

163 EAST 73RD STREET BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan,
Built 1896-97; architect Thomas Rae.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1408, Lot 25.

On June 19, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 163 East 73rd Street Building 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. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The 163 East 73rd Street Building and its twin at No. 161 are fine examples of the type of private carriage house built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in this area of Manhattan. They were constructed between 1896 and 1897 for William H. Tailer who lived at 14 East 72nd Street. Architect Thomas Rae designed both carriage houses in the late Romanesque Revival style and ornamented them with the Renaissance-style decorative forms which were then gaining in popularity.

The carriage house at No. 163 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 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.

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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. 163 is designed in a form characteristic of contemporary carriage houses. A two-story structure, it is constructed of unusual rock-faced brick and trimmed with rock-faced and smooth-faced Indiana limestone beltcourses, lintels, sills, and transom bars. A central, round-arched carriage entrance with a molded-brick intrados and limestone impost blocks and foliated keystone is flanked by a round-arched pedestrian entry and a round-arched window with a wrought-iron guard. All ground floor openings are ornamented with equestrian details indicating the use of the building. The keystone of the central entrance is in the form of a saddle pouch, while the transom bar of the window to the left has horses' heads carved in relief. The transom bar of the pedestrian entrance was removed when a short flight of steps was added. A wide limestone beltcourse separates the utilitarian ground floor from the residential upper story. The second floor, with its shallow central oriel, is simply articulated with rectangular windows.

The textural quality provided by the rough-cut brick and stone marks the building as a Romanesque Revival style structure. Additional Romanesque Revival features include the round-arched openings with stone transom bars on the ground floor and the deep, recessed second-story windows that originally had multi-paned upper sash like that at No. 161. The limestone keystones and pulvinated, galvanized-iron cornice with its frieze embossed with garlands are inspired by Renaissance design. With the exception of new doors and second-story window sash, the building retains all of its original integrity.

Ownership of the carriage house was retained by William Tailer until 1906 when his executors sold it to James McLean who lived at 7 East 75th Street. In 1914, it became the property of Jay Gould, grandson of the financier and railroad magnate of the same name. The younger Jay Gould was the court tennis champion of the world. In 1935 the carriage house was conveyed to Jay Gould's brother, Kingdon Gould (1887-1945), a financier and realtor, who retained title to the building until 1940. The carriage house is now a private residence. It has been maintained virtually in its original form on the exterior, and it remains an integral part of the unusual group of stables and carriage houses on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues.

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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 163 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 163 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of a late 19th-century carriage house; that it is a beautifully massed late Romanesque Revival style structure ornamented with Renaissance detail; that it is adorned with equestrian details indicating its original use; 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 tennis star Jay Gould and his brother Kingdon Gould; and that the carriage house is a vital component of the group of unusual buildings on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provision 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 163 East 73rd Street Building, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1408, Lot 25, 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.

New York Times, Nov. 8, 1945, p. 19.



163 East 73rd Street
Architect: Thomas Rae

Photo Credit: Gina Santucci

Built: 1896-97