

486 GREENWICH STREET HOUSE, Manhattan. Built c. 1823; attributed to John Rohr, mason.
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 595, Lot 83.

On April 10, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 486 Greenwich Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 13). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Six people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of State Senator Thomas K. Duane, State Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, Historic Districts Council, and Manhattan Community Board 2. The owner took no position on designation. In addition, the Commission received several communications in support of designation.

Summary

The modest rowhouse at No. 486 Greenwich Street was constructed c. 1823 in the Federal style, characterized by its 2-1/2-story height, second-story Flemish bond brickwork and fenestration, peaked roof, and pedimented dormer. By the 1820s, the vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets, once a Manhattan marshland known as Lispenard's Meadows, had become a thriving mixed-use district. Greenwich Street was the main thoroughfare along the west side from the Battery to Greenwich Village, while the broad Canal Street had been laid out with a sewer to assist in draining the marshy area. Trinity Church had developed the area around fashionable Hudson Square (St. John's Park) to the southeast, and a steamboat ferry to Hoboken (1823), the public Clinton Market (1829), and a "country market" (1833) were established to the west. Beginning around 1820, members of the German-immigrant Rohr family began to develop rowhouses on the west side of Greenwich Street, both south and north of Canal Street, on land then owned by Alexander L. and Sarah Lispenard Stewart. John Rohr, a mason/builder, probably constructed these, including No. 486 Greenwich Street. He and his wife, Martha, never resided here, but leased the house until 1836; the earliest known tenant was merchant Isaac Moses (1824-26). Baker Charles Hummel was a resident and owner, and apparently also had his business here, from 1831 to 1850. By 1851, the building had become a rooming house. For a century, it had two long-term owners: Abraham Witherup and Milton W. Armstrong, partners in a building firm, and their heirs (1854-84), and real estate operator Robert I. Brown and his family (1884-1953). In the 20th century, the property was used industrially, including A[ndrew]. Allan & Son, a bearing metals manufacturing firm (1906-17), and A. Johnston & Son Iron Works (1953-75). Despite the loss of some architectural details, this house, notable singly and as a pair with its neighbor (No. 488), is among the very rare surviving and significantly intact modest Manhattan buildings of the Federal style, period, and 2-1/2-story, 3-bay, single-dormered peaked-roof type, with a commercial ground story. Their survival is particularly noticeable in a neighborhood that was redeveloped with industrial and loft buildings in the late-19th and 20th centuries.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Development of the Greenwich and Canal Streets Neighborhood and Later Changes¹

The vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets, at the northern edge of the neighborhood known since the 1970s as Tribeca (Triangle Below Canal Street), was for much of the 18th century commonly known as Lispenard's Meadows. This marshy land, connected by streams to the Collect Pond (approximately at today's Lafayette and Centre Streets) and to the North (Hudson) River, was a major impediment on the western side of Manhattan to northward travel and development. Previously, in the 17th century, the Dutch had set aside land for partially freed slaves just north of this uninhabited region, to act as a buffer zone between their settlement to the south and Native Americans to the north. African Symon Congo was granted in 1644 an 8-acre farm to the northeast of this intersection, bounded approximately by present-day Hudson, Charlton, Downing, and MacDougal Streets. After the British took control of New York in 1664, Africans were legally barred from owning property. During British rule, this area was located within portions of the Trinity Church and Anthony Rutgers Farms, granted in 1705 and 1733 respectively (Congo's property became part of the Church Farm). Rutgers' property was transferred after his death in 1746, by inheritance and sale, to Leonard Lispenard (1715-1790), who had married Rutgers' daughter Alice. Lispenard's mansion was built c. 1740 at the intersection of today's Hudson and Desbrosses Streets. The Lispenard property was inherited in 1790 by Leonard's son, Anthony Lispenard, who began to plot the land in 1795. According to the 1800 Census, Anthony Lispenard owned five slaves. After his death in 1805, the Lispenard heirs in 1807 petitioned the Common Council of New York for, and were granted, the water lots opposite their holdings at Canal Street. In 1811, they also petitioned the Council for, and were granted, the right to dig a channel to drain their land between Canal and Spring Streets. The Lispenard mansion was demolished around 1813.

Trinity Church, which had earlier leased lots on its Church Farm property, also began preparing for development, and ceded to the City those portions necessary for the layout of streets, beginning with Hudson Street in 1797. St. John's Chapel (1803-07, John McComb, Jr.) was constructed next to Hudson Square (also known as St. John's Park), laid out between Varick, Beach, Hudson, and Laight Streets. Though the vicinity of the park remained relatively isolated until the 1820s, Trinity further encouraged residential growth by selling, rather than leasing, lots, and this became one of New York's most fashionable residential districts into the 1830s. Trinity's land farther north was not as conducive to development until after the draining of Lispenard's Meadows.

