Frank Sinatra, the legendary singer, was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, and his influence on the city is still felt today. Hoboken, also known as the “Birthplace of the American Dream,” was once a small, industrial town on the west side of New York City. It was home to many early 20th-century pioneers, including Frank Sinatra and many other prominent figures in entertainment, politics, and business.

Frank grew up in Hoboken during the early 20th century, and his childhood home is now a museum dedicated to his life and career. The Sinatra Museum is located on 909 Hudson Street, which was once the site of the former Bethlehem Steel machine shop. This building was donated to the Hoboken Historical Museum, which later converted it into a museum dedicated to Sinatra’s life.

The museum features exhibits on Sinatra’s life and career, including footage from some of his most famous performances. It also includes a large collection of memorabilia, including personal items, photographs, and recordings. Visitors can learn about Sinatra’s early life, his rise to fame, and his lasting impact on the entertainment industry.

The museum is open to the public, and admission is free. It is located near many other attractions in Hoboken, including the Hoboken Historical Museum, the Hoboken Civil War Memorial, and the Hoboken Terminal.

In conclusion, the Hoboken Historical Museum is a great place to learn about Frank Sinatra and the rich history of Hoboken. It is a must-visit for fans of the legendary singer and anyone interested in New Jersey history. Whether you’re a local or a tourist, the museum is sure to provide an interesting and informative experience.
The Hoboken Historical Museum

The Hoboken Historical Museum was founded in 1980. Its purpose and objectives are many: to stimulate interest in the city’s history, architecture, and genealogy, and to offer exhibits, lectures, tours, and historical walking tours. The Museum also documents historic events and landmarks, current oral histories of its former residents, and unique artifacts relating to Hoboken’s rich history.

In 2001, we moved into our current location in one of the oldest buildings on Hoboken’s waterfront, a former machine shop for Bethlehem Steel. Through award-winning exhibits and publications, a dedicated team of professionals and an army of volunteers collaborate to bring interesting aspects of Hoboken’s past to light in exhibits that change every few to twelve months. The education center reaches educos and family-friendly activities for children of all ages. Our Upper Gallery features local artists whose work interprets Hoboken and our area in a range of visual media.

Our support comes in part from public grants and fundraising events such as the annual Gala, Secret Garden Tour, House Tour, and more. But a major source of our funding comes from donations by local businesses and individual members of the community like you.

As an active and fun organization, we are always looking for new volunteers and members to assist us. If you would like to become a Museum member and receive our email newsletter, earn discounts on merchandise and events, plus free admission, please visit our website: hobokenmuseum.org/support-as-a-membership.

If you prefer to mail in your payment, please provide the following information: name, address, phone, and email, and mail it with your check, payable to the Hoboken Historical Museum, to: Hoboken Historical Museum, P.O. Box 2206, Hoboken, N.J. 07030.

Getting to Hoboken

From New York: NT 29th Street Ferry to North Hoboken (14th Street Pier). See NYWaterway.com for details.

PATH train from MT or NJ to Hoboken Terminal, then take NJ Transit bus, local train, or walk north on Hudson Street to 13th Street. Our address is 1301 Hudson Street.

NJ Transit bus 520 or 126 to 14th & Washington Streets or from PATH to 13th & Washington Streets.

By car: From NJ Turnpike, take Exit 14C and follow signs to Hoboken, or Exit 14E, last exit before Lincoln Tunnel.

Parking: Three hours of free parking is in the Millinery Parking Garage at 12th & Shipyard Lane (with validation).

*free parking not available on certain dates. Call 201-856-2240 in advance to confirm.

Wheelchair-accessible: Main Gallery, Shop, and restrooms. Note: Our Upper Gallery is not wheelchair-accessible; however, the images can be viewed online at hobokenmuseum.org.

Francis Albert Sinatra (1915 – 1998)

"A Kid from Hoboken Who Got the Breaks"

Old Blue Eyes. The Voice. Chairman of the Board. Or, in Hoboken, simply “Frankies.” Old-timers here may argue about whether Frank Sinatra was a class act or a bum, whether he was the best or others were better, but whatever they say about Sinatra, they say it like family. They know the guy. You were from Hoboken. Nothing can change that.

He was, as one writer put it, “a kid from Hoboken who got the breaks.” And in the course of his sixty-year career, that skinny kid the others called “Slats” reshaped American popular music and ideas about style.

Frank Sinatra was America’s first teen heart-throb, earning another nickname—“Teenager”—after girls started fainting at his concerts during the 1940s. Boys imitated his allowed-auburn hair and croaky demeanor. All across the country—and that the world—sighing, swooning, swaggering fans fell in love with that voice, with an intense style of singing that brought the listener into the song, alongside the singer.

