

January 14, 2020

**Testimony before the New York City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Siting and Maritime Uses regarding the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company); the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company (BRT) Central Power Station Engine House; the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building; the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House; and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter and Garage**

Good afternoon Chair Adams and Subcommittee members, I am Kate Lemos McHale, the Director of Research at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to present five landmarks designated in the Gowanus neighborhood of Brooklyn.

On October 29, 2019 LPC designated *the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory* (later American Can Company); the *Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company (BRT) Central Power Station Engine House*; the *Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building*; the *Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House*; and the *ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter and Garage* as individual landmarks.

These designations were the result LPC's Gowanus Initiative, which I will describe in the next few slides. They were found meritorious for designation due to the combination of their prominence within the neighborhood, their notable architectural character and integrity, and their historic connections to the canal and the industries and organizations that developed around it in the late-19th and early-20th century. Their designation recognizes and celebrates the unique development history of Gowanus; they have adapted over time in response to the changes in industrial activity and the neighborhood itself, and remain the area's most prominent, architecturally distinctive and historically significant buildings. The agency worked closely with the property owners and received strong support for these designations.

The designations were the result of a multiple-year effort by LPC, through its *Gowanus Initiative* to study the Gowanus area, which has a rich history, and has seen tremendous change over time. The canal's designation as a federal Superfund site in 2010 and Superstorm Sandy in 2012 brought particular attention and engagement on the need to remediate and improve infrastructure in Gowanus, and to develop a plan for the neighborhood's future. As part of the Administration's multi-agency planning process, LPC worked closely with the Department Of City Planning, key stakeholders, and community members. LPC staff participated in the Public Realm Working Group, which met several times in 2017 and 2018, to understand concerns of the community, inform the planning process, and identify preservation opportunities in the neighborhood.

As part of LPC's *Gowanus Initiative*, staff undertook a comprehensive and detailed study of the entire neighborhood, including the planned rezoning area and the industrial area to the south, to identify

potential landmarks. We developed a framework defining the major periods of the Gowanus neighborhood's development history to guide and inform the evaluation of historic resources and identification of meritorious buildings as landmarks that best represent the Gowanus' significant history and character. To illustrate this framework and our study, I'd like to summarize Gowanus' development history, and then describe each building briefly.

The Gowanus Canal was preceded by the Gowanus Creek, shown here in this 1766 map. Prior to European settlement, the area was inhabited by members of the Canarsee tribe. Gowanus' Native American history is tied very strongly to its original ecology – estuaries provided abundant access to shellfish and other natural resources. Later, the Gowanus area played a key role in the Battle of Long Island (also called the Battle of Brooklyn), which was the first major battle of the Revolutionary War and the largest battle ever waged in North America up to that time.

First proposed in the 1840s, the Gowanus Canal runs from Gowanus Bay to its terminus just south of Butler Street and was completed after the Civil War in 1869. Shown here is the outline of the canal in its fullest extent from 1942 overlaid over an 1839 base map of Gowanus Creek. The manmade canal transformed the natural creek and estuary into one of the country's first planned industrial districts.

The canal's construction, coinciding with tremendous growth in Brooklyn, spurred development of a range of industries, and the area was a major entry and distribution point for building materials. The Gowanus Canal and the adjacent businesses were most active in the early 1900s. In the 1920s, vessels moved more than \$100 million worth of goods each year, making it one of the world's most productive and valuable waterways. It also became highly polluted. Most canal-side businesses were housed in wood-framed structures that no longer survive. Of buildings that do survive from this period, two that particularly stand out are the immense brick engine room of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company; and the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company), both of which depended on their canal side locations, and are included in this collection of landmarks.

Following World War II, there was a decline in industrial activity along and around the Canal, and many industrial businesses closed or downsized. Over the past 30 years, light-industrial and commercial activity has grown in the area, and it has become a hub for creative industries and artists, many of whom have reactivated former industrial and manufacturing buildings.

### **Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company)**

Located at the intersection of 3rd Street and 3rd Avenue, the distinctive Somers Brothers Tinware Factory was built in 1884 for the largest decorated tinware firm in the country at the time.

At the Public Hearing on September 24, 2019, the Commission received support for the proposed designation from 14 people, including representatives of the property owner, New York City Councilmember Brad Lander, the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, Historic Districts Council, Society

for the Architecture of the City, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Park Slope Civic Council, Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus, Municipal Art Society, and four individuals. No one spoke in opposition. The Commission received 33 written submissions in support of designation.

In a time before plastics and aluminum cans, tinsplate containers made the consumption of a wide range of products possible out-of-season and at great distances from centers of production. In 1878, Somers Brothers firm began to use a lithographic process to print images on tinsplate sheets, and custom equipment to cut and shape the sheets into containers. This set Somers Brothers apart as the first known American producers of decorated tinware.

Daniel Somers designed the factory and invented many of the machines and processes used within. Much of his factory design was functional, typical of late-19th century industrial architecture, but it was also expressive, with a remarkable variety of brick patterns and arrangements that enliven the facade, and a mixture of segmental and semicircular arched windows characteristic of the American round-arched style.

In 1901, Somers Brothers was absorbed by the American Can Company, which became the largest producer of tin cans in the world, and made many innovations including the country's first usable beer cans. The American Can Company sold the building in 1950.

The factory became a creative node in Gowanus beginning in the 1970s and today is used by more than 300 artists, performers, designers, fabricators, publishers, non-profit organizations, and an iconic music studio. Known as the Old American Can Factory, it led the Gowanus neighborhood's transition from industry to a lively mix of arts and manufacturing, and remains a vital contributor to the historic, architectural, and cultural character of the neighborhood. It remains remarkably intact to its time as a major manufacturing presence in Gowanus and is one of Gowanus' most-distinctive industrial buildings. The landmark site shown on the right is a lot in part that includes the original 1884 structure.

### **Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company (BRT) Central Power Station Engine House**

The former BRT Central Power Station Engine House is a monumental link to the Gowanus Canal's industrial past and a significant structure in the development of mass transit in New York City. It is located on the east side of the Gowanus Canal, near the intersection of Third Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. At its public hearing on September 24, in addition to the support I described previously for the designations, the Commission received support from a representative of the owner, Powerhouse Environmental Arts Foundation. No one spoke in opposition.

The Central Power Station was built in 1901-04 by the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company, established in 1896. This complex consolidated power generating operations for Brooklyn's various lines on a single site, marking the company's emergence as one of the country's largest transit providers, and an important step towards the creation of an integrated mass-transit system. The original site extended from the First

Street basin to Third Street and from Third Avenue to the canal, where barges delivered coal directly to the power station.

At the time of completion, the BRT Power Station consisted of two main blocks: a north section, demolished before 1950, which served as the boiler room, and the surviving engine house, indicated with red arrows. The Engine House remained in operation, providing electric power to the Fourth Avenue subway, until 1972.

The monumental BRT Central Power Station Engine House is a prominent reminder of the era when the Gowanus Canal was significant inland waterway and the Gowanus neighborhood was a major industrial center. The three original facades of the Engine House are bold yet restrained, gaining much of their impact from the structure's immense size, simple massing, and multi-story window openings, and incorporating expressive brick details which remain intact. In its current form since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the building is a significant presence in the Gowanus neighborhood, known colloquially as "the bat cave". In 2012, the former BRT Central Power Station engine house was acquired by the Powerhouse Environmental Arts Foundation, which plans to reuse and rehabilitate the structure and construct an annex on the north side. The site conditions have changed through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the landmark site is a lot in part, incorporating the land beneath the Engine House.

### **Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building**

The Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company building located on the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Second Avenue in Brooklyn reflects the industrial history of the Gowanus neighborhood and stands out for its simple yet refined design and high level of integrity. At the Public Hearing held September 24, 2019, testimony supporting designation was received for this property along with all five proposed landmarks, previously described. No one spoke in opposition.

The Montauk Paint Manufacturing Building was historically located on a super block stretching between second avenue and the canal, largely occupied by the Brooklyn Union Gas Company and the Brooklyn Alcatraz Asphalt Company. It was built as an investment property in 1908 by the Brooklyn Alcatraz Asphalt Company's President William Kelly, a well-known contractor in Brooklyn.

The first tenant of Kelly's new factory building was the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1908, who remained in the building for more than 20 years. The Brooklyn Eagle noted at the time that the borough of Brooklyn was one of the foremost paint manufacturing centers in the US. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Norge Sailmakers moved in to 170 2<sup>nd</sup> avenue. The Norge sail makers company manufactured yacht and sailboat sails as well as covers for pleasure crafts, and showcased the building in their advertisements.

The Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building was designed in a simplified version of the American Round Arch style, by Garabed George Heghinian. A civil engineer, Heghinian utilized

sophisticated brickwork and established a clear expression of the buildings structure to create an austere and elegant design. The distinguished design of this building lends to its prominence within the industrial Gowanus neighborhood, and is remarkably intact.

### **Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House**

Located at the head of the Gowanus Canal and completed in 1911, the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House were part of a major infrastructure project intended to clean the increasingly polluted water of the canal. They were designed in a monumental neoclassical style elevating their function, and are little changed from their historic appearance. At the Public Hearing on September 24, 2019, the Commission received support for the proposed designation along with testimony supporting all five proposed landmarks, as well as a representative of the owner, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. No one spoke in opposition.

The original plan to maintain the water quality in the Gowanus Canal relied on the ebb and flow of tides but it was soon determined that this was insufficient for the task as the canal received increasing amounts of industrial waste and run off from sanitary and storm water sewers. The City of Brooklyn purchased the lots at the head of the canal, including part of the canal, in 1890. In 1904 the Bureau of Sewers for the Borough of Brooklyn proposed construction of a 6,280-foot-long tunnel linking the Canal to Buttermilk Channel. A nine-foot propeller would move the dirty water from the canal and replace it with cleaner water from the bay.

