PANORAMA
Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art
ISSN: 2471-6839

Cite this article: Jessica Larson, "The Real and Imagined Black-Built Environment of the Ashcan School," in "Blackness, the Ashcan School, and Modern American Art," edited by Jordana Moore Saggese and Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, In the Round, *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2025), https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.19867.

The Real and Imagined Black-Built Environment of the Ashcan School

Jessica Larson

The following essay contains language and images that readers may find disturbing or otherwise challenging to encounter.

In the first few years of the twentieth century, as laborers broke ground on what would soon become Manhattan's Pennsylvania Station, photographers hired by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company captured hundreds of images documenting the train station's construction. These photographs, which recorded in acute detail the technical processes, machinery, and demolition of the surrounding built environment, relay the tremendous consequences of the train station's construction on the urban landscape (figs. 1, 2). Figures dwarfed by the mechanisms of modernity stand amid the gaping craters left on Manhattan's surface. These photographs are notable in their exacting documentation of Penn Station's engineering and architectural achievements. Yet they depart from contemporary images of turn-of-the-century New York. Alongside the details of the demolition, we notice the striking presence of Black figures, laboring in service of Manhattan's monumental temple to the industrial expansion of American trade and transportation. Many artists captivated by the metropolis's rapid modernization, most notably those associated with the Ashcan School, depicted scenes of labor or urban life devoid of this racial component.

Figs. 1, 2. Left: Louis H. Dreyer, *Station Site Work*, c. 1904–10. Penn Station, New York, Photographs, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; right: Unknown photographer,

Manhattan East C-D, C-D Pump Chamber Iron and Concrete, 1907. Penn Station, New York, Photographs, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

As art historian Martin A. Berger pointedly notes, however, these artists must have worked quite hard to intentionally exclude subjects of color from their canvases.[1] Although not nearly as numerous as the city's white inhabitants, the presence of Black residents in Manhattan was a visible and frequently mentioned reality that was often the topic of public debate. Between 1900 and 1920, the city's Black population rose dramatically, from 60,666 to 142,467.[2] The relationship between race, ethnicity, and Ashcan renderings of urban life has been given ample scholarly attention; analyses have focused on artists' attitudes toward the ethnic minorities most visible in early twentieth-century Manhattan, such as the numerous near-caricatural depictions of European or Chinese immigrants produced by artists like John Sloan (1871–1951), Robert Henri (1865–1929), or George Luks (1867–1933). In dialogue with emerging forms of mass visual media, Ashcan artists conceived their new world as indexable, wherein diverse identities could be cataloged as traceable actors within an ever-complex urban microcosm.[3] Yet, these translations of ethnic "types" rarely included Black figures, despite widespread contemporary discussion—and worry—over their increasing presence in New York.

This essay argues that the site-specific nature of Ashcan works, which frequently portrayed areas and neighborhoods well known to viewers or noted outright in their titles, would have been impossible for audiences to divorce from perceptions of the growing Black presence in New York. Even if Black figures were not always included in Ashcan works, the locations that works expressly depicted would have been recognizable to viewers as Black neighborhoods and, thus, been received on racialized terms. Further, this essay examines how the seeming ambivalence to Black urban inhabitants and their neighborhoods bolstered Ashcan interpretations of the modern city as a site developed in service of white urbanites at the expense of others.

Fig. 3. George Bellows, *Pennsylvania Station Excavation*, c. 1907–8. Oil on canvas, 31 3/16 x 38 1/4 in. Brooklyn Museum, A. Augustus Healy Fund, 67.205.1

