

Claremont Theater Building

Individual Landmark

3320-3338 Broadway

Designation Date: June 6, 2006



Claremont Theater Building, View from west side of Broadway. 3320-3338 Broadway (aka 536-40 West 135th Street), Manhattan. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission Claremont Theater Building Designation Report. Photo by Carl Forster.

The Claremont Theater building is one of the oldest structures in New York City planned specifically to exhibit motion pictures, originally called “photoplays.” Located in north Manhattanville, at the southeast corner of Broadway and 135th Street, the theater opened in November 1914.

Commissioned by Arlington C. Hall and Harvey M. Hall of the Wayside Realty Company, it was designed in the neo-Renaissance style by Gaetano Ajello, an architect best-known for apartment buildings on Manhattan’s Upper West Side. The building has three distinct fronts, including a clipped corner façade where the auditorium’s entrance was originally located. This distinctive arrangement enhanced the theater’s visibility and increased the amount of retail space. The corner, consequently, received the most elaborate decorative treatment and is embellished with an elegant low relief depicting an early motion picture camera set on a tripod.

In 1915 Thomas Edison produced a short film in which the theater's entrance is prominently featured. Filmed from across Broadway, it depicts groups of men, women, and children exiting the building. The second floor accommodated a large restaurant and ballroom, known under such names as the Broadway-Claremont or Clarendon Restaurant, and later, the Royal Palms Ballroom and Roof Garden. Until the early years of the Depression, area residents gathered here to eat, drink, and dance.

Beginning in the late 1920s, the storefronts were leased to automobile-related businesses; by 1933 the theater closed, and the interior was converted to an automobile showroom. Despite these changes, the exterior is well-preserved and remains a symbol of the growing popularity of the motion picture in the early twentieth century.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)