

First Hungarian Reformed Church



First Hungarian Reformed Church

LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan
346 East 69th Street
(aka 346-348 East 69th Street)

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

The First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City, built in 1915-16, is significant as a striking example of early-20th-century architecture by prominent New York City architect Emery Roth who incorporated both Secessionist and Craftsman details into the design. In addition, the church provided an important community and political center in the “Little Hungary” neighborhood in Yorkville.



First Hungarian Reformed Church

346 East 69th Street

1927, P. L. Sperr Collection, New York Public Library

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First Hungarian Reformed Church

346 East 69th Street, Manhattan
(aka 346-348 East 69th Street)

designation were also received including the 69th Street Block Association, and ten individuals, including two of Emery Roth's grandchildren.

Designation List 512

LP-2601

Built: 1915-16

Architect: Emery Roth

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map
Block 1443, Lot 37

Calendared: January 22, 2019

Public Hearing: March 26, 2019

On January 22, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to calendar the First Hungarian Reformed Church for consideration as an individual landmark.

On March 26, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the First Hungarian Reformed Church as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item # 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Five people testified in favor of the proposed designation, including New York City Council Member Benjamin Kallos, representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the New York Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, the Friends of the Upper East Side, and an individual. A letter from Community Board 8 supporting the designation was also read. No one spoke in opposition.

Eleven letters in support of the proposed

Summary

First Hungarian Reformed Church

The First Hungarian Reformed Church is located in the neighborhood of Yorkville in Manhattan on the south side of East 69th Street between First and Second Avenues. Completed in 1916, the church was designed by the distinguished New York City architect Emery Roth, who incorporated both Secessionist and Craftsman details into the building's impressive facade. It is also significant for its association with the Hungarian-American community, many of whom settled in Yorkville during the first half of the 20th century.

The First Hungarian Reformed congregation, *Első Magyar Református Templom*, was founded in 1895 when increased numbers of Hungarian immigrants came to New York City.¹ The newly organized congregation first met in the Lower East Side where many immigrants settled during the late 19th century. After 1900, a large number of Hungarians moved uptown to Yorkville and brought their churches, restaurants, bookstores, bakeries, and other businesses with them.

In 1914 the congregation purchased three row houses along 69th Street, using two lots for the new church building. They commissioned Emery Roth (1871-1948) to design the Yorkville church building and remodel the adjacent row house to the west for the parsonage. Roth himself was an immigrant from Austria-Hungary, coming to the United States at the age of 13. He began his career as an apprentice in Illinois before working as a draftsman with Burnham and Root for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. He then moved to New York City where he worked for Richard Morris

Hunt before establishing his own practice. During his early professional years, he designed a variety of building types including four synagogues and the First Hungarian Reformed church. During the 1920s he became widely known for his office towers, hotels, and elegant apartment buildings, particularly along the Upper West Side.

The three-bay symmetrical building is an excellent example of a church that incorporates both Secessionist and Craftsman features, creating a stylish and modern design for the Hungarian-American congregation. The bold geometric forms, flat wall surfaces, and stylized patterns are all hallmarks of the Secessionist style. Craftsman features that evoke Hungarian folk designs include the overhanging roof edges, knee brackets, and exposed rafter tails. There are also decorative Arts and Crafts glazed-ceramic panels on the facade, features that were incorporated into both the Craftsman and Secessionist styles.

Over the years, the First Hungarian Reformed Church has celebrated its heritage and supported Hungarian-American causes, particularly during the years before World War I and the Cold War during the Hungarian rebellion in 1956.

The building is a strong contributor to the streetscape with its 80-foot tall tower that rises above adjacent rows of handsome 19th century row houses. With few changes since construction, the building continues to serve its original congregation, retains its historic materials and design, and enhances the neighborhood.

Building Description

First Hungarian Reformed Church

The First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City is located midblock along the south side of East 69th Street between First and Second avenues. Symmetrical in composition, the stucco facade expresses strong geometric shapes that define the building. Its dominant feature is a central bell tower with its lower half integral with the front facade. The top half of the tower breaks through the roof edge and rises to a height of 80 feet. Capped with a conical roof, it retains its original copper weathervane.

Flat piers with abstract capitals visually buttress the building and divide it into three major bays. Flanking the main entrance, the wide piers at each side of the main entrance step back slightly in stages and narrow as they continue upwards, becoming the two expressed corners at the front of the squared tower. Similar corners are at the rear of the tower above the roof. Rectangular windows and doors, residential in character, are offset by the prominent large round window opening above the entrance.

