

APPELLATE DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, FIRST DEPARTMENT--2 1/2-story main building (Proposed Landmark excludes 5-story addition at 31-33 Madison Avenue), Madison Avenue at East 25th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1896, completed 1900; architect James Brown Lord.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 855, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described main building is situated.

On April 12, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Department and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 17). 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. In a letter to the Commission, Hyman W. Ganso, Clerk of the Appellate Division, said that the Court was "pleased to learn" that the original Appellate Division courthouse is being considered for designation.

In his letter, Mr. Ganso said, "I call your attention again to the fact that the erection of a second addition to the building is contemplated. The vacant land immediately to the east of the building on 25th Street is the site of the proposed extension, which is expected to be 7 stories in height, with provision for additional stories, as needed.... The plans contemplate that the addition will be in harmony with the original structure and that there will obviously be interior connections between the old building and the addition with possibly some other changes. While the Court approves the designation of its courthouse as a landmark, it does so upon the understanding that such designation will not preclude the erection of the extension and will not delay its construction."

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Distinguished for its classic beauty, this small marble courthouse represents in a civic building, the epitome of collaboration between architect, sculptor, and mural painter. Classic Eclectic in design, but influenced by the Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, the three-story building, with low basement, expresses the best of Classical tradition, in its columned porch (portico) and much fine sculpture, one of the building's chief distinctions.

The south elevation is divided into three parts with the impressive porticoed central portion with entrance dominating the facade. Right and left of the portico, symmetrically balanced, are two tiers of handsomely enframed windows on the first and second floors. A low flight of steps leads up to the shallow portico which is formed by six fluted Corinthian columns resting on solid pedestal bases. These columns support an ornate triangular pediment filled with sculptured figures. On top of the pediment is Justice, flanked by figures representing Power and Study. This facade is crowned with seven statues standing on low pedestal blocks set within the parapet wall above the roof line.

The west elevation is also imposing. Four Corinthian columns backed-up by pilasters support the cornice. Features of this facade, are the statues of four maidens (caryatides), supporting Ionic capitals, upon which rests the roof cornice. Standing on pedestal blocks, projecting forward from the parapet wall, are two statues one at each corner of the building and a large central group in the middle.

This Civic building set an example for successful collaboration of the Fine Arts. One third of the total construction cost was spent on decoration. Few buildings in the country, even today, can boast of such an endorsement of the arts.

The Landmarks Commission wishes to state at this time that it will cooperate fully with the Appellate Division's expansion plans covering the area adjacent to this Landmark and its Landmark Site.

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 Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Department 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 Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Department, attained a high degree of artistic achievement for a Civic building, that it is a good example of Classic Eclectic architecture, that it is constructed of the finest materials in an excellent state of preservation, and that it continues to serve the judiciary of our City with distinction and dignity.

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 Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Department--2 1/2-story main building (Proposed Landmark excludes 5-story addition at 31-33 Madison Avenue), Madison Avenue at East 25th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 855, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described main building is situated.