Greenwich Street became the main thoroughfare along the west side of Manhattan from the Battery to Greenwich Village. As early as 1729, the Common Council had planned for two new streets (Greenwich and Washington) on the west side of lower Manhattan "for the better utility of the Trade and Commerce of this City,"² that were to be plotted on landfill. The layout of lower Greenwich Street, at the high water line of the North River, was begun in 1739. Complicating the realization of these plans, however, were a number of impediments: a bluff that ran along the east side of the planned route of Greenwich Street from the Battery to Wall Street; many of the "water lots" in the area flooded at high tide; and most of the land was owned by a number of wealthy landowners and Trinity Church. The issue of creating landfill along the shore was ignored throughout most of the 18th century, but after the Revolutionary War, owners of property along Greenwich Street were eventually required to relinquish portions of their property so that the street could be laid out. In 1787, the Common Council passed an ordinance to complete the landfill necessary to create the 65-foot-wide streetbed from the Battery to Cortlandt Street and, in 1794, passed another ordinance to complete Greenwich Street between the Battery and Rector Street. Closely following the shoreline of the river, Greenwich Street was apparently opened by 1797 after Trinity Church granted its portion of the street to the City. Lower Greenwich Street attracted the construction of elegant houses for the social elite and merchant class and became one of the most fashionable addresses in New York for over four decades. Farther north, Greenwich Street's character was somewhat more mixed in terms of its class of residents, as it "was home to numerous artisans and shopkeepers as well as a small population of free blacks."³ Greenwich Street had been completed as far north as Christopher Street by 1809.

An 1820 survey conducted by John Randel, Jr., of the area west of Greenwich Street, between Desbrosses and Houston Streets, indicates that the shoreline was then quite irregular, West Street did exist for the most part, and that there was a rectangular boat basin at Washington and Canal Streets.⁴ Washington and West Streets along the North River were created through landfill, and completed by around 1824 as far north as the State Prison (1796-97), located just north of Christopher Street. The area of today's Greenwich Village was, during the 18th century, the location of the small rural hamlet of Greenwich, as well as the country seats

and summer homes of wealthy downtown aristocrats, merchants, and capitalists. A number of cholera and yellow fever epidemics in lower Manhattan between 1799 and 1822 led to an influx of settlers in the Greenwich area, with the population quadrupling between 1825 and 1840.⁵ Previously undeveloped tracts of land there were speculatively subdivided for the construction of town houses and rowhouses.

Though Anthony Rutgers had been granted his petition in 1733 to lay a ditch to assist in draining the area of Lispenard's Meadows, and several attempts at drainage were made over the years, no decisive action was taken until the early 19th century. A survey was finally made in 1805 for a 100-foot-wide Canal Street, but not until 1817 was an ordinance passed to "fill in" Lispenard's Meadows, and in 1819 a sewer was finally completed along the street's length. By the 1820s, Canal Street had become a thriving retail district. A steamboat ferry to Hoboken was established at its west end in 1823. A public market, named the Clinton Market after former governor DeWitt Clinton, was opened in 1829 on the triangle of land bounded by West, Washington, Spring, and Canal Streets, and a "country market" was established in 1833 on a triangular site just south of there, on the south side of Canal Street.

The appeal of the fashionable residential neighborhood surrounding St. John's Park was short-lived as the entire area became increasingly commercial. As James Fenimore Cooper had observed as early as 1828 of the vicinity of lower Manhattan, "commerce is gradually taking possession of the whole of the lower extremity of the island, though the Bay, the battery, and the charming Broadway, still cause many of the affluent to depart with reluctance."⁶ By 1840, with the straightening of the Hudson River shoreline and the construction of piers and wharves at every cross street between Vesey and King Streets, the waterfront became quite active, particularly for produce associated with the Washington Market to the south. In 1846, the Hudson River Railroad was incorporated, and was constructed along West Street, terminating in a station at Chambers Street in 1851. An 1853 map indicates that a freight depot was located at Canal Street. In 1866, Trinity Church and other property owners sold St. John's Park, and the Hudson River Railroad built St. John's Freight Terminal (1867-69, John B. Snook) on the site. Numerous large warehouse buildings replaced many of the earlier low-scale residential and commercial structures, including a storage warehouse at No. 490-506 Greenwich Street (1883-84, John B. McIntyre) constructed to the north of No. 488 Greenwich Street. The city's first elevated train line opened along Greenwich Street in 1870.

