

1966

Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 19, 1966, Number 14
LP-0184

BOWERY SAVINGS BANK, 130 Bowery, Borough of Manhattan. 1894; architects McKim, Mead & White.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 470, Lot 61.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Bowery Savings Bank at 130 Bowery and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 8). Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The Commission continued the public hearing until April 12, 1966 (Item No. 1). At that time one speaker appeared to testify. Both hearings were duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to designation at either meeting. In a letter to the Commission, Morris D. Crawford, Jr. President of The Bowery Savings Bank, stated that the Bank would not oppose designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The World's Columbian Exposition, at Chicago in 1893, brought to this country a new classicism. This Bank of 1894 was one of the first to herald the new style making the most of a difficult L-shaped site. The narrow entrance at 130 Bowery has been handled extremely effectively, utilizing the triumphal arch motif combined with an outer enframement reminiscent of the temple-form, complete with pediment. An attic story surmounts the whole with a cornice richly decorated by lions' heads and other ornament. McKim, Mead & White, the architects, always availed themselves of sculpture where possible. Here in the pediment the central clock is handsomely flanked by reclining classical figures and domesticated lions.

The broader side on Grand Street repeats the sculptured pediment on a broader scale, supported on four great columns. The walls on each side of this shallow portico, and on the Elizabeth Street side, consist of windows flanked by pilasters. On this portion of the building the pilasters are repeated in the very refined attic-story which is handsomely panelled in between. A rich cornice, similar to that on the Bowery side, is carried around both sides of the el.

The success of this early savings bank is amply attested to by its dignified and imposing architecture. It is reputed to be the only bank in New York which retains a branch on the site where it first started business.

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 Bowery Savings Bank at 130 Bowery 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 Bowery Savings Bank at 130 Bowery is one of the first buildings to reflect the classical influence of the Chicago Fair of 1893, that it is a fine, dignified expression of a New York banking house and that in its skillful use of site its good proportions, fine detail and sculpture, it reflects credit on the well-known architectural firm which designed it and the bank which had it built.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A 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 Bowery Savings Bank, 130 Bowery, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 470, Lot 61, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.