In 1909 work on the flushing tunnel had been completed and Arthur L. L. Martin, of the Bureau of Sewers, submitted applications for construction of the two buildings at the head of the canal to house the pumping equipment. The buildings were completed in 1911 and on June 21 of that year the residents of South Brooklyn celebrated the opening of the new works that promised to improve the canal's condition.

Executed in red brick and limestone the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House reflect the monumental classicism favored for civic structures of the time. The Pumping Station, on the right, with monumental round arches, high gambrel roof, and corbeled cornice, housed the tunnel's pumping equipment and the northern sluice gate. The smaller gate house shown on the left was built to protect the tunnel's southern sluice gate.

The Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel operated until the 1960s when the propeller mechanism broke. DEP reactivated it in 1999 after a five-year renovation which included reversing the flow of water to bring oxygenated water from Buttermilk Channel into the canal. The tunnel was again rehabilitated from 2009-2014, with three vertical turbines pumping over 250 million gallons of water into the canal from the bay daily. The landmark site includes that portion of the current tax lot on which the Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House are located and does not include DEP's new service building on Butler Street.

## **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter and Garage**

Upon its opening in 1913, this building at 233 Butler Street in Gowanus was hailed as “the largest, most complete animal shelter in the world.” It was originally constructed as the Brooklyn dog and cat shelter of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and is the finest surviving ASPCA building in New York City. At the public hearing on September 24, 2019, the Commission received support for the proposed designation from representatives of the property owner, in addition to the support for all five landmarks described already. No one spoke in opposition. The Commission has also received 33 written submissions in support of the proposed designation.

Originally constructed in 1913, the building was just a single story in height, occupying only the western portion of its lot, as shown in the image on the left. Renovations in 1922 enlarged it to its current size, expanding its shelter capacity and expanding it into the ASPCA’s Brooklyn headquarters and ambulance house. The ASPCA building is located across Butler Street from the head of the Gowanus Canal. The historic map on the right shows the site in 1921, just before the shelter building was expanded eastward to its present size.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has been headquartered in New York City since its founding by Henry Bergh in 1866 (shown on the right coming to the aid of overworked horses). Before its founding, animals enjoyed few legal protections. The ASPCA was crucial in revolutionizing Americans’ attitudes toward animals and in establishing New York as a national leader in the humane movement.

The elegant neo-Romanesque-style design of the Butler Street facade by the firm of Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker is a testament to the organization’s civic and social importance. Two large arches—one of which served as an ambulance portal—dominate a facade enlivened by molded and patterned brickwork and limestone trim. Changes on the main facade are essentially limited to sash and door replacement.

As shown by this group of Girl Scouts assembled in front of the building, probably in the 1920s, this building played an important role in educating Brooklynites in the care and humane treatment of animals. Thousands of Brooklynites adopted pets here before its closure. The ASPCA was a leader in hiring female ambulance drivers—including three working here starting in 1924—who were thought to be more tactful than men in dealing with the delicate situations often faced by ASPCA staff. Bronze medals were awarded here to heroic Brooklyn animals including Micky the Irish setter, who saved his family from a fire in 1940.

The sidewalk in front of the building retains a granite watering trough dating from its opening. Dozens of similar troughs were installed throughout the city by anti-cruelty advocates to provide horses with drinking water, and this is one of the few that remain. The trough and the building behind it—the finest, best-preserved ASPCA building remaining in New York City--constitute a unique monument to a time

when working animals filled the city's streets and to New York's central role in the nationwide anticruelty movement.

The existing tax lot does not correspond with the historic lot, and currently includes a lot to the building's west. The landmark site is a lot in part incorporating the footprint of the ASPCA Building and the sidewalk in front of it, including the watering trough.

Thank you very much. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

# Gowanus Landmarks

Designated October 29, 2019

# Gowanus Landmarks

Designated  
October 29, 2019



Somers Tinware  
(later American Can Company)



Brooklyn Rapid Transit (B.R.T.) Central  
Powerhouse



Gowanus Canal  
Flushing Tunnel Pump House



American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to  
Animals (ASPCA) Building



Montauk Paint Factory  
(later Norge Sailmakers Corporation)