While New York City had developed as the largest port in the United States by the early 19th century, in the early 20th century it emerged as one of the busiest ports in the world. In Manhattan, South Street along the East River had been the primary artery for maritime commerce, but West Street became a competitor in the 1870s and supplanted the former by about 1890. After the Civil War, New York also flourished as the commercial and financial center of the country. The corridor of blocks closest to the Hudson River was, throughout the 19th century, a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, typical of a waterfront neighborhood. The diversity of businesses in the vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets included lumber, stone, and coal yards; iron and copper works; sugar refineries; soap, lantern, glass, pipe, wire, and steel wool manufacturing; elevator works; food processing; and bonded warehouses along West and Washington Streets.

Transportation improvements connected with the construction of the Holland Tunnel (1919-27), and the completion of the elevated Miller Highway (1929-31) above West Street, provided easier access between the metropolitan region and the Hudson River waterfront. Trucking traffic greatly increased in the neighborhood, and there were a number of effects on the area's real estate, such as the spurring of construction of even larger loft buildings. Most of the many early Federal style houses that survived into the 1920s in the vicinity of the western blocks of Canal Street were demolished. St. John's Chapel was torn down in 1919 for the widening of Varick Street, and the Holland Tunnel exited onto the former site of St. John's Freight Terminal. The elevated was demolished in 1940. A number of early 19th-century rowhouses, such as Nos. 486 and 488 Greenwich Street, Nos. 502-508 Canal Street, and the James Brown House (c. 1817), 326 Spring Street, however, survived in the vicinity of Canal and Greenwich Streets, in part because they remained viable for commercial and residential use.

Construction and 19th-Century Ownership and Tenancy of No. 488 (later 486) Greenwich Street⁷

Beginning around 1820, members of the Rohr family began to develop rowhouses on the west side of Greenwich Street, both south and north of Canal Street, on land then owned by Alexander L. Stewart and Sarah Lispenard Stewart, daughter of Anthony Lispenard (married 1803), who were the inheritors of one-third of the Lispenard's Meadows property. According to the 1810 and 1820 Censuses, the Stewarts were not slave owners. Alexander Stewart (1775-1838) was described in 1808 as "the active manager of the said undivided estate of Mr. Lispenard and contracting for valuable improvements upon their grounds."⁸ First constructed c.

1820 were three houses on the northwest corner, leased by the Stewarts to German-born (naturalized 1826) merchant tailor John George Rohr (c. 1798-), and his wife, Rebecca (c. 1802-1869). These were followed the next year by two adjacent houses to the north, leased to his relative John Rohr, a mason/builder, and his wife, Martha. An 1820 city directory listed John G. Rohr's business at the corner of Greenwich and Canal Streets (in 1833-38, he was listed at No. 482 Greenwich Street -- the northwest corner). In 1823, the Stewarts leased six more lots to the north of these existing houses to John Rohr. Tax assessment records for 1823 indicated Rohr's name in pencil (as a correction to Stewart's) for the portion (still vacant lots) that comprised (today's) Nos. 486 and 488 Greenwich Street. Tax assessments records for 1824 indicated houses on these two lots, with the annotation "new." In an 1823 city directory, John Rohr was listed at Canal Street near Greenwich. By 1825, John Rohr had constructed on the remaining four lots to the north of the earlier houses. John G. Rohr built an additional five houses c. 1826 on the south side of Canal Street, of which (today's) Nos. 506-508 survive.⁹ Presumably, all of the brick-clad houses developed by the two Rohrs were constructed by mason John Rohr. John G. Rohr acquired the property at the northwest corner of Canal and Greenwich from the Stewarts in 1823. Ownership of the northern six of John Rohr's houses, including (today's) Nos. 486 and 488 Greenwich Street, was transferred by the Stewarts to him in December 1825. From 1825 until 1846, John Rohr was listed in directories living on Greenwich Street near Spring Street (No. 498 Greenwich after 1827). In 1827-30, John G. Rohr lived at No. 243 (later 510) Canal Street, and from 1830 to 1849 at No. 239 (later 506) Canal Street, then No. 238 Canal; his clothing business was at No. 480 Greenwich Street in 1838-44, at No. 238 Canal Street in 1844-49, and then at No. 260 Canal Street. In 1837-40, John G. Rohr also manufactured platform patent balance and jack screws at No. 242 Canal Street. His son, George Rohr (c. 1824-), joined him in the clothing business, and was listed residing with his parents, after 1844. There is no evidence to suggest that the Rohrs owned slaves. John G. and Rebecca Rohr moved to Baltimore in 1868.

