

Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 19, 1966, Number 11
LP-0149

GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY GATES, Fifth Avenue and 25th Street, Borough of Brooklyn.
Begun 1861, completed 1865; architects Richard M. Upjohn & Son.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 902, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On February 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Green-Wood Cemetery Gates including its attached Chapel and Office and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 50). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two speakers spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

One of the monuments of the Gothic Revival, transitional to Victorian Gothic, is the Twenty-fifth Street Gateway of Green-Wood Cemetery. It represents an ingenious linking together and piling up of architectural elements to create an impressive main gateway to the cemetery. Here are combined two principal gates flanking a Flamboyant Gothic clock-tower. On either side of this central feature, and connected directly to it, are the cemetery offices on one side and a chapel and reception room for visitors on the other.

The low slate roofs of the flanking buildings provide a picturesque profile leading up to the towering central motif, the gates. Immediately above the gates, in the deeply recessed tympani of the pointed arches, are handsome sculptured bas reliefs. The black shadows cast on the bas reliefs create a feeling of sadness quite in keeping with ecclesiastical Gothic architecture of this cemetery gateway. Openwork gables surmount the arches, while the central clock-tower rises to a pinnacled height above an open niche which is ingeniously buttressed from each side by fine flying buttresses which in turn are carried down to massive piers forming the outer sides of the arches, themselves handsomely pinnacled.

Green-Wood Cemetery, like that of Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts, represented a new concept in cemeteries. There for the first time, a rural setting, instead of a churchyard, was to provide the last resting place. Where Mount Auburn Cemetery was the first cemetery to exemplify this new concept Green-Wood was to succeed it only ten years later. Many famous Americans are buried behind this splendid gateway in this natural setting, a part of which was the site of one of the decisive battles of the Revolution.

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 Green-Wood Cemetery Gates including its attached Chapel and Office 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 Green-Wood Cemetery gates and its attached Chapel and Office is one of the outstanding monuments of the late Gothic Revival, that it represents an ingenious plan, that it displays much fine detail and sculpture and that Green-Wood Cemetery shares with Mount Auburn Cemetery the distinction of being one of the early cemeteries in a natural setting.

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 Green-Wood Cemetery Gates including its attached Chapel and Office, Fifth Avenue and 25th Street, Borough of Brooklyn and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 902, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described improvement is situated.