

1261 MADISON AVENUE APARTMENT HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1900-01;
architects Buchman & Fox.
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1502, Lot 20.

On June 25, 1974, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 1261 Madison Avenue Apartment House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 8). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eight witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There was one speaker in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This grand apartment house, built in 1900-01, is a fine example of the French Beaux-Arts style which was popular at that time for large buildings such as this and for single-family dwellings. Gilbert Brown, a real-estate developer, commissioned the design from architects Buchman & Fox.

The area in which the building 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 also to move here. Although many built their own houses, others chose to move into elegant and newly fashionable apartment houses such as 1261 Madison Avenue which was built to house only fourteen families.

1261 Madison Avenue, an elegant, yet restrained, example of Beaux-Arts design, is seven stories high including the tiled mansard roof. Heavy rusticated limestone is used on the first two floors which form a base for the composition. A grand entrance is provided on Madison Avenue. Projecting forward from the facade, it is flanked by rusticated pilasters enclosing a molded enframingent. A short flight of steps leads up and back to the double doors. The enframingent is crowned by a voluted "broken" pediment set on foliate console brackets with flowered blocks. More volutes in the break of the pediment enframe the street number "1261." A large cartouche with marble medallion rises above the pediment on the wall.

The three stories above the rusticated base are faced with smooth limestone accented by panels beneath the windows on the fourth and fifth floors. On both sides the windows on these floors have keyed enframingents. The outer bays on Madison Avenue side project slightly and the fifth floor windows are arched and emphasized by cartouches above. Flanking console brackets help support a continuous modillioned cornice which spans both facades and is surmounted by a wrought-iron balcony rail. The sixth floor windows have keyed flat arches with frieze panels above. The projecting outer bays are emphasized by two-story pilasters which rise to the seventh story mansard and flank the windows on both floors. These windows are crowned by large curved pediments with carved motifs. Curved pediments and voluted enframingents enhance the other windows in the mansard which rise above a sixth floor string course.

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 1261 Madison Avenue Apartment 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 1261 Madison Avenue Apartment House is a fine example of the French Beaux-Arts style, that it is enhanced by carefully executed architectural detail, that it is

an interesting example of a building type which became fashionable and popular in the early 20th century, and that it adds distinction to its block and enhances the entire 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 1261 Madison Avenue Apartment House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1502, Lot 20, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.