REQUEST FOR EVALUATION (RFE) - INDIVIDUAL, INTERIOR, SCENIC

INSTRUCTIONS:

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is responsible for identifying and designating the special buildings and sites that represent the architectural, historical and cultural heritage of New York City. The Commission’s Research Department accepts suggestions from the public regarding potential historic resources throughout the five boroughs. If a property appears to rise to the level of significance necessary to be considered for Landmark designation, the agency may conduct additional research, and may recommend it for consideration by the Commission.

Please complete all 5 sections of this form. Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required. An incomplete submission may slow down review of your request. You may mail this form to the address above or send it by email to RFE@lpc.nyc.gov.

Requests will only be considered if a property is 30 years or older and if it is not already designated as a New York City Landmark. Please be advised that if a property is located within the boundaries of a Historic District or Scenic Landmark, the exterior of the property is already protected under the full extent of the law. LPC does not regulate the use or occupancy of Landmark buildings and sites.

1. SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

To request the evaluation of a property’s Landmark eligibility, you must include ALL of the following materials:

- Completed Request for Evaluation Application Form (5 sections)
- Statement of Significance (on Page 2 of application form)
- Current photographs of the site. Photographs should comprehensively reflect current conditions.

2. PROPOSED LANDMARK TYPE (Please select ONE of the following)

- Individual: The exteriors of individual structures, ranging from farmhouses to skyscrapers. (e.g., Woolworth Building; Pieter Wyckoff House; Cyclone Roller Coaster)
- Interior: Building interiors that are customarily open or accessible to the public, and meet the criteria for individual landmarks (e.g. Empire State Building lobby; Grand Central Terminal concourse and waiting room). The site cannot be a private residence or religious property

- Scenic: City-owned parks or other landscape features (e.g., Prospect Park; Central Park; Ocean Parkway)

3. REQUESTOR INFORMATION

| NAME* | Brad Vogel |
| E-MAIL ADDRESS | Brad.Vogel@gmail.com |
| ADDRESS* | 365 Bond St |
| CITY, STATE* | Brooklyn |

| TELEPHONE* | 920.860.6199 |
| AFFILIATION/REPRESENTING* | Gowanus Landmarking Coalition |
| ZIP CODE* | 11231 |
| DATE OF REQUEST* | 5/18/18 |

4. PROPERTY TO BE EVALUATED

| PROPERTY/ADDRESS* | 595-611 Smith Street |
| BOROUGH* | Brooklyn |
| BUILDING OR INTERIOR NAME (IF APPLICABLE) | |
| TAX MAP BLOCK* | 489 |
| TAX MAP LOT* | 1 |
| DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (IF KNOWN) | 1886 |
| ORIGINAL USE (IF KNOWN) | Grain Storehouse |
| ARCHITECT (IF KNOWN) | |
5. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Please provide a statement explaining why you think this building or site should be considered for designation as an Individual, Interior, or Scenic Landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

This morning, a man with an axe stood chopping into the roof of the S.W. Bowne Grain Storehouse and garbage bags rained from the metal-shuttered window openings, a day after a coalition of Gowanus-area groups sent out a press release calling for the 1886 brick building to be designated as an individual landmark. The coalition calling for landmark status consists of: Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus (FROGG), Old Stone House, Park Slope Civic Council, CG CORD, and Historic Districts Council, along with a number of Gowanus residents. Our press conference will be held on May 22, 2018 at 9:30 a.m. on the Union Street Bridge in Gowanus.

Numerous articles and sources have established the historic significance of the S.W. Bowne Grain Storehouse along the Gowanus Canal. And as demolitions have left the Canal bereft of most of the touchstones of the area's direct architectural linkages to its commercial maritime past, the S.W. Bowne Grain Storehouse remains, for the moment.

