DESIGNATION REPORT

Kimlau War Memorial

Landmarks Preservation Commission

Designation Report
Kimlau War Memorial
June 22, 2021

Designation List 525
LP-2653

DESIGNATION REPORT

Kimlau War Memorial

LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan
Within Kimlau Square, Chatham Square

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by notable architect Poy Gum Lee and dedicated in the memory of Chinese American soldiers who died during World War II, the granite ceremonial gateway with flanking benches presents a unique blend of traditional Chinese architectural forms with a streamlined mid-century modern aesthetic and has served as an important community monument for nearly 60 years.

Kimlau War Memorial
2021

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Kimlau War Memorial

Within Kimlau Square, Chatham Square, Manhattan

Designation List 525
LP-2653

Built: 1962
Architect: Poy Gum Lee

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 117, Lot 100 in part, consisting of the monument and flanking benches only. Located within Kimlau Square, Chatham Square and East Broadway.

Calendared: May 4, 2021
Public Hearing: June 1, 2021

On June 1, 2021, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Kimlau War Memorial as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Twelve people testified in favor of the proposed designation, including representatives of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, City Councilmember Margaret Chin, the Historic Districts Council, the Lieutenant B. R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 of the American Legion, the Sons of the American Legion Post 1291, the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, and four individuals, including the niece of Lt. B. R. Kimlau. No one spoke in opposition to the designation.

In addition, the Commission received 51 written submissions in support of the proposed designation, including from the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the United War Veterans Council, the Chinese American World War II Veterans Recognition Project, and the Chinese Center on Long Island, and from individuals including veterans and members of the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of the American Legion.

Summary

Kimlau War Memorial

Designed by architect Poy Gum Lee and dedicated in 1962, the Kimlau War Memorial is a granite ceremonial gateway located in Kimlau Square at the intersection Chatham Square, Oliver Street, and East Broadway in Manhattan. The memorial, sponsored by the Lieutenant B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 of the American Legion, honors Chinese American soldiers who died in action during World War II. It consists of a granite arch and a flanking pair of benches, which together create a unique blend of traditional Chinese architectural forms with a streamlined mid-century modern aesthetic. It pays tribute to Chinese American patriots and has served as an important community monument for nearly 60 years.

The memorial is named after Second Lieutenant Benjamin Ralph Kimlau (1918–1944), a Chinese American pilot who died while attacking Japanese military installations in the South Pacific. Inscribed on the nearly 19-foot-high arch is a dedication in both English and Chinese to the memory of Chinese Americans who died while serving in the United States military during World War II. As part of Kimlau Square, the arch serves as the site of an annual celebration to honor war veterans and remains an important marker at the heart of Manhattan's historic Chinatown.

The architect Poy Gum Lee, born on Mott Street in 1900, was a highly successful Chinese American architect who made a career designing buildings for the Chinese community. Lee was educated at Pratt, MIT, and Columbia, and worked as a draftsman in New York and Chicago in the early 1920s at architecture firms including J.B. Snook & Sons, and Murphy, McGill & Hamlin. In 1923, Lee was hired as a staff architect for the YMCA in China and spent the next two decades of his career in Shanghai designing institutional and commercial buildings that blended Art Deco and International Style with traditional Chinese vernacular forms. After World War II, Lee and his family returned to New York, where he became a senior architect for the New York City Housing Authority and also had his own architecture practice in Chinatown, designing structures for influential Chinese community organizations, as well as storefront and facade alterations for small commercial clients.

The Kimlau War Memorial combines modern design with a streamlined interpretation of traditional Chinese architecture, with a peaked roof, interlocking brackets, and a symmetrical configuration. The arch itself is a typical Chinese architectural element that can be used both as a physical gateway or as a decorative symbol.

Under the care of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, in the late 1990s the footprint of Kimlau Square was expanded, and the Chatham Square intersection was reconfigured. In 2001, the Parks Department's first historical signage in Chinese was installed at the arch. Within the expanded park, the memorial retains a high degree of integrity to its original design.

The Kimlau War Memorial is significant for its design by the architect Poy G. Lee, and as a prominent monument dedicated to the contributions of Chinese American veterans. While there are numerous New York City landmarks in the Chinatown area, the Kimlau War Memorial is the first New York City landmark that specifically recognizes Chinese American history and culture.

Landmark Description

Kimlau War Memorial

Description

The Kimlau War Memorial consists of a stylized granite gateway arch flanked by pebbledash concrete benches, situated at the northwest side of Kimlau Square. The monument is oriented in a southwest to northeast direction and aligns with the Bowery. It consists of a granite horizontal entablature with a gabled roof supported by two square granite pillars. The pillars are incised with bands at the top. Streamlined modern dougong brackets project from the sides.[1]

At the top of the pillars, round American Legion medallions are carved beneath the incised bands. The entablature bears two inscriptions. Written in Chinese and English beneath the peaked roof is the text, "In memory of the Americans of Chinese ancestry who lost their lives in defense of freedom and democracy."

The benches situated on either side of the arch are simple and streamlined. Each is comprised of an oblong lozenge-shaped seat supported by three concrete pillars that pierce the plane of the seat and are strung with simple horizontal bands to form the backrest of the bench.

