




A GUIDE TO WILLIAMSBURG

Long time residents are astonished at the changes in Williamsburg. For many years a poor, overcrowded neighborhood (in 1939, the *W.P.A. Guide to NYC* called Williamsburg “a virtually unrelieved slum”), Williamsburg today is widely acknowledged as one of the “hippest” neighborhoods in the United States, complete with cutting edge art galleries and night clubs, and expensive real estate.

Where Is Williamsburg?

Williamsburg is in northern Brooklyn. It is connected to Manhattan’s Lower East Side by the Williamsburg Bridge.

It's Easy to Get to Williamsburg:

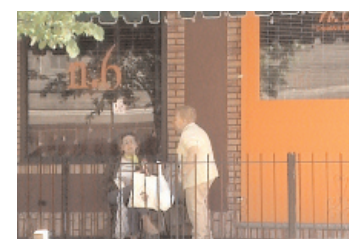
 The Bedford Avenue subway stop of the L train takes you to Bedford Avenue at North 7th Street. The Marcy Avenue subway stop of the J, M and Z trains [*Wheelchair accessible*] takes you to Broadway on the South Side. The most dramatic entrance to the neighborhood is to walk across the Williamsburg Bridge.

About Williamsburg

The area traditionally called Williamsburg, south of Division Avenue, is home to a large community of Hasidic Jews. The “hipster” or artistic area of Williamsburg was traditionally called the North Side, while the streets between Broadway and Grand Street. are known as the South Side.

In 1638, the Dutch West India Company first purchased the area’s land from the local Native Americans. In 1802, Col Jonathan Williams, a U.S. engineer surveyed the property and named it Williamsburgh (with an “h.”) In 1855 the City of Williamsburg was annexed into the City of Brooklyn and lost the “h”.

In the 19th century, Williamsburg was a wealthy industrial area, home to Astral Oil (later part of Standard Oil), Corning Glass Works, Pfizer Pharmaceutical, Domino Sugar, and several beer breweries. Wealthy New Yorkers such as Cornelius Vanderbilt and railroad magnate Jim Fisk stayed in elegant resorts in Williamsburg overlooking the water.



- Photos:
- Bedford Avenue subway station
- Wall Art
- Shopping
- N6 restaurant



Photos:

Mini Mini Market

Brooklyn Brewery

Pierogi Art Gallery entrance

Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration

McCarren Park

* Wheelchair accessible




The Williamsburg Bridge opened in 1903 and changed the neighborhood completely. Thousands of immigrants moved from the tenements of Manhattan's Lower East Side, bringing with them overcrowding and poverty. The decline of industry in the area only made conditions worse.

By the 1980's the neighborhood completely changed again, this time for the better. As with many newly fashionable neighborhoods, the transformation began with artists who moved from areas like SoHo, attracted by the large loft spaces, cheap rent and convenient transportation. Today, Williamsburg has dozens of art galleries and is known world wide for its music scene and ambience.

Greeter's Secret — A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Betty Smith's famous coming of age novel, is set in Williamsburg at the turn of the century. "Serene was a word you could put to Brooklyn, New York. Especially in the summer of 1912. Somber, as a word, was better. But it did not apply to Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Prairie was lovely and Shenandoah had a beautiful sound, but you couldn't fit those words into Brooklyn. Serene was the only word for it; especially on a Saturday afternoon in Summer."

Things to See and Do in Williamsburg

1  **Mini Mini Market**, 218 Bedford at North 5th St. A small mall located in the old Realfarm Girdle Building. There are no chain stores here, but there is a gourmet cheese store, Spoonbill and Sugartown Bookstore specializing in rare art and architectural books, Earwax Records selling new and used CDs, and an internet café.

2 **Pierogi Art Gallery**, 177 North 9th St. between Bedford & Driggs, one of the earliest art galleries in the neighborhood.

3 **Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church**, Havenmeyer & North 8th St. Every July, this church is home base for a two week festival, part religious and part entertainment. The highlight of the festival is Giglio Sunday, a huge parade with marching bands and a group chosen to carry the giglio, a 4 ton, 65' high tower decorated with papier mache saints, angels and a map of Italy. The giglio has been a tradition in Italy since 409 AD and in Brooklyn since 1903.

4 **Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration**, North 12th St. at Driggs Ave. A beautiful onion domed church built in 1922, a rare example of Byzantine revival architecture. The five copper cupolas and Patriarchal crosses are visible all over the neighborhood.


5 Across the street from the Russian Orthodox Cathedral is **McCarren Park**, a community center for over 100 years. The now-closed swimming pool was built during the Depression by the Works Progress Administration. There's a Green Market selling produce here on Saturdays.




6 Most of the old houses in Williamsburg have been modernized. To see what the neighborhood looked like in the 19th century, check out the house at **105 North 9th St.** with its original wooden facade.

7 **Brooklyn Brewery**, 79 North 11th St. and Wythe Ave., manufactures Brooklyn Lager and other beers. They offer free tours on Saturday afternoons and tastings on Friday nights. In the 19th century there were dozens of breweries in Brooklyn, mostly run by German immigrants.

