



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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CBJ SNYDER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON MANHATTAN'S LOWER EAST SIDE DESIGNATED AS A LANDMARK

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to landmark former Public School 64, a French Renaissance Revival-style building designed by noted New York City school architect Charles B.J. Snyder. Completed in 1906, the five-story, H-plan structure at 605 East 9th St., was one of Snyder's first elementary schools to include an auditorium with direct access from the street, and served as a learning center for generations of immigrant children and adults in the Tompkins Square neighborhood.

Snyder was the Board of Education's Superintendent of School Buildings from 1891 to 1923, a period of unprecedented expansion and construction of new schools and additions in New York City. During this time, Snyder planned, designed and built some 170 distinguished structures that reflected the



City's commitment to public education. Although Snyder embraced a variety of architectural styles that were sometimes repeated in different locations, his design for P.S. 64 was unlike any of his others.

"P.S. 64 is a dignified, ornate structure that made an eloquent statement about the importance of education," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "In a neighborhood crowded with tenements, this school was to become the centerpiece of the community, a role it continued to play throughout its history."

The building features a slate-covered mansard roof, terra-cotta moldings and keystones, contrasting brick and stone materials, and pediments that are filled with fruit and foliage. The innovative H-plan design provided ample light and air, and the auditorium offered the neighborhood's immigrants a generous public space for evening lectures and educational programs that helped them assimilate into their new country. In addition, prominent elected leaders such as Gov. Alfred Smith, Mayor Jimmy Walker and Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered political stump speeches in the assembly hall.

P.S. 64 was also an incubator of educational innovation and experimentation. Little Red Schoolhouse founder Elizabeth Irwin taught there from 1912 to 1921, and created a classification system that was based on IQ test scores. The school's second principal, William E. Grady, was a supporter of the Ettinger plan, which made vocational training available to 7th and 8th graders. The school's alumni include "Wizard of Oz" lyricist Yip Harburg and Joe Mankiewicz, director of "All About Eve," "Cleopatra," "Guys and Dolls," and "No Way Out."

The school was closed in the mid-1970s by the Board of Education, and was subsequently used as a cultural center for 20 years by a local community group, Charas/El Bohio, until the city sold the building at auction in 1998.

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission is the largest municipal preservation agency in the United States. Since its creation in 1965, the Commission has designated more than 23,000 buildings in all five boroughs, including 1,140 individual landmarks, 106 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 85 historic districts.