



# HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY FORM

NYS OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION  
& HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
P.O. BOX 189, WATERFORD, NY 12188  
(518) 237-8643

OFFICE USE ONLY

USN:

## IDENTIFICATION

Property name (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address or Street Location 129 Piermont Avenue  
County Rockland Town/City \_\_\_\_\_ Village/Hamlet: South Nyack  
Owner \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Original use Residential Current use Residential  
Architect/Builder, if known \_\_\_\_\_ Date of construction, if known Early-19<sup>th</sup> century

## DESCRIPTION

Materials – please check those materials that are visible

Exterior Walls:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wood clapboard	<input type="checkbox"/> wood shingle	<input type="checkbox"/> vertical boards	<input type="checkbox"/> plywood	
	<input type="checkbox"/> stone	<input type="checkbox"/> brick	<input type="checkbox"/> poured concrete	<input type="checkbox"/> concrete block	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vinyl siding	<input type="checkbox"/> aluminum siding	<input type="checkbox"/> cement-asbestos	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	
Roof:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> asphalt, shingle	<input type="checkbox"/> asphalt, roll	<input type="checkbox"/> wood shingle	<input type="checkbox"/> metal	<input type="checkbox"/> slate
Foundation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> stone	<input type="checkbox"/> brick	<input type="checkbox"/> poured concrete	<input type="checkbox"/> concrete block	

Other materials and their location: \_\_\_\_\_

Alterations, if known: Rear addition Date: Mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  deteriorated

## Photos

Provide several clear, original photographs of the property proposed for nomination. Submitted views should represent the property as a whole. For buildings or structures, this includes exterior and interior views, general setting, outbuildings and landscape features. Color prints are acceptable for initial submissions.

Please staple one photograph providing a complete view of the structure or property to the front of this sheet. Additional views should be submitted in a separate envelope or stapled to a continuation sheet.

## Maps

Attach a printed or drawn locational map indicating the location of the property in relationship to streets, intersections or other widely recognized features so that the property can be accurately positioned. Show a north arrow. Include a scale or estimate distances where possible.

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(See Reverse)

**PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION**

**IF YOU ARE PREPARING A NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION, PLEASE REFER TO THE ATTACHED INSTRUCTIONS**

**Narrative Description of Property:** Briefly describe the property and its setting. Include a verbal description of the location (e.g. north side of NY 17, west of Jones Road; a general description of the building structure or feature including such items as architectural style (if known) number of stories type and shape of roof (flat gabled mansard shed or other) materials and landscape features. Identify and describe any associated buildings, structures or features on the property such as garages silos privies pools gravesites. Identify any known exterior and interior alterations such as additions replacement windows aluminum or vinyl siding or changes in plan. Include dates of construction and alteration if know. Attach additional sheets as needed.

See Continuation Sheet

**Narrative Description of Significance:** Briefly describe those characteristics by which this property may be considered historically significant. Significance may include, but is not limited to, a structure being an intact representative of an architectural or engineering type or style (e.g., Gothic Revival style cottage, Pratt through-truss bridge); association with historic events or broad patterns of local, state or national history (e.g., a cotton mill from a period of growth in local industry, a seaside cottage representing a locale's history as a resort community, a structure associated with activities of the "underground railroad."); or by association with persons or organizations significant at a local, state or national level. Simply put, why is this property important to you and the community. Attach additional sheets as needed.

See Continuation Sheet

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## 129 Piermont Avenue

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### Physical Description

Constructed in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, 129 Piermont Avenue is located in the Village of South Nyack, Town of Orangetown, Rockland County, New York. It is bound to the north by 127 Piermont Avenue, the south by 135 Piermont Avenue, the east by the Hudson River, and the west by Piermont Avenue. The residence at 129 Piermont Avenue was included in prior surveys of South Nyack conducted in 1980 (Friends of the Nyacks, 1980a). It is located within the area of potential effect (APE); over 4,000 feet north of the Tappan Zee Bridge (see Location Map). The bridge is visible from the rear of the property.

The property includes a 19<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular workers residence oriented west toward Piermont Avenue, fronted by small lawn. It also overlooks a rear lawn that slopes eastward toward the Hudson River, affording access to ample river views. The front and rear lawns are improved with many mature trees. Furthermore, a brick driveway leads from the eastern edge of the sidewalk to the property, and a flagstone path leads from the eastern edge of the sidewalk to the door, and emphasize the historic suburban setting of the residence.

The residence is a one-and-a-half-story, rectangular-plan, frame building that sits atop a brick foundation. The residence is three bays long and two bays wide, sheathed in vinyl siding and wood clapboards. It is capped by a side-gable roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. The roof is pierced by an interior brick chimney that has been rebuilt.

