

CREEDMOOR (CORNELL) FARMHOUSE, consisting of the Farmhouse and the property beginning on the western side of Little Neck Parkway at the point forming the southeast corner of the property line of P.S. 186; thence running southerly 86 degrees along the western side of Little Neck Parkway for a distance of 680 feet; thence turning westerly 95 degrees for a distance of 450 feet; thence turning northerly 93 degrees for a distance of 625 feet more or less to the southerly property line of P.S. 186; thence turning easterly 94 degrees and running along the southerly property line of P.S. 186 for a distance of 500 feet more or less to the point of beginning, 73-50 Little Neck Parkway, Bellerose, Borough of Queens. Built c.1750; additions c.1840, 1875, c.1885, c.1900.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 8401, Lot 1 in part consisting of the land described above.

On September 14, 1976, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Creedmoor (Cornell) Farmhouse and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has received many letters of support for this designation from the members of the surrounding communities.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Creedmoor (Cornell) farmhouse is a rare surviving example of a colonial farmhouse in the Borough of Queens. The oldest portion, which can be dated through an examination of physical evidence to the mid-18th century, reflects the mixture of Dutch colonial and New England influences common in old houses of Long Island where the two cultures met. Various additions were made to the house during the 19th century; the most notable in about 1840 doubled the size of the house. The unusual character of the farmhouse is further enhanced by its fifty-two acre farm site which is virtually unchanged from the time the house was built.

Mid-18th century records indicate that the land on which the house stands belonged to Samuel Cornell. It was inherited by his daughters Elizabeth Hicks and Mary Hicks Searing, and by his grandson Samuel Hicks after his death in 1796. The size of the original house, only two rooms, suggests that it may have been built for one of Samuel Cornell's daughters following her marriage, or it could have been used as a tenant house on the family farm. In his will Samuel Cornell leaves the use of his "dwelling house" to his wife Hannah and his daughter Mary Searing; however, to his daughter Elizabeth he leaves "that part of my lands where she now lives with the house...." It is a reasonable assumption that this refers to the Creedmoor farmhouse especially since Elizabeth was married in 1758 to Edward Hicks, and physical evidence indicates that the house is of about this date. The Cornells are one of New York's earliest and most illustrious families. Thomas Cornell, the founder of the family, came to Boston from County Essex, England, about 1638. His son Richard settled in Flushing about 1655, and later also in Far Rockaway where the Richard Cornell Graveyard is a designated New York City Landmark. The Samuel Cornell who is associated with the farmhouse at Creedmoor is Richard's great grandson.

John Bennum (Benham) and his wife Johanna Stoothoff acquired the house and farm from Samuel Cornell's heirs sometime in the early 1800s. They came to the area from Flatlands in Brooklyn sometime between 1802 and 1808. An 1812 mortgage on the property shows that Bennum owned it by that time. Daniel and Jane Lent and then Peter Cocx also owned the farm during the 19th century. Most of the additions date from the period of Cocx's ownership. The Stattel family was the last to farm the property. In 1926 the Brooklyn State Hospital purchased the farm to increase the acreage of their Creedmoor branch which had

been established in 1912. The farm was used to grow food for the mental patients at Creedmoor; the patients also worked in the fields as therapy.

In 1973 the Department of Mental Hygiene of the State of New York declared the farm belonging to the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center as surplus property. In response to the community, it is now intended to transfer the property to the City so the land may be kept as open space with uses restricted to recreation and for agricultural and horticultural programs of local educational institutions. In 1975 it was discovered that the house on the farm dated back to the 18th century, and the Colonial Farmhouse Restoration Society of Bellerose was formed to care for the house. The group was granted a permit in February, 1976, to occupy the house, conduct the restoration, and coordinate the educational activities at the farm.

The Creedmoor (Cornell) farmhouse as seen today includes a series of additions which were made over a period of years to the Dutch farmhouse of c.1750. An eastern portion was added to the original house in about 1840 in a simplified version of the Greek Revival style, identifiable mainly on the interior. In 1875 a wing was added to the north and in about 1885 porches were constructed on the east and south sides with a porch extension along the west side after the turn of the century. The farm buildings on the site were built after 1927 and may well be the last farm buildings to have been constructed in Queens County.

