

AN OVERVIEW OF THE WYCKOFF HOUSE AND ASSOCIATION, INC.

At 4:00 P.M. on March 4, 1937, exactly 300 years to the minute from Pieter Claesen's arrival in New Amsterdam, approximately 200 of his descendants gathered at the Sherman Square Hotel in New York City, to honor him, and to strengthen the bond of kinship. The Wyckoff Association in America was created at this meeting, and a constitution, stating the following objectives of the organization was approved.

- to unite the descendants of Pieter Claesen Wyckoff
- to promote just pride in ancestry and family traditions
- to perpetuate ancient landmarks associated with the family
- to collect and preserve records
- to encourage members to file their records with historical societies

Herbert J. Wyckoff, the originator of the plan to organize the family, became the Association's first president. Also active in the planning of the first meeting, and among the first officers were William W. Wyckoff, William Le Roy Wyckoff, Dr. John Wyckoff, Malcolm E. Wyckoff, and Ms. Harriet E. Wyckoff.

Since the founding of the organization, the following individuals have served as officers:

PRESIDENT	SECRETARY	TREASURER
1937-1941 Herbert J. Wyckoff	1937-1938 Malcolm E. Wyckoff	1937-1940 Malcolm E. Wyckoff
1941-1942 Aubrey L. Wyckoff	1938-1947 William W. Wyckoff	1940-1944 Barkley Wyckoff, Jr.
1942-1967 Ernest H. Wyckoff	1947-1965 Aubrey L. Wyckoff	1944-1946 F. R. Wyckoff
1967-1972 William S. Wyckoff	1965-1973 John L Ely	1946-1974 Oliver N. Rathbun
1972-1983 Frederick A. Wyckoff Jr.	1973-1976 Karen, Mrs. P.C. Wyckoff	1974-1982 Frederick A. Wyckoff Sr.
1983-1996 E. Lisk Wyckoff Jr.	1976-1983 Ester, Mrs DeWitt Wyckoff	1982-1988 Gretchen Wyckoff Rigol
1996-2000 Peter J. Wyckoff	1983-1986 Sarah L. Wyckoff	1988-1993 Ralph E. Jones
2000- Thomas A. Wycuff	1986-1993 John E. Kolb	1993-1998 Judith W. Anderson
	1993-1995 Beverly Luke Webber	1998-2002 Thomas D. Wyckoff
	1995-1998 Naj Wikoff	2002- E. Lisk Wyckoff, Jr.
	1998- Barbara W. McConnell	
CHAIRMAN		
1996- E. Lisk Wyckoff, Jr.		

Continuity of the organization throughout the past 67 years has been due in great measure to the dedicated efforts of a few. In addition to the officers listed above, these include Holmes S. Wyckoff, Colonel Daniel D. Streeter, Dr. D. Campbell Wyckoff, Robert Johnson, and Elizabeth S. (Mrs. William S.) Wyckoff. Special mention must be made of Ernest H. Wyckoff, who served as director and was president for 25 years; Frederick A. Wyckoff, Sr. who was vice-president, director and treasurer for more than 40 years; Oliver N. Rathbun, director, treasurer, historian, and genealogist for many years; John L. Ely, secretary and records distribution chair; F. A. Wyckoff, Jr. director and president.

Collecting and recording information about the family began long before the Wyckoff Association was founded. William Forman Wyckoff began the first known collection early in the 20th century and was responsible for the publication of THE OLD WORLD PROGENITORS OF THE WYCKOFF FAMILY. The first edition of THE WYCKOFF FAMILY IN AMERICA, edited and published in 1934 by Mr. and Mrs. Milford B. Streeter, also was based on material collected by William Forman Wyckoff.

