

434 LAFAYETTE STREET BUILDING (a part of La Grange Terrace), Borough of Manhattan. Begun 1832, completed 1833, architect; attributed to Alexander Jackson Davis.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 545, Lot 37.

On September 21, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the 434 Lafayette Street Building as a Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 13). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. More than 10 witnesses, including the owner of this building, spoke in favor of designation of it and the other buildings of La Grange Terrace. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This building is one of a group of four remaining town houses which are unified in appearance by a beautifully executed two-story Corinthian colonnade. This building and the group are one of the treasures of our architectural heritage and are a superb example of civic-minded planning.

Talbot Hamlin, the architectural historian, described the buildings as "New York's most extravagant as well as most original attempt to build dignified, gracious and elegant houses for wealthy tenants, and it achieved instantaneous fame." This idea of unifying many town houses behind one great facade was a bold architectural concept, and planning of this type might well have set a precedent for the beautification of our City had it been more widely followed.

The buildings are rich in historical associations. The wife of President Tyler lived there before their marriage; President Franklin Roosevelt's grandfather was another resident. John Jacob Astor, Jr. and Edwin D. Morgan, a Governor of New York, also lived there.

At the public hearing, the representative of the Borough President's Community Planning Board No. 2 said that the buildings were "a neglected treasure almost lost.... that an appreciative City can well cherish, however, tardily." The representative of the Washington Square Association evaluated the buildings as "a unique piece of residential architecture characteristic of the early 19th Century. It should be preserved at all costs as the last remaining example of well-planned group dwellings in this style."

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 434 Lafayette 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 434 Lafayette Street Building is an essential part of a preeminent example of Classic Revival residential planning and that this building and the row of houses, of which it is a part, are a beautifully executed architectural composition.

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 434 Lafayette Street Building (a part of La Grange Terrace), Borough of Manhattan, and designates Tax Map Block 545, Lot 37, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.