

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 15, 1973, Calendar Number 3
LP-0644

85 SULLIVAN STREET, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1819; architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 489, Lot 15.

On February 3, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of 85 Sullivan Street and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 7). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The representative of Community Board No. 2 and three other witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The owner of the building also spoke. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This Federal style house, and its neighbor No. 83, have unusually fine doorways which were generally the most important architectural features of the houses of this period. Elegant and understated, they typify the "architecture of good breeding." What is unusual about these two doorways is that, after 150 years, they are the earliest complete Federal doorways remaining in Manhattan, despite the fact that the panels of the door at No. 85 have been slightly altered. Together, they illustrate another important element of Federal design: a careful attention to scale. No. 85 Sullivan Street is narrower than No. 83, and its doorway is treated more simply. (For the description of No. 83 Sullivan Street see Report on LP-0643.)

A beautiful leaded transom, above the door, is the outstanding feature of the doorway. The reveals and molding around the doorway are reeded and the upper corners are finished with small blocks, a typical Federal detail. The stone lintels over the doorway and some of the windows and windowsills have been covered with sheetmetal, but the stone watertable exhibits the original fine tooling. Other important Federal elements are: the Flemish bond of the brickwork, the six-over-six pane windows and the wrought iron railings at the low stoop and area-way. The railing, ornamented only at the platform of the stoop, and the acorns topping the spindles of the area-way railing are typical designs. The roof was raised to three full stories in 1874 when a cornice supported on closely spaced modillions was added.

HISTORY

The lot on which this house stands was originally part of the Bayard Farm. The first Nicholas Bayard was the brother-in-law of Peter Stuyvesant. A later Nicholas Bayard conveyed the property to Daniel Ludlow and Brockholst Livingston, as trustees in 1789. They in turn sold it to Aaron Burr in 1791, who acquired a portion of the Bayard Farm, contiguous to his estate "Richmond Hill" which stood west of Sixth Avenue. Burr subdivided his property, and when he sold this lot to Anthony Bowrosan in 1802, it was on what Burr called Locust Street. In 1807, Bowrosan, who operated a tavern and garden at "Richmond Hill", sold the lot to a carpenter, Drake Crane. Sullivan Street was named for the Revolutionary general, John Sullivan.

In 1810, Crane built a wood house on the rear of this lot. This, and the wood building to the rear of No. 83 Sullivan Street, were among the first buildings on this block. Nine years later, in 1819, No. 85 Sullivan Street was built. Today, 150 years later, and almost miraculously, it retains most of its original features.

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 85 Sullivan Street has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

85 Sullivan Street (Contid.)

The Commission further finds, that among its important qualities, No. 85 Sullivan Street is a fine Federal style house, retaining one of the earliest complete Federal doorways remaining in Manhattan, that it displays Flemish bond brickwork and handsome iron handrailings at the stoop and that it continues to serve the residential purpose for which it was constructed.

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 85 Sullivan Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 489, Lot 15, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.