To introduce this analysis, I return to Penn Station. Between 1907 and 1909, George Bellows (1882–1925) produced four canvases of its construction. In keeping with his

broader approach to the city's life, Bellows envisioned the station's excavated pit as a gaping maw enveloping the laborers (fig. 3).[4] With the exception perhaps of *Blue Morning* (1909; National Gallery of Art), the final painting in Bellows's series, the artist was not interested in human details. The construction of the train station necessitated the destruction and gutting of Manhattan's West Side in service of the city's ascendancy to economic and cultural capital. What is absent in Bellows's paintings was the racial landscape of the area partitioned off by city authorities to make way for the new terminal. Where Bellows saw a site of exhilarating urban birth, Black inhabitants witnessed the destruction of their homes, businesses, and institutions in service of municipal and commercial interests. Between roughly 1880 and 1900, the area surrounding the construction of Penn Station was the city's predominant Black neighborhood, popularly referred to as the Tenderloin district.[5] Assessed as expendable, one realtor, who advised that the neighborhood be cleared for demolition, stated, "Seventh Avenue has been for many years considered to be like a Chinese wall on the west side of the city south of 42nd St. . . . on and beyond which no respectable man or woman could safely go. It is known as filled with thugs, bums, and wicked negroes."[6] Yet, Sloan lived in the area and frequently painted the Tenderloin's saloons, street life, and entertainment; this was also where Sloan and Henri organized the 1910 *Exhibition of Independent Artists* inside a vacant building on West Thirty-Fifth Street.[7] As art historian Lee Ann Custer discusses in this suite of essays, as well as elsewhere, Sloan must have been aware of his place within a tense and complex site of racial change; this is where, atop his tenement rooftop, he painted his ever-changing surroundings.[8]

Beginning in approximately 1900, spurred in part by the construction of Penn Station and the resultant demolition of hundreds of Black businesses and homes in the Tenderloin, as well as increasing incidents of racial violence sanctioned by the police, the neighborhood's Black population began to migrate northward up Manhattan Island, settling and rebuilding mostly in the West Sixties.[9] This new neighborhood, bounded roughly by West Fifty-Ninth Street and West Sixty-Fifth Street, between West End and Amsterdam Avenues, prefigured Harlem as a site generative of a uniquely Black culture and a concentration of Black institutions working in service of racial uplift. This neighborhood, called San Juan Hill, then became the most populated Black neighborhood in Manhattan between approximately 1900 and 1915, just prior to the Great Migration.

Like the Tenderloin, Ashcan artists were drawn to San Juan Hill for its inhabitants, built environment, and lower rents. This is where, from his top-floor studio on West Sixty-Fifth Street, Bellows painted the interracial boxing matches at Tom Sharkey's Athletic Club, just across the street.[10] Like the Tenderloin, the housing and commercial infrastructure of San Juan Hill offered a generative opportunity for artistic experimentation while allowing white artists like Bellows to passively observe. This living arrangement, however, was always understood as temporary or transitionary. Just three years after moving into San Juan Hill, Bellows purchased his first home, a three-story house on East Nineteenth Street. There, likely the only Black person he regularly encountered was his servant, nineteen-year-old Jamaican immigrant Hilda May Anglin.[11] White artists operated with the knowledge that their time in predominantly Black neighborhoods was temporary; Black residents, regardless of socioeconomic status, knew they would likely never leave.

Selective Depiction in John Sloan's Tenderloin

Although the geographic boundaries of the Tenderloin were debated by contemporaries, the neighborhood stretched from roughly West Twenty-Third Street to West Fifty-Seventh Street, between Fifth and Eighth Avenues.[12] In 1904 Sloan moved into the top-floor apartment at 165 West Twenty-Third Street with his first wife, Dolly.[13] Although the vast majority of his neighbors were white (both European immigrants and those who were born in the United States), census records show that Sloan's building was one of the very few on the block that had Black residents. A Black family of three—a husband, wife, and the wife's mother—are listed on the 1905 New York State census as living in the same building as Sloan. This family consisted of Rufus Hurbert (age sixty-five) and his wife Emma (age thirty-six), along with Elizabeth Osborne (age seventy-eight), probably Emma's mother. Rufus's occupation was cigar maker, and Emma's was listed as "housework," generally meaning some form of domestic service; Elizabeth did not have a listed occupation.[14] Cigar making was a particularly dangerous profession given the respiratory illnesses involved: despite it being a relatively skilled profession, cigar makers' life expectancy was only about thirty-seven years. In early twentieth-century New York, most of this work would have been done in the Hubert family's small tenement unit; in the 1870s, manufacturers began to cut costs on production by coercing employees into moving the labor into their homes. As a result, the women of the household, considered more suited for the delicate work of rolling tobacco, were often involved in this labor. Emma and Elizabeth likely toiled away at the labor-intensive and noxious profession alongside Rufus.[15] That Sloan lived in the same building as this family is particularly surprising given contemporary tenancy standards. As remarked by social reformer and photographer Jacob Riis, "Once a colored house, always a colored house," meaning that whites would generally refuse to live in the same building as Black tenants, nor would whites rent a space previously occupied by Black tenants.[16] Perhaps Sloan, himself a fan of cigars, could smell the production from his unit. If, against all odds, Sloan did not regularly interact with or see Black Tenderloin residents on the streets, he surely saw them in his building.

