

ALLEN-BEVILLE HOUSE, 29 Center Drive, Douglaston, Borough of Queens.
Built c. 1848-50.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 8064, Lot 76.

On November 9, 1976, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Allen-Beville House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers for or against designation. The owner of the property has expressed approval of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Allen-Beville House is an exceptionally fine Greek Revival structure built during the late 1840s in what is now Douglaston, Queens. It is one of the few remaining farm houses of the many built in New York during the 19th century. Little is known of the early history of Douglaston, a sparsely settled, rural community. The area was known as Madnan Neck to the Indians. During the 18th century it was called Thorne's Neck and later Wilken's Neck, after Jacob Thorne and William Wilkens, respectively. In the 19th century it was first known as Little Neck and later as Douglaston. A group of settlers led by Thomas Hicks forcibly seized Madnan Neck in the 17th century, although Dutch authorities did not condone such action. This community fell within the Town of Vlissingen chartered in 1645 by Governor Kieft, which under English rule became "Flushing." Madnan Neck was a favored location of the Matinicoc Indians of the Five Nations who prior to the 18th century used the vast oyster and clam beds to supply them with food and "wampum," the shells used as a form of currency. These sea beds were continually used by the white men until the early 20th century when pollution contaminated most of the sea life.

It appears that most of the peninsula passed from the Weeks family to Wynant Van Zandt, thence to the Douglass estate, and subsequently was subdivided. The small settlement to the south grew into the Village of Marathon, owing to early development schemes. Benjamin P. Allen contributed to this development by selling off parcels of his farmland, roughly between 1866 and 1886. William P. Douglas donated the "Douglaston" railroad station in the 1860s, and despite the objections of many villagers of Marathon, the town soon became known as Douglaston.

The site of the Allen-Beville House was inherited by Daniel K. Allen from his uncle Richard Allen, the entire estate being a farm of approximately sixteen acres which he amassed through purchases from Elijah Allen, Philip Allen, and Cornelius Van Wyck prior to 1820. Benjamin P. Allen shortly after acquired the site of the house on August 11, 1847, from Daniel K. Allen. This was in satisfaction of a legal decision handed down in 1844 by Master-in-Chancery P. T. Ruggers concerning the Richard Allen estate.

Benjamin P. Allen (b. 1819) and his wife Catherine (b. 1832), had seven children between 1855 and 1874. In 1865 Mr. Allen reportedly provided space for a school within his home for the children of the community. During the period from 1866 to 1883 Benjamin P. Allen served as vestrymen and at times as warden for the Zion Episcopal Church in Douglaston. The original church structure was opened in June of 1830. The adjoining cemetery was established in 1834, and includes the burial places of Benjamin P. Allen, who died on February 27, 1883, and many members of the Allen family.

The property later became part of the William P. Douglas estate, and the house was probably used as a guest house for visitors. William P. Douglas attained national stature when his yacht "Sappho" successfully defeated British challengers in 1876 and won what has since become the America Cup. Portions of his large estate of approximately 180 acres were offered as part

of a village development scheme, but little was sold. In 1905-1906 the Douglas Manor Company bought the Douglas estate and subdivided the land as a real estate development. The area became an attractive middle-class suburb. Anne R. Faddis purchased approximately seventeen lots in this development including the Allen-Beville House. Twenty-four years later it was bought by Walter Scott Faddis and was sold by his executors to Alan Warner in 1945, who in turn sold it to the present owners, Hugh and Eleanor Beville, in 1946.

It is believed that Benjamin P. Allen built the house soon after he acquired the property in 1847. The dating of the house is further based on stylistic evidence and the composition of this fine Greek Revival house. The Allen-Beville house is a symmetrical two-and-one-half-story rectangular white clapboard structure set on a low basement. It is five bays wide and three bays deep, with front and rear porches extending the full width of the house. Full-height windows with transoms are crowned by eared enframements and open onto these porches. Elegant fluted Doric columns, so characteristic of the Greek Revival style, support the entablature which is ornamented with dentils and paired brackets. These brackets may be a later addition, since in form they are typical of the Italianate style. A pair of handsome Queen Anne doors, replacing the Greek Revival doors, is set in the original battered and eared enframement. The other windows are handsomely proportioned with four-over-four panes, also capped by eared moldings and flanked by shutters. The only exception is the second floor rear windows which are accentuated by projecting lintels. The fascia beneath the projecting cornice is punctuated by alternating panels and small shuttered attic windows, often used in the Greek Revival period. The windows are flanked by supporting brackets with dentils between them, a motif which echoes that of the porches. There are two chimneys at either end of the house. A bracketed octagonal cupola crowns the house and is one of its most striking features.

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 Allen-Beville 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 Allen-Beville House is a handsome example of Greek Revival architecture; that it retains most of its fine details; that it survives as an example of a mid 19th-century country house; that it is one of the oldest structures in Douglaston, Queens; that it was the home of one of the oldest families in the community; and that it is attractively situated on spacious grounds.

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 Allen-Beville House, 29 Center Drive, Douglaston, Borough of Queens and designates Tax Map Block 8064, Lot 76, Borough of Queens, as its Landmark Site.