



Landmarks Preservation Commission

Meenakshi Srinivasan
Chair

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COMMISSION APPROVES INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK STATUS FOR TWO BROOKLYN BUILDINGS

LPC Votes to Landmark the Henry and Susan McDonald House and the M.H. Renken Dairy Company Office and Engine Room Buildings

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to extend landmark protection to two buildings in Brooklyn- the **Henry and Susan McDonald House** and **M.H. Renken Dairy**- citing their architectural, historic and cultural significance.



The **Henry and Susan McDonald House** is a free-standing Italianate style frame house with Greek Revival style elements located at 128 Clinton Avenue. It was built for Henry and Susan McDonald in 1853-54. McDonald, a prosperous baker with a business on Catherine Street in Manhattan occupied the house with his family until the mid-1870s.

The house, which remains unusually intact, was built following an expansion of the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the opening of several new streets. Located at the crest of a hill with excellent views of the East River and Manhattan, Clinton Avenue was the neighborhood's premiere residential street— a wide tree-lined boulevard containing the villas of wealthy merchants.

"This very rare and well-preserved frame house is an important reminder of a time when the Wallabout area of Brooklyn was undergoing rapid development," said Commission Chair Meenakshi Srinivasan. "Today's vote underscores the Commission's commitment to ensuring that it remains a part of the City's historic fabric for generations to come."

The **M.H. Renken Dairy Company** office at 582-584 Myrtle Avenue and the engine room at 580 Myrtle Avenue are two structures with a unified Art Moderne style design located in Brooklyn's Clinton Hill neighborhood.

German immigrant Martin H. Renken founded his dairy company in 1888, and by the 1930s, Renken Dairy was at its peak. The elevation of cow's milk into a commonplace food largely resulted from the rise of the industrial city, technological advancements in transportation and milk processing, and the work of progressive public officials, public –health advocates and urban reformers who were especially active in New York City.



As the third-largest dairy company in New York City, Renken pasteurized and bottled more than seven million quarts of fresh milk annually, operated 300 delivery routes, and owned several creameries in Upstate New York and Pennsylvania.

In 1932, reflecting its prosperity, the company built a new office building at 582-584 Myrtle Avenue, designed by the prolific Brooklyn firm of Koch & Wagner. Four years later, Koch & Wagner renovated the circa-1860 building at 580 Myrtle Avenue to contain an engine room and storage space, with a new front façade that matched the design of the office building and gave both buildings the look of a single structure.

The Renken buildings were “modernistic” in design and faced in beige enameled brick to convey a hygienic image. At its opening, the office building housed a “model Renken dairy store,” the storefront of which remains essentially intact.

“Dating from the period in which New York City’s milk was renowned for its exceptional quality, these buildings serve as reminders of the City’s signature role in improving the safety of milk, and are distinguished remnants of both a once-bustling dairying complex and a vanished era,” said Chair Srinivasan.

Remarkably well-preserved, the M.H. Renken Dairy Company buildings are striking examples of American architecture incorporating International Style influences.

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 approximately 32,743 buildings and sites, including 1350 individual landmarks, 117 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 114 historic districts and 21 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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