

Landmarks Preservation Commission
June 28, 2016, Designation List 488
LP-0375

ST. JOHN'S P.E. CHURCH RECTORY, 1333 Bay Street (aka 1333 -1337 Bay Street), Staten Island.

Built: 1881-1882; Builder: John W. Winmill.

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 2832, Lot 12.

On September 13, 1966 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of St. John's P.E. Church Rectory and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 64). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Representatives from the Municipal Art Society of New York and American Institute of Architects spoke in favor of designation of all three buildings within the church complex. The public hearing was continued on October 11, 1966 (Item No. 10) at which time no one spoke. The public hearing was continued again on November 10, 1966 (Item No. 21). At the hearing one individual spoke in favor of designation.

On October 22, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a special public hearing on the proposed designation of St. John's P.E. Church Rectory and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. I—Borough of Staten Island Group I, F). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. The Commission received written support from the Reverend Roy A. Cole, acting as a representative of the church. Five people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council and the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Commission also received written submissions expressing support for designation from the Alice Austen House and the Municipal Art Society.



Summary

Prominently located on Bay Street in Clifton, Staten Island, St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church Rectory is an excellent example of an early free-standing Queen Anne style residence. An offshoot of St. Andrew's Church in Richmond, Staten Island, St. John's Church was formally organized on September 23, 1843, at the home of William B. Townsend, to serve the needs of the Protestant Episcopal worshipers in the area of Clifton. For approximately 37 years, the Reverend John C. Eccleston served as the rector of St. John's Church. Under his leadership, St. John's Church grew in prestige and the new church and rectory were constructed. The rectory, located to the south of the church, was built for the Reverend Eccleston from 1881-1882 by the builder John W. Winmill. The land was donated to the church by warden and publisher John A. Appleton. True to the Queen Anne style, the house features an asymmetrical plan and three-dimensional facades achieved through the combination of protruding gables, bay windows, and a recessed front porch and entrance. The house's highly textured surface is also characteristic of the Queen Anne style and consists of a rough-faced ashlar stone base with upper floors that feature vertical siding, half-timbering, and scalloped shingles. The picturesque qualities of the Queen Anne style and the house's granite base, an unusual feature among Staten Island's Queen Anne style houses, complement St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, a New York City Landmark, which was built from 1869-71 and was designed by the prominent architect, Arthur D. Gilman.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Built from 1881-1882, St. John's Rectory is a two-and-a-half story free-standing Queen Anne style residence. The house's main entrance is on its southwest façade, which faces Bay Street. The house features a rough-faced ashlar stone base, while the upper stories feature a combination of vertical siding, half-timbering, and shingles. The stone appears to match the granite that was used in the construction of the church (1869-1871) and the chapel (c. 1885, now demolished), which was described in a newspaper article at the time of the church's construction as pink granite from Lyme, Connecticut.¹ The house features a small basement and first-story rear addition that bisects the original full-length rear porch. The addition, which was added in 1920, was designed to accommodate a kitchen on the first floor of the house and was subsequently reduced in size at some point between 2002 and 2009.² With the exception of the northwest bay window and rear addition, the first- and second-story windows of the house feature historic wooden multi-light upper sashes over single-pane lower sashes. The house's basement and attic windows have all been replaced and storm windows are present throughout the house.

Bay Street (Southwest) facade

Historic: Three-bay façade featuring two two-and-a-half-story gabled bays; westernmost gable features a two-story rectangular bay with a hipped roof and a modillion cornice; multi-pane transom windows in bay; scalloped shingles above the first story with vertical siding and applied stickwork above the attic windows of the westernmost gable; overhanging central gable above the house's recessed front entry porch features vertical siding with applied stickwork above the first story and scalloped shingles in the upper portion of the gable; scalloped shingles at second story on the easternmost side of the facade.

Alterations: Woodwork of front entry porch replaced in a manner that is reminiscent of the original porch; floor of porch resurfaced in concrete; double-leaf wood-and-glass door with

multi-pane windows and transom replaced with double-leaf wood-and-glass door of a similar configuration; double-leaf wood-and-glass storm door with single-pane glass transom added; iron railing added to front steps; electrical boxes at basement window.

Northwest facade

Historic: Gable features one-and-a-half-story bay window with hipped roof; scalloped shingles above the first story with vertical siding and applied stickwork above the attic windows of the gable; stone and corbelled brick chimney is prominently featured between two second-story windows; memorial plaque.

Alterations: Stained-glass windows in bay replaced with diamond pane windows prior to 1967; portion of stone base replaced with brick; pipes; electrical boxes.