Site

The Kimlau War Memorial is located in Kimlau Square, which was formed by the irregular street grid at the confluence of East Broadway, Chatham Square, Bowery, Park Row, Oliver Street, and Saint James Place. While the monument itself has not undergone any alterations, a late 1990s renovation by the Department of Parks and Recreation resulted in the current layout of the Square. The footprint of Kimlau Square was substantially expanded by the closure of St. James Place below Chatham Square, and the paving was updated. New pavers were installed around the monument, distinct from the paving through the rest of the square. The reconfiguration of the street grid not only expanded the park, it also addressed some of the dangerous pedestrian conditions in the area. In 2001, the Parks Department's first historical signage in Chinese was installed at the arch.[2]

The landmark site consists of the Kimlau War Memorial itself, including the arch and its flanking benches; it does not include the surrounding Kimlau Square, and the paving material installed around the monument in the late 1990s is not historic. Also located within Kimlau Square is a statue of Lin Zexu, installed in 1999. Lin was a 19th century Chinese scholar and official, known for his role in the Opium Wars. The Lin statue sits closer to the center of Kimlau Square than the Kimlau War Memorial.[3] At the time of designation, restoration including the possible disassembly and reconstruction of the monument is anticipated after a conditions assessment revealed structural issues, and protective fences have been erected around the arch and benches.

Chatham Square History[4]

The Kimlau War Memorial is located in Chatham Square, in a prominent public space central to today's Chinatown. This site has a long and multi-layered history. Prior to European settlement, portions of Lower Manhattan were seasonally inhabited by bands of Lenape, a Munsee-speaking people who were members of the larger Eastern Algonquian language family. During the Woodland Period, just prior to the arrival of Europeans, they occupied fishing camps near the water during the summer months and inland camps in the fall and winter where they harvested crops and hunted. It is believed that the Lenape camp of Werpoes may have existed in this vicinity, but conclusive evidence of its location has not been discovered.[5] Some of the trails used by the Lenape became roads that make up part of the New York street grid today. The main Lenape trail led along the east side of Manhattan from the Battery north to Inwood, with branches leading to today's Greenwich Village, the Lower East Side and Harlem.

The area around Chatham Square was developed early in the context of New York City's history. It lay north of the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, and as the settlement grew, there was no direction to go but north. The land north of the settlement was utilized for agriculture and a handful of taverns. Colonial policies in the 17th century granted land and manumission to enslaved people to encourage settlement in the area.

Until the late 18th century, the area around present-day Chatham Square had been part of Colonel Henry Rutgers' farm, at which time he subdivided his property for development.[6] After the nearby Collect Pond, once the primary source of fresh water in the area but heavily polluted by industries such as distilleries and tanneries in the 18th century, was infilled in 1813, residential development commenced on the newly created land.[7] However, the tendency for flooding made the area undesirable, and those who could afford to relocate did so. The large houses were subdivided and increasingly housed poor immigrants. Irish immigrants were the dominant population by the middle of the 19th century, surpassed by Italian immigrants by the 1870s. Tenement houses from four to six stories in height began to spring up by that time and the area came to be known as Five Points.

Chatham Square itself was the location of livestock trading until about 1820. In the mid-19th century, it was known for its infamous saloons and tattoo parlors. Some believe American-style tattoos originated in parlors surrounding Chatham Square.[8]

By 1880, Chatham Square was an important junction of the Second and Third Avenue elevated train lines. Until the middle of the 20th century, it was cast in perpetual shadow by the elevated train lines that intersected overhead. In 1955, the elevated tracks were replaced by the below-grade subway, bringing daylight to the area for the first time in 75 years.

After the removal of the elevated train tracks, several years passed before the property beneath it found its next use. In 1958, the Lieutenant B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 began to petition for the allocation of a public space for a war memorial.[9] In 1960, the New York City Art Commission accepted the proposed monument as a gift of the Lieutenant Kimlau Post, and finally in 1961, Kimlau Square was laid out as a public place by Local Law 35.[10] Installation of the Kimlau War Memorial followed the next year.[11]

Chinese American History in Manhattan's Chinatown

Until the late 19th century, few Chinese immigrants settled in New York City. The majority of immigration from China in the 1840s was related to railroad construction in the western part of the country. The completion of the Trans-Continental Railroad in 1869, coupled with an outbreak of anti-Chinese violence in the west resulted in an increase in Chinese immigrants moving to the east coast. 150 Chinese men were reported to have arrived in New York in March of 1880, but they were by no means the first Chinese people to live in New York City. In the 1840s, a group of Chinese students from affluent families made their way to New York. A small number of domestic servants from China arrived even earlier, including one who worked in the household of John Jacob Astor in the first decade of the 19th century.[12]

In the last quarter of the 19th century, Chinatowns began to form in east coast cities such as Boston, Providence, and Philadelphia. In the 1850s, early Chinese residents in New York, often former sailors, tended to settle near the docks of the Fourth Ward, southeast of today's Chinatown.[13] The small Chinese community's epicenter shifted to the Five Points neighborhood around Baxter Street in the 1860s, possibly driven by the growth of the much larger Irish community in the Fourth Ward.[14] It shifted again in the 1870s as New York's Chinese immigrant community began to settle in the vicinity of Mott, Pell, and Doyers streets, at the northwest side of Chatham Square. As early as the 1880s, Chinese shops faced Chatham Square.

