

JOHN HENRY HAMMOND HOUSE, 9 East 91st Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1902-03; architects Carrère & Hastings.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1503, Lot 10.

On June 25, 1974, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the John Henry Hammond House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 9). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Seven witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were two speakers in opposition to designation including the representative of the owner. In 1970 a public hearing was also held on the proposed designation of this building.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This grand residence was built in 1902-03 and designed by the prestigious architects Carrère & Hastings, noted for the New York Public Library and the Henry Clay Frick Mansion. The Hammond House is a fine example of a High Renaissance-style structure inspired by Roman 16th-century palazzo design; it is very much in keeping with the quality of Carrère & Hastings' work.

The area in which the house is located acquired the name "Carnegie Hill" soon after Andrew Carnegie erected his mansion at Fifth Avenue and 91st Street at the turn of the century. Although middle-class residences had been built in the area in the 1880s and 1890s, Carnegie's move uptown inspired other well-to-do business and professional people to build here also. John Henry Hammond, a New York lawyer, banker and corporation director, married Emily Vanderbilt Sloane; in 1901 her father, William D. Sloane of W. & J. Sloane, purchased the 91st Street property from Andrew Carnegie and then transferred the property to Emily as a wedding present. Mrs. Hammond, an heiress to the Sloane and Vanderbilt fortunes, devoted much of her time to philanthropic activities including the restoration of the Theodore Roosevelt House at 28 East 20th Street. The Hammond house is now occupied by the 9 East 91st Street Hospital.

The five-story house with its impressive limestone facade harmonizes extremely well with the distinguished Landmarks buildings immediately to the west, the Otto Kahn and James Burden Houses. The boldly rusticated base is pierced by a high round-arched central entrance, flanked by arched windows. The entrance doors are fine examples of wrought iron. Rising above the base are three floors faced with smooth limestone, clearly defined at the edges by exceptionally wide quoins.

The most notable element of the facade is the high second floor which is treated as a piano nobile. Here, the impressive French windows are handsomely enframed displaying the aedicule or miniature temple motif, ultimately derived from classical architecture but which came to the United States via England. Complete with Ionic columns, a full entablature and an arched pediment with modillions, these windows lend grandeur to the facade. The windows are further enhanced by richly ornamented wrought-iron railings. The center window is accented by an ornate wrought-iron balcony railing set on a projecting stone slab, carried on carved console brackets, which acts as a sheltering cornice above the entrance. The large console brackets are decorated with intricate fruit and leaf forms. The window guards of the side windows are equally rich and of similar design; set back in the reveals of the openings, they give full exposure to the handsome enframements. Cornice slabs supported on brackets surmount the third floor windows. At the fourth floor the windows are separated by panels which are outlined by egg-and-dart moldings.

The west side of the building is also faced with limestone. The two-bay section closest to the front corner is handled like the 91st Street facade, but the second floor windows have no crowning pediments. Both the west side and the front terminate in a magnificent projecting roof cornice. A rounded string course with a leaf motif and crossed bands is set just below the fleur-de-lis frieze. Lions' heads on the edge of the cornice add a further accent to this impressive architectural element.

The rich architectural details were skillfully used by the architects to create this grand palazzo-like residence which adds such distinction to this block. It is a prime example of Carnegie Hill residential architecture of the early 20th century and enhances the entire Carnegie Hill area.

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 John Henry Hammond 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 John Henry Hammond House is a grand Renaissance-style structure inspired by Roman 16th-century palazzo design, that it was designed by the noted architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings, that it is distinguished by rich architectural detail, that it is a prime example of Carnegie Hill residential architecture of the early 20th century, and that it adds to the distinction of this outstanding block and enhances the Carnegie Hill area.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of 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 John Henry Hammond House, 9 East 91st Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1503, Lot 10, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.