



## NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney  
Chairman

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### FAMED BARBIZON HOTEL FOR WOMEN AND THE PARK SLOPE HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION GIVEN LANDMARK PROTECTION

*Noted Barbizon Denizens Included Grace Kelly, Sylvia Plath, Nancy Reagan and Joan Didion, and Many Others*

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted unanimously to landmark the Barbizon Hotel for Women on Manhattan's Upper East Side, the architecturally distinctive former residence of dozens of noteworthy female writers, actors and artists, and expand the Park Slope Historic District in Brooklyn by 600 properties, making the area the largest protected swath in the borough, with 2,575 buildings.

"Today marks the culmination of a great deal of work and study by our staff in the past few years and effort on the part of residents and owners," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "Preservation is not only about protecting the historic character of New York City; it's also about creating strong partnerships with owners and the community to do so."

In other business, the Commission voted to calendar, or schedule, public hearings on proposals to give individual landmark status three New York City firehouses: the c.1903, Classical Revival-style **Engine Company 41** at 330 E. 150<sup>th</sup> St. in the Bronx, the c.1905 Classical Revival-style **Engine Company 83, Hook and Ladder Company 29** at 618-620 East 138<sup>th</sup> St. in the Bronx and the c.1925, neo-Tudor style **Engine Company 305** at 111-02 to 111-04 Queens Boulevard in Forest Hills, Queens.

Descriptions of the newly designated sites are below:

**Barbizon Hotel for Women**, 140 East 63<sup>rd</sup> Street, at Lexington Avenue



Designed by the architecture firm of Murgatroyd & Ogden, the distinctive 23-story building was completed in 1928 as a residential hotel and clubhouse for single women, who at the time were flocking to New York City in record numbers to pursue newly available careers.

"The hotel over time has been celebrated as much for its artful brickwork, masterful setbacks and eclectic ornament as the artists, writers and actors who lived there," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. "It's an excellent representation of a residential hotel building, which at the time was an important source of affordable housing in New York City."

The Barbizon was one of a number of residential hotel buildings that were constructed for single men and women in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as an alternative to rooming houses and transient hotels. They were more upscale than a YMCA or YWCA and less exclusive than a private club, offering single rooms with baths and typical hotel services, such as dining rooms, doormen and cleaning.

Named for the school of mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century French painters, the Barbizon Hotel for Women was constructed on a former synagogue site by a corporation headed by the founder of the Allerton Hotel chain, which pioneered apartment hotel-style housing and developed six of them in New York City between 1913 to 1924.



The Barbizon (photo at right c. 1928), considered the most renowned of the apartment hotels, was tailored to meet the needs of women who were pursuing careers in the arts. The upper floors featured studios for painters, sculptors, musicians and acting, and the first floor lounge had a stage and could seat up to 300.

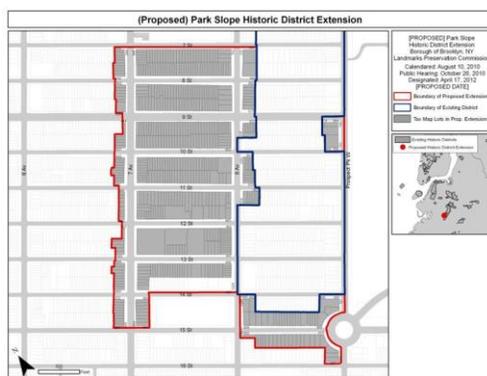
In the 1930s, the apartment hotel counted among its short-term residents such luminaries as actress Gene Tierney, author Eudora Welty and Margaret Tobin Brown, the Titanic survivor whose story became the subject of a Broadway musical and film, “The Unsinkable Molly Brown.” She died at the hotel in 1932.

