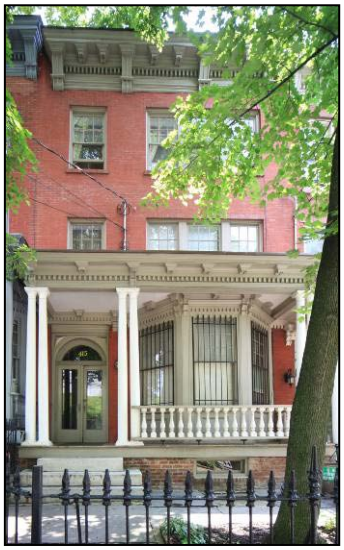
Landmarks Preservation Commission
September 15, 2009, Designation List 417
LP-2381

415 WESTERVELT AVENUE HOUSE, HORTON'S ROW, 415 Westervelt Avenue, Staten Island. Built c. 1880-82; Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 25, Lot 3.

On August 11, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of 415 Westervelt Avenue House, Horton's Row and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Eleven people spoke in favor of designation, including Councilmember Kenneth Mitchell and representatives of the Historic Districts Council, Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance, and Preservation League of Staten Island. In addition, the Commission received one letter in support of designation. The Commission previously held a public hearing on this building on October 1, 1991 (LP-1881).

<u>Summary</u>



Horton's Row, constructed between 1880 and 1882 by Harry L. Horton, is located at the periphery of Fort Hill in northeastern Staten Island at the outskirts of the villages of New Brighton and Tompkinsville. Horton was a prominent resident of Staten Island and had established a successful banking and brokerage firm in Manhattan. He was involved in Staten Island's water supply and rapid transit companies and was a president of the village of New Brighton. Horton's Row consisted of twelve identical attached masonry row houses that were built as affordable rental houses for middle-class families. No. 415 Westervelt Avenue is one of the only four intact houses that survive. The houses were under common ownership until 1908 and by 1901 they had been converted to three-family flats. The vernacular style red brick houses have neo-Grec style elements and feature full-width front porches, angled bay windows and cornices with dentils, angular or curved brackets and square consoles at the porch roof, above the entrance door transoms and bay windows at the first story, and the third story roof. The row is built on a slope with each building rising higher than its neighbor to create a stepped pattern of architectural elements. Due to the row's length and its location on the brow of the hill, it was a notable structure in the neighborhood. Horton's Row represents a rare housing type on Staten Island. Most of the dwellings built in 19th century Staten Island were free-standing single-family frame houses. Other extant examples of attached single-family dwellings dating from this time in the North-Shore villages were constructed for working-class families, making this a rare example of attached masonry row houses in Staten Island.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Site[1]

Horton's Row is located at the periphery of Fort Hill in northeastern Staten Island at the outskirts of the villages of New Brighton and Tompkinsville. Prior to settlement by Europeans, there was a small Native American encampment near this location.[2] The development of this section of Staten Island was first promoted by Daniel D. Tompkins. A governor of New York and later vice-president of the United States, Tompkins (1774-1825) spent considerable time on the island during the War of 1812 overseeing fort construction in his capacity as the Commander-in-Chief of the New York State troops. Attracted by the island's natural beauty, he began purchasing large tracts of land in northeastern Staten Island in 1814. In 1815, he moved to Staten Island and started the development of the village of Tompkinsville. Realizing that transportation would significantly aid the development, he procured the incorporation of the Richmond Turnpike Company to establish a highway from the New Blazing Star Ferry to Tompkinsville along the route of present-day Victory Boulevard. In 1816, he acquired an interest in the steamboat monopoly of Fulton and Livingston and the following year established regular ferry service between Staten Island and Whitehall Street in New York City. In the following year, Tompkins, as governor of New York, signed the "Final Abolition Act" that freed all slaves living in the state by 1827. Although Tompkins is known as an abolitionist, the 1800 U. S. Census lists a Daniel D. Tompkins living in the 1st Ward in New York City as having one enslaved person in his household. Tompkins borrowed heavily to finance his various enterprises in Staten Island, expecting to be reimbursed for expenses he had incurred on behalf of the governmental during the War of 1812. When the promised repayment stalled in Congress, it became apparent that he was overextended. In 1823, St. Andrew's Church foreclosed on the property that it had sold to Tompkins and following his death in 1825 other creditors brought suit against his estate. The remainder of his Staten Island property was sold at auction in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

