DESIGNATION REPORT

Lefcourt Clothing Center

Landmarks Preservation Commission

Designation Report
Lefcourt Clothing Center
August 12, 2025

Designation List 546
LP-2691

DESIGNATION REPORT

Lefcourt Clothing Center

LOCATION

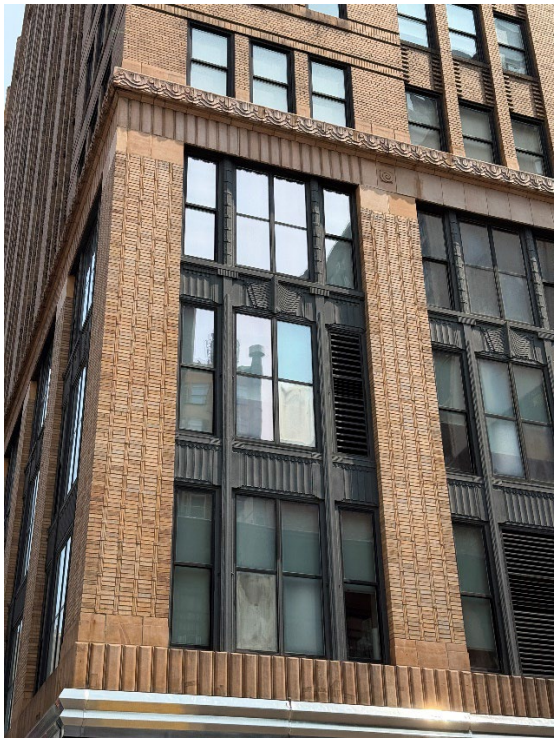
Borough of Manhattan
275 Seventh Avenue

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

The Lefcourt Clothing Center is a 27-story Art Deco loft building designed by leading architect Ely Jacques Kahn of Buchman & Kahn for the developer Abraham Lefcourt. The building housed garment industry tenants and was later home to the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, exemplifying the Garment District's transformation into a hub of the industry in the late 1920s.



Lefcourt Clothing Center
Sarah Eccles, August 2025

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Lefcourt Clothing Center

275 Seventh Avenue, Manhattan

Designation List 546
LP-2691

Built: 1927-28
Architect: Buchman & Kahn

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 801, Lot 1
Building Identification Number (BIN): 1015000

Calendared: April 22, 2025
Public Hearing: May 20, 2025

On May 20, 2025, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Lefcourt Clothing Center as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.5). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Four people spoke in support of designation, including one person representing two organizations. Speakers included representatives of Manhattan Community Board 4, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, the Art Deco Society, and Save Chelsea. No one spoke in opposition.

Summary

Lefcourt Clothing Center

The Lefcourt Clothing Center is a 27-story Art Deco loft building in the Garment District that exemplifies the transformation of the area from a residential and entertainment district to an industrial hub in the 1920s. The highly prolific real estate developer Abraham Lefcourt - who began his working life as a newspaper boy on the Lower East Side – played an important role in relocating the clothing industry to this area and he employed Ely Jacques Kahn of the firm of Buchman & Kahn to design the building.

Born in New York City to a Jewish family of Austrian and French descent, Ely Jacques Kahn was one of New York's preeminent designers of Art Deco office towers. Kahn was known for his textured brickwork, abstracted decorative motifs, and monumental setbacks that artfully maximized a building's volume according to the 1916 zoning regulations. Four of Kahn's buildings, completed during different phases of his career, are designated New York City individual landmarks, including Bergdorf Goodman, the Holland Plaza Building, the 2 Park Avenue Building, and the Municipal Asphalt Plant; his Film Center building is a designated interior landmark. Like these buildings, the Lefcourt Clothing Center stands out for its prominent location, on an avenue taking up the entire blockfront, and for its distinctive patterned brickwork.

When the Lefcourt Clothing Center opened in January 1929, the center contained showrooms, manufacturing space, and offices leased to various clothing firms. Notably, this site also became an important place for union activity when the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) leased a floor for their health center in 1935 and then bought the whole building in 1945, converting multiple floors for use as health care facilities for union workers. The ILGWU was a nationally and locally significant union that played a key role in improving workers' wages and mounting ambitious social programs. It fought for improved working conditions and offered its members expansive educational, recreational, and health benefits.

In 1989 the Union Sanatorium Association sold the building to 1710 Broadway Inc., ILGWU, and the health center rented space in the building from the union. The Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) (including the ILGWU) then merged with the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union in 2004 and became known as UNITE HERE. In 2006 1710 Broadway Inc., ILGWU merged with 275 Seventh Avenue LLC, Unite Here, the latter of which is the current owner of the property. Unite Here has its headquarters on the sixteenth floor of the building and the Union Health Center still operates in the building.

The Lefcourt Clothing Center is a highly prominent and intact building on Seventh Avenue whose history encompasses an important Garment District developer, a renowned architect, and the workers who labored and visited the health center there.

Description

275 Seventh Avenue is a 27-story building of buff colored brick and terracotta that takes up the block between 25th and 26th streets in the Garment District. It is Art Deco in style and was designed by Ely Jacques Kahn of the firm of Buchman & Kahn. The building's tripartite façade features a four-story base incorporating the commercial ground floor and the adjacent three-story section of cast iron and brick; a 13-story mid-section with brick piers and brick and terra-cotta ornament; and three tiers of setbacks beginning at the 18th story.

