

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT EXTENSION, Borough of Manhattan.

BOUNDARIES

The property bounded by a line beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Pearl Street and Dover Street, extending easterly along the southern curb line of Dover Street, southerly along the middle of Water Street, westerly along the middle of Peck Slip, northerly across Peck Slip to the eastern curb line of Pearl Street, and northerly along the eastern curb line of Pearl Street to the point of beginning.

TESTIMONY AT PUBLIC HEARING

On December 1, 1987 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the South Street Seaport Historic District Extension (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Thirty witnesses spoke in favor of designation. Eight witnesses spoke in opposition to designation. One speaker took no position. The Commission has received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation. One letter has been received opposing designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

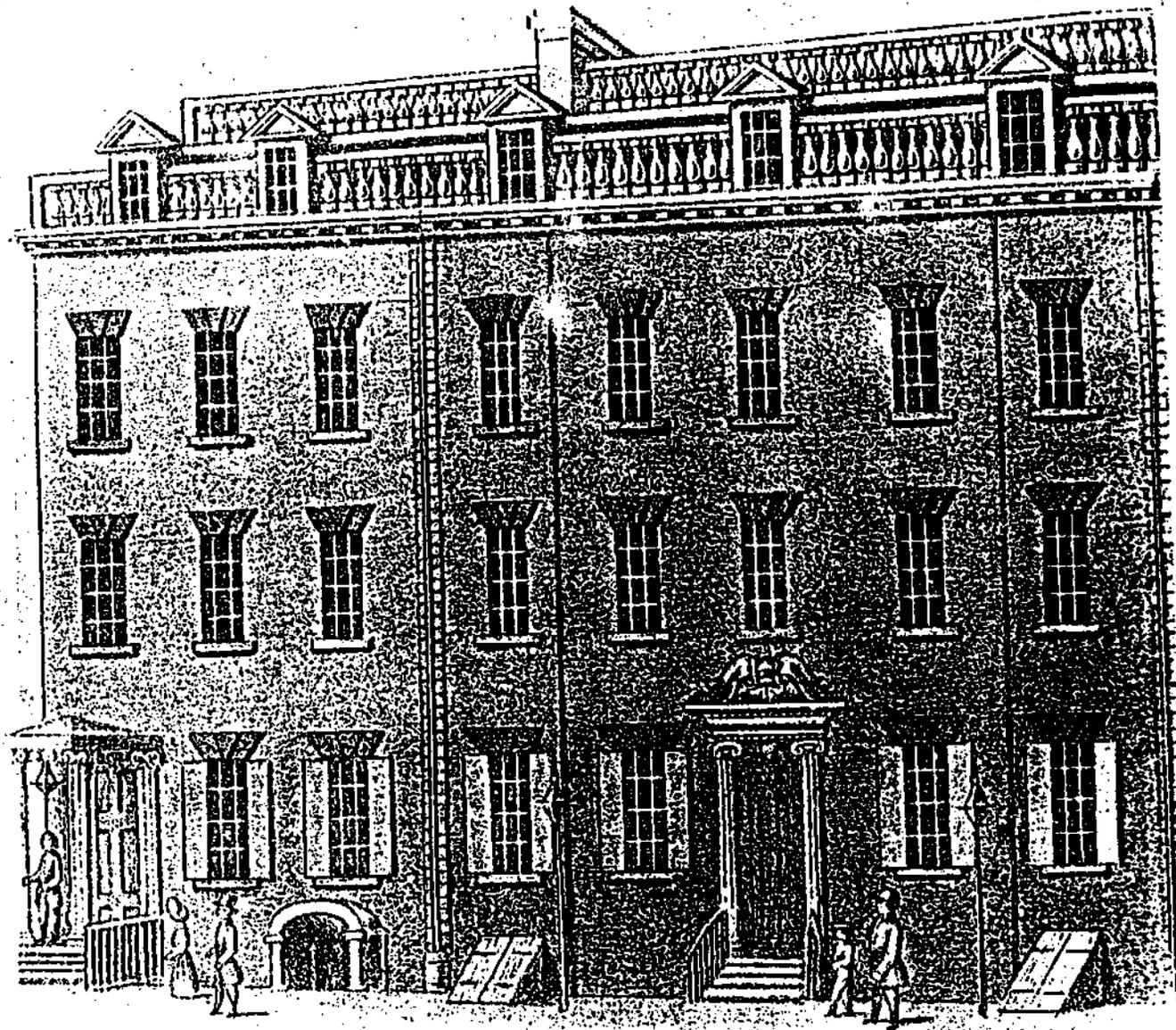
The South Street Seaport Historic District Extension consists of the block bounded by Pearl Street, Water Street, Peck Slip and Dover Street. It is an intrinsic part of an historic area that records the growth and evolution of a section of the city from a small cluster of wharves in the mid-18th century to an important part of the leading port of the nation in the mid-19th century. The South Street Seaport Historic District and its Extension are important reminders of the rise of New York City as an international center of commerce. With one exception, the buildings within the Extension span the 19th century from the early 1820s to the mid-1880s, the period of the area's greatest growth and development. The buildings are straight-forward, utilitarian structures reflecting the original uses of the buildings as warehouses, lofts and commercial storage spaces. The block was included within the boundaries of the South Street Seaport Historic District as heard by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1976 and designated in May, 1977. Subsequent to designation (July, 1977), the boundaries of the Historic District were modified by the Board of Estimate to exclude the block. The South Street Seaport Historic District including this block is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

