

NEW YORK CITY MARBLE CEMETERY, 52-74 East 2nd Street, between Second and First Avenues, Borough of Manhattan. 1831.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 444, Lot 49.

On December 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the New York City Marble Cemetery and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 10). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation including the Secretary of the New York City Marble Cemetery. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The New York City Marble Cemetery was begun in 1831 and was the second non-sectarian burial ground in the City opened to the public. It was organized by Evert Bancker, Samuel Whittmore, Henry Booraam, Garret Storm and Thomas Addis Emmet. This cemetery was started shortly after the New York Marble Cemetery, one block away, had been begun.

It was laid out on some land belonging to Samuel Cowdrey, a vault owner in the other cemetery. Once again Perkins Nichols contracted for the construction of the vaults of Tuckahoe marble. The first vaults were ready by the summer of 1831. The new organization received its own act of incorporation on April 26, 1832. Over the next three years the corporation acquired first the land in which the vaults were situated, and then adjoining lots, until it reached its present limits in 1835. The grounds now contain 256 vaults.

This cemetery may be readily seen through a handsome iron fence with gate, extending along its south side on East Second Street between First and Second Avenues. It is surrounded by a high brick wall and by houses and tenements, but this wall only encloses three sides.

When opened, it was considered a fashionable burial place, and the use of monuments and markers was permitted there to signalize the locations of the family vaults. It was laid out with long parallel walks between which are narrow strips of ground punctuated by the square marble vault slabs.

As the neighborhood around the cemetery deteriorated, the trustees became alarmed, fearing that the encroaching construction of houses might force them out of the property. In 1891, Alexander Maitland, a grandnephew of James Lenox, started a movement to raise an endowment fund. He formed a committee, which collected about \$12,500. By 1934, the fund amounted to \$26,500.

The cemetery contains the remains of many important New Yorkers such as Stephen Allen, one-time mayor of the City and governor of New York State; James Lenox, whose library, together with the Astor and Tilden collections, formed the New York Public Library; Isaac Varian, another mayor; Preserved Fish, a well-known New York merchant in mercantile and shipping ventures; and Marinus Willet, a local hero of the Revolutionary War. Also, there are six members of one branch of the Roosevelt family, including James Henry Roosevelt, who founded Roosevelt Hospital, all the remains from the churchyard of the South Dutch Church, and all the Kip family remains from Kip's Bay.

People of national importance buried in the cemetery include Moses Taylor, an exceedingly wealthy New York financier, who backed Cyrus Field in the first Atlantic Cable venture, and who strongly supported the Lincoln administration during the Civil War, heading the bankers' committee which took the first federal loan in 1861. Another nationally known figure buried here is John Lloyd Stephens, who pioneered archeological research in the Mayan country of Mexico in the Nineteenth Century; his vault is marked by a Mayan glyph designed by his celebrated collaborator, Frederick Catherwood. John Ericsson, inventor of the iron-clad Monitor, was also buried here before his body was returned to Sweden in 1890. According to tradition, here also repose in the "Ministers' Vault" the oldest white men's bones interred on the island of Manhattan, those of the Dutch dominies, brought here from their original resting place at the foot of the island.

The most important person buried in this cemetery was ex-President James Monroe, who had moved to New York in 1830, after the death of his wife, to live with his son-in-law, Samuel Gouverneur. Gouverneur owned a vault in the cemetery, and when Monroe died on July 4, 1831, he became one of the first to be buried here. The interment ceremonies were carried out with much pomp and military pageantry, which served to increase greatly the prestige of the cemetery. In 1857, however, a number of Virginians residing in New York decided to erect a monument over Monroe's vault. This move prompted the Virginia Legislature to pass a resolution to have the ex-President's remains returned to Virginia. The Gouverneur family agreed, and on July 2, 1858, Monroe's body was removed to the Church of the Annunciation on Fourteenth Street, while church bells tolled and every ship in the harbor flew its flag at half mast. It lay there in state for several days and was finally sent by steamer to Virginia, preceded in another ship by its escort, the Seventh Regiment. It was reburied at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond.

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 New York City Marble Cemetery 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 New York City Marble Cemetery is an outstanding example of an early non-sectarian cemetery of the type devoted entirely to family vaults, that it contains many handsome memorials and markers signaling the locations of the vaults, that it serves as a dignified reminder of the customs and history of a bygone age, that it contains the family vaults of some of New York's and the nation's, most distinguished families and that it once provided a burial place for a President of the United States.

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 New York City Marble Cemetery, 52-74 East 2nd Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 444, Lot 49, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.