

U.S. Boost
For Tweed
Courthouse

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

The Tweed Courthouse, which the Beame Administration reportedly would like to replace with a new City Hall annex, has officially been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Approval of the listing was announced yesterday by City Council President Paul O'Dwyer. He is co-chairman of a citizens group working to save the courthouse, which is behind City Hall on Chambers St.

The landmark register, maintained by the U.S. Dept. of the Interior and contains buildings and sites across the country of historic and architectural import. Although inclusion on the register does not prevent demolition, it does make the building eligible for federal preservation funds.

'Get On With Task'

"In light of this important designation from the nation's most prestigious historic committee, it would be unthinkable for us to destroy the courthouse," O'Dwyer said. "We must get on with the task of washing, painting and cleaning up the building."

A mayoral task force has recommended demolition of the 103-year-old courthouse, long considered a monument to civic corruption. Built under the stewardship of Boss William Marcy Tweed, it was supposed to cost \$350,000 when plans were approved in 1858. It wound up costing between \$3 million and \$12.5 million when completed 13 years later.

Mayor Beame has not yet acted on the task-force report, which was submitted to him during the summer. However, a \$1 million request by the Municipal Services Administration for demolition funds has been included in the Capital Budget.

The Tweed Courthouse has never been considered by the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission for designation as a landmark. A city landmark may not be externally altered or torn down without commission approval.

Civic Pressure

Since the Administration's intention to demolish the historic, but rundown, building was reported several months ago, many civic and architectural groups have been urging the commission to hold a public hearing on designation.

Asked whether such a hearing would be scheduled, commission chairman Beverly Moss Spatt said: "We are very much concerned with the Tweed Courthouse and are working on alternative plans for the whole area. The Administration has not yet taken action either way and it would be a year anyway before demolition contracts would be given out."

"The best thing the commission can do is be constructive, and until we come up with alternatives, we don't want to precipitate action."

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