Tax assessments did not employ house numbers for the properties on this block of Greenwich Street until 1826, nor did city directories until 1827. *Minutes* of the Common Council refer to a petition in 1826 requesting that the houses on Greenwich Street north of Vesey Street "be correctly numbered."¹⁰ The original number of (today's) No. 486 Greenwich Street House was No. 488 Greenwich Street (it was re-numbered c. 1855-59). John and Martha Rohr, who retained this house until 1836, never resided here. The earliest known tenant (1824-26) was merchant Isaac Moses. The Rohrs sold the house in 1836 to Charles Hummel, a baker who had been a resident (and apparently also had his business here) since 1831. Hummel was not listed here after 1850. He and his heirs were also the owners of No. 490 (later 488) Greenwich Street in 1846-52. In 1841, Jacob Rohr resided at No. 488 (later 486) Greenwich Street. According to the 1851 *Manhattan Street Directory*, it was by then a rooming house with five workingclass male boarders, including a porter, a baker, a weaver, and a foundryman. It was acquired in 1852 by grocer Daniel S. Miller and his wife, Ann K., who held it briefly to 1854. It then was owned for three decades (1854-1884) by Abraham Witherup and Milton William Armstrong (1804-1865), partners in the building firm of Witherup & Armstrong, and their heirs.¹¹ Directories listed Henry W. Fleischhauer's bakery here c. 1870-71. After the completion of the Greenwich Street elevated railway in 1870, the desirability of using buildings here as residences significantly decreased.

In 1884, the property was purchased by Robert I. Brown (1824-1914) and his wife, nee Clarissa Eliza Doty (died by 1889). The long-term owner of Nos. 480-484 Greenwich Street to the south, Robert I. Brown, born in Philadelphia, had established a real estate business in 1867 in Morrisania, the Bronx, that prospered with the growth and development of the borough. He retired in 1893, turning over the firm to his sons, W.E. & W.I. Brown. The Brown family retained this property until 1953.

Federal Style Rowhouses in Manhattan ¹²

As the city of New York grew in the period after the Revolution, large plots of land in Manhattan were sold and subdivided for the construction of groups of brick-clad houses. Their architectural style has been called "Federal" after the new republic, but in form and detail they continued the Georgian style of Great Britain. Federal style houses were constructed from the Battery as far north as 23rd Street between the 1790s and 1830s. The size of the lot dictated the size of the house: typically each house lot was 20 or 25 feet wide by 90 to 100 feet deep, which accorded with the rectilinear plan of New York City, laid out in 1807 and adopted as the Commissioners' Plan in 1811. The rowhouse itself would be as wide as the lot, and 35 to 40 feet deep. This allowed for a stoop and small front yard or areaway, and a fairly spacious rear yard, which usually contained a buried cistern to collect fresh water and the privy. During the early 19th century, several houses were often constructed together, sharing common party walls, chimneys, and roof timbering to form a continuous group. The houses were of load-bearing masonry construction or modified timber-frame

construction with brick-clad front facades. With shared structural framing and party walls, each house in a row was dependent on its neighbor for structural stability. With the increasing availability of pattern books, such as Asher Benjamin's *American Builders Companion* (published in six editions between 1806 and 1827), local builders had access to drawings and instructions for exterior and interior plans and details. Federal style rowhouses usually had a three-bay facade with two full stories over a high basement and an additional half story under a peaked roof with the ridge line running parallel to the front facade. (Very modest houses could be two bays wide, while grander houses had three full stories, and could be up to five bays wide). The front (and sometimes rear) facade was usually clad in red brick laid in the Flemish bond pattern, which alternated a stretcher and a header in every row. This system allowed the linking of the more expensive face brick with the cheaper, rougher brick behind. Walls were usually two "wythes," or eight inches, thick. Because brick was fabricated by hand in molds (rather than by machine), it was relatively porous. To protect the brick surface and slow water penetration, facades were often painted.

The planar quality of Federal style facades was relieved by ornament in the form of lintels, entrances, stoops with iron railings, cornices, and dormers. Doorway and window lintels, seen in a variety of types (flat, incised or molded), were commonly brownstone. The most ornamental feature was the doorway, often framed with columns and sidelights and topped with a rectangular transom or fanlight, and having a single wooden paneled door. Some grander houses had large round-arched entrances with Gibbs surrounds. The entrance was approached by a stoop – a flight of brownstone steps placed to one side of the facade – which created a basement level below the parlor floor. Wrought-iron railings with finials lined the stoop and enclosed areaways. Window openings at the parlor and second stories were usually the same height (the size sometimes diminished on the third story) and were aligned and the same width from story to story. The wood-framed sash were double hung and multi-light (typically six-over-six). Shutters were common on the exterior. A wooden box cornice with a molded fascia extended across the front along the eave, which carried a built-in gutter. A leader head and downspout that drained onto the sidewalk extended down the facade on the opposite side from the doorway. Pedimented or segmental dormers on the front roof slope usually had decorative wood trim, and the top sash were often arched with decorative muntins. The roof was covered with continuous wood sheathing over the rafters and clad in slate.

