

Landmarks Preservation Commission
February 1, 1966, Number 1
LP-0079

MUNICIPAL BUILDING, Chambers Street at Centre Street, Borough of Manhattan, Completed 1914; architects McKim, Mead and White.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 121, Lot 1.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Municipal Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 51). One witness spoke in favor of designation. The Commission continued the public hearing until November 17, 1965 (Item No. 2). Both hearings were duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. At the November hearing Deputy Commissioner of Public Works Joseph Giblin testified. In a letter to the Commission, Commissioner of Public Works Bradford N. Clark questioned the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Municipal Building is an impressive Classical skyscraper, rising to a height of 25 stories with a tower above. It represents an effort made by the City, through the use of noted architects and sculptors, to achieve an imposing building of real beauty. The great freestanding screen of columns across the front, enframing a Classical triumphal arch, is truly monumental in scale.

This large building is ingeniously designed to bridge Chambers Street by means of a handsome barrel-vaulted passageway. It also is notable that such a large building has been able to utilize such a small site so effectively. The open area at the south side, where the building is raised on stilts, equals in concept many contemporary structures.

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 Municipal 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 Municipal Building is a handsome structure built with fine materials and having many beautiful details, that it represents a bold solution of a difficult problem where a limited site is utilized to best advantage, while providing great openness at ground floor level and a splendid passage for Chambers Street through the building, and that the Municipal Building is one of the few monumental skyscrapers of the early part of the Twentieth Century.

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 the Municipal Building, Chambers Street at Centre Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 121, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.