

**488 GREENWICH STREET HOUSE**, Manhattan. Built c. 1823; attributed to John Rohr, mason.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 595, Lot 82.

On April 10, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 488 Greenwich Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 14). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Six people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of State Senator Thomas K. Duane, State Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Historic Districts Council, and Manhattan Community Board 2. The owner took no position on designation. In addition, the Commission received several communications in support of designation.

### Summary

The modest rowhouse at No. 488 Greenwich Street was constructed c. 1823 in the Federal style, characterized by its 2-1/2-story height, brick cladding, second-story fenestration, peaked roof, and pedimented dormer. By the 1820s, the vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets, once a Manhattan marshland known as Lispenard's Meadows, had become a thriving mixed-use district. Greenwich Street was the main thoroughfare along the west side from the Battery to Greenwich Village, while the broad Canal Street had been laid out with a sewer to assist in draining the marshy area. Trinity Church had developed the area around fashionable Hudson Square (St. John's Park) to the southeast, and a steamboat ferry to Hoboken (1823), the public Clinton Market (1829), and a "country market" (1833) were established to the west. Beginning around 1820, members of the German-immigrant Rohr family began to develop rowhouses on the west side of Greenwich Street, both south and north of Canal Street, on land then owned by Alexander L. and Sarah Lispenard Stewart. John Rohr, a mason/builder, probably constructed these, including No. 488 Greenwich Street. The Rohrs never resided here but leased the house, which remained in the family until 1846. The earliest known tenants included a tin/hardware dealer, a coppersmith, a grocer, and a smith/grocer/carman. By 1851, the building had become a rooming house. For nearly a century, it had two long-term owners: hardware dealer Robert Shiells and his heirs (1852-99) and the prosperous and aristocratic Ely family (1899-1944), including former mayor Smith Ely, Jr., whose leather tanning business, Ely, Vanderpoel & Kitchell, was founded in 1868. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this property was used industrially and commercially. Despite the loss of some architectural details, this house, notable singly and as a pair with its neighbor (No. 486), is among the very rare surviving and significantly intact modest Manhattan buildings of the Federal style, period, and 2-1/2-story, 3-bay, single-dormered peaked-roof type, with a commercial ground story. Their survival is particularly noticeable in a neighborhood that was redeveloped with industrial and loft buildings in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### The Development of the Greenwich and Canal Streets Neighborhood and Later Changes<sup>1</sup>

The vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets, at the northern edge of the neighborhood known since the 1970s as Tribeca (Triangle Below Canal Street), was for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century commonly known as Lispenard's Meadows. This marshy land, connected by streams to the Collect Pond (approximately at today's Lafayette and Centre Streets) and to the North (Hudson) River, was a major impediment on the western side of Manhattan to northward travel and development. Previously, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch had set aside land for partially freed slaves just north of this uninhabited region, to act as a buffer zone between their settlement to the south and Native Americans to the north. African Symon Congo was granted in 1644 an 8-acre farm to the northeast of this intersection, bounded approximately by present-day Hudson, Charlton, Downing, and MacDougal Streets. After the British took control of New York in 1664, Africans were legally barred from owning property. During British rule, this area was located within portions of the Trinity Church and Anthony Rutgers Farms, granted in 1705 and 1733 respectively (Congo's property became part of the Church Farm). Rutgers' property was transferred after his death in 1746, by inheritance and sale, to Leonard Lispenard (1715-1790), who had married Rutgers' daughter Alice. Lispenard's mansion was built c. 1740 at the intersection of today's Hudson and Desbrosses Streets. The Lispenard property was inherited in 1790 by Leonard's son, Anthony Lispenard, who began to plot the land in 1795. According to the 1800 Census, Anthony Lispenard owned five slaves. After his death in 1805, the Lispenard heirs in 1807 petitioned the Common Council of New York for, and were granted, the water lots opposite their holdings at Canal Street. In 1811, they also petitioned the Council for, and were granted, the right to dig a channel to drain their land between Canal and Spring Streets. The Lispenard mansion was demolished around 1813.

Trinity Church, which had earlier leased lots on its Church Farm property, also began preparing for development, and ceded to the City those portions necessary for the layout of streets, beginning with Hudson Street in 1797. St. John's Chapel (1803-07, John McComb, Jr.) was constructed next to Hudson Square (also known as St. John's Park), laid out between Varick, Beach, Hudson, and Laight Streets. Though the vicinity of the park remained relatively isolated until the 1820s, Trinity further encouraged residential growth by selling, rather than leasing, lots, and this became one of New York's most fashionable residential districts into the 1830s. Trinity's land farther north was not as conducive to development until after the draining of Lispenard's Meadows.

