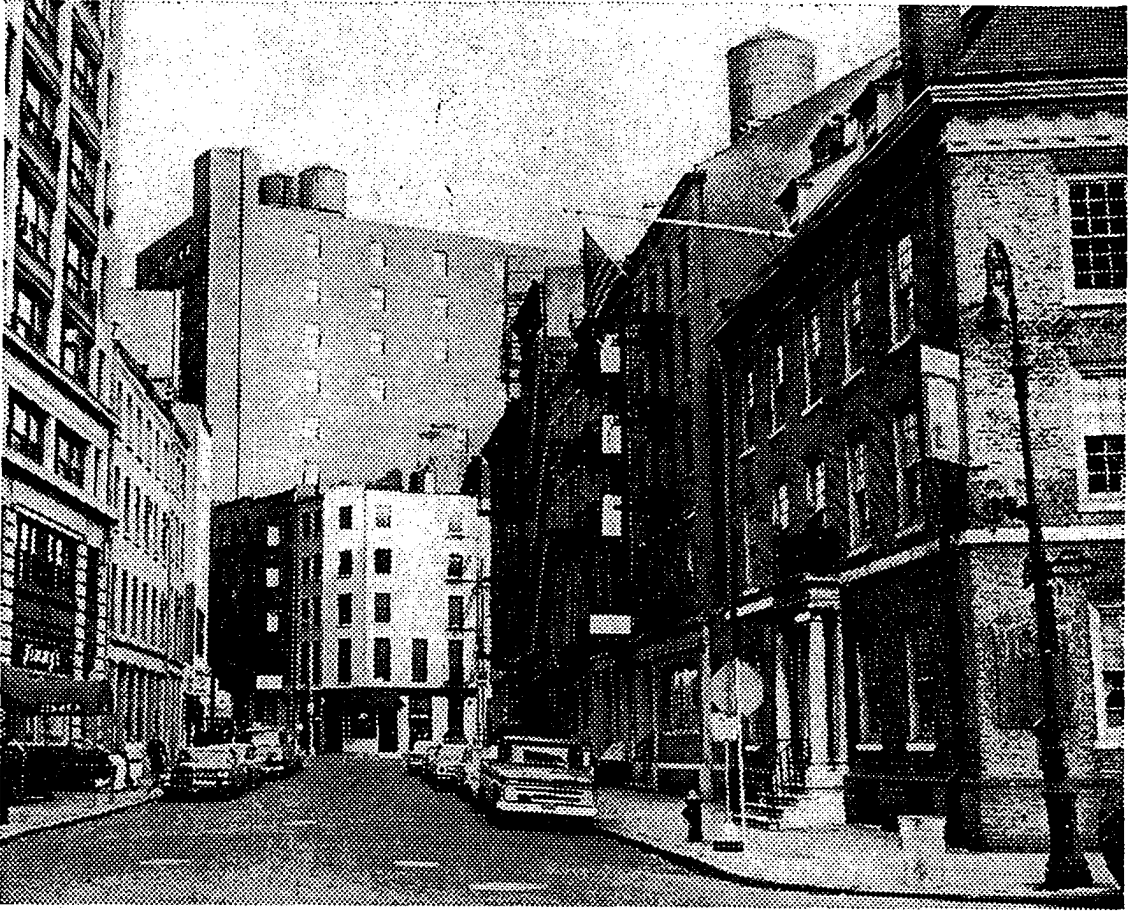


Landmark Plans Stir Wall St. Controversy



Preserving these Georgian-commercial buildings on Fulton Street as museum is proposed



This is the Pearl Street side of what is called the Fraunces Tavern block, bounded also by Water and Broad Streets and Coenties Slip. The tavern is at right. These buildings would remain, but those on the north side would be replaced by copy of a Dutch building.

City Requested to Aid One of Projects

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

New York is preparing its first full-scale preservation project—a downtown museum development known as the Fraunces Tavern block. A request of \$375,000 in the 1967-68 capital budget will be taken up at a hearing of the City Planning Commission on Monday.

The request for the appropriation has spotlighted a preservation controversy that has been simmering in lower Manhattan for a year. In a historic area where demolition rather than preservation of old buildings has been the rule, there are now two preservation projects, both in the shadow of Wall Street's skyscrapers, and each has strong partisans.

Conflict has arisen over funds, sponsorship, and the comparative merit of the two schemes.

The reason for the conflict is said to be fear that money for both plans would have to be raised from the same sources, mainly downtown financial institutions. According to Geoffrey Platt, chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the downtown community, although it is probably the richest in the world, feels "it cannot afford both preservation projects."