In 1830, Dr. John S. Westervelt (1799-1869), the first health officer of the port of New York, who had married Daniel Tompkins's daughter Hannah, purchased a ninety-eight acre tract that formerly had been part of her father's estate. The Westervelts moved into Daniel Tompkins's house (demolished) on Fort Hill near the present-day intersection of Fort Place and Sherman Avenue. To provide access to this property from Richmond Terrace and the dock at the foot of Jersey Street, Dr. Westervelt had a lane opened that eventually became Westervelt Avenue. In 1870, the year after Dr. Westervelt died, his widow Hannah and their son Tompkins, as executrix and executor of his estate, conveyed three lots to Harry L. Horton and Frank S. Cornish.[3] The contiguous lots had street frontage on Westervelt Avenue, First Avenue (now Corson Avenue) and Sherman Avenue.[4] Frank Cornish and his wife Katie Cornish conveyed their interest in the property to Horton in 1874.[5] Horton built the twelve identical row houses that were known as Horton's Row c. 1880-82.[6]

Harry L. Horton[7]

Harry Lawrence Horton was born in Bradford County, Pennsylvania in 1832 and after working as a produce and grain commission dealer in Milwaukee, he moved to New

York in 1865. He established a successful banking and brokerage concern, H. L. Horton & Company, which was located at 56 Broadway in Manhattan. After moving his residence to New Brighton and building a large suburban residence on nearby Third Avenue (now Winter Avenue), Horton became involved in the Staten Island's water supply and rapid transit companies. He constructed and operated water plants in Staten Island, which he then sold to the city, and was a president of the village of New Brighton. There are no other known examples of speculative residential real estate development by Horton. At the time of his death in 1915, he was living on West 57th Street in Manhattan.

Early Owners and Residents

These houses were built as rental housing and remained under common ownership until 1908. Early census and directory records indicate that the houses were occupied as single-family dwellings;[8] but by 1905, the houses were occupied as three-family multiple dwellings.[9] Department of Buildings records refer to the houses as "old law tenements," which would indicate that they became multiple dwellings sometime before April 12, 1901.[10]

Harry L. Horton and his wife Sarah L. Horton sold the houses to Ann Eliza Timpson in 1891.[11] The houses had several owners after Timpson and were purchased by Caroline Uhlig, who appears to be the first owner to reside in one of the houses, in 1904.[12] Uhlig sold the adjacent vacant land behind and to the east of the row, which is located on Corson and Sherman Avenues, to Frederick Ruth Realty Co. in 1908[13] and is the first owner who did not sell all twelve houses together.[14]

The Trow's and Webb's Consolidated Directories of 1882-83 are the first directories in which Horton's Row is listed.[15] Early residents included Mrs. Lucy Livingston and her four adult sons[16] at No. 5 Horton's Row (No. 403 Westervelt); Edward Alfred Sargent, an architect with an office in New York, at No. 7 (No. 407); William V. Woodworth, a businessman and his step-mother, Mrs. Sophia L. Woodworth[17] at No. 8 (No. 409) and Frederick S. Cozzens, an artist who lived and worked at No. 10 (No. 413).[18] Edward Sargent (1842-1914) was one of Staten Island's most notable architects at the end of 19th century. After 1880, he became a permanent resident of Staten Island, living in Tompkinsville until around 1905.[19] Sargent designed the Baltimore & Ohio Flats, an attached row of five three-family brick flats, which were built in 1885 and located at the foot of Victory Boulevard near the former ferry landing. These buildings, along with Horton's Row, were among the earliest examples of attached, masonry dwellings in Staten Island. They were demolished in 1984.

The earliest known reference to occupants, who apparently are not related to each other, living in the same house in Horton's Row is in the 1886 Webb's Consolidated Directory.[20] Rev. Francis M. Kip and John V. W. Vanderboort[21] are listed as living at No. 2 Horton's Row (No. 397) and Daniel J. Gasherie, miner, and Oscar W. Reed, cashier, are listed as living at No. 9 (No. 411), while William Patten, real estate agent, had his office at No. 9.[22] According to the 1888 Webb's Consolidated Directory, Joseph Patten, clerk and William Patten, real estate agent, had offices at No. 415, and Oscar Schwedersky, clerk and Mrs. Bella Schwedersky, are listed as living at No. 415.[23]

