

William Street

A “Building Shells: Building Community” Walking Tour



Welcome to Newburgh’s East End Historic District, a collection of over two thousand buildings encompassing 445 acres—one of the largest in New York State. The district was formed in the 1980s to encompass and dramatically expand the Montgomery–Grand–Liberty Streets Historic District formed in 1973, whose landmarks—by the likes of A. J. Davis and Calvert Vaux—represented the city’s elite rather than the middle and working class population whose architecture surrounds us.

Today we’re on William Street, a major north-south thoroughfare cutting across the city’s south end. The street first opened in the early 19th century to provide access to estates and pastures just on the fringes of what was then

the Village of Newburgh. After decades of development the street matured into a rich corridor of European immigrant shops and houses.

Stopping at modified buildings, active residences, and a building shell, we'll learn of stories exemplifying this transition. The built environment of the street helps to visualize this multilayered history, continuously changing, as the neighborhood is now mostly Spanish-speaking. We're looking to gather more contemporary histories, so if you have some stories, please share along the walk!

Tour theme: Immigrant history

7 William Street

A Baptist church has existed on this site since 1883, when the First Baptist Church, then located a 20 minutes' walk away on South Street, built a mission here. Mission chapels were smaller second locations of a main church. Many appeared on this end of the city after the Civil War to accommodate young neighborhoods whose residents could not easily commute down to older sections of the city for service. At a meeting in October 1901, Moulton Memorial Baptist Church, a congregation formed from the Baptist mission, began planning for a second building. They hired architect Frank E. Estabrook to design the church, and a single firm, the Burhans Brothers, to manage all aspects of construction.¹

Between 1901–1905, Estabrook planned two additional Newburgh churches: Grace United Methodist on Broadway, once a mission church too, and First United Presbyterian Church on Dubois Street. All feature pews arranged in a semicircular orientation, unprecedented in Newburgh church design. The exteriors are focused on horizontality and weight more than the usual Gothic emphasis on verticality and height.

Of the three buildings, this Baptist church was the most expensive, with a stone base of coursed, even masonry, Gothic stone door surround, and Perpendicular style tracery—the pattern within the major windows. The Perpendicular style from the late Gothic period was popular in Gothic Revival design, and used in the Cadet Chapel at West Point begun soon after this

church in 1906. On either side of the main door are pointy pinnacles covered with crockets, the small carved balls resembling leaves.

The church continues to host a large Baptist congregation, the Baptist Temple, which had its first service here in 1981.²

17 William Street

In 1892, George O. Hoyle purchased this parcel from Isabella and Alexander Morrison, owners of the spacious house and garden that once stood on the site of our next stop.³ Hoyle, a woodblock printer, built what was probably a rental property here that he could supervise from his home across the street. Built in the form of a standard post-Civil War Newburgh townhouse, Hoyle's contractor stretched his budget to create a distinguishable residence.

Instead of the rounded or polygonal multi-story bays, seen in the taller houses flanking, we see a flattened rectangular bay, an innovation of the 1890s meant to create visual variety in facades. The wooden porch and cornice—decorative woodwork crowning the building—are adorned with fretwork panels made with precise saws in the shapes of foliage or flowers. Maybe this house's most striking feature is its textured cream-colored brick, a tone of brick made popular by the city of Milwaukee in the late 19th century. In reaction to its expense, it was only used to face the house, applied almost like makeup to the front. The remainder is Hudson River brick. Brownstone sills, lintels, and connecting belt courses seem to drag across the light masonry, a bold contrast in colors.

26 William Street

Now let's look across the street at this brick house and gravel lot. From the exposed side facing us, we can clearly see the outlines of a staircase in the plaster and residue. Additionally, the small rectangular openings we see in the brick correspond with the stories of the existing house. From these clues, we can tell that the adjoining house was destroyed, and that the wall we see is a party wall: a shared masonry divider between two properties. These openings held the joists, pieces of lumber used in the construction of floors,

and they're sometimes called joist pockets. Often on the interior of building shells, we can tell where the floor plates were by searching for these vacant slots.

At the attic level, the series of smaller windows comprise the eyebrow entablature. Just like the eyebrows of a face, the entablature forms the top line of a building, and is here implemented to provide light to the attic rooms. This house dates to the first half of the 1860s, but eyebrow entablatures appeared on local buildings starting about 1800.

John and Johanna Ryan, Irish immigrants, were early owners of this house before they sold it in 1868. In 1873, George W. Brower and his wife Sarah, residents of the right house, purchased the left house and its barn from Emma B. Nichols.⁴ After this transaction both houses were often sold or owned as a pair.

