

Local Landmark Designation of the Larkin Building – 403 College Avenue

After a public hearing at their July 11th, 2017 meeting, the Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Commission (ILPC) voted to designate the Larkin Building at 403 College Avenue as an individual local landmark. The designation will now go before the City of Ithaca Planning Board for consideration.

Why was the Larkin Building eligible for designation?

It meets three criteria for designation according to Ithaca’s Municipal Code. Below is an abbreviated version of the text from the ILPC’s resolution passed at the July 11th meeting

- *The Larkin Block possesses special historical and aesthetic interest as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City of Ithaca and the growth of Cornell University. Its construction is closely tied to the evolution of this section of College Avenue from boarding house buildings into an important commercial and apartment corridor during the early 1910s and the development of Collegetown. Built in 1912-13, the Larkin Building was erected as a mixed-use, fire-resistant, commercial-style building designed specifically for commercial and apartment rental purposes in close proximity to Cornell University’s prominent stone bridge entrance. Its construction contributed to the gradual urbanization of the 400 block of that street.*
- *The Larkin Building is identified with the Larkin family, a locally significant family. The Larkin family owned multiple grocery and variety stores in Collegetown from 1889 to 1940. Edward Larkin, an Irish immigrant and laborer, established the family’s first grocery store on Eddy Street in 1890 or 1901. After the completion of their namesake building in 1913, Walter F. and John J. Larkin opened the second grocery business on College Avenue, indicating a growing need for grocery suppliers in the neighborhood to service the boarding houses, fraternities, and the residents of apartment units. (After John J. Larkin’s death in 1938, Francis W. Egan continued to operate a grocery store in this location until 1964.)*
- *The Larkin Building embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style. This building is a good example of a brick-clad Renaissance Revival style commercial building. Although the first floor has been altered, the upper stories still possess important characteristics of this architectural style, including the segmental-arch-capped three-story pilasters with simple limestone bases and Ionic capitals, the segmental-arched window openings on the fourth and fifth stories, and the alternating single and double brackets extending the full height of the fifth story, forming the building’s cornice.*