

BILLIOU-STILLWELL-PERINE HOUSE, 1476 Richmond Road, Staten Island, One room original building built about 1679; additions built about 1700, 1750, 1790, 1830.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 3299, Lot 10.

On September 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Billiou-Stillwell-Perine House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 69). 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 building's owner, the Staten Island Historical Society, has informed the Commission that it is in favor of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The original portion of the Billiou-Stillwell-Perine House is an important example of a late Seventeenth Century one and one-half story, rough-cut fieldstone farm house. Combined with later stone and frame additions of the same height, built about 1750, 1790 and 1830 respectively, these wings blend together forming a picturesque and interesting composition. The oldest wing built about 1679 is distinctive for its steep medieval type roof and boasts an immense Dutch fireplace, with huge chimney head supported on two wooden posts, almost unique in this country.

Tradition maintains that the stone wing, which is now the rear portion of the farmhouse, was erected first and that this section is the original Stillwell home. It is also agreed by historians that the stone building nearer the road is of a later date and was added to accommodate a second family. The two stone structures are lapped over each other in a rather odd fashion since, as tradition has it, a huge tree stood at one end of the original house and rather than cut the tree down, the newer part was placed against only a portion of the side of the older dwelling. Both buildings are built of undressed fieldstone known as "Dutch Construction" in contrast to the roughly squared stone which came at a later date and is known as "English Construction". There are eight rooms on the ground floor of the house and seven bedrooms upstairs; the latter consist of three unconnected groups each reached by a separate staircase. The section built in 1700 is of great interest for its fine panellled fireplace, its transitional type panel and feather edge partition.

The house was constructed by Captain Thomas Stillwell, a prominent and active Staten Island citizen, who died in 1704. A patent for the property was granted to Stillwell by Edmund Andros, the Governor of the New York Province, on September 29 1677. Stillwell's son-in-law, Nicholoas Britton, succeeded him and added the 1700-1713 section. Britton, like Captain Stillwell, was a leading Staten Island citizen as were the members of the Perine Family who were the next occupants and owners of the house. The farm house was purchased from the Perine Family in 1915 by the Antiquarian Society, now the Staten Island Historical Society. They have furnished the house and supervise its maintenance. It is open to the public.

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 Billiou-Stillwell-Perine 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 Billiou-Stillwell-Perine House is noteworthy for its distinctive architectural character, and for its historical significance, that the older portion of the house, with its steeply pitched roof and excellent stone masonry, is an important survivor of the medieval influence in American Colonial architecture, and that the pleasing proportions of this group of sections, representing a simple natural development over the years attracts the interest of architect, historian and layman alike.

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 Billiou-Stillwell-Perine House, 1476 Richmond Road, Staten Island, Borough of Richmond and designates Tax Map Block 3299, Lot 10. Borough of Richmond, as its Landmark Site.