History of the South Street Seaport Historic District and Extension¹

From the first settlement of Manhattan by the Dutch, the East River shoreline of the island was recognized as the natural mooring site for ships. It was safer to land there than to attempt the more treacherous western shore of the island along the Hudson, and the narrowness of the East River also provided a more sheltered mooring for the small ships of the 17th century. The Dutch also began reshaping the shoreline of the island by means of landfill, a practice continued over the centuries to the present day. Pearl Street marks the original shoreline and its name is derived from the myriad of pearly oyster shells which washed ashore. The intersection of Pearl Street with Dover Street (within the Extension) is the landing site of the first ferry between Manhattan and Brooklyn which was established in 1638. Water Street and Front Street were created by landfill in the 18th century, and South Street was created in 1810. Peck Slip, named for Benjamin Peck, was one of the principal wharves in the city in the late 18th century until it was filled in at the time of the creation of South Street.²

The harbor, from its early development, provided an important source of revenue for the city. The shipping trade, both coastal and trans-Atlantic, thrived during the 18th century. A number of New York merchant families historically connected with the South Street Seaport Historic District and the Extension, such as the Schermerhorns, the Beekmans and the Waltons, accumulated great wealth from the shipping trade. William Walton whose mansion stood on Pearl Street between Peck Slip and Dover Street (on a site within the Historic District Extension) made a fortune from the coastal trade, enjoying an almost exclusive contract with the Spanish in St. Augustine, Florida. The house, erected in 1752, was built of Holland brick with a 50 foot frontage along Pearl Street and stood three stories high with a domered pitched roof. It was ornamented with brownstone watertables and lintels and the central entrance was crowned by the Walton family crest. Its roofline was enhanced by balustrades and its interior by handsome carved mahogany (illus. 1). At the rear of the property on the East River was the Walton dock. Walton died without issue and left the mansion to his nephew, also named William, who had married Mary DeLancey, a member of one of the most influential families in the colony. The nephew was one of the founders of the Chamber of Commerce and active in a number of pre-Revolutionary activities in the city.³ It was in this house that the daughter of Governor Clinton married Edmond Charles Genet, known in American history as Citizen Genet, a controversial figure in the early days of the Republic. The house was the first headquarters for the Bank of New York. Later, it was converted for commercial purposes as the nature of the area changed and, for a time before its demolition in 1881, it served as a warehouse and a section of it as a lodging house for immigrants.⁴

During the Revolution, while New York was occupied by the British, the harbor lost most of its domestic trade. After the war, New York's traditional trading links with Britain were cut forcing its merchants to seek new markets. One endeavor was the opening up of trade with the Orient. By the end of the century, Britain, having normalized relations with this country, chose New York as the center for its exports. Another significant factor that added impetus to the rise of the New York port as a leading



Valentine's Manual
1858

Illustration 1.
(Demolished)

Walton House
326-328 Pearl Street
On Right

commercial center was the founding of the packet lines in 1818. These square-rigged liners sailed from South Street just below Peck Slip and were the first vessels to establish regular service between New York and Liverpool and other European ports. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 also increased the city's commercial significance by making it the focal point for the export of American agricultural products and for the import of foreign goods to be shipped back along the Canal to the Midwest. In the 1840s, the packet lines were replaced by speedier clipper ships and these, in turn, by steamships, all of which were instrumental in securing New York's position in world trade.

During the 19th century, the port of New York was famous as the center for shipbuilding in this country. The traditional location for this industry was north of the Historic District and Extension and north of the present site of the Brooklyn Bridge along both the Manhattan and Brooklyn shorelines of the East River. New York's shipyards produced America's merchant navy in the 19th century and, as a center for shipbuilding, was rivalled only by the Clyde in Scotland.

The buildings in the Historic District and the Extension housed businesses involved in shipping, trade, and related activities. Pearl Street was the center for the dry goods trade, making the area a burgeoning mercantile district with many of the buildings providing storage space for goods in transit. They also provided office space for the commission merchants who served as middle men between the merchants proper and the brokers for trade goods. The area also boasted many hotels, boarding houses, and taverns catering to the businessmen, seamen and immigrants who poured into the area during the mid-19th century.

The 1850s was the decade when the East River port was at its peak as a shipping center. After this period, the clipper ships were eclipsed by the advent of steamships. Their greater size demanded deeper berths and wider maneuvering space which the Hudson provided. The expansion of the railroads and the opening of the Panama Railway reduced demand for some shipping and with the rapid growth of the city, the commercial center moved northward. Yet the area continued to serve as an important transportation hub for the city. The Fulton Ferry which connected Fulton Street in Manhattan with Fulton Street in Brooklyn carried millions of commuters each year. Other major ferries and steamers to Connecticut and Massachusetts as well as Eastern Long Island landed at the piers along the Historic District bringing thousands of travellers to the area. As shipping moved out of the area, businesses catering to the domestic traveller and others related to the seafood industry filled the empty warehouses. The Fulton Market Fishmongers Association, organized in the 1860s, was an important institution in the area. The fish market continues to function today and its activity has contributed to the survival of the character of the Historic District and the Extension. State and Municipal authorities and the South Street Seaport Museum, founded in 1967, have been highly instrumental in the preservation and rehabilitation of the area. The work of the Rouse organization, on Fulton Street, has stimulated new construction, restoration, and revitalization in the larger area. Today, the South Street Seaport

Historic District, with the Extension, is one of the City's major tourist attractions.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE SOUTH STREET SEAPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT AND EXTENSION

The buildings of the South Street Seaport Historic District and Extension span a period of almost 200 years and are representative of several different styles of mercantile architecture; those in the Extension, in particular, represent styles popular during the 19th century including the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, and the Romanesque Revival. Quite simple in overall design, few of the stores and warehouses of the seaport area were the work of professional architects. Generally, these commercial structures were designed by builders.

The earliest buildings in the District and the Extension served as both house and store and were designed in a simple vernacular style. Built in the 1790s, the Rose House at 273 Water Street opposite the Extension, is one of the few remaining examples of this type in the District. The house-store type was constructed throughout the early decades of the 19th century and had a planar brick facade with narrow proportions and simple brownstone decorative detail displaying some features of the Federal style. Later in the century, this building type was generally converted to boarding house use. Within the Extension, 268 Water Street is an example of this type. Erected in 1823-24 for Ezra Hoyt, it exhibits the domestic scale of the early commercial buildings. Hoyt used the building for the manufacture of stoves and may have reserved the upper floors for residences. The ground floor was altered in the mid-19th century with the installation of a cast-iron storefront, a frequent method of "modernizing" a structure.