Beginning in the 1920s, Romanian immigrants Isidore and Clara Kieva began their cooperage here, producing wooden barrels and crates for groceries. When Isidore was killed in the explosion of a gas drum in 1928, Clara took on operations, later to be joined in business by her son George. George and his son Steven began additionally producing steel drums, and continued the business with multiple production yards in the neighborhood. They survived repeat burglaries that threatened the closure of their shop in the mid-1980s,⁵ and the demolition of the adjoining building, which was condemned. Kieva Cooperage still operates from the family's home, and left this property in 2010.

25 William Street

The area we stand on now epitomizes the changes in land use that occurred in Newburgh over the past 200 years. These lands were inherited by a young Eli Hasbrouck, a grandson of Col. Jonathan Hasbrouck, who owned the stone house east of here that Gen. George Washington headquartered in. Eli, who was twenty years old, built a house on this site about 1816, when he wed Harriet Belknap.

The mansion was recalled as the finest residence of its period, when houses built using brick were limited and costly to build.⁶ Succeeding owners⁷ all

boasted of the property's assets: "a choice variety of fruits...shrubbery...and pure spring water" beautifying a blocky house in the Federal style.⁸ In 1860, the property became entangled in the legal battle of a viciously Confederate family. Edward A. Pollard, a writer who justified Southern slavery, sued his Virginian family and brother Richard, its pending owner, for reasons unknown.⁹

Owners following the fiasco mostly preserved the original lot, including the stone retaining wall and steps on Clark Street, which led up to the door through a line of trees. In the late 1860s, sisters Elizabeth and Isabella Wiley lived in the house with their niece Annabel and boarders. Just before 1875, Isabella had married a Scottish dairy merchant, Alexander Morrison, and in 1891 the couple and Elizabeth began negotiations for subdividing their land.

Their mansion fell to demolition in the early 20th century, and in the broom warehouse that replaced it, a Jewish congregation began meeting. Congregation B'Nai Israel, composed of Eastern European Jews from William Street, had split from their mother congregation Agudas Achim in 1902 to establish a synagogue in this section of the city.¹⁰ Members decided on plans for a larger building in 1922, and after years of fundraising, the cornerstone for the current structure was laid in 1925. The architect was city building inspector Thomas M. Barr, who chose a Classical Revival design with domes. The bricks are pressed, giving them a smooth surface, and laid in a Flemish bond pattern that used alternating sides of the brick across the facade with marble from Gouverneur, New York.¹¹

The current Spanish Pentecostal congregation, Assembly of God, has worshiped here since the 1970s. Like the synagogue served Jewish families on William Street, Assembly of God and other neighborhood churches accommodate Spanish speakers.

Cross Washington.

Corner of Washington and William Street

Let's stop here and focus on the edge of this building, 190–192 Washington. It's been converted into a two family residence, with the doors fitted into a bricked-up storefront. It was built as the grocery store and offices of George

W. Fuller in 1888, and was the first parcel sold off by the Morrisons in 1886. Fuller had a retail space on the ground floor, a large cellar for storage, and a wooden barn beside it for delivery wagons. We can still make out the store's cornice and single cast-iron column persevering. This 1890s illustration accompanied a short biography of Fuller published in 1895. The Morrison's fence and landscape can be spotted in the background. Fuller's store faced the Washington Street School, razed in the 1960s to build the pre-k center, not currently in use.

Washington Street School was built in 1858 to serve white children of the first ward. Most of the Washington Street corridor, however, was Black, and the children of these families were sent to a segregated school of wooden construction in a remote location. In the early 1870s, music instructor Dubois Alsdorf and Black community leaders called on the Newburgh Board of Education to allow Alsdorf's three sons to attend Washington Street School. He invoked the 1866 Civil Rights Act granting rights to formerly enslaved and free African Americans. Alsdorf was with a 6–2 vote, and Newburgh schools were formerly desegregated.

Cross Washington and West Parmenter Street.

58 William Street

Here's a city-owned residential shell, possibly the oldest structure on the street. Similar to 26 William and its eyebrow entablature, this house followed building techniques originating here in the early 1800s. It dates to the early 1860s and had a dramatically steep roof. Brick infill is exposed in the house's framing.

55 William Street

Though built as an unassuming two-story house with a basement, 58 William Street influenced the scale and shape of commercial buildings postdating it. Take this 1890s storefront right beside it. Rather than two floors of living space, the builder has made the top floor a residence, and the ground level a commercial space. The arrangement is copied for the commercial building across the street, built in the late 1880s. It is one of the more modest

storefronts on this commercial block, which became a haven for many Eastern European Jewish immigrants fleeing violent persecution back home. As we walk to our next stop, we'll pass many former storefronts on the left side with iron cornices above. These were prefabricated and could be shipped to Newburgh from design catalogs.

85–87 William Street

We'll pause and take in the siting of these two buildings—their positioning in relation to the sidewalk and street. Originally one of four brick houses built in the late 1880s, this storefront extension appeared in the 1890s. We can still make out the ghostly lettering of its business in the 1920s: Yudelson's—a clothing store.

