

1966

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
April 19, 1966, Number 18  
LP-0212

131 CHARLES STREET HOUSE, Borough of Manhattan. 1834.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 632, Lot 30.

On March 8, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 131 Charles Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 36). Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. In a telegram to the Commission, the owner of the house favored its designation. In a letter, the Borough President's Community Planning Board No. 2 approved the proposed designation.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This charming, early Nineteenth Century two-story brick house with peaked roof, delicate dormers and high basement, is one of the few remaining examples of the small comfortable Federal street houses, once so abundant in New York City. Intimate in scale, the proportions and details are marked by a modest simplicity. The decorative doorway is the one note of richness in this simple builder's house. A low stoop with wrought-iron railings leads gracefully up to a handsome Federal style doorway with an eight-panelled door, slightly recessed behind two slender wood columns. The wood entablature above the door is surmounted by a rectangular leaded light, framed in handsome carved moldings. The lintel, supported on brackets above the door, appears to be a Victorian addition taking the place of an earlier plain type.

All the windows, except the dormers, have their original frames and lintels. The beaded wood cornice remains unchanged, but the alley door is missing and the interesting elliptical window above it has been bricked up. This small residence was built by David Christie, a stone cutter in 1834, for about \$2,600. These residences of the 1820's were almost all builder's, carpenter's, or stonemason's homes, and there were several blocks of them at one time. In 1899 Montgomery Schuyler, the critic, wrote that they were "the most respectable and artistic pattern of habitation New York has ever known."

#### 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 131 Charles 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 131 Charles Street House is a well preserved example of a charming, late Federal brick house of excellent proportion and scale, built of sound materials in the best tradition of craftsmanship, that it is evocative of the qualities of another century and of another way of life, and that it represents one of the best examples of the small New York town house.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A 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 131 Charles Street House, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 632, Lot 30, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.