Fig. 4. Saint Philip's Parish House, located at 125–29 West Thirtieth Street. From *Architecture and Building* 25, no. 11 (September 12, 1896): n.p.; digitized by Google, original from University of Michigan

Just two streets north of Sloan's residence, the number of Black residents increased dramatically, with a very sizable Black population beginning at West Twenty-Fifth Street. Within just a few minutes' walking distance from Sloan was Saint Philip's Episcopal Church, the city's wealthiest Black congregation in the early twentieth century; the Bethel A.M.E. Church, also one of the city's largest Black congregations; and the First African Union Church, a smaller but long-standing institution in the Tenderloin.[17] If Sloan walked just a bit farther to West Thirtieth Street, which he often did as evidenced by paintings like *Sixth Avenue and Thirtieth Street, New York City* (1907; Philadelphia Museum of Art) and *The Haymarket, Sixth Avenue* (1907; Brooklyn Museum), he would have passed by some of the city's only institutions established to aid Black migrants from the

South, such as the New York Colored Mission or a small Black institutional church across the street, called Saint Timothy's Baptist Church.[18] If, while painting both works, Sloan had turned his attention to the scene just behind him, he would have seen the Saint Philip's Parish House, a grand architect-designed building founded by Black reformers as a social welfare center for the neighborhood's Black poor (fig. 4).[19] That white men like Sloan were able to operate as casual tourists in the Tenderloin, extracting the elements that served their artistic and personal interests while ignoring the neighborhood's qualities not compatible with their vision, speaks to how Sloan and other Ashcan artists helped shape a visual rhetoric of modern life that equated the infrastructure of modernity with white navigation of the city.

Fig. 5. John Sloan, *The Haymarket, Sixth Avenue*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 26 1/8 x 34 13/16 in. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, 23.60

This is also evident in the distinctions between structures in the Ashcan School's imagined built environment chosen for demolition and those that escaped it. An example is the Haymarket, a dance hall at Sixth Avenue and West Thirtieth Street (fig. 5). Appearing in numerous works by Sloan and others, as well as being the subject of a poem by Eugene O'Neill, the Haymarket was described by the city's chief of police as "animate with the licentious life of the avenue."[20] By the late 1890s, the Tenderloin was arguably the most policed area of Manhattan. This coincided with the 1898 consolidation of the city's five boroughs into Greater New York, which resulted in the expansion of police powers and codification of the New York Police Department's bureaucracy and policies.[21] As the Black population of New York continued to grow, these factors colluded to give rise to a new form of systematized, racialized policing. The Tenderloin's primary police precinct was located a two-minute walk from the Haymarket, just one block west, at 137 West Thirtieth Street. This precinct, dubbed "the Most Important Police Precinct in America" by the *New York Times* in 1904, was, even for the time, notoriously racist. In a lengthy screed published by *Harper's Weekly*, Police Commissioner William McAdoo, who took a special interest in bringing the Tenderloin under the heel of the police, wrote:

> One of the most troublesome and dangerous characters with which the police have to deal is the Tenderloin type of negro. In the male species this is the overdressed, flashy, bejeweled loafer, gambler, and, in many instances, general criminal. . . . The negro loafer is a more dangerous character than the white cadet, as he is subject to violent fits of jealously, and when filled with the raw alcohol which is dispensed in the neighborhood, murder comes natural and easy to him.[22]

