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Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 29, 1968, Number 18
LP-0073

189 FRONT STREET BUILDING, Borough of Manhattan. 1836; architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 74, Lot 10 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On October 19, 1965 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 189 Front Street Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 45). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This building was erected in the same year as the corner building (159-163 John Street), matches it exactly, and, like the corner, replaces an earlier building owned by Anson G. Phelps. We may assume that though it has been under separate ownership, it is, in effect, the same building.

In 1834 the property was bought from Phelps by Josiah Macy (1785-1872). Phelps was the founder of Phelps, Dodge and Company; Macy was a merchant captain from Nantucket who in 1828 founded the shipping and commission house of Josiah Macy & Son. This neighborhood is really the cradle of New York's pre-eminence in the field of foreign trade, and Josiah Macy was an exceedingly important figure in establishing that pre-eminence.

In addition to its historical associations, this is an excellent building. Its architectural elements are held to a minimum; yet they are so well harmonized, the touch is so deft, that the building, a simple commercial building, may properly be called elegant. It is classically (i.e. perfectly) Greek Revival in style, with base and ground floor of granite with the typical, but here somewhat superior, square granite columns and large show windows. The four original upper stories are of brick with plain granite window lintels and sills. The plain brick fascia of the original roof cornice remains above the fifth floor windows, and above it is what we may assume to be a slightly later one-story addition. The latter is, fortunately, very sympathetically executed, and hardly, if at all, detracts from the nice quality of the total structure. A picture of it appears in Ada Louise Huxtable's Classic New York.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 189 Front Street Building has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the building at 189 Front Street is a perfect example of New York Greek Revival commercial architecture, that it has been well preserved and has fortunately withstood the changes of the surrounding area, that it is an important vestige of a crucial era of New York history, and that it is a handsome example of vernacular functional design.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 189 Front Street Building, Borough of Manhattan, and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of the Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 74, Lot 10 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.