

## OUR LANDMARKS

How can we protect our buildings? One way is to have them designated “**landmarks**.” A landmark, according to New York City’s **Landmarks Law**, can be a building, property, or object that is determined to have special historical, cultural, or architectural value. Designating a landmark means recognizing its value and protecting it with the **Landmarks Law**. The law is designed to recognize and protect buildings that represent the

city’s history, help to improve **property values** (how much money buildings are worth), and promote civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past, both for the residents of New York and the many visitors to our city. Landmarks are often buildings, but they may also be roads, bridges, monuments, plazas, parks, or, as in special cases in Brooklyn and Queens, trees. The **Landmarks Law** of 1965 is the main tool preservationists use to protect buildings.



Postcard showing the original Pennsylvania Station (1901-10, McKim, Mead and White)



Pennsylvania Station interior (1901-10, McKim, Mead and White), c. 1905

## HISTORY TELLS THE STORY

At West 34th Street and Seventh Avenue in midtown Manhattan, there was a magnificent building called Pennsylvania Station. It was so big it took up two full city blocks and construction took nearly 10 years (from 1901 to 1910). It was built of pink granite on the outside with stone, glass, and steel on the inside. The design was based on an ancient Roman building. But, by the 1960s, some people thought Penn Station was

out of date and too expensive to keep. Sadly, it was demolished. Later, on April 19, 1965, Mayor Robert Wagner signed the **Landmarks Law** and officially formed the **Landmarks Preservation Commission** to protect New York City's historic architecture. The **Landmarks Preservation Commission** is in charge of protecting landmarks in the five boroughs of New York City from being damaged or destroyed.

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION

New Yorkers were so upset by the destruction of Penn Station and other special places that they pushed for government to create the **Landmarks Law**. But that doesn't mean that all important buildings in New York City automatically become landmarks. People must **advocate** (publicly support a cause) to protect the places they believe deserve landmark designation.

LANDMARK WEST! is an example of a group of people who work together to achieve landmark status for special places. LANDMARK WEST! has saved many buildings and preserved many streetscapes of the Upper West Side.