Basement: The basement is slightly below grade and is accessed by a separate entrance at the west where a few steps lead down to a secondary door. The basement story has three rectangular window openings, two at the east of the entry steps and one at the west.

First Story: Five concrete steps access the entrance. The steps are set between two solid knee walls, similar in size and shape, and parallel to the knee

walls that extend from the building between the basement openings.

The entrance contains a double-leaf wood-paneled door set between two wide piers. Above the door is a glazed transom with two wood mullions. The door is protected by a pent roof that is mounted on the flanking piers and supported by large painted-wood knee brackets. At each side of the entrance are metal plaques attached to the wall.

Above the entrance pent roof is a rectangular decorative tile, similar to and in line with those over the four first-story rectangular window openings. These glazed-tile panels are decorated with a foliated Tudor rose pattern. Each window opening is located between secondary pilasters that extend from the basement level and terminate in a stylized capital at the first story.

Upper (Gallery) Level: Centered above the entrance bay and set within the slightly projecting tower, is a large round window opening with a profiled hood with extensions that cap large paddle-shaped decorative tiles that are mounted on the tower's pilasters. Flanking the round window are two pairs of small rectangular window openings, each pair with a stucco mullion and topped with a tiled tympanum with decorative relief. The relief pattern within the left (east) tympanum is the shield of Hungary set within a ring and surrounded by ribbons, tassels, and leaves. The relief pattern to the right (west) appears similar, but with the shield of the United States. The building's pent roof flanks the tower with a deep overhang exposing closely-spaced profiled rafter tails.

Tower: This dominant feature of the building extends above the main entrance and is marked with buttress piers that gradually step back and narrow as each rises to the top. The base of the tower contains the entrance and the large round window at the

gallery level. The upper part of the tower that extends above the roof has only one single opening between the round opening and the open belfry. At the top of the tower and along each of the four sides are three rectangular vertical openings that surround the bell chamber. Between each of the openings are descending pilasters, with decorative caps at each underside. Inlaid are additional tiles with a low relief pattern. Each of the tower's four corner pilasters terminate with a tiled panel set below a pyramidal finial topped with a small sphere. The tower itself terminates in a conical roof, complete with a copper weathervane with a star-like orb and the year "1915," the year construction began.²

Alterations: The glazing of the central round window has been filled in with an inset solid painted panel. Replacement aluminum windows are one-over-one at the basement and single-light at the upper stories. Historic photographs show double-leaf casement windows at the first story and single-leaf casements at the gallery level. Decorative colored-glass panels were added to the entrance transom and to the interior of the rectangular windows at the first and gallery stories within the past 30 years. The decorative panels of inlaid glazed terra cotta on the facade have been painted white, obscuring several areas of relief detail. These glazed terra cotta panels were described as brightly colored after construction and the facade as white cement stucco.³ The stucco finish has been recently painted (2017-18) a cream color.

The building's pent roofs and the conical tower roof were originally clad with Mission tile. Today the entrance roof is clad with standing seam metal and the building pent roof is clad with composition shingles. Additional alterations include new light fixtures at the basement and at the entrance soffit, and center poles and louvers at the bell tower openings.

History and Significance

First Hungarian Reformed Church

Yorkville⁴

The First Hungarian Reformed Church is located in an area of the Upper East Side of Manhattan known as Yorkville, a neighborhood that extends from about 68th Street to 96th Street and from Third Avenue to the East River. Dense urban settlement began in the area during the 1870s-1880s, facilitated by horse car lines on Third Avenue followed by elevated rail lines on both Second Avenue and Third Avenue. Yorkville became home to many immigrant groups because there was reasonably-priced housing in the area in addition to nearby factories providing employment.⁵ As noted in 1912, “Yorkville and the upper east side after a generation of slumber are waking up. The dirt is flying fast in the Lexington Avenue cut and the influence of a new east side subway is already being felt.”⁶ After the Lexington Avenue subway was completed in 1918, the area experienced even more growth.

Although Yorkville was primarily known as a German-American (“Little Germany”) community during the first half of the 20th century, there were also large numbers of residents who came from Austria-Hungary forming communities of their own. These included Hungarians or Magyars (“Little Hungary”) and Slavs (“Little Bohemia”). In addition, the neighborhood also counted a number of Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants, among others.⁷

Hungarian Immigration in New York City⁸

Hungarian immigrants settled in the eastern half of the United States, primarily New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, and Illinois. In

general, the Hungarian immigrants who were skilled workers, artisans, shopkeepers, and scholars gravitated to New York City, Chicago, and Cleveland where they could find employment in an urban setting. Immigrants from rural areas in Hungary tended to settle in American small-towns with factories and mining industries. Regardless of country of origin or socio-economic level, most immigrants came to the United States seeking job opportunities and higher wages.

