

## Two Upper West Side Blocks Designated Historic Districts

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

The Landmarks Preservation Commission has designated two blocks of row houses on the upper West Side as historic districts, the first such designations to be voted by the commission since it declared a moratorium on landmark designations in December, 1970.

The two blocks—the Central Park W.-76th St. Historic District and the Riverside-W. 105th St. Historic District—are the first for the West Side. Their designation comes after growing pressure from West Side organizations demanding greater recognition for the architecture that pervades the locale.

There were 18 districts around the city before yesterday's designations. Thirteen of those are in Manhattan—in Harlem, on the East Side and in the Greenwich Village area. Three are in Brooklyn—the Heights, Cobble Hill and Stuyvesant Heights in Bedford Stuyvesant. There is one block in Hunter's Point, Queens, and one three-block stretch in the Bronx, along Mott Haven's Alexander Av.

All the buildings within an historic district carry the same legal protection as an individual landmark building. Under the Landmarks

Preservation Law, a designated building may be torn down or externally altered only with commission approval.

When the commission declared a moratorium on designations in 1970 because of reported staff and money shortages, designation of 86 sites and seven areas as historic districts were pending. They all had been considered at public hearings.

A Post series in January brought to light widespread criticism of the commission's apparent reluctance to designate landmarks in the face of realtors' resistance. Since the series, the commission has been under considerable pressure to lift the moratorium and move ahead more aggressively with designations.

### Mansion Designated

At yesterday's executive session of the Landmarks Commission, designation was also voted for the New World Foundation Building, 1015 Park Av. at 85th St. The 22-room neo-Federal style red brick mansion was the home of the late Lewis Gouverneur Morris—a descendant of Gouverneur Morris, a leading American patriot during the Revolutionary period. (The 1914 house, with its gabled roof, oval windows, arched doorways and stone staircase was purchased from the Morris family in 1968 by the New World Foundation, which makes grants for the advancement of health, education, welfare and research. The designation was first proposed at a public hearing before the commission in 1970.

Designation of the two West Side districts was first considered at public hearings in 1966 and later in 1970. Many owners on both blocks supported designation and well-organized block associations researched block history and sought to pressure the commission into earlier designation. The seven-year delay has brought consider-

able architectural attention and removal of ornamental details.

Nevertheless, the two districts retain numerous 19th century row house characteristics and are among the West Side's best.

"In the early 1880s," the West 76th St. report indicates, "speculative builders were attracted to the West Side. The demand for residential dwellings there had burgeoned as a result of the overflow from the East Side, where land values had increased spectacularly."

The first houses were built in 1887. The district includes both sides of 76th St. between Central Park and Columbus Av., the Beaux Arts Kenilworth apartment house, The Church of the Divine Paternity and the already designated New York Historical Society Building on Central Park W.

Also included is The Studio Building at 44 W. 77 St., a 1907 neo-Gothic apartment building designed by the architects of the Aheyn Court Apartments on W. 98th St., also a designated landmark.

### Ecclectic Styles

The town houses along W. 76th St., representative of the city's late 19th century eclectic architectural styles.

The W. 105 St. block was developed later, in the 1890s, but was completed more rapidly than W. 76th which explains its claim to more architectural unity. The houses are predominately French Beaux Arts, were designed mostly by one team of architects and reflect the taste of the socially prominent of the day. The French architectural style was introduced in this country by architects returning from Parisian schools.

"It seemed possible in the 1890s that the new town houses being built along Riverside Drive would lure socialites away from the East Side," the commission report notes.

### Landmark Block 412013



The Landmarks Preservation Commission has designated this block of row houses on 76th St. off Central Park W. as one of two new Historic Districts. The designations are the first to be voted by the commission since it declared a moratorium on landmark designation in December, 1970. Story on Page 61.

Post Photo by Jerry Engel