January 28, 2009

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Tierney,

We write to request that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission consider the designation of the Amato Opera Company building, located at 319 Bowery in Manhattan, as a New York City Landmark. The building’s history is notable for its connection to the theatrical history both of the Bowery and of the surrounding neighborhoods. Though the Amato Opera Company has remained small and intimate since its founding 61 years ago, it has played a significant role in the both the Village theatre and world opera scenes.

The Bowery has a long and rich theatre history, which began with the opening of the Bowery Theatre in 1826. By the late 19th Century, the Bowery was considered to be the center of New York theatre life. Today, the presence of The Amato Opera Company is an important reminder of this history, yet it also links the Bowery to the avant-garde theatre scene that flourished later in the 1940s and 50s all over the South Village, East Village, Greenwich Village and NoHo. The Amato Opera Company was founded with the same populist spirit that drove Joseph Papp to showcase low-cost Shakespeare productions at the Public Theatre just a few blocks uptown, and which encouraged the opening of dozens of others such as the Circle in the Square Theatre, the Provincetown Playhouse, and the Sullivan Street Theatre, all of which have been lost. As more of these theatres are demolished, a crucial part of the history of Lower Manhattan is being erased.

The Amato Opera Company was founded by Italian husband-and-wife team Anthony and Sally Amato, in order to provide the general public inexpensive exposure to opera and to allow emerging talent to participate in full-length opera productions. At the time of the company’s founding in 1948, Anthony was working as Director of the Opera Workshop at The America Theatre Wing, and he would often cast his students in his productions. Many of the company’s performers (including Mignon Dunn, Jon Frederic West, George Shirley, and Chester Ludgin) have since moved to large opera companies around the world.

The company's first several performances were in the auditorium of Our Lady of Pompeii on Carmine Street. The first opera performed was The Barber of Seville, “sung in Italian”, according to a New York Times article from the time, “for an audience which clearly understood the
language.” In 1951, the company moved to its first permanent home at 159 Bleecker Street, where it became part of the larger avant-garde theatre scene that swept the Village in the post-war years. 159 Bleecker Street had been a former movie house which would later become the Circle in Square Theatre. It had been constructed by, and used primarily for, the neighborhood’s thriving Italian community, though it was sadly lost to demolition in 2004.

In 1962, the Amato Opera Company moved to its present home at 319 Bowery. Anthony and Sally renovated the building, which had been originally constructed as a store and lofts in 1899 by Julius Bockell & Son. A newspaper article from 1905 indicates that J. Whitelaw & Co., cigar manufacturers, had been housed in the building. In 1906, the building had been taken over by the Holy Mission Society, which operated out of the building for the first half of the century. Though the Holy Mission Society altered the storefront in 1935, the building retains much historic integrity in its classically-decorated pilasters, carved frieze, and original window configurations.

With this letter we are also submitting a photo and primary source documents that help define the significance of 319 Bowery. We have submitted prior RFE’s for other historic buildings along the Bowery, such as 35 Cooper Square. We urge the Commission to consider landmark designation for these and other important architectural and cultural resources along the Bowery.

Sincerely,

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director  
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation

Michael Rosen  
President  
East Village Community Coalition
APPLICATION FOR ERECTION OF BUILDINGS.

Applicant is hereby made to the Superintendent of Buildings of the City of New York, for the purpose of enabling the applicant to receive a permit for the erection of the building, the specifications and plans herewith submitted, for the erection of the building, whether specified herein or not. All provisions of the Building Law shall be complied with in the erection of said building.

New York, May 3, 1899. (Sign here)

1. State how many buildings to be erected.

2. How occupied? If for dwelling, state the number of families.

3. What is the street or avenue and the number thereof? Give diagram of property.

4. Size of lot. No. of feet front, 28'; No. of feet rear, 40'; No. of feet deep, 84'; No. of stories in height, 4; No. of feet in height from curb level to highest point of roof beams, 55'.

5. What will each building cost exclusive of the lot? $12,000.

6. What will be the depth of foundation walls from curb level or surface of ground?

7. Will foundation be laid on earth, sand, rock, timber or piles?

8. What will be the base, stone or concrete?

9. What will be the thickness of foundation walls?

10. What will be the sizes of piers?

11. What will be the sizes of the base of piers?

12. What will be the thickness of foundation walls?

13. What will be the thickness of upper walls? Basement, 16 inches; 1st story, 16 inches; 2nd story, 16 inches; 3rd story, 16 inches; 4th story, 16 inches; 5th story, 16 inches; 6th story, 16 inches; 7th story, 16 inches; and from thence to top, 16 inches. Of what materials to be constructed?

