

11 EAST 70th STREET HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1909-10; architect John H. Duncan.
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1385, Lot 12.

On November 27, 1973, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 11 East 70th Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 19). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses, including the representative of the owner, spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The handsome house at 11 East 70th Street was built in 1909-10 and designed in the French Classical manner, one of the prominent styles during this period. The architect, John H. Duncan is best known for his design of Grant's Tomb on Riverside Drive and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Arch in Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn.

The properties on this block were held by the Estate of James Lenox until 1907 when they were transferred to the New York Public Library-Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. The Lenox Library building which stood on this block was completed in 1875; in 1911 the collections were removed from the location on Fifth Avenue and 70th Street to the new New York Public Library building on Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street, and the Lenox building was subsequently replaced by the Henry Clay Frick mansion. The Library began selling the properties on the north side of East 70th Street in 1909, and this new residence was among the first to be built on the block. Fifth Avenue and its side streets, above 59th Street, had already been well developed in the 1880s and 1890s, so for this land to remain open until 1909 was quite unusual. The wealthy New Yorkers who bought these lots usually commissioned houses for themselves, thus continuing the well-established residential trend in the development of the area. In this case, Cornelius W. Luyster, Jr., a builder-developer, purchased the lot for No. 11 in 1909 as well as several others in the block. He sold the property with the completed house to Ruth A. Bruce-Brown in May 1910.

No. 11 East 70th Street was built as a five-story limestone residence. The ground floor contains a round-arched window and doorway with handsome wrought-iron and glass doors. Wrought-iron railings line the stoop and areaway. The stone balcony with balustrade above the ground floor is carried on heavy brackets and serves the second floor windows. These windows with their bracketed pediments, as well as the third floor windows with their molded lintels and enframements lend contrast to the smooth wall surface. The third floor is crowned by a modillioned cornice with a modified Doric frieze. The fourth floor has stone paneled wall sections flanking the windows and is crowned by a boldly projecting modillioned cornice. This cornice accentuates the setback of the mansard roof which contains two pedimented dormers.

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 11 East 70th Street House 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 11 East 70th Street House is a handsome residence in the French Classical manner, that it was designed by the distinguished architect John H. Duncan, that the facade is enlivened by fine architectural details, and that the house contributes to the dignity and character of the street.

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 11 East 70th Street House, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 1385, Lot 12, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.