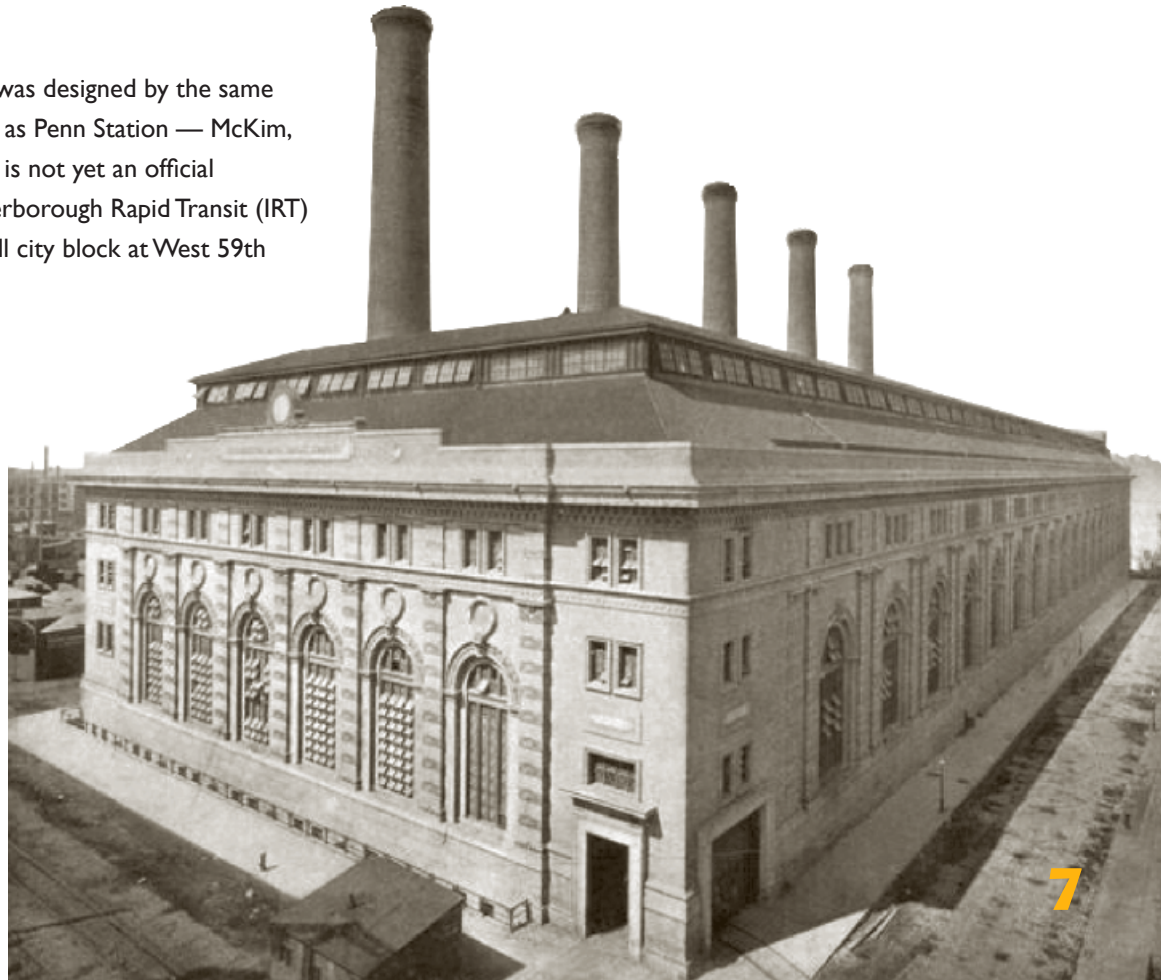
The building shown here was designed by the same celebrated architect team as Penn Station — McKim, Mead and White — but it is not yet an official landmark. The former Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) Powerhouse takes up a full city block at West 59th

Street and Eleventh Avenue. It was built in 1904 to power the subway line to the Upper West Side, where more people were starting to live. Like Penn Station, the Powerhouse was also built to look like an ancient Roman building. Luckily, it is still standing today! But without landmark protection, that could change.

It is up to the **Landmarks Preservation Commission** to decide whether or not they will use the **Landmarks Law** to protect this beautiful and important building.

LANDMARK  
WEST! thinks the  
Powerhouse should  
be a landmark.  
What do you think?

IRT Powerhouse (1904,  
McKim, Mead and White)



## HOW ARE LANDMARKS DESIGNATED?

Anyone can advocate for a place to be landmarked by contacting the **Landmarks Preservation Commission**. The **Commission** has 11 members who decide which places to landmark, with help from a staff of researchers. The process can take years:

- 1 Once the Commission decides to consider a place for designation, a public hearing is scheduled to gather information and give people the opportunity to testify for or against designation. Opinions can come from property owners, local residents, elected officials, and the general public.
- 2 After the hearing, researchers prepare a thorough report on the building's architectural, social, and cultural history.
- 3 Commissioners review this report and then schedule a public meeting where they vote for or against the designation.
- 4 The City Planning Commission and City Council must also approve the landmark designation before the site becomes an official NYC landmark.



Preservation campaign poster, illustrated by Jules Feiffer, c. 1986

## FUN FACT

Sometimes a building doesn't look very special on the **EXTERIOR** (outside), but is so beautiful on the **INTERIOR** (inside), that the interior is landmarked. The Beacon Theatre on Broadway and West 74th Street is an example of a spectacular interior landmark!