Design and Construction

Horton's Row is a very early example of attached masonry row houses in Staten Island. Its architect has not been determined. Since the island was not well populated until the 20th century, most of houses predating that time were free-standing single-family frame houses. Lying at the periphery of the prosperous Fort Hill suburb and within easy walking distance of the ferry terminal, then located at the foot of Richmond Turnpike (now Victory Boulevard), Horton's Row was intended to offer affordable rental housing to middle-class families. Although there are other examples of single-family attached houses built in the 19th century in the North-Shore villages, they were for working-class families. Historic views of Fort Hill reveal that these buildings were an anomaly in its neighborhood and a visual landmark due to their massing and location on the brow of the hill. Horton's Row represents a rare building type on the island.

All twelve houses had identical front facades and except for No. 417, had identical rear facades, when built. These three story vernacular style houses had neo-Grec style details. The neo-Grec style was popular in the second half of the 19th century and is characterized by stylized, classical details, angular forms and incised detailing. The red brick houses were built with two bays at the first story and three bays at the second and third stories. They had full-width brick porches with flat roofs supported by single columns on square pedestals and had iron railings with a criss-cross design. All had wood-and-glass double-leaf entrance doors with wood-and-glass arch-headed transoms and a rectangular molded wood surround in the north bay of the first story and a three-window-wide angled bay in the south bay. The second and third stories had three single window openings with one-over-one double-hung wood windows and smooth stone lintels and sills. Neo-Grec style cornices with dentils, angular or curved brackets and square consoles appear around the front porch roof, above the transoms and bay windows at the first story and the third story roof. The rear facades of the buildings appear one story higher than the front because the land slopes down to the east. All the buildings, except for No. 417, were built with full-width rear yard additions at the sub-basement, basement and first story that had six narrow one-over-one windows at the basement and first story. Above the rear yard extensions, there were three single windows at the second story of the rear facades and pitched roofs with three dormers having surrounds with pilasters and segmental-arched lintels and single one-over-one double-hung windows. Since the row is built on a slope, each building, in descending address order, rises higher than its neighbor, creating a stepped pattern of architectural elements. The ensemble is knit together by the ornamental wrought-iron fencing along the edge of the shallow front yards.

Subsequent History

This area of Staten Island continued to develop as a residential neighborhood following the integration of ferry and train service in the 1880s, and Staten Island's 1898 consolidation into the City of New York. The neighborhood's close proximity to the newly created Borough Center at St. George, an important road terminus and port for the ferry to Manhattan, helped maintain its status as an important "suburb."[24]

No. 415 had several owners after Caroline Uhlig until it was purchased by Albert I. and Flora B. Lederman in 1922.[25] Members of the Lederman family owned this house, as well as No. 411, 413 and 417, until 1960.[26] Albert L. Lederman, an electrical

contractor, and his wife Flora B. Lederman were German immigrants. They lived at No. 415 with their children in 1915, moved to No. 413 by 1920 and then moved to No. 417 by 1925.[27] These four houses remained under common ownership until 1982, when owners Robert Fitzsimmons and Isadore Ronenson sold them to separate parties.[28]

Description

415 Westervelt Avenue is located on a rectangular lot which has a frontage of 25 feet along Westervelt Avenue. The front bluestone areaway[29] is enclosed with a historic wrought-iron fence and northern cast-iron post (the gate and southern post are not original) set on a concrete and bluestone curb that rises to north because the row is built on a slope. Part of the concrete is missing at the southern end of the curb revealing the brick underneath. There are two concrete and bluestone steps from the sidewalk to the areaway, a round metal plate and a tree in the areaway, and three granite steps from the areaway to the porch. The house has three stories and a basement at the front façade and is constructed of red brick. The full-width brick porch has paired round slender Doric wood columns and balustraded wood railings that replaced the original columns and railings prior to 1939. The porch cornice is decorated with dentils, curved brackets, and square consoles. A rectangular wood window is located at the basement in the center of the façade beneath the porch. The house has two bays at the first through third stories. In the northern bay at the first story is a double-leaf wood-and-glass entrance door with arched-headed wood-and-glass transom and a molded, rectangular surrounded with a cornice having dentils, curved brackets and square consoles that continues around the bay window. The three-window-wide angled wood bay in the southern bay at the first story has replacement wood sash and non-historic metal window security grilles with paneled wood panels below. The northern bays at the second and third stories have replacement wood sash in original window openings with brick header lintels and sills that were installed prior to 1939. The southern bays at the second and third stories have triple window openings with replacement wood sash and brick lintels and sills that were installed c. 1937.[30] The roof cornice with dentils, angular brackets and square consoles is similar to the porch and first story cornices. The light fixture by the entrance door is not historic. There is a metal plate by the entrance door and exposed conduit and a metal pole at the first and second stories.

