

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
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LP-0133

FONTHILL (College Library), College of Mount Saint Vincent, West 261st Street (Campus also bounded by the northern boundary of New York City and the New York Central Railroad line), Borough of The Bronx. 1846.

Landmark Site: Borough of The Bronx Tax Map Block 5958, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On January 11, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Fonthill (College Library), College of Mount Saint Vincent and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 35). A letter was received from the attorneys for the owner. No speakers appeared to testify. The Commission continued the public hearing until February 8, 1966 (Item No. 34). At that time two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. In a letter the owners, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul and the College of Mount Saint Vincent, acquiesced to the proposed designation. Both hearings were duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to designation at either meeting.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Fonthill, the Gothic castle overlooking the Hudson River, is a superb example of the Romantic movement in architecture. The grouping of six turrets, all of different heights, forms a picturesque composition of unusual charm. Octagonal shaped towers, with battlements reminiscent of early medieval fortresses, were designed and executed at Fonthill with care and skill. Solidly constructed of good materials, the cut stone masonry is of the finest quality and the building is in excellent state of preservation. The exterior details are mostly Gothic in style, with the use of the pointed arched windows intermixed with round arched and rectangular shaped openings. This little castle situated among beautiful beech trees brings to mind paintings of "The Hudson River School".

Edwin Forrest, the renowned Shakespearean actor, built the castle when he was at the peak of his career. He is said to have been inspired to choose this type of architecture by memories of a visit to Fonthill Abbey, the great country house of William Beckford in England. The Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul purchased the property in 1856, and use it today as the Library of the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

#### 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 Fonthill 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, Fonthill is an admirable example of Gothic Revival architecture reminiscent of a castle, that it is well constructed of stone masonry, that it is executed with handsome detail, that it is in an excellent state of preservation and that it has been successfully adapted to serve as a library of the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

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 Fonthill (College Library), College of Mount Saint Vincent, West 261st Street, Borough of the Bronx and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5958, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.