

James Baldwin Residence



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LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan
137 West 71st Street

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

The most significant surviving building in the United States associated with the celebrated novelist, essayist, poet, and civil rights advocate James Baldwin.





137 West 71st Street, 1964

Courtesy New York City Municipal Archives

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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James Baldwin Residence

137 West 71st Street, Manhattan

Designation List 513

LP-2636

Built: 1890; altered 1961

Architect: H. Russell Kenyon

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map
Block 1143, Lot 19

Calendared: May 14, 2019

Public Hearing: June 4, 2019

On June 4, 2018, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the James Baldwin Residence and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). Forty people testified in favor of the proposed designation including representatives of Assemblymembers Linda B. Rosenthal and Richard N. Gottfried, Community Board 6, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, and Councilmember Daniel Dromm. Speaker Johnson's testimony was jointly signed by State Senator Brad Hoylman, Assemblymembers Deborah Glick and Daniel O'Donnell, and Councilmembers Margaret Chin, Daniel Dromm, Carlos Menchaca, Debi Rose, Ritchie Torres, and Jimmy Van Bramer. Also speaking in favor of the designation were representatives of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, the Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Society for the Architecture of the City, the Victorian Society of New York, the Real Estate Board of New York, the National Parks Conservation Association, Manhattan Community Board 7, Landmark West!, Village Preservation, Save Chelsea, the Bowery Alliance of

Neighbors, and 17 individuals. The owner spoke in opposition to the proposed designation.

The Commission also received 124 written submissions in favor of the proposed designation, including from Bronx Borough President Reuben Diaz, Councilmember Adrienne Adams, the Preservation League of New York State, and 121 individuals.

Summary

James Baldwin Residence

No. 137 West 71st Street is the most significant surviving building in the United States associated with the celebrated novelist, essayist, poet, and civil rights advocate James Baldwin. Born in Harlem in 1924, Baldwin was shaped by his early experiences in New York City. He was raised in Harlem in wrenching poverty and became cognizant of the city's climate of bigotry at an early age. Baldwin attended the city's public schools, where his brilliance was quickly recognized and cultivated by mentors both black and white; at the selective boys-only DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, he wrote for the school's literary magazine and made friends who encouraged his artistry. During high school, he also had his first romantic relationship with a man, which "shattered," he later recalled, "all of the American categories of male and female, straight or not, black or white ... very early in my life." After high school, Baldwin moved to Greenwich Village, where he had relationships with both men and women and met a diverse group of performers, writers, and thinkers, many of whom would remain lifelong friends and become allies in the civil rights movement. During this period, Baldwin's first book reviews and short stories were published and he met the novelist Richard Wright, who encouraged his talent after reading a portion of what would become Baldwin's first novel.

Baldwin left New York for Paris in 1948, but as he later recalled, the "first thing I learned in Paris was that you don't ever leave home. You take your home with you." In 1952 he completed his semi-autobiographical novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*,

now recognized as an American classic. He followed it with *Giovanni's Room* (1956), a canonical work of LGBT literature that was unprecedented for its empathetic, in-depth portrayals of gay and bisexual characters.

Baldwin's 1955 essay collection *Notes of a Native Son* made him a leading voice on the plight of black Americans and critic of American race relations. He would soon rise to the fore of the Civil Rights movement with his 1961 book *Nobody Knows My Name*, containing essays based on his early travels through the American South in which he met Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Extensive profiles of Baldwin were published in *Ebony* and *Life* magazines in the early 1960s, and in 1963, he graced the cover of a special *Time* magazine issue addressing "The Negro's Push for Equality." Also in that year, he convened a meeting between prominent African Americans and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy in which he urged the Kennedy Administration to frame civil rights as a moral issue, and published *The Fire Next Time*, which cemented Baldwin's reputation as a leading authority on the black American experience and eloquent advocate for African American rights. He continued to write novels, including *Another Country* (1962), which contained bisexual characters and interracial romance; the 1965 production of his play *The Amen Corner* was the first Broadway play directed, produced, and performed by African Americans.

James Baldwin craved human companionship, and family was central to his life. In 1965, a family real estate corporation controlled by Baldwin purchased 137 West 71st Street, an 1890 row house that had been expanded and converted into a Modern-style small apartment building in 1961. Baldwin's permanent American residence from 1966 to his death in 1987, it would serve as Baldwin family "headquarters," housing his mother and two sisters and their children. According to

Baldwin's niece Aisha Karefa-Smart, whenever he arrived, "The energy and vitality at 137 elevated to a fever pitch as soon as he hit the door. Even before he arrived, the house was set ablaze with excitement and anticipation just by the mention of his name." Visitors to the Baldwin family included literary and artistic luminaries such as Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison—who briefly lived here with her two sons—Toni Cade Bambara, Amiri and Amina Baraka, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Rosa Guy, Paule Marshall, Louise Meriwether, and Max Roach. Baldwin's nephew Tejan, who lived in the building, inspired his only children's book, *Little Man, Little Man* (1976).

Although Baldwin primarily used his apartment at 137 West 71st Street as a pied à terre, he participated in many significant New York City events during his time here, including an appearance with Dr. King at Carnegie Hall just a few weeks before King's death. During his ownership of the building, Baldwin's novels and essay collections included *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), and *No Name in the Street* (1972). He also spoke publicly about his sexuality, including at a forum held by the gay anti-racism group Black and White Men Together (now Men of All Colors Together) at the Westbeth Artists' Complex in 1982. In 1986, he was awarded the French Legion of Honor and traveled to Russia to meet with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev regarding the prospect of world peace.

Following Baldwin's death in France in 1987, his body was returned to New York and his funeral, which included eulogies by Morrison, Angelou, and Amiri Baraka, was held at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. No. 137 West 71st Street remains an apartment building today, its appearance largely unchanged from the time of Baldwin's ownership. It is the city's most salient architectural reminder of his grounding in, and

lifelong connection to New York, whose people, as he recalled in his later years, "produced ... the central reality of my life."

