

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
May 13, 1980, Designation List 133  
LP-1066

168 EAST 73RD STREET BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan.  
Built 1899; architect Charles W. Rownyn.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 46.

On June 19, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 168 East 73rd Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (item No. 16). 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 the designation. The Commission has received correspondence from the present owner in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The 168 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of the type of private carriage house built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in this area of Manhattan. Constructed in 1899 for William Baylis, this carriage house was designed by Charles Rownyn in a sophisticated rendition of the neo-Flemish Renaissance style.

The carriage house at No. 168 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.

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. 168 is designed in a form characteristic of contemporary carriage houses, but the neo-Flemish Renaissance style is unusual. Although never a major design force, the style had an appeal that was linked to a romantic association with New York City's Dutch heritage, and it became popular in the 1890s. The most conspicuous design motif used on neo-Flemish Renaissance style buildings is the stepped gable--a form borrowed from the Renaissance houses and public buildings of Dutch and Flemish cities. Other details that derive from Dutch and Flemish precedents are their use of brick facing on the facades, and the raised stone beltcourses, voussoirs, quoins, and strap-work panels that create polychromatic interest on the facades.

A few buildings in New York were designed in the neo-Flemish Renaissance style because of specific associational connections with the building's history or its site. This is particularly true of the West End Collegiate Church on West End Avenue and West 77th Street, designed in 1891 by Robert Gibson. The use of Dutch and Flemish Renaissance forms was appropriate for this congregation which traces its history back to the first Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam, founded in 1628. Similarly, Henry J. Hardenbergh's 1905 design for a new home for the New York Club at 20 West 40th Street, made use of a gabled front and other Flemish details to link the club to the city's early history. Another associational example is the neo-Flemish Renaissance style firehouse that once stood on Old Slip in Lower Manhattan. Architects Napoleon Le Brun & Sons chose this style for its connection with the site. Architecture critic Montgomery Schuyler wrote that the firehouse "is an unpretentious piece of Dutch Renaissance, appropriate to a site within the confines of the Dutch settlement of Manhattan."<sup>1</sup>

Most buildings designed in the neo-Flemish Renaissance style do not have a direct associational link to New York's colonial past, but use the style in a more general, evocative manner. The style was not limited to a specific building type, but is found on a wide variety of structures. A few of these are monumental in scale--much larger than anything built in Colonial New York. Major examples of this type of neo-Flemish Renaissance building include the Fleming Smith Warehouse at 451-453 Washington Street (Stephen D. Hatch, 1891-92), DeWitt Clinton High School, later Haaren High School, at 899 Tenth Avenue (C.B.J. Snyder, 1904-06), and the Heights Casino, a private club located at 75 Montague

Street in Brooklyn Heights (Boring & Tilton, c.1905). The style, however, was much more popular for small buildings designed on a scale more closely related to that of the Renaissance prototypes. A particularly notable example of such a small-scale building is the former Jackson Square Branch of the New York Public Library at 251 West 13th Street (Richard Morris Hunt, 1887). Rowhouses were also designed in the style--the finest group of neo-Flemish Renaissance style town houses in New York City is that at 457-463 West 144th Street (William E. Mowbray, 1886-90) in the Hamilton Heights Historic District. Other rowhouses, such as those at 313, 321, 325, and 337 Convent Avenue (Adolph Hoak, 1887-90) in Hamilton Heights and 11 and 18 Montgomery Place (C.P.H. Gilbert, 1887-88) in Park Slope combine Flemish gables with houses that are basically Romanesque Revival or Queen Anne in character. In an effort to attain a degree of stylishness some older rowhouses, such as 43 and 124 Willow Street in Brooklyn Heights, had stepped-gable upper stories added in the 1890s. A few free-standing residences were also designed in this style. Among the most notable was the Edwin E. Jackson, Jr. Residence at 424 Clinton Avenue in Brooklyn (now demolished).

Carriage houses and firehouses--two building types that are related in their basic form and use--were among the most popular buildings designed in the neo-Flemish Renaissance style. The scale of these buildings generally related to that of original Flemish Renaissance residences and both the carriage houses and firehouses were frequently designed in a romantic and picturesque manner. Besides the firehouse on Old Slip, two other neo-Flemish Renaissance examples are known--Engine Co. 252 at 610 Central Avenue in Bushwick (Parfitt Brothers, 1896) and Engine Co. 258 at 16-40 47th Avenue in Queens (Bradford L. Gilbert, 1903). Carriage houses in this style include that on East 73rd Street, as well as the William R. H. Martin carriage house at 149 East 38th Street (Robert S. Townsend, 1902).

The Baylis carriage house at 168 East 73rd Street is one of the finest neo-Flemish Renaissance style buildings in New York City. It was designed by noted New York architect Charles W. Romeyn (1854-1942), whose most prominent work is the old Grolier Club (1890-95), a Romanesque Revival style structure located at 29 East 32nd Street. The basic form of the 73rd Street building is typical of contemporary carriage houses, with its round-arched vehicular entrance, pedestrian entrance, and window on the ground floor and its residential living units above. This building is, however, exceptional for its superbly modulated Flemish Renaissance detail. The carriage house is constructed of Roman brick with contrasting raised terra-cotta beltcourses, quoins, voussoirs, transom bars, keystones, and keyed window enframements--all elements that derive from late 16th- and early 17th-century Dutch and Flemish architecture. In addition, the facade is enlivened by a pair of rectangular strapwork panels set below the second-floor windows, a multi-paned transom lights, and by a large strapwork cartouche panel located above the third-floor windows. The crowning element of the carriage house, and its most prominent neo-Flemish Renaissance feature, is the stepped gable capped by an aedicular niche. This gable projects from a Spanish-tiled mansard roof and is flanked by tall Flemish Renaissance style chimneys.