Miss Harriet E. Wyckoff gathered much of the material for the second edition. In 1945 she was joined by Daisy (Mrs. Oliver N.) Rathbun, who worked closely with her on the second edition and who became historian after Harriet Wyckoff's death. Many people in addition to Daisy and Oliver Rathbun have provided valuable assistance in the publication of the third edition. Among them are Dr. Helen L. Wikoff, Wilbur L. Korrow, and John L. Ely. Eleanore M. White deserves special mention for the preparation of the manuscript for the third edition from microfilm. This present edition would not have been possible without the efforts of Lynn (Mrs. Paul T. Jr.) Wyckoff, who devoted countless hours to the compilation and data-entry necessary to produce the current volume.

The Wyckoff House in the former Dutch settlement of Nieuw Amersfoort (now a part of Brooklyn, New York), known to have been the home of Pieter Claesen, has been of interest to the family since the inception of

the Association in 1937. In 1952, James Kelly, Historian of the Borough of Brooklyn, looked toward the Wyckoff family for assistance in saving the House, which was threatened by planned street openings and construction of sewer systems, from destruction. Emily (Mrs. Colin M.) Durham was appointed Chairperson of the Association's "Restoration of the Old Wyckoff House" Committee in 1957. Under her able leadership, the Wyckoff House Foundation was chartered on May 1, 1959, and began negotiations for the purchase of the House early in 1960. The purchase was completed on June 29, 1961.

Mrs. Edith Schwenke was caretaker at the House for many years, and was responsible for enlisting local community support. Colonel Daniel D. Streeter must also be remembered as the first Chairperson of the Wyckoff House foundation. He oversaw many of the important early events at the House.

The New York City Landmarks Commission voted the House the city's first Landmark in 1965. By 1968 it became apparent that because of numerous legal problems, the House could not be saved by the Wyckoff family alone. At the 1969 annual meeting, Alexander Wyckoff, then Chairperson of the Wyckoff House Foundation, reported that negotiations to transfer ownership of the House to the City of New York were nearing completion. On August 19, 1970, Mayor John V. Lindsay and numerous Wyckoff family members and friends gathered at the House to celebrate the inauguration of the restoration. However, because of New York City's fiscal crisis, the restoration was not actually undertaken until almost eleven years later.

During the years of struggle to save the House, many had given their best efforts. Among them was Harmon Goldstone, Lloyd Kaplan, Donald Simon, Colonel Arnold Albert, Margaret Tufts, and Mr. and Mrs. Walter W. Friend. Special mention should also be made of Ms. Elizabeth Lazeski who rallied the nearby Nazareth High School students to assist in the care of the House; Mrs. Mae Lubitz, without whose support there would probably be no Wyckoff House today; Edwin Thatcher, an architect and long time friend of the House, who conceived the plan for the Wyckoff-Fidler Park, which surrounds the House; and architect Herbert M. Oppenheimer, who joined the battle to save the House in the early 1970's.

Also worthy of mention is our first executive director, Dr. Donald L. Wyckoff, who led the Association into a new era marked by the creation of the Wyckoff House Museum; the first administrator of the Museum, Alan J. Lipsky; education coordinator Diane Sabbarese, who succeeded Mr. Lipsky as museum administrator; and the current executive director of the Association, Dr. Sean W. Sawyer. During this era an extensive educational program was established to service local schools. A curriculum on early Dutch farm life presented through field trips and special events began and has continued to grow over the years and now services the community as a whole.

Special meetings of the Wyckoff Association in America and the Wyckoff House Foundation were held in June 1972 to authorize the merger of the two separate organizations into the Wyckoff House and Association, Inc. William R. Fisher, Esq., long a friend of the Wyckoff House, prepared volumes of documents necessary to accomplish this merger and in addition filed the necessary papers with the Internal Revenue Service to secure tax exempt status for the new Association. In recognition of his untiring efforts, at no cost to the Association, Mr. Fisher was elected a Life Member of the Association.

On June 30, 1977 F. A. Wyckoff Jr., as president, signed an agreement with the City of New York for the operation and maintenance of the House, which includes an obligation to establish a trust fund that will ultimately provide the necessary income to operate and maintain it. On May 20, 1981, a second ceremony to celebrate the inauguration of the restoration process was held at the House and was attended by Mayor Edward I. Koch. After a delay of almost eleven years, the reconstruction of the House began shortly thereafter.

