

Dear Council Members and their Staff,

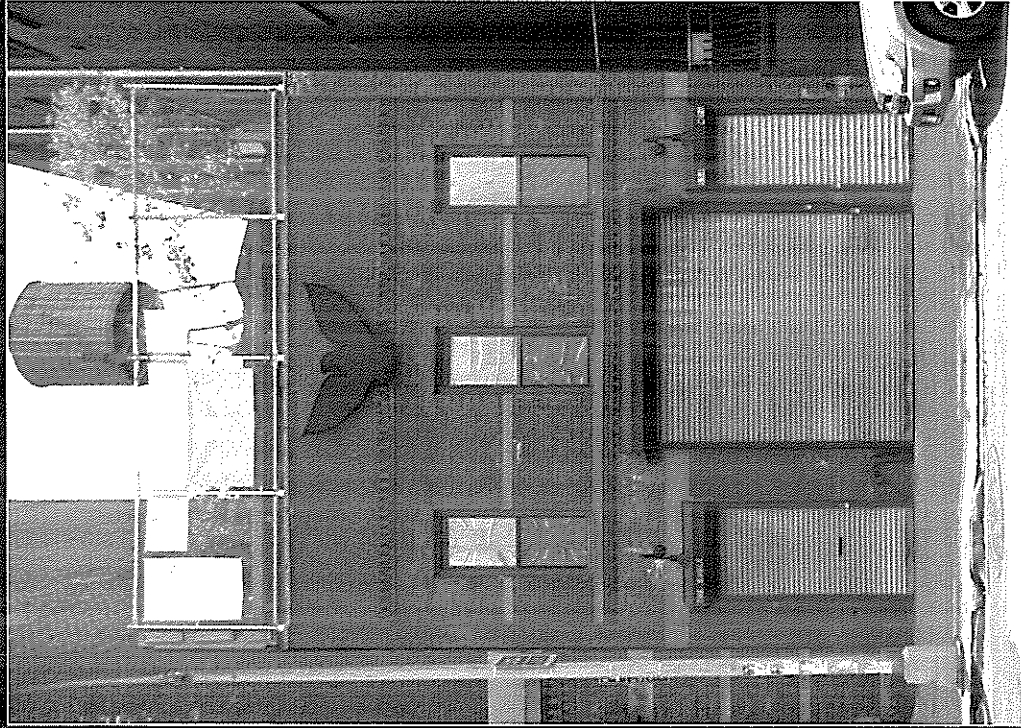
First of all I want to thank you for meeting me this morning to tour our property at 554 W. 28th Street. At the moment it is scheduled to become a NYC landmark along with all of the other properties on the Proposed West Chelsea Historic District Map. It does not deserve this status or distinction. I am confident that once you look at this property yourself, even briefly, you will decide that it does not deserve landmark status.

A review of the Landmarks Commissions own report on the property shows that even they had very little to write about the property's architectural features because there are so few of any significance in contrast with the other properties contained in their report. The only thing of note they came up with for 554 W. 28th St. was that an unknown embezzler of the late 19th century apparently built it. At just 2 stories in height with almost no detailing whatsoever and a facade that includes new windows, new doors, a non-original street opening and a rebuilt front parapet wall, its street wall facade is less than 50% original. This building is, however you define the concept, not landmark material. As to the position I heard that it represented a pre-industrial period due to its age even though it is undistinguished, I would suggest that, as poor as that reason is, if there is any validity to it then landmark the low even older buildings along West 29th St. between 10th and 11th avenues which are at least contextually representative and indeed contain a full street scape. Some of these structures were actually listed individually in the Resources Report created during the Rezoning of West Chelsea. Regarding the opinion that we should be landmarked because the things around this property are deserving, I submit that a review of the district as mapped shows buildings along 27th and other streets being excluded because they did not deserve landmarking and sitting as we do on the northern boundary of the district I cannot see why that sort of exclusion should not apply to us as well. (In point of fact not only were buildings cut out of the district but even parts of the same building along 27th St. were excluded from the district.) The last point I have to make is that the large black eagle which appears prominently on our facade is approximately 6 years old and is not quite "landmark"aged. As a small owner with only 2 properties (the other of which is also proposed for landmarking in the district) for whom this represents a huge unreasonable burden please work with me to prevent this undeserved, very restrictive confiscation of my small undistinguished property and its future potential reuse.