In 1898 the precinct more explicitly expressed their new, expanded authority over the Tenderloin via spatial control. This involved the demolition of their former precinct building and plans to construct a new, up-to-date station house in the neighborhood. The Haymarket's site was proposed as a possibility for clearance and redevelopment for the new stationhouse, given its status as a pleasure resort for vice.[23]

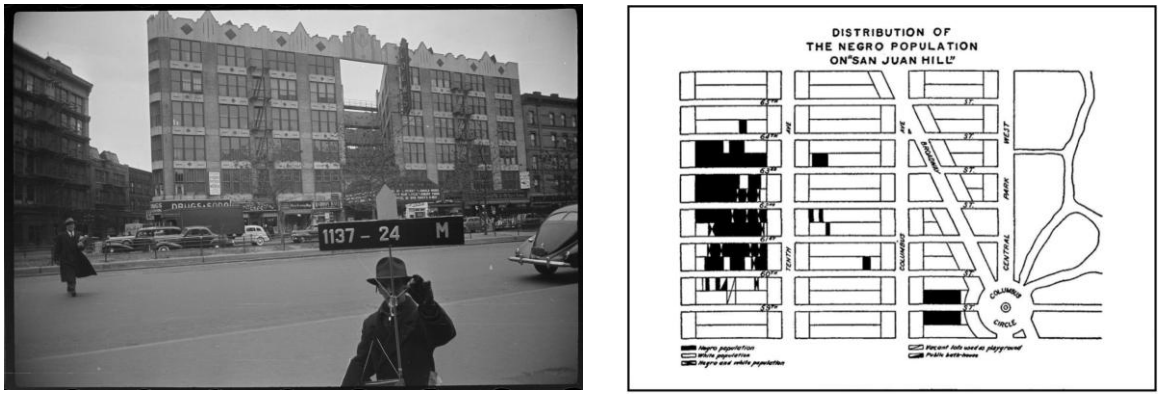
In 1900 tensions and mounting conflicts between police and Black Tenderloin residents reached a fever pitch, resulting in an event referred to as the Tenderloin Riots.[24] This conflict, wherein white police and residents violently assaulted Black Tenderloin residents en masse, attempted lynchings, and burned Black homes and businesses, spurred the migration of Black Tenderloin residents uptown to San Juan Hill. The aftermath gave license to the police and municipal interests to finally push out Black residents and businesses in favor of expanded white commerce, industry, and leisure, including Penn Station. Under Commissioner McAdoo's leadership, the police chose not to demolish the Haymarket but instead to seize by eminent domain the sites of two Black charitable institutions, demolish their structures, and build a new precinct over one of the institution's former lots; on the former station's site, the police tried (but eventually failed) to build what would have been the world's tallest prison (fig. 6).[25] Certainly, competing factors motivated the final siting of the police's new station house, and the matter of race was not the only calculation. Like the choice of location for Penn Station, though, white figures involved expressly articulated that the racial nature of the site made it expendable. While Ashcan artists like Sloan likely did not conceive of their artistic projects as deliberately or consciously arguing for the destruction of Black cultural landscapes or loci of racial uplift, the urban experiences and built environments that they selectively chose to depict reinforced a singular understanding of whom the modern city was meant to serve.

Fig. 6. Renderings for the proposed Women's House of Detention by architects Griffin & Wynkoop, 1914. Intended for 135–37 West Thirtieth Street. Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, New York Public Library

George Bellows and His Neighbors in San Juan Hill

As the city's Black population shifted farther uptown to San Juan Hill beginning around 1900, some Ashcan artists followed. This was true of Bellows and Henri, whose studios on the West Side of Manhattan were sited just one block beyond San Juan Hill's Black enclave. This was close enough that daily life would have necessarily brought the white artists in contact with their Black neighbors. Like Sloan's tourism (or "slumming," in contemporary terms) in the Tenderloin, San Juan Hill had its equivalents; historian Robin D. G. Kelly asserts that the neighborhood "made great copy for voyeuristic whites fascinated by popular images of razor-toting, dice-tossing, happy-go-lucky Negroes."[26]