On Friday, October 1, 1982, dedication of the restored Pieter Claesen Wyckoff House and the park was celebrated by hundreds of Wyckoff cousins and friends. After completion of landscaping, interior design and the installation of furnishings, the Wyckoff House Museum opened to the public on April 15, 1983, the culmination of many years of effort by a dedicated few. No discussion of the Wyckoff House would be complete without reference to William S. (Bill) Wyckoff, who devoted numerous years to its preservation and who, during the restoration process, journeyed from Pennsylvania to Brooklyn on a weekly basis to oversee the reconstruction. Were it not for Bill Wyckoff the Wyckoff House probably would not exist today. As the plaque marking the memory garden, planted to honor Bill in 1987, so accurately states, he has preserved the past for future generations.

In the years following the dedication, many significant events were celebrated at the House. At exactly 4:00 P. M. on March 4, 1987, a group of Wyckoff cousins and friends residing in the vicinity of New York City gathered at the House to commemorate the 350th anniversary of Pieter Claesen's arrival in America. In October of 1987 more than 300 Wyckoff cousins and friends attending the Annual Reunion in New York City

converged upon the House to celebrate this 350th anniversary. At this event bulbs were planted by the attendees to create a memory garden in honor of William S. Wyckoff. The 50th anniversary of the founding of the Wyckoff Association in America, which evolved into the Wyckoff House and Association, and the 5th anniversary of the dedication of the restored House were also commemorated. That evening at a dinner at the Milford Plaza Hotel, the 1937 meeting, at which the Association was founded, was reenacted in the format of a radio broadcast. In conjunction with the 1992 Annual Meeting, which took place on Oyster Bay, Long Island, a gathering similar to that in 1987 was held at the House. During October of 1995 a busload of Wyckoff cousins and friends attending the Annual Reunion in Newcastle, Delaware traveled to the House to participate in the ceremony marking the 30th anniversary of the landmarking of the House. At this ceremony bushes bearing a new breed of rose specially developed for the occasion, known as the Landmark Rose, were planted to commemorate the occasion.

During October of 2002 more than 100 Wyckoff cousins and friends attending the Annual Reunion in South Plainfield, New Jersey assembled at the House to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the construction of the House. Highlights of this event included the swearing in of a group of new citizens by the Chief Judge of the U. S. District Court and a special commemorative postal cancellation. In addition, plaques marking the memory garden planted in honor of William S. Wyckoff in 1987, the Landmark Roses, the healing garden funded by the nursing alumni of Downstate Medical Center and the rose garden planted in memory of the local school principal Elsa Ebling were dedicated.

Under the able leadership of the current president Thomas A. Wycuff, who is largely responsible for the revitalization of the organization, a new era has recently begun at the Wyckoff House with plans for the acquisition of a 200 year old Dutch barn, the Wyckoff-Durling barn of New Jersey. On April 22, 2004, a groundbreaking ceremony marking the commencement of the site redevelopment was held on the grounds of the House. Following extensive reconfiguration and landscaping of the site by the New York City Parks Department, this barn will be dismantled and reassembled upon the grounds of the House. In connection with these improvements to the site, the Pieter Claesen Wyckoff Museum will now be known as the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum and Education Center to reflect its broader focus upon farm life. Were it not for the extreme generosity of the Association's chairperson and treasurer, E. Lisk Wyckoff, Jr. and the Homeland Foundation, these improvements would not be possible.

THE WYCKOFF HOUSE AND ASSOCIATION TODAY

Today the Wyckoff House and Association is approximately 1500 members strong. We meet as an association once each year and, since 1982, have held the Annual Meeting and Reunion at various locations throughout North America, with the intent of involving more family members, getting acquainted with them and assisting them with genealogical research. The fall Board of Directors meeting, a genealogy workshop, the Association's annual business meeting, and the Association's annual banquet take place at the reunion. Despite these and other activities, which occupy the reunion weekend, there is still a significant amount of time for fellowship and enjoyment.