Greenwich Street became the main thoroughfare along the west side of Manhattan from the Battery to Greenwich Village. As early as 1729, the Common Council had planned for two new streets (Greenwich and Washington) on the west side of lower Manhattan "for the better utility of the Trade and Commerce of this City,"<sup>2</sup> that were to be plotted on landfill. The layout of lower Greenwich Street, at the high water line of the North River, was begun in 1739. Complicating the realization of these plans, however, were a number of impediments: a bluff that ran along the east side of the planned route of Greenwich Street from the Battery to Wall Street; many of the "water lots" in the area flooded at high tide; and most of the land was owned by a number of wealthy landowners and Trinity Church. The issue of creating landfill along the shore was ignored throughout most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but after the Revolutionary War, owners of property along Greenwich Street were eventually required to relinquish portions of their property so that the street could be laid out. In 1787, the Common Council passed an ordinance to complete the landfill necessary to create the 65-foot-wide streetbed from the Battery to Cortlandt Street and, in 1794, passed another ordinance to complete Greenwich Street between the Battery and Rector Street. Closely following the shoreline of the river, Greenwich Street was apparently opened by 1797 after Trinity Church granted its portion of the street to the City. Lower Greenwich Street attracted the construction of elegant houses for the social elite and merchant class and became one of the most fashionable addresses in New York for over four decades. Farther north, Greenwich Street's character was somewhat more mixed in terms of its class of residents, as it "was home to numerous artisans and shopkeepers as well as a small population of free blacks."<sup>3</sup> Greenwich Street had been completed as far north as Christopher Street by 1809.

An 1820 survey conducted by John Randel, Jr., of the area west of Greenwich Street, between Desbrosses and Houston Streets, indicates that the shoreline was then quite irregular, West Street did exist for the most part, and that there was a rectangular boat basin at Washington and Canal Streets.<sup>4</sup> Washington and West Streets along the North River were created through landfill, and completed by around 1824 as far north as the State Prison (1796-97), located just north of Christopher Street. The area of today's Greenwich Village was, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the location of the small rural hamlet of Greenwich, as well as the country seats

and summer homes of wealthy downtown aristocrats, merchants, and capitalists. A number of cholera and yellow fever epidemics in lower Manhattan between 1799 and 1822 led to an influx of settlers in the Greenwich area, with the population quadrupling between 1825 and 1840.<sup>5</sup> Previously undeveloped tracts of land there were speculatively subdivided for the construction of town houses and rowhouses.

Though Anthony Rutgers had been granted his petition in 1733 to lay a ditch to assist in draining the area of Lispenard's Meadows, and several attempts at drainage were made over the years, no decisive action was taken until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. A survey was finally made in 1805 for a 100-foot-wide Canal Street, but not until 1817 was an ordinance passed to "fill in" Lispenard's Meadows, and in 1819 a sewer was finally completed along the street's length. By the 1820s, Canal Street had become a thriving retail district. A steamboat ferry to Hoboken was established at its west end in 1823. A public market, named the Clinton Market after former governor DeWitt Clinton, was opened in 1829 on the triangle of land bounded by West, Washington, Spring, and Canal Streets, and a "country market" was established in 1833 on a triangular site just south of there, on the south side of Canal Street.

The appeal of the fashionable residential neighborhood surrounding St. John's Park was short-lived as the entire area became increasingly commercial. As James Fenimore Cooper had observed as early as 1828 of the vicinity of lower Manhattan, "commerce is gradually taking possession of the whole of the lower extremity of the island, though the Bay, the battery, and the charming Broadway, still cause many of the affluent to depart with reluctance."<sup>6</sup> By 1840, with the straightening of the Hudson River shoreline and the construction of piers and wharves at every cross street between Vesey and King Streets, the waterfront became quite active, particularly for produce associated with the Washington Market to the south. In 1846, the Hudson River Railroad was incorporated, and was constructed along West Street, terminating in a station at Chambers Street in 1851. An 1853 map indicates that a freight depot was located at Canal Street. In 1866, Trinity Church and other property owners sold St. John's Park, and the Hudson River Railroad built St. John's Freight Terminal (1867-69, John B. Snook) on the site. Numerous large warehouse buildings replaced many of the earlier low-scale residential and commercial structures, including a storage warehouse at No. 490-506 Greenwich Street (1883-84, John B. McIntyre) constructed to the north of No. 488 Greenwich Street. The city's first elevated train line opened along Greenwich Street in 1870.

While New York City had developed as the largest port in the United States by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it emerged as one of the busiest ports in the world. In Manhattan, South Street along the East River had been the primary artery for maritime commerce, but West Street became a competitor in the 1870s and supplanted the former by about 1890. After the Civil War, New York also flourished as the commercial and financial center of the country. The corridor of blocks closest to the Hudson River was, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, typical of a waterfront neighborhood. The diversity of businesses in the vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets included lumber, stone, and coal yards; iron and copper works; sugar refineries; soap, lantern, glass, pipe, wire, and steel wool manufacturing; elevator works; food processing; and bonded warehouses along West and Washington Streets.

