

ANDREW NORWOOD HOUSE, 241 West 14th Street, Borough of Manhattan.
Built 1845-47.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 764, Lot 15.

On March 14, 1978, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Andrew Norwood House, 241 West 14th Street and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 10). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Andrew Norwood House is an elegant urban residence designed in a transitional style which combines Greek Revival and Italianate features. It is an outstanding example of this type. Erected between 1845 and 1847, the house was originally part of a group of three houses which were built for Andrew S. Norwood, a prosperous New York City merchant.

The site of these three houses lies within the boundaries of a farm acquired in about 1647 by Cosyn Gerritsen van Putten, an early Dutch settler. In 1741, Sir Peter Warren, a famous Irish officer in the English Navy, purchased the property. The area surrounding the site on which the Norwood house now stands remained rural until the 1830s, despite the fact that Seventh and Eighth Avenues had been opened to traffic a decade earlier. As the city expanded northward from Greenwich Village, Union Square and 14th Street became a fashionable residential district. During the 1840s many blocks of fine town houses were constructed along and north of 14th Street. In 1845 Andrew Norwood purchased several lots on 14th and 15th Streets, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Various sources indicate that Norwood had three houses constructed along the north side of 14th Street between mid-1845 and mid-1847. These were the first brick or masonry buildings on the block between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. The three houses correspond to 239, 241, and 243 West 14th Street. Norwood's own house at No. 241 was originally flanked by "first-class" single family houses, both of which he had sold by the beginning of 1853.

The Norwood family was described in 1879 as being "among the oldest of the Knickerbockers upon this island."¹ Andrew S. Norwood (1770-1856) was a highly successful merchant. As a principal in the firm of Norwood & Austin, he eventually amassed a considerable fortune. The firm loaned \$10,000 to the merchants subscription program begun when the federal government could only raise part of the 16 million dollars needed for the War of 1812. In addition, Norwood was one of the jurors for the 1806 trial of merchant Samuel G. Ogden. This trial, which was brought by the federal government, concerned Ogden's involvement in an ill-fated commercial venture which was closely linked with General Francis Miranda's unsuccessful expedition to free Colombia, South America, from Spanish rule.

The house at 241 West 14th Street was transferred to Norwood's son, Andrew G. Norwood, in June, 1858, and the property remained in the Norwood family until the turn of the century. A.G. Norwood was a member of the Stock Exchange for forty years. His son entered the family brokerage firm in 1853, and in 1865, A.G. Norwood retired after "having accumulated a large fortune."² He died at the age of 66 on March 11, 1879, and in his memory the flag of the Stock Exchange was lowered to half-mast.

The Norwood house, a handsome and generously-proportioned four-story building, is set above a brownstone basement and subtly accented with brownstone trim. Its transitional style reflects the Greek Revival tradition, which had been popular for town house design in the 1830s and 1840s, and the new Italianate style, first introduced to New York City in the design of the A.T. Stewart Store in 1845, the very year Norwood's house was begun. At the first floor, there are two full-height French doors with Greek Revival eared enframements. These doors open onto the original, Italianate style, cast-iron

balcony. The doorway at the left, above a high stoop, has an elegant Doric entablature, carried on Doric pilasters, which is ornamented with triglyphs above guttae. The central triglyph acts as a bracket for the cornice above. The doorway treatment is a particularly striking Greek Revival feature. The three windows at the second, third, and fourth floors have distinctive Italianate style enframements and sills, each of which is supported by two corbels. The window size diminishes in height at each ascending level, a characteristic of the Greek Revival style. The wood roof cornice of Greek Revival type is composed of a fascia board below a series of closely-spaced modillions.

Today the Andrew Norwood House looks very much as it did when it was erected in 1845-47. The fine architectural details of both the interior and exterior have been carefully preserved and the building retains much of its original character. The current owner of the house is in the process of restoring the building. The elegant proportions and handsome decorative features, reflecting the Greek Revival and Italianate styles, of the Andrew Norwood House give it particular distinction. It is one of the few remaining town houses of its type in New York City and it is a striking reminder of the fashionable 14th Street residential area of the 1840s.

FOOTNOTES

1. The World, March 13, 1879, n.p.
2. New York Times, March 13, 1879, p.3

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 Andrew Norwood House, 241 West 14th Street 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 Andrew Norwood House is a handsome urban residence which combines features of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles; that it retains its original architectural character to a remarkable degree; that it is a striking reminder of the once fashionable 14th Street neighborhood of the mid-19th century; that it was the residence of the prominent Norwood family for many years; and that it is a rare surviving example of this type of town house in New York City.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly 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 Andrew Norwood House, 241 West 14th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 764, Lot 15, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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Andrew Norwood House
241 West 14th Street
Manhattan
Date: 1845-1847