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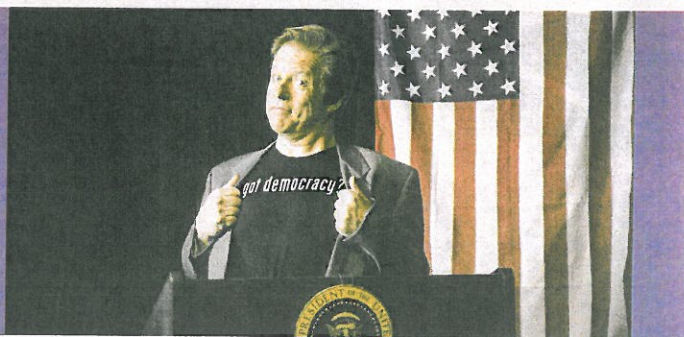
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NEWS

Luxembourg House Saga in 3 Chapters

New book tells the story of 17 Beekman Place's illustrious life

By Allen Houston

Echoes of Irving Berlin music floated out of the Luxembourg House and on to the East River as a packed house gathered recently for a signing of the book *The Luxembourg House on Beekman Place: Three Portraits in Time*.

The Luxembourg Embassy published the book in honor of its 20th anniversary at 17 Beekman Place. Over its history, the house has also been home to James Forrestal, the first U.S. secretary of defense, as well as Irving Berlin, one of the living legends of American songwriting, who lived there with his family for 42 years.

The book was born from a paper that neighborhood resident Debra Pickrel wrote for an urban history course in graduate school. Her assignment was to write about a house in the neighborhood where she lived. The Beekman Place house caught her attention every time she passed by.

"I was always captivated by the house," she said. "It's a touch of magic in Manhattan."

Pickrel received approval from Consul General Francois Knaff and, with the help of co-authors Pamela Hanlon and Marianne Matthews, went to work on the project.

The book is divided into three chapters that cover the life and breadth of the majestic East Side manor.

The book's prologue looks at the history of the Beekman Hill neighborhood, while the first chapter, "The Forrestal Years," examines the building of the house, its ornate features and looks at James and Jo Forrestal, the house's original owners.

The family commissioned the house in 1929, though it wasn't completed until 1932. Forrestal was president of the investment bank Dillon, Read & Co. and his wife Jo was an editor at Vogue magazine. In 1940, he moved to Washington to work for President Franklin Roosevelt. Eventually, he became the first U.S. secretary of defense.

Although he discussed moving back to the house on Beekman Place, the family finally sold the house in 1946 to songwriter Irving Berlin. He and his family lived there until 1989.

Pamela Hanlon, another neighborhood resident, penned the chapter on the Berlin years at Beekman Place.

"When I started the project, I wondered how much I could learn about Irving Berlin and Beekman Place," she said. "There were a lot of biographies of him and I read them all, but they didn't say much about the house itself and how the family lived in it."

Hanlon spoke with Berlin's daughters and they described what it had been like living there.

"They were so kind in sharing the details of those years when they lived in

THE LUXEMBOURG HOUSE
ON BEEKMAN PLACE
THREE PORTRAITS IN TIME



COURTESY OF THE LUXEMBOURG HOUSE

the house," she said.

The last chapter of the book focuses on 1990 to the present, after the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg purchased the house and turned it into an embassy.

Marianne Matthews, a local writer who has attended several events at the embassy, penned that chapter.

"My goal was to cover everything that happens there today and to keep the flair of the house," she said.

In addition to containing the official U.N. consulate, the Luxembourg House also contains the country's National Tourist Office, the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, the Trade and Investment Office and a cultural arm.

"It's a home away from home for Luxembourg citizens in New York and a place to forge better relationships with the United States," Matthews said.

The Luxembourg House on Beekman Place: Three Portraits in Time can be ordered from amazon.com.