

Bloomingdale / Manhattan Valley Chronology

Upper West Side, New York City

- 1600s & earlier Manhattan Island inhabited by Lenape Indians. There is no evidence of permanent settlements in the high, rocky Bloomingdale area, but it was almost certainly used as a hunting ground by Indians living near Harlem Creek to the east.
- 1625 Dutch West India Company establishes New Amsterdam at the southern tip of Manhattan.
- 1664 British seize New Amsterdam, renaming it New York. Within a few years the Upper West Side is parceled out in land grants, but there is no permanent settlement until 1689, when Teunis Ides builds his farmhouse at what was later known as Stryker's Bay, near the foot of 96th Street.
- ca. 1708 Bloomingdale Road begun, roughly along the line of the present Broadway from Madison Square northward. It may have taken until the 1720s before a usable road reached all the way to the original terminus at 115th Street and Riverside Drive. The newly accessible Upper West Side becomes an area of farms and country estates.
- 1811 The Commissioners' Plan is adopted, laying out Manhattan's system of streets and avenues. However it will be decades before most of these streets are anything more than lines on a map.
- 1821 The Bloomingdale Insane Asylum is opened on what is now the site of Columbia University. In 1834 an unused part of the asylum property is transferred to the Leake and Watts Orphan Asylum, now the site of The Cathedral of St. John the Divine.
- 1838 The Croton Aqueduct is built along Amsterdam and Columbus Avenues. It includes the Clendening Valley aqueduct bridge, up to fifty feet above ground level, extending from 102nd to 95th Streets. The massive stone structure has only three openings for future cross town streets.
- 1856 New York City acquires the land for Central Park. Two years later, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux win the competition for its design.
- 1868 The Boulevard (now Broadway) is opened, replacing the old Bloomingdale Road.
- 1871 Manhattan Avenue is opened.
- 1872-78 Sewers and water mains are laid in most of the street east of Broadway. Underground pipes replace the above ground aqueduct.
- 1870s-1889s Improved city services and low land costs attract additional charitable institutions including the Hebrew Home for the Aged, the Catholic Old Age Home and the Home for Aged Indigent Respectable Females. 1879 The Ninth Avenue Elevated Railway, powered by steam locomotives, is built along Columbus Avenue with stations at 93rd and 104th Streets. It is followed by the first distinctly urban development on the Upper West Side, with tenements and flats along Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues and row houses along side streets.

1880s-90s	To serve the growing residential population, several new churches and schools are built, mainly on or near Amsterdam Avenue.
1904	The IRT is opened on Broadway, spurring the construction of more and bigger apartment buildings.
1932	The Eighth Avenue subway line opens along Central Park West.
1940	The Ninth Avenue El is closed and torn down.
1950s	Fourteen city blocks are demolished and replaced by Frederick Douglass Houses and Park West Village. Scandals in connection with the latter project begin the decline of Robert Moses.
1970s	City fiscal crisis. Drugs, crime, deterioration and the abandonment of buildings beset the neighborhood.
1979	Community leaders organize Valley Restoration Local Development Corporation. It sponsors housing rehabilitation projects as well as programs to improve security and assist local businesses.
1990 -2005	The area attracts new businesses and private investment in housing rehabilitation. Restrictions on additional development in Park West Village expire.
2005-2007	Spurred by new construction of a pair of very tall apartment buildings at Broadway and 100 th Street, made possible by large transfers of development rights (often called air rights), residents mount a successful two-year drive for contextual rezoning of much of the area between 97th and 110th Streets, Riverside Drive to Central Park West. The new zoning protects the low heights on the side streets, limits the heights of buildings on the Avenues, and provides incentives for the inclusion of affordable housing. One block on 106 th Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Columbus Avenue is carved out at the time of the City Council vote to allow Jewish Home Lifecare (formerly the Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged) to expand its facilities. Residents also persuade the Landmarks Commission to create a Historic District on Manhattan Avenue from 104 th Street to 106 th Street.
2007-10	The new zoning does not affect Park West Village, where new owners take advantage of the site's unused development rights to construct large residential and commercial buildings along Columbus Avenue between 97 th and 100 th Streets, and on Amsterdam Avenue at 100 th Street. The new development is called Columbus Square and bisects Park West Village.

Compiled by Gilbert Tauber"