

BROOKLYN BRIDGE, City Hall Park, Borough of Manhattan to Cadman Plaza, Borough of Brooklyn. Begun 1867, completed 1883; architects John A. Roebling and Washington A. Roebling.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Blocks 120, Lot 9 in part; 113, Lot 1 in part; 108, Lot 4 in part; 73, Lot 29 in part; and Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Blocks 25, Lot 12 in part; 35, Lot 21 in part; 36, Lot 1 in part; 45, Lot 1 in part, consisting of those parts of these lots which contain a portion of the Brooklyn Bridge.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Brooklyn Bridge and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 70). One witness spoke in favor of designation. The Commission continued the public hearing until November 17, 1965 (Item No. 8). At that time one speaker appeared to testify. Both hearings were duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to designation at either meeting.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In legend and story, in painting and photo, in poetry and prose, the Brooklyn Bridge has inspired and evoked more praise and comment than any other bridge in America. The first to span the East River, this beautiful suspension Bridge is even today the most picturesque of all the bridges spanning the rivers and harbors of New York. The majestic stone towers with their buttresses and pointed Gothic arches are a remarkably clear statement of structural design and stand in sharp contrast to the graceful sloping sweep of the cables.

It is a milestone in the history of American engineering. This great structure, with its arcaded stone approaches, was the longest suspension bridge in the world from the time of its completion in 1883 until 1903. It has an overall length of 6,016 feet, and the Bridge itself is 133 feet above mean high water. It was a structural triumph attributable to the genius of John A. Roebling, the designer, and to the construction skill of his son, Washington A. Roebling. One of the ingenious methods introduced by the Roeblings in the construction of the Bridge was the pulley-and-reel system which made possible the spinning of the great cables supporting the Bridge.

The great masonry pylons and the Gothic arched towers which carry the cables, are a visual expression of the vital function they perform in carrying the four great cables from shore to shore. Due to the diminution of buttresses as they go up the towers, we notice the general pylon effect of sloping or battered walls, crowned by a cavetto type cornice, producing an almost Egyptian effect.

Design of the Land Approaches

One of the other striking features of the Bridge is to be found in the design of the masonry land approaches where a series of Italian Renaissance arches carry the roadway above. Their superb voisoirs and rusticated walls lend an air of gloomy grandeur to the structure, rarely noticed. They were filled in with brick and contain warehouses. The windows in these arches seem only to increase the colossal size of the arches.

"The New York City Guide", WPA American Guide Series, waxed lyrical when in describing the Bridge it said: "The promenade still draws its visitors, lyrical, noisy, or inarticulate. In the famous 'view' of the bay and sky line, tourists encounter the original of a long-familiar picture post-card panorama; while the high arched towers and vast curving cables of the Bridge itself are rediscovered daily.... On summer days old ladies, invalids, Sunday morning strollers, unemployed men, and wandering boys and girls absorb here the indolence of space, sun and water. Employees of downtown office buildings seek at the Bridge during lunch time and after work a session with the outer world. At twilight, the conventional beauty of the setting attains such intensity that even.... lovers are sublimated. And in the wastes of night, so passionate is the contrast between the deserted and melancholy Bridge entrances and the moonlit altitude of the passage itself, that the solitary pedestrian feels himself drawn into association with all the extravagances of the poets."

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 Brooklyn Bridge 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 Brooklyn Bridge is one of the outstanding suspension bridges in the world, that it is much admired for its singular beauty and architectural significance not surpassed by any of the later bridges spanning the East River, that it represents a milestone in the history of American engineering and that its presence still lends prestige to our City.

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 Brooklyn Bridge, City Hall Park, Borough of Manhattan to Cadman Plaza, Borough of Brooklyn and designates as its Landmark Site those parts of the following lots which contain a portion of the Brooklyn Bridge: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Blocks 120, Lot 9; 113, Lot 1; 108, Lot 4; 73, Lot 29; and Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Blocks 25, Lot 12; 35, Lot 21; 36, Lot 1; 45, Lot 1.