Again, thank for taking the time to meet with me about this property.

Jim Pastreich

Proposed West Chelsea Historic District



rather than by the number of pages being sent (creating substantial demand for envelopes as postal devices). Berlin's operation was particularly well positioned to capitalize on the new market and the company grew rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1847 the firm moved to larger quarters at 180 Fulton Street; it moved again in 1853 to 67 Pine Street, then in 1854 to 120 William Street, and finally in 1856 it erected its own large, six-story factory at 134 William Street. The firm soon became one of the country's largest producers of envelopes and related paper products, manufacturing 600,000 per day by 1860. Berlin & Jones remained at 134 Williams Street until 1899. In October of that year, the company took out a lease on Meyers' new factory building at 548 West 28th Street. The timing proved to be fortuitous, as the company's existing facilities on William Street were gutted by fire just two months later.

The Berlin Jones Envelope Company occupied the building into the 1930s, when it moved across the street to the recently opened Starrett-Lehigh Building (see entry for 601 West 26th Street). The company later relocated to East Rutherford, New Jersey, in 1962. The structure at 548 West 28th Street was subsequently leased by a series of manufacturers. In 1937, the A.H. Stiehl Furniture Company moved to the building. A decade later, in 1949, the Spear Box Company, which already occupied several adjacent buildings, took out a lease on the property. At this time the structure was connected internally with the former Terminal Warehouse Company Annex at 262 Eleventh Avenue (see entry). The Spear Box Company occupied the structure into the 1980s. The building is presently occupied, like many in the West Chelsea neighborhood, by art-related businesses, including galleries.

References:

- "Berlin & Jones Co. Moves," *New York Times* (June 30, 1962) 31.
"Big Early Morning Fire," *New York Times* (December 25, 1899) 5.
"Envelopes: Their History, Uses, Progress of Manufacture, Etc.—Berlin Jones' Establishment," *New York Times* (April 28, 1860) 8.
"In the Real Estate Field," *New York Times* (October 24, 1899) 12.
New York County, Office of the Register, Deed Liber 884, p. 326; Liber 884, p. 330; Liber 1051, p. 387; Liber 2171, p. 55; Liber 2205, p. 195; Liber 3955, p. 248.
"Selling the Colwell Iron Works," *New York Times* (May 10, 1888) 9.

554 West 28th Street, see *Figure 24*

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 699, Lot 63

Date of Construction: 1885 (969-85)

Architect: John Brandt

Original Owner: Latimer E. Jones

Type: Stable

Style: Vernacular

Stories: 2

Structure/Material: Brick

Features: Two-story, three bay wide structure; ground floor has two pedestrian entrances flanking a larger vehicular entrance; second floor has three rectangular window openings; sandstone belt course doubles as lintels for pedestrian entrances; sawtooth brick belt course

topped with sandstone belt course above first floor doubles as a continuous sill for the second floor windows; sandstone belt course between second floor windows; corbelled brick belt course above second floor; stone coping at roofline; narrow brick piers run vertically along corners of building.

Alterations: Right pedestrian entrance cut through brick facade; all ground floor entrances covered with roll-down metal security gates; windows replaced; metal fence encloses rooftop terrace.

History: The property now known as 554 West 28th Street was originally occupied in the 1850s and 60s by the NY Steam Stone Dressing Co. The Colwell family, whose Colwell Iron Works was a major presence in West Chelsea during the second half of the nineteenth century, purchased the lot and several others on the block in 1863. In 1885, the property was leased to Latimer E. Jones, who had recently married Blanche Colwell (daughter of the head of the Colwell Iron Works). Jones had began his career as a lumber dealer with his father in the Brooklyn-based firm of Jones & Son, and within a few months of his marriage he had established the New York Lumber Auction Company in a large building on West 27th Street. Soon thereafter he filed a building permit for the stable at 554 West 28th Street. According to an article in the *New York Times* from 1885, the New York Lumber Auction Company was the first such operations in the city. Wholesale lumber auctions were a common practice in England and other parts of Europe, but New York City dealers resisted the business model, worrying that it would cut into their profits. Jones' own wholesale business lasted only a short time, but it did manage to stage several successful auctions of large lots of lumber imported from the western and southern United States.

