

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 14, 1965, Calendar No. 14
LP-0022

BUILDING "A" (a dormitory facing Richmond Terrace), Sailors' Snug Harbor, Richmond Terrace, New Brighton, Borough of Richmond. 1879.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 76, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On September 21, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Building "A" at Sailors' Snug Harbor and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 22). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation of the six proposed landmarks at Sailors' Snug Harbor. Two representatives of the owner, the trustees of Sailors' Snug Harbor, appeared in opposition to the proposed designations.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This monumental building is one of five which form one of the most notable groups of Greek Revival buildings in the United States. Such unified results were rarely achieved in this country. In scale, extent, quality and in use of materials, only the building group at Girard College in Philadelphia may be compared with it.

Building "A" of Sailors' Snug Harbor is a dormitory building. It is two stories high with an attic and a high basement. This structure is a long rectangular building with a six columned (hexastyle) portico of stone. A handsome flight of steps leads up to the portico. An imposing classic pediment crowns the main facade and reflects the gabled form of the roof over the remainder of the structure. The proportions of the portico are exceptionally fine. Here the beautifully designed Ionic columns support the pedimented roof in a manner which closely reflects the design of a classic Greek temple.

The different fronts of the five buildings contribute significantly to the success of the group. Each one of the three designs related well to the others, while giving some variety to the overall picture. The five buildings are parallel and are joined in an interesting manner by enclosed galleries which link the buildings and form interior corridors from end to end of the group. The porticos of the central and end buildings are aligned with each other, while the two intermediate buildings which have only small porches seem to be set back. In reality the front walls of all five buildings are in approximately the same plane. This variation lends increased interest to the entire scheme.

At the public hearing, the representative of the New York Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians said, "These distinguished buildings form a Greek Revival group composition of preeminent interest in the United States. Its loss, in whole or in part, would be a matter of major national landmark concern."

The representative of the Architects' Council of New York City testified, "In pleading for the preservation of the buildings, we also speak for the site as a whole. For here we have, in metropolitan New York, an unusual and most significant total environment of the last century. The simple, restrained buildings....still achieve a totality of environmental experience, that needs to be preserved with respect."

The representative of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects evaluated the buildings as follows: "This grouping is a rare example of architectural excellence....The elimination of two or three buildings from the group would destroy the entire reason for being. Each building by itself is a pleasant architectural achievement, but the real significance of the complex is its success as a unified group of buildings."

As the five main buildings of Sailors' Snug Harbor were built over a considerable period of time, it is remarkable to note the strict adherence to the original style approved by the trustees. Such foresight has produced the uniform architectural quality which makes Sailors' Snug Harbor such a priceless part of our heritage today. For over a century these buildings not only have provided a home for sailors but also have constituted a great and enduring architectural masterpiece.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of the building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Building "A" of Sailors' Snug Harbor 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, Building "A" of Sailors' Snug Harbor is a notable example of the Greek Revival period whose design is marked by fine proportions and details and that this building is an essential component of a unique group of buildings which are a superb manifestation of their background and time.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A 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 Building "A" (a dormitory facing Richmond Terrace), Sailors' Snug Harbor, Richmond Terrace, New Brighton, Borough of Richmond and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 76, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.