

**92 HARRISON STREET HOUSE, 92 Harrison Street, Staten Island. Built c. 1853-54,
architect not determined**

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 531, Lot 1

On September 9, 1980, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 92 Harrison Street House (LP-1218) (Item No. 15). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Five people spoke in favor of designation including representatives of the owner, Stapleton Civic Association, Preservation League of Staten Island, and Mud Lane Society for the Preservation of Stapleton. No one spoke in opposition.

On October 22, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a special public hearing on Backlog Initiative items in the Borough of Staten Island, including 92 Harrison Street and the related Landmark Site (Item 1 - Staten Island Group 1, A). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Five people spoke in favor of designation including representatives of the Preservation League of Staten Island, Historic Districts Council, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Victorian Society New York, and Guides Association of New York City; two others spoke in favor of designating all Staten Island properties including representatives of the Historic Districts Council and North Shore Waterfront Greenway/Four Borough Alliance. The Commission received an e-mail from one of the owners which did not specify support for or opposition to designation, a letter from Borough President James S. Oddo noting his concern about the impact of designation on all the Staten Island buildings included in the Backlog Initiative, and an e-mail in general opposition to designation.

Summary

The 92 Harrison Street House is an exceptionally fine and remarkably intact example of the vernacular Greek Revival style and representative of the first period of development as Harrison Street was transitioning into a village enclave. Constructed around 1853-54 for Richard G. Smith, most likely as an investment property, the 2½ story clapboard house is sited on a large lot at the junction of Harrison and Quinn Streets making it a focal point for the immediate neighborhood. Its street-facing pedimented gable, Doric corner pilasters supporting an entablature with dentil course and heavy cornice, and the asymmetrical entrance and large parlor windows are characteristic of the temple form subset of the then popular Greek Revival style often found in smaller, pre-Civil War vernacular residences. The full-width porch with square Doric columns supports a similar entablature to that of the house as does the early 20th century side entrance porch designed to complement the original design. At the rear is a two-story porch that was added and enclosed at the turn of the 20th century. One of ten houses



constructed on Harrison Street prior to 1860, as Stapleton, and Harrison Street in particular, was transitioning into a denser neighborhood; the 92 Harrison Street House is the only example of the temple form design on the street.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Description

Sited on a large lot at the junction of Harrison Street and Quinn Street¹, the 92 Harrison Street House is a free-standing, wood-framed dwelling in the Greek Revival style. The 2½-story clapboard house sits on a raised brick basement and features a one-story, full-width porch, corner pilasters supporting a heavy cornice with frieze and architrave separated by a dentil course, and pedimented gable. There are floor-to-ceiling parlor windows and a tripartite lunette in the gable (the center panel of the lunette was restored and replaced after 1979); all windows, except the lunette, have shutters. The east and west facades are similar to the primary facade, there are two chimneys on the east and a wood entrance porch on the west (built between 1907 and 1917). Across the rear façade is a two-story, enclosed, shed-roof porch with multi-light windows (constructed by 1898 and enclosed by 1907). The site which includes a non-contributing garage (built between 1917 and 1937) and shed (built by 1907) has a non-historic wrought-iron fence and gates on three sides and a chain-link fence at the rear.²

North (main) façade: clapboard with Doric corner pilasters; stoop with wood railings and newels; porch, supported on brick piers, with wood railings, square Doric columns supporting a heavy cornice with dentil course, frieze and architrave separated by molded course; entrance with heavy surround, two-light transom and denticulated transom bar; possibly historic four-panel outer door; multi-light windows with possibly historic glass at basement with stone sills and lintels and paneled shutters; floor-to-ceiling fenestration with molded enframements at first story (actual windows not visible, shutters closed); windows at second story with simple wood enframements; possibly historic one-over-one sash; shutters; tripartite lunette with multi-light panels; cornice with entablature bisected by a dentil course; pedimented gable. *Alterations:* stoop replaced; metal decoration attached to newel posts and entrance surround; storm sashes; one shutter replaced; lights; conduit for utility lines; electric meters and outlet at basement; roof replaced.

East façade: clapboard on brick basement; windows with simple surrounds, first story with molded lintels; possibly historic multi-light sash at basement, one-over-one sash at upper story; shutters; entablature with heavy cornice and dentil course; chimneys; enclosed porch with multi-light windows at rear. *Alterations:* storm sashes; some shutters replaced; chimneys parged, topped with metal/clay caps.

West façade: clapboard on brick basement; wood entrance porch on brick foundation with wood stoop, railings and square Doric columns supporting an entablature with heavy cornice; door with simple surround with molded lintel; windows with simple surrounds, first story with molded lintels; possibly historic leaded-glass window and six-over-one sashes at upper stories; entablature with cornice and dentil course; enclosed porch with multi-light windows at rear with denticulated course at cornice. *Alterations:* metal decoration attached to newel of porch; opening at basement altered; grille at basement; metal security door; storm sashes; shutters at second story replaced; lights; bracket; mailbox.

South façade (partially visible): two-story, shed roof enclosed porch on brick foundation; wood, multi-light windows; wood entrance surround with transom; railing with balusters at first story; denticulated cornice on porch; pedimented gable with tripartite lunette. *Alterations:* metal security door.

Site: Landscaped yard; cobblestone driveway on east; bluestone paving. *Non-historic materials:* period-appropriate wrought-iron fence; concrete paving; diamond plate steps with railing off the driveway; metal enclosure behind side entrance porch. Non-contributing: Garage and shed.

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Development of Stapleton³

92 Harrison Street is located in Stapleton in northeastern Staten Island. Residential development of the area was first promoted by Daniel D. Tompkins who began buying land in Staten Island in 1814 part of which would become the village of Tompkinsville, north of Stapleton. Tompkins (1774-1825), a one-time slave owner, joined the New York Manumission Society in 1805 and actively lobbied for abolition following his election as governor of New York in 1807 and in 1817 signed the “Final Abolition Act” that freed all slaves living in the state by 1827.

The development of Stapleton began in the 1830s when Minthorne Tompkins (1807-81), son of Governor Tompkins, and his cousin and business partner William J. Staples (1807-83) purchased the Cornelius Vanderbilt farm in 1833⁴ and the following year purchased 106 acres from John Gore who owned the adjacent farm to the south.⁵ Gore who owned one slave in 1820, lived in a house located on today’s Bay Street north of Bayley Seton Hospital.⁶ In January 1835 Staples and Tompkins had the land laid out into a village with streets and building lots measuring 30 by 100 or 150 feet the same pattern as established in the development of Tompkinsville. By 1836, Stapleton (named in honor of Staples) had several houses and a hotel. The following year the Seaman’s Retreat and Hospital Fund opened its Greek Revival hospital building to care for sick and disabled merchant seamen on a 40-acre site at Bay Street and Vanderbilt Avenue.⁷ As his father had done in the development of Tompkinsville, ferry service was established between the new village and Manhattan.

In 1835, William Fuller and Dr. James M. Quin of New York City purchased 10 acres from Tompkins and Staples for \$10,000.⁸ The parcel, bounded by Gore (now Broad) Street to the north, Brownell Street to the east, the Seaman's Retreat to the south and Quinn Street to the west is identified on the 1835 survey as "Fuller and Quin's Purchase." Within a few months, the parcel was sold to Richard G. Smith, the son-in-law of Governor Tompkins, for \$16,000.⁹

Smith who likely purchased the property on speculation had a survey made of the property laying out streets, including Harrison, Tompkins, and Quin (now Quinn) and dividing the resulting blocks into 25 by 100 foot lots.¹⁰ The lots sold quickly at first but sales appeared to have been slowed by the Panic of 1837.¹¹ By the 1840s the first houses began to appear along Harrison and Quinn Streets, two of them designed in a vernacular interpretation of the then popular Greek Revival style.¹²

Over the next 20 years, Stapleton grew rapidly. Located on the main roads, it boasted an excellent port with regular steam ferry service to Manhattan and by the 1850s had been made the terminus of the Staten Island Railroad. The excellent transportation attracted businesses as well as residents. In 1851 Julius and Louis Dejonge, manufacturers and importers of coated and "fancy" papers, moved their factory from Manhattan to Richmond Turnpike and Prospect Street (now Victory Boulevard and Louis Street). It quickly became one of the island's leading industries, growing from 60 workers to 90 workers (more than half of them women) between 1855 and 1860. Stapleton's artesian springs and cool caverns attracted industry, most notably the brewers like Bechtel's Brewery (established in 1853) on Van Duzer Street at the head of Broad Street. The large number of German-owned businesses in Stapleton, especially the breweries, which required skilled knowledge of brewing techniques, brought many German-born workers to the area and Stapleton quickly became the most important village on Staten Island's east shore and one of the northeast region's principal German enclaves. As larger industries grew so did other local businesses and services clustered along Bay, Canal and Broad Streets to support the growing population of Stapleton.

92 Harrison Street

92 Harrison Street was constructed c. 1853-54 for Richard G. Smith on a 100 by 120 foot parcel at what was then the southeast corner of Harrison and Quinn Streets. Apparently built as an investment property, the house was leased to at least two successive tenants, John Whitney, a publisher and Edwin W. Parker, a British-born broker who occupied the house with their families, until it was sold in 1863 to Michael Conklin, whom a later census records as being a lumber and coal dealer.¹³ Four years later the house was purchased by Engelbert Mallet, a German-born tobacco broker with a business in Manhattan who lived there for three years.¹⁴ In 1870 it was purchased by Richard T. Hartshorne a retired sea captain turned publisher then living in Brooklyn. After retiring from the sea Hartshorne published *American Lloyd's Registry of American and Foreign Shipping* (later *The Original American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping*) from 1859 to 1879. Hartshorne and his family lived in the house until roughly

1876 when directories list their residence once again as Brooklyn after which they relocated to New Jersey.¹⁵

It was probably around 1876 that the house was sold to Henry Haltermann and his family. Born in Germany c. 1838, Haltermann's early career was as a sailor on German merchant ships. At the time he purchased 92 Harrison Street, he was working in Manhattan as an oil inspector. The house, which was "the scene of splendid summer balls, for which Haltermann hired an orchestra that played from a special platform," remained in the possession of members of the Haltermann family until 1970.¹⁶

The Greek Revival Style¹⁷

The Greek Revival style dominated American architecture from roughly 1820 to 1860 and grew out of an increasing recognition of the importance of ancient Greece as a source of western culture during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Archaeological discoveries in Southern Italy and Greece and the publication of measured architectural drawings of ancient Greek buildings, particularly Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens* raised awareness of Greek architecture and builder's guides like Asher Benjamin's *American Builder's Companion* (6th edition, 1827) and Minard Lafever's *Modern Builders' Guide* (1833) and *The Beauties of Modern Architecture* (1835) disseminated the basics of the orders and decorative details to carpenters and builders. Further contributing to the popularity of the style was a sentimental identification with Greece as the cradle of liberty and Greece's 1821-30 war for independence.

The Greek Revival style was widely represented on Staten Island in both domestic and public buildings. Noteworthy examples include the Administration Building (1831-33) and dormitories (1831-41) at Sailor's Snug Harbor designed by Minard Lafever; the Main Building (1834-37 with later additions) at the Seaman's Retreat (now Bayley-Seton Hospital) designed by Abraham P. Maybie; and the Caleb T. Ward House (1845) at 141 Nixon Avenue, designed by Seth Geer. On Staten Island a popular interpretation of the style was a side-facing gable with a tetrastyle porch such as at 364 and 390 Van Duzer Street (c. 1835 and 1834 respectively). Examples of smaller houses with side facing gables are the Austin Burk (or Burke, later Bennett) House (1839, addition 1854) and the Seaman Cottage (c. 1836-37) in Richmondtown both of which feature raised brick basements and full-width, single-story porches details shared with the later 92 Harrison Street House.¹⁸ However, as observed by the architectural historian William H. Pierson, the temple form became the "primary motif of the Greek Revival."¹⁹ On Staten Island, examples of high-style temple-fronted houses include the Henry P. Robertson House at 404 Richmond Terrace (c. 1835) whose design was based on the Parthenon and the Joseph H. Seguine House, 440 Seguine Avenue.²⁰ Among vernacular residences "the Greek temple appeared in its simplest and most prolific form as the small pitched roof house."²¹ The 92 Harrison Street House is a late, intact example of the vernacular temple form exhibiting all the characteristics of the type as noted by Pierson: a street-facing, pedimented gable, attenuated Doric pilasters at the corners supporting an encircling entablature, and an entrance placed to the side to allow for a single room on the parlor floor, a "mutation," Pierson noted, which gave "the

American Greek Revival its extraordinary diversity and strength.”²² Like other interpreters of the basic temple form, the architect or builder of the 92 Harrison Street House added a single-story porch supported by square columns.

Subsequent History

During the 20th century the Village of Stapleton underwent many economic and social changes. The Stapleton port facility built by New York Mayor John F. Hylan in the 1920s saw little success and after World War II it fell into disuse as shipping moved to other parts of Staten Island and New Jersey. Prohibition and the regionalization of the beer industry closed Stapleton’s breweries and other industries moved away. Public housing units were built, social service offices and clinics affiliated with Bayley Seton Hospital opened and the commercial district competed for customers with the newly opened malls.²³ Despite the changes to the neighborhood, the 92 Harrison Street House, which for most of its history has been owned and occupied by two families and their descendants, remains remarkably intact and is a tangible reminder of the early development history of the street.

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NOTES

¹ Quinn Street is named for Dr. James M. Quin (1806-1868) who purchased the land on which 92 Harrison Street is located in 1835 with Fuller. The current spelling is Quinn and will be used throughout this report for simplicity.

² Dates for the side and rear porches and outbuildings are based on *Insurance Maps Borough of Richmond, City of New York* (New York: Sanborn Perris Map Co, 1898) pl. 67; *Insurance Maps, Borough of Richmond, Staten Island, New York* (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1917), v. 1, pl. 32; *Insurance Maps of Borough of Richmond, New York City, Staten Island, New York* (New York: Sanborn Map Co, 1937), v. 1, pl. 38 and Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey, August 1907, sheet no. 25.

³ The history of Stapleton is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *St. Paul’s Avenue-Stapleton Heights Historic District Designation Report (LP-2147)* (New York: City of New York, 2004), prepared by Gale Harris and Donald G. Presa, 8-11; Barnett Shepherd “Research Notes for Harrison Street: A Stapleton Neighborhood,” compiled for the Mud Lane Society for the Renaissance of Stapleton, 2005; Richard Dickenson, ed., *Holden’s Staten Island: The History of Richmond County* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2002); LPC, Harrison Street research files. Daniel Tompkins, had one slave according to the U.S. Census records for 1800.

⁴ Although the first Vanderbilts who settled on Staten Island were slave owners, based on census records it does not appear that Cornelius Vanderbilt owned slaves.

⁵ Richmond County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber W, p. 206 (April 1, 1834). Minthorne Tompkins served two terms as state senator. He broke with the Democratic Party over his opposition to slavery and was a founder of the Republican Party in New York State in 1855. LPC, Harrison Street research files.

⁶ Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People: A History, 1609-1929* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1930-33), v. 1, 328; U. S. Census records, 1810-1820.

⁷ The Main Building (1834-37, Abraham Maybie, builder; additions, 1848, 1853 and 1911-12) and the Physician-in-Chief’s Residence (1842, Staten Island Granite Company, builder) are both designated New York City Landmarks.

⁸ Richmond County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber X, p. 104 (February 12, 1835).

⁹ Richmond County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber X, p. 475 (July 25, 1835). Richard Green Smith (1806-80) and his wife, Susan MacLaren Tompkins, youngest daughter of Governor Tompkins, lived on Richmond Road (now Van Duzer Street), around Smith Terrace. LPC, Harrison Street research files.

¹⁰ “Map of 132 Lots in the Town of Stapleton, Southfield, County of Richmond, Staten Island, owned by R. G. Smith to be sold by Franklin & Jenkins on Tuesday, Aug’t. 30th, 1836” filed August 22, 1836.

¹¹ Richmond County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1, p. 311 (September 15, 1836), Liber 1, p. 314 (September 7, 1836); Liber 1, p. 321 (September 15, 1836); Liber 1, p. 374 (September 18, 1836); Liber 8, p. 324 (October 1, 1841); Liber 8, p. 526 (December 7, 1841); Liber 14, p. 176 (May 30, 1846); Liber 14, p. 559 (September 13, 1846); Liber 26, p. 273 (June 15, 1852); Liber 41, p. 407 (September 5, 1857); Liber 42, p. 431 (June 26, 1858); Liber 45, p. 617 (April 11, 1860); Liber 47, p. 250 (November 28, 1860); Liber 53, p. 311 (October 24, 1863). Two larger sales in 1836 included seven lots sold to Minthorne Tompkins and 12 lots sold to Manhattan investors Botswick and Taylor, who resold the lots within two years.

¹² Neighboring 50 and 64 Harrison Street were designed with side facing gables and spring eaves, similar in style to 364 and 390 Van Duzer Street, both of which are designated New York City Landmarks.

¹³ The Butler map of 1853 does not indicate the presence of the house, however the 1854 Tax Assessment Roll for the Town of Southfield records Smith as owner of a house and five lots on Harrison Street; his neighbor William McLean owned two houses and 10 lots adjoining his property on Quinn Street. Early state and federal census compilations did not include street addresses. The names of the residents of 92 Harrison Street are based on their adjacency to William McLean. New York State Census records, 1855; U.S. Census records, 1860, 1880; Richmond County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 53, p. 311 (October 24, 1863).

¹⁴ Ancestry.com, *U.S. Naturalization Record Indexes, 1791-1992 (Indexed in World Archives Project)* [database on-line] Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, 2010; Ancestry.com, *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line] Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, 2011; Richmond County, Office of the Register, Conveyances, Liber 72, p. 358 (September 24, 1867).

¹⁵ Richmond County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 86, p. 424 (April 26, 1870); “The Original American Lloyd’s Register of American and Foreign Shipping Archives” (<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=amlloyds>, accessed April 20, 2016); New York City directories, 1863-79; New York State Census records, 1875; U.S. Census records, 1870-1880; Ancestry.com, *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line] Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, 2011.

¹⁶ Ancestry.com, *Bremen, Germany Ships Crew Lists, 1815-1917* [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2008; *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line], Provo, UT: Ancestry.com, 2011; Elaine Hess, “Heritage of Harrison St.: Family Finds History in an Old Home,” *Staten Island Sunday Advance*, December 14, 1969, 8.

¹⁷ Based on Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 159-161; LPC, *Lefferts-Laidlaw House Designation Report (LP-2099)* (New York: City of New York, 2001), prepared by Gale Harris, 4; LPC, *Seaman Cottage Designation Report (LP-2168)* (New York: City of New York, 2005), prepared by Gale Harris, 3-4; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 179-184; William H. Pierson, Jr., *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 430-452.

¹⁸ All buildings mentioned are either individually designated New York City Landmarks or included in designated historic districts.

¹⁹ Pierson, 436.

²⁰ The Robertson House is in the St. George/New Brighton Historic District; the Seguire House is an individually designated New York City Landmark.

²¹ Pierson, 450.

²² Ibid.

²³ Bechtel’s merged with Bachmann Brewery (founded in Clifton in 1851) in 1911 and closed after the passage of Prohibition in 1919. Rubsam & Horrmann survived making non-alcoholic products and was purchased by Piels Brothers in 1953, it closed in 1963. Patricia M. Salmon, *Stapleton: A Community of Contrast & Change* (New York: Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences, 2002), 5-6; Barnett Shepherd, “Stapleton” in *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Bill Franz, “Stapleton Resident’s Overwhelmed by Social Services,” *Staten Island Register*, May 16, 2000, 1, 6; *Stapleton Staten Island: A Town within a City: Guide to Antique Shops Restaurants & Landmarks* (New York: Stapleton Community Local Development Corporation of Staten Island, n.d.), 6-8.

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 92 Harrison Street 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 the 92 Harrison Street House is an exceptionally fine and remarkably intact example of the free-standing, vernacular Greek Revival style house; that it is representative of the first period of Harrison Street's transition into a village enclave; that it was constructed around 1853-54 for Richard G. Smith, most likely as an investment property; that its street-facing, pedimented gable, Doric corner pilasters supporting an entablature with dentil course and heavy cornice are characteristic of the temple form subset of the vernacular Greek Revival style; that in addition it features a full-width porch with square Doric columns supporting a similar entablature to that of the house, elongated parlor windows, asymmetrically placed entrance and lunette in the gable; that it is the only example of the temple form design found among the pre-Civil War houses on Harrison Street; that the early 20th century side entrance porch was designed to complement the original design; that a two-story porch was added to the rear façade and enclosed at the turn of the 20th century.

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 92 Harrison Street House, Borough of Staten Island, and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 531, Lot 1 as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

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



92 Harrison Street House
92 Harrison Street
Staten Island, Block 531, Lot 1
Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016



92 Harrison Street
West entrance porch
Photo: Marianne S. Percival, 2016



Main Entrance detail



Pediment with lunette

Photos: Marianne S. Percival, 2016



Basement detail

Photo: Marianne S. Percival, 2016



92 Harrison Street, c. 1940
Photo: New York City Dept. of Taxes (c. 1940), Municipal Archives

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NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission



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