

Central Park

The heartland of Manhattan, Central Park encompasses 843 acres set aside for New Yorkers and visitors, enjoyed by 40 million people annually.

Although Central Park seems “natural”—the largest surviving piece of Manhattan unencrusted with asphalt and masonry—its landscape and scenery are completely man-made, based on designs by Frederick Law Olmsted (see p. 309) and Calvert Vaux (see p. 314). Strolling around its peaceful, verdant lawns and slopes today, it is hard to believe that in the mid-19th century, before the adoption of Olmsted and Vaux’s Greensward Plan, the area was desolate, covered with scrubby trees, rocky outcroppings, and occasional fields where squatters grazed their pigs and goats. A garbage dump, a bone-boiling works, and a rope walk added their own atmosphere.



Park information and maps

Open 6am–1am all year; park drives closed to vehicular traffic on weekends, major holidays, and weekdays during non-rush hours. For a map of the park, see pp. 310–11. Free Central Park Conservancy map available at the Visitor Centers or online at centralparknyc.org/maps; GPS-enabled app also available online. Information kiosks, open Apr–Nov, at Sixth Ave, West 72nd St, and East 72nd St entrances.

Visitor Centers

Chess and Checkers House: Mid-park, 64th St. Open Nov–March Wed–Sun 10–5; April–Oct Tues–Sun 10–5; T: 212 794 4064.

Dairy: Mid-park, 65th St. Open daily 10–5, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day; T: 212 794 6564.

Belvedere Castle: Mid-park, 79th St. Open daily 10–5, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day; T: 212 772 0288.

Charles A. Dana Discovery Center: Inside the park at 110th St between Fifth and Lenox Aves. Open daily 10–5, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day; T: 212 860 1370.

Park tours

Free guided Welcome Tours cover park highlights; ticketed Premier Tours focus on

CENTRAL PARK
Indian Hunter (1866) by John Quincy Adams Ward.



bles in Kentucky and on Long Island. His estate was calculated at a quarter of a billion dollars. His elder brother married Gertrude Vanderbilt (*see p. 203*); his wife, Helen Hay Whitney, was a daughter of John Hay, secretary of state under Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Their daughter, Joan Whitney Payson, was the principal owner of the New York Mets baseball team from its beginnings in 1962 until her death in 1975, and their son, John Hay (Jock) Whitney, was publisher of the *New York Herald Tribune* and ambassador to Great Britain.

The **former Henry H. Cook** house next door at 973 Fifth Ave (1902–5) is also by McKim, Mead & White, designed to look visually continuous with the Payne Whitney house. Cook, a banker and railroad developer, at one time owned the entire block and formerly occupied a larger, more extravagant dwelling on the site of the James B. Duke mansion.

Looming up on the southeast corner of Fifth Ave and 79th St is the home of the **Ukrainian Institute of America**. The house (1899), designed by C.P.H. Gilbert for Isaac D. Fletcher, is a picturesque French Gothic mansion, with high slate roofs, pinnaced dormers, gargoyles, and a “moat” protected by an iron fence. The Institute maintains a collection of contemporary Ukrainian art and mounts exhibitions of painting, sculpture, and folk art (*open Tues–Sun 12–6; suggested donation; T: 212 288 8660, ukrainianinstitute.org*).

THE ISAAC D. FLETCHER HOUSE

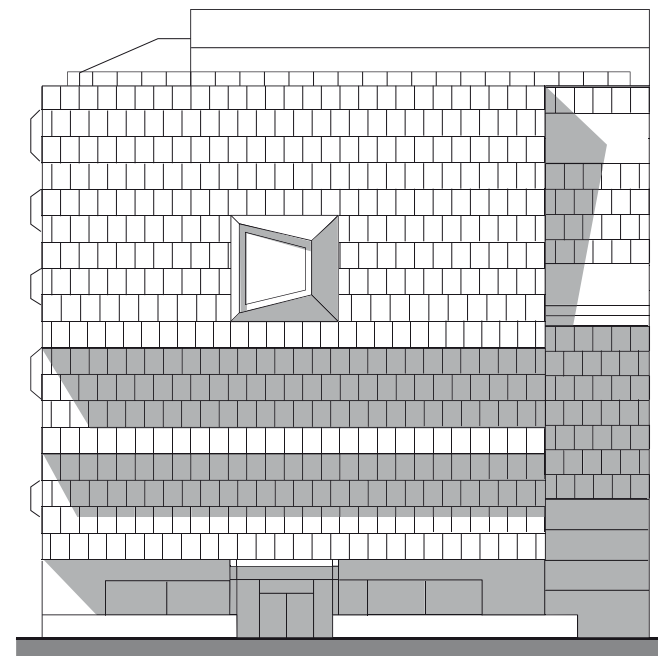
Isaac D. Fletcher, a broker and banker, died in 1917, leaving his art collection and \$3 million in stocks to the Metropolitan Museum. The collection included several Corots, Millet’s *Autumn Landscape with a Flock of Turkeys*, a charming portrait by Marie Villiers, and a *Head of Christ* formerly attributed to Rembrandt, plus many minor works, including a picture of the Fletcher mansion and a portrait of Fletcher himself.

