



**NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION
COMMISSION**

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, September 15, 2009
No. 09-09**

**COMMISSION APPROVES HISTORIC DISTRICT IN QUEENS AND FOUR
INDIVIDUAL LANDMARKS ON STATEN ISLAND**

*Designations Include Collection of 96 Distinctive, Century-Old Tenements in Ridgewood and
Horton's Row, a Quartet of Late 19th Century Rowhouses in Tompkinsville*



The New York City Landmarks Preservation today voted unanimously to approve the designations of the Ridgewood North Historic District in Queens and Horton's Row on Staten Island, a group of four, rare single-family rowhouses on Staten Island, citing their distinctive architecture and important roles in the history of housing in New York City.

The district consists of 96 distinctive multi-family residential and commercial tenement buildings that were built between 1908 and 1914, and became models for working and middle-class housing. They had bigger rooms, more light and air, and were more

sanitary than their 19th-century predecessors.

The four individual landmarks are masonry rowhouses constructed between 1880 and 1882 as affordable rental homes for middle-class families, and considered rare on Staten Island, as most of the 19th-century housing stock consisted of single-family frame houses.



Separately, the Commission held public hearings on proposals to landmark the c. 1929 Georgian Revival-style **Jamaica Chamber of Commerce** building at 89-31 161st Street in Queens and create another historic district adjacent to and developed later than the Ridgewood North Historic District, which would be called the **Ridgewood South Historic District**, and encompass 210 buildings.

"Today's actions speak to the Commission's ongoing commitment to extending its protective mantle in every borough," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "Since 2003, the Commission has designated a total of 21 historic districts across New York City, including a record 12 historic districts outside of Manhattan, more than any other administration in the Commission's 44-year history."

Descriptions of each of the newly designated district and individual landmarks follow below:

Ridgewood North Historic District



The district, located on former farmland along Gates, Fairview, Grandview and Forest avenues and Palmetto and Woodbine streets in the Ridgewood section of southwest Queens, consists mostly of 96 tenement buildings that were constructed between 1908 and 1914 by the G.X. Mathews Company, and known as “Mathews Model Flats.” (Photo at left is 60-44 to 66-22 Forest Ave.)

Constructed in long rows of repeated designs with buff-and-amber-colored brick facades, the three-story buildings include six separate residential apartments with five rooms and a separate, full bathroom, as well as ample light and air supplied by central light shafts.

“These lively buildings were a substantial upgrade from earlier tenements, and served as a model for affordable housing at a time when New York City’s population was growing rapidly,” said Chairman Tierney. “They were innovative in plan, striking in style, and, remarkably, have remained unchanged since their completion nearly 100 years ago.”

The G.X. Mathews Company was a prolific construction firm that was founded by German immigrant Gustave Xavier Mathews and his two brothers in Ridgewood in 1904. The company’s tenements in the district have Romanesque and Renaissance Revival-style details, and feature geometrically patterned brickwork, stone entrance enframements, ornate cornices with decorative swag and garland and bluestone stoops.

The brick was manufactured by B. Kreisler & Sons on Staten Island, one of the first companies in the United States to produce fire brick, a fire resistant brick used in many industrial buildings. The factory closed in 1927.

“Mathews Flats” were thought to be such an improvement over previous forms of affordable housing that they were exhibited by the New York City Tenement House Department at the Panama-Pacific Fair in 1915. The company constructed more than 300 model flats in Ridgewood, and hundreds of other buildings elsewhere in Queens, including Astoria, Woodhaven, Corona, Woodside and Long Island City before closing after Mathews’ death the late 1950s.

Horton’s Row

Horton’s Row is comprised of four rare rowhouses at 411, 413, 415 and 417 Westervelt avenues between Scribner and Corson avenues in Tompkinsville, located in northeastern Staten Island. They were constructed between 1880 and 1882, and were originally part of 12 identical attached masonry rowhouses that were built as affordable rental houses for middle-class families, but were converted to multi-family flats around 1901. (Photo courtesy of the Staten Island Historical Society)



The rowhouses were developed by Harry L. Horton, a successful banker and broker who also constructed and operated water plants on Staten Island, and was a president of the village of New Brighton. He chose the site in part because of its proximity to the ferry.

The row was considered an anomaly, not only because most dwellings constructed in the 19th century on Staten Island were single-family frame houses, but also because it's built on a slope, with each building rising higher than the other, creating a stepped pattern. The architect is not known.

“The arrangement of the buildings on the brow of a hill seems to be more San Francisco than Staten Island,” said Chairman Tierney. “They are a striking reminder of the borough’s rich past that this agency has made great progress toward protecting in recent years.”

The simple red brick rowhouses, which have neo-Grec style elements and full-width front porches, are knit together by the ornamental cast-iron fencing along the edge of their shallow front yards. They also feature angled bay windows, cornices with dentils and square or curved brackets.

Five additional buildings of the original group of 12 remain at the site, but have been significantly altered, while the other three were demolished.

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 1,239 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks and 97 historic districts in all five boroughs. Under the City’s landmarks law, considered 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.

Contact: Elisabeth de Bourbon/ 212-669-7938
edebourbon@lpc.nyc.gov