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Landmarks Preservation Commission
December 21, 1965, Calendar No. 4
LP-0042

INDIA HOUSE, 1 Hanover Square, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1851, completed 1854, architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 29, Lot 33.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of India House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 14). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The owner of the building endorsed designation by a letter to the Commission and through the appearance of its representative. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

One of the finest buildings of the Anglo-Italianate Style in New York City is India House, built for the Hanover Bank between 1851 and 1854. This building has played an important role in the commercial life of New York, having served as the New York Cotton Exchange between 1870 and 1886 and having later become the offices of W. R. Grace & Co. Today India House is a clubhouse containing a fine maritime museum, and it also stands as a surviving example of the commercial life of mid-Nineteenth Century New York.

This brownstone building with its handsome doorway, cornice and pedimented windows illustrates Anglo-Italianate architecture to perfection. Above a strong base the smooth masonry walls rise to a well-detailed cornice, carried on closely-spaced brackets. The entrance is made effective with Corinthian columns and a fine railing above (balustrade). As an example of a large, freestanding symmetrical Anglo-Italianate building, India House has few to equal it in architectural excellence in the City. Although built for a bank, this building is important because it was basically the prototype of the New York brownstone residence.

At the public hearing, James Marley, President of Local 6 of the Hotel, Motel and Club Employees Union, testified about India House as follows: "I wish to state at the outset that I am not here to plead for the jobs of the workers employed there.... The fact is that this is a tourist City. People from all over the world come here to look at us, both as we are and as we were. When they come here, they stay in the hotels and motels of the City. Workers who might no longer find employment in India House could find it elsewhere if the attractions of old New York remain. Should at any time India House cease to be a club, it should nevertheless be maintained as a Landmark...."

"The site too is important, for placed as it is, in the center of the financial district, it adds to the cityscape and gives a feeling of warmth and intimacy to the surroundings which are of almost unrelieved concrete and steel. It is the very kind of architecture and site of India House which attracts so many visitors to our City. The entire area is almost completely populated on Saturdays and Sundays with tourists carrying cameras who are seeking to find some small part of New York as it once was.... If India House as it now stands were to be dismantled or moved, it would be a great loss to all of us. Indeed, such short sightedness applied to this and other Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century buildings in New York could wipe out all evidence of the periods of growth of our 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 India House 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, India House is one of the few surviving New York banking houses of the mid-Nineteenth Century, that it is a rare and outstanding example of a symmetrical Anglo-Italianate Brownstone and that it symbolizes the important period during which the City was achieving its first major growth.

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 India House, 1 Hanover Square, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 29, Lot 33, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.