



Preservation
League of NYS

The James Brooks / Charlotte Park Home and Studios Named One of New York's "Seven to Save"

This biennial list from the Preservation League of NYS highlights the most at-risk historic places across the state

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East Hampton, NY, 05/16/2022 — Since 1999, the Preservation League has highlighted New York's most endangered historic sites through its Seven to Save program. The League works closely with local advocates over the course of the two-year listing and beyond, raising visibility, assisting with advocacy, and providing extensive technical services. **The League is thrilled to included on the 2022-2023 list the Brooks-Park Home & Studios in East Hampton, an important physical link to the Abstract Expressionist Art movement and the artists who made it their home.** This listing follows close behind the inclusion of Brooks-Park on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered List, underscoring the truly national importance of this site.

"Not many endangered sites have been awarded such recognition at local (Preservation Long Island Endangered Historic Places), state (Preservation League of NYS Seven to Save), and national levels (National Trust for Historic Preservation 11 Most Endangered Historic Places)," said **Marietta Gavaris an officer of the Brooks Park Arts and Nature Center**. "These designations emphasize the imperative to fully preserve all four structures on the Brooks-Park site. The Brooks-Park Arts and Nature Center committee (BPANC) looks forward to partnering with the Town of East Hampton to ensure robust allocation of CPF funds to fully preserve the site to facilitate the creation of a flourishing Arts and Nature Center."

Artists James Brooks and Charlotte Park were at the forefront of the Abstract Expressionist art movement of the 1940s and 50s. James Brooks in particular is especially well known for painting the largest site-specific WPA wall mural, in the landmarked interior of the Marine Terminal at New York's La Guardia Airport. Their home and studios in East Hampton are part of a constellation of such live-work spaces including the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, Elaine de Kooning House, Madoo Conservancy, and the Victor D'Amico Art Barge. The four buildings that anchor this 11-acre site include James Brooks's studio, a Midcentury vernacular structure designed and built by the artist; Charlotte Park's studio, which was reportedly the original Wainscott post office; and the couple's residence and guest cottage, which had been moved via barge from Montauk after their studios were damaged in a hurricane.



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The buildings have been vacant since Charlotte's death in 2010. Despite being purchased by the Town of Easthampton in 2013 with Community Preservation Funds (CPF), the site has remained vacant, with little done to protect or stabilize the buildings. The Town opened bids for demolition, which remained active until grassroots advocates learned of the site's plight in 2019. Since then, the group that is now organized as the Brooks-Park Arts and Nature Center has worked tirelessly to raise public awareness. Overdevelopment is a major issue on Long Island, and the preservation of this site provides a chance to not only save a vital part of local history connected to a groundbreaking American art movement, but also a pristine natural landscape.

"Alleviating threats and in some cases outright saving these seven sites from demolition will make for challenging approaches," said **Preservation League Seven to Save Committee Chair Caroline Rob Zaleski**. "The Preservation League staff are up to the task, as has been shown with the Seven to Save program's remarkable 20-year track record in forming partnerships to help save and protect historic resources in New York State. Our selection committee chose to feature a diverse range of sites: a small African American church reflecting optimism and ingenuity; a Frederick Law Olmsted park during Olmsted's bicentennial year; three urban districts – rife with history and varied important architecture; a recently closed 400-acre State hospital complex on Seneca Lake; and lastly a wooded site in Eastern Long Island, where the extant studios of two important Abstract Expressionist artists wait to be restored for public view."

"The individual sites included on this year's Seven to Save list embody key preservation issues affecting places across New York State," said **Preservation League President Jay DiLorenzo**. "From the negative environmental impact of senseless demolition to bringing little-known, but important, histories to light, the League is excited to work alongside on-the-ground advocates to save each of these seven at-risk places."

2022-2023 Seven to Save List

- **Thomas Memorial AME Zion Church, Watertown, Jefferson County**
Threat: Deterioration; Demolition
- **Genesee Valley Park, Rochester, Monroe County**
Threat: Demolition; Development Pressure; Lack of Public Awareness; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity
- **Proposed South of Union Square Historic District, Manhattan, New York County**
Threat: Demolition; Development Pressure; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity
- **Penn Station Neighborhood, Manhattan, New York County**
Threat: Development pressure; Demolition
- **Downtown Oneonta Historic District, Oneonta, Otsego County**
Threat: Demolition; Deterioration; Lack of Public Awareness; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity; Vacancy
- **Willard State Hospital, Romulus, Seneca County**
Threat: Demolition; Deterioration; Development Pressure; Lack of Public Awareness; Loss of Visual/Architectural Integrity; Vacancy
- **James Brooks / Charlotte Park Home & Studios, East Hampton, Suffolk County**
Threat: Demolition; Deterioration; Lack of Public Awareness; Vacancy



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The League collaborates with property owners, elected officials, and other stakeholders to craft preservation strategies and put these plans into action. Through partnerships with groups and individuals, threats to dozens of at-risk buildings, landscapes, downtowns, and neighborhoods have been reduced, and in many cases, eliminated by the Preservation League's Seven to Save listing and subsequent actions

For more information about the Seven to Save program and this year's list, please visit preservenys.org/seven-to-save

Interviews with representatives from the Preservation League and all the Seven to Save sites are available by request.

About the Preservation League of New York State

Since its founding in 1974, the Preservation League has built a reputation for action and effectiveness. Our goal has been to preserve our historic buildings, districts, and landscapes and to build a better New York, one community at a time. The Preservation League of New York State invests in people and projects that champion the essential role of preservation in community revitalization, sustainable economic growth, and the protection of our historic buildings and landscapes. We lead advocacy, economic development, and education programs across the state.

Connect with us at preservenys.org, facebook.com/preservenys, instagram.com/preservenys, and youtube.com/c/PreservationLeague

About Brooks-Park Arts and Nature Center

The mission of the Brooks-Park Arts and Nature Center is to experience the beauty of the natural world while celebrating the artistic legacies of James Brooks (1906-1992) and Charlotte Park (1918-2010) through the restoration of their home and studios and the woodlands surrounding them. Located in the Springs section of East Hampton, New York, the center will focus on inventive and inclusive educational programming, arts-related activities, and the discovery, research, and experience of its eleven undisturbed acres of natural habitat, bringing focus to these two acclaimed artists, the unique community in which they lived and worked, and the trail system that runs through parts of the property. brooks-parkarts.org

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