



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

1 Centre Street, 9th Floor North New York NY 10007 TEL: 212-669-7700 FAX: 212-669-7960
www.nyc.gov/landmarks



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, MAY 15, 2007
No. 07-15

CONTACT: Lisi de Bourbon
212-669-7938

LANDMARK STATUS APPROVED FOR 63 NASSAU STREET, ONE OF ONLY FIVE KNOWN SURVIVING STRUCTURES IN THE U.S. ATTRIBUTED TO CAST IRON PIONEER JAMES BOGARDUS

Five-Story Italianate Building in Lower Manhattan Featured Bogardus's Signature Bas-Relief Medallions of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously designated 63 Nassau Street as a New York City landmark, citing the building's rare façade attributed to James Bogardus, a 19th-century American inventor and former watchmaker who pioneered the use of cast iron to imitate masonry and historic buildings. Eminent historic preservationist, author and former New York City Arts Commission member Margot Gayle attended the vote.



“This dignified building is one of only five surviving examples of Bogardus's work in the United States, four of which are located in New York City,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “It's one of the oldest surviving cast-iron-fronted buildings in the City, and our vote today ensures its preservation for future generations. Margot Gayle's keen eye for Bogardus's work was instrumental in attributing the building to him.”



Initially used for decorative and structural purposes, cast-iron became a popular architectural material for facing commercial buildings in the mid-to-late 19th century, particularly in New York City. Compared with other building materials such as stone, cast iron was paintable, inexpensive, easy to assemble and allowed for the repeated production of decorative features. It was also thought to be fireproof, a belief that changed following the 1879 New York fire that destroyed several rows of buildings fronted with the material on Worth and Thomas streets in Manhattan.

Located between Maiden Lane and John Street, 63 Nassau Street was originally constructed in 1844, and housed a kitchen tinware manufacturer until 1856. Shortly after that time, a new iron

More

façade was added as part of a renovation of the five-story structure, which was commissioned to capitalize on the transformation of the neighborhood into a jewelry district.

Ms. Gayle, who celebrated her 99th birthday yesterday, is a founding member of the Friends of Cast Iron Architecture and the Victorian Society in America. She also was a long-time columnist at the New York Daily News and co-authored a book about Bogardus. She connected 63 Nassau Street's facade to him because it featured four of his trademark wreath-framed medallions of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin on the base of the columns on the building's third story. Only the pair of Franklin remains on the façade.

James Bogardus worked as a watchmaker, engraver and inventor who acquired 13 patents before moving to Europe in 1836. He returned to New York four years later, and received his first commission for a cast-iron façade in 1848 for a five-story pharmacy. His other surviving buildings, all of which are New York City landmarks, are the Bruce Building (1856-57), 254-260 Canal Street; Hopkins Bros. Building (1857), 75 Murray Street and the Kitchen, Montross & Wilcox Store (1860-61), 85 Leonard Street, The fifth remaining structure is the "Iron Clad" Building (1862) in Cooperstown, N.Y.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is 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 23,000 buildings, including 1,160 individual landmarks, 108 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 87 historic districts in all five boroughs. Under the law, 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. There are 11 commissioners, all of whom are appointed by the Mayor for staggered three-year terms.