# LPC Gowanus Initiative

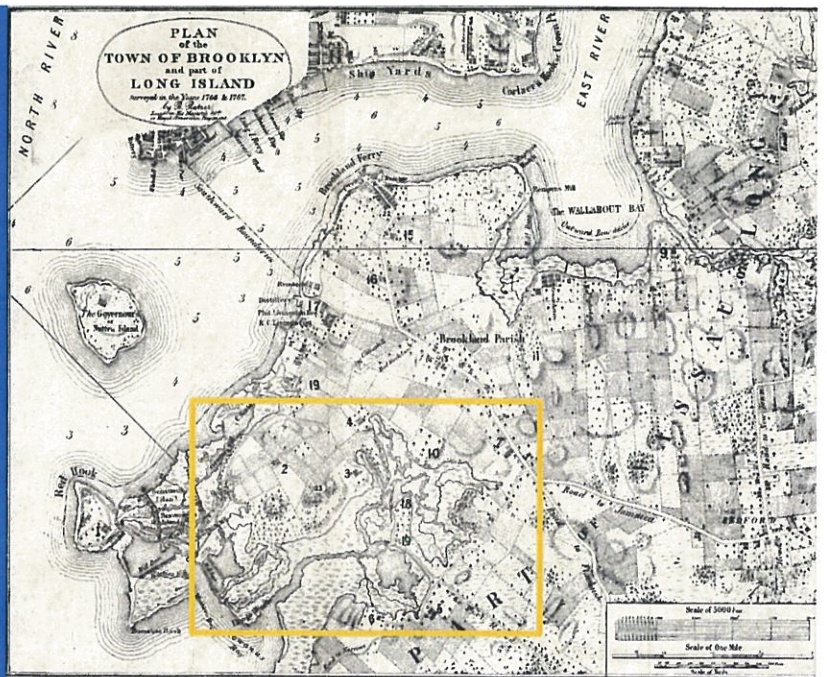


**NYC** Landmarks Preservation Commission

Gowanus Landmarks  
Designated October 29, 2019

## Historical Development: Gowanus Creek

1766 Plan of the Town of  
Brooklyn



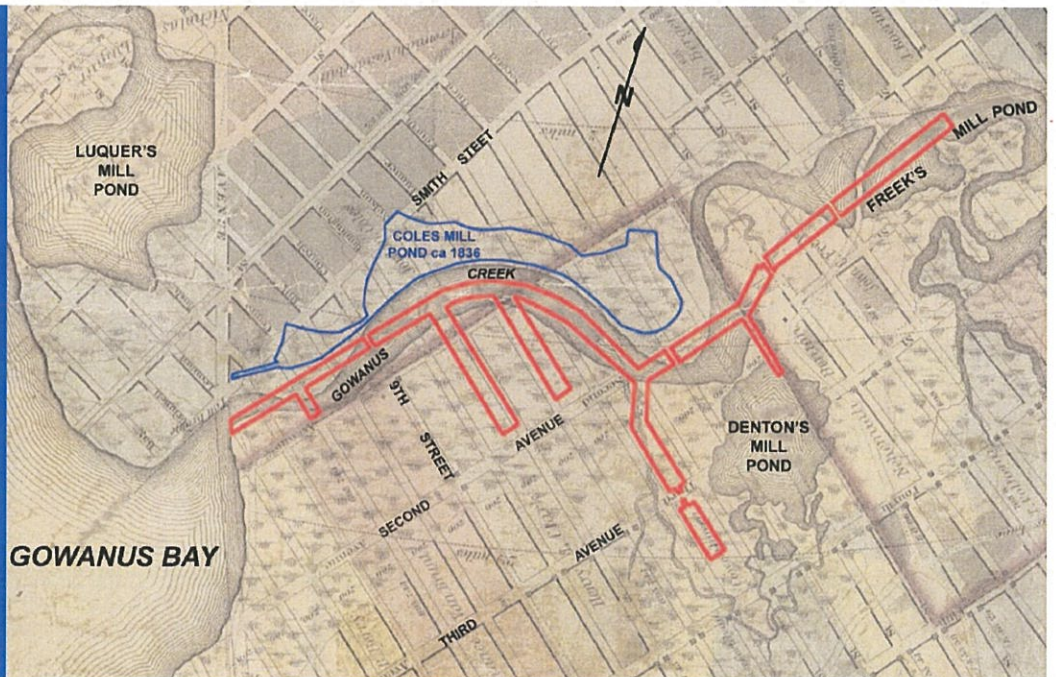
## Early Development History

Painting of the Battle of Long Island in 1776, by Charles Henry Granger



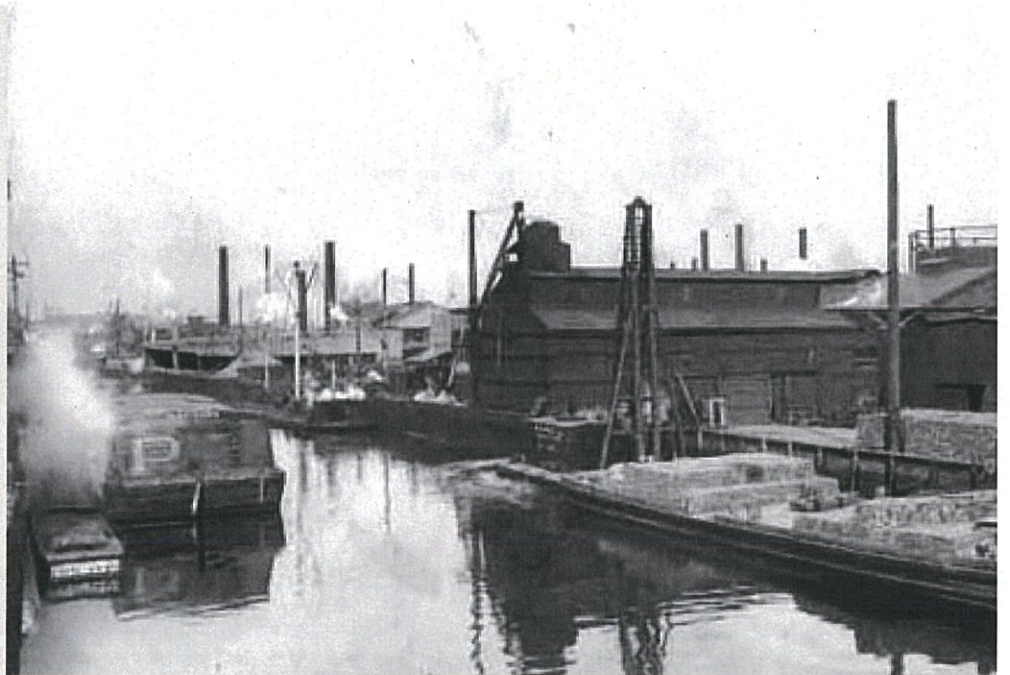
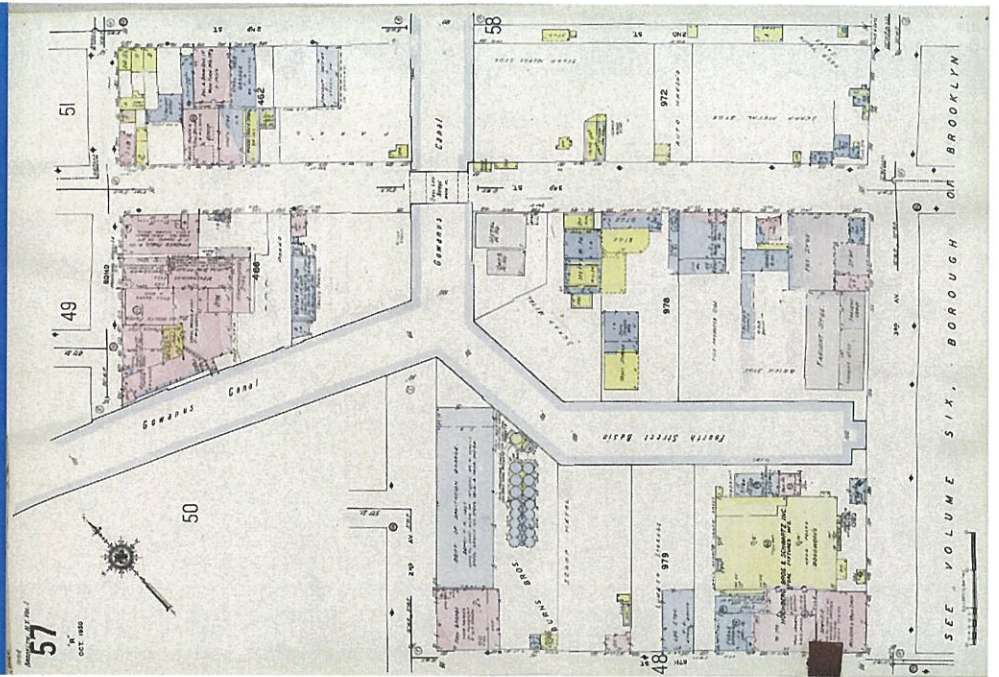
## From Creek to Canal

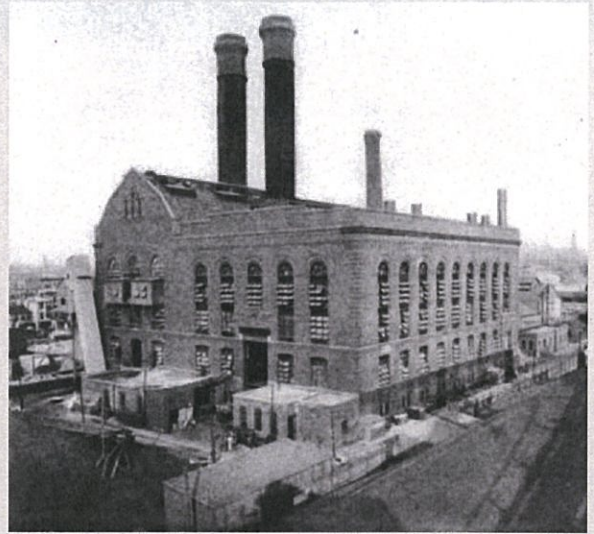
USACE (1839 Base map, 1942  
USACE notations in red)



# From Canal to Industry

1912



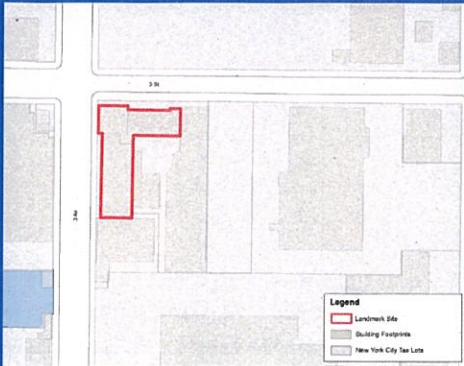


## Adaptive Reuse: The Gowanus Mix

Arts Gowanus Mural



## Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company)



## Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later American Can Company)

**Address:** 238-246 3rd Street, 365-379 3rd Avenue,  
and 232-236 3rd Street (aka 361-363 3rd Avenue)  
Borough of Brooklyn  
Tax Map Block 980, Lot 8 in part

