



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, OCTOBER 30, 2007
No. 07-31

CONTACT: Lisi de Bourbon
212-669-7938

COMMISSION LANDMARKS 19TH CENTURY BROOKLYN PENCIL FACTORY COMPLEX, A MODERNIST MANHATTAN HIGH RISE, AND A RETAIL GIANT, AMONG OTHERS

*City's Newest Landmarks Are the **Eberhard Faber Pencil Factory** in Greenpoint; **Manhattan House** on the Upper East Side, the Former Home of Grace Kelly and Benny Goodman; the **Lord & Taylor Flagship** on Fifth Avenue; the **Standard Varnish Works Factory Building** and **Gillett Tyler Mansion** on Staten Island; **Two Federal-Style Houses** on the Lower East Side and the **Voelker-Orth Museum, Bird Sanctuary and Victorian Garden** in Flushing, Queens*

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously voted to grant historic district status to the former Eberhard Faber Pencil Factory complex, as well as designate as New York City landmarks seven stand-alone buildings in Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. The designations bring the number of historic districts in New York City to 89 and the number of individual landmarks to 1,180. The designations will preserve several noteworthy examples of the rich architectural history of the five boroughs, from a pair of Federal-style buildings in Lower Manhattan, to 19th-century industrial sites in Brooklyn and Staten Island, to an iconic modernist apartment house in Manhattan.

Eberhard Faber Pencil Factory,



Comprising nine architecturally distinctive 19th and early 20th century buildings along Greenpoint Avenue and West and Kent streets, the complex is one of scores of manufacturing sites across the City to be given landmark status since 2002 and brings the number of historic districts in the City to 89. The vote came on the same day the Commission held a public hearing on a separate proposal to landmark more than 50 industrial and commercial buildings in the DUMBO section of Brooklyn.

“The Commission has worked steadily over the past few years to preserve New York City’s rich industrial past, particularly along the Brooklyn waterfront,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “This complex fueled Eberhard Faber’s rise to local, national and international prominence in the late 19th century, becoming one of Brooklyn’s most important employers, and one of the world’s best known brands of pencils.”

Manhattan House, 200 E. 66th St.

Manhattan House, the sprawling full-block, modernist white-brick icon on Manhattan's Upper East Side, attracted such renowned tenants as actress Grace Kelly and jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman. Set between a block-long garden and two driveways, the 21-story, 10-tower structure elevated white brick as a fashionable building material and popularized balconies, green spaces and driveways in many new residential high rises constructed in New York City after World War II.

“Manhattan House set a new standard for apartment construction in New York City and gave modernism a strong foothold here,” said Commissioner Tierney. “Although Manhattan House inspired many new architectural imitators, very few came close to what it achieved. It joins a growing list of modern landmarks we’ve designated since 2002, such as the Summit Hotel and Socony-Mobil building.”



The New York Life Insurance Company commissioned the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the Chicago-based firm that was at the forefront of the development of modern architecture in the United States, to design Manhattan House. Completed in 1951 and occupying a block between 65th and 66th streets and Second and Third avenues, the building reflects the theories of Le Corbusier, the renowned 20th century French architect who was known for setting enormous, slab-like apartment buildings in open spaces.

In addition to Grace Kelly and Benny Goodman, some of the Manhattan House's tenants included such design luminaries as Gordon Bunshaft, the lead architect of the building for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Elizabeth Potts, founder of the American Institute of Interior Designers; and furniture designer Florence Knoll. Actress Grace Kelly lived there for a brief period in the early 1950s, as did jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman, who died in his apartment in 1986. Former New York State Governor Hugh Carey and Frank Hardart, co-founder of the Automat restaurant chain, also lived in Manhattan House.

Lord & Taylor, 424-434 Fifth Avenue



This 10-story Italian Renaissance Revival building houses one of New York City's oldest retail stores. Located on Fifth Avenue between 38th and 39th streets, the Lord & Taylor building was completed in 1914, and embraced by critics of the day for having fewer ornamental flourishes and details than earlier department stores in New York and for being candid about its purpose. The gray brick-faced building, designed by the architecture firm of Starrett & Van Vleck, features a two-story limestone and granite base, a chamfered corner on 38th Street, a massive entrance arch flanked by decorative “L & T” shields, and a deep, bracketed copper cornice supported by a limestone colonnade.

“The building ushered in a new style of department store design that was later replicated elsewhere in the City,” said Commissioner Tierney. “In addition, Lord & Taylor's windows are on the must-see list of virtually every visitor to New York City during the holiday season. This building is part of our heritage, and part of what makes New York City great.”

Lord & Taylor was Starrett & Van Vleck's first major department store, and led to similar commissions such as the Saks Fifth Avenue flagship on Fifth Avenue between 50th and 49th streets (also a New York City landmark), the former Abraham & Strauss department store in Brooklyn and two suburban Lord &

Taylor stores. Starrett & Van Vleck is also responsible for the design of the Downtown Athletic Club and the Everett Building, in Manhattan both of which are New York City landmarks.