Building Description

James Baldwin Residence

Description

The small apartment house at 137 West 71st Street is culturally significant as the final New York residence of the celebrated novelist, essayist, and civil rights activist James Baldwin from 1966 until his death in 1987. The current facade dates to a 1961 alteration by architect H. Russell Kenyon, who expanded an existing 1890 row house into a five-story apartment house with a sunken entrance and a Modern-style white-brick facade pushed forward to the lot line. The primary West 71st Street facade is the only facade visible from surrounding public thoroughfares. It is largely intact to its period of ownership and occupancy by Baldwin and his family, with changes since then mainly limited to door and window replacements. In addition to its status as an Individual Landmark, 137 West 71st Street is within the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, which was designated in 1990.

Main (South) Facade

The historic main (south) facade is divided into two asymmetric bays and is faced in white brick. Set within a polished granite surround, the sunken main entrance is accessed by terrazzo steps with flanking decorative iron railings. The narrower western bay has window openings at the second through fifth stories; the wider eastern bay has large picture window openings at all stories. Historic features of this facade also include continuous stone or concrete window sills, openings for through-wall air conditioners beneath the east bay window openings,

and a shallow planting bed in front of the building with a possibly historic iron railing. Colonial-style light fixtures over the main entrance appear in the 1990 Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District designation photograph and may date from Baldwin's ownership of the building.

Alterations since period associated with James Baldwin:

Replacement main-entrance door with sidelights; replacement address numerals on main-entrance surround; conduit adjacent to first-story window opening; replacement windows at second through fifth stories of western bay (historically two-over-two metal windows with horizontal muntins); replacement windows at first through fifth stories of eastern bay (historically tripartite windows with single-pane central sash flanked by two-over-two double-hung sashes with horizontal muntins); terracotta coping replaced.

History and Significance

James Baldwin Residence

James Baldwin's Early Years in New York¹

The iconic American novelist, essayist, and civil rights advocate James Baldwin was shaped by his early experiences in New York City. He was born in Harlem Hospital on August 2, 1924 to Berdis Jones, a native of Maryland's Eastern Shore who came to New York by way of Philadelphia in the 1920s. When he was two years old, his mother married David Baldwin, a minister and laborer in a soda factory. During James' childhood, the family resided in at least two Harlem buildings, at 7 East 131st Street (in 1930) and at 2171 Fifth Avenue near 136th Street (in 1940), both of which have been demolished.² Berdis, who would have eight children with David, instilled in young James a "love that ... was to emerge as the central idea in a personal ideology that was to inform his later life," according to Baldwin's longtime friend and biographer David Leeming. "I don't know what will happen to you in life," she told James. "I do know that you have brothers and sisters. You must treat everyone the way I hope others will treat you when you are away from me, the way you hope others will treat your brothers and sisters when you are far from them."³

Baldwin was raised in wrenching poverty. As a child, he would climb his favorite hill in nearby Central Park and daydream about his future. Small of frame and weakened by malnutrition, he was not expected to live past the age of five, but in 1929, he started school at P.S. 24 on East 128th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues. Most of the school's students were African American, and it was led by the pioneering black principal Gertrude E.

Ayer, of whom Baldwin later recalled, "I loved and feared the lady—for she really was a lady, and a great one—with that trembling passion that only 12-year-olds could feel."⁴ Ayer quickly recognized Baldwin's remarkable intelligence and gift for writing.

By fifth grade, Baldwin had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* multiple times.⁵ On the encouragement of his teachers, James began visiting the nearby 135th Street branch library (Charles F. McKim of McKim, Mead & White, 1904-05, a designated New York City Landmark), which housed the New York Public Library's Division of Negro Literature, History and Prints—now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. As Baldwin later recalled of this time,

You think that your pain and heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world. But then you read. It was books that taught me. The things that tormented me the most were the things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive. I went to the 135th Street Library at least three or four times a week. And I read everything there, every single book in that library. In some blind and instinctive way, I knew that what was happening in those books was also happening all around me. And I was trying to make a connection between the books and the life I saw and the life I lived.⁶

At P.S. 24, Baldwin met a key early influence, Orilla Miller. Known to her friends as "Bill," Miller was an Ohio native who settled with her sister Henrietta on 124th Street by the mid-1930s. Baldwin later recalled Bill as "a young white schoolteacher ... very important to me" whom he "loved ... absolutely, with a child's love."⁷ Both Bill and Henrietta, and

Bill's husband Evan Winfield, were active in the economic and social justice movements, fighting for workers' rights and against racism and anti-Semitism. In 1934, Bill got a part-time teaching position through the New Deal's Federal Theatre Project, where she mentored young people in the dramatic arts in settlement houses and public schools throughout the city, including P.S. 24. At the urging of Principal Ayer, Bill took a special interest in Baldwin, and she, Henrietta, and Bill's husband Evan Winfield began bringing him along to plays, movies, museums, and other cultural venues. Among Baldwin's favorite experiences with them was seeing the 1935 movie version of *A Tale of Two Cities*—one of young James' favorite books—as well as the Federal Theatre Project production of *Macbeth*, performed in Harlem with an all-black cast directed by Orson Welles. Bill, Henrietta, and Evan Winfield provided Baldwin's first salient counterexample to the racism he encountered every day. As he reflected in 1976,

...the difference between Miss Miller and other white people, white people as they lived in my imagination, and also as they were in life, had to have a profound and bewildering effect on my mind.... From Miss Miller, I began to suspect that white people did not act as they did because they were white, but for some other reason, and I began to try to locate and understand the reason.⁸

After P.S. 24, Baldwin went on to Frederick Douglass Junior High School, where he came under the tutelage of Countee Cullen, the famed Harlem Renaissance poet who was then teaching there, and Herman W. "Bill" Porter, a Harvard graduate who served as faculty advisor of the school's literary magazine. Both, in Leeming's words, "had used their

intellects to confront the nemesis of racism ... and they welcomed Jimmy as a comrade who would do the same."⁹ Cullen, who taught French classes at Douglass and had visited France, instilled in Baldwin a desire to travel there, and "pointed a way around the mentality of despair and proved that many roads out of the ghetto were possible."¹⁰ Porter made Baldwin the magazine's editor-in-chief—providing the first public outlet for his work—and introduced him to the 42nd Street Library, which would become Baldwin's "haven."¹¹ By this time, Baldwin had demonstrated a gift for preaching and was doing so in several Harlem churches, which was crucial in honing his rhetorical skills.