Northeast (Rear) facade

Historic: Two steeply pitched gables either side of a dormer window; area surrounding basement dug out creating fully visible basement level; raised bracketed porch at both ends of the façade.

Alterations: Basement and first-story addition; shiplap siding on addition at basement level; shingles on first story of addition; walls of porch and upper stories of rear are sided with shingles (no images showing original condition found); posts, banisters, and brackets of porch and stairs replaced; window opening on left side of first story was enlarged to accommodate a double-leaf door in 1920; vents; light fixtures; rightmost attic window opening boarded up.

Southeast facade

Historic: Gable featuring a one-story bay window with hipped roof; multi-pane transom windows in bay; scalloped shingles above the first story with vertical siding and applied stickwork above the attic windows of the gable.

Alterations: Light fixture; electrical boxes, and conduit.

Roof

Historic: Two corbelled brick chimneys located on the northwest and northeast sides of the house.

Alterations: Roofline cresting and finials have been removed; chimney to the right of the southwestern central bay removed; asphalt shingles; terra-cotta chimney pots added on northwest façade.

Site

Alterations: Three HVAC units on concrete pad on southeast side of the building; non-historic fence at front of property.

SITE HISTORY

Clifton, Staten Island³

The course of Staten Island's early history as a relatively isolated and sparsely settled community of farmers and fishermen began to change around the turn of the 19th century. The Quarantine Station was moved to Staten Island from Governor's Island in 1799 and within 20 years the small village of Tompkinsville, located to the north of Clifton along Staten Island's northeast shore, grew up around it, due in large part to the speculative interests of Daniel D. Tompkins.⁴ In the 1830s, Tompkins' son Minthorne, along with partner William J. Staples, purchased the former Gore and Vanderbilt farms, had the land laid out into a village with streets and approximately 400, village-sized building lots, establishing the village of Stapleton.⁵ Staples and Tompkins established steam ferry service (from what is now the corner of Bay and Dock Streets) to Manhattan and advertised their new development.

Staten Island's picturesque rural environment and its accessibility from lower Manhattan also made it a logical choice for the development of New York City's early suburbs. Wooded slopes, panoramic views of Upper New York Bay, and extensive shore frontage offered an ideal setting where "men engaged in active business" might "withdraw from the labor and anxiety of commerce to the quiet of their own families, unexposed to intrusion."⁶ Clifton was founded in 1835 by English immigrant, engineer and surveyor, Thomas Scott, who with a group of New York City businessmen and real estate developers had purchased a number of farms lying between the Narrows and today's Vanderbilt Avenue. They formed an organization – the Staten Island Association – established new streets, and published an elaborate brochure advertising the suburb of Clifton. Unfortunately, no copies of the 24-page pamphlet appear to have survived and our knowledge of the Association's composition and intentions is incomplete, but it is likely that beauty of the east shore with its rising hills culminating in the cliffs at the Narrows and its views of both Upper and Lower New York Bays would have been extolled as a prime attraction.

Around the same time, Thomas E. Davis, a successful and wealthy Manhattan land developer, began the suburban development of New Brighton, extending westward from today's St. George Ferry Terminal to Sailors' Snug Harbor. The potential of the area quickly attracted the attention of other investors, and they joined with Davis to form the New Brighton Association. Streets and building lots were laid out and an elaborate brochure promoting the new suburb prepared. Although a number of factors, including the Panic of 1837, determined that neither of the two suburbs evolved as quickly nor in the manner envisioned by their original developers, Blood's 1845 map of the north and east shores reveals that a substantial number of Manhattan merchants had already established their residences on Staten Island. Villas and cottages with names such as Woodbrook, Sweet Briar, Oak Hill, and Lake Cottage suggest that Staten Island was receptive to the romantic rural suburb advocated by the noted American architect, Alexander Jackson Davis, and his collaborator, architectural critic and landscape gardener, Andrew Jackson Downing.⁷ The initial increase in population was "concentrated on the north and eastern shores," running from New Brighton, through Tompkinsville and Stapleton, to Clifton, and "was so intense that dividing lines between developments blurred: by 1840, the area appeared to many observers as 'almost a continued village.'"⁸

St. John's Episcopal Church and Rectory⁹

An offshoot of St. Andrew's Church in Richmond, St. John's Church was formally organized on September 23, 1843, at the home of William B. Townsend, to serve the needs of the Protestant Episcopal worshippers in the area of Clifton. Services were held at the Clifton Hotel

on Cliff Street prior to the consecration of the first Church on March 30, 1844. The first church building, described as “a modest wooden structure,”¹⁰ was located across from the current building, at the corner of Belair Road and Bay Street (then known as New York Avenue). Reverend Kingston Goddard purchased property across the street, where the current church stands, in July of 1844 and lived there as the congregation’s first rector. In 1858, the rector, wardens and vestrymen of the church purchased Woodland Cottage, located at 33-37 Belair Road (a NYC Landmark). During the 11-year period that the church owned the cottage, the principal occupant appears to have been its most eminent rector the Rev. John C. Eccleston, who served the parish from 1856-63 and again from 1867 until his retirement in 1898.

