



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION DESIGNATES DUMBO AS NEW YORK CITY'S 90th HISTORIC DISTRICT

Consisting of 91 Historically and Architecturally Distinctive Buildings, DUMBO Illustrates Brooklyn's Role as a Major Manufacturing Center in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to designate the DUMBO section of Brooklyn as the City's 90th historic district, underscoring its ongoing commitment to preserve the City's industrial heritage in all five boroughs, especially along the Brooklyn waterfront. Bound by John Street to the north, York Street to the south, Main Street to the west and Bridge Street to the east, the district includes 91 buildings that represent important industrial design trends in the United States and the City in the 19th and early 20th centuries.



"DUMBO was essential to Brooklyn's rise as a major manufacturing center, and was home to some of America's most important industrial firms that produced everything from ale and paper boxes to soap and steel wool," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney, "DUMBO's distinctively designed buildings and sublime vistas survive to this day, and still define its character, even as it has evolved into a largely residential neighborhood. This designation will ensure that this still-evolving neighborhood retains its unique historic character."

The new district is also distinguished by a series of dramatic streetscapes, many of which are enhanced by parts of the Manhattan Bridge. The span's support piers and anchorage, which frame several striking views and vistas around the neighborhood, are part of the historic district. Also included in the designation are a number of sidewalks and streets paved in granite Belgian blocks, and a short network of train tracks. With today's vote, LPC will be responsible for approving or denying changes to these elements as well as the facades of the buildings. The decision is subject to a review by the City Planning Commission and City Council.

Almost all of the industrial buildings in the historic district date from between 1880 and 1920, a period of explosive growth of Brooklyn's manufacturing sector. According to U.S. Census records, the number of factories in Brooklyn increased from 1,032 in 1860 to 10,713 in 1900, and the number of workers employed in the manufacturing sector increased from 12,758 in 1860 to 100,881 people by 1900. By 1913, three of the 10 industrial firms in Brooklyn with more than 1,000 employees were located in DUMBO.

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DUMBO's earlier buildings were built with brick facades, and massive wooden columns and beams, while those constructed in the early 20th century were built of reinforced concrete, which offered easy maintenance, resistance to vibration, increased floor loads and the ability to install large expanses of windows, increasing light and ventilation. The factories produced a diverse array of goods, including coffee, tea, sugar, machinery, paint, varnish shoes, handkerchiefs, meters and kitchenware.

In the late 1970s, artists began to move into industrial buildings and named the neighborhood – parts of which had been known as either Fulton Landing or Gairville – Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass. Below are brief descriptions, addresses and photographs of the companies that had a major presence in the district:



20 Jay Street, East Façade. Erected for Arbuckle Brothers in 1909. Designed by William Higginson

Arbuckle Brothers was America's largest coffee roaster and packager, as well as a sugar refiner. The sugar refinery and several other Arbuckle buildings are within the historic district. In 1913, Arbuckle employed 100 people in its coffee business and 668 in its sugar refinery.

135 Plymouth Street. Built 1901 for E.W. Bliss. Designed by RL Daus.

E. W. Bliss was a major machinery manufacturer that employed 1,646 people. It was the second largest machinery manufacturer in Brooklyn in 1913, behind the Mergenthaler Company.



26-38 Washington Street. Constructed for Robert Gair Co. in 1887. Designed by Benjamin Finkensieper.

Robert Gair Co. manufactured paper boxes and printed labels, stationery, and other items. Gair was also a major realtor, leasing industrial space in his many buildings within the Historic District. In 1913, Gair employed 1,702 people.



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 1,181 individual landmarks, 120 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 90 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.