

PRESERVATION ALERT

AT GRAVE RISK: Firefighters, soldiers, mermaids and skiers – Fortunately the risk is not to human life, but rather to polychrome terra-cotta sculptures!!

Parkchester is a housing complex in the Bronx with over 500 terra-cotta statues and 600 plaques depicting, among other things, bullfighters, Native American Indians, and numerous other figures as well as many varied animals. Continuing maintenance efforts since at least 2018 have resulted in the unnecessary destruction of a number of these wonderful creations that are unique to Parkchester.

Facts of Note:

- The plan for Parkchester was so important that it was unveiled at the 1939 World's Fair. MetLife appointed a blue-ribbon panel of architects (Shreve and Clavan) builders (Starrett Brothers and Eken), planners and designers. The architects and builders chosen, were responsible for the design and construction of the Empire State Building.
- Constructed between 1939-1941, *Architectural Forum* (Dec 1939) called Parkchester, "The world's most imposing residential building operation." There are 51 buildings which were intended for 42,000 residents and the 129-acre complex retained 73% open space. It drew on the concepts of French architect, Le Corbusier, who proposed combining relatively dense apartment buildings with lots of open space.
- Parkchester, a planned community for middle and low-income families, included baseball fields, basketball courts, playgrounds and space for theaters, community centers, and shops. Macy's chose to have its first branch store in Parkchester and it is still in operation.
- The terra-cotta ornament, which is integral to the buildings in Parkchester was manufactured by the renowned *Federal Seaboard Terra Cotta Corporation* in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. The company had its own modeling department but the original sculptures and plaques were created by artists specifically hired by the blue-ribbon panel. Raymond Barger, the Chief Sculptor, worked with eight other sculptors including Joseph Kiselewski (who also created pieces for Rockefeller Center).

We need your help to persuade the Landmarks Preservation Commission to consider Parkchester for Historic District designation.

Please send a short letter (with an emailed copy to info@friendsof terracotta.org) to:
Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Centre St, 9th fl. N
NY, NY 10007