

## **The Courthouse That Graft Built**

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The architectural stepchild of them all — New York City's Tweed Courthouse — had a roof-raising party the other day to celebrate the start of structural repairs and the announcement that the city's most despised landmark will be preserved for a new use. Until now, this fine Anglo-Italianate monument to the peculations of the notorious Tweed ring has had few friends. Only architectural oddballs gave a finial for its fate. There have been so many threats by so many mayors to demolish it that its very existence is a miracle.

But times, tastes and mayors change. In 1974 the New York Landmarks Conservancy undertook a campaign to make the basic repairs that would save it from demolition by neglect. The public and private forces that have joined to do the job were brought together in celebration at the roof-raising party, where all could

admire the high-ceilinged rotunda that endless coats of gummy brown and tan municipal paint have failed to destroy.

An extra glass was raised to Mayor Koch's official commitment to the preservation of city-owned historic structures. A new study will evaluate all the city's non-residential buildings. The aim is to fill as many as possible with appropriate city functions, and to find non-profit community uses for the rest.

Why, then, not turn the Tweed Courthouse into a courthouse? Trendy boutiques, museums or public markets are not the only salvation for period properties. We are learning valuable re-use lessons all the time. But the most impressive lesson of the Tweed Courthouse is this: Stick around long enough and your time will come.

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