



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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MID-CENTURY MODERN MIDTOWN OFFICE TOWER BECOMES A LANDMARK

Sleek, Green Glass-Paneled Structure near Bryant Park Reflects Emerging Architectural and Corporate Aesthetic of the Early 1960s



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to grant landmark status to the Springs Mills Building at 104 West 40th Street, a mid-block Modernist tower constructed north of the Garment District between 1961 and 1963 for Springs Cotton Mills, a major textile manufacturer. (Photo at left, c. 1963 courtesy of Abramowitz, Kingsland & Schiff)

The 21-story building, located between Sixth Avenue and Broadway and 39th and 40th streets, is one of eight Modernist works that have been designated as individual landmarks in the past seven years. They include I.M. Pei's University Village and Manhattan House and Chase Manhattan Plaza, both by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.

"The designation of the Springs Mills Building demonstrates the Commission's commitment to recognizing and protecting more examples of the Modernist movement, and there are more to come," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney.

Constructed on an irregular L-shaped lot, the Springs Mills Building was designed by Harrison & Abramowitz, the architecture firm that was responsible for several buildings at the 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs in Queens, the United Nations Headquarters and Empire State Plaza in Albany.

The building was mostly designed on behalf of the firm by architect Charles H. Abbe, and has two distinct facades and entrances. Its most striking element is the elongated hexagonal tower that rises from a plaza on West 40th Street.

The building is faced with deep green, heat absorbing "Solex" glass _ a material used previously at the U.N., Lever House and Abbe's Corning Glass Building at 717 Fifth Avenue _ configured into a series of panels separated by dark grey and silver aluminum mullions.

The Springs Mills Building was designed a year before the city's 1916 zoning regulations were revised. Its bulky south façade (39th Street) reflects that code, filling the width of the lot and incorporating two setbacks. By contrast, the north façade rises from a shallow, limestone-clad public plaza, anticipating the new zoning rules that encouraged slender, free-standing towers.



“This sleek, sculptural form gave the building a unique and distinctive identity,” said Chairman Tierney. “It’s not only a well-preserved example of a mid-20th century glass curtain wall skyscraper, it’s also one of the finest corporate buildings designed by Harrison & Abramowitz in New York City.”

Springs Cotton Mills, now known as Springs Global, was founded in 1914 following the merger of several separate mills in South Carolina. The company opened a sales office in Manhattan in 1946 at 200 Church Street in Tribeca, the former heart of the City’s textile district. By the time the company decided to relocate, it had become the largest producer of sheets and pillow cases in the United States. In 1999, the company sold the building, which is now owned by two investment firms, and remains a tenant.

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 1,264 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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