

The Dakota  
1 West 72nd Street  
New York  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5467

HABS  
NY,  
31-NEYO,  
74-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
601 9th Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5467

## THE DAKOTA

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NY,  
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74-

Address: 1 West 72nd Street, Central Park West between 72nd  
and 73rd Streets, New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: The Dakota, Inc.

Present Use: Co-operative apartment building.

Statement of Significance: Completed in 1884, The Dakota is a very early example of an elegant and luxurious New York City apartment building. Because it has been well-maintained and little altered since its erection, the building retains to a very great extent its original layout and decorative features.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: The Dakota is situated on what was originally Lots 25-40 of Block 1125; these lots were later combined and numbered Lot 25.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
12/31/1877 Liber 1443, page 307.	Belmont August Caroline	Clark Edward
12/27/1882 Liber 1704, page 134.	Will of Edward Clark	Devisee Clark Edward Severin
2/9/1897 Liber 54, page 183.	Hoffman Charles F. Dimond Thomas Clark Elizabeth S. Edward S.	Agreement
11/17/1961 Liber 5168, page 619.	The Clark Foundation	Glickman Corp.
11/17/1961 Liber 5168, page 623.	Glickman Corp.	The Dakota, Inc.

2. Date of erection: Construction was begun on October 25, 1880, and completed on October 27, 1884.
3. Architect: Henry Janeway Hardenbergh (1847-1918). Hardenbergh worked for Detlef Lienau from 1865 to 1870. After designing The Dakota, he became widely known for the hotels which he designed, including the Waldorf-Astoria and the Plaza in New York and the Copley-Plaza in Boston.
4. Builder: John Banta. Banta was listed in Trow's Directory for New York City published in 1880 as "198 B'way & W. 17th, n. 294 W. 4th."
5. Original plans and construction: On file at the Plans Desk at the Buildings Department, Municipal Building, New York, is the original "Detailed Statement of Specifications for New Buildings" for the Dakota. The application, No. 829, was submitted on September 29, 1880, and approved on October 19, 1880. The following information is abstracted from that statement. The depth of the foundation walls from curb level was to be "from 10 to 18 feet"; the foundation was to be laid "on solid rock," and the foundation walls were to be "From 3 to 4 feet" thick, constructed of "Blue stone laid in cement mortar." All floors were "to have rolled beams from 6 to 12 ins. deep," and "Beams on all floors [were] to be from 3 to 4 feet apart." The floors were to be "arched in brick or terra cotta." The hall partitions were to be of "fireproof blocks. All other partitions either of brick or fireproof blocks." The thickness of the exterior walls of the first story was to be "24 to 28 inches"; second through fourth stories, "20 to 24 inches"; fifth and sixth stories, "16 to 20 inches"; above sixth story, "12 to 16 inches." The staircases were to be fireproof: "Main staircases of iron, marble treads--Servants' stairs of iron." The seven elevators were to be "all enclosed in brick." The building was to be occupied as a "Family Hotel. Suits [sic] of Apartments for fourty [sic] two families besides Janitors" with "Six families on each floor a part of building on 1st floor & basement to be used as a public Restaurant--Janitors families in basement." The cost of construction was estimated to be "about \$1000000.00"

A notice in The New York Times of October 22, 1884, announced the opening of The Dakota:

THE DAKOTA.

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A DESCRIPTION OF ONE OF THE MOST PERFECT APARTMENT HOUSES IN THE WORLD.

From the Daily Graphic, Wednesday, Sept. 10.

