 2025.

Zooming in on one of the studio's selected representative blocks in the modern day can elucidate just how much this area has changed.



Block 1006, from Sanborn maps, 1911. Note that the top of this map is to the southwest, instead of to the north.

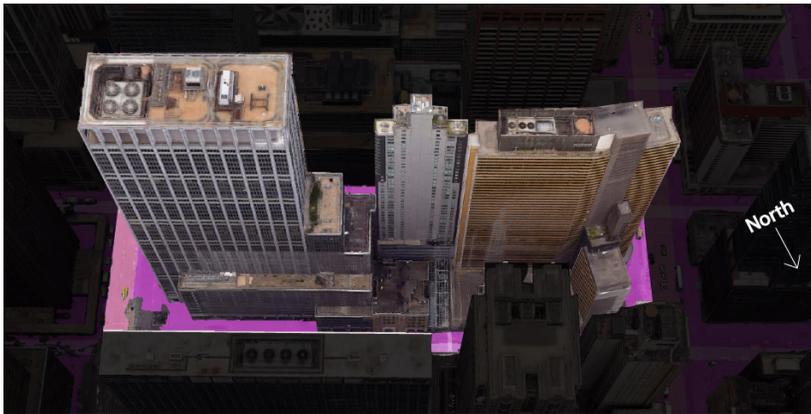
The studio team identified Block 1006, bound by West 52 Street, West 53 Street, Sixth Avenue, and Seventh Avenue, as the site of a particularly dense Black population in 1910, near the end of the period of study. Looking at a Sanborn map from the year 1911 can elucidate what types of buildings used to make up this block (Sanborn Map Co., 1911). The majority of buildings on this block feature thin, row-house (or industrial loft building)-like plots.

The majority of plots are also marked with D for “dwelling” (some are marked “boarding” as well), though most of those dwellings are on the second story or above. In 1911, this block was not entirely residential; almost a fifth of the block was occupied by a large warehouse, in addition to other businesses. About half the buildings on 52nd Street are marked with an X, indicating that they featured some form of horse stable on the first floor. Today, large-scale development has completely replaced this historic fabric..

The block now consists of two large office buildings, one condominium building, and a historic substation dating to 1932. No historic fabric from the study period remains. Nor is there any reference to Black history present in the modern block. This block is just one example of many blocks of historic fabric in the Tenderloin that large-scale development has completely replaced.



Overhead view of Block 1006. From Google Earth, 2025.



Oblique view of Block 1006. From Google Earth, 2025.

HOUSING

Abbey Francis

Historic Context

White landlords who rented to Black tenants in the Tenderloin during the period of this study (1870-1920) engaged in a repeated pattern of neglect, eviction, and demolition. White landlords neglected buildings, rented them to Black tenants at extortionate rates, and then, as soon as it was profitable, evicted those tenants and demolished their homes in favor of more profitable residential or commercial buildings. “The people who buy this class of houses are speculators,” claimed one White real estate man in 1889. “They try to get in at cheap figures, and then hold on until some one [sic] comes along to give them a profit” (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889).

Though types of Black housing differed across the Tenderloin throughout the period, ranging from ramshackle rear tenements around 28th Street to four-story stone dwellings on 53rd Street, Black tenants lived in housing that was generally more unsafe and poorly-maintained, more crowded, more expensive, and more precarious than their White counterparts of a similar income level.

White landlords engaged in the pattern of neglect, eviction, and demolition seen in the Tenderloin and in other parts of Manhattan prior to this study’s period. Evidence suggests that this kind of discrimination was a significant reason for the Black population’s northern migration within Manhattan throughout the city’s history. White landlords’ actions forced Black Manhattanites farther and farther uptown throughout the 19th century. In the mid-1800s, White developers tore down homes in what is now known as Tribeca and replaced them with commercial buildings, forcing the Black occupants of those homes to relocate to Greenwich Village. The Black community became concentrated in the streets west and south of the wealthy homes around Washington Square, where many of them worked in domestic service, one of the few industries open to Black people. Several external forces again pushed Black residents northward. In a pattern that would repeat again and again over the coming decades, White landlords,

knowing that Black tenants had few other options, neglected their properties. “The once handsome houses, altered to accommodate many families, [became] rotten and unwholesome.” As the industrial age took hold of the island, White landlords found it profitable to demolish these now-blighted homes in favor of “factories with high, monotonous fronts” (Ovington 1911, 34).

White violence, in particular the 1863 Draft Riots, also triggered Black migration. Over several days, White mobs enraged by Union drafts for the Civil War attacked Black homes, businesses, and people, ultimately lynching eleven Black men. “During the riots, landlords drove [B]lacks [sic] from their residences, fearing the destruction of their property” (Leslie M. Harris 2023, 285). Hundreds of Black New Yorkers left Manhattan in the years immediately following the riots, lowering the Black population of the island to levels not seen since the 1820s. For decades, many Black Manhattan residents seemed ready to leave it if they could. “In 1895 the Times declared that as soon as Negroes ‘amass a comfortable fortune they move from the city across the East River’ to Brooklyn” (Scheiner 1965, 20). Forming a close-knit community in Brooklyn, some of these expats even became homeowners, establishing a center of Black society and wealth unlike any that existed in Manhattan before.

Those who stayed on the island increasingly looked uptown. “In a sense,” writes Jervis Anderson, “[Black New Yorkers] were not just on the move but on the run. They stayed in certain neighborhoods for as long as they were able to and abandoned them when one circumstance or another — pressure from incoming white [sic] groups, the expansion of commerce and industry, or their own desire for better housing—propelled them into new territory” (Anderson 1982, 5). White landlords’ prejudice and opportunism circumscribed these “territories” in which Black New Yorkers were able to find housing. Just as Black tenants were sometimes pushed out of their old neighborhoods as White groups moved into them, they were often only allowed into new areas as White groups left them. This appears to have been the case in the Tenderloin, where the White population decreased from about 110,000 people in

1880 to about 89,000 people in 1910. During the same period, the Black population increased from about 7,000 people to about 11,000 people (Baics et al. 2021).

Analyzing census data and other historic accounts of housing

Some narratives from the period indicate that certain blocks of the Tenderloin were seen as significantly Black. In 1889, the primary outlet for New York real estate news, the *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, published an article about Black tenants. The article used the area between Sixth and Seventh Avenues and 24th and 33rd Streets as a case study. It claimed that in this area, "from 60 to 70 percent of the houses are occupied by [Black residents], as nearly as could be ascertained without counting the buildings" (*Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* 1889).

Efforts to confirm this statement indicate how difficult it can be to characterize the racial dynamics of housing in the Tenderloin during the period of study using the sources and data currently available. The period of study spans 50 years, from 1870 to 1920, and the availability of comparable data throughout this period is inconsistent. The statement made in the *Record and Builders' Guide*, for instance, is hard to prove in part because it was published in 1889. A federal census was taken in 1890, but the vast majority of the population schedules from that census were destroyed by a fire in the 1920s. Population schedules are available in the 1900 census record, but they have not been disaggregated en masse at the building, street, or block level.

Fortunately, *Mapping Historical New York* has compiled census data at the building and block levels for several years, including 1880. This data suggests, at first glance, that the claim by the *Record and Builders' Guide* was a dramatic exaggeration. In 1880, Black people living within these eleven city blocks comprised only about 22 percent of the total population. No block was over 50 percent Black, and only one block, between 32nd and 33rd Streets, was over 40 percent Black (Baics et al. 2021).

It is tempting to state simply that the census data proves that the *Record and Builders' Guide's* characterization of this part of the Tenderloin is incorrect. A closer look at both of these sources, however, both clarifies and complicates the picture.

First, the *Record and Builders' Guide* undercuts its claim about the percentage of houses occupied by Black residents only a few sentences after it first makes it. The article quotes Captain Thomas Reilly of the Nineteenth Precinct, who said about Black residents: "They have taken up every street from 24th to 33d, between 6th and 7th avenues, with the exception of 28th and 29th street. The north side of 24th street, and both sides of 25th, 26th, and 27th streets, between these avenues, are literally crowded with them. There are very few in 33d street." In other words, three of the ten streets that Reilly describes as being "taken up" by Black people do not, he admits, have very many Black residents at all (*Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* 1889).

Second, an analysis of *Mapping Historical New York's* building-level data for 1880 serves as a reminder that block-level census data is an imperfect metric for how a person walking down a street in the Tenderloin might have perceived their surroundings. A "block," in this context, includes addresses on the west side of one avenue, the east side of the other avenue, the north side of one street, and the south side of the other street. Looking only at data for these addresses as a group can obscure the reality of how the populations of the individual streets and avenues contained within the block might have differed from one another. This is the case within the area described by the *Record and Builders' Guide* in 1889.

For instance, the blocks on either side of 26th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues each had Black populations of about 37 percent in 1880 – somewhat significant, but a far cry from the numbers implied by the *Record and Builders' Guide*. And yet, building-level census data from *Mapping Historical New York* suggests that if one walked down this stretch of 26th Street in 1880, the claims of the *Record and Builders' Guide* in 1889 might not sound so far off. Of the 55 residential addresses on 26th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, 31 of them, or about 56 percent, had at least one Black resident. 27th Street shows a similar, though less dramatic, discrepancy between block-level data and building-level data. Though the blocks on its north and south sides had Black populations of 12 and 37 percent, respectively, 24 of the 56 residential addresses on this stretch of 27th Street, or 43 percent, had at least one Black resident.

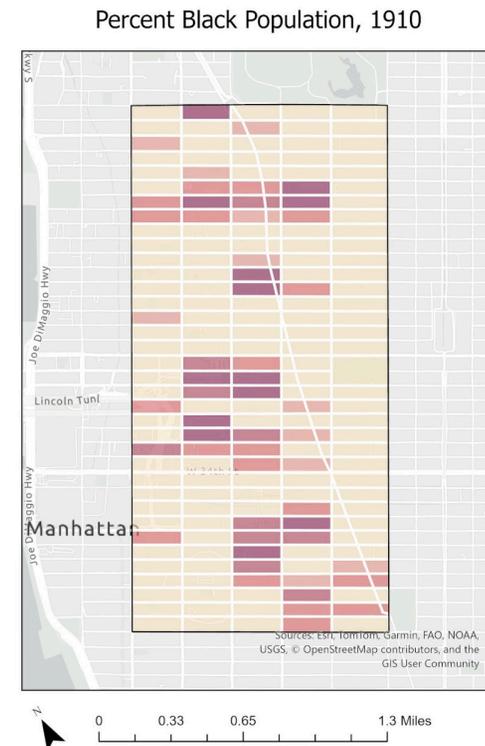
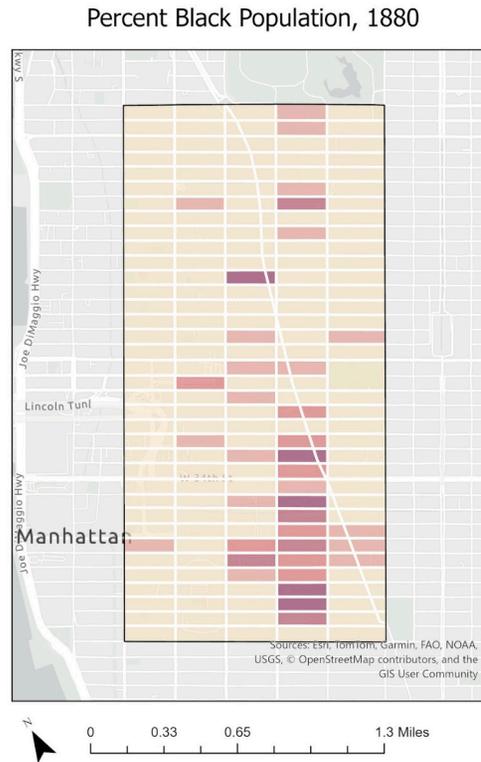
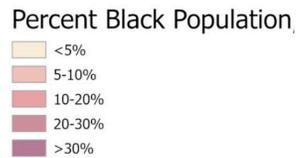
Conversely, according to the block-level data, the block that comes closest to matching the description of the Record and Builders' Guide is that between 32nd and 33rd Streets. This block was 48 percent Black in 1880. And yet, if after visiting 26th Street, a person were to stroll down 32nd or 33rd Streets, that person might find those streets to be less Black than the data about the block between them would suggest. Of the 46 residential addresses on 32nd Street, 21 of them, or 46 percent, had at least one Black resident. Of the 53 addresses on 33rd Street, only 10 of them, or 19 percent, had at least one Black resident.

Though the above characterizations are more thorough than both the initial statement by the Record and Builders' Guide and the initial analysis of block-level census data, they are still, inevitably, incomplete and imperfect. A number of issues remain: First, in analyzing this area at the building level, the studio team chose to note simply whether a building had at least one Black resident. A more extensive and useful analysis would account for what percentage of the residents of a given building were Black, as well as for the number of residents in the building overall. Second, Mapping Historical New York does not include census data from 1900. Though 1890 census data is irretrievable, pulling more of the 1900 data could help better situate the available 1880 and 1910 data. In addition, though the 1880 and 1910 data made available by Mapping Historical New York is an incredible resource for historians, it is currently displayed in a limited way, which makes it difficult to analyze at a deeper level. For this reason, the studio team identified some "representative" blocks meant to illustrate trends in the Tenderloin during the period of study, and pulled detailed census data, from 1880, 1900, and 1910, for several of them. For the purposes of analyzing housing 1910, for several of them. For the purposes of analyzing housing in the Tenderloin, the studio team cleaned and analyzed the data for two of these blocks. Analyses of these blocks will be discussed in further depth later.

It should be noted, however, that in pulling the original census schedules for these two blocks, other issues became apparent. Namely, that the building-level, and therefore block-level, data displayed by Mapping Historical New York might contain errors. At the city and neighborhood level, the data is incredibly useful. However, comparing the data for the two representative blocks, as pulled from original census schedules and from Mapping Historical New York, show a number of discrepancies. For instance, Mapping Historical New York shows that, in 1880, the block bounded by 32nd and 33rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, housed 1,101 inhabitants. Original census schedules suggest this number is 1,070. For the block bounded by 52nd and 53rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, Mapping Historical New York shows that, in 1880, the total population was 587. Original census schedules suggest this number is 630. More analysis is needed to discover the reasons for these discrepancies. The studio team accessed the original census schedules on Ancestry.com, copying that service's automatic transcriptions of the handwritten schedules into computer spreadsheets. The team made an effort to "clean" this data, by finding and correcting a number of errors in the automatic transcription.

In the case of the more northerly block, a close comparison of the data for the south side of 53rd Street shows that nine addresses, based on the studio team's data, to have occupants, but, according to Mapping Historical New York were not seen as inhabited. The studio team re-checked the original scans of the handwritten census schedules, and found that the nine addresses in question were all occupied, and were recorded on one sheet. It is likely that Mapping Historical New York missed this sheet during its transcription process. A total number of 49 people occupied these nine addresses. However, the difference between the studio 1910, for several of them. For the purposes of analyzing housing in the Tenderloin, the studio team cleaned and analyzed the data for two of these blocks. Analyses of these blocks will be discussed in further depth later.

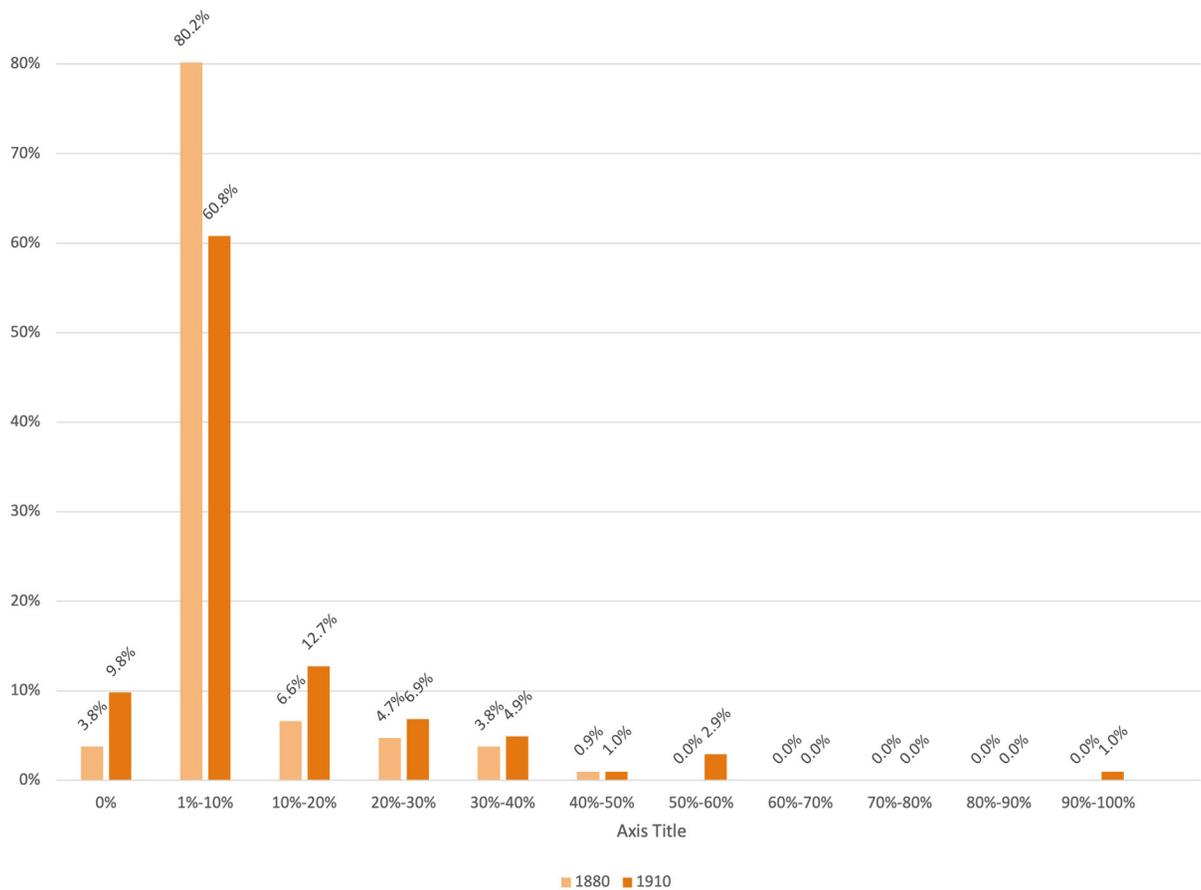
Maps indicating the percentage of Black residents by block in the study area, according to census data from 1880 and 1910.



Though the Tenderloin was, in many ways, the center of Black life within this studio's period of study, in residential blocks with the greatest concentrations of Black residents, Black residents never made up more than 60 percent of the total population of a block. For this report, the studio defined a "residential block" as a block where at least one person lived, according to either the 1880 or 1900 U.S. Census. The only exception to this rule was a single block which, in 1910, contained only five residents, all of whom were Black.

Census data also indicates that, while no blocks were more than 60 percent Black, the vast majority of residential blocks within the study area housed at least a few Black residents. Very few residential blocks—about four percent in 1880 and about 10 percent in 1910—were entirely White. However, most residential blocks had Black populations of 10 percent or less. In 1880, about 80 percent of the blocks in the study area fell into this category, while in 1910, about 60 percent did. Only 16 percent of blocks in 1880 had Black populations above 10 percent, while in 1910, about 29 percent did.

Because a more detailed census analysis is needed to contextualize this data, it is currently unclear whether those blocks with small percentages of Black residents had Black residents living in integrated households, integrated buildings, or as live-in employees of White households.



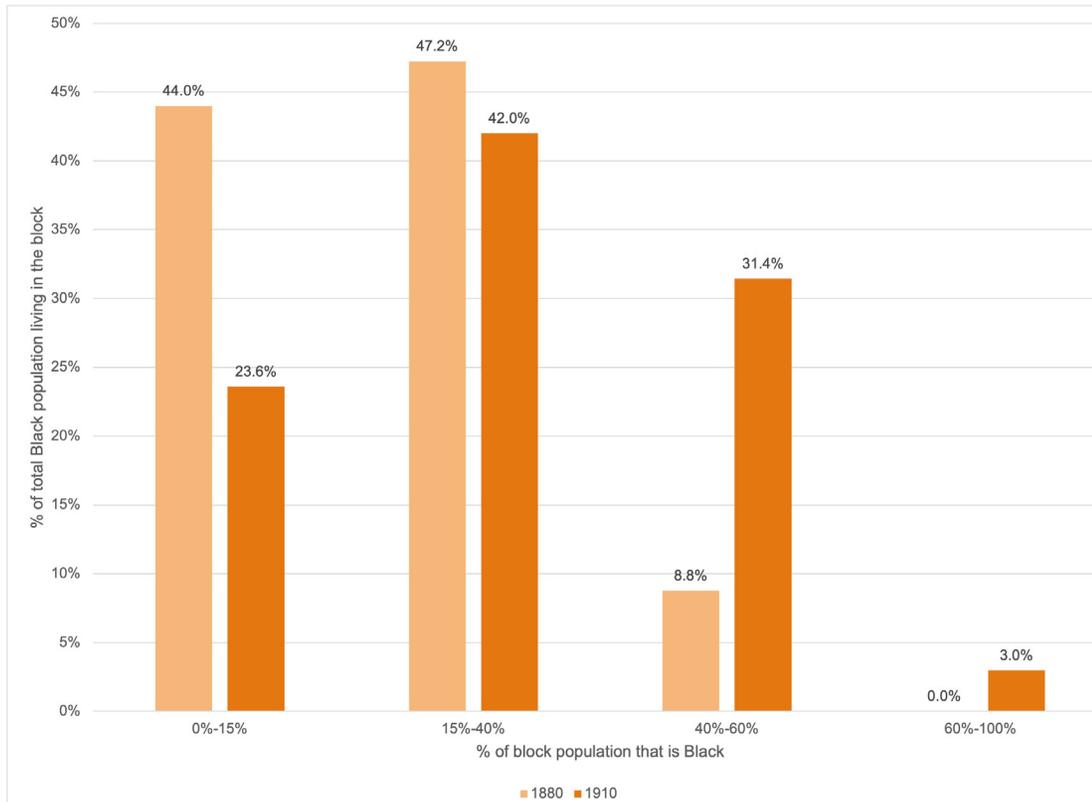
Graph showing the percent of residential blocks (x-axis) that contained different percentages of Black residents (y-axis), in 1880 and in 1910. The majority of residential blocks in the study area housed at least a few Black residents, while a small percentage of blocks were entirely White.

Census data indicate that, while Black and White residents of the Tenderloin lived alongside one another throughout the study period, the Tenderloin was slightly more segregated at the end of the period than it was at the beginning. As mentioned above, the percentage of blocks that were entirely White increased from about four percent in 1880 to about 10 percent in 1910.

In addition, Black residents of the Tenderloin were more likely to live on a block with a very small percentage of Black residents (15 percent or less) in 1880 than they were in 1910. In 1880, 44 percent of the area’s Black residents lived in blocks that were 15 percent Black or less, while in 1910, only about 24 percent did. Similarly, Black residents were much more likely to live on a block

with a significant number of Black residents (over 40 percent) in 1910 than they were in 1880. In 1880, only about nine percent of the area’s Black residents lived in blocks that were between 40 and 60 percent Black. In fact, at that time, no blocks in the study area were more than 50 percent Black. In 1910, however, about 31 percent of the area’s Black residents lived in blocks that were between 40 and 60 percent Black (27 percent in blocks that were more than 50 percent Black).

However, in both 1880 and 1910, a significant proportion of the area’s Black residents lived on a block that could be characterized as having a Black population somewhere between very small (below 15 percent) and significant (over 40 percent). In 1880, the



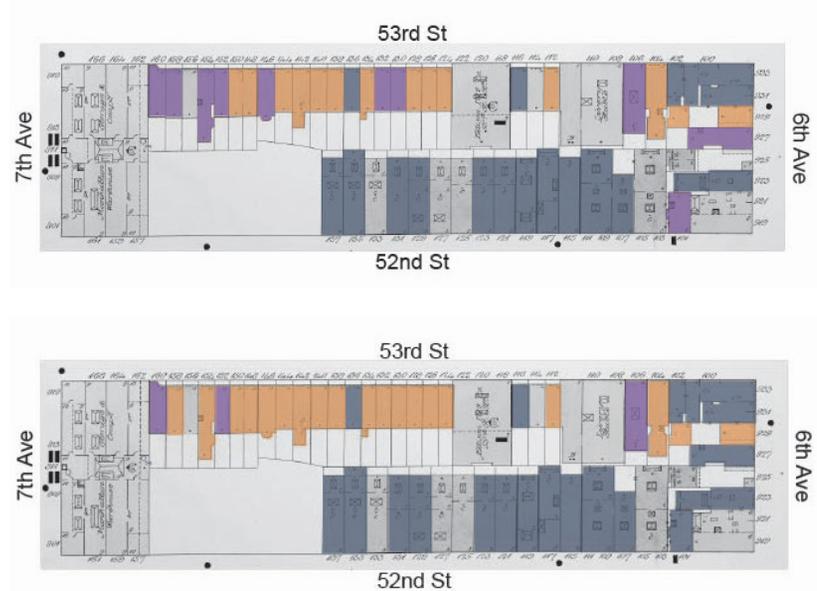
Graph showing the percent of Black residents (y-axis) that lived in blocks housing greater or smaller percentages of Black residents (x-axis), in 1880 and 1910. Black residents were more likely to live on blocks with a smaller percentage of Black residents in the early period than they were in the later period.

number of Black residents living in Blocks with Black populations of between 15 and 40 percent was about 47 percent, while in 1910, this number was 42 percent. This indicates that, while the residential population of the Tenderloin was more segregated in 1910 than it was in 1880, many Black residents in both years lived on blocks that could be characterized as somewhat, but not significantly, Black.

Census analyses and historical literature agree that Black residents lived alongside White residents at the block level, but the existing histories generally claim that Black and White residents rarely, if ever, lived in the same buildings. They suggest that buildings “went Black” all at once, and stayed that way (O’Malley 2018, 123). However, a close analysis of census data suggests that this was not the case in those representative blocks analyzed by the studio team.

In one of these blocks, bound by 32nd and 33rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, residents of both races occupied several buildings. On this block, these “mixed” buildings were often large tenement buildings, which were either mostly Black or mostly White, but also included a few residents of the other race.

In another block, however, which is bound by 52nd and 53rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, the studio team identified not only buildings that contained a few residents of a different race than the majority of building occupants, but also mixed buildings that housed equal or nearly equal numbers of Black and White residents. This further upends the narrative that Black and White Tenderloin residents lived alongside each other, but not with each other.



Census data from 1900 shows that, on one of the studio's representative blocks (bound by 53rd and 52nd streets and Sixth and Seventh Avenues), several buildings housed both Black and White residents of varying ratios. These buildings are shown in purple in the top map above. While some of these buildings only exhibited slight mixing, the buildings shown in purple in the bottom map housed equal or nearly equal numbers of Black and White residents. Annotations to map by Abbey Francis.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York (New York, N. Y.: Sanborn-Perris Map Company, 1892), Historical Information Gatherers.

Though there was perhaps more integration in the Tenderloin than previously realized, discrimination against Black tenants was commonplace. Property owners in the Tenderloin found they could profit from even the most neglected and unsavory buildings by leasing them to Black tenants.

In general, White landlords only rented dwellings to Black tenants if those dwellings were in some way deemed unsuitable for White tenants. In the Tenderloin, some buildings were deemed unsuitable because they had become associated with vice. One observer in 1889 described an area in the southeast corner of the Tenderloin, bound by 24th and 33rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, as illustrative of this dynamic. "Formerly this neighborhood was largely given over to houses of ill-fame and gambling, and there are still many left. When these were 'pulled,' or when the occupants were dispossessed, the landlords and agents found that they could not get any respectable white [sic] people to rent them, owing to their reputation. They found, however, that there were many colored people who would be glad to occupy them, as the prejudice was so strong against taking them in as tenants in respectable neighborhoods that they were forced to live in the most wretched places" (Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide 1889).

Other residences were deemed unsuitable for White people, and therefore open to Black people, because of proximity to unpleasant or disruptive activity. This was true on 53rd Street between Sixth and Eighth Avenues. In 1880, the six blocks on either side of 53rd Street were occupied almost entirely by White people—93 percent of the population of those blocks were White, while seven percent was Black. However, in 1879, when the Manhattan Railway Company built an elevated rail line along 53rd Street, connecting the Sixth and Ninth Avenues (also called "Els"), many of the White residents moved out, and Black residents moved in. Within a few years, the street was known as a center of Black life, and was an unusual example of a district in which Black residents occupied housing of a better quality than they typically had access to in the Tenderloin. According to one author, "the elite among the black [sic] clergymen and professionals lived or led their social lives" around 53rd Street. "Of the black settlements in Manhattan, the West Fifty-third Street district was the most attractive and most culturally stylish. The tenements there were not as crowded or as unsightly as those farther down in the Tenderloin" (Anderson 1982, 24).

Finally, White landlords generally rented poor-quality and older housing stock to Black tenants, reserving new builds and well-maintained buildings for White tenants. Noting that there was a recent movement among “private enterprise” to “build new improved accommodations for the unhoused population” in the wake of tenement reform efforts, one publication in 1900 made it clear that these new improved accommodations were not open to Black tenants. “[T]here is one element of the tenement-house population for which speculative builders have shown no disposition to provide improved housing, and which has remained practically untouched by the public and private efforts so far made to ameliorate life in the tenements, and this element is the Negro population” (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1900).

The tenements’ White landlords were less likely to include basic sanitary infrastructure in their properties for Black tenants. “As a rule, none of the Negro tenements contain improvements, not even ranges, beyond wash tubs.” They were also more likely to be dilapidated and neglected (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1900).

A writer in 1905 described some of the worst of this housing, a set of buildings around 28th Street: “around a central stone-paved court clustered... two-story tenements, half wood, half brick, all crazily out of plumb and in various stages of dilapidation.” Rookeries like this one, said the writer, “used to abound near Thirtieth street, ruinous, unsanitary structures they were.” She noted that, despite the dilapidated structures, “an atmosphere of refinement pervaded” the apartment she was visiting (Worker of the New York Colored Mission 1905). Other accounts say the same— that Black tenants of the Tenderloin made the best of even the worst buildings: setting the table for every meal, keeping potted geraniums in the windows, and hanging pictures of Black heroes, like Frederick Douglass, on the walls (Ovington 1905; Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889). And yet, there was only so much they could do. In this apartment, for instance, “during or after a rain... the floor space was occupied with pans

and wash basins, set there to catch the water which sometimes poured in from the leaky roof” (Worker of the New York Colored Mission 1905).

White landlords profited from renting to Black tenants in part because these landlords felt no compunction to update or maintain the buildings, and in part because they found they could charge Black tenants significantly higher rates than they could White tenants, even for poorer-quality housing. The Builders’ Record and Guide quoted a White real estate man, W. J. Roome, as he explained, in great detail, the financial logic of renting to Black tenants:

I consider our colored tenants very good. There is a prejudice amongst buyers of property against purchasing tenements and dwellings occupied by them, but there is no reason why this should be so. Such properties should be as salable as any others. Indeed, if anything, they should sell better, for a higher net return on the investment can be made out of houses occupied by negroes.... The class of buildings inhabited by them is of that kind that few others care to occupy. They are not accepted as tenants in many locations, and until recently were compelled to use all the old, ramshackle frame houses that no one else would occupy at any fair rental. But some real estate owners, who have property in certain districts, have come to the conclusion that they are much more desirable than the roughest class of white [sic] people, or disreputable characters, and they have consequently allowed their houses to be filled with colored tenants (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889).

Roome went on to give an example of one of his own properties, and the difference in profit between renting to Black instead of White families. Roome’s figures indicated that he charged 13 percent more to Black tenants than White ones for the same space.

RENTS UNDER WHITE TENANTS.			RENTS UNDER COLORED TENANTS.		
		Per Month			Per Month
Front—	1st floor (store, &c)...	\$21	Front—	1st floor (store, &c)...	\$21
	2d "	13		2d "	14
	3d "	13		3d "	14
	4th " (and rear)....	21		4th "	14
Rear—	2d "	12	Rear—	2d "	12
	3d "	12		3d "	13
	4th " (see front)....	—		4th "	13
Rear House—	1st "	8	Rear House—	1st "	10
	2d "	11		2d "	12
	3d "	9		3d "	11
	4th "	8		4th "	10
Total.....		\$127	Total.....		\$144

Figures provided by W. J. Roome to The Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, showing an increase in rent for Black tenants of 13 percent over White tenants, for the same apartments.

Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide. "Something About Our Colored Population." January 26, 1889.

This kind of blatant rent inflation was widespread. According to one scholar, "[t]hroughout the thirty-year period between 1880 and 1910, Negroes paid from 10 to 30 per cent more rent than white [sic] tenants for comparable apartments" (Scheiner 1964, 310). These elevated rents put a significant strain on the budgets of Black New Yorkers. Generally limited to low-paying industries and paid less for their work than White workers, Black workers' pay, like their housing, was limited by the prejudice and opportunism of White employers. The income of one wage-earner was rarely enough to support a family (Ovington 1911, 140).

To ensure they could pay the high rents, many Black tenants took on boarders. Boarders were common in the apartments of turn-of-the-century New Yorkers, but there is evidence that they were most common in Black homes – one 1897 survey of Manhattan's Nineteenth Assembly District "found that 40 per cent of the Negro families in the district had boarders," a rate higher than that of the White families (Scheiner 1964, 308).

The expansion of Black households in the face of precarious economic circumstances was, to some extent, a form of mutual aid. "One of the prominent virtues of the colored race is their generosity," wrote one worker associated with the Colored Mission. "They are open-handed, sharing freely with one another

the good things of life. Meals are furnished to the hungry; lodgings are provided for the penniless; garments are given to the shivering poorly-clad ones; remittances of money and boxes of clothing are sent to the home-friends at the South." She went on to relate an anecdote about a family of seven who took in a family of five to their basement apartment for an entire winter. (Worker of the New York Colored Mission 1905) Other sources suggest that many boarders were family members, who came to New York from the South or from the Caribbean via chain migration. Still other boarders were effectively strangers. "In almost half of these Negro rentals," according to one historian, "the boarders were not related to the family. W. E. B. Du Bois, a Negro social scientist, observed in 1901 that 'unknown strangers are thus admitted to the very heart of homes in order that rent may be paid.'" (Scheiner 1964, 309)

Black tenements were therefore overcrowded. Mary White Ovington, a White activist and journalist who lived with Black tenement dwellers in the first decade of the 20th century in an effort to document their living conditions, compared buildings in which many Black people lived to "the slaver's ship" because of the "mass of humanity" living together in limited space (Ovington 1911, 32).

The studio team identified a block, bound by 32nd and 33rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues, as one of several that was representative of the changes affecting the Tenderloin in this era. The block included an especially notorious tenement, nicknamed the "Tombs," which was just one example of the grim, unsafe, and extremely crowded housing White landlords rented to Black tenants. The Tombs were described as a "beehive of humanity," the two buildings containing 48 occupied apartments housing at least 180 people. This was typical of the era – Black housing, in the Tenderloin and elsewhere, was almost invariably more crowded than White housing (The Sun 1888).

Officially called the "Florida" flats, the tenement's nickname

was a reference to another notorious building nicknamed the “Tombs”—the city prison. Both buildings featured a narrow passage flanked by high walls hung with balconies. The tenement, according to one contemporary observer, “is situated in the rear of the lot, and is entered from an alley way. Its only safety, from a sanitary point of view, is in the ventilation which it obtains from the court-yard running through the centre and the open space running nearly all round. The western wall is practically barricaded from the light, with the exception of small windows sufficient to give air to the sleeping rooms. The front rooms in the courts are almost pitch dark” (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889).

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Footprint of the Tombs, and the front building on the same lot, in 1880. The front building was described in 1889 as “some sort of hotel and eating restaurant for colored people.” (Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide 1889) Census records from 1880 show the Tombs was occupied primarily by Black residents. Annotations to map by Abbey Francis. Insurance Maps of the City of New York (New York, N. Y.: Perris & Browne, 1880), Historical Information Gatherers.

A stretch of buildings on 53rd Street, part of another representative block, is illustrative of how Black and White occupancy differed, even in the exact same buildings, and even in more well-kept neighborhoods.

In 1880, of the six blocks on either side of 53rd Street between Sixth and Eighth Avenues, five of them had very small Black populations, under 10 percent of the total. Three of those had Black populations under three percent. The only exception was the block on the south side of 53rd Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. In 1880, this block had a Black population of 23 percent. However, because the population numbers for each block include residents who lived to the north and south of 53rd Street (i.e., 52nd Street and 54th Street) and on the adjoining avenues, this statistic is misleading.



The tenement called “The Tombs” resembled the city prison of the same moniker. “Interior View of the City Prison (‘The Tombs’),” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, February 1, 1873, Internet Archive.

A close analysis of census data shows that the vast majority of the Black residents residing on this block lived on 52nd Street—only two Black people lived on the south side of 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues in 1880, both of them working as live-in “servants” for White families. However, perhaps because of the installation of the elevated rail the year before, the north side of 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues was, in 1880, home to two all-Black households.

Still, of the 416 people living on 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues in 1880, only 15, or about four percent, were Black. 53rd Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues was similar—in fact, none of the Black population of the blocks on either side of 53rd Street resided on 53rd Street itself in 1880. Only the stretch of 53rd Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues housed more than a few Black people in 1880. Of the 118 Black people who lived on the blocks to either side of 53rd Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, 76 of them resided on 53rd Street itself.

By 1900, however, three significant demographic shifts had taken place: first, the total population of this stretch of 53rd Street had more than doubled, to 868 people. Second, the Black population had increased from 15 people in 1880, to 445 people in 1900—an increase of nearly 3000 percent. In 1900, more than half of the residents of this stretch of 53rd Street were Black. By 1910, the Black population of this stretch of 53rd street would be 515 out of 730 total residents, or 71 percent of the whole.

Third, the houses had become more crowded. In 1880, when the stretch of buildings was occupied by White residents, the average occupancy of each address was six people. In 1900, when most of the buildings were occupied by Black residents or a mix of Black and White residents, the average occupancy of each address was 15 people.

One reason for this shift is that, as previously mentioned, Black tenants were more likely to take on boarders than White tenants. 126 W 53rd Street is an example of this phenomenon. In 1880, the building was occupied by one family of five White people. In 1900, that same building housed 12 Black people, 10 of whom were lodgers.

128 W 53rd St shows a different phenomenon – density often increased because White landlords divided larger dwellings into smaller ones. In 1880, this building had housed five White people – three family members and two servants. In 1900, that same

building housed 14 Black people spread across three separate apartments.

Ultimately, Black housing in the Tenderloin took a number of forms depending on the area and the period. The main commonality was that, when compared to housing available to White tenants, it was more poorly maintained, more expensive, and more crowded.

Historic Assets

The scope of housing in the Tenderloin during this period is extremely vast. Several assets were identified from Black newspapers and other period sources as having housed Black people. However, the vast majority no longer exists. The only asset known to be occupied by Black people that definitively still exists is an apartment building at 325 West 52nd Street. However, the building is just west of Eighth Avenue and therefore just outside of the final study area.

The residential areas most closely studied by the studio team were two representative blocks. The first, which historically contained The Florida Flats (or The Tombs), was bounded by West 32nd and 33rd Streets and Sixth and Seventh Avenues. This block was entirely razed to make way for Gimbel Brothers' department store. The second, which became a center of Black life after the building of the El encouraged White residents to leave the area and rent to Black tenants, was bounded by West 52nd and 53rd Streets, and Sixth and Seventh Avenues. None of the buildings that historically housed Black people exist there today.

COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, AND LABOR

Matt Golf

Historic Context

Black labor has played a critical role in both the structural and economic development of New York City since its founding as a Dutch colony in 1626. But scholarship has only just begun to recognize the historic impact of their toil, and as such, many important sites of Black labor history in Manhattan remain invisible. Such is the case in the Tenderloin where the prevailing narrative speaks little to its residents' working lives, offering instead an interpretation that the exclusive industrial purview of the Tenderloin was that of vice—a sensuous historical tale of an entire neighborhood devoted to the “immoral” business that served White pleasure-seekers. And while indeed these hotels, theaters, clubs, and brothels provided critical employment for many of the neighborhood's Black residents, this simplistic industrial perspective belies a rich history of economic resilience and entrepreneurial ambition.

The following asset-informed historic context study counters this discriminatory narrative of the preeminence of the vice industry by revealing the sites of Black commerce and labor made invisible by this dominant, biased narrative. Starting first with an investigation of the labor landscape of Black people in Manhattan, this analysis then examines the growth of Black labor in the Tenderloin, specifically its businesses, supported by a collection of associated historical assets identified by this studio. The analysis concludes with a characterization of change and continuity over time, as these sites were subject to the encroachment of and demolition by new, segregated industry that reshaped the urban fabric of the Tenderloin by the beginning of the 1920s.

Historic Landscape of Black Labor in New York City

Before any analysis of the Tenderloin can begin, however, the central role of Black labor in the development of New York City must first be historically situated. This is especially crucial given that the time in which Black labor characterized the Tenderloin

from 1870-1920 followed directly after the end of the Civil War. Understanding the historic landscape of Black labor that preceded this studio's study period is then necessary to effectively trace how the conditions of Black workers in New York City were both created before and perpetuated after state and federal abolition.

This starts with the unfortunate fact that the question of who owns the labor of Black workers has persisted since White landowners began enslaving Black people in the United States in 1619. White enslavers perpetuated the institution of chattel enslavement by divorcing Black men and women from the earnings of their labor. Beyond unequal treatment both physically and legally, this inequity expressed itself economically as this international system of forced and uncompensated labor generated immense wealth for not only the White enslavers of the American South, but for the cities of the North as well and their White inhabitants, especially New York.

Enslaved Black labor played a role in the city's development since its founding as the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam in 1626. The Dutch West India Company trafficked enslaved Africans for profit, 11 of whom they brought to the newly established colony. Their forced labor cleared land and laid the infrastructure upon which the Dutch built New York City, a city that after changing hands from the Dutch to the British in 1664 would become the "most important slave port in North America" for the next century-and-a-half (Equal Justice Initiative 2022). New York's White elite grew rich off the trafficking of enslaved Africans, with Dutch and English merchants bringing over 7,000 into the United States through New York's ports between the mid-1600s to the late 1700s (Equal Justice Initiative 2022). New York's stock-trading juggernaut, Wall Street, has its origins in an altogether different form of trade—buying and selling began here when the city opened an auction block for the trafficking of enslaved Black and Indigenous people in 1711 (Equal Justice Initiative 2022).



Print of the site of White trafficking of Black and Indigenous peoples at Wall Street Fenn, Harry. New York slave market about 1730. 1902. NYPL Digital Collections.

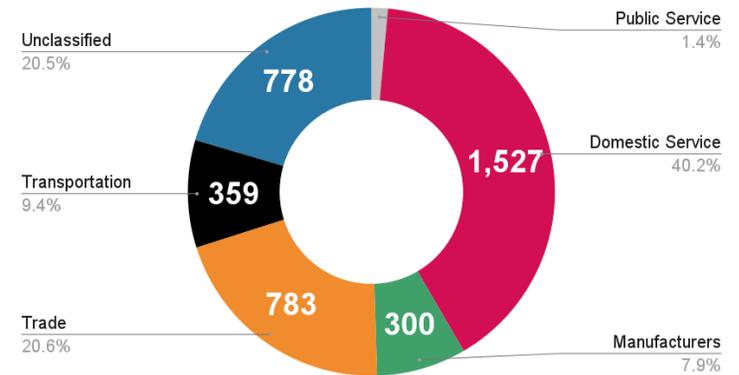
Although New York legislature gradually abolished chattel enslavement in the state by 1827, it continued to profit greatly from the labor of enslaved Black people. Insurance corporations such as New York Life, now the largest mutual life insurance company in the United States, sold policies on enslaved Black laborers since its founding in 1845. Of the initial 1,000 policies the company sold, 339 were to insure White enslavers for the potential loss of their enslaved Black workers (ABS Contributor 2019). Bankers on Wall Street speculated on a commodity market driven by the products of enslaved labor like cotton and sugar, while financial institutions like JP Morgan Chase, through predecessor organizations Citizens Bank and Canal Bank, received payment on loans in the form of human beings. Between 1831 and 1865, these banks owned around 1,250 Black people defaulted to them by their White enslavers as "collateral" (ABS Contributor 2019). As argued by sociologist Matthew Desmond, this multi-state system of exploiting enslaved labor constituted "America's first big business," and in turn, buttressed the ascendance of New York City as a global financial player (Desmond 2019). Historians even estimate that around half of the total revenue generated through Southern forced-labor camps, i.e. plantations, ended up lining the pockets of White New Yorkers (Equal Justice Initiative 2022).

While the end of the Civil War and federal abolition of slavery in 1865 put an end to this national economy of enslaved labor and products, it did little to ameliorate the financial conditions of those newly freed. The failure of Reconstruction policies in the South, due in large part to coordinated efforts from former White enslavers to terrorize and subjugate Black residents, left the majority of Black workers in dire economic straits. This White terror forced many Black people to return to the very fields where White people enslaved them, often share-cropping White-owned land, a financial system that actively stunted Black workers' ability to accumulate lasting wealth.

National Urban League, the immediate postwar also saw to the "divorce of the Negro from the soil" (Haynes 1912). Although the issues of fair compensation had yet to be addressed, freedom had given rise to "an unusual mobility of Negro labor," a movement away from the agricultural labor that had defined their enslavement towards work in the newly industrialized cities of the North (Haynes 1912). A survey by Haynes of newly arrived Black workers to New York City in 1909 supported his claim, finding that nearly 50 percent of those questioned cited an economic reason for their migration north (Haynes 1912).

While wages and opportunities were indeed greater than those in the South, Black labor had long been suppressed and segregated in New York City. Graduates of the Manumission Society School for Negroes prior to 1865 reportedly left with "every avenue closed against them and spoke of difficulties those who had trades encountered, many being forced to become waiters, barbers, servants, and laborers" (Haynes 1912). This continued into the turn of the century, where White employers conspired to bar Black laborers from certain industries. For Black tradesmen, many repeatedly received from potential White employers the "expected reply that no colored boy, however promising, was wanted" (Sacks 2006). The same was true for industrial employment, where preference for cheap labor via European immigrants had "poached defiantly upon the black man's industrial preserves" (Sacks 2006). Entrance into the

industrial workforce often came only in the form of strikebreaking, where White employers preyed upon Black men's need for work as a tool to bust labor organizing, thus intensifying racial tensions between the Black and White working classes. All the while, labor unions with an all-White membership denied membership to Black workers for fear of competition in the labor market.

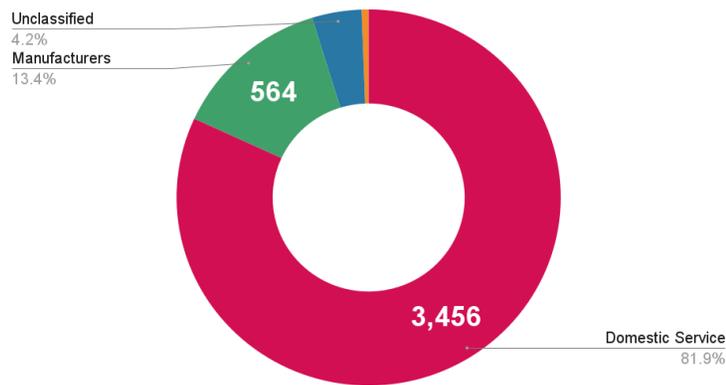


Occupations of Black Men in Manhattan, 1905
 Goff, Matt. Occupations of Black Men in Manhattan, 1905. 2025. Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.



American Federation of Labor with Calvin Coolidge
 Calvin Coolidge with Members of the American Federation of Labor. New York Heritage Digital Collections.

Likewise, White men and women prohibited Black women from entering the factory workforce. Whereas White women had found greater agency, growing economic independence, and community in the industrial workplace from White men and women granting them access to factory labor, these same White laborers actively excluded Black women from accessing the same opportunities. According to historian Marcy Sacks, “white [sic] women refused to work alongside black women and persuaded factory owners to preserve the racial homogeneity of the city’s female-dominated workplaces” (Sacks 2006, 111).



Occupations of Black Women in Manhattan, 1905

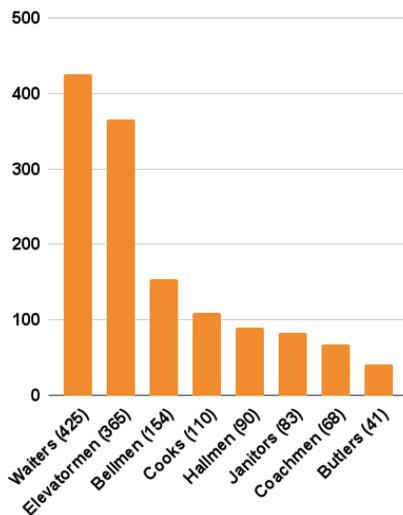
Source: Goff, Matt. Occupations of Black Women in Manhattan, 1905. 2025. Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.

This White-led entrenchment of Black men and women in menial service positions likewise obfuscated their hard-earned education and skill. In a 1903 account to the *Sun*, John B. Nail, a notable saloon keeper in the Tenderloin, noted the disconnect between Black college graduates and the jobs available to them. “The girls go to any of the Northern women’s colleges” wrote Nail. “They come back here with the same social desires and tastes that you find in white young folks of similar training. But they are barred” (Anderson 1982, 28). Nail’s testimony continues by stating that these women are thus “classed with the most degraded and brutal element of their race,” implying class divisions and tensions within the Black community itself (Anderson 1982, 28).

This segregation of labor pushed Black workers into jobs the White working class had vacated for industrial positions, most notably those in domestic or service work. Of the 3,802 Black male wage-earners enumerated in Manhattan during the 1905 New York State Census, the largest share of laborers, 1,527, were listed as working in “domestic and personal service,” cited professions comprised of the following: Barbers (27), Bartenders (24), Bellmen and Doormen (154), Bootblacks (2), Butlers (41), Chauffeurs (9), Cleaners (15), Coachmen (68), Cooks (110), Dining Car (7), Chimney Sweeps (2), Domestic Servants (12), Elevatormen (365), Hallmen (90), Hotel managers (3), Housemen (29), Janitors and Caretakers (83), Stewards (38), Valets (18), Waiters (425), Miscellaneous (5). This share of domestic labor was even higher for Black women—of the 4,045 women surveyed, 3,456 worked in “domestic and personal service.” (Haynes 1912).

Black Labor in the Tenderloin

From 1870 to 1920, many of the Black laborers identified above would have likely lived and worked in the Tenderloin. As examined in both the land use and housing context studies (see for more information), this neighborhood had become home to the majority of Manhattan’s Black population at the turn of the 20th century. Representative blocks in this study area reveal similar occupational concentrations to those listed for the whole of Manhattan. Looking to Enumeration District 728 from the 1900 Federal Census, which includes homes along West 53rd, West 52nd, and West 51st Streets between Sixth and Seventh Avenues—one of the densest areas of Black population at the time—we see labor demographics in accordance with the figures reported by Haynes. Of the 290 employed Black men enumerated in this district, those working in service comprised by the far the highest occupational share. Porters were most represented, with 50 men, followed closely by waiters (42) and bellman (33), these three jobs collectively accounting for just over forty percent of the total male labor force of these predominantly Black blocks (United States Bureau of the Census 1900).



Left: Male Service Occupations by Category, 1905

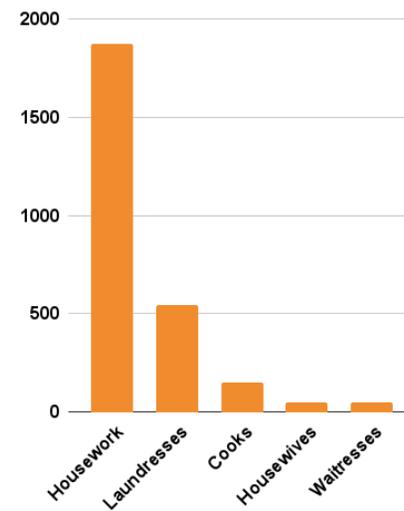
Goff, Matt. Male Service Occupations by Category, 1905. 2025. Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.

Right: Hotelmen at 46th Street, 1913

Two men ('hallboys?') on the roof of a building at 46th Street and Lexington. 1913. New York Heritage Digital Collections. William D. Hassler Photograph Collection.

Looking then to female employment in this same district reveals a similar but slightly different categorical concentration of professions. Domestic service work represented the highest single profession, with 60 listed housekeepers, and the fourth-highest, with 24 cooks (Census 1900). But besides these service jobs that took Black women outside of the home, we see that the second and third most common jobs, 52 laundresses and 27 dressmakers respectively, were those that took place in the home (Census 1900). As previously mentioned, White employers in the textile industry actively barred Black women from working in factories, meaning much of this dressmaking likely happened within the home itself. The contemporary emergence of several dressmaking schools throughout the Tenderloin, such as the nearby Madame Beck's at 324 West 52nd Street, was in likely response to the need for Black mothers to both earn a living through a skilled trade and stay at home to raise their children (New York Age 1909). This is important to note given the alternative at-home work for women without a manufacturing trade—clothes washing. Black female

laundry workers were highly skilled and widely hireable, but the nature of this work often turned “her home into a workshop, and makes her few rooms hotter, more cluttered, more unhealthy.” (Ovington 1905, 25). While this quote from White social worker and Black ally Mary White Ovington carries perhaps some paternalistic undertones, as it continues to subtly question the fitness of Black working mothers as child rearers, it does shed light on the uncomfortable reality of having to make a living from one’s cramped tenement—a situation created due to White employer’s targeted exclusion of Black women from the industrial workforce.



Left: Female Service Occupations by Category, 1905

Source: Goff, Matt. Female Service Occupations by Category, 1905. 2025. Data sourced from Haynes, Dr. George Edmund, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.

Right: Emma, Servant to the Hassler Family of New York, 1913

Emma ironing in the Hassler apartment at 150 Vermilyea Avenue, New York City, July 3, 1913. New York Heritage Digital Collections. William D. Hassler Photograph Collection.

