



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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NEW LANDMARKS NAMED IN CONEY ISLAND, MIDTOWN, TRIBECA AND THE BRONX

Coney Island Theater, Shreve, Lamb & Harmon Skyscraper, Former Department Store Building and a Hudson River Villa Make the Commission's Grade

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved the individual landmark designations of the Coney Island Theater, the 500 Fifth Avenue building, the Rogers, Peet & Company Building at Broadway and Warren Street, and Alderbrook House in the Riverdale section of the Bronx.

In other business, the Commission held a public hearing on a proposal to designate the Borough Hall Skyscraper Historic District, a group of 20 buildings roughly bound by Montague, Court and Livingston Streets. It also agreed to hold a hearing on a proposal to give individual landmark status to the Martha Washington Hotel at 27-31 East 29th Street in Manhattan.

Descriptions of each building follow below:

Coney Island Theater (later Shore Theater), 1301 Surf Avenue



The seven-story, neo Renaissance style building was completed in 1925 as part of a campaign _ beginning with the construction of the famed Boardwalk and extension of the subway _ to transform Coney Island into a year-round entertainment district. The building was designed by the experienced theater architecture firm of Reilly & Hall, both of whom were protégés of the prolific theater architect Thomas W. Lamb.

The theater housed a 2,500-seat auditorium for vaudeville and motion pictures and office space, and was initially operated by Marcus Loew, founder of the famed movie theater chain. It was built by the

Chanin Construction Company, the developer of scores of prominent buildings in Brooklyn and Manhattan, including the Chanin Building (a New York City landmark) and several Broadway theaters such as the Biltmore, the Mansfield, the Royale and the Majestic.

The theater, the tallest structure on Coney Island, stands out among the neighborhood's low-rise wood and plaster buildings. Clad in buff brick and cream-colored terra cotta with stone and green terra-cotta accents, the building, which recalls an Italian palazzo, has a rusticated base with arcaded Florentine arches, a



terra-cotta clerestory, and a roof pavilion with arched windows and a balcony. Its construction coincided with the opening of the Cyclone Roller Coaster and the Wonder Wheel, as well as hotels, restaurants and other amusements.

“The theater shepherded Coney Island’s transformation into New York City’s playground,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “Its elegant style and substantial size were decidedly more Broadway than Boardwalk.”

In 1964, the theater was brought under new management and renamed Brandt’s Shore Theater. It staged live burlesque shows in the late 1960s and in 1972, the orchestra was converted to a bingo hall, and the ground floor later leased to a bar and a chain restaurant. The building is currently vacant.

500 Fifth Avenue Building, northwest corner of 42nd Street



The soaring, Art Deco-style, 59-story building was completed in 1931, and designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, one of the premier skyscraper architecture firms whose commissions included the Empire State Building and the Bankers Trust Building at 14 Wall Street (both New York City landmarks). It was constructed on a prominent site at the same time as the Empire State Building, and, because of the lot’s small size, maximized the height and bulk allowed under the City’s zoning regulations through the use of multiple setbacks and asymmetrical massing.

500 Fifth Avenue was constructed in just over a year, and set a new standard for speed and efficiency in building construction because its components were mapped and measured before they were incorporated into the structure, and there was close collaboration among the architect, real estate advisers, operating managers and building owner.

The building, developed by Walter J. Salmon, who was responsible for rebuilding the north side of West 42nd Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues at the beginning of the 20th century, was one of dozens constructed during a construction boom that began in the 1920s, and ended by 1932. Many of them were executed in the relatively new Art Deco style, a flamboyant approach marked by the combination of gleaming metals, stone, brick and terra cotta, and use of decorative geometric motifs and natural forms.

“It was the sister skyscraper to the Empire State Building, but received as a masterpiece in its own right,” said Chairman Tierney. “It remains one of the finest Art Deco buildings in New York City to this day.”

The building is sheathed in limestone, terra cotta and buff brick, and features Art Deco ornament such as chevrons and abstracted scrolls and fronds. The black granite and limestone main entrance on Fifth Avenue is capped by an allegorical relief by sculptor Edmond Amateis depicting the “genius” of modern skyscrapers. From a distance, the building’s dark spandrels and window frames appear to merge, creating a series of vertical stripes.



