

Lee Harris Pomeroy Is Dead at 85; Architect Revived Subway Stations

By RICHARD SANDOMIR

Lee Harris Pomeroy, whose architectural touch is visible around New York City — in the subway stations he redesigned, the Fulton Mall that he helped to plan in Brooklyn and the limestone-sheathed Swiss Bank Tower he devised to fit in with nearby landmarks like Rockefeller Center and the flagship store of Saks Fifth Avenue — died on Feb. 18 in Manhattan. He was 85.

His daughter, Jordana Pomeroy, confirmed his death but did not specify a cause.

“Architecture is a social art as well as a technical, problem-solving process,” Mr. Pomeroy told his daughter in an email exchange last year. “But it is also a means of giving form to ideas, as well as satisfying a practical need. And that is what makes it so special.”

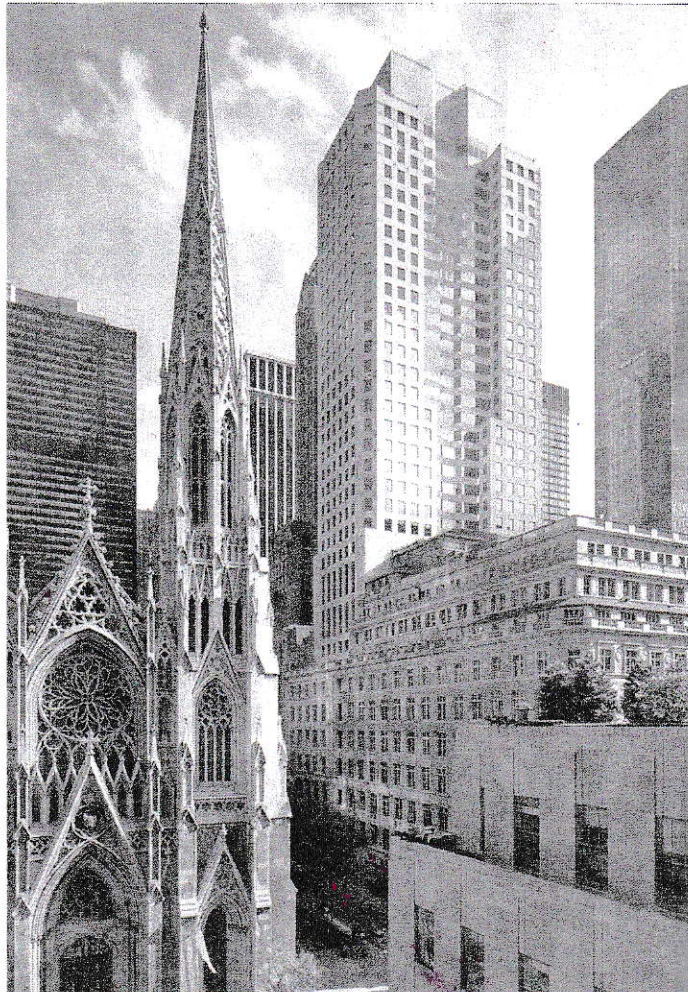
Although Mr. Pomeroy designed projects around the world, among them the Binhai International Convention and Exhibition Center in Tianjin, China, he was probably best known for his work in the city where he lived.

“Lee was the quintessential New York City architect,” said Sandra Bloodworth, director of arts and design for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. “He loved New York, and he loved the civic side of historic preservation and transportation.”

