

*St Charles  
Monument*

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
April 12, 1967, Number 4  
LP-0357

1967

ERNEST FLAGG HOUSE, GATEHOUSE AND GATE (The Society of St. Charles), 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island. Built 1898.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 891, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described improvements are situated.

On September 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Ernest Flagg House, Gatehouse and Gate and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 46). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In a letter to the Commission, the Very Reverend Caesar Donanzan, P.S.S.C. Provincial Superior of the Society of St. Charles approved of the proposed designation, saying that the Society is "privileged by the designation".

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Ernest Flagg House, together with its Gatehouse and Gate, is a magnificent example of Dutch Colonial revival style on a monumental scale. Considered the largest landowner on Staten Island, Ernest Flagg designed and constructed his own home "Stone Court", in 1898. The handsome thirty-two room mansion, the Gatehouse and Gate were built of fieldstone. The mansion today has shingle roofing, instead of the original slate. The gatehouse on the estate was constructed of fieldstone, for the gardener, and is contemporary with the mansion. Additions to the Gatehouse have been made since, including an attic greenhouse. The fieldstone surface of the Gatehouse has been painted, due to the porous nature of the material. Such exterior modifications do not detract from the overall design, but rather enhance it by contrasting various surface textures and colors.

The facade of the mansion has a two-level veranda, supported by Doric columns on the first story and by posts on the second. The traditional gambrel roof of the mansion is topped by a circular, open balustraded "captain's walk" designed to take optimal advantage of this site rising far above the Narrows. Two balanced dependencies (two stories) were designed to complement the central bulk of the mansion proper. Today, the mansion, Gatehouse and Gate and other buildings on the fourteen-acre estate are owned by the Society of St. Charles, which maintains a seminary there.

Ernest Flagg, architect, developed Flagg Ridge Estates in Dongan Hills for nearly fifty years. The houses he designed and built on the Island are a synthesis of knowledge that he acquired during his years of study in Paris and also of his own inventiveness. Flagg based his work on a module system of fixed measure derived from the Greeks. By means of his Island homes, he developed the technique of form-building. Wood sleepers, crosspieces, and uprights were placed upon a finished foundation wall. Rock was laid in the form and a cement mixture was poured around the elements. The finished wall was more than a foot thick. Among Flagg's accomplishments was the design of Manhattan's first notable skyscraper, the Singer Building. He designed St. Luke's Hospital at 110th Street and the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington, D. C., not to mention the buildings for the U. S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland.

#### 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 Ernest Flagg House, Gatehouse and Gate 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 former Ernest Flagg property with its impressive mansion, Gatehouse and Gate is one of the few remaining Staten Island estates left relatively intact, that the construction of these buildings is a noteworthy example of a unique method of construction, and that the complex reflects the grandeur of Staten Island's past, and that this was the residence of one of New York's great architects.

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 Ernest Flagg House, Gatehouse and Gate, 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 891, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described improvements are situated.

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