The west façade is the main façade. The first story is pierced by a glass-and-panel door and two six-over-six double-hung sash. The door is sheltered by a front-gable portico supported by wood posts. The roof line of the portico is emphasized by exposed rafters. The top half-story is pierced by three three-pane frieze-band windows. Fenestration throughout the façade is set within wood surrounds.

The north and south facades are the side facades. The north façade features a shed-roof addition on the first story, and a metal louvered ventilator in the top half-story. The south façade has a single six-over-six double-hung sash on the first story.

The east, or rear, façade faces the Hudson River. A single-story, flat-roof addition is banked into the sloped ground, and functions as the first story of the east façade. The roof of the addition is used as a deck to capitalize on the river view. Fenestration on the second story includes a door flanked by a double-hung sash and paired double-hung sash, respectively. The top half-story is pierced by two three-pane frieze-band windows set within wood surrounds.

### Historic Context

#### Nyack Area, 18th and 19th Centuries

In the 1700s and early 1800s, Rockland County's economy was agrarian, based primarily on subsistence agriculture. Few villages had been established, and extended families, mainly of Dutch and English extraction, settled in loose groupings and farmed large patches of land. Many settled along the Hudson River in Nyack, an area that by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century would be split into three villages including the central Village of Nyack with Upper Nyack to the north, and South Nyack to the south. In 1800, Nyack itself was home to only a few families: the Smiths, DePews, Tallmans, Lydeckers, and in South Nyack, the Cornelisons (*Old Nyack*, 1928).

The DePews owned much property in the vicinity of 129 Piermont Avenue. Specifically, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, they established a 70-acre farm which extended to the banks of the Hudson River, the current site of Memorial Park in Nyack. A red sandstone gristmill was erected at the south end of the property, near a stream fed by the Hudson River, and by 1800, the gristmill had been converted into a sulfur match factory. By 1850, the match factory had been converted into Storm's Tub and Pail, a woodenware factory that used water power to produce products that were sold throughout the United States and Europe (Friends of the Nyacks, 1980b).

O'Connor's 1854 Rockland County atlas depicts Storm's factory in its prominent riverfront location, south of Depew's Dock. The atlas also depicts several residences along one of the oldest north/south roads in the area, Front Street, later renamed Piermont Avenue (O'Connor, 1854; Green, 1886). One of the residences depicted was most likely present-day 129 Piermont Avenue, one of many residences likely erected during the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century to house workers employed in the various land- and water-based industries in Nyack (Friends of the Nyacks, 1980a).

In addition to woodworking, shoe factories also thrived in Nyack during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1826, William Perry established the first shoe factory, an industry that was to play a central role in the village's economy. At first the enterprise was a cottage industry; many of Perry's employees were country farmers doing piecework in their spare time. By 1832, however, he employed ten or twelve full-time workers. Shortly after Perry established his shop, Nathaniel, Edward, and Daniel Burr (relatives of Aaron Burr) organized another shoe factory. From the 1850s through the 1870s, Nyack became home to additional shoe factories. The use of sewing machines and steam power allowed companies to modernize and expand their businesses. By 1860, shoemaking was the largest single category of male employment in Nyack. Ketchel & Caywood had a factory on Railroad Street and DePew Avenue. C.B. Kennedy's shoe factory on Broadway employed fifty people; Conrad Doersh employed thirty, and M.A. Morrell and Jacob Siebert's firms employed forty each, to name but a few of the proliferating shoemaking enterprises in the village (Cole, 1884).

Several important ship carpentry firms were also established along the river and produced many well-known steamboats of the day including the *Arrow* and the *Crystenah*. William Voorhis built the first modern catamaran, the *Henry W. Longfellow*, at his Nyack shipyard; a design experiment that proved a financial disappointment. Other industries operated in the village included a piano-making establishment. Farming remained an important economic factor. The village's convenient location on the Hudson River allowed the local industries to flourish. A steamboat line operated by the Smith family ran a brisk business of exporting Nyack's agricultural produce and industrial goods to New York City (*Old Nyack*, 1928).

Quarrying was another industry that was prominent in riverfront communities in Orangetown, including Nyack and Grand View-on-Hudson (Grand View) (located south of South Nyack) during the early-19<sup>th</sup> century. Many quarries were established along the steep hillside west of River Road in Grand View. By the 1830s, 16 quarries were situated in Grand View, while 15 quarries were located in Nyack. Quarrying facilitated improvement of Grand View's River Road from a lane into a country road. During the height of quarrying from 1820-40, brownstone was shipped on scows from Grand View, via newly constructed piers. Some quarries even constructed narrow gauge railroads to facilitate transport of stones from quarries to the riverside (Talley, 1989).

