

# A Walking Tour of the Lost Neighborhood of Manhattan's Lower East Side



The Craco Society's Eighth Annual Reunion, August 16- 17, 2014

## Catherine Street



On the left- Looking north from the corner of Catherine and Monroe Streets, circa 1940. Notice the front of St. Joseph's Church on the right. It was designed by Matthew W. Del Gaudio and opened in 1925. Shortly after the founding of the parish, the Scalabrinians were joined by the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who helped open St. Joseph's School.

At the right- The original San Giuseppe Church, located at 65 Catherine St. In 1908, to help alleviate the overcrowding at San Joachim's Church on Roosevelt St., the Chapel of St. Rocco was opened at 18 Catherine Slip. By 1914, the facilities of St. Rocco's Chapel had been outgrown, and the Chapel of San Giuseppe was established. This new chapel was merely a renovated movie theater, but it was able to accommodate 200 people. It was not long however, before it became obvious that still larger facilities for a church and school would be necessary.

# Knickerbocker Village



The block surrounded by Catherine, Monroe, Cherry and Market Streets, including the now defunct Hamilton St. was notorious for squalid living conditions and became known as "Lung Block" for the prevalence of tuberculosis. In 1932, the area was demolished and construction of Knickerbocker Village began. The twin 13 story buildings contain 1,590 units and beautifully landscaped courtyards.

At left- Hamilton St. Notice the twin spires of St. Joseph's Church at the right and PS 177 in the foreground.



The construction of Knickerbocker Village, as seen from the Manhattan Bridge, 1933.

# Oak Street



This photo from the 1940's shows Oak Street at the intersection of Oliver Street, looking back towards Catherine St. Knickerbocker Village can be seen at the end of the block, with the front of PS 144 just visible at the right.



This 1908 photo of Oak and James Streets highlights PS 144 before it became Metropolitan Vocational HS. The building on the right is the travel offices of M. Santangelo & Co., who may have helped our ancestors with arrangements back to their homeland. The buildings on the far left in the background are where Knickerbocker Village would be built 24 years later.

## Oak, New Chambers and Roosevelt Streets



Oak and New Chambers Streets, Manhattan. (October 28, 1938). Berenise Abott

The offices of the Societa di San Vincenzo stood at the southwest corner of this intersection at 71 Roosevelt St.

The entire neighborhood south of Madison St., between Catherine St. and New Bowery was razed in 1950. It was replaced by The Gov. Alfred E. Smith houses, the largest development in the area, containing 12 seventeen story buildings, with 5,700 apartments situated on over 21 acres. The project was completed on April 1, 1953.

This photo dated 1932 was probably taken from the City Services Building on Pine St. The 3rd Ave. el can be seen running overhead New Bowery.

St. Joseph's Church is labeled in the upper right for reference.



# Batavia and Pearl Streets



Left- The corner of New Chambers and Batavia Streets. Right- A rag picker on Batavia Street.

The Franklin Square station on the 3rd Ave. line as it passes under the Brooklyn Bridge at Pearl St. This spur ran from Chatham Square to Hanover Square. The Municipal building can be seen in the background.



## New Bowery, Madison and, Roosevelt Streets

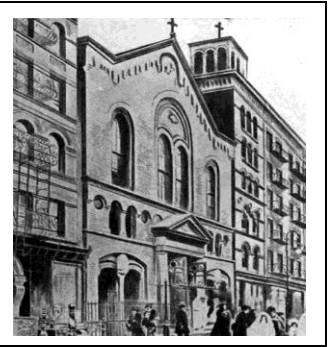


The buildings at the northeast corner of Madison St., New Bowery and Roosevelt St. remain nearly unchanged since this photo from the 1940's. The dome of St. James' Church (which was removed around 1929) can be seen in the background. The 3rd Ave. el, which ran overhead New Bowery, can be seen at the left. After the removal of the elevated train, New Bowery was renamed St. James Place. The northernmost portion of Roosevelt St., including St. Joachim's Church, was demolished in 1958 to make way for the Chatham Green Apartment Complex.

