

1973

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
May 15, 1973, Calendar Number 2  
LP-0643

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

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 489, Lot 14.

On February 3, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of 83 Sullivan Street and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 6). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The representative of Community Board No. 2 and three 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. 85, 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 has been slightly altered. Together, they illustrate another important element of Federal design: a careful attention to scale. No. 83 Sullivan Street is wider than No. 85, as it includes a passage to the rear of the lot. The doorway of No. 83 is consequently wider than the doorway of No. 85 and has been treated more elaborately. (For a description of No. 85 Sullivan Street see Report on LP-0644.)

The beautiful ovals in the transom of the doorway are smaller in size than at No. 85 because they are doubled. Beneath the transom the entablature is broken back between the Tuscan columns that flank the six-paneled door. Behind each column the wood is cut to resemble rusticated stone. Although the stone lintels over some of the windows and windowsills have been covered with sheet metal and the basement stuccoed, other important Federal elements have survived. The Flemish bond of the brickwork and most of the original wrought iron railings at the low stoop and areaway are still in place. The railing, ornamented only at the platform of the stoop, and the acorns topping the spindles of the areaway railings are typical designs. The roof was raised to three full stories in 1880 when a cornice with foliate brackets 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, David Mulford. Sullivan Street was named for the Revolutionary general, John Sullivan.

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

83 Sullivan Street (Cont'd.)

The Commission further finds, that among its important qualities, No. 83 Sullivan Street is a fine Federal style house, retaining the earliest complete Federal doorway 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 83 Sullivan Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 489, Lot 14, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.