Houses to Be Moved

Except for the concern over money, they are not mutually exclusive.

The first plan, for the Fraunces Tavern block, involves moving four houses dating from 1795 to 1823 to the Fraunces Tavern block, bounded by Pearl, Broad and Water Streets and Coenties Slip. Fraunces Tavern, at the south end of the block, is a careful reconstruction of a Revolutionary period building prominent in New York history.

The houses to be moved — Nos. 45, 47 and 49 Whitehall Street and 2 Front Street — are in the path of new commercial construction by the firm of Atlas-McGrath.

Several buildings on the block would be demolished to make room for the relocated houses. Four houses dating from about 1828 would also be restored. Buildings on the block's north end would be razed for a modern copy of an old Dutch building, the New Amsterdam Stadthuys. The cost, estimated at \$4.5-million, would be met by city and state appropriations and private subscription over the next four years.

The second project, known as the South Street Maritime Museum, would preserve one of the city's oldest remaining rows of Georgian-commercial structures running the length of Fulton Street from South to Front Street. These, dating from about 1811, would be restored on the site for reuse. They were occupied until recently by the Fulton Fish Market, and one is the home of Sweet's, an equally historic seafood restaurant.

Museum Now Established

The South Street Maritime Museum has been established by state law. A bill sponsored by Senator Whitney North Seymour Jr. was signed by Governor Rockefeller last August. The project is awaiting the Governor's appointment of its board of trustees and the allocation of funds.

The Fraunces Tavern block is being promoted by Harmon Goldstone, a member of the City Planning Commission, Mr. Platt of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association, a private organization of business leaders in the financial district. David Rockefeller, chairman of the board of the Downtown

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Lower Manhattan Association, has contributed \$50,000 for studies and drawings.

At the time that the Legislature was acting on Senator Seymour's bill, the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association wrote to Governor Rockefeller denouncing the proposal and asking him to veto it. Those who saw the letter were surprised by the violence of the attack. Objections were tempered when Senator Seymour agreed to hold off fund-raising for the South Street Museum.

The most serious split is over the aims and methods of the two proposals.

All professionals agree that on-the-site preservation of existing buildings has the highest priority in preservation practice. The South Street Museum is such a project, representing one of the city's last chances to retain a full block of homogeneous historical architecture of original construction.

The Fraunces Tavern block falls into a lower professional category—moving and reconstruction. Atlas-McGrath, the developer of the Whitehall site, is cooperating with the city by promising to pay moving costs for the four houses to be relocated. They would have to be moved twice; once to Jeannette Park to get them out of the way of the new construction, and later, after condemnation proceedings were complete, to the Fraunces Tavern block.

Whether Atlas-McGrath will pay for both moves is, in the words of a sponsor, "cloudy." At present, a mover cannot be found for the delicate job who is insured against liability.

The houses, moreover, will require full rehabilitation, which would mean rebuilding them virtually from scratch, using the original bricks and woodwork wherever possible.

The plan for the Dutch State House copy, at the razed north end of the block, is causing the most uneasiness in preservation circles. Many historians object to the idea of building a costly, modern imitation, no matter how scholarly, of a long-gone structure, when authentic buildings are urgently in need of rescue.

It is understood, however, that the reconstruction "appeals to our sponsors very much," according to one city official, who acknowledged that this meant the Rockefeller family, which has financed reconstruction at Williamsburg, Va. "It's not too much of a prostitution as a price for support," he added.

The situation is further complicated by the case of Mrs. Maggie Petersen, the tenacious owner of an old house on Moore Street, who has been fighting a single-handed battle to stay the Atlas-McGrath wreckers.

A spokesman for Atlas-McGrath professes to have offered to move Mrs. Petersen's house, which is a valid and well-restored example of the area's typical early 19th-century structure and style, to the Fraunces Tavern block with the four other houses to be relocated. He says the Landmarks Preservation Commission was not receptive to the proposal.

Mr. Goldstone says: "There just isn't room for Mrs. Petersen on the Fraunces Tavern block. The other buildings have higher priority."

In the meantime, Senator Seymour has reached a gentleman's agreement with downtown groups to delay financing for the South Street-Fulton Street buildings until the capital budget requests and estimates for the Fraunces Tavern block are settled.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission has held hearings on the South Street-Fulton Street buildings, but has yet to designate them. Nor has it released the design for the Fraunces Tavern block, preliminary to the public hearings. Appropriation of city funds would make the plan an official city project, eligible for state and Federal assistance.