

NEW DORP LIGHT, New Dorp Heights, Altamont Avenue, Staten Island. Built about 1854.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 939, Lot 120 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On September 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the New Dorp Light and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 50). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. In a letter to the Commission, a representative of the Federal Government questioned the proposal to designate the building, saying that Federally-owned property is not subject to regulation by local law.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The New Dorp Light is a unique vernacular building, with simple lines and well proportioned scale. Built about 1854, this severly plain one and one-half story clapboarded frame building is clearly rugged in character and wind-swept in appearance. This rectangular, utilitarian structure with a low square light house tower rising from the center of its steeply pitched gable roof is a type without equal in the metropolitan area. Located in New Dorp Heights and situated on high ground, it commands a view of the Narrows, and its light, when in operation, could be seen from ships far down lower New York Bay.

The lower portion of this frame building rests on a low brick foundation, and two brick chimneys rise above the ridge of the roof at the ends. The windows are of the double hung sash type, with plain sills and unadorned lintels. A distinctive feature is the cantilevered balcony or captain's walk that extends around the shaft at the level of the tower room which has a door opening onto it. The walk is enclosed by a railing of unusually good proportions with plain corner posts and spindles capped by a handsome hand rail. A low-pitched pyramidal roof, surmounted by the light beacon, crowns the tower room. At ground level a wing was added to provide a covered entrance and a screened-in porch for the caretaker. Its architectural character and the scale of the wing blend with the main house.

The New Dorp Light, variously known as the New Dorp Beacon or Moravian Light, was established in 1856, under jurisdiction of the Federal Lighthouse Service. It was operated by that Federal Agency until 1939, when the station was acquired by the United States Coast Guard and placed under its supervision. The light was a steady beam. On June 15, 1964 the station was decommissioned by the Coast Guard. Its light was darkened, and the windows in the house were boarded up.

The question has been raised by the Federal Government as to whether this building should be designated by New York City as a Landmark. The Commission wishes to honor a building of which New Yorkers are proud. The Commission is cognizant of the jurisdictional question. Nevertheless, it is very important for the Government of New York City to state officially its deep concern that this building be preserved. There should be no uncertainty about this in anyone's mind.

The Commission would be negligent if it failed to act in this situation. At some time in the future this building may be in jeopardy. Our designation will be especially helpful in alerting New York City's elected representatives in Washington of the importance of saving this building. At present the Commission's specialists can be of service in providing advice so that the architectural integrity of this building is maintained. Indeed a fine relationship already exists with many local representatives of the Federal Government.

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 New Dorp Light 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 New Dorp Light is a unique vernacular building of unusual design and outstanding architectural character, that of its type it is unequalled in the New York Metropolitan area and that it represents a singularly attractive utilitarian frame structure that served for more than a century as an important lighthouse guiding ships into New York Harbor.

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 New Dorp Light, New Dorp Heights, Altamont Avenue, Staten Island and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 939, Lot 120 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.