Primary (West, Seventh Avenue) Facade

The building's base consists of a commercial ground floor with historic decorative terra-cotta jambs at the main entrance and a three-story section of 11 evenly spaced bays. The bays of the second through fourth stories are offset by brick and terra-cotta piers resting on a sill course of terra-cotta blocks laid in soldier course. Within each bay the fenestration is set within cast-iron enframements with subtly decorated spandrels. Separating the fifth story from the building's upper stories is a terra-cotta cornice featuring a projecting crown with distinctive ornamental design.

The upper stories are anchored at the corners by slightly projecting bays with three windows at each story delineated by brick lintel and sill courses. The inner bays continue the fenestration pattern of three window openings per bay. The bays are separated by brick piers and within the bays the windows are defined by continuous brick piers and brick spandrels with raised brick decoration. At the 16th and 17th stories, the spandrels and large piers are decorated with raised geometric ornament, a pattern that continues in the setbacks above. At the uppermost setback there is a single window in the outer bays.

Alterations

The ground floor has been entirely replaced with non-historic storefronts, an aluminum cornice, and a new main entrance with an address sign. Above this floor, historic six-over-six double-hung sash windows were replaced with one-over-one and two-over-two double hung sash windows, and some windows have been replaced with louvers. There are three utility pipes. There is a terrace on the 19th floor with windows converted to doors. There are two minimally visible rooftop additions.

Primary (North, West 26th Street) Facade

The West 26th Street facade is similar in style, fenestration, and materials to the Seventh Avenue one. The entrance retains its historic bronze jambs and multi-light transom.

Alterations

The ground floor has been entirely replaced with non-historic storefronts, an aluminum cornice, and a new main entrance and security camera. Above this floor, historic six-over-six double-hung sash windows were replaced with one-over-one and two-over-two double hung sash windows, and some windows have been replaced with louvers.

Primary (South, 25th Street) Facade

The six-bay-wide south facade is similar in style, fenestration, and material to the main or Seventh Avenue elevation except that the three easternmost bays above the fourth story are four windows wide. The entrance on this elevation appears to be historic

and features bronze doors, one revolving, in a bronze surround with multi-light transom.

Alterations

The ground floor has been entirely replaced with non-historic storefronts, and an aluminum cornice. Above this floor, historic six-over-six double-hung sash windows were replaced with one-over-one and two-over-two double hung sash windows, and some windows have been replaced with louvers.

Secondary (East) Facade

This partially visible simple brick facade features triple windows with simple mullions in each bay except for the northernmost bay of uppermost setback. Examples of the historic three-over-three sash windows remain at fourth and fifth stories. There is patched brick throughout.

Alterations

Lower three stories resurfaced; historic six-over-six sash windows replaced with one-over-one double hung sash windows except as noted above.

The Historical Development of the Garment District

At its height in the 1930s, New York City's Garment District stretched north from 25th to 42nd Streets and west from Sixth to Ninth Avenues.[1] This area underwent many changes from its early development in the 1830s as a prosperous residential neighborhood to its transformation a century later into a national hub of clothing production and sales.

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the area that would become the Garment District was part of a broader terrain inhabited by Indigenous Peoples known as the Munsee that spanned the lower Hudson to upper Delaware river valleys, and an Indigenous trail ran between what would become Eighth and Ninth Avenues and approximately from 14th to 42nd Streets, ending in a stream that ran into the Hudson River.[2] Following the nominal "sale" of Manhattan to the Dutch in 1626 the colonists drove the Munsee from Manhattan by the end of the 18th century. The scholar Anne-Marie Cantwell notes that, "the Munsee did not yet realize that they were perceived as selling the land in the European sense, that is permanently alienating themselves from it. Rather, they thought they were simply allowing the Europeans to use it for a while."[3] Much of this western section of Manhattan, which today is the area from 25th to 42nd Streets and between Sixth and Ninth Avenues, became farmland during the 18th century and remained so until the early 19th century.[4]

Between the 1830s and 1860s, the city surged northward above 14th Street and developers constructed numerous relatively affordable rowhouses in Midtown West, followed after the Civil War by theaters and hotels and a burgeoning entertainment district.[5] By the 1870s, the vicinity of the new theater and hotel district and the area between Fifth and Seventh Avenues from 23rd to 42nd Streets became known as the Tenderloin.[6] The Tenderloin gained a reputation as a place of drinking, gambling, sex work, and graft. However, day to day life in the district was more varied than the sensational depictions of vice that circulated in the popular media. There were churches, factories, small businesses, and the residences of low-income New Yorkers who worked in various occupations, such as dressmakers, clerks, and carpenters.[7] African American, Irish, German, and other immigrant families lived throughout the area.[8] In this period, the Tenderloin was one of few places in the city that offered a chance of social mobility to African Americans through its vibrant music scene, including at 47-55 West 28th Street Buildings, Tin Pan Alley, designated New York City Landmarks.[9]

Real estate development and the reform efforts of middle- and upper-class white New Yorkers forced African Americans and other working-class residents to leave the neighborhood. In the early 1900s, the Tenderloin became the site of large-scale demolition to make way for the new Pennsylvania Station (1904-1910). The Pennsylvania Railroad Company chose the area in part because of the neighborhood's sensationalized reputation as a crime-ridden district of working-class residents that included a large Black population. As the historian Hilary Ballon put it, "marked by vice, by race, and by class, the Tenderloin was deemed expendable."[10]

Similarly, when garment industry leaders sought a new area for the Garment District in the late 1910s, the stretch north from 25th to 42nd Streets and west from Sixth to Ninth Avenues was an efficient choice. Relatively cheap land and a working-class population with little political power

to resist redevelopment made Midtown West an appealing candidate. By the 1920s, widespread demolition of rowhouses and tenements was underway and in their place was a landscape of showrooms, factories, and offices for the garment industry.

