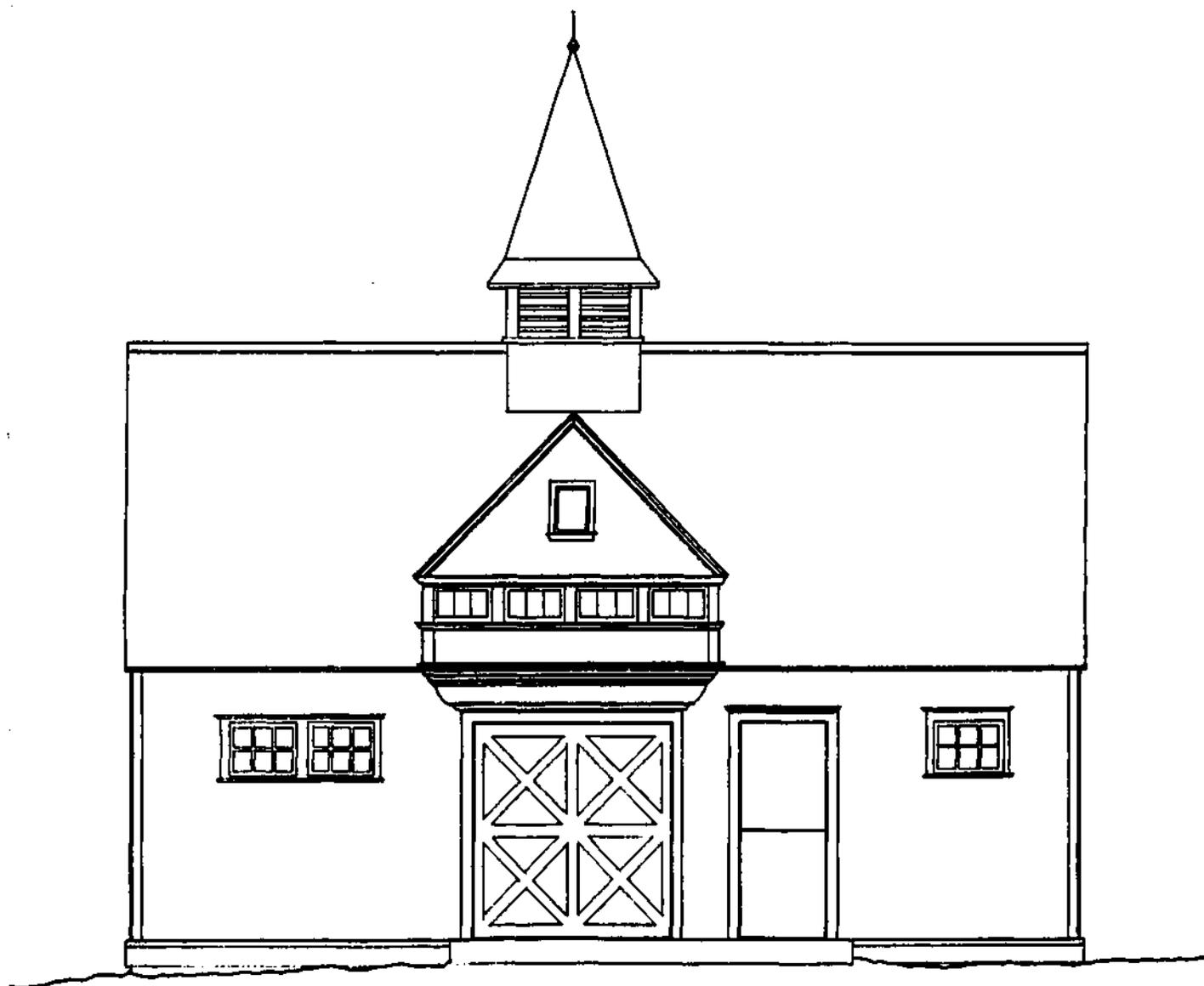
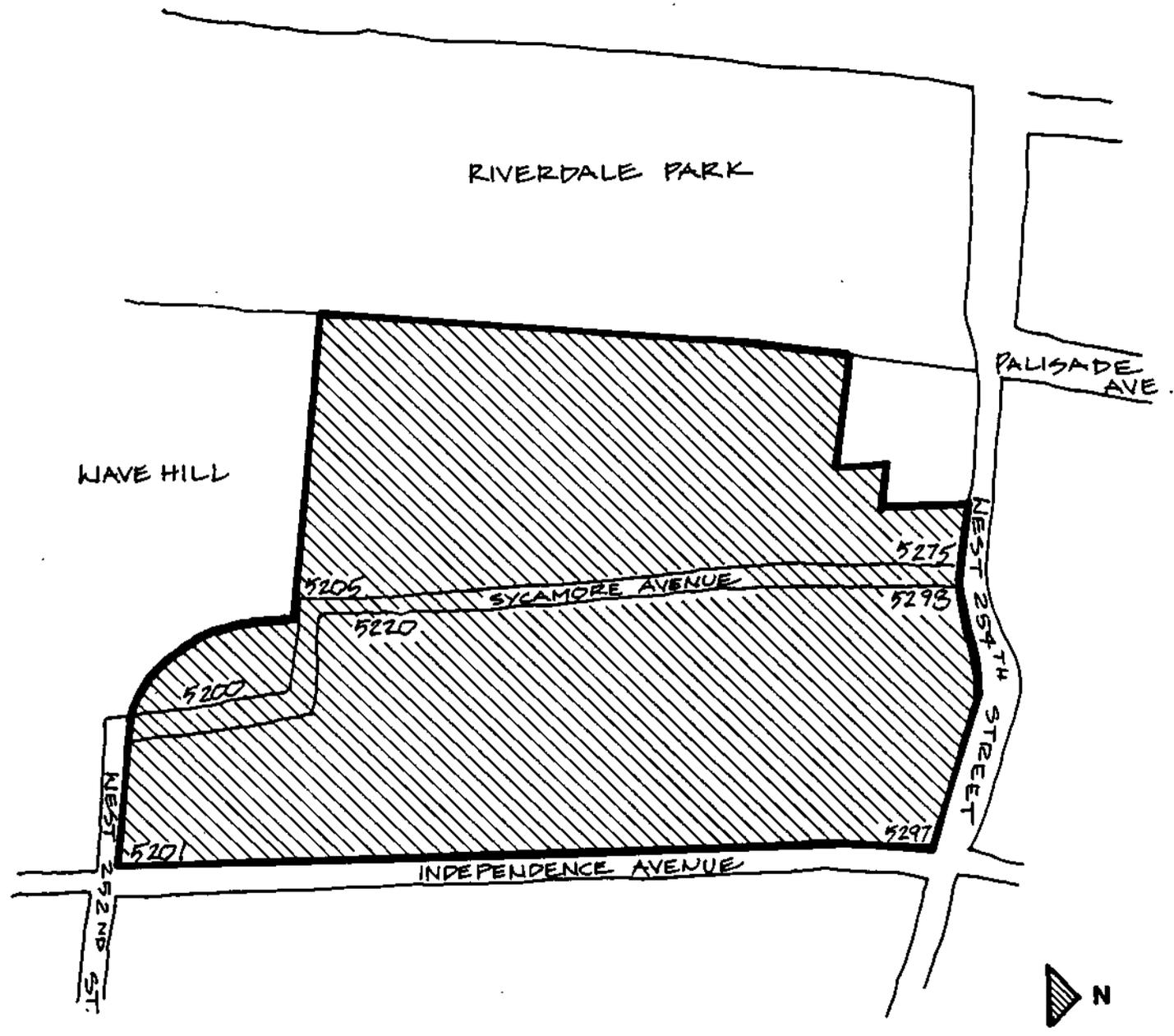


RIVERDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT



*New York City
Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 16, 1990*

RIVERDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT



LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Designated 16 October 1990

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

RIVERDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Credit: Robert J. Kornfeld, Jr., based on an original drawing

Acknowledgements

A proposal for a potential historic district along Sycamore Avenue was first suggested to the Landmarks Preservation Commission by residents in the early 1970s. Led by Robert J. Kornfeld, Sr., residents conducted research, photographed the area, and submitted material in the early 1980s to the then Bronx - Upper Manhattan staff of the Commission. At the end of 1987 Chairman Gene A. Norman directed the Research Department of the Commission to forward its recommendations concerning a potential historic district to the Commissioners. Based on preliminary research, the staff recommended that additional properties along Independence and Sycamore Avenues be included, in order to represent the full historic interrelationship between Sycamore Avenue (the original carriage alley), and the land and buildings that comprised the adjacent estates. The Commission held a public hearing on the proposed historic district in April of 1988. Subsequent research unveiled further aspects of the history of Riverdale as a mid-nineteenth-century New York City suburb.

The Commission expresses its appreciation to the residents of the historic district who cooperated with the Commission in assembling its historical and architectural research, and for allowing their properties to be photographed. The Commission particularly wishes to thank Robert J. Kornfeld, Sr., for his research and leadership role in the community, and Robert J. Kornfeld, Jr., for all current photographs included in this report. Michael Corbett, formerly on the Research Department staff, wrote a preliminary draft designation report on the district.

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RIVERDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

The Riverdale Historic District consists of the property bounded by the intersection of the western edge of the paved roadbed of Independence Avenue and the southern edge of the paved roadbed of West 254th Street, westerly along the the southern edge of the paved roadbed of West 254th Street, southerly along the western property line of Tax Map Block 5937, Lot 494 ([5265] Sycamore Avenue), southerly along part of the western property line of Tax Map Block 5937, Lot 494 ([5265] Sycamore Avenue), westerly along the northern property line of 5255 Sycamore Avenue, southerly along the western property lines of 5255 through 5215 Sycamore Avenue, easterly along the southern property lines of 5215 and 5205 Sycamore Avenue, easterly along a line extending easterly from the southern property line of 5205 Sycamore Avenue to the intersection of the western property line of 5200 Sycamore Avenue, southerly and easterly along the western property line of 5200 Sycamore Avenue, easterly across the roadbed of West 252nd Street and easterly along the northern edge of the paved roadbed of West 252nd Street, and northerly along the western edge of the paved roadbed of Independence Avenue, to the point of beginning.

TESTIMONY AT THE PUBLIC HEARING

On April 19, 1988, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of this historic district (Item No. 14). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Thirty-three people offered testimony at the public hearing; thirty people, including thirteen owners of property within the proposed district, spoke in favor of the proposed district. One owner of property within the proposed district along with his representative spoke in opposition to the inclusion of his property within the district. Another owner of property within the proposed district spoke in favor of an historic district but in opposition to the proposed boundaries of the district. The Commission has received two letters from owners of property in the proposed district expressing opposition to the inclusion of their properties within the district. The Commission has received a few statements expressing support for an historic district but with reservations about the proposed boundaries of the district. The Commission has also received numerous letters and other statements expressing support for the proposed historic district.

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INTRODUCTION

The Riverdale Historic District in the Bronx, located along Independence and Sycamore Avenues and extending from West 252nd Street to West 254th Street, encompasses about fifteen acres of steeply sloping land overlooking the Hudson River with views to the Palisades in New Jersey. The district contains thirty-four buildings of several types situated on landscaped lots, once comprising larger estate properties, that are linked and defined by landscaping and original estate features including stone border and retaining walls; terraces; steps, paths, and driveways; cobbled street gutters; and individual specimen trees and rows of trees and hedges. The historic district is the nucleus of a 100-acre parcel, purchased in 1852 from William Ackerman for a suburban development which was given the name "Riverdale." This nucleus, including the first portion to be immediately developed, is also the most visually cohesive part of the original Riverdale development which survives.