Transportation improvements connected with the construction of the Holland Tunnel (1919-27), and the completion of the elevated Miller Highway (1929-31) above West Street, provided easier access between the metropolitan region and the Hudson River waterfront. Trucking traffic greatly increased in the neighborhood, and there were a number of effects on the area's real estate, such as the spurring of construction of even larger loft buildings. Most of the many early Federal style houses that survived into the 1920s in the vicinity of the western blocks of Canal Street were demolished. St. John's Chapel was torn down in 1919 for the widening of Varick Street, and the Holland Tunnel exited onto the former site of St. John's Freight Terminal. The elevated was demolished in 1940. A number of early 19<sup>th</sup>-century rowhouses, such as Nos. 486 and 488 Greenwich Street, Nos. 502-508 Canal Street, and the James Brown House (c. 1817), 326 Spring Street, however, survived in the vicinity of Canal and Greenwich Streets, in part because they remained viable for commercial and residential use.

### Construction and 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Ownership and Tenancy of No. 490 (later 488) Greenwich Street<sup>7</sup>

Beginning around 1820, members of the Rohr family began to develop rowhouses on the west side of Greenwich Street, both south and north of Canal Street, on land then owned by Alexander L. Stewart and Sarah Lispenard Stewart, daughter of Anthony Lispenard (married 1803), who were the inheritors of one-third of the Lispenard's Meadows property. According to the 1810 and 1820 Censuses, the Stewarts were not slave owners. Alexander Stewart (1775-1838) was described in 1808 as "the active manager of the said undivided estate of Mr. Lispenard and contracting for valuable improvements upon their grounds."<sup>8</sup> First constructed c.

1820 were three houses on the northwest corner, leased by the Stewarts to German-born (naturalized 1826) merchant tailor John George Rohr (c. 1798- ), and his wife, Rebecca (c. 1802-1869). These were followed the next year by two adjacent houses to the north, leased to his relative John Rohr, a mason/builder, and his wife, Martha. An 1820 city directory listed John G. Rohr's business at the corner of Greenwich and Canal Streets (in 1833-38, he was listed at No. 482 Greenwich Street -- the northwest corner). In 1823, the Stewarts leased six more lots to the north of these existing houses to John Rohr. Tax assessment records for 1823 indicated Rohr's name in pencil (as a correction to Stewart's) for the portion (still vacant lots) that comprised (today's) Nos. 486 and 488 Greenwich Street. Tax assessments records for 1824 indicated houses on these two lots, with the annotation "new." In an 1823 city directory, John Rohr was listed at Canal Street near Greenwich. By 1825, John Rohr had constructed on the remaining four lots to the north of the earlier houses. John G. Rohr built an additional five houses c. 1826 on the south side of Canal Street, of which (today's) Nos. 506-508 survive.<sup>9</sup> Presumably, all of the brick-clad houses developed by the two Rohrs were constructed by mason John Rohr. John G. Rohr acquired the property at the northwest corner of Canal and Greenwich from the Stewarts in 1823. Ownership of the northern six of John Rohr's houses, including (today's) Nos. 486 and 488 Greenwich Street, was transferred by the Stewarts to him in December 1825. From 1825 until 1846, John Rohr was listed in directories living on Greenwich Street near Spring Street (No. 498 Greenwich after 1827). In 1827-30, John G. Rohr lived at No. 243 (later 510) Canal Street, and from 1830 to 1849 at No. 239 (later 506) Canal Street, then No. 238 Canal; his clothing business was at No. 480 Greenwich Street in 1838-44, at No. 238 Canal Street in 1844-49, and then at No. 260 Canal Street. In 1837-40, John G. Rohr also manufactured platform patent balance and jack screws at No. 242 Canal Street. His son, George Rohr (c. 1824- ), joined him in the clothing business, and was listed residing with his parents, after 1844. There is no evidence to suggest that the Rohrs owned slaves. John G. and Rebecca Rohr moved to Baltimore in 1868.