Remaining features of the modest 20-foot-wide and 2-1/2-story rowhouse at No. 486 Greenwich Street characteristic of the Federal style are its Flemish bond brickwork and fenestration pattern on the second story, simple brownstone lintels and sills, peaked roof, molded (later) cornice, and pedimented dormer. Given the lack of a raised basement and stoop, it is likely that there was originally a shop on the ground story. The earliest known depiction of the house is c. 1939 photograph; at that time it had the current ground-story configuration -- a display window, a single-door entrance, and central double doors. Despite some alterations, No. 486 Greenwich Street, notable singly and as part of a pair along with No. 488, is among the relatively rare surviving and significantly intact Manhattan buildings of the Federal style, period, and 2-1/2-story, dormered peaked-roof type (dating from 1796 to 1834).¹³ In particular, it is a very rare surviving modest Federal style rowhouse of the 2-1/2-story, 3-bay, single-dormered peaked-roof type, with a commercial ground story. Its survival is particularly noticeable in a neighborhood that was redeveloped with industrial and loft buildings in the late-19th and 20th centuries.

No. 486 Greenwich Street in the 20th Century ¹⁴

In 1902, Robert I. Brown advertised this property as "suitable for light business or stables."¹⁵ From 1906 to 1917, it was leased to A. Allan & Son, a bearing metals manufacturing firm established by Andrew Allan (c. 1837-1915), and his son, Andrew Allan, Jr. A Buildings Department application was filed in 1917 to alter the building for light manufacturing. Later tenants included a junk shop with upstairs office (Thomas Garofolo) (c. 1928); Western Chemical Ltd./Enge & Lucas (c. 1935-40); and M&M Iron Works (c. 1945-50). In 1953, the Brown Estate sold the property to James Johnston, Sr. (later the owner of No. 488 Greenwich Street in 1966-75), and the building housed A. Johnston & Son Iron Works, Inc., until at least 1975. Other tenants were Roy J. Petty, welding equipment (c. 1955); Bernard D. Lowy, scrap metal (c. 1959); and M. Berg Contracting Co. (c. 1965). The building was purchased in 1975 by artist John Hendricks (also the owner/resident of No. 488 since 1975). In 1983, it was transferred to his brother, Geoffrey Hendricks, an artist associated with Fluxus since the 1960s and a professor of art at Rutgers University (1956-2003). In 1984, the wording "WATER SPILLED FROM SOURCE TO USE" was added above the ground story of the building by conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner.¹⁶

Description

No. 486 Greenwich Street is a 20-foot-wide and 2-1/2-story Federal style rowhouse clad on the second story of the front facade in Flemish bond brickwork. The original configuration of the ground story is unknown, though there was probably an upstairs entrance and a storefront entrance and window. By c. 1939 (the earliest known photograph of the building), the configuration was as it is at present: southern single doorway, central double doorway, and northern window. The southern wood paneled door and transom and northern single-pane window and transom are of recent vintage; the central wood-and-glass paneled doors and transom appear to date from pre-1939. The southern doorsill is wood and concrete and the central doorsill is stone. The ground-story masonry is parged and painted. Above the ground story is the wording "WATER SPILLED FROM SOURCE TO USE" by conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner (1984). Above that are three star-shaped iron tie-rod anchor plates. The three second-story windows have simple brownstone lintels and sills. Original sash was probably six-over-six double-hung wood; the current 3-pane wood casement sash dates from pre-1975. A metal sign bracket (post-1939) and one star-shaped iron tie-rod anchor plate are located between the southern and central windows. A downspout is placed at the southern edge of the building. The current molded wooden cornice dates from post-1987. The peaked roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has an asymmetrically-placed pedimented dormer flanked by pilasters, with 3-pane wood casement sash (pre-1975).

