

298 STATE STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn, Built c. 1849.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 176, Lot 9.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 298 State Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 66). 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. 298 State Street was built c. 1849 for Samuel Morrow, a porter, in a modified Greek Revival style. He was living there by 1850.

This residence was a 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 incorporate Greek Revival and Italianate elements in their 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.

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. Morrow acquired the property from Hoyt in 1849. By this time the block was undergoing rapid development, and several groups of houses had already been built. However, like its neighbor, No. 296, No. 298 was designed as an individual residence and was not built as part of a speculative row.

The general form of No. 297 owes much to the Greek Revival. The brick front rises three stories above a stuccoed basement. The two rectangular basement windows have ornamental iron grilles. A lintel with cornice is the only decorative feature of the doorway. The panelled paired doors are set under a rectangular glass transom and are enframed by a rib molding. Lintels, like that over the doorway also appear above the full-height parlor floor windows and over the windows of the second floor. The progressively decreasing size of the upper-story windows as they ascend, is characteristic of the Greek Revival. The window sills of the upper two stories are set on small corbel blocks, a characteristic of later Italianate houses. The undorned roof cornice is returned to the wall at the ends. While not typical of cornices usually found on Greek Revival houses, it reflects at a larger scale the shape of the cornices of the window and door lintels. The iron yard railings and the handrailings at the stoop are of a delicate character with both curvilinear and fretwork designs, Greek Revival in style. The use of decorative wrought ironwork for railings became popular in New York in the Federal period and continued in fashion in this area until mid-century. The craftsmanship displays the skill of the local iron works.

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 298 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 298 State Street House is a fine example of modified Greek Revival architecture with handsome detail, 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 298 State Street House, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 176, Lot 9, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.