In 1906 Bellows moved, along with his studio, into the Lincoln Arcade building on Broadway between West Sixty-Fifth and Sixty-Sixth Streets (fig. 7).[27] Henri also moved his studio into the building and opened the Henri School of Art there in 1909.[28] An inarguably strange building, this massive mixed-use, six-story structure became home to many struggling artists and writers, including Marcel Duchamp, Thomas Hart Benton, and Stuart Davis.[29] There, Bellows produced many of his works that most carefully meditated on the dramatic urban changes he witnessed, including his series on Penn Station's construction.[30]



Figs. 7,8. Left: View of the Lincoln Arcade on Broadway, between West Sixty-Fifth and West Sixty-Sixth Streets. Image from the 1940s Tax Department photographs of Manhattan; courtesy of the New York City Municipal Archive; right: Black sociologist George Edmund Haynes's 1912 map of the Black population in San Juan Hill. From George Edmund Haynes, *The Negro at Work in New York City: A Study in Economic Progress* (Columbia University, 1912), 51; digitized by Project Gutenberg

The structure itself converged the new hallmarks of modernity that so often appeared in Ashcan works. Built speculatively in anticipation of white commerce and white residents overtaking the neighborhood, the Lincoln Arcade connected Broadway to one of the neighborhood's many spectacular theatres, the Lincoln Square Theatre.[31] By 1915 the area including and surrounding the Lincoln Arcade was hailed as "unquestionably a strong amusement center," with real estate fetching some of the city's highest prices for speculative development.[32]

While this benefited white patrons of the area around the Lincoln Arcade, this rise in commercial property development hardened growing lines of segregation on the Upper West Side. Black sociologist and cofounder of the National Urban League George Edmund Haynes mapped this disparity in 1912, visually demonstrating the concentrations of Black residents from West Sixtieth Street to West Sixty-Fourth Street, between West End and Amsterdam (or Tenth) Avenues (fig. 8). While the Lincoln Arcade had no Black tenants,

Fig. 9. George Bellows, *Tin Can Battle, San Juan Hill*, 1907. Crayon, ink, and charcoal on paper, 30 5/8 x 34 3/8 in. Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska—Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-272.1947

Bellows and Henri would not have had to walk far to suddenly be surrounded by Black residents of San Juan Hill. Even if the two artists had walked down West Sixty-Fifth Street one block toward the Hudson River, they would have quickly noticed tenements with only Black renters, and if they had then proceeded to walk slightly south to West Sixty-Fourth Street, they would have been surrounded by almost exclusively Black figures. Large, dense housing developments, called model tenements, along West Sixty-Fourth, West Sixty-Third, and West Sixty-Second Streets were reserved entirely for Black tenants, housing hundreds. Also on West Sixty-Third Street, less than a ten-minute walk from the Lincoln Arcade, was a Black industrial school run by the Children's Aid Society, several Black missions and churches, and Black-run childcare institutions. Mutual aid organizations to assist newly arrived West Indian immigrants were established, as were institutions specific to helping Black migrants from the South.[33] As the area east of San Juan Hill's periphery built entertainment venues to meet the growing demands of white modern life, Black New Yorkers built infrastructure necessary to establishing a stable foothold in Manhattan.

Artists like Bellows and Henri—and Sloan, too, both in the Tenderloin and when he visited his colleagues at the Lincoln Arcade—had to have been aware of and encountered Black New Yorkers. The extent to which they intentionally sought out these residents is less clear. In 1907, the year he moved into the Lincoln Arcade, Bellows produced a sketch titled "Tin Can Battle, San Juan Hill" (fig. 9). Originally titled by Bellows "San Juan Hill: N*****s Having a Tin Can Battle," the drawing became the basis for a cartoon, later published in a 1913 issue of *Harper's Weekly* under the title "A Tin Can Battle on San Juan Hill."[34] In certain thematic and visual senses, both the drawing and the cartoon mirror qualities found in one of Bellows's most famous works, which he produced while living on the periphery of San Juan Hill: *Both Members of This Club* (1909; fig. 10). The drawing depicts a scene often evoked in printed media by critics of life in the Black neighborhood; Black and white children hurl cans at one another, writhing with barbaric expressions, while Black adults watch passively, nearly spilling from overcrowded, dilapidated tenements. A 1904 article in the social-reform publication *Charities*, an outlet of the white-run Charity Organization Society, which certainly had their own motivations for furthering a public association between San Juan Hill and poorly parented Black children, detailed a scene in San Juan Hill:

