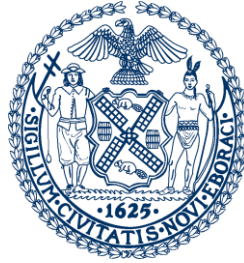


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**Testimony to the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Supporting the Designation as an Individual Landmark:
First Hungarian Reformed Church
aka 346-348 East 69th Street
Tuesday, March 26, 2019**

Since their Request for Evaluation submission on August 6, 2013, FRIENDS of the Upper East Side has supported the designation of the First Hungarian Reformed Church as an individual landmark. Both as the representative of City Council District, where this structure lies, and as the grandson of Hungarian immigrants who was raised in Yorkville, I treasure the physical markers of Yorkville's unique history. Along with FRIENDS, I would like to formally support the proposal for designation of this church as an individual landmark.

Because it is a rare example of the Hungarian Vernacular in New York City and is associated with the story of the Hungarian immigrant community in Yorkville, the First Hungarian Reformed Church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 31, 2000. Moreover, this church was and remains a cultural gathering spot and place of familiarity for the Hungarian community.

The vernacular style and detailed craftsmanship of the First Hungarian Reformed Church make it a unique architectural structure, and it should be protected as a symbol of Yorkville's ethnic history.

It is vital that structures like this church, which physically mark the relationship of Yorkville to its history as an enclave for European immigrants, be landmarked to preserve this cultural history. This church was, and remains, a cultural gathering spot and place of familiarity for the Hungarian community. Designed by prominent Hungarian architect Emory Roth in the Hungarian vernacular style, the church is a symbol of the Hungarian community and their efforts to establish a Reformed congregation in the city, free from the religious persecution they faced in their homeland. It instilled a sense of pride in their culture, while also providing a sense of security for the Hungarian immigrant community.



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That history is my family's history. My grandparents came to New York City in the wake of Kristallnacht prior to the start of World War II joining the existing community of Hungarians, moving to an apartment on East 71st Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues with a ground floor dermatology practice.

By 1940, New York City had the largest Hungarian community in America, with a population of about 123,000. The First Hungarian Church, designed in the Hungarian Vernacular and Secessionist style, became a cultural enclave for the Hungarian community. The church recalls churches located in small Central European villages, thus creating a "little Hungary" within Yorkville. Moreover, this provided and still provides a sense of security giving immigrants, like my family, a sense of place within their new country.

This is the neighborhood I grew up in, which had so many cultural touchstones from restaurants to bakeries and cultural institutions, many of which have since been displaced. That is why I cherish any buildings that connect us to our past and stand in living testimony to the rich cultural immigrant heritage of the area that might otherwise be denied.

As a child, I walked past the First Hungarian Reformed Church every day on my way to yeshiva at Rabbi Arthur Schneier Park East Day School. The church continues to this day as a part of a waning group of religious institutions devoted to and with services in their mother tongue, connecting us to that immigrant heritage we share. It continues to serve the Hungarian community and the neighborhood at large, frequently hosting block association, cooperative and condominium meetings.

For all these reasons, I am proud to support the designation of the First Hungarian Reformed Church as an individual landmark.