Beginning in the late 1820s, the popularity of the grand Greek Revival style swept America and the style was readily adapted to a commercial formula which characterizes many of the buildings in the Historic District and the Extension. The noted New York architect Ithiel Town was the first to design a commercial structure in the Greek Revival in 1829 and it served as the prototype for New York City warehouses for the next twenty years. The great fire of 1835 in lower Manhattan created a tremendous need for new buildings and, soon after the fire, trabeated granite Greek Revival shops and warehouses began to line the streets of the Historic District and Extension. Granite was used for the monolithic ground-floor piers, generally with simple Tuscan capitals, and for the window lintels at the brick upper floors. The range of granite piers is the hallmark of the Greek Revival commercial style. The building at 270 Water Street within the Extension is of this type.

The later 19th-century buildings of the Historic District and Extension are not as numerous as those erected when the area was the center of the shipping industry. Nonetheless, warehouse construction continued until the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge. Cast iron was a popular building material after the mid-19th century and marks an advance in 19th-century building technology. Many of the earlier Greek Revival storefronts were remodeled.

with the more up-to-date cast iron. The 1868 warehouse at 213-215 Water Street in the Historic District is a fine example of the Italianate style in marble and cast iron. The twin warehouses at 272-274 Water Street in the Extension have Italianate details. The Romanesque Revival is represented by George B. Post's striking building of 1885 on Beekman Street in the Historic District. Within the Extension, 324-328 and 330 Pearl Street have Romanesque-inspired details. These are the oldest surviving buildings on Pearl Street within the Historic District and the Extension. The contrast between these later buildings and those of the Federal and Greek Revival period provide the District and Extension with a diversified architectural character. The Peck Slip Post Office is a mid-20th century building in the Extension.

The Extension to the South Street Seaport Historic District contains buildings erected during the same period, for the same purpose, in the same height and scale, and with the same materials as those within the District, and they share a common history and development pattern. Streets paved with Belgian block (Peck Slip and Water Street, which were originally paved with cobblestones) further enhance the character of the Extension and are also found within the Historic District. The Extension's integrity with the District is reinforced by the clear and distinct boundaries formed by the Southbridge apartment complex on its west and by the Brooklyn Bridge on its north. As seen from the Brooklyn Bridge, the Extension is an indistinguishable part of the fabric of the South Street Seaport Historic District. The Extension enriches the District historically, contributes to its architectural character, and insures its geographic cohesiveness.

DESCRIPTION⁵

DOVER STREET between Pearl and Water Streets.

SOUTH SIDE ONLY

No. 2-14. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 22 in part]

The south side of Dover Street is occupied by a narrow, irregularly-shaped vacant lot.

PEARL STREET between Peck Slip and Dover Street.

EAST SIDE ONLY

No. 320 (260-262 Water Street). [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 19]

This building is described under 1-19 Peck Slip.

No. 322. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 17]

This site is now a parking lot.

No. 324-328. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 18]

On the site of 326-328 Pearl Street, which was once Franklin Square, stood one of the most famous and handsome early buildings in the environs of the seaport. Built in 1752, the building was an elegant Georgian house owned by the merchant William Walton, whose portrait by Thomas Wollaston hangs in the New-York Historical Society.

The brick warehouses now standing at No. 324-328 was erected in 1861-82 from the designs of architect William Kuhler. Owned by James Callery, the building originally housed a store on the first floor with a factory above. In 1888, a printing house occupied the building. Portions of the ground floors have been altered with modern brick infill and window sash but the handsome paneled cast-iron square columns of the original storefronts remain. They were produced at the Westing & Hafters Iron Works. A metal band has been placed below the second-story windows in part of the cornice. The fenestration at the four upper stories varies slightly. In the middle section the windows are of the same height but paired, contrasting subtly with the other single windows of the facade. All the windows are square-headed with one-over-one double-hung metal replacement sash. The most ornate feature of the building is the Romanesque-inspired corbeled brick roof cornice, ornamented with a fanciful geometric pattern. The exposed southern elevation is covered with stucco.

No. 330. [Tax Map Block 106, Lots 1001-1010]

Also designed by William Kuhler, this five-story brick building was erected in 1882 and is almost identical to Nos. 324-328. Originally owned by J.S. Shultz, this building was designed to accord with the facade at No. 324-328. The square-headed windows have one-over-one, double-hung metal sash. A Romanesque-inspired corbeled brick roof cornice unites both buildings. The exposed northern elevation is covered with stucco.

Nos. 334-336. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 20]

The pair of five-story buildings which once stood on this site were demolished in 1958. It is now occupied by a parking lot.

No. 338. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 22]

This site is described under 2-14 Dover Street.

PECK SLIP between Pearl and Water Streets.

Peck Slip is paved with Belgian blocks.

NORTH SIDE ONLY

Nos. 1-19 (260-262 Water Street). [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 19]

Eleven buildings, one of which was wood frame, stood on this site at least until 1910 (illus. 2). The present six-story brick and concrete structure with steel sash was erected in 1950 from the designs of Charles M. Spindler as the Peck Slip Station, U.S. Post Office. The three major facades of the building are covered with louvered aluminum screen. The original wall surfaces are still visible where they enclose the parking lot at No. 322 Pearl Street.

WATER STREET between Peck Slip and Dover Street.

Water Street is paved with Belgian blocks.