Probably not one stranger out of fifty who ride over the elevated roads or on either of the rivers does not ask the name of the stately building which stands west of Central Park, between Seventy-second and Seventy-third streets. If there is such a person the chances are that he is blind or nearsighted. The name of the building is the Dakota Apartment House, and it is the largest, most substantial, and most conveniently arranged apartment house of the sort in this country. It stands on the crest of the West Side Plateau, on the highest portion of land in the city, and overlooks the entire island and the surrounding country. From the east one has a bird's-eye view of Central Park. The reservoir, castle and the picturesque lake, the museums, and the mall are all shown at a glance. From this point also can be seen Long Island Sound in the distance, and the hills of Brooklyn. From the north one looks down on High Bridge and the tall reservoir tower, which looks as slender as a needle. From the west can be seen the Palisades, the Orange Mountains, and the broad Hudson, which narrows into a silver thread as the double row of hills close together far away in the distance. Looking south one sees the tall towers of the Brooklyn Bridge, Governor's Island, and far beyond the green hills of Staten Island and the blue waters of the Lower Bay. Every prominent landmark in the landscape can be discerned from this location, and the great buildings of the lower city are as prominently marked as if the sightseer were floating over the island in a balloon. At this elevation every breeze which moves across Manhattan from any direction is felt. This is a feature which needs no emphasis to make attractive such stifling days as these.

The building is of the Renaissance style of architecture, built of buff brick, with carved Nova Scotia freestone trimmings and terra cotta ornamentation. Although there is a profusion of ornament in the shape of bay and octagon windows, niches, balconies, and balustrades, with spandrels and panels in beautiful terra cotta work and heavy carved cornices, the size and massive construction of the edifice prevent any appearance of superfluity. The building is about 200 feet square and 10 stories high, the upper two stories being in the handsome mansard roof which, with its peaks and gables, surmounted by ornate copper work cresting and finials, and relieved by dormer and oriel windows, gives the entire structure an air of lightness and elegance. The construction is of the most massive character, and the aim of the owners has been to produce a building monumental in solidity and perfectly fireproof. The brick and mason work is of unusual weight, the walls being in some places four feet thick, and the partitions and flooring

have iron beams and framing, filled in with concrete and fireproof material.

On the Seventy-third-street side there is a handsome doorway, and on the Seventy-second-street front a fine arched carriage entrance, with groined roof and elegant stone carving. Both entrances lead into the inner court, from which four separate passages afford access to the interior of the building. From the ground floor four fine bronze staircases, the metal work beautifully wrought and the walls wainscoted in rare marbles and choice hard woods, and four luxuriously fitted elevators, of the latest and safest construction, afford means of reaching the upper floors. The ladies' sitting room, adjoining the staircase in the southeast corner, will be decorated by the Misses Greatorex, a guarantee that the work upon it will be artistic and unconventional. There are four iron staircases and four elevators inclosed in massive brick walls and extending from the cellar to the kitchens and servants' quarters in the upper stories, separate from the rest of the house, which can be used for domestic purposes, carrying furniture, merchandise, &c. There are electric bells to each elevator, and a complete system of electric communication throughout the house.

The building is in four great divisions, which inclosed a courtyard as large as half a dozen ordinary buildings. This gives every room in the house light, sunshine, and ventilation. Under this courtyard is the basement, into which lead broad entrances for the use of tradesmen's teams. Here are situated the most interesting portions of the building, or at least the most novel ones. The floor is of asphaltum, as dry and hard as rock. This basement, also, has a courtyard as large as the one above, and lighted by two huge latticed manholes, which look like a couple of green flower beds in the stone flooring. Off of this yard are the storerooms of the house, in which the management will store the furniture and trunks of the tenants free of charge. A porter is assigned to this duty alone. The rooms are all marble floored, lighted and heated, and accessible at all hours of the day or night. The rooms of the servants are also on this floor. These consist of separate dining and toilet rooms for the male and female servants and a male reading and smoking room. These are not for the personal servants of the tenants, but for the general help of the management, which will not number far from 150 persons. The laundry, kitchen, pantry, and bake shops, and private storerooms are here also, for the owners combine a hotel with the apartment house, and furnish eating facilities for all the tenants of the building who prefer it on the table d'hôte plan. Opening from the lower court, and extending under the open ground in the rear of the building, a

large vault, 150 feet long, 60 feet wide, and 18 feet deep, is now being excavated. When finished it will contain the steam boilers, steam engines, &c., for hoisting, pumping, &c., and the dynamos for supplying electric illumination in the Dakota and adjoining 27 houses. The vault will be roofed with iron beams and brick filling arches and made flush with the land in the rear of the building, 225 feet deep, which will be laid out as a garden. The boilers, with the furnaces, machirery, &c., will thus be located outside the walls of the building safely remote.