Jones parlayed his legitimate business accomplishments into a lucrative criminal career. His largest scheme was carried out in 1886, when he induced former senator Benjamin L. Ludington to contribute approximately \$200,000 for a lumber transaction that proved to be fraudulent. Jones was brought up on forgery charges the following year and he eventually fled the country to escape prosecution (a decade later he was extradited back to the United States and was convicted for his crimes—causing the *New York Times* to call him “one of New York’s boldest forgers and swindlers”).

Shortly after the crimes of Latimer E. Jones were publically revealed, the Colwell family’s West Chelsea property, including the stable building at 554 West 28th Street, were sold at auction following a court decision in the case of Sarah J. Willett versus Augustus N. Colwell. While it is unclear if this legal proceeding had anything to do with Jones or his swindling of Benjamin L. Ludington, deeds filed with the New York City Register demonstrate that the stable was purchased by Ludington at the auction (the deed was executed under the name of his wife, Marietta) and that the building remained in the family for several decades. In 1916, the stable was sold to the Terminal Warehouse Company, whose new annex had recently been erected on the property immediately to the west (see building entry for 270 Eleventh Avenue). After the Terminal Warehouse Company divested itself of its West Chelsea property in the late 1940s, the building and its immediate neighbors were occupied by the Spear Box Company. Like many structures in the area, the former stable of Latimer E. Jones has recently been turned to new use; since 2000 it has been home to a night club.

References:

“Forgery by Wholesale,” *New York Times* (November 12, 1887) 5.

“Latimer E. Jones Caught,” *New York Times* (January 29, 1897) 3.

“Lumber at Auction,” *New York Times* (September 2, 1885) 8.

New York County, Office of the Register, Deed Liber 884, p. 326; Liber 2158, p. 450; Liber 203, p. 469.

“Pardoned by the Governor.” *New York Times* (February 23, 1901) 6.

“Selling the Colwell Iron Works,” *New York Times* (May 10, 1888) 9.

556-560 West 28th Street

See: 270 Eleventh Avenue

WEST 28TH STREET, NOS. 600-654

(SOUTH SIDE, BETWEEN ELEVENTH & TWELFTH AVENUES)

600-654 West 28th Street

See: 261 Eleventh Avenue

TENTH AVENUE, NOS. 259-273

(WEST SIDE, BETWEEN WEST 25TH & WEST 26TH STREETS)

259 Tenth Avenue (259-273 Tenth Avenue; 501-505 West 25th Street; 500-502 West 26th Street), *see Figure 25*

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 697, Lot 31

Date of Construction: 1927-28 (NB 63-23)

