

L. E. S. P. I.

LESPI-NYC.ORG

January 31, 2024

Sarah Carroll, Chair
Landmarks Preservation Committee
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

RE: Former branch of The Provident Loan Society of New York, 223-225 East Houston Street

Dear Chair Carroll,

The mission of the Lower East Side Preservation Initiative – LESPI – is the recognition and preservation of the historic Lower East Side through the designation of New York City historic districts and individual landmarks. Attached please find LESPI’s Request for Evaluation for a highly significant building at 223-225 East Houston Street—a former branch of The Provident Loan Society of New York. This building merits designation for its architectural distinction, cultural history, and indelible links to the historic immigrant population of the Lower East Side, as our RFE explains in detail.

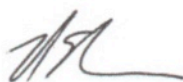
Completed in 1912, this building has a long history for residents of the neighborhood. For over 50 years, it was a branch of The Provident Loan Society of New York serving the Lower East Side, a target population for the Society. It acted as a pawnshop but without the unscrupulous dealings of many such businesses. The Society aimed to treat its clientele with a respectfulness that is reflected in the dignified architecture of this branch office. Later, for 20 years, this building was the studio and residence of Jasper Johns, considered by many the most important living American artist. In its most recent incarnations, it has played a role in the social life of new generations of Lower East Siders as the venue of various nightclubs. Its current use is unknown.

It is important to note that this building is vulnerable to the rapid development playing out on the Lower East Side, and the subsequent loss of many structures that once made up this historic neighborhood. In 2015, Christian Emanuel submitted an RFE for the building. We do not know the outcome of that request, but we do know that development continues unabated in the area. In 2017, there were approved plans to build 12 stories on top of this building, plans that luckily have not materialized. Because of the significance of this former branch of The Provident Loan Society for the Lower East Side, and the rapidly changing environment, we again submit an RFE for your consideration.

Research for this RFE was undertaken by LESPI Board Member, Deborah Wye, assisted by LESPI Individual Landmarks Committee volunteer Allison Siegel. If you have questions, please contact Deborah Wye at debwye@gmail.com or 917-846-2953.

With thanks for your consideration,

Sincerely,



Richard Moses, President

Lower East Side Preservation Initiative

