

National Park Services Adds Frederick Law Olmsted's Staten Island House to National Register of Historic Places

On December 3, the National Park Service notified the New York State Historic Preservation Office that the historic Staten Island structure known as the "Olmsted-Beil House" was officially placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This listing acknowledges the historical significance of the structure, named in the Register as the "Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Farmhouse," to the entire nation.

The New York State Historic Preservation office submitted the National Register proposal in September after recognizing the Olmsted-Beil House as worthy of inclusion on the New York State Register of Historic Places. It was one of four National Register inclusions in New York State for the first week of December, but the only site in southern New York. The farmhouse, designated a New York City landmark in 1967, was once home to landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and to naturalist and American Museum of Natural History educator Carlton Beil.

The Olmsted-Beil House now joins over fifty Staten Island sites on the National Register, which was authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources. Less than ten sites have been added from Staten Island in the past decade.

The New York State Landmarks Conservancy's resident architectural historian and Manager of Special Projects Glen Umberger drafted the house's application for the New York State Register (and, ultimately, the National Register), and National Register Coordinator in the NYS Historic Preservation Office Kathleen LaFrank further prepared and presented the application. The Conservancy has been fundraising to make urgent structural repairs to the house before it is restored.

The New York State Historic Preservation Board unanimously recommended the Olmsted-Beil House for the State Registry on September 10. The house received support in its nomination from a range of individuals and groups, many associated with the Friends of Olmsted-Beil House (FOBH), a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, organized in 2018 by concerned neighbors and former residents of the farmhouse. The Friends of Olmsted-Beil House president, Eileen Monreale, and Board members Patricia Salmon and Tina Kaasmann-Dunn provided letters of support, as did Eloise Beil, Felicity Beil, and Carlotta DeFillo, the last residents of the house. Other support for the nomination came from the National Association for Olmsted Parks and the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, which owns the building and surrounding property as Olmsted-Beil House Park.

FOBH President Eileen Monreale said, "This is most welcome news, especially in light of the challenges of COVID-19 and this most difficult year for everyone. It's extraordinarily good news that the Olmsted-Beil House, already a New York City landmark, and listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We continue to envision a day when school trips can bring thousands of children each year to walk through this

house that holds the stories of 300+ years of our nation's history. This provides an opportunity and experience that books and lectures cannot provide."