The founders of Riverdale, five wealthy and influential businessmen--William W. Woodworth of Yonkers, and Charles W. Foster, Henry L. Atherton, William D. Cromwell, and Samuel D. Babcock of New York City -- planned Riverdale as a suburban summer community beside what became at the time the only stop on the Hudson River Railroad between Spuyten Duyvil and Yonkers. Riverdale is the earliest known railroad suburb in New York City, and it has most of the features commonly associated with the American romantic suburb of the mid-nineteenth century: genesis by a group of businessmen; an appropriate name associated with natural features; picturesque site, landscaping, and architecture; connection to the city by accessible transportation; and a layout adapted to the topography, in this case incorporating an existing road (Ackerman's farm road).

From the outset Riverdale was intended to have larger estates, each with a freestanding house of the sort known as a "villa" and related outbuildings, surrounding a core of smaller estate lots, which were also developed with freestanding houses and related outbuildings. The area of the Riverdale Historic District corresponds to seven original estates linked by a carriage alley (now Sycamore Avenue) and one parcel later subdivided from the adjacent Wave Hill Estate. The core of five lots (corresponding to the present-day block bounded by West 254th Street on the north, West 252nd Street on the south, Independence Avenue on the east, and Sycamore Avenue on the west) comprised the first portion of Riverdale to be developed. Each lot received a freestanding villa (at least one of which was designed by Thomas S. Wall) facing Independence Avenue, which was completed by the end of 1853, as well as stables and carriage houses. The two larger estates (the Cromwell Estate [later Stonehurst], and the Stone Estate) between the carriage alley (Sycamore Avenue) and the Hudson River were developed by the end of the 1850s. The Cromwell (Stonehurst) residence is little changed from its original Italianate villa style appearance.

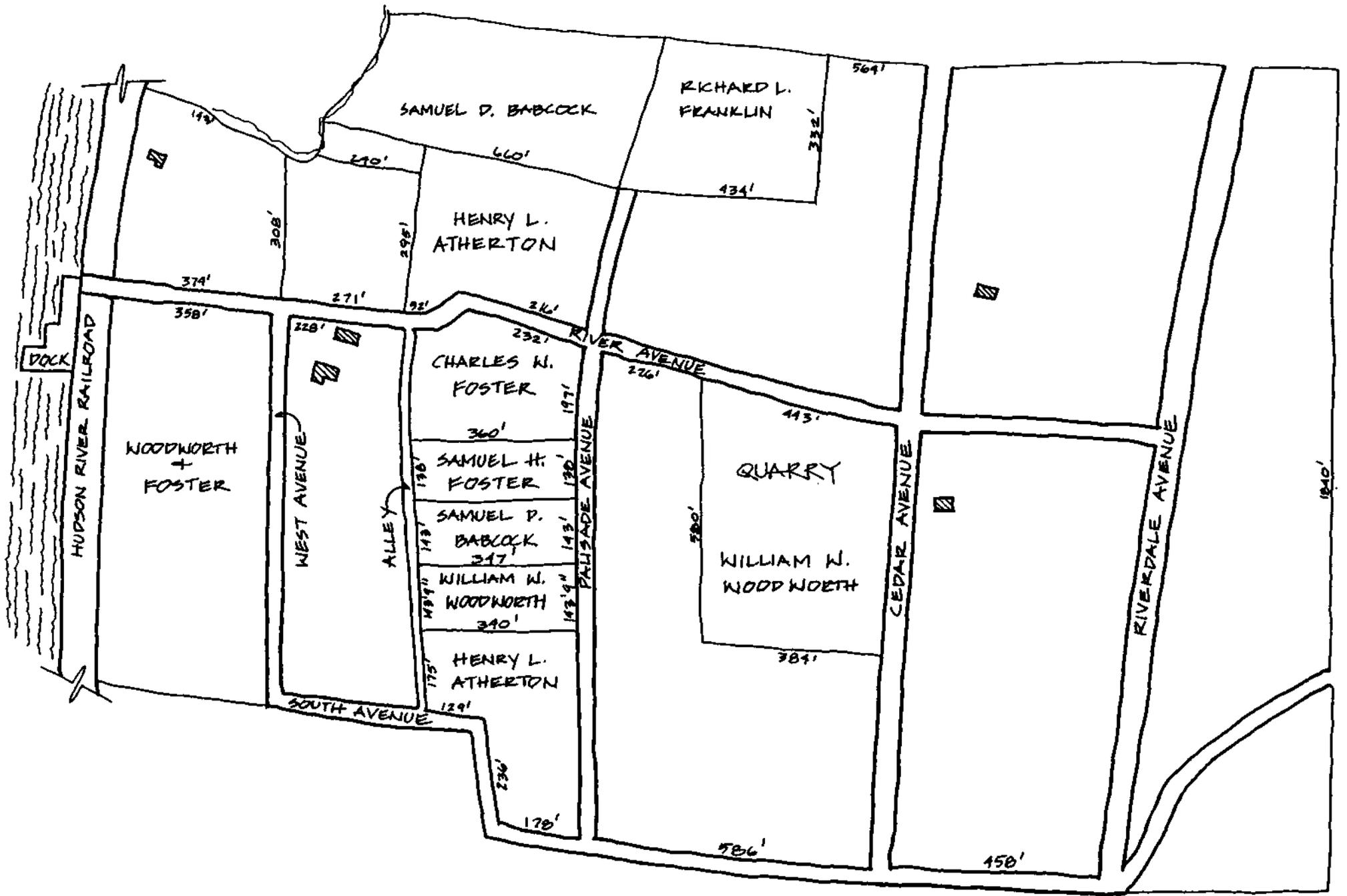
The configuration of these seven parcels of property remained intact until 1935, even though the villas were altered to accommodate new architectural tastes and changing family needs, such as the shift to year-round living. This may be seen in the four surviving villas on Independence

Avenue. In the case of the house at 5291 Independence Avenue, it was thoroughly remodeled in 1886 by the distinguished American architect, Frederick Clarke Withers. Along the common carriage alley (Sycamore Avenue), carriage houses, stables, and a cottage were built and/or altered in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As automobiles began to replace horse-drawn carriages, garages were constructed. The picturesque, physical interrelationship among the outbuildings and continuous stone walls and wrought-iron fence along the carriage alley, as well as the interrelationship of these buildings to the houses either up or down the sloping sites, is unique in New York City. In some cases, these outbuildings were designed to relate stylistically to the villas, such as the carriage house on the Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate (5253 Sycamore Avenue) and that designed by Frederick Clarke Withers at 5286 Sycamore Avenue in conjunction with his work on the house at 5291 Independence Avenue. The carriage house at 5255 Sycamore, designed by the architectural firm of Brite & Bacon, also related architecturally to the mansion it served (later destroyed by fire and demolished). In other cases, these buildings have a more vernacular character, but still incorporate picturesque features and relate to the landscape.

Beginning in 1935 with the Charles Foster Estate and the Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate, the original parcels were subdivided for development. With one exception (the house at 5200 Sycamore Avenue, architect Dwight James Baum, 1923-24), the twentieth-century houses within the district were built following these subdivisions. Most of these houses are designed in traditional architectural styles, such as the neo-Colonial and neo-Federal, use natural materials, and are sited in such a way that they relate to the overall landscape and topography of the seven original estates. Many of them are also oriented to the north and south private roads leading from Sycamore Avenue which were created from the approximate position of the Cromwell (Stonehurst) carriage drive. The carriage houses and stables were subsequently converted for residential use.

Today the Riverdale Historic District is characterized by several building types -- villas of the 1850s with later alterations, stables and carriage houses of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (later converted for residential use), and houses mostly from the second and third quarters of the twentieth century -- which reflect the changing nature of suburbanization from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Equally characteristic of the district are landscaping and estate features, including stone border and retaining walls; terraces; steps, paths, and driveways; cobbled street gutters; and rows of trees and hedges, which survive throughout the district.

The historical significance of the Riverdale Historic District also comes in part because of its prominent residents over several generations, many of them related by the close ties of business and family, who have sought to preserve its character as a distinct suburban development.



(NOTE: MAP NOT TO SCALE)

MAP OF RIVERDALE IN THE TOWN OF YONKERS

(ORIGINAL MAP FILED 12-29-1853)

DESIGNATED 16 OCT. 1990

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Historical Background¹

The Riverdale area of the Bronx was part of the large region inhabited by the Mahican Indians until 1646. In that year the land bounded by the Bronx, Harlem, and Hudson Rivers as far north as the present northern border of Yonkers became the patroonship of Adriaen Van der Donck, a Dutch trader. Van der Donck's family retained title to his holdings following the English takeover of Nieuw Netherlands in 1664. Most of Van der Donck's acreage was sold by his heirs in 1672, the majority going to Frederick Philipse I over a period of years. In the 1680s Philipse built a simple stone house (later incorporated into Philipse Manor Hall, Yonkers, still standing), as well as another stone house and mill farther north (Philipsburg Manor, North Tarrytown, still standing); in 1693 the entire property was royally patented as the Manor of Philipsburg. Frederick Philipse owned ship, lumber and lime kiln businesses, as well as rented land to farmers, and in 1693 built a toll bridge called Kingsbridge over Spuyten Duyvil Creek to Manhattan. During the American Revolution his great-grandson, the loyalist Frederick Philipse III, fled with his family to England and the Philipse land was confiscated by New York State. In 1785 the old Manor of Philipsburg was divided into a number of parcels which were sold by the Commissioners of Forfeiture; land, including the area of the historic district, was sold to George Hadley, a local farmer. In 1843 Hadley sold 100 of these acres to William G. Ackerman.

Several wealthy New York families, such as the Schermerhorns and the Delafields, began purchasing large tracts of land in the area, along the Hudson River, as early as the late 1820s. In 1836 William Lewis Morris, a prominent New York lawyer, and his wife, the former Mary Elizabeth Babcock, purchased property from Hadley to the south of what became the Ackerman purchase. He established an estate there (at some point named Wave Hill)² and built a stone Greek Revival style residence in 1843-44 (today a designated New York City Landmark); the family soon moved there as the wealthy Morris became a country "gentleman." Fonthill, a stone castellated Gothic residence constructed for actor Edwin Forrest in 1848-52 just south of Yonkers, was another early example of a villa estate in the vicinity (a designated New York City Landmark, it is now part of the College of Mt. St. Vincent).

The Hudson River Railroad, proposed in 1842 and chartered in 1846, was completed from New York City to Poughkeepsie in late 1849 and ran along the western edge of these estates and properties, including Ackerman's land. A map from 1851³ shows an irregular access road from the high land at the eastern end of the farm to a dock, known as "Ackerman's Dock," on the river. This access road appears to correspond to the route of what is today West 252nd Street, Sycamore Avenue, and part of West 254th Street, which would have been one of the gentlest routes down an irregular and steep slope. Just southwest of the northern bend of the road (now the corner of Sycamore Avenue and West 254th Street) were two of the farm buildings, Ackerman's house and barn, the first known construction within what is now the historic district. Deeds mention a stone bridge, known as "Ackerman's Bridge," which the railroad built over its tracks at what is now West 254th Street to

provide access to the dock.⁴ In July of 1852, when the steamboat Henry Clay sank in the river just south of the dock, Ackerman's house was used as a temporary hospital.⁵

With the construction of the railroad, land along the virtually undeveloped east bank of the Hudson River immediately acquired a higher speculative value, and development was soon to follow. The attractions of the Hudson River valley as a picturesque location for villas had been promoted for some time by painters, writers and others. Although the lower Hudson River valley had less hilly topography, the New York side in particular did have the advantages of proximity to New York City and scenic views of the Palisades in New Jersey. By 1851 the editor of the American Agriculturalist noted that "within the past twelve years, the number of country houses for gentlemen, on the banks of the Hudson River have [sic] greatly increased, and the style of them has undergone an entire change."⁶ In 1852 William Ackerman sold his land to a syndicate of businessmen⁷ who planned to create a suburban development, known as "Riverdale," beside what became the only railroad stop between Spuyten Duyvil and Yonkers. Initially conceived as a summer retreat, it is the earliest known suburban railroad development in New York City.