Tax assessments did not employ house numbers for the properties on this block of Greenwich Street until 1826, nor did city directories until 1827. *Minutes* of the Common Council refer to a petition in 1826 requesting that the houses on Greenwich Street north of Vesey Street "be correctly numbered."<sup>10</sup> The original number of (today's) No. 488 Greenwich Street House was No. 490 Greenwich Street (it was re-numbered c. 1855-59). John and Martha Rohr, who retained this house until 1837, never resided here. The earliest known tenants were James Wood (1824-25), a tin and hardware dealer (listed here in tax assessments, though not in directories); coppersmith John Hannah (1826-27); and grocer Anthony J. Werneken (1834-35). John and Martha Rohr conveyed the property in 1837 to John G. and Rebecca Rohr. It was transferred in 1844 to George Rohr, but was foreclosed and acquired in 1846 by Charles Hummel, a baker who resided (and apparently had his business) next door at (today's) No. 486 from 1831 until 1850; he and his heirs were owners of No. 486 in 1836-52. A long-term tenant (1838-57) of No. 490 (later 488) Greenwich Street was John McDermott, listed variously in directories as a smith, grocer, and carman. According to the 1851 *Manhattan Street Directory*, it was by then a rooming house with five workingclass male boarders, including a shoemaker. It was purchased in 1852 by Robert Shiells, a hardware dealer who retired around 1855 and died in 1862; his children, George H. and Elizabeth Shiells, and their heirs retained it until 1899. After the completion of the Greenwich Street elevated railway in 1870, the desirability of using buildings here as residences significantly decreased.

### Federal Style Rowhouses in Manhattan<sup>11</sup>

As the city of New York grew in the period after the Revolution, large plots of land in Manhattan were sold and subdivided for the construction of groups of brick-clad houses. Their architectural style has been called "Federal" after the new republic, but in form and detail they continued the Georgian style of Great Britain. Federal style houses were constructed from the Battery as far north as 23<sup>rd</sup> Street between the 1790s and 1830s. The size of the lot dictated the size of the house: typically each house lot was 20 or 25 feet wide by 90 to 100 feet deep, which accorded with the rectilinear plan of New York City, laid out in 1807 and adopted as the Commissioners' Plan in 1811. The rowhouse itself would be as wide as the lot, and 35 to 40 feet deep. This allowed for a stoop and small front yard or areaway, and a fairly spacious rear yard, which usually contained a buried cistern to collect fresh water and the privy. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, several houses were often constructed together, sharing common party walls, chimneys, and roof timbering to form a continuous group. The houses were of load-bearing masonry construction or modified timber-frame construction with brick-clad front facades. With shared structural framing and party walls, each house in a row was dependent on its neighbor for structural stability. With the increasing availability of pattern books, such as Asher Benjamin's *American Builders Companion* (published in six editions between 1806 and 1827), local builders had access to drawings and instructions for exterior and interior plans and details. Federal style

rowhouses usually had a three-bay facade with two full stories over a high basement and an additional half story under a peaked roof with the ridge line running parallel to the front facade. (Very modest houses could be two bays wide, while grander houses had three full stories, and could be up to five bays wide). The front (and sometimes rear) facade was usually clad in red brick laid in the Flemish bond pattern, which alternated a stretcher and a header in every row. This system allowed the linking of the more expensive face brick with the cheaper, rougher brick behind. Walls were usually two “wythes,” or eight inches, thick. Because brick was fabricated by hand in molds (rather than by machine), it was relatively porous. To protect the brick surface and slow water penetration, facades were often painted.

The planar quality of Federal style facades was relieved by ornament in the form of lintels, entrances, stoops with iron railings, cornices, and dormers. Doorway and window lintels, seen in a variety of types (flat, incised or molded), were commonly brownstone. The most ornamental feature was the doorway, often framed with columns and sidelights and topped with a rectangular transom or fanlight, and having a single wooden paneled door. Some grander houses had large round-arched entrances with Gibbs surrounds. The entrance was approached by a stoop – a flight of brownstone steps placed to one side of the facade – which created a basement level below the parlor floor. Wrought-iron railings with finials lined the stoop and enclosed areaways. Window openings at the parlor and second stories were usually the same height (the size sometimes diminished on the third story) and were aligned and the same width from story to story. The wood-framed sash were double hung and multi-light (typically six-over-six). Shutters were common on the exterior. A wooden box cornice with a molded fascia extended across the front along the eave, which carried a built-in gutter. A leader head and downspout that drained onto the sidewalk extended down the facade on the opposite side from the doorway. Pedimented or segmental dormers on the front roof slope usually had decorative wood trim, and the top sash were often arched with decorative muntins. The roof was covered with continuous wood sheathing over the rafters and clad in slate.

Remaining features of the modest 20-foot-wide and 2-1/2-story rowhouse at No. 488 Greenwich Street characteristic of the Federal style are its brick cladding, fenestration pattern on the second story, simple brownstone lintels and sills, peaked roof, molded (later) cornice, and pedimented dormer. Given the lack of a raised basement and stoop, it is likely that there was originally a shop on the ground story, common on such modest houses in this period and vicinity. The earliest known depiction of the house is c. 1939 photograph; at that time it had the current ground-story configuration – a display window, a single-door entrance, and wider central entrance. Despite some alterations, No. 488 Greenwich Street, notable singly and as part of a pair along with No. 486, is among the relatively rare surviving and significantly intact Manhattan buildings of the Federal style, period, and 2-1/2-story, dormered peaked-roof type (dating from 1796 to 1834).<sup>12</sup> In particular, it is a very rare surviving modest Federal style rowhouse of the 2-1/2-story, 3-bay, single-dormered peaked-roof type, with a commercial ground story. Its survival is particularly noticeable in a neighborhood that was redeveloped with industrial and loft buildings in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### No. 488 Greenwich Street in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century <sup>13</sup>

