

LOWER EAST SIDE STORIES WALKING TOUR
PROGRAM OUTLINE

Tour Objectives:

Guide:

Bold: General theme of location.

Bold Italics: Location Objectives. What visitors should learn at that location.

Italics: Questions that can help educators achieve location objectives and connect them to visitors' own experiences.

Stop One: Northwest corner of Orchard and Broome

Themes: Introduction, Affordable Housing Part I (Tenements)

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

- 1) *LES is a dynamic neighborhood - constantly changed and shaped by the arrival of new immigrants.*
 - 2) *Housing in the neighborhood has changed over time, as definitions of acceptable housing have changed*
- A. Introduce yourself and your relationship to the Museum.
 - B. Welcome visitors: *Where are you from? What brought you to the Museum today? What are you hoping to learn at the Museum?*
 - C. Introduce the mission of the Tenement Museum
 - D. Introduce general information about the walking tour: It was created in collaboration with the Lower East Side Community Preservation Project. The tour is 90 minutes. Review tour rules.
 - E. Introduce theme of tour: How new immigrants build a new life in the Lower East Side-- find housing, get a job, get an education, and build communities-- and how this compares to the experiences of immigrants in your communities. Ask: *Are there immigrants in your community? What countries do they come from?* Tell visitors they should feel free to participate throughout the tour and share their own experiences with these issues.
 - F. Introduce Lower East Side: *What have you noticed about the neighborhood? What strikes you about it?*
 - G. Introduce Location Objective One. Point to signs in different languages, immigrant businesses, people speaking different languages, etc. Talk about your own connection to neighborhood; what interested/excites you about the Lower East Side.
 - H. Introduce Location Objective Two. Point to 263 Broome -tenement on single lot) and 261 Broome -tenement on multiple lot. Suggest that people take a tour of the Museum to learn more about the pre-law tenements on single lots. Talk briefly about the changing

definitions of acceptable housing and how some of the first debates over what constitutes acceptable low-income/working class housing were fought in the Lower East Side.

- I. Sample Transition: Buildings in this neighborhood are not only homes; many also house business. Point to some buildings around you that have both commercial and residential functions. The businesses and enterprises that immigrants have started in the LES are an important part of the neighborhood's story.

Stop Two: Corner of Orchard and Grand Street

Theme: Commerce in LES

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

- 1) *Buildings in the Lower East Side have both commercial and residential functions*
 - 2) *Although there are high-end stores appearing in the neighborhood today, traditionally LES has been a destination for bargain shopping (Orchard Street).*
 - 3) *Peddling goods in the streets is an important part of the neighborhood's history.*
 - a. *Many immigrants in the past worked as pushcart peddlers ; today throughout the city many immigrants still work as street vendors. There was a battle between merchants who have commercial spaces and merchants who sell on the street. In the 1930s, pushcarts were banned, partly because of pressure from merchants.*
- A. *Have you done any shopping in the Lower East Side? What kinds of items have you purchased?*
Introduce location objective two. Introduce Amy Milford narrative. Show the Amy Milford visual aid. *Are there bargain districts in your community? Where do you go for bargain shopping?*
- B. Introduce location objective three. (Show photo of LES in 1898). Explain advantages for an immigrant of working as a pushcart peddler. Compare peddlers to today's street vendors. Talk about battles over street vending today. **MRC ADD TO TOUR CONTENT.**
- C. Today, there are many different kinds of businesses in the neighborhood. Point to various types of stores in the neighborhood (Ridleys department store, Chinese-run stores on Grand Street, boutiques).
- D. Sample Transition to next stop: The kinds of businesses we have in LES are a testament to the creativity and entrepreneurship of immigrants who move to this country and try to make a living. While parents are hard at work, their children often go to school, and are the first ones in the family to learn English and be immersed in "American" culture. At our next stop, we will discuss education in the Lower East Side.