> Both races have organized gangs made up of boys whose ages range anywhere from ten to twenty years. . . . Not long ago I witnessed a pitched battle of stones between the boys. They were stationed on opposite sides of the street, and each side had a large supply of stones. They fought earnestly and desperately, and were cheered and encouraged by their adult friends and relatives, who stood near-by ready to lend a hand.[35]

Fig. 10. George Bellows, *Both Members of This Club*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 63 3/16 in. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Chester Dale Collection, 1944.13.1

Accounts, almost always from white sources, often reiterated versions of this scene. That these sorts of narratives and images were commonly circulated calls into question whether Bellows actually witnessed such a scene.

For an avid consumer of visual print media, Bellows was likely aware of caricatural depictions of San Juan Hill's Black residents. His figures in *Tin Can Battle, San Juan Hill* draw on the visual characteristics that had come to define, to white spectators, the degradation of the neighborhood. In 1905 the newspaper *The Sun* published an article titled "The Naughty Negroes of San Juan Hill," accompanied by illustrations (fig. 11) These caricatures imagined men gambling in the streets, promenading women figured similarly as the women in Bellows's drawing (with the implication that they are sex workers), laundresses gossiping instead of working, and a man in a three-piece suit titled "Prominent Citizen" invading the personal space of a seemingly uninterested woman, also echoing Bellows's sketch.

The Naughty Negroes of San Juan Hill.

Two City Blocks Which Have Lately Been Giving the Police Extra Trouble.

WHERE THE TROUBLE STARTED.

A PROMINENT CITIZEN.

MARKETING ON THE AVENUE.

THE CRAP GAME.

WHITE WASHING

Fig. 11. Caricatures from "The Naughty Negroes of San Juan Hill," *The Sun,* August 6, 1905, 19; digitized by Newspapers.com

In Bellows's drawing, women are figured in near "mammy"-like depictions—matronly, with large breasts, wearing clothing that resembles the attire worn by domestic servants.

Another Bellows cartoon, likely drafted around the same time, reproduced similar visual language. The untitled drawing, possibly intended for a cartoon in *The Masses* but never realized, depicts three working-class women: a white woman, possibly Irish, given her facial features, pushing a baby in its carriage; a Black woman trailing behind, dressed in what appears to be an apron; and another white woman bringing up the rear, possibly Eastern European, as suggested by her shawl (fig. 12). Men's depictions in *Tin Can Battle, San Juan Hill* are more subdued, but they are similarly imagined as wearing clothing often found in caricatures of migrants from the South, including wide-brimmed hats or flat caps. On the right-hand side of the drawing, a man in what appears to be a shabby three-piece suit looms over a shirking woman, seemingly refusing his advances. Further, children crowd the backdrop, watching the violence unfold; their inclusion implies that they, too, will eventually be engaged in similar activities. The scene reinforced assumptions regarding Black parents' child-rearing capabilities, gendered respectability politics, and licentiousness.

Fig. 12. George Bellows, *Three Women and a Baby Carriage*, c. 1904–25. Black crayon on tan wove paper, mounted on off-white board, 8 1/2 x 11 7/10 in. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Bequest and gift; Caroline and Erwin Swann, DLC/PP-1974:232.54

I argue that much of the caricatural quality of the cartoon is owed to its site-specific nature. While the racial specifics of the figures are difficult to parse, often conflating stereotypes attributed to Irish immigrants while still clearly depicting Black children (as also indicated by the sketch's original title), audiences would have understood that San Juan Hill was a Black neighborhood often mocked and sensationalized for its poverty, violence, and crumbling infrastructure. In sum, San Juan Hill itself was just as much a character as any figure depicted.