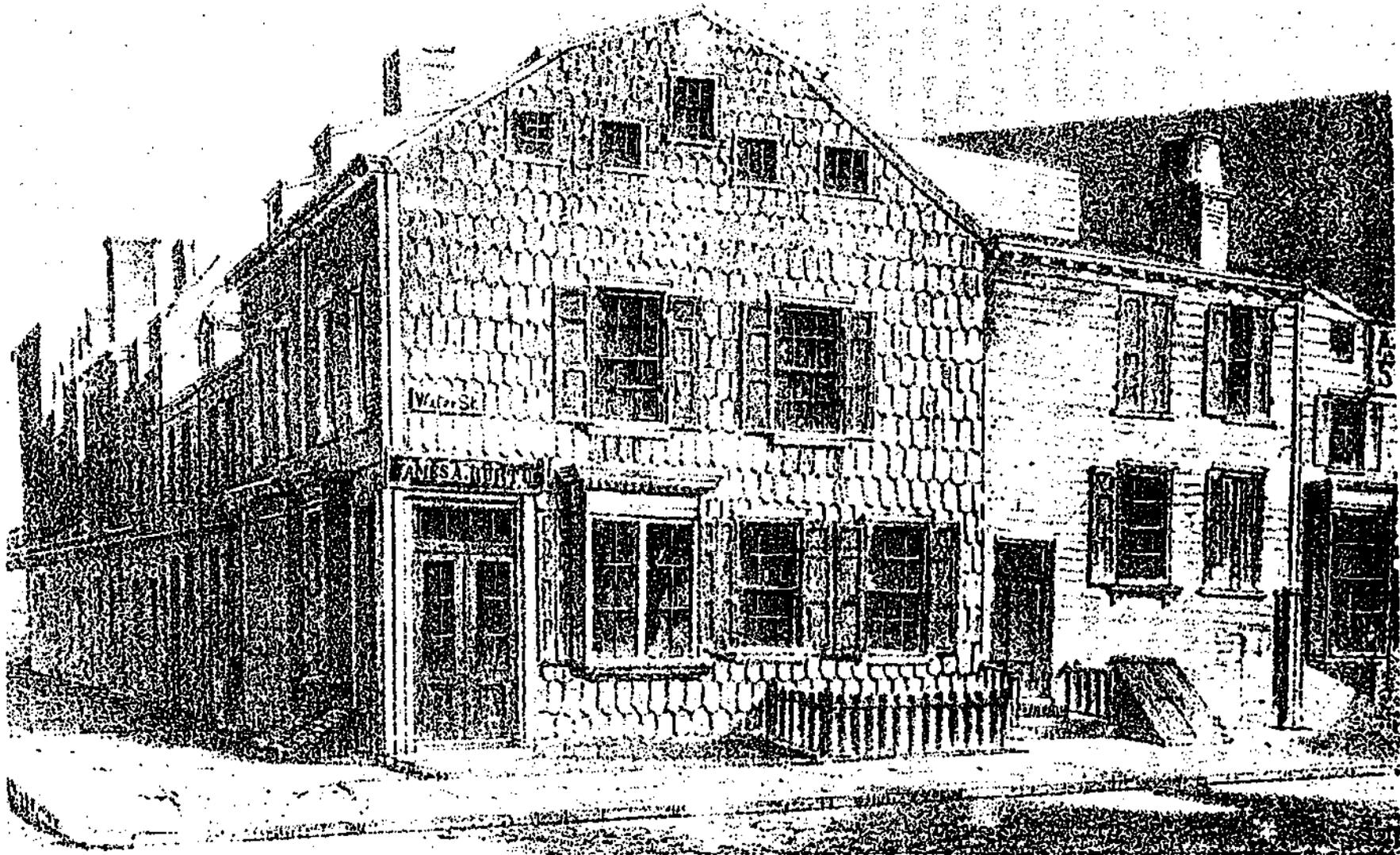
WEST SIDE ONLY

No. 260-262. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 19]

This building is described under 1-19 Peck Slip.

Nos. 264-266. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 7]

Two small buildings stood on this site by the 1820s. These early buildings may be incorporated in the present single brick building which was raised from four to six stories in 1885-86. The facade of this building dates completely from this later alteration. The building is three bays wide and has a center section with four windows, flanked on either side by two narrower bays. These bays are defined by full-height pilasters with metal capitals at alternate floors. The windows are square-headed with one-



Northwest corner of Peck Slip & Water Street
Valentine's Manual 1858
Peck Slip on the left
Illustration 2.
(Demolished)

over-one, double-hung metal replacement sash. At the ground floor the cast-iron front displays reeded square columns. Above a handsome corbel table, a deeply projecting modillioned roof cornice crowns the building. A portion of the northern elevation faced with brick and punctuated by window openings, is visible above the roof of the adjacent building.

No. 268. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 6]

This small three-story structure contrasts strikingly with the taller buildings in this block. Dating from 1823-24, it was originally owned by Ezra Hoyt, a stove manufacturer. The ground floor has been substantially altered but still reveals the paneled cast-iron square columns of the mid-19th century storefront. The upper stories, in Flemish bond brickwork, are characteristically Federal in style and have six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows with simple stone sills and lintels. At either side of these windows, the gudgeons for the iron shutters are still visible. The toothed and dentilled brick pattern of the roof cornice, a later addition, gives a lively enrichment to the facade.

No. 270. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 5]

Erected between 1836 and 1840, this five-story brick building is a characteristic Greek Revival warehouse. Large granite piers flank the three ground floor openings and support a simple granite architrave with cornice. Paneled double doors at the northernmost bay lead to the upper floors. In keeping with the standard Greek Revival design, the tall windows of the second story contrast with the shorter ones at the upper stories. All the windows are square-headed with two-over-two, double-hung wooden sash. A corbeled brick roof cornice, with fascia, crowns the facade. A granite trough, which once carried off the rain water of the downspout from the rain gutter at the roof, remains at sidewalk level in front of the building as does its granite stoop and vault apron. A portion of the southern elevation, faced with stucco, is visible above the roof of the adjacent building.

