

BETHESDA PENTECOSTAL CHURCH (formerly Bushwick Democratic Club), 719 Bushwick Avenue, Borough of Brooklyn. Completed 1892; architect Frank Freeman.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 3215, Lot 1.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Bethesda Pentecostal Church (formerly Bushwick Democratic Club) and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 29). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The attorneys for the owner have informed the Commission that it favors the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

When this impressive building was dedicated in 1892, it was considered the finest Democratic Club in Brooklyn. Sited on a corner lot so that its two elevations can be viewed to advantage, the unusual Romanesque structure reveals a striking profile to the onlooker. Three and one-half stories high, this brick and stone trimmed structure, contains some intricate and extremely handsome terra cotta ornament, enriching the exterior surfaces.

The designs of the two street facades are distinctly different. At the corner, the two elevations are skillfully connected by a curved wall surface decorated with a terra cotta panel on which the intertwined initials "BDC" are still visible. Border panels of ornament rise three stories, on either side, to join a continuous ornamental frieze located directly under the eaves. In this curved wall area the ground floor corner window, subdivided into eight openings, expresses the two-story room inside.

The building sets back behind a front yard, and the main entrance, deeply recessed within a segmental-arched opening, is reached by a series of steps and landings. The architect repeated the wide opening of the doorway at the upper levels by providing a balcony on each floor. At the third floor balcony, a special design feature is the curved multi-paneled metal railing.

Decidedly impressive is the superb Roman brick masonry, particularly in its use of rowlock arches and lintels above the openings. This treatment is especially noteworthy in the segmental arch over the main entrance and in the two large Roman arches of the side elevation.

In this side wall, a pair of one and one-half story Roman arches are separated and also flanked by engaged columns that rise above the third story. The center column is topped by a fan shaped corbel that serves as a sill for a paired attic window, set in the gable dominating the wall. Paired squareheaded windows on the third floor are also flanked by small engaged columns. A wide chimney, projected slightly out from the main surface of the wall, is located in the center of the facade and separates the design elements. This chimney rises high above the steeply pitched slate roof to form a prominent part of the composition.

An interesting feature of this clubhouse is the use of recessed balconies, created by setting the walls and windows behind them, instead of projecting them out from the wall in the conventional manner. It is features such as these, which, in addition to the masterful use of materials, signalize the unusual work of Frank Freeman.

The Bushwick Democratic Club was organized in 1890, and the clubhouse was opened in 1892. The building included, in its three and one-half stories, space for living, social and business activities. Bowling alleys were installed in the basement. The membership was about four hundred, and its members came from all parts of the City. The Knights of Columbus purchased the building in 1941, and after using it for a quarter of a century sold the property to its present owner, the Bethesda Pentecostal Church.