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Hon. Robert B. Tierney
Chairman
Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre Street
New York, New York 10007

February 10, 2009

Dear Chairman Tierney,

I write to add my words to those of so many others currently urging the Commission designate the IRT power plant at Eleventh Avenue and 59th Street. This is an important building and well deserves the honor of being a New York City Landmark.

The architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White as the nation's pre-eminent firm was clearly established by the time the powerhouse was begun. The firm had started some twenty five years earlier in a world of modest urban buildings and wooden country houses. As the firm grew, America had launched its own industrial build up. The architects built for the increasingly affluent industrialist's personal world. By the later years of McKim and White's career, the first decade of the new century, both partner's had entered the world of industrial building. Too complex a time to build beach hugging palaces, Stanford White leapt at the chance to do big commercial buildings, indeed he salivated to build a skyscraper, a goal which would elude him.

At the IRT powerhouse, White provided a shell for a technical center. Although likely not interested in the machines of the plant, White had dealt with industrial plants for two of his friends, E.D. Adams and the Chanler complex on the Roanoke River. White in these years was absorbed in European history and treasures of the past. Perhaps the power of the future was not as alluring. But even if boilers were not as visually fetching as a Renaissance ceiling, White decided that the power station should be as elegant as the city he was helping to fashion. White tried to enrich the power plant even if it was in a distant corner of the City along the water's edge where coal could be delivered easily to the boilers. On the urban side of the plant, White returned to old visual solutions. One a base of pink granite, White recalled the golden bricks of his work in the later 1880's, employing Italian- inspired forms of Roman brick. Once topped by a profound cornice, this utilitarian building presented an urbane face to the City.

In the early 20th century. power plants and factory buildings became milestones of the emerging architectural aesthetic. here, a great powerhouse worked in a simple but

comprehensible façade. This is a great work, a monument to the new era. Easily returned to its original appearance, the IRT powerhouse will become a treasure to the neighborhood.

Yours truly,

Mosette Broderick


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