

AMERICAN-ISRAEL CULTURAL FOUNDATION (formerly the William H. Moore House),
4 East 54th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1898, completed 1900; architects
McKim, Mead & White.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1289, Lot 67.

On May 10, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the American-Israel Cultural Foundation and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 26). Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. This hearing was continued to subsequent hearings of the Commission. The public hearing on the building was closed on September 13, 1966. (Item No. 5). The hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation at any hearing.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This former residence of William H. Moore is a fine example of a turn of the century stone townhouse. Its strong Italian Renaissance facade, rich carving and simple window arrangement (fenestration) give the building stability and order, and unite to make the structure a worthy architectural achievement. Designed by McKim, Mead & White, the house is an example of their skillful adaptation of a Renaissance facade to the requirements of a New York townhouse in which the sober and the elegant are successfully combined.

The first story is rusticated. Voluted keystones adorn the flat arches of the windows, while the door in the center carries a carved cartouche representing rolled leather. The principle feature of the second story is a richly carved balcony resting on large consoles or brackets. Over the second story windows the cornices rest on handsome ancone brackets. The central window head supports a small rectangular balcony with ornately designed wrought iron work. A horizontal dentilled band course separates the fourth and fifth floors. Above the fifth floor windows the elaborate entablature with scallop-shell frieze contains dentils; and the voluted brackets support the main cornice and balustrade. This decorated area of the facade contrasts beautifully with the simplicity of the symmetrically arranged windows. The heavy moldings around each window are reduced in size on each successive floor adding a feeling of vertical perspective to the building. The corner stones (quoins) and overhanging cornice frame the structure and give it a feeling of perfect unity.

The house was built in 1900 for William H. Moore, (1848-1923), Chicago industrialist and a founder of the United States Steel Corporation, the American Can Company and the National Biscuit Company.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the American-Israel Cultural Foundation has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the American-Israel Cultural Foundation was built as a large, dignified townhouse, that it displays much refined detail with almost perfect symmetry and that as the former home of a noted New Yorker it is representative of the best of its type to be found in the City.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the American-Israel Cultural Foundation, 4 East 54th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1289, Lot 67, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.