

RALPH and ANN E. VAN WYCK MEAD HOUSE (later ISAAC T. HOPPER HOME),
110 Second Avenue, Manhattan

The grand 3-story (plus attic and basement) Greek Revival style rowhouse at No. 110 (originally No. 108) Second Avenue, in the East Village neighborhood of Manhattan, is the only survivor of a row of four such houses built c. 1838 for three brothers, Benjamin, Ralph, and Staats M. Mead. No. 108 (later 110) was officially conveyed in 1839 to the widow Margaret Robertson, although it was purchased by her son, the merchant and ship broker David H. Robertson, who resided here in 1839-44. Robertson declared bankruptcy in 1842, and this property was foreclosed and auctioned in 1844, and transferred to Ralph Mead. The proprietor of a wholesale grocery business since 1810, which became Ralph Mead & Co. in 1815, Mead (1789-1866) resided in this house from 1845 until around his retirement in 1859, along with his second wife, nee Ann E. Van Wyck, after their marriage in 1846. Early in their history, the Mead rowhouses on Second Avenue functioned as a family enclave. No. 112 (later 114) was the home (1843-58) of merchant Francis T. Luqueer, father-in-law of one of Ralph Mead's sons. No. 110 (later 112) was the earlier (1838-45) home of Ralph Mead. And No. 106 (later 108) was the home (1846-53) of Ralph's daughter, Harriet Mead, and Philip Jacob Arcularius Harper, the eldest son of James Harper, one of the founders and senior member of the publishing firm of Harper & Bros., and a mayor of New York. The 110 (originally No. 108) Second Avenue house remained in the ownership of the Mead family until 1870.



It was purchased in 1874 by the Women's Prison Association, which had been established in 1845 as the Female Department of the Prison Association of New York and chartered in 1853 under the new name. The Second Avenue facility was used by 1876 as a counseling center and short-term shelter for girls and women released from prison, and named the Isaac T. Hopper Home for the noted Quaker abolitionist and leading advocate of prison reform, Isaac Tatem Hopper (1771-1852). His daughter, Abigail Hopper Gibbons (1801-1893), who vigorously participated with her father and husband in the causes of abolition and prison reform, served for years as president of the Women's Prison Association.

No. 110 Second Avenue, a rare surviving house of the period when this section of Second Avenue was one of the most elite addresses in Manhattan in the early 19th century, is also a fine example of a grand Greek Revival style rowhouse, characterized by its machine-pressed red brickwork laid in stretcher bond; high stoop and areaway with wrought-iron fence; entrance with brownstone portico with Ionic fluted columns supporting an entablature, and Italianate style paneled double doors and transom; long parlor-level windows and cast-iron balcony; and denticulated cornice. Minimal later alterations include the molded lintels and corbeled sills (post-1890s), and enlargement of the attic windows (c. 1966-78). The house was previously heard at public hearing by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1966 and 1970.