

GRACIE MANSION, East End Avenue at 88th Street in Carl Schurz Park, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1799, completed 1801; north addition 1810.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1592, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Gracie Mansion and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 3). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation, including the Park Commissioner Thomas V. Hoving. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Located in Carl Schurz Park on the East River at East Eighty Eighth Street is one of the finest Federal Style country seats remaining to us from that early period. Standing on a promontory, once known as "Gracie's Point," the large two-story frame house is enclosed, at first floor level, by a porch surmounted by a handsome Chinese chippendale railing, a near duplicate of the balustrade surrounding the hipped roof above. On the river side the house boasts an exceedingly fine Federal doorway with leaded glass sidelights and a semi-circular lunette above the door, flanked by oval rosettes set between delicate wood consoles. As tradition would have us believe, this work, consisting of additions made by Archibald Gracie about 1809, may well represent the efforts of the noted architect, Major Charles Pierre L'Enfant.

Historically, because of its strategic location in the defense of New York during the Revolutionary War, "Gracie Point" or "Horns Hook", as it was originally known, was appropriated by the American Army. The 1774 house on the site, owned by the royalist Jacob Walton, was surrounded with fortifications, known as Thompson's battery. On September 17, 1776 after several days of bombardment, "the house in the fort was set on fire by a British shell and burned down."

Archibald Gracie, a wealthy merchant purchased the site from the Walton heirs in December 1798 and January 1799, and during the latter year levelled the fortifications. From 1800-1801 he built his country seat here and he entertained lavishly in this house. Included among the guests were many foreign notables foremost among which were Louis Philippe, Duc a'Orleans, later destined to become King of France, and the Marquis de LaFayette. Among the illustrious Americans, who were guests in his home, were John Quincy Adams, President of the United States, DeWitt Clinton, Governor of New York, Alexander Hamilton and Washington Irving.

In 1891, the City purchased the property and renamed the area Carl Schurz Park. The house was restored in 1927 and from 1942, when Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia and his family first occupied Gracie Mansion, it has been the official residence of the Mayor of the City of New York. An addition, to be known as the Reception Wing, will be formally opened September 27, 1966.

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 Gracie Mansion 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, Gracie Mansion is the only one of the original country seats on the Island of Manhattan still occupied as a home, that it is a remarkably distinguished example of Federal architecture and that, as the home of the Mayors of the City of New York, it possesses a distinction quite in keeping with its architectural qualities and its historical renown.

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 Gracie Mansion, East End Avenue at 88th Street in Carl Schurz Park, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1592, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.