Since the land slopes down to the east, the rear façade, which is partially visible, is one story taller than the front façade. A full-height, full-width red brick rear yard addition that has three openings at the sub-basement, three single windows at the basement, and a single window and triple window at the first through third stories, replaced the original rear yard addition c. 1922.[31] The windows have wood sash with stone lintels and sills at the basement and the upper stories appear to have wood sash and have brick lintels and sills. There is exposed conduit and a light fixture between the sub-basement and basement. The rear façade has a leader and a metal fire escape with ladder to the roof that are not original to the house. There is a wood fence at the rear yard.

Report prepared by
Cynthia Danza
Research Department

NOTES

[1] This section on the development of Tompkinsville is adapted from Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC), *August and Augusta Schoverling House Designation Report* (LP-2073) (New York: City of New York, 2001) prepared by Gale Harris.

[2] Eugene J. Boesch, "Archaeological Evaluation and Sensitivity Assessment of Staten Island, New York" (Submitted to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, March 20, 1994), 121.

[3] Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 87, page 257.

[4] Lots 105, 106 and 107 on file map (number 228) of the property in Castleton, Richmond County belonging to John S. Westervelt, Esq., surveyed by George M. Root in 1864 and filed in the Richmond County Clerk's Office on August 10, 1867. The three contiguous lots contained approximately 4,490 square feet and measured approximately 270 feet on Westervelt Avenue, approximately 268.8 feet on First Avenue (now Corson Avenue, including the whole street frontage between Westervelt Avenue and Sherman Avenue) and approximately 230 feet on Sherman Avenue.

[5] Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 108, page 581.

[6] The addresses (1-12 Horton's Row) do not appear in the U.S. Census for 1880 but they do appear in *Webb's Consolidated Directory of the North and South Shores, Staten Island 1882-83*, which was published in 1882. The buildings were originally known as 1-12 Horton's Row, and then 271-293 Westervelt Avenue and about 1905 were given their current street addresses, 395-417 Westervelt Avenue. Three of the houses have been demolished (Nos. 401, 403 and 405) and the front facades of five have been significantly altered (Nos. 393, 395, 397, 407 and 409).

[7] This section on Harry L. Horton is adapted from Richard M. Bayles, *History of Richmond County (Staten Island), New York from its Discovery to the Present Time*, (New York: L.E. Preston, 1887), 698-699; Mitchell C. Harrison, *Prominent and Progressive Americans: An Encyclopedia of Contemporaneous Biography*, (1902); William S. Pelletreau, *Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Family History of New York*, (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1907), vol. 2, 250-254; "Harry Lawrence Horton" in *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, (New York: James T. White & Company, 1910) Supplement I, 514-515; and "Harry L. Horton Dies at 83," *New York Times* (December 18, 1915) 11.

[8] *Webb's Consolidated Directory of the North and South Shores, Staten Island* for 1882-83, 1886 and 1888; and 1900 U.S. Census.

[9] New York City Department of Buildings, Staten Island, ALT 25-05. The earliest record found in the DOB files is a notice dated 1903 requiring fire escapes at the rear third stories and goose neck ladders to the roof, indicating that the houses were multiple dwellings at that time.

[10] The Tenement Home Act of 1879 (the "old law") applied to all buildings occupied by more than two families in Staten Island beginning on January 1, 1898 (*First Report of the Tenement House Department of the City of New York*, vol. 1, January 1, 1902-July 1, 1903, page 87); the Tenement Law of 1901 (the "new law") became effective on April 12, 1901.

[11] Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 210, page 268.

[12] Timpson sold the houses to Eugene M. Boeheim in 1898 (Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 267, page 349); Boeheim sold them the following year to Augusta Klemme (Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 272, page 483; and Klemme sold them later that year to Julius Thomas (Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 289, page 473). 1904 Deed from Julius Thomas and his wife Selma to Caroline Uhlig, Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 303, page 484. 1900 U.S. Census lists Caroline Uhlig and her husband Gustav, a merchant tailor, both German immigrants, living with their son Paul at 7 Horton's Row (formerly known also as 283 Westervelt Avenue, now 407 Westervelt Avenue); a Buildings Department alterations application dated 1905 (ALT 25-05) has her address is listed as 7 Horton's Row or 618 Westervelt Avenue.

