

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
May 19, 1981, Designation List 143  
LP-1073

63 East 79th Street Building (Thatcher M. Adams Residence),  
Borough of Manhattan,  
Built 1902-03; architects Adams & Warren.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1491, Lot 28.

On June 19, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 63 East 79th Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 23). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. No witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The impressive neo-English Classic style town house at 63 East 79th Street was designed in 1902 by architects Adams & Warren for Thatcher M. Adams. The building is representative of the large houses erected on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in the early 20th century as this area became the most fashionable residential quarter of the city.

The Upper East Side of Manhattan began to be developed as a residential neighborhood in the 1860s when simple brownstone rowhouses were constructed in the area. These homes were built on speculation and sold to middle-class families. Until the last years of the 19th century the Upper East Side remained a stable middle-class community. Most of the city's wealthiest families still lived below 59th Street, but as commercial activity expanded in that area the elite families moved farther north. During the twenty-five year period between about 1890 and the beginning of World War I opulent town houses replaced the older brownstone residences. Grand mansions were built on Fifth Avenue and stylish new town houses appeared on the side streets east of the Avenue. Many of the old houses were demolished to make way for new dwellings, while others had their original facades replaced by stylish new fronts. The Thatcher M. Adams residence is typical of the town houses constructed during this period of intensive redevelopment. Two earlier brownstone houses, built c. 1877,

of the house with its Flemish-bond brick facing. An Ionic entrance portico surmounted by an ornate balcony railing shades the neo-Federal style entranceway that is composed of attenuated Corinthian colonnettes, sidelights, a transom light, and a paneled door. To the right of the entrance portico, the ground floor is articulated by a flat-arched, multi-paned window and a flat-arched service entrance, both of which are topped by heavy voussoirs and keystone in the form of a console bracket. A Vitruvian scroll frieze runs above these openings, separating the limestone ground floor from the brick upper stories. The original iron railing still runs along the areaway and along the sides of the portico.

The second floor, with its tall French windows, full limestone window enframements with deep projecting lintels supported by elongated console brackest, and its iron railing and balcony, serves as a piano nobile. The major rooms of the house including the drawing room and dining room were located on this floor. The third-story windows, which served to light the library, are given emphasis by rectangular limestone enframements with projecting keystones and voussoirs and projecting sills that rest on guttae-like brackest. A narrow stone beltcourse separates the simple fourth floor from the lower stories. The multi-paned fourth floor windows lack the enframements of the lower-story openings; however, each is capped by a limestone splayed lintel.

A stone cornice crowns the fourth floor and originally served as the base for a stone railing that ran in front of a mansard roof pierced by two segmental-arched dormers. In 1945 the Lesaul Realty Corp. commissioned architect Elias K. Herzog to convert the building to apartments, remove the mansard, and add two full stories. The new fifth floor is articulated by four windows and is capped by a parapet and balustrade. This balustrade guards the terrace of the recessed sixth story.

The Thatcher M. Adams residence remains an excellent example of the type of city house built by wealthy New Yorkers on the Upper East Side in the early years of this century. It is part of an impressive group of four contemporary town houses, all reflecting a lifestyle that has largely vanished.

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#### Footnote

1. Available records do not make it clear, but it seems likely that William Adams and Thatcher M. Adams were related.

## 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 63 East 79th Street 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 63 East 79th Street Building is an impressive residence designed with a combination of English and American Georgian and Federal detail that is typical of early 20th century design; that the town house was associated with socially prominent New Yorkers including Thatcher M. Adams and Henry Wheeler DeForest; and that it is reminiscent of an important period in New York City's history reflecting a lifestyle that has largely disappeared; and that it is a major unit in an impressive group of four contemporary residences.

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 63 East 79th Street Building, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1491, Lot 28, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.

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### Bibliography

"House of Thatcher M. Adams, Esq." The American Architect 100 (October 4, 1911), plate.  
New York City. Department of Buildings, Manhattan. Plans, Permits, and Dockets.  
New York City. Office of the Register. Liber Deeds and Mortgages. New York Times, May 11, 1919, p. 22; May 29, 1938, part II, p. 7.



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