14. State whether independent or party walls.

15. What will material will walls be composed of?


17. Will the roof be flat, peaked or mansard?

18. What will be the materials of roofing?

19. Give size and materials of floor beams. 1st tier, floor beam 3" x 14"; 2nd tier, floor beam 3" x 14"; 3rd tier, floor beam 3" x 14"; 4th tier, floor beam 3" x 14"; 5th tier, floor beam 3" x 14"; 6th tier, floor beam 3" x 14"; 7th tier, floor beam 3" x 14"; roof tier, floor beam 3" x 14". State distances from centres. 1st tier, 16 inches; 2nd tier, 16 inches; 3rd tier, 16 inches; 4th tier, 16 inches; 5th tier, 16 inches; 6th tier, 16 inches; 7th tier, 16 inches; 8th tier, 16 inches.

20. If floors are to be supported by columns and girders, give the following information: Size and material of girders under 1st floor, under each of the upper floors, under each of the upper floors, under each of the upper floors.

21. This building will safely sustain under superficial foot upon 1st floor 250 lbs.; upon 2nd floor 250 lbs.; upon 3rd floor 250 lbs.; upon 4th floor 250 lbs.; upon 5th floor 250 lbs.

22. If the front, rear or side walls are to be supported, in whole or in part, by iron girders or lintels, give definite particulars. The frame of the building is to be supported by 15" steel beams 8' 0" in length. The floor to be cast on cast iron columns 8' 0" square. Floors 240 lbs. to 240 lbs. The frame is to be constructed of iron plates. The frame is to be supported by brick piers and columns, made of the sizes of piers and columns.

23. State by whom the construction of the building is to be superintended.

24. By whom the construction of the building is to be superintended.
DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

Plan No. 568

NEW BUILDINGS OF 1899.

STATE OF NEW YORK
City and County of New York,

I, the undersigned, do solemnly swear that the premises hereinafter described, being duly sworn, deposited and made, are that described as follows:

The premises described, being in the State of New York, is the owner in fee of all that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, shown on the diagram annexed hereunto, and made a part hereto, situate, lying and being in the City and County of New York, known and designated as No. 519 Bowery

and bounded and described as follows, viz.

BEGINNING at a point on the east side of Bowery

and running thence 29th St. 94' 9"

and running thence Bowery 46' 34"

and running thence 520' 6" 4' 44"

to the point of beginning.

The said premises, proposed to be erected upon the said premises in accordance with the accompanying detailed statement and plan and the specifications and plans therefor, will be erected by or on account of the following person, whose full name, residence and interest are as follows:

Edward Meier

Edward Meier

Edward Meier

and being the only person interested in said proposed building.

Sworn to before me, this 25th day of April, 1899, the undersigned.

[signature]

[signature]
If the building is to be occupied as an Apartment or Tenement House, give the number of floors.

1. State how many families are to occupy each floor, and the whole number in the house; also, if any part of the building is to be used as a store or for any other business purpose, state the fact.

2. What will be the heights of ceilings? 1st story, 13 feet; 2d story, 11 feet; 3d story, 10 1/2 feet; 4th story, 10 1/2 feet; 5th story, 10 feet; 6th story, 9 feet; 7th story, 8 feet.

3. How are the hall partitions to be constructed and of what materials?

4. How many buildings are to be taken down?

Owner: John Doe
Architect: Jane Smith
Mason: Robert Johnson
Carpenter: William Brown

If a Wall or part of a wall already built is to be used, fill in the following.

The undersigned gives notice that... intend to use the... wall of building...

as party wall in the erection of the building hereinbefore described, and respectfully requests that the same be examined and a permit granted thereof. The foundation wall... built of...

inches thick, feet below curb; the upper wall...

inches thick, feet deep, feet in height.

(Sign here.)

NOTE: In making application for the erection of buildings, the following drawings must be submitted: Plans of each and every story, front, rear and side elevations, and longitudinal and transverse sections. All plans must be drawn to a uniform scale, and must be on tracing cloth, properly designated and colored.

THE BUILDING LAW REQUIRES:

1st—That all stone walls shall be properly bonded and laid in cement mortar.
2nd—That all masonry units shall be laid in cement mortar.
3rd—That all masonry shall be laid in cement mortar.
4th—That all masonry shall be laid in cement mortar.
5th—That all masonry shall be laid in cement mortar.
6th—That all masonry shall be laid in cement mortar.

