

6/22/74 Old Tweed Courthouse Could Haunt Mayor

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

Civic groups are coming out in strong opposition to the demolition of the 103-year-old Tweed Courthouse behind City Hall.

They are also putting Mayor Beame on notice that his decision will be considered an important indicator of his Administration's thinking on the preservation and reuse of structurally sound and architecturally important-old buildings.

"There's a predisposition in the city toward demolition," noted William Hubbard, a trustee of the City Club. "The city gets these architects in who automatically say its cheaper to tear down, which is wrong, rather than bring in a restoration architect who would know what to do. There's a lot of rethinking being done in this field but it hasn't yet caught on in municipal construction."

Call for New Study

City Club trustees, Hubbard added, are asking "the city to re-examine its position on the Tweed building as well as other city-owned buildings in the area to see if they couldn't be more economically utilized."

The Manhattan Civic Center Task Force—an eight-member group of top Administration officials appointed by the Mayor—has been studying for several months the fate of the courthouse, long considered a monument to municipal corruption because an estimated three-quarters of its cost supposedly lined the pockets of Tweed ring members. Estimated to cost \$350,000 when plans were approved in 1858, it eventual-

ly cost taxpayers between \$8 and \$12.5 million.

In recent years, it has not been well-maintained but has been nominally used as a City Hall Annex.

A draft of the task force report calling for the building's replacement with a new, more economical annex was leaked to The Post last week, long before it was ready for presentation to the Mayor. Although preliminary in nature, it is said to clearly reflect the desire of both the Mayor and his first deputy, James A. Cavanagh.

A spokesman for Municipal Service Administrator John Carroll, who headed the task force, emphasized that there is nothing final about the report and that everything is still under study.

Other groups that have since come out in opposition to demolition are the Municipal Art Society, the Victorian Society, the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Fine Arts Federation.

They are not only calling for the restoration and reuse of the courthouse as a City Hall annex. They are also urging the same approach be taken to other city-owned properties near

City Hall, such as the old Sun Building and Emigrant Savings Bank on Chambers St. and the old Police Headquarters on Centre Street. They are also partially used for city services but suffer from years of municipal neglect.

"As long as the per square foot measurement is the primary standard, old buildings will be cast aside no matter how structurally worthwhile and architecturally appealing they may be," notes Giorgio Cavaglieri, one of the city's—and the country's—foremost restoration architects. Cavaglieri designed two of the city's most appreciated renovated landmarks—the Jefferson Market Courthouse, now a branch library, and the former Astor Library, now the N. Y. Shakespeare Festival Theater.

"Isn't a high ceiling or spectacular stairway worth anything?" Cavaglieri asks. "The standard of a 10-foot ceiling with a filing cabinet by your side is an insult to the public who expects more for their civic structures, and an insult to the workers who will have to be there. The office of the Mayor should look better than the manager of the A&P."