Architect: Cass Gilbert

Original Owner: R.C. Williams Company

Type: Warehouse

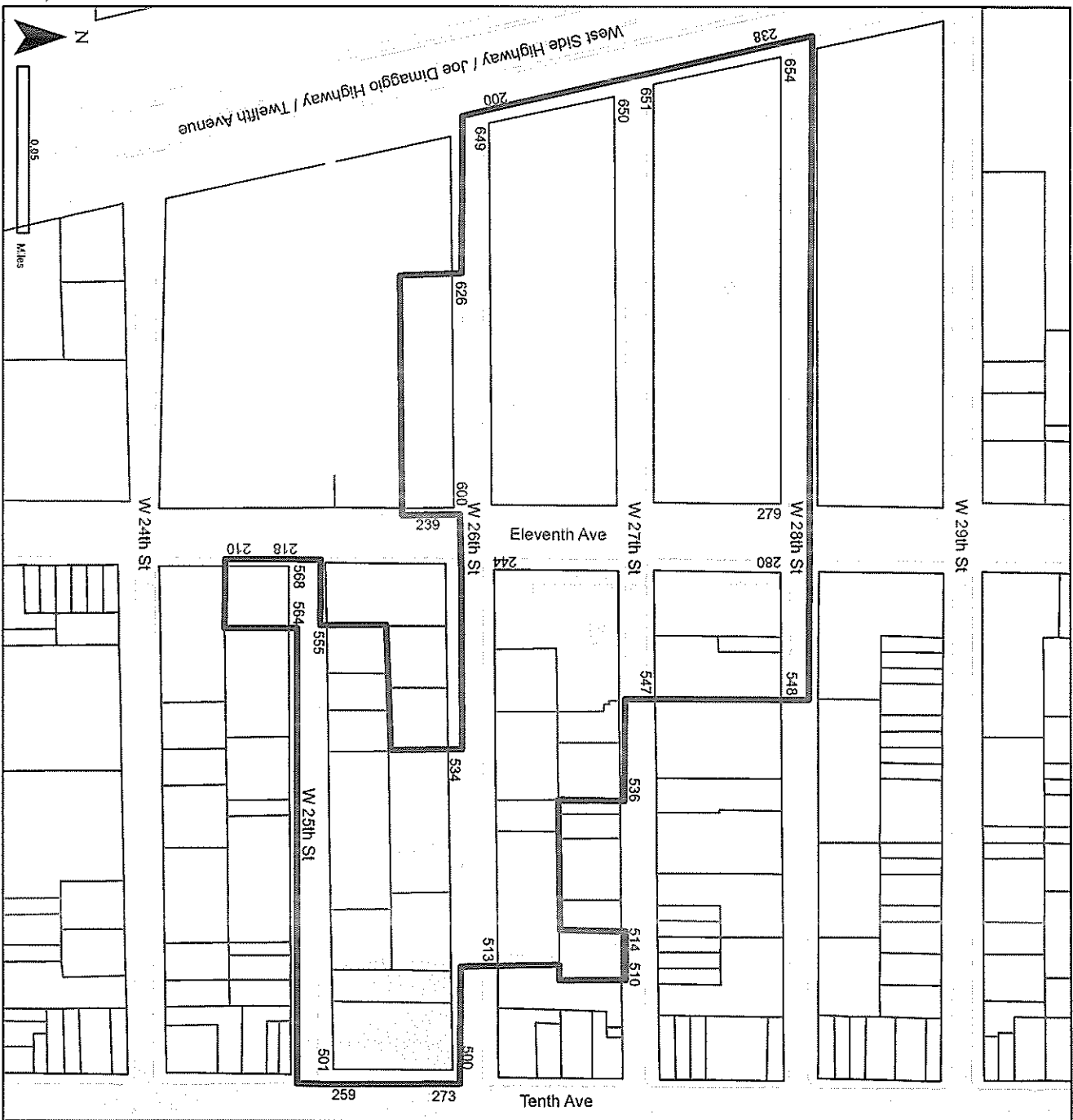
Style: Industrial Modern

Stories: 10

Structure/Material: Reinforced concrete

Features: Ten story concrete warehouse building with four visible elevations; concrete finish slightly rusticated from original formwork; tower-like elements at each corner feature a column of narrow rectangular window openings and raised concrete details at first story (typically feature two stacked rectangular windows at first story; east towers of north and south elevation feature doorways); central bays feature three at north and south elevation, eight at east and west elevation; central bays typically feature recessed rectangular loading docks spanned by an overhanging concrete canopy at first story (small rectangular doors with transoms present at north and south elevations; left-most bay features two stacked triple windows separated by continuous concrete posts at first story of east elevation; fourth bay from left of east elevation contains copper door surrounds with three doors featuring large rectangular plate glass windows



West Chelsea Historic District



Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 06C, December 2006, Author: JM, July 15, 2008.

West Chelsea Historic District
 Borough of Manhattan, NY
 Landmarks Preservation Commission

Calendar: March 18, 2008
 Public Hearing: May 13, 2008
 Continued Public Hearing: June 3, 2008
 Designated: July 15, 2008

-  Boundary of Historic District
-  Tax Map Lots in Historic District

