



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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LANDMARKS COMMISSION DESIGNATES WEST CHELSEA SECTION OF MANHATTAN AS NEW YORK CITY'S 92ND HISTORIC DISTRICT

Comprising 30 Buildings, District Recognized for Its Distinctive Architecture and Role as a Major Center of Manufacturing, Warehousing and Freight Handling

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved the designation of the West Chelsea Historic District, a collection of 30 architecturally distinctive buildings that recall New York City's standing as the leading manufacturing center in the United States during the last half of the 19th century. The creation of the district, which roughly stretches from West 28th to West 25th streets between Tenth Avenue and the Joe DiMaggio Highway (Twelfth Avenue), affirms the Commission's continued commitment to preserving significant reminders of the City's industrial heritage in all five boroughs.



"The buildings in this neighborhood convey a strong sense of place that clearly set West Chelsea apart from Midtown to the north and Greenwich Village to the south, and is now one of five districts we've formed in the last five years that are tied to the City's industrial heritage," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "West Chelsea's streetscapes owe their cohesiveness and special character to the fact that the majority of the district's buildings, which are 75 years old or more, are still remarkably intact."

Several of the nation's most prestigious manufacturers had a presence in West Chelsea at the end of the 19th century and during the first decades of the 20th century, including the famed **Otis Elevator Company** (260 Eleventh Ave), the **John Williams Ornamental Brass and Iron Works** (549 W. 26th St. and 536 and 544 W. 27th St.), a manufacturer of fine arts castings such as Columbia University's Alma Mater, and the bronze doors for the Boston Public Library -- both of which designed by renowned sculptor Daniel Chester French -- and the **Reynolds Metal Company** (521-537 W. 25th St.), a maker of tin foil wrappers and bottle caps that was founded by the nephew of tobacco maker R.J. Reynolds.

Constructed from 1885 to 1930, the buildings in the district followed the popular industrial design trends in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The buildings that were erected at the turn of the century feature red-brick facades, and a number of them were constructed in American Round Arch style, an interpretation of the Rundbogenstil, a German style of architecture that's characterized by arches, elaborate brickwork and pilasters. Examples of this style are the Reynolds Metal building and **Cornell Iron Works**. Later buildings, such as grocery wholesaler **R.C. Williams Company's** Cass Gilbert-designed warehouse at 259 Tenth Avenue were generally made of reinforced concrete, reflecting a major change in the kind of materials used in the construction of factories.

More

Because of its proximity to the Hudson River ports and railroads, West Chelsea also became the home of several important warehousing and freight handling businesses. The Terminal Warehouse Company opened its massive **Central Stores** complex at 261 Eleventh Ave. in 1891, the **Baltimore & Ohio Railroad** completed a terminal warehouse at 239 Eleventh Ave. in 1913 and the **Lehigh Valley Railroad** constructed its own warehouse and freight terminal in 1931. Occupying an entire block and completed in 1928, the **Starrett-Lehigh Building**, at 601 W. 26th St., was one of the earliest examples of modern architecture in New York City and received individual landmark status from the Commission in 1986. During second half of the 20th century, the number of manufacturing, freight handling and warehousing businesses started to decline.

Below are photographs and descriptions of some of the buildings in the district:



Central Stores Building, 601 W. 27th St.

The Terminal Warehouse Company erected its Central Stores warehouse complex so that trains could travel down the middle of Eleventh Avenue from the New York Central's yards on West 30th and enter the warehouse complex through the massive round arch in the building's eastern facade. The seven and nine-story building, designed by George B. Mallory and Otto Beck, was completed in 1891 and occupies the entire block bounded by West 27th and 28th Street and by Eleventh and Twelfth avenues.

Otis Elevator Building, 260 Eleventh Ave.

Constructed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and designed by the noted architectural firm of Clinton & Russell, the seven-story building originally housed the famed elevator manufacturer's corporate headquarters as well as a repair and manufacturing facility. The building, completed in 1912, was inaugurated the same year Otis was commissioned to build elevators for the Woolworth Building. During the time it maintained its headquarters here, Otis provided elevators to the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center and the Sears Tower in Chicago.



R.C. Willams and Company Building, 259 Tenth Ave.



Cass Gilbert, the architect responsible for the Woolworth Building and the U.S. Customs House, designed this 10-story warehouse building for R.C. Williams, a wholesale grocery company. The modern, reinforced concrete structure was completed in 1928. Part of the reason why the company selected the site was the proposed removal of the New York Central Railroad's at-grade tracks along Tenth Avenue, and their replacement with an elevated and electrified freight line that would run immediately adjacent to the site. R.C. Williams consigned the very first carload of freight to use the High Line on Aug. 1, 1933.

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 25,000 buildings, including 1,200 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks and 92 historic districts in all five boroughs.