

HIGH LINE HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR



When the High Line was built in the 1930s, it elevated freight rail tracks off the street to protect pedestrians. Its height also allowed it to uniquely interact with the many warehouses, storage facilities, and other industrial buildings. As industry started to decline in the 1960s, many of these buildings began to be used for commercial purposes, and they now house business offices, restaurants, and other uses.

On our High Line Historical Walking Tour, you will see many of these former industrial sites, as well as other historical sites of interest, highlighting West Chelsea's heritage as a mixed-use neighborhood. Many of these buildings have been landmarked as part of the new West Chelsea Historic District, protected to remind us – and many generations to come – about New York City's rich architectural history.

This printed guide is intended to accompany the audio High Line Historical Walking Tour, available for download at www.thehighline.org and via iTunes by searching "High Line Podcast."

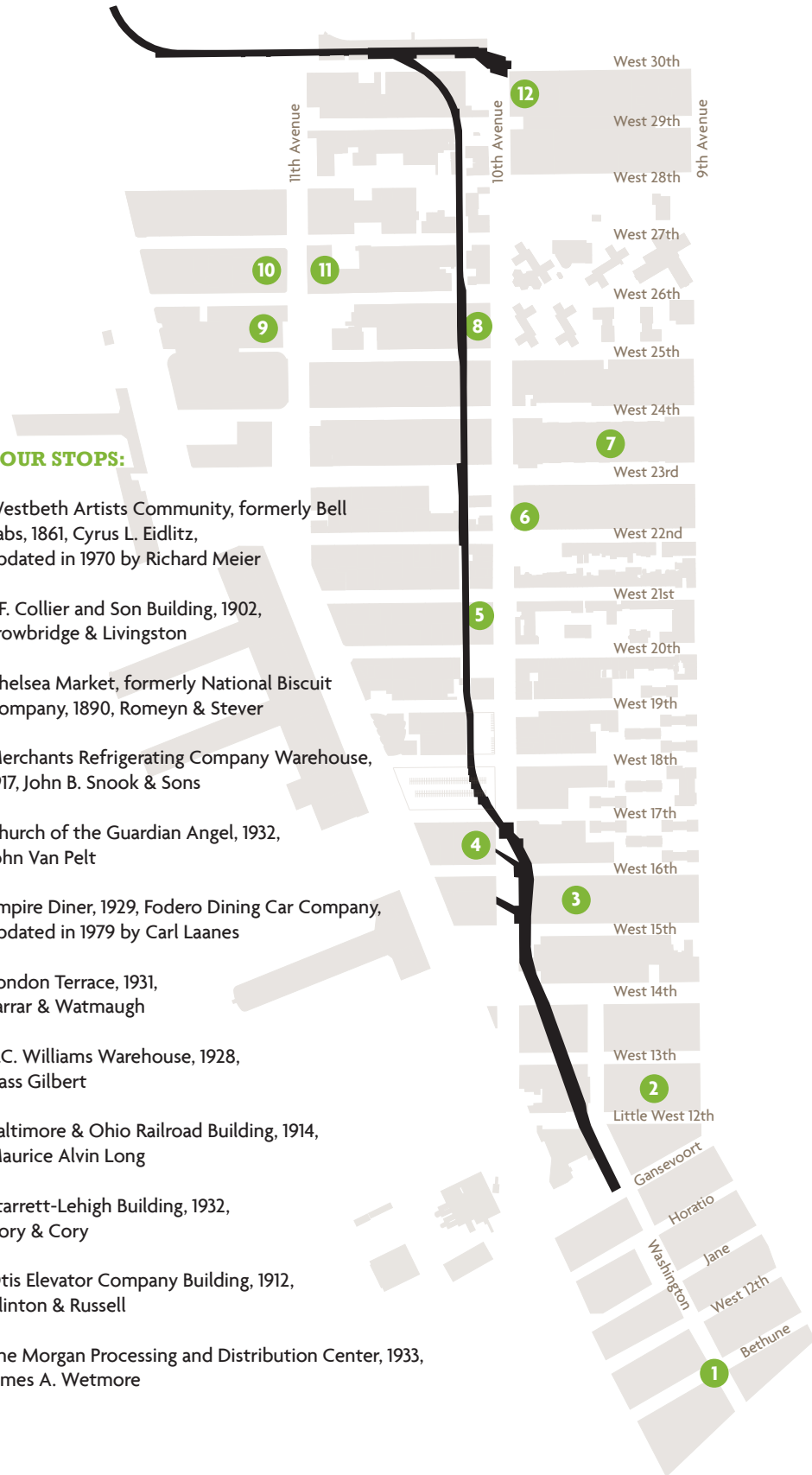
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All contemporary photos by Tom Starkweather.



