Landmarks Preservation Commission
March 27, 2012, Designation List 453
LP-2480

32 DOMINICK STREET HOUSE, 32 Dominick Street, Manhattan
Built c. 1826; builder, Smith Bloomfield

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 578, Lot 64

On June 28, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 32 Dominick Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 6). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were four speakers in favor of designation, including representatives of New York Landmarks Conservancy, Society of the Architecture of New York City, Historic Districts Council and Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

Summary

The 32 Dominick Street House was one of twelve Federal style brick row houses (nos. 28 to 50) built c. 1826 on the south side of Dominick Street between Hudson and Varick Streets; and was one of five houses (No. 28 to 36) constructed by builder Smith Bloomfield. A secession of tenants lived in the house while owned by Bloomfield and it was sold by the executors of his estate to Mary McKindley in 1866. Her heirs conveyed it to John F. Wilson, a carpenter, in 1878. Wilson's devisee sold it to the Church of Our Lady of Vilnius, which used it as a rectory. The church, located on Broome Street, was founded to serve the Lithuanian Catholic community and closed in 2007. The construction of the Holland Tunnel (1919-27) necessitated the condemnation of several lots at the center of the block and the raising of Dominick Street. As a result of its construction, trucking traffic increased and large loft buildings were constructed in the neighborhood. The 32 Dominick Street House is a remarkable, rare surviving example of a Federal style house in Manhattan. Its design is characteristic of the Federal style and the house retains a significant amount of its original architectural fabric, including its original form and materials, two-and-a-half story height and 20-foot width, and front facade with Flemish bond brickwork, high peaked roof with dormers and cornice. Of the twelve Federal style row houses built on the south side of Dominick Street between Hudson and Varick Streets, the 32 Dominick Street House is one of only four remaining and is the one that is the most intact, retaining its Federal-era form and materials.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Development of the Neighborhood[1]

The vicinity of Hudson and Canal Streets, including Dominick Street between Hudson and Varick Streets, 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 eight-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 the British rule, this area was located within portions of the Trinity Church and Anthony Rutgers Farms, granted in 1805 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 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 U. S. Census, Anthony Lispenard owned five slaves. He devised the land to his sons, Leonard, Anthony and Thomas, his daughter Sarah, wife of Anthony L. Stewart, and his granddaughter Sarah Bache.[2] 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. In that same year, a partition suit was commenced in the Mayor's Court and most of the property was included in the partition in lots.[3] 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.

An 1820 survey conducted by John Randel, Jr., of the area west of Greenwich Street, between Desbrosses and Houston Streets, indicated 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. 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. Previously undeveloped tracts of land there were speculatively subdivided for construction of town houses and row houses.

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 the 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."[4] 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.

The Construction and Early History of the Building

No. 32 Dominick Street is one of twelve Federal style row houses built on the south side of Dominick Street between Hudson and Varick Streets c. 1826. Nos. 28 to 36 were built by Smith Bloomfield, Nos. 38 to 46 by Azariah Ross and Nos. 48 and 50 by Joshua Brush.[5] All three builders purchased the lots by separate deeds dated March 10, 1826 from Robert M. and Sarah B. Livingston.[6] Sarah B(ache) Livingston, the granddaughter of Anthony Lispenard, inherited the land from him.[7]

Smith Bloomfield (1780-1865) was a mason and builder.[8] He lived in New York City and built many residences on Dominick and North Moore Streets and elsewhere in the city. In the late 1820s he lived at 28 Dominick Street, and from the 1840s until his death in 1879, his son William Bloomfield, a lawyer, lived at that same address. In 1839, after accumulating much wealth, Smith Bloomfield moved to a farm in Metuchen, New Jersey that had been in the Bloomfield family for approximately 175 years, and in the 1860 U.S. Census his occupation is listed as farmer. A secession of tenants lived at 32 Dominick Street while he owned the house, including John B. Gedney, a forwarder, in 1834 and Solomon W. Johnson, an agent, in 1856.[9] The executors of Bloomfield's estate sold the house to Mary McKindley the year after his death.[10]

Federal Style Houses in Manhattan[11]

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 rows 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 1780s and 1830s. The size of the lot dictated the size of the house: typically each house lot was between 20 and 25 feet wide (though some were smaller) and 90 to 100 feet deep. These lots accorded with the rectilinear plan of New York City, laid out in 1807 and adopted as the Commissioners' Plan in 1811. The house itself would be as wide as the lot, and commonly 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, 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. The design of some houses has been identified with certain architects or builders, such as John McComb, Jr., though such documentation is rare. 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 row houses 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, while very modest houses could be two bays wide. Grander town 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, splayed, incised, or molded), were commonly stone. 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. The entrance was usually approached by a stoop – a flight of stone steps usually placed to one side of the facade – on the parlor floor above a basement level, though some houses had ground-story entrances and commercial shopfronts. 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), aligned and were the same width from story to story. The wood-framed sashes were double-hung and multi-light (typically six-over-six). Shutters were common on the exterior. A wooden 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 sashes were often arched with decorative muntins. The roof was covered with continuous wood sheathing over the rafters and clad in wood shingles or slate.