As Baldwin's graduation from Douglass approached, Cullen recommended applying to DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, which he entered in 1938. Clinton was a boys-only institution with a largely Jewish student body whose progressive political views were similar to Bill Miller's. "More interested in Jimmy Baldwin's talent than his race," Leeming explains of his classmates, "they admired him for his writing, as most high school students admire their peers for their athletic achievements."¹² Baldwin's student colleagues on *The Magpie*, Clinton's literary magazine, included his close friends Richard Avedon, with whom he would collaborate on the book *Nothing Personal* in 1964, and Emile Capouya, later the publisher of *The Nation* magazine.

In high school, Baldwin also had his first serious romantic relationship, with a much older man. With this relationship, Baldwin later recalled, "all of the American categories of male and female, straight or not, black or white, were shattered, thank heaven, very early in my life. Not without anguish, certainly; but once you have discerned the meaning of a label, it may seem to define you for others, but it does not have the power to define you to yourself."¹³ The experience convinced Baldwin that he would

have to be true to himself to achieve success and lasting fulfillment. He left the ministry, exacerbating an already contentious relationship with his stepfather, who disapproved of Baldwin's white friends and his secular interests of theater, writing, movies, and art.

James Baldwin in Greenwich Village¹⁴

In 1940, Baldwin's friend Emile Capouya helped open the next chapter of his life when he recommended that Baldwin, then 16, meet a friend of his, the painter Beauford Delaney, at his home and studio in the Village. Active in the Harlem Renaissance, Delaney had painted many African American luminaries of the time including Louis Armstrong, W.E.B. DuBois, Duke Ellington, and Ethel Waters. In James, Delaney "saw a kindred spirit Jimmy was not yet fully aware of his homosexuality or the demands of his vocation, and Beauford, himself a homosexual, a minister's son, and an artist, was there, as a father in art, to help this younger version of himself through a crucial passage."¹⁵ Delaney introduced Baldwin to jazz and the blues as well as the artists and musicians within his social circle. Baldwin found inspiration in Delaney as the first self-supporting African American artist he had ever met, and the two would remain lifelong friends.

Following his high school graduation in 1942, Baldwin briefly worked in a defense plant in New Jersey before returning to his family in Harlem. He worked in a meatpacking plant followed by stints as a dishwasher and elevator attendant. After the death of his stepfather in 1943, he felt increasingly trapped in Harlem and felt compelled to move to Greenwich Village. "I had to jump then," Baldwin later said, "or I would quite simply have died."¹⁶ He was drawn to the Village not only by Delaney's presence there but by its reputation as a tolerant bohemian enclave, unconventional, artistic, and

welcoming of outsiders.

The Village was not as accepting as he had hoped. In an essay written shortly before his death, Baldwin remembered being subjected to anti-gay slurs "on every street corner" and feeling like "the youngest, the most visible, and the most vulnerable" of the few African Americans there.¹⁷ He did find camaraderie at the Calypso Restaurant, where he was hired by owner Connie Williams, an immigrant from Trinidad, to join the Calypso's young, creative, and racially and sexually diverse wait staff. Williams' customers were a varied group of performers, artists, writers, and thinkers including Marlon Brando, Eartha Kitt, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, Burt Lancaster, Paul Robeson, and Malcolm X, who were captivated by Baldwin's arguments and rhetorical skills as he held forth in the restaurant on various topics. Many would remain lifelong friends as well as allies, years later, in the civil rights movement. In the Village, Baldwin also encountered the Beat Generation writers Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac and had relationships with both men and women.

While he was there, Baldwin began working on what would become his breakthrough novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. An acquaintance who had heard him read a portion of it introduced him to Richard Wright, who was then living in Brooklyn. Wright read a portion of the manuscript and told Baldwin to contact his editor at Harper & Brothers, who recommended him for a fellowship. This led to Baldwin's friendship with Harper's president, Frank S. MacGregor, and to his integrating the popular Village restaurant the San Remo, which had previously barred him. After entering the restaurant one night with MacGregor, Baldwin later explained,

...they seated us and we were served. I went back to MacGregor's house for a drink and then went straight back to the San Remo, sitting on a bar stool in the window. The San

Remo thus began to attract a varied clientele.... As for the people who ran and worked at the San Remo, they never bothered me again. But the Village was full of white tourists, and one night, when a mob gathered before the San Remo, demanding that I come out, the owners closed the joint and turned the lights out and we sat in the back room ... until they judged it safe to drive me home.... They had fought me very hard to prevent this moment, but perhaps we were all much relieved to get beyond the obscenity of color.¹⁸

Although he began writing book reviews for *The Nation* and *The New Leader*, as well as a short story published in *Commentary*, Baldwin was struggling to finish his novel. Following the suicide of a close friend, Baldwin's mood darkened. In New York, Baldwin feared that "My luck was running out. I was going to jail, I was going to kill somebody or be killed."¹⁹ After winning a Rosenwald Fellowship, Baldwin used the prize money to move to Paris, where he landed, in November of 1948, with \$40 in his pocket.