The house was listed at auction in 1899 as a “two-story brick tenement, with stores,”<sup>14</sup> and acquired by Ambrose Kitchell Ely (1823-1907), owner of the storage warehouses next door at Nos. 490-506 Greenwich Street (1883-84, John B. McIntyre). It was retained until 1944 by the prosperous and aristocratic Ely family, whose leather tanning business, Ely, Vanderpoel & Kitchell, was founded in 1868. A very close-knit family, all of the Ely siblings lived together, according to the 1880 census, including Ambrose; Smith Ely, Jr. (1825-1911); William Henry Ely (1829-1913) and his wife, nee Maria Josephine Rogers (died 1924); Edwin Augustus Ely (1836-1927); and Maria Louise Ely Vanderpoel (1844-1922) and her husband, George Burritt Vanderpoel (died 1925). A lawyer who went into politics, Smith Ely served as a State Senator (1858-59), county supervisor (1860-70), U.S. Congressman (1871-73, 1875-76), Mayor of New York City (1877-78), and commissioner of parks (1895-97). A family history recorded that “on withdrawing from the leather trade, Smith [Ely], like Ambrose, speculated successfully in real estate, they being among the largest operators in New York.”<sup>15</sup> Edwin A. Ely, the last surviving sibling, left an estate of approximately \$3 million (including half a million dollars worth of real estate), and was described by the *New York Times* after his death as a “retired leather tanner, real estate operator and collector of rare books.”<sup>16</sup> His interest in history is attested to by the fact that many of his books and historical documents were left to the New Jersey Historical Society, among his \$600,000 in bequests.

The building was purchased from the Ely Estate in 1944 by George Drakoudes (1896-1967) of Jamaica, Queens. Among the commercial tenants of No. 488 Greenwich Street have been a junk shop (Vito

Cuoco) (c. 1927); Alphonso Ruocco, fruit dealer (c. 1934); Express Carriers Corp. (c. 1935); Baron's Express Co, trucking (Tony Lupardi) (c. 1937); V. Linetzky, truck covers (c. 1939-40); Metal Converters & Expeditors (c. 1945); and Eddie's Locker Room/Luncheonette (c. 1959-65). In 1965, the brickwork of the front facade was found to be "bulging and out of plumb," and the Buildings Department directed it to be corrected.<sup>17</sup> The building was refaced in common bond, apparently re-using the historic bricks. In 1966, No. 488 was acquired by James Johnston, Sr., owner since 1953 of No. 486, the location of his business, A. Johnston & Son Iron Works. No. 488 was purchased in 1975 and returned to residential use by John and Joanne Hendricks, also the owners of No. 486 in 1975-83. John Hendricks is an artist and museum curator, while Joanne Hendricks has operated a bookstore here for rare cookbooks and food books.

### Description

No. 488 Greenwich Street is a 20-foot-wide and 2-1/2-story Federal style rowhouse clad on the front facade in common bond brickwork (apparently a re-facing with the historic bricks c. 1965). The original configuration of the ground story is unknown, though there was probably an upstairs entrance and a storefront entrance and window. By c. 1939 (the earliest known photograph of the building), the configuration was as it is at present: southern window, central wide entrance (then a double doorway, now a single doorway), and northern single doorway. The southern multi-pane metal window and the central wood paneled door with fluted columns, sidelights, and transom are post-1978, while the northern wood paneled door and transom pre-date 1978. Both doorsills are stone. The ground-story openings have steel lintels (c. 1965); above the ground story are four star-shaped iron tie-rod anchor plates. The three second-story windows have simple brownstone lintels and sills. Original sash would have been six-over-six double-hung wood, and by 1978 they were four-over-four; the current wood sash (post-1978) are six-over-six. A downspout is placed at the southern edge of the building. The current molded wooden cornice is of recent vintage. The peaked roof is covered with asphalt shingles, and has a chimney on the southern end and an asymmetrically-placed pedimented dormer with one four-over-four wood sash (pre-1978) and one 8-pane wood sash (post-1981).

