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Summary Article: **Lower East Side**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Historic residential and commercial district of lower Manhattan, New York City. Chinatown and Little Italy lie to the south and southwest of the area, the East River to the east. The Lower East Side was once strongly identified with Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe, who gave the area its special character. The district is now more mixed, with substantial Hispanic and Chinese, as well as Jewish, communities.

Although parts of the area were home to large Irish and German communities in the mid-19th century, it was only after the 1880s, when a steady influx of Jewish immigrants began to move into hundreds of six-storey railroad-flat tenement buildings, that the Lower East Side took on the character it is famous for. Its delicatessens, street markets, bathhouses, and synagogues were busy hubs of Jewish culture in the period around World War I. A garment-making industry grew up in loft buildings throughout the district, and still thrives there nowadays.

In the B'nai B'rith quarter, the nurse and social worker Lillian Wald established her Henry Street Settlement, and the Jewish newspaper the *Forward* was founded. That part of the Lower East Side lying north of Houston Street later came to be known as the East Village. Some of the former atmosphere of the district is still evident in places such as the Orchard Street market. Many notable Americans were born or first lived in the Lower East Side, for example the composer Irving Berlin, the lyricist Ira Gershwin, the actor James Cagney, and the film director Martin Scorsese.

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