The Initial Development of Riverdale (1852-1860)⁸

In September of 1852 William Ackerman sold his 100-acre Bronx farm to a syndicate of five wealthy and influential businessmen. The tract, located on a steep site above the Hudson River with picturesque views of the Palisades in New Jersey, was bounded by the Hudson River Railroad along the Hudson River on the west, the Schermerhorn property on the north, the Morris property (Wave Hill) on the south, and just beyond what became Riverdale Avenue on the east. William Woodworth, who was a former United States Congressman, a major real estate developer in the Yonkers area, and the contractor for the construction of the section of the Hudson River Railroad between Spuyten Duyvil and Hastings-on-Hudson (1847-49), appears to have been the leader of this syndicate. The other four men were Samuel D. Babcock, a financier, Charles W. Foster, an auctioneer, and Henry L. Atherton and William D. Cromwell, both importers. These men are known to have had a number of business, social, and family connections -- for example, Atherton and Babcock were next-door neighbors in Greenwich Village -- and all but one had membership in common in either the Century or Union Clubs. [For more information on these men, see the Owners Appendix]. The syndicate secured \$40,000 worth of mortgages from Ackerman and proceeded to plan streets (based partially on the existing Ackerman farm road) and to subdivide a portion of the land in the middle of the proposed development for the immediate construction of five villas on smaller estate lots (included in the historic district) as a community nucleus; they subsequently restructured the ownership so that these villa estates were held individually. Parts of the remaining surrounding land were soon used for the creation of larger villa estates, while some land was held for future development.

Charles Foster started out as a majority partner in the syndicate, having a one-third interest compared to a combined two-thirds of the others, and he continued in this vein for the remaining transactions of the syndicate. In February of 1853 Crumwell sold out his shares to the others, Foster and Woodworth bought a tract next to the railroad, and Atherton and Babcock purchased large lots north of what is now the historic district. A map entitled Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers, as drawn by civil engineer Thomas Clapp Cornell, was filed at the end of December of 1853.⁹ The map (and deeds) indicate that by that time the five villas were completed and the estates were under separate ownership by the syndicate members. Although Woodworth's name appears on the map in connection with one of the estates, this property was actually the second estate owned by Charles Foster. Foster's brother, Samuel H. Foster, had by this time also purchased one of the five estates. The area of the historic district -- the nucleus of the Riverdale development -- was, as shown on the map, bounded on the north by River Avenue (now 254th Street), on the south by South Avenue (now 252nd Street), and on the east by Palisade Avenue (now Independence Avenue). The "alley" (now Sycamore Avenue),¹⁰ was intended as a carriage alley for the estates, and "West Avenue" (never cut through) divided the land between the alley and the railroad. The western boundary of the present historic district is roughly just west of where "West Avenue" is indicated on the 1853 map. The existing Ackerman farm road was basically incorporated into the layout of South Avenue, the alley, and the portion of River Avenue west of the alley. In addition to Palisade (now Independence) and West Avenues, other new streets shown on the map were the eastward extension of River Avenue, which curved due to the topography of the hill, and, east of the historic district, Cedar Avenue (not cut through) and Riverdale Avenue. The planning of streets parallel to the river seems to have been dictated by natural terracing and a necessity due to the steeply sloping site, while the placement of the five villas close to Palisade (Independence) Avenue both facilitated the construction of the houses and provided the best vantage point for views of the river and the Palisades to the west. The location of the carriage alley down the hill also provided a convenient separation of residential and auxiliary functions. In addition to the Woodworth-Foster land to the west and the Atherton and Babcock properties to the north, the 1853 Riverdale map also shows the land next to the latter which was purchased for an estate by Richard Franklin, Babcock's father-in-law, as well as a quarry to the east owned by Woodworth. A covenant on the quarry, which limited its operation to the winter months not to extend beyond April of 1856, seems to indicate that the initial conception of Riverdale was as a summer suburb; it is not known to what extent this quarry was employed during the erection of houses in Riverdale, although certainly stone was also needed in the construction of necessary landscaping features, such as retaining walls, and the walls bordering the estates and lining the alley. While the railroad is clearly marked on the map, a railroad station is not indicated, so it is probable that the station was established shortly thereafter; it was located next to the dock (shown on the map) at the end of River Avenue and was for some time the only station between Spuyten Duyvil and Yonkers.

In October of 1854 Woodworth sold out his shares in the syndicate's holdings; at this time Charles Foster solely owned the tract by the railroad and owned a half-interest in the rest of the unsold land, while Atherton and Babcock each owned one-fourth. In the first few months of 1855, Ackerman received payment and released the mortgages he held and the Atherton and Babcock villas north of the historic district were completed. These two men then sold their properties on Palisade (Independence) Avenue; Babcock's was acquired by former syndicate partner William Cromwell. In June of 1856 the partners agreed to de-map West Avenue, which had separated Foster's parcel by the railroad from two parcels to the east (one still held by the partners and another purchased in 1855 by Henry Stone), and to widen the alley (Sycamore Avenue) to twenty-five feet. At the same time Cromwell purchased the southern portion of the land west of the alley and adjacent to the Morris (Wave Hill) property,¹¹ and Stone bought the remaining parcel to the west of the one he already owned. In October of 1857 Samuel Foster sold his villa on Palisade (Independence) Avenue to Atherton, who apparently sold and moved out of his larger estate north of the district around this time. Charles Foster had also sold out by this time.¹² Cromwell sold his property on Palisade (Independence) Avenue in February of 1859¹³ and moved into the newly completed stone villa on his property west of the alley; he died in August of that year and the estate was sold in the following May for \$52,500 by his widow, Ann, to Robert Colgate,¹⁴ a wealthy businessman of the famous soap manufacturing family. Stone's villa was also completed by this time.

In summary, by 1859 none of the first five estates developed in 1853 on Palisade (Independence) Avenue were owned by any of the original syndicate members. These properties (all located in the historic district) were intended to provide a nucleus for the suburban community and appear to have been held for a combination of personal use, investment, and sale to family and associates. Soon after the appearance of these first villa estates, larger estates were created surrounding them, including two that are partly included in the historic district. Stone was the only initial developer of a property included in the historic district who still owned it after 1863, although Atherton and Babcock maintained villa estates within the original 100-acre development of Riverdale, and Babcock also owned undeveloped land.

During the initial development period of Riverdale, the area became increasingly attractive for the construction of villas and received some attention in published accounts. Henry F. Spaulding led another group of merchants (Henry L. Atherton, Levi P. Morton, and W. Kent) in the development after 1856 of a community of villas known as "Park-Riverdale,"¹⁵ south of the Morris (Wave Hill) property, which included a park; a road across the Morris land connected the two communities after 1864. An English visitor remarked in 1855 that villas were

starting up like mushrooms on spots which five years ago were part of the dense and tangled forest; and the value of property everywhere, but especially along the various lines of railroad, has increased in a ratio almost incredible. Small fortunes have been made by owners of real estate at Yonkers, and other places on the Hudson River.¹⁶

The Gazetteer of the State of New York of 1860 dryly noted "a group of villas and a R.R. station"¹⁷ at Riverdale, while Godey's Lady's Book in 1864 enthused that "if we were asked to point out the most delightful place for a residence on that most noble river, we should at once mention Riverdale...", remarking that steamboats were not even allowed to dock there, presumably because it was such an exclusive enclave.¹⁸ A.A. Turner's Villas on the Hudson, published in 1860, included photographs and plans of the Atherton villa on Palisade (Independence) Avenue, Babcock's villa "Hillside" north of the historic district, and Spaulding's "Parkside" villa in Park-Riverdale.

Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Suburbs¹⁹

Consciously planned to have larger villa estates, a core of smaller lots with villas built immediately, and a common carriage alley, Riverdale has most of the features commonly associated with the American romantic suburb of the mid-nineteenth century: genesis by a group of businessmen or a wealthy individual; an appropriate name associated with natural features; picturesque site, landscaping, and architecture; connection to the city by accessible transportation (the railroad); and a layout adapted to the topography, here incorporating a road that already existed. The survival today of several villas, the original road pattern, many estate features, landscaping, and carriage houses of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mark the importance of the Riverdale Historic District in the context of surviving early suburban development in New York City.

By the late 1830s and 1840s, those American urban dwellers with sufficient means sought, in increasing numbers, to escape the city for the countryside for the entire summer and, if possible, on weekends. Many early nineteenth-century Americans, such as writers, artists, reformers, transcendentalists, religious leaders, and politicians, promoted a view of the countryside as fostering health, virtue, and democratic values. In contrast, cities were often seen, realistically or not, as associated with congestion, disease, heat in the summer, poverty, corruption, and vice. As the United States grew in population and its commerce and industry expanded rapidly in the nineteenth century, certain sections of the nation became increasingly urbanized, and one result of these changes was that the character of established urban residential areas was often threatened by commerce. This was particularly true in New York City as it grew as the nation's major urban center; during the years from 1830 to 1850 the population of New York City increased two-and-one-half times to over 500,000, most living south of 42nd Street.²⁰ In this same period sizable merchant and professional upper-middle classes emerged that settled newer neighborhoods in the city, but also had the desire and means to maintain a "country" house.

While in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries some aristocratic families had held country seats in the greater New York City area, in the 1830s and 1840s a larger number of the wealthy New Yorkers established estates on the near outskirts of the city — in northern Manhattan, Brooklyn, Long Island, the Hudson Valley, the New Jersey shore,

and Staten Island. Farmland or undeveloped land could be acquired relatively inexpensively; estate owners had a preference for sites along a waterfront or on a hill, which would provide views and cooling breezes. Such events as the major cholera epidemics in 1832 and 1849 heightened the desire to get away from New York City during the summer months. Developments in transportation -- improved roads, steamboats, ferries, and railroads -- opened the "borderlands" to the prosperous upper-middle classes and allowed for the first time the possibility of living there year-round, still connected to the city on a daily basis. By the early 1850s the conflict in America between urban and rural values began to be resolved with the development of suburbs in which the disadvantages of each were consciously avoided. The connotation of "suburb" changed from that of the outskirts of a city to that of a positive combination of urban and rural characteristics, what Frederick Law Olmsted later (1871) identified as "detached dwellings with sylvan surroundings yet supplied with a considerable share of urban convenience."²¹ As land on the outskirts of the city was subdivided for speculation and development, the suburbs also changed from being areas with large seasonal homes for the wealthy, to communities with smaller year-round homes for the upper-middle classes.

The pattern of early suburbs in nineteenth-century America was largely influenced by English precedents and taste. The English picturesque romantic landscape, with its integral architecture, was promoted in a variety of forms which had an influence on American architecture, landscape, and suburban planning.²² Private "estates" (i.e. communities) for the wealthy emerged in England, particularly for seasonal residence in resort towns, such as the Pittsville Estate, Cheltenham (1824). Located slightly away from the town, they combined detached villas and landscaped open areas. Middle-class commuter suburbs, such as Victoria Park, Manchester (1837), later developed along similar forms established by those private estates. Publications, including the Suburban Gardener, and Villa Companion (1838) by John C. Loudon, extolled the advantages of the suburb and set forth various ideals of planning, and were influential in making these precedents known in the United States. Picturesque landscaped English parks that were opened to the public,²³ and the first American "rural" cemeteries of the 1830s²⁴ -- picturesquely-planned landscapes for burial and visitation -- had a noticeable impact as accessible landscapes visited by and popular with a wide public and were the predecessors of public parks in this country. Architect Alexander Jackson Davis and landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing had a profound impact on the architecture and landscape of American country houses through their writings, including Davis's Rural Residences (1837-38) and Downing's Cottage Residences (1842) and The Architecture of Country Houses (1850). These works advocated the style, form, and planning of country villas and cottages sited in a picturesque romantic landscape.