The design of the 32 Dominick Street House is characteristic of the Federal style. It is notable as a Federal style row house due, particularly, to its original form and materials, with its two-and-a-half-story height and 20-foot width, high peaked roof with pedimented dormers, front facade with Flemish bond brickwork, and cornice. Despite the loss or alteration of some architectural details, the 32 Dominick Street House is among the relatively rare surviving and significantly intact Manhattan row houses of the Federal style and period (dating from 1789 to 1834),[12] especially considering that many such houses were raised with additional stories in the later 19th century.

Later History[13]

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. While the neighborhood was undergoing redevelopment in the early 20th century, with its red brick houses being replaced by tenements, factories and commercial buildings, it was noted in 1910 that on Dominick Street "the owners have refused to be driven out and still live there in trim houses, with neat yards and gardens."[14] This was to change with the construction of the Holland Tunnel (1919-27), a double-tubed vehicular tunnel spanning the Hudson River. It was the longest underwater tunnel in the world at the time it opened, measuring 8557 feet. Its innovated ventilation system that utilizes four ventilating buildings became the model for other underwater tunnels in New York City and around the world.[15]

Transportation improvements connected with the construction of the Holland Tunnel and completion of the elevated Miller Highway (1929-31) above West Street, provided easier access between the metropolitan region and the Hudson River waterfront. The construction of the Holland Tunnel necessitated the condemnation of many parcels of land, including six lots at the center of the block in 1922 and 1923 for the entrance to the tunnel,[16] and the raising of Dominick Street, which caused the stoops of the remaining houses on the south side of the block to be buried. 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. Of the twelve row houses built c. 1826 on the south side of

Dominick Street between Hudson and Varick Streets, only four remain today. 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.

In 1878 the heirs of Mary McKindley conveyed the house to John F. Wilson.[17] Wilson, a carpenter, lived here with his family and rented the lower part of the house to another family. At the time of the 1880 U.S. Census, Thomas Sutter, a bookkeeper, and his family shared the house with the Wilsons.[18] Wilson's devisee, Elizabeth W. Morse, conveyed the house in 1912 to the Church of Our Lady of Vilnius (also known as Our Lady of Vilna).[19] Our Lady of Vilnius was founded in 1905 by Father Joseph Sestokas, a Lithuanian priest, to serve the Lithuanian Catholic community. The church, located at 570 Broome Street between Hudson and Varick Streets, was built in 1910. It was closed by the Archdiocese in early 2007. The house at 32 Dominick Street served as the church's rectory.[20]

Description

Two-and-one-half story red brick house with Flemish bond brickwork, peaked roof and two pedimented dormers; transom above door; stone lintels and sills; wood cornice; brick chimney; Greek Revival style front areaway fence; bluestone areaway

Alterations: stoop and side areaway fences possibly historic; stone base painted; basement windows and stoop below grade c. 1919-27 when street raised; concrete steps with railing in areaway; under-stoop gate, front doors and window sash replaced; door reveal with round molding possibly historic; lintels and sills painted; basement and first story window grilles installed; dormers' window openings altered to accommodate square-headed sash and dormers re-clad; roofing material replaced

Report prepared by
Cynthia Danza
Research Department

NOTES

[1] This section is based on New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *486 Greenwich Street House Designation Report* (LP-2225) (New York: City of New York, 2007) prepared by Jay Shockley, 2-3.

[2] Deeds and Conveyances, General Statement of Early Title for Block 578.

[3] Ibid.

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

[5] These twelve houses first appear in the Tax Assessment of 1826.

[6] Deeds and Conveyances, deed from Robert M. and Sarah B. Livingston to Smith Bloomfield recorded March 16, 1826, Liber 200, page 476; deed from Robert M. and Sarah B. Livingston to Joshua Brush

recorded March 16, 1826, Liber 200, page 475; and deed from Robert M. and Sarah B. Livingston to Azariah Ross recorded April 8, 1826, Liber 201, page 227.

