



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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COMMISSION NAMES A LANDMARK IN WILLIAMSBURG AND VOTES TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS FOR THE DESIGNATIONS OF FIVE MIDTOWN SITES AS LANDMARKS AND AN EXTENSION OF THE PARK SLOPE HISTORIC DISTRICT

*121-Year-Old Building in Williamsburg Originally Housed a School for Clerical Workers;
Midtown Sites Include Three Hotels and Two Office Buildings*



The Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to designate as a New York City landmark a 121-year-old structure in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn that originally housed the Long Island Business College, a clerical training institute that counted former Mayor John F. Hylan among its graduates, and later became a Jewish teaching academy and residential building.

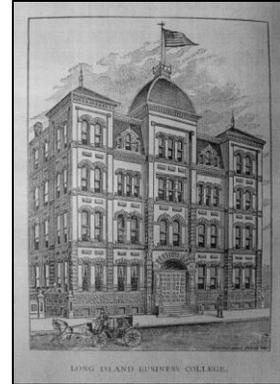
The Commission also voted unanimously to “calendar,” or schedule, public hearings on proposals to expand the **Park Slope Historic District** by 287 buildings, and designate five buildings in the Midtown East section of Manhattan as New York City landmarks. The buildings are: **the Beverly Hotel** (now the Benjamin Hotel), a c. 1927, Neo-Romanesque tower at 557 Lexington Ave.; the **Graybar Building**, a c. 1927 Art Deco style office tower at 420 Lexington Ave.; the c. 1929 **Hotel Lexington** (now The Lexington New York City), an Art Deco/Neo Romanesque style building at 511 Lexington Ave.; the c. 1923 **Pershing Square Building**, a Romanesque Revival style office building at 125 Park Ave. and the c. 1923, Romanesque Revival style **Shelton Hotel** (now the New York Marriott East Side Hotel) at 525 Lexington Ave. Dates for the public hearings were not immediately scheduled.

Located at 143 South 8th Street, the four-story Long Island Business College building was completed in 1892 in the Second Empire and Romanesque Revival styles. The building was commissioned by Henry C. Wright to serve as the new home for the school he founded in Williamsburg in 1873 that trained clerical workers for careers at the banks, insurance companies and factories that were proliferating throughout Brooklyn and New York City at the time.

Commercial colleges first appeared in the 19th century, when few students attended secondary schools, and offered students an entry to the business world, teaching courses such as stenography, typing, document drafting and mathematics.

The Long Island Business College building was designed by William H. Gaylor, a former head of the City of Brooklyn’s buildings department who was responsible for numerous commercial, public and residential buildings in Brooklyn, and was best known for cast-iron-fronted commercial buildings. His commissions include 2 Wooster Street in Manhattan, in the SoHo Cast-Iron Historic District, the Smith, Gray & Company Building at 103 Broadway in Brooklyn (a New York City landmark) and the Bedford Theater building at 109 South 6th Street.

Gaylor based the college's design on Brooklyn's public schools, considered the finest of the day (early rendering at right). The building features rough-faced brownstone trim, a five-part façade with central tower and end pavilions, slate-covered mansards and a convex roof with a square cap. It also features finely carved ornament within the spandrels of the main-entrance arch and carved rosettes at the second through fourth floors.



"This charming building still retains a strong presence on the street, and remains as evocative of its original mission today as it did 121 years ago," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney.

Former Mayor John F. Hylan, who served as New York City's mayor from 1918 to 1925, studied at the school in the 1890s at night while working as a railroad engineer. After he graduated, he enrolled in New York Law School. The school was sold in 1920 to Drake Business School, and the building reopened in 1922 as Public School 166.

During its time as the Long Island Business College, the building's assembly hall was used by the Brooklyn Philosophical Association, a leading free-thought organization, to host lectures by such speakers as the socialist and labor leader Eugene V. Debs and the suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt. In 1943, the City sold the school to the Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary of America, a teaching academy and school for girls that became a magnet after World War II for young Holocaust survivors who had moved to South Williamsburg, as well as important institution in the neighborhood's Jewish community. The seminary remained at the site until the mid-1960s and sold it in 1984, when it was converted to residential and work space by an artists' group.

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 31,000 buildings and sites, including 1,334 individual landmarks, 116 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 109 historic districts and 20 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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