After Fletcher’s death, the house was sold to Harry D. Sinclair, founder of the oil company that bore his name. Sinclair was implicated in the Teapot Dome scandal during the administration of President Warren G. Harding and was indicted for bribery and conspiracy to defraud the government of lucrative oil leases. Sinclair spent six months in jail for contempt of court (he had hired a detective agency to shadow each of the jurors) and sold the house when he got out of prison, his reputation, but not his fortune, in tatters.

The next owner was Augustus Van Horne Stuyvesant, who lived here with his sister Anne. The pair, both unmarried, had sold their townhouse on 57th St to move north ahead of the onslaught of commerce. Augustus, the last direct male descendant of Governor Peter Stuyvesant, was a successful real estate dealer, but after Anne’s death in 1938, he spent his declining years in the house, eventually becoming a complete recluse, attended only by his butler and his footman.

THE FORMER WHITNEY MUSEUM BUILDING

Between 1966 and 2015, after which time it moved to the Meatpacking District, the Whitney Museum of American Art occupied the landmark building at 945 Madison Ave at East 75th St. The building itself is considered a work of art. The Metropolitan



945 MADISON AVENUE

Museum will use it as an offshoot gallery—the Met Breuer—at least until 2023, while refurbishing its own galleries of modern art. Thomas Hart Benton’s famous murals *America Today* (*see below*) are scheduled to be installed when the Whitney vacates.

The building (1966) was designed by Marcel Breuer, a pioneering Modernist. Born in Hungary, educated in part at the Bauhaus, Breuer joined the Harvard faculty in 1937 along with Walter Gropius, where the two of them influenced the next generation of American architects. Before the emergence first of SoHo and then Chelsea as important centers of contemporary art, the Whitney was squarely in the heart of the gallery district, a neighborhood mostly of low-rise buildings. Intended to stand out, perhaps brazenly, from its neighbors, the building’s architectural power was recognized immediately. “At the top of the list of must-be-seen objects in New York,” noted the architect-authors of the *AIA Guide to New York City* (American Institute of Architects); *New York Times* critic Ada Louise Huxtable found it harshly handsome, a “disconcertingly top-heavy inverted pyramidal mass [that] grows on one slowly, like a taste for olives or warm beer.” Some critics objected to its Brutalism, but gradually the building won widespread if occasionally grudging admiration.

The building is sheathed in dark gray granite and overhangs a sunken sculpture court, spanned by a concrete bridge. The upper three floors are cantilevered outward,

across 90th St. She sold the lot with a deed that restricted building to a Christian church no more than 75ft high not counting the steeple, thus preserving the view from her garden. Begun by Bertram Grosvenor Associates, the church was completed in a Gothic-Art Deco style by Goodhue's successor firm, Mayers, Murray & Phillip. The sculptural program with Lee Lawrie, Malvina Hoffman, and others was begun but never completed.

THE COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM & ENVIRONS

Map p. 615, D2. 2 East 91st St (Fifth Ave). Subway: 4, 5, 6 to 86th, or 6 to 96th St. Bus: M1, M2, M3, M4. Open weekdays and Sun 10–6, Sat until 9. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas New Year's Day. Admission charge; discount for online tickets. Café accessible from 90th St without museum entrance. Shop. T: 212 849 8400, cooperhewitt.org.



