

THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 170 Central Park West, Borough of Manhattan. Central building begun 1903, completed 1908; architects York & Sawyer. Wings begun 1937, completed 1938; architects Walker & Gillette.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1129, Lot 29.

On June 14, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the New York Historical Society and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 13). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Historical Society has indicated to the Commission that it is in favor of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Austerely classical in feeling, and displaying great dignity in its formal composition, this building is a fitting home for a distinguished society. It is designed in the Roman Eclectic style and solidly constructed in fine gray granite.

The facade is divided into very severe end pavilions bounding and containing a colonnaded central section which, though treated with great discipline, is nobly ornamental. At the second floor level a wide horizontal band course runs around the entire building, creating a ledge in the slightly recessed central portion of the structure. Resting on this ledge, and of great compositional importance, are the eight three-quarter engaged Ionic columns of the colonnade. These support a cornice which, apart from the handsome bronze grille-work of the large side windows, is the only element of the building which may be said to be richly ornamented. The pedimented heroic size main portal on Central Park West makes a very grand entrance to the building.

The easternmost section, facing Central Park, was completed in 1908, while the north and south wings were added in 1937. These additions, though designed by another architect, were so skillfully integrated into the existing work that the structure appears to have been perfectly designed and constructed in one operation by one architect.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the New York Historical Society building is a distinguished example of Roman Eclectic architecture, designed in the best classical tradition, that it contains much excellent architectural detail, and that this imposing structure has great dignity and grandeur.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1129, Lot 29, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.