



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION DESIGNATES AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK IN HARLEM

Claremont Theater Building, 3320-3328 Broadway, Manhattan

“Thomas Edison’s 1915 film depicting the Claremont Theater demonstrates the importance of this building to New York City’s cultural history,” said Robert B. Tierney, Chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. *“I strongly and enthusiastically support this designation.”*

The Claremont Theater building is one of the oldest structures in New York City planned specifically to exhibit motion pictures, originally called “photoplays.” Located at the southeast corner of Broadway and 135th Street, the theater opened in November 1914.

Commissioned by Arlington C. Hall and Harvey M. Hall of the Wayside Realty Company, it was designed in the neo-Renaissance style by Gaetano Ajello, an architect best-known for apartment buildings on Manhattan’s Upper West Side.



The building has three distinct fronts, including a clipped corner façade where the auditorium’s entrance was originally located. This distinctive arrangement enhanced the theater’s visibility and increased the amount of retail space. The corner, consequently, received the most elaborate decorative treatment and is embellished with an elegant low relief depicting an early motion picture camera set on a tripod. In 1915, Thomas Edison produced a short film in which the theater’s entrance is prominently featured. Filmed from across Broadway, it depicts groups of men, women, and children exiting the building.

The second floor accommodated a large restaurant and ballroom, known under such names as the Broadway-Claremont or Clarendon Restaurant, and later, the Royal Palms Ballroom and Roof Garden. Until the early years of the Depression, area residents gathered here to eat, drink, and dance. Beginning in the late 1920s, the storefronts were leased to automobile-related businesses and in 1933 the theater closed and the interior was converted to an automobile showroom. Despite such changes, the exterior is well-preserved and remains a symbol of the growing popularity of the motion picture in the early twentieth century.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the New York City agency responsible for designating and regulating New York City’s landmarks. To date, the Commission has designated 1,135 individual landmarks, 106 interior landmarks, 9 scenic landmarks, and 85 historic districts.