

DESIGNATION DENIED

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Landmarks Preservation Commission
June 19, 1979, Designation List 126
LP-1042

CAPTAIN JOHN T. BARKER HOUSE, 9-11 Trinity Place
Borough of Staten Island, Built 1851, Architect Unknown

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 188, Lots 83 & 86.

On March 13, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Captain John T. Barker House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 18). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Captain John T. Barker House at 9-11 Trinity Place, Castleton, Staten Island, is a representative example of the large and imposing Italianate villas erected on Staten Island, and elsewhere, by prosperous businessmen during the middle years of the 19th century. At that time, the Italianate villa was the newest, the most stylish and the most desirable form of residence for a well-to-do man and his family. Such a house, with extensive landscaped grounds and beautifully appointed out-buildings, proclaimed to all the world that here lived a family of means and taste. Because the distance from Staten Island to Manhattan, the business center, could be covered in less than half-an-hour by fast steam ferry boats, many such families established estates within easy commuting distance on the North Shore of Staten Island - - sometimes as country estates or summer residences, and often as year-round homes. The Barker House is a rare survival of this type.

John T. Barker, 20 years of age and a silk dyer by trade, arrived on Staten Island from Massachusetts in the year 1819. In that same year three brothers named Barrett, also from Massachusetts, came to Staten Island intending to establish a commercial silk dyeing and print works. They chose to locate on Staten Island for several reasons: first, because of the availability of large tracts of land with several springs and streams of good clear water for use in the dyeing process; second, because these tracts of land were reasonable in price and taxes were low so that it would not be expensive to hold land which might be needed later for expansion; third, the proximity of a large and important seaport where untreated silks from the Orient could be received, processed and then easily transported to other parts of the country. The brothers William, Nathan and George Minot Barrett bought a large parcel of land near West Brighton Landing where, in 1819, they established their business, known as Barrett, Tileston & Company. They employed over 100 men, many of whom had come from New England.¹

John T. Barker began as a silk dyer with this firm and he remained there until his death in 1863 at which time he was superintendent of the plant, although, after reorganization in 1850, the establishment was known as The New York Dyeing and Print Works, and the area had been nicknamed "Factoryville."² George Barrett went on to form another firm which became known as Barrett Nephews Cleaning & Dyeing Company, a well-known business on Staten Island until well into the 20th century.³

*Designation "Returned without
prejudice by Board of Estimate*

After becoming established in his trade, John T. Barker married Ann Bedell, descendant of an old Staten Island family, on February 24, 1825, at St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Church at Richmond, Staten Island, in the former town of Northfield.⁴ John and Ann Barker had a family of four daughters and five sons. The daughters all died either in infancy or in childhood and are buried beside their parents in the Barker family plot in the Staten Island Cemetery at West New Brighton. The sons grew to manhood and moved away from Staten Island.⁵

As a man of many interests, Barker did a great deal to serve his chosen community. He was active in the affairs of St. Andrew's Church, serving as a vestryman and taking a particular interest in the Sunday school. He also acted as treasurer for Trinity Chapel. He was one of the incorporators of the Staten Island Historical Society, and his name is listed in the Certificate of Incorporation which was published in the Staten Islander of August 30, 1856. He was a Director of the North Shore Staten Island Ferry Company, a line which was organized in 1860. He served in the Staten Island Militia which was quite active during the war with Mexico in 1847-48. He held the rank of Captain, a title which remained with him, for he was known to all on Staten Island as "Captain Barker."⁶

The most certain way to amass riches in the New York area in the 19th century was to purchase farm property on the outskirts of established communities and to hold it for a number of years until it could be sold for building lots as the built-up areas expanded. Philip Hone, Mayor of New York from 1825 to 1826, appreciated this fact. He wrote in his diary on January 14, 1835, "men in moderate circumstances have become immensely rich by the good fortune of owning farms of a few acres of this chosen land."⁷

Barker made his plunge into real estate investment on June 23, 1832, when he purchased "a number of lots in the Town of Castleton, laid off by David Mercereau, Esq. from the purchase he made of the estate of the late John Heliker, dec'd, and then conveyed by the same David Mercereau and Maria, his wife, to Jacob Bodine, then by said Jacob Bodine and Hannah, his wife, to said John Barker."⁸ Barker held all but two or three of these lots for 18 years. In 1850, he began to develop the property he had purchased in 1832. He laid out streets; some of which were Barker Street, Ann Street (named for his wife), and Trinity Place.⁹ His land fronted on Shore Road, now Richmond Terrace, overlooking Kill vanKull. There, he selected a choice site of four acres upon which to construct his mansion. He also began to sell other property in August, 1850, and from then until the time of his death in April, 1863, he had sold 26 parcels of one or more lots each. After his death, his executors sold another 23 parcels.