**Built:** 1884

**Architect:** Daniel McLean Somers

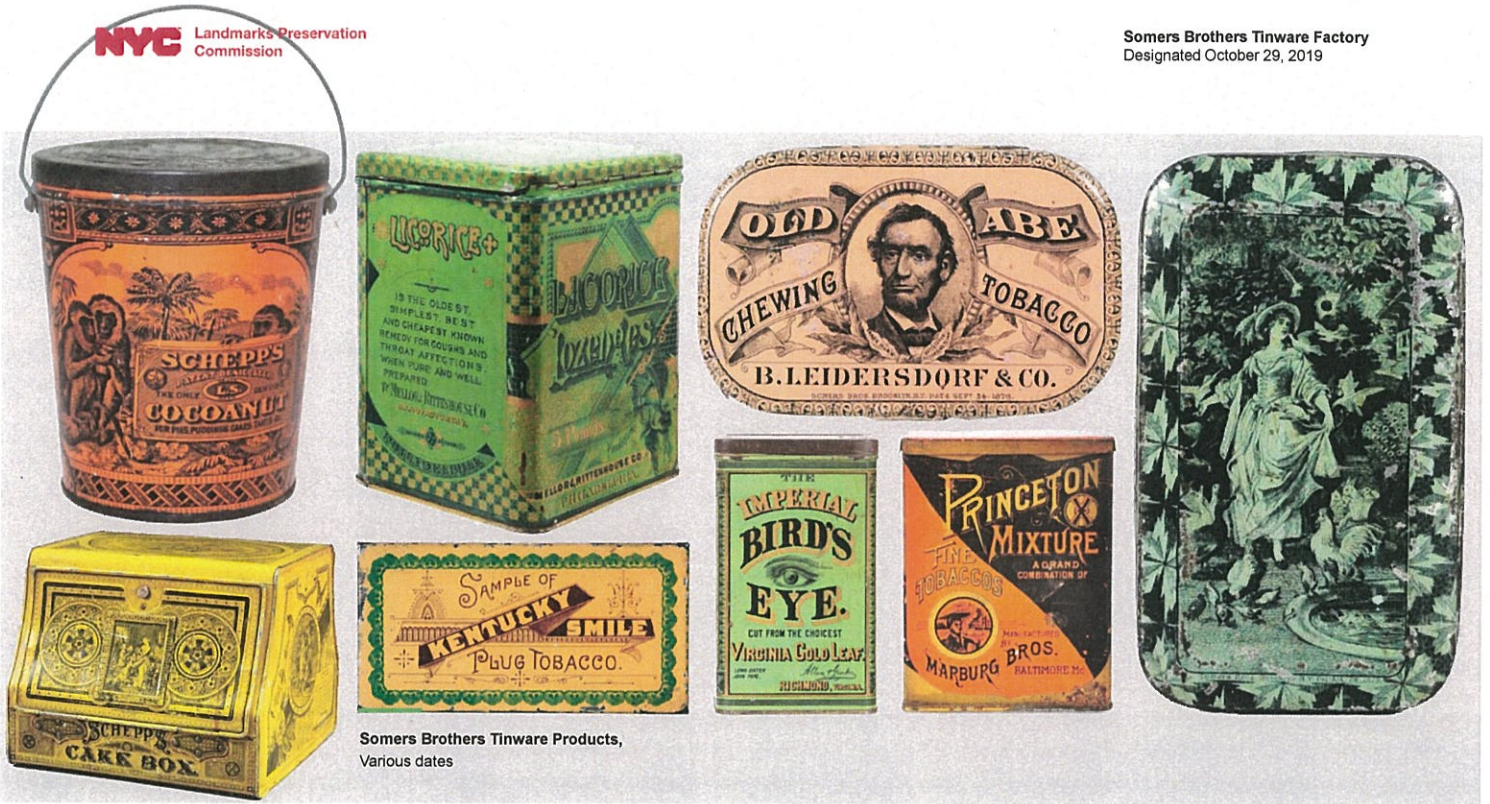
**Style:** American Round-Arched

**Item Calendared:** June 25, 2019

**Public Hearing:** September 24, 2019

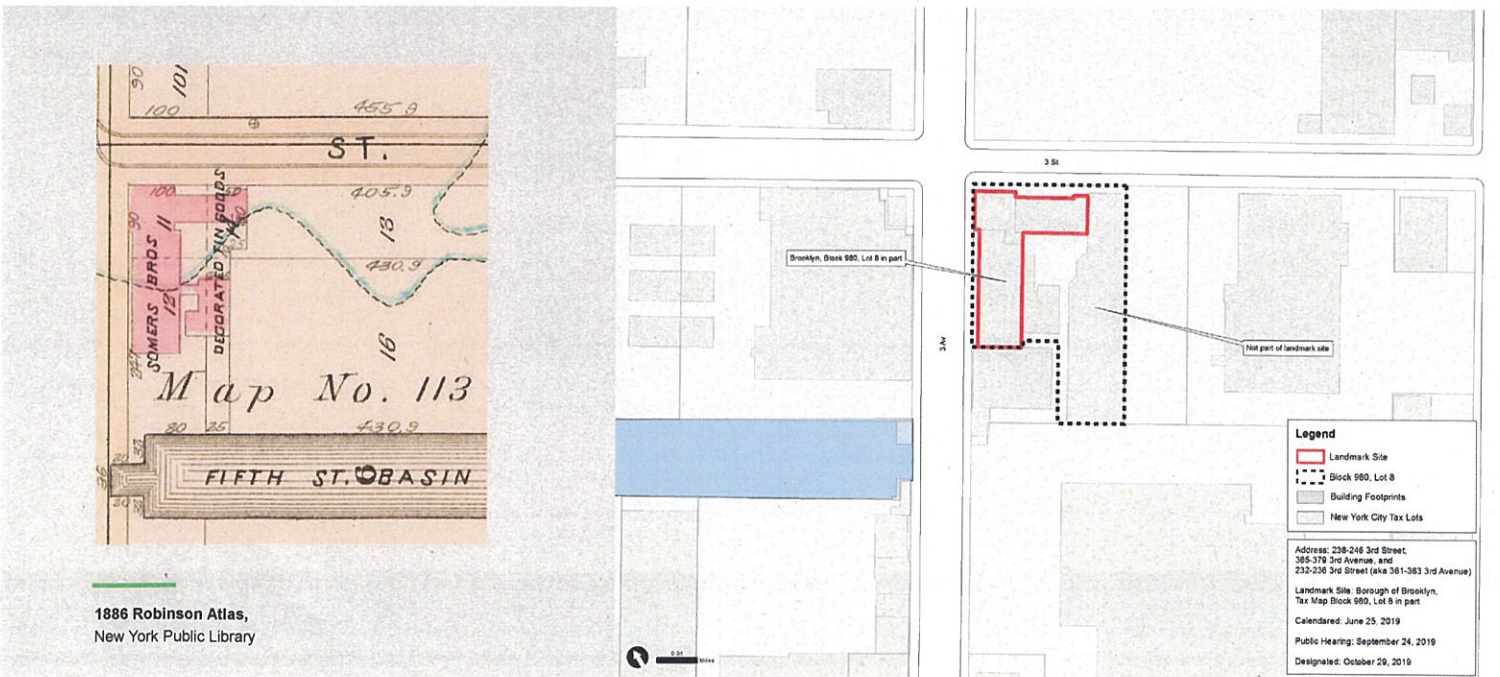
**Item Designated:** October 29, 2019







2019 Photograph, LPC



1886 Robinson Atlas,  
New York Public Library

**Brooklyn Rapid Transit  
Company (BRT)  
Central Power Station  
Engine House**



**Brooklyn Rapid Transit  
Company (BRT)  
Central Power Station  
Engine House**

**Address:** 153 Second Street (aka 322 Third Avenue,  
340 Third Avenue)

**Tax Map Block 967, Lot 1, in part**

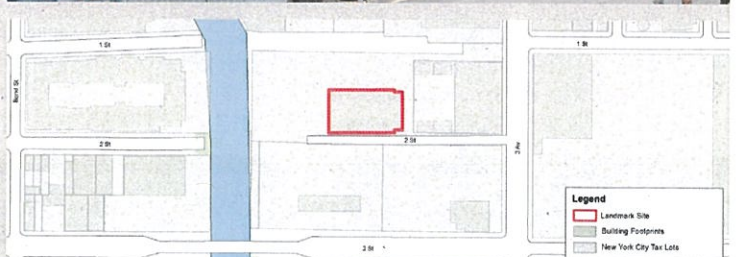
**Built:** 1901-03

**Consulting engineer:** Thomas E. Murray

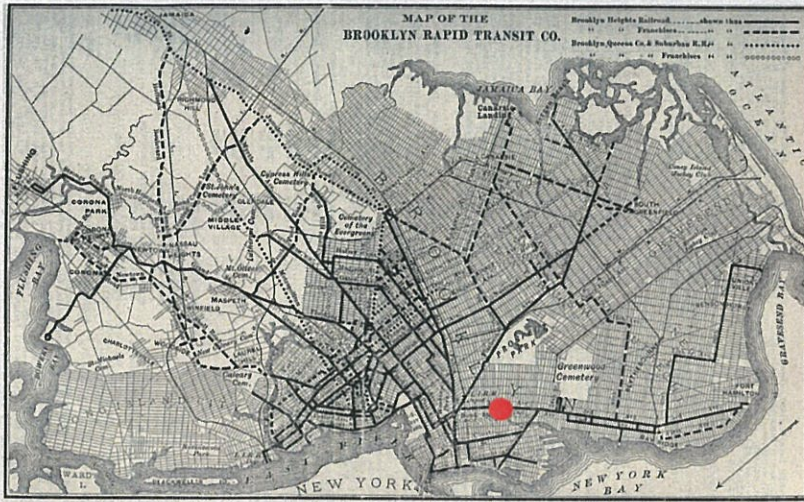
**Calendared:** June 25, 2019

**Public Hearing:** September 24, 2019

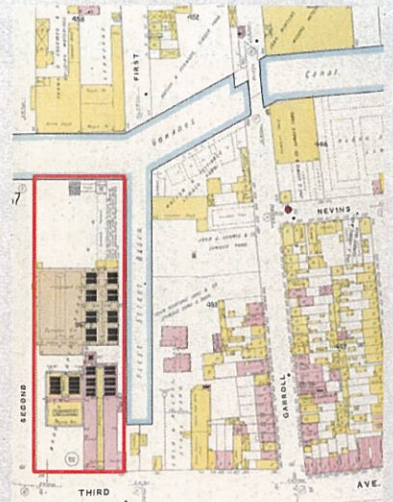
**Designated:** October 29, 2019



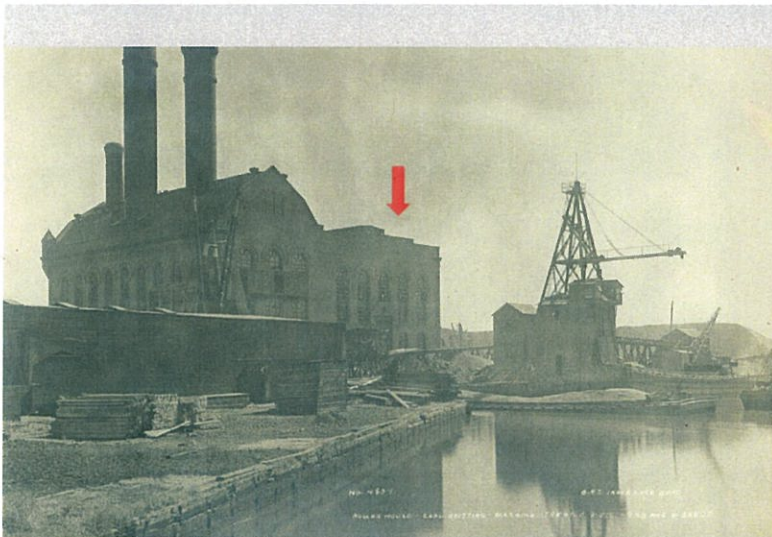




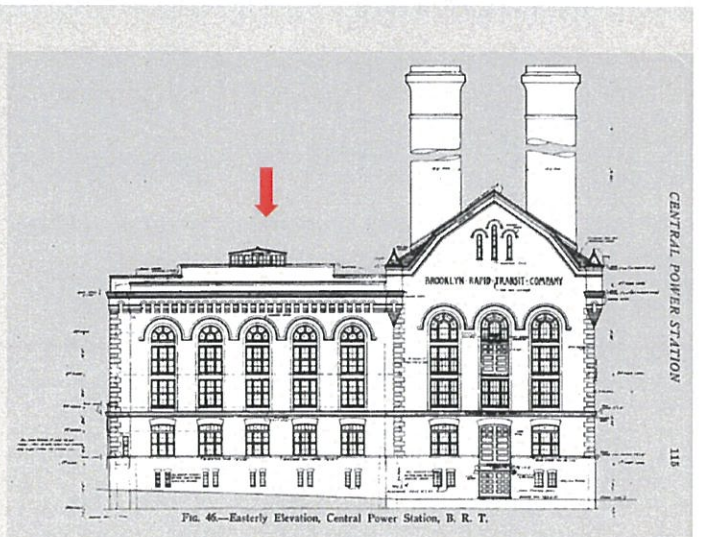
Map of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Co.  
Poor's Manual of the Railroads of the United States, 1897, Wikimedia Commons