Perhaps this is why former boy-o’-doles and zoot-suiters—sometimes with their kids and grandchildren in tow—have journeyed for years to Sinatra’s birthplace, or parked into local libraries to celebrate the birth of this city’s most famous native son. Younger fans mention the Rat Pack and the Chairman’s cool, but many also cite his musical artistry as inspiration.

And when the news broke on May 14, 1998, that Frank Sinatra had died, the fans came again to Hoboken, to pay respects and to mourn. The Hollywood Boulevard-style frieze above the Hoboken Historical Museum had instated at the singer’s birthplace two years before was soon surrounded by candles, hand-made signs, flowers, notes, photos, and signed a large U.S. flag. A Hoboken specialty That the singer sometimes had shipped to California.

It is Sinatra’s fans who inspired this guide, with their frequent requests for information on Hoboken also linked to the legendary entertainer. We hope the information we have gathered helps visitors honor Sinatra and his family, and also the long-vanished social clubs, pool halls, and bars of the thirties, where Frank and his contemporaries gave us the songs we have grown to love. We hope you’ll gain a sense of what life was like here during the singer’s early years—and what remains from that time.

Writer Pete Hamill noted in a tribute to Sinatra that when the singer’s career began, “there was an America that now doesn’t exist very much, a kind of blue collar America, industrial America...and nobody had represented that before.” You could easily assume images from working-class, urban life. In his neighborhood, he told a radio audience in 1985, “days became nights and nights became days where they worked in factories. And Sinatra knew more than a little about street-tough guys, from spending time in smoke-filled nightclubs like the Cats-Meow—one of nearly 200 social clubs in the city during the thirties.

And yet, Frank’s growing-up years weren’t nearly as roughly as some biographies have suggested. He was a rare only child, in a family whose fortunes wavered through his mother’s savory political connections. (In fact, one of young Frank’s other nicknames, “Slackey O’Brien,” stemmed from his family’s ability to buy him as many pairs of dance pants as he desired. Although it’s certainly true that Frank was born in a cold-water flat, many immigrant families made homes in such apartments. And the Sinatras, after all, did not remain on Monroe Street for long.

As a third ward leader, Frank’s mother Dolores was a significant cog in the city’s political machine, gaining Democratic votes for higher-ups and dispensing favors. Like most local residents, she was aware of the district’s power—and the city—between the Irish and the Italians, but her close relationships had this power allowed her to literally cross those lines. In 1920s Hoboken, Italians didn’t dare cross Willow Avenue, a kind of dividing line between the Italian and Irish neighborhoods, and yet, the Sinatras—sometimes calling themselves “the O’Brien”—moved across Willow, and then moved again, each time closer to the prestigious Irish/German section of town. As you take the tour you will see, in the changing architecture of each Sinatra family home, the city’s market class distinctions.

The Hoboken of the 1920s and ’30s was also a city bustling with young singers, who performed on street corners, in clubs, in private homes, and in pool rooms— wherever they could get an audience. In September 1935 Sinatra joined up with a Hoboken trio, The Three Flashes, to form the Hoboken Four. They sang on the nationally broadcast radio show, Major Bowes and His Original Amateur Hour, and were voted its most popular act. The group toured the country for several months, then Sinatra went solo, singing dances at Hoboken clubs, until he got a gig at the Rustic Cabin in Englewood Cliffs. Band leader Harry James heard Sinatra on a WNEW Dance Parade broadcast from the Cabin and offered him a position as a vocalist. In late 1939, he joined the Tommy Dorsey band.

By then Frank had already married and moved out of Hoboken, and his singing engagements seemed to be everywhere but here in Hoboken. Within years he was a true star—his new home was California.

Sinatra continued to visit family in Hoboken, but in 1947 he made his last public appearance here for nearly forty years—until he returned to accompany President Ronald Reagan to St. Anne’s Feast in 1984. On October 30, 1947, Hoboken celebrated Sinatra Day, the final event in a month-long March of Progress celebration coordinated by Mayor Fred M. DeSapio. With the assistance of his dedicated ward leader, Dolores Sinatra, twenty thousand people lined Washington Street in the pouring rain to catch a glimpse of the star, who announced, “I’ve met people in cities all over the country, but folks here in Hoboken, well, they’re just wonderful—that’s all.”

As you walk this tour, you will meet more than a few Hobokenites who will return the compliment. As one man wrote to “Blue Eyes” in the sign-in book at Sinatra’s birthplace: “I was much younger than you, but grew up in this town, and all my family know you and your legacy growing up. Thanks for the world.”

Museum Hours

Closed Monday

Tuesday – Thursday: 7 – 9 p.m.

Friday – Sunday & Holiday: 12 – 5 p.m.

Admission

General Public: $3.

Children & Members: Free

Direct on-line: hobokenmuseum.org

1301 Hudson Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030

1-800-542-2240 in New Jersey

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