



September 10, 2024

STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF THE JACOB DAY RESIDENCE - 50 WEST 13TH STREET AS AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK

Good morning Chair Carroll and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is pleased to join local elected officials and advocates in supporting designation of the Jacob Day Residence as an individual landmark.

This site merits designation for both its history and architecture. This Greek Revival-style row house is nearly 180 years old and retains its historic height, massing, composition, and some details.

It was also a locus of New York African-American history. Jacob Day, a prominent 19th century Black businessman lived at 50 West 13th from 1858 until his death in 1884. Day was a successful caterer, whose business was in the house, and an abolitionist. He was a member of the Abyssinian Baptist Church and belonged to the National Anti-Slavery Society, along with Reverend Henry Highland Garnet. Educator Sarah J.S. Tompkins Garnet rented rooms in the house when she was a teacher and principal of the nearby landmark (Former) Colored School No. 4, and prior to her marriage to Garnet. Day's sons continued the catering business there until 1896.

In the mid-20th century, the building was partly converted for theater use. The Afro-American Folklore Troupe had a residency there in 1968. It was the home of the "off-off Broadway" 13th Street Repertory Company from 1972 until 2020.

Since the theater closed, 50 West 13th Street has faced an uncertain fate, but its distinct architecture and remarkable history make a clear argument for landmark recognition. We thank the Commission for bringing the Jacob Day Residence forward and urge a swift vote to designate.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.