Though plans for a larger church had been considered during his absence, its completion is credited to Dr. Eccleston’s “energy and enterprise.”¹¹ St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church (a designated NYC Landmark) was built in 1869-71 and designed by the prominent architect and Staten Island resident, Arthur D. Gilman, best known in New York City for his work on the old Equitable Life Assurance Building which formerly stood at 20 Broad Street. In its style and setting, this charming Church is reminiscent of an English parish church; its prototype is the Collegiate Church of St. John the Baptist, a medieval church, in Shottesbrooke Park, England. The cornerstone of the present building was laid on November 10, 1869, and the Church was consecrated on September 30, 1871.

The rectory, located to the south of the church on land donated to the church by warden and publisher John A. Appleton, was completed in 1882.¹² In his Jubilee Sermon delivered upon the 50th anniversary of the congregation, Dr. Eccleston recalled “the great interest, [Appleton] felt, in the erection of the beautiful rectory of the parish.” Eccleston also detailed the contribution of a beautiful stained-glass window by the rector’s bible class, and the “handsome and commodious furniture for the rectory’s study” donated by Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt.¹³ A plaque on the northwest side of the building memorializes the contribution of John A. Appleton.

The Reverend John C. Eccleston¹⁴

The Reverend John C. Eccleston was born in 1828 in Chestertown, Maryland. He was the son John Bowers Eccleston, a prominent lawyer who later became a judge on the Maryland Supreme Court, and the nephew of Samuel Eccleston, the Archbishop of Baltimore. Under the guidance of his uncle, he attended the Roman Catholic Sulpician College of St. Mary’s in Baltimore. He graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1847, but following the death of his uncle and father, he decided not to take Holy Orders. He received a Master of Arts from St. Mary’s in 1849 and then went on to obtain a doctorate in medicine from the University of Maryland. He then entered the General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York from which he graduated in 1854. Shortly thereafter, in 1856, he began his service as the rector of St. John’s Church. In 1862, he was reassigned to Trinity Church in Newark, New Jersey, but he resigned in 1866 for health reasons and decided to serve as the rector of a small church in Western Massachusetts. In 1867, at the request of the vestry of St. John’s, the Rev. Eccleston returned to Staten Island, where he would serve as the rector for approximately 31 years. Under his leadership, St. John’s Church grew in prestige and the new church, rectory, and chapel were constructed. The Rev. Eccleston was the first rector to occupy the new rectory. He lived there with his family. His daughter, Gertrude, referred to as Trude, was a close companion of Alice Austen. Several early exterior photographs of the house and St. John’s Church taken by Alice Austen survive. The Reverend was active in both civic and charitable causes. In addition to his sermons, he provided illustrated secular and educational lectures on topics such as history

and architecture. He retired from the church in 1898 and died in 1912. He is buried in Moravian Cemetery.

Architecture of the Building¹⁵

The Queen Anne style was a romantic style intended to invoke English domestic architecture of the late medieval period. It originated in England in the 1860s and was introduced to the United States in 1874 with the completion of Henry Hobson Richardson's Watts-Sherman House in Newport, Rhode Island. The style was initially popularized by the *American Architect and Building News*, the leading architecture magazine, which published images of picturesque buildings featuring elements of Old English, Tudor, Classical, and Gothic architecture. The style was ultimately perpetuated not by academic architects, but by architect-builders, pattern books, and editors of the popular press. The American Queen Anne style flourished as a vernacular architectural form, particularly in the two decades after 1885, becoming one of the most popular residential styles across the United States. Queen Anne houses featured exuberantly detailed asymmetrical facades, picturesque rooflines, and richly embellished exteriors consisting of a variety of materials. The style relied heavily on technological advances, such as the invention of balloon framing, which allowed for more expressive plans, and inexpensive machine-made decorative elements such as turned porch posts, latticework, finials, and cresting. Like Henry Hobson Richardson's Watts-Sherman House, early examples of style frequently featured half-timbering. During the 1880s a more delicate variation featuring decorative spindlework became prominent, while the Columbian Exposition of 1893 led to the incorporation of more traditionally classical elements in the 1890s. The style transitioned and was eventually supplanted by other styles including the Colonial Revival and Tudor styles and had all but disappeared by 1910.

