

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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LP-0445

116 EAST 80TH STREET HOUSE (formerly Lewis Spencer Morris House), Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1922, completed 1923; architects Cross & Cross.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1508, Lot 66.

On November 10, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 116 East 80th Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 64). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The owner appeared at the hearing and indicated his approval of the proposed designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This residence of elegant simplicity designed in the Federal Style is four stories high, with an English basement. It is built of red brick laid in Flemish bond. The rather austere character of the building is soon forgotten in observing its fine proportions and the attractive relationship of the windows to the house as a whole. The details of design and workmanship, the beautifully patterned brickwork and the quiet accent of the white stone cornice and pediment all combine to produce a residence of unusual character and distinction.

In their design of the front elevation, the architects combined the basement and the upper floors into a formal arrangement, capping them with a cornice and a parapet which almost conceals the top floor set back behind them. Each floor has four windows symmetrically arranged, those at the first floor are arched, while those above are rectangular. The two center windows at each floor are grouped together in a wall that projects slightly forward from the main facade and is surmounted by the pediment. The cornice and window sills are of white stone as is the horizontal band above the English basement.

The two entrances, left and right of the forward projecting center section, are variations within the overall pattern of arched bays. The main entrance (right) has a semi-circular fanlight directly above the doorway, consisting of a narrow, overhanging cornice, supported by consoles forming part of the fluted trim. The service entrance (left) has an arched window separated by brickwork from a small door below, the two elements forming a single unit within the arch.

The choice of the Federal style by the architects Cross & Cross is appropriate for this residence built in 1922 for Lewis Spencer Morris, a descendant of Lewis Morris III who was a member of the second Continental Congress and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. It seems to carry a continuity of tradition into the Twentieth Century. The use of this style for fine residences generally ended after 1929 when the great financial depression brought a new pattern of life to the United States.

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 116 East 80th 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 former Lewis Spencer Morris House is a distinguished example of the Federal Style, that the simplicity of its facade draws attention to the beauty of its proportion and details, that the workmanship is of high quality, that it forms a part of a group of adjoining houses of superb architectural quality, and that through the family of the original owner it forms an indirect link with the past of this City and nation.

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 116 East 80th Street House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1508, Lot 66, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.