Baldwin in Europe and America²⁰

"First thing I learned in Paris was that you don't ever leave home. You take your home with you."
—James Baldwin

Europe gave James Baldwin the distance he needed to turn his life experiences into great fiction. Finished in an isolated Swiss town in 1952 with his lover, Lucien Happersberger, by his side, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* was released by the New York publishing house of Alfred A. Knopf the following year. Although initially only a modest success, this largely autobiographical story about a young African American boy in 1930s Harlem, his loving mother,

and his strict stepfather has achieved canonical status and is widely read by American students today. Writing it was a liberating experience. "*Mountain* is the book I had to write if I was ever going to write anything else," Baldwin explained many years later. "I had to deal with what hurt me the most. I had to deal, above all, with my father. He was my model; I learned a lot from him. Nobody's frightened me since."²¹

Baldwin followed it with *Giovanni's Room*, which revolved around a young, white, bisexual American man traveling in France. Knopf passed on the book while its publishing director William Cole was on vacation, to his deep dismay. "Two editors who had worked on *Go Tell It* read it and I guess they were scared," Cole recalled in the 1989 documentary *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket*. "Homosexuality was the theme and that was not on the books in those days. There was very little written about homosexuality—certainly very few novels—and they turned it down."²² It was soon picked up by New York's Dial Press, which would go on to publish many more of Baldwin's works. Written at a time when same-sex attraction was diagnosed as a psychiatric disorder, as it would continue to be into the 1970s, *Giovanni's Room* was a work of extraordinary courage; in exalting love while disdaining society's traditional distinctions regarding race and sexual orientation, it exemplified Baldwin's worldview.²³ So central is the book to LGBT literature that one of the country's earliest gay bookstores, established in Philadelphia in 1973, is named *Giovanni's Room*.

By the time *Giovanni's Room* hit bookstores in 1956, Baldwin was emerging as a leading voice on the plight of black Americans and critic of American race relations following the publication of his essay collection *Notes of a Native Son* in 1955. An anthology of pieces written for various magazines over the previous seven years, its title essay

constituted a “James Baldwin manifesto,” according to David Leeming, touching on themes including “the search for identity in a world that because of its racial myths cannot recognize reality,” as well as “the loneliness of the artist’s quest” and “the urgent necessity of love.”²⁴ Baldwin briefly lived in an apartment on Gay Street during 1954 and 1955 when his first play, *The Amen Corner*, was staged at Howard University in Washington. Although he returned to Paris at the end of that year, he remained keenly focused on developments in the nascent Civil Rights movement. White hostility toward African Americans was intensifying following the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawing school segregation; 1955 saw the lynching of Emmett Till in Mississippi and the start of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, sparked by Rosa Parks’ defiance and led by the 26-year-old minister Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Baldwin as a Civil Rights Icon²⁵

Despite his fears of traveling in the American South, Baldwin journeyed there for the first time in the fall of 1957 with the backing of *Harper’s* and the *Partisan Review*. He first met Dr. King in Montgomery in September of 1957, where he saw him preach and was pleased to hear him express Baldwin’s own belief that bigotry was a sickness more harmful to the bigot than to the object of his hatred. Baldwin also traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas, where African American students, facing violent opposition, were integrating Central High School under the watch of National Guard troops. Baldwin’s travels in the South did not temper his views of Northern society. In “Fifth Avenue Uptown: A Letter from Harlem,” published in *Esquire* magazine in 1960, Baldwin wrote:

Northerners indulge in an extremely dangerous luxury. They seem to feel that

because they fought on the right side during the Civil War, and won, that they have the right merely to deplore what is going on in the South, without taking any responsibility for it; and they can ignore what is happening in Northern cities because what is happening in Little Rock or Birmingham is worse.... The world has never lacked for horrifying examples; but I do not believe that these examples are meant to be used as justification for our own crimes. This perpetual justification empties the heart of all human feeling. The emptier our hearts become, the greater will be our crimes.²⁶

His frequent travels between France and the U.S. and his extended stays in New York, which included work on stage productions with Elia Kazan, led Baldwin to rent a pied à terre at 81 Horatio Street (within the Greenwich Village Historic District) at the end of 1957.²⁷ During a second trip south in 1960, Baldwin again interviewed Dr. King and chronicled the intensifying student movement. His 1961 essay collection, *Nobody Knows My Name*—which included the title essay and “The Hard Kind of Courage,” both based on his initial trip to the South, as well as “Fifth Avenue Uptown”—was an immediate best-seller, establishing Baldwin as one of the country’s most eloquent and widely read writers on civil rights. In October of 1961, an extensive profile, “The Angriest Young Man,” appeared in *Ebony* magazine.

Baldwin visited Africa for the first time with his sister Gloria in 1962 and returned to the American South in early 1963. In Mississippi, he met James Meredith, and Medgar Evers just a few months before Evers’ assassination. Baldwin lectured throughout the region on behalf of the Congress of Racial Equality. A lavishly photographed account of Baldwin’s Experiences, “At a Crucial Time a Negro

Talks Tough,” appeared in the May 24, 1963 edition of *Life* magazine. One week earlier, he had graced the cover of a *Time* magazine issue addressing “The Negro’s Push for Equality.”

That month, with Bull Connor’s officers brutalizing black protesters in Birmingham with attack dogs and fire hoses, Baldwin sent Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy a telegram upbraiding his brother’s administration for its tepid response. RFK asked Baldwin to convene a group of prominent African Americans to discuss the issue at RFK’s Central Park South apartment. Participants in the May 24 meeting would include Harry Belafonte, City College psychology professor Dr. Kenneth Clark, Lorraine Hansberry, Lena Horne, attorney and King advisor Clarence Benjamin Jones, and Jerome Smith, a young man permanently injured by assailants during the Freedom Rides.²⁸ Like other participants, Baldwin left the meeting frustrated with Kennedy, as he soon explained in the hour-long television special, “The Negro and the American Promise,” which consisted of extended, in-depth interviews between Dr. Clark and Malcolm X, Dr. King, and Baldwin:

I think that one has got to find some way of putting the present administration of this country on the spot. One has got to force somehow from Washington a moral commitment not to the Negro people but to the life of this country.... It doesn’t matter any longer ... what you do to me.... The problem now is, How are you going to save yourselves?²⁹

The *New York Times* praised Baldwin’s appearance, calling it “a television experience that seared the conscience” by placing the plight of black Americans “squarely in the laps of all Americans.”³⁰ Two weeks later, President John F. Kennedy, in a televised address proposing the legislation that would become

the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, framed segregation and racial discrimination for the first time as “a moral crisis,” one that Americans faced “in every city in the North as well as the South.”³¹

In August of 1963, Baldwin attended the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, though he was not allowed to speak; Baldwin suspected that, like the march’s chief organizer Bayard Rustin, this was because he was gay. That year also saw the publication of his book *The Fire Next Time*, which contained two essays originally published as “A Letter to my Nephew” in *Progressive* magazine, and as “Letter from a Region in my Mind” in *The New Yorker*. It was wildly popular, remaining near the top of the best-seller list for almost a year, and cementing Baldwin’s reputation as a leading authority on the black American experience and forceful advocate for African American rights. In February of 1965, he debated William F. Buckley Jr. at Cambridge University, arguing “The American Dream is at the expense of the American Negro,” and won; three days later, he learned, in London, of Malcolm X’s assassination. Baldwin returned to the United States for Malcolm’s funeral and on March 25 participated in the Selma-to-Montgomery march for voting rights led by Dr. King.

