

Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 20, 1973, Number 23
LP-0766

324 STATE STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn, Built 1870s.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 176, Lot 22.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 324 State Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 79). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty-six witnesses spoke in favor of historic preservation in the Boerum Hill neighborhood and for the creation of the Boerum Hill Historic District. There were no speakers in opposition to designation of the houses on State Street.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

No. 324 State Street was the last house built on this side of the Street. It is late Italianate in style and also has some later 19th century additions. The property was owned by Samuel Carson when the house was built. Stylistically it appears to date from the mid-1870s. Carson sold the property to Ann Augusta Tirrill in 1884.

This house was part of the Boerum Hill community which had formed the original Town of Breuckelen founded in 1646 by Dutch colonists. It was incorporated into the larger City of Brooklyn in 1834. The development of Boerum Hill as an urban community began in the 1840s and continued into the 1870s. Many of the houses which remain from this period incorporated Greek Revival and Italianate elements in the house designs. These houses were built for merchants and professional people, many of whom worked in the Wall Street area or in the vicinity of the Fulton Street ferry.

All the land in this block had originally been part of the Jacob Van Brunt farm. He willed it to his daughter Jane, wife of Samuel T. Gerritsen in 1824. State Street was originally known as Gerritsen Street. The Gerritsens and the Van Brunts, both old Dutch families, had long been interconnected by marriage and had some of the largest landholdings in Kings County. Charles Hoyt and Russell Nevins, two Manhattan real estate developers with extensive interests in Brooklyn, acquired the properties on this block in 1833. Both Hoyt and Nevins had streets named after them to the east of this block.

The entranceway above a high stoop is flanked by panelled stone pilasters terminating in console brackets which carry a projecting segmental arch above the lintel of the doorway. The arched wooden doorframe enclosing the double door is flanked by slender turned colonettes. The basement facade is stuccoed and its two segmental-arched windows are set behind ornamental iron grilles. The windows of the three floors of the brick front also have segmental arches with cap moldings. The full-height parlor floor windows are set above stone ledges supported on shallow brackets.

The most striking element of the facade is the three-sided projecting oriel above the entranceway. Such oriels are not ordinarily found on houses of Italianate design, and it may have been added after Miss Tirrill bought the house in 1884. Panels decorated with swag motifs are set above and below the windows. Spiral moldings decorate the angles between them, and egg-and-dart moldings outline them as well as the base of the oriel. It is crowned by a simple cornice.

The ornate metal roof cornice is the most Italianate feature of the front. It is supported on four foliate brackets with modillions and dentals between them. The fascia consists of segmental-arched panels between the brackets which reflect the forms of the segmental arches of the windows below them. The cast-iron balustered railings at the stoop, and partially enclosing the front yard, are more typical of post-Civil War architecture. The use of such decorative cast-iron railings became popular in New York City in the 1860s when mass production made them readily available at a reasonable cost.

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 324 State Street House 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 324 State Street House is a fine example of the late Italianate style of architecture, that it is a handsome house, that it contributes to the dignity of the street and that this house adds significantly to the overall character of the Boerum Hill community.

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 324 State Street House, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 176, Lot 22, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.