



BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY 150 YEARS

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Contact: Jeanne Hodesh

347-381-3712

jhodesh@brooklynhistory.org

CONGRESSWOMAN NYDIA VELAZQUEZ JOINS BOROUGH PRESERVATIONISTS TO COMMEMORATE DESIGNATION OF BROOKLYN HEIGHTS HISTORIC DISTRICT

*Brooklyn Historical Society Installs Permanent Commemorative Plaque in Honor of
National Historic Landmark Designation*

Ceremony co-hosted by Brooklyn Historical Society and the Brooklyn Heights Association

October 21, 2016 Brooklyn, NY— Today Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) joined Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS), Brooklyn Heights Association (BHA), other elected officials and members of the community to celebrate the return of a plaque commemorating Brooklyn Heights' designation as a National Historic Landmark. The original plaque, presented at the time of the federal designation in 1965, disappeared from a specially designed pedestal located in front of the historical society decades ago. Now, fortunately, the National Park Service has given the community a handsome copy to replace the original. It has been mounted on the exterior of Brooklyn Historical Society, at the corner of Clinton and Pierrepoint Streets, for all to see.

The National Park Service, which celebrates its hundredth anniversary this year, oversees the National Register of Historic Places, a catalogue of federal landmarks deemed worthy of preservation across the country. It was this program that originally presented the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights with a plaque declaring its historical significance. At the time, it was one of only three city neighborhoods in the U.S. to have received the honor. The plaque was presented by George B. Hartzog, Jr., then director of the National Park Service, who said that the Heights had “a great, rich and varied heritage. It has exerted influence on the course of U.S. history.”

The federal designation helped lead the way for the New York City Landmarks Law, which was passed into action later the same year, in April 1965. That November, Brooklyn Heights was designated as New York City's first historic district.

“As the National Parks Service celebrates its Centennial and the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act, it is important to note the incredible value of protecting communities like Brooklyn Heights so that Americans can better connect to their culture and history,” said Commissioner Laird. “The Brooklyn Heights Historic District holds the special distinction of being a National Historic Landmark, on the National

Register of Historic Places, and a New York City Landmark. The character of this neighborhood and the notable buildings within it hold a special place in the development of Brooklyn. In total, New York City is home to 113 National Historic Landmarks and over 900 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, which is fitting given New York City's important role in the history of the United States."

Along with Congresswoman Velazquez, the festivities were co-hosted by BHS and BHA. The BHA, the city's oldest neighborhood association, advocates to protect and enhance the quality of life in Brooklyn Heights, while striving to preserve its physical fabric. The program included remarks from Congresswoman Velazquez, BHS president Deborah Schwartz, Landmarks Preservation Commissioner Meenakshi Srinivasan, Commissioner of the National Parks of New York Harbor Joshua Laird, New York City Councilman Stephen Levin, Executive Director of Brooklyn Heights Association Peter Bray, and Brooklyn Heights preservationist Otis Pearsall.

"Not only is Brooklyn Heights an important part of New York's history, but when it was named a 'Historic District' fifty years ago, it helped pave the way for the protection of other culturally significant sites around the country," said Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY). "The preservation of Brooklyn Heights as both the city's first Historic District and one of three city neighborhoods designated by the National Parks Service as National Historic Landmark, is an example of what can be accomplished when all levels of government work together to protect our history."

"Brooklyn Historical Society is honored to display the plaque that commemorates Brooklyn Heights' designation as a National Landmark," said Deborah Schwartz, President of BHS. "Brooklyn has often been called America's first suburb. This plaque will stand as a reminder that Brooklyn Heights' role in our country's development represents many historical firsts."

"The Brooklyn Heights Historic District is a rare example of a neighborhood where one can trace nearly the entire history of urban residential design in New York City, beginning in the 1820s," said Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. "Today's plaque rededication is not only a tribute to the district's exceptional architecture, but to the activism, determination and leadership of its residents, who helped make it the first New York City Historic District in 1965. I applaud the National Park Service for ensuring that the significance of this incomparable neighborhood continues to be recognized."

"With this commemoration, Brooklyn Heights joins an exceptional group of places throughout the nation we should celebrate and cherish," said Council Member Stephen Levin. "This designation speaks to the dedication of the historic preservation advocates working together with the City to maintain an irreplaceable community for generations to come."

"The BHA appreciates the recognition the National Park Service bestowed upon Brooklyn Heights fifty years ago, an honor that continues to resonate in the neighborhood's well-preserved architecture," said Peter Bray, Executive Director, Brooklyn Heights Association. "Along with the unstinting devotion of Brooklyn Heights residents at that time, including some present today, that led to the Height's designation as the city's first historic district, these designations have given today's and future generations a magnificent legacy. We also pay tribute to the National Park Service on its centennial for its role in protecting and managing our nation's great natural and cultural monuments and parks."

"This rededication presents a wonderful opportunity to remember and celebrate the important contributions of Congressman Hugh Carey to the preservation struggle for Brooklyn Heights," said Otis Pearsall, Brooklyn Heights preservationist.

About Brooklyn Historical Society

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement and community outreach.

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