The suburban development that occurred in the 1830s was a collective expansion of the influence of Downing and Davis and generally took two different forms, either as an extension to the existing city or as a separate community. An example of the former is Hillhouse Avenue in New Haven, where in the 1830s and 1840s villas were built to the designs of Town & Davis along a boulevard on the edge of town. Several suburban communities, among the earliest known in the New York City area, were

proposed or begun in the late 1830s. Aspects of these projects may have later influenced the concept behind Riverdale, particularly the siting of a development of villas in relation to the landscape. A drawing of 1836 shows Ravenswood, a proposed development in Astoria, Queens, with a row of villas designed in different styles by A.J. Davis lining the waterfront.²⁵ Like Riverdale, a number of these early projects were conceived by wealthy businessmen. The New Brighton Association, a group of New York City businessmen led by Thomas E. Davis and George A. Ward, formed in 1834 to develop New Brighton, a residential and resort community on the north shore of Staten Island, connected to the city by ferry service. Four rows of hillside villas were to be sited parallel to the waterfront; development of New Brighton was largely thwarted by the Panic of 1837, although the streets were laid out and several houses were constructed. Clifton (1837), started by another group of New York City businessmen as the Staten Island Association, and Elliottsville (1839), founded by oculist Samuel Mackenzie Elliott, were two other early suburban villa communities on the Staten Island waterfront.²⁶ In 1847 William Ranlett, an architect active on Staten Island, produced what is believed to be the first published American prototype of a suburban development, in his book The Architect (1847). Essentially a concentration of the type of properties promoted by Downing and Davis, it consisted of sixteen rectangular plots, each having a detached villa, picturesque landscaped grounds with curving walks, and a carriage house at the rear of the property. This bears a conceptual similarity to the later scheme for Riverdale. Ranlett concurred with other writers and tastemakers of the time that a suburban residence "combines, to some extent, the advantages and pleasures of city, and country life."²⁷

A number of suburban communities were begun in the eastern United States in 1851 -- just one year before the land was purchased for the development of Riverdale -- all of which reflected in varying degrees the suburban ideals of the picturesque romantic tradition. Wealthy Philadelphia landowners subdivided estates in the area that became West Philadelphia, commissioning architect Samuel Sloan to design villas for speculative sale on the major streets, and building smaller semi-detached houses and rowhouses for the side streets, a scheme which basically made it an extension of the city. Some of these same developers, as the Riverton Improvement Company, retained Sloan in the same year to plan a summer community along the Delaware River north of Camden, N.J. Known as Riverton, it consists of a slightly curving waterfront street lined with ten villas, a carriage alley at the rear, and a grid of streets beyond; it was connected to Philadelphia via railroad and boat.²⁸ Evergreen Hamlet, northwest of Pittsburgh, Pa., is a community of wood-frame Greek and Gothic Revival style villas on a picturesque hilly site, planned in 1851 by six merchants and professional men. Glendale, near Cincinnati, Ohio, was established by the thirty businessmen of the Glendale Association to create a larger (200 acres) railroad suburb with winding roads, a lake, and common parkland. Two features of these latter three communities would become standard themes in mid-nineteenth-century American suburbs -- picturesque sites on hills or near water, and names associated with natural features.

The year after the land for Riverdale was purchased, Llewellyn P. Haskell, a wealthy pharmaceutical manufacturer, began to acquire the first

of about 750 acres in West Orange, New Jersey. He commissioned A.J. Davis to improve and landscape his proposed suburban community, Llewellyn Park, and over the next three years a ramble, park areas, and plantings along the curving roads were completed. Lots were offered for sale in 1857 and houses in styles deemed appropriate to the picturesque landscape were built. Considered by historians to be the first fully planned and executed American romantic suburb, integrating picturesque planning, architecture, and landscape, Llewellyn Park was a mature extension of the concepts explored by earlier developments such as Riverdale. By the time Riverside (1869, Olmsted, Vaux & Co.) -- another milestone in American suburban planning-- was begun near Chicago, the form of the American suburb had been firmly established.

Riverdale in the "Estate Era" (1860-1935)²⁹

The Riverdale area developed only gradually through the 1860s and 1870s, due in part to the financial Panic of 1857 and the Civil War. A few institutions were established by many of the early residents of the historic district and other neighbors. The first two churches in the vicinity, both designed by distinguished architects, were Riverdale Presbyterian Church (1863, James Renwick) and Christ (Episcopal) Church (1865-66, Richard Upjohn & Son), at Riverdale Avenue and, respectively, 249th and 252nd Streets; both are designated New York City Landmarks. The Riverdale Institute (c. 1862-63), "a collegiate school for young ladies," also founded by residents of the district, was next to Christ Church. The original prospectus for the Institute emphasized Riverdale's convenience and exclusivity:

The location is fourteen miles from the City of New York, accessible many times daily by trains of the Hudson River Railway -- half an hour's ride from 30th Street station. Riverdale is not a public town with a mixed population, but the chosen home of a few families.³⁰

Prominent New Yorkers were increasingly attracted to the area for estates. The Morris Estate (Wave Hill) was purchased in 1866 by prominent publisher William H. Appleton, who proceeded to remodel the existing house.

Railroad improvements made the connection to New York City easier. In 1853 a railroad bridge over Spuyten Duyvil Creek replaced the former ferry service there. Commodore Vanderbilt obtained the Hudson River Railroad in 1865 and merged it with his New York Central Railroad in 1869 to form the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad. In 1871 a link was provided that allowed Riverdale passengers to travel to Grand Central Station, whereas previously the railroad only followed the river down the west side of Manhattan. A new station was finally built at Riverdale in 1889, on the site of the previous one, to the design of the architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge (demolished).³¹

The section of the Bronx west of the Bronx River, including Riverdale, was annexed to New York City in 1874. As the city government prepared for its future expansion and development, Frederick Law Olmsted, noted landscape

architect and co-designer of Central and Prospect Parks, and J. James R. Croes, civil and topographical engineer, were asked by the Department of Public Parks to prepare a report on the entire area of the Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Wards (upper Manhattan and the western Bronx). Olmsted and Croes chose first to concentrate on the section "lying west of the Riverdale Road" in 1876. In the written report, Olmsted described the area, which included the historic district, becoming enthusiastic about its scenery and noting that its

ruggedness has prevented its being occupied for agricultural purposes, except very sparsely, and it is largely wooded and wild. The only noticeable improvements have been made in connection with a number of private villas, and with a large convent and seminary [Mt. St. Vincent].... That the district is not more generally occupied in this manner, is due first, to the uncertainty which exists as to how it is to be laid out and generally built over; second, to the fact that it is affected by malaria, of a mild type...; third, to its lack of suitable roads. The local scenery is everywhere pleasing, except as it is marred artificially. Generally, it is highly picturesque, with aspects of grandeur, and from nearly all parts, broad distant prospects are commanded on an extended, interesting, and even very impressive character.³²

Olmsted rejected extending the grid plan of Manhattan into this area and recommended that Riverdale remain "a specially picturesque and convenient suburb"³³ for the wealthy. Retaining these residents within the city would benefit its economic health, and, with roads laid out to follow the topography, Riverdale's infrastructure would be less costly in the long run. Olmsted envisioned for the future an expanded version of what the Riverdale syndicate of 1852 had been the first to see there:

It is not to be doubted that the promontory may, throughout its whole extent, be so laid out and occupied as to have an interest and attractiveness far excelling in its kind that of any other locality in America; nor that, if the result can be secured, it will hold great numbers of wealthy people from within the city who would otherwise go away from it to find homes to suit them, and will draw many from without the city.³⁴

Olmsted and Croes were dismissed the following year for political reasons and never made specific proposals, but the spirit of the report concerning Riverdale (both the historic district and other areas of the greater Riverdale community) — that it remain and prosper as a picturesque suburb — came to pass over the years due to efforts on the part of its residents.

Within the historic district, each of the seven estates eventually reached a stable period of longterm ownership — after 1860 for three, after 1872 for one, and after the early 1880s for the other three. Six estates each had at least two families who held the property for twenty or more years, and five were each owned for thirty years or more by the same family. It appears that throughout this period Riverdale was used as a summer community; however, from the beginning directories indicate that some

residents lived there year-round. The residents continued to be mostly wealthy bankers and businessmen, involved in such mercantile endeavors as drygoods, shipping, importing, and life insurance. Family, religious, social, and business connections continued to closely link the owners of the estates. Properties were inherited and remained in families, and several families (the Babcocks, the Meekers, the Buckners, and the Gale/Knapps) owned more than one estate. In the first decade of the twentieth century, four of the seven estates were owned by men with connections to the New York Life Insurance Company: Darwin P. Kingsley, George W. Perkins, Thomas A. Buckner, and William Harris. [For more information on the prominent residents of Riverdale, see the Owners Appendix].

Physical changes within the historic district took place incrementally on each of the estates over the years between 1860 and about 1915, such as landscaping and other estate features, remodeling of and additions to the villas, and alteration or replacement of older carriage houses and other outbuildings. These changes often reflected stylistic trends of the period or accommodated the differing needs of the families at the time. As automobiles came into use after the turn of the century, a stable was altered to accommodate this function and several garage buildings were constructed within the district. The period of the 1920s saw little physical change within the district except for the construction of a new house and the loss of another. No. 5200 Sycamore Avenue, southwest of the southern bend of the street, was built in 1923-24 to the design of architect Dwight James Baum on a lot which had been separated from the Wave Hill Estate. Darwin Kingsley's mansion, built to replace the original Stone villa in 1901, was destroyed by fire in 1929.

The threat of drastic change to the immediate environs of the Riverdale Historic District, to views across the Hudson, and to the way of life of the neighborhood's residents became of increasing concern beginning in the 1890s. The Department of Street Improvements announced new plans for street regularization in 1895. The subway, reaching Broadway and 242nd Street in 1908, and the common usage of automobiles in the 1910s, provided easy access to Riverdale, ending its extended period of relative isolation, and paved the way for speculative development. Wealthy Riverdale residents took different actions to protect the neighborhood from change. Beginning as early as 1893 George W. Perkins purchased the Spaulding and Harriman Estates in Park-Riverdale, the Wave Hill Estate, and the Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate in the district — some eighty acres in all, used for family and friends — thus consolidating control over a large amount of land and hindering the plans of speculators and the city. Perkins was also one of the leading figures behind the creation of the Palisades Interstate Park³⁵ in New Jersey which rescued the scenic Palisades from the threats of blasting for stone and unsympathetic development and, not so coincidentally, preserved the views from Riverdale. The Delafield family decided to develop its own property to partially thwart the city's laying out of the street grid; the community of Fieldston was thus begun after 1908. In 1913 the Real Estate Record and Guide, nearly echoing Olmsted, commented that

If New York can develop a favorable suburban center, such as has been done in Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, the Riverdale

section offers the only possibility.³⁶

In the district there were even later plans by the city to widen Sycamore Avenue, the carriage alley, from twenty-five feet to sixty feet (1925) and then even to eighty feet (1932).³⁷ That this and other changes did not come to pass was undoubtedly due to the influence of the residents, but particularly to the buffer of land created by Perkins's holdings.

