

SYLVANUS DECKER FARM, 435 Richmond Hill Road, Staten Island. Built about 1810.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 2390, Lot 194.

On September 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Sylvanus Decker Farm and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 58). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The owners of the property, The Staten Island Historical Society, has indicated to the Commission that it is in favor of the proposed designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Encroachments and time have done little to diminish the simple and rugged character of this one and one-half story early Nineteenth Century farmhouse. Graced with extremely fine scale and proportion, its sharp outlines cut a clearly defined profile that reveals the function of its well related parts and the vernacular style of its architecture. Aided by good care and revitalized by restoration, this simple house represents a fine example of a type of clapboarded and shingle farmhouse once so numerous on Staten Island.

About 1840, the roof of the original 1810 house was extended in a graceful sweep from the eave to form a porch supported by four square columns, with simple moldings as caps. The double-hung, sash-type windows were installed during this remodelling, along with the narrow porch in front of the kitchen wing. Two brick chimneys project above the ridge of the roof, one from the end of the kitchen wing, the other from the main body of the farmhouse.

Sylvanus Decker was a descendant of an old Staten Island family, one of the early families to settle on the Island. They were a hard-working and prosperous family and accumulated a large tract of land. This small farm was willed to the Staten Island Historical Society by Sylvanus Decker in 1955.

Under the terms of the will, the property consisting of eleven acres is to be operated by the Society as a farm museum, portraying Nineteenth Century farm life on Staten Island. With the current rate of land conversion it will probably be the only Nineteenth Century farm remaining in New York City. Besides the farmhouse there are six out buildings on the property. It is located three quarters of a mile from Historic Richmondtown.

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 Sylvanus Decker Farm 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 Sylvanus Decker Farmhouse is an outstanding example of the early Nineteenth Century vernacular style of domestic architecture, that it is a straightforward expression of simple beauty and rugged frame construction, that it represents one of the last well preserved farmhouses on Staten Island and that along with the farmland it will be maintained by the Staten Island Historical Society as a symbol of a Nineteenth Century farmhouse on the Island.

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 Sylvanus Decker Farm, 435 Richmond Hill Road, Staten Island and designates Tax Map Block 2390, Lot 194, Borough of Richmond, as its Landmark Site.