



THIRD COUNCIL DISTRICT OF  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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ERIK BOTTCHEER  
COUNCIL MEMBER

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January 14, 2022

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

Dear Chair Carroll:

I write in support of Village Preservation's November 4, 2020 letter and the additional letter dated February 5, 2021, both of which urged landmark designation of 50 West 13th Street in Manhattan. This remarkably intact 19th century, Greek Revival row house has significant ties to both African American history and the history of the Off-Off Broadway movement, and deserves landmarks protections.

Between 1858 and 1884, Jacob Day owned and resided at this location. He was one of New York's most prominent and successful African American businessmen during the second half of the 19th century, who also helped lead campaigns for civil rights for African Americans, particularly against barriers to the franchise in New York. There is also considerable evidence that he was a supporter of the Underground Railroad, possibly assisting from this very house. Such extant sites in Greenwich Village associated with significant figures or institutions of what was once the largest African American community in New York should be honored and protected.

Later, 50 West 13th Street would enjoy a very different kind of historical association, with the Off-Off Broadway movement during the 20th century. As early as 1958, the lower level of the building was repurposed as a theater. By 1972, the 13th Street Repertory Company was founded at the site and remained in operation until its owner and founder Edith O'Hara passed. For years, this theater provided writers and actors an environment to push the boundaries of their craft. When O'Hara presented one of Tennessee Williams's plays at her theater, Williams proclaimed from her stage that the future of theater in America was not in big Broadway theaters, but in small, independent houses such as the 13th Street Repertory.

Therefore, I strongly urge you to designate this site as soon as possible for its architectural significance, place in African American history, place in the Off-Off Broadway movement and place in New York City's history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erik Bottcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**ERIK BOTTCHER**  
Council Member