

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 porticoes. 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. Variouslly 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.

CASTLE WILLIAMS, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1807, completed 1811; architect Lt. Col. Jonathan Williams.

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

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Castle Williams, Governors Island and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 32). 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

Impressive in appearance, imposing in size, this red stone bastion, when completed in 1811, was an armed gauntlet bristling with over one hundred cannon. Originally called "The Tower" and nick-named "The Cheesebox" because of its circular shape, it was one of the reasons the British Fleet did not attempt an assault on New York during the War of 1812. Situated on the Northwest point of the Island, with its solid masonry foundation laid on rocks at the edge of the channel, Castle Williams, with its twin fort Castle Clinton in the Battery, was put up to guard the waterway between Governors Island and New York City.

The walls of the Castle form three-fifths of a circle two hundred feet in outer diameter. Built of hammered Newark red sandstone, the walls are forty feet high and eight feet thick at the bottom and seven feet thick above, case-mated with arches to support three tiers of guns. The outer layer of the wall is laid with the stones dovetailed so that no stone can be removed without first being broken to pieces. The double row of bomb-proof arches in the wall once contained two tiers of heavy cannon. There were 27 French 35-pounders on the lower tier and 39 20-pounders on the second tier. The terrace over the bomb-proof area formed a barbette battery for 45 Columbiads carrying 50 pound balls. Access to the tiers was had by two interior stone turret staircases. The two straight walls completing the enclosure are lower than the circular wall. These face to the East on the land side of the fort. A space for sentry duty was provided for in the thickness of the crenellated wall above the rusticated main gate, and a very picturesque stone sentry box at the angle augments the compositional interest of this unique fort.

The interior of the Castle is open to the sky. At one time there were two brick buildings and a well inside the fort. The Castle was repaired in 1833 and 1836, and again in 1912 when the buildings inside the walls were torn down and the fort was converted to a military prison. During the Civil War there were over a thousand Confederate prisoners contained in the Castle.

Castle Williams was designed and built by Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Williams, Engineer Corps. At that time he was Superintendent of the Military Academy at West Point and Chief Engineer of the U. S. Army. He had been put in charge of the defenses of New York in 1805.

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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 Castle Williams 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, Castle Williams is a unique military fortification that once played an important part in the defense system of New York harbor, that it is noteworthy as an example of a massive masonry bastion, that it is picturesque in appearance, that it has served as a useful building up to the present time and that in the future planning of the United States Coast Guard, under whose supervision the interiors are now being renovated, it will serve a new and useful purpose.

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 Castle Williams, 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 improvement is situated.

FORT JAY, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1798. Rebuilt 1806.

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

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Fort Jay, Governors Island and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 33). 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

Reminiscent of an Eighteenth Century French fortification, with its dry moat and star-shaped plan, Fort Jay is a dramatic reminder of the early defenses erected in New York harbor to protect the City from invasion. Impressive in size and design, the pentagonal-shaped breastworks occupy a knoll and dominate the Northern end of the island. It was originally equipped with strong batteries of guns and well trained artillery men. In combination with other forts on the island, in the upper bay and at the narrows, it made invasion from the sea unlikely. During the War of 1812, the British fleet did not attempt an assault on the City. Fort Jay was never called into action against an enemy.

The imposing Federal style stone entrance gateway to Fort Jay shows considerable French influence, has great dignity and is architecturally impressive in design. Monumental in scale, a low-arched opening set within a tall blind arch is flanked by four large, Doric pilasters supporting a massive entablature. Surmounting the cornice is an extremely handsome carved sculptural composition. Military in character, it is composed of flags, cannon, small weapons, banded fasces with liberty cap, and a spread eagle. The chains at the entrance are the remains of a drawbridge which once spanned the moat in front of the gate.

In 1794, because of a threat of war with France, the first permanent fortification on Governors Island was begun, financed by Congressional defense appropriations. By 1797 the fear of invasion was intense and because of what were felt to be inadequate Federal appropriations, Governor Clinton of New York enlisted the support of students and professors from Columbia University, members of many trade groups and other organizations to join in voluntary manual labor constructing the earthworks at the site of the Fort. Completed in 1798, it was named Fort Jay in honor of the then Secretary of Foreign Affairs, John Jay. Defense preparations were intensified after February 15, 1800 when Governors Island was ceded to the United States, and additional appropriations were made in 1800 and 1801.