[7] Cuyler Reynolds, *Genealogical and Family History of Southern New York and the Hudson River Valley* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1914), III, 1339.

[8] Information about Smith Bloomfield is from Eleanor M. Bloomfield, *The Bloomfield Family* (n.p.: 1951), 3-6; *Longworth Directories* 1822-1843; 1860 U. S. Census; *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Rutgers College* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Terhune & Van Anglen's Press, 1879). According the 1810 U.S. Census, Smith Bloomfield did not have any enslaved persons in his household.

[9] *Trow's Directory* 1834 and 1856.

[10] Deed recorded March 13, 1866, Liber 959, page 383.

[11] This section is taken almost is its entirety from LPC, *Hardenbrook-Somarindyck House Designation Report* (LP-2439) prepared by Jay Shockley and Cynthia Danza (N.Y.: City of New York, 2011), which was adapted from LPC, *94 Greenwich Street House Designation Report* (LP-2218) prepared by Jay Shockley (N.Y.: City of New York, 2009). The designation of the Hardenbrook-Somarindyck House was overturned by the City Council.

[12] 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.); 94 Greenwich Street House (c. 1799-1800); 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; 480 Greenwich Street and 502-508 Canal Street Houses (1818-41); 83 and 85 Sullivan Street Houses (1819; third stories added 1880 and 1874); 486 and 488 Greenwich Street Houses (c. 1823); William and Rosamond Clark House (1824-25; two stories added in the 19th century), 51 Market Street; 265 Henry Street House (1827; third story added 1895); 145 and 147 Eighth Avenue Houses (c. 1827 and c. 1828); 511 and 513 Grand Street Houses (c. 1827-28); 127, 129, and 131 MacDougal Street Houses (c. 1828-29); Isaac Ludlam House (c. 1829), 281 East Broadway; 143 Allen Street House (c. 1830-31); 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 House (1832; third story added 1872); 190 and 192 Grand Street Houses (c. 1833); 131 Charles Street House (1834); 203 Prince Street House (1834; third story added 1888).

[13] The later history of the neighborhood is based on the *486 Greenwich Street Designation Report*.

[14] "Old-Time New York Leaves Some Traces" *New York Times*, February 13, 1910, 8.

[15] Rebecca Read Shanor, "Holland Tunnel" in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 604-05.

[16] Block 578, lots 58-60 and 80-81, see Deeds and Conveyances, Block and Lot Index; "For Vehicular Tunnel" *New York Times*, April 16, 1922, 108.

[17] Deed recorded July 5, 1878, Liber 1451, page 492.

[18] *Gouldings New York City Directory* 1877; 1880 U.S. Census; Death Notice, *New York Herald*, August 26, 1880, 9; Classified Advertisement, *New York Herald*, March 6, 1881, 16.

[19] Deed recorded October 30, 1912, Liber 216, page 461.

[20] David W. Dunlap, *From Abyssinian to Zion: A Guide to Manhattan's Houses of Worship.* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2004), 169; Our Lady of Vilnius website at https://sites.google.com/site/ourladyofvilniusnyc/.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 32 Dominick Street House has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and culture characteristics of New York City.

