



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

www.nysparks.com

David A. Paterson
Governor

Carol Ash
Commissioner

June 20, 2008

Andrew Berman
Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
232 East 11th Street
New York, NY 10003

RE: State and National Registers eligibility evaluation request
Building at 101 Avenue A (Pyramid Club)
New York County, NY

Dear Mr. Berman:

Thank you for your interest in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. After reviewing your eligibility evaluation request it is the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office that the Building at 101 Avenue A meets the criteria for listing to the Registers. Attached to this letter is a copy of our Resource Evaluation.

A copy of this letter of eligibility is being forwarded to the owner of the building. In order for a building to be listed in the National Register the property owner must not oppose the proposed listing. It is the policy of the State Historic Preservation Office to work closely with owners to inform them of the potential benefits of listing. Not only is listing to the Registers a prestigious honor, it brings with it economic benefits. Not-for-profit organizations that own registered properties may apply for historic preservation grants from various sources. Owners of historic commercial properties listed in the National Register may qualify for a preservation tax credit. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 allows a 20 percent tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of income-producing historic properties.

If you have any questions about this determination of eligibility please feel free to call me at (518) 237-8643 ext. 3266.

Sincerely,

Kathleen A. Howe
Historic Preservation Program Analyst

cc: Lai Dunie, 101 Avenue A Realty Corp.



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RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: June 19, 2008

STAFF: Kathy Howe

PROPERTY: Building at 101 Avenue A

MCD: Manhattan

COUNTY: New York

USN: 06101.016972

- I. Property is individually listed on SR/NR:
name of listing:
- Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:
name of district:
- II. Property meets eligibility criteria.
- Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria.
- Pre SRB: Post SRB: SRB date

Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possess high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Neo-Grec tenement building at 101 Avenue A in the East Village was built in 1876 by Prussian-born architect William Jose. The well-preserved façade of this four-story, three-bay-wide red brick building is ornately detailed with storefront and roof cornices, beltcourses of light stone and black brick, stone window lintels with incised floral motifs, and an elaborate wrought iron fire escape. The building housed a German-American social and banquet hall on the ground floor originally known as Kern's Hall. It was later known as Shultz's Hall, Fritz's Hall, and Leppig's Hall. The basic floor plan and volume of the main hall appears to remain much as it was 130 years ago. A rear extension to the gathering hall was built sometime between 1876 and 1928. The upper floors are still in use as apartments.

The building meets NR Criterion A in the areas of social history and ethnic heritage for its association with the German-American community known as *Kleindeutschland* ("Little Germany") which flourished on the Lower East Side in the last half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It is significant for its association with pertinent social, political, and cultural issues of the day. This was one of many social halls, beer halls, saloons, wine gardens, concert halls, and clubs in *Kleindeutschland* which offered a convivial gathering place for the neighborhood's residents who for the most part lived in crowded tenements.

...beginning in the 1850s, after the political upheavals in Europe of 1848 and the resulting influx of German-speaking immigrants to New York city, the Lower East Side (the area bounded roughly by 18th Street, the East River, the Bowery/Third Avenue, and Catherine Street) became known as *Kleindeutschland* ("Little Germany"). Aside from their presence as residents, these immigrants contributed in significant ways to the vibrant commercial and cultural life of the neighborhood and the city at large. The German community was critical to the American socialist movement and the creation of labor unions. By 1880, this neighborhood constituted one-fourth of the city's population and was the first major urban foreign-speaking neighborhood in the U.S., as well as the leading German-American center throughout the century.¹

The saloon/gathering hall at 101 Avenue A played an important role in the social, cultural, and political life of the East Village's German-American population. The space was the site of many important events for the local community. In 1879 a dinner was held here to celebrate the completion of Tompkins Square Park. Many labor-related discussions were held here through the years by different trade associations. In 1885 The Amalgamated Building Trades Council held a "mass meeting of workingmen" to discuss the question of mandating shorter hours for New York State workers. The American Federation of Labor also met in the hall. The United German Society met here and the Central Spar Verein had an office here. A memorial service was held here in 1904 for the over 1,000 people, most German-Americans, that perished in the General Slocum disaster.

The hall was perhaps best known under the ownership of the Leppig family (first John Leppig, Sr., and then John Leppig, Jr.) who ran it as a combination saloon/restaurant/social hall throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century. John Leppig (Sr.) and his family lived upstairs from the business. Leppig's Hall was especially known for its role in offering charitable assistance to the destitute. Leppig's Hall and Meeting Room closed its doors in 1936.

The period of significance for 101 Avenue A is 1876 (the date of construction) to 1936 (the date when Leppig's Hall closed). This period encompasses the active use of the hall by the German-American community. The building's more recent history as the home of the Pyramid Club which opened here in 1979 represents the avant-garde and countercultural movement which emerged in the East Village including performance art and socially conscious drag performances. Although this era of the building's history began less than 30 years ago it may be worthy of evaluation in the future.

If you have any questions concerning this Determination of Eligibility, please call Kathy Howe at (518) 237-8643, ext. 3266.

¹ Jay Schockley, *Webster Hall and Annex Designation Report*, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, March 18, 2008, p. 3.