The first floor contains the dining rooms, which are finished in a perfect manner. In this case these words really mean something. The floors are of marble and inlaid. The base of the walls is of English quartered oak, carved by hand. The upper portions are finished in bronze bas-relief work, and the ceilings are also quartered oak, beautifully carved. The effect is that of an old English baronial hall, with the dingy massiveness brightened and freshened without losing any of its richness. The effect is heightened by a large Scotch brownstone engraved fireplace, which ornaments the centre of the room. The business office has oral communication with every portion of the house, and the wants of the tenants can be attended to as quickly as can be done by human ingenuity and a perfectly arranged service.

In addition to the four main staircases mentioned before, which are finished in bronze and marble, there are four iron staircases for servants, four passenger elevators, and four servants' elevators.

The Dakota will be divided into about 65 different suites of apartments, each containing from four to twenty separate rooms, so that accommodations can be furnished either for bachelors or for large families. There is an air of grandeur and elegance not only about the halls and stairways but also about the separate apartments that cannot probably be found in any other house of this kind in the country. The parlors in some instances are 25 by 40 feet, with other rooms in proportion, and there are in many cases private halls to the suites, furnished with fine bronze mantels, tiled hearths, and ornamental open fireplaces. The parlors, libraries, reception and dining rooms are all cabinet trimmed, paneled, and wainscoted in mahogany, oak, and other attractive and durable woods, and are furnished with carved buffets and mantels, mirrors, tiled hearths and open grate fireplaces, and parqueted floors. The kitchens are spacious, and provided with ranges, with ventilating hoods, all with Minton tiled facing and marble wainscoting. There are porcelain washtubs, large storerooms and closets, and butlers' pantries, equipped in the most complete manner, and each suite has its private bathrooms and closets, fitted with the most

approved scientific sanitary appliances.

The plumbing and hygienic arrangements are fully equal to anything in this country. On the top story are six tanks, holding 5,000 gallons of water each, and supplied by steam pumps having a daily capacity of 2,000,000 gallons, and about 200 miles of pipe have been used in effecting its circulation. Not only in the sanitary appliances, but in every other department, there is a completeness that is surprising. The precautions taken to secure proper ventilation and a pure atmosphere, to insure safety to occupants in cases of fire or panic, and to extinguish fire are perfect. When opened the comfort and convenience of the guests will be further insured by the accommodations of the dining rooms, laundry, and barber's shop, run on the most improved plan, in connection with the building. It is the perfection of the apartment style of living, and guarantees to the tenants comforts which would require unlimited wealth to procure in a private residence. The wisest precautions have been taken to insure freedom from the ordinary cares of the household to the fortunate tenants. For instance, the coal and kindling wood are purchased by the manager in large quantities and sold to the tenants, who take in exchange for their money tickets which are presented at the office, and the fuel is carried to their rooms in convenient quantities, thereby saving the user from any of the necessary troubles in buying and storage. This may seem like a small matter, but it is only one of the hundred plans taken by the owners to secure the comfort of the tenants.

It is almost needless to state that the building is as nearly fireproof as any which can be erected. There are continuous passageways extending through the four divisions on the roof: ninth, eighth, and first stories. On the tenth floor there is provision for a play room and gymnasium for the children, well lighted and ventilated and commanding a grand view of the city and surroundings, while on the ninth floor there will be extra servants' rooms, private laundries and drying rooms, dormitories for transient male and female servants and attachés of the building, and lavatories, toilet rooms, and bathrooms for their use.

The work on both the Dakota and the neighboring apartment house and private dwellings owned by the estate has been done not only in the most careful manner, but with a view to permanence and convenience, and to symmetry as well as beauty of appearance. The greatest skill and experience and the best materials large means could command have been employed, and the manner in which the work in each department has been done reflects the greatest credit on those intrusted with it, especially upon the architect, Mr. H.J. Hardenbergh, who has super-

vised the work from its commencement to its now rapidly approaching completion.

