

Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 19, 1966, Number 13
LP-0181

BIALYSTOKER SYNAGOGUE, 7-13 Willett Street, Borough of Manhattan. 1826.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 336, Lot 17.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Bialystoker Synagogue and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 5). Three speakers spoke in favor of designation including the representative of the Bialystoker Synagogue. The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This severely plain building of the late Federal Period is one of the few of its type remaining in New York City. The simple exterior, built of cut stone, is pleasing with its great strength and dignity. The three windows above three doors are framed with round arches. A low-pitched pedimented roof enframing a handsome lunette window has a very plain wooden cornice which also adds to the simple severity of the building. The front of the building has a brownstone base course which consists of a low flight of steps giving the Synagogue a solid appearance and setting it off most effectively from the street.

It is interesting to note that this building shows great architectural kinship to the Church of the Sea and Land except for the fact that it employs the more conventional round arched window in lieu of pointed windows. This Synagogue is a fine expression of masonry construction in the vernacular tradition.

The Bialystoker Synagogue was once the home of the Willett Street Methodist Episcopal Church, and it is interesting as an example of a religious building which was no longer needed by its former owners and which was purchased by a group which preserved it.

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 Bialystoker Synagogue 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 Bialystoker Synagogue is a building of rugged simplicity, that it is architecturally the best its period produced, that it has a fine individual quality and straightforward honesty in its design and construction, and that it adds warmth, interest and diversity to an otherwise residential neighborhood.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A 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 Bialystoker Synagogue, 7-13 Willett Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 336, Lot 17, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.