



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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NEW HISTORIC DISTRICT AND FOUR LANDMARKS NAMED IN QUEENS

Ridgewood South Historic District and Four Buildings in Jamaica Protected, as LPC Surpasses Historic District Designation Record and Considers 1,500 Other Properties in NYC

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved a 210-building historic district in the south Ridgewood section of Queens, and granted landmark status to a parish house, office tower, courthouse and bank building in the borough's Jamaica neighborhood. The district is the 22nd approved since 2003, more than any other administration since the Commission was founded in 1965. In addition to approving five new designations in Queens, the Commission voted to hold a public hearing on a plan for a historic district in central Ridgewood consisting of 900 properties.



"These measures build upon the strong record the Commission has established in the past seven years of protecting the architecturally significant buildings and sites that speak to the development and history of Queens," said Chairman Tierney. "If all 1,100 buildings were to earn designation, the total number of landmark properties in Queens would rise from approximately 2,700 to 3,800 properties, an increase of 40 percent."

The four new landmarks are the **Grace Episcopal Church Memorial Hall** at 155-24 90th Ave., the **Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building** at 89-31 161st St., the former **Jamaica Savings Bank Building** at 146-21 Jamaica Ave. and **Queens General Court House** at 88-11 Sutphin Blvd.

In other business, the Commission held public hearings on proposals to designate three historic districts in Brooklyn: the 13-building **Park Place Historic District**, near Crown Heights; the **Wallabout Historic District**, 58 buildings, near Clinton Hill and the **Park Slope Historic District Extension**, 582 buildings. It also voted to schedule public hearings on the proposed designations of a fourth district in Brooklyn, the 21-building **Borough Hall Skyscraper Historic District** and the **Free Public Baths** of the City of New York at 342-348 East 54th St. in Manhattan.

Finally, the Commission also held public hearings on proposals to give individual landmark status to four Manhattan buildings: the Hotel Wolcott, 4 W. 31st St., the Mills Hotel No. 3, at 485 7th Ave; the building at 500 Fifth Avenue Building at 42nd St. and the Neighborhood Playhouse at 466 Grand Street, and one on Staten Island, the W.T. Garner Mansion at 355 Bard Ave.

Descriptions of the Ridgewood South District and four Jamaica landmarks follow below:

Ridgewood South Historic District



Bounded by Woodward and Onderdonk avenues to the north and south, and Catalpa Avenue and Woodbine Street to the east and west, the Ridgewood South Historic District consists of 210 buildings, primarily three-story brick tenements, and the St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church complex.

The tenements were constructed between 1911 and 1912 by the G.X. Mathews Company, a pioneer of desirable, affordable apartments that were also known as “Mathews Model Flats,” and later copied by other developers. They were built on larger lots than earlier tenement buildings, allowing two, five-room apartments per floor, each with its own full bathroom and light shafts providing windows in each room.

Ridgewood remained a farming community until the late 19th century, when transportation improvements and the consolidation of the five boroughs spurred residential and commercial development in the area. It became a sought-after neighborhood among German Americans seeking an alternative to the overcrowded, unsanitary tenements of the Lower East Side, Bushwick and Williamsburg.

Most of the buildings in the district were designed by Bushwick architect Louis Allmendinger, who was responsible for other important buildings in Brooklyn and Queens, including the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Lord in Williamsburg, and the former J. Kurtz & Sons Store Building in Jamaica, both New York City landmarks.

The buildings are constructed of smooth, light-colored brick made by B. Kreischer & Sons, a noted Staten Island brick manufacturing company, and feature Romanesque and Renaissance Revival-style details such as cast-stone string coursing, segmental arches of contrasting brick, pressed metal cornices with swags and garlands and carved-stone door lintels.

“This striking collection of buff and amber colored buildings retain a high level of architectural integrity and represent the innovative direction housing had taken in New York City in the first decade of the 20th century,” said Chairman Tierney. “The tenements were so successful in terms of cost and amenities that they became a model for future housing development.”

The St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church complex, located at 58-15 Catalpa Avenue, is comprised of a cathedral, rectory, school and convent, and was integral to growth of the German American community there. All four were built between 1909 and 1926, and designed by Francis J. Berlenbach, Jr., a local architect who was responsible for several Roman Catholic churches in Brooklyn and Queens, and served as an architectural consultant to the Archdiocese of Brooklyn and Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic.



Like the other buildings in the district, the four structures are faced in the Kreischer pale yellow and amber-colored brick. The school was completed in 1909, and designed in the Romanesque Revival and Renaissance styles; the rectory was completed in 1910 and the convent was erected in 1914 and designed in Neo-classical style. The Italian Renaissance Revival style cathedral, completed in 1926, is topped a bell tower with a clock face above an arcaded porch, making a strong statement about the vitality of the parish.

Grace Episcopal Church Memorial Hall, 155-24 90th Avenue (at Parsons Boulevard)



The parish hall, completed in 1912, is part of the Grace Episcopal Church complex, one of the most historic religious sites in New York City. Founded in 1702, the church is among the nation's earliest Episcopal parishes, and the second oldest in New York State, behind Trinity Church in Manhattan. The present sandstone English Gothic Revival style church is the congregation's third on the site, and was completed in 1861. Its graveyard

contains headstones that date to the 18th century, and mark the burials of members of the prominent Gracie, Van Rensselaer, Van Cortland, Delafield and King families. Both the graveyard and the church are New York City landmarks.

