

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 13, 1980, Designation List 133
LP-1064

175 EAST 73RD STREET BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1860.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1408, Lot 30.

On June 19, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 175 East 73rd Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 14). 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 175 East 73rd Street Building is one of only two surviving Italianate style rowhouses on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues. The house was originally one of a row of six modest brick houses constructed in 1860 for E. H. Robbins on the north side of East 73rd Street.

Along with the house at 171 East 73rd Street, No. 175 is the oldest component of the group of low-rise buildings that lines this street. In the early 1860s a number of streets on the Upper East Side were developed with modest rowhouses that were sold to lower-middle-class and working-class families. No. 173 was sold in 1862 to Joseph Murray, a clerk. These rows were among the earliest building on the Upper East Side and they predate the large scale development of the area. In the last years of the 19th century the rowhouses that had been built between Fifth and Park Avenues to house middle-class families began to be replaced by mansions built by the city's wealthiest residents. Although the streets east of Park Avenue were still not seen as being desirable for large residences, they were directly affected by the new development near Central Park. The small rowhouses that lined the side streets east of Park Avenue began to be replaced by private carriage houses and stables built to serve the wealthy families who lived nearby.

Stables were a necessity during the period when urban transportation was limited to horses and carriages, but only the very wealthy could afford to build and maintain a private carriage house. 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. East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues became a prime location

for the construction of carriage houses and beginning in the 1880s the old rowhouses were replaced by carriage houses. With the construction of each new carriage house, the remaining residential buildings became less and less desirable until only a very few remained.

In 1896 owner Daniel Healey converted No. 175 East 73rd Street from a private residence into a residence and blacksmith's shop that would serve the surrounding carriage houses and stables. Undoubtedly the conversion of this rowhouse to a use associated with that of the other buildings on the street saved it from demolition. This change of use resulted in the alteration of the base of the house. The two basement windows were replaced by a large opening spanned by an iron beam.

In the 1920s the private carriage houses (now garages) became too expensive to maintain, and many were converted to stylish private residences. This return to a residential character on the street made the remaining rowhouses more desirable and both No. 171 and No. 175 were purchased by prominent architects.

In 1926 architect Francis Livingston Pell (1873-1945) purchased this house from Daniel Healey. Pell began his architectural career in the office of George B. Post, where he worked on Post's designs for City College. Pell's best known work is the Maryland Institute Building designed with Harvy W. Corbett. Pell & Corbett won the Medal of Honor of the American Institute of Architects for this design.

The No. 175 East 73rd Street Building is a modest, three-story and basement structure designed in the Italianate style. A high stoop leads to the simple rectangular entrance to the building. The entryway is composed of a pair of deep recessed double doors with a clear-glass transom light and a stone lintel. Two long double-hung windows with stone lintels articulate the parlor-floor facade to the right of the entrance. Shorter rectangular windows, also with stone lintels, are located on the second floor, while segmental-arched openings with brick lintels and stone sills light the third floor. A beautifully carved wooden cornice with single and paired console brackets and a segmental-arched frieze runs along the roof line. Alterations to the facade include a new basement that replaces the entrance to the blacksmith's shop, a new stoop and iron railings, shortened windows with new sash, and the addition of wall air conditioners. Despite these altered and restored details, the building retains its architectural integrity and is an important component of the unusual group of buildings 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 175 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 175 East 73rd Street Building is one of only two surviving rowhouses on this street; that it is an excellent example of the modest Italianate style rowhouses built in the early 1860s on the Upper East Side of Manhattan; that it is representative of the earliest period of speculative development in this area of the city; that it retains fine ornament including a bracketed wooden cornice; and that it is a vital component of the unusual group of low-rise buildings on East 73rd Street between Lexington and Third Avenues that consists of carriage houses, residences, a stable, and a garage.

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 175 East 73rd Street Building, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1408, Lot 30, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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New York Times, Sept. 8, 1945, p. 15.