[13] Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 353, page 191. By 1917, free-standing wood frame houses had been built on this land. (Bromley Atlas, 1917, vol. 1, plate 2). Frederick Ruth Realty Company also purchased No. 417 the same day by a separate deed.

[14] Uhlig sold houses Nos. 397 to 409 to Augusta Buchner in 1908 (Liber 353, page 231); Nos. 395 and 411 to 415 to Potter & Brothers, Inc. in 1909 (Liber 357, page 179); and No. 417 to Frederick Ruth Realty in 1908 (Liber 353, pages 189).

[15] *Trow's Business and Residential Directory 1882-83* (New York: Trow Directory, 1882); *Webb's Consolidated Directory of the North and South Shores, Staten Island 1882-83* (New York: Webb Brothers & Co., 1882).

[16] 1880 U.S. Census; according to the 1882-83 Webb's Directory, Arthur was a manufacturer of stationery and printer with a office at 22 New Church, NY, Edward and John were salesmen and Harry was a bookkeeper.

[17] 1880 U.S. Census.

[18] According to the 1880 U.S. Census, the Livingstons, Woodworths and Cozzens lived on Madison Avenue (now Daniel Low Terrace) two blocks away and the Sargents lived on Fort Street.

[19] LPC, *Public School 15 (Daniel D. Tompkins School) Designation Report* (LP-1877) (New York: City of New York, 1996) prepared by Jay Shockley.

[20]*Webb's Consolidated Directory of the North and South Shores, Staten Island 1886* (Poughkeepsie: Haight and Dudley, 1886).

[21] This may be a typographical error, his last name appears to be Vandervoort.

[22] There is no residential listing for Patten in the directory.

[23] *Webb's Consolidated Directory of the North and South Shores, Staten Island 1888* (New York: W.S. Webb, 1888). There are no residential listings for Joseph or William Patten in the 1888 directory. This is the earliest known reference to people who are apparently not related to each other occupying No. 415.

[24] LPC, *Tompkinsville (Joseph H. Lyons) Pool Bath House Designation Report* (LP-2235) (New York: City of New York, 2008) prepared by Tara Harrison.

[25] Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 549, page 53.

[26] No. 411 was purchased by Albert I. Lederman in 1940 (Liber 825, page 211); No. 413 was purchased by Flora B. Lederman in 1913 (Liber 431, page 59); and Nos. 415 and 417 were purchased by Albert I. and Flora B. Lederman in 1922 (Liber 549, page 53).

[27] 1915 New York State Census, 1920 U.S. Census and 1925 New York State Census.

[28] Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances.

[29] There is a square concrete panel in the areaway in front of the basement window.

[30] New York City Department of Buildings, Staten Island, ALT 736-37.

[31] New York City Department of Buildings, Staten Island, ALT 410-22.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

