

**Webster Hall**, 119-125 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, Built: 1886; Architect: Charles Rentz.  
Proposed Landmark site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 556, Lot 68



Webster Hall was constructed in 1886 to the design of Charles Rentz; a massive seventy by one hundred foot, three-story ballroom and concert hall, constructed of Philadelphia Brick with stone accents, and un-glazed red terra-cotta that originates from an 1884 Boston Terra Cotta Company catalogue. Designed in the Renaissance Revival style, the building is adorned with a fluted bracketed cornice and Corinthian pilasters, decorative terra-cotta panels incorporating foliate motifs, gryphon,

putti, and musical instruments. In 1892, a twenty by ninety-eight foot lot at No.125 was annexed and an addition was constructed for a bar, sitting rooms and living quarters for the owner. The addition used the same decorative motifs to create a seamless association between the two buildings.

Webster Hall is one of the largest public gathering halls left in New York City, and has gone through many incarnations during its existence. Halls for hire or “Pleasure Gardens” have helped sustain the city's civic life, offering large interior spaces for use by many different social and political groups. Used primarily as a dance hall during the 1880s and 1890s, the building is one of the only dance halls still extant on the Lower East Side. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was estimated that there were over 130 dance halls, mostly located on the Lower East Side, because of the large working-class immigrant population that helped to popularize the Pleasure Garden.

Webster Hall's assorted uses over the years are a prime example of the ways public gathering spaces have been used in New York City. During Prohibition, the theme of the balls held within the hall ranged from supporting social and political concerns to hedonistic celebrations. In the 1940s, it was an RCA studio, and the site of the first-ever stereophonic recording. Then, RCA Records recognized the extraordinary acoustical integrity of the building and converted it into their East Coast recording venue, Webster Hall Studios. It was here that Carol Channing recorded *Hello, Dolly!* and Harold Prince recorded *Fiddler on the Roof*. During the 1950s, Latin music greats Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez both performed and held recording sessions at in the building. Luminaries such as Julie Andrews, Elvis Presley, Tony Bennett, Ray Charles, Harry Belafonte, and Frank Sinatra all joined the list of stars that the venue had witnessed. In the 1950s, folk concerts at Webster Hall with singers such as Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie led to the founding of the legendary folk music magazine *Sing Out*. Renamed the Ritz in the 1980s, the building was the first club in the world to incorporate video into concert performances.

In the 1990s, the space reverted to the name Webster Hall and is still a popular concert and dance hall.

**BETH HAMEDRASH HAGADOL ANSHE UNGARN (Great House of Study of the People of Hungary), 242 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan**



This handsome, Beaux Arts style synagogue was constructed in 1908, rebuilt from an existing house, by the architects Gross & Kleinberger for a Hungarian congregation formed in 1883. Typically, when Jewish immigrants arrived in New York during the late nineteenth century, they tried to stay within the traditions of their homelands for general support as well as for religious practices, and they often formed small congregations with other countrymen. Immigrants from Hungary were a significant part of the large European migration of the late nineteenth century and many settled between 1<sup>st</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, near 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Manhattan.

Beth Hamedrash Hagadol was one of the earliest Hungarian congregations organized in New York. In 1908, they purchased a house on East 7<sup>th</sup> Street and spent \$10,000 rebuilding it with a brick and stone façade in the then popular Beaux Arts style. Three bays wide with a central entrance and a double set of engaged pilasters supporting a full pediment, this design testified to the substance of this congregation.

Architects Samuel Gross and Joseph Kleinberger maintained an architectural partnership from 1907 until 1922, during which time they designed numerous tenement buildings on Manhattan's Lower East Side as well as larger apartment buildings in upper Manhattan, several of which are in the Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill and Hamilton Heights/ Sugar Hill Northwest Historic Districts. For this small structure, the architects created a highly detailed façade that is more rich and varied than many Lower East Side synagogue buildings. The congregation ceased to exist by 1975 and in 1985 the building was converted to residential use.



