

**121 Heberton Avenue House**, 121 Heberton Avenue, Staten Island. Built c. 1859-61; James G. Burger, designer and builder.

Landmark Site: Borough of the Staten Island Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 9

On July 16, 2002, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 121 Heberton Avenue House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 3). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Seven witnesses, including the owner of the building, and representatives for Council Michael McMahon, Assemblyman John W. Lavelle, the Preservation League of Staten Island, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Historic Districts Council, and the Northfield Community Local Development Corporation, spoke in favor of the designation. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation.

#### Summary

This residence, constructed by carpenter-builder James G. Burger around 1859-61, is a rare surviving example in New York City of a picturesque villa in the Rustic style. Combining elements derived from the pattern books of Gervase Wheeler, Calvert Vaux, and Samuel Sloan, the design features the broad gables, openwork brackets, long outside galleries, raised basement, and simple ornament characteristic of the style. A three-bay wide, two-and-one-half-story frame building, the 121 Heberton Avenue House is sheathed in its original clapboards and retains its original wood moldings and first floor fenestration. Notable features include the handsome bracketed door and window surrounds, the angled bay windows on the side elevations, and the cross-gabled roof with overhanging eaves enriched with unusual chamfered braces. Probably built by Burger as a speculative investment, this house passed, soon after its completion, to Captain John J. Housman, a prosperous oysterman and noted abolitionist. The house was leased to tenants until 1892 when it was acquired by Robert Brown, the owner of a neighboring saloon who held a number of offices in the Port Richmond government. The house remained in the ownership of the Brown family until the 1940s. Prominent residents included Judge Thomas C. Brown, a Municipal Court justice who occupied the house in the 1890s and early 1900s, and Robert S. Brown, a clerk in the Court of Special Sessions and chief of the Democratic County Committee. It is currently being used as a residence and remains a significant reminder of the period when the neighborhood around Veterans Park was Port Richmond's most desirable residential section.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### History of Port Richmond<sup>1</sup>

Port Richmond is located on the north shore of Staten Island, adjacent to the Kill van Kull, the strait between Staten Island and Bayonne, New Jersey. The area was settled by the Dutch and the French in the late 1600s and was the site of the Dutch Reformed Church cemetery as early as 1690. At the time the area was sparsely populated; in 1698 only 727 people lived on all of Staten Island.

The county seat was established in 1729 in Richmond, in the center of the island, but much of the development occurred on the shore, at ferry landings. By 1771 the population of Staten Island was 2,847. Port Richmond village grew throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to become a small but important ferry landing, transferring people and property between Staten Island and New Jersey, in particular Bayonne and New Brunswick. The village incorporated as Port Richmond in 1866, the same year as the Staten Island villages of New Brighton and Edgewater.<sup>2</sup>

Port Richmond was a transportation center for three centuries. The ferry landings were located at the north end of Port Richmond Avenue, which was laid out in 1701. The Staten Island Railroad, established in 1860, built a station there in the 1880s, and it was a transportation hub for streetcars by 1900. Port Richmond's commercial and industrial base included the 1836 Staten Island Whaling Company; the first bank on Staten Island, established in 1837 in conjunction with the whaling company; and the Jewett White Lead Company, which later became part of Dutch Boy Paints and operated into the twentieth century. Lumber and coal yards also sprang up along the waterfront.

The village's earliest residents were Dutch and French Huguenots. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Irish and German immigrants built houses in the neighborhood. Other immigrant groups, including Scandinavians and Poles, moved in later in the century, building frame and masonry detached and row houses. Staten Island's first public park, now called Veteran's Park and located across the street from the 121 Heberton Avenue House, was laid out in 1836. In 1883, Port Richmond was described as a model village:

*The general appearance of Port Richmond is inviting and pleasing. The streets are wide, well-macadamized and smooth; the side walks well paved and generally shaded by trees of large growth. The business blocks*

*are substantial and the dwellings range from pretentious mansions to quiet cottages.*<sup>3</sup>

In 1898, at the time of the consolidation of New York City, the population of Staten Island was 65,000. Population increased slowly on Staten Island and in Port Richmond in the first half of the twentieth century. After World War I, the borough's industrial base declined and the north shore factories slowly closed, spurred by the Depression in the 1930s. Port Richmond's ferry business ended with the opening of the Bayonne Bridge in 1931. Port Richmond Avenue was still considered the shopping and entertainment district for the surrounding communities in 1939, and Port Richmond remained a small but bustling village until after World War II, when it slowly declined. The neighborhood grew little and declined economically through the 1980s, but has recently experienced a resurgence, with the restoration of historic houses and buildings.

