

AUTOMATION HOUSE, AMERICAN FOUNDATION ON AUTOMATION AND EMPLOYMENT, (formerly Mrs. J. William Clark House), 49 East 68th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1913-14; architect Trowbridge & Livingston.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1383, Lot 32.

On May 26, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Automation House (formerly Mrs. J. William Clark House) and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 20). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The representative of Community Board No. 8 and two other witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The owner of the building has indicated to the Commission that it favors the proposed designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This house adjoins and may be considered a part of that outstanding group of neo-Federal townhouses which extends along the west side of Park Avenue, between East 68th and 69th Streets. The houses on Park Avenue are sometimes referred to as the "Pyne-Davison Blockfront" due to their uniform architectural quality.

It was designed by the architectural firm of Trowbridge & Livingston and was built in 1913-14. The height of its first story base, the belt course between the third and fourth floors and the roof cornice are set at approximately the same level as those of the corner house, No. 680 Park Avenue.

Only two bays wide, No. 49 East 68th Street is given interest and importance by a twin-arched loggia at street level. This is made possible by having the wall of the first floor set back about six feet from the building line. The arch on the right leads to the arched entrance doorway, while that on the left leads directly to the basement stairs protected by a low iron railing and gate. An arched window is set above the basement entrance door.

The second-story windows were originally muntined casements extending to the floor. These and all the other windows facing the street were replaced with single fixed sheets of plate glass, when the entire structure was air-conditioned, however, the two second-story windows have retained their thin vertical limestone reveals at the windows. The second floor lintels consist of delicate projecting cornices supported on console brackets. The third story windows have paneled stone lintels, while a limestone horizontal belt course separates the third and fourth floors and serves as a sill for the fourth floor windows. A simple limestone roof cornice crowns the brickwork of the facade, which is laid up in English bond. The copper covered gambrel roof above is pierced by two pedimented dormer windows.

This house was built as a residence for J. William Clark, a grandson of the Patrick Clark who invented the form of cotton sewing thread, that was first produced in Paisley, Scotland in 1812. Clark's sewing thread was introduced to America in 1818, but, during the Civil War, when importing became difficult, William Clark and his brother opened a thread mill in Newark, New Jersey, where a 6-cord thread, trademarked "O.N.T." (Our New Thread), was perfected and became famous. Today this building is known as "Automation House".

#### 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 Automation House (formerly Mrs. J. William Clark 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, Automation House, (formerly the Mrs. J. William Clark House) is an excellent example of neo-Federal architecture, that its arcaded first story loggia is most unusual, that its compatibility with its neighbors makes it an integral part of the distinguished group of buildings that extends around the corner of East 68th Street and up Park Avenue to East 69th Street, and that it is a good example of a turn of the century town house which continues to serve a useful purpose for a 20th century organization.