Subdivision of the Original Riverdale Estates (1935-present)³⁸

The greatest change to the Riverdale Historic District began in 1935 with the first subdivision of the original estate properties. The effects of the Depression made it prohibitive for many owners to maintain an entire estate, much less have a second residence. With the improvement of Riverdale Avenue and the construction of the George Washington Bridge (1927-31) and the Henry Hudson Parkway and Bridge (completed in 1937), automobile accessibility to the area was greatly improved and the groundwork was laid for possible large-scale development in Riverdale. In the district, parcels of land were separated from the original estates after 1935, including the former Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate which had been repurchased during the Depression by the widow of George Perkins, Evelina Ball Perkins. With this subdivision of estates, construction was limited to single-family houses (a total of fifteen) and many recognizable estate features were maintained. Sometime after 1938 the former Samuel Foster villa was demolished. In 1942 the western portions of the Cromwell and Stone estates were donated along with adjacent parcels by the Perkins and Dodge families to form Riverdale Park (not included in the historic district). The development pressure in the area heightened in the years following World War II and high-rise apartment buildings were constructed in the Spuyten Duyvil neighborhood as well as in Riverdale east of the historic district. In 1953 the Riverdale Community Planning Association successfully lobbied for down-zoning, thus limiting the threat of further high-density development in other sections of the Riverdale neighborhood. During the same period, all of the existing carriage houses in the district were converted to residences.

Architecture of the Riverdale Historic District³⁹

The Riverdale Historic District contains three basic building types among its thirty-four structures: villas built during the beginning of the development of Riverdale in the 1850s, outbuildings dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — mostly carriage houses and garages — lining Sycamore Avenue, and twentieth-century suburban houses, all but one of which was built (or remodeled to its present form) after subdivision of the original estates began to occur in 1935.

Of the original seven villas built in the 1850s within the Riverdale Historic District, five were built in 1853 on Independence Avenue, four of which survive, and two were built slightly later on Sycamore Avenue, one of which survives. These houses were "villas" in the nineteenth-century sense

of large "country" or suburban houses. As English and American architects, landscape gardeners, and writers sought to influence taste on architecture and landscape in the period from the 1830s to the 1850s, two general terms were employed to classify non-urban houses other than farmhouses. A cottage, according to A.J. Downing, was a smaller dwelling for "industrious and intelligent mechanics and working men," while a villa was "the country house of a person of competence or wealth sufficient to build and maintain it with some taste and elegance."⁴⁰ American villas of the 1830s were generally in the Greek Revival style, but after the popularity of Downing's publications, several other styles were promoted for villas — Gothic Revival, Tuscan, bracketed Italianate, and a towered "Italian villa" variation. All of these styles were considered appropriate to the picturesque landscape of which they were a part. Usually asymmetrical in plan and composition, villas had numerous features that extended the house into the landscape -- bay windows, towers and belvederes, loggias, and porches.

There is photographic documentation of the original appearance of five of the seven Riverdale villas initially in the district, and the appearance of a sixth by the 1880s.⁴¹ As a group, these buildings provided an interesting collection of various mid- to late-nineteenth-century architectural styles. Subsequent owners, all with the means to do so, frequently altered these villas to reflect prevailing stylistic tastes and made additions over the years according to their families' needs.

The first five villas were constructed in 1853 along Independence Avenue. The Atherton villa (I.1, 5247 Independence Avenue) was published in A.A. Turner's Villas on the Hudson (1860); as designed by local architect Thomas S. Wall in the Gothic Revival style, it featured a central hall plan, a central gabled pavilion with bargeboards, and porches on three sides. In the 1880s the house was modified with Colonial Revival style alterations and additions, including an enlarged rear porch and a polygonal northern wing. It is possible that Wall was commissioned to design all five of the houses dating from 1853, since they were erected simultaneously for the Riverdale syndicate, and one syndicate member, Samuel D. Babcock, was a client of Wall's for other projects. [For more information on Wall, see the Architects' Appendix]. The Woodworth villa (II.1, 5251 Independence Avenue) is documented by photographs from around the turn of the century which show its original condition; designed in the Italianate style, it had a cruciform plan, a gambrel roof, eaves with bargeboards, bay windows, and verandas. In 1931 the roof was changed to a mansard, among other alterations. The Babcock villa (III.1, 5261 Independence Avenue), is known from a c. 1938 photograph to have been designed in the Italianate style with a T-shaped plan, a central gable, and a bracketed cornice; it later received additions at the southern end, was stuccoed in 1916, and was extensively altered in 1956 in the neo-Georgian style. The Samuel Foster villa (no longer extant) is also known from a c. 1938 photograph to have been a rectangular building in the bracketed Italianate style, with a mansard roof probably added in the 1870s. The original appearance of the Charles Foster villa (V.1, 5291 Independence Avenue) is not known, although it was cruciform in plan. In 1886 William S. Duke commissioned noted architect Frederick Clarke Withers to alter the house,⁴² which entailed

extending it by one story and remodeling it in the Queen Anne style by creating a picturesque roofline with dormers and chimneys and adding porches. Although the house has since been altered, the Withers design predominates in its appearance.

Following the development of the five estates on Independence Avenue, two villas were constructed slightly later, west of Sycamore Avenue. The Cromwell villa (later known as Stonehurst, VII.1, a designated New York City Landmark), at 5225 Sycamore Avenue, dates from c. 1856-58 and is the only stone villa in the district. Little altered from its original appearance, it is a large rectangular Italianate style villa that has a hipped roof with round-arched dormers, a round bay with a curved metal porch facing the Hudson River, a segmental bay on the south side, and a gabled entrance pavilion on the north side. The architect of the Cromwell villa is not known, but Thomas. S. Wall, who is documented as having designed three villas in the vicinity⁴³ dating from the same period and who may have designed all five of the villas on Independence Avenue, is a definite possibility. The Stone villa (no longer extant), originally located north of the Cromwell villa, is the only one for which there is currently no evidence of its design.

Sycamore Avenue, since 1853 the carriage alley for the initial Riverdale development, is lined with five carriage houses dating from the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century, one nineteenth-century cottage attached to part of a stable from the same date which was later altered into a garage, and two early twentieth-century garages. These buildings, located immediately beside the roadbed of Sycamore Avenue and adjacent to the continuous stone walls and iron fence which border the road, form a picturesque ensemble which imparts much character to the historic district. A suburban carriage alley with remaining buildings is a rare surviving development pattern in New York City. The conversion of one stable into a garage and the construction of new garages continued the historic function of Sycamore Avenue. In the twentieth century, all of the carriage houses were converted to residential use, although their original appearance has been maintained and their initial function is still outwardly apparent in the large window and door openings, among other features. While intended as auxiliary structures to the villas on the estates, as a group these buildings nonetheless reflect the prevailing architectural taste of their time and are characterized by such picturesque elements as projecting gables, fishscale shingles, dormers, and cupolas rising from prominent roof profiles.

The oldest carriage house in the district, and the only one remaining from the initial development phase of the 1850s, is located at 5253 Sycamore Avenue (VII.2); originally part of the Cromwell (later Stonehurst) Estate, it was built of stone in c. 1856-58 and designed in the same Italianate style as the villa to which it belonged. No. 5286 Sycamore Avenue (V.2, 1886) is a clapboard and shingled carriage house with a central gabled dormer and lantern that was designed in the Queen Anne style by Frederick Clarke Withers in conjunction with the remodeling of the former Charles Foster villa for William S. Duke. Like its earlier neighbor across Sycamore Avenue, this outbuilding was intended to relate architecturally to the villa

it served. Three other carriage houses were built on Sycamore Avenue at the turn of the century, all designed in the Colonial Revival style. No. 5255 (VI.1) was designed by Erite & Bacon and built for Darwin P. Kingsley in 1901 as an outbuilding for the mansion (demolished 1929) which replaced the Stone villa. With a large peaked roof, wood shingles, and a lantern, it complemented the Kingsley house. No. 5220 (I.2), built in 1903, is a large building with a jerkinhead roof, wood siding and shingles, and a central gabled dormer, and No. 5270 (IV.1), built in 1908, has a stone base, wood shingles, and a cupola. Two attached stone buildings at 5260 Sycamore Avenue (III.3 and III.2), believed to date from the 1870s, were built as a cottage and stable; the latter was altered into a garage in 1914. The two buildings constructed as garages along Sycamore Avenue are at No. 5255 (VI.2), dating from 1908 but altered in 1958, and at No. 5260 (II.2) of 1913. In addition to the garages on Sycamore Avenue, four other small garage structures were built in the district; these are located adjacent to houses and reached by driveways.

Sixteen twentieth-century suburban houses are located in the historic district. No. 5200 Sycamore Avenue (1923-24), designed in the neo-Dutch Colonial style by Dwight James Baum and published in The American Architect in 1924,⁴⁴ is on land that was formerly part of the Wave Hill Estate, the only parcel that was not part of the original Riverdale development. The rest of the houses date from the period after subdivision of the original estates began to occur in 1935. No. 5205 Sycamore Avenue was originally a cottage at the southeast entrance to the Cromwell Estate; in its original location but remodeled several times, its vernacular cottage appearance dates from 1937. Six houses, flanking private roads which extend west from Sycamore Avenue north and south of the Cromwell villa, were built on land that was parceled from the estate after 1937. Eight other houses in the district were also the result of estate subdivision. Altogether, five were built in 1937-38, eight were constructed in the period from 1950 to 1963, and the last two date from 1969-70 and 1980. Stylistically, ten of the houses were designed in traditional "colonial" variants -- neo-Georgian, neo-Federal, neo-Dutch Colonial, and neo-Colonial -- while six are examples of "modern" suburban architecture. Among the architects for these houses were Jerome R. Cerny, Alton C. Craft, Julius Gregory, and Hood & Manice.

Landscape and Estate Features of the Riverdale Historic District

Natural Setting

The Riverdale Historic District is dominated by its topography, a steeply sloping site above the Hudson River, with scenic views west across the river to the Palisades in New Jersey. By the early nineteenth century the Hudson River valley was being promoted for its scenery, and today this can still be considered one of the most spectacularly scenic views within New York City. The Riverdale slope is formed by a ridge of black and white banded Fordham gneiss, thought to be the oldest bedrock in New York City, which rises to some 280 feet above sea level a few blocks east of the

district (this is the highest occurrence of bedrock outcroppings in the city).⁴⁵ The glacial till covering has been altered since initial settlement to make the terrain suitable for roads, building sites, and landscaped areas. The original placement of the roads parallel to the river appears to have been dictated by areas of natural terracing on the steep slope.

Terraces

Due to the steep slope of Riverdale, sufficient land had to be graded to make level sites for initial construction, and terraces had to be created to prevent erosion and provide space for gardens and recreation. These terraces are held in place by retaining walls and planting.⁴⁶ The largest terraces are those on the Atherton, Woodworth, and Babcock Estates.

Walls

Walls were built in the Riverdale Historic District to define property lines and to act as retaining walls. The majority of the walls in the district are stone and appear to span the entire period of Riverdale's development. Undoubtedly, some of the stone used in these walls was obtained locally; it is known that William Woodworth, a member of the syndicate which initially developed Riverdale, owned a quarry east of the present historic district. The walls have required ongoing maintenance and have been repaired, rebuilt, reinforced, and replaced. The continuous stone walls along the north side of West 252nd Street and the east side of Sycamore Avenue (which also includes entrance gates), and the long expanse of the wrought-iron fence set on a stone base (with stone entry posts) of the Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate are elements that both define the original estate properties and impart a picturesque character to the district. Two of the most extensive systems of retaining walls are behind the carriage houses at 5270 and 5286 Sycamore Avenue. There are also some brick walls in the district which date from the twentieth century. Also surviving are brick entrance posts on West 254th Street which originally flanked the driveway to the Kingsley mansion (demolished 1929).

