Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 20, 1973, Number 20
LP-0763

318 STATE STREET HOUSE, Borough of Brooklyn. Built c. 1847.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 176, Lot 19.

On June 23, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 318 State Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 76). 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 Distric. There were no speakers in opposition to designation of the houses on State Street.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

No. 318 State Street was built as one of a pair with No. 320 about 1847, in the Greek Revival style, which was very popular for New York row houses in the 1830s and 1840s. John Combes, a partner in a Washington Market produce business with John Nix, acquired No. 318 in November 1846 for investment purposes. Nix acquired the adjoining lot, No. 320. The houses must have been built early in 1847. They were among the first constructed on the blockfront.

These residences were part of the 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 incorporated Greek Revival and Italiante elements in the row house 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 1842. 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.

The painted brick front of No. 318 rises three stories above a rusticated basement. The two square-headed basement windows are set behind ornamental iron grilles. The entranceway, placed above a high stoop, is capped by a low pediment, typical of the Greek Revival. The paneled wood door is set beneath a rectangular glass transom with a row of dentils. The door is flanked by wood pilasters with Doric capitals. The glass sash in the vertical sidelights outside the pilasters have been replaced by wood panels. The windows with their six over six sash have stone lintels with slightly projecting cap moldings. The roof cornice with its closely spaced brick dentils and wide brick fascia beneath it, is also typical of the Greek Revival.

The wrought-iron yard railings and the hand railings of the stoop are of a delicate nature with curvilinear ornament at the top of the hand railings and fretwork at the base of the yard railings, derived from Greek sources. The use of decorative wrought ironwork for railings became popular in New York City in the Federal period and continued in fashion in this area until mid-century. The craftsmanship displays the skill of the local iron works.

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