

166 EAST 73RD STREET CARRIAGE HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1883-84; Architect Richard M. Hunt.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 47.

On November 18, 1980, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark, of the 166 East 73rd Street Carriage House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 15). The hearing was continued to February 10, 1980 (Item No. 8). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Ten witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

No. 166 East 73rd Street is a fine example of private carriage house design of the late 19th century in Manhattan. Constructed in 1883-84 for Henry Gurdon Marquand, No. 166 was designed by Richard Morris Hunt in a simple modified version of the Romanesque Revival style. It is the earliest 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 private carriage houses such as those found on this street. Others boarded their horses in large commercial stables such as that at 182 East 72nd Street.

Private carriage houses tended to be two- or three-story structures with 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 interior 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 apartments. 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 convenient to the East Side mansions, but not so close that their noise 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 farther east. Like many streets on the Upper East Side, East 73rd Street was initially developed in the 1860s with modest Italianate style rowhouses. Most of these were replaced as the block became a prime site for carriage houses; only two of the original rowhouses (Nos. 171 and 175) survive.

No. 166 was constructed with a stable and carriage room at the first story, and a coachman's apartment and hayloft at the second. Designed by Hunt, one of the nation's leading architects in the later 19th century, for the financier and philanthropist Marquand, who amassed a vast fortune in real estate, banking and railroad holdings, the stable was undertaken in conjunction with the lavish Marquand mansions under construction from 1881-1884. These three houses were intended as the home of Marquand himself and two of his children. Located at the northwest corner of 68th Street and Madison Avenue, they were extremely fine examples of Hunt's work in the early French Renaissance chateausque manner. Previously Hunt had designed Marquand's summer home, Linden Gate, of 1872, in the fashionable resort, Newport, Rhode Island, and had recently designed the Guernsey Building, a commercial structure at 160-164 Broadway, for Marquand, as well as the Marquand Chapel at Princeton University, both completed in 1882. In 1885, Hunt was commissioned to design the Marquand family tomb at Newport's Island Cemetery.

The two men had very likely first met in 1869 when they served on a Provisional Committee, formed to organize the founding of a national art museum in New York. This museum, ultimately to become the Metropolitan Museum of Art, was incorporated in 1870, and remained an abiding interest of both Hunt and Marquand. Over the years, Hunt was to serve as a founder, a patron, a trustee, a donor, and as an architectural advisor to the museum's building committees; while Marquand was to give extremely generously to the collections, to become treasurer of the museum from 1882 to 1889, and to serve as its President from 1889 until his death in 1902. Hunt and Marquand were both deeply committed to the promotion of the arts in America, and each campaigned vigorously for improved architectural standards in this country. This sympathy of convictions and taste, which fostered not only a professional relationship, but also a sincere friendship, was to culminate in Hunt's design, at Marquand's authorization, in 1895, of the Fifth Avenue wing of the Metropolitan Museum.

On a much more modest level, the stable building also symbolizes the relationship of the architect and his client. A simple, brick structure with very restrained detailing, it is executed in a modified version of the Romanesque Revival style, with three broad round-arched openings at the first story, windows with eared lintels surmounted by segmental relieving arches at the second story, and smaller windows with eared lintels at the third story beneath an extremely handsome corbelled and patterned brick cornice. The date of the building -- 1883 -- in large cast-iron numerals is spaced across the facade above the first story arches. End piers with brick patterns which echo those of the cornice, and a band course which acts as a sill for the second story windows completed the articulation of the facade. The infill of the ground floor arches and the third floor window sash are of recent date. (The building presently has a stucco coating - the original architect's drawings and specifications for the carriage house, now in the New York City Buildings Department files indicate the building's original appearance and would aid restoration plans.)

Very soon after his death, Marquand's executors sold the carriage house to Joseph Pulitzer (1847-1911), one of America's most prominent journalists, then building a palatial Venetian Renaissance style residence at 7-15 East 73rd Street. In 1883, Pulitzer had entered the New York newspaper business with the purchase of the New York World. He later founded the Evening News. He is perhaps best remembered as the founder of Columbia University's School of Journalism, and as the endower of the literary and journalism awards, the Pulitzer Prizes.

The Pulitzer family retained the carriage house until 1924 when it was sold to the MacDowell Club of New York. This club, named for Edward MacDowell (1861-1908), a noted American composer and concert pianist, was founded in the early 1900s. The club's purpose was to bring together a wide variety of artists from different disciplines, in an "association of the arts" -- a concept very much supported by MacDowell. The founding members included several distinguished figures, among them Sarah Bernhardt, Daniel Chester French, Augustus St. Gaudens and Charles McKim.

From 1943 until 1980, the building was home to the Central Gospel Chapel of New York.

No. 166 is an important component of this block of East 73rd Street, and harmonizes effectively with the other carriage houses on the street. As the earliest of these carriage houses, it set the trend for the development of the block, one which today is evocative of the life style of Manhattan's wealthy residents at the turn of the century. No. 166 is also a symbol of the relationship between the renowned architect R.M. Hunt and his loyal patron Henry Gurdon Marquand, and part of an architecturally rare and interesting ensemble of carriage house designs.

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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 166 East 73rd Street Carriage House 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 166 East 73rd Street Carriage House is the earliest component of a rare surviving group of carriage houses and stables in Manhattan; that it was designed by Richard Morris Hunt, one of the nation's foremost architects of the late 19th century, and built for Henry Gurdon Marquand, a noted philanthropist and financier, and one of Hunt's most loyal patrons; that it is a fine example of a restrained version of the Romanesque Revival style; that it is representative of the life style of rich New Yorkers at the turn of the century, who maintained private carriage houses and stables; that it was later owned by the noted journalist Joseph Pulitzer; that it was subsequently converted into a clubhouse for the MacDowell Club, an association of artists, musicians, and architects; that it then served, for nearly 40 years, as the home of the Central Gospel Church; that it harmonizes effectively with the neighboring carriage houses on the block and contributes to the architectural cohesiveness of the block.

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 166 East 73rd Street Carriage House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 47, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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166 East 73rd Street
Architect: Richard Morris Hunt