### The Development of Veterans Park, James G. Burger, and the Construction and Early History of the 121 Heberton Avenue House

In 1836, Peter and Eder Haughwout purchased two large tracts of land which together extended from the east side of Port Richmond Avenue to the west side of present-day Cottage Place between Church Street and Castleton Avenue.<sup>4</sup> The Haughwouts had this land laid out into building lots retaining a square block bounded by Park Avenue (formerly Broadway), Bennett Street, Heberton Avenue, and Vreeland Street for a public park (present-day Veterans Park) which they presented to the Village of Northfield.<sup>5</sup> By 1838, the Haughwouts had sold a number of lots on Port Richmond Avenue, the main thoroughfare leading inland from the ferry landing. In 1842, the trustees of the School District 6 purchased land for a school at the northwest corner of Heberton Avenue and New Street which was erected shortly thereafter.<sup>6</sup> In 1843, the North Baptist Church erected a modest frame church building on the northwest corner of Park Avenue and Vreeland Street facing on to the west side of the park. (This building was replaced by the present brick structure in 1878 when the church's name was changed to the Park Avenue Baptist Church.) By 1853 the blocks on the north, south, and west sides of the square had been built up with fine residences. A number of modest shops and residences had been erected on the blocks between Cottage Place and Jewett Street, just to the east of the Haughwouts' land. The blocks between Heberton Avenue and Cottage Place remained undeveloped.

In 1853, carpenter-builder James G. Burger purchased the future site of the 121 Heberton Avenue House, then a trapezoidal lot at the southeast corner of Heberton Avenue and Bennet Street that extended through the block to Cottage Place.<sup>7</sup> Burger was a member of a prominent Staten Island family that had settled in West Brighton near Burger Street in the seventeenth century.

In 1845, following the death of his first wife, Burger married Jane M. Haggerty, a widow, who had inherited large tracts of land in Port Richmond and Factoryville (West Brighton) from her first husband. In 1847, Burger relinquished his rights to his wife's property allowing it to be put in trust for her benefit and the future benefit of her children from her first marriage.<sup>8</sup> In 1850, Burger was one of a number of Staten Islanders who went to California in hope of earning a fortune in the Gold Rush.<sup>9</sup> Ill health forced him to return to Staten Island and by 1851 he had resumed to his trade as a house carpenter. The following year, he purchased some land on Ann Street in Port Richmond from his wife and constructed two now demolished houses that he retained as investment properties.<sup>10</sup> By 1861, he was in financial difficulties and his creditors forced a foreclosure sale of his real estate in May. Just prior to the sale, one of his creditors, John J. Housman, arranged to purchase this house and lot. It is probable that the house had only recently been completed since it was not represented on Walling's 1859 *Map of Staten Island* but was mentioned in the deed for the property that the Richmond County sheriff granted to Housman in September 1861.<sup>11</sup>

Captain John J. Housman (1808-1878), was a prosperous oyster fisherman.<sup>12</sup> His house and business were located on Richmond Terrace near Housman Street midway between Port Richmond and Mariners' Harbor. He was described in a history of the North Shore of Staten Island as "of the best class of oystermen."<sup>13</sup> He was a staunch abolitionist and ...

*When the Union Army set out to reach Richmond, Va., by way of the James River, Mariners' Harbor furnished many skilled pilots who knew every foot of the way, selected from its oyster fleet by Capt. John J. Housman.*<sup>14</sup>

The 121 Heberton Avenue House was one of four properties that Housman owned in Northfield.<sup>15</sup> After his death in 1878, it passed to his estate and remained in the ownership of the Housman family until 1892. Census records and directories of the period suggest that it was never occupied by members of the Housman family but instead was a rental property.

