

# The New Rochelle Armory

“Rich in History”, as we say in New Rochelle. The reasons compelling our City to recognize this historic icon become clear as we study its distinctive architecture and historical context as it relates to our city, and its place in the fabric of our community.

## Architecture

Post WW1 saw a shift in the political/military paradigm of not only what an armory represents, but how it functions within its community. The previous century of medieval inspired, crenellated fortresses gave way to a more modern, simpler styling. Beginning in the 1920's, various renditions of Tudor, Tudor Revival, and Art Deco language began to replace the earlier Gothic themes representing an imposing military strength. This evolution continued up to the 1950's when the trend shifted again to an extremely utilitarian, primarily unremarkable design parameter so popular of the times.

The New Rochelle Armory's style fits uniquely into this narrow timeline between WW1 and the 1950's as it portrays the treatments of State Architects such as Jones or Hugaard. Coupled with the designation as a Naval Armory, this building truly stands out representing a decidedly unique exercise in style *and* purpose. This representation is *rarely* seen elsewhere in the Nation, let alone New York State.

Situated atop a knoll of the former Davids property (also the former owner of Davids Island), this uniquely asymmetrical building stands protected from nature's wrath, high above Echo Bay, standing guard over the city from its commanding perch.

Upon laying the cornerstone, Lt Governor Herbert H. Lehman proudly proclaimed the Armory to be "... considered one of the finest and most complete buildings of its time". Reinforcing that sentiment 75 years later, Gov George Pataki would say of our armories "... these familiar properties are certainly valuable assets worthy of preservation and renewal"

## Historical Context

In the quest to fulfill the need for an armory in New Rochelle, Lt. Cmndr. F.K. Gundlach (himself a direct descendant of the Badeau family of Huguenots who settled New Rochelle) was able to inspire a collaborative effort between New Rochelle Mayors Badeau, and Otto, Ward Supervisor Bacou and County, State and Federal agencies to bolster our Nation's defense. Lt. Gov. Lehman again "... a schoolhouse, a training place for patriotic young Americans..."

The new home of the 31<sup>st</sup> Fleet Division U.S.N.R. (originally organized in 1912 in New Rochelle) shared space with the U.S.M.C. Reserve, Company D and a host of units would call New Rochelle home through WW2, Korea, Viet Nam, up to Desert Storm. (SEE APPENDIX)

## Community Service of the Armory

The shift in paradigm regarding the armory's place in the community was demonstrated by the ever increasing role as a civic center. As early as the 1920's neighborhood and community events nearly surpassed the military as their primary function. In 1933, the New Rochelle was already hosting events such as the first NRA Community Expo. An article in the news on 11/6/1933 reports the Expo as featuring "the wares of New