

# Olde Site Gets Lease on Life

By ROBERTA B. GRATZ

An oak-timbered Brooklyn farmhouse that has stubbornly resisted the ravages of time and neglect has been guaranteed a future life.

The Wyckoff House, built by a Dutch settler in the 1630s, was assured restoration yesterday, under strong pressure from Borough President Leone, by the Board of Estimate.

The city also plans to create a two-acre park around the presently boarded-up structure, which is the oldest dwelling in the state.

## 5 Acres Down to 2

The city granted the farmhouse landmark status in 1965. It was the city's first landmark designation, but bureaucratic neglect has resulted in the shrinking of the now weed-grown surrounding "park" from five acres to two.

Attempts to shrink the park even more—to one and a half acres—were thwarted when Leone insisted the Board approve the two acres and provide for acquisition of the land in stages, as money is available.

"If there's any meaning to this landmark, let's preserve it properly," Leone said, "and give it a proper setting. It's already been nitpicked and sliced to death."

Objections had been raised by other city agencies, such as Budget Bureau and Parks Dept., because funds for full acquisition are not available in the middle of the financial crisis. The section of the park land proposed for elimination contains a diner and car wash that would have to be condemned and purchased by the city—often an expensive undertaking.

Leone argued, however, that the move did not have to be made now but that the commitment should be Federal community development funds—\$825,000—have been earmarked for the plan

but would only cover restoration of the landmark and partial acquisition of the land.

"If we accepted the smaller parcel now," Leone said, "it would never be expanded in the future when money is available. At least a city commitment is made for the future when a healthy economy returns."

The Pieter Clasen Wyckoff House is the oldest house in the state and may be the oldest frame dwelling in the country. For more than 20 years, preservationists and community residents have been seeking its restoration.

Two years ago, when planning boards were told by the city to list their priorities for capital budget and federal community development funds, East Flatbush placed the Wyckoff House first. East Flatbush is an integrated community of predominantly small homes undergoing rapid change and trying to preserve itself.

Plans for restoring the house are complete and are expected to proceed now that the Board of Estimate has approved.

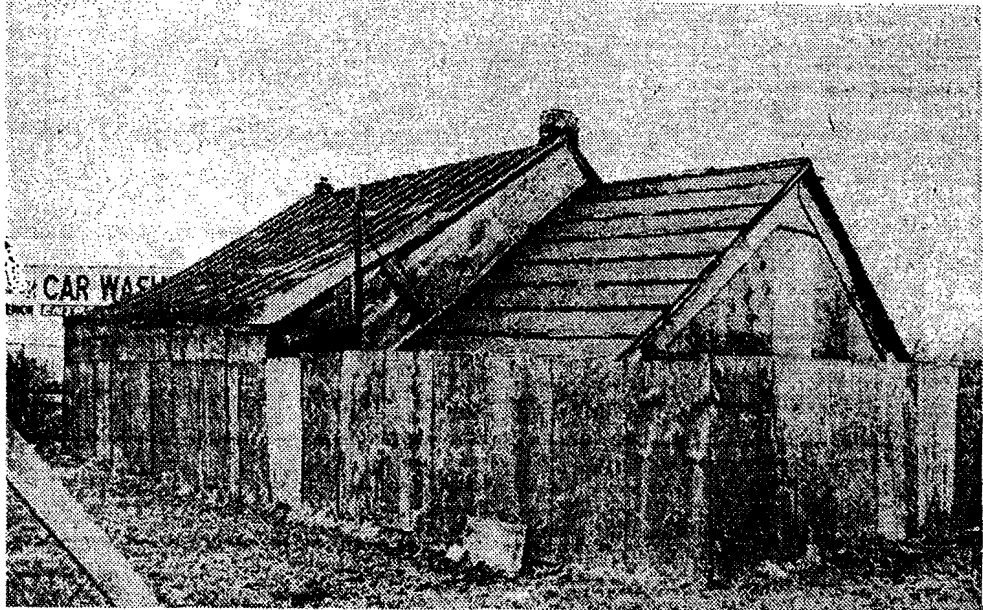
## Town Magistrate

Pieter Claesen Wyckoff was a town magistrate under Peter Stuyvesant and the name Wyckoff, in Dutch, means magistrate. He had 10 children to whom more than 1000 direct descendants trace their origin.

Wyckoff descendants lived in the house until 1901, when it was sold to a succession of owners who made only minor alterations.

The Wyckoff Family Assn. was formed in 1937 at the 300th anniversary of its forbears' arrival in New Amersfoort (now the Flatlands), and it purchased the house in 1959 for \$39,000. It donated the house to the city in 1970 and promised to provide funds for maintenance.

## Urban Renewal



Post Photo by Frank Leonarđo

The Wyckoff House, built by a Dutch settler in the 1630s, has been assured a new life by the Board of Estimate. (The anachronistic TV aerial was installed by a caretaker couple who no longer live in the Brooklyn farmhouse.) Story on Page 9.