

SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MONUMENT, consisting of the monument itself, all terraces, balustrades, ornaments and appurtenances surrounding the monument and the steps approaching the monument from the north and south sides including its landings and balustrades, Riverside Park opposite 89th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1900-02; architects Charles W. & Arthur A. Stoughton and Paul E. M. Duboy.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1254, Lot 1 in part.

On July 13, 1976, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 3). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers for or against designation. The Department of Parks and Recreation has expressed its approval of the designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Prominently situated on Riverside Drive at 89th Street, the Soldiers and Sailors Monument was erected in memory of the New York regiments that fought in the Civil War. Designed by Charles W. & Arthur A. Stoughton and Paul E. M. Duboy, the monument was built in 1900-02 after a long series of delays which involved funding, siting, and design changes.

Although the state legislature authorized the erection of a soldiers and sailors monument under the direction of the Commissioners of Central Park in 1869, no action was undertaken until 1893. In that year the Board of Commissioners of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument was formed and authorized to expend \$250,000. The Board consisted of the Mayor, the Comptroller, the Recorder, the President of the Department of Parks, the Commissioner of Public Works, and the Chairman of the Grand Army of the Republic in New York. The Plaza, now Grand Army Plaza, at Fifth Avenue and 59th Street was chosen as the site despite public opposition. A competition for the monument was not held until 1897. Seven architectural firms were invited to submit models anonymously. They were judged by Professors William R. Ware and A. D. F. Hamlin of Columbia University and architectural critic Russell Sturgis. The model submitted by Stoughton & Stoughton with sculpture by Frederick MacMonnies was awarded first prize. It consisted of a tall column surmounted by an angel of peace and adorned with sculptural groups. A balustraded terrace enclosed the composition. Opposition to the Plaza site by the newly established Municipal Art Commission--which had to approve any public work of art--led to a new location in Riverside Park, first at the northern end of the park and then at Mount Tom in the park at West 83rd Street. The new location required an entirely new design. Mount Tom was also eventually rejected because several tall apartment buildings had been constructed opposite the site on Riverside Drive, and it was thought that these would block the view of the monument and make it seem insignificant by comparison. The present site at 89th Street was finally chosen in 1900. The cornerstone was laid on December 15, 1900, with Governor Theodore Roosevelt officiating. Construction was completed in 1902, and the Monument was unveiled on May 30, Decoration (Memorial) Day, following a parade by Civil War veterans up Riverside Drive to the site.

Although their original design for the Soldiers and Sailors Monument had to be changed because of the new site on Riverside Drive, Stoughton & Stoughton were, nonetheless, the architects of the structure as built. Paul Emile Marie Duboy (1857-1907), a French architect who is best known for his work on the Ansonia Hotel, collaborated with them. Charles W. Stoughton (1860-1945) received a degree in civil engineering from Columbia University; Arthur A. Stoughton (1867-1955) studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The brothers formed the firm of Stoughton & Stoughton in 1894. Among the works of this respected firm are the 52nd Police Precinct Station House in the Bronx, a designated New York City Landmark, a bathing pavilion in Jacob Riis Park, the Bronx River Parkway, a group of buildings at Canton Christian College, China, and the Polytechnic Institute in Puerto Rico. Both were active members of the Municipal Art Society.

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The Soldiers and Sailors Monument is a simple and dignified white marble structure, based on the Hellenistic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, although built at a much larger scale. It has been sited on axis with Riverside Drive to the south so that approaching northward, the visitor has a clear, unobstructed view of the monument. Set off above a series of balustraded terraces, it rises to a height of about 100 feet. The circular marble edifice is set on a granite platform incorporating a seat. A colonnade consisting of twelve Corinthian columns, 36 feet high, rises above a high rusticated marble base. The lowest course of rustication is adorned with a handsome wave molding incorporating laurel and oak leaves, while a cornice with closely spaced modillions surmounts the base. A single entrance set in the base has a marble enframingent adorned by a laurel-leaf molding and crowned by a cornice supporting an eagle. The inscription "In Memoriam" appears above this doorway which contains a handsome bronze door.

Behind the great circular colonnade is a rusticated marble wall containing a single opening high on the south side. The wall has a Greek fret molding at the top. The colonnade carries an entablature adorned with a full frieze containing the inscription: "To the memory of the Brave Soldiers and Sailors Who Saved the Union." A cresting of eagles alternating with cartouches surmounts the cornice. The monument terminates in a low conical roof crowned by a richly decorated marble finial. On the north side of the monument set in the base is a tablet containing the names of the Monument Commissioners, the architects, and the builders.

The overall effect of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument is greatly enhanced by its setting of carefully arranged terraces, executed in geometric patterns of white and yellow marble. The terrace on the south side is on two levels. Listed on two large pylons on the terrace are the New York regiments that fought in the Civil War as well as Civil War battles, commanders, and generals. On the north side of this terrace is a tall flagpole set on a handsome bronze base. Placed on the terrace before the entrance are the seals of New York City and the United States which flank a tablet reading: "Erected by the City of New York to Commemorate the Valor of the Soldiers and Sailors who in the Civil War Fought in Defense of the Union." The terrace on the north side of the monument descends in three levels which conform to the slope of the hillside. A semi-circular area at the northern end, lined with benches, provides an ideal vantage point from which to view the monument and the surrounding park. Between 1961 and 1963 the monument underwent extensive rehabilitation which cost over one million dollars. This included resurfacing, repointing, some new stonework, waterproofing, and a new roof.

In its simplicity, scale, detail, and setting, the Soldiers and Sailors Monument is a fitting tribute to the memory of the New York regiments that fought in the Civil War. It is an adornment to Riverside Drive and Riverside Park.

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 Soldiers and Sailors Monument 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 Soldiers and Sailors Monument is a fitting tribute to the memory of the New York regiments that fought in the Civil War, that it is a handsome and conspicuous edifice based on the Hellenistic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, that the circular form and twelve great columns are an imposing feature of this high structure, that it was designed by an esteemed group of architects, that it is enhanced by its axial location and surrounding terraces, and that it is an adornment to Riverside Drive and Riverside Park.

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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 Soldiers and Sailors Monument, consisting of the monument itself, all terraces, balustrades, ornaments and appurtenances surrounding the monument and the steps approaching the monument from the north and south sides including the landings and balustrades, Riverside Park opposite 89th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1254, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described structure is situated.