

Mansion Razing Is Halted

By ROBERTA B. GRAY

Demolition of two 19th-century mansions facing the Metropolitan Museum of Art was temporarily halted today as neighborhood residents and civic organizations rallied to save the monuments to disappearing elegance from the wrecker's ball.

The situation was complicated by the fact that, according to neighborhood witnesses, internal demolition of the two buildings started in August—although a demolition permit was not officially issued by the Buildings Dept. until last Thursday. A visit to the site yesterday showed that obviously more than three days' demolition work had been completed.

"We don't know how this obvious demolition violation will help us in court, but we are certainly going to use it," said Councilman Carter Burden, (D-Man.), who sought the demolition injunction along with Assemblyman Anthony Olivieri (D-Man.), the Municipal Arts Society and scores of neighborhood residents. Arguments on nullifying the injunction permanent will be heard tomorrow.

A temporary restraining order obtained in Supreme Court yesterday blocked further demolition of the two buildings at 1005 and 1007 Fifth Av. They and two other adjacent structures were acquired by the Goldman-DiLorenzo real estate firm.

The partners, Sol Goldman and Alex DiLorenzo, whose real estate investments throughout the city include the Chrysler Building, are among the target landholders in the city. They have reportedly purchased the E. 82d St. corner package to erect a 24-story apartment house.

The townhouses which were long ago converted into small apartments, defy exact stylistic description—one architect called them "high renaissance revival"—but there was widespread feeling that they were at least "landmark quality."

Tried Purchase Plan

Kent Barwick, director of the Municipal Art Society, which has long been in the forefront of rescuing city landmarks from steel-and-glass replacement, said, "These buildings individually may not be meritorious of fine landmark designation but they work in combination to form a streetscape unparalleled in the city."

The Neighborhood Assn. for the Preservation of the Fifth Av. Homes started in public rescue attempt last May, when they first learned the buildings were threatened, says Thomas Draper, the group's secretary and a resident of 2 E. 82d St., one of the four buildings slated for demolition.

The Neighborhood Assn. appealed to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in July. Commission Chairman Harmon H. Goldstone informed the group that "the Commission can only consider for landmark designation items that have had a public hearing," he said yesterday.