

Before Public Theater, An Immigrant Shelter

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Body

To the Editor:

Further to "Papp Proved That Landmarks Law Works" by Frank B. Gilbert (letter, Nov. 13), on Joseph Papp's 1965 negotiation for the old Astor Library: In 1965, the building's owner was United H.I.A.S. Service (Hebrew **Immigrant** Aid Society), which acquired the former library as its world headquarters and temporary **shelter** for Jewish refugees and **immigrants** to the United States in January 1920.

In the book "Visa to Freedom," Mark Wischnitzer quotes a message from President Warren G. Harding when H.I.A.S. dedicated the building: "I am informed that the new house was made possible by gifts from persons who came to America as **immigrants**. It seems to me there could be no more emphatic testimony to the usefulness and effectiveness of your society's work for Americanization."

From 1920 to 1965, thousands of nights of **shelter** and millions of kosher meals were provided to these future United States citizens.

Joseph Papp's persistence was an essential element in the highly complicated and successful negotiation that enabled him to acquire the building. But Mr. Papp was keenly sensitive to the history of the landmark building that became his **Public Theater** in 1965.

JAMES P. RICE

Chicago, Nov. 13, 1991

The writer was executive director, United H.I.A.S. Service, 1956-66.

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