New Bowery and the 3rd Ave. el, at the intersection of New Chambers St. It remained in service until Dec. 22, 1950. The buildings in the distance are (l. to r.) Cities Services, City Bank-Farmers Trust, Bank of Manhattan Trust, Singer Bldg., Municipal Bldg., and the Federal Courthouse.



## Chiesa di San Gioacchino - St. Joachim's Church



### NEW DESIGN GIVEN IN PARK ROW PLAN

**Development Change Urged  
on Mayor in Effort to Save  
Church on Roosevelt St.**

A new design for the \$7,745,-030 Park Row housing redevelopment has been presented to Mayor Wagner by a group of Roman Catholic laymen who seek to prevent the demolition of St. Joachim's Church.

The church, founded in 1888 as a haven for Italian immigrants, is at 28 Roosevelt Street. This is within the six-block area to be cleared for the construction of a cooperative development for 400 middle-income families under the sponsorship of the Municipal Credit Union.

The new architectural design differs radically from the project design approved by the city's Committee on Slum Clearance. The approved plan calls for a continuous twenty-one-story apartment in a sweeping curve that would traverse the site. In the new plan, a series of wings at right angles to one another, would leave room for the existing church and a new shrine to Mother Cabrini.

The new design was made public yesterday by Frank Scervini, founder of the Charity Workers of the Blessed Trinity. The group is conducting the drive to save the church. Jimmy Durante, the entertainer, was baptized in the church and is a member of the campaign group.

The plans and architectural drawings, prepared by Vito P. Battista, founder of the Institute of Design and Construction, will be displayed at the church tomorrow morning. Special prayers will be said for preservation of the building.

Mr. Scervini said a set of plans had also been sent to the City Planning Commission.

This photograph of Roosevelt St. was taken looking northward from New Bowery and Madison Streets. San Joachim's Church, located at 22-26 Roosevelt St., is halfway down the block, on the right. The parish was established in 1888 by the Missionary Fathers of St. Charles Borromeo specifically to serve the spiritual needs of Italian immigrants. Despite much public outcry, this area was razed in 1958 to make way for the Chatham Green Housing Project.



## Saint James Church



In 1835, construction began on St. James Church at 32 James Street. The Gothic Revival style that would become nearly synonymous with church architecture was still long off and American churches tended to be of the “temple order.” The Greek Revival style was additionally attractive to the Catholics because it suggested permanence and strength—a message to anti-Catholic bigots that the religious group was here to stay. Expectedly, this was the style chosen for the new structure.

Completed in 1837, St. James Church was one of three Catholic churches dedicated that year—the others being Transfiguration (then located on Chambers Street) and St. Paul’s far to the north in Harlem.

The architect, whose name has been lost in time, outdid himself. The sophisticated design and detailing was similar to that of the influential architect Minard Lafever. The handsome proportions and the refined decorative elements

resulted in a nearly unparalleled monumentality.

At some point, possibly in 1929, the attractive cupola was removed; however the structure retained its fine proportions. When the Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the building a landmark in 1966, it deemed it “one of the monuments of the Greek Revival in New York City.”

Despite the designation, the venerable structure was threatened in 1983 when the roof was found to be in danger of collapse. After nearly a century and a half of service, the City closed the structurally unsafe St. James Church.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians, which was founded in the building 147 years earlier, took up the cause. It spearheaded a group of concerned citizens that provided the funds for a complete restoration.

Then in January 2011, a two alarm fire, apparently electrical in nature, broke out inside the historic church. An hour and a half after the first firefighters arrived, the blaze which was located between the ceiling and the roof, was finally brought under control. There was significant damage, mostly the result of water.

# Governor Alfred E. Smith



Alfred Emanuel "Al" Smith (December 30, 1873 – October 4, 1944) was an American statesman who was elected Governor of New York four times (1918- 1926) and was the Democratic U.S. Presidential nominee in 1928, losing the election to Herbert Hoover.

Smith was born and raised in the Fourth Ward on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and it was here he would spend his entire life. His father, Alfred Emanuele Ferraro, the son of Italian and German immigrants, took the name Alfred E. Smith ('ferraro' means 'blacksmith' or 'smith' in Italian). The younger Alfred served as an altar boy at St. James Church, and attended school there as well.