TOUR STOPS:

- 1** Westbeth Artists Community, formerly Bell Labs, 1861, Cyrus L. Eidlitz, updated in 1970 by Richard Meier
- 2** P.F. Collier and Son Building, 1902, Trowbridge & Livingston
- 3** Chelsea Market, formerly National Biscuit Company, 1890, Romeyn & Stever
- 4** Merchants Refrigerating Company Warehouse, 1917, John B. Snook & Sons
- 5** Church of the Guardian Angel, 1932, John Van Pelt
- 6** Empire Diner, 1929, Fodero Dining Car Company, updated in 1979 by Carl Laanes
- 7** London Terrace, 1931, Farrar & Watmaugh
- 8** R.C. Williams Warehouse, 1928, Cass Gilbert
- 9** Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Building, 1914, Maurice Alvin Long
- 10** Starrett-Lehigh Building, 1932, Cory & Cory
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- 12** The Morgan Processing and Distribution Center, 1933, James A. Wetmore



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WESTBETH ARTISTS COMMUNITY (Formerly Bell Labs)

THE WESTBETH ARTISTS COMMUNITY (463 West Street) complex contains five buildings, dating from 1861 to 1929. The earliest building, at the corner of Hudson and Bank Streets, began as a wood planing mill. Western Electric, a subsidiary of American Telephone & Telegraph, acquired the site in 1895, adding 10- and 13-story structures for manufacturing designed by Cyrus L. Eidlitz. These buildings became a research lab in 1907, later known as Bell Telephone Laboratories. Many important technological breakthroughs were pioneered here, particularly in telecommunications. Scientists were involved in the development of the amplifying vacuum tube, wireless radio, “talking” motion pictures, and color television. A fourth building was added in 1927, which was later altered to permit passage of freight trains along the High Line. Due to the sensitive nature of research that occurred here, this building needed to be reinforced against train vibrations – a difficult task.

Although severed from the High Line, the building’s elevated tunnel along Washington Street, which the tracks passed through, remains and is visible from the street. Bell Labs closed in 1966, and the building was converted to housing for artists. Financed by the National Endowment for the Arts and the J. M. Kaplan Fund, it was one of architect Richard Meier’s earliest commissions in New York City. Westbeth was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1975. Today, it is home to numerous artists, as well as the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.



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P.F. COLLIER AND SON BUILDING



THE P.F. COLLIER AND SON BUILDING (416-424 West 13th Street) has two facades, one facing Little West 12th Street, and the other facing West 13th Street, where the handsome portico features a prominent globe over the door. Faced in brick and granite, this large, three-story structure was designed by the prominent firm Trowbridge & Livingston. Completed in 1902, it housed the offices and printing operations of one of America’s most successful publishers. In addition to printing books, it produced Collier’s Weekly, a popular illustrated magazine that premiered in 1895 and grew to enjoy a circulation of more than 300,000 readers. From 1929 to the late 1960s, the building was used as a warehouse by General Electric. Now part of the Gansevoort Market Historic District, the building’s current tenants include the designers Anya Hindmarch and the Parallel Design Partnership, as well as the nightclub Buddha Bar.