The Architectural Development of the Garment District

Nearly all of the structures in what is known as the "Garment District" or "Garment Center" were built in a single decade of the 1920s, and owes its character to a single commercial activity – garment manufacturing, reflecting the success of a movement against the presence of factories in the vicinity of the Fifth Avenue shopping district.[11]

New York City's garment industry had originated south of Canal Street in the 1850s. Manufacturers of men's and women's clothing gradually moved north after the Civil War, occupying workspaces that were close to department and specialty stores that congregated near Union Square and Ladies' Mile. At the start of the 20th century, Fifth Avenue became an important commercial corridor. The first fashionable retailer to locate here was B. Altman & Company (a New York City Landmark), which opened at Fifth Avenue and 35th Street in 1906, followed by Lord & Taylor (1914, a New York City Landmark) and Arnold Constable & Company (1915).

At this time, factories began to simultaneously pack the area, crowding the avenue and adjacent streets with immigrant workers, particularly around lunchtime.[12] Bemoaned as a "factory invasion" and a "menace to trade," in March 1916 the Fifth Avenue Association placed advertisements in local newspapers asking: "Shall We Save New York?" Signed by merchants, banks, and hotels, the campaign called for "cooperative action."[13]

Four months later, in July 1916, the Board of Estimate passed a "Building Zone Resolution" to regulate the height and bulk of new buildings throughout New York City, as well as "the location of trades and industries and the location of buildings designed for specific uses."[14] The garment industry, which promised to leave the Fifth Avenue shopping corridor quickly, supported the districting scheme, anticipating lower rents and the convenience of consolidation.[15]

Industry leaders chose the West 30s, where less expensive sites could be assembled, and which was accessible to Penn Station and other transit, and plans to create a "permanent home" for the garment industry were announced in December 1919.[16] What followed was an extraordinary building boom. Approximately 100 buildings were erected in the West 30s over the next decade, peaking in 1924-25. Aside from a small group of low-rise structures that owners preserved to protect tenant views and light, the east-west blocks contain rows of 12 to 16-story setback structures, while the Broadway, Seventh and Eighth Avenues have towers that rise 20 or more stories.

The exterior cladding of most of the buildings was fairly conventional and uniform. Many have light-colored stone bases, with tan and beige brick elevations that incorporate complementary terracotta or cast-stone details. The first wave of buildings displayed varied ornamentation, such as classical or medieval style, while the structures erected later in the decade lean toward stripped or "modern" Gothic and, finally, Art Deco.

History of the Garment Industry[17]

By the end of the 1930s, New York City's garment workers made "three out of four of the ready-made coats and dresses, and four out of five of the fur garments worn by American women."[18] Clothing manufacturing had long been a substantial industry

for the city: in the 1840s numerous firms produced ready-to-wear men's clothing and in the 1880s women's garment making industrialized and greatly expanded.[19] The city dominated the national women's garment industry for decades thanks to its position as a key entry point for immigrants – who were the majority of the workforce – a locus of transportation networks, a financial center, and a leader in fashion.[20] New York's garment industry was also nationally significant to the American labor movement due to the actions of immigrant women garment workers from the early to mid-20th century.

The 19th century saw massive changes to the ways that clothes were manufactured in the United States. As the historian Nancy L. Green puts it, "home-made clothes gave way to store-bought ones, and sewing became the occupation of industrial homeworkers instead of individual homemakers."[21] By the 1880s there were three types of garment factories in New York City: inside shops where "employees worked directly for the manufacturer;" home shops where "workers, often assisted by family members, assembled clothing in their tenement apartments from cut goods supplied by the manufacturer;" and outside shops where "a contractor acted as a middleman receiving orders from the manufacturer, then hiring laborers to finish the garments either in their homes or in small workshops."[22] Many manufacturing buildings clustered in Lower Manhattan and examples are preserved in the SoHo-Cast Iron and NoHo Historic Districts.

A large portion of garment making took place in tenements and reformers were soon concerned by conditions in these sweatshops. They supported legislation to limit this practice, beginning with the 1892 New York State Factory Act.[23] In response, developers built loft buildings for the garment industry south of Union Square.[24] These structures varied in quality: some were fireproof and had large windows, marking a great improvement over tenement apartments. However, buildings that were less than 150 feet tall continued to have wood floors and there were loopholes that allowed owners to limit emergency exits.[25] Thus, the landscape of clothing manufacturing remained variable for workers even as reformers tried to regulate it.

The poor working conditions and pay that women garment makers in particular experienced fueled their activism in the early 20th century, including after 146 workers died in the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911 in the Asch Building (now the Brown Building, a designated New York City landmark).[26] This disaster brought national attention to the dangers that industrial workplaces posed to their workers. Reformers passed regulations to improve health and safety requirements and in 1913 factory owners made an agreement with the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union leadership that, among other things, established minimum wages and allowed the Joint Board of Sanitary Control more power to enforce health and safety standards.

However, even subsequent advances in labor relations and workplace conditions did nothing to redress gender inequality, and in general only men could be hired to fill the highest-paid positions and only women could be placed in the lowest-paid jobs.[27] In response, women garment workers created a particularly vibrant rank and file movement, which initiated important labor actions and a distinctive cultural program in the interwar period.

