

LYCÉE FRANÇAIS DE NEW YORK (built for Mrs. Amory S. Carhart), 3 East 95th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1913-21; architect Horace Trumbauer.
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1507, Lot 5.

On June 25, 1974, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Lycée Français de New York and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 13). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eight witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were two speakers in opposition to designation, including the representative of the owner.

Public hearings had been previously held in November 1966 and May 1970 on the proposed designation of this building.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The building at 3 East 95th Street was built between 1913 and 1921 as a New York version of a Louis XVI Parisian house. This dignified residence, executed in the best tradition of 18th-century French Classicism, is considered one of the finest examples of this style in New York City. The composition and proportions of this elegant four-story house are extremely well organized and express the consummate skill of the architect Horace Trumbauer. Trumbauer is noted as the designer of many fine town houses including the James B. Duke mansion, now the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University, a designated New York City Landmark.

The house was commissioned by Mrs. Amory S. Carhart. Unfortunately, Mrs. Carhart and her husband never lived there. Mrs. Carhart died in 1919, work was stopped on the house by February 1, and the property was sold to Clarence H. Mackay of Roslyn, New York, in September. The house was not completed until August 1921, and in 1937 it was purchased by the Lycée Français, an educational institution advancing French culture, history, and language. The Lycée Français de New York, known as the French Baccalaureate School, was founded in October 1935. It is a non-profit institution, incorporated by the Regents of the University of the State of New York and accredited by the French Ministry of National Education.

Ordered and formal in appearance, but relieved by the use of superb architectural details and well-placed ornament set in wide areas of smooth-faced stone, the structure is a straightforward expression of French architecture. The broad structure is divided horizontally into a rusticated base of one story, a main section of two stories, and a mansard roof. The building is three bays wide with all the openings placed directly one above each other. The boldly rusticated ground floor contains three tall graceful arches which frame a central doorway and symmetrically placed windows to the right and left. The large entrance doors, ornately decorated with rich carving, are of exceptionally fine quality.

Extending the width of the mansion at the second floor is a balcony supported by large ornamental brackets. Although these brackets have an almost Baroque character more readily associated with the architecture of Louis XIV, they terminate just beneath the balcony with ornamented square-ended tops. This rectangularity relates the brackets to the period of Louis XVI of which this house is such a fine expression.

A wrought-iron railing adorns the balcony. This railing is an exceptionally fine example of the Louis XVI style expressed in the carefully related use of the elements in it. Above each of the four brackets there is a vertically placed rectangular panel incorporating a formal urn motif. Between these panels is a modified guilloche pattern in which the alternate rosettes have been vertically elongated to form the supports of the railing. The light, open character of this railing is a further exemplification of this style.

The second and third floor windows are set between broad wall surfaces which have the character of pilasters and are joined vertically by handsomely carved stone panels. It is the bas-relief character of these delicately carved panels and their simple rectangular shape which is so expressive of this style. The elements of which they are composed are symmetrically disposed and highly expressive of the period from which they were derived. The two outer panels have cornucopias, back to back, supporting delicate urns with high stems set above scrolls. The central panel with a wreath at the center is reminiscent of the "trophies of war" theme embellished by scrolls. Tall French doors with arched transoms are enframed by arched openings at the second floor, while the casement windows at the third floor are lower and square-headed with "eared" enframements. The low wrought-iron window guards at these windows are of a more conventional guilloche pattern with large circles alternating with small ones. The careful attention to features such as this give this house the true character of a Parisian town house.

Crowning these three floors is a superb cornice carried on carved modillions. Recessed behind this cornice, three arched dormer windows, set in the mansard roof, are flanked by paneled sections of a parapet placed above the main wall piers below.

The beautifully massed architectural forms and carefully executed detail are combined to create an impressive residence in the best Parisian tradition. Its dignified and elegant appearance adds distinction to the entire Carnegie Hill area and to New York City.

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 Lycée Français de New York 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 Lycée Français de New York occupies a mansion designed by Horace Trumbauer in the tradition of the French Classic style of Louis XVI, that the building represents one of the finest examples of this style in New York City, that it is enhanced by exceptionally fine architectural ornament and detail, and that this elegant structure adds dignity and architectural distinction to the entire Carnegie Hill area and to New York City.

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 Lycée Français de New York, 3 East 95th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1507, Lot 5, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.