

Fragments of History: Hearings Seek to Save Them

By ROBERTA GRATZ

They came from every borough yesterday to a City Hall hearing to appeal to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to save fragments of the city's historical and architectural heritage.

It was the opening session of a new six-month round of public hearings by the commission on new proposals for landmark designation.

The last series began early in 1970.

The agenda contained extremely varied proposed sites—from two 1840s wood framed houses in Staten Island to factory twin brick row houses in Queens, from an imposing police precinct house in the Bronx to the celebrated Flatbush Town Hall, from the oldest surviving Broadway theater to an

elegant assortment of Fifth Av. mansions across from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Each appeal had a similar refrain: Stem the "tide of destruction" that has erased so much of the city's past, preserve the architectural qualities that have made so many neighborhoods appealing to their residents and above all, as Bronx historian

Theodore Kazminoff said, "don't let us continue to be the throw away society we have already become."

Brooklyn residents wore orange and yellow buttons declaring "Save Flatbush Town Hall," once the center of civic and cultural life in Flatbush, recently a police precinct house and now scheduled to make way for a parking lot. Attorney Irving Choban, who has spearheaded the effort to save the 1875 building at 35 Snyder Av., that recently served as a police precinct, said demolition was scheduled for August.

A spokesman for the Real Estate Dept. confirmed demolition bids had been taken but nothing further would be done until the Landmarks Commission acts.

Individual Efforts

Queens residents extolled the vernacular architecture of a unique factory town built by the Steinway Piano factory for workers during the Industrial Revolution.

From Staten Island a young couple, Joseph and Randy Sinisi, came to report on how they were restoring

their neglected Greek Revival home with its Corinthian columns at 390 Van Duzer St. Other young families, the Sinisis said, are joining them in the Stapleton area, buying old and run-down wood-framed houses, researching their history and restoring them.

The most extensive testimony was offered on 16 buildings being considered by the commission fronting on Fifth Av. or East 82nd St. For more than a year, this area has been the focus of one of an intensive preservation battle. The goal of a large neighborhood group is to prevent further demolition

—two town houses have been lost in recent months—to make way for a luxury apartment tower on the E. 82 St. corner sponsored by Goldman DiLorenzo realtors and to preserve the architectural continuity that frames the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Support came from a whole spectrum of public and private individuals. The opposition was led by real estate attorney Abraham Lindenbaum, who represents

the apartment tower's sponsor.

Lindenbaum argued it was not the historic quality in the buildings that prompted the neighborhood involvement but a desire to prevent a new one. Following his testimony, he indicated his client was prepared to "challenge in court landmark designation if it is made," but also said that client had expressed a willingness to sell the property for \$3,500,000—only if it is designated a landmark.

The 11-member commission now begins the long process of researching each proposal before designation is finally voted on.

The Flatbush Town Hall and the Fifth Av. mansions figured prominently in a series in *The Post* last January focusing on the Landmarks Commission and widespread criticism of its apparent reluctance to make designations in the face of strong realtor resistance.

Freeze Is On in Italy

ROME (AP)—The Italian Cabinet yesterday approved a decree putting a 60-day freeze on a wide range of food and industrial prices and broadening a rent-freeze law.