



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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TIMES SQUARE'S BRILL BUILDING TUNED UP WITH LANDMARK STATUS

Noteworthy Office Building Tied to American Music, Staten Island Church, Two Manhattan Structures and Upper East Side Historic District Extension Join City's Growing Collection of Protected Sites

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to extend landmark status to the famed Brill Building in Times Square, a Staten Island church complex, a Midtown townhouse and an East Village commercial building, and extend the Upper East Side Historic District by 74 buildings.

"All of these designations reveal the multiple layers of New York City's history, architecture, culture and economic development," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "Each site is an invaluable asset, and today's votes will enable our agency to give them the protection they deserve."

In addition to approving the designations, the Commission voted to schedule public hearings on proposals to landmark 12 other buildings throughout the City, including a church and three cottages in the **Sandy Ground** section of Staten Island, one of New York City's few communities founded by freed slaves in the 19th century, and an important stop on the Underground Railroad. The hearing dates were not immediately scheduled.

The Commission also held public hearings on proposals to form a historic district in **Addisleigh Park** in St. Albans, Queens and landmark Coney Island's former **Shore Theater** and former **Childs Restaurant** buildings and the former **Eleventh Street Methodist Episcopal Chapel**, now the Father's Heart Church at 545-547 East 11th St. in and former **Olivet Memorial Church**, now the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection, both in the East Village; **Gramercy House** at 235-237 East 22nd Street; and the **Fisk-Harkness House** at 12 East 53rd St.

Descriptions of the newly designated properties are below:

The Brill Building, 1619 Broadway, Midtown Manhattan



Located at the northwest corner of Broadway and West 49th Street, the 11-story, Art Deco-style Brill Building is virtually synonymous with American music, from the twilight of Tin Pan Alley to the dawn of rock and roll. It was built in 1931 by Abraham Lefcourt, a real estate developer who leased the site from the Brill Brothers, the owners of a men's clothing store, and designed by Victor A. Bark, Jr., the architect of several commercial buildings in Manhattan.

"This legendary building is as closely linked to American music as Hollywood is to film," said Chairman Tierney. "It's also a standout because it's one of the few Art Deco buildings in Times Square."

Lefcourt originally had planned to erect a 1,050-foot building at the site _ the world's tallest at the time _ but scaled it back because of financing difficulties. It was named for a brief time for the developer's son, Alan E. Lefcourt, who died at the age of 17 while the project was being planned. A brass-finished bust of the boy is displayed on a pedestal set in an elaborately ornamented recess above the front door of the white brick building. A masonry bust that rests in a niche at the 11th-floor parapet also is believed to be his.



Some of the building's early tenants, such as the T.B. Harms Company, which sold sheet music to musical shows, and lyricist and composer Irving Caesar, were associated with Tin Pan Alley. Big band groups and



jazz musicians such as Cab Calloway, Tommy Dorsey and Duke Ellington leased offices in the building during the 1940s, and were joined by Nat King Cole and Louis Prima in the 1950s. By the early 1960s, the building had more than 160 tenants that were related to the music industry. One of them was Hill & Range Songs, whose writers, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, wrote "Jailhouse Rock," "Hound Dog," and numerous other songs for Elvis Presley, among other rock musicians.

For decades, a succession of nightclubs and restaurants the building's first and second floors, such as Jack Dempsey's, the Turf, Club Zanzibar and Bop City.

A handful of businesses related to the entertainment industry remain in the building. They include Paul Simon Music; film distributor Broadway Video and KMA Music, a recording and mixing studio. The building is currently owned by Stonehenge Partners, Inc. and INVESCO Real Estate of Dallas, Texas.

Reformed Church on Staten Island, Sunday School Building and Cemetery, 54 Port Richmond Ave., Port Richmond, Staten Island

The Greek Revival-style Reformed Church, the congregation's third sanctuary in Port Richmond, was constructed in 1844, and designed by one of its members, James G. Burger, a Staten Island carpenter. The Sunday school, added in 1898, was designed in the Colonial Revival style by Oscar Teale, a Manhattan-based architect who is responsible for dozens of Protestant churches and other sites around New York City, including escape artist Harry Houdini's memorial in Cypress Hills Cemetery, which lies in Queens and Brooklyn.