THE COOPER HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM: 91ST STREET FAÇADE

The Cooper Hewitt is the nation's only museum devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design, its exhibitions drawn from its stupendous collections that include everything from antique wallpaper to sand toys, bird cages, and Asian porcelain. The museum occupies a mansion constructed for steel baron and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (*see opposite*). In 2014, after a three-year hiatus and a gut renovation (2014; Beyer Blinder Belle; Gluckman Mayer Architects; Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and others) the museum re-opened with newly conceived exhibits that explore the process of design and its impact on daily life. Several galleries offer interactive possibilities: design your own wallpaper and see it projected on the walls of a room, or re-design the contents of your pockets, or sit in an ergonomically devised wheelchair whose mechanical advantage becomes immediately obvious. Other exhibits explore the Hewitt sisters' collection (*see below*). Still others look at the components of design—color, form,

line, and so on. One gallery is devoted to models and prototypes, for example beautifully crafted staircase models, for religious and secular buildings. A gallery on the third floor offers space for major exhibitions, the inaugural one on tools—from a Paleolithic chopper to a satellite-transmitted image of the sun—with an installation, *Controller of the Universe* (2007; Damián Ortega), serving as the artistic center of the room.

THE COLLECTION

Sarah, Eleanor, and Amy Hewitt, granddaughters of industrialist Peter Cooper, founded the museum in 1897 as part of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. During their travels, the three had been impressed by the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria & Albert) in London and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and they began their own collection, intending it as a “practical working laboratory” where people could learn the “arts of decoration.” Helped by their friends (for example J. Pierpont Morgan, who donated European textiles), they collected decorative objects, prints and drawings, napkins, gloves, cookie tins, and other items that appealed to them as good design.

ANDREW CARNEGIE AND HIS FIFTH AVENUE MANSION

Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919), an immigrant from Scotland, amassed a fortune in iron, coal, steel, and steamship and railroad lines. In 1898 he announced his intention to build “the most modest, plainest, and roomiest house in New York.” For this plain and roomy house, he chose a rocky, semi-rural plot far north of the trophy houses of his more fashionable financial peers. His architects, Babb, Cook & Willard, finished the house in 1901.

The house was remarkably advanced for its time, well-suited to Carnegie's domestic needs and to the philanthropic projects he administered from his first-floor office. Sophisticated pumps and boilers filled the sub-basement, two of each major piece so that a spare was always available. If city water or electricity were interrupted, an artesian well and generator would spare the family and servants any inconvenience. Up in the attic great fans pulled air through cheesecloth filters over tanks of cool water, a primitive system of air-conditioning. The house was the first private residence in the city with a structural steel frame, an Otis passenger elevator, and central heating.

Over the main door on 91st St hangs an ornate copper and glass canopy. The marble vestibule leads to the Great Hall, paneled in Scottish oak, a token of Carnegie's affection for his homeland. At the east end of the hall an organ occupied the spot where the admissions desk now stands. The doorways to Carnegie's study and library, on the west end, are scaled to his height (he was 5ft 2in tall). Along the south side of the first floor, facing the garden, were public rooms—the music room on the west with musical motifs, including a Scottish bagpipe, in the ceiling moldings. In the garden vestibule, next to the music room, are leaded-glass windows by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The townhouse across the garden facing 90th St formerly belonged to Carnegie's daughter.

The building

The Cloisters (1934–8; Charles Collens of Allen, Collens & Willis) was not copied from any single medieval original, but was built around medieval architectural elements so as to make modern additions as unobtrusive as possible. The exterior granite was quarried by hand near New London, Connecticut, matching the dimensions of building blocks in Romanesque churches, especially the church at Corneille-de-Confient near Cuxa. The Italian limestone of the interior was hand-sawn to suggest weathering. The courtyards and ramparts were paved with Belgian blocks taken from New York streets and the grounds landscaped with trees intended to recall those surrounding Europe's medieval monasteries (with allowances for New York's harsher climate).

The collection

While the Metropolitan's medieval collections span the period from the barbarian invasions (from c. AD 370) to the close of the 14th century, works in The Cloisters focus on two principal medieval styles: Romanesque and Gothic. The display is organized more or less chronologically, beginning with the Romanesque Hall and ending with the Late Gothic Hall and the Froville Arcade. (The accession numbers beginning 25.120 on the labels indicate works purchased from the original Barnard collection.)

Main Level: Reconstructed around medieval architectural elements, rooms here include the **Romanesque Hall (001)**, the earliest, whose three portals illustrate the evolution of sculptured church doorways in the 12th–13th centuries, from a round-arched Romanesque French doorway (c. 1150) to a magnificently decorated 13th-century door from Burgundy.