Railroading was also prominent during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Erie Railroad's northern terminus in the 1850s was Piermont, the village several miles south of Nyack. During this time, Piermont's population was approximately double that of Nyack. A large percentage of the inhabitants of Piermont were Irish

laborers working for the railroad. Nyack's smaller population, in contrast, still drew mainly from the nearby country farms of New York and New Jersey (Nordstrom, 1973).

When the railroad finally reached Nyack in the 1870s, the new opportunities for goods transport added additional fuel to the industrial revolution taking place in Nyack. The families that controlled shipping enterprises offered incentives for industries to continue to utilize steamboats and establish themselves along the river, however, the railroad eventually won out. New commercial buildings, now built of brick and rising multiple stories, were built in the vicinity of the railroad.

Population growth and the fast pace of development facilitated efforts to incorporate the three Nyack villages in the 1870s. In 1872, both the villages of Upper Nyack and Nyack were incorporated. Six years later in 1878, the Village of South Nyack was incorporated (Green, 1886). During this period, South Broadway was laid out through South Nyack and was situated one block west of Piermont Avenue. South Broadway provided access to South Nyack from communities to the south, including Grand View and Piermont (United States Geological Survey [USGS] 1902; 1943).

By 1888, "a major transformation had been effected with the erection of some fifty blocks of all shapes and sorts. During the year 1891 alone, four brick blocks were built, and in the five years preceding, 209 buildings of all types had been constructed at Nyack" (Nordstrom, 1973). Increasingly, large landowners subdivided lots and developed them as housing for the workers employed in the various thriving factories and at the railroad.

By the 1880s-90s, many residences and industrial enterprises had also been constructed along Piermont Avenue. While Storm's Tub and Pail had been converted to function as a flock mill and then a paper mill, the Depew family had also erected greenhouses both north of the mill and on the west side of Piermont Avenue, northwest of 129 Piermont Avenue. In addition to modest worker housing, multiple high-style residences had also been constructed along the east side of Piermont Avenue, overlooking the Hudson River during this time, including present-day 99, 135, and 147 Piermont Avenue (Sanborn Map Company, 1887; 1892).

New residential development was also concentrated in areas to the south, west, and north of Nyack's center. The South Nyack station was located on Franklin Street at Smith Avenue, while the Nyack station was actually located within the bounds of South Nyack on Franklin Street and Cedar Hill Avenue (South Nyack Centennial Publication Committee, 1978). The railroad terminus and freight depot were located on Franklin Street and DePew Avenue, and many factories were established around this intersection. At the corner of Railroad and Cedar Hill Avenues, for example, were clustered the Morrow Shoe Manufacturing Company; A. H. Jackman Shoe Company (one of the largest employers in Nyack); Gurnee & Gregory Lumber, Coal, and Wood; O.P. Wright & Co. Carriage and Sleigh Manufactory; and Charles McElroy Carpenter and Builder (Sanborn, 1887).

South Nyack experienced the most rapid and concentrated residential development of the Nyacks during this period because it possessed the particular advantage of being close to railroad facilities. In fact, the railroad right-of-way (ROW) ran along the east side of Franklin Street in South Nyack proper, and south of the village core, situated east of the precursor to Shadyside Avenue (Hyde, 1886).

The Depression of 1893 caused an economic downturn in Nyack. Many of the shoe factories failed, and despite efforts, the industry never fully recovered. A few shipyards continued to operate, but were increasingly limited to the production of pleasure craft (Nordstrom, 1973).

## Nyack Area, 20th Century-Present

Despite the declining industries, Nyack fostered a relatively successful tourist industry. Increasingly too, 'suburbanites' built new residences in Nyack. They continued to work in New York City, but took advantage of the convenience of the railroad connection. Attractive qualities included the ease of travel (the train journey between the village and New York City was less than an hour in duration), beautiful Hudson River scenery and recreational opportunities (*Nyack...The Gem of the Hudson*, 1903).

By 1920, 43 passenger trains ran between Nyack and New York City every day. The convenience of travel attracted many commuters and vacationers, and houses proliferated on the southern outskirts of South Nyack during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Hillside and Shadyside Avenues, and the southern portion of Broadway.

Furthermore, the character of Piermont Avenue had also changed during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1926, buildings associated with milling operations had been removed from the east side of Piermont Avenue, and the Depew greenhouses were no longer a major presence along the east and west sides of the avenue, thereby imbuing the area with a distinctly residential feel with ample views of the Hudson River (Sanborn Map Company, 1926). By 1935, the Tappan Zee Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Park Association deeded the property to the Village of Nyack to create Memorial Park. Nine trees were planted along the perimeter of the park along Piermont and Depew avenues to honor nine soldiers in Nyack who perished during World War I (1917-18) (Rockland County Historical Society, no date).

