

Hotel Theresa

Individual Landmark

2082-2096 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard

Designation Date: July 13, 1993



Hotel Theresa, June 1, 1980

Image courtesy of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

The Hotel Theresa, built in 1912-1913, was one of the major social centers of Harlem, serving from 1940, until its conversion into an office building in the late 1960s, as one of the most important institutions for Harlem's African American community. In addition to its historical importance, the hotel is a major work of the noted architectural firm of George & Edward Blum, and it exemplifies this firm's singular approach to ornamentation and inventive use of terra cotta.

Although planned primarily as an apartment hotel, the Theresa also welcomed transient guests. In addition, the hotel contained a two-story dining room used for banquets, weddings, meetings, and other functions, and a bar and grill that became a major social center for Harlem's black celebrities during the 1940s and 1950s. During these decades, the Theresa was known as the "Waldorf of Harlem," playing host to many of America's most prominent black social, political, entertainment, and sports figures, as well as many foreign dignitaries.

The Theresa was also home to important Harlem institutions, including the March Community Bookstore and Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity. The Theresa entered the

national limelight in 1960 when Cuban Premier Fidel Castro chose to stay at the hotel while visiting New York to speak at the United Nations General Assembly. While at the Theresa, Castro hosted a visit from Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Encompassing the entire western blockfront of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard (formerly Seventh Avenue), between West 124th and 125th Streets, the Theresa is one of the most visually striking structures in northern Manhattan, with its projecting bays, arched surrounds, and prominent gables.

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