

MARTIN ERDMANN HOUSE

57-59 East 55th Street, Manhattan
Tax Map Block 1291, Lot 127

Built: 1908-09

Architect: Taylor & Levi

Style: English Renaissance Revival

Proposed Action: Item Proposed for the Commission's Calendar on May 10, 2016

The Martin Erdmann house, an English Renaissance Revival style town house, was built 1908-09 and designed by the architectural firm Taylor & Levi. It is an excellent example of a fashionable town house that was designed by classically-trained architects to reflect the upper class tastes and preferences of wealthy New York City families during the early 1900s. The house represents the period, prior to the construction of Grand Central Terminal, when the area around Fifth Avenue in East Midtown was a prestigious residential enclave.

Taylor & Levi is best known for designing high-style period-revival residential properties in New York City and large estates in the Metropolitan area.

The five-story American Basement-plan town house replaced two earlier brownstone-fronted houses that had been erected on the site c. 1870s. The house features an all-limestone façade, a ground-story arcade, multi-light Tudor-style windows with stone mullions, decorative panels, applied strap-work designs, a steep front-facing gable, and decorative chimney stacks. This house represents a time when East Midtown Manhattan, particularly between St. Patrick's Cathedral and Central Park, was one of Manhattan's most prestigious residential enclaves.



The original owner and resident Martin Erdmann spent his career as a partner in the banking firm of Speyer & Company. He purchased the property in 1909 after retiring from the financial business, using the residence to house his extensive art and antique collections until his death in 1937. Later in 1943, the American Institute of Physics converted the building from residential use to offices for their headquarters. The Friars Club, a social club for entertainment professionals, has owned the town house for use as their social and business center since 1957.

The Martin Erdmann house remains remarkably intact to its original design retaining its distinctive turn-of-the-century English Renaissance Revival style architecture and domestic character.



May 10, 2016