Women workers continued to be the militant rank and file of the garment unions well into the 1920s and 1930s, especially as the Depression wore away at the gains that earlier generations of activists had won. Beyond their labor actions, women built on the "bread and roses" approach of early women activists who wanted unions to provide educational, health, and cultural programs, as well as wage and

hour benefits. Union organizers established wide-ranging clubs and cultural activities, and local chapters founded centers in their neighborhoods where members could attend various activities. The ILGWU offered centralized services at their Workers' University in the Washington Irving High School to the east of Union Square and their Health Center in the Lefcourt Building at 275 Seventh Avenue in the new Garment District.[28]

Abraham E. Lefcourt

Born in 1877 in Birmingham, England to Russian Jewish parents, Abraham E. Lefcourt and his family moved to the Lower East Side when he was five years old. He worked as a newspaper boy and a clerk in a dry goods store before getting a job as a bookkeeper at a garment factory and working his way up the ranks to eventually buy the business.[29]

Lefcourt became an extraordinarily prolific developer, starting in 1910 with a 12-story loft building on West 25th Street. By 1923 he turned his attentions solely to real estate and ended his career in the garment trade, although he remained tied to the industry in the sense that he constructed numerous buildings for it.[30] Between 1910 and 1931 the *New York Times* estimated that he developed 31 buildings and remarked that: "the buildings constituting the Lefcourt group, if placed end to end, would cover well over a mile in length and would form a building towering eight times higher than the Woolworth Building… the thirty-one Lefcourt buildings represent, in land values and improvements, well over a quarter of a billion dollars…No other single individual or building organization has constructed in its own behalf as many buildings are in the Lefcourt group."[31] Many of these buildings were erected in the new Garment District and, as the historian Andrew Dolkart points out, "the trajectory of his career exemplifies the careers of the Jewish men who created this dynamic new district in the city. Lefcourt's loft buildings typify both the architectural character of garment district lofts and the speculative nature of much of New York City's early 20th century construction, a building pattern largely dominated by Jewish developers."[32]

Ely Jacques Kahn

Ely Jacques Kahn was one of the most important New York architects of the 20th century.[33] His career, which spanned fifty years, redefined Manhattan's Garment District and resulted in the construction of some of New York City's most significant buildings, including the Holland Plaza Building, 2 Park Avenue Building, and the Municipal Asphalt Plant, all designated New York City Landmarks. Ely Jacques Kahn was considered one of New York's leading modernists, "a robust leader in contemporary building principles and practice," and "the pre-eminent architect of office buildings in the '20's." While he is best known for his work in the Art Deco style and his designs of loft buildings, over his career, Kahn worked in a variety of styles and designed a wide range of buildings including hospitals, houses, office buildings, warehouses, apartment buildings, factories, and department stores. Ely Jacques Kahn was born into an educated middle-class Jewish family in New York. He was always interested in art, and particularly painting, but decided that architecture was a more practical vocation.

In 1903, Kahn began his architectural studies at Columbia College, where design courses were taught in ateliers directed by practicing architects. Kahn enrolled in the atelier of Thomas Hastings. After completing his thesis work, Kahn left for Paris in 1907 to attend the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. There, he joined the atelier of Gaston Redon, who had built a reputation as a painter and master of architectural decoration. Kahn was the first American student to be awarded the "Prix Labarre" at the Ecole des

Beaux-Arts. He earned his diploma in 1911. Upon his return to the United States, Kahn worked as a draftsman in several different architectural offices, helping to design traditionally styled houses and hotels. In 1915, he was appointed to a teaching position at Cornell University. During this time, Kahn was introduced to Albert Buchman and Mortimer J. Fox, partners in the long-established firm of Buchman & Fox. In 1917, Kahn was invited to join the firm as a partner to succeed Mortimer J. Fox, who was retiring. The name of the firm was changed to Buchman & Kahn. Buchman withdrew into the background, and Kahn was given a leading role both in the design and business end of the partnership. During this period, the firm's major works included 2 Park Avenue Building (1926-1928), Bergdorf Goodman (1927-1928), and the Film Center Building (1928-1929).

Upon Buchman's retirement in 1929, Kahn took complete control of the firm, changing its name to Ely Jacques Kahn, Architects. The onset of the Great Depression meant that there were few new buildings being erected during the 1930s. Kahn traveled around the United States and the Far East conducting a survey of art and architecture education for the Carnegie Corporation. This resulted in the publication of a book, *Design in Art and Industry* (1935), describing his impressions. It was during this period that he directed the architecture department of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in New York.

In 1940, Kahn took another partner, Robert Jacobs, and the firm's name was changed to Kahn & Jacobs. Jacobs was a great admirer of Le Corbusier, and the firm began designing housing and commercial projects, including the Municipal Asphalt Plant (1944, a designated New York City Landmark), that were generally consistent with ideas of the International Style. The partnership lasted until Kahn's retirement in 1965. Kahn died in 1972. He was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (1934) and served as president of the Municipal Art Society (1941-1945). During his more than fifty-year career, Kahn established himself as one of New York's leading architects.

Art Deco Style

In 1925, Kahn visited the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes was mounted in Paris.[34] This was the first international exhibition of decorative and industrial arts that required designs of "new inspiration and real originality," and prohibited reproduction or derivations of historic styles. The ideas presented at the Exposition would be integrated into a new style of architecture, in America, which incorporated bold colors, strong geometric patterns, and combined traditional craft motifs with Machine Age imagery and materials. The style became known as Art Deco. Kahn later described his experience at the exposition as an "awakening," and it influenced much of his subsequent work. Kahn helped publicize and popularize the new type of design.

