



**Greenwich Village
Society for Historic Preservation**

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E V C C
East Village Community Coalition
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August 8, 2008

Hon. Robert Tierney, Chair
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Tierney,

We write to request that the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission consider the designation of Adas Yisroel Anshe Mezritch Synagogue, located at 415 East Sixth Street in Manhattan, as a New York City Landmark.

The Congregation Mezritch Synagogue is significant as the East Village and Lower East Side's last operating neoclassical "tenement synagogue", named so for the fact that it fits miraculously into a narrow mid-block lot (in this case 22" wide) which would likely have otherwise been filled by a 19th Century tenement. In the late-19th and early-20th Centuries, the areas now known as the East Village and Lower East Side were literally filled with synagogues of this kind. Sadly, hardly any survive today to remind us of what was perhaps the most significant Jewish community in American history. The fact that the Congregation Mezritch Synagogue has not only survived completely intact, but has also operated as a shul continuously since its formation, is both rare and remarkable.

The style and history of Congregation Mezritch Synagogue strongly resemble that of the recently-landmarked Beth Hamedrash Hagadol Anshe Ungarn Synagogue at 242 East 7th Street, a building which the LPC deemed an increasingly-rare surviving symbol of the Jewish immigrant experience in the East Village and Lower East Side. Like Beth Hamedrash Hagadol, Congregation Mezritch Synagogue was built as a dwelling and later converted to a synagogue. The sophisticated, ornate facades of both these synagogues reflect the character of congregations of simple means, but with high aspirations.

The 1910 conversion of Congregation Mezritch Synagogue cost \$15,000. It was performed by the German architect and civil engineer Herman Horenburger for the Polish Orthodox Congregation that was established in 1888 (*anshe Mezritch* means *people of Mezritch*; Mezritch is a town in Poland well-known for being a center of Jewish learning). In altering the building, Horenburger converted it from 3 ½ to 2 ½ stories, and added a stone-and-brick neoclassical façade. The decorative features chosen demonstrate a desire by the congregation to embrace American values while maintaining a sense of tradition. Classical Revival


elements, such as noble arches and stately pilasters, honor traditional Roman building forms typically found on ancient temples and therefore deemed religiously “honorable”. The congregation likely took their cues from recent archaeological excavations which revealed Jerusalem’s Second Temple as being constructed in this style. Around the same time, the neoclassical style was becoming increasingly fashionable in America, so its use also demonstrates a willingness to embrace a new nationality. Moreover, the round sunburst counterpoint at the top of the building, typically found on other tenement buildings in the area, suggests an eagerness to be a part of the local community.

With this letter we are also submitting a photo and primary source documents that help define the significance of Congregation Mezritch Synagogue. Today, the building exists as an intact historic gem situated amidst a rapidly changing landscape. It would be tragic to lose such a rare remnant of an enormously important time period. We hope you will expeditiously consider this vital and important piece of American history for landmark designation.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society for Historic
Preservation



Katherine R. Spaulding
Managing Director
East Village Community Coalition



Block 434, L50 415 E. 6th Street

Block: 434
Lot: 50
Address: 415 East Sixth Street

Description:

This is a two story building plus raised basement, which is used as a synagogue.

Building Date: Unknown
Original Owner: Unknown
Original Use: Tenement
Original Architect: Unknown
Current Use: Synagogue

Year	Description	Source
1910	Architect Herman Horenburger filed on behalf of owner The Congregation of Edes Israel Anshei Mesrich to remove and rebuild front and rear walls, including construction of an extension, cutting new windows, removing all partitions and stairs and constructing a new stairway in order to convert the building from apartments to a synagogue.	ALT 480-10
1919	Jacob Fisher, the architect for the synagogue, filed to remove partitions and erect new ones to increase the stairway width.	ALT 32-19

Applicant must indicate the Building Line or Lines clearly and distinctly on the Drawings.

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Office of the Borough President of the Borough of Manhattan,
In The City of New York.

THE BUREAU OF BUILDINGS FOR THE BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN,
Office, No. 220 FOURTH AVENUE,
S. W. Corner 18th Street.

Plan No. _____

APPLICATION TO ALTER, REPAIR, Etc.

Application is hereby made to the Superintendent of Buildings of The City of New York, for the Borough of Manhattan, for the approval of the detailed statement of the specifications and plans herewith submitted for the alteration or repairs of the building herein described. All provisions of the Law shall be complied with in the alteration or repair of said building, whether specified herein or not.