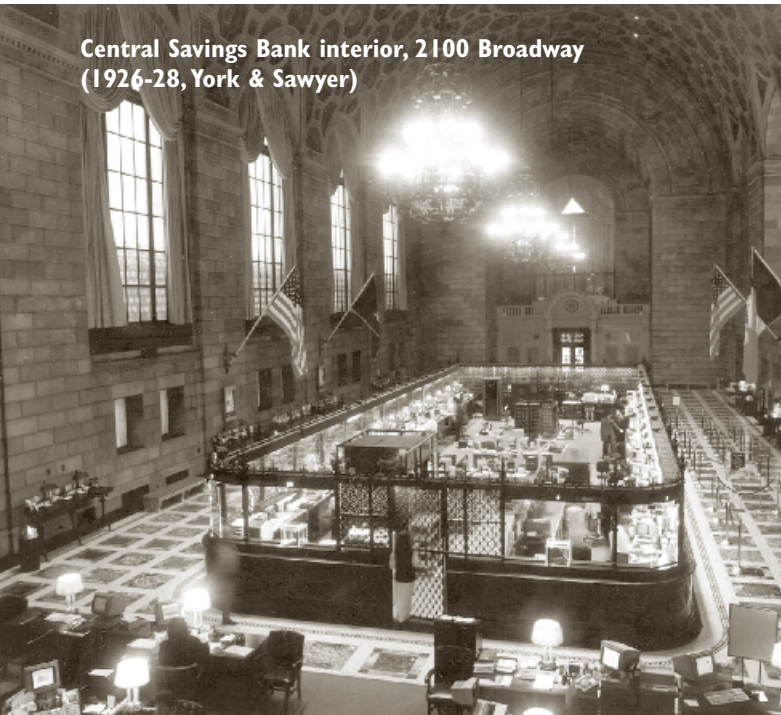


Beacon Theatre interior, 2124 Broadway  
(1929, Walter W. Ahlschlager)

**Dakota Apartments, 1 West 72nd Street  
(1884, Henry J. Hardenbergh)**



**Central Savings Bank interior, 2100 Broadway  
(1926-28, York & Sawyer)**



## THE 4 KINDS OF LANDMARKS

To be a designated landmark, a site must be at least 30 years old. For instance, the original World Trade Center, or “Twin Towers,” never got to be 30 years old, so they were not landmarked. The new One World Trade Center (completed in 2014) is too new to be landmarked.

There are four types of landmark designations:

- 1** An **individual** (or exterior) landmark, like the Dakota Apartments, is a single building of particular importance.
- 2** An **interior** landmark refers to an inside space that is accessible to the public, like the banking hall of the Central Savings Bank (now Apple Bank) on Broadway and West 73rd Street, or the inside of the Beacon Theatre on Broadway and West 74th Street.
- 3** An **historic district** refers to an area with lots of buildings that have a special character as a group, such as the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District or the Riverside–West End Historic District.
- 4** A **scenic** landmark usually has plants, trees or grass, like Central Park or Verdi Square at Broadway between West 72nd Street and West 73rd Street. Scenic landmarks may have no buildings at all.

### MY PERSONAL LANDMARK PROJECT: NOW YOU TRY

- Which building, interior, neighborhood, or park do you think should be a landmark?
- Why do you think it might be a landmark?
- What about this place is important to you or the neighborhood?
- There are many individual landmarks shown on the map that comes with this book. How many have you seen?

## FUN FACT

Central Savings Bank has been designated both an **INDIVIDUAL** and an **INTERIOR** landmark!

It is across the street from Verdi Square, a **SCENIC** landmark, and it is within the **Upper West Side/Central Park West HISTORIC DISTRICT**.

So, right there on West 73rd Street and Broadway, you can experience all four landmark types at once!

Central Savings Bank, 2100 Broadway  
(1926-28, York & Sawyer)





Manhattan Avenue looking north from 104th Street, 1927



Brown historic district street sign at Columbus Avenue

## HISTORIC DISTRICTS

**Historic districts** preserve lots of buildings in the same area. An historic district is designated because of a special role it has played in history, or because it represents especially well one or more periods of the city's architectural styles. Historic districts are one of the best ways of preserving the character of a neighborhood because all of the buildings in an historic district are protected.