Conclusion

To conclude, I return to Bellows's paintings of the construction of Penn Station. These images, and what is absent in them, coalesce the perspectives of Ashcan artists like Sloan and Bellows. The massive undertaking of gutting the Tenderloin and supplanting the

cityscape with the new transit hub forcibly displaced Black residents and began the process of transitioning the neighborhood into a site dominated by white commerce, leisure, and residence, all reinforced by expanded police interests. Similar factors would later converge to erase San Juan Hill. In Bellows's Penn Station series, human labor is present, but it is dwarfed by the megalithic structures rising from the pits. From Henri's statements, we know that Bellows went to the excavation site and viewed the construction firsthand.[36] Sloan's daily life must have been impacted by the station's construction too; he witnessed its progress from his rooftop on West Twenty-Third Street, where he often painted. Photographs show the human cost of Penn Station's creation and the central place of Black labor in the construction of the modern metropolis (fig. 13). There is an irony in the fact that many of these workers were participating in the construction of a site that replaced their homes, institutions, and cultural landscapes. As I have argued, Sloan and Bellows were less interested in these subjugations than envisioning a city that, even in its messiness, benefitted their standpoints as white men. These perspectives mirrored and reinforced larger hegemonic forces that continually remapped Manhattan at the expense of its Black inhabitants.

Fig. 13. Photographer unknown, *Manhattan Doctor Examining Man*, 1907. Penn Station, New York, Photographs, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

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Notes

[1] Martin A. Berger, "George Bellows and the Complication of Race," in *George Bellows Revisited: New Considerations of the Painter's Oeuvre*, ed. M. Melissa Wolfe (Cambridge Scholars, 2016), 73.

[2] Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham: A History of New York City from 1898 to 1919* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 8.

[3] See Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder, and Virginia M. Mecklenburg, eds., *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (W. W. Norton, 1995); Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (University of California Press, 2006); and Alexis L. Boylan, *Ashcan Art, Whiteness, and the Unspectacular Man* (Bloomsbury, 2017).

[4] Edward W. Wolner, "George Bellows, Georg Simmel, and Modernizing New York," *American Art* 29, no. 1 (2015): 107–8.

[5] Important historical context to this change is the impact of migration following the Civil War. The end of Southern slavery precipitated a large-scale exodus of Black migrants northward, although they were fewer in number than those of the later Great Migration. Between the end of the Civil War and 1900, New York's Black population more than doubled. This rise was accompanied by the concerted formation of Black neighborhoods, state laws addressing segregation, mounting race-based police violence, and other

changes reflective of increasing tensions between white and Black New Yorkers. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790–1915* (US Government Printing Office, 1968), 43–44; and Philip Kasinitz, *Caribbean New York: Black Immigrants and the Politics of Race* (Cornell University Press, 1992), 41–42.

[6] Quoted in Hilary Ballon, *New York's Pennsylvania Stations* (W. W. Norton, 2002), 35.

[7] Bennard B. Perlmen, *Painters of the Ashcan School: The Immortal Eight* (Dover, 1991), 191–95.

[8] Lee Ann Custer, "The Clean, Open Air of John Sloan's Tenement Paintings," *American Art* 37, no. 2 (2023): 28–53.

[9] Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 811–12.

[10] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 197–98.

[11] Berger, "George Bellows and the Complication of Race," 74.

[12] Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790–1920* (W. W. Norton, 1994), 203–4.

[13] Robert A. Slayton, *Beauty in the City: The Ashcan School* (State University of New York Press, 2017), 154.

[14] "New York State Census, 1905," New York County, Assembly District 25 Borough of Manhattan, Election District 04, image 12 of 17, accessed via FamilySearch, December 26, 2025, https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:9Q97-YSRS-XN6?wc=WHBW-L55%3A42719801%2C43004401%2C1590034114&cc=1463113. Family Search is the genealogical website of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. You must create a free account to access the site.

[15] Christopher J. Castañeda, "'Yours for the Revolution': Cigar Makers, Anarchists, and Brooklyn's Spanish Colony, 1878–1925," in *Hidden Out in the Open: Spanish Migration to the United States (1875–1930)*, ed. Phylis Cancilla Martinelli and Ana Varela-Lago (University Press of Colorado, 2018), 132–33; and Eileen Boris, "'A Man's Dwelling House Is His Castle': Tenement House Cigarmaking and the Judicial Imperative," in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, ed. Ava Baron (Cornell University Press, 1991), 141–20.