The French exhibition was not the only source of influence on Art Deco in the United States. Indeed, when Kahn traveled to Europe, he visited Austria and Germany as well as France.[35] The architectural historian Rosemary Haag Bletter emphasizes the varied influences on the Art Deco style, including the geometric shapes and stepped forms of Viennese Secessionism, and the angular contours and use of color found in German Expressionism.[36]

The Design and Construction of the Lefcourt Clothing Center

The Lefcourt Clothing Center was included in a larger plan by Lefcourt to construct a group of three buildings between 22nd and 26th Streets that would house the men's clothing industry and serve as an industrial hub in the burgeoning Garment District. Of

these plans, only the Lefcourt Clothing Center was built.[37] This project was part of a broader expansion of his business from women's clothing into men's garments.[38]

Taking up several lots that stretched from 25th to 26th streets along Seventh Avenue, the construction of the new Lefcourt Clothing Center epitomized the changing landscape of the area. Rowhouses, a tenement, factory, and stable were demolished to make way for the office and loft building.[39] In earlier years, families from Germany and Ireland, as well as native-born New Yorkers, resided in these homes and many took on lodgers to make ends meet. At the center of the block stood the Castle Cave restaurant, a place that specialized in steak cooked over a hickory wood fire and which was reviewed by *Vanity Fair* and the *New Yorker*.[40]

The Courtlef Realty Company bought roughly half the parcel of land from Lina Ettlinger, Elena Goodale and Pauline Drew, another large section from the Madison Square Mortgage Company, and the remaining lots from Jeremiah W. Dimick, Frederick S. Duncan, and Ralph N. Voorhis.[41] After assembling the entire parcel they turned their attention to razing the existing buildings.

Newspapers carefully covered the demolition of the block and the leasing of the space as it was being constructed. The *New York Times* reported in late January 1928 that wreckers were poised to start clearing the block and that Lefcourt had already leased 11 floors in the 27-story building.[42] By March the paper ran a story describing how half of the rentable space had been leased before the old buildings on the site had all been demolished.[43] The *Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* also published articles emphasizing that many of the firms leasing space in the new Lefcourt Clothing Center building were moving away from the old Garment District near Union Square to this new neighborhood.[44]

Kahn adopted an Art Deco style for the building as was typical of his body of work following his trip to the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris. The building features decorative cast iron window enframements at the second through fourth stories, which were originally showrooms, has setbacks starting at the 18th floor, and ornamental brickwork throughout. Kahn employed rectilinear and curvilinear motifs to create geometric ornament across the facade.

The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Lefcourt Clothing Center

Established in 1900, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union organized to improve working conditions in sweatshops throughout the United States and Canada.[45] Founded by immigrants, many of whom were Jewish, the union worked tirelessly to increase wages and limit work hours. In addition to advocating for better conditions, the ILGWU also built a robust cultural program and developed other benefits for its members, from education classes to a vacation camp. It provided a national example in this expansive approach to unionism, dubbed "social unionism."[46] This strategy was also indebted to the approach of feminist activists like Pauline Newman who advocated for the union to care for workers' quality of life both on and off the clock.

Among the many benefits the ILGWU provided was its health center. The health center was founded in 1913 after a 1912 examination of cloak makers showed that 800 out of the total 900 had tuberculosis. Originally located in two rooms at Union Square, the center greatly expanded over the years.[47]

In 1935 the health center moved into the 25th floor of 275 Seventh Avenue from premises on East 17th Street, offering its members a centralized

and larger location in the new Garment District.[48] Mayor La Guardia attended the opening of the health center in December of that year and praised "the public spirit" of the ILGWU's health activities, remarking that they were "three jumps ahead of the government in [their] program."[49] At this point the center employed 40 doctors, 5 nurses, and 25 staff members. The *New York Times* described the new premises as "a sunny loft…within easy walking distance of the factories where 110,000 union members work."[50] The center catered to the ILGWU and affiliated unions, such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL). It treated 55,000 patients in 1935, with just over half working in the garment industry. Services on offer ranged from physical exams and prescriptions to minor surgeries. The center cost 35 cents a month (about $8 in today's money), in addition to union dues.[51]

In 1938 *LIFE* magazine offered insight into the life of a typical patient of the health center in a feature they published following the daily routine of one ILGWU member, Yetta Henner. The magazine showed her playing basketball for her Local 62's team, attending a union-sponsored educational program, outside her tenement home on the Lower East Side, and getting a check-up in the union's skyscraper health center. The article documented the broad cultural program developed by the ILGWU that encompassed its members' lives after work hours, as well as the crucial role that the health center played in the life of ILGWU members.

By 1945 the ILGWU had outgrown its premises again and they bought the whole building that year.[52] They planned to occupy five floors of the building and lease out the rest.[53] In the end, they used six floors for their health work, which accommodated 148 doctors, 35 nurses, 5 pharmacists, and 150 clerical workers and treated 68,000 patients in 1949.[54]

In 1998 the union moved from the 21st through 26th floors of the building to the 4th through 6th, allowing the ILGWU to rent out the upper stories at higher rates to commercial clients.[55] The health center staff planned to add new services, including gynecology and pediatrics, to the roster of the center. In 2004 the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), including the ILGWU, merged with the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) in 2004 and became known as UNITE HERE. In 2006 the owner 1710 Broadway Inc., ILGWU merged with 275 Seventh Avenue LLC, Unite Here, the latter of which is the current owner of the property. UNITE HERE has its headquarters on the sixteenth floor of the building and the Union Health Center still operates out of the building. 275 Seventh Avenue continues to have an active commercial ground floor and now has a tenant makeup of technology, healthcare, and professional service companies, reflecting neighborhood changes in the 21st century. Ownership of 275 Seventh Avenue is crucial to helping UNITE HERE serve their members today.

