TREASURE HOUSE, 37 Arthur Kill Road, Borough of Richmond. Begun about 1700.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 2278, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On October 11, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of a Richmondtown Historic District (Item No. 15) which included this building. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Richmondtown, in which this house is located, is an unusual survival of an early town and county center. It represents a cross section of development, varying from the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth century. Historically and geographically the center of Staten Island, Richmondtown is about seven miles from St. George and is located in LaTourette Park.

The town is in process of restoration and reconstruction. Certain notable buildings on Staten Island, which would otherwise have been lost, have been moved to Richmondtown to insure their preservation. Some reconstructions are planned to fill in historical gaps. Some modern buildings, in character with their surroundings, will also be added to provide necessary services. Streets within the area will be closed to vehicular traffic; peripheral highways will give access to parking fields and to the visitors' entrance.

The houses will eventually be completely furnished and shops equipped with tools to show how previous generations lived and worked. Quiet tree-lined streets, gardens and orchards will form an attractive part of the setting of the town.

The Richmondtown Restoration, which includes this house within its boundaries, is the only project of its kind in the metropolitan region. It is administered by the Staten Island Historical Society under a contract between the Society and the New York City Department of Parks.

The Treasure House is so called from a large sum of money found secreted in the walls in the 1850's. Reputedly seven thousand dollars in British coins was discovered at that time, thought to have been left there during the Revolution. It is a building which stands on its original site, showing four stages of growth. The earliest and middle section, a one-story frame building, was built in 1700 by Samuel Grasset who lived, operated a leather business and made leather within the house and in adjacent buildings to be reconstructed. The building was raised one story about 1770 and, after the Revolution, was used briefly as a courthouse while the Second Courthouse was being built. At this time, an addition was made to the north end of the building and, in 1860, one to the south. Both additions are in architectural harmony with the original structure. This building is an interesting example of early domestic architecture of frame and rubble stone construction. It has clapboard sides and a fine early example of a spring eave extending along the 1700-1795 front.

History

The first European colonists settled in the area that is now known as Richmondtown in about 1680, the date of the first land grant. In 1695 a combined church, school and home for the lay reader and school teacher, known as the Voorlezer, was built by the congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1696 the Dutch received a lease of land in Cocclestown (Richmondtown) upon which stood the Voorlezer's house. This hamlet was probably known as Cocclestown because of the heaps of oyster and clam shells or "coccles" left there by the department Indians.

TREASURE HOUSE

Many of the buildings we see in Richmondtown today were built in the early part of the eighteenth century including a church, a county house, a jail and several houses. The Revolution had little effect on this quiet community, except for the fact that the courthouse and church were destroyed because the Dutch were believed to be sympathetic to the rebel cause. In 1898 Staten Island became a borough of the City of NewYork, and the many county functions and offices which had been at Richmondtown were moved to St. George. By 1920 all the remaining offices had also been transferred.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this house, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Treasure House has a special character, special historic and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of NewYork City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Treasure House is an interesting example of early domestic architecture, that it represents a gradual process of growth through additions, that it once served as a temporary courthouse, that it combines frame and rubble construction, that it is an attractive feature of the Richmondtown Restoration and that the designation of this house in this report will in no way preclude its being incorporated in an Historic District at a later date.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 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 Treasure House, 37 Arthur Kill Road, Borough of Richmond and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of the Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 2278, Lot 1, which contains the land on which the described building is situated.