After the 1928 election, Smith became the president of Empire State, Inc., the corporation that built and operated the Empire State Building. As with the Brooklyn Bridge, which Smith witnessed being built from his Lower East Side boyhood home, the Empire State Building was a vision and an achievement constructed by combining the interests of all rather than being divided by the differences of a few.

His commitment to the people of the Lower East Side, kept him a popular figure in this community, with housing projects, schools, parks and government facilities named in his honor.

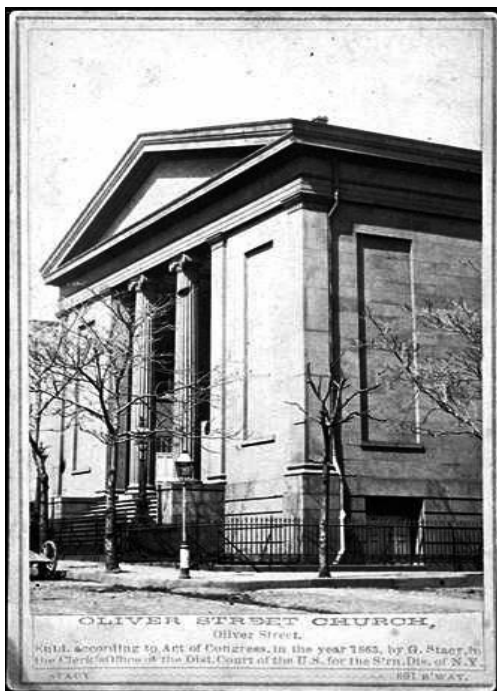


This three-story Victorian brick row house was the home of Alfred E. Smith from 1907 to 1923. Located at 25 Oliver St., it was declared a National Landmark in 1972.



# 1845 Mariner's Baptist Temple

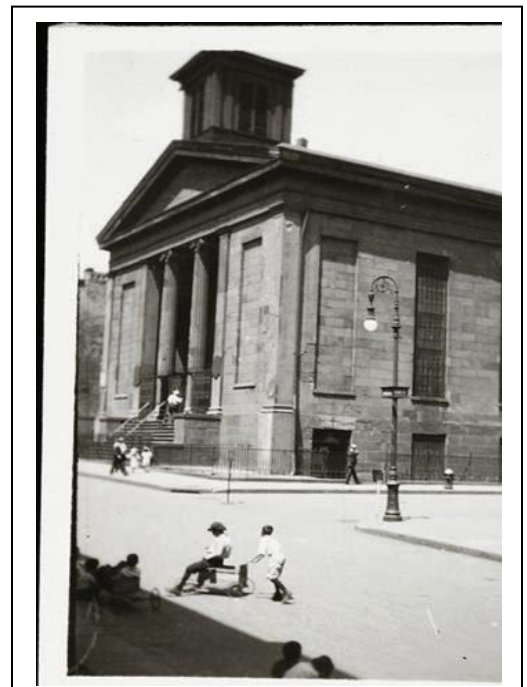
The Oliver Street Baptist Church began in 1799 as a mission for European seamen who docked at the nearby East River. The original wooden structure burned to the ground in 1843, and the current Church was completed in 1845. Through the years, the Church's mission included food distribution to the poor of the neighborhood, regardless of religious beliefs or ethnicity. During the 1960's the membership of the Mariner's Temple drastically dropped- at one point numbering only 60. Through the efforts of the Rev. Suzan D. Johnson and her "Hour of Power" noontime service, the Church survives.



Above- The original wooden structure as depicted in this 1808 watercolor.

Left- Gas street lamps stand on the sidewalk in front of the Church around 1880.

Right- By 1915 a steeple had been added. Young boys in knickers race wooden carts on Oliver St.



## First Shearith Israel Cemetery

This small graveyard is the oldest surviving Jewish burial ground in New York City. It was used by Congregation Shearith Israel, the first Jewish congregation in North America. Shearith Israel was formed in 1654 in New Amsterdam by Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal and was the only Jewish congregation in New York City until 1825. The Chatham Square graveyard is known as Shearith Israel's "first cemetery," but was actually the second burial ground used by the congregation. In 1656, city authorities granted the Jewish community "a little hook of land situate outside of this city for a burial place." The location of this original graveyard is unknown today. The Chatham Square cemetery was founded in 1682 and was expanded in the 1700s so that it once extended from Chatham Square over what is now the upper part of Oliver Street down to Bancker Street (present-day Madison Street).