The first significant wave of Eastern European immigrants came to New York City in the 1870s, including approximately 10,000 Hungarians who settled in the City.⁹ Many were political exiles who came to the United States when Hungary became part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in 1867.¹⁰ During that first wave, they lived in the East Village, an area known as “Kleindeutschland,” centered along Second Avenue between First and Tenth streets. Although this was the German-American neighborhood, the Hungarians settled there because many Hungarians spoke German at the time.¹¹ The East Village became the location for the First Hungarian businesses and institutions, including the first Hungarian Reformed Church.

The largest number of Hungarian immigrants, approximately 75,000, arrived in New York City during a second wave from 1890 to 1910 during the City’s peak immigration years. Many of these Hungarian immigrants tended to settle farther north in Yorkville, again near the Germans and other Eastern and Central Europeans. As the 20th century progressed, Hungarian houses of worship, restaurants, bakeries, nightclubs, bookstores, newspapers, and businesses flourished in lower Yorkville. Most of these were near the First Hungarian Reformed Church in “Little Hungary.”¹²

After World War I, the number of Hungarians immigrating to the United States declined, primarily due to the United States’ cap on

immigration. Nevertheless, by 1940 New York City counted the largest Hungarian community in the United States with an estimated 123,000 people who claimed Hungarian ancestry. Today many New York City Hungarian-Americans have moved to neighborhoods in the greater New York City area and elsewhere. Nevertheless, Yorkville's Hungarian heritage is still maintained, primarily through its churches. There is an additional Hungarian Reformed church on 82nd Street and a Hungarian Baptist Church on East 80th Street.¹³

The Hungarian Reformed Church¹⁴

During the early 20th century, most of the Hungarian-Americans who were Protestant belonged to the Hungarian Reformed Church, one of many reformed denominations based on John Calvin's teachings that were adapted by various European countries and cultures, such as the Dutch Reformed Church and the German Reformed Church.

During the early years of the Protestant Reformation (1517-1548), two major groups evolved in Europe, the Lutherans and the Calvinists.¹⁵ The Calvinist teachings became popular in Hungary and the Hungarian Reformed denomination was formally established in 1567 when they separated from the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁶ At that time, the Calvinists took over a large number of Hungarian Roman Catholic churches and dissolved their monasteries.¹⁷ Later in the 17th and 18th centuries, Roman Catholics reclaimed many of their earlier congregations as a result of the efforts of the Counter-Reformation. The remaining Reformed churches that were not returned to Roman Catholicism are concentrated in the eastern section of the country around Debrecen, sometimes called the Calvinist Rome.

In 1896 a classis (a regional ecclesiastical body) of the Reformed Church in Hungary, formed in the United States consisting of congregations

primarily in the Northeastern states and Ohio.¹⁸ After World War I in 1921 many Hungarian Reformed congregations broke ties with Hungary and formed their own Magyar Synod aligning themselves with Reformed churches in the United States. Those who did not join became Free Hungarian Reformed congregations.¹⁹ In 1957 the Magyar Synod changed its name to the Calvin Synod, consisting of Hungarian Reformed congregations throughout the United States.

First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City²⁰

The First Hungarian Reformed Church of New York City, *Első Magyar Református Templom*, was the fifth of its kind formed in the United States.²¹ The New York City congregation, under Reverend Bertalan Demeter, had its beginnings in 1895 when Calvinist Hungarian-Americans met in Hope Chapel at 339 East 4th Street. A few years later with the leadership of Reverend Zoltan Kuthy, the congregation purchased a small three-story tenement at 121 East 7th Street and converted the building into their church, now located in the East Village/Lower East Side Historic District. The congregation sold the building in 1914 in anticipation of their move north to East 69th Street.²² The new church location was in the southern section of Yorkville, where many Hungarian-Americans lived.²³

The congregation commissioned Emery Roth to design a church and a rectory, with the intention of building on empty lots to avoid demolition costs. Roth was Hungarian-American and in the early stages of his architectural practice, with an office at 119 West 40th Street. He first designed a church and rectory for three empty lots on East 68th Street because the congregation had made a down-payment there.²⁴ According to the church's records and confirmed by the New York City Department of Buildings, two building applications were filed by