Steps, Paths and Driveways

Numerous flights of steps and connecting paths were built to traverse the steep properties in the historic district, especially those between Independence and Sycamore Avenues, and to provide access from the main residences to the carriage houses. Usually built of concrete and sometimes of stone and brick, some of the steps have iron railings.

The first five estates had semi-circular driveways leading to the villas from Independence Avenue. Today, the Atherton, Woodworth, and Babcock houses still have semi-circular drives, although there have been changes in grade over the years. The Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate originally had an extensive driveway with a turn-around loop in front of the entrance to the villa; today, a portion of that drive, including the loop,

survives. Two private roads were established on this property in the 1930s in conjunction with its subdivision. Their placement approximates the location of the original arms of the driveway.

Landscaping

Landscaping in the historic district provided the picturesque setting appropriate to a romantic suburb of the nineteenth century. Landscape features were often used to define estate borders. Hedges and trees line the properties along Independence Avenue, hedges and some trees occur along Sycamore Avenue, rows of trees follow both West 252nd and West 254th Streets, and trees also delineate the boundaries between the estates. Landscaping was also used to ornament the grounds of the estates. Notable examples include the ornamental garden of four parterres and paths which exists on the Woodworth Estate and the row of cherry trees planted along the eastern side of the driveway leading from the bend in Sycamore Avenue to the carriage house on the Atherton Estate. Trees were also planted adjacent to the villas to create a picturesque counterpoint to the architecture and to shade the buildings. Particularly significant in the district is the existence of a number of trees, particularly magnificent copper beech trees, which date from the inception of Riverdale. In addition to the vegetation, there are trellises, gates, balustrades, walls, stairways, and paths used functionally and ornamentally on the properties. The lots of the twentieth-century suburban houses also incorporate extensive landscaping, adding to the verdant character of the historic district.

Street Drainage System

A drainage system network of street gutters and culverts, apparently dating from the nineteenth century, is found along Sycamore Avenue and a portion of West 252nd Street. Of two types -- troughs of cobblestones and channels of bluestone flagstones -- some of these gutters have been removed, replaced, or partially covered with soil and asphalt.

NOTES

1. This section of the report was compiled from the following sources: Condit; Fein, Wave Hill...; Fitzpatrick; Jenkins; Kane; Kellerman and DeNooyer; Kornfeld; and Scharf.
2. This property is called "Locust Grove" on the Map of West Chester County, N.Y. (1851).
3. Map of West Chester County, N.Y. (1851).
4. Westchester County, Sept. 27, 1852, Liber 210, 112.
5. Fitzpatrick, 317. Prominent landscape gardener A.J. Downing died in this disaster.
6. American Agriculturalist (1851), quoted in Stilgoe, 99.
7. Westchester County, Sept. 27, 1852, Liber 210, 102-117.
8. This section of the report was compiled from the following sources: Historic Maps listed in the Bibliography (some of which have been reproduced in the back of this report); and Westchester County. A more complete listing of property transactions and citations is on file at the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
9. Thomas C. Cornell, Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers (Dec., 1853). A rendering of this map is reproduced in this chapter of the report as well as at the back of the report.
10. The earliest known use of the name Sycamore Avenue appears on the Map or Plan of Section 26, p. 85 of the 24th Ward (1895). Some earlier maps refer to the alley as "West Avenue" or "West Street," though some confusion may have resulted from the fact that the "West Avenue," as drawn on the 1853 Cornell map, to the west of the alley, was never actually cut through.
11. Westchester County, June 2, 1856, Liber 337, 156 and 163.
12. Foster's holdings included the two estates on Palisade Avenue and a half-interest in the remaining undeveloped land east of Palisade Avenue.
13. Westchester County, Feb. 26, 1859, Liber 402, 304.
14. Westchester County, May 10, 1860, Liber 435, 467+.
15. Thomas C. Cornell, Map of The Park-Riverdale (1856), cited in Kellerman and DeNooyer.

16. W.E. Baxter, America and the Americans (London, 1855), cited in Kouwenhoven, 292.
17. J.H. French, Gazetteer of the State of New York (Syracuse: R.P. Smith, 1860), 708, cited in Tieck, Schools..., 91.
18. "The Riverdale Institute," Godey's Lady's Book 68 (May, 1864), cited in Kane, 14.
19. This section of the report was compiled from the following sources: Archer; Coledge; Landmarks Preservation Commission, files; Stern; and Stilgoe.
20. Condit, 34.
21. Quoted in Archer, 139.
22. Beginning as early as 1811 architect John Nash had created in Regent's Park, London, a picturesque naturalistic landscaped park, containing freestanding villas; in the Park Villages (1823) on the park's northeastern edge, Nash laid out curving streets lined with smaller villas and cottages.
23. Two of the most visited were Prince's Park, London (1842) and Birkenhead Park, Cheshire (1843).
24. The first American "rural" cemeteries were Mt. Auburn, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1831); Laurel Hill, Philadelphia (1836); Greenmount, Baltimore (1838); and Greenwood, Brooklyn (1838).
25. This drawing is part of the J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York; published in The American Heritage History of Notable American Houses, Marshall B. Davidson, ed. (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), 188-189.
26. Their exact development has not been thoroughly studied and little remains of these early suburban communities.
27. Quoted in Archer, 150.
28. Coledge, 24-27, 159-160.
29. This section of the report was compiled from the following sources: Bronx County; Condit; Fein, Wave Hill...; Kane; Kellerman and DeNooyer; Maps; Tieck, Riverdale...; Ultan; and Westchester County.
30. Cited in Kane, 33.
31. New York City, Dept. of Buildings, Plans, Permits and Dockets, NB 1152-1889.

32. From the "Report of the Landscape Architect and the Civil and Topographical Engineer, Accompanying a Plan for Laying out that Part of the Twenty-fourth Ward Lying West of the Riverdale Road," Dept. of Public Parks, Nov. 21, 1876, published in Fein, Landscape..., 360-361.
33. Ibid., 366.
34. Ibid., 363.
35. Perkins was chairman of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, established in 1900. The acquisition of property was largely accomplished through private donations.
36. Delafield, 940.
37. New York City, Dept. of Buildings, Bronx, Plans, Permits and Dockets, cited in Alt. 214-1949.
38. This section of the report was compiled from the following sources: Bronx County; Fein, Wave Hill...; Kane; and Tieck, Riverdale...
39. The structures contained within the district are shown on a map which has been annotated with keys (Roman numerals indicate original estates, arabic numbers indicate the buildings within each estate in chronological order). These keys are used to identify the buildings in the individual building entries. The map can be found at the beginning of the chapter of this report entitled "Estate Histories, Individual Building Entries, and Related Features."
40. Downing, 40, 257.
41. The first five villas on Independence Avenue are documented by c. 1938 photographs taken by the New York City Dept. of Taxes, in the collection of the Municipal Archives, Surrogate's Court. The Atherton villa was photographed in Villas on the Hudson (1860). Copies of photographs of the Woodworth villa (taken c. 1900-10) and the Cromwell (Stonehurst) villa (taken c. 1860s) were donated to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. These images are reproduced in the chapter of this report entitled "Estate Histories, Individual Building Entries, and Related Features."
42. Kowsky, 193.
43. Turner.
44. "House of Mrs. Thomas Aylette Buckner, Jr.," The American Architect 126 (Nov. 19, 1924), 501-502.
45. Fein, Wave Hill..., 3.

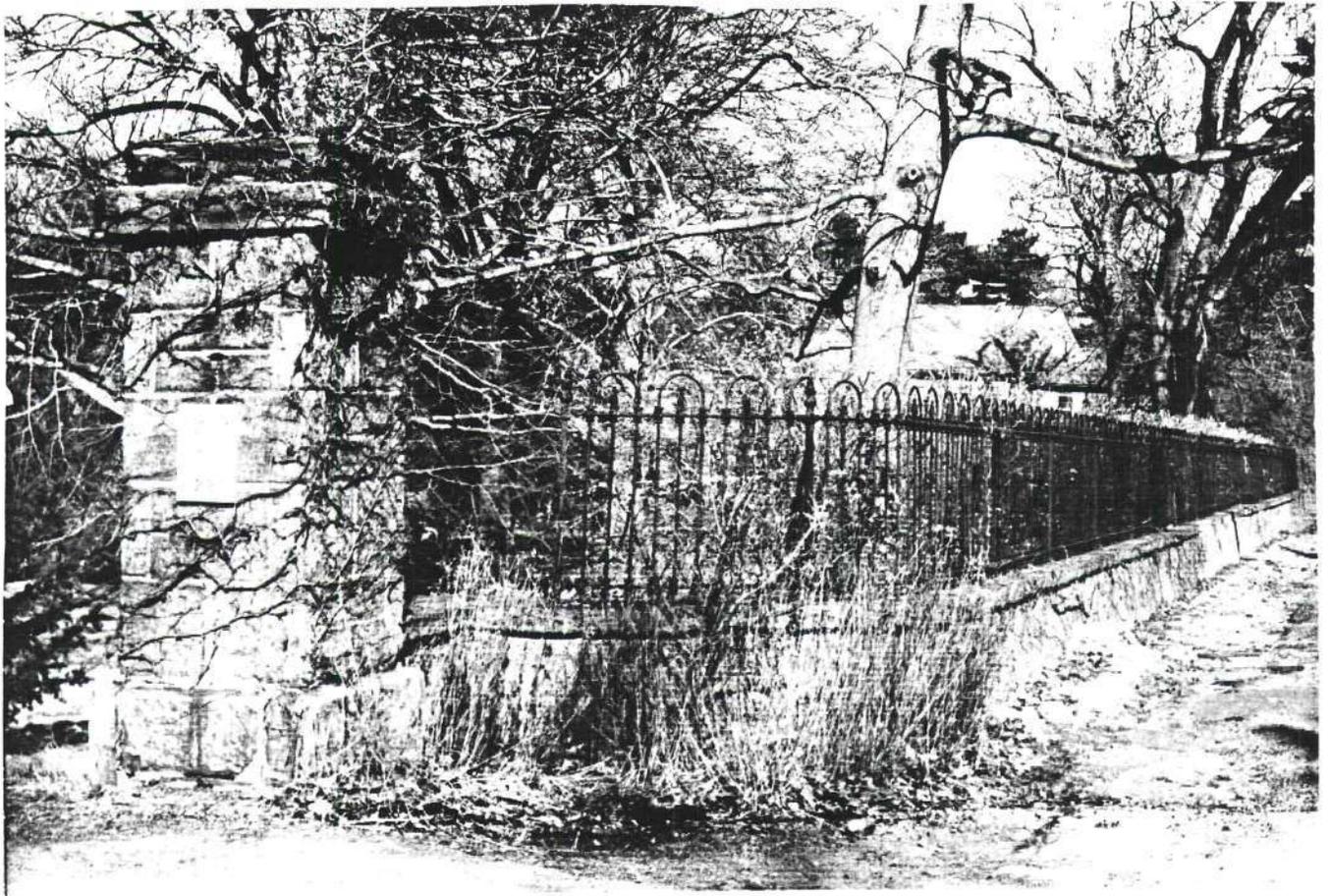
46. The stability of Riverdale's estate terraces depends to a large extent on an adequate drainage system. Visible components of the system include square brick-lined wells with bluestone-slab caps and cast-iron grates at the edges of terraces and the top landings of flights of stairs, and iron drainage pipes protruding through retaining walls below. The bluestone-slab caps are cut on the uphill side to catch water running downhill, and the iron grates have been specially cast with a cut of decreasing depth running from the front to the back, to meet the cut in the bluestone and enhance the gathering of surface water into the system. The most extensive series of these intakes runs along the north edge of the Babcock Estate.