Data from these blocks alone also reveals some wider reaching characterizations of the working lives of the Tenderloin’s Black residents. First, the large portion of working Black men and women toiled during completely different times of the day—women at daytime, men at nighttime. Black men’s presence in their neighborhoods during daylight hours given the nature of their

work, an inversion of White preconceptions of the temporality of men's labor, reportedly gave "an appearance of idleness among the population" that reinforced racist stereotypes of Black men's lack of personal ambition and industry (Ovington 1905, 25). We will see later that some women also worked into the night well beyond their daily hours as women's wages were critical to the family's well being. Men's jobs, especially those in hotel and restaurant service, were unstable, work periods determined by seasonal need for employees (Sacks 2006,). Since many Black men found themselves without work for large periods of time, supporting the family financially often fell squarely on the women of the home, whose jobs were markedly more stable given White families' reportedly limitless demand for housekeepers and laundry workers.

Secondly, a revealing contrast emerges between remembrances of these enumerated blocks and the realities of the time. In a 1929 report for the New York Amsterdam News entitled "How the Negro Made his Living in New York City Twenty Years Ago," the author regards this section of West 53rd Street as a markedly professional district known for its doctors, dentists, and churches (Reid 1929, 5). And while these professions and businesses are indeed represented in the Census data and identified assets, they are in the clear minority. This helps to better understand that even the blocks singled out for their high numbers of professionals and businesses were still predominantly working class.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, this data confirms that Black residency in the Tenderloin, in addition to being a function of land use and housing (see related context statements), was also a function of labor, as this neighborhood housed the businesses that hired the majority of Black male workers. The proportional weight of waiters, porters, bellmen and other associated professions defined not only the enumeration district explored above, but also every major center of Black population in the Tenderloin from 1880 to 1920. And placing this job share within a spatial context, it perhaps comes as little surprise given labor demographics that each of these historically Black concentrations abuts a commercial

corridor of hotels and other recreational establishments.

From 1880 to 1900, this population spanned from West 26th Street to West 33rd Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues, directly adjacent to the hotels and theaters along Broadway, the "Great White Way" of electrically illuminated recreation most closely associated with the Tenderloin. Labor statistics show that of this district's 203 working Black men in 1880 and 206 in 1900, over a third worked in hotels (United States Bureau of the Census 1880; United States Bureau of the Census 1900). As the newly constructed Penn Station and block-spanning department stores of the lower thirties changed the cultural and industrial character of the Tenderloin from 1900 through the 1910s, White hotel owners established a "New Tenderloin" near West 41st Street near Longacre Square, complete with its own vice-catering establishments in 1909 (Freeland 2009, 125). Historical maps and census data show the movement of large sectors of the Black population to this same area, whose largest proportion of male laborers worked in the hotel industry in 1910, around 40 percent of a total working population of 318 men (United States Bureau of the Census 1910). Around this same time, a sizable Black population had relocated to West 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues. As previously discussed, this neighborhood was likewise characterized by a majority of men employed by hotels, and looking at its surroundings, we again see a wide array of adjacent recreational venues, such as Carnegie Hall, although notably less than in previous neighborhoods. The establishment of the elevated transit station at West 53rd Street, however, would have made transit to and from the Broadway hotel and theater district a feasible working commute.

This evinces a correlation as to the importance of access to hotel jobs in the movements of Black residents throughout the greater Tenderloin district. Other historical sources corroborate this point, George Haynes remarking that, "the earnings in hotel service play such an important part in the income of males of the Negro group," due in large part to the supplemental income earned from tips on top of normal wages—a base wage of \$5.00 a day,

standard among other professions open to Black men (Haynes 1912). Due to the very informal and undocumented nature of tipping, no hard numbers exist as to how much these workers actually accrued. But Haynes qualifies that, “Negro men receive very inadequate wages in domestic and personal service except three or four occupations that afford ‘tips,’” further signifying their importance (Haynes 1912).

By examining these labor statistics, a complex picture of the racial working relationships in the Tenderloin emerges: a district catered to White pleasure seekers built upon the backs of and serviced by Black laborers, as few other jobs were open to them, and upon whom White aspersions of vice and immorality fell despite their presence in these spaces largely a mean of financial survival. Ovington sums up this paradoxical phenomenon well in her essay *The Negro at Home in New York*: ““There must be a world of irony in the heart of the seeing Negro who reads in the papers the lurid descriptions of his own crime, while he lives in the Tenderloin district and looks out upon its life.” (Ovington 1905, 30).

This racist association of Black labor and vice in the Tenderloin has long defined memory of its people and spaces (see the Historic Context Analysis on Media and Representation in the Appendix of this report) and simplifies the complicated relationships between Black workers and the Tenderloin’s vice industry. The Federal Writers Project’s *New York City Guide: A Comprehensive Guide to the Five Boroughs* (1939) reads as follows in regards to Manhattan’s “Tenderloin District”: “In the 1880’s and 1890’s the area between Twenty Fourth and Fortieth Streets, from Fifth to Seventh Avenue, was notorious as the wickedest and gayest spot in the city...as late as 1885 one-half of all the buildings in this district were reputed to cater to vice” (Federal Writers’ Project 1939, 147-164). That is not to say, however, that nothing to date has challenged this incomplete history. In 1930, activist and writer James Weldon Johnson in his book *Black Manhattan* attempted to revise this narrative by presenting sites of labor in the Tenderloin operated by what he deemed a “professional” class of Black workers (Johnson 1930, 74). Johnson himself was one of these

Black professionals, having first found success in the Tenderloin as a vaudeville playwright in the early 1900s. To him, this class consisted of the “the colored men engaged in these professional sports, as it was also of the genuine black-face minstrels” alongside a collection of composers and bar owners. (Johnson 1930, 73). Together these Black professionals created a “business and social center” that stood in dignified contrast to White aspersions of the Tenderloin’s unruly sensuality (Johnson 1930, 73).

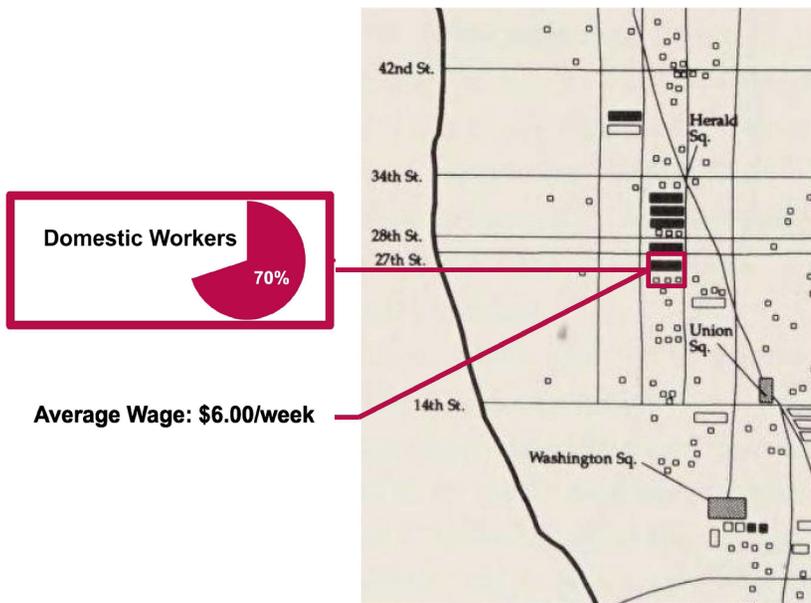
Those fortunate enough to find success in this burgeoning entertainment industry could build great wealth compared to other Black laborers. Vaudeville playwrights and comedians Bert Williams and George Walker, who catapulted to national stardom with plays such as “*In Dahomey*,” reportedly made \$35,000 in a period of six weeks in 1906 (Sacks 2006, 191). In contrast, the average monthly income for Black elevator operators, another of the more common professions among Tenderloin residents, was roughly \$7.00 per week, \$2.00 below the recommended minimum wage of White female factory workers, who were among the lowest paid White laborers (Sacks 2006, 119). Black women employed in domestic service made even less, a 1909 study finding that less than 8 percent of a survey group of 2,138 service workers made more than \$6.00 a week (Sacks 2006, 119). These low wages and previously discussed discriminatory hiring practices forced some Black women into sex work to make ends meet. Black brothels concentrated along West 25th Street to West 27th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues from 1880 to 1900 and from West 36th Street to West 41st Street between Eighth and Ninth avenues from 1900 to 1920 (Gilfoyle 1992, 209). Present scholarship on Black sex work in the Tenderloin focuses on the disparaging observations of White people and both Black and White religious reformers rather than the economic realities that informed the taking up of the profession. The inclusion of Black sex work districts in this study is instead intended to reveal the importance of earning alternative incomes in a labor market that actively conspired against Black workers.

And demographic data from these districts supports this need for additional income outside of traditional wage earning. In 1880, the block bounded by West 26th Street and West 25th Street to the north and south between Sixth and Seventh avenues was home to 513 Black residents, 288 of whom were women. Among these, 232 are listed by occupation. The largest categorical share of occupations, 169 women or seventy-two percent, belonged to domestic workers (cited as housekeepers, servants, and cooks) (United States Bureau of the Census 1880). Given the low wages cited above for this type of work and the municipally recommended minimum monthly wage of \$60 a month for families in Manhattan, it is perhaps unsurprising then that female residents of a block so represented by low-wages would potentially turn to sex work as an alternative source of income (Sacks 2006, 119).

Again, this characterization of a devoted sex work district must be taken with suspicion, as solicitation was often used by police as false pretense for arresting Black women (see the Historic Context Analysis on Racial Conflict in the Appendix of this report). Nevertheless, if taken to be true, this reveals a near never-ending workday for some female workers. Domestic jobs in White homes had gruelingly long hours, reportedly as long as fourteen a day (Ovington 1905, 25). So for those who continued to work in the employ of brothels upon returning home, these working hours could extend even further into the night.

Working Conditions for Black Laborers

In spite of these harsh working conditions, Black men and women of varied professions began to unionize within the Tenderloin to reclaim control of their own labor. By name alone, the ten identified labor organizations illustrate the predominant occupations of the Tenderloin: United Dressmaker's Protective Agency, Coachman's Union League, the Ladies' Public Cooks' and Caterers' Association, the Young Men's Beneficial League, Hotel Bellmen's Beneficial Association, Professional and Business Men's Social Club of New York City, The Caterer's and Private Waiter's Club, Colored Vaudeville Benevolent Association, The New Amsterdam Musical Association, White Rats Actors Union, Colored Branch. While little can be found for many of these examples evidencing their operations and impact, all emerged in a pursuit of solidarity and bargaining power that the majority of White unions denied Black workers. As co-founder of the National Urban League, William Bulkley, writes, "While there are many unions that are, in their constitution, open to all men, there are others which bar the doors tight against any man with an admixture of African blood. There is, further, a conviction that even the supposedly open unions do not always give the black brother a cordial welcome" (Bulkley 1906, 129).



Map of Houses of Prostitution

Source: Gilfoyle, Timothy J. *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1992.



Lyric Hall, 1927

Sperr, Percy Loomis. Manhattan: 6th Avenue - 41st Street. NYPL Digital Collections.

This narrative typified the formation of several of these unions, most notably the New Amsterdam Musical Association (NAMA), the oldest Black performers union in the United States. Professional Black musicians organized NAMA in 1904 after White members of the local chapter of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) denied their entry. The union, first led by composer James Reese Europe, proved so effective in its organizing and securing of performances that it forced the integration of the New York AFM in 1908. (Atlas Obscura 2016).



Photograph of the New Amsterdam Musical Association, 1910
New Amsterdam Musical Association, New York, U.S.A. 1910. NYPL Digital Collections.

Black Businesses in the Tenderloin

Still undiscussed, however, in this characterization of labor are the numerous Black businesses that emerged in the Tenderloin during this same period. While Johnson's reexamination of "Black Bohemia" offers a critical rebuttal of vice as characteristic of the Black labor experience in the Tenderloin, its focus remains on the realm of the night—the bars, theaters, and other venues that drove the neighborhood's economic and cultural output once the sun went down. Little has been done to characterize the businesses and community organizations that served the Tenderloin's Black denizens in their day-to-day lives.

It should first be noted that like the proprietors and entertainers identified by Johnson, business owners also comprised only a small but important subsection of the Black working public. A study of a 1909 directory of Black businesses in New York City identified a total of 309 varied establishments throughout Manhattan, the majority of whom operated independently with little to no additional staff. Interestingly, proprietors from Southern states owned over fifty percent of these enterprises, with Black immigrants from the Caribbean owning an additional twenty percent (Haynes 1912). This breakdown of business owners by nativity reflected prevailing stereotypes of Black workers native to New York. White employers often passed over Black New Yorkers in favor of Southern or Caribbean applicants as they were perceived as more "disciplined" (Sacks 2006, 131). The experiences of Black laborers were not monolithic, and White employers often "manipulated regional stereotypes" to sow division among the Black working class (Sacks 2006, 131). It is then unsurprising that the sections of the Black community favored by White employers, who were likely involved in the extension of credit for seeding these businesses, are those most visibly represented in business ownership.

The majority of these businesses served Black consumers almost exclusively, providing an alternative and often safer option to

shopping in White establishments, that is those that would even serve Black customers (Haynes 1912). Their presence likewise allowed Black communities to invest in the financial success and growth of their own neighbors, all the while receiving necessary services.

The following section, which discusses historical assets identified by this studio, will delve into greater detail as to the categorical divisions and relationships of these businesses. There are a few case studies that exemplify the variety and impacts of these enterprises and give context to identified historical assets. An omission of note here will be the bars and entertainment spaces, which are covered in greater detail in the Entertainment Historic Context analysis in the appendix of this report. Moreover, this narrowed scope allows for a more targeted characterization of the businesses often overlooked in popular histories of the Tenderloin.

Undertaking represented a noticeable portion of businesses, with four Tenderloin-based funeral homes uncovered from advertisements in Black newspapers, although there were likely more. Morticians comprised one of the largest sectors of Black businessmen in the country. Booker T. Washington remarked that, save for catering businesses, no enterprise seemed “to be more numerously engaged or one in which they have been more uniformly successful” than funeral homes (Virginia Tech News 2016). Black undertakers began opening mortuaries in predominantly Black enclaves after the Civil War due to warranted distrust of White undertakers in their respect of Black bodies, responding to concerns that to ensure one’s dignity in death, the deceased should be cared for by a member of one’s community. While socially motivated, funeral directors also amassed great wealth and neighborhood prestige through their businesses, evident within the Tenderloin.

A profile on Black businessmen in a 1904 issue of *The Colored American Magazine* cites that James C. Thomas, a Black

undertaker operating out of a storefront at 493 Seventh Avenue, did a yearly business of \$50,000 annually, and his building, that he both lived in and owned outright, was estimated to be worth \$85,000 (Moore 1904, 520). A founding member of the National Negro Business League, Thomas was one of the first Black undertakers in New York City when he opened his doors in 1902, although his competitors closed not long after, leaving him “the sole Negro undertaker in the field” (Young 1939, 2). Widely regarded in his field, he was celebrated by both contemporary and future observers as “New York City’s first successful Negro businessman,” and “the richest Negro in New York” (Young 1939, 1) (Reuter 1918, 243). In another profile on Thomas, Booker T. Washington placed the growth of undertaking into a pillar industry of Black New Yorkers squarely upon the influence of Thomas: “Where White undertakers had charge of the undertaking work of the various colored lodges and churches in New York before Mr. Thomas’ time, it is now handled almost exclusively by colored undertakers” (Washington 1907, 109). Moreover, Thomas “constantly employed a number of men and women” from within the Black community of the Tenderloin and trained aspiring business owners in funerary services (Washington 1907, 109). He closed his location in the Tenderloin, the main office of several New York state branches, shortly before the completion of Penn Station only a few blocks from his building and sold the property for a reported total of \$103,000 (Young 1939, 3). And this price appears to have been valued unfairly, the likely White brokers of the deal reselling the same plot for around \$150,000, upon which a high-rise office building, valued at over three million dollars in 1939, still stands as of 2025 (Young 1939, 3).



Portrait of J.C. Thomas, 1903
"Gotham's Business Men." *The Colored American*. Washington, D.C. November 21, 1903.

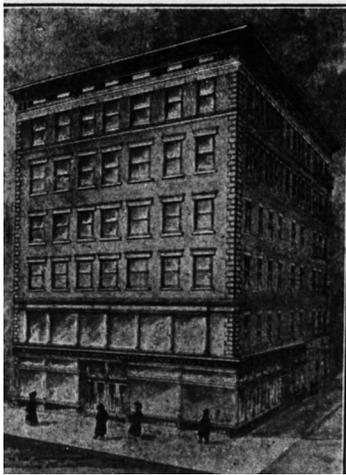
Business owners in other sectors hold significant importance to the history of civil rights. Richetta G. Randolph, a stenographer working out of 322 West 53rd Street, was the first employee of the NAACP, serving as the association's office manager. According to Mary White Ovington, whom Randolph had first worked for as a private secretary, "it was her [Randolph's] machine that in 1909 typed the original 'Call' to organize the N. A. A. C. P" (Ovington 1936, 144). She later "arranged and typed" the first issue of *The Crisis* in 1910 and colleagues regarded her as instrumental to the organization's success in its nascence (Hogans 1959, 7). In addition to its text, the photographs of *The Crisis* came from a business in the Tenderloin—a photography studio at 509 Eighth Avenue run by Black photographer C.M. Battey—see the "Media and Representation" context statement for more information.

Black corporate enterprises, such as the Metropolitan Mercantile and Realty Company, operated and owned property in the Tenderloin during this studio's period of study. In 1906, this Baltimore-based joint stock company of entirely Black shareholders, with an estimated value of around \$1,000,000, purchased a four story building at 46th Street and Eighth Avenue, with "the intention of altering the structure into a department store and bank for Negroes" (New York Tribune 1906, 8).



Richetta G. Randolph and Mary White Ovington
"Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefield." *The Crisis*. March 1943.

These proposed functions addressed White people's exclusion of Black customers and investors from these financial spaces—the studio's inquiry discovered only one bank in the Tenderloin that served Black clientele and not all of the newly established department stores in Herald Square would serve Black customers, such as Sak's. The company commissioned such an institution—the Metropolitan Building—with designs by E.R. Williams, a Black architect who in 1926 would later design an ultimately unbuilt African Museum for the National Mall in Washington, DC Mall (New York Age 1907, 4). It appears, however, that his designs for the department store were never fully realized. Instead, we see that the space, expanded with two additional stories from four to six, was likely utilized instead as office space for other Black businesses, including the newspaper the *New York Age*. Regardless, its opening in 1908 was heralded as "the beginning of a new epoch of the race...an event which will ever be conspicuous in the annals of the history of Negro progress in the city of New York" (New York Age 1908, 2). It is ironic then that this landmark achievement in the economic and industrial agency of Black people in New York City is in fact seldom remembered today.



Left: Artist's sketch of the Metropolitan Building
 "The Metropolitan Building." *The New York Age*. January 18, 1908.

Right: The Metropolitan Building, 1940
 "750-752 8 Avenue" 1939. New York Municipal Archives. 1940s Tax Department Photographs.

While due, perhaps in part, to the predominance of other histories told of the Tenderloin, the building's short life also informs this narrative silence. Following some uncertain financial struggles, *The New York Age* even reported fraud at the director-level of the company. Because the owners could not meet their first mortgage of \$26,535 in 1910, they were forced to sell at a below market foreclosure rate of \$45,000; the additional two stories erected by the company alone cost \$50,000 (*New York Age* 1910, 1). The new owners, however, the White-owned Bauman Furniture Company, continued to rent to Black tenants, as reported in Black newspapers (*New York Age* 1911, 7).

Other Black businesses in the Tenderloin appear in far less detail in the historical record, largely only in newspaper advertisements. Here, it is clear that there were a high number of Black barbershops and hair salons, a profession with roots in White enslavers "leasing" out Black men and women to cut and style neighbors' hair—the profits of which went to White enslavers. The Black barbering industry in New York grew out of this antebellum tradition, although waves of European immigration in the late

nineteenth century threatened Black workers' hold on the industry. New York's Black barber shops cornered the smallest percentage of the total hair grooming market, about 3 percent or 106 businesses, compared to other major cities in the United States in 1880 (Mills 2013, 77). The 1905 New York State Census for Manhattan cites an even smaller number of Black barbers, only 27 in total (Haynes 1912). The high representation of barbershops (11) in the studio study area when compared to these numbers reveals that the Tenderloin accounted for a significant portion of this industry in Manhattan during this time period, one that overlaps with the Black enclaves of San Juan Hill and Harlem. More importantly, these businesses persisted in a labor environment that had shifted demographically towards White, immigrant barbers.

Table 1. Total Number of Barbers in Select Cities by Race, 1880

	<i>Black</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Total</i>
Atlanta	73	92	6	8	79
Charleston	115	96	5	4	120
Nashville	101	80	25	20	126
Richmond	137	93	11	7	148
Chicago	130	13	893	87	1,023
Cleveland	55	22	198	78	253
New York	106	3	3,177	97	3,283
Philadelphia	430	21	1,661	79	2,091

Source: U.S. Census.

Number of barbers in major cities in the United States by race, 1880
 Mills, Quincy T. *Cutting Along the Color Line: Black Barbers and Barber Shops in America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

Meanwhile, the general dwindling of the barbering profession among Black men in New York City coincided with the expansion of hairdressing as a viable occupation for Black women, the origins of which can be traced to the Tenderloin. In 1908, Mme. J.L. Crawford, a Black hairdresser from Virginia, made history when she opened her hair dressing and beauty parlor at this site on West 59th Street, reportedly "the first Negro establishment of its kind in New York City" (Curtwright 1936-1941, 1). A craftswoman and inventor, Mme. Crawford formulated her own

hair products ranging from styling creams and powders to wigs and toupees. Her business grew over the ensuing years—Mme. Crawford eventually supported a staff of five Black employees and her salon became a local institution of style.



Site of Crawford's Parlor, 1929
Manhattan: 59th Street - 9th Avenue. 1929. NYPL Digital Collections.

The emergence of Black business at the turn of the century represented the aspirational possibility that Black workers could claim a right to space and labor that had been both legally and bodily denied to them by White enslavers only a few decades prior. George Haynes reflects upon this point in his examination of Black businesses:

Therefore, the Negro two and a half centuries under the complete control of a master could hardly be expected in one generation to acquire the experience, develop the initiative, accumulate the capital, establish the credit and secure the good-will demanded to-day in carrying on great and extensive business enterprises, such as find their headquarters in New York City, the commercial heart of the continent. Besides, the handicaps of the social environment, due to the prejudices and differences of the white [sic] group by which he is surrounded, and to previous condition of servitude, have had their commercial and industrial consequences...This study, then, of what the Negro is doing along business lines in New York City does not show a number of large operations when

compared with what goes on in America's greatest commercial Metropolis. But the findings are highly significant for what they disclose of business capacity and possibility. There has been a business development among Negroes in such a competitive community that is both substantial and prophetic (Haynes 1912).

Haynes' attestation of the "prophetic" quality of these early Black businesses is critical to this reevaluation, as the businesses of the Tenderloin in many ways germinated the Black enterprises of Harlem that emerged out of migrations northward in the early 1900s. While this throughline has been argued for other developments from the Tenderloin—James Weldon Johnson's implied that the professional entertainers of Black Bohemia planted the seeds of the celebrated cultural production of the Harlem Renaissance—the same has yet to be explored for Black business and industry (Johnson 1930, 74). The following list of historical assets then evidences the Tenderloin as the first, yet previously unsung, cradle of Black business and industry in Manhattan in the immediate post-Civil War.

Historic Assets

Throughout the course of this contextual study, access to extant copies of Black business directories covering the period of study was difficult. None were available for consultation. As such, the following list of historic assets including businesses, entertainment venues, and sites of labor organization and disruption among is by no means an exhaustive characterization of labor, industry, and commerce in the Tenderloin.

Regardless, each of these assets represent the how Black people overcame structural hurdles White New Yorkers placed in their way that relegated Black women and men to segregated, low-paid jobs. And taken collectively, this wide variety of industry presents a compelling corollary to the supposed ubiquity of service industry labor White observers simultaneously benefited

from and largely demonized. These assets are hereby made available as a categorical list subdivided into five major categories of asset type: entertainment spaces (bars, theaters, hotels), independent retailers, corporations, labor organizations, and employment agencies.

NAME	ADDRESS	OWNERSHIP	CITATION
BAR THEATER HOTEL			
"The Devil's Dive" , " The Black Cave"	263 Seventh Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The Evening World.</i> Dec 12, 1894. 3.
House of All Nations	117 West 32 Street	Black Owned	<i>The Evening World.</i> Dec 12, 1894. 3.
Keystone Hotel	206 West 37 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> May 25, 1905.
The New York House	241 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Sep 15, 1910. 8.
Bill Singleton	106 West 27 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Joe Gans' "Little Egypt"	141 West 33 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Tom Diggs	320 West 37 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Worth's Museum	494 Sixth Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Edmund Johnson	147 West 28 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Joe Walcott	11 West 31 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Johnson & Davis	106 West 32 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Percy Brown	317 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Walter Herbert	337 West 37 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
William Banks	290 West 37 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Hotel Maceo	213 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> May 25, 1905.
Hotel Marshall	127-29 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.

NAME	ADDRESS	OWNERSHIP	CITATION
Joe Stewart's Criterion	331 West 37 Street	Black Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Johnny Johnson's	118 West 31 Street	Black Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Barron Wilkens's Little Savoy	265 West 35 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
Nail's Saloon	805 Sixth Avenue	Black Owned	Freeland, David.
Ike Hines's "The Club"	118 West 27 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jan 28, 1939. 7.
The Waldorf	350 Fifth Avenue	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Grand Opera House	265 Eighth Avenue	White Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Nov 5, 1887. 1.
Fifty-ninth Street Theater	313 West 59 Street	White Owned	<i>The New York Age.</i> Jun 26, 1913. 6.
Breslin Hotel	1186 Broadway	White Owned	Miller, Tom. "The Hotel Breslin (Ace Hotel) - Broadway and 29th Street." <i>Daytonian in Manhattan</i>
Haymarket Dance Hall	66 West 30 Street	White Owned	"The Haymarket." <i>The Historical Marker Database.</i> Jan 31, 2023.
House "No.6"	6 West 28 Street	White Owned	Freeland, David.
Shanley's Restaurant	117 West 42 Street	White Owned	<i>The Evening World.</i> Aug 16, 1900. 2.
Cadillac Hotel	153-155 West 43 Street	White Owned	
Madison Square Theater	4 West 24 Street	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Bijou Theatre	1239 Broadway	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Carnegie Hall	881 Seventh Avenue	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Majestic Theatre (Columbus Circle)	5 Columbus Circle	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Proctor's 23rd Street Theater	141 West 23 Street	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Casino Theater (and Rooftop Garden)	1404 Broadway	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>
Metropolitan Opera House	1411 Broadway	White Owned	Johnson, James Weldon. <i>Black Manhattan.</i>

NAME	ADDRESS	OWNERSHIP	CITATION
CORPORATIONS			
Metropolitan Mercantile & Realty Company	46 Street AND Eighth Avenue, Northwest Corner	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 13, 1910. 5.
The New York Land and Brokerage Company	712 Seventh Avenue	Black Owned	
The Standard News Company	131 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 26, 1908. 7.
The True Light Newspaper	337 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Feb 29, 1912. 7.
The True Lights Big Market	337 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Feb 29, 1912. 7.
The True Light Army Eating House <u>Resaurant</u>	319 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Feb 29, 1912. 7.
The New York Age	247 West 46 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 4, 1909.
Scott Joplin Music Publishing Company	252 West 47 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Aug 14, 1913.
Clef Club Singers and Players Managing Corporation, Inc.	134 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Mar 8, 1919.
The Afro-American News Co	439 West 35 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 18, 1905. 4.
Macy's	151 West 34 Street	White Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Aug 22, 1912.
Gimbel's	West 31 AND 32 streets Along Sixth Avenue	White Owned	<i>The New York Times</i> . Sep 23, 1910. 7.
Sak's	1311 Broadway	White Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Aug 22, 1912.
Garment Center Capitol	494 Seventh Avenue	White Owned	"The Garment Center Capitol." <i>Urban Fabric</i> . The Skyscraper Museum.
Garment Center Capitol	500 Seventh Avenue	White Owned	"The Garment Center Capitol." <i>Urban Fabric</i> . The Skyscraper Museum.
Chelsea Exchange Bank	266 West 34 Street	White Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . April 3, 1913. 1.
Child's Restaurant	36 West 34 Street	White Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 23, 1913.
Seminary Music Co.	112 West 38 Street	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 19, 1910.

NAME	ADDRESS	OWNERSHIP	CITATION
EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES			
The Eureka Employment Bureau	314 West 52 Street	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 22, 1913.
New York Industrial Employment Bureau	153 West 53 Street	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jul 11, 1907.
Julia Pappin Employment Bureau	422 Sixth Avenue	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 26, 1908. 7.
Watts and Gant Colored Comedy Co. : Office of Al. F. Watts, Stage Manager	263 West 40 Street	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jul 21, 1910. 6.
Webb-Draper Employment Agency	West 24 Street AND Sixth Avenue	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 13, 1910. 5.
New Vaudeville Agency (Heidelberg Building)	42 Street and Broadway	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 30, 1912.
J.W. Brown	239 West 41 Street	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jul 14, 1888.
INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES (NON-ENTERTAINMENT)			
Capital Hair Dressing Parlor and Bath House	109 West 29 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 30, 1890.
D.P. Reid, D.D.S.	210 West 27 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Apr 18, 1891.
Miss Blanche D. Washington's School of Music	146 West 25 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Dec 14, 1889.
Mme. Baum's Hair Emporium	486 Eighth Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Mar 21, 1912.
Mr. and Mrs. L. Smith's Laundry	410 West 35 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Feb 25, 1909.
Karow Hat Co.	30 West 36 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 8, 1919.
C.N. Broward Tonsorial Parlor	342 West 37 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 26, 1908. 5.
W. David Brown Undertaker	146 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 13, 1910. 5.
J.C. Thomas Undertaker	493 Seventh Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 25, 1905.
Greenberg's Ladie's Hair Dressing Parlor	589 Eighth Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Aug 16, 1906.
The Empire Hair Dressing Parlor	149 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 28, 1891.
Charles H. Graves	319 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 25, 1905.
The Workers Hand Laundry	230 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Mar 4, 1909.
Norman B. Sterrett Jr.	304 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 13, 1910. 5.
Batthey & Warren Photographers	509 8 AVE	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Feb 14, 1907. 6.
Charles F. Jones D.D.S.	201 West 34 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Sep 27, 1890.

NAME	ADDRESS	OWNERSHIP	CITATION
The Workers Hand Laundry	230 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Mar 4, 1909.
Norman B. Sterrett Jr.	304 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 13, 1910. 5.
Batley & Warren Photographers	509 8 AVE	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Feb 14, 1907. 6.
Charles F. Jones D.D.S.	201 West 34 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Sep 27, 1890.
James L. Curtis	322 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Mar 3, 1910
C. Franklin Carr Undertakers and Embalmers	266 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 25, 1905.
Richetta G. Randolph	322 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 13, 1910. 5.
Dr. Charles H. Roberts D.D.S.	236 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Mar 24, 1910.
National Waiters' Restaurant	128 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Aug 22, 1912.
Frank Wheaton, Lawyer	357 West 54 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Mar 3, 1910.
Mader A. Priddie	220 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Dec 21, 1889.
Skolsky'Sory Goods Store	399 Eighth Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 13, 1910. 5.
353 7 AVE	353 Seventh Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The Evening World</i> . May 14, 1894. 5.
Dr. James A. Banks, Surgeon Dentist	318 West 59 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Oct 3, 1907. 5.
W. W. Hart	107 West 53 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Oct 25, 1906. 6.
Willis Restaurant	310 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jun 10, 1909. 7.
Mrs. E.J. Graham Grammar Instruction	237 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Oct 22, 1887.
Madame Beck's Dressmaking School	324 West 52 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jul 1, 1909.
F.W. Kinsman & Co.	West 39 ST and Eighth Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . May 12, 1910.
Isabel W. Maxwell	46 Street and Eighth Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jan 6, 1910
W. D. Brown's Barber Shop	102 West 27 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Crumpton's Barber Shop	128 West 26 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Chas. Moore's Barber Shop	115 West 30 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Chas. Thirl's Barber Shop	136 West 30 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Seigal's Store	146 West 30 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.

NAME	ADDRESS	OWNERSHIP	CITATION
J. H. Thompson's Barber Shop	155 West 30 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
The Cosmopolitan	1277 Broadway	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Lehr's News Stand	393 Seventh Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
S. G. Gillyard's Variety Store	202 West 37 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Edgar's Stationary Store	59 West 39 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
George H. Washington's Barber Shop	453 Seventh Avenue	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Jackson's Cigar Store	230 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Gwathney's Barber Shop	231 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Digg's Barber Shop	250 West 41 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Johnson's Barber Shop	252 West 47 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Sexton St. Mark's Church	135 West 48 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 19, 1892.
Croft's Barber Shop	332 West 52 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 16, 1905. 5.
J. W. Watkins	439 West 35 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Aug 03, 1905. 5.
Dixie Supply Company	247 West 46 Street	Unknown	<i>The New York Age</i> . Nov 16, 1911.
LABOR ORGANIZATIONS + ASSOCIATED SITES			
Hotel Bellmen's Beneficial Association	343 West 35 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Oct 10, 1912.
Professional and Business Men's Social Club of New York City	104 West 28 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Jun 21, 1890.
The Caterer's and Private Waiter's Club	127 West 26 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Feb 22, 1890.
Colored Vaudeville Benevolent Assc.	127 West 30 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Oct 27, 1910.
The New Amsterdam Musical Association	316 West 59 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Aug 16, 1906.
White Rats Actors Union, Colored Branch	145 West 45 Street	Black Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Apr 13, 1916.
Lyric Hall	725 Sixth Avenue	White Owned	<i>The New York Age</i> . Oct 29, 1887. 3.
Penn Station	214 West 34 Street	White Owned	<i>The New York Times</i> . Jun 19, 1903. 6.

Encroachment of New Industry and the Move Northward

In 1918, the National Negro Business League (NNBL) published a directory of Black businesses in the United States by city—listings for New York included exceedingly few addresses in the Tenderloin with less than ten located below Central Park. This stark contrast when compared to the district's number of Black businesses less than twenty years prior can be largely attributed to industrial changes within the studio study area that began with the construction of Penn Station in 1904. As explained by George Haynes in 1912, "There has been a decided shifting from the part of Manhattan between Twenty-fifth, Forty-second streets, Sixth and Eighth avenues, and into Harlem between One Hundred and Thirtieth, One Hundred and Fortieth streets, Fifth and Eighth avenues during the past five years as business interests have been taking possession of the zone around the new Pennsylvania Railway Station, between Thirty-second and Thirty-third streets" (Haynes 1912).

Black laborers, in part, carried out the excavation of Penn Station, receiving little recognition within the historical record for their labor. Black men worked on the "shovel brigade," moving earth with pick and shovel to clear the way for the palatial transportation center (New York Age 6, 1907). This labor represented an unfortunate irony as, explored in other thematic studies of this studio, the station's excavation displaced local Black communities. Thus, the very hands that built Penn Station were among those most harmed by the social and spatial restructuring it represented.

Yet from its announcement alone, the rail depot changed the character of the neighborhood. White critics of the Tenderloin pinned their dream of eradicating "vice" on Penn Station, with special attention given to its effect on businesses. As quoted from a 1903 article from The New York Herald in *Automats, Taxi Dances, and Vaudeville* by historian David Freeland:

With the advent of the Pennsylvania's big station and tunnel in the heart of the old Tenderloin, that famous landmark of vice and blackmail passes into history . . . Smart shops and resplendent bazaars will line the new streets and plazas of the old Tenderloin site. Here, the wealth and fashion of the metropolis will mingle with crowds from the country, thronging the grand corridors of the palace station (Freeland 2009, 118).



Macy's overlooking construction at the site of Penn Station
Byron Company. "Excavations for Penna. R.R. Co. Terminus, N.Y. City." 1906. Museum
of the City of New York.

Macy's establishment of their Herald Square location at 151 West 34th Street in 1902 was a manifestation of this promise. Although built before the completion of Penn Station, this move northward by Macy's was arguably preemptive. Its proximity to the future site of the railyard can be of little coincidence, likely to draw commercial traffic from this future transportation hub. Gimbel's and Sak's, the primary competitors to Macy's, subsequent move from their downtown locations to adjacent blocks within the ensuing decade further supports this point—even before its construction and displacement of Tenderloin residents, the very idea of Penn Station changed the neighborhood's commercial landscape.



New great department stores in Herald Square. 1903. NYPL Digital Collections.

While Macy's hired Black workers and served Black customers, this was not always true of the other department stores. Sak's staff refused on principle a Black shopper's request to try on a hat in the store, sparking outrage and calls to boycott the store in the Black press (New York Age 1912). The article's title, "Another Incident," implies that discrimination in shopping was becoming a more frequent occurrence. At a larger scale, this shift in the White consumers of the Tenderloin from a night-time, pleasure-seeking crowd to a daytime flock of shoppers began closing many of the district's theaters, bars, and hotels, the primary employers of many Black people, especially men.



White Shoppers Along Broadway, 1921
Street Scenes-Shoppers and crowds. 1921. NYPL
Digital Collections.

The transformation of the Tenderloin into the Garment District at the end of the studio study period brought great structural change to the neighborhood (see the Land Use Historic Context analysis in the Appendix of this report). From the perspective of labor, this change in the neighborhood's commercial identity from service labor to industrial labor disproportionately impacted Black workers. The closure of the White businesses that would historically hire Black staff in favor of the segregated industry that actively denied Black men and women working opportunities shrank an already exceedingly tight labor market. Taken together with the opening of real estate opportunities in Harlem around this same time, the reasoning behind the movement of businesses northward in the 1910s becomes clear.

Looking back to the 1918 NNBL directory that began the previous section, a number of business assets from the Tenderloin reappear in Harlem. These eight businesses (Dr. James A. Banks, Surgeon Dentist, 215 West 137 Street; New Amsterdam Musical Association, 137 West 136 Street; E.P. Roberts, 130 West 130 Street; The National Waiter's Restaurant, 436 Lenox Avenue; W. David Brown Undertaker, 2313 Seventh Avenue; J.C. Thomas Undertaker, 29 West 134 Street; Norman B. Sterrett Jr., 56 West 133 Street; C Franklin Carr, 110 West 131 Street) all relocated to Harlem—a near 10 percent migration rate among the studio's identified assets. Interestingly, every undertaker on the studio's asset list relocated to Harlem by 1918. This perhaps reflects the growing influence of the undertaker as a viable business enterprise for Black New Yorkers that we see rooted in the success of businessmen such as J.C. Thomas.

Taken together, the survival of these business assets in new locations uptown further evidence the importance of the Tenderloin in seeding the commercial institutions of Harlem.

ENTERTAINMENT

Fikri Izza
Chuyan (Charlotte) Zhou

Historic Context

Black entertainment in the Tenderloin District flourished between 1870 and 1920, transforming the area into a vibrant cultural and economic center for the African American population. Initially known as the Old Tenderloin, the district extended from Fifth to Seventh Avenues and 23rd to 42nd Streets before expanding in the 1890s into the New Tenderloin, reaching from Tenth Avenue to 59th Street (Deigle 2009, 649).

The district served as a crucial hub for Black social life and artistic expression, encompassing a wide range of entertainment forms, from American popular music and ragtime to racially charged vaudeville, minstrel circuits, and “coon” performances. Key artistic collectives such as The Marshall Circle and Gotham Attucks Music Publishing played a significant role in nurturing Black performers and producing influential works, most notably In Dahomey. The Tenderloin supported an extensive network of clubs, saloons, and dance halls, housing both esteemed artistic venues—including Nail’s Saloon, Barron Wilkins’s Little Savoy, and Ike Hines’s The Club—and illicit establishments such as gambling houses and brothels. White-owned venues, such as Shang’s Gambling House No. 6, often exploited Black labor, employing African Americans as bouncers while simultaneously marginalizing them within the entertainment industry.

Despite systemic racial exclusion and restrictions imposed by White society, these spaces enabled Black communities to assert their identity, engage in political expression, and sustain their livelihoods within an oppressive environment by White authorities. This era is frequently referred to as Black Bohemia, reflecting the dynamic interplay between artistic innovation and social resistance.



Frank Leslie's Newspaper, "First annual ball of the Skidmore Guard, a colored military organization, at the Seventh Avenue Germania assembly rooms," New York City, 1872.

By 1872, W.E.B. Du Bois, a Black historian, activist, and journalist, described the Black community in New York's Tenderloin district as "closed in from the outer world and almost unknown to it, with churches, clubs, hotels, saloons, and charities; with its own social distinctions, amusements, and ambitions"—a statement that encapsulated the self-contained nature of Black life in late nineteenth-century New York City (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 109). However, over the following decades, this sense of insularity began to shift as Black entertainers sought opportunities within an industry largely dominated by White performers, many of whom perpetuated racist stereotypes through Blackface vaudeville acts.

This historic context analysis examines the narrative of Black Bohemia within the Tenderloin district, structured around three key themes: the artistic, social, and underground dimensions of Black life in a space shaped by White dominance. By exploring these intersections, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Black individuals navigated and reshaped the entertainment landscape of the Tenderloin.

Black Artistic Progression: From Blackface to Black Naturalism

In 1865, Madison Square Garden at 4 West 24th Street, a major White-owned theater, opened and became a key venue where Black entertainers, such as M. Sissieretta Jones, began performing and gained recognition. Jones, one of the nation's three most renowned Black divas at the time—alongside Flora Batson and Marie Smith Selika—performed at Madison Square Garden's Jubilee Spectacular and Cakewalk in 1892 (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 114). A similar trajectory unfolded at other major White-owned theaters, with Black divas performing before a standing-room-only audience at Carnegie Hall in 1896. Selika, who performed extensively across Europe and the United States, is recognized as America's first Black concert coloratura soprano (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 114). Two years later, Black performers had also secured a presence at another major White owned theatre, the Grand Opera House at 265 Eighth Avenue, a theater established in 1863. That year, the theater hosted *The Kings Koon-dom*, a landmark production by Bob Cole's Black-owned company, further solidifying the role of Black artists in American theater (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 117).



Black Patti (Sissieretta Jones): The Great Singer. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, NYPL Digital Collections.



Flora Batson Bergen. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, NYPL Digital Collections.



Composers Bob Cole, James Weldon Johnson, and J. Rosamond Johnson. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, NYPL Digital Collections.

The Garrick Theatre at 65 West 35th Street, owned by White actor and playwright Edward Harrigan, was one of the first venues to accommodate performances by Black artists, signaling the beginning of a shift in the entertainment landscape. Black performers seized these opportunities, using their art as a means of self-expression and political resistance. The growing independence of Black entertainment was further solidified in 1890 with the establishment of Charlie Moore's Douglass Club, known as the "Greasy Front" at 120 West 28 Street. This venue became one of the first dedicated spaces for Black entertainers, featuring notable performers such as Nat Morton, Diamond Flossie, and Aida Overton Walker (New York Age 1939, 7).

African American performers like Williams and Walker initially gained recognition as "coon" performers but later sought to challenge racial stereotypes by incorporating elements of Black naturalism, a powerful mode of expression rooted in the lived experiences of Black Americans within a White-dominated

society, into their performances (Daigle 2009, 633). Their breakthrough came in 1896, when they achieved a record-breaking 40-week run at Koster and Bial's, a White vaudeville theater established in 1886 (New York Age 1939, 7). This effort was championed by The Marshall Circle, a collective of Black artists, including figures like Ernest Hogan and Paul Laurence Dunbar, based at the Black-owned Marshall Hotel (Daigle 2009, 633).



Composers Bob Cole, James Weldon Johnson, and J. Rosamond Johnson. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, NYPL Digital Collections.



Aida Overton Walker. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, NYPL Digital Collections.

However, despite their commercial success and influence, Black artists continued to face violent racial hostility. This tension came to a head during the 1900 Tenderloin Riot, one of Manhattan's worst racial conflicts since the Civil War. Ernest Hogan, a leading figure of the Marshall Circle, found himself a target of racial violence when a White mob, conflating his minstrel stage persona with his reality, chased him through the streets. The press, while exposing White police corruption in inciting the riot, largely justified the violence by portraying Black performers through racial

stereotypes by White society. This incident underscored the challenges Black artists faced in controlling public perception while being subjected to racial fantasies projected onto them by White audiences and the media (Daigle 2009, 640). By the end of the nineteenth century, Black entertainers were transforming the industry, presenting more realistic narratives of Black life through satirical comedy that highlighted the oppression Black people faced under White society (Daigle 2009, 640). This shift was accompanied by a gradual increase in opportunities for Black performers as White audiences became “more receptive” to their presence in mainstream entertainment. This transformation not only reinforced Black artistic agency but also showcased the growing prominence of Black women performers in an industry historically dominated by White control.

In the early twentieth century, alongside the success of the Black performance industry, Tin Pan Alley—the music district on West 28th Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenue—emerged as a crucial space representing the commercial potential of Black songwriters. In 1900, Harry Von Tilzer, a prominent White songwriter in Tin Pan Alley, found himself in a heated dispute after encountering the African American writing team of R.C. McPherson and James “Tim” Brymn, composers of *Let Me Sleep*, on the firm’s brownstone stoop. Von Tilzer’s account provides insight into the partially integrated nature of Tin Pan Alley and the increasing prominence (and financial leverage) of Black performers within the vaudeville industry at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Von Tilzer, he asked the visibly upset composers, “What’s the matter? You look like you are just coming from a funeral.” They responded, “We are, but it is not our funeral, it’s yours.” They explained that Von Tilzer’s partners had rejected a potential hit song because they refused to pay the composers’ asking price of \$50—an unusually high advance for the time. This revelation angered Von Tilzer, as he was aware that the song was already being performed by the popular Black vaudeville duo Williams and Walker. Any song selected by George Walker’s wife, Ada Overton Walker, a celebrated performer in her own right, was almost guaranteed to become a

success (Freeland 2009, 98). This anecdote illustrates that, despite the White dominance in the music industry, African American musicians were beginning to exert significant influence over which songs would become hits, particularly through their connections in the vaudeville circuit.

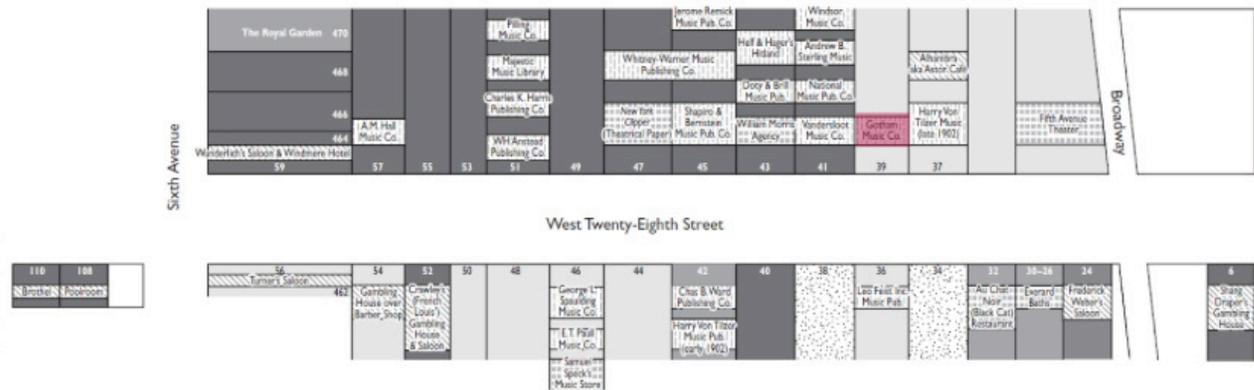


Tin Pan Alley in the 1900s.
Freeland, David. 2009. *Automats, Taxi Dances, and Vaudeville: Excavating Manhattan’s Lost Places of Leisure*. New York: NYU Press.

The Black presence in Tin Pan Alley continued to grow. In 1904, James Reese Europe—later hailed as the “Martin Luther King of American Music” for his pioneering influence—helped organize The Clef Club, a professional club dedicated to Black musicians. After his father’s death, Europe moved to New York and began working in the Tenderloin district, home to numerous clubs as well as Tin Pan Alley’s song publishers. By the fall of 1904, he had sold five compositions to music publisher Sol Bloom and had begun establishing himself by performing at elite social events (Seufert 2023).



Clef Club of New York Program Cover, with James Reese Europe Holding a Baton. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, NYPL Digital Collections.



- Building Key**
- Standing in 2008
 - Standing but façade altered
 - Demolished
 - Possibly altered after 1902
- Function Key**
- Music publisher
 - Saloon, Gambling house, pool room, or brothel
 - Other
 - Gotham-Attucks Publishing House

Tin Pan Alley/Tenderloin, 1902. Freeland, David. 2009. *Automats, Taxi Dances, and Vaudeville: Excavating Manhattan's Lost Places of Leisure*. New York: NYU Press, p. 78.

In 1905, the first Black-owned music publishing company in New York City, Gotham-Attucks Music Company, was established through a merger between Gotham Music—owned by Will Marion Cook and Richard Cecil McPherson—and The Attucks Publishing Company, the first Black music publishing house in the United States, founded by Sheperd Nathaniel Edmonds (Sampson 2014, 37). While there is no clear evidence regarding the founders' political stance in their artistic and business endeavors, the name Attucks was indicative derived from Crispus Attucks (1723–1770), a sailor of mixed African and Indigenous ancestry widely regarded as the first casualty of the Boston Massacre, and by extension, the first person fighting on the side of the Americans who the British killed in the Revolutionary War (Dixon 2018, 54). This choice of name suggests a possible connection to the heightened artistic and political consciousness within the Black community during that era.

Throughout its existence, Gotham-Attucks Publishing relocated four times, with three of its locations remaining within Tin Pan Alley, demonstrating its deep roots in the district. However, in 1911, Cook and McPherson sold the company to Ferdinand E. Miersch, a so-called “song shark” known for acquiring and exploiting song copyrights (Trow Directory, Printing and Bookbinding Company 1907, 410). Despite its relatively short lifespan, Gotham-Attucks produced an impressive number of significant musical works. Its roster of composers and lyricists was remarkable, featuring influential figures in early twentieth-century popular music, including Will Marion Cook, Bert Williams, Cecil Mack, Alex Rogers, William Tyers, Chris Smith, James Reese Europe, Wm. H. Dixon (Malinda, Come Down to Me), Tom Lemonier, James Tim Brymn, Henry Creamer, and Ford Dabney. Their collective contributions played a pivotal role in shaping American music during this period.

The Black entertainment industry in the Tenderloin district represents a significant cultural progression, where music, literature, and performance scenes created a network that expanded Black entertainment. Black artists redefined their identity from behind racist masks by White Industry leaders and forged new artistic traditions. A key manifestation of this legacy is *In Dahomey*, the first musical written and performed by Black entertainers to be staged in a Broadway theater. This African American production satirized the American Colonization Society's back-to-Africa movement (Daigle 2009, 647). The collaboration between performers Bert Williams and George Walker, Aida Overton Walker, composer Will Marion Cook, and writers Jesse A. Ship and Paul Laurence Dunbar resulted in this groundbreaking production, which triumphed on Broadway and toured the United States and the United Kingdom, demonstrating the power of Black artistry in overcoming barriers (Riis 1989, 91).



An Impromptu Coon Dance in the Public Square of Boston."
Billy Rose Theatre Division, NYPL Digital Collections.

The Tenderloin Night Scene: An Interracial Social Fabric

As the Black artistic and entertainment industry gradually gained prominence in the White-dominated entertainment world, cultural clubs in the Tenderloin district played a critical role. They provided Black artists, performers, and athletes with a platform

to showcase their talents while serving as a safe haven for social interaction and community. These clubs were not only centers of Black Bohemia but also attracted White spectators who sought out Black music, dance, and nightlife. Establishments such as Barron Wilkins's Little Savoy and Ike Hines's The Club became hubs for jazz musicians, vaudeville performers, and sports figures, fostering a vibrant cross-racial entertainment scene despite broader societal segregation (Johnson 1930, 92). The Tenderloin district housed numerous "Black and Tan" clubs, which were among the few places where racial mingling was tolerated, albeit under constant scrutiny from reformers and law enforcement (Sacks 2006, 65).

The Tenderloin district and its entertainment venues played a complex role in racial integration, simultaneously fostering cultural exchange and triggering reformist backlash. Many of these clubs were Black-owned or managed by Black entrepreneurs who created spaces that welcomed both Black and White patrons. The Clef Club, for example, was a professional musicians' association that not only provided financial stability for Black instrumentalists but also challenged racial barriers in the music industry. It booked bands for elite White audiences while maintaining a distinct Black musical identity. Its 1912 concert at Carnegie Hall, which featured a 125-member orchestra with unconventional instrumentation—including banjos, mandolins, and guitars—was a defining moment in the elevation of Black musicians in mainstream American music (Johnson 1930, 142). Another significant venue, Ike Hines's Club, opened in 1900 and catered to a diverse clientele, including Black Bohemians, sports figures, and performers. The club's walls were adorned with portraits of prominent Black figures, reflecting racial pride and resistance to exclusion from mainstream establishments. James Weldon Johnson, who frequented the club, noted that while White patrons visited "out of curiosity," the space remained a sanctuary where Black talent thrived (Johnson 1930, 92). The presence of interracial patrons in these clubs fueled concerns among White reformers, who saw such interactions as threats to social order (Black 2006, 65).

In addition to the cultural advancement of Black people during the Black Bohemia period, a social fabric was built, offering a safe space for the Black community through entertainment and social spaces. One of the most prominent establishments of this time was Nail's Saloon, located at 805 Sixth Avenue. Founded by Black entrepreneur John B. Nail, the saloon quickly became a well-known Black-owned establishment, celebrated for its honest reputation and diverse clientele, which included public figures such as boxers, jockeys, and athletes. Nail's success in attracting a racially integrated crowd exemplified the economic potential of Black entrepreneurs. Later, Nail moved uptown, becoming a key figure in the migration that contributed to the Harlem Renaissance (Freeland 2009, 81).