The church graveyard, in use since 1704, is the oldest non-private cemetery in the borough, and has markers dating from 1746 to 1916, some of which are attributed to noted New Jersey stone carvers.

"Together the church, Sunday School addition and cemetery are significant reminders of the historical, cultural, and architectural development of the Port Richmond neighborhood and Staten Island," said Chairman Tierney. "They're also part of the Commission's continued effort to protect more examples of Staten Island's rich history and architecture."

The Reformed Church is one of the oldest on Staten Island, but has the oldest congregation. Its beginnings can be traced to the 1680s when about a dozen Dutch and French families settled on Staten Island.

The congregation's first church, a hexagonal building constructed in 1715, was used as a barracks during the Revolutionary War and later razed after it was damaged in a storm. The second church was completed in 1788, and replaced after the congregation outgrew the building.

The gable-roofed church is set on a high stone foundation and faced with red brick trimmed with brownstone and wood moldings. The sanctuary has a recessed entrance porch, and is surmounted by a square wood bell tower with a denticulated cornice, paired louvered windows and a parapet decorated with v-shaped finials.

The brick-faced school addition is built at a right angle to the church, and is distinguished by a projecting two-story pavilion with paired giant brick pilasters capped with an open pediment and domical roof. The main entrance retains its original paneled wood door and narrow transom.

Germania Fire Insurance Company Building, 357 Bowery, East Village, Manhattan



Constructed in 1870 on the Bowery between East Third and East Fourth Streets, the building was designed by Carl Pfeiffer, a noted German-born architect whose commissions included hospitals, churches and apartment houses.

The building originally served as a branch of the Germania Fire Insurance Company, a firm founded in 1859 during a time when large urban fires were commonplace. The branch opened when the neighborhood was known as Little Germany, the heart of what was then the third largest German-speaking community in the world. Little Germany extended from the Bowery and Third Avenue to the East River, and from Division Street to 14th Street. The Bowery was one of its major thoroughfares, home to numerous businesses owned by German-

Americans.

The four-story building features a high basement and historic cast-iron storefront. It's topped by sloped, imitation mansard roof with a large, central dormer, and the second and third floors are faced in brick.

"This well-preserved building is a significant reminder of the days when Lower Manhattan pulsed with German immigrants," said Chairman Tierney, who noted it was brought to the Commission's attention through a survey conducted by the agency's staff.

The branch closed in the early 1880s, and moved farther north on the Bowery. Since then, the building has housed a variety of residential and industrial tenants, including a firm that manufactured barber shop equipment there from the 1930s to the 1970s. It's now a residential building.

Joseph B. and Josephine H. Bissell House, 46 West 55th Street, Midtown Manhattan

The five-story building was originally constructed as part of a row of five modest brownstones between Fifth and Sixth avenues. Josephine H. and Joseph B. Bissell, a surgeon who did pioneering research into the use of radium as a cancer treatment, bought the residence in 1903, when the area, known as Vanderbilt Row, was the city's most prestigious residential neighborhood.



Dr. Bissell commissioned architect Edward Lippincott Tilton to remodel the building with its current Neo-classical, brick and limestone façade. Tilton's firm, Boring & Tilton, designed the Main Building, Kitchen and Laundry Building, Main Hospital Building and Main Powerhouse for the U.S. Immigration Station on Ellis Island. After the firm dissolved, Tilton went on to design more than 100 libraries in the United States and Canada.

"The Bissell House is a rare example of a private residential commission by Tilton," said Chairman Tierney. "It speaks volumes about the unique character of this section of Midtown Manhattan at the turn of the 20th century."

The façade is distinguished by a bowed front, red and black brick and limestone details including two prominent cornices. Its interior was laid out under a scheme called the "American Basement Plan," in which the main entrance was centered at street level, had no stoop, and led to a generous foyer and grand stairway inside.

