

Landmarks Preservation Commission
November 23, 1965, Calendar No. 5
LP-0030

FRAUNCES TAVERN, 54 Pearl Street, Borough of Manhattan. 1719, built for Etienne DeLancey, architect unknown; restored in 1907, architect William H. Mersereau.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 7, Lot 35.

On October 19, 1965, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Fraunces Tavern and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Calendar No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Appearing in favor of designation were three representatives of the owner of the building, the Sons of the Revolution in the State of New York. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Fraunces Tavern is a three-story brick building with an attic with dormer windows. The west wall is notable for having been constructed of 18th century Holland Brick while the rest of the building utilized English Brick. This is the earliest of the 18th century buildings still standing in Manhattan. Originally, built by Etienne (Stephen) DeLancey, as his residence, it later became the Queen's Head Tavern. This building contains the notable "Long Room" in which George Washington said farewell to his officers in 1783.

The Tavern, as seen today, represents the restoration of 1907 made by architect William H. Mersereau, using that portion of the original structure which survived the fire of 1845. In evaluating the restoration, Montgomery Schuyler, the architectural critic, stated in an article he wrote in 1908: "Recent operations in the interior uncovered instructive structural facts, the slope of the roof of the original mansion, the size and shape of the old brick and what there was left of the construction of the 'Long Room'."

Historically, this building achieved great local prominence in 1763 when it became the Queen's Head Tavern with Samuel Fraunces, who later became George Washington's steward, as proprietor. Notable events which occurred within its walls include the founding of the New York State Chamber of Commerce in 1768. Today it is distinguished as the home of the Sons of the Revolution.

At the public hearing, one of the representatives of the Sons of the Revolution cited the following evaluation of Fraunces Tavern: "The City of New York has made many futile attempts to erect to the memory of Washington a suitable monument. It is already done. The preservation of Fraunces Tavern is the greatest monument that can be conceived or erected."

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Fraunces Tavern 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, Fraunces Tavern represents one of the early restorations of New York City preserving one of the few notable 18th century buildings in the City, that it contains in its west wall original Holland Brick and that it is historically outstanding through its connection with the DeLancey family and as the scene of George Washington's farewell to his officers.

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 Fraunces Tavern, 54 Pearl Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 7, Lot 35, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.