Sanborn map, 1904



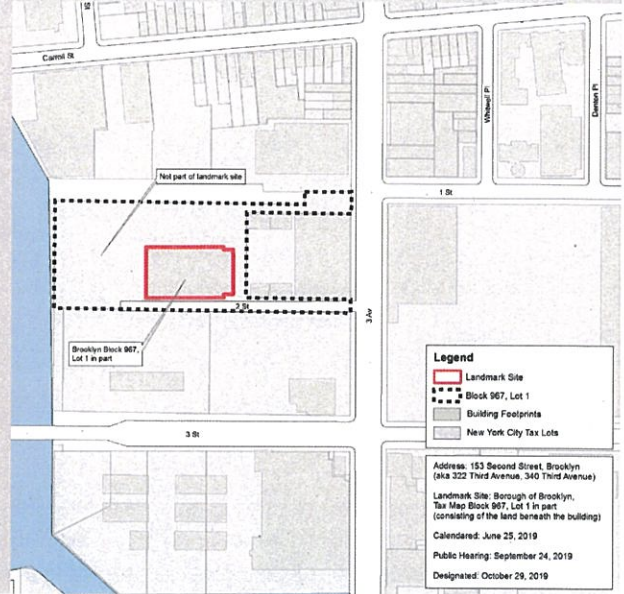
View of BRT Power Station from Gowanus Canal (north and west elevation)  
September 1916



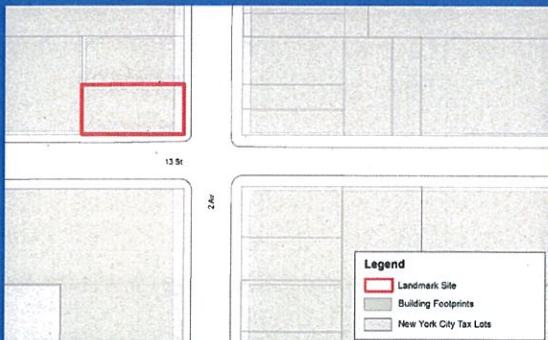
Front (Third Avenue) Elevation  
Street Railway Journal, October 5, 1901



South facade, view from Third Street, Powerhouse Workshop, c. 2017



# Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building



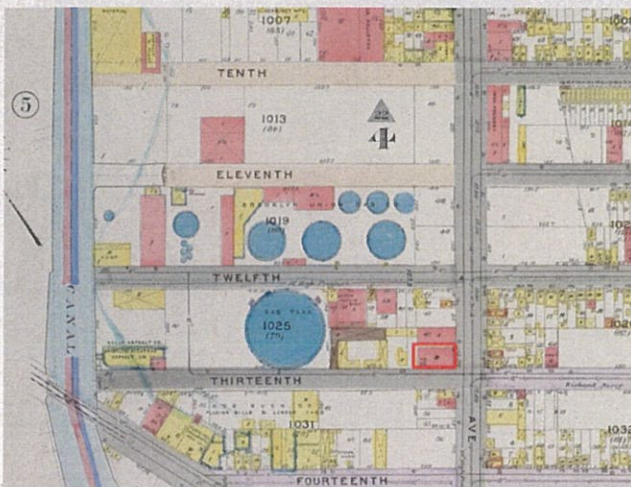
# Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building

170 Second Avenue  
Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1025, Lot 49

**Built:** 1908  
**Architect:** Garabed George Heghinian  
**Style:** American Round Arch

**Item Calendared:** June 25, 2019  
**Public Hearing:** September 24, 2019  
**Designated:** October 29, 2019

170 Second Ave, 1940, Municipal Archives



Hyde & Co. Map of Brooklyn, 1916, NYPL

1634 MONTAUK PAINT MANUFACTURING COMPANY FLOOR PAINTS

**MONTAUK PAINT MANUFACTURING COMPANY**  
Paints, Enamels and Stains  
OFFICE AND FACTORY  
170-172 Second Avenue  
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

TELEPHONE BROOKLYN, N. Y.

**PROPERTIES:** "MONTAUK" SPECIAL CONCRETE FLOOR PAINT; "MONTAUK" BRUSH WOOD "MONTAUK" ENAMEL; "MONTAUK" K' FLOOR and VARNISH STAIN; "MONTAUK" INSULATED "MONTAUK" SPECIAL CONCRETE FLOOR PAINT for concrete floors in Factories and Lab Buildings, Garages, Basements, Stables, Schools, Offices, Hospitals, Warehouses, Breweries, Engine Rooms, Hoisting Establishments, Churches, Concrete Stairs and Platforms, etc.

**FLOOR PAINTS:** The paint comes directly from the pores of the concrete surface, forms a regular and permanent covering, and prevents the absorption of dirt, moisture, and alkalis, and is impervious to mechanical wear.

**DURABILITY:** Provides a hard, smooth, tough and durable surface which resists the abrasion caused by walking, the scuffing, as well as mechanical abrasion caused by the wheels of trucks and the handling of materials.

**CLEANLINESS:** The smooth, hard surface on the site or inside, is easily washed or swept or mopped, does not show stains and prevents the penetration of water, oils and greases which will set on the concrete.

**SANITARY, ETC.:** The absence of dust is beneficial to the health and comfort of occupants; the evenly cleaned surface promotes cleanliness, prevents disease germs, improves the light, causes a cheery atmosphere; decreases vibration and noise; prevents a slippery, easy tripping that is agreeable to stand on work spaces. The elimination of workmen who are obliged to stand steadily in one place on an ordinary concrete floor are greatly relieved.

**COVERING CAPACITY:** One gallon will cover from 200 to 300 square feet first coat, and 300 to 500 square feet second coat, according to the nature and condition of the floor. It is necessary to apply two coats at first afterwards a single coat may be applied every six or seven months or at less frequent intervals, depending upon the amount of wear.

**METHOD OF APPLICATION:** "MONTAUK" Special Concrete Floor Paint should be thoroughly stirred before applying the floor surface of old or new concrete, must be perfectly clean, dry and free from dust, dirt or grease. No previous filling is necessary. Apply directly to surface with a brush, spreading from inside and working it well into the concrete. In all the early work hard work should be worked upon.

If a second or subsequent coat is to be applied, from 24 to 48 hours should be allowed between applications, according to temperature and atmosphere. This is important.

**COLORED:** "MONTAUK" Special Concrete Floor Paints is regularly made in Concrete Colors, but any color desired can be made up in quantities of one barrel (50 gals.) or more.

**REMARKS:** A small concrete block finished with the paint will be furnished on request the quantity of concrete color.

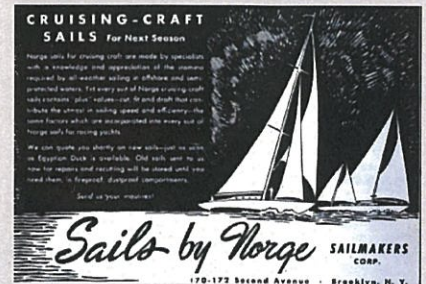
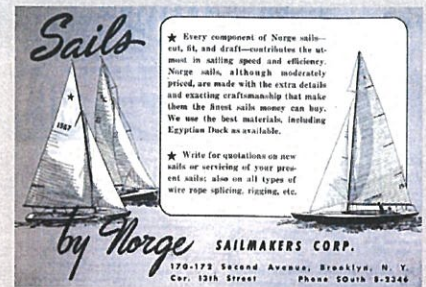
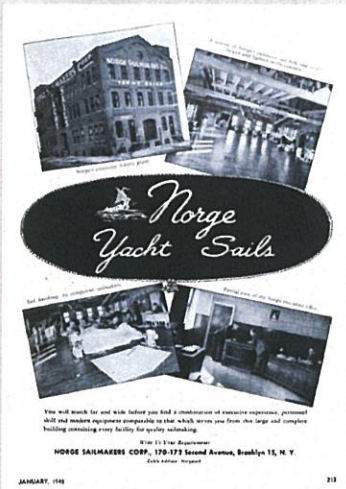
**REFERENCE:** "MONTAUK" Special Concrete Floor Paints, 100-110 Bridge Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

**PREPARED BY:** MONTAUK PAINT MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 170-172 Second Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y.

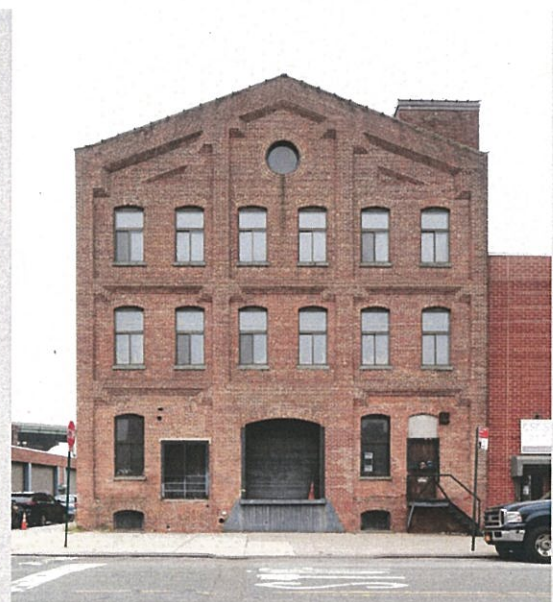
MADE IN U.S.A.

