

City Sets Out to Rescue Battery's Fireboat Station

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ



Lescaze townhouse on E. 48th St. is a modern landmark. Pps1 Photo by Terence McCarten

After years of inter-governmental wrangling and outside public pressure, the Landmarks Preservation Commission today takes the first step in designating as a municipal landmark Pier A, the simple two-story green-roofed building at the southern end of Battery Park City.

Battery Park City, a state authority, has planned to demolish the pier—still an active fireboat station—since 1970, when it leased the land from the city, but has been stopped by public pressure.

The 1868 building, the city's oldest functioning covered pier, was designated a state and national landmark last summer, but neither designation carries the prohibition against demolition that city status would bring.

At today's City Hall hearing, the commission will consider the designation of seven other properties and announce the designation of three.

Designations

¶ The partial interior of City Hall (1803-1811), already an official landmark and considered, a commission report notes, "the first expression of New York's cosmopolitanism."

¶ The William Lescaze House and Office, at 211 E. 48th St., a 1934 townhouse conversion called by the commission "one of the first truly modern buildings in the city, embodying (architect Lescaze's) principles of rational and functional architecture."

¶ The 1944 Municipal Asphalt Plant at 91st and the East River Drive, designed by the prominent firm of Kahn and Jacobs and considered a highly innovative example of functional architecture, the first in the city to make use of the parabolic arch form. It is currently being converted by a community group into a recreational center.

Other properties to be considered for designation at today's hearing are:

¶ The Anthony Campagna House at 640 W. 249th St. in Riverdale, an Italian Renaissance villa built for the builder, art collector and civic leader.

¶ St. Peter's Church, Chapel and Cemetery at 2500 Westchester Av., in The Bronx, considered to be fine examples of 19th century Gothic Revival and Victorian Gothic architecture.

¶ The Parachute Jump at Coney Island, affectionately known as the "Eiffel Tower of Brooklyn, which is unused but part of plans for a park.

¶ Gravesend Cemetery, dating from the 1650s and one of the oldest in city, and two neighboring Dutch Colonial style private residences.