



Andrew Scott Dolkart
116 Pinehurst Avenue
New York, New York 10033
Tel/Fax: (212) 568-2480
Email: asd3@columbia.edu

Robert Tierney, Chair
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

July 8, 2009

Dear Chair Tierney and Commissioners:

I wish that I could be present at this important public hearing on the former IRT Power House, but I am working with students in Amman, Jordan. I support the designation the power plant as an individual landmark with great enthusiasm.

The former IRT Power House is an extraordinary building, both as a work of architecture and as a symbol. The building is, of course, one of the largest structures every designed by McKim, Mead & White. This monumental Renaissance palace is a powerful work of architecture. Considering its utilitarian use, it is in remarkably good repair, and those elements that have been altered on the main structure, such as the cornice, could easily be restored.

What interests me the most about the power house is that this utilitarian structure, designed as an envelope for coal chutes, boilers, and generators, was commissioned from the most prestigious architectural firm in the United States and was designed, not as a simple unadorned power plant, but as a grand and ornate palace. The question is why the IRT paid a premium to hire McKim, Mead & White, the most prestigious architectural firm in America, to design a power plant in an out of the way location, where few of the firm's wealthy clients would ever see it. The reason is that this power plant was a symbol of modern New York. The subway construction was one of the great construction projects in the city's history and placed New York in the forefront of world cities, akin to London, Paris, and Budapest, cities that already had subway systems. Power for this colossal transit undertaking could not be generated from just any plant, but had to come from an architectural masterpiece.

The IRT Power Plant is eminently deserving of individual landmark status.

Sincerely,

Andrew Scott Dolkart
Director, Historic Preservation Program
James Marston Fitch Associate Professor of
Historic Preservation
Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning
and Preservation