Conclusion

The Lefcourt Clothing Center is an impressive building by Ely Jacques Kahn taking up a full blockfront of midtown Manhattan. Built for Abraham E. Lefcourt, an important developer of the Garment District, it originally housed numerous clothing firms and was part of the shift of the industry to midtown west. Highly significant for its distinctive architecture and prominent site that has made it a leading commercial building on Seventh Avenue, 275 Seventh Avenue has also been a vital hub for union activity as it is today under the stewardship of UNITE HERE.

Endnotes

[1] There are different definitions of the Garment District's boundaries, for instance the recent National Register report defined the district as running from West 35th to 41st Streets and between Sixth and Ninth Avenues, Anthony C. Robins, *Garment Center Historic District National Register Nomination* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 2009). The fur industry and a few important garment buildings, such as the Lefcourt Clothing Center, operated in the area extending north of West 25th Street between Sixth and Ninth Avenues, therefore this context statement considers this slightly larger area.

[2] *Archaeological Documentary Study No. 7 Line Extension/Hudson Yard Rezoning* (New York: New York City Transit and New York City Department of City Planning, 2004), III A-5. Robert S. Grumet notes the difficulty of assigning names to Indigenous groups because these names have been historically unstable. He uses the term Munsee to refer to the Delaware-speaking people who lived in this region and notes that the term "Munsee" refers to the specific dialect they spoke and was only introduced to refer to this group after 1727 in a period of mass dislocation from their ancestral lands by colonists. Robert S. Grumet, *The Munsee Indians: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009) 3-4 and 13-14.

[3] Anne-Marie Cantwell, "Penhawitz and Wampage and the Seventeenth-Century World They Dominated," in M.F. Janowitz and D. Dallal (eds.), *Tales of Gotham, Historical Archaeology, Ethnohistory, and Microhistory of New York City* (New York: Springer, 2013), 10-11. Although colonists forcibly dislocated the Munsee from the area, present-day descendants live among the Federally and State Recognized Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans, the Delaware Nation, the Delaware Tribe of Indians, the Shinnecock Nation, and the Unkechaug Nation. This language is drawn from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Fire Alarm Telegraph Bureau, Bronx Central Office (LP-2668),* prepared by Marianne S. Percival (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2023), 14. *Archaeological Documentary Study 44th Street and Eleventh Avenue* (New York: New York City Transit and New York City Department of City Planning, 2008), 7.

[4] *Archaeological Documentary Study No. 7 Line Extension/Hudson Yard Rezoning* (New York: New York City Transit and New York City Department of City Planning, 2004), III C-1-3. An 1815 map shows the division of this farmland and the presence of a few estates throughout the future Garment District, *Maps of Farms Commonly Called the Blue Book, 1815: Drawn From the Original on File in the Street Commissioner's Office in the City of New York* (New York: City of New York, 1868), plate 5. Although colonists forcibly dislocated the Munsee from the area, present-day descendants live among the Federally and State Recognized Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans, the Delaware Nation, the Delaware Tribe of Indians, the Shinnecock Nation, and the Unkechaug Nation.

[5] Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 203-4.

[6] The Tenderloin's boundaries of this district expanded over time west to Eight Avenue and north to Central Park, Landmarks Preservation Commission, *51 West 28th Street Building, Tin Pan Alley Designation Report (LP-2628)*, prepared by Sarah Moses (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2019), 13.

[7] Gilfoyle, *City of Eros*, 206-7, and 1880 United States Census, New York, Manhattan, Enumeration District 404, and 1900 United States Census, New York, Manhattan, Enumeration District 306.

[8] Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 12, and Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham: A History of New York City From 1898 to 1919* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 452 and 811.

[9] Within this broad category of working-class, African American residents of the Tenderloin had varying degrees of financial stability, and some lived in poverty. The historian Cheryl D. Hicks uses the terms working-class and impoverished when describing Black Tenderloin residents, see Cheryl D. Hicks, *Talk With You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 56. Mike Wallace notes the concentration of the Black population around Seventh Avenue in the lower West 30s, Wallace, *Greater Gotham*, 269.

[10] Hilary Ballon, *New York's Pennsylvania Stations* (New York: Norton, 2002), 35.

[11] This section is primarily based on Anthony Robins,

National Register Nomination for Garment Center Historic District (2008), Andrew S. Dolkart, "The Fabric of New York City's Garment District: Architecture and Development in an Urban Cultural Landscape," *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, 18, No. 1 (Spring 2011), and "Urban Fabric: Building New York's Garment District," virtual exhibit, Skyscraper Museum (2012-13), curated by Dolkart.

[12] In 1914 there were as many as 654 factories within a block of Fifth Avenue. See "Forcing Factories From Fifth Avenue," *The Sun*, April 1914.

[13] Advertisement, *The New York Times*, March 5, 1916.

[14] Building Zone Resolution, 1916, see: https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/city-planning-history/zr1916.pdf.

[15] Various areas for new garment factories were discussed, in the former shopping district along Sixth Avenue, in Long Island City and the Bronx.

[16] "Create Garment Center of America," *Women's Wear*, December 8, 1919, 2-3.

[17] This section was researched and written by Jessica Fletcher, LPC Staff, with edits by the author.

[18] Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1939), 160.

[19] Nancy L. Green, *Ready-To-Wear and Ready-To-Work: A Century of Industry and Immigrants in Paris and New York* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 45-46 and 214-215. Green explains that the origins of ready-to-wear men's clothing in the US can be traced back to the War of 1812 and the need for military uniforms, and she notes that westward expansion also fueled the men's wear market.