The Electrolux Corporation, railroad corporations and the Western Universities Club were among the first tenants in the building. Later tenants included the Austrian and Japanese consulates. It remains in use as an office building with street-level stores.

Rogers, Peet & Company Building, 258 Broadway, at Warren Street

Completed in 1900, the neo-Renaissance style building was designed by the noted firm of John B. Snook & Sons and occupied for more than 70 years by Rogers, Peet & Co., a retailer of men's and boy's clothing. It replaced a five-story building that had stood on the site, and was designed by John B. Snook before he started John B. Snook & Sons.



The building is an early example of a steel skeleton-framed skyscraper, and stands out among a group of tall structures built during the late 19th century near City Hall, considered the City's first skyscraper district. It was constructed with the latest in fireproofing technologies, and articulates its steel framing through the use of wide window bays and projecting piers.

"It's a handsome building designed by an important firm that reflects the evolution of commercial architecture in New York City and housed a well respected business for decades," said Chairman Tierney. "I can testify, personally, to the quality and longevity of Rogers, Peet clothing, having owned one of its jackets for at least 20 years."

Snook also designed the A.T. Stewart department store building at 280 Broadway, the first Italianate commercial building in New York, and a French Second Empire-style cast-iron commercial building at 287 (both New York City landmarks). Examples of Snook & Sons' work are located on the Upper East and West sides and in Tribeca, SoHo, the Meatpacking District, and Carnegie Hill.

The Rogers, Peet & Co. building is clad in stone and buff brick and crowned by a deep molded and denticulated copper cornice. A three-bay addition was constructed on Warren Street in 1909 by the architecture firm of Townsend, Steinle & Haskell that continued the original design.

Rogers, Peet & Co. was founded in 1874 by Marvin N. Rogers and Charles B. Peet, and sold ready-made men's clothing. It was one of the first clothing merchants to truthfully advertise the quality and appearance of its goods, and was known for its large inventory and low prices. The retailer had four stores in Manhattan by the 1950s.

The Warren Street store closed in 1976, and the remaining three by 1978. The building's top stories have since been converted into apartments and the ground floor is occupied by a bank.

Alderbrook House, 4715 Independence Ave., Riverdale, the Bronx

Perched above the Hudson River, Alderbrook was built c. 1859 as part of an exclusive development of eight villas in Riverdale, an area where some of New York City's wealthiest families spent their summers in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Percy R. Pyne, an English-born industrialist, trader and banker, owned and used



Alderbrook as a country home from 1864 until 1895, during which time he expanded the size of the property to 17 acres. The estate was purchased in 1921 by Viola Nadelman, the wife of the renowned Polish-born sculptor Elie Nadelman.

In 1926, the Nadelmans opened the first folk-art museum in the United States west of Alderbrook, near Palisade Avenue to house their vast collection of folk art, which was considered one of the finest in the world. They lost much of their fortune in the 1929 stock market crash, and sold the estate to a corporation that subdivided the property for new houses, and sold their art collection to Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, the New-York Historical Society and other institutions. The Nadelmans rented Alderbrook for several years until buying it back in 1936.

Using Alderbrook's kitchen as his studio, Elie Nadelman started to produce the small cast-plaster figures that came to define his late career. Hundreds of them were found in Alderbrook following Nadelman's suicide in 1946, and were photographed by Henri Cartier-Bresson.

The house, whose name may have been inspired by a collection of stories published by Fanny Forrester in 1847, combines Italianate and Gothic Revival characteristics and retains a generous veranda, gabled roofline featuring deep flared eaves, brackets and gable trusses and tall brick chimneys with grouped flues and decorative niches.

"Alderbrook is truly unique and remarkably well preserved," said Chairman Tierney. "It is one of a handful of villas overlooking the Hudson River in New York City, and is a strong link to Riverdale's historic past and a renowned 20th century artist and his work."

Alderbrook remained in the Nadelman family until 2009, and was recently sold.

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 27,000 buildings, including 1,274 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 101 historic districts and 16 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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