The Italianate style which Barker chose for his mansion was relatively new in America, having first appeared about 1845. It was a very adaptable style and lent itself to the design of buildings both urban and rural - - - palazzi for the town and villas for the country. Popular architects of the time such as Vaux, Downing and Sloan all published books with plans and drawings of elaborate villas in the "Italian Style."¹⁰ More modest designs were illustrated in the pages of the home publications of the day such as Godey's Lady's Book and The Rural New Yorker. Thus, plans and specifications for Italianate villas reached an eager public which could use them freely without the necessity of hiring an architect. The John T. Barker House, dating from 1851, is a rural Italianate villa in a vernacular style. It could well have

been inspired by one of the sources mentioned above and built by a competent local master builder.

Captain Barker died on April 27, 1863. He willed all of his property to his wife for her use for as long as she remained his widow. At her death the property was to go to his sons.¹¹ Ann Bedell Barker survived her husband by two years and five months, dying on September 21, 1865, but before she died, the property was advertised for sale in the Richmond County Gazette of March 22, 1865, as follows:

FOR SALE
AT PRIVATE SALE
a new and beautiful
MANSION HOUSE
and land attached
Belonging to the estate of the late Captain John
Barker, situated on the
NORTH SHORE of STATEN ISLAND
Between Factoryville and Port Richmond.

The land contains Four Acres, and extends to the shores of the Kill Von Kull, so that the water prospect is uninterrupted. The land is well laid out; in the rear of the dwelling is a Vegetable Garden with numerous choice Fruit Trees of various kinds, and in front a Spacious Lawn, decked with Shrubbery and Ornamental Trees.

The house is built in the very best manner, and contains 14 Rooms, and all the modern improvements.

Altogether, this is one of the most desirable places on the Island, and unsurpassed by any other on the North Shore.

Apply on the premises, or to J.J. CLUTE near the Landing, Factoryville.

On October 5, 1865, the month following Mrs. Barker's death, the executors sold the entire property to Samuel Raynor for the sum of \$15,000.¹² Raynor proceeded to have the property surveyed and divided up into 15 lots of various sizes, leaving the mansion on lot No. 1 with well over an acre. This is shown on the map of the Raynor property filed in the office of the Register of Richmond County on October 29, 1872, by J.J. Clute, Surveyor, as map No. 327.¹³

Most Italianate villas on Staten Island were located on large, well-placed lots which became very valuable for commercial use or for subdivision into smaller lots. This usually meant the demolition of the mansion. Occasionally one would be saved by removal to a new site, and it was by just such a relocation that the Captain John T. Barker House has survived until today. It remained a private one-family dwelling until the second decade of the 20th century when the lot was to be used for commercial purposes and the house was in danger of demolition. At that time, Anna B. Faye, a prominent Staten Island businesswoman, residing on Trinity Place, stepped in to save the house. Mrs. Faye, a remarkable woman, was the owner and operator of a very successful coal business which she founded and supervised while she raised a family of five children. The offices of the Faye Coal Company were located at the foot of Barker Street.¹⁴ In the spring of 1928, under the aegis of Mrs. Faye, the Barker House was moved from its original site on Richmond Terrace to her land on Trinity Place where it stands today. Subsequently, according to Building Department records, the house was altered to 2 two-family building sections with party wall under one roof (i.e. four apartments) with the address of 9-11 Trinity Place. Nonetheless, the original character of the house is still very apparent.