Roth, the first for the East 68th Street site.²⁵

In 1915 the congregation finally completed a purchase of three mid-block row houses along the south side of East 69th Street. The lots had earlier been part of a large farm that belonged to John Jones in 1797. In 1877 the Jones heirs sold the lots to a builder and developer, John D. Crimmins, who built speculative row houses. The congregation demolished two of those row houses for their new church building and retained and remodeled the third for a parsonage.²⁶

Emery Roth, who had already designed a church building and a rectory for the congregation's previous site on East 68th Street, needed to alter the drawings for the East 69th Street location.²⁷ Filling two lots, and measuring approximately 33 feet by 77 feet, the new building would extend from party wall to party wall east to west, and from the sidewalk to the rear lot line to the south.²⁸ The south end of the building, at the rear, would be angled, creating small wells flanking a shallow chancel-like feature. The front facade would face north along East 69th Street, with its bell tower reaching 80 feet overlooking the adjacent two- and three-story row houses.

The congregation reviewed the drawings and requested that each pair of gallery windows along the front facade be redesigned to accommodate an arched shape where a decorative tympanum would be installed later after construction.²⁹ Demolition of the existing row houses was completed September 24, 1915, and the new construction began shortly afterwards. The completion of the church building was delayed by weather and by unfinished interior work, including the marble pulpit. Reverend Kuthy moved into the parsonage the end of March of 1916. The parish then made preparations for the consecration of the new church by the bishop as part of a special worship service with invited clergy and guests. Plans were also made for a large celebration afterwards.

The church was consecrated on May 7, 1916.³⁰ To celebrate the new construction, the parish sponsored a catered lunch and a ball, and decorated the church with flowers, palms, and flags.³¹ The bell from the previous East Village church was installed in the belfry of the new building. A copper weathervane was installed at the top of the conical roof with the year 1915 visible from the street. Accounts indicate the building was painted white with accents of multi-color tiles.³²

A few years after the church was constructed, Emery Roth applied for alterations in the basement. His alterations were minor, involving the location of the pantry and moving a door, fixture, and partition in the men's toilet room.³³

Architect

This is an early design by Emery Roth (1871-1948), a prominent New York City architect, who was born in Galszecs, Austria-Hungary (now Slovakia).³⁴ He attended school in Budapest, but had to interrupt his studies there after his father died. Leaving his family behind, he immigrated to the United States at the age of 13, arriving in Illinois where he supported himself cleaning an architect's office and delivering newspapers. Between the ages of 16 and 18 he apprenticed in an architect's office while he worked as a carpenter. During that time he drafted the details and ornamentation for a Gothic-Revival Roman Catholic church for a German-speaking community, working closely with an Italian stone carver.³⁵

With the completion of his apprenticeship, Roth's architectural career began in the spring of 1889 when he won first prize for his drawing, "Maize" as part of a competition. He then became a journeyman architect in Kansas City for a short time until he moved to Chicago to join the architectural team designing the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.³⁶ He first worked as a draftsman with Burnham and Root and later worked on Richard Morris Hunt's

Administration Building. As a result of that professional relationship, he moved to New York City in 1893 to work in Hunt's office. He later worked with Ogden Codman on interiors and also for a short time with Karl Bitter, the sculptor.

Roth opened his own practice by buying Theodore G. Stein's architectural firm, using that name for the first year, although he was the sole practitioner. He worked on restaurants and summer houses until his first real commission in 1901, a seven-story apartment building, the Saxony, at 82nd Street and Broadway. Shortly afterwards he designed the Secessionist-style Hotel Belleclaire at 77th Street and Broadway (a New York City landmark).³⁷

During the early years of his practice he worked on five religious structures. In 1908, he designed his first synagogue, Congregation Ahavith Achem, located in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn.³⁸ Although no longer standing, its design was somewhat similar to the First Hungarian Reformed Church with simple rectilinear composition and colorful glazed terra cotta ornamentation. His practice picked up in the years before World War I, during which time he designed the First Hungarian Reformed Church.

