

Natatorium at Hansborough Recreation Center

Individual Landmark

35 West 134th Street



Interior of the Hansborough Recreation Center Natatorium.

The Hansborough Recreation Center opened on June 1, 1925, as the 134th Street Bathhouse. The Natatorium, or indoor pool, is a superlative final proto-modernist work by Henry B. Herts, New York's foremost theater specialist in the early 20th century.

From the limestone facade, embellished by a bas-relief of Apollo blazing the city seal across the heavens, to the top-lit, barrel vaulted, double-height tiled pool, with a frieze of signs of the zodiac, to a gallery supported by Guastavino vaulting, the Recreation Center and Natatorium are iconic.

Along with other bath houses built around the same time, the Hansborough Recreation Center was intended to promote public health, hygiene, and recreation. It was decorated with tiles, mosaics, and ceramic panels depicting various sea creatures. In addition to the pool, there were 164 showers and six bathtubs on the first floor, and a gymnasium, running track, locker room, and more showers on the second. Currently, the Hansborough Recreation Center is operated by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

[NATATORIUM IS DEDICATED](#)

New York Times, March 31, 1932

Walker and Levy Speak at Opening of City Building in Harlem.

Dedication ceremonies were held last night at the new natatorium of the Department of Public Works in Harlem at 45-47 West 134th Street. Mayor Walker, Borough President Samuel

Levy and Dr. Herman T. Peck of the Department of Health were among those present at the dedication and a program of aquatic events.

The mayor told those present that athletics would help the individual of the community who, in turn, would help the community to be of advantage to the entire city. Mr. Levy said the building of the natatorium had shown that there was no discrimination on part of the City Administration.