During this period, Baldwin continued to publish fiction, including the best-selling novel *Another Country* (1962), which contained bisexual characters and interracial romance; the play *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964); and the short story collection *Going to Meet the Man* (1965). The 1965 production of Baldwin’s *The Amen Corner* at the Ethel Barrymore Theater, produced by Maria Cole, was the first Broadway play directed, produced, and performed by African Americans.³²

137 West 71st Street

Manhattan’s Upper West Side developed primarily as a residential neighborhood over a roughly 50-year

period from the 1880s to the 1930s. No. 137 West 71st Street was constructed as one of four four-story-and-basement row houses designed by Thom & Wilson in the Renaissance Revival style and built in 1890.³³ It was the last of the four to survive; by the late 1930s, the other three had been demolished for large apartment buildings. Early in its history, 137 West 71st Street was occupied by a wealthy white family headed by attorney Frank Acer. The Acer household included Frank's wife Hattie, three daughters, and in 1910, four black women born in the Caribbean, Indiana, and South Carolina who were the Acers' servants.³⁴

Jack Mandel and Elias Gold purchased the row house in July of 1961 and began work on expanding it into an apartment house.³⁵ The architect of this alteration, H. Russell Kenyon, was born in New York in 1888 and lived with his family in East Harlem as a young man.³⁶ He was working as an architect by his early 20s, receiving his earliest known commission in 1910 for alterations to a Children's Aid Society building.³⁷ Kenyon established an office in Midtown Manhattan by 1913 and moved his family to Westchester County by 1922.³⁸ The following year, he designed a "modern fireproof apartment house" for the seaside town of Avon, New Jersey.³⁹ Kenyon seems to have been most active from the late 1940s to late 1950s and to have mostly designed alterations, including some on the City College campus and at the City College School of Business (now Baruch College) near Gramercy Park. His few new buildings in New York City included five single-story garages built in Greenwich Village and Harlem between 1948 and 1958, and a single-family house on Delafield Avenue in the Bronx constructed in 1950.⁴⁰

The alterations to 137 West 71st Street were part of a trend on the Upper West Side in which building owners expanded and converted former row houses into small apartment buildings with new

facades that projected a modern image and, they hoped, brought higher-paying tenants. Kenyon removed the house's stoop and brought its front wall forward to align with those of its neighboring apartment houses. Likely inspired by the influential, ultra-luxurious Manhattan House (Mayer & Whittlesey and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1947-51, a designated New York City Landmark) on the Upper East Side, he sheathed its facade in white brick and gave it picture windows and asymmetric fenestration.⁴¹ As was typical of the time, the facade lacks traditional architectural ornament. Few changes have been made to the facade since the early 1960s, other than the replacement of its entrance door and window sashes and the installation, within the basement opening, of glass block.

James Baldwin and His Family at 137 West 71st Street⁴²

James Baldwin craved human companionship, and family was central to his life. As a child growing up in Harlem, he spent much of his time looking after his younger brothers and sisters, changing their diapers, bathing them, putting them to bed, and walking them over the Harlem River into the Bronx to purchase discounted bread from the factory. His mother was an especially strong influence. In her frequent letters to him, "Mrs. Baldwin worried about her son's drinking, his smoking, his staying up late," according to David Leeming. "But her concerns went much deeper than his physical welfare. She was a constant reminder to him of the necessity of 'keeping the faith,' of not drifting onto the all-too-tempting road of racial or personal hatred."⁴³ Baldwin felt conflicted for turning attention toward himself and his career, and away from his family and their needs, when he left them as a young man to move to Greenwich Village and soon afterward, Paris. In 1959, while working on a stage version of *Giovanni's Room* on isolated Fire Island, Baldwin

thought of his family and the need to place himself on firmer financial footing with the hope, one day, of providing a home for his mother and others close to him.⁴⁴

Five years later, Baldwin and other family members chartered the El-Rhon Corporation.⁴⁵ James controlled the company, owning a majority of its shares; the rest were divided among his brothers and sisters, with Gloria Karefa-Smart, who was also his personal secretary, serving as company president. On February 4, 1965, El-Rhon purchased 137 West 71st Street from Jack Mandel and in its first two years of ownership, Baldwin spent nearly \$50,000 on the building, which contained 12 apartments. Baldwin moved there from his former residence at 470 West End Avenue by the fall of 1966.⁴⁶ His apartment was at the rear of the first floor, and his mother and two sisters, Gloria and Paula, occupied three other units. The rest of the apartments were rented to unrelated tenants.⁴⁷ Factoring into Baldwin's decision to purchase on the Upper West Side may have been its supplanting, during the 1960s, of Greenwich Village as the residential area of choice for writers and those in the publishing field. "In the 50 blocks of the west bank of the park, a bit of casual research will turn up enough well-known writing names to fill an agate-type column of the telephone book," the *New York Times* reported in 1969.⁴⁸

James Baldwin considered himself a "transatlantic commuter" who split his time between the U.S. and the rest of the world.⁴⁹ Even while in the U.S., he was frequently traveling the country, teaching, lecturing, and working on projects such as the screenplay for an unrealized Malcolm X film that took him to California in 1968. Although 137 West 71st Street functioned primarily as a pied à terre, it was his permanent American home for the last two decades of his life and the home of close family members, who considered it Baldwin "headquarters." In 2013, Gloria's daughter Aisha Karefa-Smart, who

grew up in the building, remembered James Baldwin's frequent visits:

Whenever Uncle Jimmy came home to ... 137 West 71st Street ... my grandmother would smile widely and say: 'Well, the prodigal son has returned!' ... The energy and vitality at 137 elevated to a fever pitch as soon as he hit the door. Even before he arrived, the house was set ablaze with excitement and anticipation just by the mention of his name. The refrain 'Jimmy's coming!' could be heard all throughout the house as my grandmother, my aunt Paula, and my mother Gloria would run up and down the stairs of the small, white-brick ... apartment building, preparing for the onslaught of visitors.... Sometimes strangers would simply follow Uncle Jimmy home from whatever speaking engagement or appearance he had.

