



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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COMMISSION DESIGNATES EMERY ROTH & SONS' LOOK BUILDING AND MURRAY HILL MANSION IN MANHATTAN AS NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved landmark status for the **Look Building**, a curved, multi-tiered, mid-20th century Modernist office tower in Midtown Manhattan, and the **Middleton Burrill House**, a Beaux Arts-style mansion in the borough's Murray Hill neighborhood. The Commission also voted to hold public hearings on proposals to form two historic districts in Brooklyn.



The 21-story, white-brick Look Building, designed by the celebrated architecture firm of Emery Roth & Sons, is located at 488 Madison Avenue, between 51st and 52nd streets. Named for one of its first tenants, Look magazine, the building was completed in 1950 and is among nine Modernist works that have been designated as New York City landmarks in the past seven years. They include I.M. Pei's University Village, and Manhattan House and Chase Manhattan Plaza, both by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.

"The Look Building helped establish European Modernism as a fashionable, though practical, approach for office towers that were constructed in Manhattan's business districts after the Second World War," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "The Commission has made it a point in recent years to protect those buildings that showcase the indelible imprint Modernism has left on New York City's streetscapes."

Emery Roth & Sons, established in 1938, became one of New York City's most prolific architecture firms during the mid-to-late 20th century. It was involved in the design of at least 150 structures, including such high-profile projects as the Pan Am (now Met Life) Building, the World Trade Center and the Citicorp Building.

The Look Building was developed by Uris Brothers, a leading office construction firm whose projects had a substantial impact on Manhattan's skyline and streetscapes during the mid-to-late 20th century. The New York Hilton, the Uris Building at 1633 Broadway and 55 Water Street are among the colossal structures that resulted from their financial backing.

Featuring tightly rounded corners, multiple setbacks and bands of ribbon-like windows that alternate with white brick spandrels, the Look Building has a strong horizontal emphasis that suggests the influence of the c. 1931 Starrett-Lehigh Building _ a designated New York City landmark at 601-625 West 26th St. _ and the c. 1947 Universal Pictures building, at 447 Park Ave.

Other prominent tenants in the building included Esquire magazine, Pocket Books and music publisher Witmark & Sons, which had a studio on the fifth floor where a young Bob Dylan produced a series of demo recordings in 1962 and 1963.

The building was sold to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in 1953, and has been owned since the 1970s by the Feil Organization and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The building's two-story retail base was remodeled in the 1980s, and the rest of its exterior was renovated between 1995 and 1998.



The **Middleton S. and Emilie Neilson Burrill** House, located at 36 E. 38th Street between Madison and Park avenues, was originally constructed with a brownstone façade in 1862 which was renovated in the Beaux Arts style in 1903.

Middleton Burrill, a prominent attorney, bought the row house in 1901, and commissioned the architecture firm of Hoppin & Koen to design the new façade. Hoppin & Koen is responsible for the former headquarters of the New York City Police Department at 240 Centre Street in Manhattan, also a landmark, and The Mount, author Edith Wharton's former home in Lenox, Massachusetts.

The ornate, five-story mansion features large, rusticated limestone arched openings on the first floor set between a balustrade and a sweeping, partially curved staircase flanked by iron banisters. The building is topped by a mansard roof with elaborate copper dormers capped by round-arched pediments.

"This elegant building was included in a survey of hundreds of buildings in Midtown that was initiated and completed by the Commission's staff," Chairman Tierney said. "It recalls the period when Murray Hill was an exclusive enclave for the upper class, and is an impressive example of the Beaux Arts style."

The building was converted into apartments in 1946.

In other business, the Commission agreed to hold public hearings on proposals to form two historic districts in Brooklyn. The first is the proposed **Wallabout Historic District**, consisting of 55 houses dating to the early 1800s along Vanderbilt Avenue between Myrtle and Park avenues, just north of the Fort Greene and Clinton Hill sections of the borough. The second is the proposed **Park Place Historic District**, a group of 13 Romanesque Revival row houses constructed c. 1894 on Park Place between Franklin and Bedford avenues in Crown Heights. Dates for the hearings were not immediately announced.

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 1,269 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 100 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.