



# 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) Commodore William Voorhis Residence  
Address or Street Location 147 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 1880s-90s

## DESCRIPTION

Materials – please check those materials that are visible

Exterior Walls:	<input 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: Reconfiguration of fenestration on east facade 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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## 147 Piermont Avenue

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### Physical Description

Constructed between 1880s-90s, 147 Piermont Avenue is located in the Village of South Nyack, Town of Orangetown, Rockland County, New York. It is bound to the north by 135 Piermont Avenue, the south by 157 Piermont Avenue, the east by the Hudson River, and the west by Piermont Avenue. The residence at 147 Piermont Avenue was included in prior surveys of South Nyack conducted in 1980 (Friends of the Nyacks, 1980a). It is located 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 eclectic Queen Anne-style residence oriented toward Piermont Avenue, fronted by a small lawn. An asphalt-paved driveway extends from the eastern edge of Piermont Avenue and terminates at the residence. Mature and young trees and shrubs surround the residence. The residence also overlooks a rear lawn that slopes eastward toward the Hudson River, affording access to a riparian parcel and ample river views.

The residence at 147 Piermont Avenue survives as a good example of an eclectic Queen Anne-style building erected along Piermont Avenue to capitalize on its riverfront views. The Queen Anne style originated in England during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and was characterized by application of Medieval architectural details, including turrets and asymmetrical plans. The style became popular in the United States in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, with the completion of the half-timbered Watts-Sherman House in Newport, Rhode Island. Over time in the United States, the style incorporated details such as a complicated roofscape, conical shapes, porches, and some Classical details such as columns (McAlester & McAlester, 1991). Several earmarks of the style are evident at 147 Piermont Avenue, including its asymmetrical plan, complicated roofscape, and porch.

The residence is a two-and-a-half-story, T-plan, frame building that sits atop a stone foundation. The roof is pierced by a two interior brick chimneys with corbelled caps. The residence is sheathed in vinyl siding with continuous lintels and sills that emphasize the horizontality of the building. The residence consists of two sections: an east/west-oriented section and a north/south-oriented section. The east/west oriented section is capped by an ogee-shaped roof sheathed in rolled asphalt, and the north/south-oriented section is capped by a roof that terminates in a pentagonal shape. Both sections feature a bracketed cornice, while the east/west-oriented ogee-shaped roof features cornice returns.

The west façade is the principal façade. The east/west-oriented section functions as a projecting pavilion. The first story is pierced by a bay window with replacement glazing, set within a Classical wood surround with pilaster and wood-panel details. The bay window is capped by a flared hipped roof with a cornice. The roof is topped by a wood balconette. The second story is pierced by paired double-hung sash capped by a flared semi-mansard roof. The top half-story is pierced by a lunette. Double-hung sash windows also pierce the first and second stories of the south façade of the projecting pavilion.

The north, or side, façade of the residence occurs within the east/west-oriented section. It is pierced by four double-hung sash, two on the first story, and two on the second story.

The north/south-oriented section of the west façade is three bays long. The first story is pierced by double wood doors topped by a transom, set within a wood surround, and two double-hung sash. The second story is pierced by two double-hung sash, and the top half-story is pierced by a semi-hipped roof dormer with a double-hung sash, capped by broadly overhanging eaves.

Other architectural features associated with the north/south-oriented section include a wrap-around porch on the first story which is supported by bracketed posts. The porch extends around the west (front), south (side), and east (rear) facades. In addition, the second story of the section is capped by a pentagonal roof with a bracketed cupola, surmounted by a weathervane.

The east, or rear, façade also includes multiple architectural features. The first story is pierced by three large windows positioned to take advantage of the river view. The second story features a bay window in the north/south-oriented ogee roof section, and a double-hung sash in the east/west-oriented section. A hipped-roof dormer occurs in the top half-story of the hipped-roof section.

## 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 147 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). Several of these residences were likely workers houses that had been constructed along the road during the early 1800s to shelter the growing labor force who worked in Nyack's many industries at that time (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 numerous 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.

During the mid-to-late-19<sup>th</sup> century, Piermont Avenue maintained its identity as a thoroughfare flanked by modest residences and industries. 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 (Sanborn Map Company, 1887). In addition to workers housing erected during the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, high-style residences were also constructed along the avenue presumably to take advantage of the unobstructed Hudson River views.

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).

Research indicates that the eclectic Queen Anne-style 147 Piermont Avenue was erected on the east side of Piermont Avenue between the 1880s-90s by Commodore William Voorhis, builder of the previously mentioned catamaran *Henry W. Longfellow* (Friends of the Nyacks, 1980a; Sanborn Map Company, 1887; 1892). William Voorhis was the son of Jacob Voorhis who had relocated from New Jersey to the Nyack area in the early 1800s, and soon became involved in local industries, such as rock quarrying. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Jacob's son William, had become captain of a river vessel, industrial entrepreneur, and prime investor in real estate along Piermont Avenue (South Nyack Centennial Publication

Committee, 1978). In fact, the 1876 Rockland County atlas depicts the office of William Voorhis on a large riverfront lot in the current location of 147 Piermont Avenue. Voorhis owned multiple residences and land on the west side of Piermont Avenue, underscoring his prominence as a real estate investor (Davis, 1876). Sanborn maps indicate that Voorhis office was likely replaced by 147 Piermont Avenue which was erected between 1887-92 on the east side of avenue, overlooking the Hudson River (Sanborn Map Company, 1887; 1892).

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.

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 was 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 147 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 147 Piermont Avenue is recommended National Register eligible under Criteria B and C for its local historical and architectural importance, and retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It is significant under Criterion B because of its association with William Voorhis, a prominent resident of South Nyack during the 19<sup>th</sup> century who played a role in the local shipbuilding industry and did much to develop lots along Piermont Avenue. It is also significant under Criterion C because it survives as a good example of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century eclectic Queen Anne-style residence constructed between the 1880s-90s. Built on the east side of Piermont Avenue, the residence was designed to overlook the Hudson River and still retains the feeling and association of a traditionally designed waterfront residence. As noted above, the residence features attributes of the Queen Anne style, including its asymmetrical plan, north-south section capped by an ogee-shaped roof, and east/west section with a wrap-around porch and pentagonal roof. In addition to the residence, the lawn with mature and young trees and shrubs that surround the building also contribute to 147 Piermont Avenue because they help emphasize the historic location and setting of the property. The proposed National Register boundary includes the tax parcel upon which 147 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.





	Proposed National Register Boundary	<b><i>147 Piermont Avenue</i></b>
	Property Boundary	



**Photo 1.** Looking east toward west façade of 147 Piermont Avenue. Note projecting pavilion, wrap-around porch, ogee-shaped roof, interior chimneys with corbelled caps, and historic fenestration pattern.



**Photo 2.** Looking northeast toward 147 Piermont Avenue. Note pentagonal-shaped section surmounted by a cupola. Residence overlooks the Hudson River and retains a high degree of integrity.