Standard Varnish Works Office Building

The Standard Varnish Works office building, completed in 1893 and located at 2589 Richmond Terrace, was originally part of a 7-acre complex along Richmond Terrace that was once one of the world's largest producers of varnishes, enamels and specialty inks. Standard Varnish Works was founded in 1870 in the Hunters Point section of Queens by David Rosenberg, a German Jewish immigrant who settled in the South in the 1850s and served as a procurement officer for the Confederate Army during the Civil War.



“The manufacturing industry played an important role in Staten Island’s development, and this building factors heavily into that legacy,” said Commissioner Tierney. “It is a fine example of a style of architecture typical of 19th-century industrial buildings, distinguished by its handsome detailing and careful proportions.”

The company’s products were used to coat the Queen Mary and other ocean liners, several of New York City’s largest skyscrapers, as well as caskets, locomotives, refrigerators and agricultural equipment. Standard Varnish was one of the first companies in the U.S. to specialize in the production of automobiles and had factories around the world. The Staten Island plant remained in operation until 1982, and the office now serves as a carpet warehouse.

The two-story, brick-faced office building features a prominent tower and decorative detailing. Like many factories and industrial buildings constructed in the 19th century, the office building was designed in the American adaptation of the German round-arched style (known as Rundbogenstil) of architecture.

The factory office building was constructed by Colin McLean, a contractor and superintendent with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad who was responsible for building a rail link to New Jersey and the foundations for the Brooklyn side of the Williamsburg Bridge.

Gillett-Tyler Mansion



Located at 103 Circle Road, the two-story Greek-Revival mansion was built c.1846 in Enfield, Mass., by a textile mill owner named Daniel Gillette, and was later moved more than 200 miles and reconstructed on Staten Island in 1931 for Walter A. Tyler, an executive with a chewing gum company, the L.A. Dreyfus Company.

The building was moved to Staten Island by Charles A. Wade, a contractor from Dorset, Vermont who specialized in finding authentic New England houses and moving them to a buyer’s desired location. To do this, Wade would first sketch the house, take it down, move the pieces by truck and reconstruct it on the new site.

The Gillett-Tyler mansion, a simple box-form house, has a slate-shingled roof, and decorative details such as a cornice line with wide bands of trim, two-story Doric pilasters and fluted Ionic columns and sidelights flanking the door at the recessed entry porch.

“Staten Island still has substantial numbers of some of New York City’s earliest rural and suburban structures, and many of them, particularly the Gillett-Tyler mansion, remain remarkably intact to this day,” said Commissioner Tierney. “This is one of the reasons why the Commission has made it a priority to preserve these rare and important reminders of Staten Island’s 19th-century past.

511 and 513 Grand Street, Lower East Side

Constructed c. 1828, these Federal-style houses at 511 and 513 Grand streets near East Broadway in Manhattan, are part of the Commission’s ongoing efforts to preserve examples of the City’s development following the Revolutionary War.



“These rare treasures recall an important period of New York City’s growth,” said Commissioner Tierney. “It’s remarkable that they have retained their architectural integrity to the extent that they have, even as the neighborhood around them changed dramatically.”

Both 2 ½-story row houses were constructed as investment properties by James Lent, a merchant, Queens judge and U.S. Representative, and his nephew, Henry Barclay, a major landowner descended from the second rector of Trinity Church on Wall Street. Barclay’s family owned 511 and 513 Grand Street well into the 20th century and leased

them to long-term tenants who ran businesses there and lived above them.

Earlier this year, the Commission approved the designation of two other Federal-style houses, 486 and 488 Greenwich streets, in Manhattan.

Voelker-Orth Museum, Bird Sanctuary and Victorian Garden, 149-19 38th Ave.

In designating this 116-year-old clapboard sided, pink trimmed house in the Flushing section of Queens, the Commission noted its whimsical architectural details and rich history. The designation brings the total number of Queens buildings that have been landmarked to date to 2,326, and reflects the Commission’s ongoing commitment to preserving the borough’s distinctive heritage.



“This house recalls the period when this part of Flushing transitioned from a rural outpost to a suburban neighborhood,” said Commissioner Tierney. “It merits the same protection that our Commission has extended to other significant buildings in Queens, where since 2002 the Commission has designated more buildings than in any other borough since 2002.”

where since 2002 the Commission has designated

The Voelker-Orth house, which was constructed with a variety of materials and rooflines, sits near the southeast corner of a 10,000-square-foot lot at 149-19 38th Avenue. It was built c.1891 by a Flushing merchant who sold it in 1899 to Conrad Voelker, a German immigrant who started a printing business in Manhattan that published a widely read German newspaper.

Designed by an unknown architect, the house is sided with clapboard as well as distinctively shaped shingle siding, and features shutters, deep eaves and leaded and stained glass. It has three different kinds of roofs -- gable, jerkinhead and flat -- made of wooden shingles, and an assortment of projecting bays and wings. Exuberant homes like the Voelker-Orth were routinely built at the end of the 19th century to reflect the wealth and success of the people who owned them.

The house remained in the Voelker family until 1996, when Conrad Voelker's last surviving heir, Elizabetha Orth, died and left instructions in her will to turn the house and grounds into a museum of Queens history, environmental education center and a bird sanctuary.

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 some 24,000 buildings, including 1,180 individual landmarks, 120 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 89 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.