

1965

Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 23, 1965, Calendar No. 3
LP-0017

E. V. HAUGHWOUT BUILDING, 488-492 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan. 1856
architect J. P. Gaynor with iron components by James Bogardus.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 483, Lot 1.

On September 21, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the E. V. Haughwout Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 17). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Six witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This attractive five-story building, located on a corner site, has two cast-iron fronts designed in the Anglo-Italianate manner, with arched windows set between columns. The windows are reminiscent of those of Sansovino's great library on the Piazzetta in Venice. The Haughwout Building was originally designed for the display of cut-glass, silverware, clocks and chandeliers, in a store which was the foremost of its kind in the mid-19th century. This was the first store in New York to have a passenger elevator designed expressly for the use of customers.

The building is important because it is one of the largest and handsomest of New York's cast-iron buildings. The United States led in the production of the castings which made possible these great pre-fabricated structures. Cast-iron buildings exerted a major influence on the development of skyscrapers, and the Haughwout Building stands as a leading example of this remarkable technical innovation.

At the public hearing, the Borough President's Planning Board No. 2 supported the designation, and the representative of the Planning Board's Landmark Committee said, "Even more important than its aesthetic value is its historic architectural value.... In this one building are combined the two elements that provided the basis for today's skyscraper - the load-bearing metal frame and the vertical movement of passengers." (the elevator).

The National Secretary of the Society of Architectural Historians said, "It is not generally known to the public what a magnificent architectural heritage the commercial cast-iron palaces of downtown New York really are. This is a very specific New York thing, not equalled anywhere else, antedating the rise of the steel-frame skyscraper, a group of buildings of the greatest social, technical and aesthetic significance. The Haughwout Building is the best of these cast-iron palaces, and indeed one of the most interesting and important buildings in the whole City."

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 E. V. Haughwout 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 E. V. Haughwout Building is an outstanding example of the commercial, cast-iron architecture of New York City of the 1850's and that it combines, with its aesthetic excellence, the distinction of being one of the best of those cast-iron buildings which made the United States the leader in their development.

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 E. V. Haughwout Building, 488-492 Broadway, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 483, Lot 1, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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