The **Fuentidueña Chapel (002)**, with a mid-12th century frescoed apse, is from a church near Madrid that was probably part of a castle built by Christians struggling to regain the Iberian peninsula from its Islamic conquerors. The large 12th-century Spanish Crucifix of carved, painted oak is one of the finest surviving Romanesque examples.

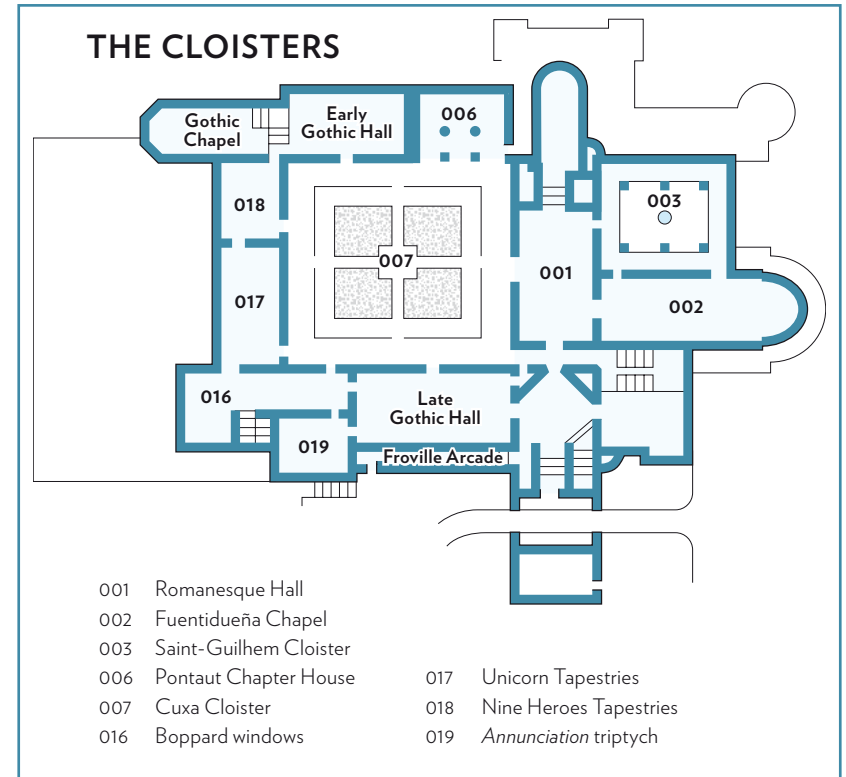
The small **Saint-Guilhem Cloister (003)** has remarkable columns, their capitals carved with plants and motifs including Daniel in the Lions' Den and a "Mouth of Hell," with cloven-hoofed demons forcing sinners into the flames

of Hell—terrifying to medieval believers.

Other medieval rooms include the **Pontaut Chapter House (006)**, a meeting room from a 12th-century abbey where the monks met to discuss business or to hear readings or sermons.

The Romanesque **Cuxa Cloister (007)** comes from a Benedictine monastery founded in 878 and left to fall into ruins after the French Revolution. In the center is an enclosed garden with quadrants of lawn, crab apple trees, and borders of herbs and flowers. In winter the arcades are glassed in and filled with pots of acanthus, olive, and bay.

Other rooms contain fine examples of stained-glass windows from French and German churches notably **Boppard** on the Rhine (**016**); paintings, among them **Robert Campin's Annunciation triptych (019)**; and tapestries, including the 14th-century French series of **Nine Heroes**, three Classical, three Biblical and three Christian (**018**) and the much loved **Unicorn Tapestries (017)**.



THE UNICORN TAPESTRIES

These seven late medieval tapestries depicting the Hunt of the Unicorn were probably designed in Paris and woven in Brussels (c. 1495–1505), but no one knows who commissioned them or the occasion they celebrated, though it was probably a marriage. The tapestries were seized during the French Revolution and later damaged when they served to protect a potato garden from frost. During the 1850s they were rediscovered lying in a barn.

According to medieval legend a unicorn could be caught only by a virgin, whose presence tamed the normally wild creature. This story was interpreted both as an allegory of human love and an allegory of the Incarnation (with the unicorn a symbol of Christ). *The Unicorn in Captivity*—one of the most cherished works in the collection—shows the wounded Unicorn, subdued and docile, inside a small corral, surrounded by flowers and fruiting plants. The image is said to symbolize both the Resurrection and the consummation of a marriage. John D. Rockefeller Jr. bought them in 1923 from the Comte de la Rochefoucauld, whose family had owned them since the 17th century, and donated them to the museum.