Several hundred individuals, including a number of veterans of the American Revolution, were buried at the Chatham Square cemetery before it closed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; the last recorded burial was in 1833. Development encroached upon the cemetery so that only a small remnant exists today. In 1823, the congregation sold an unused portion of the cemetery frontage on Chatham Square to the Tradesmen's Bank; additional unused portions on Oliver and Madison Streets were sold in 1829. A section of the burial ground was taken by the city in 1855 when the New Bowery (today's St. James Place) was cut through; 256 burials were removed from the graveyard at that time and reinterred in the congregation's cemeteries on 21<sup>st</sup> Street and in Brooklyn. About a hundred headstones and aboveground tombs can still be seen in what remains of the old graveyard, which lies above street level on the south side of St. James Place. Congregation Shearith Israel continues to maintain the cemetery, and it also has an annual Memorial Day ceremony at the site in honor of the Revolutionary War veterans buried there



The First Shearith Israel Cemetery as it appeared in the 1940's. Although the cemetery itself has changed little, notice the 3rd Ave. el, the pushcart, the vintage street lamp, the hanging laundry and the Mobil Station next door.

# Chatham Square



Chatham Square was named for William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham and Prime Minister of Great Britain before the American Revolution. Pitt Street in the Lower East Side is also named for him, and Park Row was once Chatham Street.

Up until about 1820, the square was used as a large open air market for goods and livestock, mainly horses. By the mid-19th century, it became a center for tattoo parlors, flophouses and saloons, as a seedy section of the old Five Points neighborhood. In the 20th century, after The Great Depression and Prohibition, the area was reformed. The photo above is dated 1905.

The Kimlau Memorial Arch was erected by the American Legion in 1962 to honor United States service members of Chinese ancestry who fought and died serving their country. The arch is named after 26-year-old 2nd Lt. Benjamin Ralph Kimlau, an aircraft commander in the 380th Bombardment Group who was shot down during World War II. There is also a statue of Lin Zexu, a Chinese scholar and official of the Qing dynasty, in the square.



# Collect Pond

The Collect Pond was a body of fresh water in this area occupying approximately 48 acres and as deep as 60 feet. Its name is a corruption of the Dutch word for pond, “kolk”.

For the first two hundred years of European settlement in Manhattan, Collect Pond was the main water supply for the growing city. Up until the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the pond was also used as a recreational area. However, it was polluted beyond repair by the tanneries, breweries and slaughterhouses that arose in the area. By 1813, the Collect was completely filled in with soil from nearby Bayard Hill. The poor quality of this landfill project, as well as the fact the pond was fed from underground aquifers, created an odorous, swampy and mosquito ridden district. These horrific conditions left only the poorest immigrants, mostly African-Americans and Irish, as its residents. The area known as the “Five Points” lies where the eastern shore of Collect Pond once stood.