view looking northwest from Atherton Estate



Atherton Estate from Sycamore Avenue



Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate, fence, Sycamore Avenue



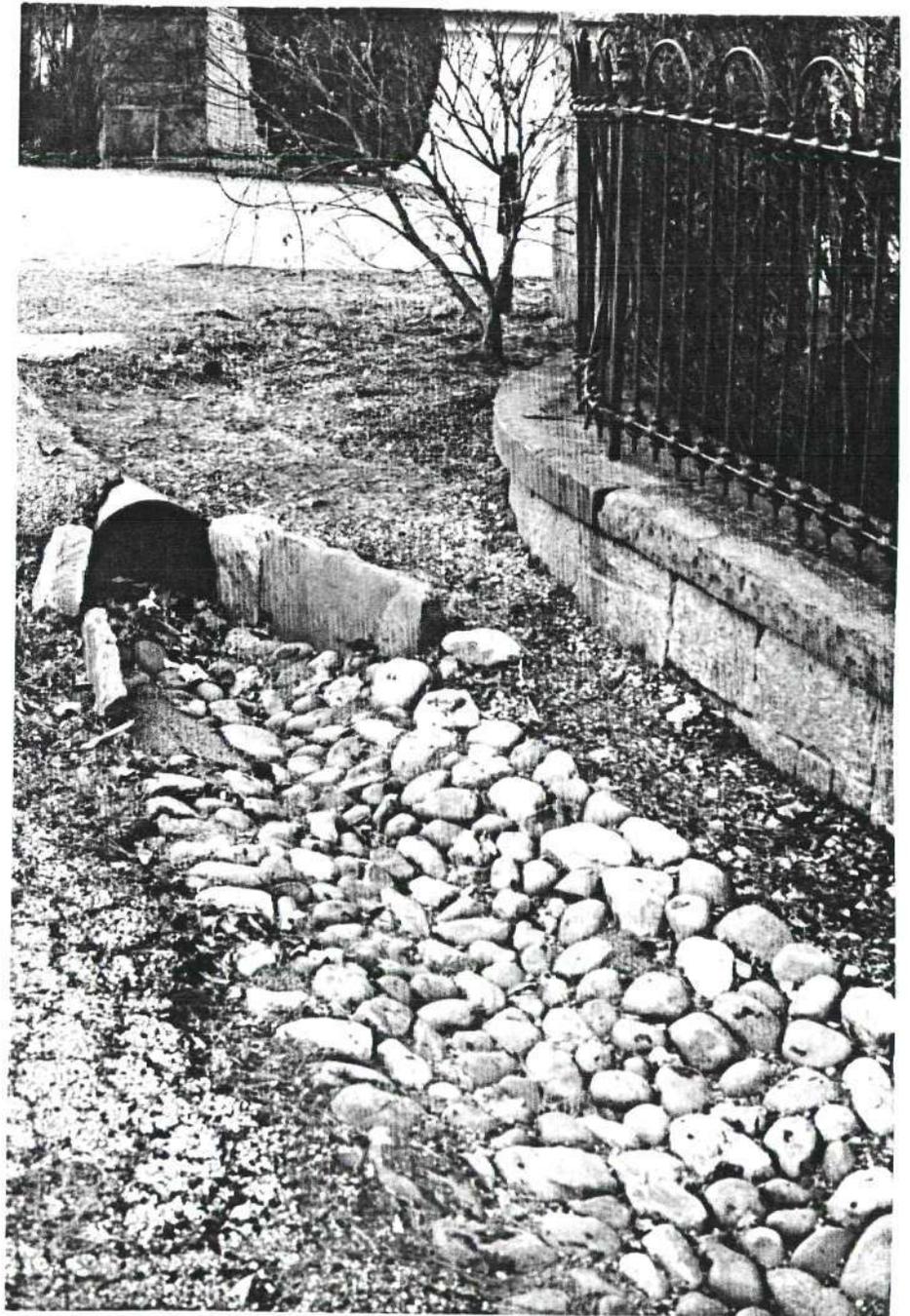
Woodworth Estate, stone wall, Sycamore Avenue



Babcock Estate, steps



Babcock Estate, cottage and tree



Sycamore Avenue, street drainage system

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ESTATE HISTORIES, INDIVIDUAL BUILDING ENTRIES, AND RELATED FEATURES¹

The complicated history of development in the Riverdale Historic District is most easily understood if one looks at the history of each of the seven original estates in the district, plus that of the additional lot that was once part of the Wave Hill Estate. Each of the seven properties was subsequently divided into two or more tax lots, and in two cases new lots were created from land that was originally part of adjacent estates.

The text of this section is arranged by "estates." Each estate is named for its original owner (taken from the 1853 Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers for those on Independence Avenue). For the estates west of Sycamore Avenue, reference is to that portion of the original estate included within the historic district. Roman numerals are used as keys to the estates in the text and on the map entitled "Riverdale Historic District: Estate and Building Numbers." Arabic numerals following the Roman numerals are used to designate individual buildings (in chronological order according to construction date) and are also used as text and map keys. An "A" or "B" is used for a separate lot on which there is currently no structure. Biographical information on the owners is contained in the Owners Appendix.

¹ Deeds, conveyances, and building records were consulted in Westchester County and the Bronx to assemble the information contained in this section of the report. The change in jurisdiction of Riverdale from Westchester County to New York County to Bronx County has made the survival and accessibility of certain nineteenth-century records somewhat problematic. Several historic maps are reproduced at the back of the report and full citations for all of the maps consulted are contained in a separate listing following the Bibliography.

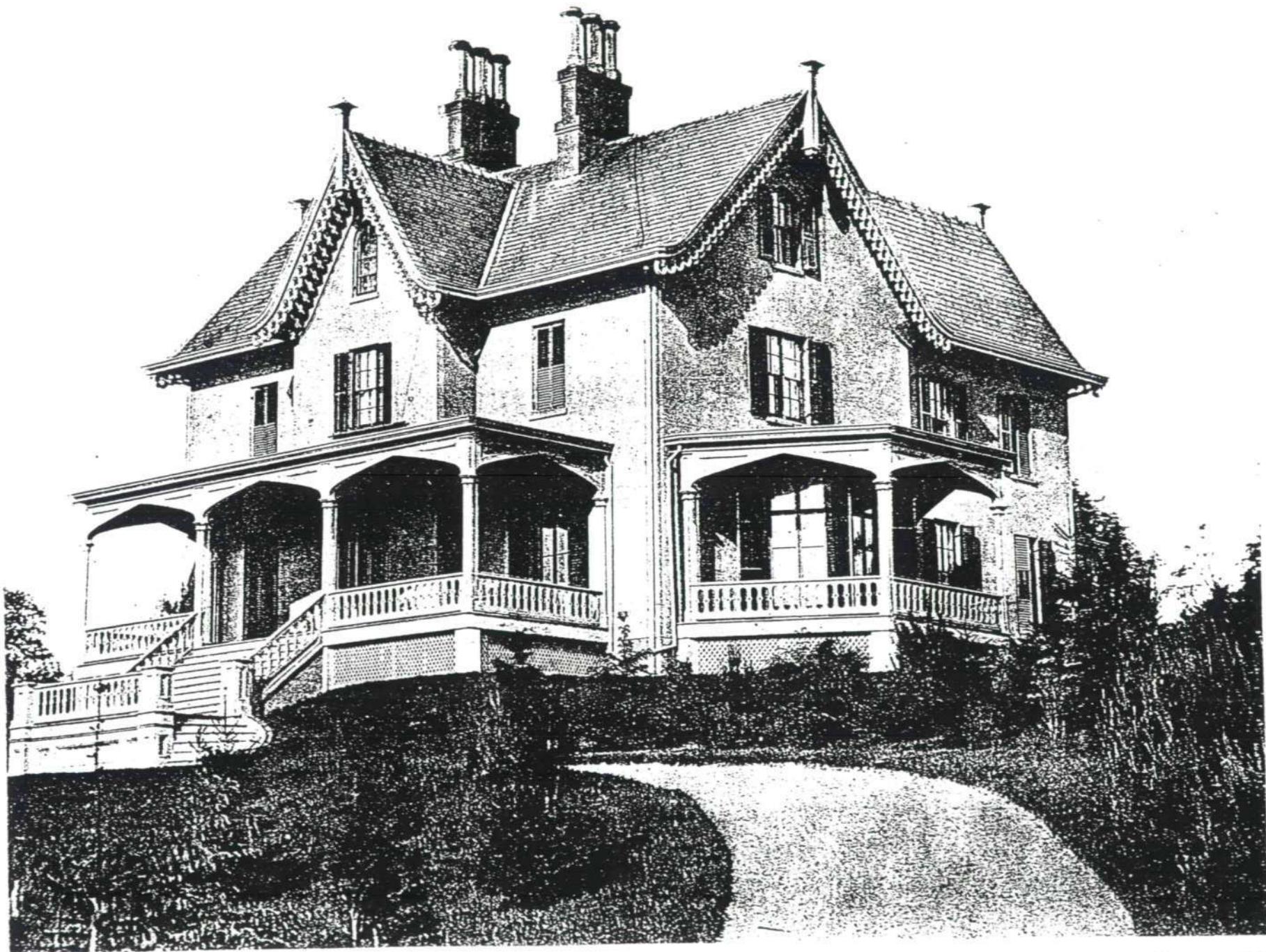
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I. Henry L. Atherton Estate

Henry L. Atherton, a merchant/importer and one of the original members of the syndicate that purchased William Ackerman's farm in 1852 for the development of Riverdale, owned the largest of the Independence Avenue estates (about 3.5 acres on an L-shaped lot). He also owned two parcels of land within the original Riverdale development, one north and one east of the historic district, on which villas were built and where he resided at different times. His house, now at 5247 Independence Avenue (I.1), first appeared on the 1853 Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers, and in 1860 it was illustrated with a photograph and ground floor plan in A.A. Turner's Villas on the Hudson. Atherton sold the property to publisher William Young and his wife, Harriet, in 1855, who remained there until 1861 when they sold it to John Phillips. According to a map in 1868 the estate by then had a semi-circular driveway leading to the house. From 1868 to 1873 the estate was owned by a banker, John A. Van Saun, and his wife, Susannah. After that the estate was owned by Francis McNeil Bacon, who built a carriage house (no longer extant) which appears on a map of 1876 at the northwest corner of the property on Sycamore Avenue. The estate was purchased from Bacon by George and Mary L.H. McGill in 1882; The McGills made numerous improvements to the property, including additions to the house. A map from 1893 shows additions to the carriage house, and in 1903 the McGills built a new carriage house (I.2), now at 5220 Sycamore Avenue, which replaced the old one. A map dating from 1907, the same year that the property was sold to Loring R. Gale, shows a driveway leading to this carriage house from the bend of Sycamore Avenue to the south. The property was later subdivided by Sanford and Lucille Gale Knapp (Loring Gale's daughter) into lots for sale to separate owners: that of the house on Independence Avenue, the carriage house on Sycamore Avenue, and three undeveloped lots to the south of the Independence Avenue house. Herbert L. Abrons built a house (I.3) at 5225 Independence Avenue on the central one of these lots in 1980; the lots to the south and north are I.B and I.A.