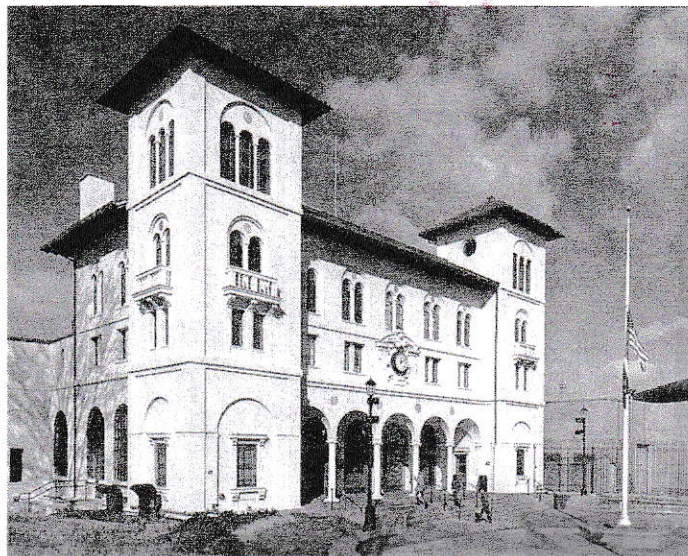
Mr. Pomeroy’s redesign of several subway stations showcased his ability to blend preservation with modern transportation needs. At the East 180th Street station in the Bronx, his firm led an effort to restore the century-old railroad building that serves as the entrance to the No. 2 and No. 5 trains (and is on the National Register of Historic Places) while improving passenger circulation, installing an elevator and reconstructing a dank passageway to the train platforms.

“We thought of the restoration of this major historic landmark as a significant gesture of respect to the Bronx,” Mr. Pomeroy said when the station’s renovation was completed in 2013.

His firm, Lee Harris Pomeroy Architects, was part of teams that restored a number of subway stations over more than 30 years, including those in Manhattan at Bleecker Street, Union Square, Fulton Street, Fifth Avenue at 53rd Street, Lincoln Center at 66th Street and in Brooklyn, DeKalb Avenue.

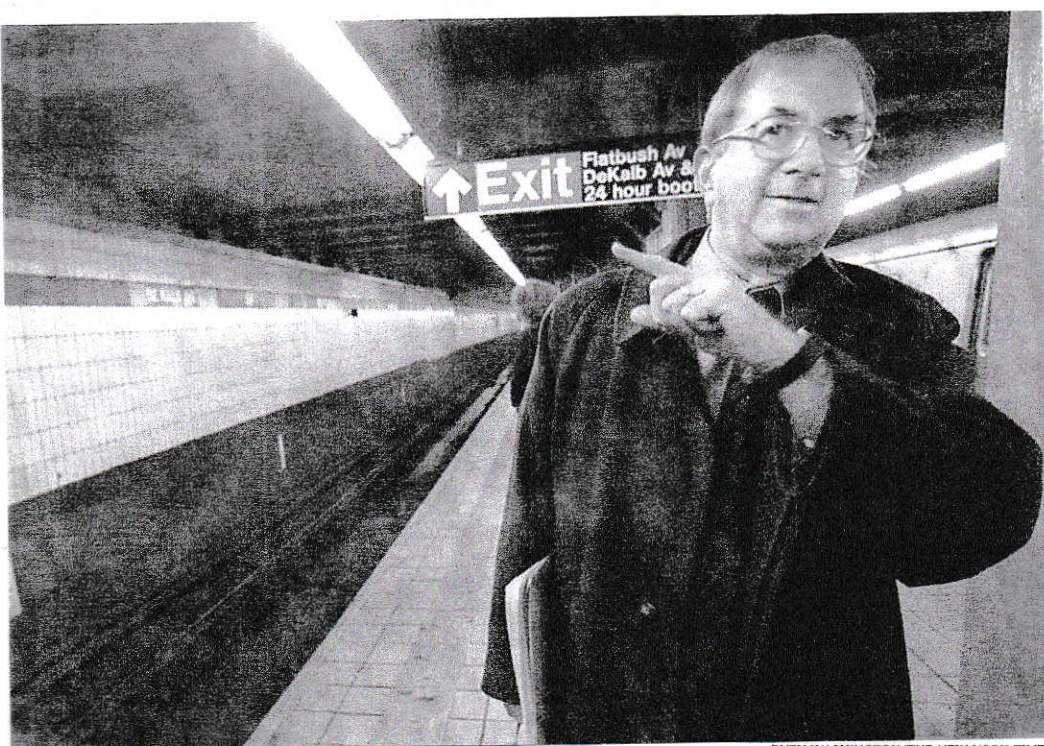


LHP ARCHITECTS



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Mr. Pomeroy’s work includes the limestone-sheathed Swiss Bank Tower, top, designed to fit in with Midtown Manhattan landmarks, to the right of St. Patrick’s Cathedral; and, above, the 2012 renovation of the East 180th Street subway station in the Bronx.



