



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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TWO TURN-OF-THE 20TH CENTURY FRENCH RENAISSANCE REVIVAL MANSIONS IN MIDTOWN MANHATTAN EARN LANDMARK DESIGNATION

*Elegant Residences on West 56th Street Owned by Prominent New York-Based Financiers and
Designed by Two Famed Architectural Firms*

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously voted to grant landmark status to the former Edey and Seligman mansions along West 56th Street, between Fifth and Sixth avenues in Manhattan. Both designations arose from Commission's recent survey – the largest undertaken since the early 1990s – of more than 16,000 historic buildings in all five boroughs, including 562 in Midtown.

Aside from their location, the refined residences at 10 and 30 W. 56th Street share a number of similarities, such as mansard roofs, limestone facades, date of completion, design and prominent owners and architects. They were two of several townhouses constructed at the start of the 20th century for financiers on that block, which became known as “Bankers Row.”

“While similar, these townhouses reflect the distinct sensibilities of the architects who designed them and the residents who lived in them,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “The Commission identified both in its survey of architecturally and historically significant buildings in all five boroughs, which has accelerated our capacity to consider and evaluate our City’s future landmarks.”



Designed by Warren & Wetmore -- the famed architectural firm responsible for Grand Central Terminal, the New York Yacht Club, 4 Park Avenue, Aeolian Hall, as well as numerous mansions and townhouses -- 10 West 56th Street was built for Frederick C. and Birdsall O. Edey and completed in 1901. Frederick Edey was a stockbroker who co-founded his own firm, and Birdsall Otis Edey, the national president of Girl Scouts of America from 1930 to 1935 and a published poet.

Their slender, six-story French Renaissance Revival townhouse was constructed primarily of brick and limestone. It's distinguished by a modillioned cornice on the second level that frames a grand Palladian window, a tripartite window on the third level with a balustraded parapet and a dormered copper mansard roof.

The Edeys sold 10 W. 56th Street in 1919, and the building later housed upscale retailers, including a dressmaker and furniture gallery. It's currently owned by Felissimo Design House, and used for exhibition space.

More

The Seligman residence, at 30 W. 56th Street, was also finished in 1901. The five-story townhouse, built on two lots, was owned by Henry Seligman, an investment banker who commissioned architect Charles Pierrepont Henry Gilbert to design the building. Gilbert, one of the city's most prolific architects, designed numerous fanciful row houses and townhouses in what are now known as the Park Slope, Upper East Side and Riverside-West End historic districts in styles ranging from Francois I and Beaux-Arts to neo-Italian Renaissance and Romanesque Revival.



Henry Seligman worked for the international banking firm founded by his father and brothers, J.& W. Seligman & Company, which not only served as the financial advisor to several foreign governments, but underwrote railroads, transit systems, public utilities and industries, including the U.S. Steel Corporation, General Motors and the Panama Canal. He and his wife, Adelaide, lived at 30 W. 56th Street until their deaths in 1933.

Designed in a restrained French Renaissance Revival style, the limestone residence recalls a European palazzo. Its notable features include original casement windows with modillioned lintels, balconies, a cornice that's accented by rows of decorative leaves and rosettes; and a one-story mansard roof with intricately carved dormers, copper trim with lion heads and limestone chimneys.

After the Seligmans died, 30 West 56th Street was occupied by the Beethoven Association, and a private club, but was later converted into apartments, with a restaurant on the ground floor.

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 1,169 individual landmarks, 108 interior landmarks, nine scenic landmarks and 88 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.