

**THE VANDERZEE-HARPER HOUSE**, 327 Westervelt Avenue, Staten Island  
Built c. 1887

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 27, Lot 5

On August 11, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Vanderzee-Harper House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Eleven people spoke in favor of designation, including Councilmember Kenneth Mitchell, one of the building's owners, and representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Four Borough Neighborhood Preservation Alliance, the Northshore Waterfront Conservancy of Staten Island, and the Preservation League of Staten Island. In addition, the Commission received one letter in support of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation.

Summary

The Vanderzee-Harper House is a fine surviving example of a Queen Anne style residence with Shingle style details, built c.1887 in Staten Island's affluent "Fort Hill" section. The house features many details characteristic of the Queen Anne and Shingle styles, including a prominent three-story tower; bay window projections; bracketed, cantilevered gable projections; turned woodwork and a curved roofline at the porch; textured shingle and clapboard siding; a variety of window types and shapes, including multi-light upper sash and stained-glass windows; and a tall, decorative masonry chimney.

The house was constructed c.1887 for Margaret A. Shields (later Vanderzee) who had recently purchased the property from Charles A. Herpich. A Manhattan furrier and prominent Staten Island resident, Herpich had substantial real estate holdings in the area, including his large home nearby at the corner of Westervelt and Hendricks avenues.

Having purchased the property in 1887, Margaret A. Vanderzee retained ownership until 1920, although she and her husband had relocated to Philadelphia by 1895. After occupancy by several renters, the home was owned for over twenty-five years by the family of Thomas Harper, a grocery store owner who was active in local civic affairs. The house has recently been restored and many of its historic decorative features remain intact.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### The Site<sup>1</sup>

The Vanderzee-Harper House is located on Fort Hill in northeastern Staten Island at the edges of the villages of Tompkinsville, New Brighton and St. George. Considered the oldest European village in eastern Staten Island, Tompkinsville was known in colonial times as the Watering Place for a fresh water spring located there. According to *Holden's Staten Island, The History of Richmond County*, Giovanni da Verrazzano, who is credited with “discovering” the island in 1524, was led “to safe anchorage near ‘The Watering Place’” by resident “friendly Leni-Lenapes.”<sup>2</sup> Evidence of earlier inhabitation by Native Americans during the Woodland period has also been found in the surrounding area, including traces of campsites, Native American artifacts and “triangular points.”<sup>3</sup> In 1639, several families sent by Captain David Pietersz De Vries, who was the second patroon to receive a land grant on Staten Island from the Dutch West India Company, settled near the Watering Place. According to research done by former Staten Island Borough Historian Dick Dickenson, there is evidence that these colonists may have owned African slaves, the first living on Staten Island.<sup>4</sup> The colony did not survive past 1641.

Residential 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 Staten Island during the War of 1812. Impressed by the island's natural beauty and the ease of travel to Manhattan, in October 1816, Tompkins commissioned a survey of a portion of his recently purchased land to be developed as the village of Tompkinsville. Realizing that transportation would significantly aid development, he procured the incorporation of the Richmond Turnpike Company to establish a highway from the New Blazing Star Ferry on the west shore of Staten Island to Tompkinsville along the route of present-day Victory Boulevard. He also 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 1817, Tompkins, in his last year as governor of New York, signed the “Final Abolition Act” that freed all slaves living in the state by 1827. (Although a known abolitionist, the 1800 U. S. Census lists 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 enterprises in Staten Island, expecting to be reimbursed for expenses he had incurred on behalf of the government during the War of 1812. Stalled repayments brought about foreclosure proceedings on the land, and following his death in 1825 other creditors brought suit against his estate. Several of his children and his nephew, Caleb T. Ward, some of whom were in part responsible for the early development of the adjacent village of Stapleton, purchased portions of his former holdings 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' daughter Hannah, purchased a ninety-eight acre tract that formerly had been part of her father's estate. The Westervelts moved into Tompkins' 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 1871, two years after Dr. Westervelt's death, his widow Hannah and their son Tompkins, as executrix and executor of his estate, conveyed over 11 lots to Charles A. Herpich.<sup>5</sup> Including several acres in two separate real estate transactions, the property had street frontage on Westervelt Avenue, Fourth Avenue (now Benziger Avenue), Sherman Avenue and Fort Street (now Fort Place).<sup>6</sup>

During the 1880s, this area of Staten Island continued to develop as a residential neighborhood following the integration of competing Staten Island ferry lines at one location, linking to train service at the site of the present St. George ferry terminal. In 1887, Herpich and his wife Matilda sold an approximately 90 by 100 foot lot to Margaret A. Shields.<sup>7</sup>