BALKONIES MUST NOT BE LESS THAN THREE FEET WIDE.

A balcony must not be less than 11 1/2 inches measured line, placed appropriately, or 11 1/2 inches measured line, as wanted, and, in no case, more than 13 inches measured line, except in the case of buildings built for family use.

The shelves of the balcony must be not less than 6 inches from the street, and not less than 6 inches from the street.

The balcony must be not less than 6 inches wide, and not more than 3 inches wide.

The balcony must be not less than 6 inches wide, and not more than 3 inches wide.

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No Fire Escapes shall be approved by the Superintendent of Buildings if not in accordance with above specifications.

In constructing all balcony fire-escapes, the manufacturer thereof shall securely fasten therein, in a conspicuous place, a cast-iron plate having embossed raised letters on the same, as to read as follows: Notice! Any person placing any incumbrance on this balcony liable to a penalty of ten dollars and imprisonment for ten days.

1st—That all exterior partitions or party walls over fourteen feet high, excepting where such walls are to be finished with cornices, galleries or stone moldings, shall have parapets wide enough to allow two feet above the roof, and shall be coped with stone, wood-venetian:
2nd—That every building and the tops and sides of every dormer-window therein shall be covered and roofed with slate, roof, or such other material as is approved by the superintendent of buildings, under his certificate, may authorize.
3rd—That all exterior cornices shall be free from jutting out or projecting.
4th—That the stones or brick work of all masonry, the chimneys of all buildings, the fireplaces of all buildings, the large cooking ranges and laundry stoves, and all base used for a similar purpose, shall be at least eight inches in thickness. If there is not a double iron of beet clay or other building material, at the sides of the masonry, one-inch spaces all around shall be filled with brick, unless the pipes shall not be less than four inches in thickness.
5th—That every roof or steel beam, limited or girder extended to span an opening over ten feet in length in any building, shall be used for supporting a wall, shall be inspected, tested and approved as provided by law.
DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN Municipal Bldg., Manhattan, N.Y.
BROOKLYN Municipal Bldg., Brooklyn, N.Y.
BRONX Bronx County Bldg., Grand Concourse & E. 156th St., Bronx, N.Y.
QUEENS 28-38 56th Ave., L. I. City
RICHMOND Navy Hall, St. George, N. Y.

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPED and filled in TRIPLETS, and accompanied by two certified copies to be held by Applicant. If Elevator or Plumbing Applications are filed hereon, one additional copy is sufficient for all. Plans must be filed on tracing Linen or Cloth.

AFFIDAVIT

PERMIT No. 103
APPLICATION No. 2597
319 Bowery
E. 40th St. South of E. 2nd Street, N.Y.

LOCATION

WARD

VOL

New York City

Sept. 20, 1898

To the Commissioner of Buildings:

Application is hereby made for approval of the plans and specifications hereto submitted, and made a part hereof, for the building thereto described—subject to the condition that if no work is performed hereon within one year from the date of issuance, this approval shall expire by limitation as provided by law; and the applicant agrees to comply with all provisions of the Building Code of the City of New York, and with the provisions of all other laws and rules relating to the erection of said building in effect at this date.

Work under this approval will not be commenced until a permit has been issued, application for which will be filed with the Commissioner of Buildings, accompanied by satisfactory evidence that compensation insurance has been obtained in accordance with the provisions of the Workmen’s Compensation Law.

EXAMINED AND Recommended for Approval on

APPROVED

Commissioner of Buildings, Borough of

State and
County of New York

being duly sworn, deposes and says: That he resides at number 22 East 17th St., in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York, aforesaid, and known and designated as Number 319 Bowery, and hereinafter more particularly described, as the work proposed to be done upon the said premises, in accordance with the accompanying detailed statement in writing of the specifications and plans of such proposed work, including all amendments to the same which may be filed hereon—and also all Elevator and Plumbing work (if any) proposed to be done upon the same premises and specified in separate applications filed herewith, and all subsequent amendments thereto—is duly authorized by Holy Name Mission for the Bowery District, Inc., (hereinafter referred to as "OWNER").

and that the said work is duly authorized by the aforesaid OWNER to make application for the approval of such detailed statements of specifications and plans (and amendments thereto) in the

Depository further says that the full names and residences, street and number, of the owner or owners of the said land, and also of every person interested in said building or proposed building, structure or proposed

(Continued on verso side)
structure, premises, wall, platform, staging, or flooring, either as owner, lessee, or in any representative capacity, are as follows:

Holly Name Mission for the Bowery District, Inc., 519 Bowery

Owner:

Patrick, Cardinal Hayes, Pres., 458 Madison Ave.