Joseph and Rosa Goldman Yudelson, Russian Jewish immigrants, acquired the store about 1917. Joseph worked as a dry goods merchant from an address close by, but moved his operation here for the next 25 years. The couple and their children lived above the store, and while listing the address as his residence, their son practiced law.¹² After World War II, the Yudelsons retired to Miami, and a tailor set up shop here. A flooring company in the 1960s advertised asbestos and vinyl flooring from these display windows, and by the late 1970s, the Allen Temple Church of the Living God used the storefront as a worship space.

This building also uses an iron cornice above the entry.

96–102 William Street

We've reached the edges of the Washington Heights neighborhood, a large-scale housing development planned in the late 1880s. It was built on the farm of sea captain Henry Robinson, whose heir, Henry R. Benkard, sold it off in sections. Robinson and Benkard are the namesakes of local avenues cutting across the former farm.

Local property owners, such as Emory Turner, relinquished their undeveloped land along with Benkard. In October 1886,¹³ he sold this entire block to Elvira L.

Van Buren, who commissioned a builder or architect to design these four cottages: Van Buren Row. Probably intended for single families, multiple tenants appear at these addresses beginning in 1888.¹⁴ Renters included railroad workers, brushmakers, carpenters, and steamboat operators. Advertisements offered rent from \$10–\$14 monthly, and each cottage had 6-8 rooms.¹⁵

Van Buren approved that these cottages be built in the Queen Anne style, the principal architectural style used in the development of Washington Heights. The Queen Anne style came to America from England in the very early 1870s. It used two historical periods as sources: the timbered houses of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, and the brick architecture of Queen Anne's reign in the early 1700s. These "Old English" aesthetics were interpreted differently by thousands of different designers, but the cottages display some solid Queen Anne traits, especially house No. 98.

Notice the inset terracotta panels between the two floors of windows, and how the craftsmen built these stone retaining walls and porches. In contrast to the masonry side of Queen Anne, we see the interest in wood too. The wooden porches have hexagonal shingles and square ones in the gable wall, hidden between each cottage. On the downward-sloping roof, the windows giving light to the third story are called shed dormers. Each cottage is compact and highly-ornamented, making them some of the most unique domestic architecture in the city.

108 William Street

When automobiles became available to Americans in the early 20th century, most Newburghers in this neighborhood—accustomed to walking—did not immediately purchase them. For those who wished to rent cars for longer distances, or store theirs for repair, Herbert Ketcham offered space in this garage. He opened the establishment to customers in September 1915.¹⁶

Spanning the width above is a metal cornice centered by a triangular pediment announcing the date of construction. This space saw continuous use as a garage for a bit more than a hundred years, but in the 1940s and 50s, it was the home of Newburgh Banana, the fruit distribution company of

Greek immigrants Spiro Chumas and James Fourtunis, in business together since 1912.

Chumas, nicknamed “Banana Joe,” came to Newburgh from Greece in 1901 and returned in 1905 to marry his wife, Katherine. He was regarded as the first Greek to immigrate here in the 20th century,¹⁷ and organized the current St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which initially worshiped in an industrial building.

Newburgh residents were not pleased with William Street’s tendency to attract immigrants, and in the 1890s one spoke of it as “a foreign colony” and criticized the lack of English spoken well.¹⁸ This disdain aggravated tensions between ethnic groups. In September 1908, the Fourtunis brothers, Chumas, and a Jewish family became engaged in what newspapers reported on as a “mild race riot.”¹⁹

112–128 William Street

This long row of cottages resembles the scale of housing built in the 1860s for industrial workers on Johnston Street. While the earlier dwellings are frame, these are of brick, and those closest to Benkard Avenue contained storefronts for families to live above. There are nine in total; about five doubled as commercial outlets.

In 1890, only one, house No. 20, was being actively used as a store, but in the next decade almost exclusively Italian immigrant tenants had occupied all the available stores. By 1920, the shops included Antonio Constantino’s shoemaking workshop at 114 with Salvatore Merano’s barbershop and Dominic Magliato’s pool room at 120. Katherine Bernabo, a resident of 118 and later 120, made news headlines in 1913 when her jewelry was stolen by another Italian woman, Mollie Grandonico, who after learning where Katherine hid her possessions, stole them and moved to New York City. A Newburgh officer traveled to arrest Grandonico with grand larceny.²⁰

Besides the drama and close-knit relationships inevitably formed on this block, the residents and landlords made some of their own adaptations. 124 at one time had a porch at the second floor level. Most of the commercial

buildings use cast-iron window lintels and bracketed sills, an Italianate feature that would be retro for this period. The lintels have a seashell-like shape in their mock keystone.

