

Plant and Scrymser Pavilions for Private Patients, St. Luke's Hospital

Individual Landmark

400-401 West 114th Street

Designation Date: June 18, 2002



Plant and Scrymser Pavilions for Private Patients, St. Luke's Hospital. Photo by Lorraine Colbert

The Plant and Scrymser Pavilions for Private Patients (1904-06 and 1926-28) are two of the six surviving buildings of eight constructed to designs by architect Ernest Flagg at St. Luke's Hospital in Morningside Heights. New York's fourth oldest hospital (1850), St. Luke's was formerly located (1858) on West 54th Street at Fifth Avenue. The Episcopal church-affiliated hospital chose a block-long site in 1892 for a new complex next to the planned Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

The design by the Beaux-Arts trained Flagg, a cousin of the wife of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, chairman of St. Luke's executive committee, was selected despite Flagg having only started his practice. Flagg's skillful plan featured nine pavilions arranged symmetrically around a central, domed administrative pavilion, five of which were built in 1893-96. This plan further developed the standard late 19th century pavilion scheme for American hospitals, an arrangement seen as functional and healthful in providing light and fresh air, and isolating germs.

The handsome French Renaissance Revival style buildings were clad in rusticated stone and buff-colored brick, with mansard roofs. The Plant and Scrymser Pavilions, added to the east of the original complex, facing Morningside Park, provided facilities for wealthy private patients, helping to subsidize other hospital programs. Margaret J. Plant, widow of Henry Bradley Plant, became a major philanthropist with the inheritance of her husband's fortune, earned mainly from southern railroads, steamship lines, and hotels.

The Scrymser Pavilions were named for James Alexander Scrymser, a pioneer in the development of telegraph cable lines in the Western Hemisphere, whose legacy of over one million dollars was received by the hospital after the death of his widow, Mary Catherine, in 1926. The Plant and Scrymser Pavilions are among the significant institutional buildings that contributed to making Morningside Heights the "Acropolis" of Manhattan.

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