

Hudson Square History

This month, as we celebrate Black History Month, we at the Hudson Square BID honor our neighborhood's history of Antebellum African American activism and contribution to the early Jazz scene.

The Ear Inn – 326 Spring Street

Hudson Square is home to NYC's first and most historic drinking establishment, The Ear Inn. Yet, while many know 326 Spring Street as the former speakeasy hotspot, few know that this is also the site of the historic James Brown House. Named after the former owner of 1770, the African war hero and aid to George Washington during the Revolutionary. James Brown was also a tobacco proprietor in the 1770's. The site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and a City Landmark.

Step 2: Freeman's Journal – The first African American newspaper

African American history in New York City typically calls to mind locations such as Harlem and Greenwich Village. However, the Hudson Square area was a significant location for black emancipation and racial progression in the years prior to the Civil War. Home to the first African American newspaper, it also served as a stronghold for the abolitionist movement through organizations such as the Spring Street Presbyterian church, and was host to many African American owned businesses and property. These organizations and individuals established this area as a vocal bastion of change and radical communication. Sources do not state exactly where the newspaper's headquarters were, but they do all point to Varick Street in Hudson Square.

Step 3: Jazz Gallery – 290 Hudson Street

New York City is well known for the height of Jazz production in the Harlem Renaissance of the 1930's. All over New York City, Jazz music has continued to flourish to this day. In Hudson Square, we have a rich history in Lower Manhattan's Jazz culture. 290 Hudson was formerly home to The Jazz Library, a cultural institution founded in 1995 by Dale Fitzgerald and Roy Hargrove. Jazz Gallery quickly became a leading venue space that allowed musicians to take creative risks that other venues would probably not allow. The Jazz Gallery continues to serve an ethnically diverse audience and to promote the roots of Jazz music.

