



**NYC**  
**Landmarks Preservation  
Commission**

**Dorothy Day Historic Site**

457 Poillon Avenue, Staten Island  
Staten Island Block: 06431; Lot: 0001

**Backlog Initiative: Addressing 95 Properties**  
Staten Island Group 3 Items

Staten Island Community Board 3  
Public Hearing Date(s): 04/17/2001

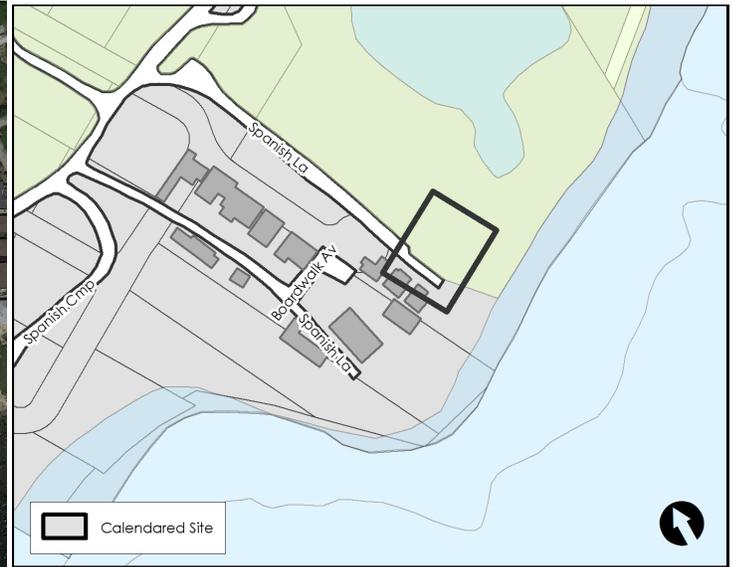


Photo: 2015 google maps. Note that buildings have been demolished

**Special Public Hearings**

The Landmarks Preservation Commission will hold a public hearing on the backlog of buildings in the Borough of Staten Island on **October 22, 2015** and encourages interested parties to submit written testimony in advance of that hearing. Each speaker will be given three minutes total to speak, and in that time may address all of the items within Staten Island Group 3, just particular items, or add comments to support written testimony. In order to conduct efficient hearings, we ask speakers to register in advance, and submit their written statements and materials that will be read at the hearing by **October 15, 2015** to [backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov).

If you have questions about this property or the hearing process please contact [backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov) or call (212) 669-7817. If you would like more information about this property, please see the research file summary (over) and go to our website (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/backlog95>) and click on the link for this building's research file.



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**Dorothy Day Historic Site Description**

Landmark Type: Individual

Built: not available

Architect: not available

Style: not available

**Research Staff Hearing Statement (2001): NOTE BUILDINGS HAVE BEEN DEMOLISHED**

**DOROTHY DAY HISTORIC SITE**, 457 Poillon Avenue, Staten Island, Block 6431, Lot 1, in part.

The social activist Dorothy Day (1897-1980) first moved to Staten Island's south shore in 1924. She gave birth to her daughter, Tamar, in Staten Island in 1927 and had her baptized at a local Catholic Church, where Day was received into the Church on December 28, 1927. In late 1932 Day met Peter Maurin, and they founded the newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*. The first issue was distributed on May 1, 1933, which cost a penny and the paper explored pacifism, anarchist utopianism and Catholic social thought through essays and articles. That same year Day and her followers established a social movement of the same name and opened a soup kitchen and later hospitality houses to feed and shelter the poor.

Throughout her life Dorothy Day maintained strong ties to Staten Island's south shore, living intermittently in a series of properties. In her writings, she repeatedly stated her fondness for Staten Island and particularly its beaches. In the 1970s Day's doctors recommended that she take more time off. In 1972, the Catholic Workers bought at two cottages in Spanish Camp. Day had written to Walter Stojanowski on January 26, 1972: "I'm very serious about that Spanish Camp bungalow you mentioned that the Norwegian wanted to sell. . . My brother lives on Long Island but I've always loved Staten Island and the beach there." Spanish Camp was created by the Hispanic Naturopath Society, which was founded in 1928 and established a tradition of renting beachfront property where members lived communally in tents set up on wooded platforms during the summer months. In 1948 the Society bought 17 acres on Raritan Bay at 457 Poillon Avenue and erected over 50 bungalows and a communal hall.

Day was probably attracted to Spanish Camp because of its communal lifestyle and modest beachfront setting. Day called Spanish Camp her "oasis" and spent six summers there and all of 1975 before her death in 1980. Day described the situation in a 1975 letter: "We paid for the two 3-room bungalows, not the land. Pay our share of taxes, city services water, street lights, electric. Mostly summer camp now, but we stay all winter." Her letters and columns for the *Catholic Worker* make references to her Spanish Camp neighbors, Pat and Kathleen Jordan, John and Marge Hughes and to the "three-room cottage." In January 1975 she wrote: "Really I am to be envied. I am spending a good deal of my time at a little three-room house on the beach, not too far away, where I can enjoy the beauties of sunrise over the bay and the sunset, which, alas, comes all too early every afternoon." And in autumn of 1977 she wrote: "In many ways this has been a good summer for me, since I spent most of it on the beach in Staten Island, where we have two small bungalows, where workers at St. Joseph's and Maryhouse can go rest from the hard life in the city."

Day's cottage was typical of modest Spanish Camp structures in its synthetic siding, the outhouse, and simple wooden platform where she looked out at the bay. The foundations of the two *Catholic Worker*'s cottages as well as those of the house next door are included in this site. Day is buried on Staten Island. One of the four remaining cottages was owned by a member of the *Catholic Workers* and Day frequented the house.