### Charles A. Herpich<sup>8</sup>

Born in Berlin in 1831, Charles A. Herpich came to the United States in the 1850s and established a fur importing business in New York in 1853 with a partner firm in Leipzig, Germany. Herpich began purchasing property in the New Brighton/Tompkinsville area in 1861, and made his residence in a large house at the northwest corner of Westervelt and Hendricks (formerly Fifth) avenues, which was described as one of the finest mansion on Staten Island (demolished). By 1874, maps show that he owned extensive property in the area. Herpich was described as a “popular, enterprising and generous”<sup>9</sup> man and was involved in public affairs. He was a member of the New Brighton Board of Trustees, serving for a time as its president, served two terms as Supervisor from the town of Castleton, served as a trustee of the Madison Avenue School, Tompkinsville, and was a founder and president of the German Club and one of the trustees of the Lutheran Church in Stapleton.

He achieved much success in his business ventures, and according to his obituary in the *New York Times*, “was one of the leading men in the trade in the United States.” The country’s financial state did, however, take a toll on his business activity, and Herpich was forced to make assignments after the panic of 1877, and again in 1886. The business again suffered in the depression of the mid-1890s. Herpich settled with his creditors and continued to operate as a wholesaler, however, never matching his earlier success. A third assignment was made in 1897, and although he resumed business “it [was] believed that he gave up all hope of ever recovering his fortune.”<sup>10</sup> Herpich died on June 18, 1898 from a self-inflicted gunshot to the head.

### First Residents<sup>11</sup>

Margaret Ann Shields of the town of Castleton purchased property from Charles A. and Matilda Herpich in June of 1887.<sup>12</sup> Although the house was not specifically mentioned in the deed, the purchase price of \$4500 indicates that it was likely present on the lot. Herpich probably had the house constructed shortly before the sale, as it does not appear on an atlas of the area published in 1887.<sup>13</sup> As early as 1880, Shields, who was born in Westchester County, New York, was living with her parents nearby on Second Avenue and later on Westervelt Avenue, on the adjacent tax block. By the time of their son’s birth in May of 1890, Margaret A. Shields and Gordon Doane Vanderzee were married and living in the Westervelt Avenue house.<sup>14</sup> A native Staten Islander, Vanderzee and his brothers were involved in the clothing business and, prior to his marriage, lived in Tompkinsville on nearby First Avenue (now Corson Avenue). The Vanderzees remained in the house for less than ten years, relocating to Philadelphia around 1895;<sup>15</sup> however, they retained ownership of the house as a rental property until 1920.

### Design and Construction<sup>16</sup>

The Vanderzee-Harper House is an excellent surviving example of a transitional Queen Anne/Shingle style residence, two styles that were popular at the time of the house’s construction. Lying on the slope of Fort Hill, the house was designed with a picturesque tower and bay window projections to take advantage of its hillside location and harbor views, and has a verticality that is characteristic of the Queen Anne style. Other distinctive Queen Anne features include the bracketed, cantilevered gable projections; contrasting wall surfaces; turned woodwork at the porch; a variety of multi-light and stained glass windows; and the tall, decorative masonry chimney. While the irregular form and use of a corner turret is characteristic of both styles, the builder’s attempt to integrate it into the main roof, albeit a little awkward, shows the influence of the Shingle style. Other Shingle-style details include the continuous wall and roof surfaces with shingle siding and the wavy porch roof.

Inspired by the British style of the same name, the Queen Anne style was popular from the 1870s until the 1910s, and was the most dominant style of domestic building during the last twenty years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Buildings constructed in the Queen Anne style<sup>17</sup> exhibit a greater freedom in their massing and a more varied, and frequently whimsical, use of ornament. The style

is characterized by picturesque and asymmetrical massing of forms and details, including the free use of varied materials, colors and textures. Certain motifs, such as the use of textured wall surfaces, towers, turrets, bay windows and stained-glass, are used on many of the houses built in this style, but they are arranged and rearranged with other decorative devices in an unending variety of forms. With a central goal of avoiding flat wall surfaces, the style's irregularity of form<sup>18</sup> allowed it to be interpreted on a broad range of housing types, from large frame mansions to small vernacular homes to masonry rowhouses.