Uncle Jimmy's being home meant that a throng of extraordinary people would stop by to pay homage and to simply be in his presence. The word spread like wildfire; it was as if a telegram, a village drumbeat, or a trumpet fanfare announced his arrival. Somehow folks just knew: Jimmy was home....

People bore witness to my uncle, sometimes crying tears of deep gratitude, explaining the impact his work had on them. How his writing had saved their lives, or had given them the courage to come out to their family.⁵⁰

"My uncle's sexuality was never openly discussed at home," Karefa-Smart recalled. "Uncle Jimmy and all

of his friends, a mixture of artists, musicians, bohemians, activists, and literary groupies, were always lovingly accepted and welcomed with open arms....”⁵¹ Visitors came from far away and much closer, including the Baldwins’ old block of 131st Street between Fifth and Lenox Avenues. Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison—who briefly lived in the building with her two sons—were frequent visitors, as were Toni Cade Bambara, Amiri and Amina Baraka, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Rosa Guy, Paule Marshall, Louise Meriwether, Max Roach, and Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, according to Karefa-Smart:

Imagine all of these famous writers, artists, and musicians in your grandmother’s living room—in my own living room—debating the state of black America and race relations.... There was never a dull moment. They talked about feminism, race, Africa, poverty, the Vietnam War, black male and female relationships, black men and white women, the FBI and whether they were listening.⁵²

James Baldwin, like other black artists and activists of the period, was indeed a target of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which had compiled an extensive dossier on him by the time he moved here. Along with his political activism, Baldwin drew the Bureau’s attention for his disparaging public statements about its director J. Edgar Hoover, as well as for statements like this from a 1963 magazine interview: “I don’t know what homosexual means anymore and Americans don’t either.... If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy. The fact that Americans consider it a disease says a lot more about them than it says about homosexuality.”⁵³ Undercover agents repeatedly visited 137 West 71st Street in the late 1960s to verify Baldwin’s

whereabouts, confirming them at one point with a woman puzzlingly identified in agency documents as his wife.⁵⁴

Baldwin in New York City, 1966 to 1987

During James Baldwin’s ownership of 137 West 71st Street, he remained politically and socially active in New York City. Soon after moving into the building, he drafted a petition on behalf of the “Harlem Six,” a group of young black men convicted of murder who, their supporters contended, had been falsely accused and denied their constitutional rights; in November of 1966, Baldwin hosted a ceremony at Columbia University, where his mother and the mothers of the convicted men signed the petition.⁵⁵ In the following year, he, Ossie Davis, and Richie Havens hosted a benefit for the Harlem Six in Greenwich Village.⁵⁶ Also in 1967, Baldwin, Davis, Alex Haley, Ralph Ellison, and the New York Urban League drew attention to the deteriorated state of the Schomburg Collection and the need for its conservation.⁵⁷ Baldwin spoke at a six-hour memorial to Malcolm X at I.S. 201 in Harlem in February of 1968, and the following month, just a few weeks before Martin Luther King’s assassination, he appeared with Dr. King during a celebration of W.E.B. DuBois’ 100th birthday at Carnegie Hall.⁵⁸ In June, Baldwin made a memorable appearance in New York on the Dick Cavett Show that was later excerpted in the Raoul Peck documentary on Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro*.⁵⁹ In early 1969, he attended the opening night performance of *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, the theatrical tribute to his friend Lorraine Hansberry, who had died in 1965.⁶⁰

The book *Rap on Race* (1971), which consisted of conversations between Baldwin and the anthropologist Margaret Mead, was recorded in New York in 1970. In 1972, the *New York Times* interviewed him, at 137 West 71st Street, for the piece “For James Baldwin, a Rap on Baldwin”; the

article included a photo of him in the building's rear yard.⁶¹ The following year, as part of the Newport Jazz Festival-New York, Baldwin wrote, directed, and narrated "The Hallelujah Chorus—the Life and Times of Ray Charles," starring Charles and his band as well as actors Cicely Tyson and David Moses, at Carnegie Hall.⁶² In 1974, he received the Cathedral of St. John the Divine's Centennial Medal recognizing "the artist as prophet," which had previously been bestowed upon Tennessee Williams and Martha Graham.⁶³

Although set in Harlem, Baldwin's only children's book, published in 1976, was inspired by another resident of 137 West 71st Street, Aisha Karefa-Smart's brother Tejan, known to friends and family as TJ. According to Aisha:

My uncle had a deep love for his family and made all of us feel incredibly special.... TJ always used to ask my uncle the same question every time he saw him: 'Uncle Jimmy, when are you going to write a book about me?' Everyone would laugh and Uncle Jimmy would pick TJ up and swing him around playfully just like all of my other uncles and say, 'I am working on it!' Sure enough, a box arrived from Dial Press one Thanksgiving, filled with copies of ... *Little Man, Little Man*—written for my brother TJ.⁶⁴

Baldwin spent much of 1976 at home on 71st Street. In 1978, he received the Martin Luther King Memorial Medal from City College of New York, presented during the college's annual Langston Hughes Festival.⁶⁵

Although James Baldwin was a pioneer in writing fiction with gay and bisexual protagonists, it was not until late in his life that he spoke openly and publicly about his own sexuality. In 1982, he talked

about his experiences as a gay African American man at a forum held by the gay anti-racism group Black and White Men Together (now Men of All Colors Together) at the LGBT synagogue Beit Simchat Torah in the Westbeth Artists' Housing Complex. In 1984, as part of a special section in the *Village Voice* commemorating the 15th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, Baldwin spoke to the *Voice*'s Richard Goldstein, stating a recurring motif of his writing: "Loving anybody and being loved by anybody is a tremendous danger, a tremendous responsibility. Loving of children, raising of children. The terrors homosexuals go through in this society would not be so great if the society itself did not go through so many terrors which it doesn't want to admit."⁶⁶