CHELSEA MARKET AND 85 TENTH AVENUE

(Formerly the National Biscuit Company)

Located on both sides of Tenth Avenue (85 and 88 Tenth Avenue) is the former factory of the NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY, originally called the New York Biscuit Company and now known as Nabisco. These brick buildings once housed half the biscuit production of the United States. Constructed in stages, from 1890 to 1932, the earliest buildings, designed by Romeyn & Stevers, are located midblock, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. Albert G. Zimmerman, Nabisco's staff architect, supervised a major expansion of the facility between 1905 and 1913, adding an 11-story structure to the west side of Tenth Avenue. In 1932, the east building was substantially rebuilt to accommodate the High Line. Trains entered both buildings from 30 feet in the air to supply raw ingredients like milk and flour, and to carry out such popular products as Uneeda Biscuits, Saltine Crackers, Fig Newtons, and Oreo cookies. Incidentally, Nabisco's upstate box factory, which now houses Dia: Beacon, a major contemporary art museum, was connected to this facility by rail tracks that ran along the High Line.

Nabisco closed the 22-building complex in 1959, and during subsequent decades it was used for light manufacturing. During the 1990s, both buildings were converted to new uses by the developer Irwin B. Cohen. The block-long food concourse called Chelsea Market is located inside, inventively designed by Vandenberg Architects. In addition to being a culinary destination, the east building also houses various media companies, such as the Food Network, Google, and New York 1.



MERCHANTS REFRIGERATING COMPANY WAREHOUSE



Once the world's largest refrigerated warehouse, the MERCHANTS REFRIGERATING COMPANY WAREHOUSE (500 West 17th Street) was a cold storage facility designed by John B. Snook & Sons. It opened in 1917 and was later retrofitted for the High Line. It served this purpose continuously until it was purchased by developers in 1983, after which *the New York Times* reported it required seven months to thaw. In the mid-1980s, a plan was hatched to convert the building into a vertical discount shopping mall, complete with restaurants, but the idea fell through. Today the top three floors are used by Manhattan Mini-Storage, and the rest holds government offices. In order to make the interiors suitable as offices, windows have been punched through the formerly blank facades. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

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CHURCH OF THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

THE CHURCH OF THE GUARDIAN ANGEL (193 Tenth Avenue) was founded in 1888. The congregation was originally located on West 23rd Street, just east of where the High Line stands today. To make way for the railway's construction in 1930, the church sold its property to the New York Central Railroad. It then used the money to construct the current house of worship, as well as a rectory and school. Completed in 1932, this distinctive structure was designed in the Italian neo-medieval style by architect John Van Pelt. The church ministered primarily to seamen in its earlier years, as the Hudson River and its bustling waterfront piers were only a block away. Today it serves a diverse congregation, operating a private Catholic school for students from pre-kindergarten through 8th grade.



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EMPIRE DINER



The classic and particularly well-preserved EMPIRE DINER (210 Tenth Avenue) was built by the Fodero Dining Car Company. Installed here in 1946, it can be seen in the background of many historic High Line photos, as well as a few movies. Fodero diners were manufactured in New Jersey from 1933 to 1981 and are best known for their gleaming stainless steel exteriors. Gently remodeled by architect Carl Laanes in 1979, this Art Moderne style restaurant now features a stylized model of the Empire State Building on the roof.

LONDON TERRACE

LONDON TERRACE (Tenth Avenue, between 23rd and 24th Streets) was built in two phases, between 1929 and 1931. It was named for the row of early 19th century townhouses it replaced on the site. Covering an entire block, London Terrace was once the largest apartment building in the world, with 14 interconnected brick-faced structures, 1,665 apartments, and 4,000 rooms. Designed by architects Farrar & Watmaugh, each building has an arched entrance portico, embellished with colorful terra-cotta panels. Developer Henry Mandel provided his tenants with cutting-edge amenities, including a large swimming pool, an acre of gardens, free page-boy service, telephone message service, and a rooftop play area for children. Unfortunately, the Depression struck just as Mandel started to build, and the immense project eventually forced his company into foreclosure. Mandel committed suicide by leaping off the roof in 1934. The four larger corner buildings, now called the Towers at London Terrace, were converted to cooperative ownership in 1989. The rest remain rental units called London Terrace Gardens.