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### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> I.N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island* (N.Y.: Robert H. Dodd, 1926), including vol. 3, 560-562, 950 and 1001, vol. 4, 512-513, 533 and 560-562, vol. 5, 1221, 1308, 1406, 1474, 1592 and 1621, and vol. 6, 102 147-148, and pl. 84B-b; Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris, eds., *Slavery in New York* (N.Y.: New Pr., 2005), 8-10, 42-45; New York City, *Common Council Minutes*, vol. 4, p. 652, Dec. 1, 1807, vol. 5, p. 6-7, Feb. 15, 1808, and vol. 6, p. 526, Mar. 25, 1811, and p. 536, Apr. 1, 1811; "Leonard Lispenard," *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (N.Y.: D. Appleton & Co., 1889), 737; "Anthony Lispenard," U.S. Census (New York, 1800); New York County, Office of the Surrogate, Anthony Lispenard Will, liber 46, p. 389 (Sept. 22, 1806); Ann Buittenweiser, *Manhattan Water-Bound: Planning and Developing Manhattan's Waterfront from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (N.Y.: New York Univ. Pr., 1987); Andrew S. Dolkart, *The Texture of Tribeca* (N.Y.: Enterprise Pr., 1989); LPC, *Tribeca North Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1714) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1992), prepared by Betsy Bradley; Thomas F. De Voe, *The Market Book: A History of the Public Markets of the City of New York* (N.Y.: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), reprint of 1862 edition, 527-530; Colton Map (1836); Perris Map (1853); Bromley Map (1879); Robinson Map (1885); Bromley Map (1891).

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Stokes, vol. 4, 512.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> John Randel, Jr., "Map of the Area Later Bounded by Desbrosses Street, Greenwich Street, Houston Street, and the Hudson River, Manhattan" (Oct. 1820), New-York Historical Society.

<sup>5</sup> Jan S. Ramirez, "Greenwich Village," in Kenneth T. Jackson, edit., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1995), 506.

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- <sup>6</sup> Cited in Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Rowhouse, 1783-1929, An Architectural and Social History* (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 35.
- <sup>7</sup> Note: The address of this property was 490 Greenwich Street until c. 1855-59. Susan De Vries conducted preliminary conveyance and tax assessment research on this property for the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, including Liber 148, page 277-280 (Jan. 27, 1821), Liber 160, page 356-358 (Mar. 30, 1822), Liber 177, page 193 (May 7, 1823), Liber 198, page 304 (Dec. 21, 1825), Liber 379, page 206 (May 3, 1837), and Liber 455, page 196 (Oct. 2, 1844); "Lispensard Stewart," Moses Y. Beach, "Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of New York City" (1845), 27, in Henry W. Lanier, *A Century of Banking in New York, 1822-1922* (N.Y.: Gilliss Pr., 1922). New York Tax Assessments (1818-84); Tax Assessment Map (1848); *New York City Directories* (1818-60); "Alexander Stewart," U.S. Census (New York, 1810 and 1820); *Stewart and Lispensard Families Family Tree*, New-York Historical Society; J. Montgomery Seaver, *Stewart Family History* (Philadelphia: Amer. Histl. Genealogical Soc., 1929); NY County, Office of the Surrogate, Robert Shiells Will, liber 141, p. 109 (May 8, 1862), and Rebecca Rohr Will, liber 190, p. 36 (June 2, 1869); LPC, *506 Canal Street House Designation Report* (LP-1991) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Marjorie Pearson and Susan De Vries, consultant; "John G. Rohr," Marine Court Naturalization Records (1826) and U.S. Census (New York, 1850).
- <sup>8</sup> NYC, *Common Council Minutes*, Feb. 15, 1808.
- <sup>9</sup> These houses are designated New York City Landmarks.
- <sup>10</sup> NYC, *Common Council Minutes*, vol. 15, p. 386, May 1, 1826.
- <sup>11</sup> Adapted from LPC, *281 East Broadway House (Isaac T. Ludlam House) Designation Report* (LP-1993)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Marjorie Pearson. For the history of Federal style rowhouses, see: Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Pr., 1989); Ada Louis Huxtable, *The Architecture of New York: Classic New York Georgian Gentility to Greek Elegance* (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Bks., 1964); Lockwood; Montgomery Schuyler, "The Small City House in New York," *Architectural Record* (April-June, 1899), 357-388.
- <sup>12</sup> The following Federal style houses are designated New York City Landmarks: Edward Mooney House (1785-89), 18 Bowery; James Watson House (1793, attrib. to John McComb, Jr.; 1806), 7 State Street; nine houses at 25-41 Harrison Street (1796-1828; two designed by John McComb, Jr.); Nicholas and Elizabeth Stuyvesant Fish House (1803-04), 21 Stuyvesant Street; Gideon Tucker House (1808-09), 2 White Street; Robert and Anne Dickey House (1809-10), 67 Greenwich Street; Stephen van Rensselaer House (c. 1816), 149 Mulberry Street; James Brown House (c. 1817), 326 Spring Street; 502 Canal Street House (1818-19); 83 and 85 Sullivan Street Houses (1819; third stories added 1880 and 1874); 486 Greenwich Street House (c. 1823, attributed to John Rohr); William and Rosamond Clark House (1824-25; two stories added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), 51 Market Street; 506-508 Canal Street Houses (c. 1826); 265 Henry Street House (1827; third story added 1895); 127, 129, and 131 MacDougal Street Houses (c. 1828-29); Isaac Ludlam House (c. 1829), 281 East Broadway; Hamilton-Holly and Daniel Leroy Houses (1831), 4 and 20 St. Mark's Place; Seabury Treadwell House (1831-32), 29 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street; 116 Sullivan Street (1832; third story added 1872); 131 Charles Street House (1834); and 203 Prince Street House (1834; third story added 1888).
- <sup>13</sup> *Manhattan Address Directories* (1929-75); Ely-Vanderpoel Family, U.S. Census (New York, 1880); Ambrose E. Vanderpoel, edit., *Personal Memoirs of Edwin A. Ely* (N.Y.: Chas. Francis Pr., 1926); "Smith Ely, Jr.," [www.bioguide.congress.gov](http://www.bioguide.congress.gov) website; NYC, Dept. of Buildings, Certificate of Occupancy (1927); "Business Leases," *New York Times* (NYT), July 30, 1934, 28; "Wide Range Covered in Business Rentals," NYT, Mar. 6, 1937, 30; "Business Leases," NYT, Aug. 16, 1937, 30; NYC, Dept. of Taxes, photograph (c. 1939); Ambrose E. Vanderpoel obit. listing, NYT, Apr. 6, 1940, 20; "Manhattan Transfers," NYT, Sept. 8, 1944, 28; "George Drakoudes," U.S. Social Security Death Index (1967); "When is a Book Not a Book," NYT, Mar. 18, 1977, 73; LPC, photographs (1978, c. 1981, 1984, 1987, 2006); "A New Source of Cookbooks for Collectors," NYT, Jan. 17, 1996, C2; Stuart Waldman, *Maritime Mile: The Story of the Greenwich Village Waterfront* (N.Y.: Mikaya Pr., 2002), 94; "Downtown, Federal Era Blooms in Hiding,," and "Spring Street, a Stroll for All Seasons," NYT, June 20, 2003, E27 and 34; and E27 and 32; "13 Federal-Style Buildings are Eyed as Landmarks," *The Villager*, Aug. 20-26, 2003.
- <sup>14</sup> "Real Estate at Auction," NYT, Mar. 5, 1899, 10, and "Auction Sales This Week," NYT, Mar. 19, 1899, 11.