Most likely it commanded a high rent since the blocks facing the park were considered "the most beautiful part of Port Richmond and perhaps its most desirable residence portion."<sup>16</sup> Because the nineteenth century censuses for Port Richmond do not list addresses, little is known about the occupancy of this house while it was owned by the Housman family. However, the Staten Island directories indicate that from at least 1888 to 1892 the house was occupied by Emil Bottger, Superintendent of the Port Richmond schools.<sup>17</sup>

#### The Design of the 121 Heberton Avenue House

Recalling Staten Island's rural past, the 121 Heberton Avenue House is a fine and well-preserved example in New York City of a picturesque rural cottage. During the mid-nineteenth century American rural architecture underwent a revolution as nationally-circulated journals and architectural handbooks rapidly began to introduce new ideas about planning and design to a broad public.<sup>18</sup> Much of the credit for this change belongs Andrew Jackson Downing, who introduced English ideas on rural landscape design and architecture to the American public through a series of essays in *The Horticulturalist*, a "journal of rural art and rural taste," which he edited, and in his architectural handbooks, including *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841), *Cottage Residences* (1842), and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850).<sup>19</sup> Downing published numerous designs for cottages, farmhouses, and villas, featuring the work of Alexander Jackson Davis, John Notman, Gervase Wheeler, Richard Upjohn, and Calvert Vaux (the last became his business partner). These designs were largely in the Gothic Revival, Italianate, and Swiss Cottage styles since Downing considered the picturesque qualities of these styles particularly suitable for country settings. In addition, he outlined several elements that he believed were important in a country home regardless of its style – it should "spread out and extend itself on the ground,"<sup>20</sup> [its details] should be simple and bold, its ornaments ... rustic, strong, or picturesque, [rather] than delicate or highly finished."<sup>21</sup> It was important he said that "the roof is boldly shown, and rendered ornamental, the windows suitably introduced and enriched, and the comfort and pleasure of climate and home understood."<sup>22</sup> Chimney stacks were particularly important because they were expressive of "human habitation and domestic life ... in a northern climate"<sup>23</sup> and "verandas, piazzas, bay windows, and balconies were also valuable as they were chiefly used for domestic buildings and therefore conveyed "domestic habitation."<sup>24</sup>

Downing died in 1852 but his publications were frequently reprinted and reached a wide audience. In addition, many architects, including a number whose work Downing had featured, published architectural pattern books in the 1850s and 1860s. As architectural historian Daniel Reiff observed in his study of the use of pattern books in American architecture, it was understood that carpenters and builders, who “were already adept at designing, planning, and detailing buildings,”<sup>25</sup> would adapt pattern book designs and details “to meet local needs and financial constraints.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, precise copies were the exception rather than the rule and many carpenter-builders combined ideas from a variety of sources. This seems to have been the case with James Burger’s design for the 121 Heberton Avenue House. The overall form of the building and some details appear to be based on a design for an “English Rustic Cottage” (pls. LXV and LXVI) in Gervase Wheeler’s *Homes for the People* (1855).<sup>27</sup> Wheeler’s cottage is a T-shaped building with a gabled two-story main block and gabled one-and-a-half-story side wings that act as terminations for the veranda that wraps around the front and sides of the house. In describing this house, Wheeler noted that “the roofs project boldly from the gables and to a somewhat less degree upon the eaves, and are supported by open framing in the large gables.” Curved brackets were set beneath the purlins at certain key points adding to the stability of the structure and increasing the decorative quality of the design. In his plans for 121 Heberton Avenue James Burger adopted many of the salient features of Wheeler’s design -- the cruciform plan and cross gabled roof, wrap-around veranda, and oversized gable with projecting bracketed eaves; however, he adapted the design to create a larger two-and-one-half-story three-bay wide house perhaps drawing inspiration from “Design No. 1” for a “Simple Suburban Cottage” published by Calvert Vaux in his *Villas and Cottages* of 1857. Vaux’s design for a front gabled house with smaller side gables, shares certain similarities with this house. In addition to the use of a gable front and cross-gabled roof, these similarities include the tripartite facade design with its asymmetrically placed entrance and square-headed windows and the first story plan incorporating a two-bay wide front parlor and a small rear porch. Another notable feature of the 121 Heberton Avenue House, its decorative door and window enframements featuring wide lintels capped by molded cornices resting on simple curvilinear brackets, may have been inspired by similar bracketed enframements in the design for “A Villa Mansion” which served as the frontispiece for Gervase Wheeler’s *Homes for the People*. It is worth noting