Nos. 272, 274, 276. [Tax Map Block 106, Lot 2]

Originally two structures were located at No. 272 and one at No. 274—each three stories in height. The present twin five-story warehouses were constructed in 1867. The cast-iron storefronts, with Italianate detail characteristic of the period, are particularly handsome. Paneled cast-iron square columns with large decorative motifs at mid-height support broad openings with flat arches curved at the ends. At the upper stories of No. 272, many of the sheet metal lintels, with egg-and-dart moldings, remain, as do the metal sills set on ornate iron brackets. The original windows remain at No. 272 and are wooden four-over-four, double-hung sash. The wide central muntin was designed to give the windows the appearance of a casement, a feature of the Italianate style. The windows of No. 274 undoubtedly once had similar lintels and sills. The simple modillioned metal roof cornice remains only at No. 274. The sidewalk in front of No. 274 consists of bluestone flagging and Belgian block. Demolition of a building at No. 276 has exposed the northern elevation of No. 274. It is brick

partially covered with stucco. The vacant lot at No. 276 shares the tax lot with No. 274.

Report prepared by James T. Dillon,
Research Department

Edited by Marjorie Pearson,
Director of Research Department

NOTES

1. The information contained in this report is adapted in part, from LPC, South Street Seaport Historic District Designation Report, (New York, 1977).
2. For a paradigm of the landfill pattern in the Seaport consult: Professional Service Industries, Inc., "The Archaeological Investigation of the 175 Water Street Block, New York City," report prepared for HRO International, Tower 56, 125 East 56th Street, New York, N.Y., 10022. This report is available at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
3. George Wilson, Portrait Gallery of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New-York, (New York, 1860) 28-30.
4. Mary L. Booth, History of the City of New York, (New York, 1860), 384-385.
5. Unless noted in the text, all the sidewalks are concrete and the streets are paved with asphalt.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this Extension to the South Street Seaport Historic District, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the South Street Seaport Historic District Extension [Tax Map Block 106] along with the South Street Seaport Historic District, have a special character and special historical interest and value which represent one or more periods or styles of architecture typical of one or more eras in the history of New York City and which cause this area, by reason of these factors, to constitute a distinct section of the City.

The Commission further finds that the South Street Seaport Historic District Extension contains buildings which span the 19th century from the early 1820s to the mid-1880s, the period of the East River port's greatest growth and development, the period when it was the most important shipping center in the nation; that the Historic District and the Extension comprise the surviving elements of this port; that the buildings in the Extension are simple, utilitarian structures reflecting their original uses as warehouses, lofts, and commercial storage spaces; that the buildings also represent important phases in the evolution of the city's commercial architecture from the house/store type of the early 19th century, to the warehouses of the Greek Revival period with their granite piers, to the larger masonry and cast-iron warehouses of the mid to late 19th century; that the Extension is associated historically with figures prominent in the commercial development of the city and, as such, shares a common history with the designated District; that within the Extension some of the streets are paved with Belgian block, a 19th-century paving material found in many of the streets within the Historic District; that its buildings are of the same era, in the same scale and height, and of the same materials as the buildings within the designated District; that these buildings form a seamless fabric with the District and enhance its physical integrity and architectural cohesiveness; and that the integrity of the Extension with the Historic District is further enhanced by the clear and distinct boundaries formed by the Southbridge apartment complex on its west and by the Brooklyn Bridge on the north, and as seen from the Brooklyn Bridge the Extension is an indistinguishable part of the fabric of the South Street Seaport Historic District.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, 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 an Extension to the South Street Seaport Historic District, Borough of Manhattan, the property bounded by a line beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Pearl Street and Dover Street, extending easterly along the southern curb line of Dover Street, southerly along the middle of Water Street, westerly along the middle of Peck Slip, northerly across Peck Slip to the eastern curb line of Pearl Street, and northerly along the eastern curb line of Pearl Street to the point of beginning.

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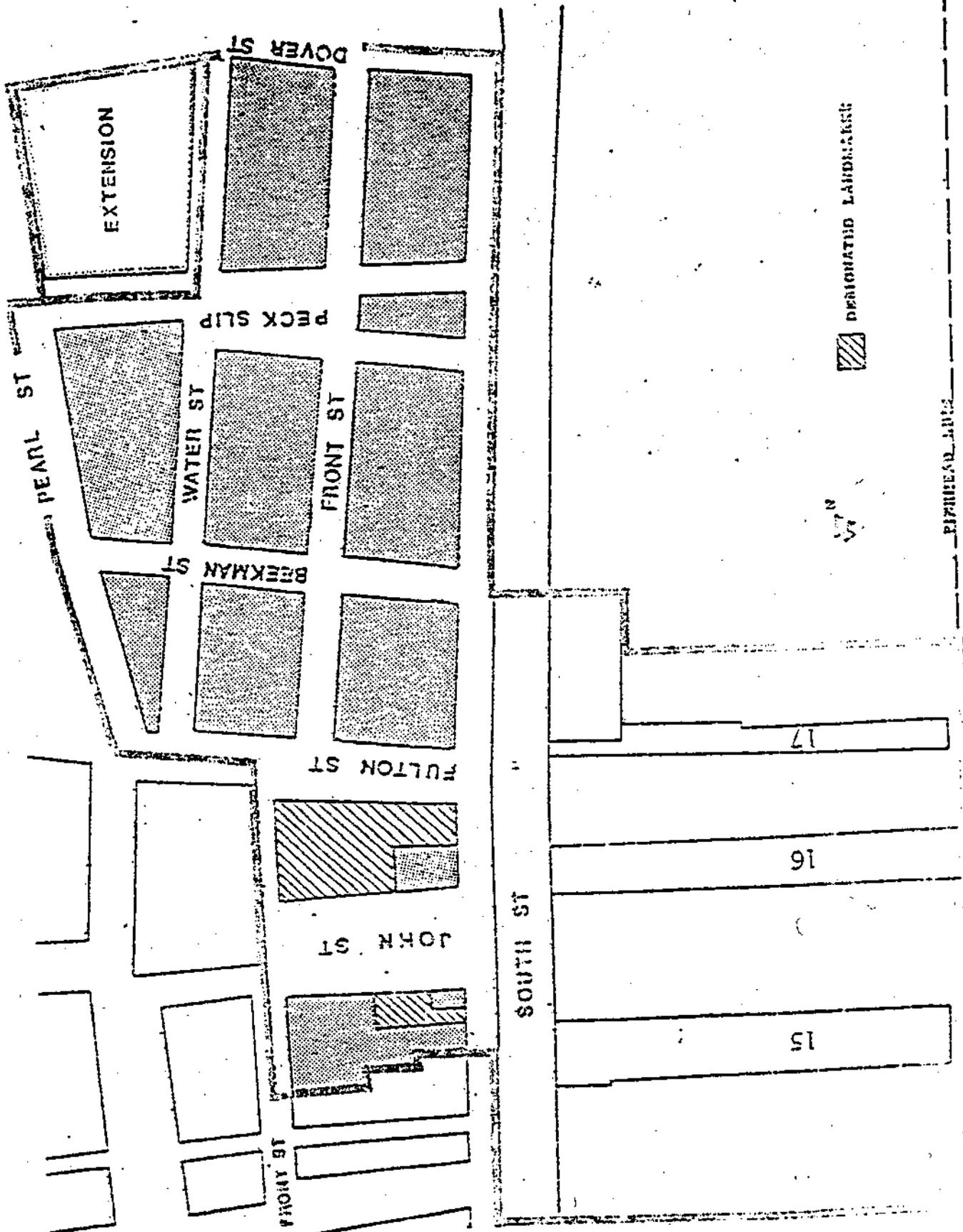
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SOUTH STREET SEAPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT
 DESIGNATED 10 MAY 1977
 EXTENSION

