

SLEIGHT FAMILY GRAVEYARD (The Rossville (Blazing Star) Burial Ground), Arthur Kill Road at Rossville Avenue, Staten Island. 1750-1850.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 6190, Lot 318 in part, consisting of the land on which the described cemetery is situated.

On September 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Sleight Family Graveyard (The Rossville (Blazing Star) Burial Ground) and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 76). A further public hearing was held on October 11, 1966 (Item No. 12). One witness spoke in favor of designation at the September hearing. There were no speakers in opposition to designation at either hearing. The Junior Chamber of Commerce of Staten Island has undertaken the care of this cemetery.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Set among trees in a narrow strip of land on rising ground that lies between a highway and a steep bank leading to the salt meadow beyond are the remains of some of Staten Island's earliest settlers and their descendants. A low retaining wall rising at the curb of the highway encloses this cemetery along the roadside boundary of the property. Piercing this concrete embankment is a narrow flight of five steps leading up to the gravestones surrounded by grass. There is no railing enclosing the cemetery or any architecture to detract our attention from the silent mood that prevails over these grounds. On a post a small solitary sign bears testimony to its existence. Here amid the passing seasons a bit of history stands recorded.

Located just east of Rossville, on the north side of Arthur Kill Road, The Rossville (Blazing Star) Burial Ground or Sleight Family Graveyard became one of the first community burial grounds in Staten Island. These early burial grounds were referred to as Homestead Graves, and often a restriction was recorded in the deed to a property, that the graves were not to be moved. From the cemetery one sees Sleight Creek to the right, and off to the left, a metal scrapyard marks the location, where formerly the Blazing Star ferry to New Jersey had its mooring slip.

A few hundred feet down the hill, west of the cemetery and across the road, at the intersection of Rossville Avenue, once stood a house built by Peter Winant who died there in 1758. He is buried in Grave #4 in the Sleight Family Cemetery. Peter Winant was born in Brooklyn in 1663. This Peter Winant, sometimes spelled Pieterse Wynant, was the son of Pieterse Wynant who emigrated to America from Betune-in-Geldersland between 1655 and 1660. Pieterse Wynant, Sr. was one of that group of men who made the first permanent settlement on Staten Island in 1661.

The earliest gravestones in the cemetery date from 1750. Interred here among others are representatives of the following notable families: Winant, Sleight, Seguire, Oakley, Parlee, Cole, La Forge, Marshall, Perine and Poillon. The Junior Chamber of Commerce of Staten Island now maintains this cemetery.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this cemetery, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Sleight Family Graveyard (The Rossville (Blazing Star) Burial Ground) 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 Sleight Family Graveyard or The Rossville (Blazing Star) Burial Ground is one of the first community burial grounds on Staten Island, that interred there are the remains of some of the earliest settlers of Staten Island and their descendants, and that this cemetery contains a gravestone representing one of the first families to make permanent settlement on Staten 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 Sleight Family Graveyard (The Rossville (Blazing Star) Burial Ground), Arthur Kill Road at Rossville Avenue, Staten Island and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 6190, Lot 318 which contains the land on which the described cemetery is situated.