that like his “Rustic Cottage” the tower of Wheeler’s mansion is ornamented with openwork brackets. Such brackets are relatively rare; however, they appeared in a number of Wheeler designs and in two designs published by the influential Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan in *The Model Architect* of 1852. The last more detailed source probably provided the model for the brackets at No. 121. In a page of details for “An Ornamented Cottage” in the “bracketted” style [Design XXV] Sloan included a profile drawing for a decorative triangular bracket with open sides. While Burger probably did not have the resources to reproduce anything so elaborate he seems to have attempted to create the same effect by breaking the design up into component parts and reproducing some of the essential elements. Thus, he created wood braces with chamfered corners attaching them directly to the wall rather than to a vertical member and supporting them with scrolled corbels similar in design to the scrolled bases of Sloan’s brackets. Burger also inserted abacuses as imposts between the braces and purlins. Another feature of his design, the large square chimney decorated with rectangular recessed panels may also have been inspired by a drawing on the same page of details though once again Burger’s interpretation is less decorative than Sloan’s model.

Elsewhere in his book Sloan identified a slightly more elaborate building with many of the same features as Design XXV as “Swiss style.” Downing called the Swiss cottages that provided the inspiration for the style “the most picturesque of all dwellings built of wood.” He admired “their broad roofs, open galleries, and simple and bold construction.”

*The true Swiss cottage is always built of wood, and often shows a great deal of ornamental work in the brackets which support the roof, as well as the borders to the doors and windows, etc. ... The living-rooms are raised several feet above the level of the ground, and are reached by a flight of steps outside. Frequently all this ornamental work is done in a rude manner, with the axe alone, and the effect is more picturesque and rustic, and therefore better suited to rural buildings than highly finished carpentry.*

He cautioned, however, that if the style was to be employed for a house in “a tame landscape” that it must be “subdued and chastened in its picturesqueness, and much less bold and rude.” In describing a Swiss style design he felt had been successfully adapted to a suburban site he noted that “it still retains the picturesque roof, the bold brackets, and the long outside galleries—but all much more delicately made than in Swiss examples” while a

successful adaptation of a Swiss farmhouse design was “purposely made so in simple in its exterior as to lose some of those details by which we most commonly recognize the Swiss chalet.”

In designing No. 121 Burger incorporated the broad gables, ornamental trussed brackets, elaborate molded surrounds for the doors and window, long verandas, and high basement which Downing identified as key features of the style, suggesting that he was influenced by Downing’s precepts. However, he eschewed the jig-sawn ornament that is usually associated with the Swiss Style as well as the bark-covered wood ornament that would have been inappropriate for its suburban setting. Instead he used extremely simple ornament that allowed him to incorporate classically-inspired motifs like the bracketed window surrounds with seemingly medieval motifs like the oriel windows at the side of house in a harmonious design.

In the 1850s, pattern books were dominated by Gothic and Italianate designs interspersed with a few designs based on Northern European vernacular timber-framed houses such as Sloan’s “ornamented Cottage” or Wheeler’s “English Rustic Cottage.” Houses in the style were always relatively rare, and in New York City, where so many mid-nineteenth-century wood houses have been lost, the 121 Heberton Avenue House is an exceptional survivor.

#### The Brown Family

In January 1892, Robert Brown purchased the 121 Heberton Avenue House from Jacob Housman. Robert Brown (1840-98?) and his wife Matilda (Longworth) Brown (1839-191?) were Irish immigrants who came to this country as children and grew up in New York City. The Browns settled in Port Richmond around 1866. There, Brown purchased a building with a ground floor saloon and upstairs living quarters at the southeast corner of Bennett Street and Cottage Place, directly across the street from the rear yard of 121 Heberton Avenue. He became active in the volunteer fire company on Bennett Street and took an interest in local Democratic politics. He held various town offices and immediately prior to Consolidation served as one of the Trustees of the Village of Port Richmond. The Browns had five children at least four of whom resided with them in this house during the 1890s. Their eldest son, Robert S. Brown (1861-1926) remained in the Brown’s apartment above the saloon.. Their son, Thomas C. Brown (1876-1938) graduated from New York Law School in 1897 and practiced law from 1898 until 1904, when he was appointed a Justice of the Municipal Court of New York City. The Brown’s three daughters were

