Landmarks Preservation Commission
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LP-0752

296 STATE STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn, Built c. 1852.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 176, Lot 8.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 296 State Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 65). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Twenty-six witnesses spoke in favor of historic preservation in the Boerum Hill neighborhood and for the creation of the Boerum Hill Historic District. There were no speakers in opposition to designation of the houses on State Street.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

No. 296 State Street, a transitional house, built c. 1852, is basically Greek Revival in style, although it incorporates elements that can be attributed to the new Italianate style. George Hastings, a merchant who lived at 32 Pierrepont Street, acquired this property from Charles Hoyt in 1850 and in 1851 he sold the lot to Erastus A. Conkling who ran a wood yard. He moved into the house in 1852.

This residence was a part of Boerum Hill community which had formed the original Town of Breuckelen founded in 1646 by Dutch colonists. It was incorporated into the larger City of Brooklyn in 1834. The development of Boerum Hill as an urban community began in the 1840s and continued into the 1870s. Many of the houses which remain from this period incorporate Greek Revival and Italianate elements in their design. These houses were built for merchants and professional people, many of whom worked in the Wall Street area or in the vicinity of the Fulton Street ferry.

All the land in this block had originally been part of the Jacob Van Brunt farm. He willed it to his daughter Jane, wife of Samuel T. Gerritsen, in 1824. State Street was originally known as Gerritsen Street. The Gerritsens and the Van Brunts, both old Dutch families, had long been interconnected by marriage and had some of the largest landholdings in Kings County. Charles Hoyt and Russell Nevins, two Manhattan real estate developers with extensive interests in Brooklyn, acquired the properties on this block in 1833. Both Hoyt and Nevins had streets named after them to the east of this block. By 1852 much of the block had already been built up, and although this house was a single house, it has certain stylistic similarities to the earlier pair Nos. 300 and 302.

The painted brick front rises three stories above a stuccoed basement whose windows are set behind handsome ornamental iron grilles. The doorway rises above a high stoop and is surmounted by a shallow triangular brownstone pediment supported on simple curved brackets. While this particular form of pediment was used in Greek Revival architecture the supporting brackets are Italianate. The glass paneled double doors, set under a rectangular transom, are enframed by a rope molding. The full-height parlor floor windows, and the windows of the second floor, have brownstone lintels with cap moldings, another typical Greek Revival form. The roof cornice is a simplified version of the Italianate style. It is supported on foliate brackets with panelled frieze sections between them.

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 296 State 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 No. 296 State Street House is a fine example of a house which is transitional from Greek Revival to the Italianate style of architecture, with much handsome detail, that it contributes to the dignity of the street and that this house adds significantly to the overall character of the Boerum Hill community.

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 296 State Street House, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 176, Lot 8, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.