

THE DAKOTA APARTMENTS, 1 West 72nd Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1880, completed 1884; architect Henry Janeway Hardenbergh.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1125, Lot 25.

On June 14, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The Dakota Apartments and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 12). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The hearings were continued and finally closed December 27, 1966. (Item No. 4). The attorney for The Dakota and the secretary of this co-operative have discussed the proposed designation with the Commission.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Clearly unique in its architectural character in New York, the Dakota, the City's first luxury apartment house, continues to be a conversation piece. This imposing structure of eight stories with attic reflects the romanticism of the German Renaissance style and combines a superb blend of formalism and picturesqueness into a unified composition, with dignity and serenity. The design of each elevation is treated in an individual manner, without repetition or symmetry inhibiting the free use of an historical style. Monumental in scale and impressive in appearance, this building, massively constructed of yellow colored brick with stone trim and terra cotta ornament, has the indestructible quality and undeniable grandeur reminiscent of a large, European chateau. It was designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh, who later designed the Plaza Hotel.

The principal elevations have three horizontal divisions: the base, consisting of two stories and basement, the shaft of four floors, and the crown, or roof with its multiplicity of gables and dormers. At the top of the second floor, and separating the base from the shaft, is a wide band course consisting of handsomely carved panels. Boldly accenting these elevations at the seventh floor level and connecting the shaft with the crown is an ornately bracketed cornice, with a decorative metal railing, enhancing the building. A dominant feature of the end pavilions on the south facade are the two semicircular oriel windows which extend up through seven stories. The building is seemingly surrounded by a moat and is virtually square in plan. It was designed around an inner courtyard, originally conceived as a carriage turn-around. An extremely handsome two-story double arch is elaborately enriched by window pilasters, decorative panels, moldings and medallions and contains the segmental arched entranceway. The entrance is flanked by double metal urns mounted on large pedestals and a sentry box for the doorman guarding the passageway into the inner court where the four corner entrances lead to the upper floors.

Despite its monumental size the Dakota has an intimate quality enhanced by separate entrances. When completed in 1884, it was considered by some to be the most notable building of its kind in the United States. Service elevators, among the first to be installed in New York, were placed behind the kitchens of each bank of apartments. With its massive load bearing walls, heavy interior partitions, and double thick floors of concrete, it is one of the quietest buildings in the City.

Due to its great size and uptown location it was once known as "Clark's Folly", with reference to Edward S. Clark, heir to the Singer Sewing Machine Co. fortune who built it. Its intended location was so far north of the mainstream of Manhattan life in 1879 that it was named the "Dakota" because Mr. Clark's colleagues once teased him by saying that if he went a few blocks further away he could build it in Dakota, then still in Indian territory.

Edward S. Clark, in addition to his connection with the Singer Sewing Machine Company and the development of its fine downtown building designed by Ernest Flagg, was one of the leading residents responsible for the development of Cooperstown, New York.

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 Dakota Apartments 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 Dakota is one of the most notable buildings of its kind in the United States, that it is a masterful expression of a historical style, that it has monumental grandeur, that it is superbly sited on a corner plot overlooking Central Park and that for more than three quarters of a century, it has been a luxury apartment house of great distinction.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 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 Dakota Apartments, 1 West 72nd Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1125, Lot 25, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.