

Inwood Hebrew Congregation

111 Vermilyea Avenue, New York, NY 10034

(Iglesia Avenista del 7mo Dia del Dyckman)

Lot 50' x 150' Building 45' x 123' 3 stories EMV \$846K

This is Manhattan's northernmost former shul, an unusual honor to bestow upon a building. The building, which held the Inwood Hebrew Congregation (IHC), managed to survive into the early years of the 2000s. It still resembles a synagogue in so many ways. The church that moved into the premises put up a few of their signs, tacked up an awning with the church's name, and removed a few (but only a few) items of Jewish importance. Throughout New York City, you can see houses of worship that have this mixed heritage appearance, this interfaith mingling of Jewish and Christian (and in a few instances, Jewish and other faiths) symbols. This Vermilyea Avenue ex-shul is a particularly fine example of this.

On the outside, IHC has an attractive mix of classical elements and more modern urban styling. There are four sets of twinned pilasters and a streamlined pediment at the roof. The Judaica that remains is very noticeable: two cast-stone Jewish stars, a simple Decalogue with Roman numerals (as opposed to Hebrew letters or Latin numbers), and the congregation's English name. The windows are plain and the brickwork is holding up; the tan trim could use a paint job because it is peeling in several spots.

The inside of the building is haunted by its Jewish past: plaques, stained glass windows with Jewish names and Jewish symbols, memorial tablets, and what appear to be original lighting fixtures. Slightly elegant touches are the stained glass skylights—some shuls have one, but IHC has four. The stage has a painted background, and the Holy Ark is gone, but IHC still hosts Saturday prayer, for this is now a Seventh Day Adventist church.

Inwood and Washington Heights were home to many German Jews who survived the Holocaust. Among those who came to the neighborhood, and to this synagogue in particular, was a Mr. J. Dymont, a cantor from Berlin. He was “the gifted composer of *Rinot Ya'akov*, a Sabbath Eve service (including Mincha) for cantor, mixed choir and organ.” Dymont also conducted the High Holiday Choir at IHC, according to a journal article by Max Wohlberg. Wohlberg was the cantor at IHC, as well as the recording secretary (who preserved the minutes of meetings for perpetuity) of the Board of Directors of the Chazinim Ministers Alliance. Later he taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