Frances, a school principal, Martha, a designer, and Matilda, wife James A. Simpson. In 1910, the Federal census indicates that Matilda Brown was residing in the house with her daughters Martha and Matilda and her son-in-law. By 1915, Matilda Brown had died. The Simpsons had moved and Robert S. Brown who had inherited this house was living there with his wife and family. Robert S. Brown had given up his contracting business and become a court clerk. He served as clerk of the Special Sessions for over twenty-two years and with his brother Thomas was one of the leaders of the Democratic Party on Staten Island.<sup>28</sup> Following his death members of the Brown family continued to occupy the house. In the 1930s, the rear portion of the lot was sold.. During World War II, the house was acquired by C. Dallessandro and after the war was sold to J. Balsano. It remains in residential use.

#### Description

\_\_\_The 121 Heberton Avenue House occupies a trapezoidal corner lot which has a frontage of fifty-nine feet on Heberton Avenue and seventy-three feet on Bennett Street. Non-historic wood picket fences border the property on Heberton Avenue and along the western half of the property on Bennett Street. The eastern portion of the Bennett Street boundary, the eastern (rear) boundary, and southern boundary are bordered by non-historic six-foot-high picket fences. The house is approached by a historic bluestone path that extends from the front gate to the front porch.

The 121 Heberton Avenue House is a T-shaped building, with a two-and-one-half-story gable-roofed main block and two-story gable-roofed side wings. There is a one-story-plus basement kitchen ell at the rear of the building which has a one-story entrance porch at ground level. A veranda wraps around the front portion of the main block, which is three bays wide. The house rests on a masonry base which is parged with stucco and lit by rectangular windows. The front porch rests on non-historic cinder block piers which have been painted. There is a deep areaway under the porch at the front of the house providing full-length windows for the basement. The upper walls of the house are sheathed with lapped-clapboards. Its window and door openings are set off by molded wood surrounds with projecting lintels supported by simple brackets. The sides elevations of the main block have angled window bays at the first story. The windows at the first story have historic wood sashes which are protected by storm sash. The upper-story windows have non-historic six-over-six replacement sash. The gable roofs have deep overhanging eaves supported by exposed rafters with

carved braces resting on corbel brackets. A massive brick chimney at the center of main block is decorated with a recessed panel motif. It is now partially parged with stucco but otherwise retains its original form. The columns, railings, and cornice and roof of the wood porch that extends across the front and sides of the main block probably date from the 1920s or 1930s.

The house's **primary facade**, facing westward to Heberton Avenue, has a three-bay design. The one-story front porch is approached by a wood stoop with wood railings. The porch has non-historic square posts with stylized capitals. Its non-historic railings are composed of narrow wood members arranged in an x-pattern. The tracery wood braces though inspired by nineteenth-century sources are also non-historic. On the other hand the narrow porch floor boards appear to be historic and may be original. A nineteenth-century boot scraper has been installed on the porch floor near the stoop. The porch ceiling is pierced by three louvred metal vents. The porch roof has been covered with non-historic roofing materials.

The entrance to house is in the south bay. The center bracket of door surround has been painted with the number "121." The entry retains its original paneled wood door but has a non-historic storm door. There is an iron lantern attached to the clapboards to the north of the entry and a non-historic metal mail box and wood sign to the south of the entry. On the upper stories, the windows retain their historic wood surrounds but have non-historic six-over-six replacement sash. There is a small metal vent cover between the second story windows and a small fire alarm protruding from the clapboards to the south of the attic window.

The first story of the **north facade** of the main block is lit by a single window opening containing a pair of historic wood sash windows and non-historic storm sash. The west wall of the side wings is illuminated by a matching window which also has historic sash windows and non-historic storm windows. Paired two-over-two wood sash windows

are also employed for the angled bays. Articulated by a wood-framed two-story-plus-basement five-sided angled bay at the west end of the facade and by a line of square-headed windows at the east end of the facade. The second-story window has non-historic replacement sash.

The design of the **south facade** is identical to that of the north facade. The first story windows retain their historic sash. The second story window has replacement sash. A basement window opening located between the side wall and the bay window has been sealed with glass block.

