

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 13, 1980, Designation List 133
LP-1063

173 EAST 73rd STREET BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1903; architect Hobart H. Walker.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1408, Lot 29.

On June 19, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 173 East 73rd Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 13). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The 173 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of the type of private carriage house built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in this area of Manhattan. Designed in the late Romanesque Revival style by Hobart H. Walker, who is best known for his work in Brooklyn, this carriage house was constructed in 1903 for J. Henry Alexandre who lived at 35 East 67th Street.

The carriage house at No. 173 is a component of the rare surviving group of carriage houses, stables, and garages built on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues to serve the wealthy families who lived on or near Fifth Avenue. Stables were a necessity during the period when private urban transportation was limited to horses and carriages. Only the very wealthy, however, could afford to build and maintain a private carriage house such as those found on this street. Others boarded their horses in large commercial stables such as that at 182 East 73rd Street.

The private carriage houses tended to be two- or three-story structures often designed in the most stylish architectural modes of the period. On the interior were two major ground-floor spaces--a front room for the carriages and a rear room with stalls for the horses. At the upper stories were one or two apartments for the coachman, groom, or related employees. Some of the larger carriage houses had ramps on the ground floor that led to additional horse stalls on the second floor. Early in the 20th century, as automobiles began to replace carriages as the primary means of transportation for the wealthy, these stables were converted to garages and chauffeur's residences. Later in the 20th century, when private garages became too expensive to maintain, most of the buildings were converted to stylish residences.

The carriage houses were built on streets that were convenient to the East Side mansions, but were not so close that their noises and smells would mar the exclusive character of the residential streets. A few carriage houses were erected between Madison and Park Avenues, but most were constructed on the less elegant streets east of Park Avenue. Like many streets on the Upper East Side, East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues was initially developed in the 1860s with modest Italianate style residences. Most of these houses were replaced as the block became a prime site for carriage houses; only two of the original rowhouses (Nos. 171 and 175) survive.

The building at No. 171 is designed in a form characteristic of contemporary carriage houses. A three-story structure, the building is constructed of white brick. On the first floor, the brick is laid in imitation of stone rustication. A segmental-arched vehicular entrance is set at the left side of the ground floor, while a narrow pedestrian entrance with a slab lintel is located to the right. A stone beltcourse supported on corbel blocks separates the lower level from the residential floors above. The upper floors are simply articulated; on the second floor are three rectangular windows with stone lintels and sills and on the third floor are three round-arched windows with brick voussoirs and stone sills. A corbelled brick bandcourse and a brick parapet with recessed brick panels crowns the building. The original cornice has been removed.

The carriage house was built for J. Henry Alexandre (1847-1912), owner of the Alexandre Steamship Line and vice-president of the National Hunt and Steeple Chase Association. The Alexandre family retained ownership of the building until 1951. Alexandre's architect, Hobart H. Walker, is best known for the residential buildings that he designed in Brooklyn early in the 20th century. These include the Pratt Institute faculty houses (1910) on Willoughby Avenue, Steuben Street, and Emerson Place, the William H. Burger Residence at 443 Clinton Avenue, and the Ralph H. Wilson Residence at 162 Argyle Road, all of which use Dutch Colonial detailing. With the exception of the loss of the cornice and the addition of a new garage door and two wall air conditioners the carriage house, which is now used as a residence, retains its architectural integrity, complementing the other stables and carriage houses on this block of East 73rd Street.

Report prepared by
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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 173 East 73rd Street Building 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 173 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of a late 19th-century carriage house; that it is a simple, but beautifully massed late Romanesque Revival style structure; that the building, a rare survivor, is a reminder of an elegant lifestyle that has passed; that the carriage house was owned by important New Yorkers including ship owner J. Henry Alexandre; and that the carriage house is a vital component of the unusual group of buildings on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly 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 173 East 73rd Street Building, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1408, Lot 29, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

New York City. Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets.

New York County. Office of the Register. Liber Deeds and Mortgages.

New York Times, July 2, 1912, p. 11.



173 East 73rd Street
Architect: Hobart H. Walker

Photo Credit:
Gina Santucci

Built: 1903