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<sup>15</sup> Vanderpoel, 300.

<sup>16</sup> “\$600,000 Gifts in Ely Will,” *NYT*, July 1, 1927, 13; “Edwin Ely Estate Put at \$2,982, 963,” *NYT*, Apr. 1, 1928, 14.

<sup>17</sup> NYC, Dept. of Buildings (BN 4973-65).



## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 488 Greenwich Street House has a special character and a 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 488 Greenwich Street House is a modest rowhouse constructed c. 1823 in the Federal style, characterized by its 2-1/2-story height, brick cladding, second-story fenestration, peaked roof, and pedimented dormer; that by the 1820s, the vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets, once a Manhattan marshland known as Lispenard's Meadows, had become a thriving mixed-use district, with Greenwich Street as the main thoroughfare along the west side from the Battery to Greenwich Village, while the broad Canal Street had been laid out with a sewer to assist in draining the marshy area, and that Trinity Church had developed the area around fashionable Hudson Square (St. John's Park) to the southeast, and a steamboat ferry to Hoboken (1823), the public Clinton Market (1829), and a "country market" (1833) were established to the west; that beginning around 1820, members of the German-immigrant Rohr family began to develop rowhouses on the west side of Greenwich Street, both south and north of Canal Street, on land then owned by Alexander L. and Sarah Lispenard Stewart, with John Rohr, a mason/builder, probably constructing these, including No. 488 Greenwich Street; that the Rohrs never resided here but leased the house, which remained in the family until 1846, and the earliest known tenants included a tin/hardware dealer, a coppersmith, a grocer, and a smith/grocer/carman, and that by 1851, the building had become a rooming house; that for nearly a century, it had two long-term owners, hardware dealer Robert Shiells and his heirs (1852-99), and the prosperous and aristocratic Ely family (1899-1944), including former mayor Smith Ely, Jr., whose leather tanning business, Ely, Vanderpoel & Kitchell, was founded in 1868; that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this property was used industrially and commercially; and that, despite the loss of some architectural details, this house, notable singly and as a pair with its neighbor (No. 486), is among the very rare surviving and significantly intact modest Manhattan buildings of the Federal style, period, and 2-1/2-story, 3-bay, single-dormered peaked-roof type, with a commercial ground story, and that their survival is particularly noticeable in a neighborhood that was redeveloped with industrial and loft buildings in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 488 Greenwich Street House, 488 Greenwich Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 595, Lot 82, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair;  
Pablo E. Vengochea, Vice Chair  
Stephen F. Byrns, Diana Chapin, Joan Gerner, Christopher Moore,  
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