The Barker House is basically a large two-and-one-half story rectangular wooden block set on a masonry foundation which rises three feet above the ground. The most prominent feature of the house is the flat roof with an extremely wide overhang at the eaves supported by large ornate scrolled brackets with turned pendants hanging from their extreme outer edges. This roof treatment is the detail which all Italianate villas have in common. Beneath the eaves and centered between the brackets are the attic windows which are relatively small in size and were not meant to be conspicuous. The other windows all have lintels with projecting cornices supported by brackets at either end. The sashes are an interesting combination of two different kinds in the same house. The ones in the windows of the front facade are divided into small panes by narrow muntins of the traditional kind, while the other sashes in the house are made in a four-over-four design intended to give the impression of casement windows. All of the windows originally had louvered wooden exterior blinds. These remain on a few of the attic windows and on a large floor-length blind window on the side of the house. This blind window is for appearance only, and is designed to echo the two floor-length windows which open onto the veranda on either side of the front entrance. The original front doors have been removed. However, the enframingent with its high bracketed lintel remains in place. The veranda, with its paired fluted columns resting on square plinths, gives the facade a very graceful touch and does much to lighten the otherwise ponderous appearance of the building. The infill between the piers which support the veranda floor is now cement block, but it would originally have been wooden lattice in a criss-cross pattern. The siding, now Johns-Manville shingles which were probably applied in the 1930s, would have been wooden clapboards and the house would perhaps have been painted in a subtle combination of three or four colors. The mansion is crowned by a sizable square, flat-roofed cupola which also has scrolled brackets beneath its projecting eaves. There are paired windows with narrow-muntined four-over-four sashes on all four sides of the cupola. A cupola is usually thought of as a sort of observatory and, indeed, this could well be the case in a location like that of the Barker House with its broad view across the water, but the chief reason for a cupola, no matter how decorative it might be, was to aid in ventilating and cooling the house in hot weather. The cupola, the widely projecting eaves, the large brackets, the floor-length windows, the veranda, are all component parts of a villa in the Italianate style and are the features which give it distinction. All of these are to be found in the Captain John T. Barker House.

On September 29, 1979, the Barker House was purchased by the Orthodox Catholic Church in North and South America for the use of the Holy Trinity Monastery, and they plan to restore the house to its original appearance.

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Research Department.

FOOTNOTES

1. Henry G. Steinmeyer, Staten Island 1524-1898, Staten Island Historical Society, Richmondtown, Staten Island, New York, 1950, p. 45.
2. Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, Staten Island and Its People, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1930, Vol II, p. 999.

3. 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, p. 113.
4. Royden Woodward Vosburgh, Records of St. Andrew's P.E. Church at Richmond Staten Island in the former Town of Northfield, Vol. II & III unpublished typescript, Staten Island Historical Society, New York, April, 1923.
5. Royden Woodward Vosburgh, Staten Island Gravestone Inscriptions, Vol. I, unpublished typescript, New York, March, 1924.
6. Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, Staten Island and Its People, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1930, Vol II, p. 856, 999 and 1010.
7. Allan Nevins, The Diary of Philip Hone, Dodd, Mead and Company, New York, 1927, Vol. I, p. 147-148.
8. Staten Island Deeds, Jacob Bodine of Castleton to John Barker of Castleton, June 23, 1832, Liber U, p. 104-106 and Liber W, p. 73.
9. Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, Staten Island and Its People, Lewis Historical Publishing Company Inc., New York, 1930, Vol. II, p. 998-999.
10. Calvert Vaux, Villas and Cottages, Harper & Brothers, New York, 2nd Edition, 1864; Andrew Jackson Downing, The Architecture of Country Houses, D. Appleton & Company, New York, 1850; Samuel Sloan, The Model Architect, E.S. Jones & Co., Philadelphia, 1852.
11. Staten Island Wills, April 23, 1860, file # 850, Liber I, p. 673.
12. Staten Island Deeds, John, Calvin and Joseph Barker to Samuel Raynor, October 5, 1865, Liber 62, p. 173.
13. Office of the Register of Richmond County, Map No. 327, October 29, 1872.
14. Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, Staten Island and Its People, Lewis Historical Publishing Company Inc., New York, 1930, Vol IV, p. 437-438.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

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 Captain John T. Barker House has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