The two-story, red brick and limestone building was constructed in memory of the congregation's deceased parishioners, and included a gymnasium, auditorium, meeting rooms and offices. It was designed in the Tudor Gothic Revival style by the architecture firm of Upjohn and Conable.

Hobart B. Upjohn, the son and grandson of famed architects Richard M. Upjohn and Richard Upjohn, respectively, is best known for his designs of distinctive residences, churches and college buildings in and around New York City. George W. Conable also specialized in churches and institutional buildings and was the architect of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce building, which was given New York City landmark status today.

The parish hall, used by 21 different organizations by the mid-20th century, features steeply pitched gable roofs with intersecting gables, several tall chimneys, arched window and door openings and bay windows with crenulated parapets.

"This picturesque structure was built to serve as a powerful link to the church's historic past, and secure a promising future," said Chairman Tierney. "The parish hall nurtured and sustained this important congregation for almost 100 years, and its designation helps to assure its role will continue."

Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, 89-31 161st Street

Constructed on a prominent site at the foot of 90th Avenue in Jamaica's central business district, the 10-story Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building was completed in 1929. It was designed in the Georgian Revival style by George Conable, the architect of several other buildings in Jamaica.

The Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1919 as the Board of Trade to promote Jamaica's commercial and residential development. Its growth during the ensuing decade coincided with Jamaica's emergence as a financial center, as numerous banks, trust companies and bond and mortgage companies opened offices, and the chamber's membership climbed to 500.



"The stately building reflects the Chamber's prominence and Jamaica's financial strength, and is a reminder of an important moment in Jamaica's economic development history," said Chairman Tierney.

The building has a terra cotta base and central arched entrance, above which the chamber's name is carved into the frieze of the first floor's cornice. The upper brick façade is divided by cast-stone quoins into three sections, and is topped by a three-story pavilion with a pedimented temple featuring Doric pilasters and large scrolls at the corners.

The Chamber of Commerce left the building in 1999, and in July 2010 dedicated a new building on Rockaway Boulevard. Its original headquarters is currently used for offices.

Former Jamaica Savings Bank, 146-21 Jamaica Avenue



The one-story Moderne style building was completed in 1939 to serve as a branch of the Jamaica Savings Bank, a financial institution that helped fuel the growth not only of Jamaica, but also of Queens. The bank was incorporated in 1866, and founded by a group of distinguished local civic leaders and businessmen, among them John Alsop King, the eldest son of the noted statesman and abolitionist Rufus King, a signer and framer of the U.S. Constitution. John King was a member of the New York state assembly and senate, a U.S. congressman and governor of New York from 1857-58.

The branch building, constructed on a trapezoidal lot at the northwest corner of Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard is clad in Indiana limestone with a polished granite base, and was designed by Morrell Smith, a prolific Queens architect whose specialty was commercial bank buildings. His other clients included the Bank of Manhattan and the Bank of Manhattan Trust Company. Smith also helped to draft the city's new building code under former Mayor Jimmy Walker.

"This simple, but finely detailed building is an excellent example of the Moderne style," said Chairman Tierney. "It was designed to convey the bank's strength and prosperity da time when the Jamaica Savings Bank was considered to be one of the largest savings institutions in the United States."

The monumental structure has a distinctive corner entrance with an ornamental bronze doorway surmounted by a large eagle and an angled façade. A series of tall rectangular, recessed windows with ornamented spandrels create a rhythmic sweep across both sides of the building, which is topped by a stylized Greek entablature.

The building is now a branch of Capital One Bank.

Queens General Court House, 88-11 Sutphin Boulevard

Located on a full block site, the E-shaped seven-story, Alabama limestone-faced courthouse stands on a lot that stretches nearly 337 feet across Sutphin Boulevard and 148th Street and 285 feet along 88th and 89th avenues. It was completed in 1939, and designed in the Modern Classical style by Alfred H. Eccles and William W. Knowles, both well-known Queens architects and residents.

Queens' population expanded rapidly at the beginning of the 20th century, putting a severe strain on the court system in Jamaica, which was spread out among several



buildings, including the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, approved today as a New York City landmark.

Construction of the courthouse was funded by City funds and a grant from the federal Public Works Administration, established to lift the nation out of the Great Depression. It housed the Queens County Clerk's office, and the City, Small Claims, Supreme and Surrogate's courts, as well as the District Attorney's, motor vehicle, and Sheriff's offices.

The courthouse was constructed at the same time of a number of other large-scale civic projects in Queens such as the Triborough (now Robert F. Kennedy) Bridge, the North Beach (now La Guardia) Airport, Flushing Meadows Park, and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel.

"This grand monument is one of the finest and most imposing public buildings in Queens, and a major civic improvement that consolidated numerous courthouses and municipal offices," said Chairman Tierney. "Its dignified design reflects the high civic purpose it was constructed to serve."

A 2 1/2-story colonnaded portico that fronts on a grand staircase dominates the façade of the building. Its three arched entrances feature the original bronze coffered doors and are framed with bronze sculptural panels depicting famous legal figures. Other notable features include heavy, bracketed cornices, balconies with balustrades and ornamented relief panels.

The building, now known as the Supreme Court Building, has been featured in such films as "Bonfire of the Vanities," "Freedomland," and "Leaving Las Vegas." It's also used for the current television series, "The Good Wife," and "You Don't Know Jack."

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 1,266 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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