Musical comedy star Elaine Stritch, future princess Grace Kelly and future first lady Nancy Davis Reagan were residents in the 1940s, when the Ford Modeling Agency began housing its models there. Sylvia Plath wrote about her stay at the Barbizon in “The Bell Jar,” calling the hotel the Amazon. Designers Linda Allard, Betsey Johnson and the writers Joan Didion, Gael Greene and Francine du Plessix Gray stayed there in the 1960s and 1970s as part of a summer program for college students sponsored by Mademoiselle magazine. In addition, the hotel housed students from the Katherine Gibbs secretarial school and the Parsons School of Design.

The Barbizon also attracted acclaim for the high quality of its design and shape. The building is arranged in a series of setbacks and topped with a five-story tower resembling a chapel with enormous Gothic windows. At the third story, the building recedes into a U-plan with a long center light court, and the facades are richly decorated with a mixture of North Italian Gothic, Romanesque and Renaissance ornament and clad with bricks trimmed with beige sandstone and terra cotta.

The hotel had begun to lose some of its luster and many of its tenants by the mid-1970s, and by 1981 had started allowing male guests. KLM Airlines acquired the hotel in 1983, changed the name to the Golden Tulip Barbizon Hotel and sold it five years later. It’s currently owned by the Berwind Properties Group and was recently converted to condominiums.

### Park Slope Historic District Extension



The Park Slope Historic District Extension encompasses 600 buildings that adjoin the Park Slope Historic District to the west and south, as well as three buildings on Prospect Park West between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> streets. The newly designated buildings lie roughly between 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets and 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> avenues, and along 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and part of 16<sup>th</sup> streets from Prospect Park West to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The original historic district, whose name is taken from nearby Prospect Park and its position on an incline that slopes from Mount Prospect to the Gowanus Bay, was created in 1973 and includes 1,975 buildings. It is Brooklyn’s largest historic district, and the city’s third largest.



Like their counterparts in the original district, the buildings in the extension were mostly completed by 1910 and designed in a variety of architectural styles. The earliest free-standing structures, two Italianate style houses at 457 12<sup>th</sup> Street and 565 11<sup>th</sup> Street (at left), were built prior to 1869. The earliest row houses, also designed in the Italianate style, at 453 to 459 9<sup>th</sup> Street, were constructed between 1869 and 1875.

The most popular architectural style in the extension is the simpler neo-Grec style. More than 200 row houses and apartment buildings are designed in this style, such as the c. 1884 row at 433 to 461 8<sup>th</sup> Street (below), and the c. 1880 row at 413 to 491 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

Other well-represented architectural styles in the district's row houses include the Renaissance Revival style, including 516 to 524 9<sup>th</sup> Street, c.1903, by the prolific Brooklyn architect Axel Hedman, and the Queen Anne style, including 466 to 480 9<sup>th</sup> Street, c. 1882, by the architect L. Pearson.



The buildings that were constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also were designed in styles that were popular at the time, such as the Colonial Revival, neo-Classical, Medieval Revival and Art Deco styles. Two examples include 145 Prospect Park West between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> streets (neo-Classical, by Eisenla & Carlson, c. 1912) and 150 Prospect Park West (Colonial Revival, architect unknown, c. 1922).



A number of noteworthy institutional and commercial buildings are also included in the extension such as Ladder Company 122 (c.1883), designed by Francis D. Norris in the Gothic Revival style, and its later neighbor, Fire Engine Company 220 (c.1906), designed by the prominent Brooklyn architect Walter E. Parfitt in the Beaux-Arts style (left). Another is the former Congregation Tifereth Israel (1925-27), designed in the Romanesque Revival style by architect Allen A. Blaustein.

“The extension retains a remarkable degree of cohesion because of its architectural integrity and diversity of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural styles,” said Chairman Tierney. “These extraordinary characteristics set it apart from every other neighborhood in New York City, giving it a special sense of place.”

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The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency 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 more than 29,000 buildings and sites, including 1,305 individual landmarks, 114 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 107 historic districts and 17 historic district extensions in all five boroughs. Under the City's landmarks law, considered among the most powerful in the nation, 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.

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