[20] Dolkart, "The Fabric of New York City's Garment District,", 16. Green outlines the market share that New York City held of the garment industry and women's wear: "by 1890, 44 percent of all readymade clothes in the United States were produced in New York City… 65 percent of the total value of American-made women's wear came from the city in 1899 and 78 percent in 1925, far exceeding the role played by any other city." Green, *Ready-To-Wear and Ready-To-Work*, 214.

[21] Green, *Ready-To-Wear and Ready-To-Work*, 214.

[22] New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Brown Building (originally Asch Building) Designation Report*, prepared by Gale Harris (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2003), 3.

[23] Harris, *Brown Building*, 4. Harris notes that of subsequent laws, the 1901 Tenement House Act was particularly instrumental in shifting garment making from tenements to loft buildings.

[24] The term "loft" has a long history: "During the nineteenth century, the word "loft," previously meaning an unfinished upper story where work such as sailmaking was done, took on the definition of an upper story of a warehouse, a commercial building, or factory, as well as a partial upper area, such as a hay loft. Loft floors were used for a variety of purposes including storage, light manufacturing, showrooms, and offices. In addition, it was fairly typical for a building that was constructed for one purpose, such as storage, to have been occupied partially or totally by a different use, such as manufacturing or offices, within a few years of its completion. Such was the versatility of the large, open upper-story spaces, which could easily be adapted to suit a tenant's needs." New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Noho Historic District Designation Report*, prepared by Donald G. Presa (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1999), 10. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *826 Broadway Building*, prepared by Margaret Herman (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2019), 13; New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *830 Broadway Building*, prepared by Marianne S. Percival (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2019), 9; New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *832-834 Broadway Building*, prepared by Jessica Baldwin (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2019), 10; and New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *840 Broadway Building*, prepared by Donald G. Presa and Matthew A. Postal (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2019), 9.

[25] Dolkart, "The Fabric of New York City's Garment District," 17.

[26] This section is based on Harris, *Brown Building*, 5-7. Harris' report offers a more detailed account of the 1909-1910 strike and Triangle Shirtwaist Fire.

[27] Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 76.

[28] Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 129-131 and 68, and *The Thread of Life; ILGWU Health and Welfare Services* (New York: International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 1956), 38-40.

[29] Andrew Dolkart outlines Lefcourt's biography,

including the multiple discrepancies in official documents, and concludes that he was likely born in England to Russian Jewish parents before moving to the United States when he was five years old. See, Andrew Dolkart, "From the Rag Trade to Riches: Abraham E. Lefcourt, and the Development of New York's Garment District," *Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter With American Capitalism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 72-73, and "A Builder Who Changed Mid-Manhattan's Skyline," *New York Times*, November 20, 1932, RE1-2.

[30] "A. E. Lefcourt Dies; Builder of Skyscrapers," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 14, 1932, 17.

[31] Arthur Tarshis, "Thirty-One Commercial Buildings Erected by A. E. Lefcourt in Two Decades," *New York Times*, May 18, 1930, RE2.

[32] Dolkart, "From the Rag Trade to Riches," 64.

[33] This section was adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, Bergdorf Goodman (LP-0735) (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2016), report prepared by Corinne Engelbert.

[34] This first paragraph was adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, Bergdorf Goodman (LP-0735) (New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2016), report prepared by Corinne Engelbert.

[35] Rosemary Haag Bletter, "The Art Deco Style," in Cervin Robinson and Rosemary Haag Bletter, *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco, New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 52.

[36] Bletter, "The Art Deco Style," 49, 52-6.

[37] Dolkart, "From the Rag Trade to Riches," 83.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Map bounded by West 27th Street, Sixth Avenue, West 22nd Street, Eighth Avenue" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed December 30, 2024, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e4-56c4-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 and Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Plate 17: Bounded by W. 36th Street, E. 26th Street, Lexington Avenue, E. 25th Street, Madison Avenue, E. 26th Street, and Eighth Avenue." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed December 30, 2024. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-0968-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.

[40] John McMullin, "The Fashions and Pleasures of New York," *Vanity Fair* (December 1922), 29, and Lois Long, "Tables For Two," *New Yorker*, July 3, 1926, 47-48.

[41] Manhattan, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 3526 and Page 254 (March 4, 1926) from Lina Ettlinger, Elena Goodale, and Pauline Drew to Courtlef Realty; Manhattan, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 3526 and Page 253 from Madison Square Mortgage Company to Courtlef Realty (March 4, 1926); and Manhattan, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 3536 Page 324 (April 2, 1926) from Jeremiah W. Dimick, Frederick S. Duncan, and Ralph N. Voorhis to Courtleft Realty.

[42] "Clearing 7th Avenue Site, *New York Times*, January 18, 1928, 43.

[43] "Lefcourt Leases Floor," *New York Times*, March 7, 1928, 44.

[44] "Clothing Concern Leases Large Space From Plan," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 26, 1928, 39, "Leases In Clothing Centre," *New York Times*, October 21, 1928, 52, and "Clothing Concern Leases Large Space in New Building," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 13, 1928, 44.

[45] *Structure and Functioning of the ILGWU* (New York: International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, 1947), 1.

[46] Robert Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue: David Dubinsky and the American Labor Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1.

[47] Bernard Weinraub, "A 2-Room Clinic and How It Grew," *New York Times*, June 7, 1964, 77.

[48] "Health Centre Gets Floor on West Side," *New York Times*, August 15, 1935, 36.

[49] "Industrial Clinic Praised By Mayor," *New York Times*, December 15, 1935, N1.

[50] "Union Health Center Grows," *New York Times*, January 5, 1936, X13.

