

THE ANSONIA HOTEL, 2101-2119 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1899, completed 1904; architect Paul E. M. DuBoy.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1165, Lot 20.

On April 28, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Ansonia Hotel and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 13). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The owner opposed it. Subsequent to the hearing the Commission has received 53 letters from individuals and organizations and petitions signed by approximately 25,770 persons favoring designation. It has also received a petition signed by 11 persons opposing designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This apartment-hotel in the grand French Beaux Arts style occupies the entire blockfront on the west side of Broadway between 73rd and 74th Streets. It rises on its conspicuous site to a height of seventeen stories. Built at the turn of the century, with over three hundred suites, it was at that time one of the largest apartment-hotels in the world. The Ansonia is a symbol of an era of opulence and elegance, and still stands as one of the truly grand buildings of Manhattan's West Side.

The most striking features of this vast structure are the corner towers on Broadway, with their domes and railings, which rise slightly above and repeat the theme of the three story convex mansard roof that crowns the building. Another noticeable feature, the result of a plan which provides maximum light and air, is a series of recessed courts: two on the north side, two on the south side and one on Broadway.

The three great facades, although higher than they would have been in Paris, are very French in their detail. The sense of verticality established by the tiers of windows and by the recessed courts and rounded corner towers is skillfully modulated by a series of horizontal balconies. Those at the top and just above the three story rusticated base are continuous and are constructed of limestone. Iron balconies at the intermediate floors though not all continuous are nonetheless carefully related to those above and below them. The architect has contrasted highly ornamented and delicate ironwork against terra cotta and massive limestone details, and has contrasted quoins and rustication against smooth paneled surfaces of brickwork.

The Ansonia Hotel was built by William Earl Dodge Stokes, a noted capitalist and builder who was one of the leading developers of Riverside Drive and the Upper West Side. It was designed, in accordance with his specific instructions, by Paul DuBoy, a French architect. It was built by the Onward Construction Company which was owned by Stokes and for which he served as treasurer. His personal fortune had been inherited from his father, James Stokes, a partner in Phelps, Dodge & Co.

The name Ansonia was derived from Ansonia, Connecticut, where Stokes spent many summers and the town, in turn, had been named for Anson Greene Phelps, his maternal grandfather, who founded the Ansonia Brass & Copper Company.

Mr. Stokes had many ideas in advance of his day that were carried out in the construction of the Ansonia which he superintended in person. His early advocacy of fireproofing accounts for the all-masonry construction and the thickness of the interior partitions. In order to insure its high quality, he had the terra cotta ornament made at a plant he owned at Perth Amboy, New Jersey, under the supervision of a manager brought over from France. The elevators were likewise installed by a firm he owned in Worcester, Massachusetts. In addition to six passenger elevators there were also large service elevators for deliveries to the apartment kitchens. When the hotel opened, it had attractions unheard of at the time, such as two swimming pools, a roof garden, and shops in the basement.

The Ansonia Hotel is known the world over as a residence for musicians. It has always attracted notables from the music world due to the virtually soundproof construction of its walls and floors. Among those who have lived there are Leopold Auer, Karin Branzell, Enrico Caruso, Gatti Casazza, Bruna Castagna, Feodor Chaliapin, Fausta Cleva, Alessio De Paolis, Mischa Elman, Geraldine Farrar, Herbert Janssen, Lauritz Melchior, Yehudi Menuhin, Ezio Pinza, Lily Pons, Tito Schipa, Friedrich Schorr, Antonio Scotti, Igor Stravinsky, and Arturo Toscanini. Theatrical notables who have lived in the Ansonia include: Billie Burke, Florenz Ziegfeld, De Wolf Hopper, and Sol Hurok as well as the authors, Theodore Dreiser, Elmer Rice and W. L. Stoddard.

#### PRESENT CONDITION

In the face of the owner's opposition to designation and of the unusually widespread public support for designation, the Landmarks Preservation Commission has also considered the present condition of the building and whether it appears to have a viable future.

As far as the exterior is concerned, we note that the cupolas that once crowned the corner towers have long since been removed, some of the balconies and railings are damaged or missing, the ground floor archways have been converted to shop fronts or blocked up, and that inappropriately designed commercial signs detract from the original street level appearance, but that none of these changes have irreversibly affected the essential fabric of the structure and that its overall effect is still one of joyous exuberance profiled against the sky.

While the Commission has no jurisdiction over the interiors of Landmarks, we have checked with the agency responsible for the inspection of buildings insofar as their maintenance, mechanical equipment, use and occupancy effect the safety and sanitary conditions of the occupants. As of March 13, 1972, the records of the Department of Buildings list 278 outstanding violations on 2109-2119 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan. A careful reading of the list, however, reveals that it consists almost entirely of an inventory of leaky faucets, faulty radiators, flaking paint, lockers that obstruct a passageway, the objectionable intrusion of an air-conditioning unit, etc., etc. The only more substantial items we could find were the use of two rooms on the 14th floor as meeting rooms, the parking of automobiles in one of the courtyards and the erection of an electric sign without a prior permit. The correction of the sum total of these items does not, in our view, appear to present an unreasonable financial burden on the owner.

As to the future viability of the Ansonia Hotel, the Commission has been given written assurance by the owner that it has no intention to sell or demolish the hotel. Still living in the Ansonia are such artists as Bidu Sayao and Thelma Votipka. The building still houses the teachers and accompanists of such performers as Lucia Albanese, Franco Corelli, Alexander Kipnis, Roberta Peters, Jan Pearce, Elizabeth Schwartzkopf, Joan Sutherland, Renata Tebaldi and Richard Tucker.

The Ansonia is, in fact, one of the few buildings in New York City where musicians can practice or give lessons without disturbing their neighbors. Since Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is only five blocks away, there is a new and inherent opportunity to increase the economic potential of the old building and to assure for it a long and useful life as an adjunct to one of the City's greatest cultural resources.

#### FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of the building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Ansonia Hotel 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 Ansonia Hotel has long been world renowned as a center of musical activity, that this tradition is enhanced by its truly splendid French Beaux Arts exterior which has a joyous quality befitting its musical associations, that it was solidly built by a noted builder with virtually soundproof partitions as one of the largest apartment hotels in the world, that the appropriate and ornamental use of its various materials has resulted in a building of architectural distinction and that it continues to provide a vital service to the music world of New York City today.

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 Ansonia Hotel, 2101-2119 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1165, Lot 20, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.