

Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 23, 1965, Calendar No. 6
LP-0036

JAMES WATSON HOUSE (a part of the Shrine of Blessed Elizabeth Seton), 7 State Street, Borough of Manhattan. Right portion 1793, left portion 1806, architect: attributed to John McComb, Jr.; restored in 1965, architect Shanley & Sturges.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 9, Lot 7 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the James Watson House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 8). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This fine brick, Federal town house is significant as the last of the row of elegant town houses which once lined State Street. It is three stories high with an attic and is set on a stone basement. The unusual feature of this house is in the portion added in 1806 where there is a great curved portico which follows the curve of State Street. At the first floor level the portico has square wooden columns, and the part above has circular Ionic columns, believed to have been made from ships masts.

As restored today, on the basis of a print from Valentines Manual of 1859, the house has been returned to its original appearance with its fine cornice, distinctive second floor porch windows and its attractive railing (balustrade) at the edge of the roof. This building is notable for its remarkable oval windows in the west wall, for its splayed window lintels and for the fine rectangular and oval panels of stone set between the windows.

At the public hearing the architect of the 1965 restoration said, in referring to the Watson House, "While it was an important city residence when it was built, its preservation to this day is a near miracle; and the present owner, appreciating its architectural merit and historic importance, has spared no pains or expense to maintain the building and restore it insofar as possible to its original appearance."

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 James Watson 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, part of the James Watson House is one of the few fine 18th century Federal town houses remaining in Manhattan and that the colonnade of the 19th century portion is unique both in its adaptation to the curve of State Street and in its monumental scale.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A 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 James Watson House (a part of the Shrine of Blessed Elizabeth Seton), 7 State Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 9, Lot 7 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.