

THE DORILTON, 171 West 71st Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1900-02;
architects Janes & Leo.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1143, Lot 1.

On May 30, 1974, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Dorilton and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support for this designation from members of the community. The owner has expressed her opposition to designation. The Commission had previously held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Dorilton in 1966.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This French Beaux-Arts style apartment house, located diagonally across Broadway from The Ansonia and harmonizing with it, evokes memories of Paris. It was erected by Hamilton Weed, a builder, in 1900-1902 and was designed by the architectural firm of Janes & Leo. They also designed the row of houses on the south side of 105th Street in the Riverside - West 105th Street Historic District and many notable town houses in Manhattan.

Architecturally the Dorilton is one of the finest Beaux-Arts buildings in Manhattan and displays exceptionally handsome detail. It is twelve stories high, built of brick and limestone, and expresses the theme, popular at that time, of base, shaft and capital, reminiscent of the column. The base consists of two stories of rusticated limestone surmounted by one floor of alternating bands of brick and limestone, crowned by a balustrade carried on heavy brackets which are paired for vertical emphasis at certain points, above which rises the higher shaft portion of brick trimmed with limestone cornerstones, or quoins, thus establishing three vertical pavilions expressed by the greater height of their roof lines. This portion is, in turn, crowned by the ninth floor which repeats the horizontal banding of brick and limestone which is also found directly beneath it. Above this a transitional floor, emphasizing the vertical, forms a base for the capital, or top portion of the building, a very high two-and-a-half story convex mansard roof replete with copper crestings at the tops of the three corner pavilion sections.

Tall chimneys, flanking the courtyard and at the outer extremities of the building, with their horizontal banding and paired brackets supporting cornices at their tops, lend a note of elegance to the skyline.

The most striking feature of the Dorilton is its deep entrance courtyard facing 71st Street which is entered through a handsome triple gateway. The side portions of this gateway, with their high iron gates, once served as a U-shaped carriage access drive while the low central gateway was for pedestrians. Adding dramatic character to the entrance courtyard is the flying three-centered arch which connects the wings of the building on either side of it at ninth floor level.

The gateway consists of four limestone columns, surmounted by balls. The columns support the high wrought-iron gates with top crestings and enframe the low square-headed pedestrian access gate. This is surmounted by a shield supported by two cherubs which is kept below the cornice caps of the columns so that the four balls rise above it and dominate all three gates.

The arch at ninth floor level has a soaring quality which is visibly stabilized by the fact that the unusually wide quoins rise up to the spring-line of the arch and are terminated by large shields which have the appearance of corbels supporting the arch. The arch itself has deep voussoir stones with a keystone at the apex. The top surface of the arch is horizontal and aligns with the bandcourse above the ninth floor windows, thus tying it to the wings of the building.

On the Broadway side an exceptionally attractive feature is the central metal bay window, enframed with stone, extending up from the fourth floor through the eighth and crowned by an arch. To further emphasize the bay it is flanked at its base by two greater than life-size female figures whose handsome draped clothing enhances the motion expressed in their bodies.

Because of its large rooms and soundproof construction, the Dorilton has always been popular as a residence for artists and musicians.

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 Dorilton 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 Dorilton is an exceptionally fine apartment house, that it is an outstanding example of French Beaux-Arts architecture in Manhattan, that it displays a wealth of architectural detail, that its entrance gates and the arch above them are unusually striking features and that, located on its conspicuous corner site, it complements the nearby Ansonia and enhances the quality of its neighborhood.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 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 Dorilton, 171 West 71st Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1143, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.