**488 Greenwich Street House, Manhattan**  
Photo: Carl Forster, LPC





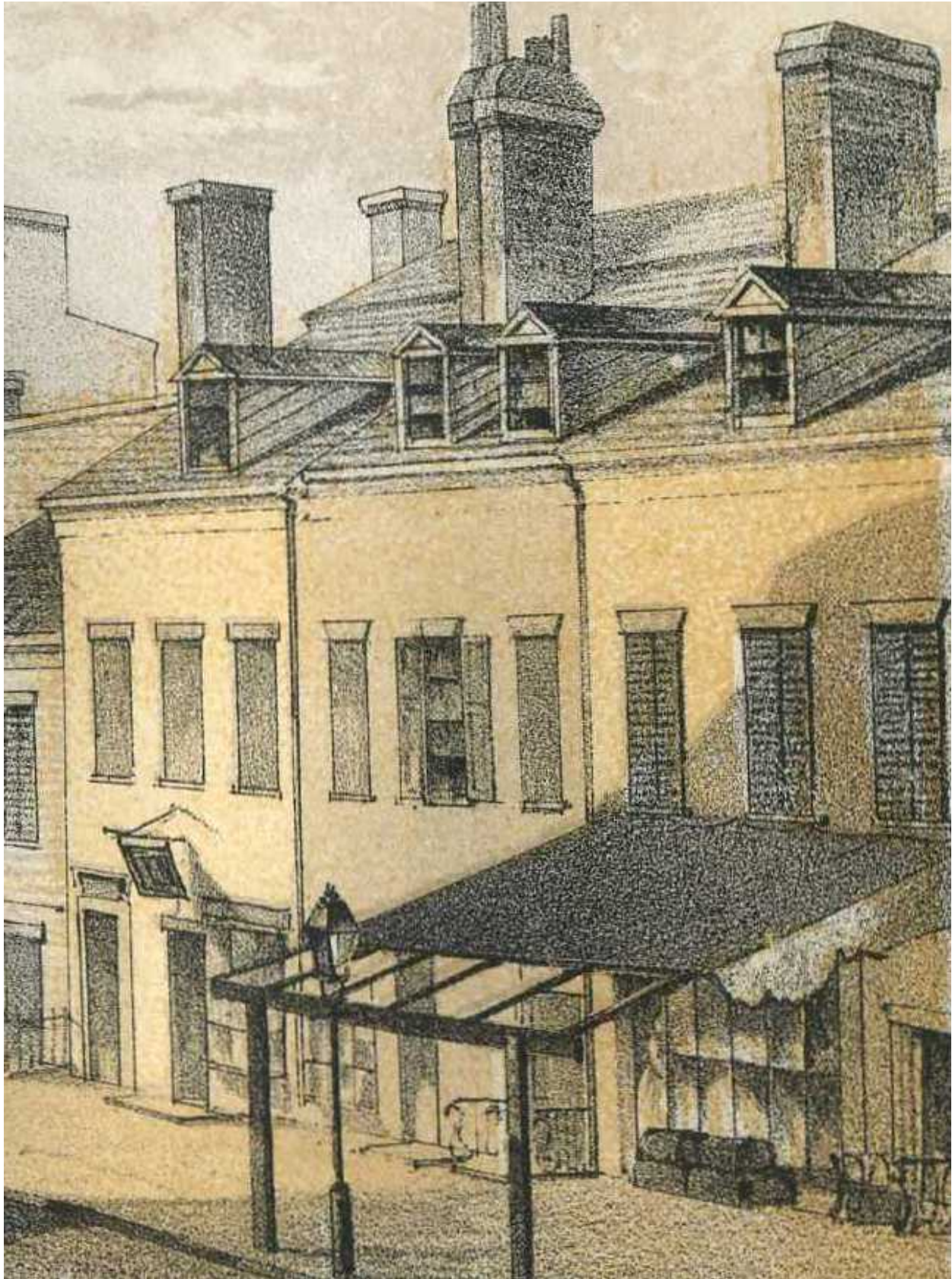
**488 Greenwich Street House, Manhattan**  
Photo: LPC (1978)



**488 Greenwich Street House, Manhattan**

Photo Credit: Federation to Preserve the Greenwich Village Waterfront & Great Port (1987)





**“Greenwich St. Below Thames St. 1861”**

Rendering of similar modest Federal style rowhouses

Source: D.T. Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New-York* (1863)



488 GREENWICH STREET HOUSE (LP-2224), 488 Greenwich Street.  
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 595, Lot 82.

Designated: July 24, 2007