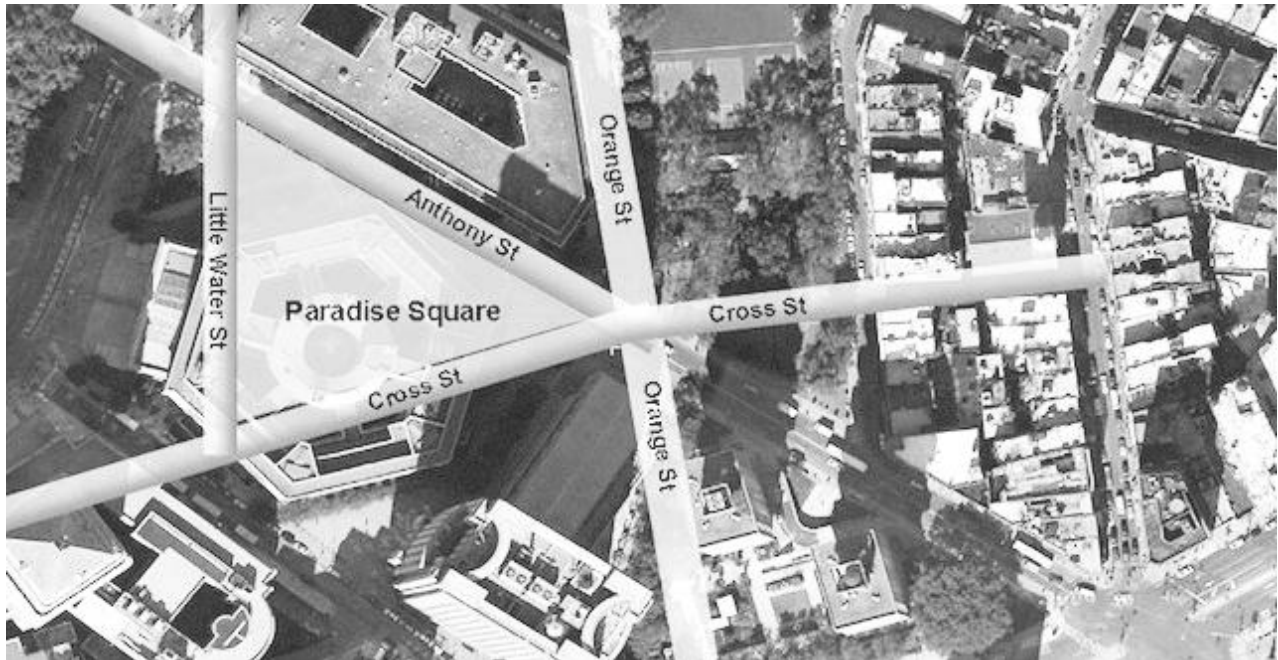
In 1960, a portion of the site of the Collect was given to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation for conversion into a park. Originally, the park was named "Civil Court Park" due to its proximity to the surrounding courthouse buildings. However, the park was renamed "Collect Pond Park", its current name, to represent its history more accurately.



N.Y. Collect pond 3e5 1796  
"This beautiful pond, occupying the site of the present great gloomy pile of prison buildings known as The Tombs, was the scene in the summer of 1796 of the first trial of a steamboat with a screw propeller. It was the invention of John Fitch. From the collection of the NYPL." R. T. FRENCH LITHO

“This beautiful pond, occupying the site of the present great gloomy pile of prison buildings known as The Tombs was the scene in the summer of 1796 of the first trial of a steamboat with a screw propeller. It was the invention of John Fitch. *From the collection of the NYPL.*”

# Five Points



The name Five Points was derived from the five-pointed intersection created by Orange Street (now Baxter Street) and Cross Street (now Mosco Street); from this intersection Anthony Street (now Worth St.) and ran in a northwest direction, creating a triangular-shaped block thus the fifth "point". To the west of this "point" ran Little Water Street (which no longer exists) north to south, creating a triangular plot which would become known as Paradise Square or Paradise Park.

Five Points gained international notoriety as a disease-ridden, crime-infested slum that existed during the mid to late eighteenth century. By the time our ancestors arrived here at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Irish gangs and violence were largely gone, leaving only the despicable tenement lifestyle behind. First generation arrivals remained in the lower east side, due to the low rents. Many soon moved north to Mulberry Street and Greenwich Village, or for the more pastoral landscape of Brooklyn. Enough remained in this neighborhood to keep the Crachesi traditions of San Vincenzo alive.



Left- Rear of a tenement at the Baxter bend.

Right- The north side of Worth St. at the corner of Baxter St. after a snowstorm.



# Baxter Street

In Ellis Island Ships Manifests an overwhelming majority of immigrants from Craco reported 42 or 44 Baxter Street as their destination in the New World. While we will never know for sure, one can imagine this was a “safe house” for all Crachesi arrivals to New York from the late 1880’s to the 1920’s.

The U.S. Census of 1900 lists Crachesi immigrants living at 38- 44 Baxter Street as Mormando, Sarubbi, Lorubbio, Cantasano, Rinaldi, Roccanova, Matera, Marrese, DeCesare, Lobasco, Fittipaldi, Tuzio, Riviello, Zaffarese, Episcopia, Ferrante, Grieco, Rubertone, Camperlengo, Secafico, Viverito, Gigliano and Storica.

