Landmarks Preservation Commission
August 2, 1967, Number 5
15-O-06th

OLD WEST FARMS SOLDIER CEMETERY, 2103 Bryant Avenue and 130th Street, Borough of The Bronx, 1315

Landmark Site: Borough of The Bronx Tax Map Block 3133, Lot 25.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a landmark of the Old West Farms Soldier Cemetery. The hearing was well attended in accordance with the provisions of existing law.

One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Standing on a stone pedestal on sloping ground and almost hidden from view by the trees which surround it, the bronze statue of a Union Army soldier maintains a lonely vigil over the oldest public veterans' burial ground in the Bronx. Old West Farms Soldier Cemetery, here, among shade trees in a modestly landscaped wire-fenced enclosure, the remains of forty veterans of four wars lie beneath well-marked stones in a quiet, sequestered and historic place of about two-thirds of an acre. There is not a building in this Cemetery, but there are handsome tombs.

The first interment, in 1815, was that of Samuel Adams, whose family owned land in the area. A nearby street bears his name. The last interment was that of Pvt. Patrick O'Brien, a World War I veteran. Among the many veterans of four wars buried there are two from the War of 1812, thirty-five from the Civil War, two from the Spanish-American War and two from World War I.

The Sixth New York Heavy Artillery, which recruited several companies from West Farms for the Civil War, is well represented in this Cemetery as is the New York Zouaves. Several of the bodies were originally interred on West Farms where a marker still stands. Noting a few of the well known veterans, there lie here Captain John Butler, 1st Light Artillery, War of 1812; Captain William S. Hampson, 5th N.Y. Dragoons, War of 1861; Captain William M. Warren of the 7th Infantry; Captain Edwin, originally in the Navy, serving on the Merrimac before she fell into the hands of the Confederates, and later transferred to the Army, Fifth U.S. Regt.; Samuel Irwin, whose family once owned much land on Tremont Avenue; and Pvt. Alexander Terzian, 25th Ambulance Co., 62nd Division, awarded the Silver Star, who received a special citation for bravery under fire in World War I, a copy of which is engraved upon his stone.

This section of the Bronx received its name in 1663 when Edward Jones, a Quaker, and John Richardson, both from Connecticut, both from Connecticut, bought the land from the Indians. They named the area West Farms to distinguish their property from the settlement at Westchester Village. West Farms Cemetery was founded in 1815, on the land purchased the year before by John Butler, who had plots laid out for a private burial ground. The Butler family retained control of the Cemetery until 1955, when the City assumed possession on a "quiet claim" deed.

The burial ground has been maintained by a Civil War Memorial Committee which was reconstituted about 1950. During the early part of the century there was a cemetery committee composed of inhabitants of the Bronx, among them General John D. Harman, a former Ninth Century Field places in the Cemetery. Due to vandalism and the elements, the statue was removed from the monument about 1950, and its whereabouts was unknown until located by the newly created committee. The statue was restored, and restored to its present site and rededicated on November 11, 1959, by the existing Civil War Memorial Committee.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and the features of the cemetery, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Old West Farms Soldier 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, Old West Farms Soldier Cemetery stands as a memorial reminder of our past, that it serves as the last resting place for veterans of four wars, one of whom made the supreme sacrifice for their country, that they are interred in a modest landscaped enclosure, and that it is an attractive cemetery representing an important part of our heritage.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 844 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Old West Farms Soldier Cemetery, 2103 Bryant Avenue and 130th Street, Borough of the Bronx and designates Tax Map Block 3133, Lot 25, Borough of The Bronx, as its Landmark Site.