Among the most notable Black-owned establishments was the Marshall Hotel (also known as the "Hotel Marshall"), which became a crucial hub for Black intellectual and artistic life in New York City. Established by James L. "Jimmie" Marshall in 1900, the hotel quickly became a gathering place for the most influential Black entertainers, writers, and activists of the time. Figures such as Bert Williams, George Walker, W.E.B. Du Bois, Jack Johnson, Will Marion Cook, Eubie Blake, and James Weldon Johnson all frequented the Marshall (Kirkeby 2017). The hotel not only provided high-quality accommodations for Black guests in an era of rampant segregation but also housed a restaurant, a ballroom, and a vibrant entertainment scene that attracted both Black and White patrons (Johnson 1930, 92).

The Marshall was more than a social venue; it played a pivotal role in the development of Black cultural movements. The Clef Club, founded by James Reese Europe, was initially organized at the Marshall, serving as a booking agency and union for Black musicians (Johnson 1930, 142). Additionally, early discussions that led to the formation of the NAACP reportedly took place in the hotel's dining room, demonstrating its importance beyond the arts (Kirkeby 2017).

However, the very success of the Marshall Hotel made it a target

for reformers and city authorities. The Committee of Fourteen and the Anti-Saloon League, White-led moral reform organizations, sought to shut down venues that encouraged interracial mingling. Their investigations into the Marshall Hotel, though failing to uncover illegal activities, focused on the racial dynamics of the establishment, particularly the presence of interracial couples (Fronc 2010). Congressman William S. Bennet, a Committee of Fourteen member, openly stated that the issue was not Black-only establishments but the fact that the Marshall allowed racial integration (Kirkeby 2017). Ultimately, under pressure from city officials, the hotel closed in 1913, marking the end of one of the most significant Black cultural spaces in early twentieth-century New York (Kirkeby 2017).

Many entertainment clubs in the Tenderloin were spaces where Black and White performers worked side by side, breaking conventional racial barriers. At the Marshall Hotel, one of the most prestigious Black clubs in New York, interracial musical collaborations flourished. Legendary Black performers such as Bert Williams, George Walker, and James Reese Europe played in venues that welcomed both Black and White audiences. The presence of White patrons at these clubs, particularly White women engaging in social activities with Black men, fueled racist anxieties and moral panic among reformers (Sacks 2006, 66). The Committee of Fourteen, a reformist group established in 1905, systematically targeted establishments that catered to interracial audiences, attempting to close venues like Wilkins' Café and the Criterion Club Café by revoking liquor licenses or framing them as sites of vice and immorality (Sacks 2006, 66).

The integration of White and Black patrons in these clubs, particularly the presence of White women, provoked hostility from the dominant White society. The Tenderloin was home to numerous "Black and Tan" clubs, where racial mingling was more accepted than in other parts of the city. However, reformers and police officials viewed these spaces as a threat to White supremacy and launched campaigns to close them. The fear of interracial

relationships, particularly between Black men and White women, became a major justification for the moral crackdown on these clubs (Sacks 2006, 65).

Police Captain George Walling described his horror upon visiting a Black and Tan club, stating that the sight of Black men dancing with White women was “revolting” (Black 2006, 65). The Committee of Fourteen actively sought to eliminate such venues, portraying them as corrupting influences on public morality. This racial anxiety led to the raids and closures of some of the most influential Black cultural hubs in the city (Sacks 2006, 66).

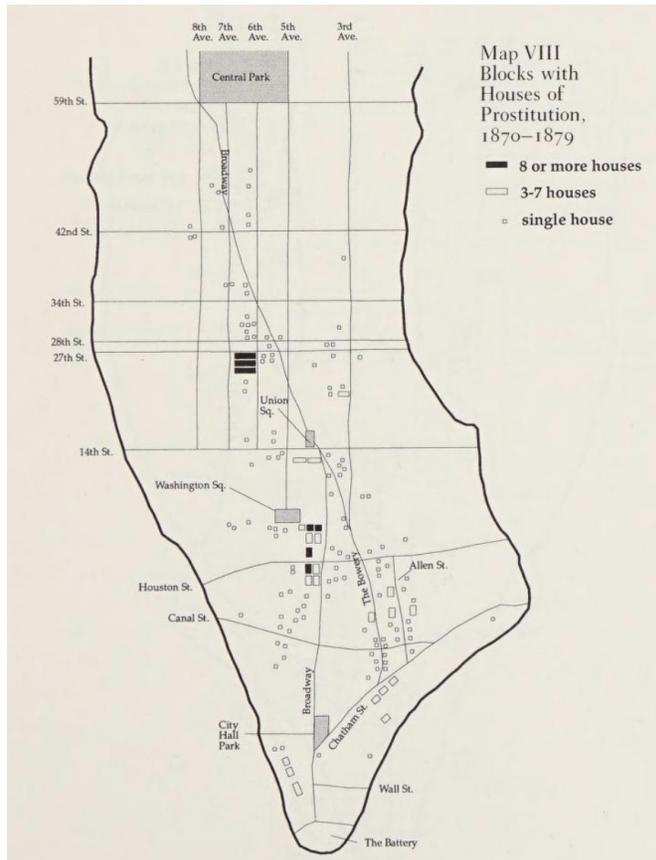
The New York State Legislature passed the Raines Law in 1896. The Legislature originally designed it to curb excessive alcohol consumption by prohibiting liquor sales in saloons and taverns on Sundays, the one day of rest for most working-class people. However, the law included a loophole: it allowed hotels with at least ten rooms to serve alcohol to guests on Sundays (Dreiling 2024). This provision led to the rise of so-called “Raines Law hotels”, where many saloon owners quickly adapted by partitioning their existing spaces into makeshift hotel rooms, often furnished with just a bed and a washstand, just to qualify for a liquor license (Hendrick 2013). While this circumvented the prohibition of Sunday alcohol sales, it also led to an unintended consequence: these “hotels” became hubs for illegal activities, including prostitution and gambling (Flowe 2019). The Committee of Fourteen, formed in 1905, sought to eliminate the vice problems stemming from these establishments. Under the leadership of Judge William McAdoo and Frederick H. Whitin, the Committee worked alongside law enforcement and other White-led reform groups to target locations associated with organized crime, corruption, and illicit alcohol sales (Gallas 2022). Their efforts were instrumental in shutting down many Raines Law hotels, particularly in European immigrant neighborhoods, where beer gardens and saloons had previously been a key part of social life (Curry 2016).

Despite these reform efforts, the Raines Law ultimately pushed the alcohol trade further underground. Speakeasies and hidden drinking establishments flourished, setting a precedent for what would later happen during Prohibition (1920-1933) (Strausbaugh 2018).

Black Survival in the Vice Industry of The Tenderloin

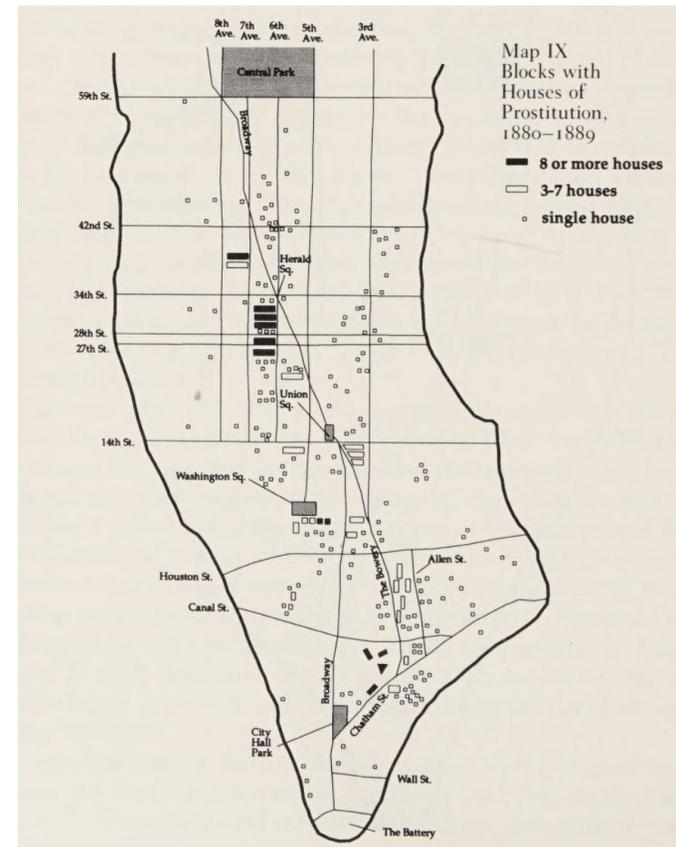
By the 1870s, the Tenderloin in New York had emerged as a prominent red-light district, known for its mix of legal and illegal saloons, dance halls, brothels, and gambling houses. This area became infamous as “Satan’s Circus.” The growth of manufacturing, theater, and entertainment in Manhattan brought an influx of new populations, which in turn fueled the rising demand for commercial sex. In 1870, an anonymous author published a pocket guidebook, *A Vest Pocket Guide to Brothels in nineteenth-Century New York for Gentlemen on the Go*, offering detailed descriptions of popular addresses, the interiors of establishments, and their general atmosphere or “class” level—whether upscale, seedy, or somewhere in between (New York Times 1870). The guidebook acted as a roadmap to the city’s sex industry, helping visitors and curious locals navigate the various brothels and assignation houses scattered throughout Manhattan.

For example, Mrs. Kate Woods managed 105 West 25th Street, known as Hotel de Wood. Ms. Woods furnished the house at a cost of \$70,000, with one oil painting valued at \$10,000. The establishment was known for its “sex workers,” who were particularly noted for their rare personal attractions. Other boarding houses were similarly categorized into “first” or “second” class. By the 1880s, this area was frequently associated with African American sex workers (Gilfoyle 1992, 209).



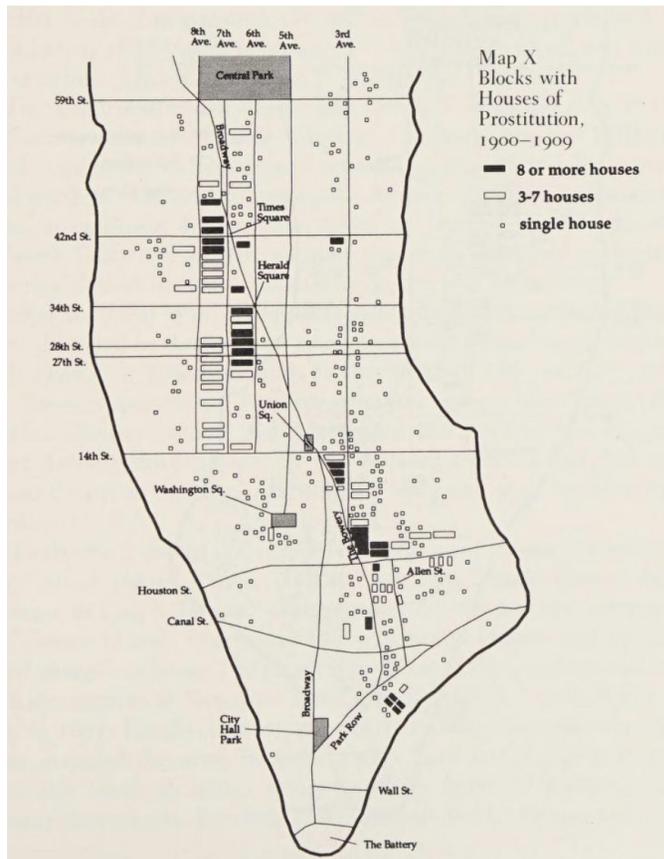
Blocks with Houses of Prostitution, 1900-1909. Gilfoyle, Timothy J., *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1992, p. 201.

The commercial sex industry extended well beyond residential brothels; dance halls, saloons, and bars in this neighborhood frequently served as additional venues for sex work. One example is the Haymarket, a three-story dance hall with bands playing music and “high-kicking saloon girls.” The Haymarket was also nicknamed “the prostitutes’ market,” which meant those saloon girls were most often sex workers (Young and Meyers 2016, 261). This blend of entertainment and sex work, operating openly under the veneer of nightlife, helped cement the Tenderloin’s reputation as the city’s preeminent hub of vice.



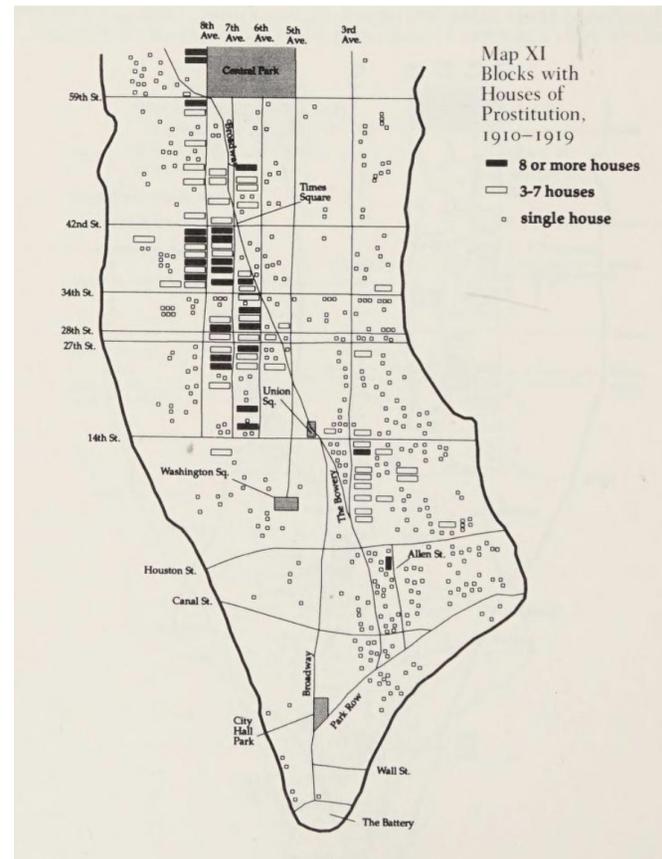
Blocks with Houses of Prostitution, 1910-1919. Gilfoyle, Timothy J., *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1992, p. 202.

There were a number of saloons and bars that also functioned as brothels, with names like Star and Garter, Buckingham Palace, Bohemia, Tivoli, and Old Alhambra, concentrated on the streets west of Broadway (Manhattan Unlocked 2025). In a 1910 letter to the Committee of Fourteen, White Tenderloin resident Jack Ferguson and business owner expressed concern about the Tenderloin sex industry because of its racially mixed nature. Police Commissioner William McAdoo echoed Ferguson’s sentiments, noting, “The mixed-race resort, besides running counter to violent racial prejudices and traditions, is an unmitigated and disgusting evil” (Flowe 2019, 929-930).



Blocks with Houses of Prostitution, 1870-1879. Gilfoyle, Timothy J., *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1992, p. 199.

Places like Digg’s Hotel (Tom Digg), Percy Brown’s Cafe, and Walter Herbert’s Criterion Club Cafe were racially integrated, with White men often seeking the company of Black women (Gilfoyle 1992, 209). Although these establishments were not explicitly recognized as venues for commercial sex, historical records indicate that they exhibited certain characteristics associated with the industry, often operating more secretly. Sex work in the Tenderloin was also a racially segregated affair. Police enforcement relegated the Black sex working industry to the edge of the sex district along Seventh Avenue from 23rd to 40th Streets, better known as African Broadway (Gilfoyle 1992, 209).



Blocks with Houses of Prostitution, 1880-1889. Gilfoyle, Timothy J., *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1992, p. 200.

After the hub of the entertainment industry moved northward to the Longacre Square (Times Square) area in the early 1900s, Black women “soliciting in the streets at any hour of the day or night” filled West 36th to 41st Streets (Gilfoyle 1992, 209).

“Taxi dance” was a common phenomenon in Times Square, the name derived from “pay more money, get more time,” which reached its peak during the 1920s and early 1930s (Freeland 2009, 188 & 189). For example, the Orpheum was the most famous and the oldest, having opened in 1917 or 1918 as Wilson’s Dancing Academy, part of a chain operation

that advertised itself as a dance “school” with “instructresses” (Freeland 2009, 189). It was a type of establishment where men could pay for individual dances with women. This system blurred the lines between social dancing and transactional relationships, as it often provided an avenue for further arrangements beyond the dance floor. Such venues became a space where working-class men could experience a degree of intimacy with women in a way that resembled commercial sex work without being explicitly labeled as such.



Haymarket. n.d. The Gilded Hour.

As a consequence of the 1896 Raines Law, which did not allow taverns and saloons to serve alcohol on Sundays, hundreds of saloons quickly turned into “hotels” with bedrooms, a kitchen, and a dining room, allowing them to sell alcohol—and other services—under the innocent guise of neighborhood hotels (Peters 1908, 88). The Committee of Fifteen (1900–1901) hired private investigators to conduct block-by-block reports on suspected vice establishments across various neighborhoods, with a particular focus on the Tin Pan Alley area. Putnam’s own publishing house published their findings in *The Social Evil* (1902), revealing saloons and bars that functioned as brothels. One example of a brick building, the Wunderlich’s Saloon, located at the northeast corner of 28th Street and Sixth Avenue, was documented as “having a back room where prostitutes solicit,” while the Royal Garden at 470 Sixth Avenue was described as being “patronized

by prostitutes night and day” (Freeland 2009, 116).

These clubs and bars were more than just places of entertainment; they were centers of cultural resistance that challenged racial boundaries through music, dance, and community-building. However, they were also targets of White-led government repression, illustrating how Black spaces of artistic and social innovation were simultaneously sites of surveillance and control. The Tenderloin district’s vibrant nightlife eventually gave way to harsh moral policing and systemic exclusion, but its influence paved the way for the Harlem Renaissance, where many of these Black artistic traditions continued to flourish (Flowe 2019, 75). The owners of gambling places established their enterprises on 27th and 28th Streets. During the late nineteenth century, gambling houses, or “poolrooms,” in the city thrived alongside taverns and brothels, such as Satan’s Circus (Nomad Alliance 2012). The gambling industry thrived largely because of the police corruption, as payoffs to the police ensured that White officials turned a blind eye. Many of these establishments had hidden back rooms accessible only to a select few. Police officers often occupied posts outside gambling houses, allegedly for routine checks, but in reality to act as unofficial security; it was revealed that they were paid five dollars per shift (Freeland 2009, 119). Interestingly, these shady activities became an open secret, shaping the image of Tenderloin.

One famous gambling house was located just off Broadway’s “Tin Pan Alley” block, at Sixth West 28th Street, known as No. 6, opened by Thomas (Shang) Draper. Draper’s venue became a favorite for big bettors from politics and show business, and Black bouncers tightly guarded Shang’s House No. 6. This detail offers a glimpse into the role Black individuals played in Tenderloin’s nightlife scene. Patrons felt their bankrolls were safe at No. 6, because Draper’s security included steel grates, heavy doors, and escape stairways in the rear (Freeland 2009, 121). On 28th Street, there are several gambling houses using “saloon, poolroom” as euphemisms for gambling establishments (Freeland 2009, 78). Some of their buildings still exist today, shown on



Tin Pan Alley/Tenderloin, 1902. Freeland, David. 2009. "Automats, Taxi Dances, and Vaudeville: Excavating Manhattan's Lost Places of Leisure." New York University Press, p.78.

Building Key		Function Key	
	Standing in 2008		Music publisher
	Standing but façade altered		Saloon, Gambling house, pool room, or brothel
	Demolished		Other
	Possibly altered after 1902		

the accompanying map. Even the renowned Haymarket had gambling parlors upstairs (Freeland 2009, 95).

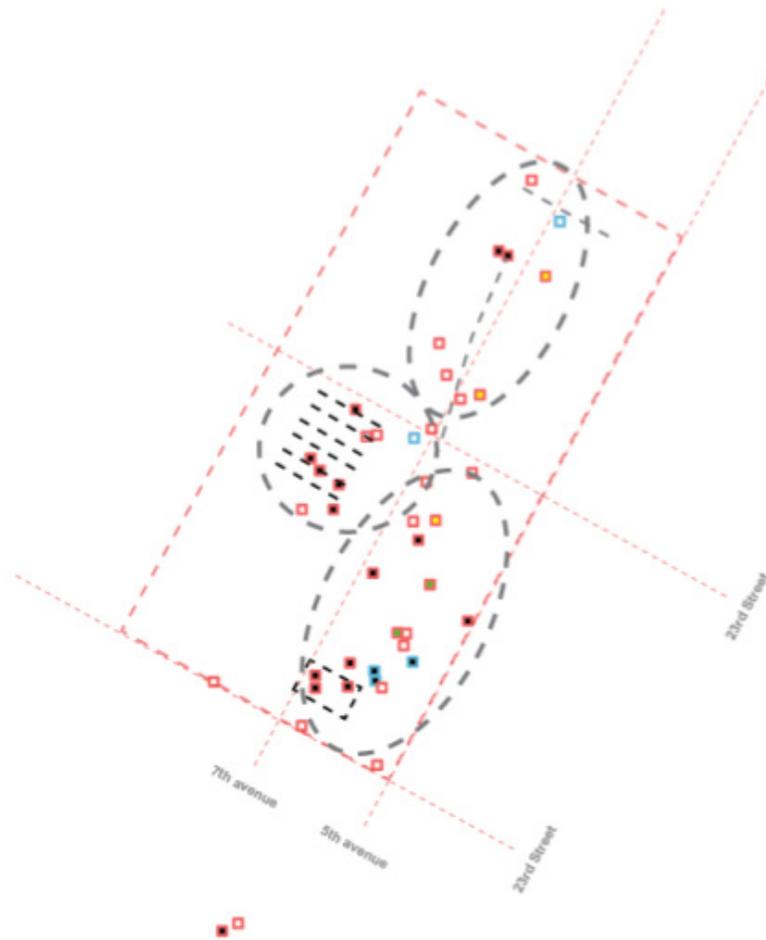
By 1910, the atmosphere had changed in the Tin Pan Alley Area, and the gambling houses, dance halls, and music publishers were gone, in part due to the construction of Pennsylvania Station. The surrounding residential neighborhood fabric was impacted, thus leading to the destruction of the old Tenderloin identity and contributing to the dispersal of its entertainment industry to other parts of Manhattan (Freeland 2009, 102). In addition, reform efforts intensified, leading to increased crackdowns on gambling, prostitution, and other forms of vice that had once flourished openly in the Tenderloin. The combined efforts of district Attorney William Travers Jerome, private reform groups like the Committee of Fifteen, and shifting political dynamics made it increasingly difficult for gambling operators to continue their businesses with the same level of impunity (Freeland 2009, 117).

Times Square), the consolidated gambling empires that had flourished with public visibility in the 1870s– 1890s were no longer practical. While corruption never disappeared, city authorities were increasingly compelled to respond. By the onset of Prohibition in 1920, the Tenderloin's old gambling scene had largely dispersed or been forced underground (Han 2021).

By the mid-1910s, much of the Tenderloin's "wide-open" character was gone. Although illicit nightlife and speakeasies would later find new homes farther uptown (especially around

Historic Assets

The historic assets associated with its entertainment legacy are distributed across both the Old Tenderloin and New Tenderloin. The accompanying diagram below illustrates the clustering of these assets (represented by gray-dashed-line circles). This clustering serves as a tool for understanding the spatial distribution and characterization of Black Bohemia within the Tenderloin district.



The Parti Map of the Tenderloin's Historic Entertainment Clusters in the Tenderloin District.
Map by Fikri Izza.

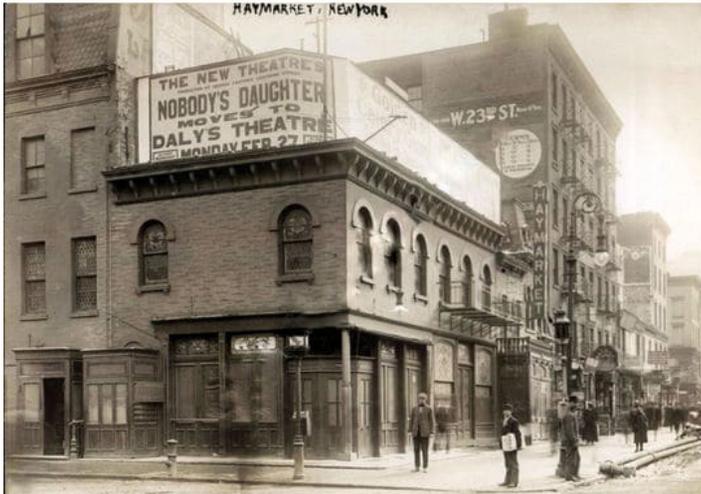
Cluster 1: Old Tenderloin (Lower Tenderloin)



Madison Square Theatre, built in 1863, operated as a theater from 1865 until its demolition in 1908. It was renowned for innovations in stage technology, theater design, and theatrical tour management. Over its history, it was also known as the Fifth Avenue Theatre (Performing Arts Archive 2009).



Grand Opera House (265 Eighth Avenue), in 1898, Black producer and writer Bob Cole founded a production company for his musical comedy *A Trip to Coontown*, initially staged at the Third Avenue Theatre. Later that year, a troupe performed it at the Grand Opera House under the title *The Kings Koon-dom* (Kenrick 2009).



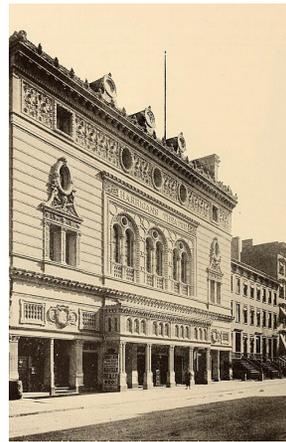
Haymarket Dance Hall (66 West 30th Street, Block: 831, Lot: 78), from 1872 to 1911, it was a major entertainment venue, attracting diverse audiences with its lively performances. It became a social and cultural hub, particularly for working-class patrons, featuring music, dance, and theatrical acts that shaped the era's nightlife.



Bijou Theatre (1239 Broadway), operating from 1880 to 1914, it played a pivotal role in Black theater history. Following racial tensions, it reopened in 1914 as a segregated venue exclusively for Black audiences. In 1906, Bob Cole and J. Rosamond Johnson staged *The Shoofly Regiment* there, and in 1921, White playwright Ernest H. Culbertson's *A Play of Negro Life in the Back Alleys of Washington* featured a Black cast (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 139).



Koster and Bial's Music Hall (147 West 34th Street) is a famed vaudeville theater, hosted the legendary duo Williams and Walker for a record-breaking 40-week run in 1896, solidifying their influence on American entertainment. The venue was known for its variety acts, musical performances, and as an early space for Black performers.



Garrick Theater (65 West 35th Street), built in 1890 by actor and playwright Edward Harrigan, the theater was renamed the Garrick in 1895 and later became home to the Theatre Guild from 1919 to 1925. In 1917, the Colored Players performed there, but their success was short-lived due to World War I, which strained the theater industry (Kenrick 2009).

Broder Schlam Music Publisher (39 West 28th Street), operate from 1893 to 1898, this White-owned music publishing company became known for its connections to Black musicians. It hosted performances by notable figures such as Ernest Hogan, a key figure in the development of ragtime music and early African American musical theater (ExploreKYHistory 2009).

Ike Hines’s “The Club” (118 West 27th Street), Between 1894 and 1902, Ike Hines’s venue provided an organized and professional entertainment space for Black artists and athletes. It became an important center for cultural exchange, fostering a vibrant community that blended sports, music, and nightlife in a respectable setting (Johnson 2001).

Charlie Moore’s Douglass Club (120 West 28th Street), known as the “Greasy Front,” this club was a leading venue for Black entertainers between 1895 and 1900. Hosting prominent artists like Aida Overton-Walker, Nat Morton, and Diamond Flossie, the Douglass Club played a crucial role in shaping the performance culture of the period (New York Age 1930).

Crawley’s (52 West 28th Street), originally Lovett’s poolroom, Crawley’s became a well-known gambling house in 1896. It was a center for horse betting and other forms of wagering, drawing a diverse clientele from New York’s underworld and entertainment circles (Freeland 2009).

Worth’s Museum (494 Sixth Avenue), a prominent training ground for Black performers, Museum operated as a Black stock theater where actors like Bob Cole refined their craft. The venue’s All-Star Stock Company was immensely popular, offering a crucial space for African American talent to develop and gain visibility (Johnson 2001).



Gotham-Attucks Publishing Company, the first Black-owned music publishing company in Manhattan and the United States, Gotham-Attucks Publishing was instrumental in advancing Black musicians in Tin Pan Alley’s competitive music industry. It represented a landmark in Black entrepreneurship, giving African American composers greater agency over their work (Shirley 1987).



Manhattan Opera House (311 W 34th Street), opened in 1906, it became a stage for the New York Syncopated Orchestra, a groundbreaking ensemble of 50 Black actors and singers. The venue helped establish a professional space for Black performers in the early twentieth century, further integrating them into New York’s theater scene.

House "No. 6" (6 West 28th Street), a gambling house owned by the notorious Irish bank robber 'Shang,' House "No. 6" operated until its closure in 1911. Notably, Shang employed Black servants as bouncers, reflecting a complex dynamic of race and labor within New York's underground economy (Freeland 2009).

The Waldorf (350 Fifth Avenue), a high-profile nightclub, The Waldorf was notable for its employment of Black porters and staff, making it an early example of racial labor integration in entertainment spaces. It was a site of both luxury and social change, attracting a wealthy clientele while providing employment opportunities for Black workers.

Johnny Johnson's (118 West 31st Street), a cornerstone of Harlem's nightlife, Johnny Johnson's was a major venue that showcased Black musical and performing arts talent. It served as a hub for entertainment and cultural expression, drawing some of the most influential Black artists of the time.

Clef Club (134 West 53 Street), a unique combination of a musicians' hangout, fraternity, and professional organization, the Clef Club played a pivotal role in the careers of Black musicians. It functioned as both a social space and an advocacy group, supporting Black artists in an industry often hostile to their presence.

Cluster 2: Old Tenderloin and New Tenderloin (Mid Tenderloin)

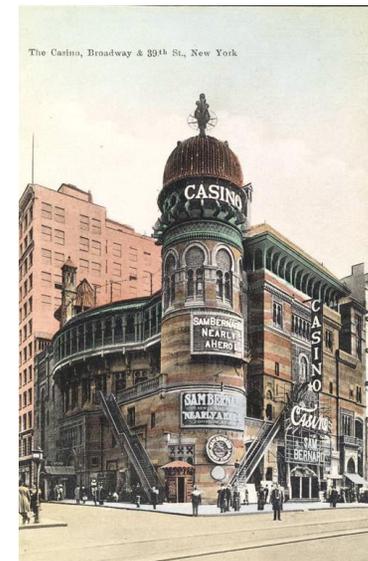
Bijou Theatre (209 West 45 Street), reopened in 1914 as a segregated theater for Black audiences after racial tensions caused its initial closure. It played an important role in the early history of Black theater and performance in New York City.

Gotham-Attucks Music Co., moved from Tin Pan Alley to 136 W 37th St until its sale to Ferdinand E. Mierisch, a "song-sharker." The company was a significant player in the music scene, representing Black artists during the early twentieth century.



New Amsterdam Theatre (214 West 42 Street), Built in 1902-03 for theatrical producers Klaw & Erlanger, it was a prestigious Times Square venue and home to the famous Ziegfeld Follies, shaping the landscape of Broadway during its time.

Casino Theater (1404 Broadway), the first rooftop theater in NYC, renowned for hosting operettas and musicals. After a fire in 1905, the owners restored the venue and it became a top location for performances, including Ernest Hogan's "Clorindy" in 1898.





Metropolitan Opera House (1411 Broadway), opened in 1883, the “Yellow Brick Brewery” was known for its industrial-looking exterior and intimate interior. It was rebuilt in 1892 after a fire, and despite being slated for landmark designation, it was demolished in 1967.

Cluster 2: Old Tenderloin and New Tenderloin (Mid Tenderloin)



Carnegie Hall (881 7th Avenue), a world-renowned venue that became a significant site for Black activism, particularly noted for the “An Appeal to the Mayor” performance. Carnegie Hall played a crucial role in advancing Black cultural and political movements in the twentieth century.

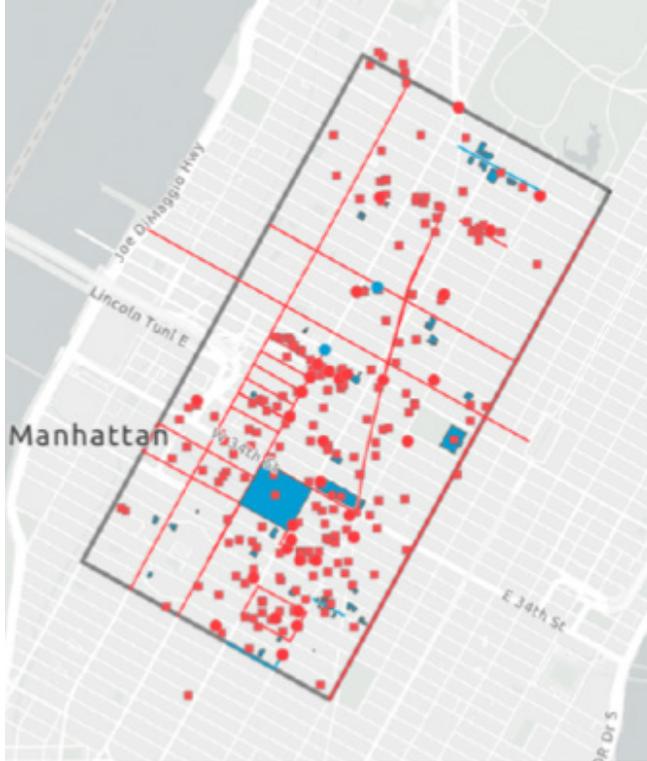
Hotel Marshall (127-29 W 53 Street), located on West 53rd Street in the heart of “Black Bohemia,” Hotel Marshall became a revolutionary center for Black artistic life. It attracted prominent figures from the arts and entertainment industries, including Williams and Walker, Jack Johnson, and Lillian Russell, known for its extravagant atmosphere.



Majestic Theatre (5 Columbus Circle), a prominent venue in New York, the Majestic Theatre hosted a variety of performances, contributing to the cultural landscape of the city during its time.

Fifty-Ninth Street Theater (313 West 59 Street), a vaudeville and motion picture theater owned by Black entrepreneur William Mack Felton. This theater played an important role in providing opportunities for Black performers in the entertainment industry.

Historic Change and Analysis



Map of the Tenderloin's Historical Asset in the contemporary neighborhood.
Map by Sabina Busch.



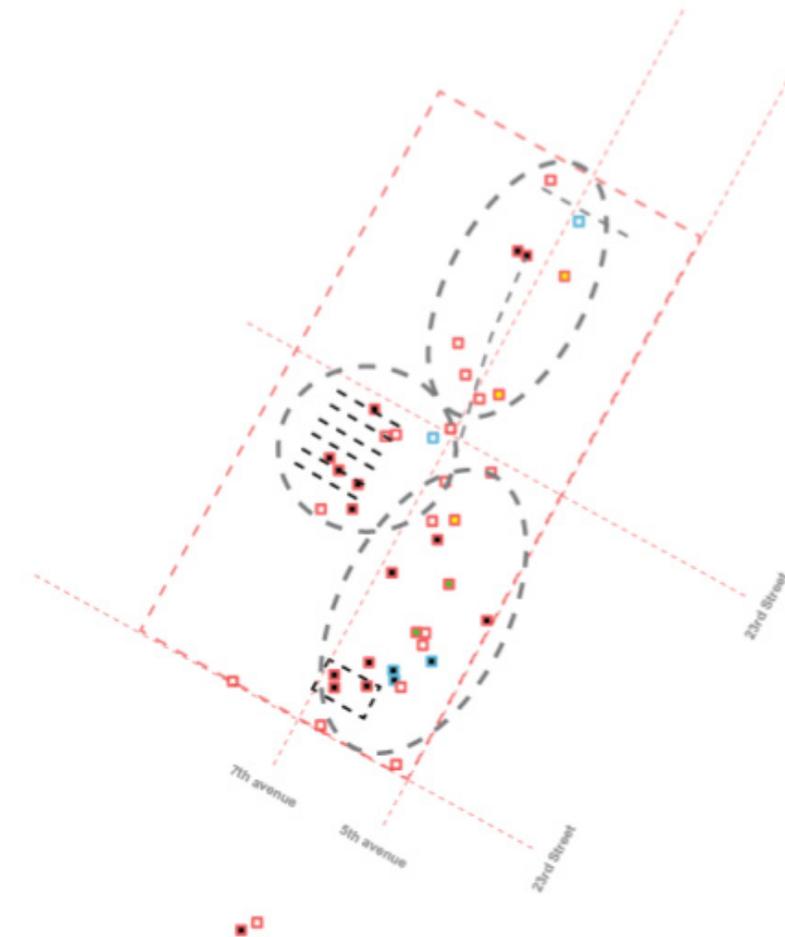
Map of the Tenderloin's Entertainment Historical Asset in the contemporary neighborhood.
Map by Fikri Izza.

Between 1870 and 1920, the Black community in the Tenderloin focused on cultural activities, entertainment, and nightlife. However, it is important to note that there were also simpler aspects of life in the Tenderloin, such as shops and children playing on the streets in the afternoon. In this study, the studio team identified approximately 250 historical assets and about one-third are directly related to the Black entertainment industry. This suggests that Black entertainment in the area was not only significant but also vibrant, despite the pressures of White domination, and appears to have been the embryo for the cultural and entertainment developments of the subsequent era, particularly the Harlem Renaissance.

The Black Bohemia entertainment scene cannot be viewed as a binary phenomenon between the Black and White worlds. On the contrary, it represents a progressive process where Black artistry, initially a form of racist entertainment that the White market demanded, gradually evolved into a full expression of art that embodied resistance and a realistic portrayal of Black life. This transformation not only allowed Black artists to showcase their true artistic talents but also enabled them to dominate the entertainment market.

Similarly, both legal and illegal forms of entertainment were not clearly separated domains. There was an in-between space that connected elements considered taboo and acceptable, mutually influencing one another. These networks formed clusters that we have identified through a geo-location approach, creating small clusters that simultaneously contributed to the life and development of Black Bohemia.

Black Survival in the Vice Industry of The Tenderloin



The Parti Map of the Tenderloin's Historic Entertainment Clusters in the Tenderloin District.
Map by Fikri Izza.

The Tenderloin district emerged as a hybrid hub of vice and culture, with Black entertainers and entrepreneurs playing crucial yet often underappreciated roles. The area's theaters, saloons, dance halls, and music-publishing offices provided spaces where African American performers, composers, and business owners could thrive despite systemic discrimination. Tin Pan Alley, located on West 28th Street, was the heart of American music publishing, yet Black-owned companies, such as Gotham-Attucks Music Company, struggled to gain visibility. These businesses frequently relocated and received minimal mainstream coverage, underscoring the racial barriers faced by Black professionals.

Vaudeville theaters such as the Casino Theater and Charlie Moore's Douglass Club showcased Black talent, highlighting the creativity and resilience of African American artists. At the same time, bars and saloons, including John B. Nail's establishment, offered racially integrated entertainment where boxers, athletes, and stage personalities mingled. Black entrepreneurship in the Tenderloin extended beyond performance: many Black-owned venues also operated as hotels and social clubs, fostering self-sustaining business networks.

The Tenderloin's reputation for vice intersected with the reality of Black sex workers, particularly along "African Broadway" on Seventh Avenue. This mix of nightlife, prostitution, and music often blurred the lines between entertainment and illicit activity. Despite this, the district's vibrant Black creative community paved the way for cultural expression, underscoring the significance of African American contributions to New York's early entertainment scene.

Through examining historical assets and comparing timelines, this research identifies three distinct characteristics of the Tenderloin. The lower Tenderloin, dominated by artistic and production hubs like Tin Pan Alley, coexisted with gambling establishments and brothels. The mid-Tenderloin served as a social hub, where entertainment and networking converged. In contrast, the upper Tenderloin, centered around Carnegie Hall, became the site for

grand performances, drawing artistic products from the lower Tenderloin and social networks from the mid-Tenderloin.

A significant shift occurred in the lower Tenderloin, between 23rd and 37th Streets, where the entertainment industry largely disappeared, leaving only a few theaters near Times Square. This area transformed from a music industry hub to the "Flower District." While Times Square retained its theatrical essence, its architectural typology shifted with the rise of Modernist trends. High-rise International-style buildings reshaped the skyline and character of the area, while the neighborhood surrounding Carnegie Hall, once known for its bohemian atmosphere, has evolved significantly over time.

SOCIAL CLUBS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Yuhan(Alex) Shi

Historic Context

From 1870 to 1920, Black people in the Tenderloin built a thriving network of social clubs, community organizations, and cultural institutions to support their community amid racial discrimination and economic barriers. These spaces played important roles in political activism, professional development, entertainment, and mutual aid. However, as Harlem emerged as a new center for Black life, these institutions followed the broader migration of Black residents from the Tenderloin to Harlem, adapting their services and expanding their reach. The Silent Parade of 1917 was a defining moment, showing the community's commitment to Civil Rights and racial justice. Political advocacy groups such as the Citizens Protective League and the Union League Club worked to combat racial violence and police brutality. Economic and professional organizations, including the Professional and Business Men's Social Club and the Hotel Bellmen's Beneficial Association, provided financial security and career support. Meanwhile, social and cultural clubs, such as Barron Wilkens's Little Savoy, Ike Hines's The Club, and the Clef Club, fostered artistic innovation and cross-racial interaction in the entertainment industry. Mutual aid societies, such as the Harlem YMCA and the New York Colored Mission, offered housing, education, and vocational training. Together, these institutions created a resilient and self-sufficient community, laying the foundation for future Civil Rights movements.

Professional and Mutual Aid Organizations

In the early twentieth century, the Black community in the Tenderloin district faced numerous socio-economic challenges. In response, a range of professional and mutual aid organizations emerged to address the needs of Black professionals, workers, and migrants. These organizations played a crucial role in ensuring economic security and providing essential networking opportunities. They served as a lifeline for those excluded from mainstream White professional spaces. One such organization

was the Professional and Business Men's Social Club of New York City. It was established at 104 West 28th Street. This club was dedicated to promoting the proficiency and economic advancement of Black professionals, artisans, and businessmen. It offered a platform for professional development and advocacy for Black business interests, which were often overlooked or hindered by racial discrimination. It aimed to improve the intellectual and economic status of Black individuals by fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual support among members. It encouraged them to advance in their respective fields and challenge the social inequities they faced (New York Age 1890).

The Society of the Sons of New York, located on West 53rd Street, emerged in the late nineteenth century as one of the most prestigious social clubs for Black elites in Manhattan. As noted by the New York Tribune in 1892, membership was considered "the dream of every respectable Negro in this city." Yet admission required more than personal success or respectability—members had to be born and raised in New York, reflecting a strong sense of nativism within the Black upper class. Non-native New Yorkers could only be admitted as associate members, and only with proof of citizenship and character (Thompson 1981).

This exclusivity reflected growing tensions between native Black New Yorkers and the waves of Southern Black migrants who arrived in the city around the turn of the century. By 1900, many of the city's leading Black preachers, businessmen, artists, and politicians were Southern-born, and their increasing public influence unsettled established families who had long seen themselves as culturally superior. As described by activist Mary White Ovington in 1911, these old New York families, often bearing historic Dutch or English surnames, regarded Southern newcomers with disdain, perceiving them as culturally different despite their education and ambition. Meanwhile, newcomers, full of energy and determination, quickly gained prominence in fields like law, medicine, religion, and politics, reshaping the city's Black leadership landscape (Thompson 1981).

Within this dynamic, the Society of the Sons of New York served as a protective enclave for native-born Black elites—a space where they could maintain social distinction and resist the rapidly

shifting demographics of Black Manhattan. In doing so, the club both reflected and reinforced class divisions within the broader Black community during a period of major social and cultural transformation (Thompson 1981).

Also, the Hotel Bellmen's Beneficial Association, formed by Black employees working in hotels and clubs, was an early example of a mutual aid society. It provided critical benefits such as sick and death benefits to its members. It offered a form of financial security that was particularly important for workers in an era when many Black individuals had limited access to formal insurance or labor protections. Like the trade unions of the time, these mutual aid organizations ensured that Black workers had a support system in times of need. They countered the lack of support from White-dominated institutions that often excluded Black people from full participation. These early Black-led organizations helped to alleviate some of the hardships faced by Black workers, who were frequently relegated to low-wage jobs with few protections and were often marginalized from larger, more established professional networks.

At that time, the National Urban League was a significant social organization. It was dedicated to improving the conditions of the Black community in the Tenderloin. The National Urban League's efforts were primarily focused on improving education, housing conditions, civic participation, and cultural revitalization.

The National Urban League made notable contributions to education and skills training. By organizing projects like the St. Christopher Club, the League provided learning opportunities for community members (Black Fives Foundation n.d.). Founded by a Bishop in 1896 as a Bible study group, the club gradually evolved into an organization that helped community members escape poverty and crime. Through this action, young people were able to learn basic life skills and engage in physical training. It not only improved their physical fitness but also raised their moral standards and reduced the likelihood of their involvement in criminal activities. Such social and educational programs not only

filled gaps in the lives of many Black families but also gave them a sense of identity and belonging. The National Urban League worked to improve literacy and technical skills, thereby enhancing the Black community's access to better employment opportunities (National Urban League 1911–1916).

Additionally, the League worked to improve civic participation and political rights for the Black community. At the time, Black Americans faced great social injustice and had limited opportunities for meaningful participation in civic life. The National Urban League helped by organizing community activities, youth clubs, and social networks, allowing the Black community to gain social capital and integrate into broader social circles. These initiatives not only helped Black youth escape poverty but also elevated their social standing and confidence (National Urban League 1911–1916).

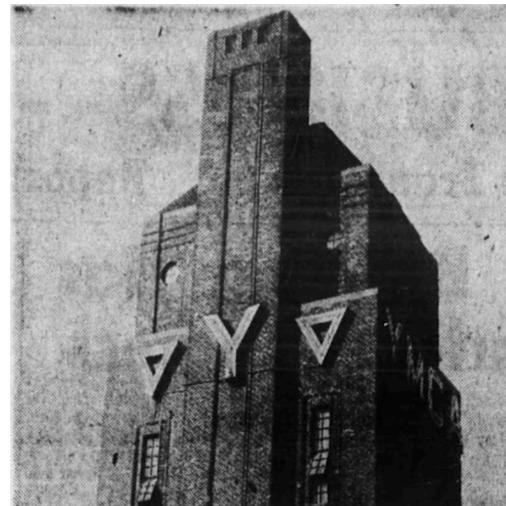
The New York Colored Mission also played a pivotal role in improving the living and working conditions of Black migrants and workers. It provided vocational training and job placement services to newly arrived Black migrants. Many had come from the South in search of better economic opportunities. The organization equipped individuals with the necessary skills to improve their job prospects, which helped them navigate the competitive job market in New York City (New York Colored Mission 1865–1964). Among other vital organizations were the Colored YMCA and YWCA, which became central institutions in the community. The Colored YMCA, founded in 1900 by a group of citizens led by Rev. Charles T. Walker, initially began as a men's club and later evolved into the Harlem Branch YMCA. The organization focused on improving the lives of young Black men in the city. It offered a range of services from educational programs to physical training. Furthermore, the Colored YWCA sought to assist young Black women in New York who were seeking better opportunities.. It began as a small group but rapidly grew into a significant force for social change. The YWCA offered services, including trade training, particularly to women who had migrated from the South

Historic Assets

Professional and Business Men's Social Club, a prominent organization dedicated to advancing the economic, intellectual, and professional development of Black men by fostering business proficiency, advocacy, and mutual support in an era of racial exclusion.

Hotel Bellmen's Beneficial Association, a mutual aid society consisting of approximately 350 Black hotel and club employees, providing essential financial security through sick and death benefits, functioning as an alternative to mainstream insurance companies in an era when Black workers faced exclusion from formal labor protections.

National Urban League Office, the headquarters of the National Urban League, a civil rights and economic advocacy organization founded in 1910 to support Black migrants from the rural South by providing employment opportunities, housing assistance, and social integration, later expanding its mission to address systemic racial and economic inequalities nationwide.



Colored YMCA, a pivotal institution dedicated to improving the lives of Black youth in New York City, providing housing, education, and social services, and later evolving into the Harlem Branch YMCA as Harlem became the center of Black life and culture.

Historic Change and Analysis

A comparison between historical assets from 1870 and present-day surveyed assets shows a clear pattern of change. Only a few elite White clubs, such as the American Fine Art Society, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Union League Club, still exist. However, the Union League Club later moved out of the Tenderloin district. In contrast, most entertainment-based social clubs have disappeared. Professional and mutual aid organizations, such as the Urban League Union, the Colored YMCA, and the Colored YWCA, still exist but have relocated multiple times, leaving the Tenderloin area.

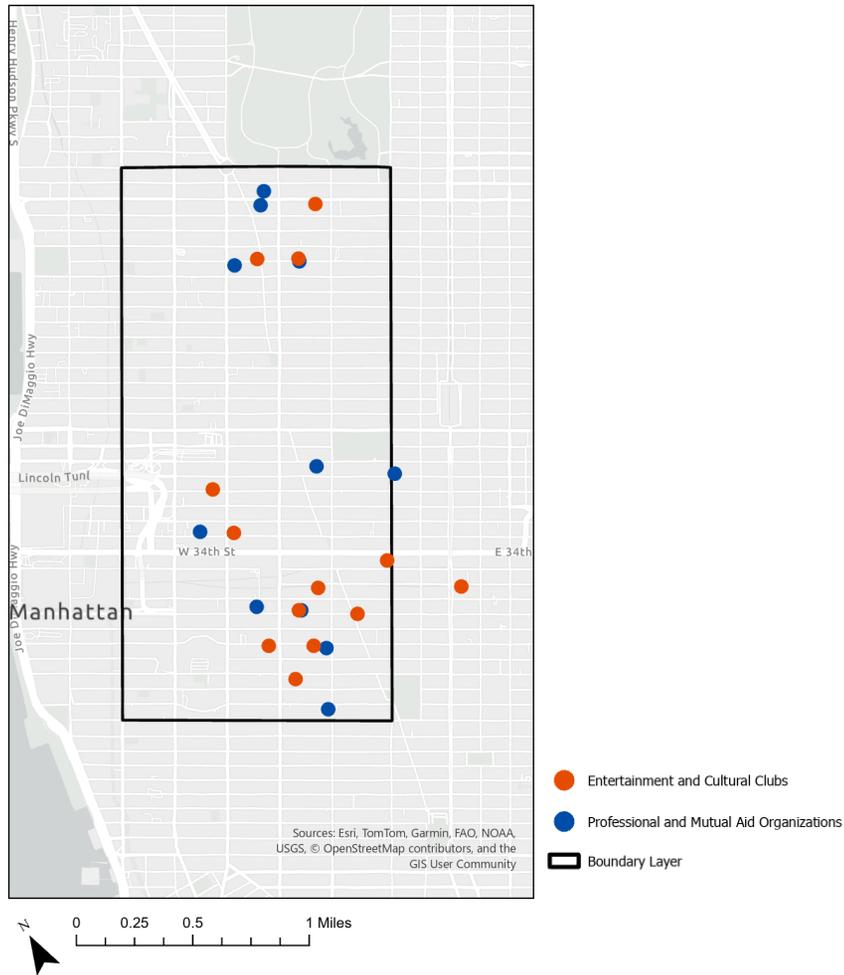


Colored YWCA, established to support the growing number of Black women migrating to New York for better opportunities, providing housing, employment assistance, and social services.

New York Colored Mission, a community-based organization dedicated to the religious, moral, and social uplift of Black individuals, offering vocational training in cooking, sewing, and carpentry, as well as providing lodging for women, employment assistance, and healthcare support through district nursing services.

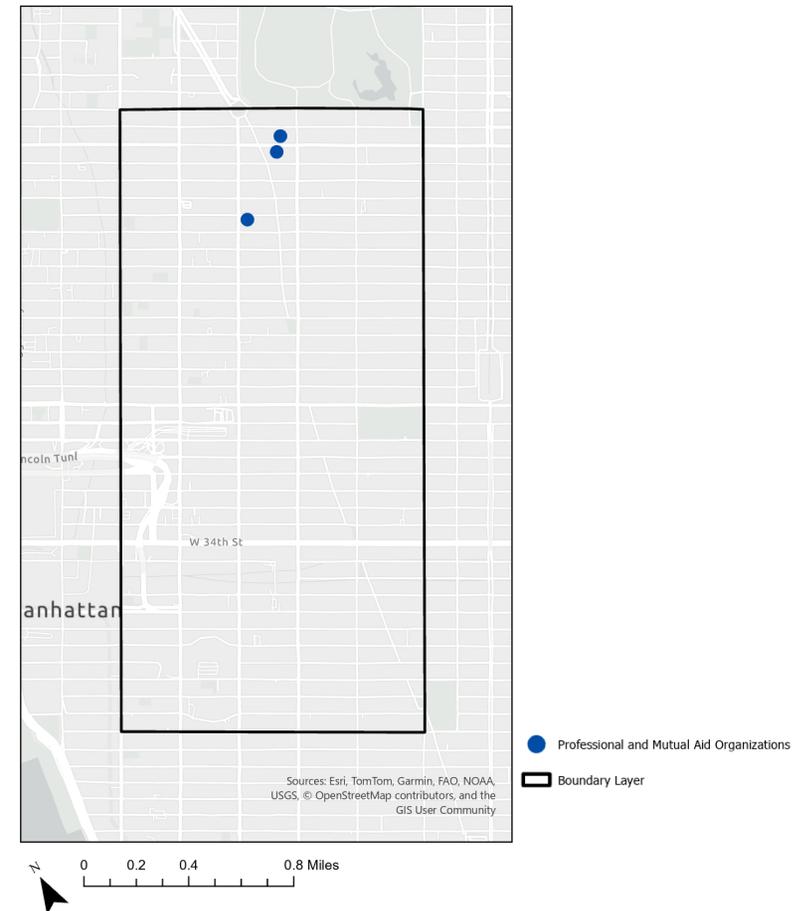
Society of the Sons of New York, a prestigious Black social club founded in the late nineteenth century, serving as a gathering place for native-born Black New Yorkers seeking to maintain social status and community cohesion amid rising Southern and Caribbean migration; the Society emphasized cultural refinement, civic engagement, and exclusivity, requiring members to be born in New York and embody high standards of respectability, thereby shaping the social leadership and elite identity of Black Manhattan in a time of demographic transformation.