The site where 42 and 44 Baxter St. once stood is now the rear of the Louis J. Lefkowitz State Office Building (141 Worth St.), whose construction began in 1928 and was completed in 1930.





## Columbus Park

Jacob Riis and other social reformers were instrumental in convincing the city to raze the Mulberry Bend area to the ground in 1895. Two years later, Mulberry Bend Park was finally dedicated as one of the first two parks created under provisions of the then decade-old 1887 Small Parks Act. Mulberry Bend's demolition inaugurated what would become one of the city's prevailing policies for the improvement of urban woes. To the reformers of Jacob Riis' day, the pathology of the urban poor grew directly from their physical living conditions. New York's long history of urban renewal and slum clearance programs can be traced, at least in sentiment, to reformers' battles with this particular site.

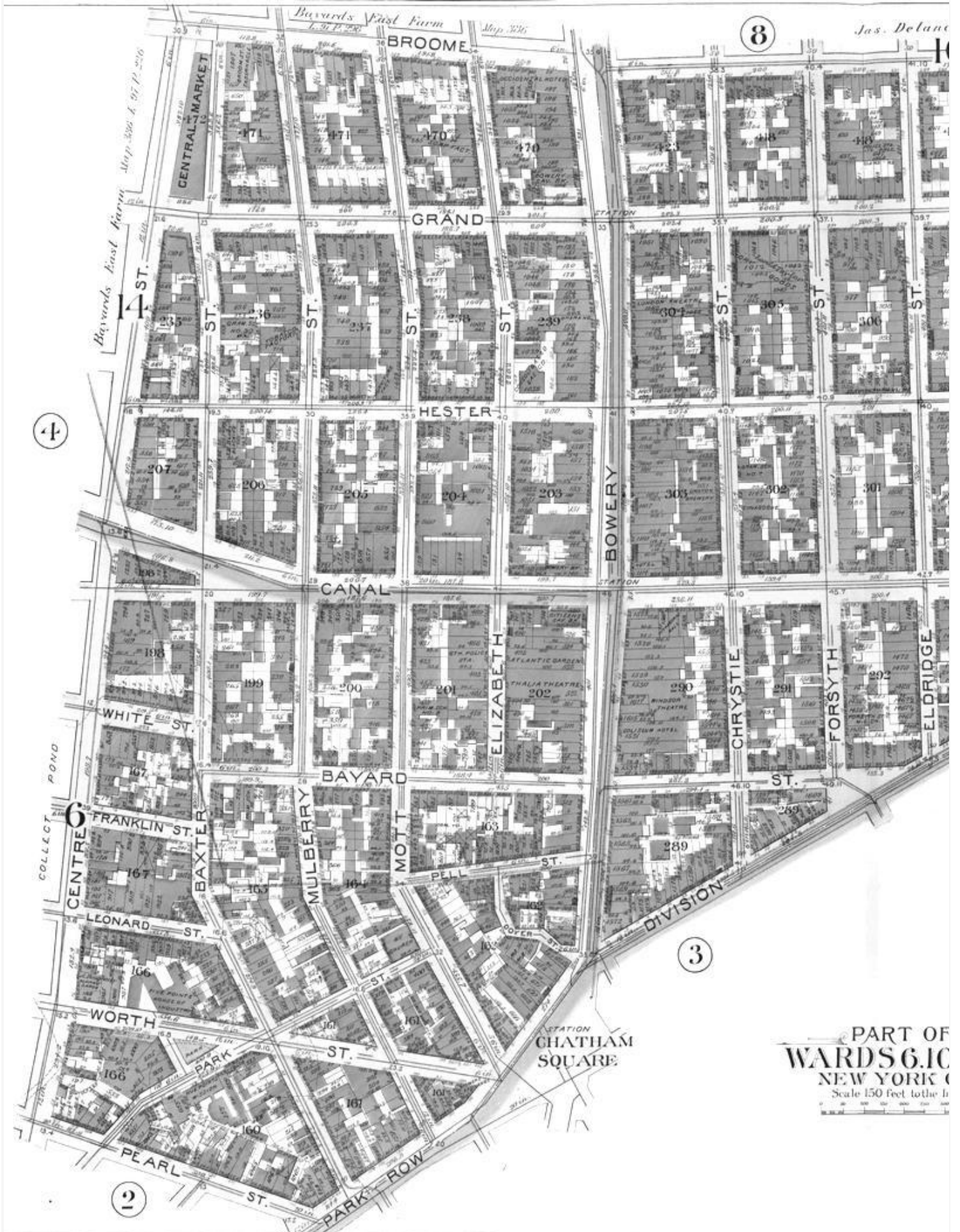
The park provided the neighborhood with trees, grass, and flowers with bench lined curved walkways and an expansive open grassy area. It was renamed Columbus Park in 1911. No doubt many of our ancestors roamed this urban oasis in an attempt to escape the overcrowded and unfamiliar life in New York.



