

FLATIRON BUILDING, Broadway and Fifth Avenue at 23rd Street, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1902; architects D. H. Burnham & Co.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 851, Lot 1.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Flatiron Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 43). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In a letter to the Commission, the owner of the building indicated that he is proud to accept the proposed designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The triangular site on which this turn of the century French Renaissance skyscraper was built, gave to it a special character and a poetic quality. As seen from the north, it has been compared, by many writers, to a great ship sailing up the Avenue. Whether seen at night, reflected in the glistening pavement during a thundershower, or fighting for its life in a blizzard, it has a quality of directional motion with its prowlike mass towering above the beholder. To the New York of 1902 this building represented the very essence of modernity. It is a building whose walls are covered with ornament, not one square inch remaining flush and plain. Nevertheless, because of its prowlike quality, it still enjoys a feeling of daring slenderness and height, unequalled by many later structures. It derived its name from its shape which was so similar to that of the laundress' flat-iron.

It is interesting to note that this steel-framed skyscraper, which dominates the south side of Madison Square, was designed by a Chicago architect. Perhaps the daring of this high, narrow triangular shaped structure may be attributed to the great backlog of experience which was so notably attained by the Chicago School of architects.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that commercial requirements may from time to time necessitate alterations to the store fronts on the street level of the Flatiron Building. By this designation it is not intended to freeze the Flatiron Building in its present state for all time and thus prevent future appropriate alterations at street level. The Commission believes it has the obligation, and indeed, it has the desire, to cooperate with owners of Landmarks who may wish to make changes in their properties to meet their current and future needs. This attitude reflects the Commission's endorsement of the view that Landmarks are often successfully preserved through active and beneficial use.

The Landmarks Preservation Law contains many provisions relating to changes in Landmarks. The Commission is already working with owners who wish to make changes in their properties. In this connection, the Commission wishes to state at this time that it recognizes that the owner of the Flatiron Building may want to modify its store fronts to suit its tenants' needs. The Commission looks forward to working with representatives of the owner if and when such exterior alterations are planned.

#### 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 Flatiron 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 Flatiron Building is an interesting example of the early steel-framed skyscraper built on an unusual triangular site, that due to the prow-like effect of its northern end, it creates an impression of great slenderness and height, that it displays a wealth of ornamental detail representative of its time and that although a utilitarian office building, it has inspired literary out-pourings of an almost poetic quality.

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 Flatiron Building, Broadway and Fifth Avenue at 23rd Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 851, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.