Mutual aid societies such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA), On Leong Tong (also known as the Chinese Merchant's Association), and family associations formed the social backbone of the Chinese immigrant community in New York City. These societies, known as *fang*, took the form of store-centers, organized by region of origin or kinship groups. In addition to the social aspects of such organizations, they provided lodging, a place to receive mail, employment services, and burials. The CCBA, still active today, functioned at the time as the Chinese immigrant community's unofficial government.[15]

Legal immigration from China slowed in the late 19th century as a result of the discriminatory 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act which prohibited all Chinese laborers from immigrating to the United States, the only federal law to ever target immigration from a single country. The Page Act of 1875 had prohibited Chinese women from immigrating, and the two laws resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of immigrants from China. Many individuals who were able to circumvent these highly restrictive laws did so by investing in businesses, often entering into partnerships with dozens of other owners.[16] Others took advantage of the provision that allowed children of American-born Chinese Americans to join their parents already living in the United States, including so-called "paper sons" who bore forged documents and were in fact unrelated to those with whom they were supposedly reuniting. These workarounds were so successful that the Chinese population in New York City grew between 1880 to 1900.[17]

During World War II, the Republic of China, long engaged in conflict with and by then partially occupied by Japan, became an ally of the United States government.[18] Anti-Japanese sentiments fueled a more benevolent public perception by Americans of the Chinese people and of Chinese immigrants, and the Chinese Exclusion Act came to be viewed as an embarrassing slight against our wartime ally. After Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the wife of the Nationalist leader of the Republic of China completed a highly successful eight-month speaking tour of the United States in 1943, which

included an address to a joint session of Congress, sympathies for the Chinese plight grew.[19] Late that year, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed by the Magnuson Act. In addition to granting Chinese the right to become American citizens, the act allowed immigration to resume, albeit with the vanishingly small quota of 105 people of Chinese descent, regardless of their country of origin.[20] Restrictions on property ownership persisted until later in the decade.

The Chinese American community was further impacted by the War Brides Act of 1945 and the Chinese American Brides of American Citizens Act of 1946 that granted residency to the wives of Chinese American servicemembers, after years of severe limitations.[21] Immigration grew rapidly after 1965 when the Hart-Celler Act repealed quotas, and prioritized the immigration of family members, professionals, and refugees, leading to an increase in immigration of Chinese professionals.[22] By the end of the 1970s, Manhattan's Chinatown had grown to cover seven blocks and continued to expand in the next decades.

Lieutenant Benjamin Kimlau[23]

Second Lieutenant Benjamin Ralph Kimlau was born in Concord, Massachusetts in 1918. He moved to New York City's Chinatown as a teenager and attended Dewitt Clinton High School. Kimlau traveled to China in 1937, and there witnessed Japanese military aggression firsthand. Upon his return to the United States, he enrolled at the Pennsylvania Military College, where he was among the first Asian-American cadets at the institution. By all accounts, Kimlau was a successful student, serving as president of his senior class.[24] Kimlau graduated with honors, earning a commission as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Field Artillery branch. He was granted a transfer to the U.S. Army Air Forces and trained as a bomber pilot in the South Pacific during World War II. Despite federal laws that discriminated against Chinese Americans, around 13,000, or 17% of Chinese Americans served in the United States military in World War II.[25] Unlike those of Japanese and Filipino descent, most Chinese Americans served in non-segregated units.[26]

During a bombing mission over the New Guinea Islands in 1944, Lieutenant Kimlau's plane was shot down and he was killed in action at the age of 26. The Chinatown Post of the American Legion was formed the following year and honored Kimlau's memory by adopting his name for the post.[27]

American Legion Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291[28]

The American Legion was formed in 1919 by a group of veterans as a nonsectarian, nonpartisan service organization. Membership was originally limited to World War I veterans who were honorably discharged, but veterans of subsequent wars were later admitted as well. Theodore Roosevelt was among the organization's founding members, and its membership has included many former presidents. The organization's early and primary mission was the care of disabled and sick veterans. To advance that goal, the organization established hospitals and in 1930 sponsored the creation of the Veterans Administration.

There are more than 12,000 local American Legion posts throughout the country, as well as in Mexico, France, and the Philippines.[29] Within New York City, the Lieutenant B. R. Kimlau American Legion Memorial Post 1231 is the largest. It was named to honor Chinatown native Kimlau, who was a revered patriot in the Chinatown community. Founded in 1945 by a group of 95 Chinese American and one non-Chinese American World War II veterans, its membership quickly grew to 600

veterans. By the 1950s, the Lieutenant Kimlau Post became an integral part of the community fabric of Chinatown. The post provided immigration assistance, rehabilitation care, arranged for visitations to homebound veterans, and organized several parades annually. They also lobbied for reform of immigration laws and restrictions. The group formed an alliance with the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association and financially supported many charitable and patriotic causes in the neighborhood. This culminated in the successful petition in 1958 for a site to erect the Kimlau War Memorial to honor fallen Chinese American soldiers.

