

First Hungarian Reformed Church

**346 East 69th Street,
(a.k.a. 346-348 East 69th Street)
Manhattan
Tax Map Block 1443 Lot 37**

Built: 1915-16

Architect: Emery Roth

Style: Secessionist with Craftsman/Arts and Crafts features

Action: Proposed for Commission's Calendar: January 22, 2019
Public Hearing March 26, 2019



First Hungarian Reformed Church, LPC, 2018

The First Hungarian Reformed Church is located in the Yorkville neighborhood on the south side of East 69th Street between First and Second avenues. Completed in 1916, the church is a significant example of a religious property designed by the distinguished New York City architect Emery Roth, and represents Yorkville's immigrant history and Hungarian-American community. A striking example of early-20th-century church architecture, the sophisticated design incorporates both Secessionist and Arts and Crafts details and remains remarkably intact.

The First Hungarian Reformed congregation of New York City, Első Magyar Református Templom, was founded in 1895 when increased numbers of Hungarian immigrants came to New York City. The Reformed (Calvinist) denomination was the major Protestant affiliation in Hungary, and as such, enough Reformed members decided to form their own church, first meeting in a small church in the Lower East Side. After 1900, a large number of Hungarians moved uptown to Yorkville and brought with them their churches, restaurants, bookstores, bakeries, and other businesses with them.

In 1915 the congregation purchased three row houses along East 69th Street, using two lots for the new church. They commissioned Emery Roth (1871-1948), a young New York City architect who was born in Austria-Hungary, to design the church. After immigrating to the United States at the age of 13, Roth began his career with Burnham and Root for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and later worked in the New York City office of Richard Morris Hunt. Although the First Hungarian is his only known church, his other religious properties consisted of four synagogues. During the 1920s he became widely known for his office towers, hotels, and elegant apartment buildings, particularly along the City's Upper West Side.

The three-bay symmetrical facade incorporates both Secessionist and Craftsman/Arts and Crafts features, creating what was at the time a modern design for the congregation. The bold geometric forms, flat wall surfaces, and stylized patterns are all hallmarks of the Secessionist style. Inset on the stucco facade are decorative glazed-ceramic panels, often utilized in Arts and Crafts designs of the period. The panels are painted white, but were originally brightly colored. Craftsman features include the pent roof at the entrance and the building's overhanging roof edges with closely-spaced exposed rafter tails.

The building is prominent in the streetscape, with an 80-foot tall tower that rises above and complements a block of 19th century row houses. With few changes since construction, the building retains its historic materials and design, and continues to serve its Hungarian-American congregation.

