

Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 18, 1966, Calendar No. 2
LP-0087

FIRE HOUSE, ENGINE COMPANY 31, 87 Lafayette Street, Borough of Manhattan.
1895; architect Napoleon Le Brun & Sons.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 197, Lot 1.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Fire House, Engine Company 31 and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 59). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Fire Commissioner Robert O. Lowery and another witness appeared at the public hearing and supported the proposed designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This Fire House in the French Renaissance Eclectic Style of architecture is an outstanding example of good civic architecture of its time. Here in this small fire house can be seen the result of New York City's attempt to produce a high level of architectural excellence. In this case the design was entrusted to an architectural firm of note, Napoleon Le Brun & Sons. They were given the opportunity of designing several fire houses, both large and small, throughout the City. In fulfilling the commission here, they chose the French Renaissance Style of architecture brought to this country by the leading architect, Richard Morris Hunt.

The delicacy of detail displayed here in shell forms, dolphins, floral wreaths and many other details typical of that period, is a delight to the beholder. In addition, the main mass of the building is well composed with its high, hip-roof and iron crestings embellished by dormer windows and set off to advantage by a railing (balustrade) and a low, corner tower. This building demonstrates that the City recognized that it could create structures that rivaled the finest architecture on Fifth Avenue, both as to architectural grace and use of fine materials.

At the public hearing the statement of Fire Commissioner Lowery said in part: "This beautiful and imposing public building should be preserved and its preservation will enhance the changing face of lower Manhattan. We are sure that this restored building will continue to afford pleasure and satisfaction to all who wish to maintain a beautiful example of architecture from our past.... Aside from the beauty and historic value of this structure, were we required to build a fire house of comparable cubage, the cost would be more than one million dollars".

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 Fire House, Engine Company 31 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, Fire House, Engine Company 31 is an example of excellence in the realm of public architecture, that in the quality of its detail and in the use of fine materials it is unsurpassed by any building in its category and that it is a building which is a pride to the Municipality.

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 Fire House, Engine Company 31, 87 Lafayette Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 197, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.