162 William Street

The final house on the street was home to one Italian-American family for generations. As its datestone proudly announces, the house was built in 1917 by D. Magliato. Born Arturo Domenico Magliatto in Calabria, Italy in about 1897, he sailed from Naples to New York in either 1899 or 1905 with his parents Giuseppe and Maria, the family selecting Newburgh as their final destination. After becoming naturalized, he Anglicized his name to Arthur Dominic, but went more frequently by Dominic Magliato.²¹

If Dominic did in fact build this house in 1917, it would make him about 20 years old—the same age Eli Hasbrouck was when he built himself a house at the other end of William Street a century prior. Dominic practiced as a mason and later contractor of suburban developments in the Town of Newburgh. He began listing himself as the owner of a pool room and later a resident of 162 William in the late 1910s.²²

The unique treatment of the exterior in stucco gives a sense of his Italian training. Lack of visual interest for the windows and an absent cornice suggests Magliato was just getting a sense of what American architecture looked like, but nonetheless seemed proud of the result. Members of his family continued living here until recently, and many local Italian Americans and Catholics can trace their family's origins to this section of the city.

Tour Acknowledgments

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Endnotes

1. "New Baptist Church," *Newburgh Daily News*, 10 October 1901, 1; "Contracts Signed," *Newburgh Daily Journal*, 28 March 1902, 1.
2. "Baptist services arranged," *Evening News* (Newburgh, NY), 31 January, 1981, 3A.
3. *Orange County Deeds*, Liber 387–374.
4. Liber 212–68; Liber 253–589. See 1870 City of Newburgh Map.
5. Jean Yanarella, "Burglars put 75-year-old cooperage over a barrel," *Evening News* (Newburgh, NY), 9 March 1985, 3A.
6. "Joseph Alexander's Recollections," *Newburgh Daily Journal*, 4 April 1895, 3. Confirmed by Liber 52–236, Eli Hasbrouck to John W. Knevels, inclusive of "the premises and lot on which, the house and garden of the said Eli Hasbrouck, are situated." An existing house on Montgomery Street, built by Goldsmith Denniston of brick about 1820, gives us the Hasbrouck mansion's rigid appearance.
7. Businessmen John W. Knevels, Aaron P. Johnes, and Benjamin Webster. See Liber 61–513 (1838), Liber 125–110 (1853) for these transfers. Webster may have foreclosed on the house after failing to complete obligations set in a mortgage recorded 3 April 1855.
8. "Auction Notices: John Lloyd, Auctioneer," *Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer*, 29 September 1854. An 1875 bird's eye view map of Newburgh depicts the house with a slightly pedimented roofline.
9. "Supreme Court," *Newburgh Daily News*, 6 March 1860, 1.
10. "Sons of Israel In Fine Temple On William St.," *Newburgh News*, newspaper clipping in library of Historical Society of Newburgh Bay and the Highlands.
11. "New Synagogue for the Congregation B'Nai Israel," *Newburgh News*, 15 December 1922, 1.
12. Washington Street School information from Tashae Smith's Sound & Story Project, "In Washington's Shadow: An African American Walking Tour of Newburgh.," "Two Newburgh Law Students Pass Tests for N. Y. State Bar," *Newburgh News*, 23 August 1930, 2.
13. Liber 345–186. Henry R. Benkard sold the first portion of his grandfather's farm in this month, see John J. Nutt, *Newburgh: Her Institutions, Industries, and Leading Citizens* (Newburgh, NY: Ritchie & Hull, 1891), 65.
14. William L. Morrison, a bookkeeper, began living at house no. 100 in 1888. At 98, Peter D. Shay, a baggageman for the West Shore Railroad, lived with Annie Wynn, a domestic worker, in 1890. In 1900 and 1910, Lewis Greiner and Charles H. Stormes, switchmen for the Erie Railroad, lived at 96 and 100.
15. "For Rent," *Newburgh Daily Journal*, 27 November 1897, 4; "For Sale and For Rent," *Newburgh Daily Journal*, 30 September 1898, 4.

16. "Garage," *Newburgh Daily News*, 30 September 1915.
17. "Chumas Dies; Founder of Fruit Firm," *Evening News* (Newburgh, NY), 5 October 1962, 9B.
18. "Brief and Pointed," *Newburgh Daily News*, 13 August 1897.
19. "Mild Race Riot on William St. To-Day," *Newburgh Daily News*, 17 September 1908, 9; "The Greeks and Hebrews Clash on William Street," *Newburgh Daily Journal*, 18 September 1908, 1.
20. "Accused Woman Still in Hospital," *Newburgh Daily Journal*, 1 November 1913, 5.
21. Magliato with a single "t."
22. A year later he was listed at house no. 130, "William Street extension," which is also given as 130 Overlook Place. The address became 162 William by 1930. It is clear that this portion of the city still had a bit of uncertainty about its planning.