



Landmarks Preservation Commission

Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair

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THE MILLS HOTEL BECOMES A NEW YORK CITY LANDMARK

Commission Approves Individual Landmark Status for the Mills Hotel



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to designate the Mills Hotel No. 3 in Manhattan as a New York City Landmark. Located at 485 Seventh Avenue, this 16-story neo-Renaissance building was the third and largest of the three model residential hotels for single working men erected by Darius Ogden Mills at the turn of the 20th century.

Mills was a banker and philanthropist particularly concerned with the problems of housing the urban poor. In 1896, he decided create inexpensive lodgings for the working poor that would compete with and raise the level of the city's commercial lodging houses. He commissioned architect Ernest Flagg to build Mills House No. 1 at 160 Bleecker Street (1896-97, included within the South Village Historic District) and Mills House No. 2 at Chrystie and Rivington Streets (1896-98, demolished). In 1905, encouraged by the success of his two earlier hotels and wanting a hotel in a thriving Midtown location that would be convenient to public transportation, Mills commissioned the firm Copeland & Dole to design the Mills Hotel No. 3.

Rising to 16 stories, Mills Hotel No. 3 originally had 1,885 small single bedrooms each with a window opening onto the street or courtyard. The building incorporates two light-court units linked by central elevator hall. The unprecedented scale of the project allowed Mills to significantly lower the costs per room and offer the men residing in the hotel a larger equivalent for their money than had ever been possible at the time.

"The fascinating history of this building is an important reminder of the Housing Reform Movement— a pivotal time in the history of New York City, and the Commission is proud to ensure that this dignified building is protected for generations to come," said Commission Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan.

After Mills' death in 1910, a family trust continued to operate the hotel as a low-cost residence for single men. The majority of guests were blue collar workers, salesmen, and hotel and service industry employees. However, the hotel's location near the theater district made it particularly popular with actors and entertainers, especially in the 1910s.

The Mills family retained ownership of this hotel until 1954. The building remained a low cost hotel until the early 1980s, although stores and a parking lot were installed in its lower stories. In the 1980s, it became the Fashion Avenue Atrium and was remodeled for use as offices and show rooms. Aside from the alterations to its lower stories, its facades remain largely intact and the building retains its historical and architectural significance as a reminder of the Housing Reform Movement and the Progressive Era.

The building's facades are clad with limestone, light-colored brick, and terra cotta. The end bays are slightly projected and the windows are grouped in rhythmic patterns to provide visual interest. The stories are arranged into a three-story rusticated limestone base (the first and second story have been extensively altered), a nine story brick-clad midsection, and a four-story terra-cotta-clad attic. Significant features include molded string courses and cornices, fielded panels, cartouches, lion heads, and a richly embellished Renaissance copper cornice.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency responsible for protecting and preserving New York City's architecturally, historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Since its creation in 1965, LPC has granted landmark status to approximately 31,725 buildings and sites, including 1340 individual landmarks, 117 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 111 historic districts and 20 historic district extensions in all five boroughs. Under the City's landmarks law, considered among the most powerful in the nation, the Commission must be comprised of at least three architects, a historian, a realtor, a planner or landscape architect, as well as a representative of each borough.

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