A WALK UP FIFTH AVENUE

Fifth Avenue is still New York's most famous promenade, the route of its grand parades, the site of some of its most iconic attractions. This walk begins north of the Empire State Building and continues past the landmark New York Public Library to St. Patrick's Cathedral and Rockefeller Center. Fifth Avenue was once the mecca of elegant shopping, where the great department stores settled after they left Ladies' Mile (see p. 186), and while most of the department stores have now departed, the neopalazzi that once housed them remain, as do Lord & Taylor and Saks Fifth Avenue.

To reach the starting point by subway: B, D, F, N, Q, or R to 34th St-Herald Square; Bus: M2, M3, M4, M5. Begin at Fifth Ave and 34th St.

THE FORMER B. ALTMAN & COMPANY store at **365 Fifth Ave** (1906; Trowbridge & Livingston) fills the entire block between Fifth and Madison Aves, East 34th and East 35th Sts. It now houses Oxford University Press and the CUNY Graduate Center (entrance on

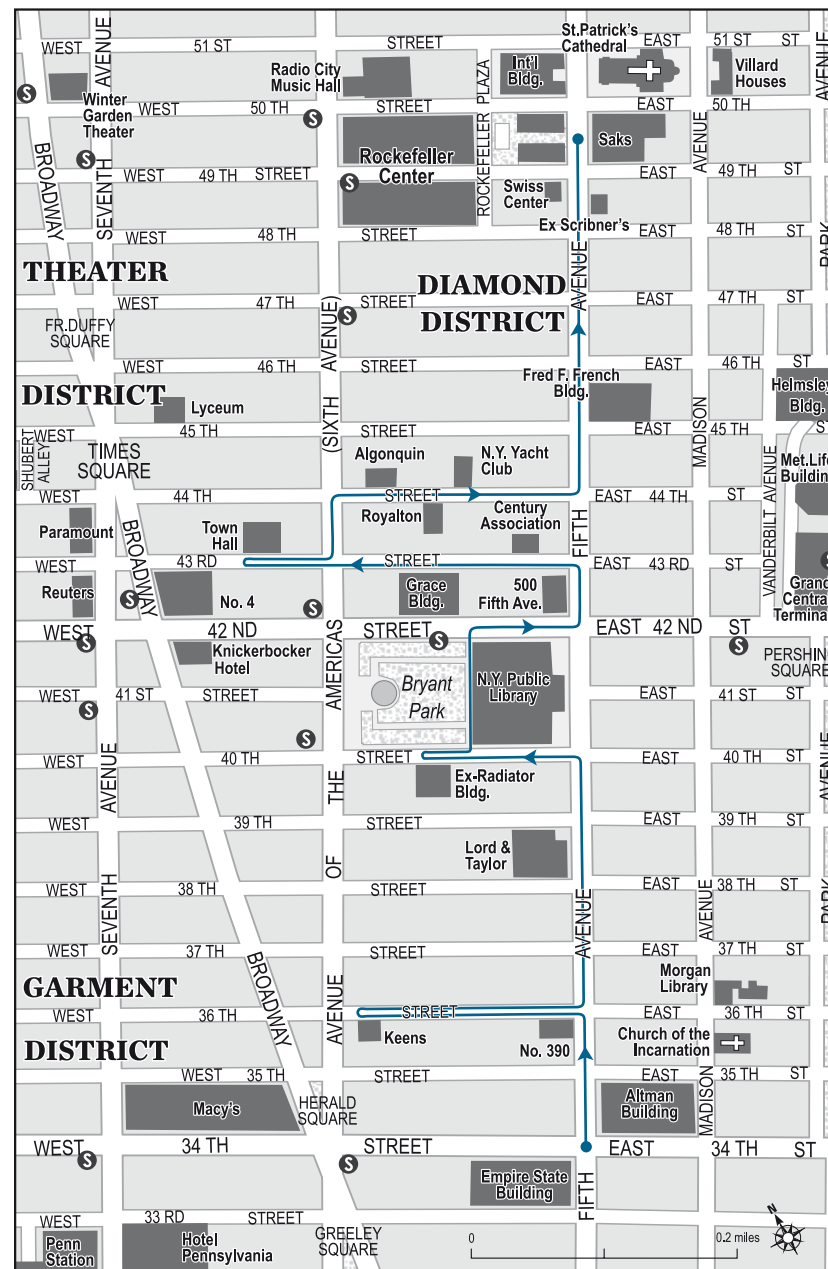
Fifth Ave). Altman's, the first department store to intrude on a previously sedate residential area, was designed in the same Italian palazzo style that many of New York's newly rich chose for their mansions, perhaps to soften the blow to disgruntled neighbors.