St. John's Rectory is a relatively early example of a Queen Anne style house. The house features an asymmetrical plan with three-dimensional facades achieved through the combination of protruding gables, bay windows, and a recessed front porch and entrance. Like many other Queen Anne houses, the rectory features a highly textured surface consisting of a rough-faced ashlar stone base with upper floors that feature vertical siding, half-timbering, and scalloped shingles. Picturesque windows were a primary feature of many Queen Anne houses and were incorporated in St. John's Rectory. These include the multi-paned upper sashes of the house's first- and second-story windows and the historic diamond-pane windows at the attic story. Other no longer extant features of the building's original design that are typical of Queen Anne houses include the finials and roofline cresting. Additionally, the heavy turned porch supports, frequently found in early half-timbered Queen Anne houses such as this one, were replaced in the early 21st century. Despite minor alterations, St. John's Rectory remains an excellent example of an early half-timbered Queen Anne style house. Furthermore, it is unusual among Queen Anne style houses in Staten Island for the incorporation of stone at the first story. The picturesque qualities of the Queen Anne style, which are evocative of English domestic architecture of the late medieval period, and the house's granite base, successfully tie the rectory to the adjacent church, which was built 13 years earlier and designed in the Victorian Gothic style by the prominent architect and Staten Island resident, Arthur D. Gilman.

John W. Winmill¹⁶

An entry from June 4, 1881 in *The Real Estate Record* states that the contract for the construction of the rectory of St. John's Church had been awarded to J. W. Winmill.¹⁷ Little is

known about the builder John W. Winmill. Sources indicate that John W. Winmill was born in England in 1831 and that he came to New York with his family in 1838. The 1855 census shows John Winmill living with his wife, Mary Winmill, in New Windsor, New York. It is unclear when Winmill moved to Staten Island, but he is listed in the 1875 New York state census as living in Castleton. He was a self-described carpenter and builder, but little is known about his work. While some sources have attributed the design of St. John's Protestant Episcopal Rectory to Gilman, there is little evidence of this, and it would not have been unusual at the time for a builder to have also been the architect on the project. It is not known how long Winmill lived in Staten Island, nor how many other residences he may have constructed. By 1900, he had moved to Florida where he appears to have lived until his death in 1912.

Later History¹⁸

In the latter part of the 20th century, St. John's Church experienced financial hardship as wealthier parishioners died and moved away. Insufficient funds began to take a physical toll on the church and its related buildings, and the rectory required significant repairs. In need of a solution, the church allowed for the development of the rear portion of the property and an affordable senior housing complex known as Canterbury House was constructed. With the funds from the development and additional money contributed by the parish, the rectory underwent an extensive restoration in the first decade of the 21st century.

Report prepared by
Tara Harrison and
Corinne Engelbert
Research Department

NOTES

¹ “A New Church on Staten Island,” *New York Herald*, Nov 11, 1869, 10.

² New York City Department of Buildings, Job # 500564418, application approved in 2002 and work completed in 2009; New York City Department of Buildings, Alt. 653, 1920.

³ Portions of this section are adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), 33-37 *Belair Road House, (Woodland Cottage) Designation Report* (LP-1212) (New York: City of New York, 1982), prepared by Shirley Zavin; and LPC, *H.H. Richardson House Designation Report* (LP-2141) (New York: City of New York, 2004), prepared by Virginia Kurshan.

Information in this section is based on the following sources: Charles L. Sachs, "The Island Image: Reflections and Refractions from Home and Abroad," in *Community, Continuity and Change, New Perspectives on Staten Island History* (New York: Pace Univ. Press, 1999) 48-52; "Historical Sketch of Clifton," in *Stapleton, Tompkinsville, New Brighton, West New Brighton, Clifton and Port Richmond, Staten Island: Their Representative Businessmen and Points of Interest* (New York: Mercantile Publishing Company, 1893), 28-30; Ira K. Morris, *Memorial History of Staten Island* (New Brighton, Staten Island: printed privately, 1900), 2, 441.

⁴ In 1799, the Port of New York Quarantine Station was relocated from Governor's Island to the north shore area that soon became known as Tompkinsville, located to the north of Clifton.

Residential development of northeastern Staten Island was first promoted by Daniel D. Tompkins (1774-1825), a governor of New York and later vice president of the United States.

⁵ Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber W, Page 206 (April 1, 1834); E.W. Bridges, "Map of Grounds in the Towns of Castleton & Southfield, Richmond County, Staten Island, the property of M. Tompkins & W. J. Staples, Esqrs.," Staten Island Borough President's Office, Topographic Division, file map 8.