[51] Ibid.

[52] "Gets Skyscraper For Health Unit.," *New York Times*, October 6, 1945, 2, and Manhattan, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 4387 and Page 455.

[53] "$1,000,000 Expansion Begun at ILGWU Health Center Here," *New York Times*, October 14, 1947, 1 and 20.

[54] Howard A. Rusk, "Union's Health Center Here Model of Aid to Workers," *New York Times*, April 10, 1949, 57.

[55] John Holusha, "A Medical Clinic Leases Lower Floors to Modernize," *New York Times*, November 15, 1998, RE9.

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Lefcourt Clothing Center has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City, state, and the nation.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Lefcourt Clothing Center and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 801, Lot 1 as its Landmark Site, as shown in the attached map.

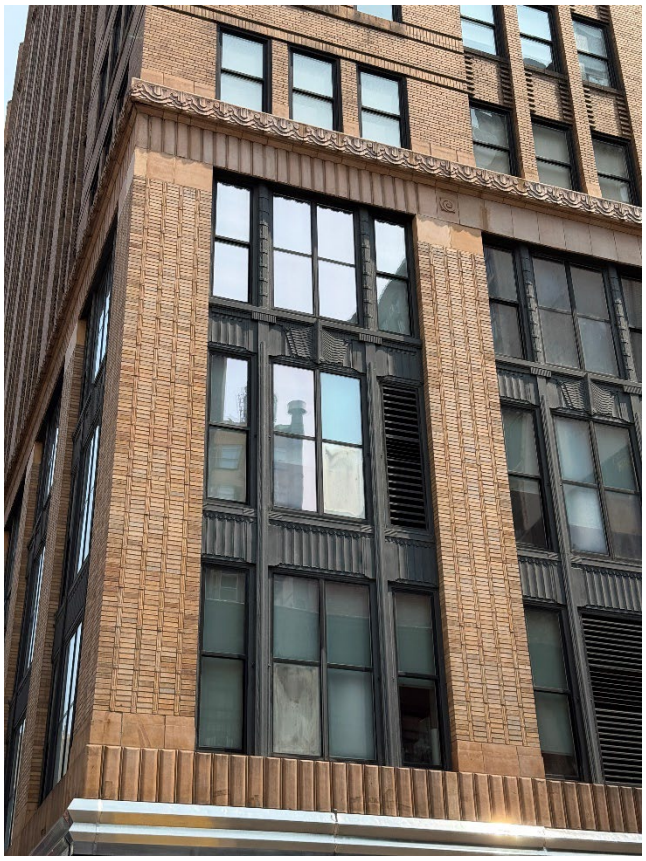
North and West facades of the Lefcourt Clothing Center, view from Seventh Avenue between 27th and 26th Streets

Sarah Eccles, August 2025

South and West facades of the Lefcourt Clothing Center, view from Seventh Avenue between 25th and 24th Streets
Sarah Eccles, August 2025

South and West facades of the Lefcourt Clothing Center, view from intersection of 25th Street and Seventh Avenue
Sarah Eccles, August 2025

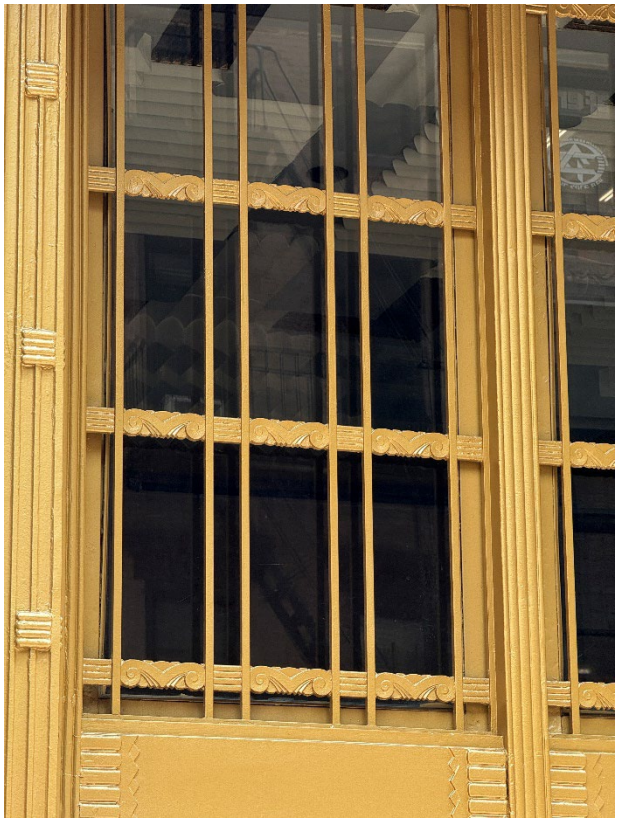
Front entrance of the Lefcourt Clothing Center
Sarah Eccles, August 2025



South facade of the Lefcourt Clothing Center, view from 25th Street
Sarah Eccles, August 2025

South facade of the Lefcourt Clothing Center, view from 25th Street
Sarah Eccles, August 2025

Side entrance from 25th Street
Sarah Eccles, August 2025



Detail of side entrance from 25th Street
Sarah Eccles, August 2025

Lefcourt Clothing Center | LP-2691
Legend
Proposed Landmark Site
Building Footprints
NYC Tax Lots
Address: 275 Seventh Avenue
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 801, Lot 1
Calendared: April 22, 2025
Public Hearing: May 20, 2025
Designated: August 12, 2025
W 26 St
W 25 St
7 Av
0.01
Miles