

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 15, 1973, Calendar Number 4
LP-0645

116 SULLIVAN STREET, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1832; architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 504, Lot 29.

On February 3, 1970, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of 116 Sullivan Street and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 8). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. The representative of Community Board No. 2 and four witnesses, including the wife of the owner spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The front of this Federal style house is of red brick, laid up in Flemish bond. The original pitched roof was doubtless of slate but the house was raised two stories in 1872. The present window lintels, with their heavy cap moldings, and the sills with corbels were probably covered with sheetmetal at the same time.

The glory of 116 Sullivan Street is the elaborate enframing of the front door within its simple round-arched masonry opening. The opening itself is flanked by plain brownstone pilasters, and by a flush-faced semi-circular band of brownstone defining the arch. The treatment of the sidelights was rare in its own time and is unique today. It is of great significance to New York domestic architecture. They are flanked by slender wood Ionic columns, backed by wood carved to resemble stone rustication. The columns in the corners are cut in half where they meet the masonry. The handsome entablature is broken back beyond the columns to form a recess over the door. The wood soffit of the arch, outside the fanlight, is paneled and trimmed by a carved molding. But it is the sidelights that are particularly worthy of note. Instead of the leaded glass treatment, typical of the time, each sidelight is divided into three superimposed oval sections. The ovals are formed by a richly carved wood enframing that simulates a cloth sash curtain drawn through a series of rings.

The Historic American Buildings Survey has recorded a similar doorway at No. 329 Cherry Street. Since this building is now demolished, the door enframing at 116 Sullivan Street remains New York City's sole surviving example of this particular treatment of a Federal style doorway, even though the six-panel door is not original.

HISTORY

No. 116 Sullivan Street stands on land which was once part of the Bayard Farm. Nicholas Bayard was Peter Stuyvesant's brother-in-law. The building is one of seven houses built as an investment by Charles Starr, a bookbinder, whose business was on Nassau Street. Starr must have been quite prosperous, for the house he built for himself at 110 Sullivan Street had the unusually ample width of 32 feet.

Still used for residential purposes today, No. 116 Sullivan Street, with its unique doorway, suggests the original appearance of this row which must have been intended for well-to-do families.

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 116 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.

116 Sullivan Street (Cont'd.)

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the 116 Sullivan Street house, although remodeled, is a fine Federal townhouse, that it displays a doorway which is unique in New York City and that the building continues to serve the residential purpose for which it was designed.

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 116 Sullivan Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 504, Lot 29, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.