The carriage house was built for William Baylis (1875-1944), a wealthy banker and tax expert. In 1920 Baylis sold the building to Charles Russell Lowell Putnam (1867-1962), a prominent pediatric surgeon and the grand-nephew of poet James Russell Lowell. In 1922 the building was purchased by George Grant Mason who lived at 854 Fifth Avenue. Mason owned the carriage house until 1955 when it was sold to a realty company. For four years, beginning in 1956, financier William Armistead Moale Burden (b. 1906) owned the building.

With the exception of a modern door at the carriage entry, the building retains its unique architectural character. It is among the finest neo-Flemish Renaissance style buildings in New York City and, in addition, it is a major component of the group of carriage houses that gives East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues its distinctive character.

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1. Montgomery Schuyler, "The Works of N. LeBrun & Sons," Architectural Record, 27 (May, 1910), 365-381.

#### 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 168 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 168 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of a late 19th-century carriage house; that it is one of the most beautiful buildings in New York City designed in the neo-Flemish Renaissance style, an architectural mode that enjoyed a brief popularity during the late 19th century; that the neo-Flemish Renaissance style was used in New York City because it was evocative of the city's colonial past; that the building has superb brick and terra-cotta ornamental forms reminiscent of Renaissance structures in Holland and Belgium, including a stepped gable, strapwork panels, and raised beltcourses; that it was designed by prominent New York architect Charles W. Romeyn; that the carriage house, a rare survivor, is a reminder of an elegant lifestyle that has passed;

that it was owned by important New Yorkers including banker William Baylis and surgeon Charles Russell Lowell Putnam; and that the carriage house is perhaps the most vital component of the group of unusual 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 168 East 73rd Street Building, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 46, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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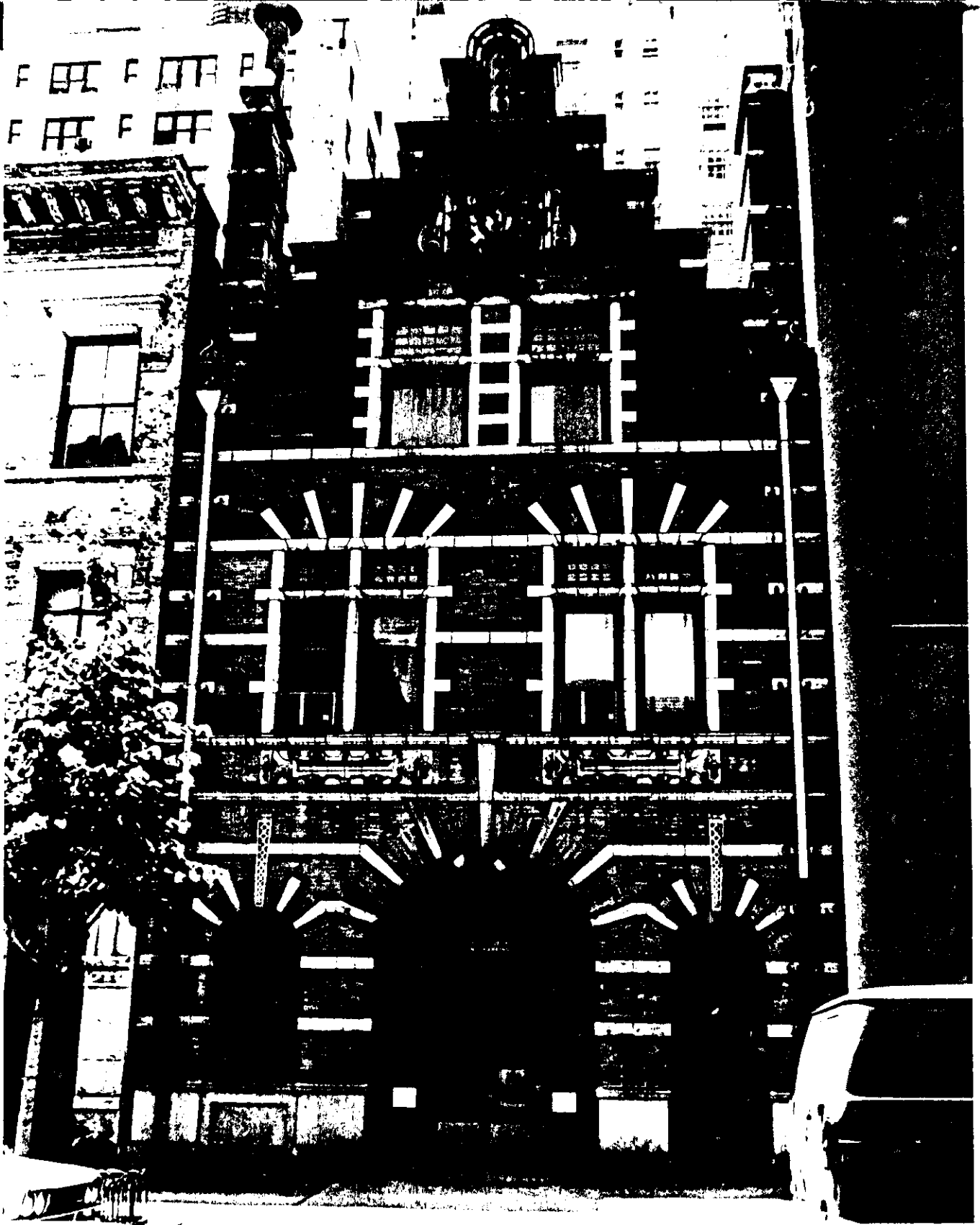
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168 East 73rd Street  
Architect: Charles W. Romeyn

Photo Credit: Gina Santucci

Built: 1899