DESIGNATED 11 JULY 1988



Photo Credit:
Carl Forster

324-328 Pearl Street



Photo Credit:
Carl Forster

330 Pearl Street

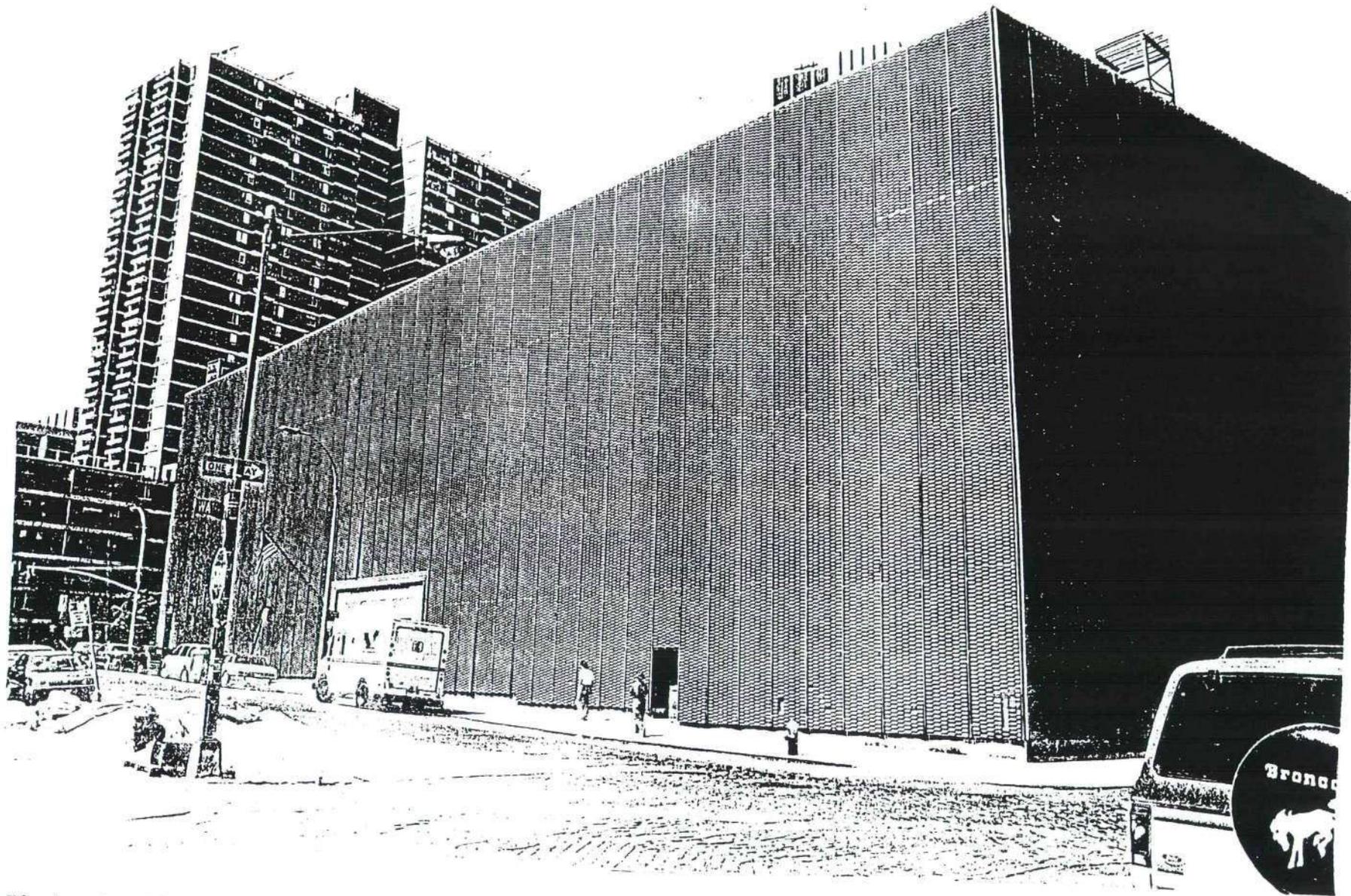


Photo Credit:
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1-19 Peck Slip