Poy Gum Lee[30]

In 1960, the American Legion engaged one of their members, the Chinese American architect Poy Gum Lee, to design a monument to Chinese Americans who lost their lives in World War II, named in honor of Second Lieutenant Benjamin R. Kimlau. Poy Gum Lee is among the most important architects associated with Manhattan's Chinese American history. Born at 13 Mott Street in 1900 and raised on the same street, Lee was educated at Pratt, MIT, and Columbia. He worked as a draftsman for architecture firms in New York and Chicago before relocating to Shanghai. Prior to departing for China, Lee worked as a draftsman and architectural detailer for the firm of Henry K. Murphy, an early proponent of "Chinese Adaptive" architecture, a precursor of Chinese Modernism. Among the projects he worked on during that time was the Peking University in Beijing.

Lee then accepted a position as the first staff architect for the YMCA in China in 1923. He became one of the "First Generation" of professional architects in China, trained in the west and Japan, and founders of the Society of Chinese Architects in 1927, the first professional organization of its kind in the country. Lee's arrival in Shanghai coincided with the early emergence of a Chinese Modern style, a picturesque traditional Chinese revivalism that incorporated emerging Modernist styles with vernacular Chinese elements. Shanghai's 20th century architecture reflects the influence of Christian missionary architects, as well as numerous other architectural influences from abroad.

Just two years into his time in China, Lee took a supervisory role over the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing, an important Nationalist Monument dedicated to the founder of the Republic of China. The monument was designed by Chinese architect Lu Yanzhi, who had received some of his training at Cornell and had worked in the Shanghai office of Henry K. Murphy.

The Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing and the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Guangzhou exhibited a hybridized modern style with references to traditional Chinese decorative and structural elements such as upturned eaves, tiled roofs, and brackets. Lee would be remembered for his role in the completion of this important monument to Sun Yat-sen and his name associated with this Nationalist project for the rest of his career.[31]

When Lee returned to New York in 1945 due to rising political conflict in China, he brought with him his experience of work in an evolving Chinese architecture scene. Lee's early commissions in New York included leading the committee to design and build a Chinese community center in 1947 for the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. He also designed numerous storefronts and signs and was commissioned to remodel the Lee Family Association building in 1950. In 1948, Lee participated in the design of the new On Leong Tong Merchant's Association building at the intersection of Canal and Mott Streets. While it is apparent that Lee developed the concepts, he is not listed as the architect of record on either the CCBA or the On Leong Tong building.

From 1951-1962, Lee served as senior architect and project supervisor for the New York City Housing Authority while also maintaining his own practice in Chinatown that blended Art Deco, Modernism, and Chinese vernacular forms. It was during this period that he received the commission to design the Kimlau War Memorial. In his private practice, Lee designed many restaurant facades, and the Pagoda Theater in 1964, his last Chinatown commission. As with many of his previous projects, he utilized a modernist aesthetic, and incorporated traditional Chinese architectural elements in his design for the memorial.

While few of his designs were completed in the United States, Poy Gum Lee's work has been cited by scholars as among the most important Chinese American architecture of its time. Many of the most recognizable buildings associated with the Chinese American community in Chinatown were developed from Lee's concepts. His influential body of work was the subject of a 2015 retrospective exhibit at the Museum of Chinese in America, which examined Lee's pivotal role in the design of many notable buildings in Chinatown as well as in China, including those where he was not the architect of record.

In 1960, he was commissioned by the American Legion to design a monument to honor Chinese Americans who perished in military service.

Design of the Kimlau War Memorial[32]

The Kimlau War Memorial is a restrained granite ceremonial gateway, or *pailou*, with a peaked roof, flanked by two benches finished in pebbledash concrete. Both the arch and the two benches blend traditional Chinese architectural forms with a streamlined mid-century modern aesthetic. The memorial's Asian-inspired architecture reflects the cultural traditions of the Chinese American community, in a significant central location.

A *pailou* (or *paifang*) is a traditional gateway in Chinese architecture that evolved from Buddhist forms originating in India.[33] Traditionally composed of wood and stone with elaborately tiled upturned roofs, they are decorative gateways to into villages or cemeteries. Many such *pailous* have been constructed as gateways to Chinatowns throughout the world.[34] The initial phase of *pailou* construction in the United States occurred in conjunction with Expositions around the turn of the 20th century. The 1893 Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition and the 1915 San Francisco Panama-Pacific International Exposition featured *pailous*, but they were intended to be temporary and were eventually dismantled.

A *pailou*-building trend aimed at promoting tourism commenced with construction of the Dragon Gate in San Francisco in 1970 and continued in Chicago in 1975, followed by Boston, Portland, Oregon, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC in the 1980s.[35] These gates were often constructed of wood, with a central gate spanning the roadway, flanked by pedestrian gates on either side. While many of these gates are larger and more traditional in design, the Kimlau War Memorial preceded many of the *pailous* in the United States.