During his ownership of 137 West 71st Street, Baldwin continued to write and publish fiction and non-fiction, including the novels *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), and *Just Above My Head* (1979); the essay collections *No Name in the Street* (1972), *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), and *The Price of the Ticket* (1985); and the poetry collection *Jimmy's Blues* (1983). In 1986, he was awarded the French Legion of Honor by President François Mitterrand and traveled to Russia with Arthur Miller to discuss the prospect of world peace with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Shortly before his death, he told his friend David Leeming:

In principle I could stay [in Europe] and never go back to Harlem and New York City again. I think that's what I'd like to do, in a way. But I can't do it. I can't do it because if I were to avoid the journey back to America I'd be avoiding everything—the people who have produced me (both black and white), the central reality of my life. And once you do that I don't know what you can write

about or what you can write out of. To avoid the journey back is to avoid the Self, to avoid ‘life.’”⁶⁷

James Baldwin died in December of 1987 at his home in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France. His body was returned to New York, and following his funeral at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, which included eulogies by Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Amiri Baraka, he was buried in Ferncliff Cemetery in Westchester County. Baldwin’s family sold 137 West 71st Street in 1994, and it remains an apartment house today. It is the most significant surviving building in the United States associated with James Baldwin.

Conclusion

Baldwin’s influence on other fiction writers, essayists, and public intellectuals during his lifetime and continuing to today is well-known. Just as important was his effect on ordinary Americans, who saw their lives reflected in his novels, or were stirred to action by his essays, or had their eyes opened to the discriminatory and disparaging treatment of their fellow citizens simply because of the color of their skin or who they loved. Today, Baldwin’s papers reside at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, just a few steps away from the 135th Street Library that was his childhood sanctuary. Although Baldwin corresponded with dozens of notable writers and civil rights figures, some of the most affecting letters in this collection are those he received from fans, typed or written out in longhand on good stationery and telling Baldwin what he meant to them.

In one of these, written around 1980, a white woman from the Midwest recounted that she had read *Another Country* at the age of 14—secretly because her parents told her it was “dirty.” She explained, “I think it was probably one of the first

adult books I read from cover to cover. I couldn’t put it down and after I was through I began wondering about my parents because I hadn’t thought it ‘dirty’ at all but beautiful.... From then I read anything I could get my hands on that you had written.” Inspired by him, she became active in the civil rights movement and began teaching in a predominantly black neighborhood, where she hoped that “I may have another James Baldwin or Martin Luther King or W.E.B. DuBois in my room.” She concluded:

Your work also had another effect on my life and that was regarding my attitude toward homosexuality. I think that it is very important that the first exposure I had to it was in your writing. In your books it is presented in such a tender way—the people involved truly loving and caring about each other. Some of the most beautiful scenes in your books are between homosexual lovers. Because of that exposure homosexuals are not some vague group of people, they are Eric and Crunch, and Giovanni. To criticize them would be to criticize love itself.⁶⁸

Endnotes

¹ The primary source for this section is David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1994), 3-31.

² United States Census (New York City, New York County, New York) , 1930 and 1940.

³ Leeming, 9.

⁴ Leeming, 13.

⁵ Baldwin would later dismiss the “self-righteous, virtuous sentimentality” of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in one of his early essays, “Everybody’s Protest Novel.”

⁶ Karen Thorsen, Director, *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (Maysles Films and PBS/American Masters, 1989).

⁷ Leeming, 14.

⁸ James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (New York: Dial Press, 1976), 5.

⁹ Leeming, 21-22.

¹⁰ Leeming, 22.

¹¹ Leeming, 42.

¹² Leeming, 26.

¹³ James Baldwin, “Here Be Dragons,” in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948-1985* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985).

¹⁴ The Primary Source for this section is Leeming, 32-55.

¹⁵ Leeming, 33.

¹⁶ Leeming, 43.

¹⁷ Baldwin, “Here Be Dragons.”

¹⁸ Baldwin, “Here Be Dragons.”

¹⁹ Jordan Elgrably, “James Baldwin, the Art of Fiction No. 78,” *Paris Review* (Spring 1984), accessed online on May 17, 2019 at www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2994/james-baldwin-the-art-of-fiction-no-78-james-baldwin.

²⁰ The primary source for this section is Leeming, 56-134.

²¹ Leslie Bennetts, “James Baldwin Reflects on ‘Go Tell It’ PBS Film,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1985, C17.

²² Thorsen.

²³ “Psychiatrists, in a Shift, Declare Homosexuality No Mental Illness,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1973, 1.

²⁴ Leeming, 100.

²⁵ The primary source for this section is Leeming, 135-252.

²⁶ James Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue Uptown,” *Esquire* (July 1960), accessed online on May 17, 2019 at www.esquire.com/news-politics/a3638/fifth-avenue-uptown/.

²⁷ In 2015, a plaque was installed at 81 Horatio Street commemorating Baldwin’s connection with the building. See Danielle Tcholakian, “James Baldwin Historic Plaque to Be Unveiled at 81 Horatio Street,” *DNAinfo.com*, October 6, 2015, accessed on May 17, 2019 at www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20151006/west-village/james-baldwin-historic-plaque-be-unveiled-at-81-horatio-st/.

²⁸ Dr. Clark and his wife Dr. Mamie Clark, who earned her Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University, founded the Northside Center for Child Development. Their experiments in which African American children demonstrated preferences for white dolls over black dolls provided evidence of the psychologically damaging effects of segregation critical to the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

²⁹ Henry Morgenthau III, Producer, “The Negro and the American Promise” (WGBH, 1963), accessed online on May 17, 2019 at <https://www.pbs.org/video/american-experience-james-baldwin-from-the-negro-and-the-american-promise/>.