Both the Dakota, the private residences, and the smaller apartment house are now ready for occupation, and we need hardly comment on the peculiar attractions they will possess for those who have experienced a desire for an eligible residence on the west side. The natural and artificial attributes of the position are all in favor of the buildings, which for comfort, ample space, salubrity, convenience, and accessibility cannot be excelled, and a glance at our description will suffice to show that everything skill could furnish, ingenuity and experience suggest has been supplied. The managers of the Clark estate, the owners of the property, are well known for their fairness and liberality to tenants, and every care will be taken to insure comfort and well-being. The rents are moderate when compared with the accommodations furnished, and those desiring to secure either dwellings or apartments can examine plans, &c., and make arrangements at the office of the estate, at No. 25 West Twenty-third-street, New-York.

6. Alterations and additions: The grounds of The Dakota originally extended 175 feet west beyond the rear of the building. The property contained gardens, croquet and tennis courts, and a depressed boiler room, which are no longer extant.

The following material concerning building applications is from the Plans Desk, Buildings, Department, Municipal Building, New York:

On May 22, 1894, George H. Griebel Archt., 247 West 125th Street, received approval for alteration application Plan 640 for the following work: "New Toilet Room for Help to be arranged under sidewalk in Vault. Front Area to be lowered as to give light, and for Appearance, and Ventilation." The cost was estimated to be "\$2000<sup>00</sup>/100." Work was begun on July 2, 1894, and completed on September 22, 1894.

On August 29, 1903, Griebel, now of 489 Fifth Avenue, received approval for alteration Plan 1438 for "General repairs, such as patching floors and plastering" on the interior and the following work on the exterior:

- A - on plan - New dormer window to be put, constructed of angle iron frame work, hollow block and Copper.
  - B - on plan - New opening cut - jans [sic] rebuilt with 2 rowlock arch over same.
  - C - on plan - Partition to be removed.
  - D - on plan - New dormer window to be put in. Constructed of angle iron frame work, hollow blocks and Copper.
- All work to be done in 9th Story.

Unfortunately, the accompanying drawings are missing. The work was begun on October 5, 1903, and completed on November 24, 1903.

Minor alterations to apartment partitions were carried out in Apartments 92 and 93 in 1933-35, Apartment 84 in 1935-36, Apartment 41 in 1939, Apartment 4 in 1962, and Apartment 34 in 1963, and in a number of apartments in 1964, and Apartment 31 in 1965. Apartment 1 was divided into two apartments in 1965.

A 15,000 gallon tank was installed "in coal bunker enclosed in 8" brick wall" in 1936-37. The curb along the West 72nd Street entrance was dropped in 1940-41 to provide an automobile driveway. In 1962-63 a new apartment was constructed on the first floor at the corner of 72nd Street and Central Park West and new elevator doors installed.

7. Important old views:

- a. Photograph of The Dakota with skaters in Central Park, dated "about 1890." Negative 34438C, New-York Historical Society. This view is reproduced in King's Handbook of New York City, 2nd ed., p. 746.
- b. Photograph of the 72nd Street facade, dated "before 1890 (?)." Museum of the City of New York. (See HABS photocopy).
- c. Photograph of Central Park West facade, dated "1890." Museum of the City of New York.
- d. Two photographs--one looking north, one looking south--taken from the roof of The Dakota, dated "1887." New-York Historical Society.
- e. Photograph showing both West 72nd Street and Central Park West facades by Wurts Brothers, reproduced in New York Landmarks, p. 153.

B. Sources of Information

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Records from the Plans Desk, Buildings Department, Municipal Building, New York, New York.

2. Secondary and published sources:

"A Description of One of the Most Perfect Apartment Houses In the World," The New York Times, October 22, 1884, p. 5.

