

Landmarks Preservation Commission
June 12, 1968, Number 2
LP-0582

312 EAST 53RD STREET HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1866.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1345, Lot 47.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 312 East 53rd Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 72). One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission continued the public hearing until January 31, 1967 (Item No. 30). At that time one speaker spoke against designation. Both hearings were duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The owners have indicated to the Commission that they favor the designation of their House.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This attractive little wood house, one of a pair, was built for R. V. J. Cunningham in 1866. Simple as it is, it nonetheless reflects faithfully the post-Civil War architecture so much influenced by French Second Empire models. Here are the Mansard roof and the carefully framed windows and front door, all displaying cornices carried on brackets. The arrangement of the windows is somewhat unusual as the two long ones at the left of the door follow an asymmetrical pattern, while the two above are symmetrically placed with reference to the center of the building, as are the two dormers above them. They are all the double-hung type with the broad central muntin intended to simulate casement windows. This was characteristic of our desire to look French while retaining the practicality of double hung windows.

The house has a high basement and a stoop which changes direction, thus obviating a too deep extension onto the sidewalk. The roof cornice is carried on widely spaced brackets and crowns the front wall effectively. Of a type fast disappearing in the City, this little house and its neighbor add charm and a quaint reminiscence to the neighborhood.

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 312 East 53rd Street House has 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 312 East 53rd Street House is one of the very few wooden houses remaining in Manhattan and that it is a fine example of the small French Second Empire town house retaining on this street a reminder of the post-Civil War period of New York architecture.

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 312 East 53rd Street House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 1345, Lot 47, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.