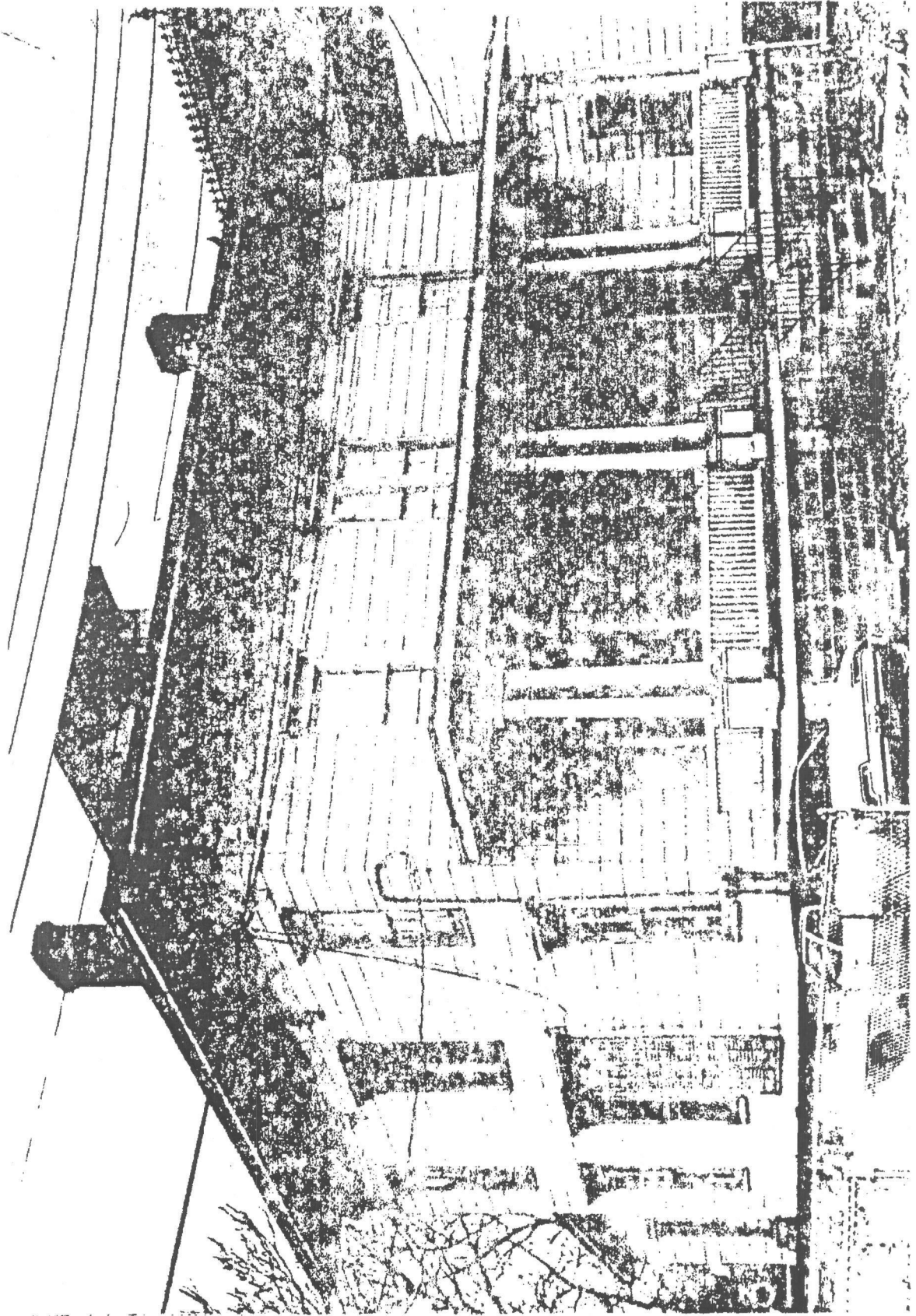
The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Captain John T. Barker House is a representative example of the large and imposing Italianate villas erected on Staten Island during the middle years of the 19th century; that the house is a rural Italianate villa in a vernacular style; that it might well have been inspired by designs which were published in the books and magazines of the late 1840s; that the most prominent and characteristically Italianate feature of the house is the flat roof with extremely wide overhanging eaves supported by large ornate scrolled brackets with turned pendants hanging from the outer edges; that the veranda with its

paired fluted columns resting on square plinths gives the facade a very graceful touch; that the house is crowned with a sizable square, flat-roofed cupola with paired four-over-four windows on all four sides; that the house was built for Captain John T. Barker, a prominent Staten Island businessman; and that there are plans to restore the house for use by the Holy Trinity Monastery.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Captain John T. Barker House, 9-11 Trinity Place, Borough of Staten Island, and designates Tax Map Block 188, Lots 83 and 86 as its Landmark Site.

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Built: 1851
Arch: Unknown

Captain John T. Barker House
6-11 Trinity Place Staten Island

Photo Credit:
Peter Kunt



Photo Credit:
Peter Kunz

Captain John T. Barber House
411 "Fidelity" Place, Boston Island
Cape Cod

Built: 1901
Arch: Unknown