In addition to the corner tower, gable projections and bay windows add variety to basic rectangular form of the house at the Vanderzee-Harper House. The side gables of the eaves-front building are bracketed and cantilevered over both the north and south facades; and smaller gable projections extend from all three secondary facades. The cut-away bay at the first floor of the front facade creates a slight cantilever of the second story at the southwest corner. The house features two other bay windows, extending from the south and rear (east) facades. Additional surface texture is added by the use of clapboard cladding at the base and patterned shingles at the upper floors. Rectangular shingles, set at alternating levels or straight across, are mixed with rows of scalloped shingles to give more variety to the wall surfaces. Like the majority of Queen Anne buildings, the house at 327 Westervelt Avenue features a front porch with turned woodwork. One original column remains at the northeast corner of the porch, distinguished by a large, central round element; while slightly more simplified, the historic posts at the northwest and southwest corners were relocated from the rear porch. Other notable Queen Anne features on the house include the use of large panes of glass, bounded by smaller panes in a multi-light-over-one, double-hung window configuration, found in most openings on all facades; and the use of decorative stained glass windows at the second floor of the front facade and at the center of the north facade.

Beginning in the 1880s as a popular style for the construction of seaside "cottages," the most defining characteristic of the Shingle style is its cladding of continuous wood shingles, which cover an irregular house form. Although it spread across the country from the New England communities of Newport and Cape Cod, because of its generally low and sprawling form, the style was never practical or popular in urban settings. Influenced by the Queen Anne style, as well as the Colonial Revival and Richardsonian Romanesque, the Shingle style borrowed wide porches, shingled surfaces and asymmetrical forms from its picturesque predecessor. The style did not achieve the popularity of the Queen Anne; it "remained primarily a high-fashion, architect's style, rather than becoming widely adapted to mass vernacular housing."<sup>19</sup> Although unusual in New York, in addition to its influence on 327 Westervelt Avenue, a number of houses designed in the Shingle style remain in the nearby St. George/New Brighton area (a designated New York City Historic District.)

In addition to being the most defining characteristic of the style, the continuous wall and roof surfaces clad with shingle siding is the dominant Shingle-style characteristic of the Vanderzee-Harper House. At the time of its construction, the main roof of the house likely also featured wood shingles, further unifying the structure. (Wood shingles are currently prohibited as a roofing material by New York City building code and therefore cannot be replaced in kind, once removed.) Evidence of the wood-shingle roofing remains at the porch roofs on the front facade. Additionally, the curved roofline of the porch roof recalls the curvilinear shape of eyebrow dormers or wavy wall surfaces, commonly found on Shingle-style houses.

The building's architect has not been determined. Based on style and detail, it has been attributed to Edward Alfred Sargent, Staten Island's most prominent 19<sup>th</sup>-century architect who designed over 300 buildings on the island during his career, a number of which were located in the area. However, there is no documentation to substantiate this claim. Some of the building's features, including the corner tower, projecting bays, porches, stained-glass windows and shingled-wall surfaces, although commonly used by Sargent, are generally characteristic of the Queen Anne or Shingle styles. Additionally, study of other extant buildings and architectural

delineations indicates a general difference in proportion of this house to other documented Sargent commissions.

It is also possible that the house was not designed by an architect, but was designed by a builder or inspired by a pattern book.<sup>20</sup> Although builder's guides had been published earlier, beginning in the 1870s an increasing number of architectural pattern books were marketed to the general public.<sup>21</sup> Often published by architects who realized the potential of mass marketing their designs, the books served as a catalog from which full sets of construction drawings could be ordered, often including site selection and technique suggestions, material lists and estimates, and even sample contracts for builders. Pattern books allowed architect-designed houses to be more affordable to the middle-class, although their construction was still limited to the skills of the local contractor and lacked the oversight that an architect often provided during construction. Often modified by their builders, these houses frequently exhibit a whimsical eclecticism, with multiple styles freely mixed on the same house in a decidedly non-Academic way, and in a romantic manner inspired by the picturesque architecture of the era.

### Later History<sup>22</sup>

Suburban development continued in the area as the owners of large estates died and the heirs sold off the properties. Following 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 transportation terminus and link to Manhattan, helped maintain the area as an important "suburb,"<sup>23</sup> a status which it continues to maintain today.