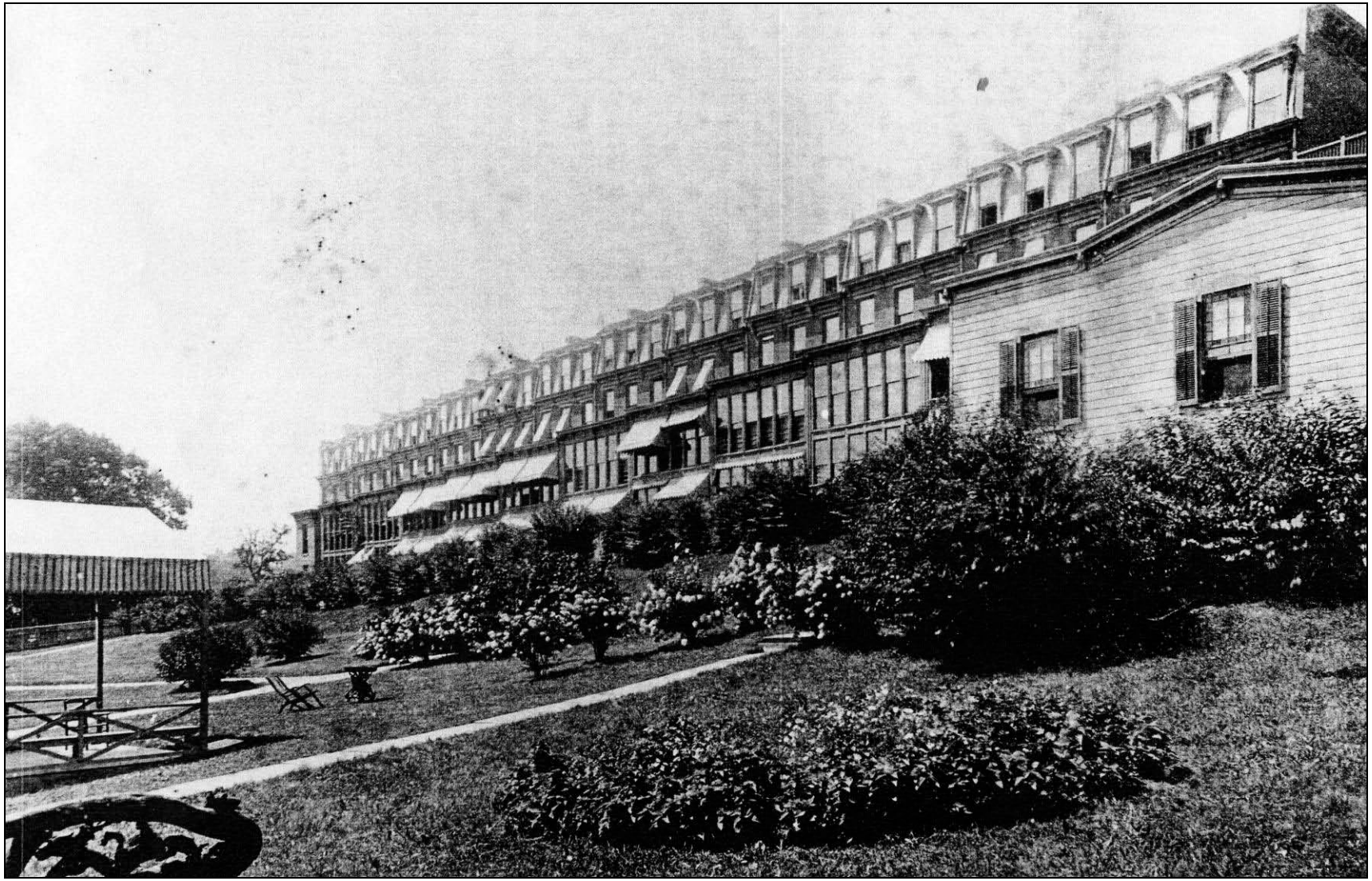
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that 415 Westervelt Avenue House, Horton's Row has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, 415 Westervelt Avenue House, Horton's Row represents a rare housing type on Staten Island; that Horton's Row was built c. 1880-82 by Harry L. Horton and is located at the periphery of Fort Hill in northeastern Staten Island at the outskirts of the villages of New Brighton and Tompkinsville; that Horton was a prominent resident of Staten Island and had established a successful banking and brokerage firm in Manhattan; that he was involved in Staten Island's water supply and rapid transit companies and was a president of the village of New Brighton; that Horton's Row consisted of twelve identical attached row houses that were built as affordable rental houses for middle-class families; that No. 415 Westervelt Avenue is one of the only four intact houses that survive; that the houses were under common ownership until 1908 and by 1901 they had been converted to three-family flats; that the vernacular style red brick houses have neo-Grec style elements and feature full-width front porches, angled bay windows and cornices with dentils, angular or curved brackets and square consoles at the porch roof, above the entrance door transoms and bay windows at the first story, and the third story roof; that the row is built on a slope with each building rising higher than its neighbor to create a stepped pattern of architectural elements; that due to the row's length and its location on the brow of the hill, it was a notable structure in the neighborhood; that most of the dwellings built in 19th century Staten Island were free-standing single-family frame houses; and that other extant examples of attached single-family dwellings dating from this time in the North-Shore villages were constructed for working-class families, making this a rare example of attached masonry row houses in Staten Island.