REGISTERED TRADE MARK

Sweets Catalogue of Building Construction, 1912

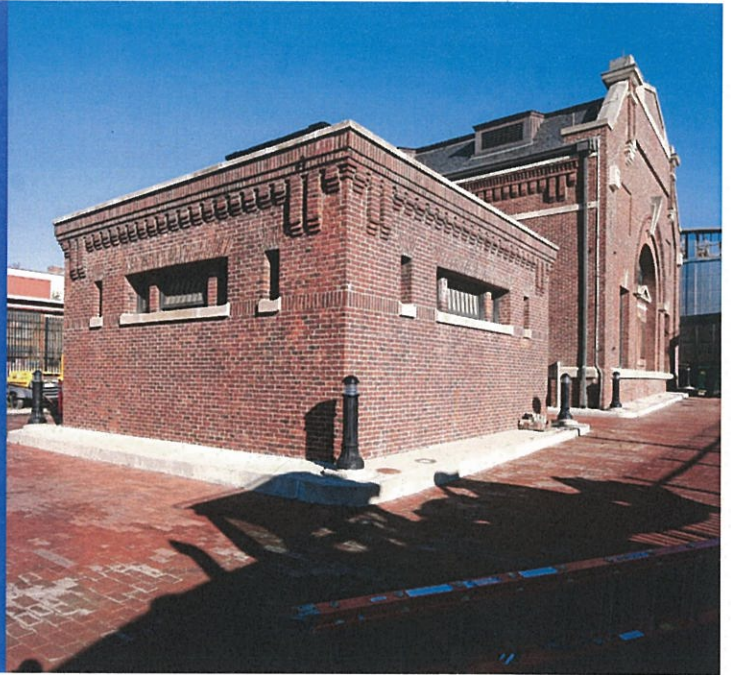
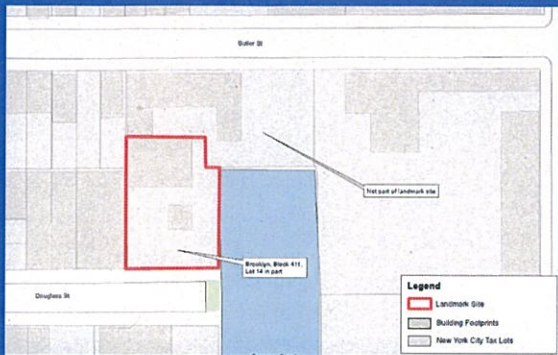


Norge Sailmaker Advertisements, Motorboating Magazine, 1946



170 Second Avenue, LPC, 2019

## Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House



## Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House

**Address:** 201 Douglass Street (aka 196 Butler Street)  
Borough of Brooklyn  
Tax Map Block 411 Lot 14 (in Part)

**Built:** 1909-11  
**Architect:** Arthur L. L. Martin; Edwin J. Fort, Chief Engineer,  
Brooklyn Bureau of Sewers  
**Style:** Neoclassical

**Item Calendared:** June 25, 2019  
**Public Hearing:** September 24, 2019  
**Designated:** October 29, 2019





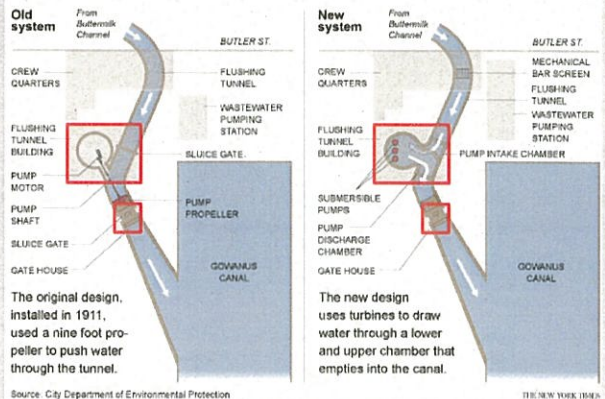


Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House, LPC 2017



**Flushing the Gowanus Canal**

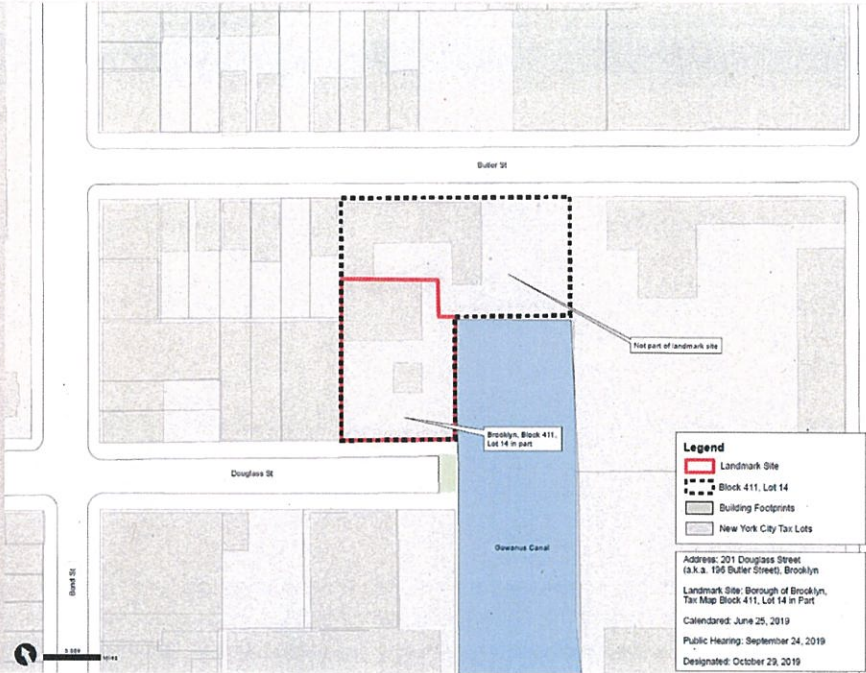
The city has begun a four-year, \$140 million renovation of the Gowanus Flushing Tunnel in an effort to turn the Gowanus Canal into a moving and less fetid channel, using water from more than a mile away.



Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House, NYC Department of Environmental Protection, 2013 (left) and 2011 (right, *New York Times*, February 23, 2011)



Gowanus Canal Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House, NYC Department of Environmental Protection, 2013 (above); Map of Proposed Landmark Site (right)



**American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage**





## American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage

**Address:** 233 Butler Street (aka 231-237 Butler Street)

Borough of Brooklyn

Tax Map Block 405, Lot 51 in part and a portion of the Butler Street sidewalk in front of said lot

**Built:** 1913; expanded 1922

**Architect:** Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker

**Style:** Neo-Romanesque

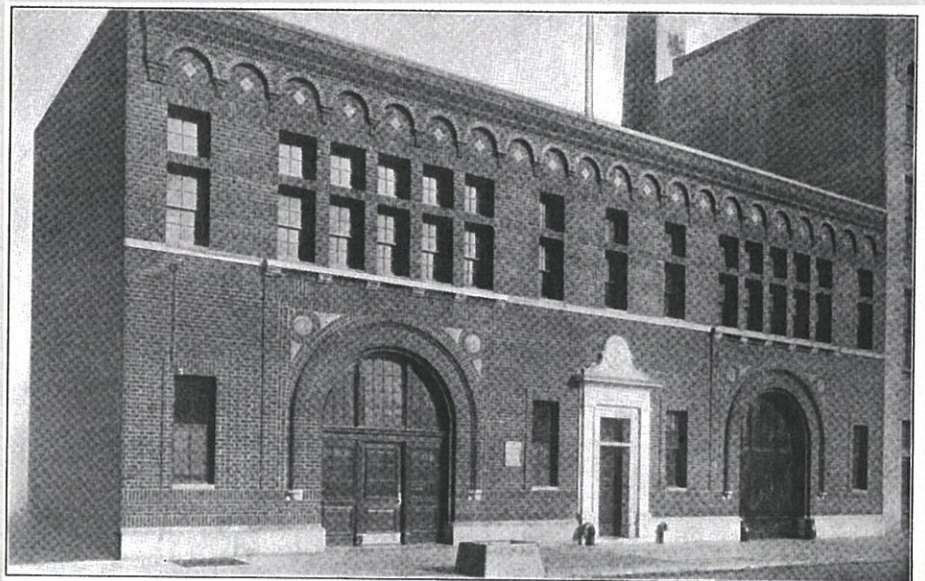
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**Public Hearing:** September 24, 2019

