



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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COMMISSION LANDMARKS TWO DISTRICTS AND A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AND CALENDARS PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR 13 SITES

*Thomas Hastings' Fort Washington Presbyterian Church and Audubon Park in Washington Heights and
Fillmore Place in Williamsburg Now Protected*

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to name as the City's newest historic districts Fillmore Place in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, a small enclave of 29 mid-19th century row houses and Audubon Park in the Washington Heights section of Manhattan, a collection of 19 grand, early 20th century apartment houses and one freestanding duplex residence.



The Commission also approved individual landmark status for the neo-Georgian style Fort Washington Presbyterian Church, designed by Thomas Hastings, co-founder of the renowned architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings, and voted to formally consider for designation 13 sites in Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island, including four rare, Federal-style houses dating to the early 19th century.

“Separately, each historic district or building we acted on today illustrates a significant moment in the City’s history or a distinct architectural style,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “Collectively, they represent this Commission’s resolve to accelerate the protection the rich past of all five boroughs.”

Today’s designations bring to 95 and 1,230, respectively, the total number of historic districts and individual landmarks in all five boroughs. Since 2003, the Commission has designated 10 historic districts outside of Manhattan, the highest number of any Commission since it was founded in 1965. Below are descriptions of the designated sites:

Audubon Park Historic District, Washington Heights, Manhattan

Located between 158th and 155th streets between Riverside Drive and Edward M. Morgan Place, and adjoining the Audubon Terrace Historic District to the southeast, the Audubon Park Historic District consists of 19 grand, architecturally distinctive apartment houses and one Spanish Revival-style duplex house that were constructed between 1905 and 1932 on the former 20-acre estate of the famed wildlife artist John James Audubon.

The apartment houses, which range in height from 5 to 13 stories, were constructed in the tradition of the elegant residential buildings to the south in Morningside



Heights and on the Upper West Side following the extension of the IRT Broadway-Seventh Avenue subway line to the neighborhood in 1904.



Most of the buildings were given names that recalled the neighborhood's past, and evoked glamour and prestige, such as the Grinnell, a massive Mission Revival style apartment house at 800 Riverside Drive (pictured above) that was named for the family who once owned most of Audubon's estate following his death; Hispania Hall at 601 W. 156th St. (pictured left), a reference to the nearby Hispanic Society of America; and the Riviera at 790 Riverside Drive, both of which are designed in the Renaissance Revival style.

"These buildings are not only highly intact, but also retain the vibrant details and character that attracted residents to them a century ago," said Chairman Tierney. "The curving streets and dramatic vistas

formed by the area's hilly topography continue to define the neighborhood to this day, and create a powerful sense of place."

Fillmore Place Historic District, Williamsburg, Brooklyn



This district encompasses 29, three-story row houses on the north and south sides of Fillmore Place, and along Driggs Avenue and Roebling Street, which border Fillmore to the west and east. The buildings were completed in the mid-1850s, when Williamsburg had begun its transition from a rural village to an urban neighborhood.

Most of the buildings in the district are designed in a restrained Italianate style, with symmetrical three-bay wide brick facades, projecting stone door hoods, molded stone lintels and projecting sills, and bracketed wood cornices. Many of them have changed very little, despite the influx of residents and development ushered in by the opening of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903, because they were owned

for decades by the same families.

"Constructed for working class-tenants, the architecture of the buildings in this district has more in common with fashionable middle- and upper-class single-family row houses than the tenements that were typically built to house them," said Chairman Tierney. "The district is an evocative reminder of this period in Brooklyn's history."

The district's most famous resident was author Henry Miller, who spent part of his childhood at 662 Driggs Ave. (see photo, right). In his controversial 1939 novel, "The Tropic of Capricorn," Miller described Fillmore Place as "the most enchanting ... I have ever seen in all my life," adding that it was "an ideal street – for a boy, a lover a maniac, a drunkard, a crook, a lecher, a thug, an astronomer, a musician, a poet, a tailor, a shoemaker, a politician."



Fort Washington Presbyterian Church, 21 Wadsworth Ave., between W. 174th and 175th streets

This handsome neo-Georgian church was completed in 1914 and designed by Thomas Hastings, co-founder of Carrère & Hastings, one of the leading architecture firms in the United States known for its



civic and institutional buildings such as the New York Public Library's main branch at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, Staten Island Borough Hall and the First Church of Christ, Scientist at 1 W. 96th Street.

The church was constructed following a merger in 1911 of West Presbyterian Church on West 42nd Street near Fifth Avenue (subsequently demolished) and Park Presbyterian Church at West 86th Street and Amsterdam Avenue (now West Park Presbyterian Church) as part of an expansion to Manhattan's Washington Heights section. The neighborhood is named for Fort Washington, which was erected during the American Revolution on a ridge between what are now 181st and 186th Streets.

The congregation remained affiliated with West Park Presbyterian Church until 1923 and disbanded in 1982, turning over the building to a Hispanic congregation now known as the Iglesia Presbiteriana Fort Washington Heights, which will celebrate its 61st anniversary as a Spanish-language church at the site this year. Inspired by English parish churches and Colonial New England meeting houses, the church features a temple-fronted entrance portico with four monumental stone columns and a prominent steeple.

"Fort Washington Presbyterian has distinguished itself for nearly a century for its service to Washington Heights, and as an outstanding work by a celebrated architect who was inspired by the neighborhood's colonial past and Revolutionary War heritage," said Chairman Tierney.

In addition, the Commission voted to calendar, or schedule, hearings on proposals to landmark 11 buildings in Manhattan and two in Queens and Staten Island. The Manhattan buildings include: four rare, early 19th century Federal-style houses at **145 and 147 Eighth Ave.** in Chelsea and **143 Allen Street** on the Lower East Side and **138 Second Avenue** in the East Village; the former Ridley's Department Store buildings at **315 and 321 Grand St.**, a pair of cast-iron structures on the Lower East Side completed in 1886 that were part of what was once one of the largest department stores in the City; **97 Bowery**, a five-story, cast-iron structure built c.1869 for a hardware and carriage supply business; the former **Germania Fire Insurance Co.** building at 357 Bowery, a Second Empire-style structure built in 1870; the **Hebrew Actors Union** at 31 East 7th Street, which was the world's center for Yiddish theater at the turn of the 20th century; the **Sire Building** at 211 W. 58th Street, a five-story apartment building constructed in 1885 in the high Victorian Gothic style; and the **Mission of the Immaculate Virgin**, at 448 West 56th St., a Beaux-Arts style building completed in 1903 for a Catholic charity.

The other two buildings that were calendared are: the **Lydia Ann Bell and J. William Ahles House** at 39-24 and 39-26 213th Street in the Bayside section of Queens, a rare surviving Second Empire-style villa dating to 1873, and a Greek Revival-style residence at **63 William Street** completed c. 1844 in the Stapleton section of Staten Island. Hearing dates were not immediately set.

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 1,230 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks and 95 historic districts in all five boroughs. Under the city's landmarks law, considered 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.