**ELIZABETH HOME FOR GIRLS**, 307 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1891, Vaux & Radford, architects.



The only shelter for young women in a series of Children's Aid Society facilities, the Elizabeth Home for Girls is a lasting reminder of the difficulties faced by those living in New York's tenement districts in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Children's Aid Society was conceived of by Charles Loring Brace in 1852 and was "the first organization in the United States to concern itself with childhood poverty and crime." In considering the plight of immigrants living in abject poverty in New York's poorest districts, Brace felt that children experienced the most suffering and developed the Children's Aid Society with the intention of housing and educating the city's poorest children. Brace employed long-time friend and celebrated architect Calvert Vaux to design the Children's Aid Society buildings, and between 1879 and 1892 the firm of Vaux & Radford designed twelve facilities for the organization.

Of these facilities, four have been demolished and two are designated New York City landmarks (the Mott Street Industrial School and the Tompkins Square Lodging House for Boys).

The Elizabeth Home for Girls, located in what was once the densely-populated immigrant neighborhood of the East Village, was the only such facility for young women and served not only as a home but as a training school teaching laundry, dressmaking, cooking and housecleaning. Constructed in 1891, the building served the needs of the Children's Aid Society until 1930, when it was sold to Dr. Benedict Lust. Dr. Lust, a German healer who was credited with founding the Naturopathic Society of America and the American School of Naturopathy, used the former girls' home as one of his several "health houses" located throughout the city. After Lust's death in 1945, the building was sold to the Florence Crittendon League which once again utilized the building as a home for destitute young women. From 1946 to 1984, the building was owned by the League and known as the Barrett Shelter. Today, the building houses co-op apartments.

The Elizabeth Home for Girls, a four story brick and sandstone building, was constructed in the Queen Anne style with elements derived from the German Renaissance. Brace had been impressed by a building he had seen while traveling in Nuremburg and requested that Vaux & Radford employ similar stylistic elements in their designs for the Children's Aid Society facilities. The stepped gable theme was appropriately reminiscent of New York's Dutch heritage, and the sophistication of the buildings brought richness to the tenement districts in which they were located. The building maintains nearly all of its original defining characteristics, including its cross-axial stepped gable, arched entrance topped with an intricately ornamented sandstone console and balcony, dominant central chimney, multi-paned transom over the main entrance, two hipped gabled dormers, and irregularly sized and arranged fenestration.

## Public Bath, 538-540 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan



Designed by noted architect Arnold W. Brunner and completed in 1906, this elaborate Beaux-Arts style structure was built by the City of New York as a free public bath. The building is a significant reminder of the area's history as an immigrant neighborhood. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, progressive social reformers lobbied for the creation of public baths that would help alleviate sanitary problems in New York City's tenement neighborhoods, where few residents had access to a bath or shower. Built in a

predominantly German immigrant neighborhood, the limestone-clad structure was meant to contrast with its tenement neighbors through material, scale and detail, making it a monument to civic beneficence. Rusticated pilasters set on high bases with unusual capital designs flank the three entrance arches, which are surmounted by elaborate brackets framed by fruits with plaques above. A frieze framed by cartouches, inscribed with "Free Public Baths of the City of New York" runs along the top of the building.

In their early days of use, the baths could be quite popular. During a 1906 heat wave, "people stood in lines 'four deep'" at the Eleventh Street baths. However, as bathing facilities gradually were added to apartments, public baths had to add swimming pools in order to continue to attract users. This building was used as a bath until the 1950s. In 1995, Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Eddie Adams bought the building and converted it into a high-end fashion and corporate photograph studio.

Arnold Brunner was a noted architect and city planner who designed either independently or in partnership the Public Baths at East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Asser Levy Place (Brunner & Aiken), Shearith Israel Synagogue (Brunner & Tryon), portions of Mount Sinai Dispensary (Brunner & Tryon), (all designated New York City landmarks) and Temple Israel in the Mount Morris Park Historic District. Brunner also designed the Cleveland Federal Building and plans or studies for the cities of Baltimore, Denver, Colorado, Rochester and Albany, New York.