BENJAMIN ALTMAN

Son of a Lower East Side milliner, Benjamin Altman (1840–1913) opened his first shop (c. 1865) on Third Ave near 9th St and worked his way uptown via a stylish store in Ladies' Mile (*Sixth Ave and 19th St*), becoming a legendary retailer and a notable art collector. He bought his first parcel of land on this block in 1896 and the rest when Grand Central Terminal and Penn Station announced their new locations. Apparently a humorless workaholic, Altman was nevertheless a compassionate employer, providing rest rooms and a cafeteria for his workers, funding education for their children, and inaugurating Saturday closings in summer. When he died unmarried in 1913, he left his art collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and \$20 million in Altman stock to a philanthropic foundation. The store, known for high-quality clothing, home furnishings, dishes, and glassware, went out of business in 1989.

Keen's Steakhouse (72 West 36th St, between Fifth and Sixth Aves) dates back to 1878, when the side streets west of Fifth Ave belonged to the Theater District and the restaurant, then called Keen's Chophouse, served as the dining

room for The Lambs, a social club for theater people. In 1885 manager Albert Keen restructured the restaurant as an independent commercial venture and began feeding his masculine clientele massive cuts of meat in dining rooms



THE ARMORY SHOW

Generally credited with introducing the American public to modern European art, the Armory Show opened on February 17, 1913 and, before it traveled to Boston and Chicago, drew as many as 75,000 people, a significantly larger audience than most art exhibitions of the day. With at least 1,250 works by 300 artists, the show was a broad survey, the oldest piece a miniature by Goya, the most recent created within the year of the show. About two-thirds of the works were American, but it was the European Modernists who provoked the most intense response.

Two artists in particular drew scorn. The first was Marcel Duchamp, whose Cubist-Futurist *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) depicted a moving figure as a series of fractured planes, painted with a restricted palette of brownish and reddish tones that simulated wood. It was parodied as “Rude Descending a Staircase: Rush Hour in the Subway” or “Food Descending a Staircase,” and likened by one critic to an “explosion in a shingle factory.”

Henri Matisse took second place in the high dudgeon sweepstakes, condemned by students at the Chicago Art Institute, among others, for such transgressions as “artistic murder” and “criminal misuse of line.” Even the sculptor William Zorach confessed to being disturbed by Matisse’s *Luxe II*, one of whose nudes has only four toes.

Nonetheless, the Armory Show brought modern art into major collections. A California dealer purchased Duchamp’s *Nude* sight unseen; Lillie P. Bliss bought paintings by Cézanne, Redon, and Vuillard among others, which she later bequeathed to the Museum of Modern Art; and the Metropolitan Museum bought Cézanne’s *Hill of the Poor* (*View of the Domaine Saint-Joseph*). The Armory Show’s achievement was not so much that it taught individual artists the mystique of Cubism, but it that drew a wider audience of collectors and gallery owners to Modernism, creating a market and laying the foundation for new directions in American art.

EATING AND DRINKING AROUND UNION AND MADISON SQUARES AND THE FLATIRON DISTRICT

As well as being famous for Eataly and the Shake Shack, this area is known for several luxurious establishments, as well as the more modest eateries of Curry Hill along Lexington Ave north of Gramercy Park, and some classics.

\$\$\$ Eleven Madison Park. ■ One of New York’s best and most expensive restaurants, where everything is beautifully done, provides an experience to remember. Neo-classic cooking with luxury ingredients—foie gras, truffles—as well as a fine wine

list and creative cocktails. Lunch Thur–Sat, dinner nightly. Reserve two months in advance. *11 Madison Ave (East 24th St).* T: 212 889 0905, elevenmadisonpark.com. Map p. 619, D2.

\$\$\$ A Voce. Seasonal, regional,