Several renters occupied the house at 327 Westervelt Avenue after the Vanderzees relocated to Philadelphia. According to census records, Austro-German immigrant Ignatius Newburg, a liquor importer, lived there with his wife, three sons, two daughters and a servant in 1910. Five years later, his children continued to occupy the house, still maintaining a servant. By 1920, Swedish immigrant Albert Johnson lived there with his Bohemian-immigrant wife and their three daughters. The Johnsons shared the house with two borders, a German- and Bohemian-immigrant married couple and an Italian-immigrant lodger. Thomas H. Harper, a resident of nearby Hendricks Avenue, purchased the property in June of 1920, with plans to live there upon the expiration of the current tenants' lease.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas H. Harper<sup>25</sup> was born in Ireland in 1857 and immigrated to the United States in the 1870s, first settling in Brooklyn. Harper came to Staten Island in 1878, where he operated grocery stores in both Stapleton and New Brighton. He purchased two lots from Charles A. Herpich on Fifth Avenue (later Hendricks Avenue) in 1884 and made his residence there for the next 36 years. In addition to his business, Harper was active in public affairs, serving as a Trustee, and later president of the Board of Education of former Public School District 3 (New Brighton) and also as a Trustee of the Village of New Brighton prior to Staten Island's consolidation into the City of New York. Harper was a charter member and director of the New Brighton Co-operative Savings and Loan Association and was an active member of the American Red Cross during World War I. Shortly after his death in 1922, his widow Ella sold the house to their son Lester and his wife Ethel, but continued to live there until her death in 1940.<sup>26</sup> The Harpers sold the house and half of the lot in 1946; this subdivision of the property later allowed for the construction of the building at 333 Westervelt Avenue in 1952-53.<sup>27</sup> Subsequent owners that occupied the house for long time periods include: Mr. and Mrs. Oscar J. and Ana Quaranta (9 years), Mr. and Mrs. Milton and Marjorie Saul (28 years), and Mr. Ronald Brown (19 years).<sup>28</sup> The house was sold again in 2002 and underwent extensive interior and exterior renovation work including the installation of new plumbing and electrical systems, the addition of a second story to the rear porch, the restoration of the historic shingle and clapboard siding, and the installation of new windows at the rear facade.

### Description

The Vanderzee-Harper House is located on a rectangular lot that has a frontage of 50 feet along Westervelt Avenue and is approximately 89 feet deep. The house sits just forward of the center of the lot, behind a simple iron railing with historic iron posts.<sup>29</sup> A concrete-paved path leads from the sidewalk through a decorative iron gate set between two, non-historic brick piers to the front door. The path is flanked by gardens and several low, curvilinear bluestone planting beds. Located on Fort Hill, the site slopes down toward the south (side) and east (rear of the building). There is a concrete paved sidewalk along the northern side of the house, and a less-structured path of bluestone pavers, gravel and brick, as well as numerous plantings along the southern side of the house, leading to the well-planted rear yard.

Set on brick foundation, the two-and-a-half-story building, divided into five bays at the first floor and two bays at the upper stories, is dominated by a three-story round and polygonal tower at the front facade. The facade features pale-green painted clapboard siding with olive-green corner boards at the first floor and natural-wood or brown-painted shingles of different shapes at the second and third stories. The large, one-story porch at the northern half of the front facade partially wraps around the north-side facade and features projecting gable and curved rooflines, extending from the second floor tower. The porch is supported by simplified, turned wood posts, painted brown and olive green, set on an olive-green, square-post railing with light green square balusters.<sup>30</sup> Brown-painted rectangular wood shingles, set at alternating levels, fill the gable while unpainted wood shingles cover both porch roofs. The porch features a brown-painted wood floor and unpainted bead board ceiling with a light fixture and several planters suspended from it. The first bay of the first floor has a rectangular, single-pane fixed window with a storm window and the numbers "327" above. The paneled wood and glass door is located in the second bay, and features a brown-painted wooden storm door and simple, olive-green painted surround. The next three openings comprise a bay window of multi-light-over-one, double-hung wood windows with simple wood surrounds and storm windows. There is a small, rectangular basement window located below the fourth bay. The second floor of the front facade is divided into two bays and features scalloped and rectangular wood shingles. The rounded section of the tower projects from the facade in the first bay and features a tripartite window composed of three, multi-light-over-one, double-hung wood windows with simple wood surrounds and wood storm windows. The second bay of the second floor also contains a tripartite window, however, it features three rectangular, stained-glass windows set above a single, multi-light-over-one, double-hung wood window with olive-green painted wood shutters, all with storm windows. The natural-wood-shingle-clad tower extends above the roofline at the third story with a polygonal shape, three, multi-light-over-one, double-hung wood windows with simple wood surrounds and wood storm windows, and an asphalt-shingled, bell roof. Side walls and a gable roof extend from the sides of the tower, intersecting with the slope of the eaves-front, asphalt-shingled main roof. A small, gable-front dormer, with natural-wood shingle cladding and a single, multi-light-over-one, double-hung wood window with simple wood surround, extends above the southern side of the roof. The dormer has a historic, wood storm window and asphalt shingles at the roof. A pale-grey-stuccoed, decorative brick chimney with two flue caps extends from the slope of the roof near its southern edge.