Photo Credit:
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264-266 Water Street

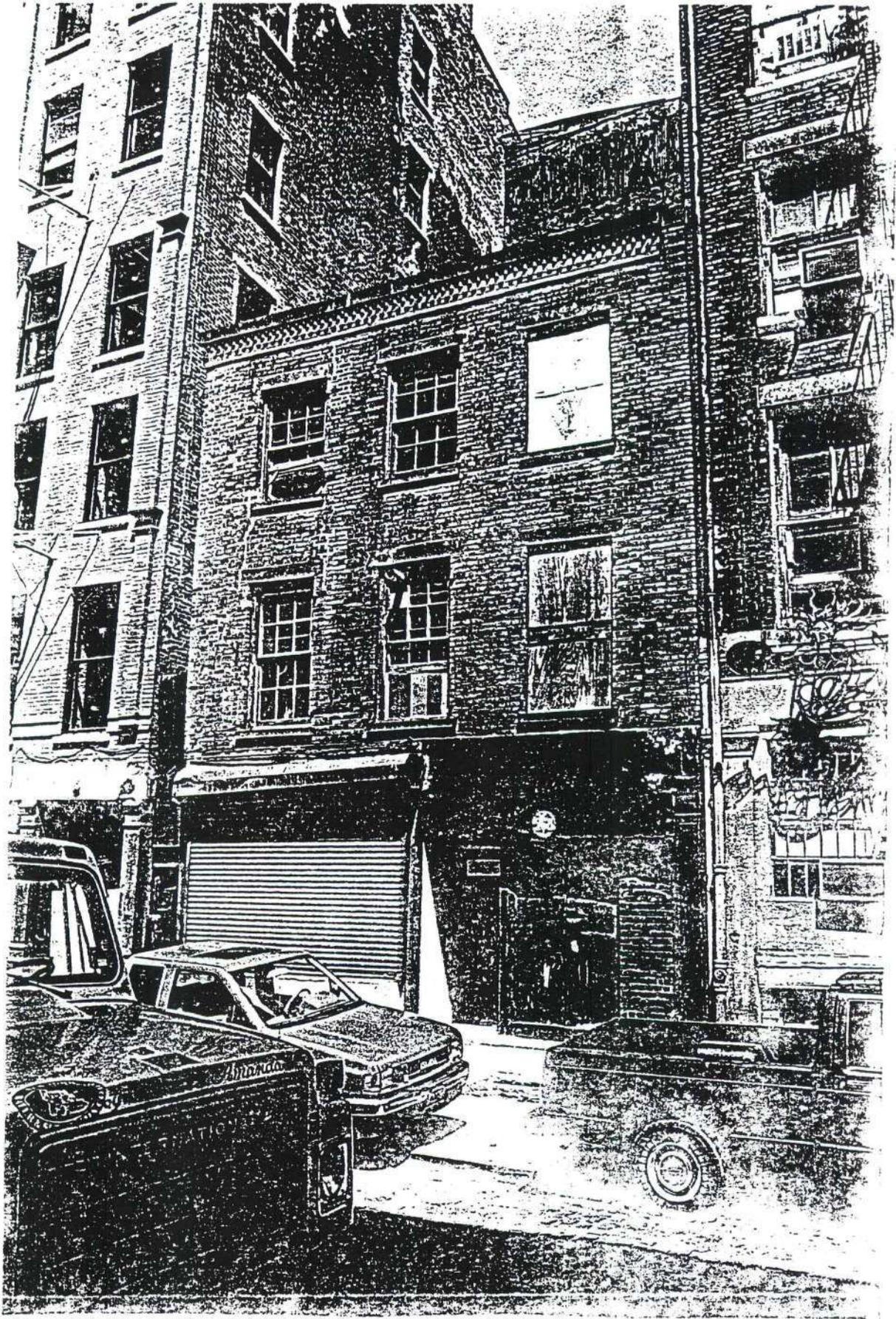


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268 Water Street

