

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 13, 1980, Designation List 133
LP-1068

172-174 EAST 73RD STREET BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1889; architect Frank Wennemer.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 44.

On June 19, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 172-174 East 73rd Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 18). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The 172-174 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of the type of private carriage house built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in this area of Manhattan. Constructed in 1889 for Frank P. Perkins, the carriage house was designed by architect Frank Wennemer in a Romanesque Revival style that is enlivened with neo-Grec detail.

The carriage house at 172-174 East 73rd Street is a component of the rare surviving group of carriage houses, stables, and garages built on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues to serve the wealthy families who lived on or near Fifth Avenue. Stables were a necessity during the period when private urban transportation was limited to horses and carriages. Only the very wealthy, however, could afford to build and maintain a private carriage house such as most of those found on this street. Others boarded their horses in large commercial stables such as that at 182 East 73rd Street.

The private carriage houses tended to be two- or three-story structures often designed in the most stylish architectural modes of the period. On the interior were two major ground-floor spaces--a front room for the carriages and a rear room with stalls for the horses. At the upper stories were one or two apartments for the coachman, groom, or related employees. Some of the larger carriage houses had interior ramps on the ground floor that led to additional horse stalls on the second floor. Early in the 20th century, as automobiles began to replace carriages as the primary means of transportation for the wealthy, these stables were converted to garages and chauffeur's residences. Later in the 20th century, when private garages became too expensive to maintain, most of the buildings were converted to stylish residences.

The carriage houses were built on streets that were convenient to the East Side mansions, but were not so close that their noises and smells would mar the exclusive character of the residential streets. A few carriage houses were erected between Madison and Park Avenues, but most were constructed on the less elegant streets east of Park Avenue. Like many streets on the Upper East Side, East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues was initially developed in the 1860s with modest Italianate style residences. Most of these houses were replaced as the block became a prime site for carriage houses; only two of the original rowhouses (Nos. 171 and 175) survive.

The building at No. 172-174 is designed in a form characteristic of contemporary carriage houses. A three-story structure, it is constructed with a rock-faced limestone base and brick upper stories that have rock-faced limestone trim. The massing of the front facade is enlivened by a projecting central pavilion that encompasses the elliptical-arched vehicular entrance. This entrance is set within a limestone enframingent. Neo-Grec style pilasters with incised shafts support the entablature of the enframingent. Paired windows with stone enframingents mark the upper two stories of this projecting section. One-window-wide bays flank the central pavilion. On the ground floor, an arched pedestrian entrance is set to the right of the carriage entrance, while a window of similar form is located to the left. Single windows with stone enframingents articulate the upper floors. A simple galvanized-iron cornice with an egg-and-dart molding and stylized neo-Grec style end brackets crowns the building.

In 1890, soon after the completion of the building, Frank Perkins sold the carriage house to railroad entrepreneur James B. Layng (1833-?). Layng became vice-president of the Cleveland, Chicago & St. Louis Railway in the same year that he purchased the carriage house.

Although the facade of the carriage house has been painted and the original doors have been replaced, the building, now used as a residence, retains its architectural character and forms a major component of the unusual group of carriage houses and stables that gives East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues its singular character.

Report prepared by
Andrew S. Dolkart
Research Department

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 172-174 East 73rd Street 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 172-174 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of a late 19th-century carriage house; that it is an unusual Romanesque Revival style building with Neo-Grec details; that the building, a rare survivor, is a reminder of an elegant lifestyle that has passed; that it was owned by important New Yorkers including railroad magnate James B. Layng; and that the carriage house is a vital component of the unique group of buildings on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly 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 172-174 East 73rd Street Building, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 44, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

New York City. Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits and Dockets.

New York County. Office of the Register. Liber Deeds and Mortgages.

Who's Who in America, Vol. 3, (1903/05).



172-174 East 73rd Street
Architect: Frank Wennemer

Photo Credit:
Gina Santucci

Built: 1889