R. C. WILLIAMS WAREHOUSE



The ten-story R.C. WILLIAMS WAREHOUSE (259 Tenth Avenue) was designed by the prominent architect Cass Gilbert, who also built the Woolworth Building and the former United States Custom House. R. C. Williams was founded in 1809, and by the early 20th century it was an important wholesale grocer, with clients in Asia and Africa. Completed in 1928, the reinforced concrete warehouse was retrofitted just a few years later with a platform on its western face to easily accommodate freight deliveries from the High Line on the third floor. The R.C. Williams Warehouse received the first shipment of High Line goods in 1934. Later used by the H. Wolff Book Manufacturing Company, the warehouse is currently used for prop and scenery storage by ABC television. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 and is part of the West Chelsea Historic District.

BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY FREIGHT WAREHOUSE

THE BALTIMORE & OHIO RAILROAD COMPANY FREIGHT WAREHOUSE (239 Eleventh Avenue) was built by the country's first commercial rail company. This eight-story warehouse and freight terminal was built in a vaguely neo-classical manner by Maurice Alvin Long, an architect for the railroad, between 1912 and 1913.

According to a 1914 article in the *Railway Review*, this all-concrete building was the largest structure of its kind in New York City. It was also an early example of flat-slab construction, which rests concrete floors directly on the vertical columns of the floor below. This technique eliminates the need for intermediate girders, thus increasing natural light and headroom. Goods could be directly loaded onto trucks parked in the company's nearby rail yards along the Hudson River, or trains could be brought directly into the building where shipments were stored. During Prohibition, the warehouse was reportedly used by federal agents to store illegal gin and whiskey. Sold to a developer in 1981, the building has been adapted to house light industrial tenants.



STARRETT-LEHIGH BUILDING



The 2.2-million-square-foot STARRETT-LEHIGH BUILDING (601 West 26th Street) is one of the most striking examples of early modern architecture in the United States. It was included in the first architectural exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932. The architects were Cory & Cory, who collaborated with architect Yasuo Matsui and the engineers Purdy & Henderson. Built with a flat-slab reinforced concrete frame, the 19-story tiered structure is enclosed with alternating bands of spandrel brick and eight miles of casement windows, a novel treatment at the time. Completed in 1931, the Starrett-Lehigh Building also featured enormous elevators that could lift fully loaded freight cars to any floor for unloading. This remarkable warehouse was designated a New York City Landmark in 1986. Today, the restored building is headquarters to a variety of fashion and design companies, including Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Hugo Boss, and Tommy Hilfiger. Diller Scofidio + Renfro, members of the High Line design team, have offices here.

OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY BUILDING

Designed by architects Clinton & Russell, THE OTIS ELEVATOR COMPANY BUILDING (260 Eleventh Avenue) was completed in 1912. Founded in 1853 by Elisha Graves Otis, this American company made skyscrapers possible by providing safe, mechanical transport to upper floors. It did this by pioneering the development of the safety elevator, which used a special mechanism to lock the elevator car in place should the hoisting ropes fail. The company is currently the largest manufacturer of elevators in the world. The Otis Elevator Company occupied the seven-story structure for about six decades, from 1912 to 1973. Faced with brick and limestone, this neo-Renaissance building has an impressive copper cornice. It originally contained five floors of executive offices and two floors of machine shops and stock rooms. Part of the West Chelsea Historic District, the building is now used for offices.



THE MORGAN PROCESSING AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER



THE MORGAN PROCESSING & DISTRIBUTION CENTER (341 Ninth Avenue) was completed in 1933. This six-story neo-classical style structure serves as the U.S. Postal Service's largest mail processing hub in New York City. Previously, the site had been occupied by a station of the Hudson River Railroad. A bronze plaque, on the building's north facade, recounts Abraham Lincoln's visit to the station during 1861, as well as in 1865, as part of his funeral procession.

James A. Wetmore served as the mail building's architect. The building was designed to reduce delivery times to and from New York City. By 1947, *the New York Times* reported that 85% of all of all U.S. mail addressed to foreign countries was handled here. An 11-alarm fire broke out in the Morgan facility in 1967, destroying thousands of tons of mail and forcing it to close for more than 13 years. It was finally returned to use in 1980. Though originally built with a direct connection to the High Line at the corner of 11th Avenue and 30th Street, the second floor tunnel has been blocked with brick for several decades. In the future, as part of plans to adapt the Farley Post Office on Eighth Avenue to new uses, local mail processing operations will be moved here.