

THE NATIONAL ARTS CLUB, 15 Gramercy Parck, Borough of Manhattan. 1874;
architect Calvert Vaux.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 875, Lot 70.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the National Arts Club and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 47). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four witnesses spoke in favor of designation including John Booth, the President of the National Arts Club. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The home of the National Arts Club represents the height of Victorian Gothic in residential architecture. It is replete with horizontal belt courses and pointed arched windows all done in contrasting colored stones while certain bands of stonework display leaves and flowers interspersed with the heads of famous authors.

The whole exterior is a scholarly recreation of that architecture so much admired by John Ruskin and so ably described in his influential book, "The Stones of Venice". The house represents the remodelling of the facades of two Brownstones, and the design is a display of Italian Renaissance elements applied to the New York town house of the period. Bay windows and other familiar elements appear in a new guise embellished with this rich detail.

These two town houses, now joined together by the Club, were originally remodelled for Samuel J. Tilden by Calvert Vaux, architect of the Jefferson Market Courthouse in Greenwich Village. They are much more restrained in feeling than the courthouse but were a striking novelty when built in the early 1870's. Tilden will be remembered as having run for the Presidency against Rutherford B. Hayes and lost. Perhaps he is best remembered for his great library which, as the Tilden Trust along with those of Astor and Lenox, formed the nucleus of the great collection of the New York Public Library. This pair of houses, unified behind a uniform facade, is a familiar sight on Gramercy Park and has been associated with the National Arts Club since 1906 when it moved into its present home.

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 National Arts Club 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 National Arts Club is a fine example of conservative Victorian Gothic architecture, that it displays a wealth of unusual details and varicolored stones and that it was once the home of an American distinguished both in the realm of politics and in the world of culture and scholarship.

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 National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 875, Lot 70, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.