Rev. W.J. Hafter, Sec. and treas., 519 Bowery, N.Y.

Lessee:

William Shey, 22 East 17th St., N.Y.C.

Architect:

Supersintendent

The said land and premises above referred to are situate, bounded and described as follows, viz: BEGINNING at a point on the East side of Bowery distant 40 feet south and Bowery St., from the corner formed by the intersection of running thence South 26.4 feet; thence East 25 ft.,

thence N.E. 4 feet; thence N.W. 87 ft.,

thence West 42.8 ft.

to the point of place of beginning—being designated on the map as Block No. 457 Lot No. 8 feet

(Sign Here)

Sworn to before me, this day of

NOTE: If Building is a Multiple Dwelling the following authorization is required.

AUTHORIZATION OF OWNER

...DEPOSES AND SAYS: That...reside at

City of

State of...

that he is...owner of all that certain piece or lot of land situated in the Borough of...

...in the city of New York, and located on the...side of...

and known as...on said street; that the multiple dwelling proposed to be upon said premises will be constructed in accordance with the annexed specifications and plans submitted herewith for the approval of the Department of Buildings, and that...is duly authorized by said owner...to make application in said owner’s behalf in compliance with Chapter 73 of the Laws of 1929 for the approval of such specifications and plans.

NOTE: This clause to be used only when the person executing this authorization is not the sole owner of the premises described herein.

He further says that the full names and residences, street and number, of the owner or owners of the said land, and of every person having an interest in said premises and projected multiple dwelling either as owner, lessee, or otherwise, as required by Section 309 of the Multiple Dwelling Law, are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Name)</th>
<th>(Address)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

No.

28

28

28

28

Signatures.

DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

CITY OF NEW YORK

No work under this application shall be started in connection with the said construction until the said construction shall have been approved by the Commissioner of Buildings.

NOTE: All applications and work must be approved by the Commissioner of Public Works.
**BOROUGH OF New York, CITY OF NEW YORK**

**DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANHATTAN</th>
<th>BROOKLYN</th>
<th>BRONX</th>
<th>QUEENS</th>
<th>RICHMOND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Bldg., Manhattan</td>
<td>Municipal Bldg., Brooklyn</td>
<td>Bronx County Bldg., Grand Concourse &amp; E. 181st St., Bronx</td>
<td>21-10 49th Avenue, L. I. City</td>
<td>Boro Hall, St. George, S. L.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTICE**—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPlicate

Use for Specifications of “ALTERED” Buildings

**ALTERED BUILDINGS**

**PERMIT No.** 19  
**APPLICATION No.** 2597  
**BLOCK No.** 457  
**LOT No.** 8  
**WARD No.**  
**LOCATION** 319 Bowery, East side, 40'-0" South of East 2nd St.  
**VOL. No.**  
**DISTRICT** (under building zone resolution) USE UNRES.  
**HEIGHT** 2  
**AREA** B

**SPECIFICATIONS**

1. **NUMBER OF BUILDINGS TO BE ALTERED** one  
2. **Estimated Cost of Alteration**: $1,000.  
3. **Occupy (in detail)**: Mission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STORY (including cellar and basement)</th>
<th>BEFORE ALTERATION</th>
<th>AFTER ALTERATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APARTS</td>
<td>ROOMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellar</td>
<td>storage</td>
<td>on earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st fl.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd fl.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd fl.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>club-room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th fl.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


LOT DIAGRAM
ALTERATION TO BUILDING AT 319 BOWERY,
NEW YORK CITY

SCALE 1/40" = 1 FOOT

WILLIAM SHARY
ARCHITECT,
22 EAST 17TH ST, N.Y.
**THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS**

MANHATTAN
New York 7

BROOKLYN
Municipal Bldg.
Brooklyn 1

BRONX
151 1st Ave.
New York 12

QUEENS
120-21 Queens Blvd.
Kew Gardens 34, L.I.

RICHMOND
Bowling Hts.
St. George 1, S.I.

