

Landmarks Preservation Commission
September 20, 1966, Number 4
LP-0289

THE BELNORD APARTMENTS, 201-225 West 86th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1908, completed 1909; architect H. Hobart Weekes.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1234, Lot 19.

On June 14, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Belnord Apartments and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 21). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Occupying an entire city block and enclosing a spacious landscaped courtyard, this massive twelve story brick and limestone building is a fine example of imaginative apartment house design. Planned for gracious living, this Italian Renaissance structure is one of several large projects built at the turn of the Century, which set a rarely-surpassed standard for multiple dwellings in New York City.

A notable feature of this architectural scheme is the manner in which the window arrangements differ from those in most contemporary high-rise buildings. Instead of establishing a uniform window size and subordinating the entire composition to it, the architect of the Belnord chose to use windows of several sizes, which were then further differentiated by varying their enframements and embellishments. Handsome decorated panels were used to tie the corner windows together vertically, which, combined with the rusticated brickwork at the corners of the building, constitute a very subtle but effective vertical emphasis for each of the four long, horizontal facades. In general, ornament is used sparingly, though very skillfully, throughout the structure. The decorative panels between the attic story windows are of outstanding quality, and, together with the very elaborate projecting cornice at the roof line, crown the building in the grand manner.

At the Belnord, all entry into the apartments is made from a central, interior courtyard, and automobile access to this courtyard is made through two barrel vaulted entrances. The contrast between the low vaults by which one enters and the open verticality of the court, provides a very dramatic entrance. There are only a few of these large apartment houses in New York with open central courtyards large enough to accommodate a turn-around for vehicular traffic.

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 Belnord Apartments 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 Belnord Apartments is a building of impressive character, that this large structure includes an unusual number of interesting architectural details, and that the building is especially impressive as an imaginative solution to the problem of apartment house architecture.

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 Belnord Apartments, 201-225 West 86th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1234, Lot 19, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.