[16] Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (Scrivener's, 1890), 151.

[17] "Colored Pastors' Flocks," *Sun*, April 10, 1882, 1; and Charity Organization Society, *Charities Directory: A Classified and Descriptive Directory to the Charitable and Beneficent Societies, Institutions, and Churches of the City of New York* (Knickerbocker, 1895), 363.

[18] Lee Ann Custer's essay in this issue provides a more in-depth visual analysis of these and other works: Lee Ann Custer, "Locating Blackness in John Sloan's Neighborhood Scene," in "Blackness, the Ashcan School, and Modern American Art," edited by Jordana Moore Saggese and Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, In the Round, *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2025), https://journalpanorama.org/article/blackness-the-ashcan-school/locating-blackness.

[19] As an indicator of the social, racial, and economic mobility that Black reformers actively sought to foster through their building programs in the Tenderloin, Saint Philip's Episcopal Church used this structure to partially provide quality, Black-controlled rental units to congregants, the revenue from which they used to amass significant real-estate holdings throughout the Tenderloin and Harlem. This eventually led to Saint Philip's becoming the wealthiest Black congregation in the United States. While not pictured by artists like Sloan, such endeavors radically altered the Tenderloin's architectural landscape. For more on Saint Philip's and their real-estate ventures, see Kevin McGruder, *Race and Real Estate: Conflict and Cooperation in Harlem, 1890–1920* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 97–120.

[20] Stephen A. Black, *Eugene O'Neill: Beyond Mourning and Tragedy* (Yale University Press, 1999), 98; and Irving Lewis Allen, *The City in Slang: New York Life and Popular Speech* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 170–71.

[21] For more on the expansion of police powers and the advent of racialized policing, see Matthew Guariglia, *Police and the Empire City: Race and the Origins of Modern Policing in New York* (Duke University Press, 2023), 93–106.

[22] William McAdoo, "Experiences of a Police Commissioner: IV. Problems of Crime and Detection," *Harper's Weekly* 50, no. 2579 (May 26, 1906): 741.

[23] "News of the Day Briefly Told," *Standard Union*, April 6, 1903, 5.

[24] Historically, this event has been referred to as the Tenderloin Race Riot of 1900. In an effort to use more aware and updated language, scholars have more recently begun to refer to it simply as the "1900 Tenderloin Riots."

[25] Jessica Larson, "The Black Built Environment of Benevolence in New York's Tenderloin District: Comparative Architectural Approaches to Race, Reform, and Discipline, 1865–1910," *Buildings & Landscapes* 31, no. 1 (2024): 54–74.

[26] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press, 2009), 19.

[27] Andrea Olmstead, *Julliard: A History* (University of Illinois Press, 1999), 173.

[28] Susan S. Udell, *Homer Boss: The Figure and the Land* (Elvehjem Museum of Art, 1994), 9.

[29] Gerry Souter, *American Realism* (Parkstone, 2012), 156.

[30] Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (Yale University Press, 1992), 86.

[31] "C. E. Blaney Leases the Lincoln Square," *New York Times,* May 3, 1907, 7; and David L. Lightner, *Winne Lightner: Tomboy of the Talkies* (University Press of Mississippi, 2016), n.p.

[32] "Many Kinds of Buildings in Lincoln Square District," *New-York Tribune*, February 7, 1915, 33.

[33] Jessica Larson, "Building Black Manhattan: Architecture, Art, and the Politics of Respectability, 1857–1914" (PhD diss., Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2024), 117–88; and Marcy S. Sacks, *Before Harlem: The Black Experience in New York City before World War I* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 155–56.

[34] George Bellows, "A Tin Can Battle on San Juan Hill," *Harper's Weekly* 58, no. 2958 (August 30, 1913): 26; and Charles H. Morgan, *George Bellows: Painter of America* (Reynal, 1965), 68.

[35] "A Stone-Battle Neighborhood in New York," *Charities* 12, no. 17 (April 30, 1904): 435.

[36] Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America*, 26.