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Landmarks Preservation Commission
August 18, 1970, Number 4
LP-0118

ST. JOHN'S RESIDENCE HALL (a part of the "Old Quad"), Queen's Court, Fordham University, Rose Hill Campus, East Fordham Road and East 191st Street, Borough of The Bronx. Completed 1845; architect William Rodrigue.

Landmark Site: Borough of The Bronx Tax Map Block 3273, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On March 3, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of St. John's Residence Hall and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 12). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in favor of designation, including Professor Irma B. Jaffe, Chairman of the Department of Fine Arts, who represented the University. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission also received a letter from Joseph R. Cammarosano, Executive Vice President of the University. Writing on behalf of Rev. Michael P. Walsh, S. J., President of Fordham, Mr. Cammarosano said; "We are delighted to learn that the City's Landmarks Preservation Commission is moving forward with its recommendation to have three of our buildings on the Rose Hill Campus officially designated as Landmarks. We are grateful to you for bringing this good news to our attention, and we shall, of course, be pleased to cooperate with the Commission in any way we can."

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Reminiscent of English ecclesiastical architecture, in its austere and rugged character, this three-story residence hall, is an early example of the American Collegiate Gothic style. Erected in 1845 as the Seminary for the Diocese of New York, the dignified and well proportioned dormitory forms the northern arm of the attractive U-shaped complex, on the Fordham campus, known as Queen's Court, and formerly known as the "Old Quad".

St. John's Residence Hall is a rectangular building, seven bays wide, solidly built of gray random ashlar, with brownstone trim. The courtyard side is divided vertically by stepped buttresses terminating in octagonal chimney-like finials. Between the buttresses are paired windows with trefoil tracery at the heads and label molding lintels. Located at the center of the ground floor is a deeply recessed entrance doorway set in a strikingly bold ogee arch.

Fordham University takes its name from the Manor of Fordham, granted in 1671 to John Archer (Jan Arcer) by the Royal Governor, Francis Lovelace. The manor was a very large tract, later divided into many farms. The site of this campus was known, for almost a century, as the Corser Farm. Benjamin Fletcher Corser, born on the farm about 1692, was the grandfather of Andrew Corsa (1762-1853) who, as a member of the Westchester Guides, served as a scout for the American and French commands during the Revolution.

Robert Watts (1743-1814) acquired the property in 1787 and it remained in the possession of Robert Watts, Jr., his son, until 1824. The estate was bought in 1836 by Horatio Shepheard Moat, a Brooklyn merchant, and in 1839 by Bishop Hughes, for a seminary for his diocese. The arrangements for a college began at the same time. The University began as St. John's College, Fordham, on June 24, 1841. On that date it was formally opened by the Right Reverend John Hughes, D.D., then Coadjutor-Bishop of New York, and later its first Archbishop. The Reverend John McClosky, subsequently Bishop of Albany, Archbishop of New York and the first American Cardinal, was its first President. The college opened in September 1841, with six students. In 1905, the Charter of St. John's College was amended and the institution received the corporate and academic name of Fordham University.

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ST. JOHN'S RESIDENCE HALL

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 St. John's Residence Hall 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, St. John's Residence Hall has historic association with St. John's College, that it is architecturally important as an early American Collegiate Gothic structure and that it forms the northern arm of the attractive U-shaped complex known on the campus as Queen's Court, formerly the "Old Quad".

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 St. John's Residence Hall (a part of the "Old Quad"), Queen's Court, Fordham University, Rose Hill Campus, East Fordham Road and East 191st Street, Borough of The Bronx and designates as its Landmark Site that part of the Borough of The Bronx Tax Map Block 3273, Lot 1, which contains the land on which the described building is situated.