

PIETER CLAESEN WYCKOFF HOUSE, Clarendon Road and Ralph Avenue, Borough of Brooklyn. Built before 1641, architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 7917, Lot 9 and that portion of the adjoining City-owned land on which is situated a part of the described building.

On September 21, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Wyckoff House as a Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. More than 15 witnesses appeared and spoke in favor of designation of the building including the executive director of the Wyckoff House Foundation, the owner of the building, and the Deputy Borough President of Brooklyn representing the Borough President of Brooklyn. A representative of the Department of Highways asked that the house be moved to permit the continuation of Ditmas Avenue. The Borough Historian opposed this request. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This house in its oldest part, which is the lower part of the building lying to the west, is the oldest building in New York City and State. The steep slope of the roof and the proportions are purely medieval. This wooden, one-story farmhouse is an example of the Flemish Medieval Survival and the Dutch Colonial styles of architecture.

The land on which it stands was acquired from the Canarsie Indians in 1636 by Wouter Van Twiller, Director-General of New Netherland (1632-8). The property was confiscated by the Dutch West India Company in 1652 and passed to the ownership of the Duke of York when New Netherland was seized by the English. The property was given to the town of Flatlands in 1667. It was then being lived in by Pieter Claesen Wyckoff.

Pieter Claesen (who took the name of Wyckoff after the ceding of New Amsterdam to the English) came from Holland in 1636 and for a time in 1655 was a superintendent on Peter Stuyvesant's farm. He rose to be a man of wealth as well as a magistrate in Flatlands and was one of the representatives at the convention held at Flatbush to send delegates to Holland to lay before the States-General and the West India Company the distressed condition of New Amsterdam. The house remained in the possession of the Wyckoffs until 1901 and has lately been acquired by the foundation established by the Wyckoff Association in America.

At the public hearing, the president of the New York State Historical Association said, "The Wyckoff House is a unique treasure for New Yorkers and all Americans.... There is no other house as old and as unique left standing in the United States."

The house is standing on its original site today. Because of the unique physical evidence in its foundations and the significance of the structural membering above, the Wyckoff House's archeological value would be greatly reduced if it were removed from its original foundations which are essential for confirming its architectural significance.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, both the architectural and structural character and other features of the house, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Pieter Claesen Wyckoff House has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, part of the Wyckoff House is the oldest building standing in New York City and New York State and one of the oldest wooden buildings in the United States and that it is the only existing building in New York City directly associated with a high ranking Dutch official of the 17th Century.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Pieter Claesen Wyckoff House, Clarendon Road and Ralph Avenue, Borough of Brooklyn, and designates as its related Landmark Site Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 7917, Lot 9 and that portion of the adjoining City-owned land on which is situated a part of the Wyckoff House.