

1968

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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REFORMED CHURCH OF SOUTH BUSHWICK, 855-867 Bushwick Avenue, Borough of Brooklyn. Main section completed 1853; Wings completed 1883.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 3264, Lot 36.

On February 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Reformed Church of South Bushwick and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 69). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation, and a representative of the Church also testified. Since the public hearing discussions have taken place between officers of the Church and representatives of the Commission during which the provisions of the Landmarks Preservation Law were discussed. The Consistory of the Church has informed the Commission that it approves the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Reformed Church of South Bushwick is an excellent example of the adaptation of a Georgian type masonry church, with tower, to a Greek Revival church of frame construction. Its dominant features are the classic portico and the soaring tower which rises from a square base through a handsome octagonal belfry to an octagonal spire. This type of steeple once characterized the skyline of London with its appearance on the numerous churches which the architect Wren and his follower Gibbs built to replace those lost in the Great Fire. This style of church continued as the model of many churches in England and America. Here it is interesting to note the persistence of this steeple type of church carrying over even to the Greek Revival. The influence of the Greek Revival can be seen in the pilasters of the steeple and in the two fine fluted Ionic columns of the portico. These columns were set between two slender pilasters (in antis) of the portico to frame the main door. Their capitals are remarkable for the delicacy of their carving.

This Church stands in a small park on land donated in November 1851 by two of the first parishioners, Abraham and Andrew Stockholm. The original congregation was made up of families from twenty neighboring farms. The cornerstone was laid on September 13, 1852, a late date even for Greek Revival architecture. The Church was not dedicated until February of 1853. The New York Collegiate Church loaned \$2,000 of the \$5,900 cost of construction. The first pastor was the Rev. John Himrod, and the Church was enlarged during the tenure of the fourth pastor, the Rev. George Duryea Hulst.

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 Reformed Church of South Bushwick 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 Reformed Church of South Bushwick is an exceptionally handsome example of late Greek Revival Church architecture, that its soaring steeple, silhouetted against the sky, is a memorial to a once dominant style of church architecture, and that the small yard surrounding it still reminds the passerby of the original rural character of the area.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A 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 Reformed Church of South Bushwick, 855-867 Bushwick Avenue, Borough of Brooklyn, and designates Tax Map Block 3264, Lot 36, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.

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