Social Clubs and Organizations



This pattern suggests that social clubs and community organizations are highly mobile and not strongly tied to specific locations or historic assets. They are easier to move compared to elite institutions. One key reason is that, in the past, Black grassroots organizations and gatherings faced strong suppression from the White elite. Many of these organizations operated informally and were poorly documented. As a result, they struggled to survive and maintain a historical presence.

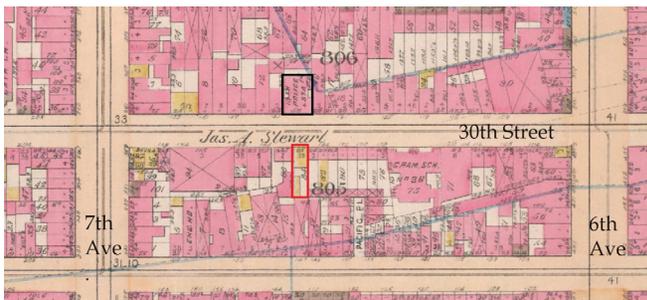
Social Clubs and Organizations Extant by 1920



In contrast, elite White clubs had strong institutional backing and extensive records. Even if they moved, there were photographs and written records of their new locations. This reflects the systemic racial disparities in historical preservation and documentation. Black-led organizations, particularly those rooted in working-class and community activism, were often erased from mainstream historical records due to discrimination and institutional neglect. These historical patterns of exclusion highlight the broader struggle for Black community spaces to achieve long-term

recognition and visibility within NYC.

In late 1889, a group of crime reporters covering the 23rd Police Precinct moved into an old, rundown wooden building across from the station house, known as the “Eel Pot.” What started as a group of about a dozen journalists informally gathering at midnight for meals and camaraderie quickly expanded as more late-night workers, including actors, artists, commercial workers, and even cabdrivers, joined their gatherings. As their numbers grew, they formalized into an unofficial social club, eventually named the Tenderloin Club (Seany n.d.).



Insurance Maps of Manhattan, New York City, Volume 6, Plate 306 and 806. Sanborn Map Company. (1909).

However, tensions within the club soon surfaced as original newspaper members felt that their informal gatherings had become too crowded with outsiders. In 1893, they left to establish the Anonymous Club at 38 West 30th Street, while the remaining Tenderloin Club members relocated to 114 West 32nd Street (Seany n.d.).



Insurance Maps of Manhattan, New York City, Volume 6, Plate 306 and 806. Sanborn Map Company. (1909).

The beginning of the end came in 1894 when Anthony Comstock, an anti-vice crusader known for his moral campaigns against obscenity, led a raid on the Tenderloin Club. Armed with axes, Comstock and his men destroyed much of the club’s artwork and confiscated paintings and photographs deemed “obscene.” The only person present at the time, the 16-year-old Black doorman Eugene Leonard, was arrested and jailed on obscenity charges. Although the club managed to secure his release through legal intervention, the raid marked the start of an intense crackdown (Seany n.d.).

However, the New York State Senate, through the Lexow Committee, launched an investigation into police corruption in New York City, revealing deep-seated vice and bribery within the Tenderloin District. In 1895, Theodore Roosevelt became President of the Police Commission and initiated sweeping reforms, further disrupting the district’s illicit activities. In 1896, the Raines Law was enacted, imposing strict liquor regulations that forced unlicensed clubs to shut down. The Tenderloin Club, lacking official charter recognition, was deemed a “fake club” and repeatedly raided. Membership had already declined due to mounting restrictions, and faced with continued police harassment, the club was ultimately forced to close (Seany n.d.).

In an ironic twist, the 23rd Police Precinct station, which had once been the target of the Tenderloin Club’s journalistic scrutiny, was demolished as part of the district’s reformation efforts. In 1905, a new five-story precinct house was built on the very site of the original Tenderloin Club. The wood remains of the club’s first building were sold as kindling for a mere \$6.25. The night after the demolition, a few old members were seen scavenging through the rubble, searching for souvenirs of the club that had once been a vibrant center of New York City’s bohemian nightlife (Seany n.d.).

Many Black social clubs of the time, such as Barron Wilkens’ Little Savoy, the Waldorf, among others, were highly mobile and lacked fixed venues, and thus did not retain their historical assets over time (Seany n.d.). However, a few nightclubs have survived.

Despite being overshadowed by modern high-rises and repurposed as a bagel shop today, this 1886 structure serves as a poignant reminder of a bygone era. Once home to Billy's Topless Bar, it retains physical markers of its deep history, including the engraved plaque that reads "The Corner" and the inscription "KOSTER & BIAL" near the cornice, honoring the legacy of John Koster and Albert Bial. The building was originally part of a larger entertainment complex, with Koster and Bial operating a poolroom and saloon that served as an adjunct to their concert hall. This historic site offers a rare glimpse into the neighborhood that, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, became infamous for its vibrant nightlife and became, as historian Timothy Gilfoyle described, "the most famous sex district in New York City history" (Seany n.d.).

Professional and Mutual Aid Organizations

The architectural and urban evolution of Black institutions between 1870 and 1920 reflects significant change. Not only the increasing necessity of community-driven spaces, but also the broader demographic shift of Black populations from the Tenderloin district to Harlem. As systemic racial segregation and socio-economic challenges increased, they sought greater opportunities for stability, professional advancement, and self-sufficiency. So it led to a migration that reshaped the urban landscape. Institutions such as the Harlem YMCA, the Colored YWCA, and the New York Colored Mission first established themselves in the Tenderloin district, where Black communities had begun forming in the late nineteenth century. However, as Harlem became a center for Black social and economic life, these institutions relocated. It followed and facilitated the movement of Black residents northward.

The Harlem YMCA exemplifies this transition. Originally founded in 1900, it was under the leadership of Rev. Charles T. Walker. The YMCA began as a small organization that operated from a rented space on West 53rd Street in the Tenderloin. However, when more Black migrants arrived in New York City from the South, the

demand for communal and professional support services grew. By 1903, the Harlem YMCA moved to a larger three-story building at 132 W. 53rd Street. Shortly, it expanded again to a facility at 252-254 W. 53rd Street. However, as Harlem transformed the cultural and economic center of Black life in New York, the YMCA recognized the necessity of it. So they relocated to better serve their community. A large-scale fundraising campaign in the 1920s enabled the YMCA to move its headquarters to 181 W. 135th Street. They established a six-story building that would later be expanded into a twelve-story facility. This move showed the YMCA's commitment to making it within the heart of the growing Black community (New York Age 1953).

Additionally, the Colored YWCA followed a similar trend of institutional expansion correlating with the demographic movement of Black residents from Tenderloin to Harlem. Established in 1905, the goal was to assist Black women in securing employment and housing. The YWCA first operated from a small space at 169 West 63rd Street in the Tenderloin. As the population of Black women in New York increased, the demand for the YWCA's services increased. In 1912, it relocated to a rented house at 143 West 53rd Street, a move that kept it within the Tenderloin. But it also provided more space for its workforce training and social services. However, as Harlem became a major center for Black migration, the organization recognized the need to follow its community north. In response, it acquired two private houses at 121-123 West 132nd Street, marking its transition into Harlem and cementing its role as a long-term provider of economic and social support for Black women. This expansion coincided with the labor shortages caused by World War I, which made workforce training even more crucial, especially when it was a hard time for Black women to achieve economic security in the labor market (New York Age 1955).

Collectively, these relocations highlight the resilience and strategic planning of the Black community. They not only countered systemic exclusion but also laid the groundwork for broader social and economic advancements.

SOCIAL WELFARE AND HEALTHCARE

Heather Oakley

Historic Context

During the studio's study period (1870-1920), public health and social welfare in New York City were inextricably linked to housing conditions and economic opportunities. Within the Tenderloin, many Black residents confronted a tenuous daily existence. White people limited Black people's access to jobs, adequate housing, and healthcare services, thus developing and enforcing a system of oppression against their fellow Black neighbors, i.e., systemic White supremacy. White landlords charged Black tenants more rent, making fewer housing options available and forcing them to live where they could afford, including damp cellars and rear tenement buildings. These dwellings perpetuated a lifetime of health inequalities, resulting in higher mortality rates compared to their White neighbors. To meet the needs of Black residents in the Tenderloin, social and welfare organizations were established that offered a multitude of public services. However, access to healthcare, such as hospitals, remained on the periphery of the neighborhood, to the detriment of the community's overall health.

By the early twentieth century, Black residents in the Tenderloin and the organizations that served them began moving north to Harlem in search of improved housing and better job opportunities. Virtually no historic buildings within this theme survive today in the study area. While these organizations left, their stories continued in Harlem, where these organizations were able to expand their services to the Black community. As they grew in Harlem, their roots, though altered today, remain in the Tenderloin.

Organizations

The nineteenth century witnessed dramatic advances in the healthcare and welfare of New Yorkers. Public and private institutions built institutions such as hospitals, sanitariums, and asylums to address the public health needs of the city's growing population of vulnerable and impoverished communities.

Advocates formed social groups, such as the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor and the New York Charity Organization Society, to provide impoverished residents with food, clothing, and financial support. The city’s lawmakers wrote and passed sanitation laws to clean the streets of garbage, horse manure, dead animals, and industrial waste. Yet, despite these advances, the Black community in the Tenderloin remained vastly underserved, confronted with inescapable poverty, inadequate housing, and compromised health.

During the studio’s study period, public and private institutions built hospitals and clinics in Manhattan to serve people with low or no incomes; however, they were largely at the periphery of the Tenderloin, physically located outside the neighborhood. This created barriers to accessing adequate care. Moreover, systemic White supremacy prevented Black people from pursuing medical training as doctors, nurses, and midwives, which affected how Black people experienced healthcare in their daily lives. To lessen the burden on Black residents in the Tenderloin, charity organizations focused on the Black community played a vital role in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable. Churches like St. Philips, the oldest Black Episcopal Church in New York City, and the New York Colored Mission provided myriad services for their community, including housing, employment, and industrial skills classes. However, by the early twentieth century, the Black community in the Tenderloin and the organizations that served them began moving north to Harlem in search of greater security, improved housing, and better job opportunities.

Environment and Social Pressures

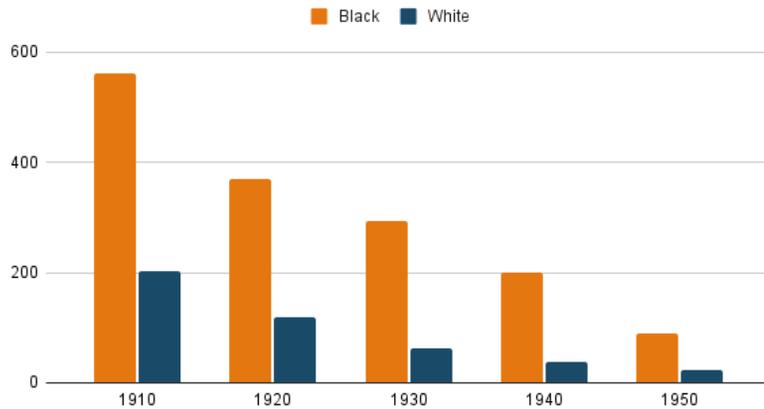
In nineteenth-century New York City, public health was closely tied to, and often dependent on, one’s living conditions and access to economic opportunities. In the Tenderloin, the reality faced by many Black people was precarious, fragile, and significantly lacking due to pervasive forms of systemic White supremacy, such as segregated housing. White landlords openly

discriminated based on race and charged Black people higher rents than White people (Ovington 1905, 25). This often meant that the only financially viable housing option for Black tenants was in the damp basements or rear buildings of tenements, which frequently lacked ventilation, fresh air, and access to sunlight. As a result of these exploitative housing practices, Black people experienced significantly worse health outcomes marked by higher mortality rates than their White neighbors (Ewbank 1987, 100-128). A six-year mortality study from 1884-1890 reveals that the death rate from Consumption (Tuberculosis) among the Black population was double that of the White population in New York City. In the ensuing decades, Tuberculosis continued to soar among the Black communities in New York City, where death rates far exceeded that of White people.

CAUSES	Aggregate.	WHITES.				Colored.	
		Total.	Native.		Foreign.		
			Total.	Both par- ents native.			One or both parents foreign.
All causes.....	2,601.00	2,983.03	3,425.08	2,350.89	3,561.09	2,314.77	3,327.36
Scarlet fever.....	52.19	52.91	85.57	79.54	88.30	0.89	11.11
Typhoid fever.....	24.27	24.38	10.51	18.51	19.96	30.89	18.05
Malarial fever.....	24.92	24.09	26.98	30.07	25.29	21.47	25.69
Diphtheria.....	121.11	122.07	202.45	179.46	212.94	17.58	31.94
Croup.....	60.53	61.30	101.42	78.76	111.75	8.59	13.19
Diarrheal diseases.....	316.85	318.14	491.16	383.24	540.36	90.25	243.72
Consumption.....	391.75	385.05	310.05	228.45	342.09	483.83	774.21
Pneumonia.....	287.80	287.25	363.64	280.15	314.78	265.27	324.27
Measles.....	45.07	45.21	76.31	68.34	84.59	6.56	15.28
Whooping cough.....	33.79	33.09	57.82	51.24	50.46	1.09	30.58
Cancer and tumor.....	60.55	60.82	29.49	54.92	17.32	162.61	45.13
Heart disease and dropsy.....	138.34	137.37	83.65	130.00	77.08	194.95	188.17
Childbirth and puerperal diseases.....	28.72	26.78	18.25	16.87	18.87	38.01	23.01
Diseases of the liver.....	33.93	33.39	17.91	24.05	15.11	63.79	12.56
Diseases of the nervous system.....	241.96	241.99	270.11	308.64	261.27	107.06	240.25
Diseases of the urinary organs.....	173.72	172.52	110.77	147.70	93.90	253.86	242.33
Old age.....	21.38	21.16	8.69	21.11	2.15	38.37	34.02
Stillbirths.....			394.23	228.81	424.97		300.00
All other causes.....	711.32	710.86	871.27	918.05	849.04	499.44	740.88
Unknown.....	0.99	0.06	1.11	1.23	1.06	0.70	2.78

“Specified cause of death, average annual death rate per 100,000 of the mean population during the 6 years ending May 31, 1890, from “Vital Statistics of New York and Brooklyn: Six Years Ending May 31, 1890,” Department of the Interior Census Office.

Tuberculosis Death Rate Per 100,000 People



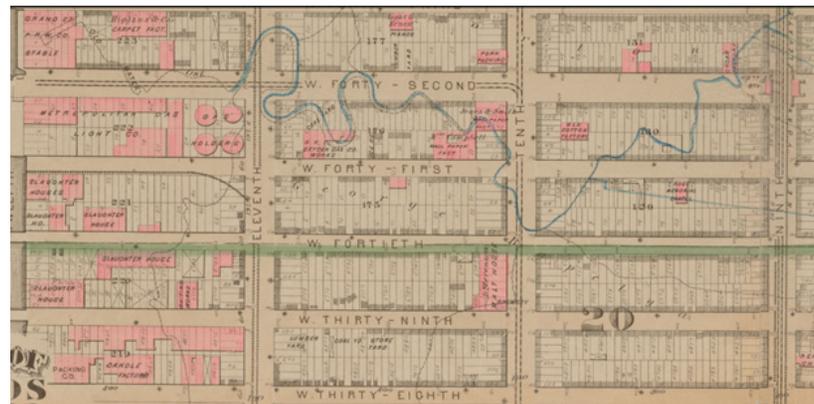
Leading cause of death among Black and White populations, 1910-1950. New York Tuberculosis and Health Association. 1952

The fact that Black people experienced higher rates of disease and death than their White neighbors was not a new development during the studio's study period. Unventilated cellar basements were dangerous breeding grounds for disease, a fact that had been recognized decades earlier. In a report about the cholera epidemic of 1819, it was recorded that "out of 48 blacks, living in ten cellars, 33 were sick, of whom 14 died; while out of 120 White people living immediately over their heads in the apartments of the same house, not one even had the fever (Griscom 1845)." Despite this, damp, stifling, and neglected tenements continued to be rented to people in the name of profit.

An 1845 report concerning the laboring population of New York also attributed dampness and the lack of ventilation to be "a very prolific source of disease and, combined with the darkness and impure air of these places, is actually productive of a great amount of sickness." Well into the twentieth century, doctors needed only to look at patients and know where they lived (Griscom 1845). Their pallor, gaunt appearance, and persistent cough indicated a life of illness that would not abate unless the occupant could afford to move elsewhere. As more Black families moved to the North from the South in the Great Migration following

emancipation from chattel enslavement, housing was limited and often desperate, forcing many families to share a few dark rooms until employment could be secured.

To further complicate public health, the co-location of industry and transportation near residential communities negatively impacted air quality. During the studio's study period, the lack of land use regulations meant that countless of industrial and manufacturing businesses, including refineries, swill mills, slaughterhouses, freight depots, and iron, brass, and copper works, were pumping toxic pollution into the air of the Tenderloin. The dangerous experience of inhaling airborne pollution was a daily occurrence in the Tenderloin, compromising the ability for residents to avoid the environmental consequences of the city's rapid industrial expansion (Schulman 2023). To further compromise the quality of air, the Tenderloin was between the elevated Sixth and Ninth Railways, which meant daily exposure to substantial noise and air pollution. Before electrification in the early twentieth century, the trains spewed ashes, sparks, and soot on the streets and buildings below them.



Detail from Bromley's Atlas of the Entire City of New York, 1879, Plate 15 showing the co-location of slaughterhouses, factories, stables, breweries, lumber, coal, and stone yards (in pink) amidst residential areas. NYPL

Healthcare

Within the studio's study area, smaller specialty clinics opened during the late nineteenth century: the New York Institute for the Blind, New Amsterdam Eye and Ear Hospital, and the Metropolitan Throat Hospital. However, throughout the study period, 1870-1920, there was a noticeable absence of new charitable hospitals being built in the Tenderloin, whereas the east side of Manhattan had at least seventeen hospitals at the turn of the century.

As noted in the New York Times by a resident in the nineteenth ward:

Of late years, this section of our city (the nineteenth ward) has become veritably the Mecca of benevolent enterprises in this line, for reasons not easy to explain unless for the convenience of those who foster them. They are also aggregated within a comparatively small area- one bounded only by Fortieth and Eighty-third streets. Fifth Avenue, and the East River....The Red Light and the Tenderloin are in point. They are both densely populated and with a somewhat different class of peoples, respectively, it is true...There is no benevolence that appeals to the higher sense of mankind more keenly and lasting than the prompt suffering of our fellow-beings in their homes, or at least in their society and surroundings. Where so many now are located, and others to be within a short time, does not seem to be meeting the issue. It is not convenient, and besides, this needy people will feel as if they are taken away from their friends among strangers; also, this section of the city is relatively sparsely populated and the home of many of our wealthiest citizens, and does not seem to need this monument to personal charity (New York Times 1902, 14).

In 1908, the Standing Committee on Hospitals of the State Charities Aid Association observed that "the Middle West side, comprising chiefly the territory between 20th and 86th street west

of 6th avenue, was lacking. Roosevelt Hospital, in the far northwest corner of the Tenderloin, was, without doubt, one of the busiest hospitals in the city with hundreds of patients are turned away every year for lack of room" (State Aid Charities 1908). The only hospital devoted to serving the Black community in New York City was the Colored Home, located outside the studio's study area at East 65th Street and First Avenue. Founded in 1838 as a home for the "worthy Colored Poor" on West 51st and Twelfth Avenue, the institution grew to serve more purposes, relocating to the east side. By 1877, the Colored Home included lying-in and hospital departments as well.



Drawing of The Colored Home at East 65th Street and First Avenue.
Courtesy of Wikipedia

Despite being underfunded, the Colored Home provided vital healthcare to nearly 800 patients annually, from infants to aging adults. The Commissioners of Public Charities and Correction failed to keep their word and provide their pledged support, forcing the Colored Home to fundraise to meet their expenses (New York Times 1877). In 1882, the Colored Home relocated to the Bronx to expand services. This was a devastating loss for New York City's Black community, particularly in the Tenderloin which had the largest Black population in Manhattan circa 1875 (New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor 1877).

As White male doctors continued their grip on the evolution of healthcare, there was a concerted effort on their part to eradicate the role of the midwife through the racialization of midwifery. As more American-born women were turning away from midwife deliveries, the changing racial demographics of midwifery made it vulnerable to criticism (Craven & Glatzel 2010, 330-358). White doctors and White nurses campaigned against midwives, who were largely European immigrant women, characterizing them as “filthy”, “ignorant,” and a “danger” to the lives of mothers (Crowell 1906). In 1908, New York State legislature gave control of midwife licensing to the Department of Health, which implemented stringent regulations the following year. It became prohibitive for many practicing midwives to pursue educational programs to fulfill licensing requirements. In addition to formal education requirements, every registered midwife had to have training under a physician who could attest to her “character and habits” and state the number of confinements experienced under the recommending physician’s care (New York City Department of Health 1911). Such a requirement would have been incredibly difficult for most midwives, particularly Black midwives, as few Black doctors were in practice at this time. White physicians were unlikely to offer their endorsement easily or willingly. Under the guise of improving maternal and infant mortality rates, White doctors and White nurses effectively put out of business Black and European immigrant midwives.

The embrace of maternity hospitals, such as Sloane Maternity Hospital, on the periphery of the Tenderloin, clearly showed the shift in attitudes across races and classes. The New York Times noted that “Sloane cares [sic] for 700 patients a year... Statistics show that New York City cares practically for 3,000 maternity patients a year, besides the great number provided for by its churches. One percent of these is colored” (New York Times 1894).

Black women continued to use the services of midwives well into the twentieth century despite attempts to institutionalize the process of giving birth. In 1905, 43,834 babies, forty-two percent

of reported births, were delivered at home with the aid of a midwife in New York City (Crowell 1906). There were many reasons for this. Culturally, many women were uncomfortable with the idea of a male doctor taking control of their bodies during the birthing process. The preference for a midwife can also be attributed to cost because, financially speaking, they were more affordable. For example, a midwife might cost eight dollars compared to a physician or hospital that charged \$15-\$25 (Litoff 1978, 235–51). In the early years of Sloane, the cost to deliver a baby was \$25, the equivalent of two months' rent or more for those living in the Tenderloin. Worthy poor mothers were not turned away from Sloane for lack of funds. However, if they were not able to pay, new mothers were expected to repay their fee by working at the hospital for three months once they recovered from birth (New York Times 1894). The expectation of labor for labor perpetuated an era of neo-slavery and continued to erode women's control of the birthing process by White doctors.



Sloane Maternity Hospital, at West 59th Street and Tenth Avenue, c. 1887. Courtesy of Columbia University



The New York Times, 1929
Dr. Eugene P. Roberts

DR. E. P. ROBERTS, 85, HARLEM PHYSICIAN

First Negro Assistant Medical Examiner, a Founder of the Urban League, Is Dead

Dr. Eugene Perry Roberts, one of the oldest physicians in this area and one of the first Negroes to practice in New York, died yesterday in his home, 130 West 130th Street, at the age of 85. He had been inactive for the last three months because of failing health.

A leader in the Negro community, Dr. Roberts had been instrumental in aiding many young Negro physicians get a start. He was a founder of the National Urban League.

He was born at Louisburg, N. C., where his parents had been born as slaves. One of nine children, he attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, graduating in 1891. He came to study medicine at what was then the New York Homeopathic Hospital (now Flower-Fifth Avenue Hospital). Dr. Roberts received his M. D. in 1894 and had been in practice here since. His office was at 148 West Fifty-third Street until 1917, when he moved to Harlem.

Dr. Roberts was appointed an assistant medical examiner in 1897, the first Negro to receive such an appointment. In 1917, Mayor John Purroy Mitchel recognized his ability by naming him to the Board of Education. He had served also on the Board of Health first as a medical examiner.

The physician, a holder of Lincoln University's Abraham Lincoln Award, had an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from the university. He had been active for many years in the work of the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association and was a founder of St. James Presbyterian Church, now at 409 West 141st Street.

A trustee and former president of the Alumni Association of Lincoln University, Dr. Roberts headed a committee to raise funds for the North Harlem Community House in 1920.

He leaves his wife, Mrs. Ruth Logan Roberts, a member of the New York State Board of Social Welfare, and a brother, Dr. Charles H. Roberts, a practicing dentist here.

Social and Welfare Organizations

To counter the absence of critical social services, local organizations in the Tenderloin took root. Organizations like the New York Colored Mission and St. Philip's Parish House aimed to elevate the Black community through religious and practical instruction. The New York Colored Mission, founded by White Quaker women, opened its doors at 135 West 30th Street in 1868. The primary goal was to educate members of the community so they could move into positions of independence and self-sufficiency. Over time, they shifted their focus to women, providing lodging accommodations to young single women from the South. Within ten years, they were providing 3,969 lodgings annually (New York Times 1887, 9). There was a focus on morality and religion evident in the Sabbath school and temperance league, although they also operated an employment bureau that, in 1877, helped secure jobs for 338 people (New York Times 1887, 9). Though a modest building, the New York Colored Mission played a critical role in the heart of the Tenderloin.

In 1897, nearly thirty years after the New York Colored Mission opened, the parish house of St. Philip's was completed at 125-129 West 30th Street. The design of the purpose-built parish house included apartments flanking either side, which were leased to Black and White families. St. Philip's focused on services for children, particularly boys, providing a gymnasium with recreational activities, a glee club, acting classes, and industrial training. Unlike the Colored Mission, whose focus was primarily centered on women, which underscored the "familial, social and employment duties of Black women over expectations of men," St. Philip's Church obtained a reputation for being more lenient with male behaviors such as smoking and playing cards (Larson 2024). St. Philip's place in the Tenderloin was particularly significant because, unlike the Colored Mission, St. Philip's parish house and church on West 25th Street were Black owned. Their ability to leverage land ownership to develop black-owned housing must have been empowering for a class of residents who had to endure exploitation by White landlords (Ovington 1905).



St. Philip's Parish House, 125-129 West 30th Street, taken by Byron Company, ca. 1897. Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York



Image of The New York Colored Mission from the Annual Report, NYPL.

In addition to these social services, there was a critical need for childcare for Black families in the Tenderloin. As Black mothers were able to secure jobs outside of the home, they became reluctant to leave for long hours, especially if they had small children to raise, for fear they would be neglected by a caretaker. Safeguarding their children meant taking in customers' laundry at home, and though she might be nearer her children, the mother's wages were often less (Ovington 1905). The lack of nurseries and the expense of the White ones in the neighborhood were prohibitive for parents. Some White employers allowed servants to bring their infants; however, this was generally a short-term arrangement. In one case, Annie Holland was forced to board her six-year-old daughter, Ella, at the Riverdale Orphan Asylum in 1892 when her employer no longer allowed mother and daughter to be together at work. The crowded asylum quickly caused Ella to fall ill from tuberculosis and pneumonia; she died less than one month after her arrival (Sachs 2006).

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Compounding these pressures, mothers were often the breadwinners for their families. Increasing job competition from the waves of new immigrants arriving in New York prevented Black men from accessing job opportunities in most industries. While some Black men found employment as laborers, many were in service roles. Unable to access higher-skilled labor opportunities, many Black men had no choice but to work long hours on railroads or ships, forcing them to take seasonal work and spend lengthy periods of time away from families (Sacks 2006).

The limited job opportunities made access to food and clothing even more challenging. As historian Marcy Sacks notes, quoting the New York Colored Mission's Annual Report of 1898:

The New York Colored Mission, one of the few philanthropic organizations in the city serving black people, regularly reported near penury during the winter months. Wood yard tickets that allowed black men to work for a day or two in exchange for economic assistance were "most thankfully received, especially where there has been a wife and little children to

support, and no steady employment during the severe months of the winter" (Sachs 2006, 138).

It was no wonder that the Black community struggled to maintain their health when there was limited food, resources, or recovery time. More often than not, there were persistent health problems, which tragically had become daily life for so many in this period.

Mrs. Arthur Dodge, an ardent supporter of nurseries in New York, actively promoted and financed child care institutions for the poor. In 1902, a group of Black women, led by Ms. E. E. Greene, a Black graduate nurse, founded Hope Day Nursery on 135 West 35th Street with the support of Mrs. Dodge (Ovington 1905). Hope Day Nursery became an essential part of the community. They later relocated to Harlem, first to 114 West 133rd Street, then moved to a donated building at 33 West 133rd Street in 1914 (Robertson 2016).



Hope Day Nursery, 135 West 35th Street. From "Charities and the Commons, 1905."

The role that these organizations played in the Tenderloin was vital, given that so few institutions existed for the Black community specifically. Their service to the Tenderloin was invaluable yet cut short. While these social organizations had all left the Tenderloin by 1920, their relocation afforded them new opportunities to continue supporting the Black community in Harlem for decades to come.

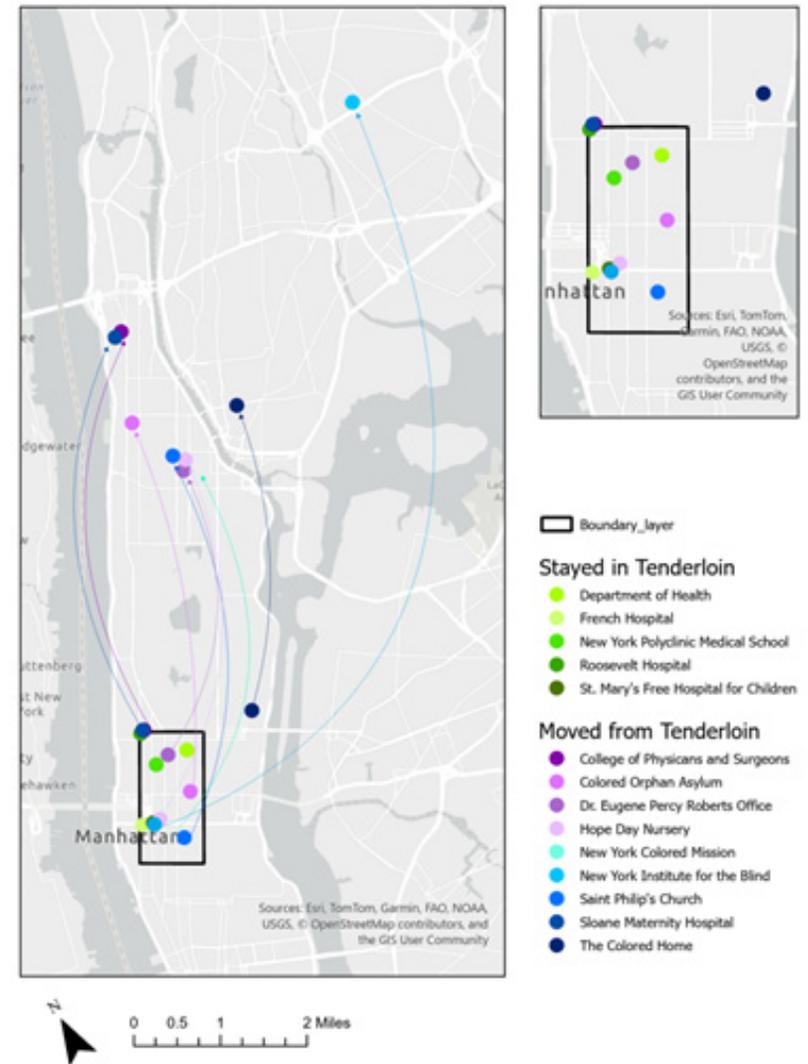
Historic Change and Analysis

Persistent systemic White supremacy, restricted access to healthcare, inadequate housing, and limited job opportunities signaled displacement and a population move to Harlem by the early 20th century. As community members began to relocate to Harlem, so did many of the organizations that supported them, including St. Philip's Parish House, the New York Colored Mission, Hope Day Nursery, and more. Even hospitals began moving uptown, including the Colored Home (renamed Lincoln Hospital).

In Harlem, the New York Colored Mission was able to expand care for 25 children in 1920. Hope Day Nursery relocated to Harlem and expanded its capacity to 35 children by 1921 (Robertson 2016). The opportunity to invest in real estate, build a new church, and expand services to the Black community was compelling for St. Philip's Church. Having received considerable pressure to sell their property in the Tenderloin, St. Philip's Church began acquiring land in Harlem as early as 1908. Their relocation allowed them to engage the Black-owned architectural firm Tandy & Foster to design their new church. George Washington Foster Jr. was one of the first Black architects to practice in the profession in the country, and Vertner W. Tandy was the first Black architect registered in the State of New York (Savage 1993). Today, the church is a New York City landmark and memorializes a significant community that, for decades, served the Black community throughout Manhattan.

No buildings associated with social or welfare organizations

exist today in what was once the Tenderloin. Of the clinics and hospitals that remained, by the mid-twentieth century, the city allowed their owners to demolish or repurpose all of them. Though the built fabric no longer occupies space in the Tenderloin, the stories live on in the next generation in Harlem.



Movement of Social and Health Organizations from the Tenderloin to Harlem and the Bronx.

RELIGION

Congyin Li

Historic Context

This historic context analysis examines the role of religious institutions, their communities, and their neighborhood functions in the Tenderloin district between 1870 and 1920, with a particular focus on Black communities. The analysis is organized into two historical periods, 1870–1900 and 1900–1920, each shaped by denominational differences and significant shifts in Black migration patterns and the spatial development of the Tenderloin district.

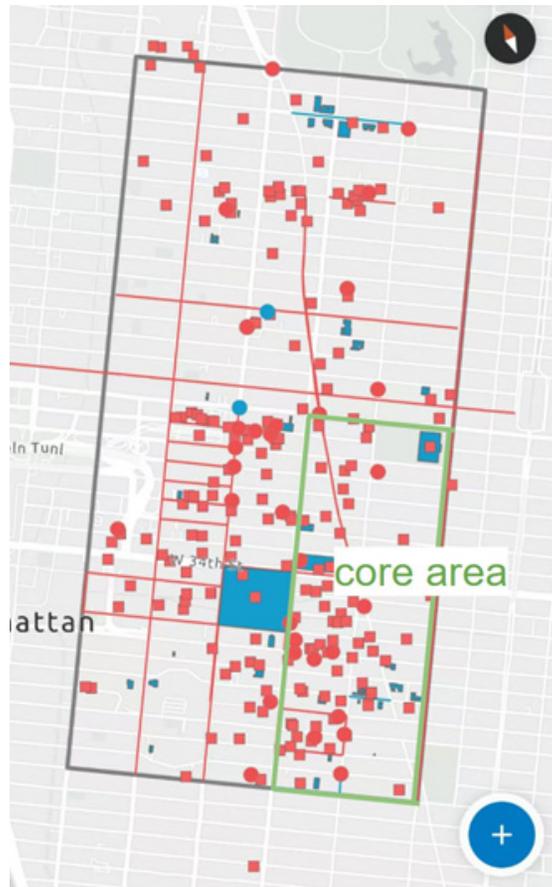
Shifting Geographies

During the Reconstruction era (1865–1877), newly freed Black individuals migrated to northern cities, with the Tenderloin emerging as an early residential center for the Black middle class. As historian Sacks notes, “The last decades of the nineteenth century saw a marked rise in the number of churches serving New York’s Black population.” These churches primarily catered to Black newcomers by preserving and supporting their customs and traditions from their places of origin (Sacks 2006, 179). At the same time, Irish and German White residents began moving westward and northward toward Chelsea and the Upper West Side, altering the neighborhood’s racial and religious composition (Long 2012; O’Donnell 2003).

Between 1870 and the 1910s, the Tenderloin district expanded westward and northward, prompting Black churches to establish new branches in these areas. Between 1910 and 1920, the uptown movement witnessed African Americans gradually migrating to Harlem. As a result, Black churches became distributed between Harlem and the Tenderloin, reflecting a transitional phase of community displacement.

Corresponding to these historical shifts, the geographical focus of this analysis is structured around the expansion of the Tenderloin district. The 1870–1900 period primarily concerns the core area,

defined as the region between 23rd and 42nd Streets, from Fifth to Seventh Avenues. Between 1900 and 1920, the study's geographical scope extended to what is now considered the broader Tenderloin area, encompassing the region between 23rd and 59th Streets, from Fifth to Tenth Avenues. The analysis of historic assets follows this spatial framework and corresponds to the Tenderloin's identified geographical boundaries.



Geographical Scope of Religious Institutions in the Tenderloin. Map by Congyin Li using studio base GIS map.

Denominations

Due to differences in theological doctrines and institutional structures, various religious denominations exhibited varying degrees of openness toward Black congregants across different periods. At the same time, the diversity within the Black population further shaped church affiliations, as individuals from different social classes and cultural backgrounds gravitated toward distinct congregations.

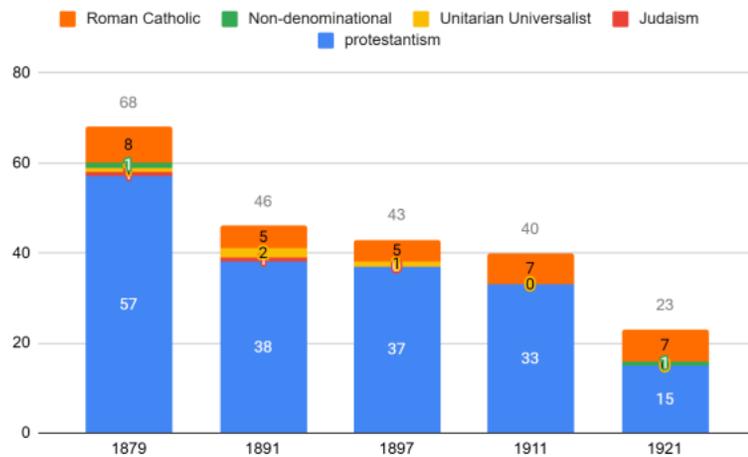
By examining denominations as an intermediary factor, this analysis seeks to analyze the demographic composition of their congregations, assess their level of openness toward Black communities, and explore their evolving neighborhood functions. To provide a structured foundation for the following analysis, this section introduces the hierarchical classification of denominations, outlining the criteria used to select data under each category.

During the study period of the Tenderloin district, the primary religious institutions consisted of churches and synagogues. However, synagogues were excluded from this analysis for several reasons: only two synagogues existed within the research timeframe, both with relatively short-lived presences, and because no available records indicated a significant connection between these synagogues and the Black community. Given these limitations, this analysis focuses exclusively on churches.

Among the churches, the various denominations have been categorized into four main groups: Roman Catholic, Non-Denominational, Unitarian Universalist, and Protestant, with Protestant churches forming the overwhelming majority. In analyzing the distribution of Black-friendly churches, this analysis considered all identified churches, regardless of denomination.

However, when examining denominational differences within Black-friendly churches, the focus shifted to Protestant denominations specifically. Catholicism and Orthodoxy,

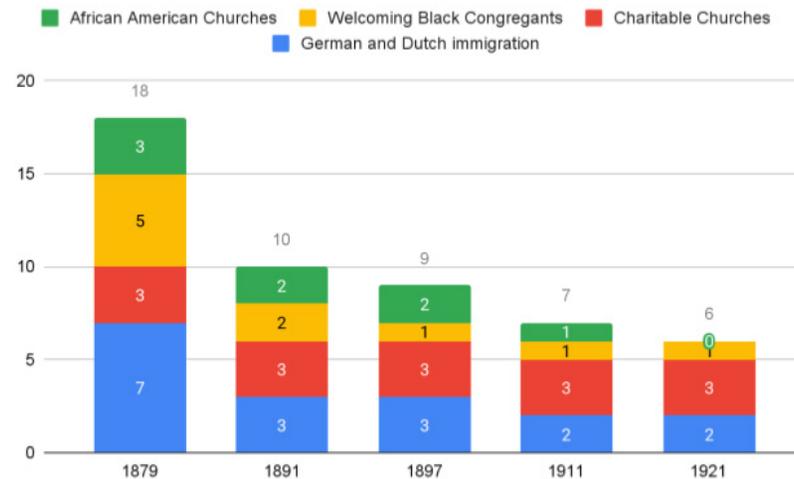
like Protestantism, are broad religious traditions that existed at the same hierarchical level. In contrast, the denominations within Protestantism (e.g., Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist) represent subcategories within the Protestant tradition and are not equivalent in classification to broader traditions like Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Therefore, this analysis focuses exclusively on Protestant denominations to ensure a consistent framework for comparative analysis.



Denominations in Tenderloin (1879-1921) by Congyin Li

Rise of Black Churches (1870-1900)

Based on the accompanying chart, it is evident that between 1820 and 1900, the number of all-White churches in the core area (before the Tenderloin expanded northwest) declined significantly. Concurrently, the proportion of churches that either accepted Black congregants or provided charitable programs for African Americans increased.



(* Charitable Churches: White-led churches that primarily served White congregants but provided social services to Black populations.
 Welcoming Black Congregants: White-led churches that allowed Black congregants to join worship.
 African American Churches: Black-led congregations serving Black communities.
 German and Dutch Immigration Churches: Churches that catered to European immigrant communities, usually excluding Black congregants.)

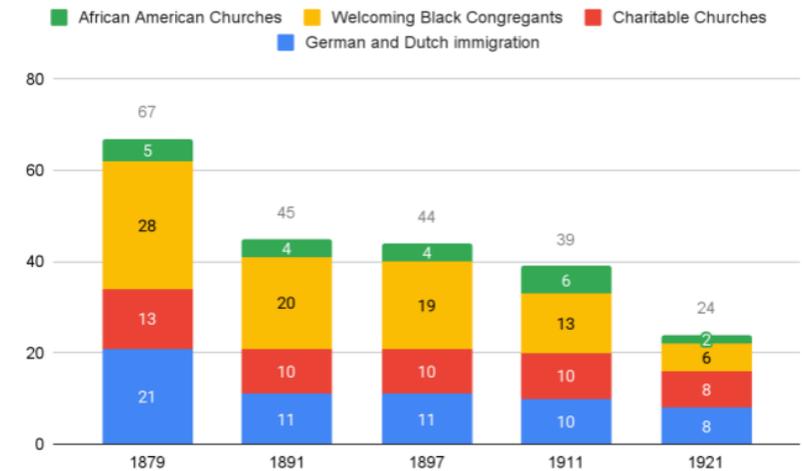
This shift can be attributed to two key factors. First, the mass migration of newly freed Black individuals into the area led to a growing demand for Black religious institutions, prompting them to establish their own churches and break away from White church control (McCormick 2019). Between 1826 and 1840, although St. Philip’s Episcopal Church remained under White ecclesiastical control, its pastor, Peter Williams Jr., the first African American Episcopal priest in New York City and one of only three Black members of the inaugural Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, was a dedicated abolitionist throughout his career (Dunlap 2004, 242-43). In the 1850s, the Church of St. Vincent de Paul, primarily serving the French-speaking community, took a progressive stance under Father Annet Lafont. He broke racial barriers by welcoming both Black and White congregants to receive the Eucharist together and admitting Black children to the church school to be educated alongside White students—a

groundbreaking initiative for the time (Miller 2010). During the July 1863 Draft Riots, although Holy Cross St. John the Baptist primarily served the Irish community, its priests actively persuaded Irish Catholic acquaintances to refrain from participating in the violence, playing a crucial role in preventing White people from lynching and attacking African American families (Pfeifer 2020.).

The second factor was that White congregations, particularly Dutch Reformed and Lutheran churches, had declined due to the outmigration of their members. As a result,, many of these churches were either transferred to or repurposed for Black congregations. For example, the St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church, originally established to serve Irish immigrants, gradually expanded its outreach to include various racial and ethnic communities, including African Americans. It introduced initiatives such as the Nightworker’s Mass and adult education programs, providing religious services and support for working-class and underserved populations (St. Francis of Assisi Church n.d.).

Expansion and Displacement (1900-1920)

As the Tenderloin expanded westward and northward, the number of newly established Black churches grew. Meanwhile, more White-led churches with predominantly White congregations began accepting Black congregants or offering charitable services to African Americans.



Trends in Church Affiliations in Tenderloin (1879-1921)
 (* Charitable Churches: White-led churches that primarily served White congregants but provided social services to Black populations.
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At the same time, Black churches broke away from White ecclesiastical control, resulting in a significant proportion of fully independent Black congregations. Many majority-White churches transitioned to majority-Black congregations and/or had majority-Black leadership. For instance, St. Philip’s Episcopal Church, after gaining independence from strict White Episcopal control in the 1860s, transitioned to full governance by its Black congregation (Dunlap 2004, 242-43).

However, with the uptown movement, the overall number of churches in the Tenderloin declined sharply, and the displacement of Black churches became widespread. The primary reasons for this decline and displacement were the loss of Black congregants and the demolition of churches to make way for the construction of Pennsylvania Station.

Black churches	Building Survival	Church Displacement and Continuity	Reasons
St. Mark's Episcopal Church (65 W 35 St, 139 W 48 St, 231 W 53 St)	N	55 Edgecombe Avenue in Harlem	Congregant Migration
Church of St. Vincent de Paul (123 W 23rd St)	E (2013 closed, 2016 sold)	N	Congregant Migration
St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church (161 W 25th St)	N	204 West 134th Street in Harlem	Congregant Migration
Shiloh Presbyterian Church (165 W 26 St)	N	N	Congregant Migration
Mt. Olivet Baptist Church (159 W 53 St)	N	201 Lenox Avenue (Malcolm X Boulevard) in Harlem	Congregant Migration
Little Baptist Church (136 W 30 St)	N	N	Construction of the new Tenderloin Police Station
First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel (239 West 25th Street)	N	52-60 West 132nd Street in Harlem	Congregant Migration
Abyssinian Baptist Church (240 West 40th Street)	N	West 138th Street between Lenox and Seventh Avenues in Harlem	Congregant Migration
African Methodist Episcopal Church (250 West 50th Street)	N	N	Congregant Migration
St. James Presbyterian Church (211 West 32nd Street, 359 W 51st Street)	N	59 West 137 Street in Harlem , 409 West 141 Street in Harlem	Congregant Migration
North Presbyterian Church (374 Ninth Avenue)	N	525 West 155th Street in Harlem	Construction of Pennsylvania Station
St. Benedict Catholic Church (342 West 53rd Street)	E (2017 closed, 2023 sold)	N	Congregant Migration

The current status of religious institutions in the Tenderloin

(* E = Building still exists, N = Building no longer exists or the institution has ceased to exist)

The Pressured Northward Migration of Black Churches

Some Black churches actively relocated northward, following the migration of the African American community. St. Philip's Episcopal Church, the city's oldest African American congregation, relocated from 122 Centre St to 159 West 25th Street in 1886, before ultimately moving to 204 West 134th Street in Harlem in 1900 (Dunlap 2004, 242-43). The church played a central role in encouraging a significant portion of New York's Black population to move to Harlem (Save Chelsea n.d.).

In 1873, St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church acquired the former Church of the Resurrection, located at 65 West 35th Street, where it remained for 16 years. In 1889, the congregation relocated to 139 West 48th Street, then moved again in 1895 to 231 West 53rd Street, before ultimately relocating in 1926 to 55 Edgecombe Avenue in Harlem (New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists n.d.).

St. Benedict the Moor Church, the first Catholic parish in New York City established specifically for African American congregants, was originally located at 210 Bleecker Street. As the Black population migrated northward, the church relocated in 1898 to 342 West 53rd Street (New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists n.d.).

First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel (239 West 25th Street) relocated to 52-60 West 132nd Street in Harlem in 1913 (Miller 2020).

In 1903, St. James Presbyterian Church relocated from 211 West 32nd Street to 359 West 51 Street. In 1915, it moved to 59 West 137th Street in Harlem, and in 1927, it relocated again to 409 West 141st Street (New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists n.d.).

Mount Olivet Baptist Church (159 West 25th Street) relocated to Harlem at 201 Lenox Avenue (Malcolm X Boulevard) in 1925 (Harlem One Stop n.d.).

Abyssinian Baptist Church (242 West 40th Street) relocated to Harlem at 132 West 138th Street in 1923 to accommodate its expanding congregation and to establish a prominent presence within Harlem's growing African American community (Moore and Dolkart 1993).

The Forced Abandonment of Black Church Sites

Some Black churches were forced to abandon their original locations as they were repurposed for other uses. For example, in 1903, North Presbyterian Church (374 Ninth Avenue) was forced to sell its original site due to the expansion of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company in the area. In 1905, the church relocated to 525 West 155th Street, at the border of Harlem and Washington Heights (New York Times 1901).

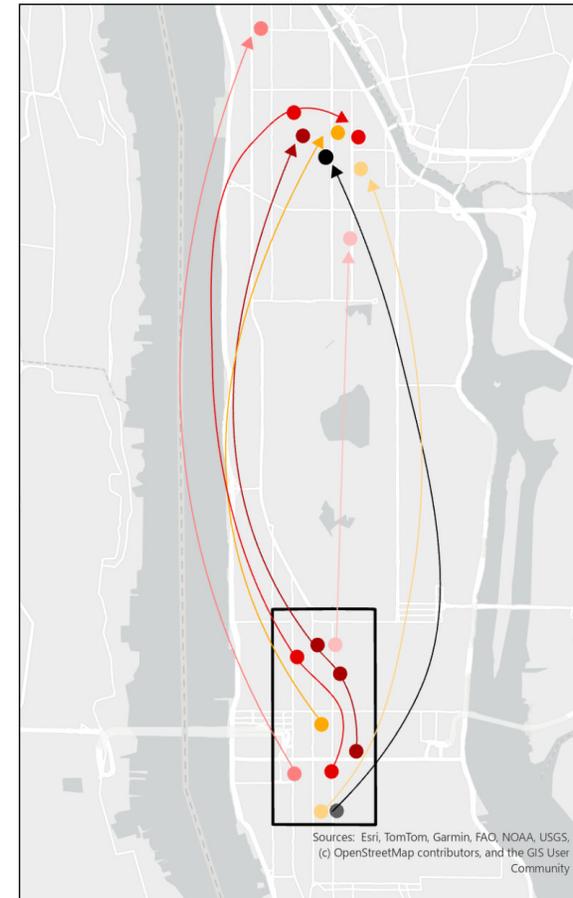
Little Baptist Church (136 West 30th Street) was forced to disband when its land was requisitioned for the construction of the new Tenderloin police station (New York Age 1905).

Building Survival

Churches that neither relocated nor closed during this period but continued to exist in the Tenderloin eventually faced closure due to declining congregations, decreasing attendance, and financial pressures. Research revealed that all religious institutions studied ceased to exist in the Tenderloin, with only two church buildings remaining extant.

The Church of St. Vincent de Paul (123 West 23rd Street) was closed in 2013 and sold in 2016 (Schmidt 2016). Parishioners had deep emotional ties to the church and repeatedly challenged the Archdiocese of New York's decision to close it through the Catholic Church's canon law system, but their appeals were

Movement of Churches from the Tenderloin to Harlem

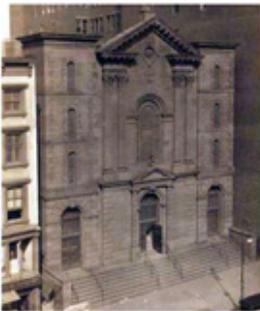


0 0.5 1 2 Miles
 Movement of Churches from the Tenderloin to Harlem. Map by Ashlyn Pause.

- Boundary_layer
- Abyssinian Baptist Church
- First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel
- Mt. Olivet Baptist Church
- North Presbyterian Church
- St. James Presbyterian Church
- St. Mark's Episcopal Church
- St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church

unsuccessful (Schmidt 2016, West 2016). Additionally, the church became the focus of multiple preservation efforts, with preservationists seeking to save it by securing landmark status. However, its façade had already undergone alterations as early as 1939, which ultimately contributed to the rejection of its landmark designation (Miller 2010; Dunlap 2012).

The St. Benedict Catholic Church (342 West 53rd Street) closed in 2017, and the building was sold in 2023. Notably, its architectural appearance has remained unchanged, preserving its original form (Dolan 2017; Hall 2023). However, due to the Archdiocese of New York’s refusal to designate religious buildings as landmarks, the Local Landmark application for the church was also unsuccessful (Interview with John Restuccia, March 11, 2025). This demonstrates that the preservation process faces challenges due to churches being diocesan property.



Original façade of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul. New York City Chapter of the American Guild of Organists



Current condition of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul. Photo by the author, February 24, 2025.



Historic view of the Church of St. Benedict the Moor. Source: photograph by P. L. Sperr, 1929, Wikimedia Commons.



Contemporary view of the Church of St. Benedict the Moor. Photo by the author, February 24, 2025.

The Movement and Resilience of Black Churches in Manhattan

To better understand the resilience of Black religious institutions in the Tenderloin, this section traces their movement before and after their time in the neighborhood. It first examines their locations in Lower Manhattan, as well as the social and spatial forces that prompted their relocation to the Tenderloin. It then follows their subsequent migration to Harlem, documenting their new sites and their later recognition through Local Landmark designation.

