



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING AND MARITIME USES  
REGARDING DESIGNATION OF GEORGE WILLIAM AND ANNA CURTIS HOUSE  
September 7, 2016**

Good morning Chair Koo and Committee Members. My name is Lauren George, Director of Intergovernmental and Community Affairs at the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I am here today to testify on the Commission's designation of George William and Anna Curtis House, 234 Bard Avenue, Staten Island. Built c. 1859; Architect not determined, Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 138, Lot 166.

On September 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the George William and Anna Curtis House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Two people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Municipal Art Society.

On October 22, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a special public hearing on the proposed designation of the George William and Anna Curtis House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Five people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Victorian Society New York. The Commission also received written submissions expressing support for designation from the Municipal Art Society, the Society for the Architecture of the City, and the Preservation League of Staten Island.

Built in 1859, the George William and Anna Curtis House is an excellent example of a pattern-book-inspired Italianate style country residence and was the home of the notable reformist George William Curtis. The house was built in Elliottville, an area that was developed in the 1840s by Samuel MacKenzie Elliot, a prominent eye surgeon, activist, and abolitionist, who attracted a group of notable like-minded reformists to the neighborhood; residents included the abolitionist, Sydney Howard Gay, the progressive reform leader, Josephine Shaw Lowell, and George William Curtis.

The Curtises lived most of their lives together in the house at 234 Bard Avenue. George William Curtis was a distinguished author, editor, essayist, and lecturer. He was a writer for Putnam's Magazine and later for various Harper Brothers publications including Harper's Weekly, Harper's Magazine, and Harper's Bazaar. A progressive thinker and persuasive lecturer, he addressed major political issues of the day, such as slavery, women's suffrage, and civil service reform. Anna Curtis was active in local organizations and came from a like-minded family of reformists. In addition to its significant associations with George William and Anna Curtis, the house is a fine example of a vernacular free-standing Italianate style country residence. Sharing similarities with the design for "An Ornamental Farm House" in Andrew Jackson Downing's pattern book, Cottage Residences, the house exemplifies the influence of pattern books and Downing's work on American 19th-century residential architecture. Accordingly, the Landmarks Preservation Commission urges you to affirm the designation. Thank you.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Michael Owen (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Landmarks Pres. Commission

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE COUNCIL  
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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Lauren George (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Landmarks Pres. Commission

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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