

170 East 73RD STREET BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1890-91; architect Frank Wennemer.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 45.

On June 19, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 170 East 73rd Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 17). 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 170 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 between 1890 and 1891 for Frank P. Perkins, the carriage house was designed by architect Frank Wennemer in an eclectic manner, combining neo-Grec, Queen Anne, and Renaissance style motifs.

The carriage house at No. 170 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. 170 is designed in a form characteristic of contemporary carriage houses. A three-story structure, it is constructed with a stone base and brick upper stories with contrasting stone trim. On the ground floor the bands of rock-faced stone blocks are interrupted by a centrally-placed, segmental-arched vehicular entrance that is flanked by narrow, segmental-arched pedestrian entrances. These arches have molded surrounds, each with a smooth keystone and a pair of voussoirs. A modest stone entablature separates the utilitarian ground floor from the residential upper stories. The fenestration patterns of the second and third floors are identical--each has a pair of central windows and single side windows, all connected by a molded, stone beltcourse. Queen Anne style sunburst panels separate the central windows and neo-Grec style stone lintels with chamfered lips and incised brackets cap all of the windows. A projecting, galvanized-iron cornice with a frieze embossed with neo-Grec forms crowns the building.

The original owner of the carriage house, Frank Perkins, sold it before its completion to George C. Clausen (1859-1917), who lived at 18 East 76th Street. Clausen, "one of the wealthiest and best-known German-American citizens in New York,"¹ was head of the surety and insurance firm of Clausen, Bayley and Kearny, an executive of the Henry Clausen & Sons Brewery, a family business in Brooklyn, and Parks Commissioner of New York during the 1890s. As Parks Commissioner Clausen was involved in a scandal over the expenditure of \$100,000 appropriated for the benefit of the laboring poor.

In 1896 Clausen sold the carriage house to the wealthy merchant, Henry T. Sloane (1846-1937), who had just built a grand mansion at 9 East 72nd Street (now part of the Lycee Francais de New York). Henry T. Sloane managed the exclusive home furnishings store of W. & J. Sloane founded by his father in 1843. In 1899 Sloane and his wife, the former Jessie Robbins, were party to one of the most scandalous divorce cases of the era. After the divorce both Sloane and his former wife vacated the new mansion. The mansion and the carriage house were sold in 1901 to James Stillman (1850-1918). Stillman began his business career as a cotton merchant. In 1891 he was selected as president of the National City Bank, which, after allying itself with the Rockefeller's Standard Oil interests, became one of the largest and most powerful monetary institutions in the country. In 1901, soon after purchasing the building, Stillman commissioned architect Bruce Price to undertake interior alterations. After Stillman's death the carriage house was sold to a succession of owners. In 1925 architects Delano & Aldrich altered the residential portion of the building for owner Sarah H. Lancashire. Today the carriage house is a private residence. Although the facade has been painted, the building retains virtually all of its original detail and forms a major component of the unusual group of carriage houses and stables that lends a unique character to this block of East 73rd Street.

Footnotes

1. New York Times, May 25, 1917, p.11.

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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 170 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 170 East 73rd Street Building is a fine example of a late 19th-century carriage house; that it is an unusual building combining neo-Renaissance, neo-Grec, and Queen Anne style 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 George C. Clausen, Henry T. Sloane, and James Stillman; 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 170 East 73rd Street Building, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1407, Lot 45, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

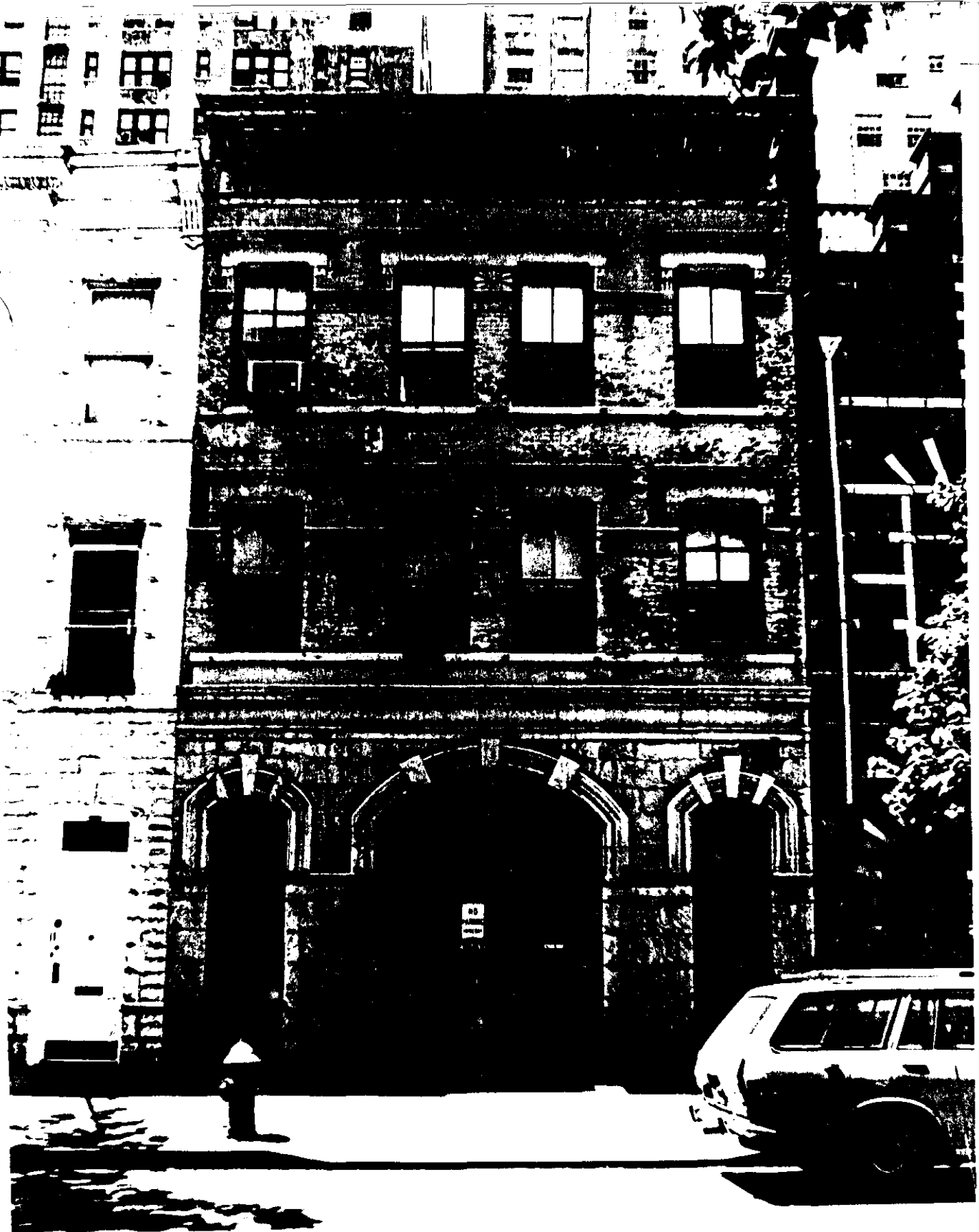
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New York Times, May 25, 1917, p. 11.



170 East 73rd Street
Architect: Frank Wennemer

Photo Credit: Gina Santucci

Built: 1890-91