

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ARTS, 120 Madison Avenue, Borough of Manhattan.
1905; architects McKim, Mead & White.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 860, Lot 16.

On April 12, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item 18). 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.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

When Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White, designed this handsome Federal Eclectic building in 1905, his client was the Colony Club, the first women's organization in New York City to build itself a club house for social activities and an artistic center. The plan, accordingly, required spaces for assembly rooms, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, dining quarters and a roof garden, many of which were sure to be reflected on the exterior design.

The architect provided all of these facilities within six stories and a basement, on a narrow lot and in an individual manner. He chose a rather free version of the Federal Style. The grayish red brickwork with its admirable texture and color is very unusual in its pattern. A handsome white limestone is used for the window lintels, trim, cornice and stones at the corners. The second floor lounge is well expressed on the exterior by five arched window openings with French doors and sash above extending to a two-story height. The doors lead to a shallow balcony, which is supported by thin pilasters and extends the entire width of the building. This provides a very pleasant shadow to accent the entrance and ground floor windows. A beautiful stone cornice crowned by a perforated railing separates the lower four floors from the curb roof and its five dormers, which give light and air to the dining room. Glass enclosures on top of the roof declare the presence of a delightful roof garden.

Donn Barber, summing up Stanford White's work three years after the completion of the building, wrote that this building was a "combination of rigid solidity and graceful delicacy which was always so cleverly combined and so characteristically treated in all of Mr. White's work."

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 American Academy of Dramatic Arts 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 American Academy of Dramatic Arts was the first clubhouse built for a women's social and literary organization in New York, that it was designed in impeccable taste by one of America's most renowned architects, and that its details and unusual brickwork have a graceful delicacy which sets it quite apart from other buildings of the same style in the City.

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 American Academy of Dramatic Arts, 120 Madison Avenue, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 860, Lot 16, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.