YOUR GUIDE TO THE LOWER EAST SIDE

A sign project mapping memories of community life
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

*Your Guide to the Lower East Side* presents the experiences of past and present Lower East Siders on twenty-eight signs at six separate sidewalk locations. With photographs and text in five languages, these “place markers” weave personal stories and cherished memories directly into the landscape, often right where the stories took place.

This public history project celebrates people, places, and community life on the Lower East Side. The signs reveal the rich and diverse layers of human experience that make the neighborhood so distinctive. They transform the participants’ stories of struggle and achievement into a legacy for all who pass by.

The catalog showcases all of the signs and keys their locations to the map on the following page.

The signs are a project of Place Matters, an initiative of City Lore and the Municipal Art Society to promote and protect places that connect us to the past, sustain community and cultural traditions, and maintain the distinctive character of neighborhoods throughout the city. Place Matters believes that this kind of “place marking” draws attention to our surroundings, and encourages people to recognize, protect, and care for the places that matter to them. We welcome inquiries about how to do similar projects in other places. Go to our website at www.placematters.net to learn more about places on the Lower East Side and all around the city.

Many thanks to the individuals and organizations who shared their stories and photographs, and to the E.H.A. Foundation, the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts for funding *Your Guide to the Lower East Side*.

We also thank our other Place Matters funders, including the Altman Foundation, the J.M. Kaplan Fund, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York Community Trust, the New York Council for the Humanities, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the Scherman Foundation.

Chris Neville & Marci Reaven, project directors of *Your Guide to the Lower East Side*, Place Matters, September 2007
THE SIGNS: LOCATIONS

THE SIGNS: SITES & STORIES

Lower East Side Tenement Museum
Office windows, 91 Orchard St., corner of Broome
1-2 • Rev. Bayer Lee on laundry work (Chinese & English)
3 • Afifa D. Dawson & Frank Dawson on The Lower East Siders drum corps
4 • Victor Papa on Father Gigante of St. James Church
5-6 • Hyman Genee on Kehila Kedosha Janina (Greek & English)
7-8 • Lillian M. Rivera on garment work (Spanish & English)
9 • Bea Salwen on Salwen’s Umbrellas
Rear yard, 96 Allen St., between Delancey & Broome
10 • Joan H. Geismar on archaeology

P.S. 42 • 71 Hester St., corner of Orchard
11 • Lillian M. Rivera on discrimination
12 • Rosa Casiello O’Day on discrimination
13 • Rosa Casiello O’Day & May Wong Lee on the school community
14 • Aaron Eng-Achson on teaching about the past

St. Teresa’s Church • 141 Henry St., corner of Rutgers
15 • Father Donald Baker on the church roof collapse
16 • Carol Cain on the church rededication
17 • Father John B. Chiang on Father Flynn
18 • Sister Diane Olmstead on the multilingual congregation

Seward Park • Canal St., corner of Essex
19 • Mayor Seth Low on the park’s opening, 1903
20 • NYC Department of Parks on the “Mothers’ Corner,” 1904
21 • NYC Department of Parks on the “School Farm,” 1929

St. Augustine’s Church • 290 Henry St., near Montgomery
22 • The Rev. Dr. Errol Harvey, Rector, on the Slave Galleries

Straus Square • Rutgers St., between Canal & East Broadway
23 • Restaurant managers on the former Garden Cafeteria, now Wing Shoon Seafood Restaurant
24 • Wanda Evans on Betances Health Center
25 • Fern Schwartz on the Educational Alliance
26 • Girls at play on Rutgers St., 1950s
27 • Louis Katz on The Forverts/Forward newspaper
28 • Rebecca Lepkoff on Loew’s Canal Street Theater
三零年代時堂先生在柯察街86號上開了一家手洗衣店。

我父親也是那時從台山來。他跟同一家族的人一起住在包里街40號，也一起在鄰區的洗衣店工作。六零年代他在他的洗衣店打工。他說他以前白天在燙衣板上燙衣服，晚上在燙衣板下睡覺。餐館的工作把父親們帶得很遠，洗衣店讓他們離家比較近。

- 李牧師，中國城教堂

你總是走著別人的腳步。誰會走上你的？

Mr. C. J. Thom ran a Chinese hand laundry at 86 Orchard Street in the 1930s.

My step-father came from Taishan around the same time. He lived at 40 Bowery with many other men from his kin network and worked in hand laundries uptown. When I worked in his laundry during my teens in the 1960s, he told me that he used to press shirts on top of the ironing table by day and sleep underneath the same table by night.

Restaurant jobs take fathers away from home but laundries keep them close. - Rev. Bayer Lee

Pastor to Chinatown churches

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
Do you know our drum corps marched here?