The southern (side) facade is visible from both Westervelt Avenue and partially visible from Benziger Avenue. Like the front facade, the side features pale-green painted clapboard siding with olive-green corner boards at the first floor and natural-wood shingles of different shapes at the second and third stories. A bay window projects from the eastern portion of the facade at the first two stories and basement, below an extended gable at the third floor. The triangular portion of the main roof gable also extends forward, cantilevered over the wall surface of the facade and supported by simple, curved brackets. There is a single, multi-light-over-one, double-hung wood window with simple wood surround and historic wood storm window in each opening on the first and second floors of the bay window, and a single, one-over-one, double-

hung wood window with simple wood surround toward the western edge of the facade at the second floor. Paired, one-over-one, double-hung wood windows with simple wood surrounds and wood storm windows are located in the center of the facade at the third floor. There is a rectangular window in an elliptical opening at the center of the small gable projection. A two-story porch, extending from the rear facade, is visible from the southeast corner of this facade. At the basement level, there are two, single-pane multi-light wood windows with storm windows, and two, one-over-one, double-hung vinyl windows in the center on third openings of the bay projection. Metal conduit runs down the southwest corner and along the bottom of the facade and there are two flood lights, two utility meters, three vents, wires and a spigot attached to facade.

The eastern (rear) facade is partially visible from Benziger and Hendricks avenues and features a large, two-story porch that partially wraps around the southeast corner of the building. Like the front and south facades, the rear facade features pale-green painted clapboard siding with olive-green corner boards at the first floor and natural-wood or brown-painted shingles of different shapes at the second and third stories. The porch is supported by simplified, white-painted turned wood posts with square bases at the first floor and square 6" by 6" wood posts at the basement level. The porch also features light-green-painted bead board trim; natural-wood-finish, square-wood-baluster railings; bead-board ceilings; and one light fixture at each level. There is a projecting bay with a low-pitched, hipped roof in the northern portion of the facade at the first and second floors. A projecting gable extends from the eaves-front roof above this bay window. Each of the three openings at both floors of the projecting bay have replacement wood windows in the historic, multi-light-over-one, double-hung configuration. A gable-roofed dormer and stuccoed brick chimney with flue cap extend from the roof of rear facade. Because the house was constructed on a sloped site, the brick basement is at grade at the rear. There is a wood-and-glass door with wood storm door and two, one-over-one, double-hung vinyl windows with wood storm windows in segmentally arched openings at the basement level of the facade, and a bluestone, brick and concrete patio under the porch.

The northern (side) facade is visible from Westervelt and Hendricks avenues and is clad in non-historic composite siding. (At two places, the synthetic siding is partially removed, revealing the historic clapboard or shingle siding.) The eastern portion of the facade projects below an extended gable and the triangular portion of the main roof gable is cantilevered forward, supported by simple, curved brackets. Several windows of various sizes and configurations, most with storm windows, dot the facade, including a large, stained-glass window at the center of the first floor and a small, rectangular stained-glass window at the center of the second floor. The trim and simple window surrounds are painted dark red at this facade. Because the site slopes downward, much of the brick foundation is visible toward the eastern (rear) end of the house. At the basement level, there is one, one-over-one, double-hung vinyl window and one masonry opening with brick infill. A leader runs down this facade at the north east corner, and there are two vents and one flood light fixture at this facade.

Report prepared by  
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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This section on the development of Tompkinsville is adapted from Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC), *Tompkinsville (Joseph H. Lyons) Pool Bath House Designation Report* (LP-2235) (New York: City of New York, 2008) prepared by Tara Harrison; LPC, *411 Westervelt Avenue House, Horton's Row Designation Report* (LP-2377) (New York: City of New York, 2009) prepared by Cynthia Danza; and LPC, *St. George/New Brighton Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1883) (New York: City of New York, 1994) prepared by Gale Harris and the Research Department of LPC. For additional information on the development of St. George and New Brighton, see the designation report.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Dickenson (ed.), *Holden's Staten Island, The History of Richmond County* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2002), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Four Native American sites in the area surrounding Tompkinsville are listed in Eugene J. Boesch, "Archaeological Evaluation & Sensitivity Assessment of Staten Island, New York," 1994, submitted to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

<sup>4</sup> "There is circumstantial evidence that as of January 5, 1639, the De Vries settlement in what is now Tompkinsville had African slaves...and thus the roots of Afro-American on Staten Island may have been laid at that time.' Richard Dickenson, *Census Occupations of Afro-Americans on Staten Island, 1840-1875* (Staten Island: Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, 1981), 48" as cited in Dickenson, *Holden's Staten Island, The History of Richmond County*, Errata.