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NOTES

¹ I.N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island* (N.Y.: Robert H. Dodd, 1926), including vol. 3, 560-562, 950 and 1001, vol. 4, 512-513, 533 and 560-562, vol. 5, 1221, 1308, 1406, 1474, 1592 and 1621, and vol. 6, 102 147-148, and pl. 84B-b; Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris, eds., *Slavery in New York* (N.Y.: New Pr., 2005), 8-10, 42-45; New York City, *Common Council Minutes*, vol. 4, p. 652, Dec. 1, 1807, vol. 5, p. 6-7, Feb. 15, 1808, and vol. 6, p. 526, Mar. 25, 1811, and p. 536, Apr. 1, 1811; "Leonard Lispenard," *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (N.Y.: D. Appleton & Co., 1889), 737; "Anthony Lispenard," U.S. Census (New York, 1800); New York County, Office of the Surrogate, Anthony Lispenard Will, liber 46, p. 389 (Sept. 22, 1806); Ann Bittenweiser, *Manhattan Water-Bound: Planning and Developing Manhattan's Waterfront from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (N.Y.: New York Univ. Pr., 1987); Andrew S. Dolkart, *The Texture of Tribeca* (N.Y.: Enterprise Pr., 1989); LPC, *Tribeca North Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1714) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1992), prepared by Betsy Bradley; Thomas F. De Voe, *The Market Book: A History of the Public Markets of the City of New York* (N.Y.: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), reprint of 1862 edition, 527-530; Colton Map (1836); Perris Map (1853); Bromley Map (1879); Robinson Map (1885); Bromley Map (1891).

² Cited in Stokes, vol. 4, 512.

³ Ibid.

⁴ John Randel, Jr., "Map of the Area Later Bounded by Desbrosses Street, Greenwich Street, Houston Street, and the Hudson River, Manhattan" (Oct. 1820), New-York Historical Society.

⁵ Jan S. Ramirez, "Greenwich Village," in Kenneth T. Jackson, edit., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1995), 506.

⁶ Cited in Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Rowhouse, 1783-1929, An Architectural and Social History* (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 35.

