

297 STATE STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn, Built c. 1874.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 170, Lot 44.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 297 State Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 60). 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. 297 State Street was erected as part of a row of six houses (Nos. 289-299), by Michael Murray, a local builder who lived at 240 DeKalb Avenue. Murray must have rented the house after it was built, for the property was not sold until 1886 to William J. Logan.

These handsome residences were 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 row house design. 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.

Murray, the builder, acquired the land for Nos. 289-295 in 1872, and the land for the pair Nos. 297 and 299 in 1874, from William Schermerhorn. The Schermerhorns were one of Brooklyn's old, wealthy Dutch families; Peter Schermerhorn, William's father, was, with his brother Abraham, one of Brooklyn's largest landholders. Schermerhorn Street, one block north of State Street, was named after them.

The north side of State Street was largely undeveloped when Murray began erecting Nos. 289-295 in 1872, (No. 289 has been demolished). Nos. 291-299 are five, almost identical, brownstone houses built in a late version of the popular Italianate style. They have undergone only minor alterations in the past one hundred years and the row retains an integrity and a unity which enhance the entire block.

The brownstone front of No. 297 which forms a pair with No. 299 is one of the best preserved in the row. It rises three stories above a rusticated basement which contains two segmental-arched windows with beveled keystones and iron grilles. Ribbed pilasters flanking the doorway are topped by grooved console brackets with foliate pendants which support a bold segmental-arched pediment. A round arch with a foliate keystone and beveled spandrel panels accentuates the doorway. As on the other houses in the row, wooden engaged colonnettes topped with Corinthian capitals are set within the doorway recess. The wood double doors with four glazed panels are similar to those at No. 295,

the two small panels at the top being curved to complement the arch. The full-height parlor floor windows are crowned by projecting cornice slabs set on brackets, while the upper-story windows have cap moldings above the lintels and sills supported on corbel blocks. The roof cornice at No. 297 is more ornate than those at Nos. 291-295 and is more typically Italianate. It is supported on four heavy foliate brackets interspersed by modillions and dentils; panels enrich the frieze.

The handrailings at the stoop, and the yard railing are supported on cast-iron balusters. Square newel posts, topped with spheres, flank the areaway gate and hexagonal newel posts the handrailings of the stoop. The balusters are typical of post-Civil War ironwork. The use of cast-iron railings, such as these, became popular in New York City at this period when mass production made them readily available at reasonable prices.

#### 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 297 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 297 State Street House, is a fine example of the late Italianate style of architecture, that it forms part of a handsome row of five houses, that this house contributes to the dignity of the street and that this house and its row add significantly to the overall character of the Boerum Hill neighborhood.

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 297 State Street House, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 170, Lot 44, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.