

# The Pieter Claesen Wyckoff House

## House Overview

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The oldest house in New York City and one of the oldest in the country, the Pieter Claesen Wyckoff House was built between ca. 1652 and 1819 and is one of the few structures still standing from the period of Dutch rule in the American colonies. The Wyckoff House, a national historic landmark, is also the first building to be designated a historic landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

A typical example of the Dutch-American farmhouses of the late 17th and 19th centuries as adapted to life on Long Island, the house is, in essence, two structures — the Old Kitchen, in what is believed to be the original 17th-century portion of the house; and the eighteenth century addition, which includes two parlors. In 1819, the roof was raised to enlarge the rear of the house to include three bedrooms. That same year, the central hallway separating the two parlors was created. Thus, as a whole, the house is restored to look as it did in 1819. An excellent example of the Dutch Colonial vernacular style, the House has a number of remarkable features, including an H-frame structure, shingled walls, split Dutch doors, and deep, flared “spring” eaves.

The Old Kitchen houses a rare jambless hearth, a very fine common fireplace style among the Dutch in the American colonies. Various cooking pots and utensils are on display, along with earthenware dishes, pewter vessels, a butter churn, cider press, and work table. The kitchen also has a significant display of colonial and nineteenth-century lighting devices. The parlors are restored to their original condition, painted in the traditional New York colors of orange and blue. The common parlor contains a variety of items used for home textiles, including wool cards, a spinning wheel, and drop spindles. In the formal parlor, the hearth is surrounded by mauve and white ceramic tiles, originally imported from the Netherlands in the late 17th century. This room contains a number of early heating devices, as well as a large wooden *kas*, or cupboard, a must in any Dutch-American colonial homestead.

The house’s furnishings reflect its Dutch heritage. In addition to the above objects, the Wyckoff House’s collection includes heirloom cradles, a colonial rope-bed, family linens, and quilts, and a variety of chairs, tables, and chests either donated to the museum by Wyckoff descendants or on loan from the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities.

A 1.5-acre park surrounds the house, with seasonal plantings. Behind the house is a colonial-style kitchen garden, containing mint, parsley, basil, and other plants used for both cooking and medicinal purposes.