



March 22, 2021

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Commissioner Sarah Carroll, Chair
NYC Landmarks Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: In support of landmark designation of 50 West 13th St.

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Dear Chairwoman Carroll,

On behalf of the Preservation League of New York State, I write in support of the evaluation of 50 West 13th St. as an individual landmark. This site contains significant history deserving of protection under the rule of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Jay DiLorenzo
President

With the passing of owner Edith O'Hara, of the 13th Street Repertory Company which occupies the building, we are concerned for the future of the building and its rich cultural history. Built in Greek revival style c. 1846-47, it retains its original form and many architectural details such as the ogee arches at the window lintels, a bracketed metal cornice at the roof, parlor floor windows, and cast-iron portico with a hipped metal hood. Local lore also points to a hidden passageway in the building rumored to be connected to the underground railroad. While other theories may indicate use as a speakeasy.

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Recently, it was discovered this building had a strong link to African American history. Between 1858-84, Jacob Day was one of New York's most prominent African American businessman and Abolitionist. During his time residing at the property were historic times spanning the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, Draft Riots, Emancipation and the adoption of Amendments 13, 14, 15, and Reconstruction efforts, which Mr. Day was active in.

When the building was altered to include a theater in 1958, the so-called "off-off Broadway" theater took on important social & cultural history. Under Edith's direction, it championed up-and-coming artists, including Bette Midler, Barry Manilow, Chazz Palminteri, Amy Stiller, Jamie DeRoy, Richard Dreyfus, and Christopher Meloni.

The history that resides within the walls of this building is something we believe should be further explored and retained for future generations. From the architecture to the history of Mr. Day as a prominent African American resident, to potential Underground Railroad connections, as well as the cultural significance of the off-off Broadway decades- 50 West 13th St. runs the gamut of historic importance we seek to celebrate.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Jay DiLorenzo
President