Mulberry Bend in the Five Points neighborhood (Jacob Riis c. 1894) looking north from just above Cross Street. The tenements on left were razed to create Mulberry Bend Park (now Columbus Park). The two tenements visible on right, 46 Mulberry Street (c.1886) in foreground and 48-50 Mulberry Street on "Bend" still stand.

## Crachesi Addresses in the Lower East Side

Number	Street	Individual Association	Source	Comment
24	Baxter St.	Rinaldi & Grossi Saloon, (Joseph Rinaldi & Antonio Grossi) 1915		
44	Baxter St.	Rinaldi, Nicola (1899)	February 2014 NL	
46	Baxter St.	Muzio Family (1899)	March 2014 NL	
47	Baxter St.	D'Addurno, Rosa (LaRubbio Murder Trial)	June 2013 NL	
47	Baxter St.	Matera, Vitantonio (LaRubbio Murder Trial)	June 2013 NL	
26	Cherry St.	Benedetto, Paolo & Antonia Roccanova Home (1905)	May 2014 NL	
10	Franklin St.	Secefico Family	April 2014 NL	
5	Madison St.	Ragone, Gerardo Home	May 2014 NL	
5	Monroe St.	St. Joseph's Church		
76	Mott St.	Viggiano, Dr. Donato Office	March 2012 NL	
15	Mulberry St.	Rinaldi, Joseph Home (1915)		
58	Mulberry St.	Camperlengo Family Home	January 2012 NL	Photo available
89	Mulberry St.	Salomone Family	April 2014 NL	
109	Mulberry St.	Most Precious Blood Church (1st San Vincenzo Feast)	October 2012 NL	Photo available
171	Mulberry St.	DeCostale Family	April 2014 NL	
221	Mulberry St.	Marrese , Pasquale Home (before 1899)	December 2013 NL	
23	New Bowery	Cataldi, Giovanni & Maria Libonati	April 2014 NL	
169	Park Row	Viggiano, Prospero Barber Shop	June 2013 NL	
1	Peck Slip	Benedetto Paper Stock Co. (1906)	1906 Rosa Benedetto Ltr	
5	Peck Slip	Benedetto, Pietro Home (1905)		
	Reade St.	Stone Front Bar & Grill (Domenico Rinaldi)	August 2013 NL	Photo available
5	Roosevelt St.	Elia, Francesco Butcher Shop	June 2013 NL	
13	Roosevelt St.	Spera, Caterina & Virroria Spera	April 2014 NL	
71	Roosevelt St.	Societa S. Vincenzo Martie di Craco office	Broadside 1935	Photo available
53	Spring St.	Marrese Tailor Shop (Pasquale Marrese)	December 2013 NL	Photo available
352	Water St.	Ragone & Son paper stock	May 2014 NL	
518	Water St.	Benedetto Paper Stock Companies		Photo available
172	Worth St.	Muscalet Beverage Co. (Jos. Rinaldi)	February 2014 NL	Photo available
176	Worth St.	Imperial Distributing Company, (Joseph Rinaldi & Antonio Grossi)		