- "At Home in The Dakota," Interiors, CXXIII (June, 1964), 58-59.
- Bach, Richard F. "Henry Janeway Hardenbergh," The Architectural Record, XLIV (July, 1918), 91-93.
- "Costly New-York Buildings," The New York Times, October 5, 1890, p. 11.
- Hartmann, Sadakichi. "A Conversation with Henry Janeway Hardenbergh," The Architectural Record, XIX (May, 1906), 376-80.
- "H.J. Hardenbergh, Architect, Is Dead," The New York Times, March 14, 1918, p. 13.
- Schuyler, Montgomery. "The Works of Henry Janeway Hardenbergh," The Architectural Record, VI (January-March, 1897), 335-75.
- "The Venerable Dakota," Architectural Forum, Vol. 110 (March, 1959), pp. 122-23.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural interest and merit: Completed in 1884, The Dakota is a very early example of an elegant New York City apartment building. Because it has been well maintained and little altered since its erection, the building retains to a very great extent its original layout and decorative features.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

### B. Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories: Seven stories, plus two full stories housed under the roof.
2. Number of bays: The West 72nd Street and Central Park West facades are both eleven bays wide; the West 73rd Street facade is thirteen bays wide; and the rear facade is seventeen bays wide.
3. Over-all dimensions: The Central Park West and rear facades each measure approximately 204'-4"; the West 72nd and West 73rd Street facades each measure approximately 200'-2".
4. Layout, shape: The building is rectangular in plan, with an

I-shaped court.

5. Wall construction, finish and color: From the basement level to the first floor window sills the walls are of a yellowish-gray sandstone. Above this, the walls are of yellow brick, laid up in common bond. There is a terra-cotta belt course carved with a diaper pattern between the second and third floors. The rear wall is of red brick, laid up in common bond.
6. Chimneys: There are several corbeled yellow brick chimneys on all sides.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance, on 72nd Street, consists of a large stone archway with an iron gate and with three windows above. A second iron gate opens into the courtyard. A glass-enclosed passageway runs along the west side of the courtyard.
  - b. Windows: All windows are square-headed and have stone architraves and sills except for windows at second floor level, which are round-headed. All windows have one-over-one light double-hung sash. On the West 72nd Street facade bay windows extend from the second floor to roof and are topped by pentagonal towers at roof level. On the Central Park West facade in the center bay there are bay windows at the fourth and fifth floor levels. Some windows have balconets, and basement windows have iron grilles.
8. Balcony: On the seventh floor level a stone balcony with an iron railing runs along the West 72nd Street and Central Park West facades and partially along the West 73rd Street facade.
9. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The building has an irregular roofline with gabled, mansard and pyramidal roofs, covered with slate shingles.
  - b. Cornice: Stone.
  - c. Dormers: There are two, three, and four levels of dormers at various parts of the roof, some with stone faces and some covered with copper. All have one-over-one light double-hung sash.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: At each corner of the central courtyard is a passenger elevator and stairway. On floors two through seven, only two or three apartments are served by each elevator and stairway, as there is no corridor linking other apartments. The eighth and ninth floors, originally servants' rooms, are now being converted into small apartments; a continuous corridor on these floors connects all apartments.
2. Stairways: The corner stairways have iron balusters with wooden railings; from the first to second floors there is marble wainscoting, and above the second floor there is wooden wainscoting.
3. Elevators: The eight original hydraulic elevators--four passenger, four service--are still functioning, but new cabs have been installed.
4. Flooring: Hall floors on the first floor are of marble; hall floors on the floors above are of wood.
5. Wall and ceiling finish: The hallways have wooden wainscoting, and plaster walls and ceilings.
6. Doorways and doors: Apartment entrance doors and hall doors are of paneled wood, two to three inches thick.
7. Notable hardware: The brass door knobs, escutcheons, and hinges are all original.
8. Lighting, type of fixtures: Electrical. Hallways have combination brass and glass hanging lights.
9. Heating: Steam.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. Orientation and general setting: The entrance facade on West 72nd Street faces south, and the Central Park West facade faces east onto Central Park.
2. Fence: A fence consisting of a stone coping topped by an iron railing supported by cast iron grotesques and bearded male masks surrounds the building on all but the rear facade and is separated from the building by an arcway.
3. Sidewalks: Concrete and stone, contiguous to fence.