**NOTICE**—This Application must be **TYPEWRITTEN** and filed in **QUADRUPLE**

**ALTERED BUILDING**

**LOCATION**
319 Bowery, 101 South of East 2nd Street, Manhattan

House Number, Street, Distance from Nearest Corner and Borough

**EXAMINED AND RECOMMENDED**

For Approval of

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examiner</th>
<th>Borough Superintendent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

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Initial fee payment

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2nd payment of fee to be collected before a permit is issued—Amount $3

Verified by

---

Date

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**SPECIFICATIONS**

1. Classification of Buildings to be Altered. (NOTE—See C26-05-050)

2. Any other buildings on lot or permit granted for one?

3. Use and Occupancy. Sunday-School and storage

(NOTE—if a multiple dwelling, application of owner must be filed)

A new C of O will not be issued.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Legal Use</th>
<th>Proposed Occupancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apt.  Room  Use</td>
<td>Apt.  Room  Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry  on</td>
<td>Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Club rm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Chapel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Class 3, non-fireproof
(4) State generally in what manner the Building will be altered:

Alter first floor and cellar to open theatre.
Remove portion of first tier, New partitions, Fire
retard entire stair wells, New sprinkler
Separate application filed for sprinkler system.

(5) Size of Existing Building:

At street level 22-1/2" feet front 81' feet deep 7'-4" feet rear
At typical floor level 21-1/2" feet front 50' feet deep 7'-4" feet rear
Height stories 52 feet

(6) If volume of Building is to be changed, give the following information:

At street level feet front feet deep feet rear
At typical floor level feet front feet deep feet rear
Height stories

Area of Building as Altered: At street level Total floor area sq. ft.
Total Height Additional Cubic Contents
c. ft. c. ft.

(7) Estimated Cost of Alteration $1,000.
Estimated Cost, exclusive of extension:

(8) Is Application made to remove violations? No If Yes, State Violation Numbers

(9) If building is to be enlarged or extended or floor loads increased, Soil Data shall be submitted in accordance with Sec. C26-376.0. For alterations of a minor nature, the Applicant certifies that he has investigated the nature of the soil and finds the following:
Character of soil Bearing capacity

(10) State what disposition will be made of waste and sewage
(Public sewer, Private sewer, Cesspool, etc.)

(11) Does this Application include Dropped Curb? No
(If Drop Curb Permit is obtained with this Application, DIAGRAM showing the relative position of drop curb and extent thereof must be included on plot diagram).

Drop Curb ft. @ $ per ft. Spay ft. @ $ per ft.

Exact distance from nearest corner to Curb Cut feet.
Deposit: $ Fee: $ Total: $ Cashier
Paid 19 Document No. 19 . Cashier

(12) Temporary Structures between Street Line and Curb:
Will a Sidewalk Shall be required? Length feet.
Will any other miscellaneous temporary structures be required?

1. The term "height" of a structure shall mean the vertical distance from the curb level to the highest point of the roof beam; or if flat roof, the entire height of the structure; or if a sloping roof, a line drawn, from the point of the curb to the highest point of the roof beam, parallel to the line of the curb. The horizontal distance of the boundary line of all the ground lying above the level of the street lines is also to be included.

2. In computing this area, measurement shall be taken to the outside surface of concrete walls at each floor. Corners, yards, etc., shall be included. The areas of elevators and basements shall not be included.

3. Total height shall be measured from 4 inches below the lowest finished floor to the outside of the roof, and in case of sleeping rooms, to the average height.

4. The cubic contents is the actual space enclosed within the outer surfaces of the outside walls and between the outer surface of the roof and air below. Include the walls of dormer, porches, decks, flat, enclosed porches, and other similar structures. Chutes, water tanks, basements, storage, cellars, yards, light sheds and buildings detached from the main structure are not to be included.

5. "Relevant" Cost for computation purposes on alterations of existing buildings or structures shall be the cost of all contemplated construction, including plumbing work, elevator work, specialties for floor work, automatic sprinklers, fixed oil, air conditioning, etc.

6. Space for plot diagram is based on Allen's Form.

7. Use should be related to pertinent legal terms, e.g., use terms like factory rather than left, male employ rather than wife, etc.

8. If floor heating equipment is to be included in an Allen's Central Equipment Form must accompany this application.

Brobby is a Crime! A person who gives or offers a bribe to any employ of the City of New York, or an employee who takes or solicits a bribe, is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment for ten years or by a fine of $4,000, or more, or both. Penal Law, Section 378 and 382.