**Designated:** October 29, 2019

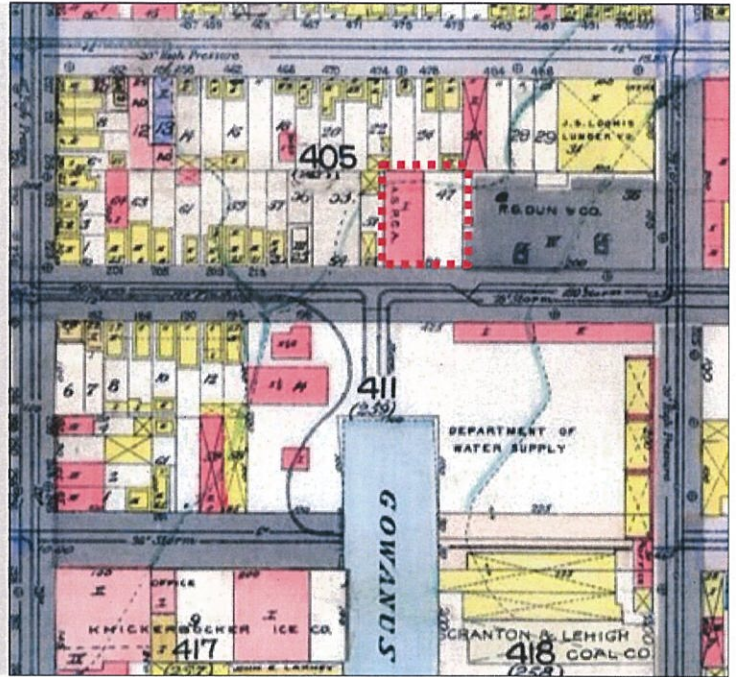
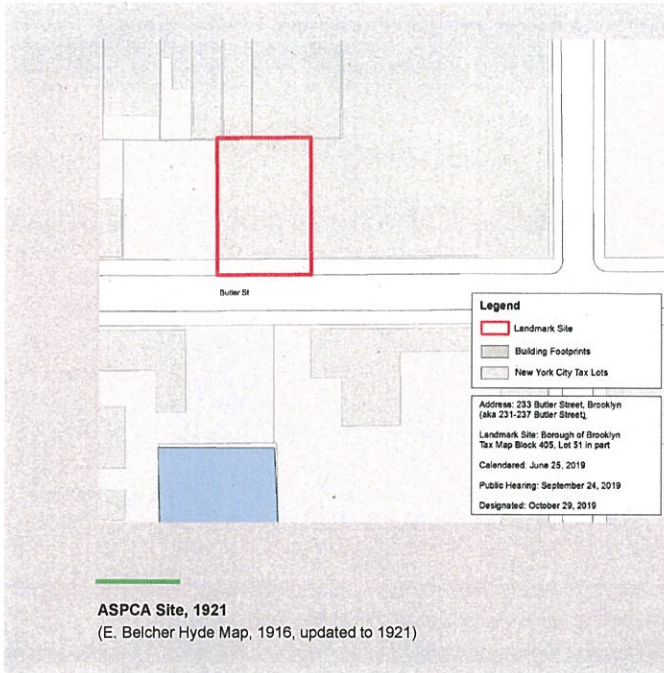


(Above)  
ASPCA Building, 1913  
(ASPCA 1913 Annual Report)



(Right)  
ASPCA Building, c. 1925  
(ASPCA Archives/Gothamist)

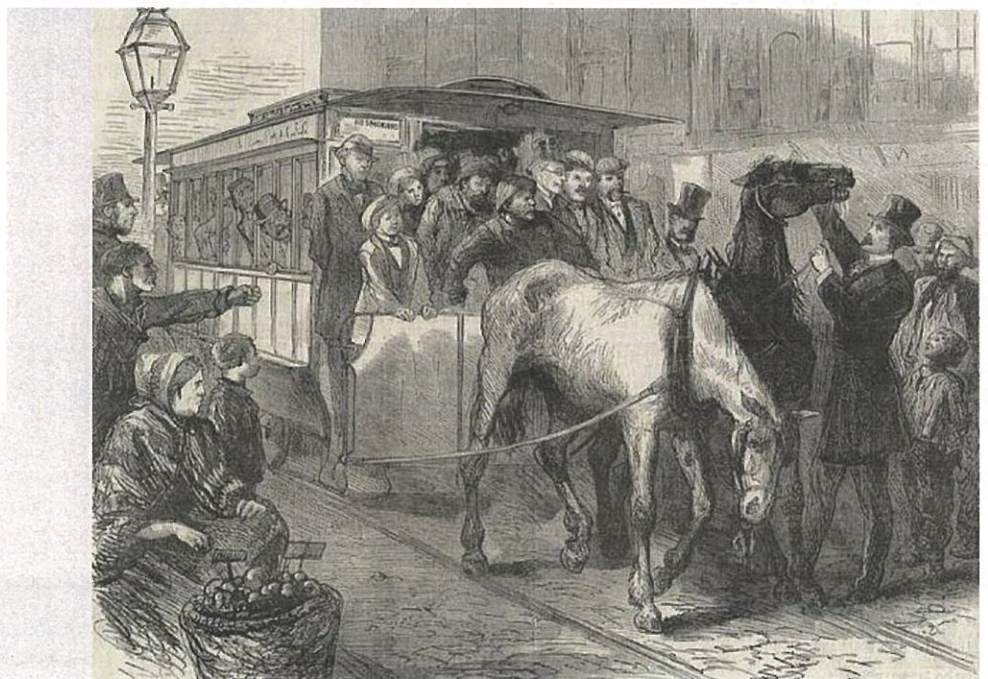
BROOKLYN OFFICE, SHELTER AND GARAGE  
233 BUTLER STREET, BROOKLYN



ASPCA Site, 1921  
(E. Belcher Hyde Map, 1916, updated to 1921)



(Above)  
ASPCA Seal drawn by Frank Leslie  
1867



(Right)  
Henry Bergh assisting overworked horses  
(Harper's Weekly, September 21, 1872)



ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter,  
and Garage, 2019, LPC



Girls Scouts in front of building, c. 1925  
(ASPCA Archives/Gothamist)

### DOG RECEIVES MEDAL FOR RESCUE IN FIRE

#### Brooklyn Irish Setter Gets Humane Society Award

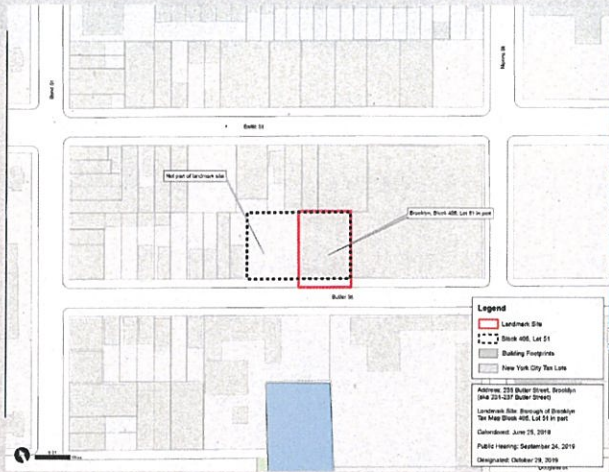
Micky, a five-year-old Irish setter, received a medal yesterday at the Brooklyn Shelter of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 233 Butler Street, for saving the members of his household from fire. Taking a cue from his mistress, 11-year-old Marie Hirsch, Micky walked forward slowly and at times fearfully to receive his award from William H. Groome, district manager of the Brooklyn Shelter. Micky received the medal gently, but with apprehension, caused by the glares of photographers' flash-

(Above)  
New York Times, April 18, 1940, 14

(Right)  
Ambulance Drivers in front of building, c. 1925  
(ASPCA Archives/Gothamist)



Watering trough in Butler Street sidewalk, 2019  
LPC



Front facade, 2019, LPC

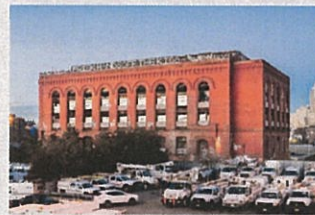


# Gowanus Landmarks

Designated  
October 29, 2019



Somers Tinware  
(later American Can Company)



Brooklyn Rapid Transit (B.R.T.) Central  
Powerhouse



Gowanus Canal  
Flushing Tunnel Pump House



American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to  
Animals (ASPCA) Building



Montauk Paint Factory  
(later Norge Sailmakers Corporation)



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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Statement of the Historic Districts Council  
Testimony before the City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks  
January 14, 2020

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

ASPCA BROOKLYN OFFICE, SHELTER, AND GARAGE (ASPCA ROGERS MEMORIAL BUILDING)

233 Butler Street (aka 231-237 Butler Street), Brooklyn Tax Map Block 405 Lot 5I in part, and a portion of the Butler Street sidewalk in front of said lot

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts, landmarks and buildings meriting preservation.

The Historic Districts Council has been working with Gowanus since 2011 when we featured it as one of our first annual Six to Celebrate neighborhoods. At that time, we worked closely with a community group, Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus, which had formed in response to immense real estate pressure resulting in the erosion of their neighborhood character through demolitions of significant historic buildings, gentrification, and tenant/resident displacement. As a result of our collaboration, a historic resources survey was completed and Gowanus was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places with the New York State Historic Preservation Officer's full support in 2013.

Throughout 2014-2015, HDC participated in Councilmember Lander's "Bridging Gowanus" project and submitted a statement that called for historic preservation to be a part of any future comprehensive neighborhood plan. In fact, the final "Bridging Gowanus" report references our Gowanus guidebook. A word about the guidebook, although it was never meant to be a comprehensive list of significant historic resources in the area, even the limited inventory of structures highlighted includes a number of worthy buildings which have been demolished subsequent to its 2012 publication. The danger to this neighborhood is very real.

When the City of New York announced the Gowanus rezoning in September 2016, HDC called on the LPC to designate historic districts and/or landmarks prior to the rezoning. HDC staff participated in the Public Realm working group, founded the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition during the rezoning framework process and identified several buildings worthy of preservation, five of which the LPC has committed to protecting in 2019. We greatly appreciate the LPC taking action prior to the rezoning, we thank the agency for communicating the research staff's rigorous methodology for their choices, and we urge the Commission to pursue other buildings on the list, especially the T.H. Roulston Complex



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL

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buildings (70-124 9th Street), and the Ice House & Brewing Complex (40I-42I Bond Street). As stated earlier, Gowanus has a limited universe of significant historic structures and they are disappearing faster than can be imagined.

At the time of its opening in 1913, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage (also known as the ASPCA Rogers Memorial Building) housed the most expansive and comprehensive animal shelter in the world. For 66 years, this building served as the Brooklyn headquarters of the ASPCA. Here, the organization cared for and fought to protect domesticated animals from abandonment and abuse, specifically with regard to horses which were a heavily-mistreated mode of transportation at the time. It is significant that the ASPCA chose this neighborhood for this building. One hundred years ago, caring for horses was considered as noxious a use as auto-repair is considered today; it was a necessary service but you certainly wouldn't want to live next to it. It only made sense to consign animal care to the same liminal space as those other necessary but unpleasant businesses such as fuel storage and manufacturing: the Gowanus.

