

So atop the city that taught the world what modern cities ought to be, there they are, the hoops and staves of the Middle Ages.

— Charles Kuralt



WATER TOWERS

The newsman Charles Kuralt was a big admirer of the water towers that grace so many of New York's rooftops. The city requires that every building above a certain height — around six stories — must have them, both to regulate water pressure throughout the building and to help firefighters by providing a reliable source of water. To this day Manhattan's water tanks, which hold between 5,000 and 10,000 gallons each, are hand-crafted from wood and iron by one of two companies that have been making them here for more than a century. Wallace Rosenwach was one of those coopers; his grandfather started the business in 1896. While walking around the city one day with Kuralt, Wallace looked up and said: "That's our skyline. We helped create it."

The High Line is bookended by two former industrial buildings, each of which has a prominent

water tower standing tall on its roof. At the southern end, on Gansevoort Street, is the former Manhattan Refrigerating Company, now the West Coast apartment building (p.58). At the northern end is a large, brick former furniture factory that stands across the West Side Rail Yards at 34th Street and is now the corporate headquarters of Coach leatherware. All along the High Line's path through the Meatpacking District and Chelsea, countless water towers can be seen and admired. Some are old, some are new. Most rest on a simple metal frame but some — like the ones on the London Terrace apartment building (top left) — have been given a place in the architecture. One pair, which sits atop an old tinfoil factory, looks like a couple of spaceships (below, center). Another sits alone on the remains of a brick parapet, like an ancient ruin (below, right). Water towers are a quintessential element of the skyline, a sure sign to a New Yorker that he's home.

