Landmarks Preservation Commission  
March 15, 1966, Number 3  
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, consis­  
ting 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 fort­  
resses, 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 inter­  
mixed 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.