

## Celebrating 50 Years of NYC's Landmarks Law



The Brokaw Mansion, via [Ukrainian Institute](#)

2015 marks the 50th anniversary of Mayor Robert Wagner signing the New York City Landmarks Law —and in a time when we're losing icons like the [Domino Sugar Factory](#) and [5 Pointz](#), and historic buildings are being [stripped apart for condos](#), the landmarks law is still as relevant as ever. Over [1,300 individual landmarks](#) are currently protected in NYC, and the Historic Districts Council says there's [still more to be done](#).

The law was pushed by public outcry after the French Chateau style [Brokaw Mansion](#)—which used to stand on the corner of East 79th and Fifth Avenue—was demolished in February 1965. Built between 1887 and 1890, the building was later home to the Institute of Radio Engineers, and while it was recognized as a landmark structure by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, there was [no legislation in place](#) to back up the commission's authority. [The mansion was turned to rubble](#) just a couple of years after the old Penn Station was destroyed, which galvanized the preservation movement.

There are a series of events beginning this month, presented by the NYC Landmarks50 Alliance, to celebrate the buildings and other landmarks that have been preserved since this time and educate New Yorkers on how they can help keep their history alive. It all kicks off with a [keynote speech and opening reception](#) featuring Gothamist Publisher/[Native New Yorker](#) Jake Dobkin at Barnard College, where he'll be talking about youth and the future of landmarks.

[The Municipal Art Society](#) will be offering walking tours tomorrow (March 7th) through May 31st—they'll take you past a range of landmarks, areas vulnerable to "inappropriate development", and various historic districts. The tours are \$20 a pop, and you can cast fresh eyes over the Rockefeller Center, Harlem and Bushwick, to name but a few.

Author David Freeland will be talking about today's sites of cultural importance with various panelists, including 5 Pointz' Marie Falgeul—how do you protect places that speak to so many New Yorkers for different reasons? [Barack Obama Slept Here: Recognizing Today's Sites of Cultural Significance](#) is on March 11 at the Museum at Eldridge Street, from 6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. (We all know he slept in an [apartment on West 109th Street](#).)



The Alice Austen House after a snowfall earlier this week (Facebook)

Early American photographer Alice Austen's house on Staten Island has a colorful history—from life as a one-room Dutch farmhouse in the 1690s to a Victorian Gothic cottage to a protected landmark and its current incarnation as a museum. The house was narrowly saved in the 1970s after a preservation effort, and it's a big part of the 50 years of landmark law celebrations. [The house opens to the public](#) for an exhibition and tours on March 14 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., and you can check it out until August 30.

And if you're just curious about what landmarks are lurking near your apartment, check out the [NYC Landmarks50 map](#), where you can peruse individual landmarks, historic districts and scenic landmarks among others.

Contact the [author](#) of this article or email [tips@gothamist.com](mailto:tips@gothamist.com) with further questions, comments or tips.

[Jessica Warriner](#) in [Arts & Entertainment](#) on Mar 6, 2015 3:17 pm

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