Fort Jay was extensively rebuilt in 1806. All of the works, except the walled counterscarps, the gate, the sally port, the powder magazine and two barracks were torn down and rebuilt with stronger materials. The new fortification consisted of an enclosed, pentagonal work with four bastions of masonry to hold 100 guns. Fourteen feet were added to three sides of the old Fort, and on the North wall a ravelin with two casemated flanks was added. Guns commanding the dry moat were located there. Completed in 1808, the new fortification was named Fort Columbus. In 1904 the War Department renamed the Fort, returning the original name Fort Jay. Within the Fort is a quadrangle of officers' dwellings.

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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 Fort Jay 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, Fort Jay is an outstanding example of military fortifications, that it stands historically as a reminder of New York City's early defense system, that it is picturesque in appearance, monumental in scale and architecturally noteworthy, and that it now serves a useful purpose containing a quadrangle of officers' dwellings.

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 Fort Jay, 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 improvement is situated.

Gov. & House
THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan. Early 18th Century.

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 Governor's House, Governors Island and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 35). 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

This early Eighteenth Century, modified Georgian style, red brick house has the austere feeling and architectural character of an important provincial residence of pre-Revolutionary New York. As it was erected during the reign of the British Colonial Governors and was reputedly the home of Lord Cornbury, the formal, two-story and basement structure with its grounds was fittingly referred to as "The Smiling Garden of the Sovereigns of the Province".

Symmetrical in plan, the original portion of the dwelling was designed in the form of a Greek cross. The wings of the front and rear projections, facing East and West, are surmounted by low pediments. At the roof line the cornice forms the base of the pediment and continues around the building. Centered at the front of the house and raised six steps above the ground, the platform of the square entrance stoop has two Ionic columns and pilasters supporting a graciously proportioned entablature with a handsomely dentilled cornice. The windows of the House are of the double hung sash type, so popular with the British, and are framed with stone sills and low, segmental-arched brick lintels.

Built on the higher ground in the Northeast corner of the island, with the land sloping off toward the East to what is known as "Buttermilk Channel", the House afforded the opportunity of building an extension at a later date on that side. It contains a terrace over a garage and a pavilion at the Northern end of the wing. A very elegant recessed back door opens on to the terrace. Framed with fluted pilasters with ornate acanthus leaf capitals and an impressive entablature with mutuled cornice, it is an elegantly decorated architectural feature of this rather plain brick residence.

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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 Governor'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 Governor's House is an outstanding example of an elegant but small Georgian country house with excellent architectural detail, that it is a building of fine proportions and a house whose occupants have been associated for over two hundred years with the history of Governors Island.

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 Governor's House, 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.

THE BLOCK HOUSE, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1843;
architect Martin E. Thompson.

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 hold a public
hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The Block House, Governors
Island and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 34).
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 desig-
nate the building, saying that Federally-owned property is not subject to
regulation by local law.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In its severe classic simplicity, this almost square, two-story Greek Revival
1840 building with basement has superb architectural character. Extremely austere
in appearance and dubbed the "Block House", this stone trimmed brick structure
derives its dignity and aesthetic quality from the strict, disciplined scale
expressed in its components and from the large surfaces of brick interspersed with
evenly spaced, well-proportioned openings.

The upper two floors of brick construction rest on a wide stone band course
while the basement below is of rough-cut masonry construction with some brick
rustication. Surrounding the building is an open arcaway, enclosed by a low curb
and a plain railing. At the roof line a combination of simple moldings with brick
dentils and a coping of stone crowns the building.

The building, five windows wide, has windows of the double hung sash type
with plain sills and lintels. A note of richness was added to the wide center
window of the upper story, with its mullions and sidelights, by the addition of
an ornate balcony with railing projecting from the wall. A flight of steps,
contained by large stone blocks and a graceful curvilinear iron railing, leads
to the entrance doorway. Enframed with plain pilasters and a very low pitched
pediment of stone, it encloses a Twentieth Century version of the original Greek
Revival door.

The building is surrounded by brick walks and is set among large trees in
the Northeast corner of the island. It now contains officers' apartments. Over
the years the structure has served as a blockhouse, general's headquarters,
officers quarters and a hospital.

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
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ship 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 Block 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 Block House is a distinguished example of Nineteenth Century Greek Revival utilitarian architecture, that it has excellent proportions and fine scale, that it is extremely well sited, that it served the armed forces of the nation for over a hundred years and that it continues to serve a useful purpose as a multiple dwelling for officers 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 Block House, 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.