

Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 19, 1966, Number 9
LP-0147

BROOKLYN BOROUGH HALL, 209 Joralemon Street, Borough of Brooklyn. Begun 1846. Completed 1851; architect Gamaliel King.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 139, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On February 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Brooklyn Borough Hall and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 48). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two speakers spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In a letter to the Commission, the President of the Borough of Brooklyn, the Honorable Abe Stark, said of the building, "While it may not be the oldest building in Brooklyn, it is the one which is known to more people, and in all consideration should be identified as a Landmark."

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Brooklyn Borough Hall, a dignified civic structure of impressive scale, is one of the City's finest Greek Revival buildings. It is oblong, rectangular in plan, with two end wings projected slightly at the rear. This handsome all-masonry building consists of two high stories and a low attic story above a high basement. At the center, above the main roof, is a handsome Georgian Eclectic domed cupola of a considerably later period.

In front of the central section of the building an imposing porch (portico), consisting of six fluted Ionic columns, rises three stories above an inviting flight of steps, which sweep up to the entrance from three sides. A simple pediment surmounts the columns above the cornice line of the roof. The sides and rear of the building likewise have low pitched pediments placed above pilasters and rise three stories above the basement level. The windows are placed between the pilasters and this formal arrangement is both stately and impressive in scale.

Historically, Brooklyn Borough Hall is important as a building which served for nearly fifty years as a City Hall and the seat of government, for the City of Brooklyn before its union with New York in 1898. Originally it housed all the City departments including the courts. The cornerstone was laid in 1836, and it is the oldest of Brooklyn's public buildings. The lobby contains an interesting and valuable collection of portraits of the former Mayors of Brooklyn.

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 Brooklyn Borough Hall 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, Brooklyn Borough Hall is beautifully proportioned, that it is one of the City's finest Greek Revival buildings, executed in the best tradition of fine craftsmanship, that it is a building which -- for over one hundred years -- has provided a dignified home for the seat of government in the Borough of Brooklyn and that architecturally, it is the finest Borough Hall in our City.

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 Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon Street, Borough of Brooklyn and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 139, Lot 1 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.