

MANHATTAN COUNTRY SCHOOL (built as Ogden Codman House), 7 East 96th Street,
Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1912, completed 1913; architect Ogden Codman.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1602, Lot 7.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Manhattan Country School and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 83). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In a letter to the Commission, the director of the School indicated that he is in favor of the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

There is an air of gayety and frivolous vitality in the architectural character of this French Renaissance townhouse, that is both refreshing and stimulating. Typically French are not only the plan of this four-story house and its handsome, limestone facade, but also its garden court elevation. On approaching the house Paris and the Champs Elysee immediately come to mind.

The Parisian character of the house is most emphatically to be found in the street elevation, with its strong, rusticated first floor and high double carriage-door entrance, which serves also as vestibule. It is again expressed in the second floor stone balcony extending across the width of the entire front. The second floor windows are very high with arched heads indicating the importance of the drawing room behind them. The third floor windows are square in shape with heavy molded stone frames with swags beneath the sills. All windows of this three story section are shuttered in a typically French manner. Completing the composition of the facade is a well proportioned stone cornice at the fourth floor level behind which rises a slate Mansard roof with three unusual dormer windows, distinguished by their handsome semicircular stone frames and arched roofs.

This is one of the last three family residences built in 1915 still standing on East Ninety-Sixth Street. Through the years this street has become a busy thoroughfare and family houses have yielded to multi-unit Brownstones and large apartment houses. All three townhouses were designed by Ogden Codman, Jr. who, although trained as a decorator, practiced architecture in New York City and was responsible for many fine buildings and houses here as well as others in Boston and Newport. Having spent a good part of his life in France, it is quite natural that Codman designed No. 7 (now the Manhattan Country School), No. 15 (now the Convent of St. Francis de Sales), and No. 12 (now the Emerson School), in the French Louis XV style. The first mentioned, No. 7, was built for his own use, and as his home the appointments received the most scrupulous attention.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that the Landmark on the property in question (and the Landmark Site) is used for educational purposes by the School and that the needs of the School for such uses may change in the years ahead, entailing alterations in the existing structure. By this designation of the Landmark above described and the Landmark Site on which it is located, it is not intended to freeze the structure in its present state or to prevent future appropriate alterations needed to meet changed requirements of use for educational and related purposes. The Commission believes it has the obligation and, indeed, it has the desire to cooperate with owners of Landmarks who may wish to make changes in their properties. The Commission recognizes that the School may wish to make exterior alterations to its existing building. The Commission looks forward to working with the representatives of the School when the School desires to make exterior alterations on its existing building.

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 Manhattan Country School 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 Manhattan Country School is the most interesting of the last family residences remaining on East Ninety-sixth Street, Manhattan, that it has distinguished architectural character in the spirit of Paris and the French Renaissance, and that both the plan and main facade are noteworthy as a record of a particular type of dwelling preferred by many in New York City at this period.

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 Manhattan Country School, 7 East 96th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1602, Lot 7, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.