Before the Tenderloin: Lower Manhattan

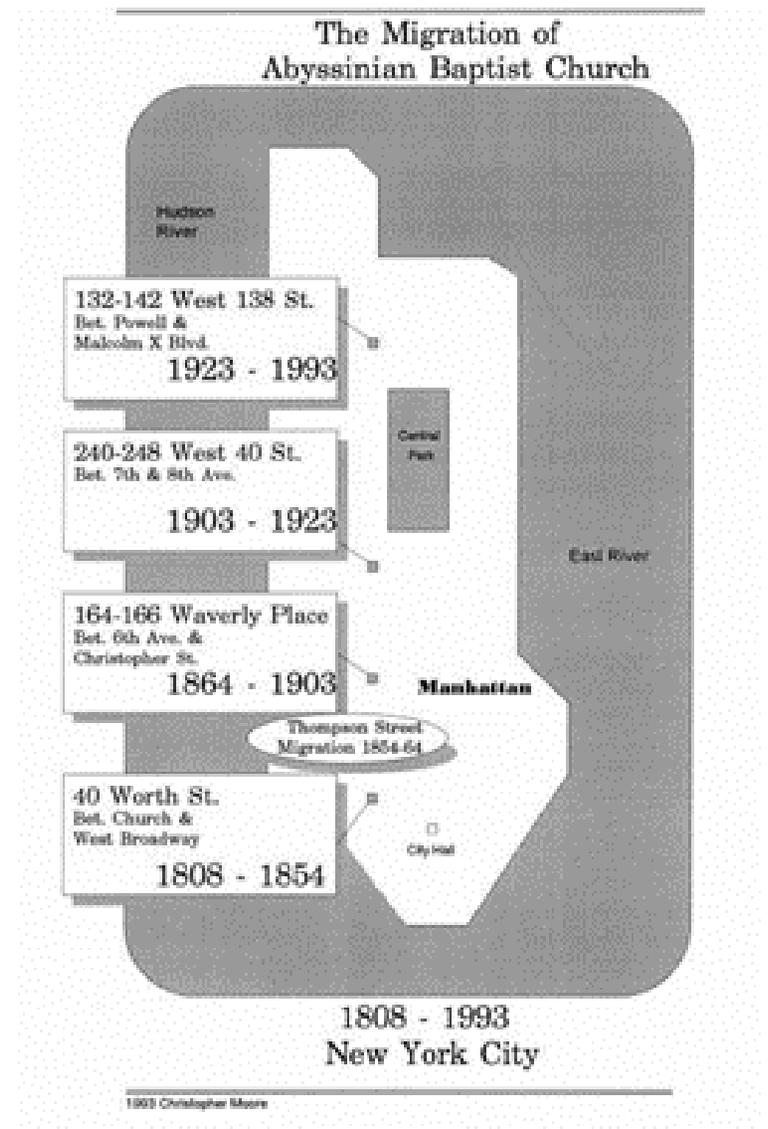
During the study period, several Black churches associated with the Tenderloin were not originally founded in the neighborhood; many had historical roots in Lower Manhattan. Among them were three particularly prominent institutions—St. Philip’s Church, the First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, and Abyssinian Baptist Church. Under the combined pressures of racial discrimination, spatial constraints, and economic limitations, these churches eventually relocated northward.

St. Philip’s Church was initially established at 122 Centre Street. Between 1856 and 1857, due to mounting pressures of racial discrimination and spatial constraints, the church relocated to 305 Mulberry Street. During the Draft Riots of July 1863, the Mulberry Street building was seized and used as a barracks by the militia. Recognizing shifts in New York City’s demographics and the need for greater security and room for expansion, Rev. Dr. Hutchens Chew Bishop led the congregation’s move in 1889 to 161 West 25th Street in Midtown Manhattan (St. Philip’s Church Harlem n.d.).

Similarly, Bethel A.M.E. Church, founded in 1819, first worshiped in a rented classroom on Mott Street. As the congregation grew, it purchased property on East 2nd Street between Avenues B and C, but the northward migration of African Americans and limited

transportation access soon made the location less viable. In 1862, Bethel sold the East 2nd Street property and acquired a church building at 214 Sullivan Street to better serve its members. By the 1890s, as the Black population in the area declined, the church relocated again in 1894 to West 25th Street in the Tenderloin district, seeking greater stability and long-term growth (First Bethel Harlem n.d.).

During the early nineteenth century, the Abyssinian Baptist Church faced severe economic and social challenges. Racial discrimination and growing competition from European immigrants strained the congregation, leading to frequent foreclosure battles and the forced sale of its property at 40 Worth Street in 1854. Without a permanent home, the church temporarily relocated to Thompson Street during the Civil War, amid the turmoil of the draft riots (Winchell 2020). Under Rev. William Spellman's leadership (1856–1885), Abyssinian moved in 1864 to 164–166 Waverly Place, the heart of "Little Africa," then New York's largest Black community. Ownership of the fully equipped building enabled the church to thrive, becoming one of the city's most prosperous African American congregations by the turn of the century (Winchell 2020). However, increasing immigration, subway expansion, and new housing opportunities in northern Manhattan quickly dispersed the Black community from Greenwich Village. In 1903, Abyssinian sold its Waverly Place property and moved to 242 West 40th Street in the Tenderloin, aligning with the broader northward migration of Black New Yorkers and responding to urban redevelopment pressures (Winchell 2020).

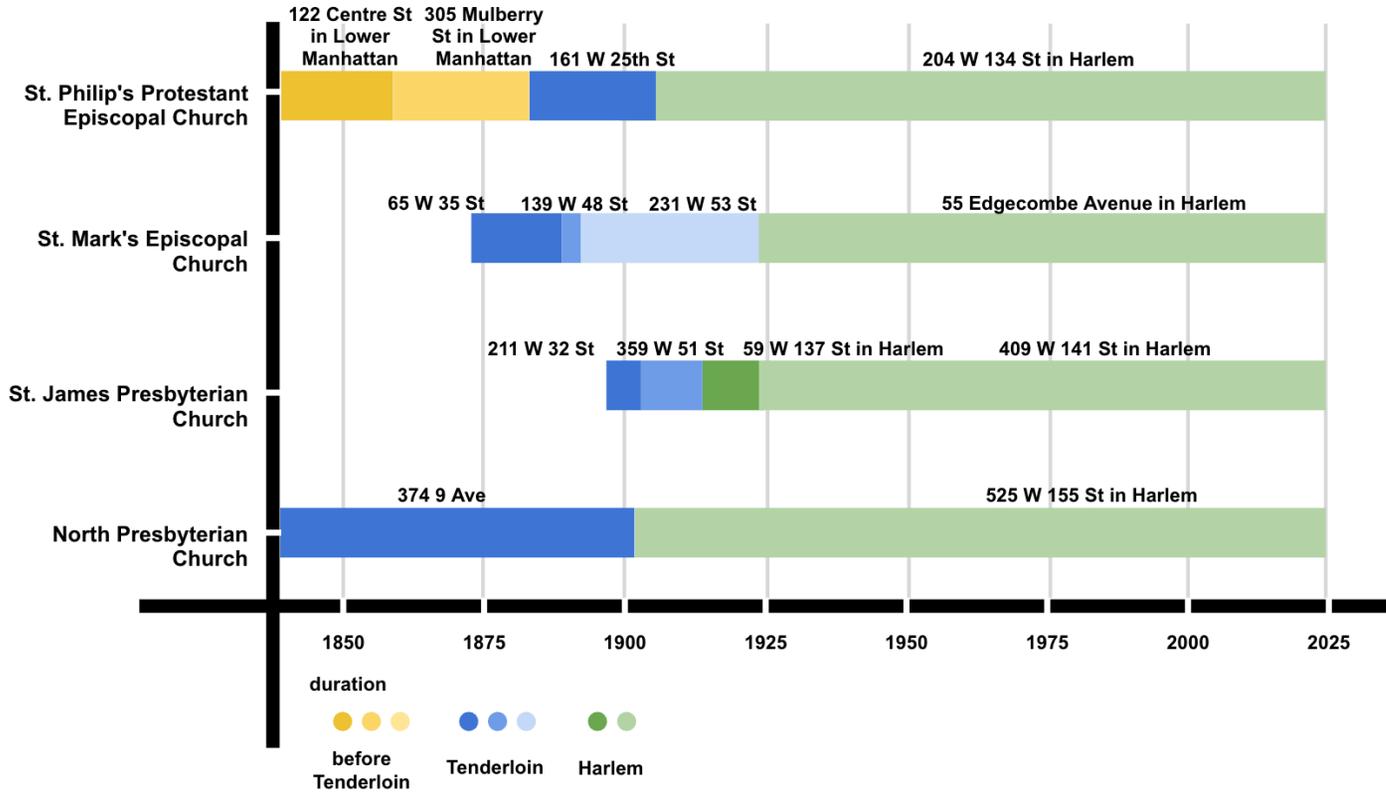


Migration of the Abyssinian Baptist Church. The New York City Landmarks Preservation Designation Report.



Historic Image in the Tenderloin

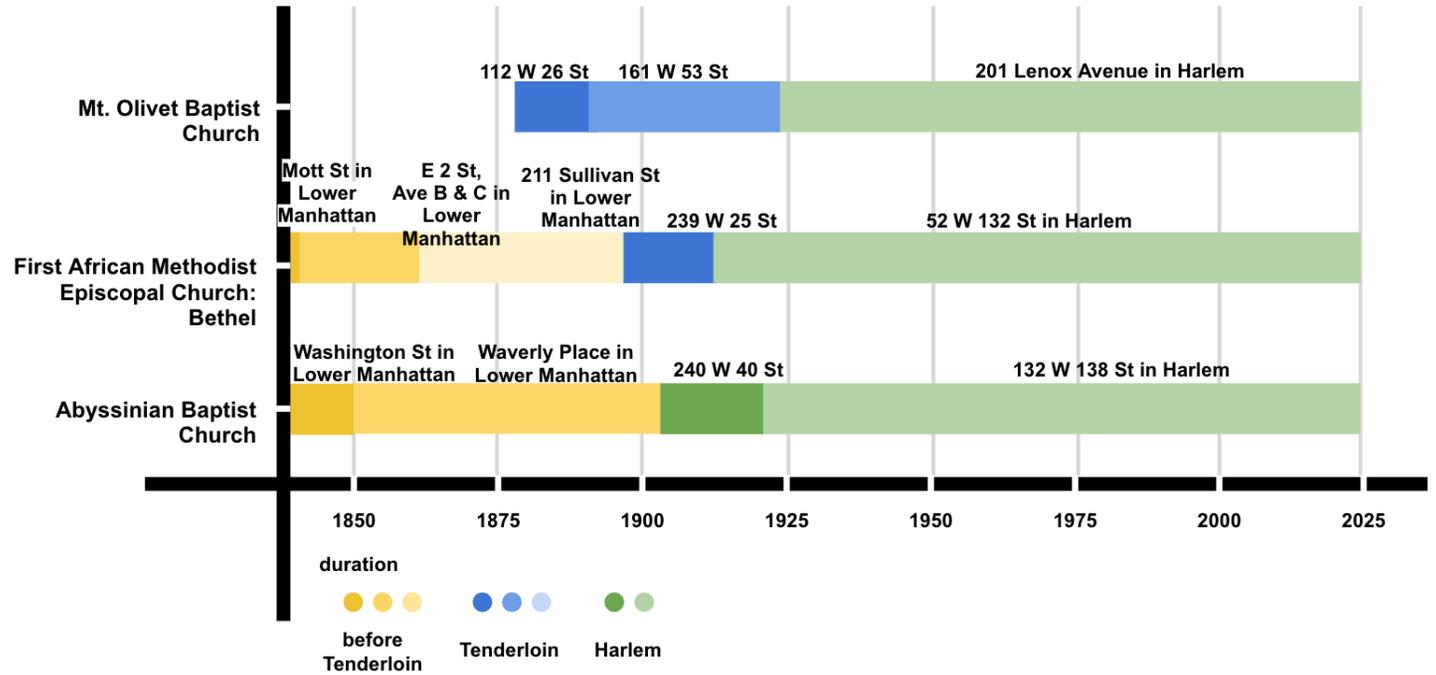
Contemporary Image in Harlem





Historic Image in the Tenderloin

Contemporary Image in Harlem



After the Tenderloin: Harlem

After having reestablished themselves in the Tenderloin, many Black churches found themselves forced to migrate further north during the nineteenth century (after the study period) to Harlem.

Some churches experienced additional relocation even after resettling in Harlem. This shift coincided with the Harlem Renaissance of the early twentieth century, a time of profound demographic, cultural, and institutional growth for Black communities. As congregations expanded, churches such as St. James Presbyterian Church moved from 59 West 137th Street to 409 West 141st Street to accommodate their growing membership (Winchell 2020).

Over time, several of these churches received formal recognition for their architectural and historical significance. The New York City Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC) designated St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, designed by African American architects Vertner W. Tandy and George W. Foster, Jr., a New York City Landmark in 1993 and the National Park Service (NPS) listed it on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. Its Gothic Revival design and pioneering leadership represent important symbols of Black ecclesiastical independence and professional achievement (Savage 1993, Dolkart and Postal 2009; Shaver 1997).

Similarly, LPC designated the Abyssinian Baptist Church building at 136-142 West 138th Street, a blend of, established in 1808 and blending Gothic and Tudor Revival styles, a New York City Landmark in 1993 in recognition of both its architectural distinction and its major role in civil rights advocacy (Moore and Dolkart 1993).

Other churches achieved national recognition without LPC awarding them city-level landmark status. For example, North Presbyterian Church has been listed on the National Register of

Historic Places but has not been designated as a New York City Landmark (Whisenhunt 2013). And, it is not possible to review Requests for Evaluations (RFEs) to confirm if LPC is considering it for landmark designation. For more information on LPC and the RFE process, see the Preservation section.

While architecturally and historically notable, factors such as alterations, preservation conditions, or levels of public attention may have contributed to the absence of local designation. Several historically significant Black churches remain without formal landmark recognition. These include St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Mount Olivet Baptist Church, the First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, and St. James Presbyterian Church.

Neighborhood Functions and Congregations

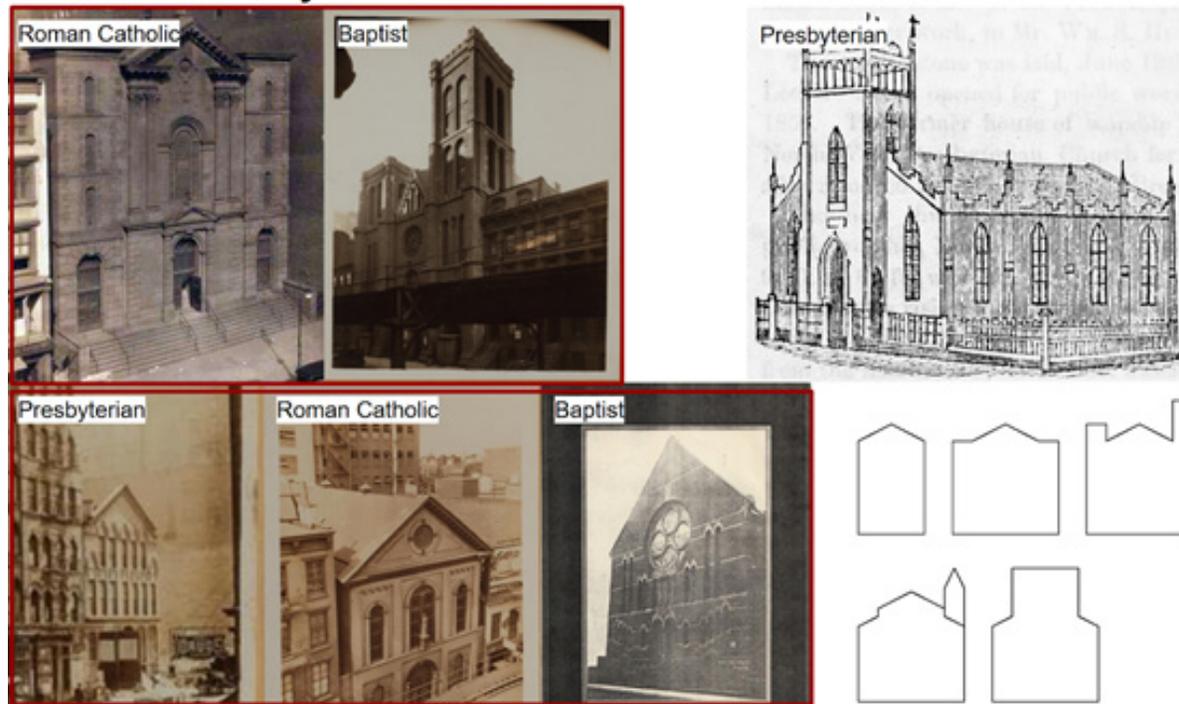
The transformation of the neighborhood functions of religious institutions in Tenderloin between 1870 and 1920 was closely tied to denominational trends. During this period, the primary Protestant denominations associated with Black-friendly churches included the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist traditions. In this analysis, Black-friendly churches are defined as those that either welcomed Black congregants or provided social services to Black communities.

This section examines how these denominations interacted with different social classes and cultural groups. Additionally, it examines the extent of openness toward Black congregants across various denominational contexts, while also assessing the scope and distinctiveness of their neighborhood functions.

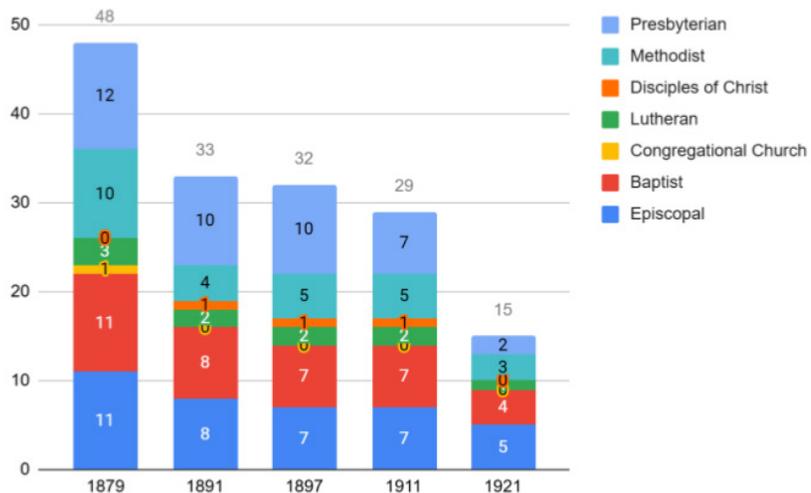
Architectural Typologies

In Tenderloin, many Black churches were purchased from formerly White congregations, resulting in minimal architectural differences between Black and White churches, as well as among different Black denominations.

Formal church architectural typologies can generally be categorized into basic gable form, extended gable form, towered gable form, and central tower form. However, these classifications do not fully capture the diversity of church architecture in Tenderloin. Due to financial constraints and a lack of familiarity with formal ecclesiastical architecture, many Black churches in Tenderloin adopted alternative forms of worship spaces. Some congregations established storefront churches, repurposing small, rented commercial spaces into religious institutions, while others relied on outdoor preaching, holding open-air gatherings as places of worship in the absence of permanent church buildings (Sacks 2006, 182).



Comparative examples of church façades and formal typologies in New York City. The images include the original façade of the Church of St. Vincent de Paul (23rd Street Church), sourced from the NYC Chapter of the American Guild of Organists (“Original Façade of 23rd Street Church,”; Mt. Olivet Baptist Church (1926), from the NYPL; North Church on 32nd Street (1858), accessed via Wikimedia Commons; Shiloh Presbyterian Church (1912, 165 West 26th Street), from OldNYC Mapping based on historical photographs from the NYPL; historic view of the Church of St. Benedict the Moor (1929), photographed by P. L. Sperr and accessed via Wikimedia Commons; the Abyssinian Baptist Church, from the official website of the Abyssinian Baptist Church; and schematic formal church architectural typologies drawn by the author using CAD software.



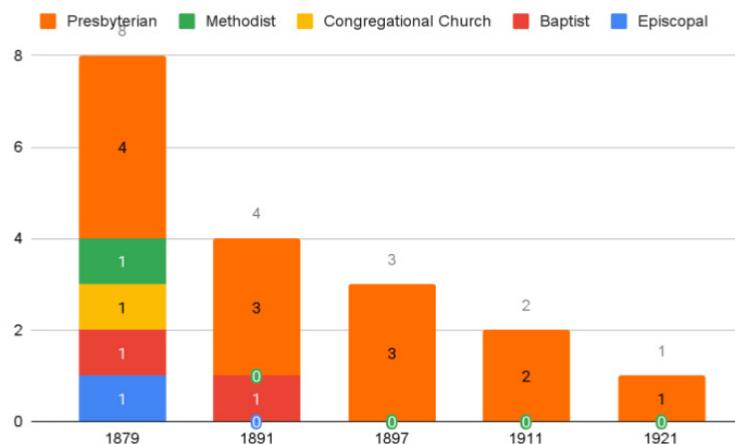
Protestant Denominations in Tenderloin (1879-1921). Chart by Congyin Li.

Black Episcopalians and Black Presbyterians were classified as formalist denominations, maintaining close ties with White-dominated religious institutions and generally attracting members of higher social status (Bulthuis 2019, 277). These churches emphasized education, rational discourse, and public morality, making them particularly appealing to Black elites such as doctors, merchants, and scholars (Bulthuis 2019, 258).

Compared to the White Episcopal Church, which upheld hierarchical structures, the White Presbyterian Church was relatively more inclusive toward Black congregants. Northern White Presbyterians, in particular, were moderate anti-slavery advocates and aligned with abolitionist movements (McGill 1865), which made their churches somewhat more accessible to Black worshippers. However, this inclusivity remained limited—many of these churches retained White leadership, enforced hierarchical oversight over Black congregants, and distanced themselves from radical activism.

In contrast, Black Baptists and Black Methodists were primarily composed of working-class and impoverished populations (Bulthuis 2019, 271). These churches placed greater emphasis on personal religious experience, including preaching, spiritual revivals, and direct participation in social change (Bulthuis 2019, 271-272).

Among the churches in the core area (before the northwestward expansion of the Tenderloin) that accepted Black congregants or provided charitable programs for African Americans, the period from 1870 to 1900 saw a decline of Episcopal churches, because they were subject to strong White control. Conversely, White Baptist and White Presbyterian churches, which allowed for greater Black autonomy, increased. However, the growth of fully independent Black churches remained relatively limited, indicating that most Black congregations were still under White ecclesiastical authority.



Black-Friendly Protestant Denominations in the Core Area (1879-1921). Chart by Congyin Li.

Because there was a socio-economic distinction between Black Presbyterians and Black Baptists, Black Presbyterian churches far outnumbered Baptist churches during this period, meaning that congregations in the area were predominantly composed of middle-class professionals and intellectuals rather

than formerly enslaved individuals, laborers, or impoverished African Americans. This demographic composition influenced the neighborhood functions of Black churches, which primarily centered on structured religious practice and education, reflecting a more moderate approach (Masci 2016).

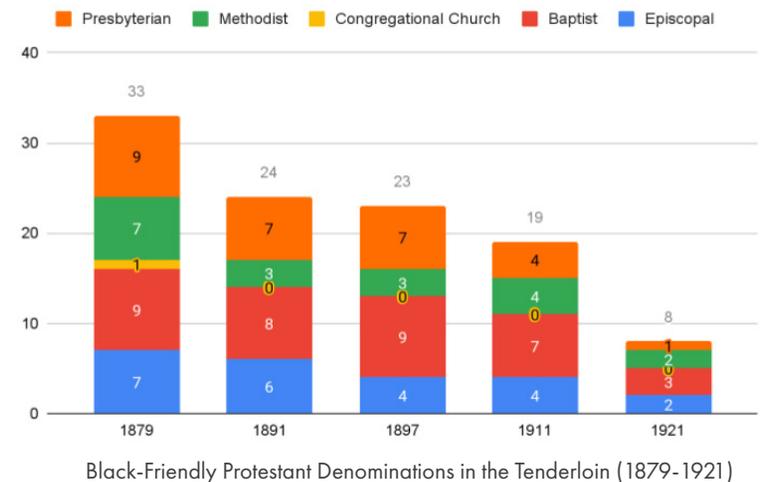
For instance, as Anderson states, “In the years before 1914, and for many years thereafter, the members of St. James Presbyterian would not have referred to themselves as ‘black’ — ‘black’ being a term that was not as acceptable then as it has since become. Theirs was not a mass church—members of which might not have objected to being called black—but one of several upper-class non-White congregations of Manhattan. Many of its communicants were in the professions, in small but profitable businesses, or in humble but respectable trades ... Some belonged to what there was of Manhattan’s non-White elite. And the majority of its important members were light-skinned” (Anderson, 1982, 6).

St. James Presbyterian Church, though recognized as a non-White church before 1914, exhibited a degree of colorism, as its members were largely well-educated, financially stable, and often lighter-skinned African Americans. The church took a more cautious stance on racial identity, and its services were notably more elitist and structured (Anderson 1982, 6).

Nevertheless, during this period, Black churches increasingly engaged in community support efforts. In 1880, approximately 150 Black refugees from Arkansas arrived in New York City, seeking passage to Africa. St. Philip’s Episcopal Church raised funds to assist those awaiting transportation, while Mt. Olivet Baptist Chapel provided shelter (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 105-106).

Over time, Baptist churches surpassed Presbyterian churches in influence, to become the dominant denomination. Methodist churches witnessed an increase in representation, while Episcopal churches experienced a decline. Notably, independent Black

churches were predominantly Baptist and Methodist. For example, St. Mark’s Methodist Episcopal Church, established in 1896, had close ties with the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (New York Public Library n.d.). This denominational shift reshaped the neighborhood functions of Black churches, steering them toward greater grassroots activism, political engagement, and social mobilization.



The rise of Baptist churches gradually replaced the more elite-oriented, education- and economic empowerment-focused role that Presbyterian churches had previously played. These churches not only fought for Black civil rights externally but also actively promoted social transformation within Black communities. For instance, Rev. Dr. H. C. Bishop of St. Philip’s Episcopal Church served as the president of the Silent Protest Parade in New York City on July 28, 1917, leading a mass demonstration against lynching and racial violence (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000, 156–157). Likewise, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell of Abyssinian Baptist Church spearheaded campaigns against vice in Black neighborhoods, advocating for moral reform and community uplift (Sacks 2006, 184).

At the same time, as Black newcomers to the city increasingly

sought out religious services that reflected their customs and traditions, Black churches evolved into distinctly cultural institutions, a transformation most evident in Baptist churches (Sacks 2006, 180). These churches embraced emotionally expressive worship styles and became key centers for the dissemination of Gospel music and Spirituals, playing a pivotal role in the spread of Black musical culture. The Reverend T. H. Gilbert at Mount Olivet Baptist Church highlights this dynamic—his attempt to introduce a more 'intellectual manner' to preaching was met with resistance from the congregation, which found his approach 'distasteful' compared to the previous pastor's more emotional style (Sacks 2006, 182). First Free Baptist Church served not only as a place of worship but also as a center for community gatherings and lectures, hosting concerts and public speeches (Miller 2020).

Methodist churches, though generally less militant than Baptist congregations, played a significant role in advancing voter education, civil rights advocacy, and leadership development within Black communities. Many Methodist congregations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), sought greater autonomy by breaking away from White-led ecclesiastical structures and establishing independent Black-led institutions. The pastors of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church were actively involved in community service, including participation in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Among them, Brooks was regarded as one of the most politically active African American pastors in New York City (New York Public Library n.d.).

In 1903, Rev. R.D. Stinson, pastor of First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel, traveled north to raise funds for the expansion of Morris Brown College in Atlanta. The goal was to provide Southern African Americans with vocational skills, including tailoring, cooking, domestic service, laundry work, nursing training, carpentry, harness-making, shoemaking, printing, bricklaying, dressmaking, and the arts (Miller 2020). The decline of Episcopal churches within Black communities further reflected

the growing push for Black religious autonomy and a shift in the socioeconomic composition of Black congregants. Similarly, in 1886, Father Augustus Tolton, the first publicly recognized African American Catholic priest in the United States, celebrated his first Mass in the country at St. Benedict the Moor Church. The two Catholic priests before him were both White (Davis 1986, 1-17).

Key Church Leaders

St. Mark's United Methodist Church

William F. Butler

Tenure: Founded the church in 1871

Contribution: As the church's founder, he secured permission from the Mother African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia to establish a new congregation for African Americans in New York City, laying a strong foundation for its growth (NYPL 2024).

John J. Hicks

Tenure: From 1964

Contribution: Hicks was deeply involved with the NAACP and the Harlem YMCA, establishing funds to support the church and its community, further strengthening its role in Harlem (NYPL 2024).

William H. Brooks

Tenure: 1897–1923

Contribution: A founding member of the NAACP and the National Urban League, Brooks was one of New York City's most influential Black ministers, actively promoting civil rights and social justice (NYPL 2024).

John W. Robinson

Tenure: 1923–1931

Contribution: Under his leadership, a new Gothic-style church was completed in Harlem in 1926, becoming a landmark for the African American community (NYPL 2024).

St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church

Peter Williams Jr.

Tenure: 1826–1840

Contribution: The church's first rector and the first ordained African American Episcopal priest in New York City. He was a leading abolitionist and co-founder of Freedom's Journal and the Phoenix Society (Brady 2007).



New-York Historical Society. 2007. "Peter Williams Jr." New York Divided: Slavery and the Civil War.

Shelton Hale Bishop

Tenure: 1933–1957

Contribution: Son of Hutchens Bishop, he expanded the church's social service programs, focusing on community development and education. (NYPL 2024).



NYPL Library. 1917. Silent Protest parade on Fifth Avenue, New York City, July 28, 1917. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Hutchens Chew Bishop

Tenure: 1886–1933

Contribution: Led the church for 47 years. A pioneer African American seminary graduate, he oversaw the move to Harlem and commissioned architect Vertner Woodson Tandy. He also helped organize the 1917 Silent Parade for civil rights (Jones 1995).



New-York Historical Society. 2007. "Peter Williams Jr." New York Divided: Slavery and the Civil War.

M. Moran Weston

Tenure: 1957–1982

Contribution: A minister, banker, and activist. He helped found Carver Federal Savings Bank, led community housing initiatives, and became Columbia University's first Black trustee (Dunlap 2004).

Mt. Olivet Baptist Church

Daniel Washington Wisner

Tenure: From 1878

Contribution: Founded New York's first Black militia, established an orphanage and a home for the elderly, and was active in anti-slavery and Baptist missionary organizations (Harlem Is n.d.).

Swann Galleries. 2024. "Dedication Program and Early Photograph from Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Harlem." Sale 2562, Lot 342.



O. Clay Maxwell

Tenure: Mid-20th century

Contribution: Launched Harlem's first after-school program and helped organize national Baptist education initiatives (Harlem Is n.d.).



Floyd, Silas Xavier. 1902. Life of Charles T. Walker, D.D.: ("The Black Spurgeon") Pastor Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, New York City. National Baptist Publishing Board, 174.

Charles T. Walker

Tenure: From 1899

Contribution: Known as the "Black Spurgeon," he expanded the church's social services, including founding the Harlem YMCA and YWCA (Harlem Is 2023).

William Preston

Tenure: Early 20th century

Contribution: Ran for Congress (21st District) and led the church's relocation from Midtown to Harlem, expanding its influence (Harlem Is n.d.).

Charles A. Curtis

Tenure: Late 20th century–Present

Contribution: Advocated for social justice policies, expanded community services, and strengthened the church's role as a political and social hub in Harlem (Harlem Is n.d.).



Harlem World Magazine. 2022. "Jobs, Livable Wages, and More Discussed at Baptist Ministers' Conference in Harlem."

Abyssinian Baptist Church

Thomas Paul

Tenure: Helped organize the church in 1808

Contribution: Promoted religious autonomy for African Americans (Abyssinian Baptist Church 2025).



Johnson, Kevin. 2025. "The Beginnings of Abyssinian." Abyssinian Baptist Church, August 13.

Johnson, Kevin. 2025. "The Beginnings of Abyssinian." Abyssinian Baptist Church, August 13.



Charles Satchell Morris

Tenure: 1902–1906

Contribution: Succeeded Wynn, sold the Waverly Place church, relocated Abyssinian to 242 West 40th Street, marking an early Great Migration movement (Abyssinian Baptist Church 2025).

William Spellman

Tenure: 1856–1885

Contribution: Expanded membership to 1,600 and strengthened the church's community influence (Abyssinian Baptist Church 2025).

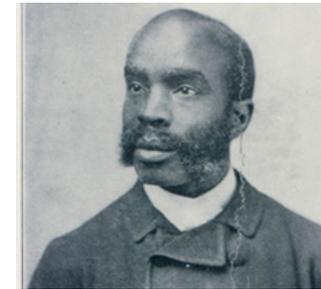


"The Beginnings of Abyssinian." Abyssinian Baptist Church, August 13.

Robert D. Wynn

Tenure: 1885–1901

Contribution: Led the congregation for 16 years, completed the purchase of the Waverly Place property, and prepared the church's move uptown (Abyssinian Baptist Church 2025).



Johnson, Kevin. 2025. "The Beginnings of Abyssinian." Abyssinian Baptist Church, August 13.

Adam Clayton Powell Sr.
Tenure: 1908–1936
Contribution: Grew the congregation to over 10,000 members and was a co-founder of the National Urban League (Mack 2014).



SamePassage. 2023. "Adam Clayton Powell, Sr."

Banks. 2024. "Abyssinian Baptist Church's Kevin Johnson Has History of Following Prominent Clergy."



Kevin R. Johnson
Tenure: 1902–1906
Contribution: Current pastor, continuing the church's mission in faith, education, and community service (Mack 2014).



Washington Area Spark. 1941. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. behind the Pulpit.

Adam Clayton Powell Jr.
Tenure: 1937–1971
Contribution: Led the church while serving in Congress, advancing civil rights and social reform (Mack 2014).

Calvin O. Butts III
Tenure: 1989–2022
Contribution: Founded the Abyssinian Development Corporation and spearheaded major community revitalization efforts in Harlem (Mack 2014).



African American Golfer's Digest. 2022. "Rev. Dr. Calvin O. Butts III, Community Leader and Longtime Pastor in Harlem, Dies at 73." African American Golfer's Digest, October 29.

North Presbyterian Church

Washington Roosevelt
Tenure: 1849–1855
Contribution: First pastor of North Presbyterian Church, helped establish the church's foundation during its early years (New York Times 1884).

Thomas Street
Tenure: 1864–1873
Contribution: Achieved financial stability by helping the church pay off its debts. (Alexander 1887, 113).

Wilson Davidson Sexton
Tenure: 1900–1907
Contribution: Led the merger with Washington Heights Presbyterian Church and supervised the construction of the new church building at 525 West 155th Street (New York Times 1907).

Edwin Francis Hatfield
Tenure: 1856–1863
Contribution: Guided the church through an early phase of growth following Roosevelt's tenure (New York Times 1883).

Stealy Bales Rossiter
Tenure: 1873–1900
Contribution: Oversaw a period of major expansion, growing the congregation to 1,000 members and 900 Sunday School students; later resigned to serve as U.S. Secretary for the McAll Mission (New York Times 1914).

John R. Mackay
Tenure: 1908–1926
Contribution: Expanded membership from 664 to 1,471 and oversaw the construction of the Memorial House community center in 1923 (New York Tribune 1908).

Arthur J. Smith

Tenure: 1926–early 1927
(interim)

Contribution: Served as interim pastor following Mackay’s resignation; previously Secretary of the New York City Evangelistic Committee (New York Times 1926).

Merle H. Anderson

Tenure: From 1933

Contribution: Stabilized the church during a period of declining membership (New York Times 1933).

Henry Burnham Kirkland

Tenure: 1927–1933

Contribution: Led the merged congregation with St. Nicholas Avenue Presbyterian Church but resigned due to administrative disagreements (New York Times 1927).

Mark L. Chapman

Tenure: Present

Contribution: Current pastor; also a professor of African and African American Studies at Fordham University, emphasizing multicultural ministry and social justice (North Presbyterian Church NYC 2023).



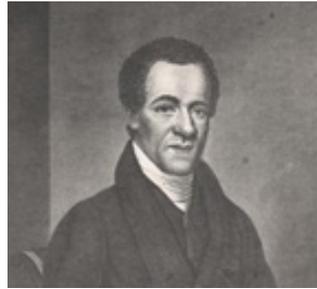
North Presbyterian Church NYC. 2023. "Rev. Chapman at Grace Congregational Church of Harlem!"

St. James Presbyterian Church

Samuel Cornish

Tenure: 1822

Contribution: Founded Shiloh Presbyterian Church, the first Black Presbyterian church in NYC; co-founded Freedom's Journal, the first African American newspaper; active in the Underground Railroad (Herman 2024).



Paradise, John. Rev'd Samuel Cornish, Pastor the First African Presbyterian Church in the City of New York. Engraved by Francis Kearny. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 1800–1899. The NYPL Digital Collections.

Henry Highland Garnet

Tenure: 1859–1865; 1873–1882

Contribution: Leading abolitionist; first Black minister to address the US Congress; advocated for economic boycotts against slave-produced goods (Herman 2024).



Black America Web. 2018. "Little Known Black History Fact: Henry Highland Garnet." Black America Web, August 22, 2018.



NYPL. 1840. Bishop Richard Allen. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division.

Theodore Sedgwick Wright

Tenure: 1830s–1847

Contribution: First African American graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary; founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society; Underground Railroad activist (Endicott 1840s).

William Lloyd Imes
Tenure: 1920s–1940s
Contribution: First African American board member of Union Theological Seminary; strengthened the church's role as a cultural hub during the Harlem Renaissance (St. James Presbyterian Church 2025).



Jones, Diana L. 1995. Episcopal Bishops of African Descent: A Celebration. Church Publishing. Log College Press Annex. n.d. "William Lloyd Imes (1889–1986)."

Pierce Butler Thompkins
Tenure: 1895
Contribution: Founded St. James Presbyterian Church after leading a group from Shiloh Presbyterian Church; emphasized rebuilding Black Presbyterian presence in Manhattan (St. James Presbyterian Church 2025).

Shelby Rooks
Tenure: 1960s–1970s
Contribution: Supported the founding of the Harlem School of the Arts by his wife, Dorothy Maynor, in the church basement; expanded the church's educational and cultural influence (New York City Chapter, American Guild of Organists n.d.).



Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. 1953. "Clergy - Rev. Charles Shelby Rooks Installed as Pastor of Lincoln Congregational Temple." Howard University Digital Howard.

First African Methodist Episcopal Church: Bethel

Richard Allen

Tenure: Sent a missionary in 1819

Contribution: Founder of the AME Church; authorized Rev. William Lambert to establish an independent Black congregation in New York City (First Bethel Harlem n.d.).



NYPL. 1840. Bishop Richard Allen. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division.

First Bethel Harlem 2024.
"History of First Bethel."



Henry A. Belin III

Tenure: Present

Contribution: Leads the church's spiritual, educational, and community initiatives (First Bethel Harlem n.d.).

William Lambert

Tenure: From 1819

Contribution: Organized Bethel AME Church in New York City, initially meeting in a rented space on Mott Street (First AME Church: Bethel 2024).

W. B. Derrick

Tenure: Late 19th century

Contribution: Advocated for education over pensions for African Americans, promoting institutions like Morris Brown College (Miller 2020).



NYPL.1902. Bishop W. B. Derrick. From Shadow and Light: An Autobiography with Reminiscences of the Last and Present Century. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.



Peter Williams Jr.



M. Moran Weston



W. B. Derrick



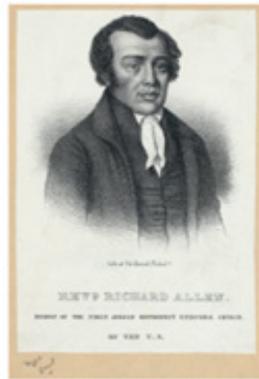
Adam Clayton Powell Sr.



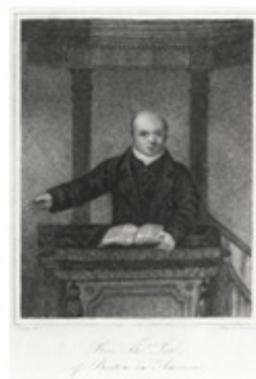
Charles Shelby Rooks (center, facing left)



Charles T. Walker



Richard Allen



Thomas Paul



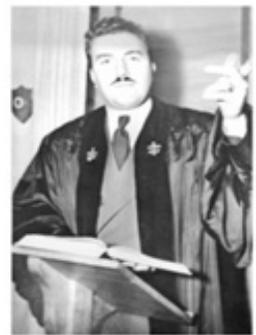
William Spellman



Robert D. Wynn



Charles Satchell Morris (left)



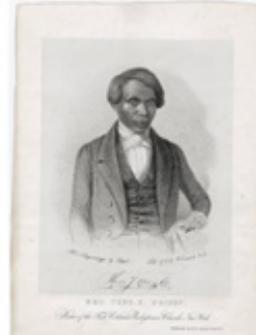
Adam Clayton Powell Jr.



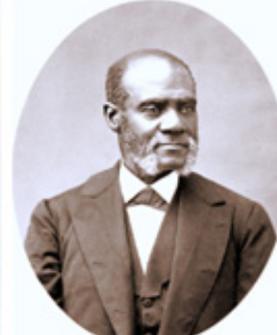
Calvin O. Butts III



Samuel Cornish



Theodore Sedgwick Wright



Henry Highland Garnet



William Lloyd Imes

EDUCATION

Yuhan(Judy) Wang

Historic Context

Between 1870 and 1920, the Tenderloin neighborhood was home to a large population of African Americans who migrated from the northward from the city center in lower Manhattan. In this evolving urban landscape, Black residents built educational institutions that fostered community, resilience, and resistance to systemic discrimination. Among these institutions, schools and learning facilities played a critical role in reflecting the racial injustices entrenched in New York City's education system. It explores the presence of African American educational institutions in the Tenderloin, examining how public schools, vocational programs, medical training facilities, and libraries reflect the opportunities and challenges faced by African American students and education professionals. By analyzing key institutions, this context statement highlights how discrimination, segregation, and gradual inclusion shaped the educational experiences of Black New Yorkers in the Tenderloin.

Black Education in New York City before the 1870s

In New York City, a mix of systemic White supremacy and pioneering efforts shaped African American education in Manhattan. The New York African Free School (NYAFS) was founded in 1787 by the New York Emancipation Society and supported by figures such as John Jay and Alexander Hamilton. It was the first non-religious free school for Black students (Rury 1983, 187). In 1853, the New York City public school system absorbed NYAFS, reflecting both progress and the limitations of inclusion efforts (Rury 1983, 190).

Despite these early advances, formal education for African American children continued as an issue of exclusion and struggle. Segregation remained the norm in New York City's schools well into the late nineteenth century. Segregation in New York was enforced through informal but entrenched practices. Public schools

became a battleground as White parents, school boards, and politicians resisted integration in order to maintain racial "order" and protect resources for White students. The Board of Education played a major role in maintaining school segregation by failing to allocate resources equitably, approving discriminatory admissions policies, and establishing separate schools for Black students, which received fewer resources than White students (Blascoer 2015, 85).

"Colored schools," staffed entirely by African American teachers, were established as offshoots of the New York African Free School. By 1834, seven such schools existed. Even after the New York State Civil Rights Act of 1873 mandated that public schools be open to all children, segregation persisted in New York City until 1883 (McBride 1990, 207). In 1884, the Board of Education officially removed the term "Colored" from school names, but racial discrimination in education did not disappear. Instead, many schools that had previously served only Black students continued to function as predominantly Black institutions under new names (Hurley 2023, 10). The No. 4 and 3 "Colored" schools were renamed Grammar School No. 81 and Grammar School No. 80, respectively, with Grammar School No. 80 located in the Tenderloin (Hurley 2023, 12).

The Tenderloin, despite being known for its theaters, gambling halls, and nightlife, had a large and diverse population, necessitating the establishment of multiple public schools. However, Black children had few schools to choose from. Higher education offered virtually no opportunities for Black New Yorkers before the Civil War, as most universities refused to admit Black students. However, medical training advanced slightly ("Education Steeped in African American Culture: Historically Black Colleges and Universities", n.d.). In 1863, the founders of the New York Medical College for Women established one of the first institutions to provide Black women with opportunities to study medicine (New York Medical College, n.d.). In 1870, the college graduated the first African American woman physician

in New York, setting a precedent for future Black professionals in medicine.

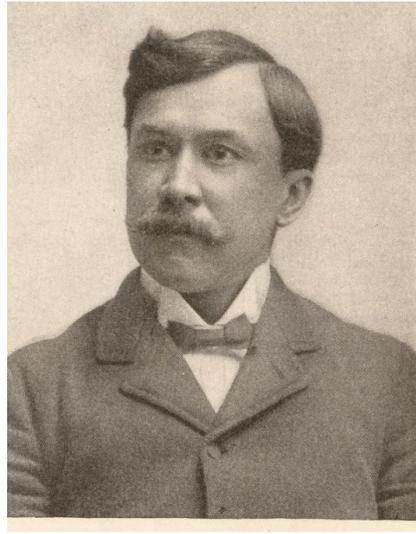
Public Education for Black Youth in the Tenderloin

There were a total of 11 public schools in the Tenderloin during the studio's study period. Two of them were high schools; the remainder were elementary and middle schools. Six of the schools had records of Black students, but the proportion was very small. The legal doctrine of "separate but equal," which was still widely accepted before 1900, limited their access to education. Although schools are open to everyone, many still secretly prevent African American students from enrolling, leaving them with only three or four choices (Volle and Duignan 2025).

Located at 265 West 41st Street, P.S. 80 was a cornerstone of Black education in New York City in the early twentieth century. By 1900, ninety-nine percent of the school's students were African American, making it one of the few public schools in New York City where Black students could be educated in an environment relatively free of the hostility and neglect that was common in predominantly White schools. Activist and educator Sarah Jane Tompkins Garnet, an early Black female principal at P.S. 80, insisted on providing equal educational opportunities, ensuring that Black children received the guidance and support they needed to thrive despite systemic racism. In 1900, after Garnet retired, Black activist and educator William L. Bulkeley took over as principal, continuing and expanding the school's role in the community. Bulkeley emphasized the importance of parent involvement, holding evening meetings each semester to engage parents in their children's education. This engagement manifested his belief that strengthening the connection between home and school was key to academic success (Norris 2022, 89).



Sarah J.S. Tompkins Garnet. c. 1860.
Photographs and Print Division,
Schomburg Center for Research in Black
Culture, the NYPL



"W.L. Bulkley. A Noble Example of the
Triumph of Perseverance." NYPL Digital
Collections

However, changing society's attitudes toward education remained a challenge. Many Black families struggled with economic difficulties and found it difficult to prioritize schooling over basic needs, like food and clothing. However, P.S. 80 became more than just a school; it became an informal civic center, a space where Black residents could gather, organize, and share ideas about education, society, and the world. In 1905, William L. Bulkley also opened a night school for people over the age of 16 years at P.S. 80, where ninety percent of the students were Black. Some were mothers with young children. Not only did they have English classes, but they also provided technical classes such as dressmaking, bookkeeping, and cooking. In 1906, it moved to P.S. 67, a larger location at 120 West 46th Street (Norris 2022, 95). This building survives today and still functions as a school. Night schools operated frequently at the time, but very few schools welcomed Black students. This initiative reflected a broader recognition of the economic struggles faced by many Black and immigrant families in the Tenderloin, where survival often took precedence over traditional schooling. These programs allowed

children and adults to work during the day and attend classes in the evening, learning practical skills that could improve their job prospects (Palmer 2018, 185).



"Public School 67" New York City,
Municipal Archives



"Public School 80" New York City,
Municipal Archives



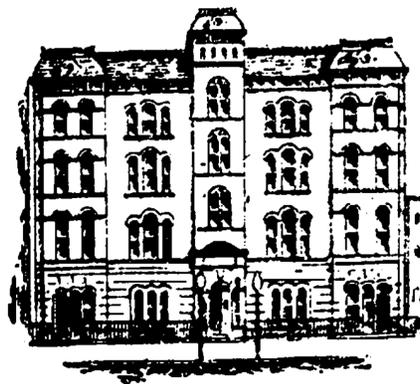
73 Years old;Goes to school, New York
Age, vol. XXVI, no. 14 (1913)

With few schools to choose from, many students had to travel long distances to get there. Public School No. 48, situated between Fifth and Sixth Avenues at 28th Street, became the "most fashionable school" for African American children due to its relatively high quality and well-resourced environment. This school building also survives today. Unlike many overcrowded

and underfunded schools for Black students, Public School No. 48 had better facilities, attracting children from over 100 streets away. The New York Times noted that, “Colored children predominate in No. 48,” but in fact only 33 percent of the students were African American, reflecting the broader racial disparities in access to quality education (New York Tribune 1895, 11). Most other public schools either limited Black enrollment or were composed of a mix of Black and immigrant children. Public School No. 28, for instance, had highly diverse students, including those from Germany, Italy, and France, many of whom were high-achieving despite facing cultural and economic challenges (New-York Tribune 1895, 11). Black families in New York City faced a difficult choice: send their children to underfunded local schools or endure a grueling commute to institutions like P.S. 48. Both choices came with a price: either limited opportunity or daily hardship. This lack of accessible quality education hindered social mobility for Black communities, trapping many in a cycle of poverty. Despite the rich cultural life in areas like Black Bohemia, the systemic neglect in schooling highlighted the broader social exclusion they faced.



Public School 48 1940 Tax Photo, Municipal Archives



Public School 28, New York Tribune, 1895

Most public schools in the Tenderloin were elementary and middle schools, with only one high school, Public School No. 67 (Miller 2016). The lack of high schools was partly due to the low demand for secondary education at the time. In 1874, New York enacted a compulsory education law requiring children between the ages of 8 and 14 to attend school for at least 14 weeks per year (Fay 1874, 532). However, enforcement was weak. Many parents use the excuse that their children were working to avoid punishment, as economic need often took precedence over education. This loophole reduced school attendance and reinforced the idea that work experience was more valuable than formal education (Stambler 1968, 203).



Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The NYPL. "Map of the County of New York: showing the school districts and the locality of the public schools, 1883" NYPL Digital Collections.

During a period of demographic change in the Tenderloin, two principals offered very different explanations for declining enrollment. Sarah Garnet, the Black principal of Grammar School No. 81, attributed the change to Black families moving northward in the city, in pursuit of better facilities and educational equality—a sign of their growing desire for equality. In contrast, Louise Clausen, the White principal of Grammar School No. 48, blamed the decline in enrollment on the “rise of the colored race” and saw integration as a threat to White families. Her perspective revealed an early example of white flight and racial anxiety. (New-York Tribune 1895, 11)

African Americans in Private and Catholic Schools

Between 1870 and 1920, there were four private church schools in the Tenderloin area, all of which were Catholic schools. While Catholic schools improved educational access for many disadvantaged groups, they directed efforts primarily toward immigrant communities rather than addressing the systemic exclusion of African American students. They offered a variety of courses, including language and singing.

An example is Holy Cross Academy, founded by the Sisters of Charity in the fall of 1858 as a school specifically for young girls. It offered industrial school courses in the nineteenth century. Later, it became a coeducational elementary school in 1903 (Miller 2023). Although the school was located in a crime-ridden and poverty-stricken area, the nuns enforced strict behavioral norms. They also believed that the children did not learn because the public schools were seriously flawed. As such, they made sure to hire well-equipped teachers (Weisz and Cross 1972, 158). Catholic schools in the area worked hard to address inequality in education,

providing more accessible education (Brandes 2020). However, the need to provide alternatives to public education reflects the systemic inequities faced by Black students.

Vocational Schools

The Mechanical and Technical School, an extant building on 43rd Street (founded in 1820), embodied the paradox of vocational education during the industrialization era. While it provided working-class students with critical skills such as carpentry and plumbing, White people leveraged the tools of systemic White supremacy and prevented African Americans from finding employment after graduation (New York Tribune 1900, B1). White employers refused to hire Black graduates despite their qualifications, highlighting deep-seated racial discrimination.

Such limitations made vocational training a partial solution, as economic mobility remained tied to social bias rather than ability.

In a 1907 newspaper article, an unnamed vocational school for African Americans stated that while free and inclusive, it operated in a segregated labor market, and graduates still faced barriers to upward mobility, reflecting broader systemic inequalities (New York Tribune 1907, B7). This same school was noted as valuing intergenerational learning, enrolling students from teenagers to seniors. Older learners who gained literacy and technical skills demonstrated a breakthrough in intergenerational poverty (New York Tribune 1907, B7). This contrasted with the male-dominated, youth-centered model of mechanical schools, which excluded older people and women.



The General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York
Epicgenius, 2022

Gender exclusion was prevalent in mainstream institutions of the time. The Mechanical School closed its women's department in the late nineteenth century, limiting women's opportunities in the trades and reinforcing gendered labor roles (Goeschel 1988, 4). In contrast, schools for African Americans were often inclusive of all genders, offering courses in "male" fields (e.g., electrical installation) and "female" trades (e.g., tailoring). This inclusivity enabled Black women to pursue economic independence

by taking on roles such as cooks or housekeepers, challenging traditional domestic service. However, social expectations still confined many women to low-wage industries, highlighting the intersection of race and gender in career opportunities (Goeschel 1988, 4).

Medical Schools

From 1870 to 1920, African Americans in New York City faced severe systemic barriers to pursuing medical education and careers, despite incremental and hard-earned progress. Medical institutions existed in areas like the Tenderloin, but racial discrimination and segregation were rampant, and Black students did not have equal access to training and employment opportunities.

Pioneers like Dr. Susan McKinney, the first Black woman physician in New York State, embodied both resilience and the harsh realities of exclusion. She was the sister of Sarah Garnet, the first Black female principal of New York. Although Dr. McKinney graduated top of her class from the New York Medical College for Women on 54th Street in 1870, the mainstream White media ignored her achievements. Her education was enabled by her family's relative wealth, and such resources were not common to many Black New Yorkers (History of American Women Blog 2015). Even after earning her degree, she struggled to find employment, reflecting the dual burdens of systemic White supremacy and sexism (Rux 2020).

By 1888, the first Black man earned a medical degree from the Academy of Medicine on 42nd Street, and by 1900, six Black nurses completed their training, but these milestones masked deeper inequalities (New York Medical College, n.d.). White administrators confined Black nurses and physicians to segregated hospitals or underserved communities, where they exploited the labor of the Black nurses and physicians in low-paying positions that reflected broader societal discrimination. Institutions such as

the New York Medical College for Women and the New York Academy of Medicine provided rare opportunities but failed to eliminate systemic barriers, leaving Black professionals to rely on self-determination and community support.