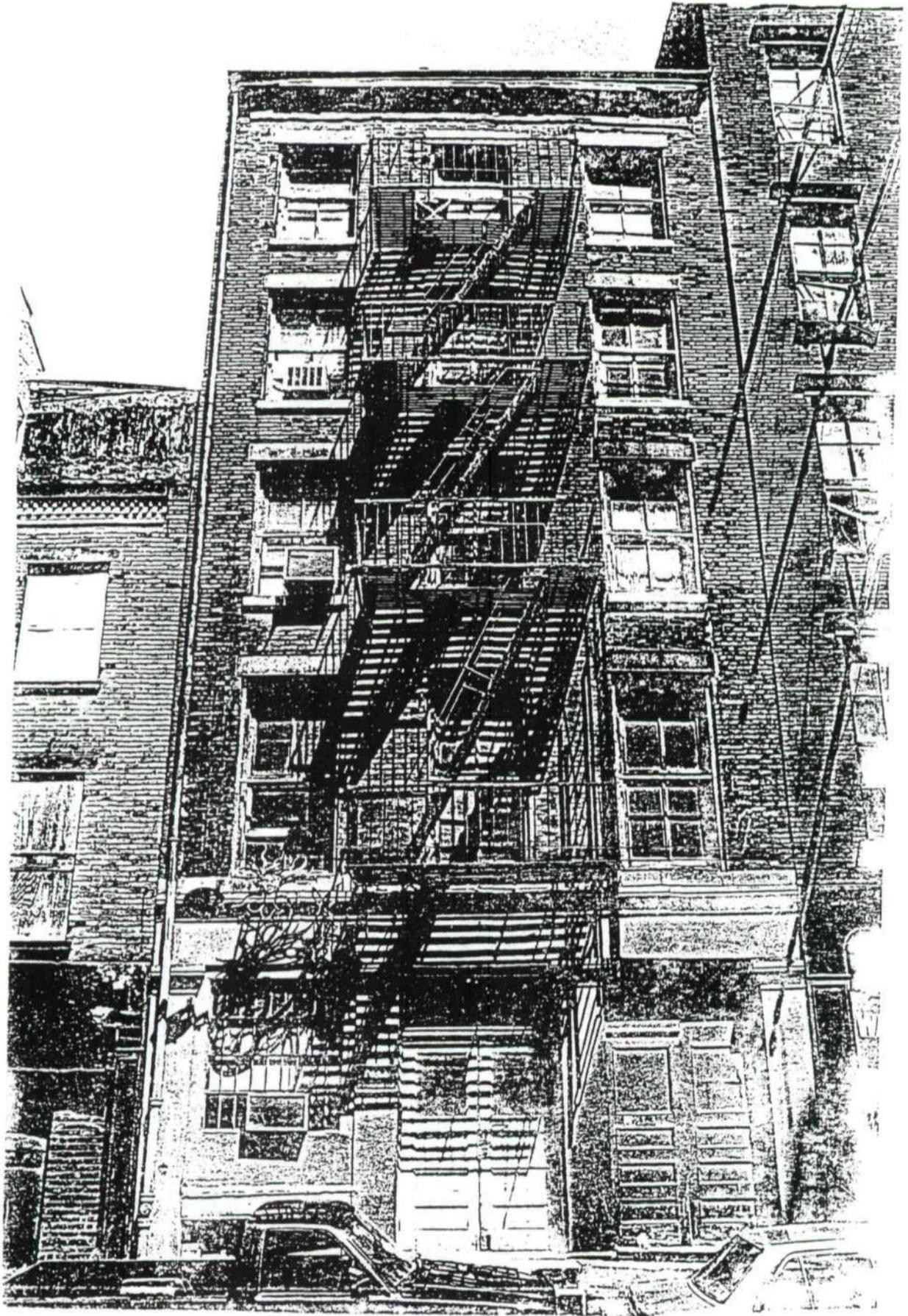


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270 Water Street

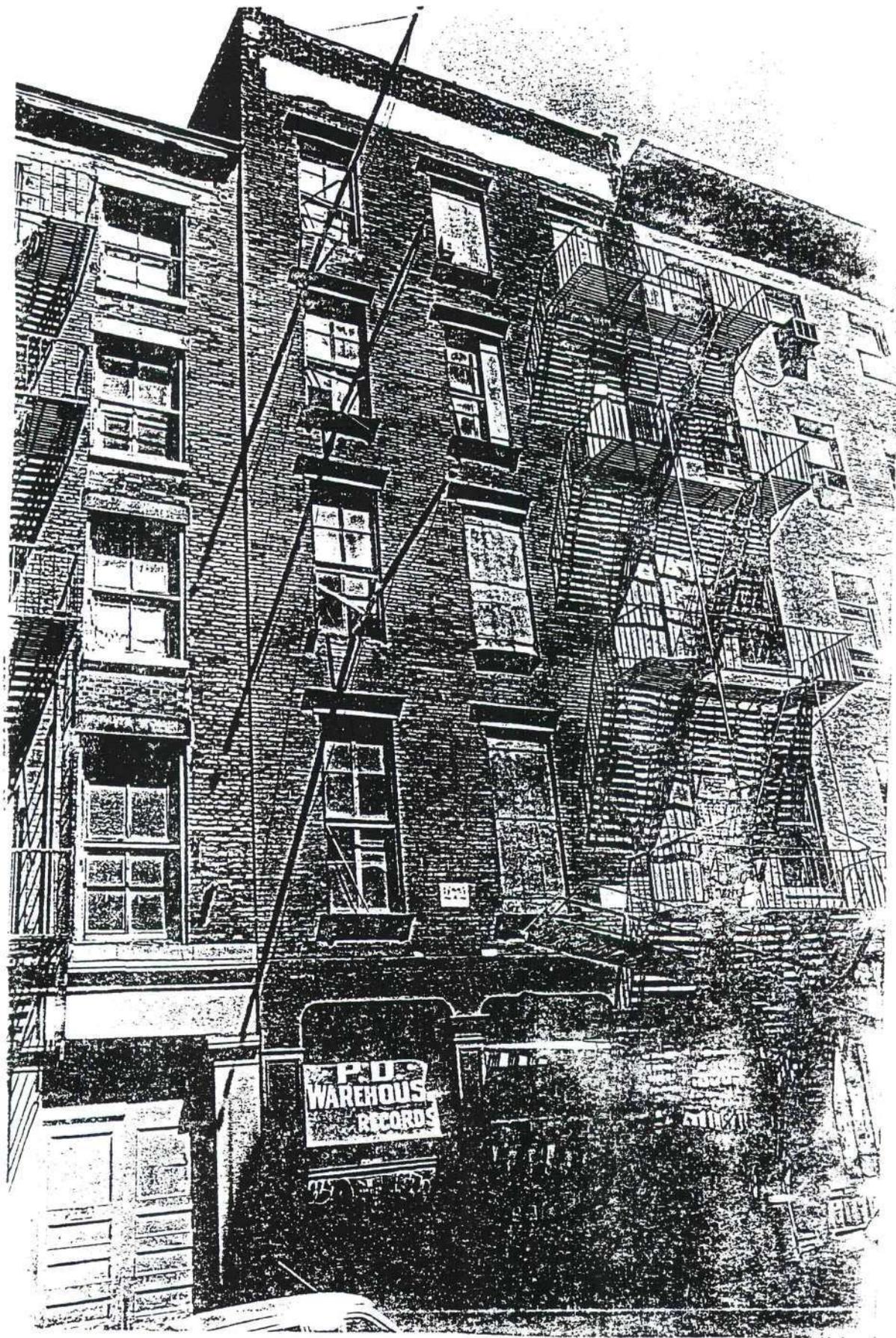


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272 Water Street