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 increasing 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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>ALT 480-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Jacob Fisher, the architect for the synagogue, filed to remove partitions and erect new ones to increase the stairway width.</td>
<td>ALT 32-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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) 

The City of New York, Borough of Manhattan, June 9, 1926

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF PRESENT BUILDING.

1. State how many buildings to be altered.

2. What is the exact location thereof? (State on what street or avenue, the sides thereof, and the number of feet from the nearest street or avenue, and the same thereof).

3. How was the building occupied? 

4. Is the building on front or rear of lot? 

5. Is there any other building erected on lot or permit granted for one? 

6. Give distance between same and proposed building.

7. Size of lot? 

8. Size of building which it is proposed to alter or repair? 

9. Depth of foundation walls below curb level? 

10. Material of foundation walls? 

11. Thickness of foundation walls? From front to rear.

12. Material of upper walls? 

13. Thickness of upper walls?

Basement: front, rear, side. 
1st story: 
2nd story: 
3rd story: 
4th story: 
5th story: 
6th story: 

In roof flat, peak or mansard?

The Bureau of Buildings for the Borough of Manhattan,
If the Roof, Floor or Side Walls, or any portion thereof, are to be taken out and rebuilt, give details particulars, and state in what manner:

It is proposed to remove certain fronts and rear windows and substitute partially as shown. New walls to be added.

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

All first floor and attic to be removed to lower level, and new foundations and new walls. New stairways to be constructed on both sides of Street. New floor plans to accommodate an upper floor. All known to be removed and replaced by new framing and roof as shown on plans.

The Building will be occupied as an 

49. How much will the alteration cost? $5,000

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Floor</th>
<th>1st Floor</th>
<th>2nd Floor</th>
<th>3rd Floor</th>
<th>4th Floor</th>
<th>5th Floor</th>
<th>6th Floor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>How many families will occupy each?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Height of ceilings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>How basement to be occupied?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>How made water-tight?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Will cellar or basement ceiling be plastered?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>How will cellar stairs be enclosed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>How will cellar be occupied?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>How made water-tight?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Will shafts be opened or covered with louvers? What size of shafts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Size of each shaft?
38. Dimensions of water closet windows?

39. Dimensions of windows for living rooms?

40. Of what materials will hall partitions be constructed?

41. Of what materials will hall floors be constructed?

42. How will hall ceilings and sills of stairs be plastered?

43. Of what material will stairways be constructed?

Give size of stair well holes?

44. If any other building on lot, give size front, rear, stories high; how occupied; on front or rear of lot; material.

45. How much space between it and proposed building?

46. How will floors and sides of water closets to the height of 16 inches be made waterproof?

47. Number and location of water closets; Cellar; 1st floor; 2nd floor; 3rd floor; 4th floor; 5th floor; 6th floor.

48. This building will occupy masts per superficial foot upon the 1st floor; upon 2nd floor; upon 3rd floor; upon 4th floor; upon 5th floor; upon 6th floor; upon 7th floor; upon 8th floor; upon 9th floor.

49. Is architect to supervise the alteration of the building or buildings mentioned herein?

Name
Address

50. If not the architect, who is to superintend the alteration of the building or buildings described herein?

Name
Address

The Congregation of Elders.

Architect

Superintendent

Mason

Carpenter
BUREAU OF BUILDINGS
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTICE. This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPlicate, and ONE copy
must be kept by Applicant. If Elevator or Plumbing Applications are filed herewith, ONE AFFIDAVIT is
required for all. Plans must be filed on tracing Litho or Cloth.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 191

LOCATION 431 E. 6th St. s.w. 176°-7" E. of 1st Ave., BLOCK 424, LOT 8G

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
indicated in the foregoing statement and the attached plans and specifications which are a part hereof.

EXAMINED AND RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL CO |

APPROVED. FEB. 7 – 1919

Superintendent of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan.

New York City, JANUARY 5, 1919

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 described, with the understanding that if the work is performed within one year from
the date 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

being duly sworn, deposes and says: That he resides at Number 631 Fox Street
in the Borough of Bronx
in the City of New York, in the County of
in the State of New York, that he is Architect for Congregation

Elios Emanual Amos Warrick

owner in fee of all that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, shown on the diagram annexed hereto and made a part
hereof, situated, lying and being in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York aforesaid, and known and
designated as Number 431 E. 6th St. S.W. 176°-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

[Page 1] (over)
BUREAU OF BUILDINGS
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, CITY OF NEW YORK

NOTICE—This Application must be TYPEWRITTEN and filed in TRIPlicate.
"SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A" (Form 152) must be filed with EVERY Alteration Application.
"SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET B" (Form 158) must be filed, in addition, if the building is to be
raised in height or occupancy changed as to increase floor loads, or if building is to be enlarged
on one side.

ALT. APPLICATION No. 191

LOCATION. 415 East 6th St., N.Y., 126'-7" E. of 1st Ave.

Examined. 391

SPECIFICATIONS—SHEET A

(1) NUMBER OF BUILDINGS TO BE ALTERED: 2

Any other buildings 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: Synagogue

(4) SIZE OF EXISTING BUILDING:
    At street level: 22 feet front, 22 feet depth
    At typical floor level: 36'-6" feet depth
    Height: 2 1/2 stories

(5) SIZE OF BUILDING AS ALTERED:
    At street level: Same feet front, Same feet depth
    At typical floor level: Same feet front, Same feet depth
    Height: Same feet depth

(6) CHARACTER OF CONSTRUCTION OF PRESENT BUILDING:
   Ordinary

(7) STATE GENERALY IN WHAT MANNER THE BUILDING WILL BE ALTERED:
   Remove partitions, erect new partitions, increase stairway in width as shown on plans.