



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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COMMISSION EXPANDS SOHO-CAST IRON HISTORIC DISTRICT AND TAPS LANDMARK STATUS FOR BUSHWICK BREWERY COMPLEX

World's Largest Collection of Cast-Iron Clad Buildings Absorbs 135 More Properties; Former Lager Plant Becomes New York City's First Landmarked Brewery

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved the expansion of the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District in Manhattan by 135 buildings, and granted landmark status to the William Ulmer Brewery Complex in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. The designations bring to more than 27,000 the total number of properties throughout the City that have earned landmark protection since the Commission was founded in 1965.

"These numbers attest to the effectiveness of the Landmarks Law, and show how far the effort to preserve the best of New York City's built environment has come in the past 45 years," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "The buildings that were designated today tell a tale of two cities _ New York and Brooklyn _ at a time when both were starting to flex their industrial muscle."

Descriptions of the district and brewery are below:

SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension



The SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Extension consists of 135 cast iron clad and masonry buildings along the eastern and western borders of the existing district, which was designated in 1973 and includes 500 buildings between West Houston and Canal streets to the north and south, and Crosby Street and West Broadway to the east and west.

The eastern part of the expanded district encompasses the entire eastern side of Crosby Street and portions of Lafayette, Howard and Centre streets, while the western section includes buildings on the west side of West Broadway.

Like their counterparts in the existing SoHo district, most of the buildings in the extension were constructed after the Civil War as store and loft structures for dry goods wholesalers and textile and other manufacturers that transformed the area from a residential neighborhood to a thriving commercial zone.

A number of architectural styles, including the Italianate, Queen Anne, Second Empire and Romanesque and Renaissance Revival styles are represented in the extension. Several early 19th-century Federal and Greek Revival-style houses on Prince, Grand and Centre streets also survive.

Many of the buildings in the extension were designed by the same prominent architects as those in the existing district, such as Robert Mook (386-388 West Broadway, c. 1871 Italianate style,

above); D. & J. Jardine (28 Howard St., c. 1872, Italianate style) and John B. Snook (158-164 Lafayette Street, c. 1889, Queen Anne style, below).

The neighborhood lost its manufacturing base after the Second World War, and by the late 1950s became a commercial slum known as “hell’s hundred acres.” Artists started converting the vacant lofts and warehouses to studios during the 1960s, and turned the neighborhood into one of the most creative centers of contemporary art in the United States during the 1970s. Keith Haring, Andre Emmerich, Frank Gehry and Mary Boone, among others, had studios and galleries there. Upscale boutiques, bars, hotels and restaurants later replaced the artists’ and remaining manufacturing spaces.



“The buildings in the district extension will not only enhance, but also help to safeguard SoHo’s standing as one of New York City’s most attractive and popular neighborhoods,” said Chairman Tierney.

William Ulmer Brewery Complex, Bushwick, Brooklyn



The four buildings that comprise the lager plant were constructed in the German round-arch style between 1872 and 1890 and were used to house an office (at 31 Belvidere St.), the main brew house (45-47 Belvidere St.) an engine and machine house (35-43 Belvidere St.) and a stable and storage facility (26-28 Locust St).

The plant is located in Bushwick, which was a major brewing center from 1890 until the late 1940s. During this period, Bushwick supplied almost 10 percent of the beer consumed in the United States because of soil conditions suitable for cool storage chambers underground, an abundant water supply and its proximity to rail and water transportation.

The brewery was owned by William Ulmer, a German immigrant whose lager was sold only at taverns he owned, a strategy that helped make him a millionaire. Ulmer Brewery was one of 45 operating in Brooklyn by the late 19th century, and at its peak made 3.2 million gallons of beer annually.

Ulmer retired from the business in 1900, and passed it along to his sons-in-law, who closed it after prohibition was enacted in 1920. Brooklyn’s last two breweries closed in 1976.

“The Ulmer plant is a remarkably intact reminder of one of Brooklyn’s most important industries,” Chairman Tierney said. “It’s also one of many examples of New York City’s industrial past that have been recognized by this Commission to date.”

The two-story, Romanesque Revival red brick office building _ the architectural highlight of the complex _ and machine house were completed in 1885 and designed by Theobald Engelhardt, a prolific Brooklyn architect who designed numerous mansions, tenements, banks, churches and factories in the borough. The building features arched and dormered windows, a slate-clad mansard roof and terra cotta panels that are etched with the brewery’s trademark, first initial of the last name of the owner.

The other factory buildings are designed in the American round arch style. They were sold and converted for light manufacturing use, but the Ulmer family retained ownership of the office building until 1952.

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 1,265 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 100 historic districts and 15 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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Contact: Elisabeth de Bourbon/ 212-669-7938
edebourbon@lpc.nyc.gov