³⁰ Jack Gould, “T.V.: Challenge on Racism,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1963, 29.

³¹ John F. Kennedy, “Excerpt from a Report to the American People on Civil Rights, 11 June 1963,” accessed online on May 17, 2019 at www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/historic-speeches/televised-address-to-the-nation-on-civil-rights.

³² “Negro-Acted, Staffed, Produced, Directed,” *New York Amsterdam News*, May 15, 1965, 20.

³³ LPC, *Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District Designation Report (LP-1647)*, 263.

³⁴ United States Census (New York City, New York County, New York) , 1900 and 1910.

³⁵ New York County, Office of the Register, Conveyance

Liber 5156, 139 (July 12, 1961).

³⁶ United States Census (New York City, New York County, New York), 1910.

³⁷ “Roof Garden for Boys’ Hotel,” *New York Times*, March 16, 1910, 15.

³⁸ James Ward, *Architects in Practice in New York City 1900-1940* (Union, New Jersey: J&D Associates, 1989), 42; *Trow’s General Directory of New York City* (New York: R.L. Polk & Co., 1922), 1022.

³⁹ “To Build at Avon,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1923, RE1.

⁴⁰ See “Building Plans Filed” in the *New York Times* of the following dates and pages: June 26, 1947, 40; March 17, 1948, 44; May 4, 1946, 25; November 8, 1949, 47; December 2, 1948, 52; June 25, 1949, 24; January 24, 1950, 54; November 30, 1950, 68; November 1, 1951, 50; July 8, 1953, 43; June 8, 1954, 43; and January 16, 1954, 26. The five garages appear in a building permits search on the website of the Office for Metropolitan History (metrohistory.com).

⁴¹ LPC, *Manhattan House Designation Report (LP-2246)* (New York: City of New York, 2007), prepared by Matthew A. Postal.

⁴² The primary sources for this section are Wanett Clyde and Amanda Davis, *Draft National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, James Baldwin Residence* (2019), 17-26; and Aisha Karefa-Smart, “Foreword: The Prodigal Son,” *African American Review* (Winter 2013), 559-561.

⁴³ Leeming, 10.

⁴⁴ Leeming, 162.

⁴⁵ Certificate of Incorporation for the State of New York, El Rhon Corp. (456445), September 24, 1964.

⁴⁶ An FBI memorandum dated October 17, 1966 stated that “on October 11, 1966, a source in a position to supply reliable information advised that James Arthur Baldwin had moved from Apartment 6, 470 West End Avenue, to 137 West 71st Street, New York City.” This document is from Baldwin’s declassified FBI file, which may be downloaded from <https://vault.fbi.gov/james-baldwin>.

⁴⁷ New York County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 5279, 486 (May 29, 1964). Michael D. Remer, Memorandum to File, James Baldwin Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Box 70, Folder 13.

⁴⁸ Lewis Nichols, “West Side Story,” *New York Times*,

March 30, 1969, BR8.

⁴⁹ Leeming, 197.

⁵⁰ Karefa-Smart, 559.

⁵¹ Karefa-Smart, 559.

⁵² Karefa-Smart, 560.

⁵³ According to a May 29, 1963 synopsis of Baldwin’s activities, Baldwin and others wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Herald Tribune* dated June 17, 1961 in which they said that “It is appalling that ... [Hoover] ... uses his enormous power and prestige to corroborate the blindest and basest instincts of the retaliatory mob.” Baldwin’s statement regarding homosexuality was reported in the same document as having been made in the May, 1963 issue of *Mademoiselle* (3 and 4).

⁵⁴ FBI memorandum, December 28, 1967.

⁵⁵ “Harlem 6 Moms Press Appeal,” *New York Amsterdam News*, June 24, 1967, 6; “Baldwin Opens Drive to Win New Death Trial for ‘Harlem Six,’” *New York World Journal Tribune*, November 12, 1966. Civil Rights attorney William Kunstler appealed and their convictions were overturned; one of the men was later convicted, but the others spent years in jail before being released in 1973. Among those signing the petition were Ossie Davis, Allen Ginsberg, Gunter Grass, Nat Hentoff, Bertrand Russell, and Pete Seeger. See “Georgia Justice for Harlem Six” (Advertisement), *New York Amsterdam News*, July 22, 1967, 22.

⁵⁶ “Baldwin Speaks for Harlem Six,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 12, 1967, 3.

⁵⁷ Cathy Aldridge, “Schomburg’s Irreplaceable Works Reach Critical State of Decay,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 8, 1967, 9.

⁵⁸ Sara Slack, “The Inside Story of the Malcolm X IS 201 Memorial,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 2, 1968, 1; “Remember Dubois,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 27, 1968, 3.

⁵⁹ Raoul Peck, Director, *I Am Not Your Negro* (Magnolia Pictures/Amazon Studios, 2016).

⁶⁰ Vivian Robinson, “Warm Eulogy Given to Lorraine Hansberry,” *New York Amsterdam News*, January 11, 1969, 19.

⁶¹ George Goodman, Jr., “For James Baldwin, a Rap on Baldwin,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1972, 38.

⁶² Leeming, 319.

⁶³ Leeming, 322.

⁶⁴ Karefa-Smart, 360.

⁶⁵ Leeming, 338.

⁶⁶ Richard Goldstein, “Go the Way Your Blood Beats: An Interview with James Baldwin,” *Village Voice*, June 26, 1984, accessed online on May 17, 2019 at <https://www.villagevoice.com/2018/06/22/james-baldwin-on-being-gay-in-america/>.

⁶⁷ Leeming, 256.

⁶⁸ Judith Hamilton to James Baldwin, c. 1980, James Baldwin Papers, Box 4, Folder 2.

Findings and Designation

James Baldwin Residence

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the James Baldwin Residence has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the James Baldwin Residence and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1143, Lot 19 as its Landmark Site.



James Baldwin Residence, 137 West 71st Street, Manhattan
Sarah Moses, LPC, 2019



James Baldwin Residence, entrance
Sarah Moses, LPC, 2019



James Baldwin Residence, Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District designation photograph
LPC, 1990