The **rear facade**, which faces east, is partially concealed by the intersecting kitchen wing at the first story. The elevated basement of this facade is parged with stucco. Its square headed windows contain ? window sash. The first story window on the north side of the facade retains its historic bracketed surround but has replacement sash. Non-historic replacement sash windows and storm windows have been installed at the second story. The third-story gable is lit by a non-historic six-over-six window. There is a small metal vent cover between the second story windows and a small fire alarm protruding from the clapboards to the south of the attic window.

The base of **kitchen ell and enclosed porch** are parged with stucco. The upper portion of the porch is clad in non-historic siding and its roof is covered with non-historic materials. The wood and glass porch door is non-historic. The east wall of the kitchen ell is pierced by a large non-historic picture window. The south side of the wing contains an entry with a non-historic wood and glass door which is sheltered by a non-historic vinyl awning.

Report prepared by  
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## NOTES

1. This section on Staten Island and Port Richmond history was based on the following sources: Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Pantheon Books, reprint, 1982, originally published 1939), 620; Edna Holden, *Staten Island, A Resource Manual for School and Community* (New York: Board of Education of the City of New York, Bureau of Curriculum Research 1964), 5, 147, 174-177; Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1930) 348; Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1995) 929, 1112-1118; "Port Richmond," *New York Times*, July [ ], 1996 [Real Estate Section]. Preservation League of Staten Island, *Port Richmond Walking Tour*, brochure, [c.1995].

2. Port Richmond has had many names in its three-hundred-year history. The area was known as the Burial Place in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, after the Dutch Reformed Church cemetery. The port village grew as the site of a number of popular ferries and the name of the village changed with the name of the ferry operators. In the early nineteenth century it was known as Decker's Ferry, Dacosta's Ferry, Hilleker's Ferry, Ryers' Ferry, and Mersereau's Ferry, or Landing. The village was also known, in the mid-nineteenth century, as New Bristol, Irvington, and Cyrene. It is said that the Reverend James Brownlee of the Dutch Reformed Church suggested the name Port Richmond.
3. *Port Richmond Walking Tour*.
4. Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber Z, p. 409, 413. See also Map of the Property of Peter W. Haughwout and Eder Haughwout at Port Richmond surveyed by John Martineau, filed June 29, 1838, Richmond County, Office of the Register, file map 20.
5. This discussion of the development of the Veterans Park is based on the "Descriptive Sketch of Port Richmond," in Stapleton, *Tompkinsville, New Brighton, West New Brighton, Clifton, and Port Richmond: Their Representative Businessmen & Points of Interest* (New York: Mercantile Publishing Co, 1893), 78-80; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Public School 20 Annex Designation Report* (LP-1627), report prepared by Dr. Shirley Zavin and Nancy Goeschel (New York: City of New York, 1988); James Butler, *Map of Staten Island or Richmond County, New York* (New York: Mayer & Co, 1853). United States Census Office, *Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, New York, Westchester County, Roll 615 -- Town of Pelham, p. 384; *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, New York, Westchester County, Roll 882 -- Town of Pelham, p. 445; *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*, New York, Westchester County, Roll 1115 -- Town of Pelham, p. 107; *Population Schedules of the Tenth Census, 1880*, New York, Westchester County, Town of Pelham, Supr. Dist 3, ED 120, p. 182; Randall Comfort, *History of Bronx Borough, City of New York: compiled by the North Side News* (Bronx, NY: North Side Press, 1906); New York City Directories, 1882/83, 1891/92, 1893/94, 1897/98; tombstone inscriptions for the Pell and Scofield family members at the Pelham Cemetery, City Island.
6. This building was replaced by Public School 20 in 1891. A large annex designed by James Warriner Moulton was added to the building in 1897. Public School 20 Annex is a designated New York City Landmark.
7. Conveyances, Liber 35, p 159.
8. Conveyances, Liber 16, p. 261.
9. In California Burger pursued his trade as carpenter erecting one of the first houses in Greenwood Valley (now Greenwood), a small town in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, that became a major commercial center during the Gold Rush. He also tried his hand at prospecting for gold on the Yuba River. Burger's California trip is documented by his letters to his brother-in-law Lawrence Hillyer, two of which were published in "Letters from a Staten Island 'Forty Niner', 1850," *Staten Island Historian*, vol. 30, no. 3 (July-September, 1969), 23-25. See also the unpublished letter in Prall-Decker-Hillyer family collection at the Staten Island Historical Society.
10. Conveyances, Liber 35, pp. 162, 163; H.F. Walling, *Map of Staten Island* (New York: D.A. Fox, 1859). During the 1850s Burger also derived income by investing in mortgages and purchased the rights to a patent for improvements to window sash. He was active in the civic affairs of Northfield, serving as village supervisor in 1855.
11. Conveyances, Liber 48, p. 555. Housman perfected his title to the property by obtaining a quit claim from Eder Haughwout and his wife Elizabeth in September 1861. See Conveyances, Liber 48, p. 732.
12. For Housman see Mary Thacher, Housman-Johnson-Van Name Family Research, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences Archives, Genealogy file 4.23 B.
13. Charles Gilbert Hine and William T. Davis, *Legends, Stories, and Folklore of Old Staten Island* (New York: Staten Island Historical Society, 1925), 114.

14. Ibid.
15. New York City Department of Records and Information Services, Municipal Archives, Northfield Tax Assessment Rolls, 1867, 1872,
16. *Stapleton, Tompkinsville*, 79.
17. After Consolidation in 1898, Bottger was one nine commissioners appointed to the School Board of Richmond County and served as Chairman of the Committee on Schoolhouses and Sites. See "Borough School Boards Named," *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1898; "Richmond Borough Has No Money to Pay Its Teachers," *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1899.
18. This discussion of the influence of architectural handbooks is based on Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1738-1950* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001; Sally Ann McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19 n. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn, 1984), 128-150.
19. For an overview of Downing's career and achievements see George B. Tatum, "A.J. Downing," in *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Free Press, 1982). For the impact of his ideas on rural design see McMurry, 39-47.
20. A.J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850: rpt. New York: Dover, 1869), 33.
21. Ibid, 141.
22. Downing, *Architecture of Country Houses*, 275.
23. Ibid, 32.
24. Ibid.
25. Reiff, 62.
26. Ibid
27. Gervase Wheeler, *Homes for People, in Suburb and Country: the Villa, the Mansion, and the Cottage, adapted to American Climate and Wants* (New York: C. Scribner, 1855),
28. Robert S. Brown served as president of the Richmond County Fair Association and was prominently identified with the County Fairs held on the Island prior to World War I.



## 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 121 Heberton Avenue 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 121 Heberton Avenue House, constructed by carpenter-builder James G. Burger around 1859-61, is a rare example in New York City of a picturesque villa in the Rustic style; that its design combines elements derived from the pattern books of Gervase Wheeler, Calvert Vaux, and Samuel Sloan such as broad gables, openwork brackets, and long outside galleries that are characteristic of the style; that this three-bay wide, two-and-one-half-story frame building is sheathed in its original clapboards and retains its original wood moldings and first floor fenestration; that its notable features include the handsome bracketed door and window surrounds, angled bay windows, a wrap-around porch, and cross-gabled roof with overhanging eaves enriched with unusual trussed brackets; that this house passed soon after its completion to Captain John J. Housman, a prosperous oysterman and noted abolitionist; that it was leased to tenants until 1892; that it was then acquired by Robert Brown, a saloon owner and prominent politician; that the house remained in the ownership of the Brown family until the 1940s and that prominent residents included Municipal Court Judge Thomas C. Brown, and Democratic-Party leader Robert S. Brown; that it is currently being used as a residence and remains a significant reminder of the period when the neighborhood around Veterans Park was Port Richmond's most desirable residential section

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 121 Heberton Avenue House, 121 Heberton Avenue, Staten Island, and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 9, as its Landmark Site.



121 Heberton Avenue House, 121 Heberton Avenue Staten Island  
View from the west showing the Heberton Avenue façade  
Photo: Carl Forster



View from the southwest showing the Heberton Avenue and south facades  
Photos: Carl Forster



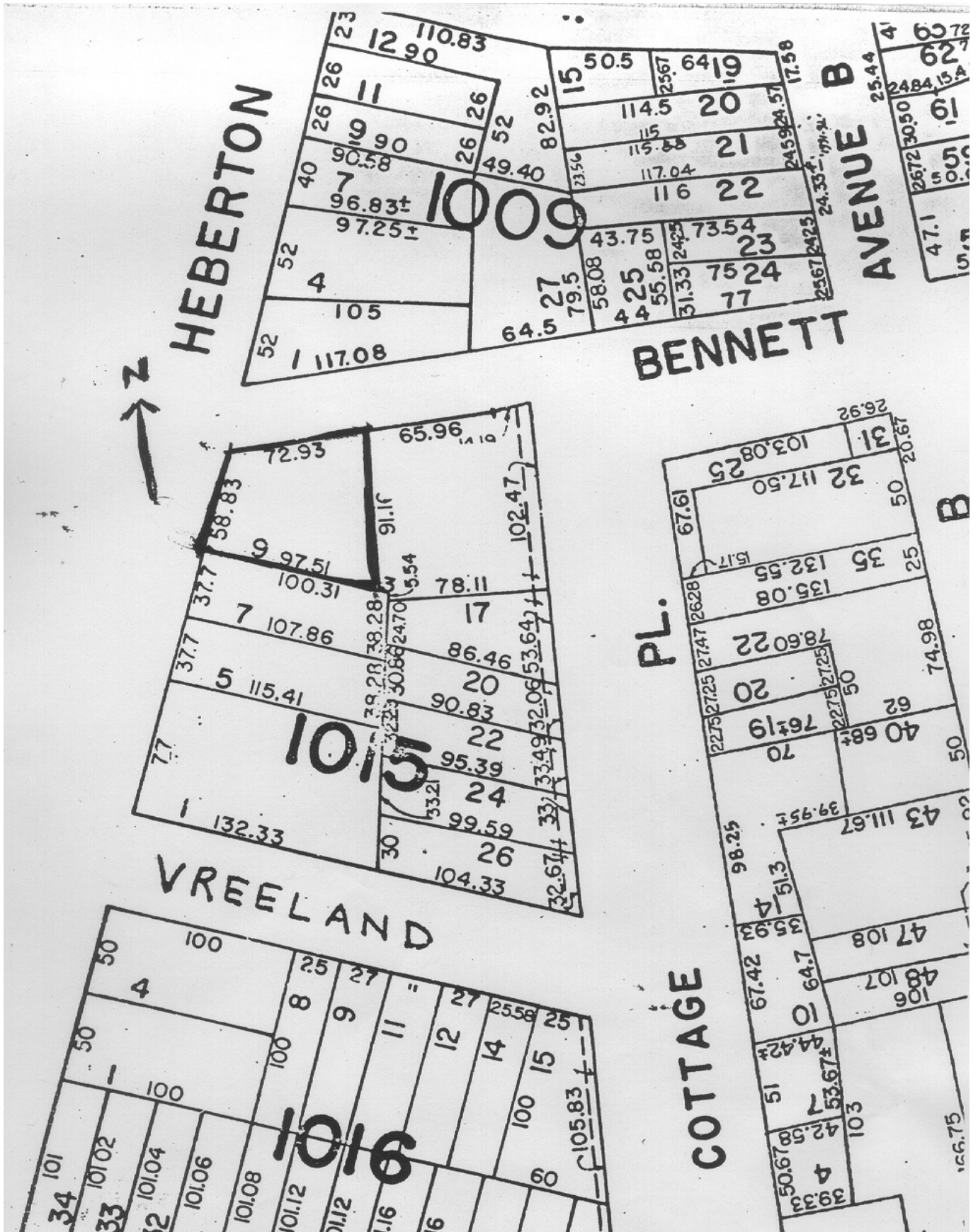
View from the northwest showing the Heberton Avenue and Bennett Street facades  
Photo: Carl Forster



Left: Detail of the bay window on the south façade  
Right: Detail of the front entrance on Heberton Avenue  
Photos: Carl Forster



Left: Detail of the showing the second-story window surround and gabled roof  
Right: Detail of the overhanging eaves and brackets on the east (rear) elevation  
Photos: Carl Forster



121 Heberton Avenue House, 121 Heberton Avenue, Staten Island  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 1015, Lot 9  
 Source: Sanborn Building & Property Atlas of Staten Island, 1998 v. 2., pl. 211