In 1917 Roth designed Temple B'nai Israel in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. Classical and monumental in style and scale, it was demolished in 2005.³⁹ Congregation Sons of Israel in Brooklyn, designed in 1918, still stands at its corner location and continues to function as a synagogue.⁴⁰ His last religious structure during those early years was the Jacob H. Schiff Center in The Bronx dedicated 1925.⁴¹

Roth is better known for his elegant Upper West Side apartment buildings that were designed during the next decade. The 1920s were prosperous years before the Depression and enabled him to gain prestigious commissions such as the 1925 Ritz Tower, 461-465 Park Avenue, the 1928 Beresford Apartments at 211 Central Park West, the 1929 San

Remo Apartments at 145-46 Central Park West, and the 1938 Normandy Apartments at 140-47 Riverside Drive, all New York City Landmarks. These dramatic buildings were (and still are) prominently visible along the Upper West Side of Manhattan and contributed to his reputation, bringing in many additional commissions over the years. After the Depression, Roth designed more modest buildings, but aided by his sons, continued his practice until his death in 1948.⁴²

Design⁴³

The First Hungarian Reformed Church published a pamphlet when the congregation celebrated 60 years as a parish in 1955. The history section noted, "In 1915, the congregation has built her present church in beautiful Hungarian style which we are still occupying on East 69th Street."⁴⁴ This Hungarian Style of the First Hungarian Reformed Church refers to both the Secessionist character of the design and the Craftsman features that reference folk architecture.⁴⁵

Secessionist-style architecture was popular in Hungary during the turn of the 20th century. As part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, Hungarian designers interpreted and adapted the Viennese Secessionist's approach to a stylized classicism. The abstracted and bold geometric forms, flat wall surfaces, symmetry, and stylized patterns are all hallmarks of the Secessionist style.⁴⁶ For example, the First Hungarian Reformed Church's buttress-like piers or pilasters with stylized capitals organize the facade. The large round window, a pure geometric shape, anchors the residential scale of the small rectangular windows.

Neither Gothic nor Romanesque Revival in style, it was an unusual approach for a religious building in New York City, but it clearly reflected the character of a Reformed congregation with its understated features.⁴⁷ Although the exterior is devoid of overtly religious symbols, its form with the

tall bell tower signifies a religious property.

Balancing and complementing the Secessionist characteristics are the Craftsman and Arts and Crafts features that connect the building to Hungary's vernacular tradition and to the growing popularity of the Craftsman style in the United States. "...the church was a charmingly exotic adaptation of Hungarian vernacular architecture."⁴⁸

Although the First Hungarian Reformed Church is urban, Roth included features that suggest folk influences such as overhanging roof edges, knee brackets, exposed rafter tails, a deep hood over the large round window, the conical tower roof, and the church's signature detail of decorative glazed-ceramic panels. These Craftsman details are reminiscent of Central European vernacular rural buildings with low thatched roofs and expressed structural elements that have been incorporated into the design. The church also incorporates materials such as Mission-tile roof cladding that exhibits a rustic Craftsman quality. The originally colorful inlaid tilework can be found in European vernacular architecture and is also an Arts and Crafts feature that illustrates the style's emphasis on the decorative arts.

Further combining the Secessionist, Craftsman, and folk vernacular is the smooth plaster stucco of the First Hungarian Reformed Church. These walls may be seen as relating visually to traditional native rural structures of plastered mud and clay, built throughout Europe before the modern era. Throughout Central Europe today, many church and civic buildings, including those in a Secessionist style, are clad with plaster and painted a light color, bringing to mind a long-standing building tradition.

In the facade of the First Hungarian Reformed Church, which was constructed by and for the Hungarian-American community, two prominent panels illustrate and celebrate their old and new countries. Within the tympanums of the gallery

windows are the tile shields of Hungary and the United States, signifying the importance of both the congregation's Hungarian heritage and their American home.

Recent History

Over the years, the First Hungarian Reformed Church has celebrated its Hungarian heritage and supported Hungarian-American causes, particularly during World War I and World War II. The church joined Hungarian-Americans in New York City in 1944 to protest the persecution of Jews in Hungary.⁴⁹ During the Cold War, and particularly after the Hungarian rebellion in 1956, the parish clergy and parishioners demonstrated in front of the United Nations against the Soviet regime in Hungary. In 1957, the Magyar Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church met at the First Hungarian Reformed Church in New York City. At that time, the president of the synod announced that the goal would be the "peaceful liberation of Hungary."⁵⁰ The following year, a number of anti-Soviet protests were led by the pastor of the First Hungarian Reformed Church, Rev. Imre Kovacs, who opposed Soviet occupation of Hungary.⁵¹ The parish today continues to be an important community center for Hungarian culture in the greater New York area.

Conclusion

The First Hungarian Reformed Church is an outstanding example of an early-20th-century religious property with Secessionist and Craftsman details, creating a stylish and modern design for the Hungarian-American congregation.

Visually striking, the church looks much as it did when it was constructed in 1915 and continues to serve the same congregation that built it more than 100 years ago. With its distinctive design, the First Hungarian Reformed Church is a significant

religious structure designed by Emery Roth, and is an exceptional cultural and architectural reminder of the early 20th-century Hungarian-American community in Yorkville.

