

THE ADMIRAL'S HOUSE, (formerly Commanding General's Quarters), Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1840.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1, Lot 10 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The Admiral's House (formerly Commanding General's Quarters), Governors Island, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 36). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. In a letter to the Commission, the Coast Guard questioned the proposal to designate the building, saying that Federally-owned property is not subject to regulation by local law.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

As is befitting the station and importance of an executive officer, The Admiral's House on Governors Island is an elegant late Federal style manor house of imposing scale. This porticoed, rectangular mansion with extended wing has the appearance of a Southern plantation house transplanted to New York. It is a two-story structure with basement, built of brick with stone trim, and is situated on landscaped grounds in a setting worthy of its gracious dignity and charm.

Both the front and rear of this large dwelling have wide verandas dominated by six-columned Doric porticos. At the roof lines and surmounting the handsome dentilled cornices are plain balustrades. The regal front entrance doorway is centered between four full length windows with large, panelled shutters. This doorway with intricate leaded transom and side lights has four handsome pilasters capped with ornate acanthus leaves.

Since the House is built on sloping ground, the rear colonnaded veranda is supported by a brick wall with striking round-arched openings leading into the basement level. From the center of the veranda one can descend to the garden by way of an unusual double u-shaped stairway. The entire composition is grand and imposing in appearance.

In more than a century and a half, as a permanent installation of the United States Army, Governors Island has been the home of some of the Army's most famous regiments and commanders. Variousy designated as Headquarters, Division of the Atlantic; Hq., Department of The East; Hq., Atlantic Division; Hq., Eastern Division; Hq., Second Corps Area; Hq., First Army; the island ceased being an Army Base December 31, 1965. Among the officers who have been on duty on Governors Island may be mentioned such notable Generals as Winfield Scott, Nelson A. Miles, Leonard Wood, Tasker H. Bliss, Charles P. Summerall, Hugh A. Drum and James A. Van Fleet. Commanders of the First United States Army included such notable generals as John J. Pershing, Omar N. Bradley and Walter Bedell Smith.

The question has been raised by the Federal Government as to whether this building should be designated by New York City as a Landmark. The Commission wishes to honor a building of which New Yorkers are proud. The Commission is cognizant of the jurisdictional question. Nevertheless, it is very important for the Government of New York City to state officially its deep concern that this building be preserved. There should be no uncertainty about this in anyone's mind.

The Commission would be negligent if it failed to act in this situation. At some time in the future this building may be in jeopardy. Our designation will be especially helpful in alerting New York City's elected representatives in Washington of the importance of saving this building. At present the Commission's specialists can be of service in providing advice so that the architectural integrity of this building is maintained. Indeed a fine relationship already exists with many local representatives of the Federal Government.

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 Admiral's 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, The Admiral's House on Governors Island is a superb example of a late Federal style manor house, that it has excellent architectural proportions and superior details, that it is imposing in appearance and befitting to the illustrious generals who were resident commanders in its spacious quarters, and that it now serves as a gracious home for the resident Admiral of the Coast Guard.

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 Admiral's House (formerly Commanding General's Quarters), Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1, Lot 10 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.