



## The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**TUESDAY, OCT. 30, 2007**  
**No. 07-27**

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### **STATEN ISLAND VARNISH PLANT AND MANSION DESIGNATED AS NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS**

*Rare Structures Are Part of Commission's Initiative to Preserve the Island's 19<sup>th</sup> Century Past*

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to approve landmark status for the former Standard Varnish Works factory office building in Elm Park, and the Gillett-Tyler House on Todt Hill, recognizing both for their architectural integrity and associations with Staten Island and American history. The designations stem from a Commission initiative begun earlier this year to protect more examples of the Island's rich, 19<sup>th</sup>-century heritage. Since 2003, the Commission has designated more than 100 landmarks on Staten Island, the majority of which date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

"Staten Island remains the only borough in which substantial numbers of New York City's earliest rural and suburban structures remain intact," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "This is one reason why the Commission has made it a priority to preserve these rare and important reminders of Staten Island's past.

#### **About the Standard Varnish Works Office Building**



The Standard Varnish Works office building, completed in 1893 and located at 2589 Richmond Terrace was originally part of a sprawling, seven-acre complex along Richmond Terrace that was once one of the world's largest producers of varnishes, enamels and specialty coatings. It was founded in 1870 in the Hunters Point section of Queens by David Rosenberg, a German Jewish immigrant who settled in the U.S. South in the 1850s and served as a procurement officer for the Confederate Army during the Civil War.

"The manufacturing industry played an important role in Staten Island's development, and this building factors heavily into that legacy," said Commissioner Tierney. "It is a fine example of a style of architecture typical of 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial buildings, distinguished by its handsome detailing and careful proportions."

*More*

The company's products were used on the Queen Mary and other ocean liners, several of New York City's largest skyscrapers, as well as caskets, locomotives, refrigerators and agricultural equipment. Standard Varnish was one of the first companies in the U.S. to specialize in the production of automobile varnishes and had factories around the world. The Staten Island plant remained in operation until 1982, and the office now serves as a carpet warehouse.

The two-story, brick-faced office building features a prominent tower and decorative detailing. Like many factories and industrial buildings constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the office building was designed in the American adaptation of the German round-arched style (known as Rundbogenstil) of architecture.

The factory office building was constructed by Colin McLean, a prominent contractor who worked extensively for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and helped build part of New York City's first subway line. He also was responsible for constructing the foundations of the Brooklyn side of the Williamsburg Bridge.

### **About the Gillett-Tyler House**

Located at 103 Circle Road, this two-story Greek-Revival mansion was built c.1846 in Enfield, Mass. for a textile mill owner named Daniel Gillett, and was later moved more than 200 miles and reconstructed on Staten Island in 1931 for Walter A. Tyler, an executive with a chewing gum-base manufacturer, the L.A. Dreyfus Company.



The building was moved to Staten Island by Charles A. Wade, a contractor from Dorset, Vermont who specialized in finding authentic New England houses and moving them to a buyer's desired location. To do this, Wade would first sketch the house, take it down, move the pieces by truck or rail, and reconstruct it on the new site.

The simple box-form Gillett-Tyler mansion has six-over-six windows, and decorative details such as a cornice line with wide bands of trim, two-story Doric pilasters and fluted Ionic columns and sidelights flanking the door at the recessed entry porch.

In the 1950s, the house and property were sold to Horace P. Moulton, vice president and general counsel of AT & T and his wife, Gretta, an advocate for Staten Island's Greenbelt parkland. It's now used as a private residence.

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The Landmarks Preservation Commission is 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 some 24,000 buildings, including 1,180 individual landmarks, 120 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 89 historic districts in all five boroughs. Under the law, 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. There are 11 commissioners, all of whom are appointed by the Mayor for staggered three-year terms.

