

326 EAST 18TH STREET HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1853.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 923, Lot 50.

On May 26, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 326 East 18th Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 15). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Ten witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. Many letters have been received by the Commission favoring this designation. The owner of the house has indicated that she is in favor of its designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

No. 326 is the westernmost house of a charming row of three brick Italianate residences (Nos. 326-330). This low-lying, two-story row is set far back from the street behind exceptionally deep front yards -- a great rarity in Manhattan. Built in 1852-53 on land which had originally been part of Governor Stuyvesant's "Bouwerie", or farm, the houses recall a period when rows of one-family dwellings were beginning to line the city's "uptown" side streets from the Hudson River to Avenue A. With the exception of No. 313, the sole survivor of a mid-eighteen-forties row on the north side of East 18th Street near Second Avenue, Nos. 326-330 are the earliest buildings which still stand on this street.

This row recalls a time when the area east of Third Avenue was just beginning to be developed. The block bounded by First and Second Avenues between 17th and 18th Streets, on which it is located, was conveyed in city lots on November 11, 1847 by the executors of Peter Gerard Stuyvesant (1778-1847), a great-great-grandson of Governor Stuyvesant, to his heirs. Fifteen lots on the south side of 18th Street passed to his nephew, the Reverend Peter Stuyvesant Ten Broeck (1792-1849), of North Danvers, Massachusetts. Quite logically, development of the land by Stuyvesant's other heirs began at the ends of the street. The central section, where Nos. 326-330 are now located, was still vacant in 1852, when the survey for the Dripps Map of that year was made.

It was Cornelia Stuyvesant Ten Broeck (1820-92), a daughter of Reverend Ten Broeck, who was directly responsible for the development of the row. In March 1852, she leased the lots to five men, several of whom were in the construction trades: George W., Theodore F. and Charles E. Youngs; Henry Wilson and John Edwards. The lease specifically stipulated that they were to build on these lots "good and substantial dwelling houses... being three or more stories in height and constructed either of Brick or Stone." The City's tax assessment records indicate that Nos. 328 and 330 were built in 1852, while No. 326 was completed the following year. The houses appear on the Perris Fire Insurance Map of 1854 as Nos. 205, 207 and 209 (corresponding to the modern Nos. 326, 328 and 330) and are depicted as "First Class Dwellings."

According to the City Directory of 1852/53, both George W. and Theodore F. Youngs were carpenters. Shortly thereafter, George began operating a good-sized lumber yard on lower Seventh Avenue in partnership with William Youngs; from 1855 on, George W. Youngs is identified as a builder. At the time the row on East 18th Street was built, Henry Wilson was a stonecutter who lived nearby, in a wide brick house at No. 129 East 16th Street. Shortly thereafter, he opened a large stone yard in partnership with John Edwards, under the firm name of Wilson & Edwards, which occupied the eastern half of the block between East 15th and 16th Streets and First Avenue and Avenue A. It is of interest to note that Henry Wilson lived at No. 326 for many years and that Edwards was associated with the development in 1855-56 of brownstones which still stand to the west of Nos. 326-330.

No. 326, like its neighbors, is vernacular in feeling, with decorative elements deriving from the popular Italianate style of the 1850s. Erected in 1853, it was, as noted above, the residence of its builder, Henry Wilson, for many years. It is approached by a high stoop leading to the entrance doorway, sheltered beneath a canopy. French doors open onto the veranda, which is continuous with that of the

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center house, No. 328. Conceived as a pair, both Nos. 326 and 328 always had small rear extensions. The veranda roof and entrance canopies are concave in section, with the entrance canopies set slightly higher. They are all supported by delicate ironwork trellises, embellished with graceful and varied decorative motifs. This treatment of the ironwork is similar to that of such elegant town-houses as Nos. 3 and 4 Gramercy Park West. The cast iron veranda railing, the handrailings of the stoop and the yard railings are more conventionally Italianate in design, with arched panels. The original ironwork of the stoop has been stuccoed over. The design of the roof cornice, with three elongated panels separated by paired brackets, is identical to that of No. 328.

On the west side, the house abuts a three-story brownstone, erected a few years later. Built almost to the property line, this house protects the front yard of No. 326.

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 326 East 18th 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 326 East 18th Street House is one of a delightful row of brick residences which has historical associations with descendants of Governor Peter Stuyvesant, that these modest Italianate houses are among the earliest surviving structures in this neighborhood, that they are enhanced by graceful ironwork and set behind exceptionally deep, landscaped front yards which provide unexpected surprise and refreshing contrast to the continuous line of brick and brownstone facades along the street.

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 326 East 18th Street House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 923, Lot 50, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.