Endnotes

¹ Magyar refers to the ethnicity, culture, and language of Hungary. In the ninth century, the Magyars migrated from the Ural Mountains to what is today Hungary.

² Typically, either a star-like orb or a rooster tops the towers of Reformed church buildings.

³ “New Hungarian Reformed Church,” *Record and Guide*, September 16, 1916, 402.

⁴ This section is compiled from information in the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Yorkville Bank Designation Report LP-2510* (New York: City of New York, June 12, 2012), prepared by Olivia Klose, 2-3; “Yorkville Changes in Home Conditions,” *New York Times (NYT)*, October 21, 1928, 171; On the Upper East Side, *Memories Fueled by Strudel*, April 7, 2006; and “Yorkville,” in Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2nd. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 1428-29.

⁵ The Ehret’s and Rupert’s breweries were in Yorkville at that time.

⁶ “Yorkville’s Great Revival,” *New York Times*, April 14, 1912, XX2.

⁷ Although the neighborhood is rich in immigrant history, there are only a few immigrant-related New York City landmarks in Yorkville. Both the 1902 Yorkville Branch New York Public Library on East 79th and the 1897 Bohemian National Hall on 321 East 73rd Street are related to Czech immigration history. The 1905 Yorkville Bank Building on Third Avenue is notable for its association with German immigration.

⁸ This section is compiled from information in Jackson, “Hungarians,” 630 and “Immigration,” 640; Julianna Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States 1880-1914* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982), 126-177; and Steven Bála Várdy, *The Hungarian Americans: The Hungarian Experience in North America* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1990), 66-69.

⁹ Before the first major wave of Hungarian immigrants, Louis Kossuth, a national Hungarian hero, visited New York City in 1851 after the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1838-49. Associated with that visit, Hungarian Reformed services were held in New York City.

¹⁰ The Austrian-Hungarian Empire lasted until 1918. After

World War I, Hungary lost much of its territory and experienced political chaos with its association with Germany. It came under the control of the Soviet Union after World War II, regaining some independence after the 1956 rebellion, and regained full independence in 1989 when it became the Hungarian Republic. Hungary has been part of the European Union since 2012.

¹¹ The German language became compulsory in Hungary in 1711 under the Austrian Hapsburg rule.

¹² Jackson, “Hungarians,” 630; Few Hungarian restaurants and bakeries remain. Café Tokay, Mocca Hungarian Restaurant, Mrs. Herbst’s Bakery, Paprikás Weiss, Blue Danube Gifts, Yorkville Meat Emporium, and many other Hungarian establishments have closed.

¹³ In addition, two former Hungarian Roman Catholic churches have merged with Saint Monica, now known as the Church of Saint Monica, Saint. Elizabeth of Hungary, and Saint Stephen of Hungary. Also in Yorkville, St. Joseph Church on East 87th Street hosts a Hungarian mass on Sundays.

¹⁴ Information on the Hungarian Reformed Church, Puskás, 184-215.

¹⁵ The Reformation is usually dated from 1517 (Luther) to 1648.

¹⁶ Dora Wiebenson and József Sisa, eds., *The Architecture of Historic Hungary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998), (Chapter 4 by Peter Farbaky).

¹⁷ Most congregations of Roman Catholic churches in western Hungary near Bavaria did not become part of the Reformed Church at that time.

¹⁸ Administratively, the Reformed congregations are organized according to synods. Synods are umbrella organizations that include smaller administrative groupings known as classes (singular is classis), similar to a presbytery.

¹⁹ The other Hungarian Reformed church in Yorkville is an independent congregation, located at 229 East 82nd Street. It is not part of the Calvin Synod that the First Hungarian Reformed Church belongs to.

²⁰ This section is compiled from information in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), *First Hungarian Reformed Church* (Listed August 31, 2000), nomination form prepared by Gregory Hedberg and committee members of The East 69th Street Association.

²¹ Cleveland, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Trenton New Jersey; and South Norwalk, Connecticut established

Hungarian Reformed congregations before 1895. (NRHP, First Hungarian Reformed Church).

²² The congregation sold the tenement church to the Resurrection Greek Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox church of SS. Peter and Paul. Later it became St. Mary's American Orthodox Greek Catholic Church.

David W. Dunlop, *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 227.

²³ "Latest Dealings in the Realty Field," *NYT*, May 17, 1914, XX1.

²⁴ "Acquire Site for Church," *New York Tribune*, February 7, 1915, C2.

