

*Kingston, NY* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that the Old Dutch Church in Kingston has been designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark. The congressman had made numerous appeals to the National Park Service (NPS), which oversees the landmark program, to grant the church National Historic Landmark status.

"I am delighted that the Old Dutch Church in Kingston has finally been rightly designated as a National Historic Landmark," Hinchey said. "The church has played a vital role in the Kingston community for centuries and its beautiful architecture and deeply rich history make it very worthy of a National Historic Landmark designation. It has taken a lot of work on the part of many people to reach this day, but I am very pleased that people all across the nation will now be able to more easily learn about the Old Dutch Church as well as the City of Kingston. The timing of this designation is very good as we head into 2009 when we have the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain quadricentennial celebration that is supported by federal funds I've been able to help secure."

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 learned yesterday that it was approved.

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.