Following World War II (1941-45), the federal government created dramatic incentives for highway construction. The Palisades Parkway was begun in 1947, and shortly thereafter, the New York State Thruway (Interstate [I]-87/287) and the Tappan Zee Bridge were constructed in the early 1950s. Nyack, and particularly South Nyack, would be irrevocably changed when they were chosen as the path of the Tappan Zee Bridge and I-87/I-287. In March 1952, construction began on the bridge south of 129 Piermont Avenue. The bridge would touch down near the southeastern boundary of South Nyack, and on the Thruway was laid out along the east side of Hillside Avenue (US Route 9W).

The highway project, completed in 1955, was unpopular amongst the majority of residents of the Nyacks due to the number of property acquisitions required for construction. The new highway connected with the Tappan Zee Bridge from a trajectory parallel to Hillside Avenue by sweeping through Nyack and South Nyack in a cut. Hillside Avenue was elevated to accommodate construction of the highway cut. The construction of Interchange 10 also impacted the Village of South Nyack, requiring the acquisition and removal of additional municipal and commercial properties (South Nyack Centennial Publication Committee, 1978). Following construction of the Thruway and Interchange 10, many local roads were truncated, but bridges were constructed at Highland Avenue in Nyack, and Broadway and South Franklin Street in South Nyack to maintain access.

The population of South Nyack dropped somewhat during construction of the bridge, however, shortly after its completion, it rose again to an all-time high. The automobile replaced the railroad as the primary method of travel between Nyack and New York City. In 1965, rail commuters from Nyack to New York had diminished so significantly that passenger service was discontinued (Zimmerman, 2002). Today the population consists of both full-time residents working locally or commuting to jobs in New York City, as well as vacationers with holiday homes in the area.

## **National Register Eligibility Statement and Proposed National Register Boundary**

The residence at 129 Piermont Avenue is recommended National Register eligible under Criterion C because it survives as a good example of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century vernacular workers house overlooking the Hudson River. Character-defining features include its rectangular-plan form and massing and original fenestration, including six-over-six double-hung sash; three-pane frieze-band windows, and glass-and-panel door. Landscape features include mature trees on its front and rear lawns. Hardscape feature include the brick driveway and flagstone path that lead to the residence from the eastern edge of the sidewalk, and emphasize the suburban setting of the residence. Although 129 Piermont Avenue was one of many workers houses constructed along Piermont Avenue in South Nyack during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is one of the few surviving that retains the seven aspects of integrity necessary to qualify for National Register listing, including location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The proposed National Register boundary includes the tax parcel upon which 135 Piermont Avenue sits, including the riparian parcel in the Hudson River.

## References

### Books

Cole, David, ed. *History of Rockland County*. New York: J. B. Beers & Company. 1884.

Green, Frank B. *History of Rockland County*. New York: A.S. Barnes & Company. 1886.

McAlester, Virginia & Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1991.

Nordstrom, Carl. *Frontier Elements in a Hudson River Village*. Port Washington: Kennikat Press. 1973.

*Nyack... The Gem of the Hudson*. Nyack: Blauvelt and Morrell. 1903.

*Old Nyack: An Illustrated Historical Sketch of Nyack-on-the-Hudson*. Nyack: Nyack National Bank. 1928.

South Nyack Centennial Publication Committee. *South Nyack Centennial 1878-1978*. Tenafly: Keystone General Offset Printing. 1978.

Talley, Terry. *Oh What a Grand View*. Altus, OK: Altus Printing. 1989.

Zimmerman, Linda, ed. *Rockland County 1900-2000: Century of Progress*. New City: Historical Society of Rockland County. 2002.

### Pamphlets

Friends of the Nyacks. "A Stroll Through South Nyack." 1980a.

Friends of the Nyacks. "Take a Step Back in Time Through Nyack's Business District from 1800-1900." 1980b.

### Maps

Davis, F.A. *Atlas of Rockland County*. New York: F.A. Davis & Company. 1876.

O'Connor, R.F. *Atlas of Rockland County*. New York: R. F. O'Connor. 1854

Sanborn Map Company. *Village of Nyack, New York*. 1887; 1892; 1926.

United States Geological Survey (USGS). *Tarrytown, New York-New Jersey*. Washington: USGS. 1902.

USGS. *Nyack, New York-New Jersey*. Washington: USGS. 1943.

### Other Sources

Rockland County Historical Society. No date. Memorial Park Historic Marker Sign. Village of Nyack, New York.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Proposed National Register Boundary</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Property Boundary</li> </ul>	<p><i>129 Piermont Avenue</i></p>
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**Photo 1.** Looking east toward west façade of 129 Piermont Avenue. Note six-over-six double-hung sash and glass-and-panel door on first story, and three-pane frieze-band windows at top half-story, typical details associated with early-19th century workers houses.



**Photo 2.** Looking northeast toward south and west facades of 129 Piermont Avenue. Note mature trees which surround residence and contribute to its historic feeling.