²⁵ A permit, New Building (NB) 77-1915, was issued by the Department of Buildings to build a church on 68th Street. Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan NB Database 1900-1986," accessed 8/27/18. Also information on the location of the church building site on East 68th Street from "Minutes of the Consistory of the First Hungarian Reformed Church," translated by L. Frank Deak of the First Hungarian Reformed Church.

²⁶ In 1915 the lots on East 69th Street were sold to the First Hungarian Reformed congregation. "Block Index of Re-indexed Conveyances" Section 5, Blocks 1440-1449. Lots 36 1/2 and 37 sold to Magyar Reformed Church of the City of New York on June 1, 1915 and June 8, 1915 respectively. Adjacent lot 38 was sold to the congregation November 17, 1915, for use as a parsonage. (New York City Department of Finance, Conveyances and Deeds).

²⁷ It is not known what the original design looked like or how it differed from the present-day church building.

²⁸ Demolition (of row houses) permit 169-1915, 9/3/15 and completed 9/24/15; NB 188-1915 for church on East 69th Street; (New York City Department of Buildings)

²⁹ The other request was to design a barrel-vaulted ceiling above the main sanctuary.

³⁰ Other accounts list the consecration date as March 7, 1916. The May date was confirmed by the church minutes of April 9, 1916.

³¹ Consistory Minutes, March 28, April 30, May 5, and May 14, 1916.

³² "New Hungarian Reformed Church," *Record and Guide*, September 16, 1916, 402.

³³ Alt 2528 1917 (New York City Department of Buildings)

³⁴ Information on Emery Roth, "Autobiographical Notes," 1940-1947, photocopy of manuscript, Avery Library, Columbia University, New York; Steven Rutenbaum, *Mansions in the Clouds: the Skyscraper Palazzi of Emery Roth*. (New York: Balsam Press, Inc., 1986); NRHP, "First Hungarian Reformed Church."

³⁵ Emery Roth's autobiography repeatedly states he lived in Fairplains, Illinois during the time he arrived in Illinois and left in 1888. Rutenbaum's monograph on Roth states the town was Bloomington, Illinois. Research failed to find a "Fairplains," but Bloomington's German St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church is Gothic Revival, was built in 1885, and designed by a local architect named George H. Miller. Roth did work for an architect named George, but his last name appeared to be Vonderwiede. Additional research is needed.

³⁶ During his time working on the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, he met architects from many areas of the United States and around the world, exposing him to various architectural traditions and modern trends. Emery Roth, "Autobiographical Notes," 239.

³⁷ Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Hotel Belleclaire Designation Report (LP-1507)*, (New York: City of New York, February 10, 1987), prepared by Nancy Goeschel.

³⁸ Congregation Ahavith Achem was located at 447 Pulaski Street, Brooklyn before it was demolished.

³⁹ Temple B'nai Israel was located at 602-606 West 149th Street. David Dunlop, "Apartment Building to Rise Where Temple Now Stands," *NYT*, February 13, 2005.

⁴⁰ Congregation Sons of Israel is located at 2115 Benson Avenue in Brooklyn; Rutenbaum, 55.

⁴¹ Jacob H. Schiff Center is located at 2510 Valentine Avenue, The Bronx. The building is still standing behind storefront walls and commercial signage, with parts of the synagogue still visible at the top of the building. A front-facing gable end with a round-arch window opening extends above the signage.

⁴² LPC, *Hotel Belleclaire Designation Report (LP-1507)*, 3.

⁴³ Chapter 8, József Sisa, "Hungarian Architecture from 1849-1900," 173-210; Chapter 9, Tibor Sabjan "Hungarian Folk Architecture," 211-222; Chapter 10, János Gerle, "Hungarian Architecture from 1900-1918 in Dora Wiebenson and József Sisa, eds., *The Architecture of Historic Hungary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press,

1998); and “Hungarian Reformed Church Architecture in the 19th and 20th Century,” and *Centropa: A Journal of Central European Architecture and Related Arts*, September 1, 2003, 208-224.

⁴⁴ “Life Begins at Sixty,” Pamphlet in the files of the First Hungarian Reformed Church.

⁴⁵ See <https://felvidek.ma/2013/09/befejezodott-a-ladmoci-reformatus-templom-teljeskoru-rekonstrukcioja/>

This Hungarian Reformed Churches in Slovakia is near Debrecen, a center for the Hungarian Reformed Church. Many of the design features are similar to the First Hungarian Reformed Church in New York. Courtesy of L. Frank Deak, of the First Hungarian Reformed Church.