Bayards First Farm Map 385  
 Bayards East Farm Map 386

Jas. Delano

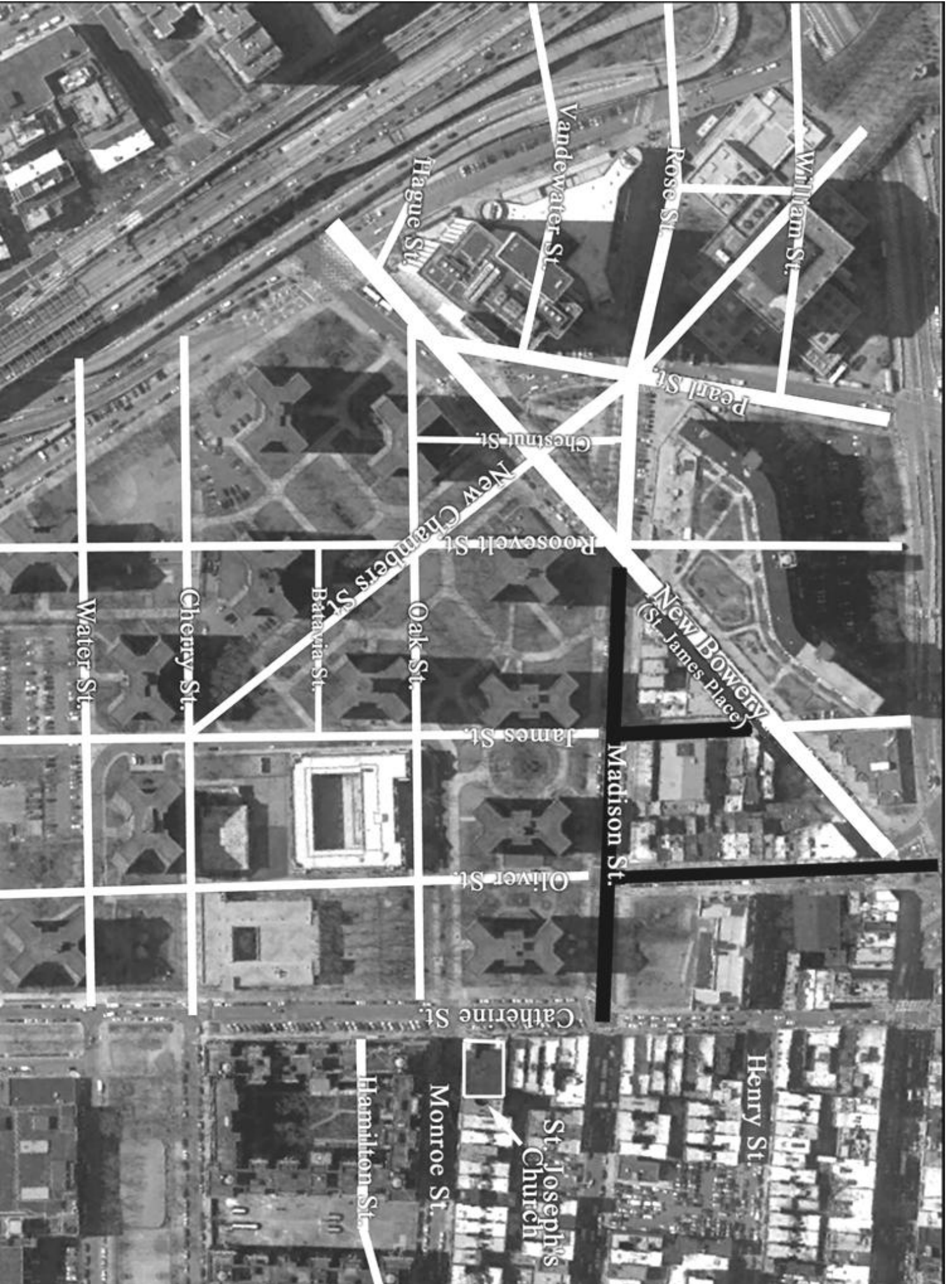
8

4

3

2

PART OF  
 WARD 6.10  
 NEW YORK C  
 Scale 150 feet to the I



William St.

Rose St.

Vandewater St.

Hague St.

Pearl St.

Chestnut St.

New Chambers St.

Roosevelt St.

New Bowery  
(St. James Place)

Oak St.

Batavia St.

Cherry St.

Water St.

Madison St.

James St.

Oliver St.

Catherine St.

Henry St.

St. Joseph's  
Church

Monroe St.

Hamilton St.