

163-165 EAST 78TH STREET HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1861.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1413, Lot 26.

On November 10, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 163-165 East 78th Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 43). 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 Commission has been informed that the owner of the 163-165 East 78th Street House favors the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Subdued charm and warm mellowness pervade these three-story red brick houses with painted stone trim at 163 and 165 East 78th Street. Standing next to three other row houses and sharing a party wall with their neighbors, these two residences and the adjacent dwellings to the west were built with modifications 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, which crowns these residences. In uniformity of size and quality of design these houses, and their three adjoining neighbors, add color, character and dignity to Seventy-eighth Street.

Two steps down from the sidewalk, a wide areaway, enclosed by a low retaining wall with a shoulder high iron picket fence, separates the buildings from the property line. This partially landscaped enclosure adds a sense of privacy and another dimension to the dwellings. The plain lintels of the first and second floors and the cap-molded lintels of the third floor windows are identical in all the houses, as is the impressive cornice which adorns them at the roof line. At the second floor level, in both houses, a continuous stone band course serves as a sill for the floor length French doors. An unusual feature of these two houses is that this same type of wide muntined French doors with a handsome low railing is also repeated at the third floor. The penthouse on the fourth floor is a Twentieth Century addition and sits back several feet from the wall line of the buildings.

John Turner, painter, purchased the two lots at 163 and 165 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 houses were assessed for \$1,500. Number 163 was bought in 1865 by Mary Jane Maguaran, for \$4,400, and John McGrath purchased Number 165 for \$4,200 in 1864.

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 163-165 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, 163-165 East 78th Street are admirable examples of mid-Nineteenth Century residential brick architecture, that they were constructed in the vernacular of the period with Italianate influence, that these row houses have dignity, individual character and charm and that they lend 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 163-165 East 78th Street House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1413, Lot 26, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.