

Murray Hill, Gramercy & Midtown East (//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/manhattan/murray-hill-gramercy-midtown-east)

Arts & Entertainment (//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/topics/arts-entertainment)

## Irving Berlin's Former Beekman Place Home Chronicled in New Book



By [Mary Johnson](#) (//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/mary-johnson) on July 14, 2011 6:02pm

[@mjohns422](#) (<http://twitter.com/mjohns422>)

(//www.dnainfo.com/new



The five-story building at 17 Beekman Place was once home to the composer Irving Berlin.

[View Full Caption](#)

DNAinfo/Mary Johnson

TURTLE BAY — For its famous former inhabitants and current role as a diplomatic and cultural center, the five-story house located at 17 Beekman Place is the subject of a new book titled “The Luxembourg House on Beekman Place: Three Portraits in Time.”

The legendary American composer Irving Berlin lived at 17 Beekman Place with his family for more than 40 years before he passed away in 1989 at the age of 101. And the home was originally commissioned by James V. Forrestal, a Wall Street banker, who moved in after construction was completed in 1932. Now known as the Luxembourg House, the building is currently home to the Permanent Mission of Luxembourg to the UN, the Consulate General of Luxembourg and the Luxembourg Tourist Office.

Descendants of Forrestal and Berlin, as well as those affiliated with the Luxembourg House, gathered Wednesday night at 17 Beekman Place to celebrate the book, which recently won an APEX Award in the one-of-a-kind custom-published publications category. The book’s three authors, who divvied the building’s 80-year history into three chapters, were on hand to sign copies and discuss their work on the project.

Debra Pickrel, a Turtle Bay resident who wrote the first chapter about the Forrestal family's time in the house, came up with the idea for the book after writing a graduate school paper about the residence.

“No. 17 had always captivated me,” Pickrel said at the event. “A complete history of the house had never been published.”

Pamela Hanlon, also of Turtle Bay, wrote the book’s second chapter, which covers the Berlin family's time in the home from 1947 to 1989.

“My only hesitation [about getting involved in the project] was that I worried that perhaps I wouldn’t be able to find all the information I needed,” Hanlon said. “Very little — in fact nothing — had been written about the Berlins in this house.”

Hanlon contacted Rodgers & Hammerstein: An Imagem Company, which also encompasses the Irving Berlin Music Company. Immediately, that organization put her in touch with Berlin’s three daughters—all of whom agreed to contribute to the book.

Berlin’s oldest daughter, Mary Ellin Barrett, 84, who attended the book signing on Wednesday night, had already told her story once, in her memoir published in 1994. Still, Barrett said it was a worthwhile endeavor to relive her past for the sake of chronicling the history of the house.

“It was very stimulating,” Barrett said, “and [Pamela Hanlon] did a beautiful job.”

The book’s third chapter, written by Marianne Matthews, covers the period from 1990, when the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg purchased the building from the Berlin family, to the present. The residence underwent a three-year renovation to ready it for diplomatic use before reopening in 1993. It now houses the offices of the Luxembourg government in New York City and periodically hosts cultural events, including art exhibits and musical performances.

The book, “The Luxembourg House on Beekman Place: Three Portraits in Time,” is published by the Consulate General of Luxembourg in New York and is available for purchase at Amazon.com.

- Related Items*
- Irving Berlin ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/irving-berlin](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/irving-berlin))
  - James Forrester ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/james-forrester](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/james-forrester))
  - Pamela Hanlon ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/pamela-hanlon](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/pamela-hanlon))
  - Debra Pickrel ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/debra-pickrel](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/debra-pickrel))
  - Marianne Matthews ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/marianne-matthews](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/marianne-matthews))
  - 17 Beekman Place ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/places/17-beekman-place](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/places/17-beekman-place))
  - Beekman Place ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/places/beekman-place](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/places/beekman-place))
  - Luxembourg ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/tags/luxembourg](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/tags/luxembourg))

	<p><b>NEXT IN MURRAY HILL, GRAMERCY &amp; MIDTOWN EAST (/NEW-YORK/MANHATTAN/MURRAY-HILL-GRAMERCY-MIDTOWN-EAST)</b></p> <p><b>Beth Israel Says Medical Residents Are Not 'Competent' Enough to Unionize</b></p>	➔➔
	<p><b>Local Artists to Showcase (/new-york/20140604/jackson-heights/diversity-plaza-festival-looking-for-local-artists-showcase)</b></p>	➔➔

(mewize)  
 york/20140604/jackson-heights/diversity-plaza-festival-looking-for-local-artists-showcase)