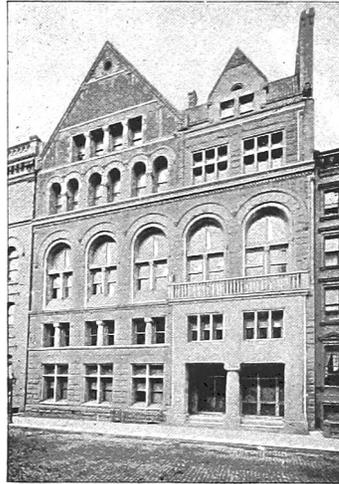
Libraries

Prior to 1903, the Tenderloin area had only the George Bruce Library on 42nd Street, built in 1888 (New York Public Library, n.d.). The second public library in the area was built after 1898, and the Tenderloin soon after became home to what is today the main branch of the New York Public Library. While the neighborhood eventually housed four public libraries, these White-led institutions ignored African American history and literature. White library staff and patrons were often unwelcoming to Black patrons, enforcing segregation through overt discrimination and covertly via the exclusion of materials related to Black experiences (Mattern 2019). This not only reduced African Americans' physical access to resources but also erased their cultural contributions from public memory. In response, African American collectors such as Arturo Schomburg took action. By the end of the nineteenth century, Schomburg had amassed a large collection documenting the achievements of the Black diaspora, which later became the cornerstone of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (Schuessler 2024). The public library's exclusion of Black literature and collections also extended to employment discrimination. It was not until 1920 that New York City hired its first Black woman librarian, and the Schomburg Center opened in 1925 in Harlem (Evans 2020). The institution has become a cornerstone of Black scholarship and remains one of the most important research centers for African American and African diaspora materials.

Historic Assets

The **New York Medical College for Women**, was a medical school that opened in 1863 and closed in 1918. It was founded by Dr. Clemence Sophia Lozier. In 1870, graduate Susan McKinney Steward became the first African-American female physician in New York State.

The **New York Academy of Medicine**, a health policy and advocacy organization founded in 1847 by a group of leading New York metropolitan area physicians as a voice for the medical profession in medical practice and public health reform. The early leaders of the academy were invested in the reform movements of the day and worked to improve public health by focusing on the living conditions of the poor. The College's first Black male graduate received his M.D. in 1888. In 1900, six African American nurses graduated from this school.



The Academy moved into this structure in 1890. King's Photographic Views of New York City, 1893

Grammar School No. 26/ Public School No. 26, it was located at 121 West 30th Street. It was a public school that served Black students along with students of other backgrounds.



Ward School 48/ Public school No. 48, It was located at 120 West 28 Street. It was a public school that served Black students along with students of other backgrounds. It became known as the "most fashionable school" among Black children due to its relatively high quality and well-resourced environment.

Public School 67, It was located at 120 West 46th Street in Manhattan. Due to the increasing number of students, the night school was moved here from P.S. 80. It was one of the first night schools established by the Board of Education, providing students with technical training. Today, the building continues to be used for educational purposes as the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School.





Public School 80/ Former Colored School No. 3, It was located at 225 West 41st Street, the building originally housed Colored School No. 3, one of New York City's segregated public schools for African American children. Following the city's desegregation of the school system, the city renamed it as Public School 80. In 1905, educator William Bulkley established a free vocational night school here, offering Black adults educational opportunities in trades and literacy.



The General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, an educational and cultural association at 20 West 44th Street in Midtown Manhattan, New York City. The first school, which became the Mechanics Institute in 1858, continues to provide tuition-free evening instruction in trades-related education. It is the oldest privately endowed tuition-free technical school in the city of New York, with more than 180,000 alumni.



The New York Public Library, the flagship building in the New York Public Library system in the Midtown neighborhood of Manhattan in New York City. It occupies former site of the Croton Reservoir, and the library's cornerstone was laid in 1902.

Historic Change and Analysis

Most of the schools that once served the Tenderloin's diverse population have disappeared, leaving little physical evidence of their role in the district's history. Public Schools No. 28 and 67 are the only buildings that survive. Today, No. 28 is no longer used as a school; it has been converted into office space and painted red. No. 67 remains in use as a school.

These changes reflect a broader trend of urban transformation and loss of educational heritage in New York City. Many of the Tenderloin's historic school buildings have either been demolished or repurposed, their histories fading from public memory. The disappearance of these institutions also signals a shift in the neighborhood's socioeconomic and racial makeup. Schools that once served Black and immigrant communities have been abandoned, redeveloped, or integrated into the city's expanding commercial landscape.

RACIAL CONFLICT AND SOLIDARITY

Yixuan (Jess) Chen

Historic Context

From 1850 to 1920, New York's Tenderloin district was a flashpoint of racial and ethnic conflict. It was shaped by rapid urbanization, police corruption, and tensions between Black and other immigrant communities. The neighborhood was notorious for its vice economy, but it also became a center for interracial social spaces, Black-owned businesses, and civil rights activism. However, Black residents faced persistent violence, discrimination, and police crackdowns.

Key historic events of this period include the 1863 Draft Riots, during which White mobs attacked and lynched Black residents, and destroyed the Colored Orphan Asylum. The work of the Lexow Committee (1884), initiated by the New York State Senate, exposed police corruption and anti-Black vagrancy laws. But this did little to prevent the 1900 Race Riot, triggered by a police killing in McBride's Saloon in the Tenderloin. The era also saw significant activism, including the Negro Silent Protest Parade (1917) and the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Colored Citizens' Protective League (CCPL) in challenging racial injustice.

This period was marked by a duality: rising racial violence but also increasing interracial collaboration in legal reform, civil rights advocacy, and Black economic empowerment. Figures such as Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Du Bois, and James Weldon Johnson played important roles in advancing racial justice. Institutions like the 23rd Police Precinct reflected the entrenched power structures that maintained racial inequities. Interrogating this history exposes the ongoing challenges of racial integration and the enduring struggle for justice in America.

The Tenderloin district of Manhattan was infamous as Gilded Age New York's vice quarter, but it was also a densely populated working-class neighborhood. In the late nineteenth century,

the area's residents were a mosaic of ethnic groups. Large communities of Irish immigrants had long dominated the district, alongside growing numbers of Italian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants living in crowded tenement housing. By the 1880s, African Americans began moving into the Tenderloin in significant numbers, many migrating from the post-Reconstruction South in search of jobs as porters, waiters, launderers, and laborers. Census data reflect this demographic shift: in 1880, the Tenderloin housed about 4,800 Black residents – nearly 17.5 percent of New York's Black population, though Blacks comprised only 14 percent of the Tenderloin's own population. Over the next two decades, the Black population in the district roughly doubled, reaching 9,685 by 1900, about 18 percent of Tenderloin residents (Logan, Zhang, and Chunyu 2015). This made the Tenderloin home to one of the largest Black enclaves in the city at the turn of the century. The surrounding White population remained predominantly immigrant, setting the stage for a volatile interracial coexistence.

As the Tenderloin's racial makeup changed, friction grew between Black newcomers and the White ethnic working class, often flaring into open hostility. Prejudices and competition for jobs and housing bred resentment between these groups. Many Irish residents faced nativist prejudice but still harbored anti-Black sentiments dating back to the Civil War era. By the 1890s, the Tenderloin had become a flashpoint of interracial conflict. Black tenants who moved in would face harassment, including slurs and even violence from White coworkers and neighbors. A particularly toxic element was the role of the New York City Police Department (NYPD). The force at the time was overwhelmingly White (largely Irish-American) and frequently exacerbated racial tensions. The NYPD in this era had no Black officers or leadership; the force remained entirely White until 1911, and many officers patrolling Black neighborhoods exhibited open racial animosity (Sacks 2006). Instead of providing equal protection, police often treated Black people as a population to be controlled rather than served. Incidents of police brutality against Black residents were

common and went largely unpunished, fostering deep mistrust.

Corruption and political patronage within the police and city government also played a role in fostering racial tensions. The Tenderloin's police precinct was notorious for graft and lax law enforcement on vice (Crain 2020). This culture of corruption, sanctioned by Tammany Hall politicians, meant that officers often acted as virtual warlords in their precincts. In the 1890s, the Lexow Committee's investigation into NYPD corruption revealed that Tenderloin precinct captains took massive payoffs from gambling houses, saloons, and brothels—up to \$400 a month in illicit income, a huge sum at the time. Policing in the district thus depended less on the rule of law than on the discretion or prejudice of individual officers. In this environment, minor infractions or mere suspicion could be used as a pretext to arrest marginalized residents. Broad vagrancy and “disorderly conduct” laws gave police wide latitude to detain anyone deemed undesirable. These laws were selectively enforced to target Black people and poor immigrants, who could be arrested simply for “loitering” or being unemployed. For instance, the confrontation that ultimately ignited the 1900 Tenderloin riot began when plainclothes officer accused a Black woman of solicitation, effectively a vagrancy-related charge, as she stood outside on the street (Will Mack, 2017). Such practices created a climate of fear for the Black community. Even outside of riot situations, Black residents were far more likely to be stopped, arrested, or brutalized by Tenderloin police than their White counterparts. Statistical data bear this out, although Black people made up under two percent of New York's population before World War I, they comprised over five percent of arrests after 1900, more than double their share of the populace. No other ethnic group experienced this level of disproportionate police scrutiny. Such racial disparities in policing reinforced Black people's perception that the city's institutions were biased against them. Black citizens bristled under constant police surveillance and rough justice, heightening interracial tensions. Meanwhile, the government and courts offered little recourse. City authorities often suppressed or

or ignored complaints of racist policing. After outbreaks of violence, official investigations typically exonerated the police, sending a clear message that brutality toward Black citizens would be tolerated (Reitano 2006). This combustible mix of segregation, prejudice, and official indifference set the historical context for the Tenderloin’s eruptions of racial conflict – and also for emerging currents of interracial solidarity and civil rights activism as Black New Yorkers and their allies fought back. The following tables provide a snapshot of the Tenderloin’s Black population and an example of citywide racial disparities in policing around 1900:

Black Population in Manhattan’s Tenderloin District (1880–1920)

Year	Black Population in Tenderloin	% of Tenderloin Population that is Black	% of NYC’s Black Population in Tenderloin
1880	4,804	14.2%	17.5%
1900	9,685	18.6%	18.3%
1910	8,050	14.6%	8.8%
1920	4,397	10.2%	2.9%

NYC Census data analyzed in Logan, John R., Weiwei Zhang, and Miao Chunyu. 2015. “Emergent Ghettos: Black Neighborhoods in New York and Chicago, 1880–1940.” *American Journal of Sociology* 120(4): 1055-1094.

YEAR	NEW YORK CITY ^a	MANHATTAN
1820	12,647	10,886
1830	15,983	13,976
1840	19,204	16,358
1850	17,880	13,815
1860	17,580	12,581
1865	14,804	9,943
1870	18,760	13,093
1880	28,815	19,662
1890	33,888	23,601
1900	60,666	36,246
1910	91,709	60,534
1920	152,407	109,133

^a The 1820–1890 data are Manhattan and Brooklyn only; 1900–1920 includes all five boroughs; adapted from Scheiner (1965).

Lans, Aja M. 2024. “Say Her Name: Resistance, Race Riots, and a Bioarchaeology of Black Life in New York City.” *Historical Archaeology*, 58: 326–350.

After the 1900, the Black community began relocating uptown to San Juan Hill and Harlem, causing the Tenderloin’s Black population to fall even as NYC’s total Black population rose. By 1900, the district had a substantial Black minority living amid a larger White immigrant community, yet in the eyes of law enforcement, Black residents were treated as a suspect class. As detailed next, these conditions erupted into violence on several occasions and also galvanized pioneering movements for justice.

1863 Draft Riots

By 1863, New York City was a hotbed of racial and class conflict. President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation heightened tensions, with abolitionists and Black New Yorkers celebrating freedom, while pro-slavery Democrats incited fear among the White working class, warning that newly freed Black laborers would take their jobs. At the same time, class grievances escalated due to the 1863 Federal Draft Law because wealthier White men could pay a \$300 commutation fee to avoid military service. Poor Irish immigrants, already struggling economically, saw this

as grossly unfair. Black men were exempt from the draft because they were not yet considered citizens. As such, resentment toward the Black working class among White laborers intensified, fueling fears that they were being forced to fight for a cause that would ultimately harm their job prospects.

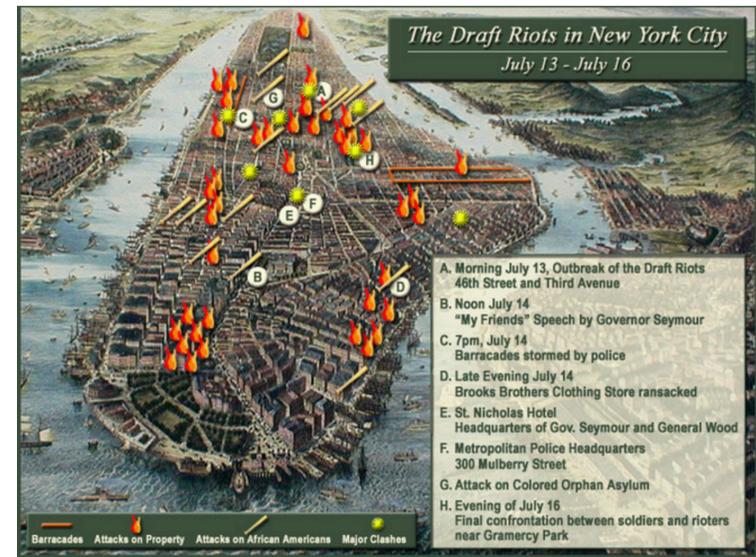
1863 Draft Riots

By 1863, New York City was a hotbed of racial and class conflict. President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation heightened tensions, with abolitionists and Black New Yorkers celebrating freedom, while pro-slavery Democrats incited fear among the White working class, warning that newly freed Black laborers would take their jobs. At the same time, class grievances escalated due to the 1863 Federal Draft Law because wealthier White men could pay a \$300 commutation fee to avoid military service. Poor Irish immigrants, already struggling economically, saw this as grossly unfair. Black men were exempt from the draft because they were not yet considered citizens. As such, resentment toward the Black working class among White laborers intensified, fueling fears that they were being forced to fight for a cause that would ultimately harm their job prospects.



Hanging a Negro in Clarkson Street by Thomas Nast, 1 August 1863.

On July 13, 1863, just days after the first draft lottery, riots broke out. Initially targeting government buildings and draft offices, the violence quickly turned towards Black residents. Over five days, White mobs lynched at least eleven Black men, torched the Colored Orphan Asylum on Fifth Avenue between 42nd and 43rd Streets, and scared Black families into fleeing their homes. These attacks were not random acts of chaos, but deliberate actions of racial terror, reflecting the White outrage over the shifting social and political order (Duller 2018).



Map of attacks during the week of the riot, CUNY Academic Commons



Colored Orphan Asylum exterior, circa 1860-1861. New York Historical Society (PR 065, Stereograph File).

As noted in the Minutes of the Board of the Association for the Benefit of Colored Orphans, July 25, 1863:

On the 13th July at 4 PM, an infuriated mob ... surrounded the premises of the Asylum and 500 of them entered the house ... they deliberately set fire to it ... simply because it was the home of unoffending colored orphan children (Murphy 2013).

As a consequence of this violence, the Colored Orphan Asylum relocated uptown in 1867 to 143rd Street in Harlem. The forced relocation of the Black orphanage from Midtown Manhattan to the rural periphery was an early indicator of how the Tenderloin's Black residents and institutions would be pushed into geographic marginality. This also foreshadowed Harlem's emergence as a predominantly Black neighborhood in the twentieth century (Harris 2003). Even after the riots subsided, Black people remained vulnerable to White harassment and violence. Public spaces were hostile environments, and Black families even held funerals for family members who were victims of the riots under police protection. White supremacist sentiment continued to permeate throughout the city, with Black residents facing ongoing social exclusion and discriminatory economic barriers.

Nonetheless, the aftermath of the riots prompted some New York elites and institutions to help mend the rupture by providing aid to the Black community. Shocked by the bloodshed, the city's pro-Union elite took steps to assist Black residents and reaffirm a commitment to racial harmony, at least on the surface. The Union League Club, a patriotic organization founded in 1863 with a mission that included Black uplift, and a Committee of Merchants, organized relief for Black victims. They provided relief funds and organized the enlistment of Black soldiers, parading them down Broadway in March 1864 as a symbolic reclaiming of public space. However, these efforts did not erase the deep-seated racism that the riots had exposed.



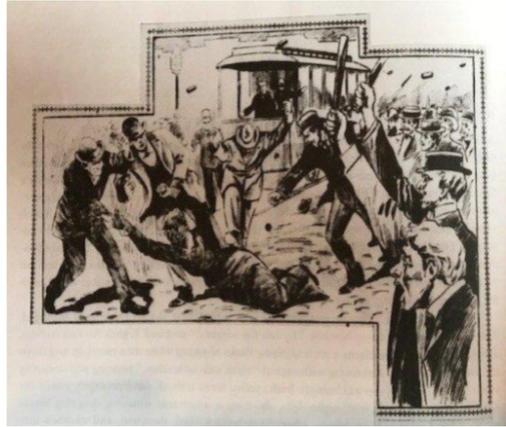
The Twentieth United States colored troops receiving their colors on Union Square, March 5, 1964. Library of Congress.

The post-war Reconstruction era brought legal victories: the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) granted Black men voting rights and New York's 1873 Civil Rights Act sought to ensure equal access to public spaces. However, social attitudes were slower to change. Black voters experienced intimidation, and White-controlled political machines resisted Black political participation. While racial discrimination was formally outlawed, segregation and economic exclusion persisted.

The 1900 Tenderloin Race Riot: Echoes of 1863

On a sweltering night in August 1900, the long-simmering tensions in the Tenderloin boiled over into a full-scale race riot, one of the worst urban disturbances in New York since the Civil War. The immediate trigger was an incident on August 13, 1900, involving a Black man named Arthur J. Harris and policeman Robert J. Thorpe. Around 2:00 a.m. Harris found Thorpe accosting Harris's girlfriend, a Black woman named May Enoch, on West 41st Street and Eighth Avenue, at McBride's saloon. Thorpe, a White officer in plainclothes at the time, had assumed Enoch was a prostitute soliciting on the street when he grabbed her. Harris rushed to defend Enoch, unaware that the aggressor was a police officer. In the scuffle that ensued, Harris slashed Thorpe with a pocketknife,

inflicting a wound that proved fatal (Ovington 1911). Thorpe, it turned out, was not only an officer but also the son-in-law of a local police precinct captain, which heightened the stakes. As news spread the next day that a Black man had killed a White policeman, the stage was set for violent retribution.



White Men Beating Lavine Johnson, Evening World, August 16, 1900

Over the next several days, the Tenderloin exploded. On August 15, a fight between a Black man (Spencer Walters) and a White man (Thomas Healy) near Thorpe's family home ended with Walters being beaten nearly to death by a White mob. This assault kicked off the riot: word spread rapidly through the neighborhood that White gangs were attacking Black individuals, and White mobs soon surged through Tenderloin streets in the thousands, looking for any Black person in sight. Contemporary accounts describe enraged crowds roaming from the West 20s up into the 30s, dragging Black people off streetcars, pulling them from their homes, and brutally beating them on the sidewalks. Eyewitnesses recalled the mob shouting "Lynch the niggers!" as they bludgeoned their victims. Black residents, caught by surprise as they returned from work in the evenings, were chased down and pummeled; many fled or hid rather than risk the streets (Will Mack 2017).

Rather than protect the besieged Black community, the police largely sided with the White rioters or stood by as violence raged. Mayor Robert Van Wyck and Police Chief William Devery eventually deployed some 700 officers into the Tenderloin to quell the chaos. However, the police response was blatantly skewed: officers were witnessed, club in hand, chasing down Black citizens and "throwing them to the mob," effectively abetting vigilante assaults. Inside police station houses, Black detainees fared no better – many were savagely beaten in custody. In stark contrast, White rioters were coddled or ignored by police. By the riot's end, dozens of Black men and women had been arrested, versus almost no Whites. This disparity is telling: of approximately 35 people arrested and 60 injured during the riot, the vast majority were Black, even though White mobs were the clear instigators. The NYPD's bias was so egregious that even New York's mainstream newspapers expressed dismay. The press excoriated that Black New Yorkers had "been harshly and unfairly used by the force in this city for many years" (Osofsky 1963).

Despite this outcry, meaningful official accountability was absent. At a perfunctory hearing afterwards, all charges of misconduct against officers were declared "unsubstantiated," and the department essentially whitewashed the riot's aftermath. No police were disciplined or prosecuted, and civil damage suits filed by Black victims were summarily dismissed by the courts. City leaders' reluctance to punish police emboldened the worst elements of the force and left the underlying racial conflict unresolved.

There were some key figures in this riot. T. Thomas Fortune, a prominent Black journalist and civil rights activist, and editor of the New York Age newspaper. In the riot's aftermath, Fortune emerged as a leader in the community's response, helping channel Black anger into organized action. Fortune chaired the Citizens' Protective League, formed in September 1900, and led the push for investigations and reforms. On the establishment side, Chief William Devery personified the entrenched police

ethos; a former boxer and saloonkeeper, Devery was the NYPD's last superintendent under Tammany Hall and was known for corruption and bravado. His handling of the riot, more suppression than protection, underscored why many Black people saw the police not as guardians but as another hostile mob.

The Colored Citizens' Protective League and Black Resistance

In response to the rampant injustices of the 1900 riot, Black New Yorkers organized one of the city's first modern civil rights initiatives. Mere weeks after the violence, a group of Black activists formed the Colored Citizens' Protective League (CCPL). Meeting at Cooper Union and later rallying 3,500 people at Carnegie Hall, these leaders, including T. Thomas Fortune as chairman and William Henry Brooks, wrote an appeal to the mayor. They vowed to seek redress and protection for their community (Osofsky 1965). Lacking faith in official channels, the CCPL effectively conducted its own investigation of the riot: they gathered affidavits from 80 eyewitnesses and victims of police brutality, compiling damning evidence that they forwarded to the Mayor's office along with demands for action. While city officials ignored these appeals, the very act of documentation was significant. It marked a shift from isolated pleas to a coordinated civil rights strategy. The CCPL kept pressure on authorities and made sure the Black perspective on the riot was recorded for history, countering the narrative that blamed "Black criminals" for the unrest. The League also provided practical aid, raising funds for Black families who had suffered in the mayhem. Some sympathetic White New Yorkers assisted in these relief efforts, holding interracial fundraisers to help the riot's Black victims rebuild. This indicated flickers of interracial solidarity even in the riot's wake, a recognition by some White citizens that unchecked police violence threatened the social order at large, not just the Black community.

Although the CCPL did not achieve immediate policy changes, it set a precedent. It was one of the first sustained civil rights advocacy groups in the city, predating the NAACP. The CCPL's efforts kept the spotlight on police misconduct and racial violence in the city's political discourse. Indeed, when a second major racial outbreak —the 1905 San Juan Hill Riot — struck the city a few years later, Black New Yorkers quickly resurrected the Protective League model, this time with broader interracial support.

Law Enforcement and Vagrancy Laws as Tools of Control

Throughout this era, vagrancy laws and "public order" policing were systematically used to control and intimidate Black and immigrant communities in the Tenderloin. New York's vagrancy statutes criminalized those deemed idle, disorderly, or suspicious, granting officers sweeping power to arrest individuals who had not committed any specific crime. In practice, such laws became a legal pretext to harass Black residents and poor immigrants. Tenderloin's Black residents, in particular, were targeted under vague accusations of loitering, disorderly conduct, or prostitution. The fatal 1900 confrontation between Thorpe and Harris exemplifies this dynamic: Thorpe grabbing a Black woman on the street was part of an NYPD crackdown on perceived vice in the Tenderloin.

Undercover officers like Thorpe routinely accosted Black women in the district on suspicion of vagrancy or sex work, often with little cause beyond racial stereotypes. Similarly, Black men gathering on stoops or street corners could be told to "move along" or face arrest. One police inspector in the Tenderloin, Cornelius Willemse, later admitted that he would beat any Black man "within reach" if he felt they were lingering, bragging that he gave them "skull trouble" with his nightstick (Sacks 2006).

Such punitive enforcement was rarely applied to the White middle-class crowds who frequented Tenderloin dance halls or

theaters at night. The injustice of these vagrancy arrests did not go unnoticed by Black activists. The CCPL and Black newspapers like the *New York Age* documented numerous cases of Black citizens arrested on trumped-up “disorderly conduct” charges or subjected to excessive fines for minor infractions. They argued that these laws functioned as a Northern parallel to the Jim Crow South’s Black Codes, effectively criminalizing Black presence in public space. By highlighting the discriminatory application of these laws, early twentieth-century activists in New York laid the groundwork for later civil liberty challenges to vagrancy statutes. In the Tenderloin years, however, vagrancy laws remained a potent weapon of social control, often turning interactions with police into flashpoints for racial conflict.

23rd Precinct Station: White Violence as Class Control



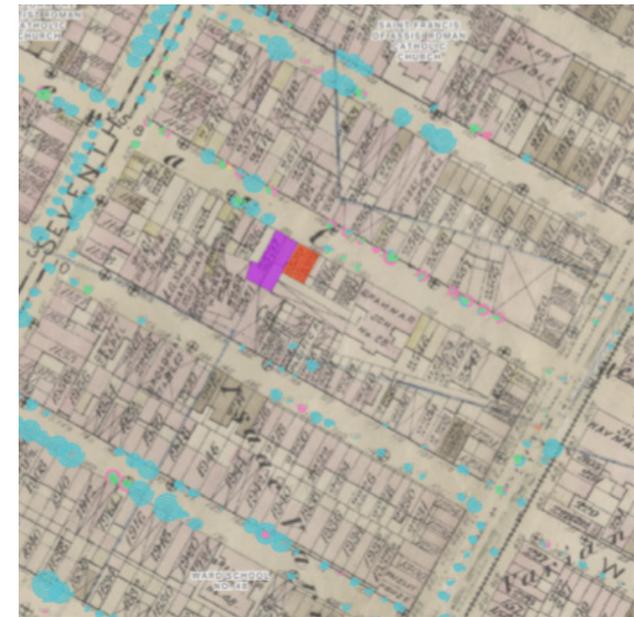
23rd Precinct Station, New York
City Landmarks Preservation
Commission, Landmark
Designation Reports, 2019

In 1907, the City of New York erected the 23rd Precinct Station House at 134–138 West 30th Street, strategically positioned

within the Tenderloin, a neighborhood characterized by interracial social life, sex work, and a substantial Black working-class population. Designed by architect R. Thomas Short in the Romanesque Revival style, the station’s robust, fortress-like appearance featured heavy masonry, rounded arches, and imposing turrets, reflecting the style’s intent to communicate strength, permanence, and authority. This architecture symbolized

more than mere physical presence; it signified the power and dominance of state control.

The station represented a significant municipal investment of \$75,000 and was constructed not solely for the purpose of public safety but as a calculated mechanism for urban and social control. Importantly, the precinct replaced several prominent Black-run institutions, including a Colored Mission and a Black and Tan club, effectively signaling a profound shift from inclusive community spaces to a structure representing increased state surveillance and dominance. Before the precinct’s construction, a “Colored Mission” occupied by the site, serving as a religious and community center for Black residents, followed by a “Black and Tan” club, a venue fostering interracial social interactions. Their forced displacement marked the erasure of crucial community spaces that had supported Tenderloin’s diverse social fabric.



Mapping Historical New York: 1885
Purple: Colored Mission, Red: Black and Tan Club



Sanborn, Manhattan Land Book (1897-98), 23rd Precinct Station

The Landmarks Preservation Commission later contextualized the station as part of a broader campaign aimed at reasserting police authority over what was perceived as an “unruly area,” thus capturing prevailing racial and moral anxieties of the time. At the turn of the century, the Tenderloin was notoriously stigmatized as “Satan’s Circus” by moral reformers and city authorities, and the establishment of the 23rd Precinct embodied an explicit moral and spatial cleansing effort intended to curb interracial interactions, sex work, and the visibility of the Black working class. All-White membership and leadership groups like the Committee of Fourteen supported this effort by pushing for the closure of venues where interracial socialization, particularly between Black men and White women, occurred.

Thus, the precinct’s function extended beyond regular policing activities, serving instead as an active agent in enforcing racial segregation and spatial boundaries under the facade of maintaining public morality. The police forces starkly demonstrated this complicity in enforcing these racial dynamics during the 1900 race riot, when officers from this precinct actively participated alongside White mobs in attacking Black residents. This event underscored the station’s symbolic role as an instrument of racial oppression, surveillance, and control in the Tenderloin district,

making explicit the deeper meanings embedded within its architectural expression.

Carnegie Hall Integration from the Start

Carnegie Hall, the famous concert venue at 57th Street and 7th Avenue, sits at the northern fringe of what was once the Tenderloin District. From its inception in 1891, Carnegie Hall had a reputation as an inclusive space, compared to many other institutions of the era. Black audiences were never formally barred from Carnegie Hall, unlike segregated theaters in the South or even some discriminatory establishments in New York. In fact, African Americans both attended and performed in Carnegie Hall from the very beginning, not just at politically oriented events like the CCPL mass meeting, but also in musical concerts and cultural gatherings. The hall’s management did not enforce a color line in ticket sales or seating, which meant that if Black New Yorkers could afford a ticket, they were welcome to sit in the audience alongside White people. This was a forward-thinking stance in the 1890s, when even many Northern venues excluded Black patrons or relegated them to the back (Worldstrides 2024).



1895: View of Carnegie Hall on the corner of Seventh Avenue and 57th Street, New York City. Photo by Museum of the City of New York

Carnegie Hall also opened its stage to African American political voices relatively early. Booker T. Washington delivered the first of his many Carnegie Hall speeches in 1896, where he addressed an integrated audience about racial progress. Over the years, Washington spoke at the establishment approximately 15 times, often to raise funds for Tuskegee Institute. His lectures drew Black New Yorkers, who were admitted without restriction. In 1904, Washington shared the stage with W. E. B. Du Bois during a historic three-day conference of Black leaders at Carnegie Hall. It brought together Black educators, clergy, and activists from the Tenderloin community and beyond. The audience was notably mixed, including White philanthropists and many Black citizens who came to witness two leading but ideologically opposed Black spokesmen debate. Such events made Carnegie Hall a forum for racial dialogue and uplift. The very presence of Black audiences listening to Black speakers in one of New York's premier venues was a powerful form of normalization and assertion of equal citizenship. In contrast, just a few blocks south, some theaters and restaurants near 42nd Street still practiced de facto segregation or outright refusal of Black customers (Moss 2019). Carnegie Hall stood out as an exception to color barriers. The *New York Age* praised the hall for its color-blind admission policy when covering these meetings, and Black leaders took pride in holding important gatherings there rather than in smaller, Black-only venues.

The 1917 Silent Protest Parade on Fifth Avenue

By the 1910s, New York City's Black community had grown and shifted northward to Harlem, but the legacy of the Tenderloin and its conflicts lived on in the city's activist memory. On July 28, 1917, African American New Yorkers mounted a landmark demonstration of interracial solidarity and Black protest: the Silent Protest Parade along Fifth Avenue. This march was organized by the NAACP, which had been founded in New York in 1909 as an interracial civil rights organization.



Here and above: Underwood & Underwood, Silent protest parade in New York [City] against the East St. Louis riots, 1917. Library of Congress.

Two key NAACP leaders, James Weldon Johnson and W.E.B. Du Bois were the principal organizers of the parade, forming a special committee that also included other influential figures of the Black community. Nearly 10,000 Black men, women, and children assembled that Saturday afternoon, marching in total silence from 57th Street down the heart of Manhattan to 23rd Street, along the eastern edge of the Tenderloin. Many marchers carried signs and banners, but none uttered a word. This silent, dignified procession stunned onlookers; as one account noted, "New York City, and the nation, had never before witnessed such a remarkable scene" (Flatiron NoMad 2020).



Silence Parade of 1917 Routine

The decision to march down Fifth Avenue was highly symbolic. Fifth Avenue was New York's premier boulevard – home to its richest families, major churches, and commercial promenades. By taking their protest to this conspicuous corridor of power, Black New Yorkers aimed to confront the city's and country's elite with the horrors of racial violence. The parade route deliberately passed near sites of past racial strife. Beginning in Midtown just blocks from the old Tenderloin, it moved south through the city's commercial center. The march ended at 23rd Street, adjacent to Madison Square, not far from where the Tenderloin violence had spilled over in 1900. Moreover, Fifth Avenue was traditionally used for grand parades; by peacefully occupying that space, Black citizens asserted their right to full citizenship and visibility. Johnson and Du Bois chose silence as the tactic to emphasize moral contrast. In place of the frenzied mobs and police brutality that had too often characterized racial conflict in New York, here was a disciplined, peaceful demonstration of Black grievance and determination. The silence spoke volumes, forcing spectators to reflect on the message conveyed by signs like "Thou Shalt Not

Kill" and "Your Hands Are Full of Blood," which referred to the lynchings and pogroms against Black Americans (National Humanities Center 2014).



Beinecke Library's exhibition of photographs of the 1917 Silent Protest Parade

The immediate impetus for the Silent Parade was the gruesome East St. Louis race riot earlier that month, in which White mobs in Illinois massacred dozens of Black residents while White authorities looked on. But New York's marchers also protested lynchings in the South and racial terror nationwide, and by extension recalled the violence that Black New Yorkers themselves had endured. The parade's official flyer invoked the atrocious crimes committed against "Colored American citizens":

We march in memory of our butchered dead, the massacre of honest toilers who were removing the reproach of laziness and thriftlessness hurled at the entire race. They died to prove our worthiness to live. We live in spite of death shadowing us and ours. We prosper in the face of the most unwarranted and illegal oppression... We march because the growing consciousness and solidarity of race, coupled with sorrow and discrimination, have made us one; a union that may never be dissolved... (Morand 2020).

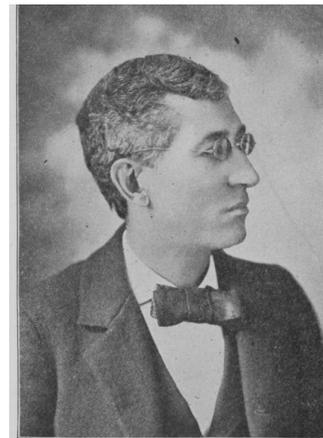
Fifth Avenue was chosen because it guaranteed the protest would penetrate the consciousness of those who could not ignore Black suffering as a distant problem; it brought the reality of racial violence to the doorstep of Manhattan's influential classes. This show of unity and pride stood in contrast to the fear that had pervaded the same streets in 1900. Fifth Avenue offered the biggest stage and symbolic meaning: it was New York's safest, most policed avenue, briefly occupied by those who the city's White-led government had historically denied police protection.

The Silent Protest Parade was not only a response to events in the South; it also reflected the lessons Black New Yorkers had learned from two decades of struggle in their own city. Leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois had been deeply impacted by the Tenderloin riot. Du Bois wrote in 1906 that "the 1900 violence proved the black man is in continual danger of mob violence in New York as in New Orleans." Likewise, Ida B. Wells, a Black woman, journalist, and pioneering anti-lynching activist spent time in New York in the 1890s, using the Black press to publicize racial atrocities. Wells's crusade against lynching had galvanized early civil rights organizing in the city, directly influencing groups like the NAACP. By 1917, the NAACP's New York branch consciously employed public protest as a tool, something practically unheard of in 1900. The Silent Parade thus built on years of groundwork laid by organizations such as the CCPL and the Niagara Movement. Many Black leaders in Harlem, including clergymen and business owners, joined Johnson and Du Bois in the parade ranks, highlighting a broad Black coalition from working-class domestics to the professional class. Their shared presence was itself a statement of intraracial solidarity forged in the fires of earlier struggles in districts like the Tenderloin. When the 10,000 marchers reached the terminus at 23rd Street in the Flatiron District, they had etched their demand for justice into the city's consciousness. The Silent Parade received extensive press coverage and historians credit it with pressuring President Woodrow Wilson to finally speak out against lynching (Reitano 2006).

More enduringly, it provided a blueprint for future civil rights marches, a direct ancestor of later mass demonstrations from the 1941 March on Washington Movement to Dr. King's 1960s protests. In the context of New York's racial history, the Silent Parade was a turning point: an example of how the Black community, once victimized by riot and police violence in places like the Tenderloin, could regroup and seize control of the narrative through disciplined, collective action in the public sphere.

Key Activists and Legal Figures

The period 1860–1920 in New York's Tenderloin and environs saw the rise of influential civil rights activists and interracial allies who shaped the struggle for racial justice.



Timothy Thomas Fortune circa 1900, NYPL

T. Thomas Fortune (1856–1928): A towering Black journalist and agitator, Fortune was editor of the *New York Age*, one of the nation's leading Black newspapers. Living in New York during the Tenderloin's turbulent years, he became an outspoken critic of racist violence and inequality. Fortune was a principal organizer of the 1900 and 1905 Colored Citizens Protective Leagues, chairing mass meetings and gathering evidence against the police

He advocated a strategy of militant agitation and also helped found the Afro-American Council, a forerunner to the NAACP. Fortune's insistence that African Americans "make a lot of noise" against injustice laid the intellectual groundwork for the activism to come. (Reitano 2006) He also mentored younger activists; for instance, he collaborated with Ida B. Wells in the 1890s, publishing her anti-lynching reports when she fled Memphis for New York.

Cihak and Zima, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, ca. 1893-1894. University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center.



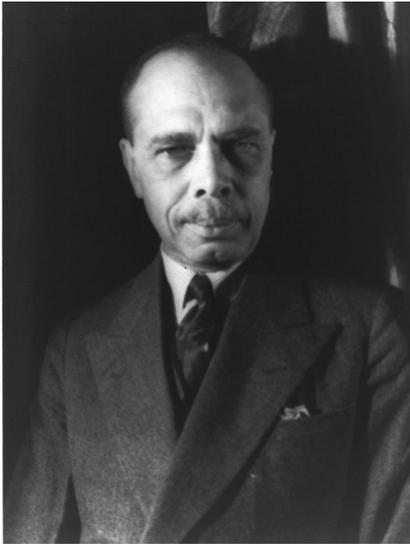
Ida B. Wells (1862–1931): Although the United States legally abolished slavery post-Civil War, racial violence against Black Americans persisted throughout the Jim Crow era, often with impunity. Lynching Black people was widespread, with White mobs carrying out these extrajudicial killings while all-White law enforcement departments turned a blind eye. In response to these atrocities, Ida B. Wells, a Black woman, a journalist, and activist, arrived in New York in 1892 following the lynching of her friends in Memphis. She spent several months writing for the *New York Age*, using her platform to expose the brutality of lynching to Northern audiences. That same year, on October 5, she delivered a powerful speech at Lyric Hall (725 Sixth Avenue), detailing the horrors of mob violence in the South (Wells 1892). Organized by fellow Black women and activists Victoria Earle Matthews and Maritcha Remond Lyons, the event galvanized support for anti-lynching advocacy and led to the founding of the Women’s Loyal Union of New York and Brooklyn. This organization became a key ally in Wells’s campaign, helping to distribute her investigative pamphlet, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (Lewis 1993). While Wells played a crucial role in shaping the fight against racial violence, organizations she helped to establish often sidelined her, including the NAACP. Her unwavering commitment to exposing racial injustices, even when it challenged social conventions, cemented her legacy as a pioneering voice in the struggle for Black civil rights.



W.E.B. Du Bois by James E. Purdy, 1907. the National Portrait Gallery.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963): As a scholar and activist, Du Bois moved to New York in 1905 and became one of the most significant Black leaders in the city. He observed the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill clashes, noting that northern Blacks faced the same deadly racism as in the South.

In 1905, Du Bois co-founded the Niagara Movement (Predecessor of the NAACP), an all-Black protest organization, and in 1909, he co-founded the NAACP, choosing New York as its headquarters. He played a direct role in organizing the 1917 Silent Parade, helping conceive of the silent format and likely marching at its front. Du Bois’s contribution was also intellectual – he articulated the idea of interracial solidarity in works like *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), yet also warned that without allies, Black people must defend themselves. In New York, Du Bois forged alliances with White progressives in the NAACP but maintained a clear-eyed focus on Black autonomy. His famous statement that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” rang especially true in the Tenderloin, and he worked tirelessly to erase that color line through legal challenges and moral suasion (Lewis 1993).



Portrait of James Weldon Johnson, The Library of Congress

James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938): A true polymath – a lawyer, diplomat, poet, songwriter, novelist, and civil rights leader – James Weldon Johnson’s life intersected

with the Tenderloin’s era in multiple ways. Born in 1871, Johnson came of age as the Tenderloin was flourishing and then faltering. In 1900, Johnson penned the poem “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (NAACP, n.b.), usually called as “Negro National Anthem.” It resonated deeply with Black communities, North and South.

Johnson moved to New York City in 1903 to pursue a literary career in the Tenderloin’s Black Bohemia. In those years, the Tenderloin was home to thriving Black music and theater venues. Johnson became a songwriter for Broadway along with his brother and Black composer, actor Bob Cole, writing popular songs performed in the district’s theaters. He frequented places like the Marshall Hotel (also “Hotel Marshall”) on 53rd Street – a Black-owned hotel in the Tenderloin where Black and White musicians mingled freely. In fact, it was noted that at the Marshall Hotel, “people of different races could meet and socialize on equal terms” – an island of relative integration that foreshadowed the ideals Johnson espoused. Johnson later wrote about this era in his book *Black Manhattan* (1930), chronicling the vibrant Black culture in the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill before Harlem took the spotlight. He described how The Marshall Hotel fostered the New Negro spirit and how the early Jazz scene blossomed there (Johnson 1938). By documenting this, Johnson ensured that

the contributions of Tenderloin’s Black community would not be erased by time.

Johnson joined the NAACP in 1916 as a field secretary and rose to executive secretary, making New York his base. He was the chief organizer of the 1917 Silent Protest Parade, handling logistics and publicity. Johnson believed in the power of mass demonstrations and voter mobilization; under his leadership, the NAACP’s New York office grew exponentially. He also forged Black–Jewish alliances, working with Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald on funding Black schools and reaching out to labor activists. Johnson’s advocacy extended to fighting segregation in federal jobs and lobbying for the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill in Congress (Hester, 2009). In the Tenderloin and Harlem context, Johnson emerges as the bridge between eras: he personally knew veterans of the 1900 struggle like Fortune and also mentored the younger activists of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance. His work exemplified interracial cooperation – e.g., he coordinated with White NAACP board members such as Oswald Villard and Mary Ovington to strategize protests – but he always centered Black leadership and initiative.



Morris Hillquit portrait, Library of Congress

Morris Hillquit (1869–1933):

Morris Hillquit was a leading critic of police corruption and racialized law enforcement in the Tenderloin, particularly after the 1900 Race Riot. He defended Black residents

arrested under vagrancy laws, arguing that these statutes functioned as a Northern version of the Black Codes, used to criminalize Black presence in public spaces. Hillquit compared them to Tsarist Russia's restrictions on Jews, stating: "Vagrancy laws are a modern version of the Russian residence laws, now applied to Black Americans." He worked with the CCPL, helping document police abuses and challenge racial discrimination in court. His advocacy exposed the NYPD's bias and laid the groundwork for later civil rights legal strategies in New York City (Peter Dreier 2023).

Conclusion

From 1850 to 1920, the history of New York City's Tenderloin district was a complex chapter filled with violence, oppression, and resistance. Events such as the 1863 Draft Riots, the 1900 Race Riot, and the 1917 Negro Silent Protest Parade not only exposed deep-rooted racism and systemic injustice but also showcased the resilience and unity of the African American community in the face of adversity. Through interracial cooperation, legal battles, and nonviolent protests, the residents of the Tenderloin carved out a difficult but hopeful path toward equality and justice.

This history is not just a memory of the past but a profound lesson for the present. It reminds us that racism is not merely individual prejudice but a system of oppression embedded in laws and policies. The struggle in the Tenderloin district teaches us that true social change requires diverse solidarity and sustained efforts. Whether through Ida B. Wells' anti-lynching campaign or the interracial collaboration of W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, their work continues to inspire today's civil rights movements.

As we confront police violence, housing discrimination, and economic inequality today, the history of the Tenderloin remains deeply relevant. It serves as a reminder that achieving racial justice requires not only legal reforms but also social awareness and action. By remembering this history, we can better understand contemporary challenges and contribute to building a more just and inclusive society.

Historic Change and Analysis

1863 Draft Riot: The 1863 Draft Riots in New York City were a violent expression of class and racial tensions, exacerbated by a deeply inequitable conscription system that allowed wealthy men to buy their way out of service while forcing poorer, often immigrant, populations to fight in the Civil War. The riots, largely led by Irish immigrants, turned into brutal attacks on Black communities, with mobs burning the Colored Orphan Asylum and targeting Black residents. This historical event exemplifies the classic “divide and rule” strategy, where marginalized groups are manipulated into opposing each other rather than addressing systemic inequalities created by the ruling elite. This same pattern continues in contemporary society. For example, in 2025, the U.S. government implemented “Operation Safeguard,” an aggressive immigration enforcement initiative targeting undocumented immigrants, particularly in sanctuary cities. This policy has intensified divisions within communities, pitting immigrant groups against law enforcement and even other minority communities, while the root causes of economic disparity and systemic exploitation remain unaddressed. Just as the nineteenth-century draft system diverted working-class frustrations toward racial violence rather than economic injustice, modern policies continue to deflect attention from those in power who benefit from societal divisions. Recognizing these historical parallels is crucial for educating community leaders and fostering solidarity among marginalized groups, rather than allowing the cycle of manipulation and displacement to persist.

1900 Race Riot: In August 1900, a violent Race Riot erupted primarily around West 30th Street in the Tenderloin. Today, these same blocks around 30th–41st Streets form the Penn Station and Herald Square area, a bustling commercial zone. A spatial comparison shows that what was a residential tenement cluster is now dominated by Penn Station, Madison Square Garden, and high-rise office buildings, with no trace of the tenements or

riot-torn streets remaining on the landscape. McBride’s Saloon was the starting point of the riot. Today, the New York Times headquarters is in the Saloon’s former location, symbolizing the transformation of a space once associated with racial violence into a center of media and corporate influence, with no visible acknowledgment of its past. While no physical markers commemorate the riot in this space, historical records do exist. The New York Times itself reported on the event at the time and today, BlackPast and the New York Public Library have preserved accounts detailing the causes and consequences of the violence. These digital and archival resources offer critical documentation, even as the physical landscape remains unmarked.

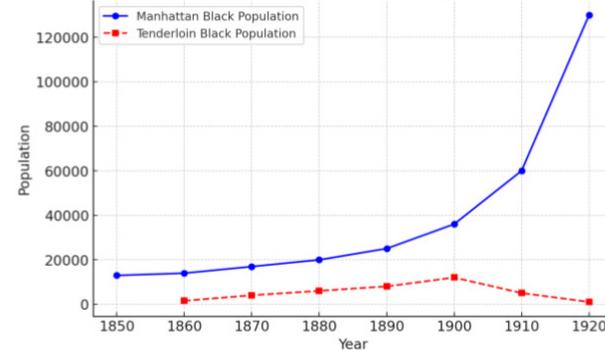
23rd Precinct Station: The center of policing in the Tenderloin was the 23rd Precinct station house, a fortress-like police building erected in 1907–08 at 134–138 West 30th Street. The city built this station to “service the Tenderloin, one of the most crime-ridden areas of Manhattan at that time.” Remarkably, this limestone castellated building still stands today, landmarked in 1998 and now houses an NYPD traffic unit. It is one of the few physical remnants of the Tenderloin era and a direct spatial link to the 1900 Race Riot. Modern visitors passing the 23rd Precinct building might not guess it was once called the Tenderloin Precinct and that its turreted walls bore witness to racial strife in 1900. However, the fact that one of the few surviving structures from the Tenderloin era is a police station. An institution historically linked to racial oppression, corruption, and the enforcement of White authority raises a question. Does the endurance of this building, rather than any of the spaces significant to Black community life, reflect an implicit whitewashing of the district’s history?

1917 Silent Protest Parade: Throughout American history, parades have served as powerful tools for protest, celebration, and recognition. However, Black-led demonstrations such as the 1917 Silent Protest Parade remain largely unrecognized in public memory. This march, where 10,000 African Americans protested racial violence along Fifth Avenue, has no physical markers,

existing mainly in historical archives. In contrast, mainstream events like New York's ticker-tape parades, which honor political leaders, military figures, and sports heroes, receive permanent plaques in the 'Canyon of Heroes.' Similarly, Black-led parades such as the 15th Amendment Celebrations, Harlem Hellfighters Parade, and the Fifth of July Celebrations, while historically significant, lack widespread commemoration. The 15th Amendment Celebrations, once marking a milestone in Black suffrage, have faded into academic discourse rather than public tradition. The Harlem Hellfighters Parade, which welcomed home one of World War I's most distinguished Black regiments, is remembered in military history but lacks a permanent public memorial. Likewise, the Fifth of July Celebrations, commemorating New York's abolition of slavery in 1827, have all but disappeared, showing how Black-led historical events are often erased from public consciousness (Bryant Park n.d.).

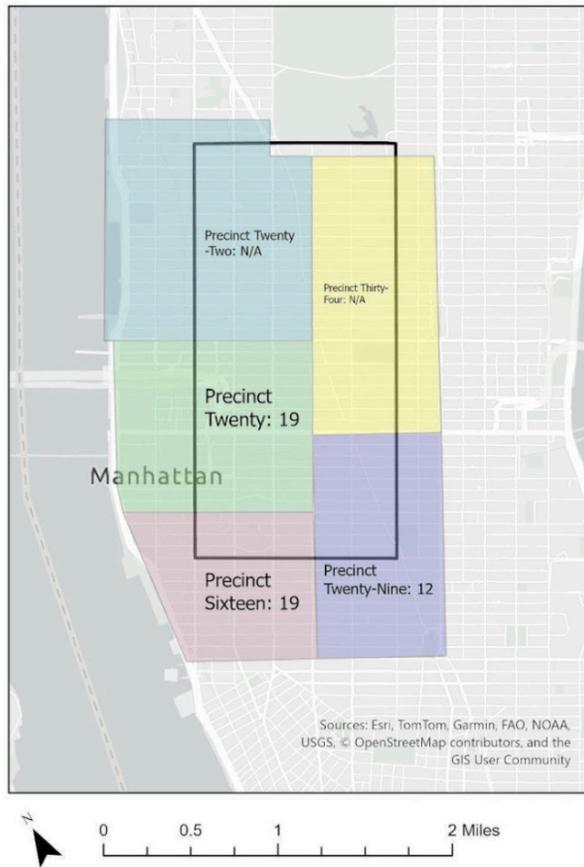
The disparity in commemoration reflects broader systemic exclusion. While public agencies and private entities institutionalize acts of patriotism and mainstream heroism in urban landscapes, these same entities often omit Black-led protests and celebrations. This omission raises critical questions about whose history do people preserve and why. Addressing this inequity requires integrating Black activism into public memory through physical markers, educational programs, and civic recognition. Ensuring that people and institutions acknowledge events like the Silent Parade not only honors past struggles but also fosters a more inclusive historical narrative.

Comparison of Black Population Trends in Manhattan and the Tenderloin (1850-1920)



Population statistics illustrate the rise and fall of the Tenderloin's Black community. In 1890, Manhattan's Black population was about 25,000; by 1900, it had grown 41 percent to 36,000, much of that increase settling in areas like the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill. Within the Tenderloin, Black residents made up a notable numerical minority alongside Irish, German, and other ethnic groups (McGruder 2015). But after the 1900 Race Riot, the black population in the Tenderloin declined rapidly. Manhattan's Black population continued to grow, reaching ~60,000 by 1910 and over 130,000 by 1920, but this growth happened almost entirely in Harlem, not in the Tenderloin. In fact, census records for the Tenderloin's tracts reveal a decline in Black residents by 1910, as many moved uptown (Burrell 2007). By 1920, the Tenderloin precincts had only a small fraction of Manhattan's Black population, while Harlem housed nearly 70 percent of it. A statistical graph of this trend would show a peak around 1900 in Midtown's Black population, then a steep drop-off by 1920, inversely mirrored by Harlem's rise (Kissinger 2014). This demographic displacement is quantifiable evidence of how racial conflict and urban redevelopment drove a people's relocation.

Police Brutality Cases by Precinct, 1865-1894



Surviving NYPD records and contemporary accounts point to significant racial disparities in policing during the Tenderloin era. During the 1900 riot, for example, the police force flooded the district with 700 officers. Rather than protect Black citizens from White mob violence, officers mostly cracked down on Black residents, arresting Black people in disproportionate numbers and often beating them in custody. Of the approximately 35 people NYPD arrested in the riot, the vast majority were Black, despite White people being the primary instigators of the violence.

This imbalance continued beyond the riot. The New York Age accused the NYPD of targeting Black men and women in the Tenderloin for petty offenses while turning a blind eye to White perpetrators. Unfortunately, official statistics by race are scarce, but newspaper reports, NAACP memos document police bias. For instance, complaints of police brutality against Black New Yorkers in 1900 were widespread, and no officers were ever disciplined, confirming a lack of accountability. Outside of riots, everyday policing in the Tenderloin also reflected racial disparity: Black sex workers and saloon owners were more likely to be raided or prosecuted than their White counterparts. Tenderloin's Black community faced over-policing and selective enforcement, contributing to their sense of alienation and desire to seek safety in a new neighborhood.

