

FLATBUSH DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH PARSONAGE, 2101-2103 Kenmore Terrace,  
Borough of Brooklyn. Built 1853. Architect Unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 5102, Lot 143.

On September 12, 1978, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church Parsonage and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 12). The hearing was continued to November 14, 1978 (Item No. 5). Both hearings were 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

The Parsonage of the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church, which displays the forms of Greek Revival and Italianate architecture, is a handsome residential structure. Built in 1853, this is the third parsonage building to serve the ministers of the congregation.

The Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the Town of Flatbush in Kings County, a designated New York City Landmark, located at the southwest corner of Church and Flatbush Avenues in Brooklyn, has existed and functioned continuously for well over 300 years and has had 21 ministers during that time.

In 1654, Director General Peter Stuyvesant ordered that a church be built in the new settlement of Flatbush. It was to be in the form of a cross, 65 feet long, 28 feet broad and 14 feet high under the beams, with a portion of the rear to be reserved for a dwelling for the minister.<sup>1</sup> This church was the first of three to be erected on the same site.

Dominie Johannes Theodorus Polhemus arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654 from Brazil where he had served the Dutch West India Company, and he was chosen to be the first minister of the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church in 1655. He sent to Holland for his wife and family, and they resided in the quarters provided for them at the rear of the church.

The first church building served until 1698, when the congregation decided to build a larger church of stone. A separate parsonage was then built to the south of the new church and facing east on Flatbush Avenue. This building stood until 1853, when it was torn down.

In 1822, the young and capable Reverend Thomas M. Strong was called to be the minister at the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church. He was to serve for 39 years and was greatly loved and respected by his congregation. During the period March 23, 1823, to June 11, 1824, a new parsonage was built for Dr. Strong. It was located on the east side of Flatbush Avenue, north of the Erasmus Hall Academy.<sup>2</sup> The building was constructed under contract with John Voorhees and Jeremiah Lambertsen for the sum of \$1,549.00 plus \$179.87½ for extras not included in the contract.<sup>3</sup> This parsonage was sold at public auction at the

Merchant's Exchange in the City of New York on Monday October 10, 1853, for, by that date, Dr. Strong had moved into the new parsonage.<sup>4</sup>

The Parsonage of the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church, a large and imposing wooden frame residence now located at 2101-2103 Kenmore Terrace, was built by order of the Consistory, in 1853, south of the church and fronting on Flatbush Avenue after the original parsonage, built about 1699, was razed in order to clear the site.<sup>5</sup> It was probably built by a master builder with considerable experience at a time of architectural transition from the Greek Revival style to the Italianate. This becomes evident as one examines the building. The shape and form of the house are in the Greek Revival tradition of country houses - - two and one-half stories in height with four chimneys and a peaked roof, and five bays in width with a center hall. Yet, the architectural details and features which embellish it are all in the Italianate style.

The roof cornice of the house has a wide frieze with rather large dentils and paired curvilinear brackets with returns at the gable ends. The porch, which in 1853 would have been called a verandah or a piazza, extends fully across the front of the house and along the east side. It has the same cornice design as the main roof but in somewhat smaller scale. The ten wooden columns which support the porch roof have fluted shafts and beautifully carved capitals in the Greek Corinthian style with acanthus leaves resting against a bell-shaped form, but without volutes. A railing of delicately turned wooden balusters connects the columns and encloses the porch. Originally, both the porch roof and the main roof of the house were edged with decorative panelled wooden railings which were later removed. The windows throughout the house now have one-over-one sashes, but an old photograph shows the originals to have been in the Italianate style with four-over-four sashes in imitation of casements. These windows still retain their exterior wooden louvered blinds. The parlor windows on either side of the front door are floor-length and were also four-over-four. The lintels above these windows are even smaller copies of the cornice of the porch. The front door has a three-light transom and flanking sidelights extending down to the floor. The transom and the sidelights are now filled with stained glass in stylized leaf patterns in various shades of blue. The front door is, no doubt, a replacement, being of quartered-oak and having a total of seven panels in a style popular at the turn of the century. The enframing, however, is original. It has a wide surround composed of several bold mouldings and has crossetted (eared) corners at the top which serve to delineate the architrave, directly above which is a frieze with dentils topped by a wide cyma recta moulding. This doorway, although restrained in design and decoration, has pleasing proportions and is very attractive. The siding of the first floor beneath the porch is of narrow matched-boarding applied horizontally. All of the other walls of the house are covered with wooden shingles, presently painted grey. A two-story wing at the rear contains a kitchen and a dining room with a bay window on the first floor, and rooms originally for servants on the second floor.

As land on Flatbush Avenue became more and more valuable, it was decided to move the Parsonage across the cemetery to its present location on Kenmore Terrace. This was done in 1918, the same year in which Kenmore Terrace was developed. The old site on Flatbush Avenue was retained by the church and is now used for commercial purposes. Fortunately, the present location of the

Parsonage provides ample space on all sides, thus displaying its grace and beauty to full view.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Rev. Thomas M. Strong, History of the Town of Flatbush, (New York: Thomas R. Mercein, Jr., 1842), pp. 74-75. Rev. Strong, born in Cooperstown, New York, April 28, 1787, died in Brooklyn, New York, June 14, 1861, served as minister of the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church from 1822 to 1861.
2. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
3. Receipt signed "John Voorhees", dated August 21, 1823, for "the balance in fees for myself and Jeremiah Lambertsen for building the parsonage house in the town of Flatbush." Records of the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church of Flatbush, March 23rd, 1823 to June 11th, 1824.
4. Records of the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church of Flatbush, October 24, 1853.
5. Records of the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church of Flatbush, January 24, 1853. "Resolved that in accordance with the recommendations of the Great Consistory, this Consistory proceed to remove the old Parsonage building, and erect a new Parsonage on the said premises."

#### 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 Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church Parsonage 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 Parsonage of the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church was originally built in 1853, on the site of the first parsonage, south of the church on Flatbush Avenue; that the Parsonage was built at a time of architectural transition from the Greek Revival style to the Italianate; that the shape and form of the house are in the Greek Revival tradition of country houses while the architectural details and features which embellish it are all in the Italianate style; that among the many handsome details are the ten fluted columns of the porch which have beautifully carved capitals in the Greek Corinthian style; that the Parsonage was moved to its present location on Kenmore Terrace in 1918, the same year in which Kenmore Terrace was developed; and that this large and imposing residence is the third parsonage building to be erected by the Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church to serve the ministers of the congregation.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly 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 Flatbush Dutch Reformed Church Parsonage, 2101-2103 Kenmore

Terrace, Borough of Brooklyn, and designates Tax Map Block 5102, Lot 143, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dutch Reformed Church of Flatbush, Records of the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church of Flatbush. Unpublished manuscript, March 23, 1823 to June 11, 1824; January 24, 1853; October 24, 1853.

Strong, Thomas M. History of the Town of Flatbush in Kings County, Long Island. New York: Thomas R. Mercein, Jr., 1842.

Wells, Cornelius L. Quarter Millennial Anniversary of the Reformed Dutch Church of Flatbush, New York. Brooklyn, 1904.



Parsonage  
2101-2103 Kenmore Terrace

Arch: Unknown      1853