The originally proposed design for the Kimlau War Memorial more closely resembled traditional Chinese *pailou*s than the ultimately-constructed design. Substantially larger than what was actually built, the scale of the proposed monument was reduced partly because of fears of potential subsidence caused by the presence of water mains below grade.[36] The reduced proposal that followed was still very traditional, incorporating features such as decorative brackets and an undulating surface along the roof that simulated the pattern of traditional roof tiles. The flanking benches were semi-circular, oriented perpendicular to the arch, and enclosed small planting beds at the base of the monument's piers.

By 1961, Lee's renderings began to scale back some of the more traditional decorative elements of the original proposal.[37] This shift to a more modern design included the removal of the finials from the top of the piers and much of the applied decorative stonework. Aside from a general simplification, other features that changed over time included the removal of American Legion symbology from the base of the monument and a reconfigured bench design, reorienting them to align with the arch. Decorative elements such as the brackets and the roof tiles were streamlined. The monument's final design consisted of a streamlined, modernist arch that reframes a traditional Chinese form through the lens of an emerging Chinese Modernist aesthetic.

The final design of the Kimlau War Memorial resulted in a granite Chinese Modern gateway with a peaked roof, flanked by oblong, lozenge-shaped benches with stylized backrests.[38] Inscribed upon the arch are the words, "In memory of the Americans of Chinese ancestry who lost their lives in defense of freedom and democracy" in both Chinese and English. As ultimately executed, Poy Gum Lee's Chinese Modern design for the memorial reveals his thoughtful combination of Modernism with traditional Chinese features.

Chinese Modernism

Prior to the advent of professional architecture in China, buildings were executed by tradespeople who worked in vernacular styles. In the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA) exhibition catalogue on architect Poy G. Lee, Kerri Culhane writes,

> There is no unifying style to fully describe the breadth of Chinese architectural history—in China prior to the rise of architectural professionalism, there is no such thing as the 'Chinese Style.' In the 20th century, the contemporary terms Neo-Chinese, Chinese Modern, Chinese Revival, Adaptive Chinese, Indigenous and Chinese style all referred to the same impulse to reflect Chinese culture within a modern architectural composition.[39]

Chinese Modern architecture incorporates traditional roof forms with a mid-century modern streamlined aesthetic. Often this has resulted in buildings that were essentially Modernist but amended with a Chinese roof or other acknowledgements of vernacular forms. In the early 20th century, the lack of professional architecture programs in China drew Chinese students to Europe, Japan, and the United States to study and work. As these newly minted architects returned to China, they brought with them the current trend, namely Modernism, which began to be synthesized with traditional styles and forms and is seen in Chinese Nationalist monuments and buildings.

In his book, *Architecture and the Landscape of Modernity in China before 1949*, Edward Denison notes the Chinese Nationalists' incorporation of modernism into government architecture was a product of the time in which it emerged, writing,

> Architecture has by its very nature always been exposed to a wider and less select audience than the outputs of other art practices. Consequently, its potential to manipulate the cause of nationalism negatively or positively was often greater than any other form of art—a fact that did not go unnoticed among China's political elite. The paradox for China, as with many places outside the west, is that architecturally, nationalism and the study of the nation's built heritage that helped to define a national architectural style were

> contemporaneous with modernism, in contrast to the west where architectural historical research long pre-dated modernism, and where modernism was explicitly internationalist.[40]

Henry K. Murphy, an American architect, was one of the early proponents of Chinese Modernism. In addition to his work in the United States, Murphy was hired for a number of prominent government and university campus projects in in China and the resulting designs were heavily influenced by western architects' interpretation of vernacular Chinese forms. He opened an office in Shanghai in the first decades of the 20th century and there employed many western-trained Chinese architects.

Murphy was hired by the Nationalist government of China to design the new capital at Nanjing in 1928. The resulting buildings referenced vernacular Chinese styles, but utilized western building techniques and modern materials.[41] Poy G. Lee worked in Murphy's United States office as a draftsman and architectural detailer from 1921 to 1922, and that influence is reflected in much of his future work, although he was comfortable working in many styles.[42] Lee was steeped in Chinese Modernism via his work with Murphy.

Later History

Kimlau Square is defined by the irregular street grid at the intersection of Bowery, East Broadway, Oliver Street and several other streets. In its original form, Kimlau Square was a small crescent-shaped island, but the park was substantially expanded in the late 1990s. For years, there had been a history of pedestrian fatalities at this intersection, so measures were undertaken to increase safety around Kimlau Square.[43] At that time, the street pattern was reconfigured, creating a larger plaza with seating and landscaping. The closure of Saint James Place allowed for expansion into the former roadway. On a practical level, the larger Kimlau Square provided a safe haven for pedestrians, but it additionally created a welcoming public place surrounding the Kimlau War Memorial. The enlarged park anchors Chinatown and bestows added visual prominence to the Kimlau War Memorial. The openness of this location offers a reprieve from the narrow streets surrounding the square while at the same time, it provides a refuge from traffic.