<sup>5</sup> Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 92, page 633 (June 3, 1871) and Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 97, page 123 (November 13, 1871.) The bulk of the acreage was purchased for \$35,000 in June of 1871.

<sup>6</sup> Lots 1 – 11, and 17 on "Map of Property in New Brighton, Staten Island, New York belonging to the estate of John S. Westervelt, deceased," surveyed by George M. Root in March 1871 and filed in the Richmond County Clerk's Office (filed map 310) on July 12, 1871. The Vanderzee-Harper House was constructed on a portion of lot 1, with frontage on both Westervelt and Fourth avenues.

<sup>7</sup> Although the house is not shown on a map of the area published in 1887, the price that Shields paid for the land, \$4500, indicates that it included the house. J.B. Beers, *Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County* (New York: J.B. Beers and Co., 1887); Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 175, page 359 (June 16, 1887).

<sup>8</sup> Sources for this section include: Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People: A History, 1609-1929* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1930-33), vol. 2, 906-7; Albert Lord Belden, *The Fur Trade of America and Some of the Men who Made and Maintain It* (New York: The Peltries Publishing Company, Inc., 1917), 299-300; "Prominent Man Suicides. Charles A. Herpich Ended His Life Saturday – Worry the Cause," *Richmond Co. Advance* (June 25, 1898), 1; "Charles A. Herpich Dead," *New York Times* (June 19, 1898), 9; "Failure of a Fur Dealer," *New York Times* (December 17, 1886), 8; "No Proof of Fraud," *New York Times* (April 1, 1887), 8; "Business Troubles," *New York Times* (January 20, 1895), 19.

<sup>9</sup> "Prominent Man Suicides."

<sup>10</sup> "Prominent Man Suicides." The obituary attributes the cause of Herpich's suicide to worry over his financial troubles and concern about his "helpless" and "badly deformed" son.

<sup>11</sup> Sources for this section include: Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 134, page 188 (August 23, 1880); Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 165, page 341 (May 1, 1886); United States Census Records 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930; *Standard Directory of Richmond Borough*, 1893-94, 1895-96, 1897-98, *Webb's Consolidated Directory of Staten Island*, 1882-83, 1884, 1886, 1888, 1890-91, 1891-92; *Philadelphia City Directories*, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897; Richmond County, Town of Castleton, Vital Records – Births, 1890; "On Staten Island," *New York Times* (May 8, 1920).

<sup>12</sup> Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 175, page 359 (June 18, 1887). Another deed was issued later the same year to reconfirm Shields' ownership amid an assignment to



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his creditors due to Herpich's business troubles. Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 179, page 276 (December 23, 1887).

<sup>13</sup> Beers, *Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County*, 1887.

<sup>14</sup> Richmond County, Town of Castleton, Vital Records – Births, 1890.

<sup>15</sup> The latest Staten Island directory to list Gordon D. Vanderzee as a resident of Westervelt Avenue was published for 1893-94. Vanderzee appears in Philadelphia by 1896; while his mother-in-law Sarah A. Shields, also a former resident of Westervelt Avenue, is listed as a resident of that city two years earlier.

<sup>16</sup> Sources for this section include: James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell, *House Styles in America* (New York: Penguin Studio, 1996); and Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> A portion of this section on the Queen Anne style is adapted from LPC, *Crown Heights North Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2204) (New York: City of New York, 2007) prepared by Michael D. Caratzas and Cynthia Danza.

<sup>18</sup> Advances in construction techniques, most importantly balloon framing, made the irregular massing, projections, and towers of the Queen Anne and Shingle styles possible, forms that could not be easily achieved with earlier timber-framing methods. First used in 1833, although it was not widely used until the post-Civil-War construction boom, the balloon frame played a key role in transforming "home building ... from a specialized craft into an industry." Proving much faster and cheaper than mortise-and-tenon construction, the balloon frame used lighter, precut pieces of lumber joined by machine-made nails. Construction was "reduced ... to a few basic hand and tool techniques," and a "new structure could be erected more quickly by two men than the heavy timber frame by twenty." (Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 126-27. This note adapted from LPC, *Fisk Terrace – Midwood Park Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2208) (New York: City of New York, 2007) prepared by Michael D. Caratzas.)

