

Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 18, 1968, Number 4
LP-0423

161 EAST 78TH STREET HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1861.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1413, Lot 25.

On November 10, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 161 East 78th Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 42). 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. The owners of the 161 East 78th Street House have indicated to the Commission that they would be pleased to have their house designated.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

There is a charm and sparkle in the appearance of this three-story red brick house with painted stone trim at 161 East 78th Street. Standing at the eastern end of two other similar row houses and sharing party walls with its neighbors, this residence and its adjacent dwellings to the west were built from one set of architectural drawings and specifications in 1861. They are in the vernacular of the period and reveal an Italianate influence in the style of the windows and especially in the modillions and ornate brackets of the cornice, crowning the residence. In uniformity of size and quality of design, this House and its adjoining neighbors add color, character and dignity to Seventy-eighth Street.

A narrow areaway three steps down ^{from} the sidewalk separates the building from the property line. The deeply recessed paneled entrance door on the ground floor is enframed and enriched by plain stone pilasters and cornice-slab. At the second floor level a stone band course, which continues on into the two adjacent houses to the west, serves as a sill for the floor length steel French doors at this level. The plain lintels of the first and second floors and the cap-molded lintels of the third floor windows are identical in the three houses as is the impressive cornice which adorns this residence at the roof line.

John Turner, painter, purchased the three lots at 157, 159, and 161 East 78th Street in 1860 for \$500 apiece. The houses were constructed by Henry Armstrong, a builder, who erected eleven houses on this street. In the tax assessment book for 1861, the owners were listed as Turner & Armstrong, and the House was assessed for \$1,800. Number 161 was bought that same year by Charles C. Wakeley for \$4,000, and the conveyance carried the notation that "Both side walls of house on said lot being party walls."

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 161 East 78th 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 161 East 78th Street House is an admirable example of mid-Nineteenth Century residential brick architecture, that it was constructed in the vernacular of the period, with Italianate influence, that this row house has dignity and individual character, and that it lends refinement to the street and to the 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 161 East 78th Street House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1413, Lot 25, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.