



Sarah Carroll
Chair

November 27, 2020

Kate Lemos McHale
Director of Research
KLemosMcHale@lpc.nyc.gov

Peter S. Green
Upper Riverside Residents Alliance
870 Riverside Drive 4G
New York, NY 10032

1 Centre Street
9th Floor North
New York, NY 10007

Re: Harris-Newhouse Home, 857 Riverside Drive, Manhattan

(212) 669-7700 tel
(212) 669-7960 fax

Dear Mr. Green:

Thank you for your request for evaluation of the Harris-Newhouse Home at 857 Riverside Drive in Manhattan. The extensively researched report prepared by Joseph Amodio provided fascinating information on Dennis Harris, John Newhouse and their contributions to Washington Heights and the abolitionist movement. We greatly appreciate the information and the report has been added to our research files.

As a regulatory agency concerned with protecting the historic character of buildings significant to New York City's history and architectural heritage, in addition to evaluating architectural significance and the strength of association with an important person or event, we must consider the degree of integrity it retains to its period of significance. We evaluate the degree to which a building retains its historic appearance and building materials (commonly referred to as historic fabric) to communicate its historic significance, and if altered, whether those alterations date to the period of significance.

While we recognize the important history of Washington Heights and its residents, staff review of 857 Riverside Drive determined that as a result of the extensive modifications that have been made to the house and its architectural details it does not appear to retain the integrity necessary for consideration as an individual landmark. The alterations include the removal of the octagonal cupola and wrap-around porch along with their decorative trim, replacement of windows and doors and removal of their enframements, and the addition of the permastone veneer. Because of these alterations, the house at 857 Riverside Drive retains neither the historic appearance nor adequate historic fabric from the 19th century abolitionist era, and therefore does not possess integrity of historic association, design or materials.

As you know, researching the abolition movement and Underground Railroad in New York City presents numerous challenges, because so few documents exist related to that history, given the dangers of helping enslaved individuals in that era. We will continue to study the history of abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in Washington Heights, and the contributions of Dennis Harris and John Newhouse to the movement.

LPC is committed to recognizing the important role New York City played in the effort to abolish slavery nationwide, and to assist those seeking to escape it. We seek to recognize this history through designations of buildings as landmarks with good integrity to embody their important history, and other tools such as archaeology, documentation, interpretation, and education in cases when the building fabric itself is not intact. Designated landmarks associated with the abolition movement and the Underground Railroad in New York City include the First Free Congregational Church in Brooklyn, Plymouth Church in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District, the Brooklyn Friends Meeting House, the Lamartine Place Historic District in Manhattan, and the Curtis House on Staten Island, among others. All of these sites retain significantly more physical integrity to the mid-19th century than 857 Riverside Drive.

We thank you for your commitment to historic preservation and appreciate your interest in the work of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Lemos McHale". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kate Lemos McHale