⁴⁶ The style was employed more often in New York City for apartment buildings, particularly in the Upper West Side and Morningside Heights, for buildings that capitalized on the simplification and stylization of common classical motifs.

⁴⁷ Another example of a Secessionist-style “religious” building is the Society for Ethical Culture, at 2 West 64th Street, Manhattan, within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District.

⁴⁸ Stern, Gilmartin, & Mellins, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1987), 164.

⁴⁹ “Massacre of Jews in Hungary Scored,” *NYT*, July 10, 1944, 9.

⁵⁰ “Hungarian Task Cited: Liberation This Year is Goal of Clergyman Here,” *NYT*, May 9, 1957, 6.

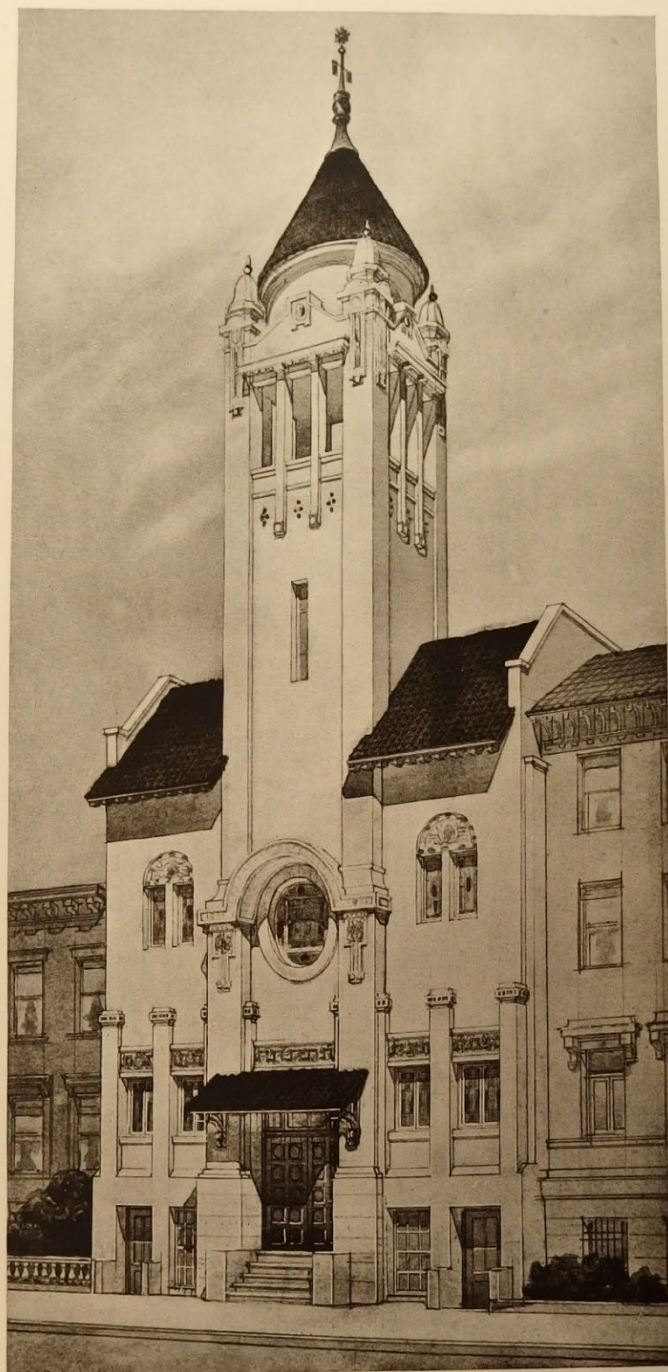
⁵¹ Robert Alden. “Leader of 18 Hungarian Pickets in City Says American Apathy ‘Broke Our Spirit.’” *NYT*, July 19, 1958, 3.

Findings and Designation

First Hungarian Reformed Church

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the First Hungarian Reformed Church has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and culture characteristics of New York City.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the First Hungarian Reformed Church and designates Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 1443, Lot 37 as its Landmark Site.



EMERY ROTH, Architect

HUNGARIAN REFORMED CHURCH

340 East 69th Street
New York

First Hungarian Reformed Church

c. 1915, Avery Library Archives, Columbia University



First Hungarian Reformed Church

Detail: Gallery Level

Sarah Moses, June 2019



First Hungarian Reformed Church

Sarah Moses, June 2019



First Hungarian Reformed Church

Detail: Tower

Marianne Hurley, February 2019



First Hungarian Reformed Church
Marianne Hurley, March 2019