Dr. James Ramsay Hunt, a prominent neurologist, bought the building in 1919 and maintained his practice there. The building was converted to offices in 1954, and has been owned and occupied since 2001 by Les Copains, an Italian manufacturer of women's clothing.

Upper East Side Historic District Extension



The extension encompasses 74 buildings located in two sections along Lexington Avenue between East 63rd and East 76th streets. It shares a similar development history and building styles and typologies to those in the adjacent Upper East Side Historic District, which was designated in 1981, and is the fifth largest historic district in the City. With 1,044 buildings, it's bounded to the north and south by East 79th Street and East 59th Street, and west and east by Fifth Avenue and much of Lexington Avenue.

"These buildings are inextricably linked architecturally, historically, and visually, to the existing district," said Chairman Tierney. "The residential structures, and their later adaptation to commercial use, represent important trends in the development of the Upper East Side."

Development in the Upper East Side Extension started in the 1870s with the construction of three and four story row houses designed in the neo-Grec and Italianate styles, many of which were demolished in the 1910s and 1920s to make way for larger apartment buildings.

The district's second wave of growth came in the early 20th century following the completion of the Lexington Avenue subway, and saw the alteration of many of the row house facades, such as the addition of storefronts, to accommodate new commercial uses. Many large, multi-unit residential buildings were constructed at this time as apartment house living became fashionable among the wealthy.

The earliest example in the extension is 993 Lexington Ave. (pictured at right) a 15-story Renaissance Revival style brick building that has an elaborate limestone entrance on East 72nd Street. Designed by the noted firm of Schwartz & Gross and completed in 1913, it replaced a row of four-story 19th century row houses.



Other prominent buildings include 1017 Lexington Ave., built in 1922 near the southeast corner of East 73rd Street and designed in the Colonial Revival style by Cross & Cross, and 157 East 72nd Street, a Renaissance Revival-style apartment house featuring elaborate terra-cotta details. It was built in 1923 and designed by Rouse & Goldstone.

Below are details and the names of the other proposed sites which were approved for public hearings:

1. **Coleman House**, 1482 Woodrow Road, Sandy Ground, Staten Island
A rare example of the 19th century cottages that were built in Sandy Ground, one of the few communities founded by free African-Americans in New York City.
2. **565 and 569 Bloomingdale Road**, Sandy Ground, Staten Island
Two rare surviving examples of the late 19th-century cottages that were built in Sandy Ground.
3. **Rossville A.M.E. Zion Church**, 584 Bloomingdale Road, Sandy Ground, Staten Island
The predecessor to this 1897 structure anchored the development of Sandy Ground.
4. **190 and 192 Grand Street Houses**, 190-192 Grand Street, Little Italy Manhattan
These Federal-style brick houses, constructed c. 1820, remain largely intact.
5. **Haskins and Sells Building**, 35 West 39th Street, Midtown Manhattan
Neo-renaissance style, 12-story building was constructed in 1912 as the headquarters Haskins & Sells, an accounting firm.
6. **154 West 14th Street Building**, at Seventh Avenue, Greenwich Village, Manhattan
Viennese Secession style, 12-story loft building completed in 1913.
7. **Ridley & Sons Department Store**, 315 and 321 Grand streets and 59 Orchard St., Lower East Side, Manhattan.
The Classical Revival structures were originally built as part of a major expansion of the E. Ridley & Sons Department Store, completed in 1886. Ridley was one of the Lower East Side's most important retailers. At the time, the store had five acres of floor space and up to 2,400 employees.
8. **Japan Society Building**, 333 E. 47th St., Midtown Manhattan
Modernist structure, designed by Junzo Yoshimura with George Shimamoto of Gruzen Partnership and completed in 1971. It's the first building in New York City by a leading Japanese architect.
9. **Loew's Canal Street Theater**, 31 Canal St., Chinatown, Manhattan
Rare, small scale Spanish Baroque Revival style theater completed in 1927 and designed by noted architect Thomas W. Lamb.
10. **St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church**, 444 South 5th Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn
A striking, red-brick Romanesque Revival style church that was completed in 1885 that originally served a largely German immigrant population.

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 more than 25,000 buildings, including 1,263 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 100 historic districts and 14 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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