(Sign here) *Herman H. Rosenberg*
THE CITY OF NEW YORK, BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, *June 7* 19*10*

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF PRESENT BUILDING.

- State how many buildings to be altered one
- What is the exact location thereof? (State on what street or avenue, the side thereof, the number of feet from the nearest street or avenue, and the name thereof)
N^o 415 E. 6th Street
- How was the building occupied? dwelling
How is the building to be occupied? synagogue
- Is the building on front or rear of lot? front Is there any other building erected on lot or permit granted for one? _____ Size _____ x _____; height _____ How occupied? _____ Give distance between same and proposed building _____ feet.
- Size of lot? 22'0" feet front; 22'0" feet rear; 90'10" feet deep.
- Size of building which it is proposed to alter or repair? 22'0" feet front; 22'0" feet rear; 85'10" feet deep. Number of stories in height? 3 1/2 Height from curb level to highest point? 40'0" above 4' below
- Depth of foundation walls below curb level? 10'0" Material of foundation walls? stone Thickness of foundation walls? front 20" inches; rear 20" inches; side 20" inches; party _____ inches.
- Material of upper walls? brick If ashlar, give kind and thickness _____
- Thickness of upper walls:
Basement: front 12 inches; rear 12 inches; side 12 inches; party _____ inches.
1st story: " 12 " " 12 " " 12 " " " "
2d story: " 12 " " 12 " " 12 " " " "
3d story: " 12 " " 12 " " 12 " " " "
4th story: " _____ " " _____ " " _____ " " "
5th story: " _____ " " _____ " " _____ " " "
6th story: " _____ " " _____ " " _____ " " "
- Is roof flat, peak or mansard? flat

If the Front, Rear or Side Walls, or any portion thereof, are to be taken out and rebuilt, give definite particulars, and state in what manner :

47. *It is proposed to remove entire front and rear walls and rebuild front wall, as shown. Rear wall to be taken down in order to build an Extension to rear. New windows to be cut in side wall and provided with brackets above sills as marked on plans.*

If altered internally, give definite particulars, and state how the building will be occupied :

48. *All partitions and stairs to be removed as shown on dotted lines and new partitions added for toilets. New stairways to be inserted on both sides of Ridge also stairs from sidewalk to Basement ^{2nd} 1st Story. All beams to be removed and replaced by new beams, sizes as shown on plans.*

The Building will be occupied as a Synagogue.

49. How much will the alteration cost? *\$ 15,000.00*

If the Building is to be occupied as a Flat, Apartment or Lodging House, give the following particulars :

50. Is any part of building to be used as a store or for any other business purpose, if so, state for what ?

	Cellar	Basement	1st Floor	2d Floor	3d Floor	4th Floor	5th Floor	6th Floor
51. How many families will occupy each ?								
52. Height of ceilings?								

53. How basement to be occupied? _____
How made water-tight? _____

54. Will cellar or basement ceiling be plastered? _____ How? _____

55. How will cellar stairs be enclosed? _____

56. How will cellar be occupied? _____
How made water-tight? _____

57. Will shafts be opened or covered with louvre skylights full size of shafts? _____

Size of each shaft? _____

58. Dimensions of water closet windows? _____
 Dimensions of windows for living rooms? _____
59. Of what materials will hall partitions be constructed? _____
60. Of what materials will hall floors be constructed? _____
61. How will hall ceilings and soffits of stairs be plastered? _____
62. Of what material will stairways be constructed? _____
 Give sizes of stair well holes? _____
63. If any other building on lot, give size; front _____; rear _____; deep _____;
 stories high _____; how occupied _____; on front or rear
 of lot _____; material _____.
 How much space between it and proposed building? _____
64. How will floors and sides of water closets to the height of 16 inches be made waterproof? _____
65. Number and location of water closets: Cellar _____; 1st floor _____; 2d floor _____;
 3d floor _____; 4th floor _____; 5th floor _____; 6th floor _____
66. This building will safely sustain per superficial foot upon the 1st floor _____ lbs.; upon 2d floor
 _____ lbs.; upon 3d floor _____ lbs.; upon 4th floor _____ lbs.; upon 5th floor
 _____ lbs.; upon 6th floor _____ lbs.; upon 7th floor _____ lbs.; upon 8th floor
 _____ lbs.
67. Is architect to supervise the alteration of the building or buildings mentioned herein? Yes
 Name _____
 Address _____
68. If not the architect, who is to superintend the alteration of the building or buildings described herein?
 Name Samuel Spector (Pres.)
 Address 199 E. 3rd St.