8 **Rosenwach wood tanks**, Wythe Ave at North 9th St. They've been in business here for over 100 years and are the last company in New York to manufacture the wooden water tanks found on rooftops all over the city. The current owners are descendents of Harris Rosenwach who bought the tank business for \$55 in 1896 when the previous owner died.


 **9** **Galapagos Art Space**, 70 North 6th St. between Wythe & Kent. This is a performance space, gallery, and bar, featuring a variety of live music, theater, dance and film. Open nightly 6:00 PM – 2:00 AM.

 **10** **Grand Ferry Park**, Grand St. between River St. and the East River. A small park with a great view of Manhattan. This is where the ferries ran from, before the Williamsburg Bridge was built. The red brick smokestack was part of a molasses plant run by Pfizer pharmaceuticals. Across the street is the now closed Domino sugar plant.

11 **135 Broadway**, at Bedford Ave. Formerly the Kings County Savings bank building, built in 1867. Now closed.

12 **Williamsburg Savings Bank building**, 175 Broadway, at Driggs Ave. A major Brooklyn landmark since 1875. Look inside to see the interior of the dome, and the painted doors to the safe deposit boxes.

13 **Washington Plaza statue**, Broadway and Havenmeyer St. A bronze George Washington has been on horseback since 1901.

 **14** **Peter Luger Steak House**, 178 Broadway. The most famous restaurant in Williamsburg, they've been serving top grade steaks since 1876. The side door has the original glass.

If you're not tired, you may want to continue south of Division Avenue. At that point, you've entered into Hasidic Williamsburg, a completely different neighborhood with its own landmarks and traditions. The public library at Division Avenue at Marcy Ave. is a good first stop if you want to explore this part of the neighborhood.

***Greeter's Secret** — Look up at the rooftops of New York and you'll see giant structures that look like huge wooden barrels. In fact that's exactly what they are. Water tanks make it possible for buildings taller than six stories to get decent water pressure. There are thousands of wooden tanks in the city and only a few companies left that build them.*



Photos:
Rosenwach wood tank
Galapagos Art Gallery
Peter Luger Steak House

* Wheelchair accessible



When It's Time to Eat

There is a large selection of restaurants on and around Bedford Avenue.

There are two old classic diners that have been refurbished and serve modern American food:

15 Diner at 85 Broadway; and

16 Relish, 225 Wythe Ave. at North 3rd Street.



17 For traditional Italian food, go a few blocks east to **Bamonte's** – 32 Withers Street at Union Ave. A family owned restaurant since 1900.



18 For modern Italian food try **Acqua Santa**, North 7th at Driggs Ave. Weather permitting, enjoy a nice outdoor garden.



19 **PlanEat Thailand**, North 7th between Bedford and Berry. This was formerly



called **Planet Thailand** until they were sued by **Planet Hollywood!** They've expanded into a large industrial space, but the prices are still reasonable. Check out the rowboat/fountain in the entrance.

Shopping

You'll find lots of small stores selling furniture, antiques, clothing, and music on and around Bedford Avenue. There are still a few Polish butchers and other remnants of the "old neighborhood."



20 21 Check out **Brooklyn Industries** (two locations at 162 Bedford at North 8th St., and 184 Broadway at Driggs) to get Brooklyn t-shirts and souvenirs.



22 **Beacon's Closet** at 88 North 11th St. has a large selection of vintage clothing and accessories.

23 **Moon River Chattel**, 62 Grand St., sells architectural salvage and kitchenware.



Web Links

Brooklyn Brewery: www.brooklynbrewery.com

Russian Orthodox Cathedral: www.roct.org

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church:

www.giglio-usa.org/Brooklyn_Mt_Carmel.htm

To get listings for the many art galleries in the neighborhood, check out the following web links:

www.freewilliamsburg.com

www.billburg.com

www.11211magazine.com

About Big Apple Greeter

Founded in 1992, Big Apple Greeter's mission is to enhance New York City's worldwide image while enriching the City experience for its visitors. Connecting with business and leisure travelers from all over the United States and the world, Greeters bring visitors to neighborhoods in all five boroughs, promote tourism throughout the city, and help visitors discover the ease of using public transportation. More than 350 volunteer Greeters, speaking over 30 languages, enjoy giving their time and energy back to their hometown. Big Apple Greeter volunteers research, write

and distribute the *Neighborhood Information Profiles*, a series of five page feature stories describing a New York City neighborhood in text and photographs. Since its founding, Big Apple Greeter — a free public service — has welcomed over 50,000 visitors and been featured in hundreds of newspapers, magazines, television and radio programs all over the world, reaching an audience exceeding one billion potential visitors to New York City.

Big Apple Greeter is proud of its affiliation with NYC & Company and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

You may learn more about Big Apple Greeter and its many services on our website: www.bigapplegreeter.org or by emailing us at information@bigapplegreeter.org.

Big Apple Greeter welcomes you to New York.

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