

Observatory

The four-story, 60-foot high Observatory on Fort hill in Patterson Park was described by its designer, Charles H. Latrobe, General Superintendent and Engineer under the old Park Commission, as "a most substantial and ornamental building, commanding a very fine view, especially over the harbor," in his report to his superiors upon its completion in 1891.

Substantial, in resisting vandalism and neglect, the tower was held in such esteem, that in 1965 the Board of Estimates, prompted by a Mayor who appreciated the City's distinctive buildings, appropriated more than twice the amount for refurbishing than it had originally cost.

Four spreading flights of granite steps form the base of the octagonal iron structure, with the central circular stair enclosed by glass and wood. The three cantilevered iron balconies, the yellow and red-orange paint, and the multi-colored glass in the transoms have long since made this prominent landmark familiar to all visitor and residents as the "pagoda" or the "Chinese Pagoda" even though they use it to survey the Basilica or the Washington Monument to the west, the Stadium to the north, or the activity of the harbor and the bay to the south.

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