RUBY WASHINGTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Lee Harris Pomeroy in 2000 at the DeKalb Avenue subway station in Brooklyn. Mr. Pomeroy redesigned that station and several others in Manhattan, including Union Square and Fulton Street.

At the bustling Union Square complex, he designed a concourse that connected the three subway lines that stop there and collaborated with the artist Mary Miss to highlight architectural remnants of the station's past, like the pillars and terra cotta tiles uncovered during the renovation.

"It was chaos before," Mr. Pomeroy said in 2000, referring to the difficult pedestrian flow before the renovation. "This is all open now, a continuous flow."

Mr. Pomeroy's passion for preservation found a slightly different outlet in the early 1980s, when he entered a battle on Broadway to save the Helen Hayes and Morosco Theaters from being demolished to make way for the Marriott Marquis Hotel on Broadway. He was a member of Community Board 5, which included the theater district, and had his office in the Plaza Hotel.

"He felt that Times Square was being destroyed, and he wanted to do something about it," Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz, his sister, said in a telephone interview.

Mr. Pomeroy worked with Actor's Equity and helped write a report that offered a way to incorporate the theaters in the hotel's design. The campaign failed, but the city soon conferred landmark status on many remaining Broadway theaters to prevent their destruction. (Another theater in the district was renamed for Helen Hayes shortly afterward as well.)

Mr. Pomeroy was born in Brooklyn on Nov. 19, 1932. His father, Alfred, was a furniture designer who owned a store on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. His mother, the former Florence Greenberg, was a homemaker. "Our father was always full of ideas and wonder," Ms. Schwartz said, "and we grew up loving design."

Architecture fascinated the

younger Mr. Pomeroy.

"I've always been interested in the balance between old and new," he said for "Street Value" (2010), a book about the Fulton Mall by Rosten Woo, Meredith TenHoor and Damon Rich. He added: "Early buildings were not done necessarily for utility; architecturally designed buildings were designed mostly because they were symbols, like pyramids and Greek temples."

He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y.,

An ability to blend preservation with modernity without hewing to a set style.

with a bachelor's degree in architecture, then earned his master's from the Yale School of Architecture in 1961.

Two years later, his firm Pomeroy, Lebduska Associates, designed the privately-financed conversion of a former red-brick mint factory in Downtown Brooklyn to artists' studios — earning a Progressive Architecture award for adapting the building "ingeniously and sensibly, and with respect for the existing architecture" — but the conversion was not completed until 1975. Shortly before the renovation was done, Mr. Pomeroy told The Times that the project had been inspired partly by his father's love of Brooklyn.

"From him," he said, "I inherited an allegiance to the borough and thought this project would

help enhance its image."

The Fulton pedestrian mall was another Brooklyn project for Mr. Pomeroy, which involved designing street furniture, canopies, vendors' kiosks, lighting, graphics and signage. His plan to cover the eight-block retail area with a fiberglass canopy — at one point it was going to be pink — was not supported by merchants.

"The whole idea was to create a space that doesn't exist in New York," he told the authors of "Street Value."

At the more ambitious Swiss Bank Tower, Mr. Pomeroy designed a 36-story building that gave the Saks Fifth Avenue flagship store space to expand. But he also wanted it to be compatible with its famous architectural neighbors. He told The Times in 1990 that he thought of the tower "as having, in form and proportion and material, a dialogue with Rockefeller Center."

In addition to his daughter and sister, Mr. Pomeroy is survived by his wife, the former Sarah Berman; a son, Jeremy, and seven grandchildren. Another daughter, Alexandra, died in 2015.

Antonio Figueroa, an associate principal at the Pomeroy firm, said Mr. Pomeroy did not have a single, definable style as he moved from projects as diverse as the mid-1980s restoration of Grand Central Terminal to the master planning of a mixed-use development in Bangalore, India, called Skill City, which has not been built.

"He felt that every project had its own dynamic, and the only style there was had to be a celebration of the context in which the project is done," Mr. Figueroa said. "If it's a subway station in a historical area, that has to be celebrated."