The Congregation of Ederet Leivual Anshin, Messing

Owner, Samuel Spector (Pres.) Address, 199 E. 3rd St.

Architect, _____ " _____

Superintendent, _____ " _____

Mason, _____ " _____

Carpenter _____ " _____

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

32
1919

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPPLICATE, and ONE copy sworn to by Applicant. If Elevator or Plumbing Applications are filed herewith, ONE AFFIDAVIT is sufficient for all. Plans must be filed on tracing Linen or Cloth.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 32 191 9

LOCATION 415 E. 6th St. N.S. 178'-7" E. of 1st Ave. BLOCK 434 LOT 50

When properly signed by the Superintendent of Buildings of the Borough of Manhattan, this application becomes a PERMIT as required by the Building Code of The City of New York, to perform such work as is described in the foregoing statement and the attached plans and specifications which are a part hereof.

EXAMINED AND RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL ON February 6th 191 9

H. M. Bennett
Examiner

APPROVED FEB 7 - 1919 191

[Signature]
Superintendent of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan.

New York City, January 3, 191 9

To THE SUPERINTENDENT OF BUILDINGS:

Application is hereby made for approval of the plans and specifications herewith submitted, and made a part hereof, for the ALTERATION of the building therein described,—with the understanding that if no work is performed within one year from the time of issuance, this approval shall expire by limitation as provided by law; and the applicant agrees to comply with all the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Buildings for the Borough of Manhattan, all provisions of the Building Code of The City of New York, and with every other provision of law relating to this subject in effect at this date.

STATE, COUNTY AND }
CITY OF NEW YORK } SS.: Jacob Fisher
Typewrite Name of Applicant

being duly sworn, deposes and says: That he resides at Number 931 Fox Street
in the Borough of BRONX

in the City of New York, in the County of Bronx

in the State of New York, that he is Architect for Congregation

Edea Israel Anshel Mesrich.

owner in fee of all that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, shown on the diagram annexed hereto and made a part hereof, situate, lying and being in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York aforesaid, and known and designated as Number 415 E. 6th St. N.S. 178'-7" E. of 1st Ave.

and hereinafter more particularly described; that the work proposed to be done upon the said premises, in accordance with the accompanying detailed statement in writing of the specifications and plans of such proposed work, including all amendments to the same which may be filed hereafter—and also all Elevator and Plumbing work

BUREAU OF BUILDINGS

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPPLICATE.
 "SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A" [Form 152] must be filed with EVERY Alteration Application.
 "SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET B" [Form 153] must be filed, in addition, in case the building is to be raised in height or occupancy changed so as to increase floor loads, or if building is to be enlarged on one side.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 191 9LOCATION 415 East 6th St. N.S. 178'-7" E. of 1st Ave.Examined 191

Examiner

SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A

- (1) NUMBER OF BUILDINGS TO BE ALTERED ONE
Any other building on lot or permit granted for one? NO
- (2) ESTIMATED COST OF ALTERATION: \$ 2000
- (3) OCCUPANCY (in detail):
Of present building SYNAGOGUE
Of building as altered SAME
- (4) SIZE OF EXISTING BUILDING:
- | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|-----------|
| At street level | <u>22</u> | feet front | <u>82'-0"</u> | feet deep |
| At typical floor level | <u>22</u> | feet front | <u>82'-0"</u> | feet deep |
| Height | <u>2 1/2</u> | stories | <u>30'-0"</u> | feet |
- (5) SIZE OF BUILDING AS ALTERED:
- | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| At street level | <u>SAME</u> | feet front | <u>SAME</u> | feet deep |
| At typical floor level | | feet front | | feet deep |
| Height | | stories | | feet |
- (6) CHARACTER OF CONSTRUCTION OF PRESENT BUILDING: Ordinary
[Frame, Ordinary or Fireproof]
- (7) STATE GENERALLY IN WHAT MANNER THE BUILDING WILL BE ALTERED:
Remove partitions, erect new partitions, increase stairway in width as
AA shown on plans.

