

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AND FRIENDS SEMINARY (not including the 1964 4-story addition to the Seminary); Meeting House 15 Rutherford Place (221 East 15th Street), Seminary 226 East 16th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1861.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 897, Lot 16 in part, consisting of the land on which the described buildings are situated.

On April 12, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Friends Meeting House and the old Friends Seminary and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 23). Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In 1861 the "Hicksite" Quakers built a three story brick meeting house at the northwest corner of Rutherford Place and East Fifteenth Street. Its simple pedimented entrance porch and double hung muntined sash with plain sills and lintels would suggest that this structure might have been built some twenty years earlier. The elegant restraint of the design may be attributed to the natural conservatism of the Friends, which was found not only in matters pertaining to their dress but also in their physical surroundings. Charles T. Bunting, a member of the meeting and a builder, was responsible for the construction and probably also for the design.

The low, end gable above the entrance porch facing Rutherford Place has a bisected lunette window in it, below which is the datestone. The raking cornice of the gable meets simple side cornices with plain wood fascia boards below them, reminiscent of those of the Greek Revival period.

The T-shaped Seminary building to the north was built as nearly similar to the meeting house as possible with entrance porch and gable, also facing Rutherford Place.

The earliest mention of a Friends Meeting in Manhattan is under the date of 12th of 8th month (August) 1687 where it was agreed that "...ye first day meeting (Sunday) shall remain at Robt. Story & ye fifth day (Thursday) meeting at Lewis Morris house until a publick meeting house shall be provided."

In 1696 a small frame meeting house was built on what is now known as Liberty Place, then known as Little Green Street. The next, a substantial meeting house of brick, was built on Pearl Street between Franklin Square and Oak Street in 1775-6. In 1819, yet another, a large brick meeting house was erected at Hester Street between Elizabeth Street and the Bowery. In 1824, with the advent of commerce on Pearl Street, the meeting house on Pearl Street, between Franklin Square and Oak Street, was demolished and replaced by stores. Following this, a frame meeting house was erected on Rose Street near Pearl Street.

A schism developed in 1827 when the followers of Elias Hicks seceded from the main orthodox body of the meeting. At the time of the separation, in 1828, the "Hicksites" stayed on at Hester Street until 1861, when they moved into the newly completed meeting house on Rutherford Place. The "Orthodox" Friends built a new meeting house on Henry Street, between Catherine and Market Streets. They sold the Henry Street meeting house in 1840 to the Synagogue Anshe Chesed at which time they built a large brick meeting house on Orchard Street near Walker Street. From there, they used the chapel of Rutgers Female Institute for a few months in 1859, located on the east side of Fifth Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets. In 1859 they moved into the handsome Italianate meeting house on Gramercy Park (No. 144 East 20th Street). The use of this building as a place of worship was discontinued in 1958 when the "Hicksite" and the "Orthodox" meetings were happily recombined at Rutherford Place and was sold to a civic-minded group of Gramercy Park residents in 1969 for a community use.

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE AND FRIENDS SEMINARY (not including the 1964 4-story addition to the Seminary)

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of these buildings, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Friends Meeting House and the old Friends Seminary have 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 their important qualities, the Friends Meeting House and the old Friends Seminary are outstanding examples of that conservatism which was found only in the architecture and dress of the Friends, that they are fine brick buildings built in the style of an earlier period, that they display great elegance in their simplicity and that, as a pair of buildings, set off in spacious grounds, they are a positive addition to Stuyvesant Square.

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 Friends Meeting House and Friends Seminary (not including the 1964 4-story addition to the Seminary), the Meeting House being located at 15 Rutherford Place (221 East 15th Street) and the Seminary at 226 East 16th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 897, Lot 16, which contains the land on which the described buildings are situated.