

310 STATE STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn, Built 1847-1848.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 176, Lot 15.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 310 State Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 72). 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. 310 State Street is one of a row of four houses built in 1847-1848 for John and Diederick Westfall in the Greek Revival style which was still popular for row houses in this area. The Westfalls, who were liquor merchants, acquired the four lots for Nos. 310-316 in September 1847, and they commissioned the construction of the row. Both brothers were living in newly built houses on these lots by the next year.

These 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.

All the land on 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.

No. 310 displays the purest use of Greek Revival elements on the entire block-front. It is also among the best-preserved of the group of four Greek Revival houses. The entrance, set above a high stoop, is the most impressive element of the front. Heavy flanking pilasters with Doric capitals support a bold horizontal entablature with a low pediment above the cornice. The original four paneled wood door is set beneath a three-paned rectangular transom with egg and dart molding. The door is further enhanced by flanking paneled pilasters with stylized Corinthian capitals and by rectangular glass sidelights. The simple three-story brick front rises above a stuccoed basement. The simple roof cornice, returned to the wall at the ends, and set above brick dentils and fascia, is also characteristic of the Greek Revival period.

The wrought-iron railings at the front are of a delicate nature with curvilinear ornament at the top of the handrailings of the stoop and fretwork at the base of the yard railings--both derived from Greek sources. The use of decorative wrought iron-work for railings became popular in New York City 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 considreation of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 310 State Street House has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural charateristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that among its important qualities, the 310 State Street House is a fine example of the Greek Revival style of architecture, that it forms part of a handsome group of four houses, that it contributes to the dignity of the street and that this house and its row add 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 310 State Street House, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 176, Lot 15, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.