In addition to starting campaigns for slaughterhouse reform, anti-cruelty laws, and bans on cock fighting, the ASPCA ran programs for children, sponsored lectures, facilitated thousands of pet adoptions, and operated a large veterinary clinic. The site was also equipped with rescue ambulances that allowed for the transporting of injured and maltreated horses to this facility.

Today, it exists as the finest surviving ASPCA property in New York City. Not only does it merit architectural recognition with its extraordinarily well-preserved fenestration, which features a relief of the ASPCA seal depicting the Angel of Mercy intervening to protect a horse from its abusive driver at the main entrance, but its historical significance lies heavily in the fact that this building housed the country's first and the world's second animal-welfare organization. Serving as a tangible link to the history of this renowned organization, the ASPCA Rogers Memorial Building deserves to be safeguarded with landmark protections.



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BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN  
GOWANUS FLUSHING TUNNEL PUMPING STATION AND GATE HOUSE  
196 Butler Street

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts, landmarks and buildings meriting preservation.

The Historic Districts Council enthusiastically supports the designation of the Gowanus Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House at 196 Butler Street. Integral to the history of the Gowanus Canal and, subsequently the history of the Gowanus neighborhood, this pumping station and gate house were created as a part of a substantial infrastructure plan to improve the over-polluted waterway in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

When the Flushing Tunnel opened after its completion in 1911, this project was considered one of the most ambitious and extensive water pollution clean-up attempts ever made in the United States, with only two similar lower-scale projects being undertaken in Milwaukee and Chicago. Still in active use today, with its largely-intact Colonial Revival style façade featuring Secessionist details, the Gowanus Flushing Tunnel Pumping Station and Gate House are historically and architecturally meritorious. HDC would prefer to see the proposed landmark site expanded to encompass the entirety of the actual property lot. While the utilitarian accessory buildings are not especially significant, the brick structure is quite handsome and provides an appropriate street frontage, especially when facing the proposed landmark ASPCA building. There was a great deal of discussion about preservation tools during the neighborhood planning process but it remained largely in the abstract. Absent any other tool, landmark designation is the only regulation which would allow substantial design review of any new construction. This is a site where sensitive, contextual urban design would greatly benefit the neighborhood, so we urge the LPC to consider including the entire site in the proposed landmark designation.





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January 14, 2020

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN  
BROOKLYN RAPID TRANSIT COMPANY CENTRAL POWER STATION ENGINE HOUSE  
153 2nd Street (aka 322 Third Avenue, 340 Third Avenue)

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts, landmarks and buildings meriting preservation.

This enormous eight-story Romanesque-Classical Revival style building at 153 Second Avenue served as the powerhouse for the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Corporation (or BRT), which owned every steam railroad, elevated line and streetcar in Brooklyn at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here, coal fed from the Gowanus Canal bank via an elevator to a cement tunnel connected to the building was burned in order to generate electricity for all of the trains operating in the borough.

Today, the BRT Central Power Station Engine House serves as a remnant of both the industrial past of the Gowanus neighborhood and the history of mass transit development in New York City. While the building is but one largely intact remnant of what originally was a sizeable complex, it requires much needed protections awarded with designated landmark status, especially considering the ambitious redevelopment plans currently proposed. The Historic Districts Council eagerly supports the designation of this distinguished building.



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Statement of the Historic Districts Council  
Testimony before the City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks  
January 14, 2020

**Item 4**

LP-2640

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

SOMERS BROTHERS TINWARE FACTORY (AMERICAN CAN COMPANY)

238-246 3rd Street (aka 232-236 3rd Street, 361-363 Third Avenue, 365-379 Third Avenue)

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts, landmarks and buildings meriting preservation.


The Somers Brothers Tinware Factory (later the American Can Company) is deeply embedded in the fabric of Gowanus' industrial history. Designed by Daniel Somers of the Somers Brothers, the facility was powered by oil pumped from iron tank boats right on the Gowanus Canal. The site, which is a plant complex consisting of multiple adjoining factory buildings, displays a combination of well-preserved unique architectural elements, from its four diamond shaped openings (the majority of which have retained their original Queen Anne-style sashes) to its abstracted cornice.

While decorated tinware was manufactured in the buildings directly at the corner of Third Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, it is the southeastern section of the complex that housed perhaps a more noteworthy industrial operation. It was within this section of the complex that the Somers Brothers became the first company to manufacture tin plate in New York State in 1891. After the enactment of the McKinley Tariff of 1890, the import duty on tin plates were raised from 30% to 70% in an effort to spur American tin production. Consequently, as reported in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, the Somers Brothers built this additional building and created Somerton Tinplate Works, pioneering tin plate manufacturing in the state. The Somers Brothers also exhibited their tinware, made with their own tin plate manufactured in this facility, at the World Columbian Exposition in 1893 as a member of the newly-organized Associated Manufacturers of the United States of America. In this specific portion of the factory complex, which has been curiously left out of the potential landmark site, significant changes in New York's industrial history took place.

The Somers Brothers Tinware Factory is a testament to and an expression of the industrial character that has defined the Gowanus neighborhood for over a century. The Historic Districts Council supports the landmark designation of the Somers Brothers Tinware Factory, but urges the Commission to recognize the



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contentious fact that arguably the most historically important portion of this factory complex is being cut out of the landmark site. HDC understands that the southeastern section has undergone alterations at its main façade, but given its extreme historical merit, this portion of the complex deserves to be considered for designation along with the rest of the site before it get demolished for future development.



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Statement of the Historic Districts Council  
Testimony before the City Council Subcommittee on Landmarks  
January 14, 2020

BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN  
MONTAUK PAINT MANUFACTURING COMPANY BUILDING  
170 2nd Avenue

The Historic Districts Council is the advocate for New York City's designated historic districts, landmarks and buildings meriting preservation.

At the time of the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building's construction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brooklyn was considered to be the country's foremost paint manufacturing hub. The borough housed some of the oldest and most successful paint factories in the United States, the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building being one of these.

Between 1942 and 1951, the building became home to lessee Norge Sailmakers Corp., a company that manufactured covers and sails for yachts and pleasure crafts. As Norge Sailmakers Corp. was well-known for having one of the largest, if not the largest, sail lofts in the country, the building is also widely referred to as the Norge Sailmakers Building.

Except for the reconfigured window opening on 2nd Avenue, window and door replacements, and some infill at entrances, this impressive American Round Arch style building remains extraordinarily intact. Like the four other sites being proposed for landmark designation today, the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building is a fine example of beautifully preserved industrial architecture and its existence helps to convey the story of the growth and prominence of the Gowanus neighborhood. We would especially like to thank the Landmarks Preservation Commission for bringing this building forward for landmark consideration as it falls outside of the rezoning area. As such, the Historic Districts Council is in full support of designating the Montauk Paint Manufacturing Company Building as an individual landmark.



# PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL

Advocate for Our Community

P.O. Box 172, 123 Seventh Avenue • Brooklyn, New York 11215  
Telephone 347.871.0477 • [www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org](http://www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org)

## Testimony Before the Landmarks Subcommittee Regarding Gowanus Landmarking January 14, 2020

I am Peter Bray and I represent the Park Slope Civic Council as the Chair of its Historic District Committee. I am here to urge the City Council to ratify the five Gowanus buildings designated on October 29<sup>th</sup> by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The Civic Council has been a forceful advocate throughout the Gowanus rezoning process for the protection of its history, diversity, and unique industrial character. There is no other place quite like in the city. To ensure that these concerns were heard, the Civic Council helped to found the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, and I am speaking on its behalf.

I do not intend to address each of the five buildings other than to say that they unquestionably deserve to be landmarks. In addition to their architectural strengths, they represent significant aspects of Gowanus' history, whether powering the transportation modes of the day or using the Gowanus Canal to produce and ship goods. The Gowanus Pumping Station buildings continue to be vital to the safe operation of the Canal. It is important to note that the owners of the four private buildings testified in favor of their designation at the LPC's public hearing.

While we appreciate the LPC efforts to protect these buildings, I ask that the Subcommittee view this action only as a starting point and not the end of the Gowanus landmarking process. The LPC informed the Coalition in writing that it will continue to assess several other buildings. The Coalition submitted a list of 18 priority buildings. It is our concern that once these five buildings are approved, the LPC will not return to address the other buildings that also contributed significantly to Gowanus' role in the development of Brooklyn.

So yes, please endorse the designation of these five deserving buildings. But please also use your influence to act in the public interest to press the LPC to do more. Its work in Gowanus is not done. The completion of the area's rezoning will inevitably eradicate its remaining character with a wave of development, so further action is imperative.

Thank you.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No.      <sup>Resolutions</sup> Res. No.     

in favor     in opposition

Date:     

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Simon Bankoff

Address:     

I represent: Historic Districts Council

Address: 230 E 11 St NY 10003

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No.      Res. No.     

in favor     in opposition

Date: 1/14/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anthony Fabre

Address:     

I represent: NYC Landmarks <sup>Director of</sup> community & Intergovernmental Affairs

Address:     

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

5  
GOWANUS  
BUILDINGS

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PETER BRAY

Address: 237 GARFIELD PL BROOKLYN

I represent: PARK SLOPE CIVIC COUNCIL

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

# THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kate Lemos McHale

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC Landmarks - Director of Research

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms