

Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 30, 2001; Designation List 323
LP-2073

AUGUST AND AUGUSTA SCHOVERLING HOUSE, 344 Westervelt Avenue, Staten Island.
Built circa 1880-82.

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 38, Lot 35.

On May 16, 2000, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the August and Augusta Schoverling House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 7). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Five witnesses spoke in support of the designation including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Staten Island Preservation League, and Preserve & Protect. The owner sent a letter in opposition to the designation. The Commission has received five letters in support of the designation including a letter from Councilman Jerome X. O'Donovan. This building was the subject of a previous hearing by the Commission on October 1, 1991 (LP-1848).

Summary

Constructed between 1880 and 1882 for August and Augusta Schoverling, this house is one of the most imposing and architecturally distinguished of the masonry Second Empire style houses in northeastern Staten Island. It is located on Fort Hill on part of the former estate of Dr. John Westervelt, which was between the historic villages of New Brighton and Tompkinsville. In the mid-nineteenth century Dr. Westervelt's estate was developed as a fashionable suburban enclave, favored by prosperous German-American families. The house's owner, August Schoverling, who had immigrated to New York City from Germany in 1859, was one of the world's foremost importers and distributors of firearms. The Schoverling house is picturesquely sited and designed to capture the vistas provided by the hilly terrain. Faced in tawny-red iron-spot brick set off by stone and wood trim, the house is asymmetrical in plan. Its principal feature is a projecting tower-like bay with windows on three sides that is set on an angle at the southeast corner of the house, the best vantage point for views of the harbor at Tompkinsville. A deep, elevated porch extends the length of the southern and eastern facades. The towering presence of the house is, in part, attributable to its tall basement story, made even more prominent by the brick piers that support the porch and define a gallery at the lower level. The house is crowned by a multi-colored slate mansard roof with gabled dormers and massive shaped chimneys. A late example of the Second Empire style, the house incorporates neo-Grec ornament that is handled with unusual sophistication. Notable elements include the soldier-brick band courses, the molded window and door lintels, and the turned and jigsaw-cut elements of the porch and roof gables.

From 1908 to 1924 this house was owned and occupied by Judge Morgan L. Ryan who organized the first juvenile court systems in the Bronx, Queens and Richmond County and who was the first justice to preside over the Children's Court on Staten Island. The subsequent owners Salvatore and Fannie Cassaviell, who retained ownership of the house until the early 1990s, converted it to apartments in the 1930s. It remains in use as a multiple-dwelling.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Site¹

The Schoverling house is located on Fort Hill in northeastern Staten Island at the outskirts of the villages of New Brighton and Tompkinsville. 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 (1724-1825) 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. Tompkins borrowed heavily to finance these enterprises, expecting to be reimbursed for expenses he had incurred on behalf of the government 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 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, the first health officer of the port of New York, who had married Daniel Tompkins's daughter Hannah, purchased a ninety-eight acre tract which formerly had been part of her father's estate. The Westervelts moved into Daniel Tompkins house (demolished) on Fort Hill near the present-day intersection of Fort Place and Sherman Avenue.² 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 1834, the Manhattan real estate developer Thomas E. Davis purchased other portions of the former Tompkins estate for development as a summer retreat named New Brighton after the famous English seaside resort. By the 1850s, New Brighton had developed into a fashionable summer resort with large Greek Revival and Italianate villas,

several major hotels, two churches, a ferry landing, and facilities for bathing, boating, fishing, and other sports. Tompkinsville, the site of the greatest commercial activity on Staten Island during the early nineteenth century, continued to expand.

By February 1853, Dr. Westervelt and Hannah Westervelt had a large tract of land extending from just north of present-day Layton Avenue to Brook Street between Westervelt Avenue and the western property line of the Westervelt estate mapped into streets and building lots.³ In March 1853, the Westervelts conveyed this land to Isaac V. Fowler, a Manhattan merchant and real estate developer.⁴ Fowler also acquired the adjacent parcel extending west to Jersey Street from the New Brighton Association, the corporation that had succeeded T.E. Davis as the developer of New Brighton. In July, Fowler filed a development map for the entire parcel which was bisected by Fowler Avenue (now Bismark Avenue).⁵ He began building houses for sale but by 1854 was forced to sell off most of his real estate at a loss. The present Shoverling House site was part of a large property extending along the west side of Westervelt Avenue between Benzinger Avenue (then Fourth Avenue) and Winter Avenue (then Third Avenue) that Fowler had improved with a house and sold to Susan Tompkins, the wife of Ray Tompkins, Daniel D. Tompkins' youngest son, in November 1854.⁶ In 1857, she sold the house to Henry R. Weed, an investor who owned considerable property in the neighborhood.⁷ In September 1880, Robert M. Weed, who had inherited the property, sold the northern half to Augusta Schoverling, wife of August Schoverling.⁸ A house was constructed on the site by May 1882 when the Schoverlings were listed in the first directory for Richmond County. By that time the neighborhood atop Fort Hill had developed into a fashionable enclave of suburban villas favored by German-American businessmen.⁹

August and Augusta Schoverling¹⁰

[Heindrick] August Schoverling was born in Osnabrück, Hanover, Germany, in 1840. He immigrated to New York City in 1859 and found employment in the firm of Hermann Boker & Co., wholesale dealers in cutlery, hardware, guns, and metals. He rose quickly within the firm and in a few years was appointed head of the gun department. In 1865, he left the firm to establish a gun business with a fellow clerk, Charles Daly. In 1877, Joseph Gales, also became a partner in the firm which the *Sporting*

Goods Gazette called “one of the foremost houses in the arms trade...being one of the largest in the world in this line, and having relations with every quarter of the globe.”¹¹ In the 1880s the firm became the American distributor for H. Peiper, Liege, the largest manufacturer of breech-loading shot guns in the world.

Around 1869, August Schoverling and his wife Augusta [Gussie] Heitman Schoverling (born 1852) moved to Staten Island, where his brother, Hans Herman Schoverling, and sister-in-law, Caroline Schoverling, had been living since 1863. In 1882, Hans and Caroline purchased the existing Second Empire style frame house (built prior to 1874) at 347 Westervelt Avenue across the street from this property. In 1888, August Schoverling developed heart disease and semi-retired from his business. He spent most of the last three years of his life in Europe and died in Dusseldorf in March 1891. Augusta Schoverling, a native New Yorker, seems to have remained abroad for some years but returned to Staten Island by 1895. She occupied this house with her three sons and daughter until the early 1900s. In 1908, Augusta Schoverling sold the house to Judge Morgan L. Ryan¹² and moved to the Upper West Side of Manhattan where she resided with her sons Albert and Frederick W. Schoverling, who operated a sporting goods business on Reade Street in Manhattan.

The Second Empire Style and the Schoverling House

Like many of the nineteenth-century residences built in the hilly sections of Staten Island, the August and Augusta Schoverling House was picturesquely sited to capture the vistas afforded by the terrain. It is asymmetrical in plan and its primary facade is oriented to the south to command a view of Tompkinsville, Pavilion Hill, and the harbor. The eastern facade, facing Westervelt Avenue, also commands a harbor view and is treated as a principal facade. The building has a commanding presence in the neighborhood with its deep terraced lawn and its placement on a high basement to accommodate the sloping terrain. Elevated porches extending the length of the southern and eastern facades and a projecting corner tower also add distinction to the design.

The Schoverling House is one of the most imposing and distinctive of the masonry Second Empire houses on Fort Hill and in the surrounding neighborhoods of Tompkinsville, St. George, and eastern New Brighton. An eclectic architectural style based on French Renaissance and Baroque models, the Second Empire style developed in France during the reign of Napoléon III (1852-1870) and became popular in America around 1860. It remained popular in this country until around

1880, with some examples dating from as late as 1890. The Second Empire style is well represented on the north shore of Staten Island where its flowering coincided with a period of rapid growth.¹³ Notable examples include two public buildings in the area: the New Brighton Village Hall at 66 Lafayette Avenue (James Whitford, 1871, a designated New York City Landmark) and the U.S. Light-House Service, Third District, Staten Island Depot Office Building at 1 Bay Street (Alfred B. Mullett, c. 1865-71, a designated New York City Landmark). The most impressive house in the style on Staten Island was “Bay Villa,” an enormous brick mansion located about six blocks from the Schoverling house at St. Marks Place and Hamilton Avenue, built by ferry company president John M. Pendleton in 1862 and enlarged by financier Anson Phelps Stokes in 1875 (demolished c. 1928). Tompkinsville had a number of Second Empire rowhouses, freestanding townhouses, and double-houses; St. George and eastern New Brighton had double houses and free-standing villas; and Fort Hill had numerous Second Empire villas and double houses, especially along Westervelt Avenue, Fort Place, and Sherman Avenue. Today, the Schoverling House is one of the largest and most impressive of the surviving Second-Empire-style houses in its neighborhood and one of the very few remaining brick buildings in the style.¹⁴

Aspects of the Schoverling House design which identify it as Second Empire include its boxy form and the incorporation of a projecting angled corner tower, pavilions, and a mansard roof broken by dormers.¹⁵ The use of decorative brackets beneath the roof eaves is also typical of the style. Because the Schoverling House is a late example of the style, its decorative detailing is not the heavily modeled classical ornament associated with the Second Empire style but instead is neo-Grec. The *Néo-Grec* or “Modern Greek” was also a French architectural style, developed in the 1830s, which employed a simplified, stylized form of ornament that was likened to the ornament of archaic Greek architecture. Its originators became leading practitioners and influential teachers whose work influenced a younger generation of designers from the late 1850s through the 1870s. In the late 1860s and 1870s the work of these architects was transmitted to the United States by architectural journals and pattern books and through the designs of the first French-trained American architects, H.H. Richardson, Richard Morris Hunt, and Hunt’s pupils: George B. Post, William Ware, Henry Van Brunt, Frank Furness and Arthur Gilman. In the 1870s and 1880s, most architects and builders designing houses in the Second

Empire style would have incorporated at least some neo-Grec motifs in order to appear up-to-date.

In the Schoverling House, neo-Grec features are used extensively and with considerable sophistication. Among the neo-Grec aspects of the design are the emphasis on planar wall surfaces and the use of minimal ornament that is recessed or in low relief. At the base of the porch, the buttressed piers are articulated with light-colored stone corbels and capitals (now painted) to emphasize the points of structural stress. Similarly, light-colored stone was used for the water table (now painted) between the basement and parlor stories on the north and east facades, for the window and door lintels (now parged) and at the base of the chimneys. At the parlor and second story the underside of the lintels are chamfered and decorated with a rondel stop, a stylized motif typical of the neo-Grec. Other neo-Grec features include the banded decoration below the lintels of the parlor and second story windows comprised of recessed soldier courses set off by stringer courses of dark brick; the vertical proportions, shallow projections, and angular brackets of the crowning cornice; the stylized turned posts, angular trusses, and flat wood frieze with incised decoration on the porch (the railings have been replaced); and the gabled dormers with exposed rafters, brackets, and flat sawtooth molding. (Another neo-Grec element, the angular braces that once extended between the brackets on the front of the gables, has been removed.) The neo-Grec interest in surface pattern and polychromy is evinced in the use of multi-colored roof slates laid to create a lozenge pattern. The treatment of the chimneys with their chamfered corners and caps decorated with a stylized Doric frieze in low relief is also a characteristic feature of neo-Grec buildings.

In addition to these stylistic features the Shoverling House is also noteworthy for its beautiful tawny red brickwork and the high quality of its sawn and turned wood trim. The survival of a wood porch from this period of this size and quality is truly exceptional, even though the original railing has been removed.

Later History

Judge Morgan L. Ryan, the second owner of the house, played a prominent role in organizing the juvenile court system of New York City.¹⁶ Born in Batavia, New York, in 1867, Ryan received undergraduate and graduate degrees in law from Cornell University and was admitted to the bar in 1897. Shortly thereafter, he moved to Staten Island where he established a general practice that included many of the island's leading corporations. In 1907, he was appointed a judge of the Court of Special Sessions of

the City of New York. In 1910, he was given the responsibility of organizing special divisions of the court to deal with juvenile cases for the boroughs of Richmond and Queens. In 1915, he organized a division of the Court of Special Sessions for juveniles in the Bronx. When it became apparent that the new Children's Courts would be conducted as separate judicial tribunals, Judge Ryan was one of five justices appointed to preside over the court. Judge Ryan retired from the bench in January 1924. He subsequently became president of the Richmond County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and counsel to the Staten Island Visiting Nurses' Association.

Judge Morgan resided at 344 Westervelt Avenue until March 1924 when he sold the house to Salvatore and Fannie Cassavel.¹⁷ By that point the house had been divided into two apartments.¹⁸ The Cassavels, who were employed in the garment industry, initially divided the building into four apartments.¹⁹ In the 1930s they made a number of alterations to meet the building code for a multiple dwelling including the addition of fire escapes to the north and west facades and the creation of a basement level entrance on Westervelt Avenue.²⁰ On the west facade an old wood porch was removed and a brick one-story plus basement addition was constructed. An exterior brick staircase was built to provide access to the new addition and a window opening on the west wall was enlarged to create an exterior door which opened onto the landing of an interior staircase. In 1946, the apartment in the basement of the house was converted to a dental office for the Cassavel's son, Vincent, who lived with his parents in an apartment on the parlor floor of the house.²¹ Salvatore Cassavel died in the 1950s but his widow continued to occupy the house until her death in 1990s. The house was purchased by its present owners in 1999 and remains in use as a multiple dwelling.

Description

The August and Augusta Schoverling house is located on a rectangular lot which has a frontage of 100 feet along Westervelt Avenue and 155 feet along Benzinger Avenue. The steeply sloping ground is terraced and bordered by stone retaining walls on the east and south sides of the property. The historic east wall along Westervelt Avenue is constructed of roughly dressed fieldstone blocks and has a stepped top with bluestone coping. The principal entrance to the property is at the south end of the wall. This entry is framed by fieldstone piers with molded bluestone capitals that support a decorative wrought-iron arch that extends over the entryway. The entrance also retains its

original neo-Grec wrought-iron gate featuring decorative scroll patterns and the initials A. S. (A metal plaque with the number 344 has been attached to the A.) Behind the gate is a staircase that retains its original stone steps. The stairs are flanked by original fieldstone retaining walls. There is a non-historic iron pipe railing attached to the south wall. All but the eastern corner of the south wall has been reconstructed with non-historic concrete blocks. The north edge of the property along Benzinger Avenue is bordered by hedges and short expanses of non-historic wood-picket and iron-picket fence. Twentieth century brick and cast stone piers flank the path to the brick staircases that provide access to the basement and rear apartments. The western boundary is bordered by a non-historic gravel driveway and by a non-historic one-story garage at the northwest corner of the site.

The house is located at the western end of the lot. Asymmetrical in plan, it has a tall basement, two full stories, and a mansarded attic with gabled dormers and molded brick chimneys. The facades are faced with a rich tawny-red iron-spot brick laid in running bond and trimmed with stone which was resurfaced with stucco and painted in the 1990s. Brick soldier courses, a bracketed wood cornice, gabled dormers, multi-color slate roof tiles, and molded chimney stacks add to the decorative effect. A freestanding building, the house has four designed facades. The primary facade faces south toward Winter Street where it is partially screened from view by later houses and vegetation. The eastern facade facing Westervelt Avenue is also treated as a principal facade. These two facades are joined by a projecting angled bay at the southeast corner of the house and by the elevated porch which extends the length of the southern and eastern facades. Alterations in the 1930s to adapt the house for use as a multiple dwelling included the replacement of a wood porch at the northwest corner of the house with a small one-story-plus- basement brick addition that matched the original materials and detailing of the house, the creation of a basement entrance at the center of the Benziger Avenue facade, the creation of an entrance between the parlor and second stories and a brick staircase on the western facade, and the installation of fire escapes on the Benziger Avenue facade and western facade. During the 1990s, the window openings on the parlor floor were reduced in size and most of the building's historic windows were replaced with one-over-one sash windows. Almost all the stone trim was painted and the stone lintels of the windows not sheltered by the porch were parged. The house originally had paneled shutters on the parlor-story windows and louvered shutters on the second-story

windows. All the shutters have been removed.

The south facade is approached by a quarter-turn staircase. The lower portion of the staircase has painted stone steps and stone-trimmed brick side walls and retains its original cast-iron picket rail at the landing. The upper steps are wood and have wood replacement railings. The porch is supported by brick piers with painted stone trim. The piers define a gallery at the lower level which has a finished ceiling constructed of narrow boards. The upper level of the porch is constructed of wood. It has wood replacement railings but retains its original chamfered posts, diagonal brackets, and jigsaw-cut decorative frieze beneath the porch eaves. On the porch roof wood replacement railings screen off a small second-story balcony.

The asymmetrically-composed south facade is framed by a projecting rectangular pavilion on the west and by an angled bay on the east. The pavilion is articulated by a single window at each story; the recessed center section of the facade is divided into two bays, the western serving as the entrance bay; and the angled bay has an entrance at the basement level, windows on all three sides at the parlor and second stories, and a single dormer at the third story. The basement entrance in the angled bay has a neo-Colonial wood surround and paneled wood door with arched lights dating from the 1930s. It is flanked by curved wrought-iron railings from the 1930s. There is a non-historic number "1" attached to the north side of the entrance surround. Wrought-iron electric lamps are attached to the wall at either side of the door and a non-historic metal light fixture is attached to the gallery ceiling near the entry. There is a single window opening on the basement wall to the east of the stairs. The opening has been partially filled in with brick and contains a non-historic sash-window which is protected by a non-historic iron grille. To the west of the staircase the basement wall is largely blocked from view by a wood lattice and a non-historic metal gate which have been installed between the brick piers supporting the porch.

At the parlor story the entry retains its original paired wood and glass doors and single-light transom with a wood surround. The windows have non-historic one-over-one sashes. The stone window lintels with their chamfered neo-Grec soffit decorations and stone window sills have been parged. At the second story the entry to the balcony on the porch roof retains its original wood framing and wood transom but has a non-historic wood and glass door and non-historic screen door. A small decorative metal screen for ventilation has been installed in the brickwork just to

the east of the doorway. The second story is capped by a bracketed wood cornice which is patched with wood boards at the center of the facade and above the eastern center bay. The western portion of the mansard roof is covered with asphalt shingles, but these have been removed from the eastern side of the roof revealing original slate shingles. The gabled wood dormers are enriched with brackets and scalloped trim over the windows but have lost their original cross bracing bars. The one-over-one windows were installed in the 1990s replacing the original two-over-two sashes. The metal flashing along the ridge of the roof replaces the original molded copper flashing.

The eastern facade facing Westervelt Avenue is divided into two sections: the shorter southern section comprised of the angled bay and a windowless wall capped by a chimney at the attic-story; the longer northern section is recessed and has two widely-spaced window bays which are separated by a chimney at the attic-story. At the basement, the stone trim on the piers has been painted and the stone facings for the capitals on the fourth and fifth piers (reading south to north) have been removed. The window openings were reduced in size with brick infill during the 1990s. The original stone window sills have been painted. The windows contain non-historic one-over-one metal sash and are protected by non-historic iron grilles. At the parlor story, the porch posts, brackets, and frieze survive. (One small section of frieze between the fifth and sixth posts has been lost.) The wood porch railings have been replaced. The two windows on the north side of the facade have been partially filled in and have non-historic replacement sash. The infill around the windows has been stuccoed and painted. The original stone sills and lintels have been painted. At the second story all of the window lintels and sills have been parged with stucco. The windows have non-historic one-over-one replacement sashes. The bracketed wood cornice which crowns the second story has been patched above the northernmost window. The attic window sashes also have been replaced. The dormers retain most of their original decorative elements except for the cross trusses and a bracket which has been removed from the south window. The chimneys are decorated by dark glazed brick bands at their bases and with corbeling in the form of stylized Doric friezes at their caps. (The southern chimney has been lengthened slightly.)

The north facade facing Benzinger Avenue is articulated into a two-bay-wide main section and a recessed rear section which has a one-story-and-basement extension. The basement of this facade was extensively remodeled during the 1930s. At its center

is an entrance with a neo-Colonial wood surround with deep-paneled wood reveals and a paneled wood door. There is a non-historic light fixture in the pediment over the door. The two window openings to the east of the entrance were reduced in size in the 1990s; however, their (painted) stone sills and lintels remain visible. The windows have non-historic one-over-one sashes and are protected by iron grilles. To the west of the entrance there is one window. The bottom half of the window opening has been sealed with infill; the upper portion contains a single-light steel casement window. The basement of the brick extension has a single horizontal window opening which is protected by iron security bars. The deeply recessed window has a historic multipane wood window. The eastern portion of the basement is surrounded by a paved areaway which is edged on the north by concrete curbs for planted flower beds. Because the land slopes upwards towards the west the western rear section of the basement is not entirely excavated and the western end of the areaway is set off by a brick retaining wall with a brick staircase.

The upper stories of the north facade are separated from the basement by a painted stone water table which has lost a portion of its molded profile over the easternmost window. The articulation of the upper stories is similar to that of the Westervelt Avenue facade except for the absence of the porch. The windows have replacement sashes and their lintels and sills have been parged. At the parlor story the brickwork around the west window on the main section of the facade appears to have been replaced during the 1930s alterations. At the second story there is a smaller segmental arch to the west of the west window on the main section of the house. An iron fire escape extends from the parlor floor to the attic on the western end of the main section. On either side of the east window and to the west of the west window on the main section of the facade the crowning cornice has lost its molded wood trim and brackets.

The articulation of the first story of the enclosed porch extension replicates that of the original building except that the facing brick is not as orange as that at the original portions of the building and the soldier brick course is set off by bands of plain brick rather than glazed brick. The sill and lintel of the single window have been parged. The one-over-one window sash is non-historic. The extension is capped by a molded wood cornice and a flat roof.

The western facade is organized into a wide two-bay section, a narrow recessed one-bay section, and the enclosed porch addition. On the north side of the

facade, a brick exterior staircase with corbeled decorations, added in the 1930s, extends in front of the enclosed porch and the recessed one-bay section. (Some of the bricks from a corbeled balustrade at the top of the stairs have been removed). A rectangular entrance surmounted by a plain stone lintel on the north side of the porch addition contains a non-historic paneled door. At the top of the stairs a window which formerly lit an interior staircase was made into a doorway as part of the 1930s alterations. The entrance is sheltered by a shed-roofed hood covered with asphalt shingles. The light fixture beneath the hood and the present door are non-historic. The articulation of the wide two-bay section remains largely unaltered except for the addition of a fire escape which extends from the south attic window to the north second-story window and the

loss of some of the brackets and moldings from the cornice. A chimney rises between the dormers on the two-bay section of the facade. All the windows on this facade are non-historic. The iron bars on the horizontal basement windows on the southern two-bay section of the facade are original. The small section of wood-picket fence that extends west from the north corner of the staircase, the chain link gate, and a chain link fence that runs north-south parallel with the western facade screening off a trash storage area between the house and driveway are non-historic.

Report prepared by
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Research Department

Notes

1. This section on the development of New Brighton and Tompkinsville is adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *St. George /New Brighton Historic District Report* (LP-1883) (New York: City of New York, 1994), 6-7; LPC, *Public School 15 Designation Report* (LP-1877) prepared by Jay Schockley (New York: City of New York, 199?), 2; Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People* (New York: 1929-30), v. 1, 218-228, v. 2, 973-974, v. 3, 21-22; "Daniel D. Tompkins" *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), v. 9 583-584; Ray W. Irwin, *Daniel D. Tompkins: Govenor of New York and Vice President of the United States* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1968).
2. Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber S, p. 108.
3. See Richmond County, Office of the Register, "Map of Property at Staten Island Between Tompkinsville and New Brighton," surveyed by Geo. M. Root & Co, Mar. 7, 1853, file map 107.
4. Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 39, p. 368.
5. "Map of Property at Fort Hill, Staten Island," filed by Isaac V. Fowler, July 9, 1853, file map 116.
6. Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 35, p. 247.
7. From the late 1860s to the early 1880s the house was leased to Samuel M. Roosevelt, a commission merchant.
8. Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 135, p. 289.
9. The German presence on Fort Hill may have been due to Charles A. Herpich, a German-born businessman who purchased much of Fowler's property on Fort Hill which he improved with houses that were supplied with water from a reservoir on Winter Avenue near Bismark Avenue "pumped from a well by a picturesque windmill." Leng and Davis, 906-907.
10. This biographical section on the Schoverlings is based on the obituaries for August Schoverling in the *New York Times*, Mar. 31, 1891, p. 2 and the *Sporting Goods Gazette*; listings for Schoverlings in the New York City directories, 1859-1909; Staten Island directories, 1882, 1888, 1890-98; Federal Census, Richmond County, 1900; Adienne Schoverling, "Pedigree for Heindrick August Schoverling," *Ancestry.com*. The Commission wishes to thank Rudolph and Adienne Schoverling for their assistance in compiling this biographical material and for making available their historic photographs of the house.

11. August Schoverling obituary, *Sporting Goods Gazette*.
12. Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 354, p. 171.
13. A number of factors brought about a growing demand for housing. These included improvements to the local ferry service which made it easier for middle-class New Yorkers who were being priced out of the Manhattan housing market to live on Staten Island and the continued expansion of the area's industrial and commercial base which created a demand for workers' housing.
14. The others include a very altered townhouse at 107 Monroe Avenue and double-house at 55-57 Monroe Avenue, the townhouse at 27 Fort Hill Place (a free-standing building on a corner site that, like the Schoverling House, has a corner tower but is smaller and less elaborately decorated) and the villa at 357 Westervelt Avenue identified as Knothe house on the atlas of 1887 (a smaller less elaborate house which has a significant twentieth-century addition). The Feodor Schmidt house of 1885, at 117 Daniel Low Terrace, is a picturesque suburban house that incorporates some features found in Second Empire buildings but is more closely related to the German and French revivals of chateaux design of the 1870s.
15. This discussion of the Second Empire and neo-Grec styles is based on: David Van Zanten, *Designing Paris: the Architecture of Duban, Labrouste, Duc, and Vaudoyer* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987); Van Zanten, "Second Empire Architecture in Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 74 (Sept. 1978), 9-24; Christopher Mead, *Charles Garnier's Paris Opera: Architectural Empathy and the Renaissance of French Classicism* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991); Neil Levine, "The Book and the Building: Hugo's Theory of Architecture and Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève," and Barry Bergdoll, "'The Synthesis of All I Have Seen': the Architecture of Edmond Duthoit (1834-89)," in *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1982); Bergdoll, *Léon Vaudoyer: Historicism in the Age of Industry* (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1994).
16. This biographical section on Judge Ryan is based on Leng and Davis, v. 3, 16; *Picturesque Staten Island and Its Prominent Citizens* (New York: Turpisch Hampton Publishing, c. 1914);
17. Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 578, p. 97.
18. Federal Census, 1920, Richmond County, v. 345, ED 1545, sheet 12, line 38.
19. New York State Census, 1925, AD 1, ED 865.
20. For these alterations see New York City Department of Buildings, Staten Island, Block and Lot Dept., Microfiche for Block 38, lot 35: Alteration permit 302-1932, Alt. 162-1933, Alt. 737-1936.
21. Microfiche, Block 38, lot 35, Building Notice 382-1946.

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 August and Augusta Schoverling House has a special character and 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 August and Augusta Schoverling House is one of the most imposing and architecturally distinguished of the Second Empire style masonry houses in northeastern Staten Island; that built between 1880 and 1882 for the German-born Schoverling, a prominent dealer in firearms and sporting goods, this house is a reminder of the fashionable suburban neighborhood that developed on Fort Hill between the historic villages of New Brighton and Tompkinsville in the mid-nineteenth century and of the prosperous German-American families that settled there in large numbers; that the building's siting, well back from Westervelt Avenue on a terraced lawn, and its placement, on a high basement to accommodate the sloping terrain, gives it a commanding presence in the neighborhood; that the house's asymmetric plan, facades of tawny-red iron-spot brick set off by stone and wood trim, double-story porch, angled bay, and multi-colored slate mansard roof punctuated by gabled dormers and massive shaped chimneys create an extremely handsome and picturesque design; that the house was skillfully sited to capture the vistas provided by the hilly terrain with its principal facades, porches, and angled bay overlooking Tompkinsville and the harbor; that the house is a late example of the Second Empire style decorated with neo-Grec ornament that is handled with unusual sophistication; that among its notable decorative elements are soldier brick band courses, molded window and door lintels, and sawn and turned wood trim; that even with the loss of its railing, that the survival of a wood porch from this period of this size and quality is truly exceptional; that from 1908 to 1924, this house was owned and occupied by Judge Morgan L. Ryan who organized the first juvenile court systems in the Bronx, Queens and Richmond County and was the first justice to preside over the Children's Court on Staten Island; that it was converted to apartments in the 1930s and remains in use as a multiple dwelling.

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 August and Augusta Schoverling House, 344 Westervelt Avenue, Borough of Staten Island, and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 38, Lot 35 as its Landmark Site.



August and Augusta Schoverling House
Historic view showing the southern and western facades
Photo source: Adienne and Rudolph W. Schoverling III



August and Augusta Schoverling House
Historic view showing the eastern facade facing Westervelt Avenue
Photo source: Adienne and Rudolph W. Schoverling III



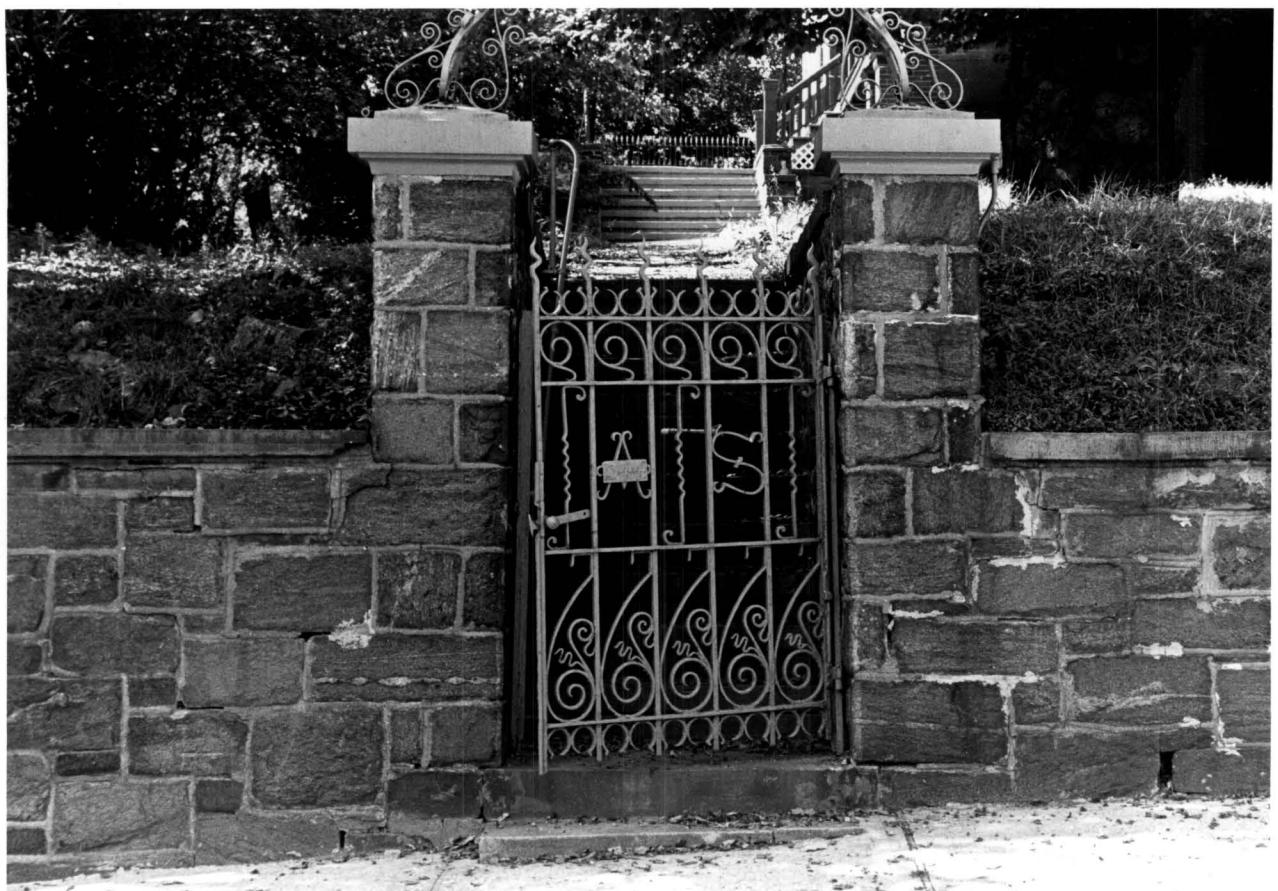
August Schoverling
Source: *The Sporting Goods Gazette*



August and Augusta Schooverling House
344 Westervelt Avenue, Staten Island
Photo: Carl Forster



August and Augusta Schooverling House
View from the northeast showing the Westervelt Avenue and Benzinger Avenue facades
Photo: Carl Forster

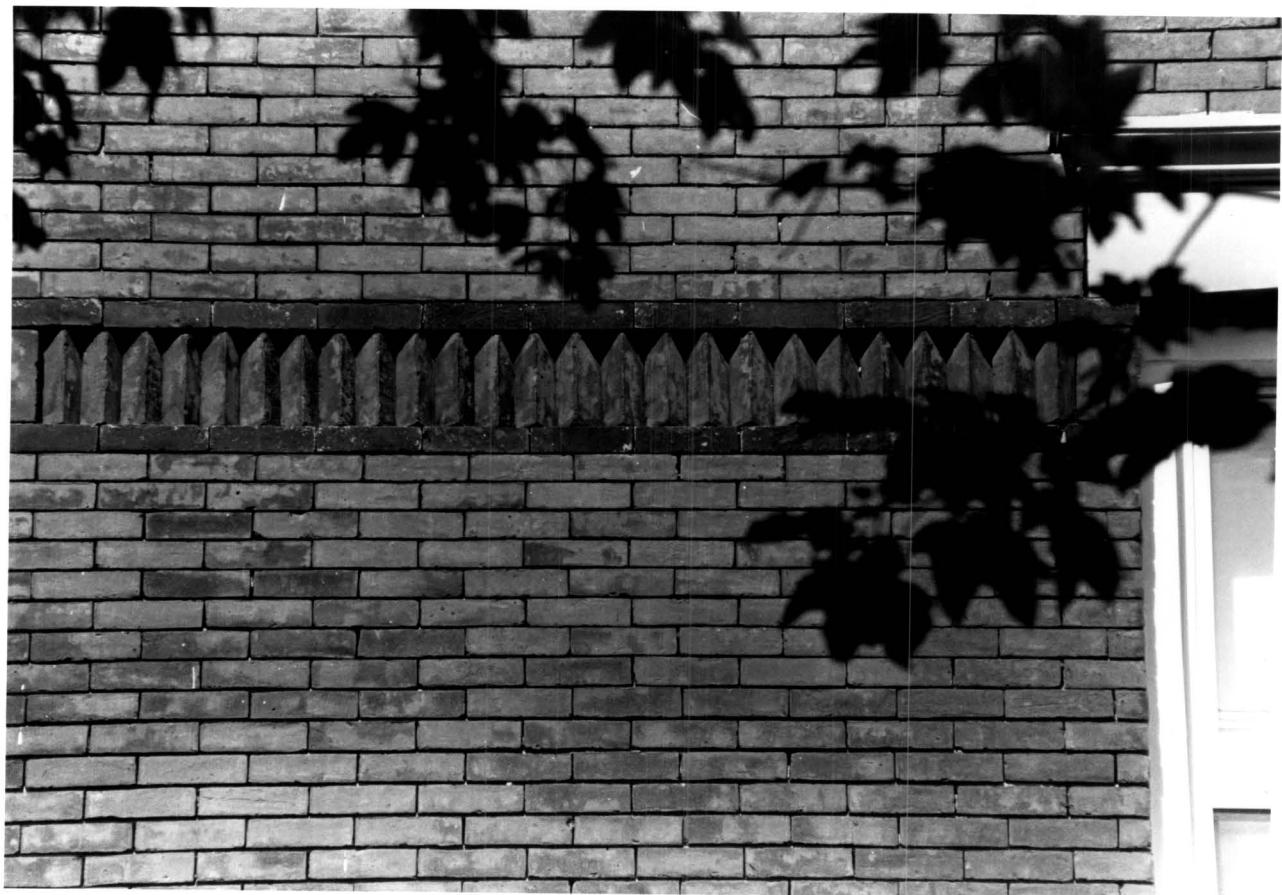


August and Augusta Schoverling House
Details of the retaining wall and original wrought iron gate on Westervelt Avenue
Photos: Carl Forster

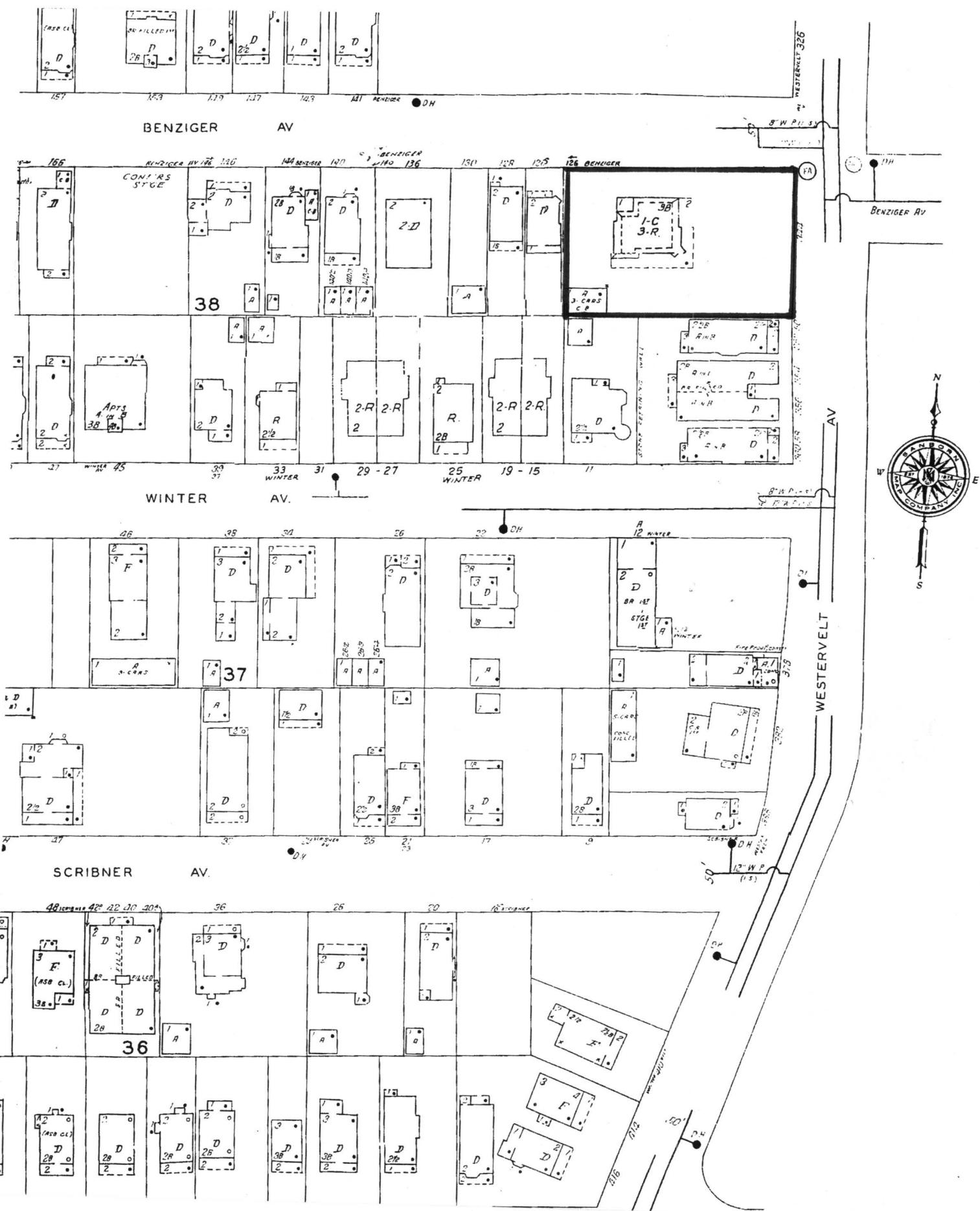


August and Augusta Schoverling House
Window details
Photos: Carl Forster





August and Augusta Schoverling House
Details second-story soldier course and roofline
Photos: Carl Forster



August and Augusta Schoverling House

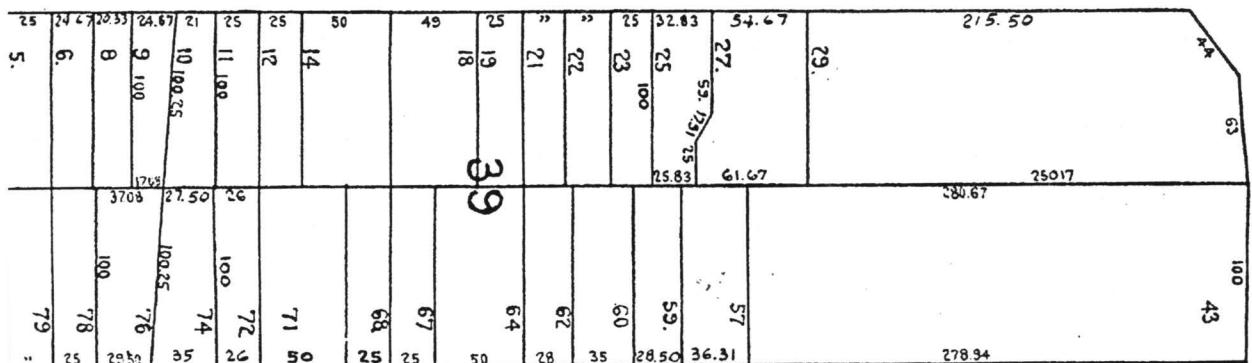
344 Westervelt Avenue, Staten Island

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 38, Lot 35

Source: Sanborn Building & Property Atlas of Staten Island, 2000

HENDRICKS

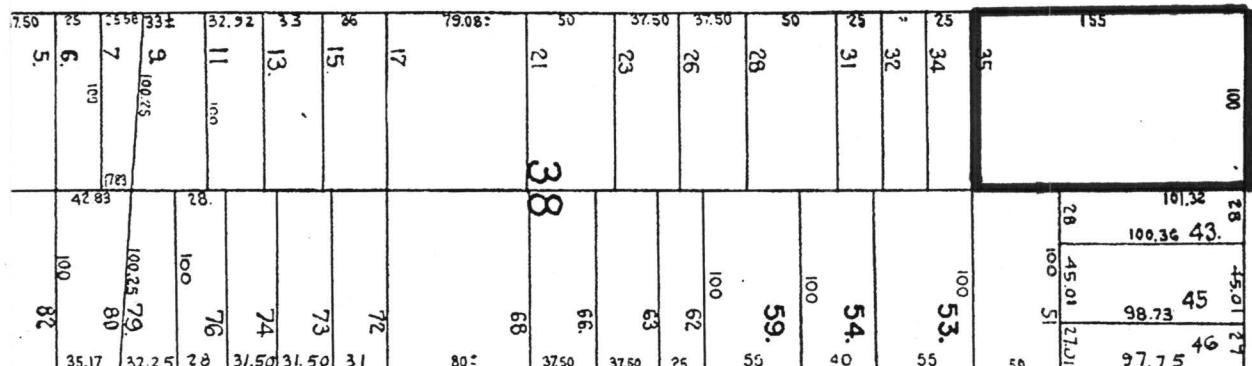
AVE.



BENZIGER

(SWINNERTON AVE)

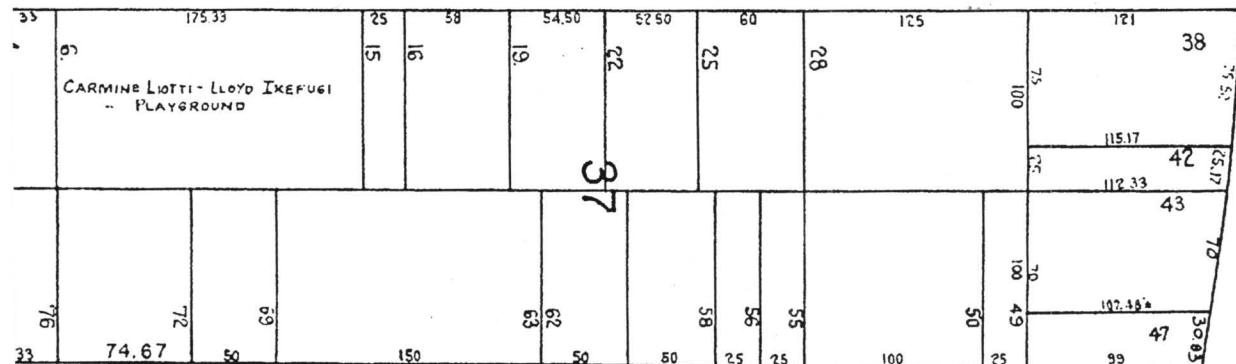
AVE.



WINTER

(13RD AVE)
(DOWNEY AVE)

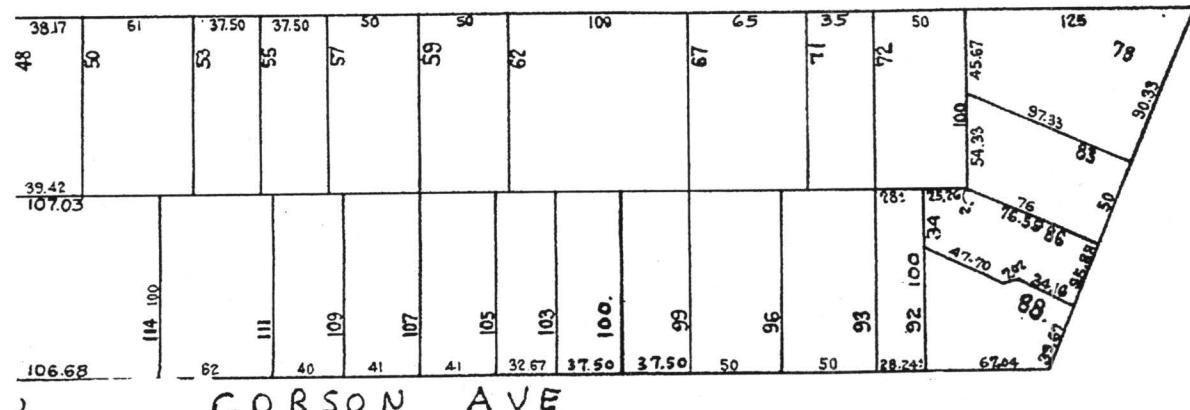
AVE.



SCRIBNER

(2ND AVE)
(LYNCH AVE)

AVE.



CORSON AVE.

August and Augusta Schoverling House
344 Westervelt Avenue, Staten Island

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 38, Lot 35

Source: Sanborn Building & Property Atlas of Staten Island, 2000

