



## Landmarks Preservation Commission

Meenakshi Srinivasan  
Chair

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
Tuesday, October 28th, 2014**

### **THE FIRST GERMAN BAPTIST CHURCH BECOMES A NEW YORK CITY LANDMARK**

*Commission Approves Landmark Status for the Tifereth Israel Town and Village Synagogue*



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission today voted to designate the First German Baptist Church building in Manhattan as a New York City Landmark. Currently the Congregation Tifereth Israel Town and Village Synagogue, the building is located at 334 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street. It was erected in 1866-69 and is an excellent example of the German Rundbogenstil style of architecture, and a significant reminder of the evolving character of the Lower East Side.

The First German Baptist Church was built at the northern boundary of the thriving mid-19<sup>th</sup> century German community of Kleinduetschland. The building's architect, Julius Boekell was a talented and prolific designer who worked almost exclusively for German clients within the German enclaves of New York. The Church is an early example of his work and is his only known church design.

The First German Baptist Church was a vital social and spiritual center for its largely poor and immigrant congregation and an important training ground for the German Baptist Church in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

"This building is not only an example of significant architecture, but also represents the waves of immigrants that contributed to the identity, dynamism, and social and cultural history of the Lower East Side," said Meenakshi Srinivasan.

By the 1920's the German presence on the Lower East Side had declined and was replaced by a new wave of immigrants from Eastern Europe and new communities such as Little Ukraine. As a result, in 1926, the First German Baptist Church leased its building to the newly formed Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church of St. Volodymyr. Located in the heart of the Ukrainian community in the largest city in the country, St. Volodymyr's was one of the most important Ukrainian Orthodox churches in North America and the site of some of the most significant events in Ukrainian Orthodox church history. In 1939-40, the church was refurbished and altered to give it a more Eastern appearance. The original windows were replaced by stained-glass lights and the original spires were replaced with small chambers topped by copper-clad onion domes.

In 1962, the Church of St. Volodymyr sold the building to Congregation Tifereth Israel- Town and Village Synagogue. The location at 334 14<sup>th</sup> Street was the congregation's first permanent quarters, since it was founded in 1948. The synagogue made some changes to the façade of the building, notably signage, the installation of iron menorahs at the first story, and a Star of David to the center second-story window lighting the sanctuary.

The building's Rundbogenstil design incorporates such typical German Romanesque features as roughly coursed stone facings, large round-arch openings, arcuated corbel tables, bet and string courses, and a central gable pierced by an ocular window.

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The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency responsible for protecting and preserving New York City's architecturally, historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Since its creation in 1965, LPC has granted landmark status to approximately 31,729 buildings and sites, including 1339 individual landmarks, 117 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 111 historic districts and 20 historic district extensions in all five boroughs. Under the City's landmarks law, considered among the most powerful in the nation, the Commission must be comprised of at least three architects, a historian, a realtor, a planner or landscape architect, as well as a representative of each borough.

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