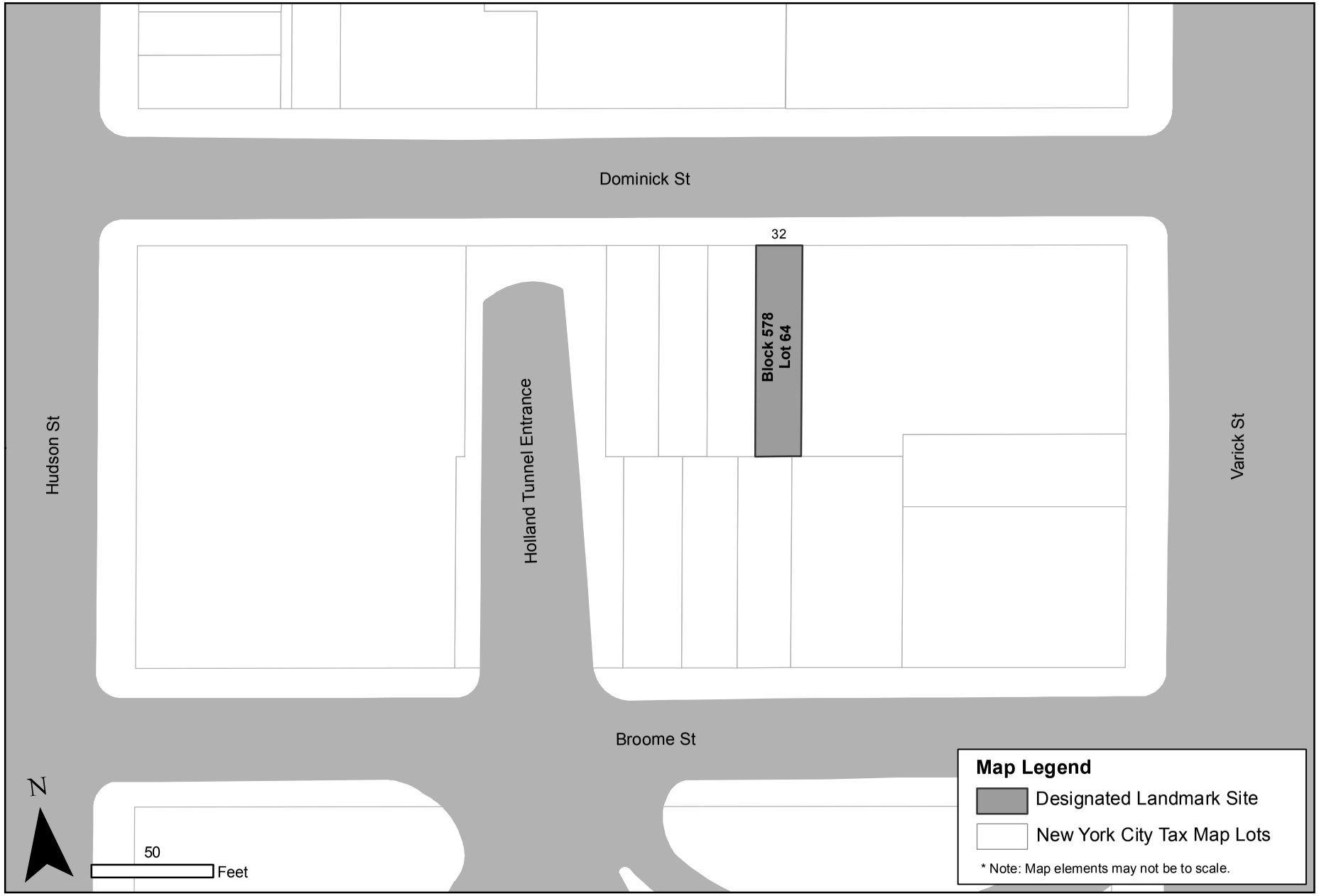
The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the 32 Dominick Street House was one of twelve Federal style brick row houses (nos. 28 to 50) built c. 1826 on the south side of Dominick Street between Hudson and Varick Streets; that it was one of six houses (No. 28 to 36) constructed by builder Smith Bloomfield; that a secession of tenants lived in the house while owned by Bloomfield; that it was sold by the executors of his estate to Mary McKindley in 1866; that her heirs conveyed it to John F. Wilson, a carpenter, in 1878; that Wilson's devisee sold it to the Church of Our Lady of Vilnius, which used it as a rectory; that the church, located on Broome Street, was founded to serve the Lithuanian Catholic community and was closed in 2007; that the construction of the Holland Tunnel (1919-27) necessitated the condemnation of several lots at the center of the block and the raising of Dominick Street; that as a result of its construction, trucking traffic increased and large loft buildings were constructed in the neighborhood; that the 32 Dominick Street House is a remarkable, rare surviving example of a Federal style house in Manhattan; that its design is characteristic of the Federal style and the house retains a significant amount of its original architectural fabric, including its original form and materials, two-and-a-half story height and 20-foot width, and front facade with Flemish bond brickwork, high peaked roof with dormers and cornice; that of the twelve Federal style row houses built on the south side of Dominick Street between Hudson and Varick Streets the 32 Dominick Street House is one of only four remaining; and that it is the one that is the most intact and retains its Federal-era form and materials.

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 32 Dominick Street House, 32 Dominick Street, Manhattan, and designated Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 578, Lot 64, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner,
Michael Goldblum, Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter,
Elizabeth Ryan, Commissioners

32 Dominick Street House
32 Dominick Street, Manhattan
Block: 578, Lot: 64
Photo: Olivia T. Klose, 2011

32 Dominick Street House
NYC Dept. of Taxes (c. 1939), Municipal Archives



32 DOMINICK STREET HOUSE (LP-2480), 32 Dominick Street
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan, Tax Map Block 578, Lot 64

Designated: March 27, 2012

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 09v1, 2009. Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, JM. Date: March 27, 2012