Stop Three: Corner of Orchard and Hester Street- PS

Theme: Education and "Americanization"

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

- 1) *At one time, education was supposed to "Americanize" immigrant students. Today, this is an ongoing debate, particularly with regard to bilingual education.*

- A. Point to school and to American flag flying in front of school. *Did anyone here have flags in front of their schools as children? Did you say the pledge of allegiance? Introduce story about "Swanee River" song. What roles do schools play in the construction of the "American" identity? What role should they play?*
- B. Introduce Location Objective One. *Are there bilingual programs in any of the schools in your community? What do you think about them?*
- C. Sample Transition: Now let's go see another school that was built later and talk about how education has changed over time.

Stop Four: Corner of Hester and Essex Street

Theme: Education and "Americanization" continued/Education and Recreation

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

- 1) *Notions of what education should look like change over time*
 - 2) *.Seward Park High School is being divided into four small thematically organized schools, including a Chinese/English Asian-American Studies HS. This is a new trend in education. There are lots of charter schools being started in the city with specific focuses.*
 - 3) *Reformers advocated recreation for children as a way to engage students in healthy activities and keep them out of gangs. But schools did not always have a place for recreation at urban schools. Recess was in the streets. By the time of Seward Park HS, recess is on the roof instead of on the streets.*
- A. (Point to Seward Park HS). Explain that it is another school, built later.
 - B. Introduce Location Objectives One and Two. *Did anyone here attend a charter school? What was it like? Do you know of any charter schools or similar kids of schools in your community?*
 - C. Introduce Location Objective Three. Point to roof of Seward Park. *What was recess like at your school? What do your children do for recess? Should a school be required to have an outdoor space for recreation?*
 - D. Sample Transition: Just as schools started to recognize the need for children to have a place to play, so did city planners. At our next stop, we will learn how reformers campaigned to create spaces for public recreation in the Lower East Side.

Stop Five: Corner of Essex and Canal Street- Seward Park

Theme: Role of public spaces in cities, importance of community involvement in city planning

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

- 1) *Parks are considered by many to be an important part of what makes a city livable.*
- 2) *The government can (and has) taken over private property to create parks and other places for public use.*
- 3) *Seward Park was created due to pressure from reformers who thought that parks and playgrounds would keep children out of gangs. This was the first public playground in the nation and was completed in 1903.*

- 4) *Originally, city planners did not ask residents what they wanted in their park, so it was not as successful as they had hoped. But a few years ago, the park was renovated and the community was asked to participate in the planning process.*
- A. *Where do you go for recreation? Do you have parks where you live? Introduce Location Objective One and Two. Talk about the creation of Seward Park. Show map of how neighborhood has changed. Should government be able to take over private property for public use? If not, who should be responsible for creating public spaces in communities?*
- B. Introduce Location Objective Three. Talk about the problem of gangs in New York City and the role of reformers in advocating for change in the Lower East Side. Talk about Jacob Riis and his appointment to the small parks commission. Introduce his quote about the parks wrestling with the gangs for the boys.
- C. Introduce Location Objective Four. Talk about how the park was originally divided, why parents and children did not initially like it. Talk about recent renovation of park. Point out things in park that public demanded- places to practice tai chi, fountains for the children to play in, etc. *Do you know of any examples in your city of public projects in which the community was not involved? What happened? Do you think community involvement in planning is important? Why or why not?*
- D. Sample Transition: Community involvement is particularly important in a neighborhood like this one, where there are many different nationalities and competing interests. At our next stop, we will explore the diversity of ethnic and religious communities in the LES over time.

Stop Six: Strauss Square at intersection of East Broadway and Canal- Forward, Shtiebel Row
Theme: Political History of Neighborhood/ Transformation of neighborhood with each new immigrant group that arrives.

