



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation
Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189
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Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

September 7, 2012

Andrew Berman, Executive Director
Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
232 East 22th Street
New York, NY 10003

Re: 186 Spring Street, New York, NY

Mr. Berman:

Our office has received your submission for a request for National Register of Historic Places eligibility for 186 Spring Street in Manhattan. I want to thank you for your thoroughly prepared historic overview of the site and inform you that, based on the information provided, the New York State Division for Historic Presentation has determined that 186 Spring Street is individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The house at 186 Spring Street is eligible under National Register Criterion A in the area of social history for its association with the later-twentieth century LGBT civil rights movement. Covering a period of significance from 1970 to c.1980, the building operated as a boarding house and later a private residence to several prominent gay activists during the post-Stonewall years. These include Dr. Bruce Voeller, Jim Owles, and Arnie Kantrowitz, among others. Voeller, the home's longest resident from the period, is associated with the formation of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) in 1970 and the National Gay Task Force (NGLTF) in 1973. The GAA is credited with creating the first gay rights bills in the United States, with legislation introduced in 1971 to the NYS Legislature and the NYC Council. The house at 186 Spring Street is mentioned in biographical accounts consulted to date as a private space where early political discussion of LGBT issues and the planning and organization of the civil rights movement took place. The organization's public space, a firehouse at 99 Wooster was severely damaged by a fire in 1974.


Previous to this request for individual eligibility, 186 Spring was determined eligible for the National Register in 2007, but only in the context of the South Village Historic District. While the context developed for the South Village neighborhood documents the broad history of the area over a hundred and fifty year period, individual listing offers the opportunity to document the specific history of 186 Spring. This history includes and is exceptionally significant for a brief period of time during the LGBT civil rights movement between the Stonewall riots and the onset of the AIDS crisis.

To date, there is only one site on the National Register directly associated with LGBT history: Stonewall, designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2000. In the era after the landmark Stonewall riots of 1969, individuals such as Voeller, Owles, and Kantrowitz had important roles in developing and shaping the specific actions through which lesbian and gay rights were codified into law. Therefore, the activity that took place at 186 Spring Street represents an important aspect of LGBT history.

Eligibility and/or listing on the National Register offers a measure of protection under federal and New York State historic preservation laws. It does not prohibit a property owner from making changes to a property with private funding. The Division for Historic Preservation provides consultation when public money or permitting is associated with a historic site. The purposes of the Register program is to document sites of cultural significance in communities and to qualify properties for potential grant programming and tax credit incentives for rehabilitation.

If there are any questions about this determination of National Register of Historic Places eligibility, please contact the Division staff to discuss further.
518.237.8643 x3257 daniel.mceneny@parks.ny.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. McEneny', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel McEneny
Historic Preservation Program Analyst
New York City and Long Island

cc: Nordica SoHo