

304 STATE STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn, Built c. 1850.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 176, Lot 12.

On June 23, 1976, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 304 State Street House 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. 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. 304 State Street was built about 1850-51 in a late version of the Greek Revival style for William G. Talman. 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 retained in the larger City of Brooklyn when it was incorporated 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 rowhouse 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. In 1824 he willed it to his daughter Jane, wife of Samuel T. Gerritsen. 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. Talman, a cooper, bought the property in 1850 and moved into his newly built house the following year. This block was built up largely in the 1840s and early 1850s by owners who erected houses in groups. While No. 304 is stylistically similar to Nos. 310-316, it was erected alone and not as part of a speculative row.

No. 304 shows predominantly the stylistic characteristics of the Greek Revival. The painted brick front rises three stories above a basement which has been stuccoed. The entranceway, set above a high stoop, is the most notable Greek Revival characteristic of the front. Heavy pilasters support a bold horizontal entablature with a block pediment above. The panelled double doors, enhanced by heavy wooden moldings now have the upper panels glazed. They are surmounted by a rectangular glass transom. All the windows on the front have flush brownstone lintels.

It will be noted upon examining the window proportions that the floor heights are somewhat lower than usual. Also the distance between the top floor windows and the entablature is unusually wide. From the rear of the building it can be seen that this is to compensate for another complete story. Thus the owners of the house gained an additional story while the builder was able to harmonize this facade with others on the block.

The cornice is of a highly ornate Italianate design and may postdate the original construction date of the building. It is supported by long foliate brackets interspersed by panels in the frieze. Modillions and dentils further enhance the cornice. The iron handrailings at the stoop and the railing enclosing the front yard are like those on Nos. 300 and 302, with curvilinear forms typical of Italianate design.

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 304 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 304 State Street House, although Greek Revival in its general form, and retaining the best elements of that style, was built at a later period, that it accords well with the row houses on either side of it and that, in its dignified simplicity, 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 304 State Street House, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 176, Lot 12, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.