We were the Lower East Siders, from the Vladeck projects, 99% of us Black and Puerto Rican. We were fantastic, criss-crossing the field, arms and legs coming up to just the right height. We competed all over the tri-state area, but we had no money. So our mothers made our uniforms, and we traveled in cars rather than rent buses. How we could fit in a car! Five on the back seat, four on the floor, and four on the knees of the five in the back seat. Even now my kids say, ‘Don’t let mommy go to a parade.’ They know I’ll take off and follow the band. — Afiya Diane Dawson

You’re always walking in somebody’s footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
My parents and other 'Yaniotes' from the Lower East Side opened our synagogue Kehila Kedosha Janina in 1927.

We’re from Janina (Ioannina) Greece. Who could have imagined that we would be the only Greek hometown to establish a synagogue in this country, or that, today, ours would be the last in the Western Hemisphere to practice the Romaniothe Jewish tradition. I'll never forget the day I became president of the congregation.

I’ve spent many a good year here since.

-Hy Genee, 2005

Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue & Museum
280 Broome St., www.kkljs.org
You’re always walking in somebody’s footsteps. Who will walk in yours?

“KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA”
In memory of Hyman Genee b. 4/27/1922 - d. 2/13/2006

“KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA”
Εις μνήμην του Χάμι Γενεέ, αποθανόντος στις 13 Φεβρουαρίου 2006.

“KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA”
Οι γονείς μου και άλλοι Γιαννινώτες από την Κάτω Ανατολική Πλευρά της πόλης της Νέας Υόρκης ιδρύσαν την συναγωγή μας, Κεχίλα Κεντόσα Ιοάννινα, το 1927. Καταγόμαστε από τα Ιοάννινα της Ελλάδας. Ποιος θα μπορούσε να φανταστεί ότι θα ήμασταν οι μόνοι Εβραίοι Ελληνικής καταγωγής που θα ιδρύσαμε μια συναγωγή στην Αμερική, ή ότι σήμερα, η δική μας συναγωγή θα ήταν η τελευταία που ακόμα χρησιμοποιεί τη Ρωμανιώτικη Εβραϊκή παράδοση. Δεν θα εχόταν ποτέ εκείνη την ημέρα που εκλεγήκαμε πρόεδρος της συναγώγης. 'Διαλέγομαι καθή', έλεγαν. Από τότε, έχει περάσει πολλά καλά χρόνια εδώ. -Χάμι Γενεέ, Κεχίλα Κεντόσα Ιοάννινα

Συναγωγή & Μουσείο,Οδός Μαρούμ 280.

Βασίζετε πάντοτε στα χαρά κάποιον. Ποιος θα βασίζετε στα δικά σας χαρά;
**Your Guide to the Lower East Side**

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**Garment Work**

"Mi mamá trabajó duro para criarnos a los cinco—factorías de ropa durante el día, lavar la ropa de otros por la noche, en nuestra bañera. Ella misma hacía su propio almidón con yuca. También trabajábamos por pieza. Después que salíamos de la escuela, mi hermano Tony llevaba a casa unos trucitos de tela para hacer yarmulkes. Mami cosía diez docenas por noche en su máquina. Nosotros nos sentábamos con ella; poníamos en hilera los trocitos de tela que iba a coser y cortábamos los hilos sueltos cuando terminaba. Todo ese tiempo conversábamos y escuchábamos novelas en español por radio. —Lillian M. Rivera

Uno siempre sigue en los pasos de otro. ¿Quién seguirá en los tuyos?"

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"My mother worked hard to raise us five—garment factories during the day, other people’s laundry at night, in our tub. She made her own starch using yucca. We also did piece work. After school, my brother Tony carried home little triangles of fabric cut for yarmulkes. Mommy sewed ten dozen a night, sitting at her machine. We sat with her; lining up pieces for sewing and cutting loose threads when she finished. All the while we talked, and listened to Spanish soaps on the radio. —Lillian M. Rivera

You’re always walking in somebody’s footsteps. Who will walk in yours?"
This is a sad day, I'm closing the store for good," Mrs. Salwen told the second graders interviewing her.

"My husband's father started Salwen's Umbrellas in 1902. His family lived at 43 Orchard, above the shop. My husband went to PS 42, just like you, and all his life he worked in the store. We sold umbrellas and parasols of all shapes and sizes. On a good day, we could sell a hundred dozen. My husband used to play his violin for all the children who came to the shop. I'm glad you came to visit today." As the children filed out, she called, "Remember to study!