<sup>19</sup> McAlester, 290.

<sup>20</sup> A portion of this section on pattern books is adapted from LPC, *Fisk Terrace – Midwood Park Historic District Designation Report*.

<sup>21</sup> Among these was *Model Homes for the People*, a catalog of home designs published by George Palliser of Bridgeport, Conn. Palliser sold *Model Homes* for only 25 cents as a means of enticing the public to order construction drawings of the houses contained therein. Beginning in 1881, architect Robert W. Shoppell, who was associated with the Co-operative Building Plan Association of New York City, published his first catalog of building designs. According to Shoppell's publications, the advantages of buying one of his designs are: large selection of designs, reliable estimates for construction costs, patented designs for uniqueness, ability to make alterations, proper contracts are supplied, and free consultations before, during and at the completion of the work. (Robert W. Shoppell, *Shoppell's Building Plans for Modern, Low-Cost Houses*, (New York: Co-operative Building Plan Association, 1884). A portion of this note is adapted from LPC, *Fisk Terrace – Midwood Park Historic District Designation Report*.)

<sup>22</sup> Sources for this section include: United States Census Records 1910, 1920; New York State Census Records 1915, 1925.

<sup>23</sup> LPC, *Tompkinsville (Joseph H. Lyons) Pool Bath House Designation Report*.

<sup>24</sup> Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 502, page 547 (June 1, 1920); "On Staten Island," *New York Times* (May 8, 1920).

<sup>25</sup> Sources for this section include: Ira K. Morris, *Morris's Memorial History of Staten Island, New York* (West New Brighton, Staten Island, New York: Published by the Author, 1900), v. II, 510-11; Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 155, page 47 (October 20, 1884); "Harper Funeral This Evening," *Staten Island Advance* (February 4, 2009), 2; "Died," *New York Times* (February 3, 1922), 14; "Deaths," *New York Times* (November 12, 1940), 30.

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<sup>26</sup> Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 558, page 372 (May 1, 1923). Ella and her three other children, Anita H. Carraine, Wilfred Harper and Grace Harper, who must have inherited shares of the house upon their father's death, are listed as the grantors.

<sup>27</sup> The southern portion of the original lot was sold by the Harpers to Joseph and Ida Rotelli in 1950. Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 960, page 490 (August 30, 1946); Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1112, page 303 (April 3, 1950); New York City (Staten Island) Department of Buildings, NB 338-1952, CO9927-1953.

<sup>28</sup> Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 963, page 282 (September 17, 1946); Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1334, page 198 (October 28, 1955); Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Reel 13, page 8922 (May 7, 1983); Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 13557, page 24 (August, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> While not original to this house, the iron fence posts were salvaged from 308 Westervelt Avenue (1903, E.A. Sargent), across the street.

<sup>30</sup> The two posts at the front corners of the porch are reused from the rear porch. The post at the north east corner of the porch appears to be original, as seen in the c.1940 tax photo.

## 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 the Vanderzee-Harper House, 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, the Vanderzee-Harper House is a fine surviving example of a Queen Anne style residence with Shingle style details located at 327 Westervelt Avenue; that the house was built c.1887 in Staten Island's affluent "Fort Hill" section; that the house features many details characteristic of the Queen Anne and Shingle styles, including a prominent three-story tower, bay window projections, bracketed, cantilevered gable projections, turned woodwork and a curved roofline at the porch, textured shingle and clapboard siding, a variety of window types and shapes, including multi-light upper sash and stained-glass windows, and a tall, decorative masonry chimney; that the house was constructed c.1887 for Margaret A. Shields (later Vanderzee) who had recently purchased the property from Charles A. Herpich; that Herpich was a Manhattan furrier and prominent Staten Island resident with substantial real estate holdings in the area, including his large home nearby at the corner of Westervelt and Hendricks Avenues; that Margaret A. Vanderzee retained ownership of the property until 1920; that the home was later owned and occupied for over twenty-five years by the family of Thomas Harper, a grocery store owner who was active in local civic affairs; and that the house has recently been restored and many of its historic decorative features remain intact.