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- ⁷ *Note:* The address of this property was 488 Greenwich Street until c. 1855-59. Susan De Vries conducted preliminary conveyance and tax assessment research on this property for the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation in 1998. New York County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, including Liber 148, page 277-280 (Jan. 27, 1821), Liber 160, page 356-358 (Mar. 30, 1822), Liber 177, page 193 (May 7, 1823), Liber 198, page 304 (Dec. 21, 1825), Liber 379, page 206 (May 3, 1837), and Liber 455, page 196 (Oct. 2, 1844); New York Tax Assessments (1818-84); Tax Assessment Map (1848); *New York City Directories* (1818-60); "Alexander Stewart," U.S. Census (New York, 1810 and 1820); *Stewart and Lispenard Families Family Tree*, New-York Historical Society; J. Montgomery Seaver, *Stewart Family History* (Philadelphia: Amer. Histl. Genealogical Soc., 1929); LPC, *506 Canal Street House Designation Report* (LP-1991) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Marjorie Pearson and Susan De Vries, consultant; "John G. Rohr," Marine Court Naturalization Records (1826) and U.S. Census (New York, 1850); *New York State Business Directory & Gazetteer* (1870), 317; Robert I. Brown obit, *New York Times* (NYT), Mar. 12, 1914, 9.
- ⁸ NYC, *Common Council Minutes*, Feb. 15, 1808.
- ⁹ These houses are designated New York City Landmarks.
- ¹⁰ NYC, *Common Council Minutes*, vol. 15, p. 386, May 1, 1826.
- ¹¹ Armstrong's heirs included Peter and Elizabeth Armstrong Discho, and Sarah, Grace, and Alida Armstrong. "Putnam County, N.Y. Cemetery Inscriptions" website; "Milton W. Armstrong," www.familysearch.org website; "Peter and Eliza Discho/Armstrong," U.S. Census (New York, 1880).
- ¹² Adapted from LPC, *281 East Broadway House (Isaac T. Ludlam House) Designation Report* (LP-1993)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Marjorie Pearson. For the history of Federal style rowhouses, see: Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Pr., 1989); Ada Louis Huxtable, *The Architecture of New York: Classic New York Georgian Gentility to Greek Elegance* (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Bks., 1964); Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Rowhouse, 1783-1929, an Architectural and Social History* (N.Y.: McGraw-Hill, 1972); Montgomery Schuyler, "The Small City House in New York," *Architectural Record* (April-June, 1899), 357-388.
- ¹³ The following Federal style houses are designated New York City Landmarks: Edward Mooney House (1785-89), 18 Bowery; James Watson House (1793, attrib. to John McComb, Jr.; 1806), 7 State Street; nine houses at 25-41 Harrison Street (1796-1828; two designed by John McComb, Jr.); Nicholas and Elizabeth Stuyvesant Fish House (1803-04), 21 Stuyvesant Street; Gideon Tucker House (1808-09), 2 White Street; Robert and Anne Dickey House (1809-10), 67 Greenwich Street; Stephen van Rensselaer House (c. 1816), 149 Mulberry Street; James Brown House (c. 1817), 326 Spring Street; 502 Canal Street House (1818-19); 83 and 85 Sullivan Street Houses (1819; third stories added 1880 and 1874); 488 Greenwich Street House (c. 1823, attributed to John Rohr); William and Rosamond Clark House (1824-25; two stories added in the 19th century), 51 Market Street; 506-508 Canal Street Houses (c. 1826); 265 Henry Street House (1827; third story added 1895); 127, 129, and 131 MacDougal Street Houses (c. 1828-29); Isaac Ludlam House (c. 1829), 281 East Broadway; Hamilton-Holly and Daniel Leroy Houses (1831), 4 and 20 St. Mark's Place; Seabury Treadwell House (1831-32), 29 East 4th Street; 116 Sullivan Street (1832; third story added 1872); 131 Charles Street House (1834); and 203 Prince Street House (1834; third story added 1888).
- ¹⁴ *Manhattan Address Directories* (1929-75); *New York City Directories* (1904-17); "Andrew Allan Dies After Surf Bath," *NYT*, July 7, 1915, 11; NYC, Dept. of Buildings, Certificate of Occupancy (1928); NYC, Dept. of Taxes photograph (c. 1939); "Manhattan Transfers," *NYT*, Jan. 28, 1953, 44; LPC, photographs (1978, c. 1981, 1984, 1987, 2006); Stuart Waldman, *Maritime Mile: The Story of the Greenwich Village Waterfront* (N.Y.: Mikaya Pr., 2002), 94; "Downtown, Federal Era Blooms in Hiding," *NYT*, June 20, 2003, E27, 34; "13 Federal-Style Buildings are Eyed as Landmarks," *The Villager*, Aug. 20-26, 2003.
- ¹⁵ "To Let for Business Purposes," *NYT*, Aug. 18, 1902, 11, and Sept. 18, 1902, 14.
- ¹⁶ "The Sculptured Word," *NYT*, Sept. 18, 1994.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 486 Greenwich Street House has a special character and a 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 486 Greenwich Street House is a modest rowhouse constructed c. 1823 in the Federal style, characterized by its 2-1/2-story height, second-story Flemish bond brickwork and fenestration, peaked roof, and pedimented dormer; that by the 1820s, the vicinity of Greenwich and Canal Streets, once a Manhattan marshland known as Lispenard's Meadows, had become a thriving mixed-use district, with Greenwich Street as the main thoroughfare along the west side from the Battery to Greenwich Village, while the broad Canal Street had been laid out with a sewer to assist in draining the marshy area, and Trinity Church had developed the area around fashionable Hudson Square (St. John's Park) to the southeast, and a steamboat ferry to Hoboken (1823), the public Clinton Market (1829), and a "country market" (1833) were established to the west; that beginning around 1820, members of the German-immigrant Rohr family began to develop rowhouses on the west side of Greenwich Street, both south and north of Canal Street, on land then owned by Alexander L. and Sarah Lispenard Stewart, with John Rohr, a mason/builder, probably constructing these, including No. 486 Greenwich Street; that John Rohr and his wife, Martha, never resided here, but leased the house until 1836, the earliest known tenant being merchant Isaac Moses (1824-26), with baker Charles Hummel a later resident and owner, who apparently also had his business here, from 1831 to 1850, and that by 1851, the building had become a rooming house; that for a century, it had two long-term owners, Abraham Witherup and Milton W. Armstrong, partners in a building firm, and their heirs (1854-84), and real estate operator Robert I. Brown and his family (1884-1953); that in the 20th century, the property was used industrially, including A[ndrew]. Allan & Son, a bearing metals manufacturing firm (1906-17), and A. Johnston & Son Iron Works (1953-75); and that, despite the loss of some architectural details, this house, notable singly and as a pair with its neighbor (No. 488), is among the very rare surviving and significantly intact modest Manhattan buildings of the Federal style, period, and 2-1/2-story, 3-bay, single-dormered peaked-roof type, with a commercial ground story, and that their survival is particularly noticeable in a neighborhood that was redeveloped with industrial and loft buildings in the late-19th and 20th centuries.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 486 Greenwich Street House, 486 Greenwich Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 595, Lot 83, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair;
Pablo E. Vengochea, Vice Chair
Stephen F. Byrns, Diana Chapin, Joan Gerner, Christopher Moore,
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