As seen from the south, the most significant element of the house is a wood-columned porch which extends the entire width of the front and along the sides. Above the porch is a series of fascia-type low windows set just below the eave. In the western portion these probably replaced a projected or spring eave which, judging from the north elevation of this portion of the house, must have once been a notable feature on the south side.

The double-pitched roof with rather high gables at each end maintains a continuous ridge from end to end. The dormer window at the south was a later addition. The porch is the most conspicuous feature at each end of the house; four windows are placed above it at the west.

The vernacular north wing is set behind the Greek Revival portion of the house revealing the original spring eave of the old portion of the house to the west of it as well as twelve-over-twelve window sash and original shingles exposed about twelve inches to the weather and secured by hand-wrought nails. A portion of this old shingle facing is also exposed on the south side to the right of the front door. Two original windows in the north wall, complete with heavy muntined sash, follow the Dutch pattern of placing their tops right up against the second story floor boards.

The old portion of the house was constructed with the characteristic Dutch framing. It consists of a series of closely spaced transverse "bents" comprised of floor beams with tenons set into morticed uprights at the wall. The framing is of oak with beams of tulip poplar. The exterior walls have "wattle and daub" nogging consisting of clay with a straw binder set between the studs as insulation.

Except for the western portion of the north wall, the other exterior walls have been re-sided with narrow clapboard. Without this portion of the north wall, it would be almost impossible to determine the real age of the house. The extent of the old portion has been largely deduced from a study of the interiors.

The chimney, set just north of the ridgepole, is probably too small to be the original. As seen in the cellar, the base of the chimney is constructed of stone piers with brick arch between them, designed to support back-to-back fireplaces above. This would have resulted in a large square chimney above the roof. The chimney placement is indicative of New England influence. The house rests on a foundation of native field stone with mud-packed joints.

The old portion of this house might be described as "Dutch Colonial" and indeed the reference is correct in describing the general style of this type of

house; however, the stylistic elements of this so-called "Dutch Colonial" architecture were actually brought over to this country during the 1600s by Flemings and Walloons who had fled before the Spanish invasion of Flanders in the 1620s. They first arrived in densely populated Holland, only to subsequently emigrate to America where they lived under Dutch rule. This is probably the reason why houses built by the Flemish were referred to as Dutch. One of the distinctive features of the "Dutch Colonial" house is the projected, or spring, roof eave which may have initially acted as an overhang to give protection to masonry walls from cascading rain water and snow. Many houses on Long Island made traditional use of this detail despite the fact that most of them were constructed of wood, a material which was plentiful on Long Island. This traditional spring eave also provided shelter for stoops and benches at the entrance doors.

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 Creedmoor (Cornell) Farmhouse 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 Creedmoor (Cornell) Farmhouse is a rare surviving example of a colonial farmhouse in the Borough of Queens, that the oldest portion of the house can be dated back to the mid-18th century, that the character of the farmhouse is further enhanced by its fifty-two acre farm site which is virtually unchanged from the time the house was built, that this is the only extant building in Queens which can be associated with the Cornells, one of New York's earliest and most illustrious families, that among the original 18th-century features of the house are the spring eave, the siding and the windows on the north wall, and the Dutch framing system, that a series of additions of varying dates reflect the changing needs of the past owners of the farmhouse, and that it is now being restored by the Colonial Farmhouse Restoration Society of Bellerose.

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 Creedmoor (Cornell) Farmhouse, consisting of the Farmhouse and the property beginning on the western side of Little Neck Parkway at the point forming the southeast corner of the property line of P.S. 186; thence running southerly 86 degrees along the western side of Little Neck Parkway for a distance of 680 feet; thence turning westerly 95 degrees for a distance of 450 feet; thence turning northerly 93 degrees for a distance of 625 feet more or less to the southerly property line of P.S. 186; thence turning easterly 94 degrees and running along the southerly property line of P.S. 186 for a distance of 500 feet more or less to the point of beginning, 73-50 Little Neck Parkway, Bellerose, Borough of Queens, and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 8401, Lot 1 described above.