

REMSEN CEMETERY, between Alderton Street and Trotting Course Lane, adjoining 69-43 Trotting Course Lane, Borough of Queens.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 3178, Lot 44.

On July 8, 1980, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Remsen Cemetery and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. At the public hearing there were five speakers in favor of designation and none opposed. Twenty-three letters were received supporting designation and none against.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Remsen Cemetery is a tangible reminder of the colonial past of this section of Queens. Typical of the small private cemeteries that were favored by early settlers, it commemorates one of New York's earliest families and the role it played in both the French and Indian War and the American Revolutionary War. The plot has been preserved and maintained by various local organizations and citizens within the community.

The Remsen family ancestors immigrated to America in the 17th century from northern Germany and eventually settled in Queens County. The founding father of the clan in America was Rem Jansen Van der Beeck; his sons adopted the surname Remsen. One son, Abraham Remsen, settled at Hempstead Swamp, as this area of Queens County was then called, and had a son named Jeromus. Jeromus lived on the paternal farm and had a son, also named Jeromus, born on November 22, 1735. It is not known if the younger Jeromus grew up to live on or simply near the family homestead. The younger Jeromus served during the French and Indian War of 1757 and became active in Whig politics prior to the Revolutionary War. After the Continental Congress of 1774 was established the inhabitants of New Towne (Newtown) assembled at the request of Jeromus Remsen and appointed a committee to insure adherence to congressional measures within the limits of the town. Jeromus Remsen was a member and clerk of the county committee. Later he was appointed colonel over half the militia of Kings and Queens counties and joined forces under the brigade of General Greene in Brooklyn. These American forces were routed at the Battle of Long Island and after their retreat Colonel Remsen was forced to flee to safety in New Jersey, where he resided until the war's end. Jeromus had married Ann(a), daughter of Cornelius Rapelje, on April 31, 1768. She bore him seven children of whom only three sons survived infancy. Jeromus died in 1790 while Anna lived until 1816.

The original cemetery lay solely within the property of the Remsen family, and it is typical of the private family cemeteries favored by New York's colonial settlers. In a February 23, 1887 article in a Kings County newspaper the cemetery was described as lying between the old Remsen house and the Suydam homestead, neither of which survive.¹ This small cemetery is believed to have been used from the mid-18th through the 19th centuries for Remsen family members. The oldest known grave is that of Jeromus Remsen, from 1790. In a survey of 1925, the graves and grave-

stones of eight Remsen family members were identified.² These included those of Colonel Jeromus Remsen, his wife Ann(a) Remsen, a Jeromus Remsen who was probably their son, three Remsen children, a Bridget Remsen, and Major Abraham Remsen, who is described as the colonel's brother. Presently the cemetery features a group of three brownstone gravestones near Alderton Avenue, formerly Orville Street, (the two Jeromus Remsens and Anna Remsen), two along the northwesterly perimeter (Jerome Remsen and Ann Elizabeth Remsen), and the remnants of another tombstone along the southern property line (Bridget Remsen). These tombstones date from 1790 through 1819. Recently, commemorative gravestones have been erected by the Veterans Administration in honor of Col. Remsen, Major Abraham Remsen, and their two brothers Aert Remsen and Garrett Remsen, who were also Revolutionary War officers. A World War I memorial, honoring the community's service in that war, occupies the center of the cemetery. It consists of two doughboy statues flanking a flagpole.

The Remsen cemetery remains an important element in the community commemorating an early New York family and their contributions to our heritage.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Kings County newspaper clipping, February 23, 1887 (excerpt in Landmarks Preservation Commission files).
2. Charles U. Powell, Description of Private and Family Cemeteries in the Borough of Queens, Alice H. Meigs, ed. (Jamaica, New York: Long Island Collection, Queens Borough Public Library, 1932), pp. 7, 62, 63.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this improvement, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Remsen Cemetery 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 Remsen Cemetery is typical of the private family cemeteries favored by New York's early settlers; that is it a tangible reminder of the areas of colonial past; that it contains the remains of Colonel Jeromus Remsen of American Revolutionary War fame, and Major Abraham Remsen, also a Revolutionary War officer and brother of the colonel as well as the remains of other Remsen family members; and that it recalls the contributions of the Remsen family to our political heritage.

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 Remsen Cemetery, between Alderton Street and Trotting Course Lane, adjoining 69-43 Trotting Course Lane, Borough of Queens, and designates Tax Map Block 3178, Lot 44, Borough of Queens, as its Landmark Site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Kings County Newspaper Clipping, February 23, 1887. (Excerpt in Landmarks Preservation Commission files).
- Musell, W.W. History of Queens County. New York: W.W. Munsell & Co., 1882.
- Powell, Charles U. Description of Private and Family Cemeteries in the Borough of Queens. ed. Alice H. Meigs. Jamaica, New York: Long Island Collection, Queens Borough Public Library, 1932.
- Riker, James Jr. Annals of Newtown. New York: D. Fanshaw, 1852.