



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4

330 West 42nd Street, 26th floor New York, NY 10036
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512
www.ManhattanCB4.org

J. LEE COMPTON
Chair

MICHELLE SOLOMON
Acting District Manager

March 2, 2006

Hon. Robert Tierney
Chair
Landmarks Preservation Commission
One Center Street—Ninth floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: Designation of 127 Seventh Avenue

Dear Chair Tierney:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 is glad to support the request of the Council of Chelsea Block Associations that the Landmarks Preservation Commission promptly designate the handsome brick structure at 127-131 Seventh Avenue in Chelsea as a New York City landmark. This building deserves designation both for its architectural quality and its historical significance as expressed in its façade, which contains emblems of the change and development of the Chelsea community and indeed of New York City.

The symmetrical design of the four-story Seventh Avenue façade is strikingly strong, simple, and impressive. The lower portion of the central mass is divided into three strongly expressed piers by two wide recessed three-story bays topped by segmental arches. The bays rise from tall windows at the sidewalk level, clearly former entrances, to shorter triple windows on an elevated second floor and an arched group of triple windows on the third. Above the arches is a fourth floor, set off by a projecting string course and again showing triple windows, which is crowned by a heavy battlemented cornice flanking a central gable. The main mass is set off on either side by flanking narrow recessed bays with tall entrances and single double-hung windows at each story. These rise to form short towers set back above the cornice line. The building is in good condition.

Located on the line of the central pier are emblems of two historic uses of the building. Just above the ground floor is a rectangular stone block, heavily painted over. On the top line can be clearly read the words "MISSION SCHOOL". The next short line is probably "OF," and the next clearly "PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH". The next is less clear, probably "5th AV Cor 12th St.,"; and the second half of the last line is the date "AD 1874." The official history of the first Presbyterian Church, which is in the collection of the New York Public Library, indicates that the church, located on the west side of Fifth Avenue between West 11th and 12th Streets since 1846, operated a "mission Sabbath school" between 1868 and 1885, apparently without giving further details.

Hon. R Tierney
March 2, 2006
Page 2 of 2

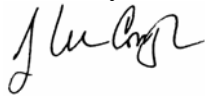
At the top of the central pier, above the third floor, is a small circular medallion bearing a somewhat damaged horse's head, the traditional symbol of a stable. During the period in which the central retail district of New York was the Ladies' Mile a little to the east, stables serving these stores and their deliveries were common in the area, and a group of stables is designated on 18th Street just to the east. It is locally reported, but without known documentation, that this stable served Macy's, located in the latter part of the 19th century on 14th Street just east of Sixth Avenue.

More recently the upper floors were used as offices by Barney's clothing store, long proclaimed as offering bargain suits at Seventh Avenue and 17th Street, while until a few years ago the ground floor of the building, as well as the low building on the corner to the left, housed a respected restaurant, Le Madri. It is presently vacant, and reports abound of demolition and replacement by a large residential building, as the zoning would allow.

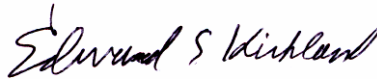
While former stables are common, few retain the iconic emblem of their former use. In the 19th Century mission schools were frequently maintained by well-off Protestant churches, but few if any of these buildings remain to display such an explicit indicator of the early purpose. The building is thus a rare surviving testimonial to social and economic developments in the period.

The building at 127 Seventh Avenue has exceptional architectural and historic significance. It is unfortunately currently liable to demolition and replacement. It deserves designation and is significantly threatened. The local community supports designation. The Board urges the Commission to act swiftly before this resource is lost.

Sincerely,



J. Lee Compton
Chair
Manhattan Community Board No. 4



Edward S. Kirkland
Chair
Landmarks Taskforce

cc: Elected Officials
Council of Chelsea Block Associations