

DYCKMAN HOUSE, Broadway between West 204th Street and West 207th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built about 1783.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 2241, Lot 35.

On June 14, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Dyckman House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 41). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Today the Dyckman House stands as the last typical Dutch Colonial farmhouse left on Manhattan Island. Built of fieldstone, brick and wood, this Eighteenth Century house replaced one of 1748 which was destroyed by the British in the Revolutionary War. Descendants of the Dyckman family purchased and restored the house with period furnishings, presenting it to the City in 1915 which now manages it as a museum and park. It is a modest dwelling with an unpretentious charm and warmth. Architecturally, it is a country farmhouse of the period, at its best. Perched on a small landscaped hillock, with a sturdy fieldstone wall enclosing the property, it is a valued treasure of our architectural legacy.

Built in 1783, the structure has a few features and details suggesting earlier construction. It is believed that some of the materials salvaged from the 1748 house were used in erecting this farmhouse. The one and one-half story dwelling with high basement, has a sweeping low-pitched gambrel roof, curved out over a full porch. It has brick and fieldstone walls below and clapboard above. The columns of the porch, supporting the roof, are of the plain box type. At the south end a small wing extends out from the main dwelling.

During the Revolutionary War the land of the three hundred acre farm was occupied by both the Continental and the British Armies. The Continental Army with some ten thousand troops occupied the Dyckman Farm following the Battle of Harlem Heights of September, 1776. This area constituted the famous Hessian Hut camp, consisting of approximately thirty-six little rough wood huts with thatched roofs. The camp remained the outer point of defense for the British until 1783. When they left, they destroyed the orchards and the farmhouse. A replica of one of these huts is preserved on the grounds in the rear of the farmhouse.

Dyckman Street is named after the Dyckman family. Jan, who came to America in 1661 from Westphalia, purchased several acres near Spuyten Duyvil and began to acquire the acreage for his farm. He was appointed a magistrate in 1674. Jan was a good farmer, as were his descendants after him. Jacob, his son and heir to his farm, is noted for having constructed the Free Bridge (Dyckman's Bridge) over the Harlem River. Jacob acquired more land, and when he died in 1774 his son, William, inherited the farm. His sons distinguished themselves in military service in the Westchester Guards. Jacobus, a soldier in the Continental Army, was elected a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1821. The farm prospered until 1868 but was in part auctioned off in 1870.

This house-museum contains Dutch and English Colonial furniture and many interesting curios. The household wares are authentic, although they were not used in this house. It is open to the public.

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 the Dyckman 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, the Dyckman House is outstanding as the only remaining Dutch Colonial farmhouse in Manhattan, that it represents an excellent restoration of pre-Revolutionary Dutch Colonial architecture, that it stands on historic ground made hallowed by those engaged in the War of Independence and that it was donated and restored by descendants of a family prominent in the development of the community and of New York City.

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 Dyckman House, Broadway between West 204th Street and West 207th Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 2241, Lot 35, Borough of Manhattan, as its Landmark Site.