

THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan. Early 18th Century.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1, Lot 10 in part, consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The Governor's House, Governors Island and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 35). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. In a letter to the Commission, the Coast Guard questioned the proposal to designate the building, saying that Federally-owned property is not subject to regulation by local law.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

This early Eighteenth Century, modified Georgian style, red brick house has the austere feeling and architectural character of an important provincial residence of pre-Revolutionary New York. As it was erected during the reign of the British Colonial Governors and was reputedly the home of Lord Cornbury, the formal, two-story and basement structure with its grounds was fittingly referred to as "The Smiling Garden of the Sovereigns of the Province".

Symmetrical in plan, the original portion of the dwelling was designed in the form of a Greek cross. The wings of the front and rear projections, facing East and West, are surmounted by low pediments. At the roof line the cornice forms the base of the pediment and continues around the building. Centered at the front of the house and raised six steps above the ground, the platform of the square entrance stoop has two Ionic columns and pilasters supporting a graciously proportioned entablature with a handsomely dentilled cornice. The windows of the House are of the double hung sash type, so popular with the British, and are framed with stone sills and low, segmental-arched brick lintels.

Built on the higher ground in the Northeast corner of the island, with the land sloping off toward the East to what is known as "Buttermilk Channel", the House afforded the opportunity of building an extension at a later date on that side. It contains a terrace over a garage and a pavilion at the Northern end of the wing. A very elegant recessed back door opens on to the terrace. Framed with fluted pilasters with ornate acanthus leaf capitals and an impressive entablature with mutuled cornice, it is an elegantly decorated architectural feature of this rather plain brick residence.

The question has been raised by the Federal Government as to whether this building should be designated by New York City as a Landmark. The Commission wishes to honor a building of which New Yorkers are proud. The Commission is cognizant of the jurisdictional question. Nevertheless, it is very important for the Government of New York City to state officially its deep concern that this building be preserved. There should be no uncertainty about this in anyone's mind.

The Commission would be negligent if it failed to act in this situation. At some time in the future this building may be in jeopardy. Our designation will be especially helpful in alerting New York City's elected representatives in Washington of the importance of saving this building. At present the Commission's specialists can be of service in providing advice so that the architectural integrity of this building is maintained. Indeed a fine relationship already exists with many local representatives of the Federal Government.

#### 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 Governor's 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 Governor's House is an outstanding example of an elegant but small Georgian country house with excellent architectural detail, that it is a building of fine proportions and a house whose occupants have been associated for over two hundred years with the history of Governors 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 Governor's House, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1, Lot 10 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.