

ARDSLEY GARAGE

165 EAST 77TH STREET (AKA 159-165 EAST 77TH STREET), BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

BLOCK 1412 / LOT 25

BUILT: 1914 (NB 434-1913)

ARCHITECT: GEORGE F. PELHAM

ORIGINAL OWNER: THE ARDSLEY GARAGE CO. (MAX A. CRAMER, PRESIDENT)

PREVIOUS ACTIONS: NA

SIGNIFICANT ALTERATIONS: COMMERCIAL SIGNAGE; FIRE ESCAPE; LIGHT FIXTURES

The Ardsley Garage is an exceptionally fine example of an early garage building in New York City, featuring a beautifully detailed white terra-cotta facade that has remained virtually intact over its nearly century-long existence. With terra-cotta fabricated by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company, the facade is loosely based on classical precedents, including pilasters with stylized capitals framing each of its five bays, three of which are headed by large round-arched openings with keystones. Its ornament is eclectic, combining traditional classical elements, such as egg-and-dart moldings, with diamonds and other geometric motifs that are typical of Arts-and-Crafts-style commercial architecture. Much of the facade's detailing, including its round bosses crowned by austere capitals, is characteristic of Viennese Secessionist architecture. This free mixing of the Arts-and-Crafts with abstracted and traditional classicism extends to the building's richly textured parapet, its raised ends bridged by a stylized classical frieze. Panels at the parapet's ends are filled with geometric ornament and crowned by projecting roundels containing old-fashioned spoked wheels announcing the building's function. Remarkably, the Ardsley Garage retains all of its historic, likely original, multi-paned windows, as well as first-story piers and much of its ground-floor infill. The building remains in use as a garage today.



New York's first purpose-built automobile garages appeared around the turn of the 20th century, and by 1915, more than 600 garages were listed in a local directory (although many of them were undoubtedly converted stables). The Ardsley Garage, designed by the prolific and versatile George F. Pelham, is characteristic of urban garages of the time, which frequently hid their utilitarian contents behind attractive facades that harmonized with their surroundings. Terra cotta was a preferred facing material for garages and other buildings serving the automobile. At least two other purpose-built garages have been designated Individual Landmarks by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.