

Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 19, 1973, No. 3
LP-0654

NEW WORLD FOUNDATION BUILDING (formerly Lewis G. Morris House), 100 East 85th Street. Built 1914; architect Ernest Flagg.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1513, Lot 69.

On February 3, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the New World Foundation Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 17). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The representative of Community Board No. 8 spoke in favor of designation. In a letter to the Commission the New World Foundation indicated its support of the proposed designation of its building.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This large red brick town house is an exceptionally fine example of an early 20th Century town house designed in the neo-Federal style. It is located at the southeast corner of Park Avenue and East 85th Street. It was designed by Ernest Flagg who, though trained at the French Ecole des Beaux Arts and best remembered as the architect of the Singer Building on lower Broadway, demonstrated the range of his versatility with this unusual example of his work.

The house occupies a long narrow plot, measuring only a little over twenty-five feet on Park Avenue by eighty-two feet on 85th Street. Actually, it appears to be two houses separated by a square open court -- a skillful solution of the requirements of the original owner and of the limitations of the site. The major, or western portion, faces Park Avenue and extends along East 85th Street for approximately forty feet. The narrower eastern portion presents a gable end to the street.

The western portion, on 85th Street, has a basement with windows. Above it are three stories with paired double-hung windows, separated by a broad expanse of brick wall in which is located a handsome oval window at the third floor. All of the windows have splayed flat arches of brick. Those at the first floor have stone end blocks and central keystones, at the second floor keystones only, and at the third floor neither keystones nor end blocks. The fourth floor is set in the steep slate roof which forms a high gable-end on Park Avenue. It has five hip-roofed dormer windows above the modillioned roof cornice. The Park Avenue end has a central chimney which rises up above the peak of the roof at the gable, providing an abutment for the balustrade which runs the length of the roof. A brick elevator tower is set in an angle of the open court and is crowned by a four-sided cupola. Each side of this cupola has an arched double-hung window with interlaced muntins in the upper sash. A small balcony on consoles repeats the theme of the roof balustrade.

A garage on the eastern portion, on 85th Street, necessitated raising the first floor a half story above the first floor level of the western portion. This created a split-level served by a broad interior staircase at the back of the open court. The staircase is visually expressed on the exterior by a series of vertical windows which follow its rise. The first and second floor windows above the garage, in the eastern portion, are contained in a three-sided bay window, while the third floor has two conventional windows set flush with the brick wall. The gable-end above, crowned by a central chimney, has two quadrant windows similar to those on Park Avenue.

A stone staircase with iron handrails leads up to the main entrance on the west side of the court. The entrance consists of a handsome arched doorway with double doors surmounted by a fanlight. An oval window at the third floor emphasizes its location.

This house was built as the residence of Lewis Gouverneur Morris, a descendant of a family prominently associated with Colonial history. Morris has served as governors and judges of New York and New Jersey. Wishing to preserve the house after the death of their father, Mr. Morris's daughters sold it to The New World Foundation expressing the wish that they would maintain it as a Landmark and use the building only for the advancement of world health, education and welfare, civil rights and race and inter-group relations.

THE NEW WORLD FOUNDATION BUILDING

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 New World Foundation Building 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 New World Foundation Building (formerly Lewis G. Morris House) is an interesting interpretation of an early 20th century town house in the neo-Federal style of the Eclectic period, that it solves, in a highly original way, a series of demanding requirements on a very limited site, that it displays particularly fine details and brickwork and that it has been adapted, without exterior change, to serve a new and useful public purpose.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 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 New World Foundation Building, 100 East 85th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1513, Lot 69, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.