This pattern of racialized policing continues in contemporary New York City. The NYPD's stop-and-frisk policy, which peaked in the early 2010s, disproportionately targeted Black and Latino individuals. In 2011 alone, there were 685,724 stops, with Black individuals accounting for approximately 51 percent of those stopped, Latinos 33 percent, and White people only 9 percent. The majority of these stops (88 percent) resulted in neither fines nor convictions, reinforcing the perception of racial profiling rather than crime prevention. A study analyzing 2010 stop-and-frisk data found that non-weapon force was used in 14.1 percent of stops, with Black individuals experiencing non-weapon force in 7.6 percent of cases compared to only 0.9 percent for White individuals, making Black individuals eight to nine times more likely to experience such force (Sisak 2024). The parallels between over-policing in the Tenderloin era and modern-day practices illustrate how racial disparities in law enforcement persist over time, with Black communities continuing to bear the brunt of these injustices.

The transformation of the Tenderloin, the racial disparities in policing, and the erasure of Black-led commemorations reveal a broader historical pattern of systemic exclusion and selective

memory in New York City. While sites associated with state power, such as the 23rd Precinct station, remain preserved, locations tied to Black resilience and activism have largely disappeared from the physical landscape. The absence of markers commemorating events like the 1900 Race Riot and the 1917 Silent Parade reinforces this marginalization, showing how public history often privileges dominant narratives while ignoring the struggles of marginalized communities. Similarly, the stark contrast between the over-policing of Black communities in the Tenderloin and the racialized policing of modern-day New York City highlights the persistence of systemic inequities. The statistical evidence, from the early twentieth century to the present, underscores how Black communities have continuously faced criminalization and displacement.

MEDIA AND REPRESENTATION

Sabina Busch
Yekaterina (Kat) Nestser

Historic Context

“The working-place and the amusement resort of thieves, gamblers, ‘loose’ women, and ‘fast’ fools in search of novelty, and some students of human nature.”

-Sun’s Guide to New York 1892

The preceding quote exemplifies the perception of the Tenderloin district at the turn of the twentieth century, one that has largely persisted over time. However, this so-called rowdy vice district, which White media often labeled with scandalous names such as “Satan’s Circus,” was also home to Black Bohemia, where African Americans created art, knowledge, and community. Black media publications, notably the New York Age and the NAACP’s *The Crisis*, were important conduits for sharing information among the Black community. These and other publications had claims to space in the Tenderloin, with offices for the New York Freeman, the New York Age, the Afro-American News Company, and the Standard News Company located in the district. African Americans had to define their community on their own terms, as White media, including publications and visual media, often misrepresented or omitted them. The White sheet music industry, which flourished in the Tenderloin, produced many racist “novelty songs,” defined by degrading lyrics and caricatures of African Americans. Additionally, paintings and illustrations depicting the neighborhood were focused on how White people encountered it: shopping, “slumming,” or attending Whites-only entertainment venues. In searching for Black Bohemia, it is imperative to question these widespread White narratives and intentionally seek descriptions of the community by African Americans in order to combat stereotypes and amplify stories who people have previously dismissed.

White Media's Narrative of the Black Community

Names and Neighborhood Characterization

The name "Tenderloin," emerged in White media by the late 1880s. When the New York City Police Department assigned Captain Alexander Williams to the West 30th police station in 1876, the then-undefined district was "[about] to become the centre... of all-night life" (New York Times 1917). Although the neighborhood was not characterized as particularly immoral prior to Williams' arrival, upon initiating the new assignment, he had concluded that the supposed level of corruption would afford him an upgraded, diet of tenderloin steak, earning Williams the title the "Czar of Tenderloin" (New York Times 1917). His nickname would inspire the title and content of Bob Cole's song released in 1897 (Cole 1897).

Law enforcement continued to have authority over defining the neighborhood; in 1907 the neighborhood was split into the "old" and the "new" by the advent of a station opening at West 20th Street (New York Tribune 1907); a mere five years later, the fickle boundaries would be reintroduced by a new police captain (Sun 1912). Over time, the term "Tenderloin" spread across the country and became synonymous with vice-associated neighborhoods, most notably in San Francisco.

Many names compared New York City's Tenderloin to the biblical idea of Hell: "Satan's Circus," "Hell's Cauldron," and "The Modern Gomorrah" (Federal Writers' Project 1939). Names like "The Roaring Forties" reflected what was considered the rowdy character of parts of the neighborhood, particularly after dark. The Sun's Guide to New York, published in 1891 for a predominantly White audience, referred to the viceful, lower parts of the district as "The Burnt District" and "The Lava Beds," suggestive names that characterized the neighborhood as "the working-place and the amusement resort of thieves, gamblers, "loose" women, and "fast" fools in search of novelty, and some students of human

nature" (The Sun's Guide to New York 1892). Other names were more descriptive, including the area around Broadway, which was dubbed "The Great White Way," "The Gay White Way," or "The White Light District," upon early illumination of the city via electric street lights, around 1890 (Allen 1993). The area around Seventh Avenue and the streets in the upper 20s and lower 30s housed a large proportion of Black tenants. As such, after the 1880s, it was sometimes referred to as "Black Chapel" (Freeland 2009). White media labeled the area along Seventh Avenue "African Broadway," citing a visible Black population along the avenue (Anderson 1982). White newspapers also published characterizations of the neighborhood using the term "Black Belt," making a direct reference to densely-Black and impoverished regions in Alabama and Chicago that were known by the same moniker (New York Tribune 1895).

Although the White media coined and perpetuated most of the neighborhood's names, African Americans claimed the names "Black Bohemia" or "Negro Bohemia," for themselves (Anderson 1982). Unlike other neighborhood names, Black Bohemia referred not to a specific group of city blocks, but to a network of "gambling-clubs, honky-tonks, and professional clubs" that famous African Americans and those who wished to spend time among them frequently attended (Johnson 1930). Johnson offers a vibrant portrayal of Black Bohemia as a space of culture, leisure, socialization, and pleasure for African Americans, in contrast with the White media's characterization of the neighborhood.

THE NEW NEGRO QUARTER.

COLORED PEOPLE MOVING UP INTO
SEVENTH-AVE.

CHARACTERISTIC SIGHTS AND SCENER AMONG THE
POORER DENIZENS OF THE "BLACK BELT."

In the "Lava Beds" of New York; or,
THE 'TENDERLOIN DISTRICT' BY NIGHT.

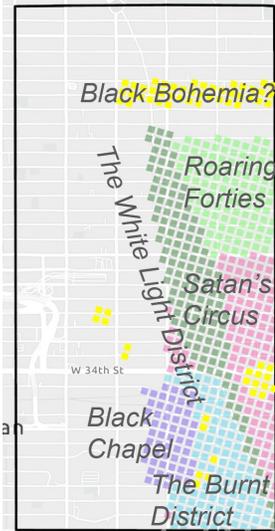
Bold Raid Before Dawn by Three
'Black Chapel' Desperadoes.

ON DARKEY FIFTH AVENUE

Former Housekeeper Tells of Her Erratic
Personal Life, Love for Dime Novels
and Murder Stories, and How She
Sent to Negro District for Possum

Media Clippings of Alternative Neighborhood
Names

Graphic by Kat Nestser



Map of General Extents of Various
Historic Neighborhood Names.

Map by Sabina Busch via ArcGIS Pro.



The Great White Way. Published by American Art Publishing Co., Printed by H.
Finkelstein & Son, 1917.

NYPL Digital Collections. "The Great White Way, New York City."



The Great White Way. Published by American Art Publishing Co., Printed by H.
Finkelstein & Son, 1913.

NYPL Digital Collections. "'The Great White Way,' Broadway, New York City."

White Media's Negative Characterizations of African Americans

White people widely controlled the newspapers and often used them as tools to spread prejudice about African Americans in the Tenderloin. White publications attacked the character of Black people in this neighborhood, illustrated by the following 1897 quote from Harper's Weekly:

Amid scenes of indescribable squalor and tawdry finery, dwell the negroes, leading their light-hearted lives of pleasure, confusion, music, noise and fierce fights that make them a terror to white [sic] neighbors and landlords alike (Anderson 1982).

There was continual ridicule of African Americans who attempted to amass wealth and break the cycles of inequity that stemmed from over 240 years of enslavement. In an 1895 article in the New York Tribune entitled, "The New Negro Quarter," the White author posits "how most of the [Black] men [living in the

Tenderloin] support their wives and families is a mystery, for they seem to do nothing but lounge about street corners," as well as, "the younger women, [are] arrayed in gowns that are wonderfully good imitations of the fashions, though only heaven knows how they can afford them" (New York Tribune 1895).



Black men standing on 7th Avenue near 30th Street. Byron Company, "People on 7th Avenue near 30th Street; in an African-American neighborhood," Museum of the City of New York, 1903, MNY13368.



Black women walking on 7th Avenue, near 30th Street, 1903. Byron Company, "People on 7th Avenue near 30th Street; in an African-American neighborhood," Museum of the City of New York, 1903, MNY10383.

White media sources also spread explicit misinformation in addition to mocking statements. In the same Tribune article, the author claimed, "the mystery of how these people [African Americans] get along deepens as a closer view is taken of their life. All of the business of the quarter [the Tenderloin] is the

hands of others. There is hardly a negro who has even the tiniest shop or store" (New York Tribune 1895). This statement was explicitly false. Historic sources contain scores of Black-owned businesses operating in the Tenderloin at this time, and many were refined and successful establishments, far exceeding the pejorative description of a "tiny shop." White media created this negative characterization and erasure of Black business owners, creating barriers by way of prejudice, thwarting African American entrepreneurship. This resulted in negative impacts on the well-being of the Black community and their ability to accumulate wealth.

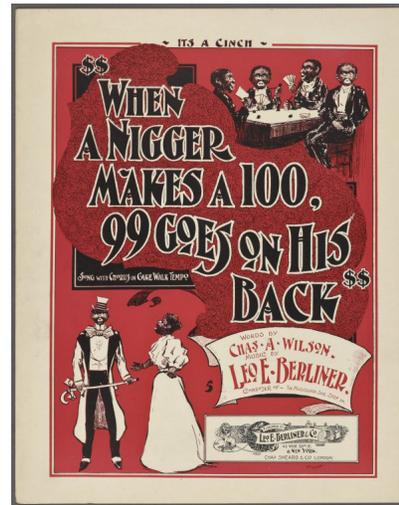
White-Published Sheet Music and Depictions of Black Performers

Although the African American artists and performers of Black Bohemia were incredibly influential, White audiences and producers limited their creative freedom by demanding adherence to derogatory and disparaging stereotypes. Unable to fully express creative freedom, the White-led system forced Black creatives to play the part of caricatures or minstrels in order to achieve success in this era. James Weldon Johnson illustrates this cruelty in the following quote from *Black Manhattan*:

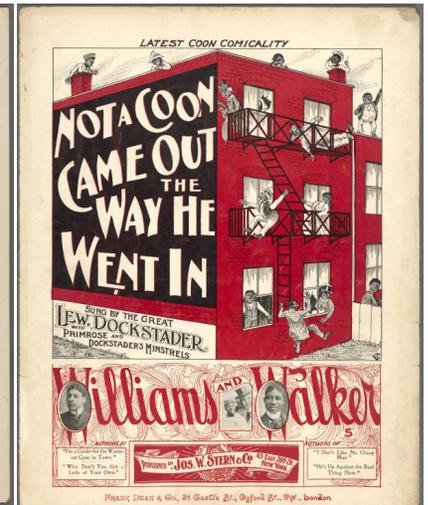
There was one man [at the club], a minstrel, who, whenever he responded to a request to "do something," never essayed anything below a reading from Shakespeare...here was a man who made people laugh at the size of his mouth, while he carried in his heart a burning ambition to be a tragedian; and so after all he did play a part in a tragedy (Johnson 1930).

The fact that many music publishing and theater companies were White-owned perpetuated this dynamic. White owners sought to produce pieces for largely White audiences. The sheet music industry flourished in the Tenderloin, particularly along Tin Pan Alley on West 28th Street. Sheet music from this area was widely

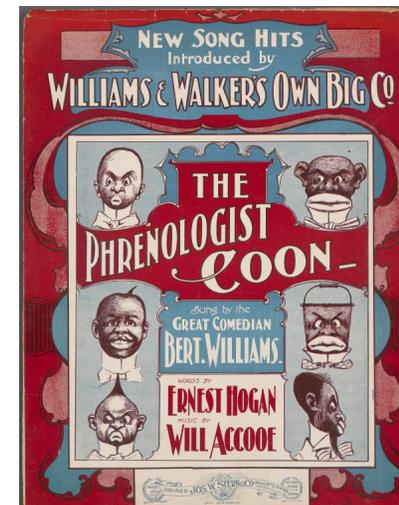
distributed across New York and beyond, and the choice of art on the covers plainly and painfully reflected music publishers' view of African Americans. White companies published racist illustrations of African Americans on the covers of disparaging songs that created or perpetuated harmful stereotypes, veiled as comedy. The lyrics of these songs, as well as the cover art, clearly expressed prejudice. For example, an 1899 song published by Leo E. Berliner & Co. entitled, "When a Nigger Makes a 100, 99 Goes on His Back," perpetuated a stereotype that African Americans were not able to wisely manage their spending (Wilson and Berliner 1899). The cover for the song also shows cartoon caricatures of African Americans. This is just one of many examples of racist songs and caricature imagery distributed by White publishing companies in the Tenderloin. Others include "Not a Coon Came Out the Way He Went In," which paints out Black men to be short-tempered and violent criminals; "The Phrenologist Coon," which references the racist pseudo-science of phrenology; and "She's Getting More Like the White Folks Every Day," which suggests that Black women desire to take on White culture in order to become more refined (Williams, Walker, and Dockstader 1898; Hogan and Accooe 1898; Williams and Walker 1901). Needless to say, this imagery is troubling and harmful. Despite the fact that several of these examples, and many others, were created in part by Black entertainers, the systemic White supremacy entrenched in this industry and era is inherently clear.



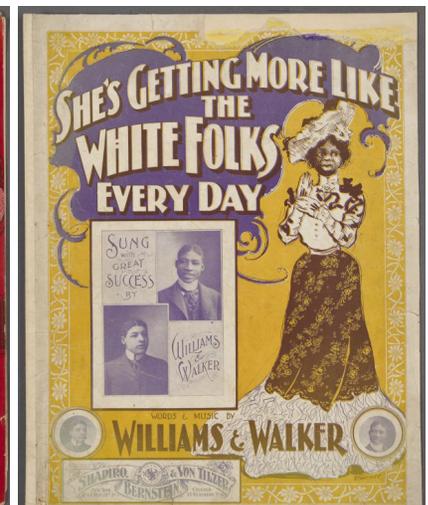
"When a Nigger Makes a 100, 99 Goes on His Back," Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Leo E. Berliner & Co., 1899. Words by Chas. A. Wilson, Composed by Leo E. Berliner. NYPL Digital Collections.



"Not a Coon Came Out the Way He Went In," Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1898. Written by Williams and Walker, Sung by Lew. Dockstader.



"The Phrenologist Coon," Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1901. Words by Ernest Hogan, Music by Will Accooe. NYPL Digital Collections.



"She's Getting More Like the White Folks Every Day," Sheet Music Distributed by White Publishing Company Shapiro, Bernstein, & Von Tilzer, 1901. Words and Music by Williams & Walker. NYPL Digital Collections.

White Visual and Fine Arts

White artists rarely depicted the Tenderloin's Black residents in their works. Even in artworks depicting bustling street scenes, Black presence is either erased entirely or reduced to caricature. For instance, George Bellows' portrayal of Madison Square suggests the area is entirely populated by White figures. Similarly, his series documenting the demolition of the future Penn Station site—once home to a significantly Black neighborhood—focused solely on its emptiness, omitting any trace of the Black residents displaced by the upheaval. In a print titled *Sidewalks of New York*, which brings the district's subjects into closer view, the artist rendered a single Black individual in a distinctly mocking manner.



"New York, 1911" by George Bellows. Oil on canvas, 42x60"



"Excavation of Penn Station" by George Bellows. Oil on canvas (1908).



"Blue Morning" by George Bellows. Oil on canvas, 34x44" (1909).

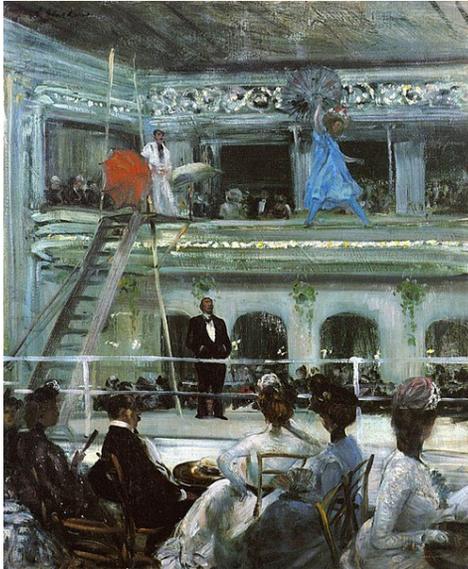


"Pennsylvania Excavation" by George Bellows. (1907).



"The Sidewalks of New York" published by Strobridge Litho. & Co., (1899).

In the rare instances when White artists portrayed Black individuals, they usually did so within the context of entertainment, filtered through the White gaze. William Glackens's *Hammerstein's Roof Garden*, for example, highlights a Black host and performers onstage. However, the composition itself—framed and foregrounded by a White audience—reinforces a visual hierarchy that reflects the power dynamics of White-owned venues like Hammerstein's (Berman 2015).



"Hammerstein's Rooftop Garden" by William Glackens (1901). Oil on canvas, 30x25". In the Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Image via WikiArt.org

Leo Rauth's *Cakewalk* illustrates how a dance rooted in Black culture became a European fascination, originating on Broadway and in entertainment venues in Manhattan's Tenderloin district and exported overseas (Pomeranz 2023). Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's expressive portrayals of Black performers reveal how deeply Black aesthetics shaped European Expressionism. However, as art historian Richard Powell notes, this influence often bordered on appropriation rather than authentic representation, since Black artists themselves were systematically excluded from these movements (Powell 2021). Kirchner's occasional references to "Bohemia" in his titles reinforce a broader network of influence, linking Black culture to the mystical ideals of Bohemianism (Kirchner 1924). Charles Demuth's stylistically comparable

depictions of scenes at the Marshall Hotel further credit the Tenderloin's Black entertainment venues as a primary source of influence for the emerging Expressionist styles.



"At Marshall's" by Charles Demuth, 1915. Barnes Collection Online



"At Marshall's" by Charles Demuth, 1915. Barnes Collection Online



"Marshall's" by Charles Demuth, n.d. Art Oyster LLC.

The Art Students League trained at least one Black artist, Samuel O. Collins, whose landscape paintings later circulated in Black-organized art exhibitions (New York Age 1905, 1920). One Black-owned establishment, Café Wilkins, was reportedly adorned with paintings of Black subjects, further underscoring the presence of a parallel artistic network that valued Black representation on its own terms (New York Age 1907). These instances reinforced Powell's insight by suggesting that the subject matter chosen by Black artists reflected little interest in the performative depictions favored—and often imposed—by their White contemporaries.

“Slumming”

White publications frequently characterized Black areas of the Tenderloin as impoverished, though this portrayal often ignored the true socioeconomic realities of Black residents. An 1895 New York Tribune article praised the fashionable appearance of Black women living along Seventh Avenue, paralleling their appearance to the elite White women of Fifth Avenue. Yet, despite acknowledging and even illustrating their elegance, the article still framed this section of the neighborhood as impoverished, reinforcing the racial biases of the time (New York Tribune 1885).

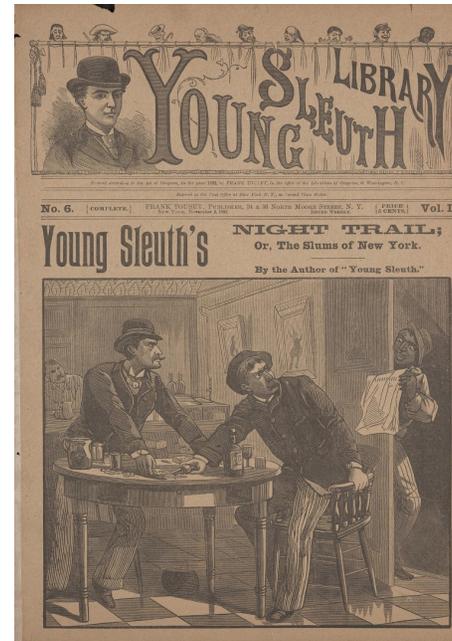


Illustration of 7th Avenue Resident
New York Tribune, 1895.



Street Scene Depicting White Women at 5th
Avenue. Museum of the City of New York

White patrons of Black establishments called themselves “slummers,” which reinforced stereotypes by framing Black spaces as sites of deviance, as they participated in the form of entertainment. “Slumming” and the Bohemian style, which eventually absorbed it, operated as an exploitative form of cultural tourism (Harvey 1905). Non-New Yorkers paid to be guided through the so-called “Bohemia” of Midtown Manhattan, unaware that the “natives” they stared at were usually tourists like themselves (Sun 1918, 54). Popular media fueled the appeal of slumming. Dime novels such as the Young Sleuth series romanticized urban exploration; however, newspapers began to recognize the hypocrisy of slumming and exposed this behavior through comical cartoons.



Cover of Young Sleuth... in the Slums of New
York”

By 1903, “slumming” had become an umbrella term for vice-related activities, increasingly detached from its literal origins. Although the term circulated widely in White newspapers, it was notably absent from Black newspapers, which instead advertised the venues favored by slummers like the Little Savoy and the Keystone Cafe (Heap 2000; New York Age 1908).

The rise of slumming also reflected the tensions caused by racial integration. When “White Slavery” raised fears about sex trafficking, the concern centered exclusively on White women—Black women were ignored (Payne 2024, 92). Similarly, when a White reverend was arrested in 1907 for soliciting Black sex workers near Seventh Avenue and West 33rd Street, he sanitized his own actions by calling his behavior “slumming.”

Incidents such as the death of blackface performer Gussie Hart in 1906 further reinforced these exploitative dynamics. When Hart died (whilst “slumming” in blackface) her friends and witnesses implied it was part of her job, as she was studying for her role (Evening World 1906). A decade earlier, teenager Louis Foye was arrested while travelling from his Upper West Side home to the Tenderloin in blackface, inspired by a dime novel’s depiction of nightlife (New York Times 1893).

Although most slummers pursued financial gain or personal thrills, a small handful of White patrons became genuine members of these communities; still, the dominant legacy of slumming remains one of racial exploitation (Johnson 1930).



“What a Glorious Excuse “Slumming” Has Become! by E.F. Flinn. Evening World (May 27, 1903)

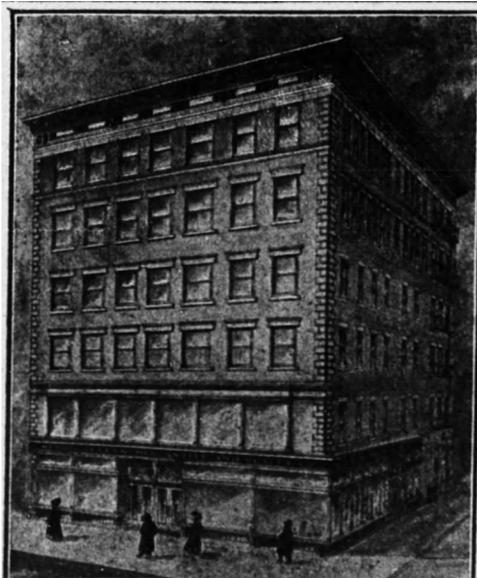
African Americans Claiming Black Agency Through Media

Black Media Publications

In the late twentieth century, the New York Age was one of the most widespread and influential Black newspapers in New York City. It was founded by T. Thomas Fortune, a formerly enslaved Black man (PBS, n.d.). Under Fortune’s leadership, the New York Age found support from Booker T. Washington and employed influential Black writers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, and Ida B. Wells (Wintz, et. al., 2004). Beginning as early as 1893 and leading up to her premature death in 1907, Victoria (nee Smith) Earle Matthews was a writer for the New York Age as well as the White-owned New York Times. At the

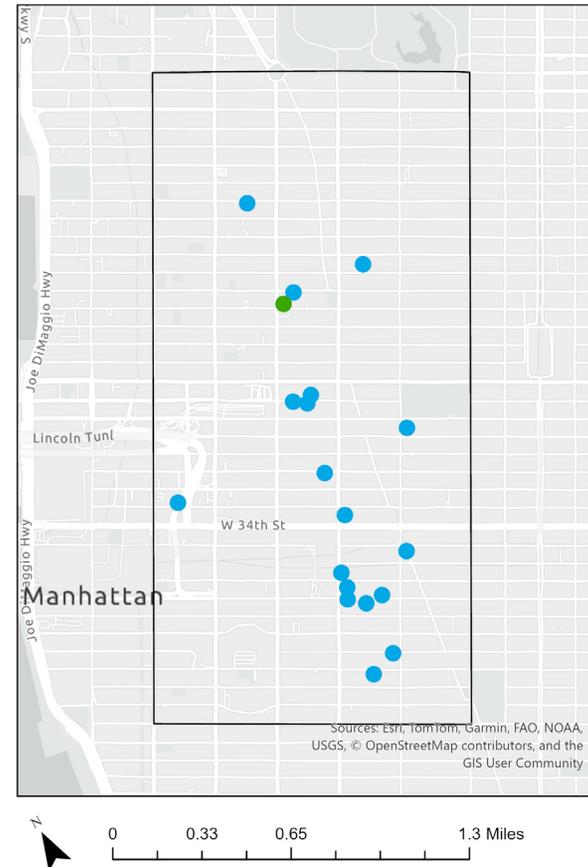
time of her birth, White people enslaved her mother Caroline and thus Victoria as well (Dodson, Moore, and Yancy 2000; Majors 1893, 211-213; Matthews 1906, 2).

In 1909, the New York Age moved into a new office in the Black-owned Metropolitan Building at 247 W. 46th Street, where they operated their own printing press (New York Age 1909). The paper had already been widely distributed in the neighborhood for over a decade (New York Age 1892). In 1892, 18 businesses in the Tenderloin advertised that they sold the New Age publication, primarily barbershops. Of the buildings that housed those businesses, only one remains extant today.



Artist's sketch of the Metropolitan Building, where the New York Age office was located. "The Metropolitan Building." *The New York Age*. January 18, 1908.

New York Age Sold, 1892



Map of Businesses that Sold the New York Age in 1892, with the later New York Age office at 247 W 46th Street indicated in green. Map by Sabina Busch.

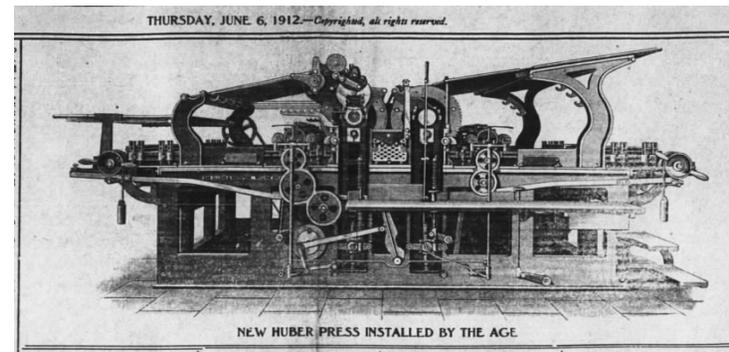


Illustration of a printing press owned by the New York Age, one of three presses owned by the company in 1912. *The New York Age*, June 16, 1912, p. 1.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) also provided an important source of Black media with the publication of its journal, *The Crisis*. First published in 1910, the journal's mission was to "set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested to-day toward colored people" (*The Crisis* 1910). Richetta G. Randolph, the stenographer for the NAACP, likely typed the first edition of *The Crisis* at her office, located at 322 West 53rd Street (Hogans 1959). *The Crisis* published news about the Black experience all over the country, with a particular focus on urban centers. It also included an opinion section where W.E.B. Du Bois, who edited the publication from 1910 to 1934, provided social commentary for Black Americans. Additionally, it highlighted the work of Black artists and photographers with its illustrated covers and spreads. *The Crisis* was a publication that was aware of how White people perceived it, and thus highlighted Black achievements and excellence. However, this perception did not stop Du Bois from publishing bold calls to action, encouraging Black people to stand up to injustice.

Cornelius M. Battey was a notable Black photographer who strove to depict Black subjects with dignity. Described in *The Crisis* as "one of the few colored photographers who have gained real artistic success," he shot portraits of many accomplished African Americans, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Frederick Douglass, as well as notable White people, including Sir Thomas Lipton and Prince Henry of Prussia (*The Crisis* 1917).



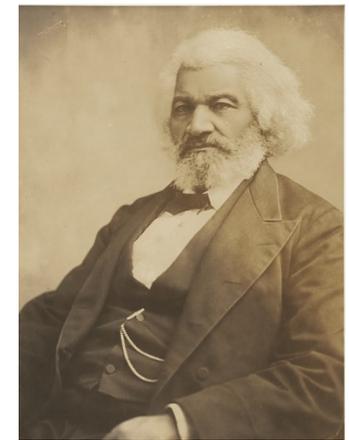
Portrait of Cornelius M. Battey.
The Crisis, Vol. 14, Iss. 1, May 1917,
p.32.



Portrait of W.E.B. Du Bois by C.M. Battey,
1918.
National Museum of African American
History and Culture.



Portrait of Booker T. Washington by C.M.
Battey, 1908.
National Museum of African American
History and Culture.



Portrait of Frederick Douglass by C.M.
Battey, 1895.
National Museum of African American
History and Culture.

Around 1900, Battey opened a photography studio with a White business partner at 509 Eighth Avenue (Appiah and Gates 1999). The NAACP often published Battey's photographs as covers for *The Crisis* celebrating influential African American leaders. Other common subjects featured on the covers of *The Crisis* and as illustrations for its stories included Black babies, soldiers, and beautiful women. These images sought to combat the racist idea that Black people were inherently inferior because of their genetics (Johnson 2024). Battey was well-known in African American media and respected for capturing his subjects with honor.

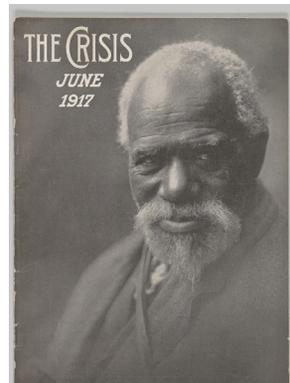


Cover of the October 1914 Issue of *The Crisis*, photographed by C.M. Battey. National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Left: "The Crisis Vol. 8 No. 6," October 1914 Right: "The Crisis Vol. 9 No. 2," December 1914.



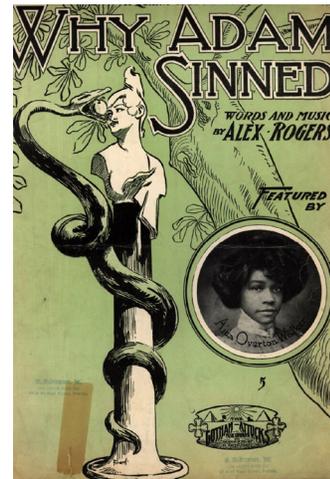
Cover of the November 1915 Issue of *The Crisis*, photographed by C.M. Battey. National Museum of African American History and Culture. "The Crisis Vol. 11 No. 1," November 1915.



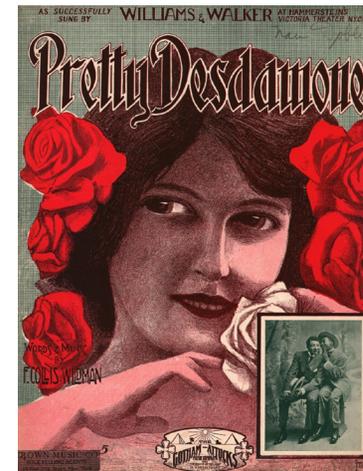
Cover of the June 1917 Issue of *The Crisis*, photographed by C.M. Battey. National Museum of African American History and Culture. "The Crisis, Vol. 14, No. 2," June 1917.

Black-Owned Sheet Music Publishing

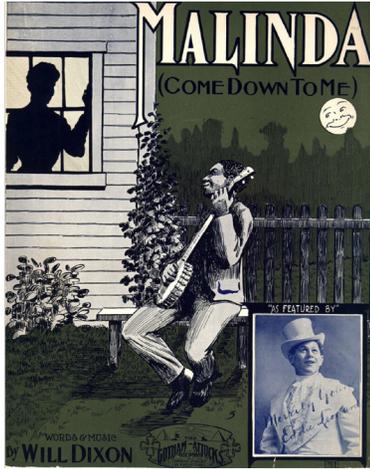
In contrast to the White-owned sheet music publishers discussed earlier, the Black-owned Gotham-Attucks Publishing Company, also located in the Tenderloin, created images on their sheet music that portrayed much more dignified depictions of African Americans. Although they still distributed some songs that perpetuated stereotypes—an unfortunate necessity in marketing to White audiences—the company humanized Black performers by replacing cartoon caricatures with photographs and lifelike illustrations. The Black publishing company's choice illustrates how African Americans used photography as an act of resistance against racist stereotyping: they chose to control the narrative to represent a more authentic view of African American culture. This act of Black agency also allowed Black performers to have more dignity and creative freedom.



"Why Adam Sinned," Sheet Music Distributed by Black Publishing Company Gotham-Attucks, 1904. Words and Music by Alex Rogers, Performed by Aida Overton Walker. Duke University Libraries.



"Pretty Desdamore," Sheet Music Distributed by Black Publishing Company Gotham-Attucks, 1905. Words and Music by F. Collis Wildman, Performed by Williams and Walker. Duke Digital Collections.



"Malinda (Come Down to Me)," Sheet Music Distributed by Black Publishing Company Gotham-Attucks, 1905. Words and Music by Will Dixon, Performed by Eddie Leonard. Duke University Libraries.

While it is difficult to reckon with the fact that Black entertainers participated in the production of racist media, it must be understood that he this harmful culture of White consumers forced them to cater to this audience. However, it must still be recognized that Black composers in this era created wonderful melodies that deserve to be remembered and celebrated, even in light of the racist lyrics that were set to their tunes.

Historic Assets

Distribution Sites for The New York Age

Johnson's Barber Shop (Extant) - 252 West 47th Street

The 6-story building at 252 West 47th Street was had a commercial storefront as well as residential apartments on the upper floors. The building seems to have been a microcosm of African American life at the turn of the century. A 1912 advertisement for Johnson's Barber Shop in the New York Age reads, "W. W. Johnson, 252 W. 47th street, wishes to announce to his friends and customers that his shop is opened from 6 o'clock a. m. to 9.30 p. m., and he will be pleased to see them" (New York Age 1912). The business had evidently been owned by W.

W. Johnson (or a relative) for two decades, as it was advertised to sell the New York Age in 1892 (New York Age 1892). A 1908 New York Age advertisement noted that Mrs. Ruth Dickerson's Reliable Employment Office was located in the building and touted to be the "help of all nationalities" (New York Age 1908). In the same year, an advertisement was taken out in the New York Age for an apartment rental in the building (New York Age 1908). Additionally, a tenant of the building, Eddie Smith, placed an ad in the New York Tribune for a "young colored man as a good, experienced cook" (New York Tribune 1906). According to the 1910 census, all tenants in this building were Black or mixed-race (U.S. Federal Census 1910). The building, along with an adjacent row house from the same period at 250 West 47th Street, survives today.

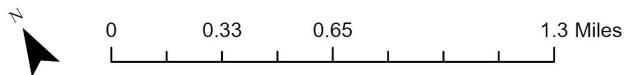
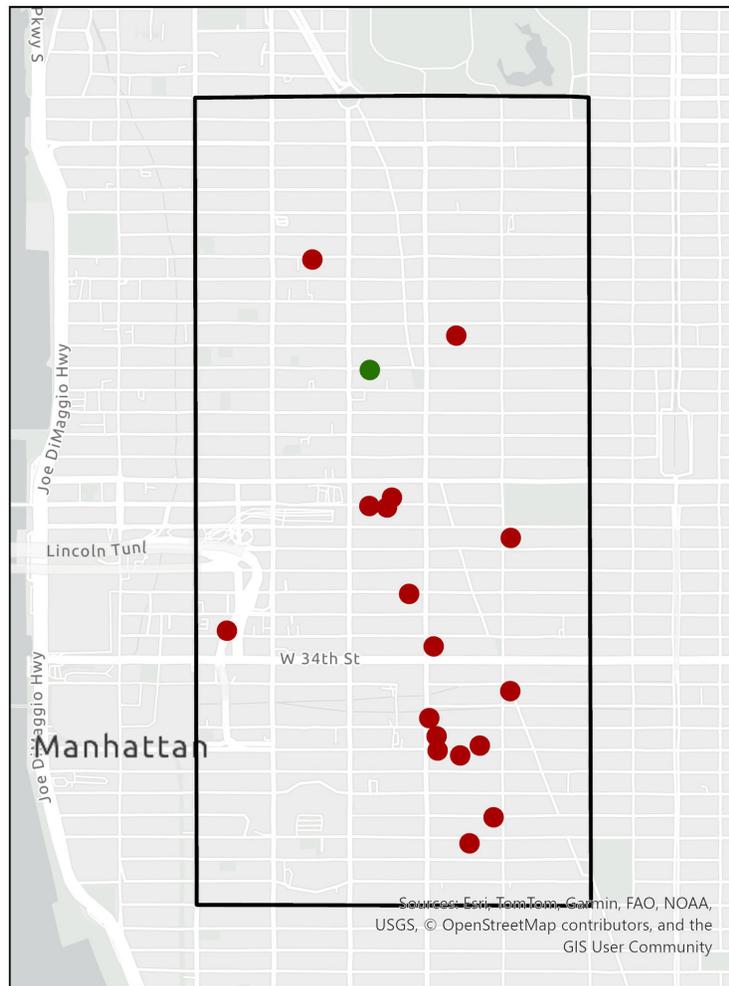


252 West 47th Street, 1940's Tax Photo. Image via NYC Municipal Archives.



252 West 47th Street, today the Glass House Tavern. 2025 Studio II Field Survey Photo. Photograph by Sabina Busch.

BUSINESSES THAT SOLD THE NEW YORK AGE IN 1892



Extant in 2025

- Non-Extant
- Extant

Map of Surviving and Non-surviving buildings where *the New York Age* was sold in 1892. The location of Johnson's Barbershop is shown in green.
Map by Sabina Busch via ArcGIS Pro.

- W. D. Brown's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 102 West 27th Street
- Crumpton's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 128 West 26th Street
- Chas. Moore's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 115 West 30th Street
- Chas. Thirll's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 136 West 30th Street
- Seigal's Store (Non-Extant) - 146 West 30th Street
- J. H. Thompson's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 155 West 30th Street
- The Cosmopolitan (Non-Extant) - 1277 Broadway
- Lehr's News Stand (Non-Extant) - 393 Seventh Avenue
- S. G. Gillyard's Variety Store (Non-Extant) - 202 West 37th Street
- Edgar's Stationary Store (Non-Extant) - 59 West 39th Street
- George H. Washington's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 453 Seventh Avenue
- Jackson's Cigar Store (Non-Extant) - 230 West 41st Street
- Gwathney's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 231 W 41st Street
- Digg's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 250 West 41st Street
- Sexton St. Mark's Church (Non-Extant) - 139 West 48th Street
- Croft's Barber Shop (Non-Extant) - 332 West 52nd Street
- J. W. Watkins (Non-Extant) - 439 West 35th Street

Black Media Offices

- The New York Freeman Branch Office (Non-Extant) - Sixth Avenue and 26th Street
- Afro-American News Company (Non-Extant) - 439 West 35th Street
- The New York Age Branch Office (Non-Extant) - 247 West 46th Street
- The Standard News Company (Non-Extant) - 131 West 53rd Street
- The True Light Church and Newspaper (Non-Extant) - 337 West 41st Street
- Batley & Warren Photographers (Non-Extant) - 509 Eighth Avenue

Historic Change and Analysis

Widely, White people in the Tenderloin created and perpetuated racist stereotypes of Black people that were degrading and damaging. Racial prejudice, in part, led to the violent Tenderloin Race Riot of 1900. Although many African Americans had created their own communities in Black Bohemia, many ultimately left for Harlem to escape a neighborhood whose White residents viewed them through the lens of stereotypes and prejudice. These dangerous views created a compounding effect, empowering White people to incite violence against African Americans, such as in an article in the New York Tribune on June 23, 1900, describing a conflict between Black and White men. The article states that three Black men were in an argument that resulted in someone or multiple people shooting guns. Then, “the shooting drew a crowd, and when some of the white [sic] men saw that it was ‘another nigger fight,’ as one big teamster put it, they began to make threats. When a White man appeared with a clothesline, the crowd started in to carry out somebody’s suggestion of lynching. Some scores of negros seeing their brethren imperiled, rushed to the rescue, and on both sides revolvers were spitting fire in a short time.” It is clear that there were hostile relations between Black and White residents of the Tenderloin, and tensions were high in the early twentieth century. The White practice of “slumming,” or inserting themselves into Black culture for sport, began to extend to White people seeking out violence against Black people, in a twisted extreme form of slumming. A quote from Mary White Ovington sums up the unwelcoming atmosphere of the Tenderloin for its African American residents:

There must be a world of irony in the heart of the seeing Negro who reads in the papers the lurid descriptions of his own crime, while he lives in the Tenderloin district and looksout upon its life. He sees the daily danger attending the attractive women of his own and other races, and he

sees temptation offered where he should see high ideals (Ovington 1905).

Black performers and entertainers, who got their start by playing into the racist caricatures White audiences and publishers preferred, also moved out of the Tenderloin in order to pursue creative freedom. Additionally, the invention of the phonograph in the late nineteenth century had set in motion greater opportunities for Black artists to “compose and perform on their own terms, for who they truly were, not as minstrels in ‘blackface’ on stage for White ‘coon show’ audiences” (Johnson 2022). When Black residents migrated out of the Tenderloin to escape this environment, their media outlets followed. Publications such as the New York Age, The Crisis, and The New Amsterdam News began to be published in Harlem in the early twentieth century. Although White people’s degrading stereotypes and the poor conditions they created for Black people pushed African Americans out of the Tenderloin, the success of Black performers and media outlets in Harlem in subsequent years can be celebrated as proof of resistance and resilience.

PRESERVATION

Ashlyn Pause

Historic Context

Understanding preservation policy and the subsequent prioritization, or lack thereof, of Black histories in Manhattan's Tenderloin district is a key element to developing the historic context of the district and how people perceive the Black history in this area and tell it today. The analysis of preservation policy involves research and data collection pertaining to buildings and districts within the study area that are National Register-listed and -eligible, as well as those calendared and designated locally by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). These research findings expose the underrepresentation of the Black narrative in historic preservation policies, reports, and district nominations. This diminishing of the Black narrative in New York City's preservation policy and practices has occurred since New York City Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Jr., signed the New York City Landmarks Law in 1965 and continues to impact preservation actions today.

Through data collection and analysis, eight historic assets related to both preservation and the history of the Black community in the Tenderloin of Manhattan have been identified. These assets include 47-55 West 28th Street, located in Tin Pan Alley —five buildings that served as the workplaces of many Black songwriters and musicians during our study period (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 2025). The additional assets include the 23rd Police Precinct, Mills Hotel No. 3, and the Hopper-Gibbons House. These eight buildings are identified as assets because they are the only examples of listed or designated properties in the Tenderloin with nomination or designation reports that mention or highlight Black history. Additional listed or designated assets that play a role in the Black history of the Tenderloin have been identified in other historic contexts; however, their reports exclude Black history.

Background and Methods

The analysis of the local and national preservation policy and practice is a key aspect in understanding how Black history has been underrepresented and under-acknowledged in the Tenderloin. Locally, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) was founded through innovative legislation signed by late Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Jr., in 1965 (“About LPC” 2025). The following year, in 1966, the US Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), establishing the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register (NR) seeks to preserve the historic built environment largely through recognition, as it does not de facto protect properties from demolition. The New York City Landmarks Law provides greater protections and regulatory review of changes to designated. Since the 1960s, the preservation of many historic sites has been accomplished through these policy tools. However, the narratives highlighted in both LPC designation reports and NR registration forms focus nearly exclusively on history pertaining to White people. This historic context analysis interrogates the marginalization and underrepresentation of Black histories in the Tenderloin through the examination of nomination and designation reports and various other resources related to preservation.

This research draws from LPC and NR databases, which enabled the identification of designated/listed buildings, historic districts, and special purpose districts within the study area. Once these properties were identified, their corresponding reports or nomination forms were read and analyzed to determine the property’s significance (the grounds for designation/listing) and its relationship to Black history. These reports were further analyzed in the context of the 290 historic assets identified by the studio team to aid in understanding the extent of Black history recognition in preservation practices. The goal of this research and methodology is to learn how preservation policies and practices include and/or exclude Black histories of the Tenderloin.

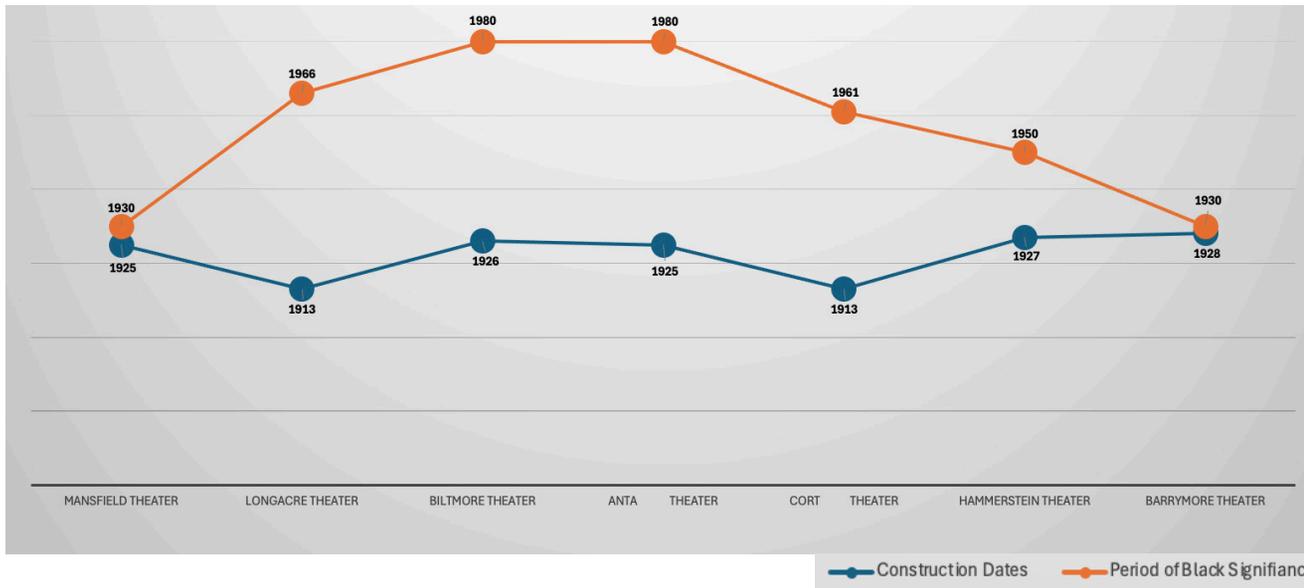
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Local Designation

As a result of the establishment of the LPC in 1965, this preservation-focused historic context analysis extended beyond the studio’s 1870 - 1920 study period. Similarly, the designation reports themselves include periods of significance that either predate or postdate the study period, despite their inclusion of Black history. This is primarily an issue for buildings related to theater, as they are often considered significant to Black history after the studio’s study period. This holds true because, often, the date of construction is after 1920. Likewise, these designation reports commonly claim to have significance related to Black history, yet White histories tend to be exclusively portrayed.

Despite these findings, the reports have been invaluable in identifying which histories LPC designation prioritizes and whose narratives are highlighted. Through the data collection and analysis of preservation efforts and policies in the Tenderloin, it is clear that the narrative prioritized by LPC designation is that of White men. This is true whether it be the architect, owner, residence, organization, or event associated with the designation form. This is a pattern observed from designation reports dating back to the 1960s, and has continued through the present-day.

Construction Dates of Broadway Theaters vs. The Period of Significance in Black History as Listed in the LPC Designation Reports



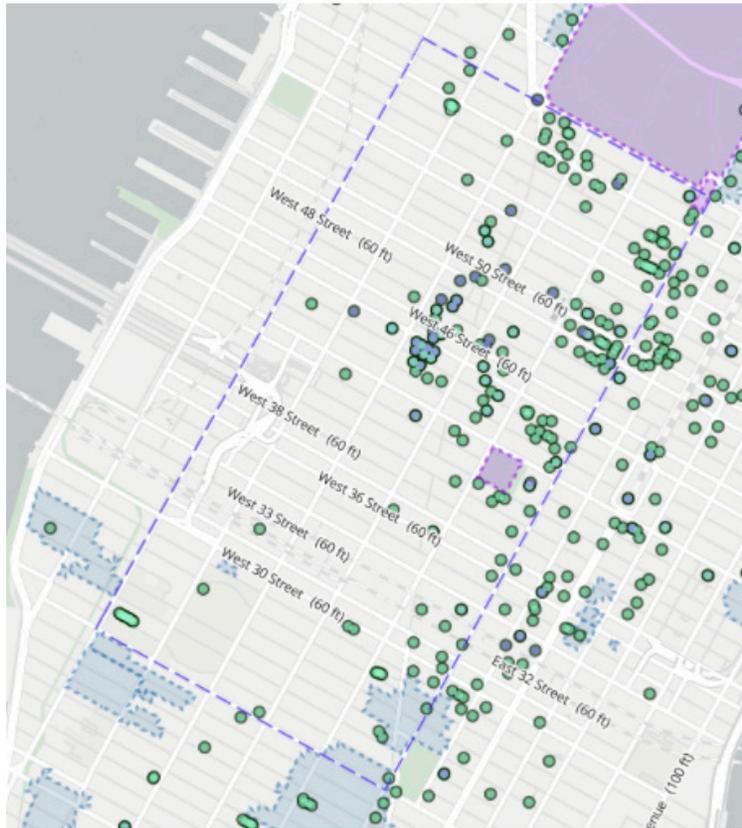
Construction Dates of Broadway Theaters vs. The Period of Significance in Black History as listed in the LPC Designation Reports. Graphic by Ashlyn Pause.

Locally, there are a total of 172 LPC-designated buildings in the study area, with 38 of these located in the sub-area of the Old Tenderloin. These designations include individual and interior landmarks, as well as two scenic landmarks and three historic districts. It should be noted that the study area also overlaps with four special purpose districts, which are established by the City Planning Commission. While not regulated by the LPC, they are a policy tool that seeks to preserve neighborhood character.

The entirety of the Lamartine Place Historic District, which includes the buildings from 355-333 West 29th Street, is within the study area. The Lamartine Place Historic District includes the Hopper-Gibbons House, a historic asset identified under the preservation context and overlaps with the “racial/ethnic conflict and interracial solidarity” historic context report. The other two historic districts overlap with the boundaries of the studio’s study area. These include the Madison Square North Historic District and the Ladies’ Mile Historic District.

The LPC’s online interactive ArcGIS Story Map titled “Preserving Significant Places of Black History” served as an invaluable tool for identifying landmarks and districts related to Black history (Kose and Dieg 2025). This digital resource centrally documents the LPC designation reports related to Black history and the representation of this narrative. The Story Map is updated monthly to include the most recently approved designations. While a positive example of reparative action in preservation practice, the Story Map also highlights the disparity in the narrative and the lack of Black history designations within the study area.

Within the boundaries of the Old Tenderloin sub-area, only four percent of LPC-designated buildings were associated with significant Black history. Within the entirety of the studio’s study area (extending northward and westward to Tenth Avenue), ten percent, or 18 of 172 LPC- designated properties, relate to Black history. This increase can be attributed solely to the Lamartine Place Historic District, which represents 12 of the 18 properties.

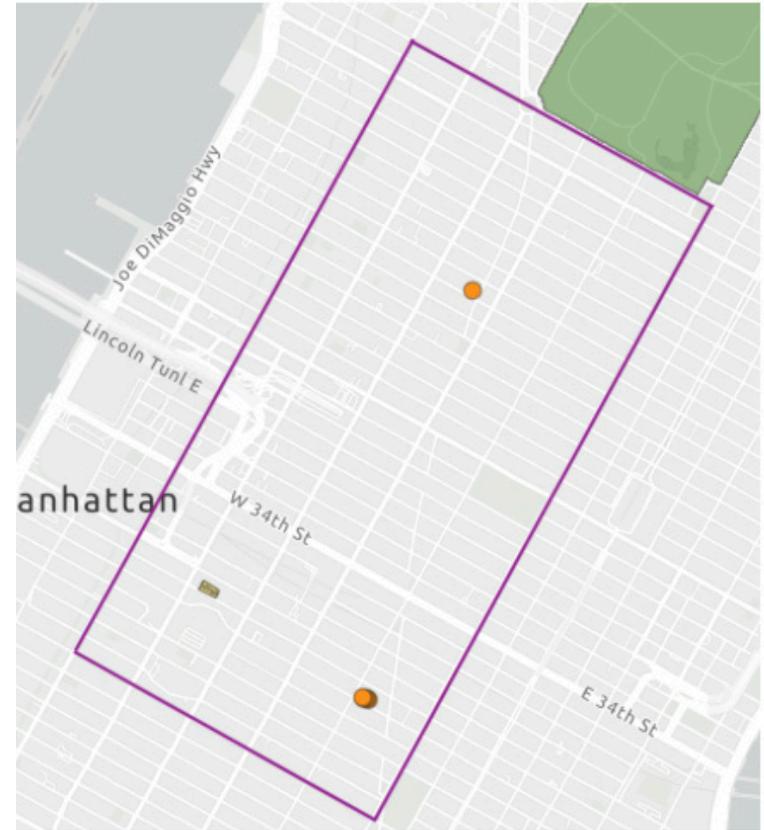


Individual, interior, and scenic landmarked buildings, structures, or areas and historic districts within the study area, New York City, 2025. ZoLa.

Moreover, these buildings were listed in 2009, 2010, or 2019 (Kose and Dieg 2025). That it took more than 40 years for the Black legacy of the Tenderloin to be recognized through LPC designation speaks to the marginalization of Black history in this locale.

