

Kingston, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped officially unveil the designation of the Old Dutch Church in Kingston as a National Historic Landmark. Over the past several years, the congressman made numerous appeals to the National Park Service (NPS), which oversees the landmark program, to grant the church National Historic Landmark status. At a ceremony at the church today, the NPS presented the church with a plaque officially designating it as a National Historic Landmark.

"The Old Dutch has long been a centerpiece in Kingston and the Hudson Valley and now it has its rightful place as one of our National Historic Landmarks," Hinchey said. "The church has played a central role in the Kingston community for centuries and its majestic architecture has been admired locally and around the world. I commend the collective work done by the members of the church, other community leaders, and our local National Park Service office who all helped ensure that the Old Dutch Church received its proper national recognition. As we continue with the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain quadricentennial celebrations this year, this National Historic Landmark designation will help further demonstrate just how central the Old Dutch Church has been to this region culturally, religiously, and historically."

The New York State Historic Preservation Office submitted the Old Dutch Church's National Historic Landmark nomination application to NPS in June 2006. The nomination was considered in December 2007 by the NPS Landmarks Committee, which votes on whether to recommend the designation to the NPS Advisory Board, which in turn counsels the Secretary of the Interior on whether to approve the site. Prior to the meeting of the NPS Landmarks Committee, Hinchey wrote to the panel, urging them to support the Old Dutch Church's designation as a National Historic Landmark. The committee unanimously voted to recommend the designation. Hinchey's office tracked the progress of the nomination, which encountered some difficulty as the entire advisory board was slated to be reauthorized. The congressman's office continued to press for the church's designation and eventually ensured its approval as a National Historic Landmark.

In addition to helping secure the Old Dutch Church's designation as a National Historic Landmark, Hinchey also secured federal funds for the preservation of the building. Using his seat on the House Appropriations Committee, Hinchey secured \$100,000 in the fiscal year 2004 budget for the emergency stabilization of the church's walls.

The proper name for the church is the First Reformed Protestant Dutch Church. The congregation of the First Dutch Reformed Protestant Church was organized in 1659 as a direct

result of the settlers' petition to Peter Stuyvesant. Stuyvesant gifted these settlers with the half acre parcel on which the church stands today. After the English wrested control of the New Netherlands settlements in 1663, King George granted Old Dutch a charter of incorporation and confirmed its title to the half acre parcel.

The first of the three church structures was erected in 1680 and expanded several times prior to being burned by the British during their 1777 foray into Kingston during the Revolutionary War. Though gutted, it was eventually restored. In 1832 the second church structure was erected to meet the needs of a growing congregation. In fact, Old Dutch was the only church in Kingston for 175 years and as such, served as home to many different denominations. Finally, in 1850 the current structure was designed by noted ecclesiastical architect Minard Lafever. The stately structure, built from local bluestone, is one of the most fully developed extant examples of his work in the Renaissance Revival style and the design has been the driving force behind having the church declared a National Historic Landmark. Old Dutch Church stands as a cornerstone of the Historic Stockade District and is undoubtedly one of Kingston's most beloved landmarks.

The church was already listed on the National Register of Historic places, but landmark designation will highlight the church's history much more prominently. Today, fewer than 2,500 historic places have been designated as National Historic Landmarks.

Hinchey authored the legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the first federal action formally recognizing the fundamentally significant role the people of the Hudson Valley played in the early development of America and its institutions. The Old Dutch Church is part of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.