

**James A. and Ruth M. Bailey House**

Individual Landmark

10 St. Nicholas Place

Designation Date: February 19, 1974



*James A. and Ruth M. Bailey House August 1, 1981*

*Image courtesy of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission*

This handsome residence was erected between 1886 and 1888 for James Anthony Bailey, partner in the famed Barnum & Bailey Circus. Samuel B. Reed, the architect for the house, combined structural and decorative elements, associated primarily with the Romanesque Revival style, to create a powerful residential design befitting a man of Mr. Bailey's position. Born in Detroit in 1847, Bailey became connected with the circus as a very young man, and rapidly developed his superb showmanship. He founded his own circus in 1872 and formed a partnership with Phineas T. Barnum in 1881, assuming major managerial responsibilities. He was known as a kind man, and one who believed in giving his public the best.

The house is in a neighborhood which was largely rural until the 1880s, the decade during which the Bailey residence was built. Although much of the area today is dominated by apartment buildings, the survival of this house and other neighboring buildings of the same period help to retain a pleasant 19th century residential atmosphere. The building is currently occupied by a funeral home.

The architect skillfully utilized the corner site, upon which the house was built, so that when approaching it from any direction, one is struck by its powerful composition. The picturesque

character of the building radiates from an impressive three-story corner tower located at the intersection of St. Nicholas Place and West 150th Street. The tower, characteristic of the Romanesque Revival style, is surmounted by a conical roof and spiked finial which rises high above the curvilinear Flemish gables found on each of the four facades. The theme of the central tower is repeated using small turrets at the three remaining corners of the house.

The gable on the entrance facade facing St. Nicholas Place is similar to the others in shape and proportion but crowns a projecting front which provides space for a one-story entrance porch, set within the recess between the gabled front and the corner tower. The gray slate roof, with dormer windows on all four sides, is crowned by a wrought-iron railing at the truncated apex. Other distinguishing features include projecting porches, arched windows, bays and high chimneys, one of which bears the date "1887."

The surface treatment of the house is predominantly rough-faced stone laid in random ashlar, typical of the Romanesque Revival. The boldly cut masonry is relieved by smooth-faced stone, notably at the window and door enframements, the main entrance porch, and the spandrels above the third-story tower windows.

Ornamental detail is provided by foliate bands on the St. Nicholas Place and West 150th Street facades and a heraldic crest set above the main entranceway. Railings, pierced in a checker-board pattern, handsome wrought-iron lamps at the main entrance, and stained-glass transoms above many of the door and window openings also accent the house. Although most of these decorative motifs are associated with the Romanesque Revival style, evidence of other traditions is apparent, such as the stone urn set atop the corner of the entrance porch, reminiscent of Renaissance architecture, and a panel with Tudor roses associated with the Queen Anne style on one of the chimneys. Such ornamental variety greatly adds to the interest of this house, which is a superb example of the picturesque tradition.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)