

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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LP-0563

STEPHEN VAN RENSSELAER HOUSE, 149 Mulberry Street, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1816 (moved from 153 Mulberry Street in 1841); architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 236, Lot 21.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Stephen Van Rensselaer House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 53). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has discussed the City's Landmarks Preservation program with the family who has owned this house for over 45 years and who has maintained it well during this period.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Stephen Van Rensselaer House is a good example of a small early Nineteenth Century Federal style house. The two story structure, with basement and attic, is typical of the modest dwellings described by Montgomery Schuyler, the noted critic, writing for the Architectural Record in 1899. In an article entitled The Small City-House in New York, he stated that it was "the most respectable and artistic pattern of habitation New York has ever known."

Built at No. 153 Mulberry Street in 1816 for Stephen Van Rensselaer, and assessed for \$3,750, the building was moved to No. 149 Mulberry Street in 1841. The basement and first floor are now occupied by a commercial establishment, and the upper stories by living quarters.

This house followed the design pattern well established by the 1820's. Two stories high with an attic story and low basement, the main floor is raised above the street level with the entrance door at one side of the front. The stone stoop, seven steps high, retains some of its original wrought iron handrailings with castings of later date. The three remaining decorative cast iron panels above the top step consisting of wreaths with bows and arrows are beautifully composed. The structure, three windows wide, is built of brick laid-up in Flemish bond, set on a stone basement. The window sills are of stone, and the stone lintels are paneled. There is a narrow sunken areaway enclosed at street level with an iron railing. Six steps down from the sidewalk, on the right side, is the basement door and centered in this stone wall is a window. The characteristic gambrel roof, one of the few remaining in Manhattan, contains two handsome dormers, and below the roof line there is a wood fascia board.

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 Stephen Van Rensselaer 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 Stephen Van Rensselaer House, at 149 Mulberry Street, is a good example of a modest early Nineteenth Century Federal style house, that it has fine proportions, with its original features and excellent details well related in scale, that after one hundred and fifty years, this structure continues to serve a useful purpose and that in the neighborhood where it stands, it remains a quaint reminder of an earlier city.

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 Stephen Van Rensselaer House, 149 Mulberry Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 236, Lot 21, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.