Constructed in 1886 on land partially reclaimed from tidal marshes around what was once the mouth of Gowanus Creek, the sturdy, multi-story brick warehouse features metal star bolts evidencing rod and plate construction across its facades, as well as metal hatch-cover window shutters. A central ventilation ridge runs along the spine of the building. Steeply-pitched roofs and gables loudly convey the age of the building and mark it as a survivor of an earlier time in the city’s history. Metal armatures still extend out from various parts of the building's parapet, formerly held pulley lifts for raising and lowering cargo into and out of the structure. Critically, in terms of integrity, aside from the collapse of a small portion of the roof and weakening of the related parapet on the northeast corner of the building - and graffiti galore - the building remains in remarkable intact condition (both inside, with massive wooden beams, and outside) from its original 1886 construction and readily conveys the sense of the building as a grain storehouse functioning along the waterfront in a city largely dependent on grain to feed the mass of horses engaged in providing transit for a booming metropolis just a decade away from consolidation in 1898.

The building also embodies what one historian noted is "a continuous thread of grain-handling from the time the Dutch arrived" on the site. The Gowanus and Red Hook areas' history of tide mills serving as grist mills, as well as the history of the vast quantities of grain moved down the Erie Canal and the Hudson River to Brooklyn via barges in the 19th Century make this building an important focal point that permits those stories to be told. The S.W. Bowne Company sold hay, straw, grain and feed and manufactured oat and corn into processed livestock feed. This large warehouse stored that grain, four stories of grain and feed, most of it stored in
woven sacks. It would have been a very labor intensive business, involving men moving heavy sacks of grain around all day, storing it by type and date, and moving it for sale or inspection. By 1916, conveyer belts and machinery helped to move and mix the goods.

Change along the waterfront is also conveyed by the building's own history. By the 1930s, it had become a general-use warehouse, and by the 1950s, parts of the property were being used by cargo and stevedoring companies, with the property becoming largely abandoned in the 1960s. These changes tie in with the broader reduction in maritime traffic on the Gowanus Canal and in New York Harbor across the same decades as highways and containerization changed the traffic in bulk commodities.

But it is the story of S.W. Bowne himself and his literal interweaving with the building that captures the significance of the structure. As historian Suzanne Spellen noted: "S.W. Bowne was not a huge company, but it traded stock and had a board of directors. Its president was S.W. Bowne himself, and he owned 560 of the 800 shares in the company. Bowne was not a sit in the big office kind of man. He often went into the warehouse and worked alongside his staff. In 1916, he was helping his men bring some wood in through one of the windows when his foot went through the floor and his pant leg was caught in a conveyer belt that ran below the floor. The belt pulled him down into the machinery, crushing his leg in an instant. He would have to have it amputated above the knee."

This incident cemented the building's importance in labor history. As Spellen notes: "[Bowne] had to sue to get workman's compensation, claiming to be an employee of his own company, and thereby due compensation. The court agreed. His board of directors disagreed, and the case ended up in the Court of Appeals. They ruled that even though he did own a majority of the stock, and was the president of the company, he was also a working employee, and therefore due workman's comp. The case is listed in the 1916 NY State Court of Appeals as Bowne v. SW Bowne Co."

The S.W. Bowne Warehouse is the last of its kind and is worth preserving. There is not much time to act; we request that the Commission calendar the building as soon as possible for consideration for individual designation. We understand the LPC has been surveying Gowanus for potential landmarks: this is one of them, and the Coalition behind this RFE has raised this building as a prospective landmark in summer of 2017 in Gowanus Places meetings where an LPC representative was present. And further more, as one of the sources below clearly show...LPC has been aware of the significance of this building since at least 2009.

Additional sources for further supporting material as to significance:

Roebling Chapter - Society for Industrial Archaeology - 2010 Newsletter - Evidencing fact that LPC was aware of building's significance in 2009 and stated that
it would be considered as a part of a Gowanus historic district:
http://roeblingsia.org/newsletters/V19No1.pdf

Historian Suzanne Spellen article in Brownstoner:

Curbed Photo Essay by Nathan Kensinger:

Baruch College - Reconsidering Gowanus - Mention of S.W. Bowne Grain Storehouse in timeline of Gowanus history:

Bowne v Bowne Co - Court Case of 1916: https://casetext.com/case/bowne-v-bowne-co

VJURBEX Details on Structure: https://vjrurbex.com/2016/02/29/s-w-bowne-grain-storehouse/

Billy Woerner Blog - Additional Detail:
https://billywoerner.wordpress.com/2014/03/18/s-w-bowne-grain-storehouse-gowanus-brooklyn/