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

- 1) *Public spaces were not only used for recreation, they were also spaces for political organizing and protest. The Lower East Side has a strong history of activism. In the past, this square was a place where people used to organize rallies and demonstrations. There was a nascent political movement of socialists and anarchists from Europe organizing in the LES.*
- 2) *Immigrant papers were an important part of the political movements. The Jewish daily forward was a famous secular socialist paper that gave voice to this community and their struggles.*
- 3) *There was tension between the religious and secular communities that existed on this very street (Forward Building vs. Shtiebel Row).*
- 4) *After the Forward moved uptown, this building became a Chinese Bible Tract Society.*
- 5) *Today, this street, known as Fuzhou Street, is home to many recent Chinese immigrants. But this may change. This building is now being converted into luxury condos.*

- A. Introduce Location Objective One. *Is there a place in your community where demonstrations or marches currently take place? What kind of political activism is there in your community?*
- B. Introduce Location Objective Two. Point to Forward building, medallions of Marx, Engels, and Leibniz. Discuss that Forward was written in several different languages. Read excerpt from Bintl Brief.
- C. Introduce Location Objective Three. Point to Schtiebel Row.
- D. Introduce Location Objective Four and Five. Point to Chinese signage. Talk about the cost of luxury condos in New York City and the impact of the creating of this type of housing on low-income/working class neighborhood residents. *Where can local residents go when the cost of living in their neighborhood increases? Have any of you experienced this issue in your communities?*
- E. Sample Transition: As the cost of renting or buying an apartment on the Lower East Side increases, so too does the concern about affordable housing. Let's look some more at how these issues have played themselves out in New York City history.

Stop Six: Corner of Henry and Rutgers Streets: LaGuardia Houses

Theme: Affordable Housing Part II (Era of Public Housing, Super-blocks, and Urban Renewal)

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

1. *In the 1930's Fiorella LaGuardia was the first mayor in the country to successfully attract federal funding for public housing projects. LaGuardia's believed that tenements could not be reformed and the City needed a new model for low income housing*
2. *With the construction of public housing projects, thousands of tenements were razed in the 30s and 40s in New York City and the era of public housing and super-blocks began. This sparked a similar movement for city planners and government officials across the nation.*
3. *Today, some immigrants are not eligible for public housing. Immigration status is a major factor in determining eligibility. MRC TO ADD TO TOUR CONTENT.*

- A. Introduce Location Objective One. Point to LaGuardia Houses. *Are there any government subsidized housing projects in your communities? What are they like? How do people feel about them?*
- B. Introduce Location Objective Two. Show maps of neighborhood pre and post "slum-clearance." *In hindsight, do you think that public housing projects were an improvement over tenement buildings or not? Does anyone live in housing projects in New York City or in another city? What are the advantages?*
- C. Introduce Location Objective Three. Recommend that visitors take the Getting By tour to learn more about the options available to immigrants and need and some of the issues they face when trying to access assistance.

- D. Sample Transition: The luxury condominiums that are going to open in the Forward building are located right next to subway and overlook the park while the LaGuardia houses are built further out from the center of the neighborhood. Much like on the Lower East Side, public housing is often located on the geographical margins of cities throughout the United States. As we look to the history of public housing, we find that certain populations were also placed at the margins of society, both literally and figuratively.

Stop Seven: Remain at Henry and Rutgers Street: St. Teresa's Church

Theme: How neighborhood was shaped by segregation: African-American and Latino communities.

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

1. *The most recent immigrant groups have always ended up in this part of the neighborhood. St. Teresa's, formerly Rutgers Street Presbyterian Church, served the Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, and Latino populations that have built their communities in this part of the LES.*
 2. *In the aril 19th century, many of this neighborhood's elite civic leaders had slaves living in their households. By 1810, 20% of New Yorkers were black. In 1827, slavery was abolished in NYC. But laws requiring racial segregation continued. St. Augustine's Church built slave galleries, segregated areas in the church.*
 3. *Today, in contrast the history of segregation in the Church, there is a celebration of diversity. Masses at this church are offered in Spanish and Chinese.*
- A. Introduce Location Objective One. Point to Church. Show photograph of St. Augustine's Slave Galleries.
- B. Introduce Location Objective Two.
- C. Introduce Location Objective Three. *Are there any organizations in your community that provide services in different languages? If so, what are they?*
- D. Sample Transition: A community is often made up of diverse people who come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Within the Chinese community there is a huge amount of diversity. We will talk about this at the next corner.

