

THE GRECIAN SHELTER, Prospect Park near Parkside Avenue (Between the Park Circle and Ocean Avenue entrances), Borough of Brooklyn. Completed 1905; architects McKim, Mead & White.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1117, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described improvement is situated.

On February 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The Grecian Shelter and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 55). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The refined Grecian Shelter is a masterpiece of neo-classic architecture. Possessing great dignity and superb proportions, this early Twentieth Century peristyle has no peer in the City of New York. The flowing rhythm of twenty-eight graceful marble columns with square piers at the corners, supporting a full ornate terra cotta entablature, evokes poetic memories of the Grecian temple and the grandeur of classical antiquity. This rectangular-shaped Shelter is superbly sited on a raised platform two steps up from the pedestrian walks and landscaping which surround it. Situated south of the lake, a visitor standing in the shadow of the Shelter has a broad view of the water and the park beyond.

Located on the Parkside Avenue border of Prospect Park, and midway between the Park Circle and Ocean Avenue entrances to the Park, the Shelter acts as a unifying link between these two entrances, designed by the same architects, McKim, Mead & White. Built in 1905 and neglected for many years, the Shelter underwent a major rehabilitation in 1966, under the supervision of the late Monuments Officer of the Department of Parks, Walter Beretta. That same year, in an article published in the September issue of Civic News, Mr. Beretta wrote, "Why it was called the Croquet Shelter, when all croquet was played on the Long Meadow at the other end of the Park, nobody knows; but it was so designated on the original plans."

The columns have marble Corinthian capitals. Everything above the capitals is terra cotta. The frieze is decorated with the rinceau, a repeated pattern in low relief of an undulating vine, bearing conventionalized leaves and flowers. The modillions of the cornice are ornately decorated and alternate with recessed panels. A balustrade of exceptional beauty crowns the Shelter. The pedestals, separating the groups of balusters, are handsomely decorated, particularly those at the four corners, which contain richly ornamented swags. Guastavino tile was used on the vaulted ceiling, and glazed beveled bricks cover the platform.

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 Grecian Shelter 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 Grecian Shelter is a superb example of early Twentieth Century classical architecture, that it possesses great dignity and stately proportions, that it is faithfully restored to its original beauty and is handsomely sited, and that this Shelter has no peer in the City of New York.

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 Grecian Shelter, Prospect Park, near Parkside Avenue (between the Park Circle and Ocean Avenue entrances), Borough of Brooklyn and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1117, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described improvement is situated.