486 Greenwich Street House, Manhattan
Photo: Carl Forster, LPC

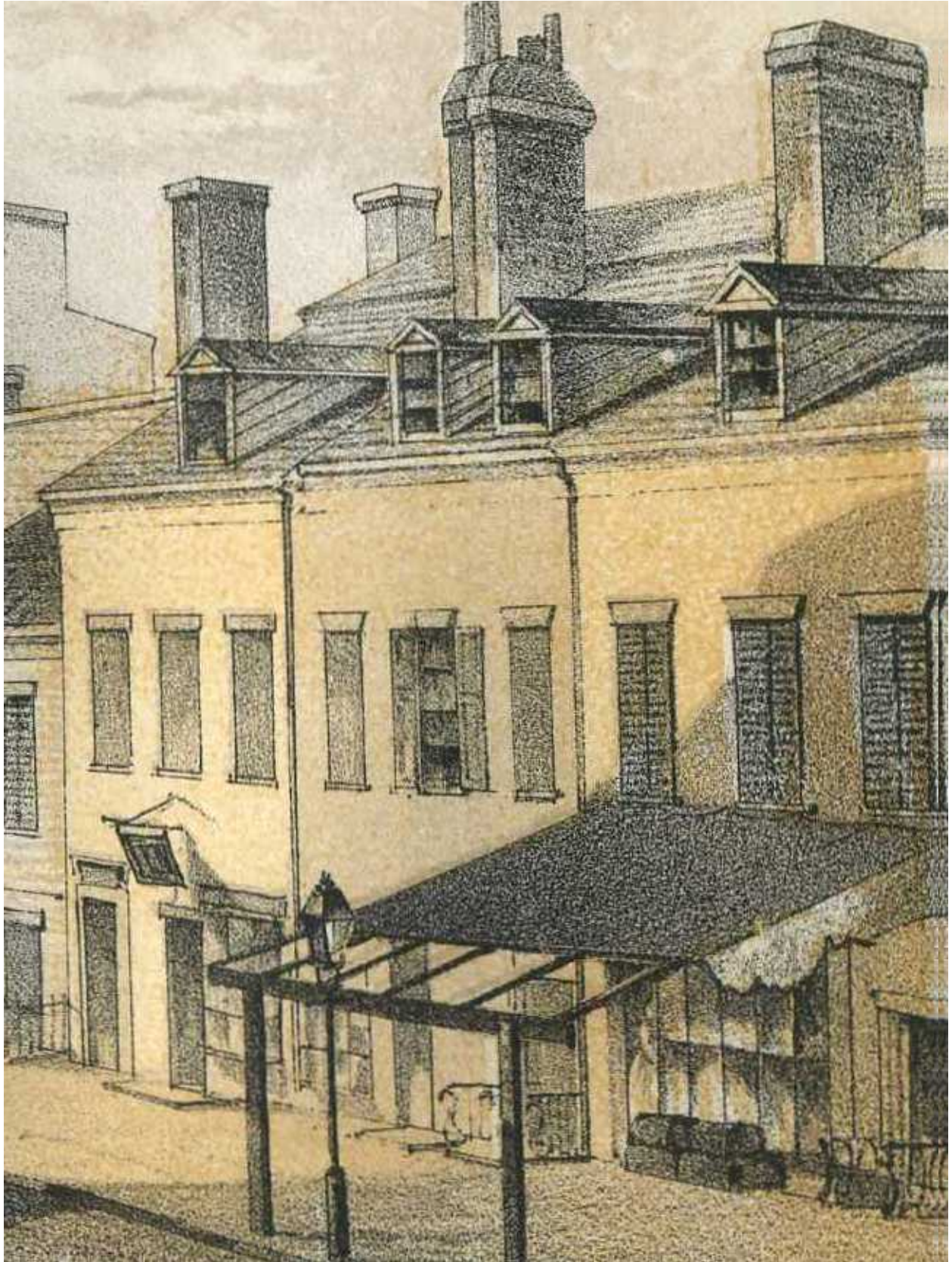


486 Greenwich Street House, Manhattan
Photo: LPC (c. 1981)



486 Greenwich Street House, Manhattan

Photo Credit: Federation to Preserve the Greenwich Village Waterfront & Great Port (1987)



“Greenwich St. Below Thames St. 1861”

Rendering of similar modest Federal style rowhouses

Source: D.T. Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New-York* (1863)



486 GREENWICH STREET HOUSE (LP-2225), 486 Greenwich Street.
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 595, Lot 83.

Designated: July 24, 2007