Over the nearly 60 years since its construction, the Kimlau War Memorial has become the centerpiece of many annual celebrations, including parades to celebrate Memorial Day and Veterans Day, often attended by public officials and dignitaries, domestic and foreign.

Conclusion

Located in what has been the historical heart of Chinatown since the late 19th century, Kimlau Square transformed from a train hub, to a small plaza surrounded by traffic in the mid-20th century. In recent years, Kimlau Square has become a park with a welcoming sense of place. More importantly, it has become a place for remembrance and relaxation. Kimlau Square sits at the epicenter of today's expanded Chinatown as a site of honor for Chinese American veterans. It serves as an important place of pride, gathering, and remembrance of the sacrifices of the Chinese American community for a country that has not always fully accepted them or acknowledged their contributions.

The Kimlau War Memorial and its benches retain a high degree of integrity to their period of construction. Under the ownership of the New York City Parks Department, the Kimlau War Memorial is significant for its association with the architect Poy Gum Lee, and for its importance as the only monument dedicated to the contributions of Chinese American veterans in New York.

Endnotes

[1] According to Kerri Culhane, "The dougong, or bracket set, a typical supporting feature of traditional timber-framed Chinese building, became a symbolic vestige of traditional Chinese architecture—the dougong was now cast of reinforced concrete, rather than hand cut from timber." Kerri Culhane, *Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee,* (New York: Museum of Chinese in America, 2015). Exhibition Catalog.

[2] "Daily Plant June 8,2001", New York City Parks Department, accessed May 24, 2021, https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/kimlau-square/dailyplant/9846

[3] "Lin Ze Xu," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed May 4, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lin-Zexu.

[4] This section on the history of Chatham Square is adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *New York Public Library Chatham Square Branch Designation Report* (LP-2098) (New York, City of New York, 2001) and Landmarks Preservation Commission, *New York Public Library Harlem Branch Designation Report* (LP-2652) (New York, City of New York, 2021).

[5]Robert Steven Grumet. *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1981).

[6] *New York Public Library Chatham Square Branch Designation Report* (LP-2098) (New York, City of New York, 2001).

[7] Rebecca Yamin and Joseph Schuldenrein, *Landscape Archaeology in Lower Manhattan: The Collect Pond as an Evolving Cultural Landmark in Early New York City*, (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[8]According to several sources, one of the earliest tattoo parlors in New York was located at 11 Chatham Square. Its proprietor, Samuel F. O'Reilly, held the first U.S. patent on an electric tattooing machine. There is evidence that a parlor located on Oak Street preceded O'Reilly's by about five years. Michael Pollack, "Tattooing Embraced Long Ago by New Yorkers," *New York Times* (New York, NY), July 10, 2015.

[9] "A Brief History of the American Legion Lt. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291," American Legion Post 1291, accessed April 22, 2021, https://ltkimlau.com/home/post-history/history-of-post-1291.

[10] Correspondence from Jane Cleaver to Parks Commissioner Robert Stern, 1988.

[11] "Legion Dedicates War Memorial," *Chiniese-American Times* (Forest Hills, NY) May 1962.

[12] Bruce Edward Hall, *The Tea That Burns* (New York: The Free Press, 1998) 27.

[13] Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points* (New York: The Free Press, 2001) 396.

[14] Ibid, 397.

[15] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1129-1131.

[16] Hall, 87.

[17] Tyler Anbinder, *City of Dreams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2016) 522.

[18] "Occupation of China Extended by Japan," *New York Times,* (New York, NY), July 28, 1937.

[19] W.H. Lawrence, "Mme. Chiang Asks Defeat of Japan, and House Cheers," *New York Times* (New York, NY), February 19, 1943.

[20] Anbinder, *City of Dreams*, 522.

[21] Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family and Community 1940-1965* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

[22] Elliott Robert Barkan, *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 1498.

[23] "Our Namesake Lt. B.R. Kimlau," American Legion Post 1291, accessed April 13, 2021, https://ltkimlau.com/home/post-history/our-namesake-lt-b-r-kimlau.

[24] Pennsylvania Military College, Sabre and Sash 1942 Yearbook. (Chester, PA: Graduating Class of 1942), Widener University Archives, 4.

[25] Hall, 225.

[26] Kevin Scott Wong (2005). *Americans first: Chinese Americans and the Second World War*. Harvard University Press., *"One Fifth of Chinese Americans Fight Fascism in World War II"*. Xinhua News Agency. 28 May 2001.

[27] "A Brief History of the American Legion Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291," American Legion Post 1291, accessed April 22, 2021, https://ltkimlau.com/home/post-history/history-of-post-1291.

[28] "American Legion," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed April 22, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/American-Legion, "About Us," American Legion Post 1291, accessed April 22, 2021, https://ltkimlau.com/about-us.

[29] "Fast Facts," American Legion, accessed May 4, 2021, https://www.legion.org/presscenter/facts

[30] Sources for this section include Kerri Culhane, *Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee,* (New York: Museum of Chinese in America, 2015). Exhibition Catalog and Kerri Culhane, "Poy Gum Lee and the Politics of Self-Orientalism in New York's Chinatown, 1946-1960,*"* (London: University College London, 2021).