**(Former) PUBLIC NATIONAL BANK OF NEW YORK (later Public National Bank & Trust Company of New York/ later Tompkins Square Bank) BUILDING, 106 Avenue C (aka 231 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street), Manhattan**



The Public National Bank of New York Building, at 106 Avenue C (aka 231 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street), is a highly unusual structure displaying the direct influence of the early-20<sup>th</sup> century modernism of the eminent Viennese architect/designer Josef Hoffmann and others. Built in 1923-24, the bank was designed by Eugene Schoen (c. 1880-1957), a German-American architect born in New York City, who had graduated from the Columbia University School of Architecture in 1902. According to the monograph *Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work* (1985) by

Eduard F. Sekler, “Schoen brought back lasting impressions of Hoffmann’s work from a tour of study in Vienna and effectively transposed them into designs of his own in New York.” He was a partner in [Axel S.] Hedman & Schoen from around 1906 to 1918, after which time he practiced independently. He was said to have been inspired to become an interior designer after attending the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs, and opened his own New York gallery. Among Schoen’s significant design collaborations were the interiors of the Rockefeller Center complex. He received the Gold Medal of the Architectural League in 1931. The *New York Times* at his death stated that “Schoen was regarded as one of the leading exponents of modern architecture and design and as such helped to develop the movement here.”

This building was a branch bank of the Public National Bank of New York (it was known as the Public National Bank & Trust Company of New York after 1927), which had its headquarters at Delancey and Ludlow Streets. Schoen is known to have also designed two other branches for the bank, one in Brooklyn in 1923 and one in the Bronx in 1931. This structure, originally two stories, had a monumental ground-story banking floor and upstairs offices. Clad in grey terra cotta above a polished granite base, the design features an angled corner bay with the entrance, capital-less fluted pilasters (a direct reference to Hoffmann’s work), and a broad, highly stylized molded cornice with a lower band with bosses. The entrance is surmounted by polychrome Viennese-inspired terra-cotta ornament in the form of a decorative band above which is a cartouche with a wreath of fruit (which once held a clock) above an eagle, flanked by curvilinear forms and decorative urns. The building’s terra cotta was manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co.

In 1929, this building became headquarters of the newly-organized Tompkins Square Bank. The structure was sold in 1954, and converted into the Stuyvesant Nursing Home, with the addition of an intermediate floor and entrance at the west end of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street facade. It was converted into apartments in the 1980s.



**WHEATSWORTH FACTORY**  
**444 EAST 10<sup>TH</sup> STREET, MANHATTAN**



The Wheatsworth Factory was constructed in 1927-28 to the designs of J. Edwin Hopkins. This Art Deco/Viennese Secessionist style factory building features a granite base, light-colored iron-spot brick, large multi-pane pivot steel windows and multi-chrome terra cotta friezes with green circles at the base and the parapet. The linear ornamentation of the terra cotta friezes with their restrained, geometric designs is characteristic of this style of architecture. The door surrounds at either end contain terra cotta panels with images of bundles of wheat stalks. The brick façade and large multi-pane steel windows are typical features of factory buildings of the era; however, the elaborate decorative terra cotta distinguishes this building from typical factory buildings of the 1920s.

The building was built by Wheatsworth, Inc., the manufacturer of whole wheat biscuits and flour and inventor of the Milk-Bone dog biscuit. The company was formed under the name F.H. Bennett Biscuit Company in 1907 by Dr. Thomas L. Bennett to market whole wheat products. Wheatsworth was a successful food manufacturer with plants in Manhattan and Hamburg, New Jersey. According to the *New York Times*, the estimated cost of the new factory, which was built adjacent to their existing Manhattan factory, was \$1,000,000 and tripled the capacity of the company's baking activities. National Biscuit Company acquired Wheatsworth in 1931. The company, now known as Nabisco, sold the rights to the Milk-Bone dog biscuit in 2006 but continues to make Wheatsworth Crackers.

This area of the East Village, which was formerly known as the Lower East Side, near the river was an industrial area populated with gas works, coal yards, iron works, ice companies, mills and factories. Most of these industrial facilities have been replaced by residential housing, including several public housing complexes, a public pool and parking garages. The Wheatsworth Factory remains as one of the few remaining buildings built for an industrial-based use in the far East Village.