In addition to the LPC's ArcGIS Story Map, the full text of the LPC designation reports for properties in the Tenderloin were analyzed to observe how often and to what extent Black history is mentioned.

The LPC generates these reports and thus is the primary actor



Landmarked buildings and a historic district related to Black history, New York City, 2025. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

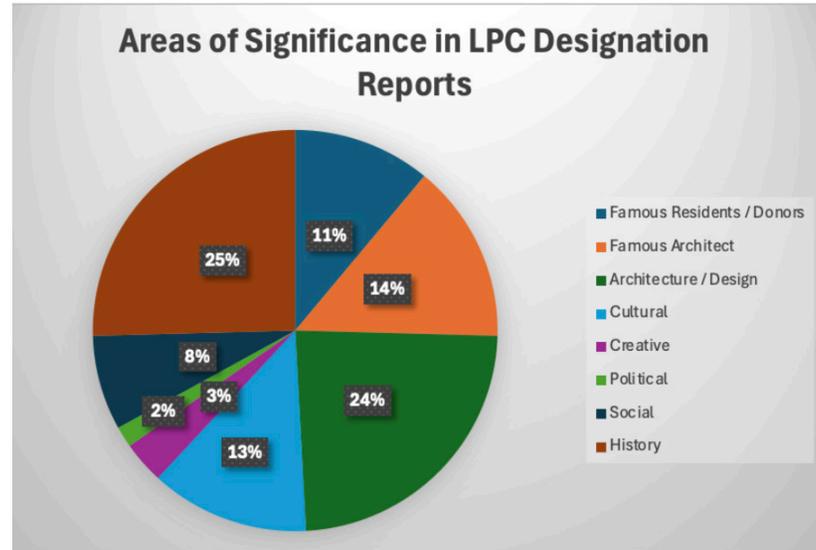
in the centering or decentering of their content narratives. The research included in these reports often represents the collective work of LPC staff, consultants, preservation advocacy organizations, community boards, and more. In addition, the process to bring forward potential designations derives from community and professional activism as well as LPC leadership. While collaborative in their development, these reports—as legal outcomes—serve as an important proxy for analyzing the representational inequities resulting from designation as a public policy tool. The LPC's ultimate authority over the designation process suggests that it has a proactive role to play in addressing the underrepresentation of Black history in the Tenderloin.

As a content analysis, the following data was derived from the LPC reports for the 172 designated properties in the study area, based on the frequency that terms appear:

- “Black” (in reference to a person) - 405 mentions, of which 375 appear in the Tin Pan Alley reports and 10 in the Lamartine Place report.
- “African American” - 129 mentions, of which 110 appear in the Tin Pan Alley reports and eight in the Lamartine Place report.
- “Mixed-race” – two mentions.
- “Race” - 53 mentions, of which 50 refer to the 1900 race riot referenced in the Tin Pan Alley reports (designated in 2019).

In total, the above terms appear in only 21 of the 172 designation reports for landmarks within the Tenderloin, eight of which focus on the Black narrative.

Further analysis of the areas of significance identified in designation reports sought to interrogate the rationale for designation. This analysis used a sample of the 172 designation reports, specifically the 38 designated properties within the Old Tenderloin sub-area. Within this sample set, the more widely recognized areas of significance for designation relate to architecture and history. Likewise, there is a large number of designations related to famous architects and cultural significance, a term that was loosely defined in the reports. None of these areas of significance relate to the ethnic or racial history of Black Americans.



The areas of significance in the LPC designation reports related to the study area, 2025. Graphic by Ashlyn Pause.

As of April 2025, the LPC does not have any calendared buildings for designation in the studio’s study area (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 2025). The lack of Black history represented by LPC designation and the abundance of Black history in the Tenderloin presents a compelling opportunity for reparative action through designation.

National Register Listing

The National Register of Historic Places (NR) provides another policy tool through which historic properties may be recognized. There are 414 NR-listed buildings in the Tenderloin. Of these 414 buildings, 94 are individually listed and 320 are part of two NR historic districts: the Garment Center Historic District, which relates to the industrial aspects of the area, and Paddy’s Historic Market Historic District, which relates specifically to Irish history. The properties located within each of these districts are documented in their respective district registration form; the remaining 94 properties should, in theory, have individual registration forms, however, the studio team was unable to locate nine of them.

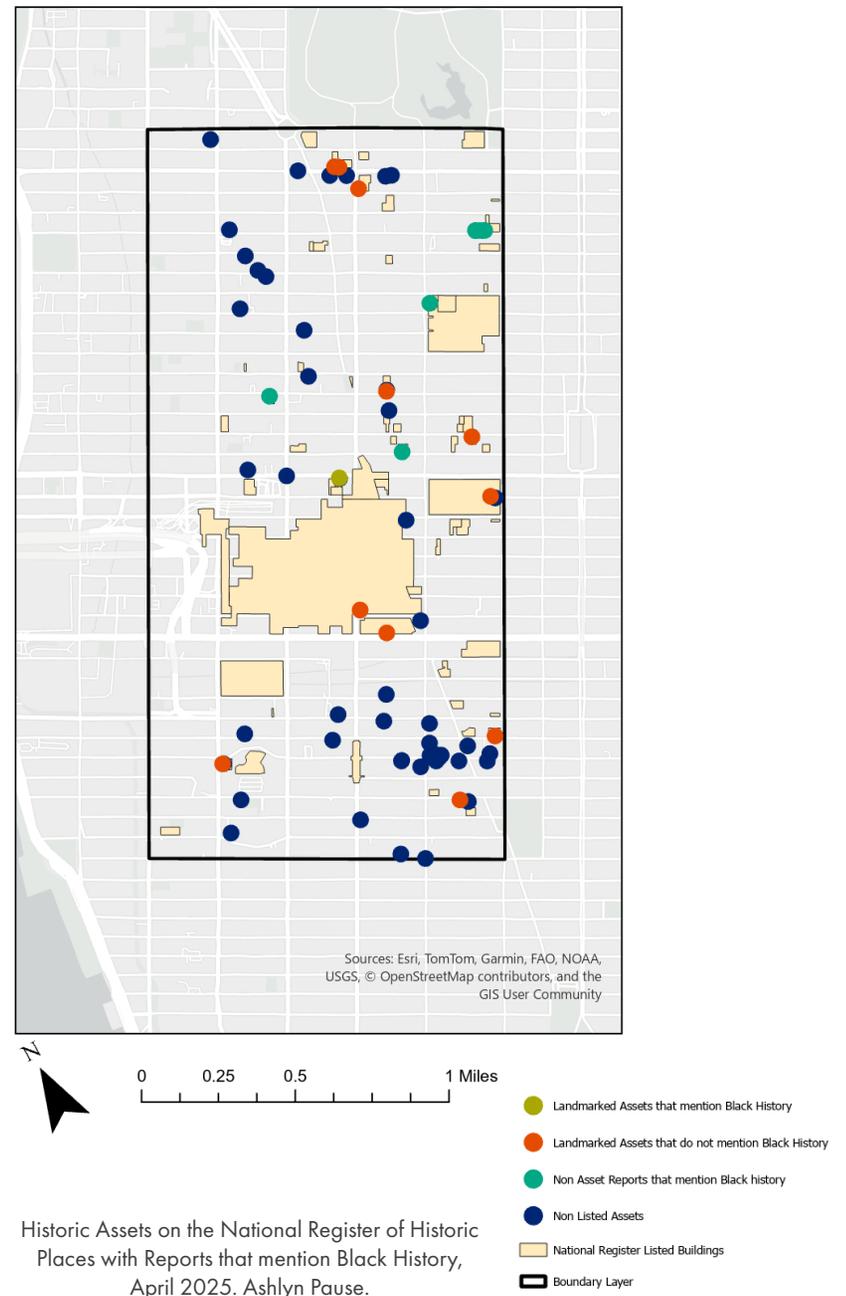
To identify which NR registration forms include buildings in the Tenderloin that either mention or focus on Black histories and narratives, this analysis focused on the 87 available registration forms. These forms may be developed by a range of actors, including property owners, advocates, historians, students, and others, and are reviewed by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the New York State Board for Historic Preservation, local officials, and the National Park Service, which has final approval.

Similar to the content analysis of the LPC designation reports, the goal was to observe how often and to what extent NR registration forms mention Black history based on the frequency with which the following terms appear:

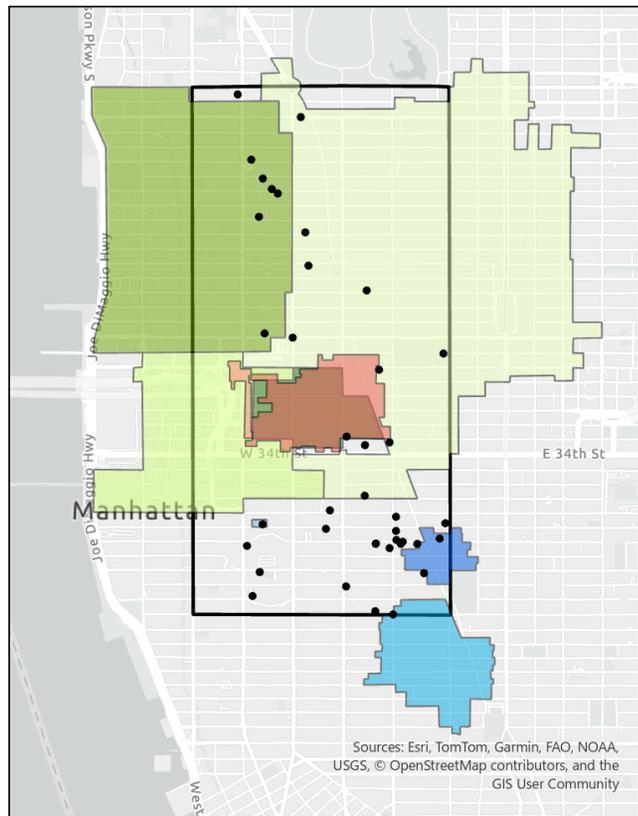
- “Black” (in reference to a person) - nine mentions. These nine uses of the word “Black” were present in only five of the 87 forms.
- “African American” - 11 mentions, six of which were from the Paddy’s Historic Market Historic District form, a listing related specifically to Irish history.
- “Mixed-race” and “race” - no mentions.

As the above demonstrates, there is very minimal representation of Black people, their stories, and their places in the hundreds of buildings listed on the NR within the Tenderloin area. This exclusion, especially given the prominence of the Black community within the Tenderloin during the study period (1870 - 1920), represents a systemic injustice in need of remediation. While LPC designation reports may not be altered post-designation, as they are part of a legal record that incurs regulation, existing National Register forms can be amended and new listings can be nominated, representing a potential avenue of reparation

Historic Assets on the National Register of Historic Places with Reports that mention Black Historic



Surviving Assets in Historic Districts and Special Purpose Districts



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

NRHP Historic Districts

- Garment Center Historic District
- Paddy's Historic Market Historic District

LPC Historic Districts

- Ladies' Mile Historic District
- Lamartine Place Historic District
- Madison Square North Historic District

Special Purpose Districts

- Special Clinton District
- Hudson Yards Special District
- Special Garment Center District
- Special Midtown District

- Surviving Assets
- Boundary Layer

The surviving historic assets within historic districts and special purpose districts in relation to the Tenderloin study boundary, 2025. Ashlyn Pause.

Historic Districts and Special Purpose Districts

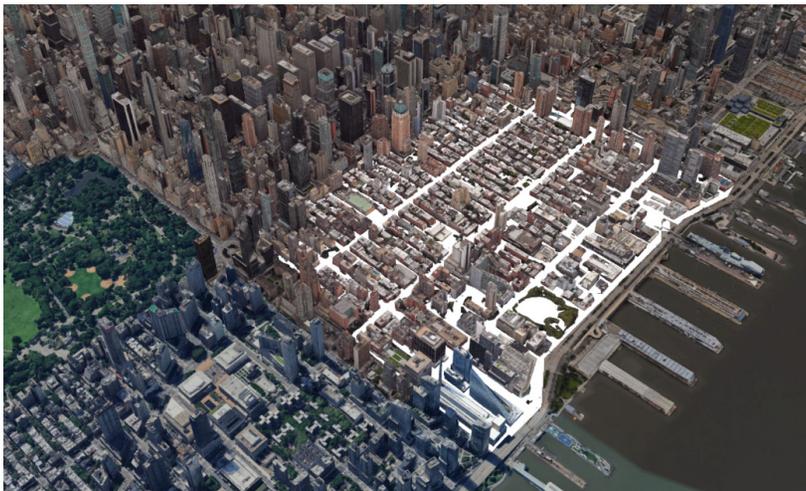
It is important to note that the collective narratives centered in the designation or listing of an historic district can contribute to the de-centering of Black histories within a neighborhood. For example, although the Garment Center NR Historic District is located in a neighborhood with a significant Black history, the registration form focuses almost exclusively on manufacturing and clothing production narratives. Likewise, Paddy's Historic Market NR Historic District is located in a similar neighborhood that once had a notable Black population but is listed solely on the basis of Irish history. As a result, the Black historical perspective has gone unrecognized and undocumented in favor of White histories, which further contributes to the lack of documentation of Black histories in the Tenderloin.

There are three local LPC historic districts that are either located within or overlap with the study area: Ladies' Mile Historic District and the Madison Square North Historic District. Neither of these districts mentions Black history within their designation reports. However, the 2009 LPC designation of the Lamartine Place Historic District on West 29th Street highlights the important role the properties within the historic district played in the community's Black history, particularly their role in the abolitionist movement. This inclusive narrative is an example of a reparative action happening within preservation policy and practice today, and sets an example for future LPC designations and NR nominations.

Similar to historic districts, there are four locally-designated special purpose districts that overlap with the studio's study area. The New York City Planning Commission began establishing Special Purpose Districts in 1969 to regulate zoning and urban design issues as a result of the growing city ("Special Purpose Districts" 2025). The four special purpose districts that extend into the Tenderloin are the Special Clinton District (CL), Special Garment Center District (GC), Special Midtown District, and Special Hudson Yards District. The Special Clinton District was

the earliest of these districts, put into effect in 1974, and was established for the residential preservation of the area, as well as to combat new development (New York City Planning 2025). These districts all follow a similar mission, often seeking to preserve neighborhood character. However, they were developed after the migration of the Black community into Harlem. As a result, these districts are currently working to preserve neighborhood character as of the 1970s and beyond, after they became predominantly White communities.

Despite this, the implementation of special purpose districts has contributed to the survival of numerous historic assets. The Special Clinton District, in particular, has played a significant role in the preservation of the neighborhood's character and scale by discouraging demolition and promoting same-scale new construction (New York City Planning 1974; "Special Clinton District," n.d.). Six historic assets identified by the studio have likely survived as a consequence of the district, including: the office of Black lawyer Frank Wheaton, St. Benedict Catholic Church, apartment housing located at 325-331 West 52nd Street, the Eureka Employment Bureau, the New York Polyclinic Medical School and Hospital, and Holy Cross Church.



Building Heights within the Special Clinton District (April 2025). Image by Google Earth and Ashlyn Pause.

Similarly, eight historic assets have survived within the Special Midtown District. The general purpose of this special purpose district is to regulate new development and facilitate growth (New York City Planning 1982). Preservation goals related to the historic architectural character have also been included in the legislation, including a section on the importance of the Theater Subdistrict and the preservation of its character (New York City Planning 1982). As this district includes the Times Square redevelopment zone, the built environment has undergone significant change. However, the Special Midtown District likely contributed to the survival of the following assets identified by the studio: the Artists' Hub, Saint Malachy's Roman Catholic Church, Johnson's Barber Shop, Public School No. 67, Croton Reservoir / New York Public Library, the National Urban League Office, Herald Square, and St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church.

The additional two special purpose districts that overlap with the study area have nearly zero surviving historic assets identified by this studio located within their boundaries. Within the Special Garment District, only one historic asset survives —the Mills Hotel No. 3, which was listed as a historic asset because of its role in segregation and its eventual acceptance of integration (Harris 2014). The Hudson Yards Special District does not have any surviving historic assets within its boundaries. Therefore, there are 43 historic assets that have survived outside of a special purpose district.

The Theater Subdistrict and its fundamental use of Transferable Development Rights (TDR) was another key zoning regulation that impacted the development of the Tenderloin (NYC Department of Planning 2016). Established in 1998, the Theater Subdistrict plays both a positive and negative role in the preservation of the study area (NYC Department of Planning 2016). Through TDR, many significant theaters were preserved. Their funds collected through the sale of air rights resulted in financial assistance for the maintenance of these theaters and the compensation of artists and performers (NYC Department of Planning 2016). While many of

these theaters were constructed after the studio’s study period, this zoning resolution has likely benefited theaters that have historically celebrated Black history and Black performers. While an example of positive preservation action, the Theater Subdistrict’s use of TDR has incentivized large-scale development within the study area. This, along with other contributing factors, have resulted in a significant loss of historic fabric and historic assets.

Historic Tax Credits (HTC)

The final category of data collected for this preservation historic context analysis relates to preservation incentives, specifically historic tax credits (HTC). In total, there are 14 buildings in the study area that have utilized historic tax credits within the Tenderloin (Novoco 2024). As a requirement to receive an HTC, a building or property has to be NR-listed or –eligible, but none of these NR properties have mentions of Black history in their nomination forms. Considering the underrepresentation of Black history in NR–listed buildings in the Tenderloin, the use of HTCs are compound this exclusion by incentivizing investment in properties that largely center White histories. As a point of quantification, the combined cost of all of these 14 HTC projects is \$2,085,383,615.00, before the application of the incentive (Novoco 2024). Nearly half of these project costs went into the United States General Post Office on Eighth Avenue for their \$1,263,183,219.00 project (Novoco 2024).

The historic context of preservation in the Tenderloin has a heavy focus on White histories and narratives. Despite the expansion of the histories recognized through local designation in recent decades to include Black narratives, historic tax credits and NR nominations demonstrate that preservation policies have contributed to the marginalization of the Black histories in the Tenderloin. Although these histories are beginning to be brought more into light through designation reports and listings, it is still of limited success, with further efforts to be made to sufficiently represent these significant Black narratives.

Historic Assets

The historic assets identified as significant in the preservation context relate to Black history and are LPC-designated, NR-listed, or both. These historic assets fit into other historic contexts covered in the collective study and can further relate to and bring new meaning through consideration in other contexts. These assets currently serve as either examples of how the Black narrative has been shared or elevated through listing and designations, or examples of how the narrative of the Black population of the Tenderloin has been omitted.



The 23rd Police Precinct ('Tenderloin') Station. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

23rd Police Precinct ('Tenderloin') Station (1998 LPC designation), the local precinct in the Tenderloin area, which played a large role in the suppression and aggression against Black Americans in the area. The designation report only acknowledges that the precinct was located in a predominantly Black area and was close to "African Broadway" ("23rd Police Precinct ('Tenderloin') Station House" 1998). It does not mention the negative role the precinct played in this area.



3D Laser Scan image of Tin Pan Alley, 47 - 55 West 28th Street. Produced by Sabina Busch in collaboration with the Columbia GSAPP Digital Heritage Documentation Spring 2025 course.

47, 49, 51, 53, and 55 West 28th Street Building, Tin Pan Alley (2019 LPC designation), a series of five buildings listed together with the same designation report for the LPC as individual landmarks. This area, known as Tin Pan Alley, was where sheet music written, sung, and produced by African Americans was produced in the 1890s and 1900s (Moses 2019). The area is directly tied to this aspect of Black history, and the designation reports reflect this and highlight this history. They also acknowledge the role African American musicians were forced to play in their own mocking through music in order to keep their jobs in the industry (Moses 2019). This is an important aspect to acknowledge, and the report does this well. It is a positive step in the preservation of the Black narrative in the Tenderloin and one that should continue to be reflected in future listings.



The row house at 47 West 28th Street (1940). New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.



The row house at 49 West 28th Street (1940). New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.



The row house at 55 West 28th Street (1940). New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.



The row house at 51 West 28th Street (1940). New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.



The row house at 53 West 28th Street (1940). New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.



The row house at 55 West 28th Street (1940). New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

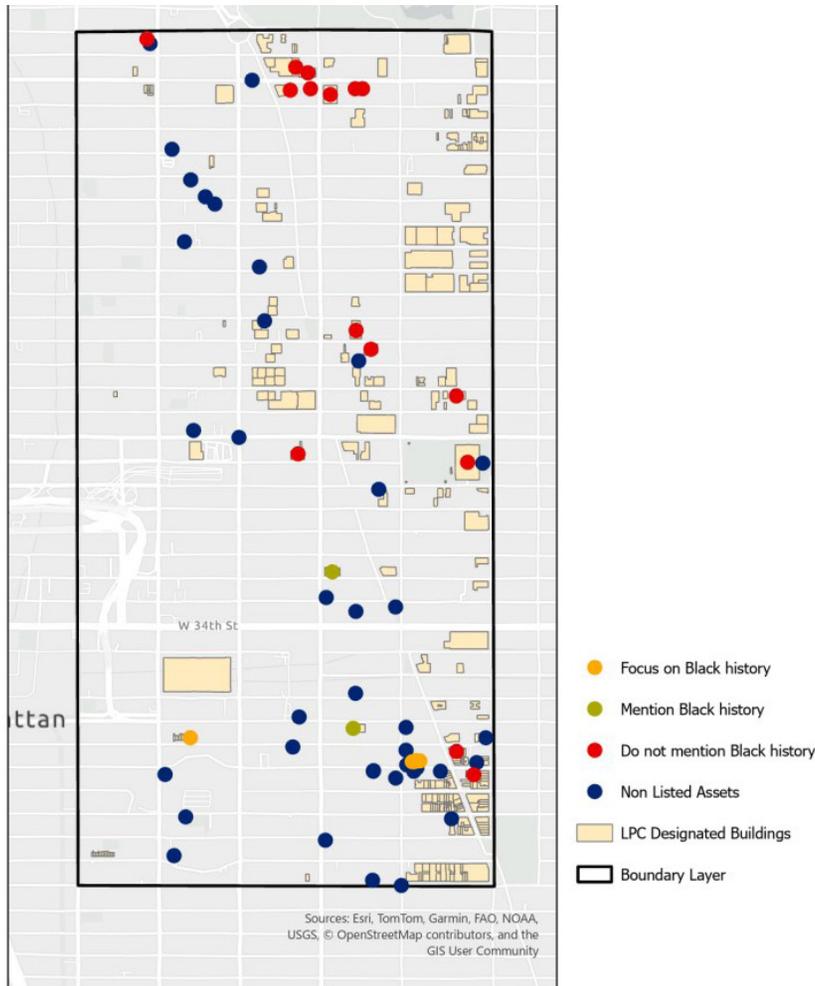
Mills Hotel No. 3 (2014 LPC designation) is included in the preservation of historic assets because of its role in the segregation and desegregation of the Tenderloin, as well as its listing as an individual landmark on the LPC. The hotel originally opened in the study period, 1907, and was originally a segregated, White only hotel (Harris 2014). This hotel serves as a small example of what the atmosphere was like at the time. The main difference is that this hotel is designated locally as a landmark. Additionally, the hotel experienced desegregation, and future owners even went as far as to advertise their rooms in historical African American periodicals and newspapers in the 1940s and 1950s (Harris 2014). This acknowledgement is mentioned in the designation report.



The Hopper-Gibbons House at 339 West 29th Street (1940). New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Hopper-Gibbons House (2009 LPC designation) is part of a larger listing of 12 buildings in the Lamartine Place Historic District, located at 339 West 29th Street. It is locally designated, and its designation report reflects the large role this building played in the abolitionist movement (Kurshan and Noonan 2009). This includes its White occupants who were supporters of the abolitionist cause and even used their home as a documented stop on the Underground Railroad (Kurshan and Noonan 2009). Although slightly outside the period of significance, this property plays a huge role in the local Black narrative as a place of refuge and freedom. This was a place affected by hateful, race-related riots and violence (Kurshan and Noonan 2009). This is reflected in the 2009 designation report, and therefore a key historic asset related to the preservation of the Tenderloin.

NYC LPC Total Landmarked Buildings vs. Surviving Historic Assets



NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission designation reports and their relation to Black history, 2025. Ashlyn Pause.

These eight historic assets related to preservation are a representation of a larger number of landmarked or designated historic assets identified within the Tenderloin. These additional landmarked or designated assets have been identified as significant in other historic contexts. However, their LPC or NRNR status places them into the preservation context as well. These additional assets were not originally included within the preservation context as a consequence of the narratives highlighted in their designation reports. These narratives focused solely on White histories and were completely exclusionary of Black history. This is true despite their identifications within other historic contexts as significant places of Black history or contributors to the Black narrative.

There are 13 additional LPC-landmarked historic assets identified by other contexts in this study as relating to Black history. With these additional assets, the total number of LPC-designated buildings relating to Black history in the study area is 21 out of 172 total designations. It is clear that Black history within the study area has been underrepresented in preservation and the use of landmarking and designations. Of the 21 LPC landmarked buildings within the study area, the following 13 buildings are significant places of Black history, with designation reports that do not include this history.

- New York Public Library (1967 LPC designation; 1966 NR listed)
- Marble Collegiate Reformed Church (1967 LPC designation; 1980 NR listed)
- Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava (today the Trinity Chapel Complex) (1968 LPC designation; 1982 NR listed)
- The American Fine Arts Society (1968 LPC designation; 1980 NR listed)
- Osborne Apartments (1991 LPC designation; 1993 NR listed)
- Society House of the American Society of Civil Engineers (2008 LPC designation;
- Rodin Studios (1988 LPC designation)

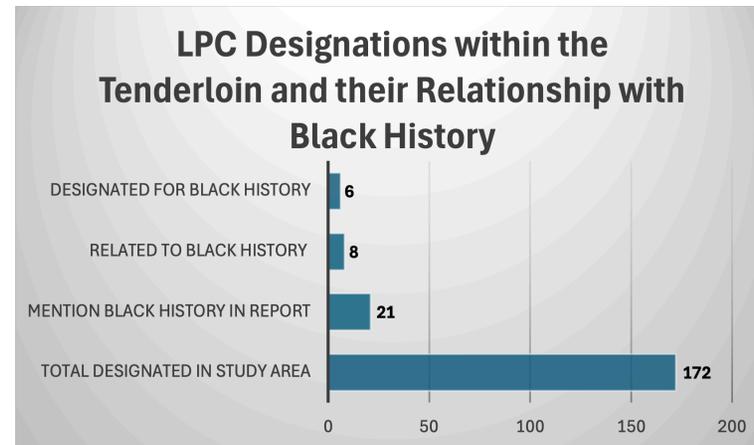
- Carnegie Hall (1967 LPC designation; 1966 NR listed)
- 130 West 57th Street Studio Building (1999 LPC designation)
- Mechanics’ and Tradesmen’s Institute (Formerly Berkeley School) (aka General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen) (1988 LPC designation; 2008 NR listed)
- New Amsterdam Theater (1979 LPC designation; 1980 NR listed)
- Church of the Holy Apostles (1966 LPC designation; 1972 NR listed)
- Public School No. 67 (1982 LPC designation)

Similarly, of the 58 extant historic assets identified by the studio, 12 that are NR-listed, 10 are also LPC landmarks. These two historic assets that are only NR-listed included the R.H. Macy & Company Store (1978 NR listed) and the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin (1990 NR listed). These 12 buildings were not among the properties identified through content analysis of the LPC designation reports and NR registration forms because not one mentions Black history, even briefly. As previously noted, this exclusion of Black history in nomination forms is true for nearly all NR-listed buildings within the study area. This acts as an erasure of the Black narrative in these places and hinders the resources provided for Black history to be told for future generations.

Historic Change and Analysis

As previously mentioned, the LPC has an extremely minimal number of designations related to or even mentioning Black history, whereas the NR has none. This exclusion is especially true for properties designated on the basis of significant Black history, which are even more minimal. In this study, of the 290 total historic assets identified related to Black history, only 58 of them are extant in the field. Of these 58 extant buildings, LPC designated only 21. Of these 21 LPC-designated buildings, only eight mention Black history. And among these eight buildings, the LPC only

designated six of them with the primary significance being Black history, five of which were nearly identical reports from Tin Pan Alley. Additionally, of the 58 extant buildings, only 12 of them are listed on the NR, 10 of which overlap with the LPC designations, with no mention of Black history in the local or NR documentation. These statistics speak to the volume of which Black history is ignored and marginalized in preservation policy and practice in New York.



Historic assets with LPC designations within the Tenderloin and their relationship with Black history, 2025. Ashlyn Pause

Analyzing the minimal change over time in preservation policy and practice as it relates to the representation of Black history, the first addition of this history to an LPC designation report began with the brief mention of the area’s local Black neighborhood context, as well as the mention of “African Broadway,” in the 23rd Police Precinct (‘Tenderloin’) Station report (“23rd Police Precinct (‘Tenderloin’) Station House” 1998). This designation report dates to 1998, nearly 30 years after the LPC establishment. The next designation report to include Black history was the Lamartine Place Historic District report in 2009, nearly a decade following the 23rd Police Precinct report. This groundbreaking report was written with Black history at the forefront of the report and a primary area of significance. The Lamartine Place Historic District

the preservation historic asset, the Hopper-Gibbons House. This designation report was one of progressivism at the LPC, which helped set the precedent for the Tin Pan Alley designation reports in the following decade. Despite this, the Lamartine Place Historic District and the five Tin Pan Alley designation reports are the only LPC reports designated based on significant Black history in the Tenderloin.

Although the representation in these six reports is vital to change in preservation, it is still not enough considering the extensive history of the Black community in the neighborhood. Considering the hundreds of buildings designated over the last 60 years in the Tenderloin, it is shocking that the Black narrative has not been further recognized. The change in preservation and the narratives these preservation organizations are highlighting can be characterized as slow, unambitious, and exclusionary. This claim is supported throughout this report by evidence, such as LPC's lack of calendared buildings related to Black history and NR's lack of Black representation in any reports in the Tenderloin. Although there are now designation reports listed for significant Black histories, there has not been any new development in the designation of similar motives in the last five years. Whether this neglect of the Black narrative stems from pre-existing standards or regulations, more purposeful action is needed to rectify this injustice.

HISTORIC ASSETS

BUILDING

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Real Old-Time Rookery 253 W 28 St	Housing	Residents + Publics		1910		
"The Devil's Dive" , " The Black Cave" 263 7 AVE	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation				
23rd Police Precinct ('Tenderloin') Station House 134-138 W 30 ST	Preservation	Labor + Industry	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	1907-08	LPC	⬠
47 West 28th Street Building, Tin Pan Alley 47 W 28 ST	Preservation	Media + Representation	Entertainment	1852	LPC	⬠
49 West 28th Street Building, Tin Pan Alley 49 W 28 ST	Preservation	Media + Representation	Entertainment	1852	LPC	⬠
51 West 28th Street Building, Tin Pan Alley 51 W 28 ST	Preservation	Media + Representation	Entertainment	1852	LPC	⬠
53 West 28th Street Building, Tin Pan Alley 53 W 28 ST	Preservation	Media + Representation	Entertainment	1852	LPC	⬠
55 West 28th Street Building, Tin Pan Alley 55 W 28 ST	Preservation	Media + Representation	Entertainment	1852	LPC	⬠
Abyssinian Baptist Church 242 W 40 ST	Religion					
Academy of Medicine 15 W 43rd St	Education + Childcare	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions				
African Methodist Episcopal Church 250 W 50 St	Religion					

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
American Fine Arts Society 215 W 57 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Entertainment			LPC & NRHP	●
American Society of Civil Engineers 218 W 57 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Residents + Publics	1897	LPC	●
Anna Flats 494 and 496 Seventh Ave	Housing	Residents + Publics		1882		
Anonymous Club 38 W 30 ST	Building	Entertainment	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction			
Apartment Housing 243-245 W 29 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Apartment Housing 309-311 W 37 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Apartment Housing 418 W 52 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Apartment Housing 448 W 54 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Apartment Housing 142 W 28 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Apartment Housing 248 W 29 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Apartment Housing 325-331 W 52 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				●
Apartment Housing 219-229 W 40 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Artists' Studio 130 W 57 ST	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics	1907	LPC	●
Attucks Music Publishing Company 1255-57 BROADWAY	Entertainment					

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Barron Wilkens's Little Savoy 265 W 35 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction			
Batley & Warren Photographers 509 8 AVE	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation				
Bethel AME Church 233 W 25 ST	Religion					
Bijou Theatre 209 W 45 ST	Entertainment			1901		
Bill Singleton's Club 106 W 27 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
Branch office of New York Freeman 6 AVE and 26 ST	Media and Representation			1887		
Breslin Hotel 1186 BROADWAY	Entertainment	Labor + Industry		1904		⬠
Broadway Tabernacle 47 W 34 ST	Religion	Entertainment		1959		
Broder Schlam Mucic Publisher 39 W 28 ST		Entertainment				
Bryant Hall Building 725 6 AVE	Entertainment	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity		1820		
C.N. Broward Tonsorial Parlor 342 W 37 ST	Labor + Industry					
Cadillac Hotel 153-155 W 43 ST	Labor + Industry	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Media + Representation			
Capital Hair Dressing Parlor and Bath House 109 W 29 ST	Labor + Industry					
Carnegie Hall 881 7 AVE	Entertainment				LPC & NRHP	⬠

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Casino Theater (and Rooftop Garden) 1404 BROADWAY	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Entertainment			
Charlie Moore's Douglass Club 120 W 28 ST	Entertainment					●
Chas. Moore's Barber Shop 115 W 30 ST	Media + Representation					
Chas. Thirl's Barber Shop 136 W 30 ST	Media + Representation					
Chelsea Exchange Bank 266 W 34 ST	Labor + Industry	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Labor + Industry			
Chelsea Park Apartment 444 W 27 ST	Housing	Residents + Publics				
Child's Restaurant 36 W 34 ST	Media + Representation					
Childhood Home of Egbert "Bert" Williams 136 W 26 ST	Residents + Publics					
Church of Simon of Cyrene 351 W 37 ST	Religion			1857		
Church of St. Vincent de Paul 123 W 23 ST	Religion			1848		●
Church of the Holy Apostles 296 9 AVE	Religion			1848	LPC & NRHP	●
Clef Club Singers and Players Managing Corporation, Inc. 34 W 53 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
College of Physicians and Surgeons 437 W 59 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions					
Colored Orphan Asylum 520-522 Fifth AVE	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions	Education + Childcare				

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS		BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Colored Vaudeville Benevolent Assc. 127 W 30 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction			
Colored YMCA 252-254 W 53 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Religion			
Colored YMCA 143 W 53 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Religion			
Comedy Theatre 110 W 41 ST	Entertainment	Media + Representation			
Crawley's Gambling House 52 W 28 ST	Entertainment				⬡
Croton Reservoir 476 5 AVE	Landuse				⬡
Crumpton's Barber Shop 128 W 26 ST	Media + Representation				
D.A. Greene's Stationary Store W 40 ST AND 8 AVE	Labor + Industry				
Digg's Barber Shop 250 W 41 ST	Media and Representation	Commerce + Industry			
Dixie Supply Company 247 W 46 ST	Labor + Industry				
Edgar's Stationary Store 59 W 39 ST	Media and Representation				
Edmund Johnson's Club 147 W 28 ST	Entertainment				
Employment Office District 23 ST AND 6 AVE	Commerce + Industry	Residents + Publics			⬡
Fifth Avenue Hotel 1 W 28 ST	Housing	Entertainment			⬡

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Everard Spa Turkish Bathhouse 28 W 28 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction					●
Fifty-ninth Street Theater 313 W 59 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation	Entertainment			
First home of what became the Harlem YMCA 132 W 53 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction					
Florida Flats Apartments("The Tombs") 137 W 32 ST	Residents + Publics	Housing				
Former Colored School No. 3 225 W 41 ST	Education + Childcare					
Free Circulating Libraries The Muhlenberg Branch 209 W 23 ST	Education + Childcare					
French Hospital 450 W 34 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions					
Gambling House "No.6" 6 W 28 ST	Entertainment					●
Garment Center Capitol 494 7 AVE	Labor + Industry	Landuse				
Garment Center Capitol 500 7 AVE	Labor + Industry	Landuse				
Garrick Theater 65 W 35 ST	Entertainment			1892		
George H. Washington's Barber Shop 453 7 AVE	Media + Representation					
Gimbel's Department Store W 31 AND 32 ST ALONG 6 AVE	Labor + Industry					●
Gotham Music Publishing Company 39 W 28 ST	Entertainment					
Gotham Music Publishing Company 42 W 28 ST	Entertainment					

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Gotham-Attucks Publishing Company (first location) 42 W 28 ST	Entertainment					
Gotham-Attucks Music Company (second location) 50 W 29 ST	Entertainment					⬢
Gotham-Attucks Music Company (third location) 136 W 37 ST	Entertainment					
Grand Opera House 265 8 AVE	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				
Greenberg's Ladie's Hair Dressing Parlor 589 8 AVE	Labor + Industry					
Gwafthney's Barber Shop 231 W 41 ST	Media and Representation	Commerce + Industry				
Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre and Paradise Roof Garden 201 W 42 ST	Entertainment					
Haymarket Dance Hall 66 W 30 ST	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				⬢
Headquarters of National Negro Conference 500 5 AVE	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Residents + Publics	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	1909		
Herald Square 1 HERALD SQUARE	Residents + Publics			1846		
High Educational College of Glory 325 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation	Religion			
Holy Cross Church 329 W 42 ST	Religion			1854		
Home of Ernest Hogan (AKA Reuben Ernest Crowdus) 131 W 53 ST	Housing	Residents + Publics	Entertainment			⬢
Home of George Walker, 1900 505 - 507 6th Ave	Housing	Residents + Publics				

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Hope Day Nursery for Colored Children 325 W 35 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions	Labor + Industry				
Hopper-Gibbons House 339 W 29	Preservation	Education + Childcare	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	1846-47	LPC	●
Hotel Bellmen's Beneficial Association 343 W 35 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Labor + Industry				
Hotel de Wood 105 W 25 ST	Housing	Entertainment				
Hotel Maceo 201 W 42 ST	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				
Hotel Marlborough 1359 BROADWAY	Landuse	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Entertainment	1888		
Hotel Marshall 127-29 W 53 ST	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				
House of All Nations 117 W 32 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation				
Ike Hines's "The Club" 118 W 27 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction			●
J. H. Thompson's Barber Shop 155 W 30 ST	Media + Representation					●
J.W. Brown's Staffing Agency 239 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry					
Jack's Restaurant 6 AVE between 43 ST 44 ST	Media and Representation	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity				

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Jackson's Cigar Store 230 W 41 ST	Media and Representation					
Joe Gans' "Little Egypt" 141 W 33 ST	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				
Joe Stewart's Criterion 331 W 37 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Entertainment			⬠
John B. Nail's House 807 6 AVE	Residents + Publics			Early 1880s		
Johnny Johnson's 118 W 31 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Entertainment			
Johnson and Davis Club 106 W 32 ST	Entertainment					
Johnson's Barber Shop 252 W 47 ST	Media and Representation	Commerce + Industry				⬠
Julia Pappin Employment Bureau 422 6 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
Karow Hat Co. Association 30 W 36 ST	Labor + Industry	Commerce + Industry				
Keystone Hotel 206 W 37 ST	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				
Koster and Bial's Music Hall 147 W 34 ST	Entertainment			1859		
Little Baptist Church 136 W 30 St	Religion					
Lyric Hall 725 6 AVE	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Entertainment			⬠
Macy's 151 W 34 ST	Labor + Industry	Landuse		1910	NRHP	⬠

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Madame Beck's Dressmaking School 324 W 52 ST	Labor + Industry	Education + Childcare				
Maddie A. Priddie, Shoemaker 220 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Commerce + Industry				
Madison Square Theater 4 W 24 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Entertainment	1863		
Majestic Theatre (Columbus Circle) 5 COLUMBUS CIRCLE	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				
Manhattan Opera House 311 W 34 ST	Entertainment			1906		
Manor Community Church 350 W 26 ST	Religion			1855		⬠
Marble Collegiate Church 1 W 29 ST	Religion			1854	LPC & NRHP	⬠
McBride's Saloon Eighth AVE 41 ST	Building	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Residents + Publics	1900		
Metropolitan Mercantile & Realty Company 46 ST AND 8 AVE	Housing	Commerce + Industry				
Metropolitan Opera House 236 W 53 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Entertainment		1883		
Mills Hotel No. 3 481 7 AVE	Preservation	Housing		1906-07		
Miss Blanche D. Washington's School of Music 214-216 W 29 ST	Labor + Industry					⬠
Mme. Baum's Hair Emporium 486 8 AVE	Labor + Industry					

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Mr. and Mrs. L. Smith's Laundry 265 8 AVE	Labor + Industry					
Mrs. E.J. Graham Grammar Instruction 237 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Education + Childcare				
Mt. Olivet Baptist Church 159 W 53 ST	Religion	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction				
Nail Brother Restaurant 461 6 AVE	Entertainment	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction				
Nail Brother Restaurant 461 6 AVE	Entertainment					
National Urban League Office 110 W 40 ST	Media + Representation	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	1914		
National Waiters' Restaurant 128 W 53 ST	Labor + Industry					
New Amsterdam Theatre 214 W 42 ST	Entertainment	Media + Representation				⬢
New Vaudeville Agency (Heidelberg Building) 42 ST AND BROADWAY	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
New York Colored Mission - Phase 1 135 W 30 ST	Religion	Housing	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	1868		
New York Colored Mission - Phase 2 225-227 W 30 ST	Religion	Housing	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	1902		

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
New York Industrial Employment Bureau 153 W 53 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Labor + Industry				
New York Medical College for Women 204 W 55 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions	Education + Childcare		1863		
New York Polyclinic Medical School & Hospital 339-351 W 50 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions			1912		⬠
New York Theater (formerly Olympia Theater) 1514 BROADWAY	Entertainment			1890		
North Presbyterian Church 374 9 Ave	Religion					
NY Institute for the Blind 360 W 34 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions			1831		
Office of C. Franklin Carr Undertakers and Embalmers 266 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of Charles F. Jones D.D.S. 201 W 34 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of Charles H. Graves, Undertaker 319 W 41 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of D.P. Reid, D.D.S. 210 W 27 ST	Commerce + Industry					⬠
Office of Dr. Charles H. Roberts D.D.S. 236 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of Dr. Eugene P. Rogers 242 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					⬠
Office of Dr. James A. Banks, Surgeon Dentist 242 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					

HISTORIC ASSETS

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Office of Frank Wheaton, Lawyer 242 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of Isabel W. Maxwell, Stenographer 46 ST AND 8 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
Office of J. W. Watkins 439 W 35 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of J.C. Thomas, Undertaker 493 7 AVE	Commerce + Industry	Entertainment				
Office of James L. Curtis, Attorney 322 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of Norman B. Sterrett Jr., Undertaker 322 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of Richetta G. Randolph, Stenographer 322 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Office of W. David Brown, Undertaker 146 W 53 ST	Commerce + Industry					
Original Tenderloin Club 137-139 W 30 ST	Entertainment	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction				
Penn Station 214 W 34 ST	Labor + Industry	Residents + Publics	Landuse	1910		
Percy Brown's Club 317 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
Philomathean Lodge No. 446 108 W 32 ST		Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction				
Proctor's 23rd Street Theater 141 W 23 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Professional and Business Men's Social Club of New York City 104 W 28 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction				
Public Bath House 347 W 41 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction			1904		
Public School No.28 121 W 30 ST	Education + Childcare					
Public school No. 48 120 W 28 ST	Education + Childcare					⬠
Public School No. 67 120 W 46 ST	Education + Childcare	Labor + Industry				⬠
Roosevelt Hospital 1000 10 AVE	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions			1871		
Royal Garden Dance Hall 470 6 AVE	Entertainment					⬠
S. G. Gillyard's Variety Store 202 W 37 ST	Media and Representation					
Saint Malachy's Roman Catholic Church 239 W 49 ST	Religion			1854		⬠
Sak's 1311 BROADWAY	Labor + Industry	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity				
School of Mechanics and Tradesmen 20 W 44 ST	Education + Childcare			1890	LPC & NRHP	⬠
Scott Joplin Music Publishing Company 252 W 47 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
S. G. Gillyard's Variety Store 202 W 37 ST	Media and Representation					
Sak's 1311 BROADWAY	Commerce + Industry					

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Seminary Music Co. 112 W 38 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
Shanley's Restaurant 117 W 42 ST	Labor + Industry	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Media + Representation			
Sherwood Studios W 57 ST AND 6 AVE	Housing	Residents + Publics	Labor + Industry	1880		
Site of Assault of May Enoch 135 W 48 ST	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Residents + Publics	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	1900		⬠
Site of refuge for a Black man during the 1900 riot 135 W 48 ST	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Residents + Publics				
Skolsky'Sory Goods Store 399 8 AVE	Labor + Industry					
Sloane Maternity Hospital 447 W 59 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions			1886		
St. Benedict Catholic Church 342 W 53 ST	Religion					⬠
St. Eleftherios' Greek Orthodox Church 359 W 24 ST	Religion			1973		⬠
St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church 135 W 31 ST	Religion			1892		⬠
St. James Presbyterian Church 357 W 51 ST	Religion	Housing				
St. John the Baptist Catholic Church 213 W 30 ST	Religion			1872		⬠
St. Mark's Episcopal Church (First Tenderloin location) 65 W 35 St	Religion					
St. Mark's Episcopal Church (Second Tenderloin location) 139 W 48 St	Religion					

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
St. Mark's Episcopal Church (Third Tenderloin location) 139 W 48 St	Religion					
St. Mary's Free Hospital for Children 405-411 W 34 ST	Health + Welfare + Charitable Institutions			1880		⬢
St. Philip's Parish House 125 W 30 ST	Religion	Housing	Education + Childcare			
St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church 159 W 25 St	Religion					
The Afro-American News Co 439 W 35 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation				
The Beaufort Artists' Studio 140 W 57 ST	Labor + Industry	Residents + Publics	Housing	1907		
The Caterer's and Private Waiter's Club 127 W 26 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction				
The Church of St. Mary the Virgin 145 W 46 ST	Religion			1895	NRHP	⬢
The Cosmopolitan 1277 BROADWAY	Media + Representation					
The Empire Hair Dressing Parlor 149 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry					
The Eureka Employment Bureau 314 W 52 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation		1910		
The Ladies Progressive Literary Circle 218 W 28 ST	Labor + Industry	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction				⬢
The Lotos Club 110 W 57 ST	Residents + Publics	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Entertainment	1909		

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
The New Amsterdam Musical Association 316 W 59 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				✪
The New York Age Office at the Metropolitan Building 247 W 46 ST	Media + Representation					
The New York House 241 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation	Religion			
The New York Land and Brokerage Company 712 7 AVE	Labor + Industry	Housing				
The New York Public Library 476 5 AVE	Education + Childcare			1910	LPC & NRHP	✪
The New York Realty Co. 439 W 35 ST	Commerce + Industry					
The Osborne (Apartments) 205 W 57 ST	Labor + Industry	Residents + Publics	Housing	1985		
The Rembrandt Studio 152 W 57 ST	Labor + Industry	Residents + Publics	Housing			
The Rodin Studios 200 W 57 ST	Labor + Industry	Residents + Publics	Housing			✪
The Standard News Company 131 W 53 ST	Labor + Industry					
The Tenderloin Club 114 W 32 ST	Entertainment	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/Interaction				
The True Light Army Eating House Restaurant 319 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation	Religion			
The True Light Newspaper 337 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation	Religion			
The True Lights Big Market 337 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation	Religion			

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
The Union League Club 1 E 39 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity				
The Waldorf 350 5 AVE	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Labor + Industry	Entertainment			
The Workers Hand Laundry 230 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry					
Thirty-ninth Street Theatre 123 W 39 ST	Entertainment	Media + Representation				
Thoroughgood Club 308 W 38 ST	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	Media + Representation	Entertainment			
Tom Digg's Club 320 W 37 ST	Entertainment					
Trinity Chapel (Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Sava) 20 W 26 ST	Religion			1855	LPC & NRHP	◻
W. D. Brown's Barber Shop 102 W 27 ST	Media + Representation					
W. W. Hart's Barber Shop 107 W 53 ST	Media + Representation					
Walter Herbert's Club 337 W 37 ST	Media + Representation					
Watts and Gant Colored Comedy Co. : Office of Al. F. Watts, Stage Manager 263 W 40 ST	Entertainment	Labor + Industry				
Webb-Draper Employment Agency W 24 ST AND 6 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
White Rats Actors Union, Colored Branch 145 W 45 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Will Ford's Venue W 40 ST AND 8 AVE	Entertainment					
William Banks' Club 290 W 37 ST	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
William Carroll's Restaurant 353 7 AVE	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				⬠
Willis Restaurant 310 W 41 ST	Labor + Industry	Media + Representation				
Worth's Museum 494 6 AVE	Labor + Industry	Entertainment				
Wunderlich's Saloon 59 W 28 ST	Entertainment					⬠
Zion Flats Apartments 397 7 AVE	Housing					
W.S. Rockey 24 ST AND 8 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
W.S. Rockey 42 ST AND 9 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
W.B. Riker's 23 ST AND 6 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
F. Grotta 27 ST AND 6 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
F. Grotta 38 ST AND BROADWAY	Commerce + Industry					
L.P. Rupp 36 ST AND 9 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
F.K. James 44 ST AND 8 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
Gibian 42 ST AND 8 AVE	Commerce + Industry					
Site of Lynching of a Black coachman Abraham Franklin, age 23 during the 1863 Draft Riot-Massacre W 28 ST AND 7 AVE	Commerce + Industry					

HISTORIC ASSETS

STREET

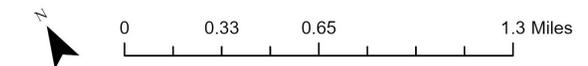
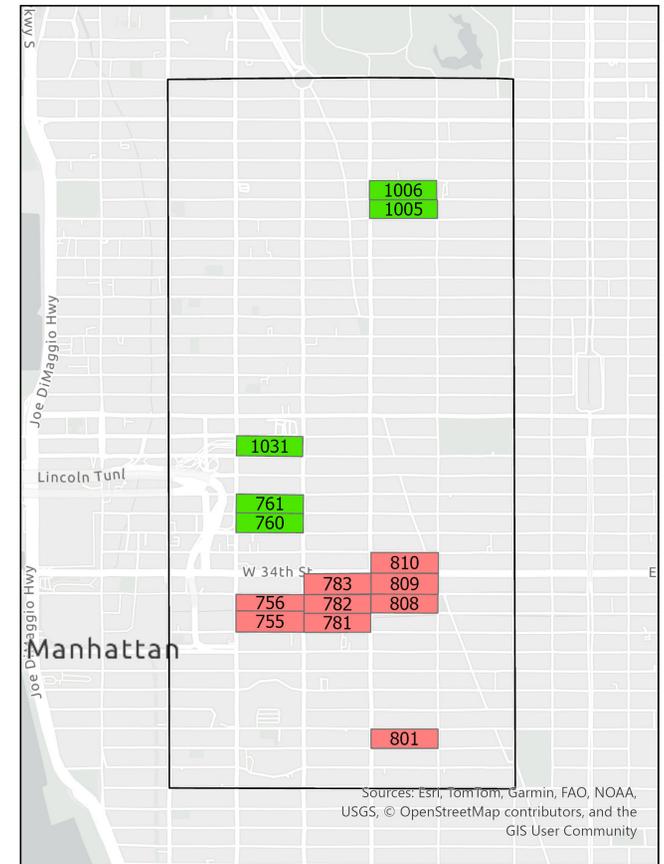
NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS			BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
Artists' Hub W 57 St Between 6 Ave AND BROADWAY	Entertainment	Residents + Publics	Commerce + Industry	1891		●
Tin Pan Alley W 23 St Between 6 Ave AND Broadway		Entertainment		1902	LPC	●
Silent Parade Fifth Avenue, from 57th St to 23rd St	Media + Representation	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction	1917		
1900 Riot Eight Avenue, from 27th to 42nd	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity					
March of the 8th Regiment Band 23rd and 8th, up to 34th, over 34th to Broadway, up Broadway to 50th, take subway to 135th	Entertainment	Commerce + Industry				
Broadway (The Great White Way) Broadway running 41st to 53rd Streets	Landuse	Entertainment				
West 43rd Street (Soubrette Row) West 43rd Street	Landuse	Entertainment				●
Seventh Avenue (African Broadway) 30th to 31st Street	Landuse	Entertainment				
Ninth Avenue Elevated Line 23rd to 59th Street on 9th Ave	Landuse	Commerce + Industry		1869		
Area of dense Black population 37th St between 8th and 9th Aves	Housing	Residents + Publics				
Area of dense Black population 53rd Street between 6th and 7th Aves	Housing	Residents + Publics				

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS		BUILT YEAR	Designation	EXTANT
1863 Draft Riots 23rd ST and 42nd ST, W of Fifth AVE	Racial/Ethnic Conflict + Interracial Solidarity	Social Clubs + Community Organizations + Spaces of Activism/ Interaction			
"SEVEN SISTERS" Center of Black Sex Work (1880-1900) W 25 ST and W 27 ST between 6 and 7 AVE	Commerce + Industry				
Center of Black Sex Work (1900-1920) W 36 ST to W 41 ST between 8 and 9 AVE	Commerce + Industry				
Residential Area for Black Tenants W 47 ST	Residents + Publics				
Funeral March of James Reese Europe 59 ST AND 8 AVE	Residents + Publics				

HISTORIC ASSETS

REPRESENTATIVE BLOCKS

NAME & ADDRESS	RELEVANT CONTEXTS		
Block 755 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 756 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 760 - Increase in Black Population	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 761 - Increase in Black Population	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 781 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 782 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 783 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 801 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 808 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 809 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 810 - Displacement	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 1005 - Increase in Black Population	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 1006 - Increase in Black Population	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics
Block 1031 - Increase in Black Population	Labor + Industry	Housing	Residents + Publics



■ Displacement
■ Increase in Black Population

HISTORIC ASSETS

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