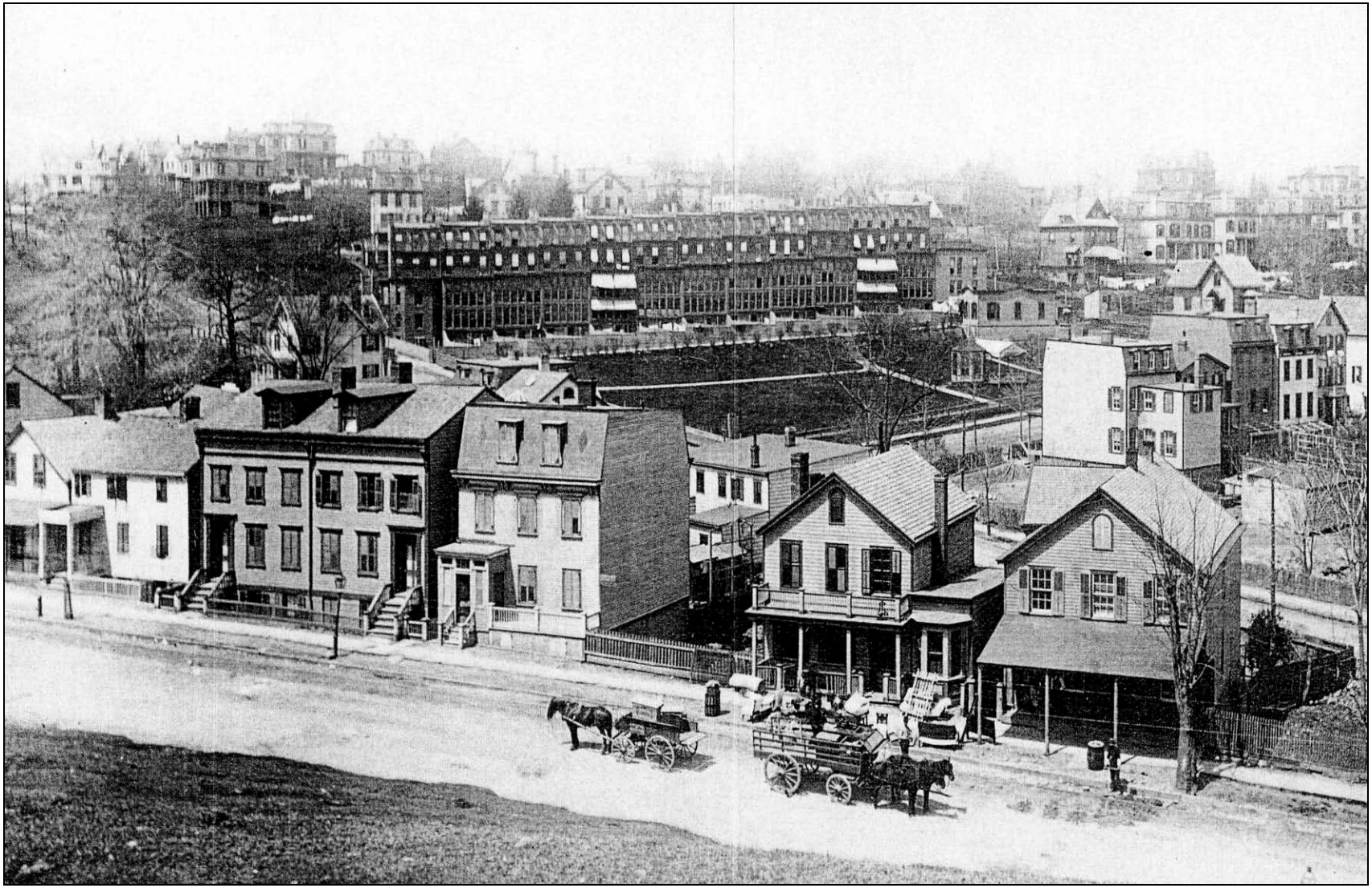
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark 415 Westervelt Avenue House, Horton's Row, 415 Westervelt Avenue, Borough of Staten Island, and designates Staten Island Tax Map Block 25, Lot 3, as its Landmark site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter,
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners

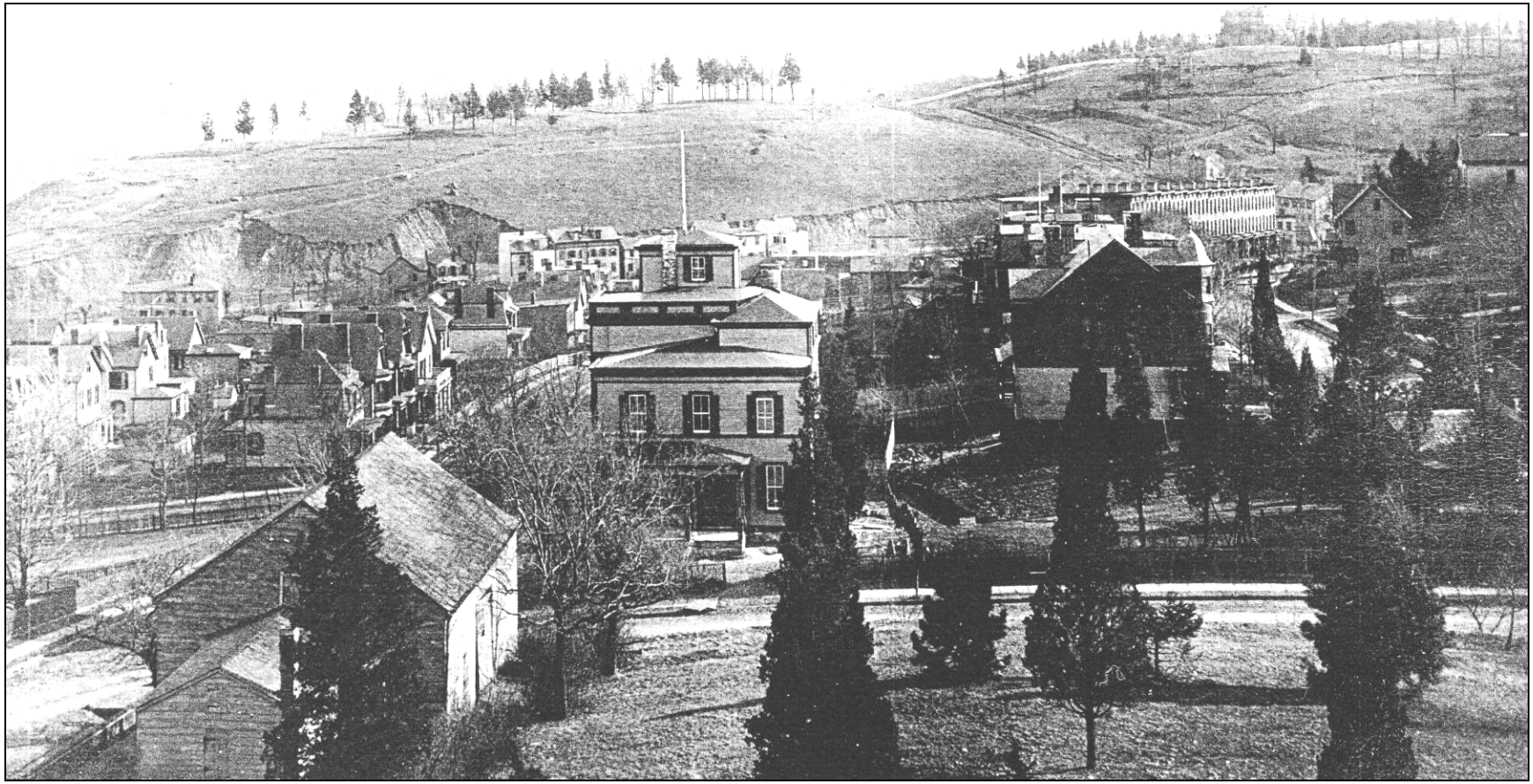
Horton's Row, Front View
Photograph by Isaac Almstaedt, c. 1885
Source: Staten Island Historical Society Collection



Horton's Row, Park (Rear) View
Photograph by Isaac Almstaedt, c. 1885
Source: Staten Island Historical Society Collection



View of Tompkinsville from Pavilion Hill
Photograph by Isaac Almstaedt, c. 1885
Source: Staten Island Historical Society Collection



View from Brighton Heights
Photograph by Isaac Almstaedt, c. 1888
Source: Staten Island Historical Society Collection

411-417 Westervelt Avenue, Horton's Row
Photo: Tara Harrison, 2009

415 Westervelt Avenue
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

415 Westervelt Avenue
Photo: Tara Harrison, 2009

415-411 Westervelt Avenue, Rear Facades
Photo: Tara Harrison, 2009

415 WESTERVELT AVENUE HOUSE, HORTON'S ROW (LP-2381), 415 Westervelt Avenue.
Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 25, Lot 3.

Designated: September 15, 2009

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 09v1, December 2009.
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