Stop Eight: Corner of East Broadway and Essex (stop sign)

Theme: Long History of Chinese in LES, diversity within Chinese community

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

1. *A community is made up of people who come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The Chinese community in this neighborhood, which dates back to the mid-1800's, represents several different waves of immigration from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.*
2. *In 1882, the United States government passed the Chinese exclusion act, the first federal law regulating immigration and the first to bar a group of people solely*

on their national origin. The law remained in effect until 1943 and wasn't fully lifted until 1965.

- 3. The Chinese immigrants are a diverse group. The people who live here speak at least four mutually unintelligible Chinese languages, come from a variety of economic backgrounds, and practice many different religions. The most recent wave of Chinese immigrants to arrive in this section of the Lower East Side are from the Fujian province.*

- A. Introduce Location Objective One. Show map of China. MRC TO PROVIDE.
- B. Introduce Location Objective Two. Show Reverend Lee photo and read story about Paper Sons.
- C. Introduce Location Objective Three. Point out Fujian province on map of China.
- D. Sample Transition: We are going to walk along East Broadway and meet at the corner of Allen and Division. From the Fukianese Mutual Aid Society to the Hong Kong Supermarket, there are many sites along East Broadway, also known as Fuzhou Street, that represent this diversity.

Stop Nine: Corner of Pike and Division Street - 1 Pike Street

Theme: Affordable Housing Part III (1970s Abandonment, Community-Based Housing Movement)

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

- 1. During the 1970s fiscal crisis, many tenement owners decided their buildings were not worth maintaining. Property value was decreasing rapidly. Many owners abandoned their buildings or burned them to the ground.*
- 2. Some community organizations decided to revitalize the neighborhood. They took over the abandoned buildings and turned them into affordable housing. One Pike Street is an example of a building that was taken over and improved through a public/private partnership between the city and a community organization, Asian Americans for Equality.*

- A. Introduce Location Objective One. Show photograph of abandoned buildings.
- B. Introduce Location Objective Two. Point to One Pike Street and to the AAFE sign. Read Drew's story. *Are there struggling neighborhoods like this in your city? Are people doing anything to revitalize these neighborhoods?*
- C. Sample Transition: The revitalization of the Lower East Side has attracted resources, residents, and investment to the neighborhood. This poses challenges for the immigrants who call this neighborhood home, especially for those who decided to live here because it was affordable. Note as we walk how the neighborhood is changing before our eyes, and imagine the impact it is having on the neighborhood's residents.

Stop Ten: Orchard Street between Grand and Broome 72 Orchard (Forward, looking at Harry Zarin)

Theme: Economic Development and Gentrification

Location Objectives: Visitors will know:

1. *Business in the Lower East Side is changing. High-end stores and restaurants are moving into the neighborhood and displacing the low-end bargain stores for which the neighborhood is famous.*
 2. *The traditional businesses in this neighborhood provided many job opportunities for recent immigrants. As these businesses are pushed out, it becomes increasingly difficult for immigrants to stay in this neighborhood.*
- A. Introduce Location Objective One. Point for Forward store and Harry Zarin. Introduce BID story about Forward.
- B. Introduce Location Objective Two. *How can we revitalize neighborhoods without pushing out the residents who need an affordable place to live? Should anything be done to protect the people who live here?*

Conclusion

Now that we have talked about the history of the neighborhood, what do you think could happen to this community in the future? Is there anything you heard on the tour today that gave you a new perspective on your own neighborhood? Thank visitors for coming on the tour. Remind them again about the mission of the Museum and invite them to visit the website to learn more about these issues. Invite them to supplement their experience by taking a tour of the interior of 97 Orchard Street, and/or by walking around the neighborhood and supporting some of the local merchants. Invite them to become members.