⁶ Advertisement written by George A. Ward, "Description of New Brighton on Staten Island Opposite the City of New York," (New York: New Brighton Association, 1836), 6.

⁷ See LPC, 33-37 *Belair Road House* for further discussion of the picturesque development of Staten Island and its architects.

⁸ Sachs, 52.

⁹ Portions of this section are adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *St. John's Church Designation Report* (LP-0373) (New York: City of New York, 1974). Information in this section is based on the following sources: Rev. John C. Eccleston, D.D., Rector, *Jubilee Sermon Delivered at St. John's Church, Clifton, Staten Island*, unpublished pamphlet, December 31, 1893 available at Staten Island Museum Archives; LPC, 33-37 *Belair Road House*; Richard M. Bayles, ed., *History of Richmond County (Staten Island), New York, From its Discovery to the Present Time*, (New York: L.E. Preston, 1887), 399-401; Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People: A History 1609-1929*, (New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1930), v.1, 457-58; Richmond County Register's Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 43, Page 325, (April 23, 1858); Richmond County Register's Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 81, Page 626, (1869);

¹⁰ Seldon C. Judson, *Illustrated Sketch Book of Staten Island, New York, Its Industries and Commerce*, (New York: S.C. Judson, 1886), 136.

¹¹ Bayles, 402.

¹² Appleton sold the property where the new church stands to St. John's in 1870 for \$7000 plus a \$5000 mortgage. (Richmond County Register's Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 88, page 124, 1870.) He later sold or "donated" the adjacent parcel to south, where the rectory stands for \$2. (Richmond County Register's Office, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 103, Page 124, (July 31, 1873.); *The Churchman*, July 18, 1885, 62; "Notes and Items," *The Real Estate Record*, June 4, 1881, 593.

¹³ Eccleston, 22.

¹⁴ Information in this section is based on the following sources: Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and its People*, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1933). Vol. V, 143-144; "The Rev. Dr. Eccleston's Fortieth Anniversary," *The Churchman*, Apr 11, 1896, 496; *History of Richmond County*, (New York: L. E. Preston & Co., 1887) 401; "Churches and Churchgoers," *The New York Press*, Sep 6, 1896; "Church History," St. John's Episcopal Church, accessed May 2, 2016, <http://www.stjohnssi.org/im-new-here/church-history.html>.

¹⁵ A portion of this section is adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Bedford Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2514) (New York: City of New York, 2015), 16, prepared by Michael Caratzas. Additional sources for this section include: Leland Roth, *A History of American Architecture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 241-242; Janet W. Foster, *The Queen Anne House* (New York: Abrams, 2006), 16-30; Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2013), 345-374.

¹⁶ Information in this section is based on the following sources: Staten Island Directories (1886 and 1890); U.S. Census (1880, 1900, and 1910); New York State Census (1855 and 1875); Find a Grave, #19412198, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=19412198&ref=acom>; Ancestry.com, *New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957*, Microfilm Roll 36, Line 31, List number 324.

¹⁷ *The Real Estate Record*.

¹⁸ Information in this section is based on the following source: "Church History," St. John's Episcopal Church.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of the buildings and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that St. John's P.E. Church Rectory 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, St. John's P.E. Church Rectory is an excellent example of an early free-standing Queen Anne style residence; that the church has served the needs of the Protestant Episcopal worshipers in the area of Clifton, Staten Island since it was formally organized on September 23, 1843; that the rectory was built for the Reverend Eccleston from 1881-1882 by the builder John W. Winmill; that the house's features are characteristic of the Queen Anne style, including its asymmetrical plan and three-dimensional facades, which are achieved through the combination of protruding gables, bay windows, and a recessed front porch and entrance; that the house's highly texturized surface is also representative of the Queen Anne style and consists of a rough-faced ashlar stone base with upper floors that feature vertical siding, half-timbering, and scalloped shingles; that the picturesque qualities of the Queen Anne style and the house's granite base, an unusual feature among Staten Island's Queen Anne style houses, complement St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, a New York City Landmark.

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 St. John's P.E. Church Rectory, and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 2832, Lot 12 as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Frederick Bland, Wellington Chen, Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum, Jeanne Lufty, Adi Shamir-Baron, Commissioners



St. John P.E. Church Rectory
Main Facade
Photo: Corinne Engelbert, 2016



St. John's P.E. Church Rectory, 1889
Main Facade
Photo: Alice Austen, Staten Island Historical Society



St. John's Church, Chapel, and Rectory, undated
Photo: Isaac Almstaedt, Staten Island Historical Society