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 the Vanderzee-Harper House, 327 Westervelt Avenue, Borough of Staten Island, and designates Staten Island Tax Map Block 27, Lot 5, as its Landmark site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice-Chair

Stephen F. Byrns, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore,

Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



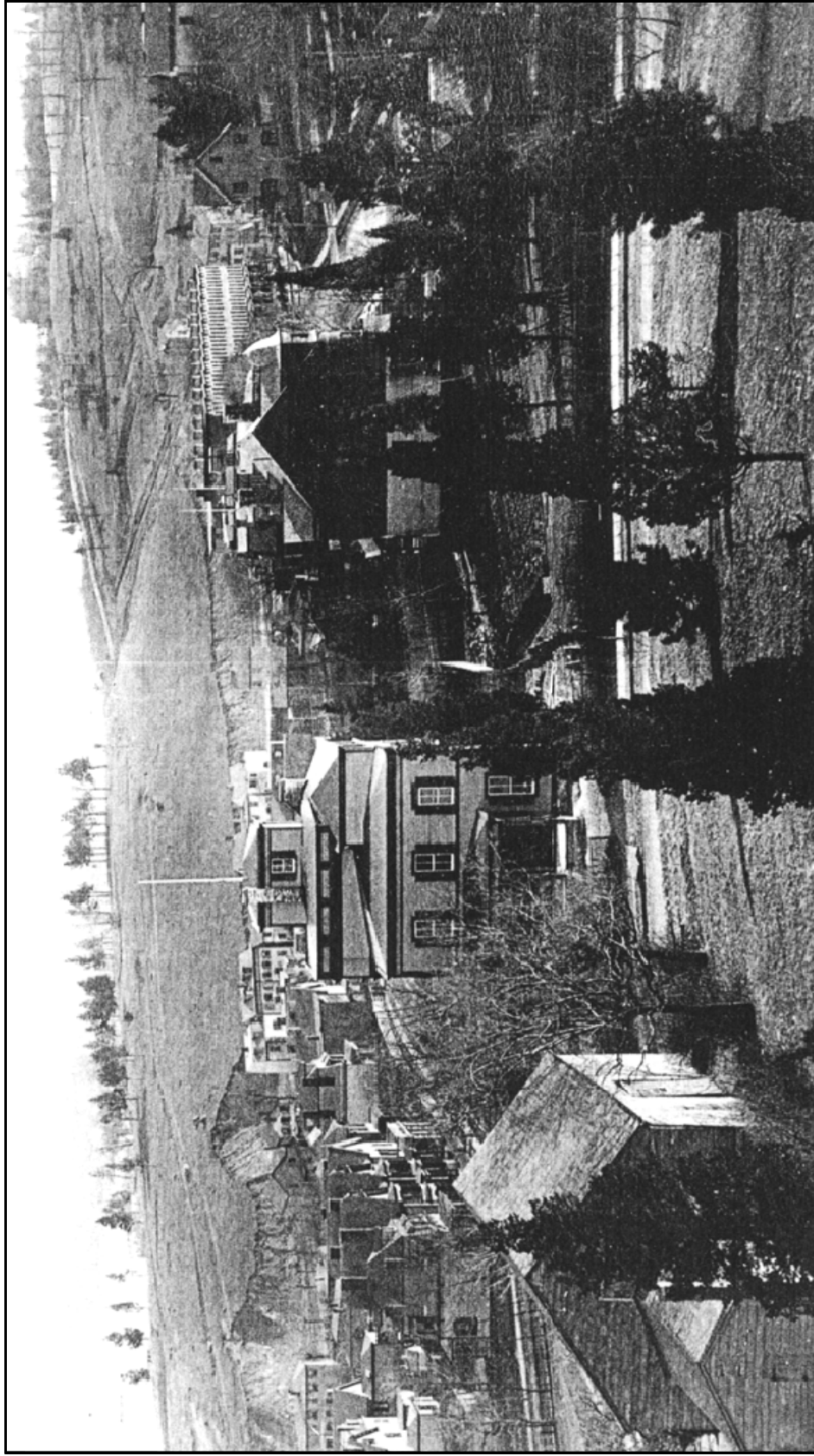
The Vanderzee-Harper House, 327 Westervelt Avenue  
Staten Island

*Photo: Tara Harrison, 2009*





The Vanderzee-Harper House  
*Photo: New York City Department of Taxes, c.1939*



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





The Vanderzee-Harper House

Front porch detail

*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



The Vanderzee-Harper House  
 Window detail, second floor  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



The Vanderzee-Harper House  
 Window detail, first floor  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*





The Vanderzee-Harper House  
Front and south facades  
*Photo: Tara Harrison, 2009*



THE VANDERZEE-HARPER HOUSE (LP-2349), 327 Westervelt Avenue.  
Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 27, Lot 5.

Designated: November 17, 2009