

The Educational Building, 70 Fifth Avenue

**70 Fifth Avenue (aka 2-6 West 13th Street), Manhattan
Tax Map Block 576 Lot 36**

Built: 1912-1914

Architect: Charles A. Rich

Style: Neoclassical/Beaux Arts

Action: Propose for Calendar January 19, 2021



70 Fifth Avenue, 2020 (LPC)

Commissioned by book publisher-philanthropist George Arthur Plimpton and built in 1914, 70 Fifth Avenue is a 12-story building located on the southwest corner of West 13th Street in the Greenwich Village section of Manhattan. Charles A. Rich, formerly of the architectural firm Lamb & Rich, designed the building, which housed the national office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) among a remarkable tenant roster of progressive organizations that have shaped American society, several of which remain active.

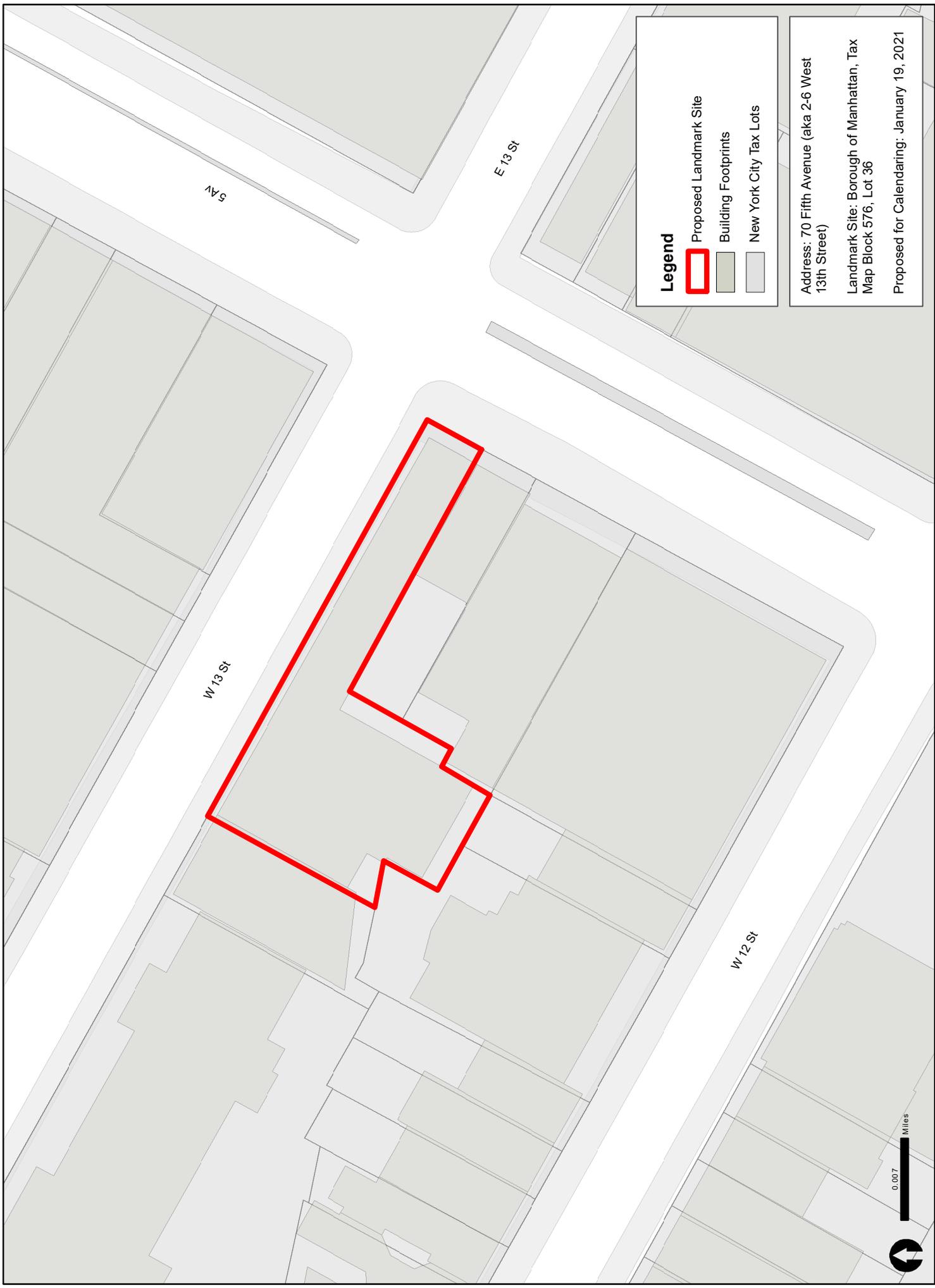
Identified as the “Educational Building” in the 1910s, the base of 70 Fifth Avenue was initially occupied by Ginn & Company, the educational book publisher co-founded by Plimpton, while most of the upper floors were leased to social reform organizations. Most notable was the NAACP, which had its “national office” on the fifth floor from 1914 to 1923. Established in 1909 to fight racial injustice and prejudice through legal and educational means, the NAACP was headquartered in 70 Fifth Avenue during a period of substantial national growth, when it established local branches, increased membership, and lifted its public profile through publications, legal challenges, and peaceful protest. W. E. B DuBois, who helped found the organization after moving from Atlanta to New York City in 1909, was director of publications and research, as well as editor of *The Crisis*, also located at 70 Fifth Avenue. This widely read monthly magazine, which continues to publish today, featured news reports about the NAACP and writings by African American authors who made significant contributions to the Harlem Renaissance. Another tenant, Dubois & Dill, published *The Brownies’ Book*, the first magazine for young African American readers.

70 Fifth Avenue attracted many progressive non-profit groups as tenants, including the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM) who founded the National Civil Liberties Bureau (later known as the ACLU) in the building, League for Industrial Democracy, League of Nations Union, National Board of Censorship in Motion Pictures (later the National Board of Review), National Child Welfare Association, National Plant, Flower & Fruit Guild, New York Teachers Union, Pan American Society, Women’s Peace Party, World’s Court League, as well as many book publishers.

An understated and refined example of the Beaux Arts style, the L-shaped office building features two street facades clad in white brick and stone (possibly cast stone) with a classical tripartite configuration. Much of the neoclassical ornament is well preserved, including door surrounds, pilasters, composite capitals, relief panels, keystones, rounded pediments, and an extensive masonry cornice. In reference to building’s original owners and tenants, the door surrounds incorporate cartouches with small images of open books and the uppermost floors display iron grilles with gilded book reliefs.

The New School for Social Research acquired 70 Fifth Avenue in 1972. A significant institution long associated with Greenwich Village, it was founded in 1919 as a progressive center for adult education and now incorporates five colleges. The building was renovated in 2005-06 and is currently part of the Shelia C. Johnson Design Center at the Parsons School of Design/The New School. Except for the recessed entrance along West 13th Street and modest alterations to the entrances and storefronts, there have been few changes to the exterior. The handsome and highly intact building is historically significant as the home of the national office of the NAACP in the early-20th century, as well as many other progressive organizations working for social justice and equality, a legacy carried on for almost 50 years by the New School.

(Proposed) The Educational Building, 70 Fifth Avenue | LP-2650



Legend

-  Proposed Landmark Site
-  Building Footprints
-  New York City Tax Lots

Address: 70 Fifth Avenue (aka 2-6 West 13th Street)

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 576, Lot 36

Proposed for Calendaring: January 19, 2021

