Landmarks Preservation Commission
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LP-0628

440 CLINTON STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn. Built about 1840; architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 355, Lot 22.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 440 Clinton Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 118). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The owner of this building has indicated to the Commission that he favors its designation as a Landmark.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This mansion is one of the finest Greek Revival residences in all the five Boroughs. Sited on a corner lot so tha t its admirable proportions can be viewed to advantage, this mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival brick and stone house is imposing in size and impressive in appearance. The austere looking, almost square three-story and basement building has dignity and serenity in its measured scale and classic orderliness.

Above the stone basement, the front elevation of brick is divided into three sections. The middle space, projected slightly forward from the main facade, contains a centrally located doorway with stoop and in the upper two floors, single windows. In the other two areas flanking the center portion, windows are symmetrically placed. With the exception of the basement openings, all the windows have cap molded lintels. At the extremities of the front elevation and raised slightly from the wall, three story brick pilasters with decorated molded stone caps adorn the structure. Stone pilasters, which enframe the doorway, support an entablature enriching the entrance. The newel posts flanking the stoop are capped by a carved anthemion motif. A narrow yard, which runs around the two elevations facing the street, is enclosed by a handsome metal railing which abuts against the newel posts of the stoop. Crowning the dwelling is a simple but dominant entablature, enriched by moldings and dentils below the cornice.

This 1840 residence is in an excellent state of preservation and is now occupied by an undertaking establishment. The upper floors are residential. Its exterior has been altered very little in the past century and a quarter. The house was built at a time when the area was rural farm country and clipper ships sailed into New York Harbor, and its original owner, John Rankin, an affluent merchant, had a magnificent view of the bay from his home.

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 440 Clinton Street 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, the 440 Clinton Street House is an impressive mansion, imposing in size, that it has great architectural merit, that it is an asset to the community where it stands and that it is one of the finest Greek Revival residences in New York City.

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 440 Clinton Street House, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 355, Lot 22, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.