

U.S., State and City Aid Asked To Save Landmark on East Side

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

Action on the Federal, state and city levels may save the old Merchant's House, the New York landmark that is threatened with demolition after resisting for more than 130 years.

The building is not out of danger, but a start has been made toward finding a way to keep it out of the wrecker's hands.

The response followed the announcement Wednesday that the historic building at 29 East Fourth Street was almost certain to be closed and sold because funds for maintenance and repairs were lacking.

Owned and operated as a museum by the Historic Landmark Society, a private organization set up to administer the building, the 1832 house is considered a structure of rare historic and esthetic value because it has survived with its original furnishings and interiors.

Reaction to Announcement

It is also known as the Seabury Tredwell House, for the family that occupied it continuously from 1835 to 1933.

Reaction to the news of the threat to the shabby, but still elegant 19th-century house ranged from school children's petitions to Federal recognition.

The Federal Government will designate the building as a national monument. To expedite the process, which usually takes several months, an official of the National Park Service will visit the house today. Its selection as a national monument, however, guarantees only the prestige conferred by a plaque and an official listing.

On the state level, State Senator Frederic S. Berman of Manhattan will introduce a resolution

at Albany on Monday urging the City Council to pass the pending Landmarks Bill, which would protect the city's historic structures.

Senator Berman's district, the 20th, encompasses a wide range of landmark disasters, from the threatened old Merchant's House to the condemned Brokaw Mansion at Fifth Avenue and 79th Street, now being demolished.

Council Urged to Act

On the city level, Senator Berman delivered a letter yesterday to David Ross, majority leader of the City Council, in which he asked the Council to give the bill "immediate attention and top priority, to prevent the loss of other historical buildings which are irreplaceable in terms of esthetics, history and culture."

The bill is under study by the Codification Committee, but no action is expected for some weeks.

Local responses to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which continues to act unofficially without its enabling legislation, have included an expression of interest from a New York-based foundation, and two offers of purchase.

James Van Derpool, executive director of the commission, said that the tentative proposals provided hope, but no solution, as yet.

At the Downtown Community School, a private experimental elementary school at 235 East 11th Street, the students will hold an assembly program today to prepare a petition to Mayor Wagner. The Old Merchant's House has been a favorite pilgrimage point for the past field trips.