

**TESTIMONY OF THE LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES ON THE DESIGNATION OF TAMMANY HALL IN MANHATTAN.**

**January 28, 2014**

Good morning Council Members. My name is Jenny Fernández, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Relations for the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of Tammany Hall in Manhattan.

On June 25, 2013, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Tammany Hall. There were 17 speakers in favor of designation including representatives of Councilmember Rosie Mendez, State Assemblymember Richard Gottfried, State Senator Liz Kreuger, Manhattan Community Board Five Landmarks Committee Chair Howard Mendez, former City Councilmember Carol Greitzer, representatives of the Union Square Community Coalition, the Gramercy Neighborhood Association, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, and the National Democratic Club. A representative of the owner indicated that the owner was "not opposing the designation and looked forward to continuing the relationship with the LPC." There was no testimony in opposition to the designation. The Commission has received a statement in support of the designation from Assemblymember Deborah Glick. It has also received two letters in support of the designation, including one from the Samuel J. Tilden Democratic Club. On October 29, 2013, the Commission voted to designate the building a New York City individual landmark.

Built in 1928-29 to the designs of Thompson, Holmes & Converse and Charles B. Meyers, this handsome neo-Georgian building is the only surviving headquarters building of Tammany Hall, the Democratic Party machine that dominated New York City politics in 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The building replaced Tammany's old headquarters on 14<sup>th</sup> Street and was both a reminder of the Society's origins in the Federalist period and a symbol of the reform-minded "New Tammany" organization that emerged in the late 1910s and 1920s. When the building was commissioned, the Tammany Society was at the height of its political fortunes and popularity – Robert F. Wagner was beginning his distinguished career in the U.S. Senate, Alfred E. Smith was a popular and widely respected governor and the leading contender for the Democratic candidacy for president, and Jimmy Walker was an extraordinarily popular Mayor. Within a few years of the building's completion, revelations of municipal corruption led to Walker's resignation and a split in the Democratic Party with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and other reformers distancing themselves from Tammany and ensuring the election of Fiorello LaGuardia as mayor. In 1943 the Tammany organization sold the building to Local 91 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the main meeting hall became one of the most important centers for union activities in New York City. Since the mid-1980s the building's large auditorium has been home to Off-Broadway theater, housing the Roundabout Company until 1991 and a number of distinguished independent productions since then. The remainder of the building has been

occupied by the New York Film Institute since 1994. The building was praised by the *Real Estate Record* for its “dignified architectural treatment, one of the chief motifs of which are the severe Colonial columns in the centers of the Union Square and Seventeenth-street facades which recall the days of early American architecture.” This architecturally distinctive building remains a significant reminder of New York City’s political, theatrical, and labor history.

The Commission urges you to affirm this designation.

**THE NEW YORK  
LANDMARKS  
CONSERVANCY**

January 28, 2014

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL LANDMARKS SUBCOMMITTEE REGARDING THE DESIGNATION OF TAMMANY HALL, 100-102 EAST 17<sup>TH</sup> STREET, MANHATTAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK**

Good morning Chair Koo and Councilmembers. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of The New York Landmarks Conservancy. We are pleased to join with public officials, preservationists, and local advocates in supporting designation of Tammany Hall, in particular Mr. Jack Taylor, who has kept the designation status of this building on the radar of the preservation community for many years.

This handsome building has both architectural and cultural significance, and is an anchor of its neighborhood. Set on the east side of Union Square, itself an icon of labor history and a significant public space, Tammany Hall is a fine example of Colonial Revival architecture often found in social service and institutional buildings of the era. With its red brick façade and white granite and limestone trim, Tammany was designed to evoke the “days of early American architecture,” according to the *Real Estate Record* of 1928. Not only was this an attractive style, but it would also recall the founding days of this country, a positive association for the political machine of the New York City Democratic Party, which faced accusations of corruption. The historic fabric is mostly intact, with some alterations at ground floor storefronts.

Tammany Hall has also had an important role in cultural history, starting as home to NYC Democratic Party from 1928 to 1943. Since then it has continued to be a center of the political and arts communities, housing first the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, later an Off-Broadway theatre, and now the New York Film Academy.

In 1985, the Conservancy first wrote to the Landmarks Commission requesting that Tammany Hall be considered for designation. Nearly 30 years later, we thank the Commission for acting to designate this site, and urge the Council to affirm that designation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Conservancy’s views.

**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: 1/28/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KATE DALY

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

I represent: LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMM.

Address: 1 CENTRA ST. NYC 10007

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

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

in favor  in opposition Tammany Hall

Date: 1.28.14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrea Goldwyn

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

I represent: NY Landmarks Conservancy

Address: 1 WHITCHALL ST NYC 10004

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

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

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/28/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Barst

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

I represent: Historic Districts Council

Address: 232 E 14th St NY 10003