[31] Kerri Culhane, "From China to Chinatown: Poy Gum Lee and the Politics of Self-Representation, 1945-1960," (London: University College London, 2021).

[32] Poy Gum Lee, Proposed Elevations and Renderings of the Proposed Kimlau War Memorial, 1959-1960, New York City Parks Department Archives.

[33] A. H. Longhurst, *The Story of the Stupa.* (Ceylon: Ceylon Government Press, 1936) 17.

[34] Erica Allen-Kim, "The Political Economy of Chinatown Gates," Pidgin Magazine (March 2013): 1-10, https://www.academia.edu/4298726/The_Political_Economy_of_Chinatown_Gates.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Gabe Mui and Randall Eng (Lieutenant Kimlau American Legion post members), in discussion with Kate Lemos McHale, May 11, 2021.

[37] Poy Gum Lee, Proposed Plans and Elevations of the Kimlau War Memorial, May 10,1960.

[38] Poy Gum Lee, Proposed Plans and Elevations of the Kimlau War Memorial, January 10,1961.

[39] Kerri Culhane, *Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee,* (New York: Museum of Chinese in America, 2015). Exhibition Catalog.

[40] Edward Denison, *Architecture and the Landscape of Modernity in China before 1949* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 137.

[41] "Chinese Cities to be Developed Along Native Lines," *New York Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), November 9, 1928.

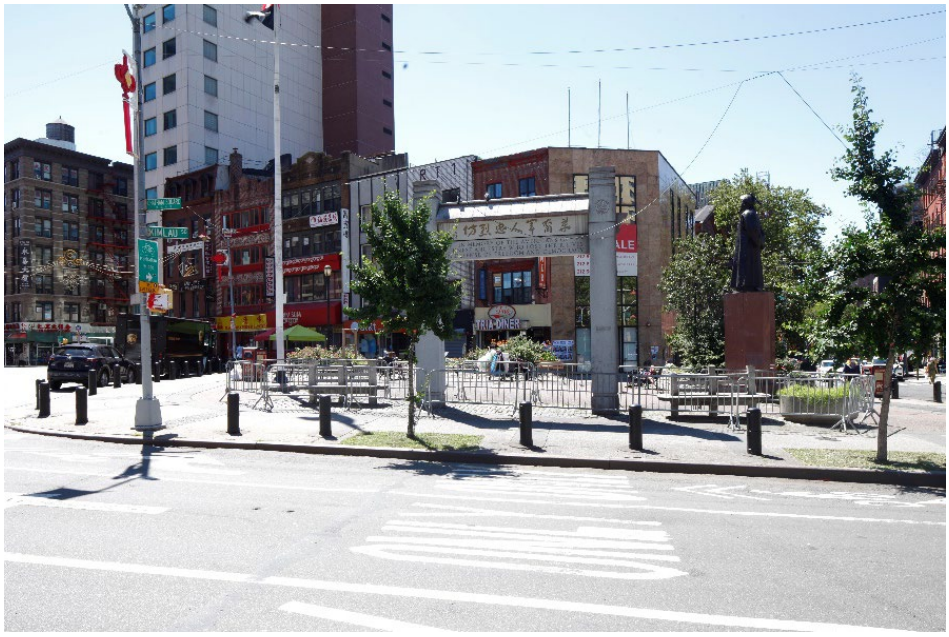
[42] Kerri Culhane, "Poy Gum Lee and the Politics of Self-Orientalism in New York's Chinatown, 1946-1960," (London: University College London, 2021).

[43] Jen Lin-Liu, "A Bermuda Triangle for Pedestrians at Chatham Square," *New York Times* (New York, NY), October 24, 1999.

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Kimlau War Memorial has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City, state, and the nation.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Kimlau War Memorial and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 117, Lot 100 in part, consisting of the monument and flanking benches only, as its Landmark Site as shown in the attached map.

Kimlau War Memorial,
Kimlau Square
LPC, June 2021



Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, June 2021

Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, June 2021

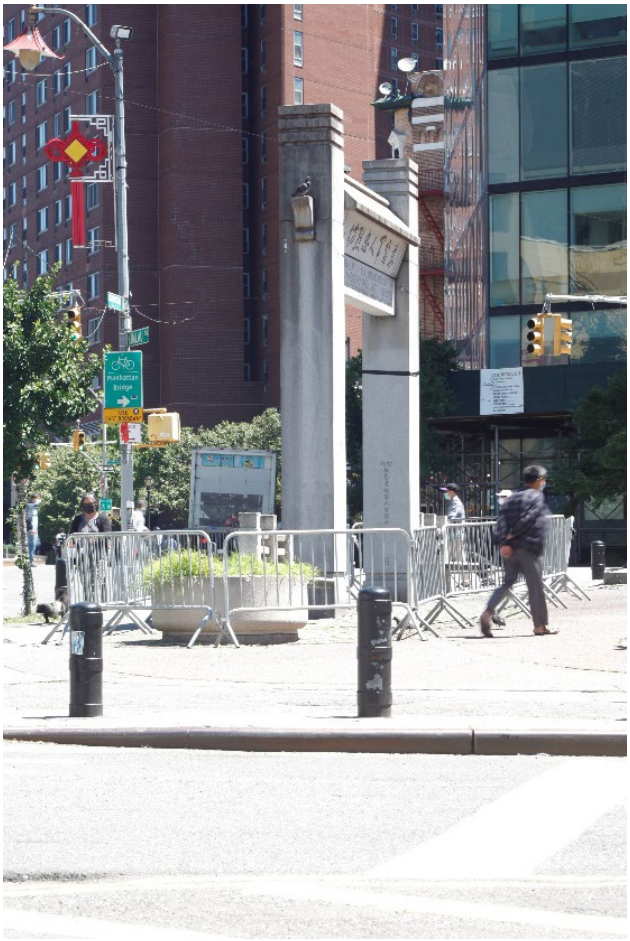
Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, April 2021

Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, April 2021

Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, June 2021

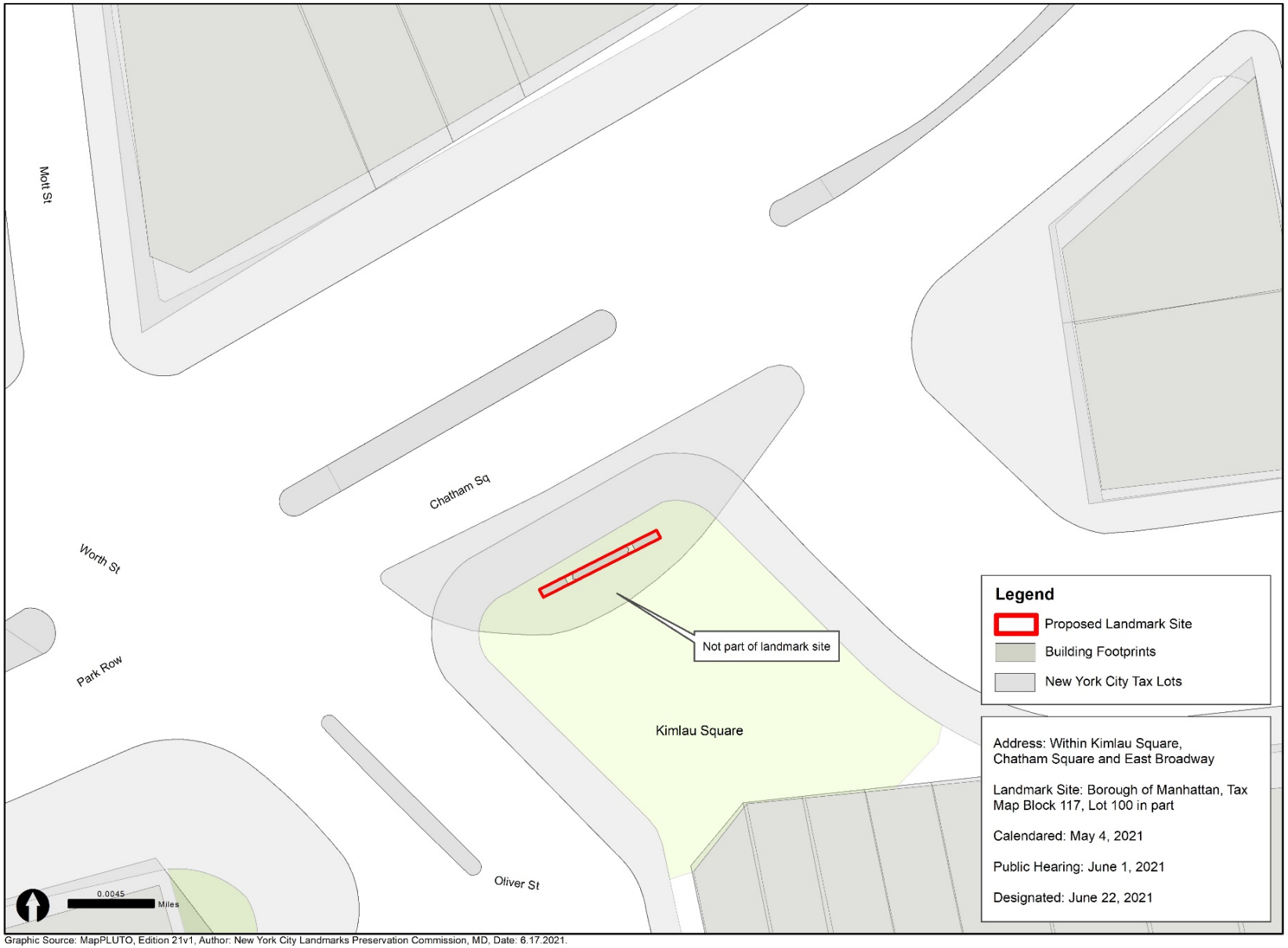
Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, June 2021

Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, June 2021



Kimlau War Memorial
LPC, June 2021

Kimlau War Memorial | LP-2653



Graphic Source: MapPLUTO, Edition 21v1, Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, MD, Date: 6.17.2021.