



## Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ERIK KULLESEID**  
Commissioner

# RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: 6/18/2020

STAFF: Linda Mackey

PROPERTY: East River Park Track House and Tennis Center  
Comfort Station

MCD: Manhattan

ADDRESS: East River Park; Delancey Street at FDR Drive

COUNTY: New York

PROJECT REF: 15PR02961

USN: 06101.019052 and 06101.019051

- I.  Property is individually listed on SR/NR:  
name of listing:
- Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:  
name of district:
- II.  Property meets eligibility criteria.
- Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria.

### Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

- A.  Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- B.  Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C.  Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D.  Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Based on the information submitted, the East River Park Track House and Tennis Center Comfort Station are locally significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as outstanding examples of Art Deco and WPA Moderne design. Located adjacent to the Lower East Side neighborhood, the East River Park runs alongside the Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Drive and the East River from Montgomery Street to East 12th Street. Conceived in the early 1930s by Robert Moses, the East River Park was designed in tandem with FDR Drive. Moses knew that the highway would pass through the Lower East Side, a neighborhood sorely in need of parkland. He envisioned a tree-shaded esplanade alongside the highway with abundant recreational facilities and windswept views of the East River and beyond. Prior to this time, the East River waterfront had been an active shipping yard and later became home to many of the city's poorest immigrants. In 1939, the park opened and became the largest open green space on the Lower East Side.

Constructed in 1938, the Tennis Center Comfort Station and the Track House are the remaining two of five comfort stations and support structures designed by Aymar Embury and built during the Park's construction. Embury was the New York City Parks Department's chief architect during the New Deal, and during his tenure with the Parks Department, he designed such New York City landmarks as the Triborough Bridge, Orchard

Beach and bathhouse, the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge, the Central Park Zoo, several WPA swimming pools, the Henry Hudson Bridge, and Bryant Park.

Located near the Sixth Street entrance to the Park, the Track House is a one-story, rectangular masonry building with a hipped roof clad in slate tiles. The east elevation features a central main open entry with curved walls. The building is composed of three blocks. The central block features what appears to be a stacked stone cupola, and brick chimneys pierce the roofs of the two end blocks, the corners of the three-part building are articulated with fluted pilasters. The building retains the Greek key design in blue and white terra cotta, punctuated by rosettes, which forms a frieze below the roof line. Beneath the windows on the east elevation are bold terra cotta spandrel panels that display stylized fish, vegetation and water, rendered in blue, silver and green. The restroom door surrounds consist of a repeating pattern of anchor and bow shackles, and ropes in blue, gold and white. Like the spandrel panel fish motif, this design references the Lower East Side's history of maritime and ship-building industries.

Toward the southern end of the park, near the Delancey Street and FDR Drive juncture, the Tennis Center Comfort Station is a small one-story masonry building with a hipped roof punctuated by two chimneys. The walls are clad in limestone panels and the roof is covered with slate tiles. The Comfort Station features separate entrances for men and women with the same decorative anchor and bow shackles door surrounds as the Track House. The Comfort Station, however, has a blue terra cotta frieze with scattered decorative stars. The fenestration pattern was retained, and windows are generally glass block.

The interiors of the two buildings are also remarkably intact. The men's and women's rooms and showers have original textured glazed ceramic wall tiles, original square ceramic floor tiles, and many original fixtures, as compared with historic photos dated 1939 and 1941.

The buildings retain a high degree of integrity. Both buildings are sited on their original locations, and retain their original massing, scale, form and fenestration pattern. The interior plans are also intact conveying the historic function. While the overall East River Park has changed over the years, the Park retains various athletic fields and access to the East River waterfront. The buildings retain their original materials including limestone cladding, polychromatic terra cotta, slate tile roof, and glazed ceramic wall tiles on the interior. In addition, the terra cotta spandrel panels below the windows that feature stylized fish, vegetation and water recall the area's shipbuilding and maritime heritage. Both buildings are remarkably intact to their original date of construction conveying their historic character, reflective of the WPA era and Parks heritage.

If you have any questions concerning this Determination of Eligibility, please contact Linda Mackey at (518) 268-2148 or [Linda.Mackey@parks.ny.gov](mailto:Linda.Mackey@parks.ny.gov).