-Mrs. Bea Salwen, March 29, 2006, interviewed by Mr. Eng-Achson's class "2-311" from PS 42

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?

NO GOLD? NO DINOSAURS? NO LONG-FORGOTTEN TOMB?

Instead, our backyard archaeological dig found 97 Orchard Street's original toilet: an outdoor privy with multiple seats. Rather than a privy pit, this backyard outhouse had an underground 'vault' that drained into the public sewer under Orchard Street. It could be flushed occasionally with rainwater, or perhaps with water from a nearby spigot.

Although exceeding City requirements at first, this shared privy remained the only sanitation for the building's twenty apartments from 1864 to 1905, when two toilets were installed in the hallway of each floor. -Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D., urban archaeologist

Between 1864 and 1935, 97 Orchard Street housed nearly 7,000 people, mainly immigrants and their descendants, and it has been home to the Lower East Side Tenement Museum since 1988.

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
Leaving a Place called Home

I said, ‘My name is Lillian Milagros Rivera and I was born under the Puerto Rican flag.’ My teacher said, ‘No, your name is Lillian Rivera and you’re an American.’ This went back and forth a couple of days until I said, ‘My mother says you’re crazy and I was born under the Puerto Rican flag and my name is Lillian Milagros Rivera and not to listen to you.’ So she put me in the corner with a dunce cap and every time she pointed at me the kids yelled hee haw, hee haw.

-Lillian Milagros Rivera, student in the 1950s, PS 42

You’re always walking in somebody’s footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
Finding a Place called Home

Ten of our teachers attended this school as children. That’s a source of pride. It makes us feel they wanted to come home.” - Rosa Casiello O’Day, principal, PS 42

“I went into teaching assuming that I could come back here to teach. I wanted to give back a little of what I got. I had a great experience at PS 42. So did my brother, my husband, all of my cousins. We were all neighborhood kids. - May Wong Lee, assistant principal & former student, PS 42

You’re always walking in somebody’s footsteps. Who will walk in yours?

Revisiting a Place Called Home

How does a story about a man named Allan Eng-Achson, who immigrated to America many years ago, impact our lives today? By telling my father’s story, I encouraged my 2nd-grade students to explore their own family immigration stories. We made family trees, looked at family photos, created timelines, and thought about family treasures. I want them to know it’s important to remember the past, think about the present, and consider the future. - Aaron Eng-Achson, English Language Learners teacher, PS 42

You’re always walking in somebody’s footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
When Cardinal Egan came to dedicate our restored church in 2002, you couldn't fit another soul inside. He consecrated the altar with oils and sealed a relic of a saint inside. He blessed the church and everyone was there. It was something you see once in a lifetime. - Carol Cain

Our beautiful, restored church is the product of a disaster. Without warning one day in 1995, the vaulted ceiling of our church caved in. Sixty thousand pounds of plaster fell to the floor.

During rebuilding, we uncovered a painted cross from the mid-1800s as a memorial to when this was a Protestant church.

- Father Donald Baker
A fellow priest, Father Michael Flynn, decided to learn Chinese and went to China to study.

When he returned, he held a Cantonese mass. Now we hold mass in Chinese, Spanish, and English. Flynn spoke all three. Being part of a neighborhood means knowing who lives here. -Father John B. Chiang

The people from our three language groups seldom get to celebrate together, so we throw two big parties a year. People make Chinese and Spanish foods. We have cakes, a flea market, music, and dancing. At a party in 2004, Father Baker took this picture of us. -Sister Diane Olmstead

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
It gives me great pleasure to formally open this park.
It indicates that the city has come to realize that it must provide for its children, that they have a right to play as well as to work. -Mayor Seth Low, 1903

Es para mí un gran placer inaugurar este parque formalmente. Los niños tienen tanto el derecho a jugar como a trabajar.

開放公園是我的榮幸。這代表我們城市能體會到小孩子們需要玩耍空間的重要。

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?

On a wide porch overlooking the Park, a number of comfortable wide-armed rocking chairs have been set about for the exclusive use of women accompanied by small children. Of course, the chairs in this Mothers' Corner are entirely free, as are all facilities at the disposal of the department. -1904 Annual Report, Department of Parks

En un amplio portal con vista al parque, se han colocado numerosas mecedoras con brazos para el uso exclusivo de señoras acompañadas por niños pequeños.

