

Angel Guardian Home

6301 12th Avenue, Brooklyn
Tax Map Block 5739 Lot 1 in part

Built: 1899

Architect: George H. Streeton

Style: Renaissance Revival and Beaux Arts

Proposed Action: Calendared June 30, 2020;
Public Hearing August 11, 2020



Angel Guardian Home, LPC, 2018

The Angel Guardian Home, located at 6301 12th Avenue in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn, was built as an orphanage in 1899 and was operated by the Sisters of Mercy as a branch of their convent in Clinton Hill. The Angel Guardian Home was designed by George H. Streeton, a prominent architect of Catholic churches in New York City, in a monumental limestone and brick structure blending the Renaissance Revival and Beaux-Arts styles that stands out from the surrounding residential streetscape. The main building (1899) facing 12th Avenue dates to the complex's formation at the turn of the twentieth century. With ornate carved limestone door surrounds, corner quoins, arched windows, copper cornices, and mansard roofs evoking the sophistication of European architecture, the Angel Guardian Home's design was intended to express the importance of its social service mission.

Historically part of the town of New Utrecht, the neighborhood of Dyker Heights remained a sparsely developed suburb until it was annexed to the City of Brooklyn in 1894 and incorporated into Greater New York City in 1898. During this period, the Sisters of Mercy expanded their charitable activities, renovating their convent and opening a campus on Long Island before acquiring a large property in Dyker Heights. In 1897, they hired George H. Streeton to design an orphanage there that would serve approximately 200 children under the age of seven.

George H. Streeton was born in Brooklyn in 1864. After studying at Cooper Union and Cornell University, he embarked on a successful career as an ecclesiastical architect working throughout New York City's five boroughs. Catholic churches that Streeton designed include, among others, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church rectory in the Greenwich Village Historic District, the Church of St. Cyril & Methodius and St. Raphael in Hell's Kitchen, and the Cathedral of St. James in Downtown Brooklyn.

At its opening in 1899, the Angel Guardian Home originally consisted of only the four-story main building, which within a few years was expanded to include north and south wings containing a chapel and administrative functions. A nursery, boiler house and other utilitarian structures were also constructed on the site, and by the 1920s, the orphanage and its gardens were extended to encompass the entire block and were surrounded by a stone and brick wall. The orphanage closed in the 1980s and the complex has since been used for a senior center and other purposes. For close to 120 years, the Angel Guardian Home's distinctive main building has been prominent within the Dyker Heights neighborhood and remains highly intact. The elegantly designed Angel Guardian Home with its monumental civic scale and adept blend of Renaissance Revival and Beaux-Arts architectural details, is architecturally significant and reflects the importance given to social services in the Progressive Era, and of the role the Sisters of Mercy have played in Brooklyn for over a century.