The nine **Historic Districts** of the Upper West Side are:

1. Upper West Side/Central Park West
2. West End—Collegiate
3. Riverside Drive—West End
4. Manhattan Avenue
5. Central Park West—West 76th Street
6. Central Park West—West 73rd-74th Streets
7. Riverside Drive—West 105th Street
8. Riverside Drive—West 80-81st Streets
9. West 71st Street

The Morningside Heights Historic District also dips into northern blocks of the Upper West Side. Find these historic districts on the map in the back pocket of this book. They were all created to protect our neighborhood's special apartment buildings, public buildings, tenements, and rows and rows of rowhouses!

## FUN FACT

**Most street signs are reflective green. But you know you are in a historic district if you look at a street sign and it is brown and says the name of the historic district in small letters at the top.**



West 74th Street rowhouses  
and the San Remo apartment  
building in the Upper West Side/  
Central Park West Historic District



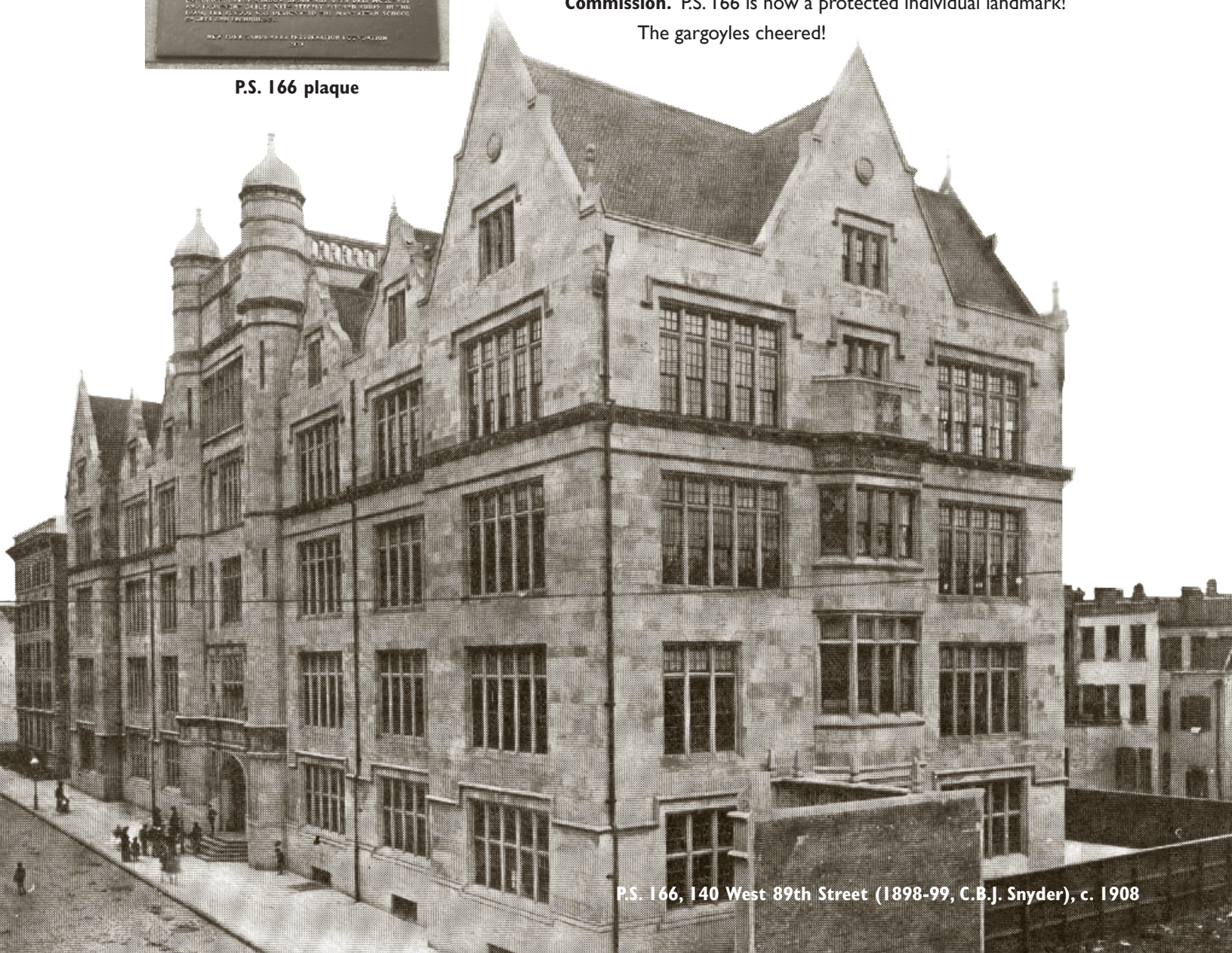
P.S. 166 plaque

## SOMETIMES YOU WIN, SOMETIMES YOU LOSE...

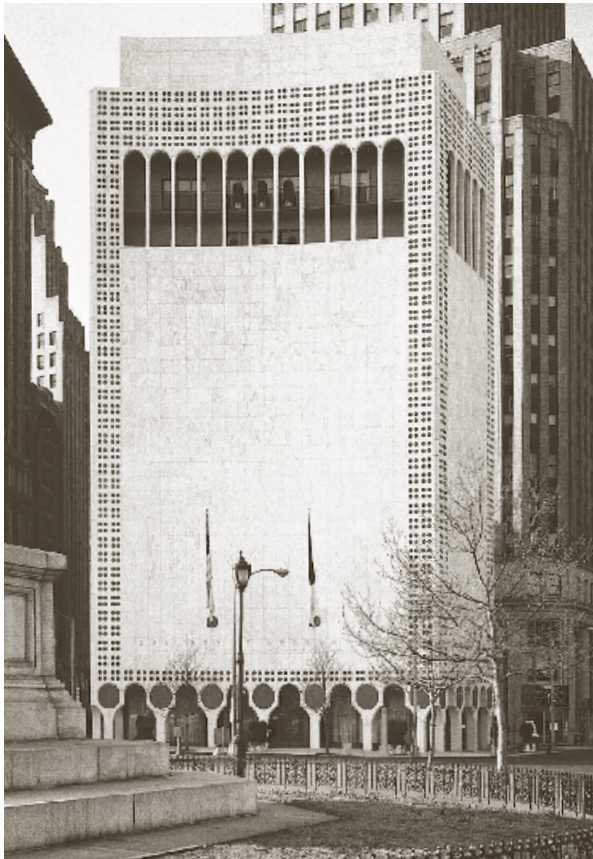
In 2000, children from P.S. 166 testified at a public hearing in support of making their school an individual landmark. Their written and spoken feelings about the importance of their beautiful, unique 19th-century school building helped persuade the **Landmarks Preservation**

**Commission.** P.S. 166 is now a protected individual landmark!

The gargoyles cheered!



P.S. 166, 140 West 89th Street (1898-99, C.B.J. Snyder), c. 1908



**2 Columbus Circle (1964, Edward Durell Stone) in 1964**

LANDMARK WEST! worked hard to try to save 2 Columbus Circle, one of only two buildings on the Upper West Side designed by the famous architect Edward Durell Stone. (The other one is P.S. 199 on West 70th Street.) Have you ever seen a building that looks like this? Unlike many other buildings from the mid-20th century, 2 Columbus Circle did not have big glass windows. Instead, it used solid white marble with small, round windows like a ship's portholes.



**2 Columbus Circle (2008, redesigned by Brad Cloepfil/ Allied Works Architecture) in 2015**

Can you guess why some people called it the “lollipop” building?

Many advocates tried to convince the **Landmarks Preservation Commission** to hold a public hearing on 2 Columbus Circle, but the Commission refused. In 2005, a museum bought the building and changed its exterior, erasing almost all of Stone's original design.