公園前面的走道上放了幾張寬大的扶椅，特別是為帶著小孩的婦女們用的。婦女用的椅子和其它的設備都是這單位免費提供的。

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
ALL THE GARDEN WORK IS DONE
ENTIRELY BY THE CHILDREN,
including preparation of the soil, spading, raking, planting,
cultivating, and harvesting. The season is divided into two
sessions; first planting in May, harvesting in July, and second
planting before August 1st, harvesting on October
15th. The rules of the garden are Honesty,
Truthfulness, Justice and Courtesy.
-1929 Report of Seward Park
School Farm, Department of Parks

TODAY THE WORK DE HORTICULTURA LO HACEN POR COMPLETO
LOS NIÑOS, inclusive preparan el suelo, revuelven la tierra, rastillan,
siembran, cultivan y cosechan. Las reglas del huerto son honradez,
veracidad, justicia y cortesía.

庭園裡所有的工作都是小朋友做的，包括理土、挖土、種植、
培養與收割。庭園的規則要求誠實、正當、正義與禮貌。
You're always walking in somebody's footsteps.
Who will walk in yours?

St. Augustine’s Episcopal Church
built in 1828 as All Saints Free Church
Designated a NYC Landmark, 1966

From the ‘Slave Galleries’ you’re invisible.
You can see, but can't be seen. Black people, free
and enslaved, were forced to sit in hidden, cramped rooms
above the balcony of our church. Today, we are one of the
largest African American congregations in the Lower East
Side, and with the neighborhood changing, succeeding
generations might not become aware of our history. Restoring
the Slave Galleries not only preserves our Greek Revival
building, but also the memory of slavery in American history
and evidence of our important place in the community.

If the Slave Galleries become invisible, history
will become invisible too.-The Rev. Errol
Harvey, Rector

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps.
Who will walk in yours?
The former Garden Cafeteria, now Wing Shoon Seafood Restaurant, 165 East Broadway

"The writers from The Forward, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and the guys from the Workmen's Circle all came in. The old Jewish people who lived in the area for years—they'd come, have a cup of coffee, sit, and talk. Around 11 o'clock the lunch hour would start and we'd need the tables but they wouldn't get up. I would literally push them out, but as soon as lunch was over, they were back."

-Bert Feinberg, manager of the Garden for 25 years

"Wing Shoon means everything comes easily. We came to America hoping to do well and prosper. We've been here over 20 years and our customers are loyal. See those men there? All taxi drivers. They used to come in with their babies. Now those babies are grown. -Manager, Wing Shoon"

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?

- Wanda Evans
Executive Director
Betances Health Center
280 Henry St.
www.betances.org

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
One amazing night a few years back we held a prom for our older members in the Whittaker Senior Center. Some had been in Nazi concentration camps during their own prom years, others had been too poor. They had missed this experience. We also invited young people and everybody danced. *You've never seen anything like it.*

-Fern Schwartz, the Educational Alliance

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?

The Educational Alliance operates a network of cultural and community centers, including the original settlement house at 197 East Broadway (St. Jefferson St.), est. 1891.

corner of Essex & Canal St., 1950's

Five potato,
six potato, seven potato, more.

One potato,
two potato, three potato, four.

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You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
I survived the war in Poland, then worked at a Yiddish daily in France. After emigrating to New York with my mother, I dreamed of working at The Forward. Well, 'Krakow wasn't built in a day.' Eventually, I was invited to take the typesetter's exam in the Forward building. Machine no. 9 must have been lucky, because I passed with a high score. 

I've been working at The Forward ever since. - Louis Katz

THE FORWARD

LOCATION: Straus Square, free-standing mount

I remember the Loew's Canal Street Theater.

My brother came here to see his favorite movies. This place brought fantasy into people's lives. You could pack a lunch, stay all day for a nickel, and not see the same movie twice. I was a brand new photographer when I took this picture. I danced in the chorus at the New York World's Fair and made enough money to buy a camera. I would start off walking from my home on Clinton Street and look for things to shoot that showed real life.

- Rebecca Lepkoff, photographer

location: Straus Square, free-standing mount

You're always walking in somebody's footsteps. Who will walk in yours?
CREDITS

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Sign Fabrication Info

The signs are designed to be low-cost, and easy to fabricate and install.

Printing: Digital ink-jet prints, using exterior-grade inks on vinyl.

Signs: Graphics mounted on custom-fabricated metal box supports, 36” x 18”. Supports fabricated from welded metal frames of 1” square tubing, clad in bent sheet metal, with a factory-applied gloss coating. Protective layer of clear vinyl applied for locations prone to vandalism. Signs hung in windows with thin wire, or mounted on iron fences and railings using screw-on brackets. Free-standing signs supported by bolted-on painted metal legs, set in concrete-filled post holes.

Banners: Graphics printed on heavy vinyl sheets, 72” x 36”, hemmed at top and bottom for insertion of lightweight metal battens (to avoid wrinkling) and steel mounting cables.