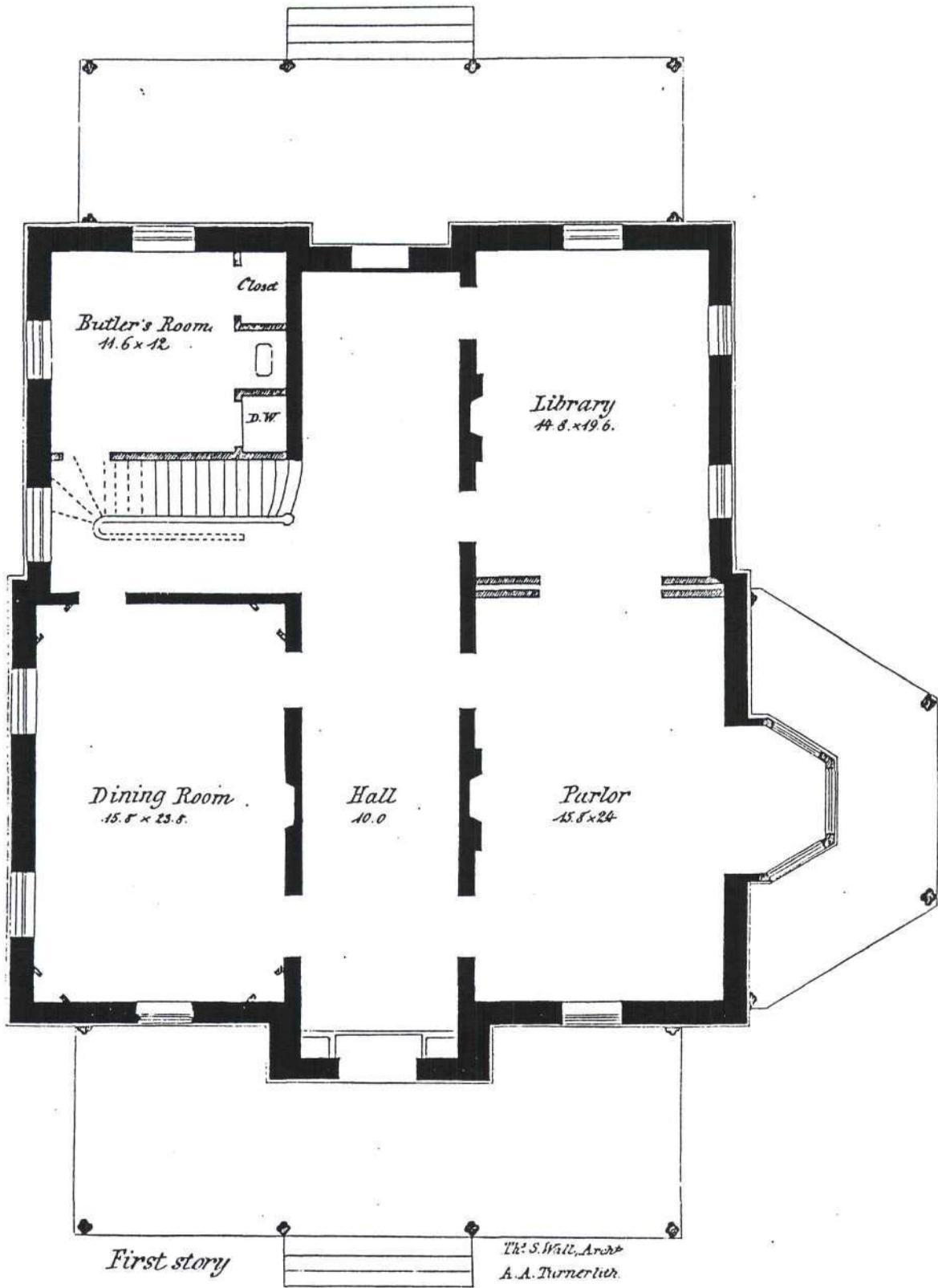
In summary, the Atherton Estate today is subdivided into five lots having three structures with four separate owners. Despite its subdivision and the construction of one new house, visually the property retains a high degree of integrity as a single estate, as it appeared in about 1903. A number of features survive from the estate era. It is bordered along West 252nd Street and Sycamore Avenue by stone walls (with stonework of various types). A semi-circular driveway still leads to the house. The driveway to the carriage house also exists; it is lined on the east by trees and its entrance is flanked by rounded stone posts. The ground is graded from west to east with a series of increasingly high terraces which are scaled by flights of concrete steps. The periphery of the estate is nearly continuously vegetation: trees along Independence Avenue and West 252nd Street, and between the Atherton and Woodworth Estates; and hedges, small trees, and shrubs along West 252nd Street and Sycamore Avenue.

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Atherton Villa

A.A. Turner, Villas on the Hudson, (1860)



H.L. Atherton's Villa.



Atherton Villa (I.1)
5247 Independence Avenue

N.Y.C. Dept. of Taxes
c. 1938

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5247 Independence Avenue 5939/450 (I.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; altered 1886 [ALT 572-1886], 1910 [ALT 454-1910], and 1914 [ALT 246-1914]

ARCHITECT: Thomas S. Wall; Isaac Van Steenburgh (1886)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Henry L. Atherton; Mary McGill (1886)

STYLE: Gothic Revival with Colonial Revival additions

Built in 1853 and designed by Thomas S. Wall, this is the house of the Henry L. Atherton Estate. As illustrated in A.A. Turner's Villas on the Hudson of 1860, the house was a two-and-one-half-story Gothic Revival style villa. With its central hall plan, it was basically square but given vitality and variety in appearance by several means: the central hall projected forward from the plane of the front facade and was indented at the rear and the two front rooms on either side of the hall projected at the sides. The illustration shows steeply pitched, gabled slate roofs with upturned eaves, bargeboards, and finials, pierced by two large chimneys. The house originally had porches on three sides including a wide front porch with an elaborate central stairway. The house has a wood frame on a stone and brick foundation and infill of brick clad with a four-inch stucco surface.

In 1882 the rear porch was enlarged, extending it across the entire elevation and creating a balcony at the second story and a curved projection supported on Ionic columns at the first story. In 1886, the architect Isaac Van Steenburgh designed a major addition on the north side of the house, a two-story, wood-frame polygonal structure. It is probable that at this time several modifications were made to the existing house: the pitch of the roof was made slightly shallower, the upturned eaves and bargeboards were removed, the slate roof shingles were replaced, and the chimneys were modified. Apparently, it was also at this time that the front wall of the house was built out into a single plane and restuccoed and the front porch was replaced by a porte cochere topped by a balustrade; these conditions are documented in a photograph dating from c. 1938. In 1910 the architect Robert H. Murphy designed a bedroom extension at the rear. In 1914 the firm of Parish & Schroeder designed a steel-frame extension at the rear for a kitchen and bedroom. Sometime after 1938, the porte cochere was replaced by a metal porte cochere in a neo-classical style and a balcony was removed from the top of the bay window on the south facade of the house. In 1959 a small greenhouse was added at the south side (ALT 752-1959).

The house was originally fronted by a semi-circular driveway and remains so today although the level of the ground in the front of the house has been raised. A stone wall on the south side of the driveway leads to a path with steps near the greenhouse.

5220 Sycamore Avenue 5939/374 (I.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1903 [NB 173-1903]

ARCHITECT: Clarence L. Sefert

ORIGINAL OWNER: Mary McGill

STYLE: Colonial Revival

This building was designed in 1903 by Clarence L. Sefert for Mary McGill who then owned the Atherton Estate. Built as a stable, coach house, and dwelling, the rectangular two-story building originally had a large coach room, a stable, a feed room, and a harness room on the ground floor, and a bedroom, living room, kitchen, bath, and feed loft on the second floor. At an unknown date the coach room was converted to a two-bay garage and the other ground-floor spaces were converted for residential use; the original wood vehicular doors are intact. The building incorporates various remnants of pre-existing stone walls and foundations in its foundation. Constructed with a balloon frame, it is clad in narrow horizontal wood siding at the first story and wood fish-scale shingles at the second story below the eaves of the bracketed hipped roof (now sheathed in asphalt shingles) with gabled dormers and jerkinhead ends. It originally had a cupola which has been removed.

The building is situated on the north side of the property, with its long facades on an east/west axis. A long driveway lined with cherry trees leads from the dogleg of Sycamore Avenue. The property is terraced slightly at the west and steeply at the east. Bordered by stone walls along Sycamore Avenue, the property also includes stone retaining walls, concrete steps, iron gates, and the remnants of a formal garden with a central well. The planting includes vegetable and flower gardens and flowering trees. At the time the carriage house was built, there were two "flower houses" (no longer extant) on the property.

5225 Independence Avenue 5939/463 (I.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1980

ARCHITECT: Harold Sussman, Horace Ginsbern & Associates

ORIGINAL OWNER: Herbert L. Abrons

STYLE: Modern

Herbert L. Abrons bought this lot in 1978 from Lucille Gale Knapp, prior to which time, as far as is known, it had not been built upon. In 1980 Abrons built a two-story wood-frame house with an irregular plan designed by Harold Sussman, Horace Ginsbern & Associates. The property presently includes a large side yard which is on a separate lot at (5201) Independence Avenue. There is a stone wall at the west end of the property on Sycamore Avenue and there are stone walls enclosing gardens and plantings near the house.

(5239) Independence Avenue 5939/458 (I.A)

Lot (no buildings)

As far as is known, this lot has never been built upon. It is planted with grass and contains large trees.

(5201) Independence Avenue 5939/350 (I.B)

Lot (no buildings)

This lot is the side yard of 5225 Independence Avenue. As far as is known it has never been built upon. The lot is bordered on the south and west by stone walls lined with trees and shrubs.

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II. William W. Woodworth Estate

William W. Woodworth, the leader of the syndicate which bought the Ackerman farm in 1852 for the development of Riverdale, was a major real estate developer in the Yonkers area and was the contractor of the Hudson River Railroad between Spuyten Duyvil and Hastings-on-Hudson. Although he was identified on the 1853 Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers as the owner of the estate with the villa now at 5251 Independence Avenue (II.1), the property had been purchased in 1853 by Charles W. Foster, an auctioneer who also owned the estate with the villa now at 5291 Independence Avenue (V.1). At that time Woodworth and Foster jointly held a seven-acre tract of land between the proposed West Avenue and the railroad tracks; this land subsequently became part of the Stone (VI) and Cromwell (later Stonehurst, VII) Estates. Woodworth also owned a quarry east of the present historic district. He sold out of the syndicate in 1854.

The villa (II.1), now at 5251 Independence Avenue, first appeared on the 1853 map on a roughly 1.2-acre tract of land. From 1857 to 1859 the property was owned by William Underhill, though he may have leased it earlier. In 1859 the estate was purchased by Newton and Ann Carpenter, and in 1868 it was sold to Albert G. Hyde. According to an 1876 map a semi-circular driveway led to the main house, and a stable complex (no longer extant) was located near the southwest corner of the property. In the 1870s the estate was purchased by Henry F. Spaulding, who also owned a large villa estate in the Park-Riverdale section south of Wave Hill. In 1880 the original Woodworth estate was sold to Thomas B. Meeker (a relative of William B. Meeker, owner of the Samuel Foster Estate, IV) and his wife, Grace. On a map of 1893, Spaulding's name reappears in connection with this property. Dr. A. Emil Schmitt bought the estate from Grace Meeker around 1904. Adin G. and Estella M. Pierce were the next owners of the estate, living there from 1910 to about 1930; they constructed a garage (II.2) in 1913 as an extension to the stable which was subsequently demolished. The Pierces sold the estate to Lucille B. Gale (later Knapp) who had inherited the adjacent Atherton Estate (I) from her father, Loring R. Gale. Gale, who carried out a remodeling of the house in 1931, later subdivided the property into two lots: that of the house on Independence Avenue and the other with the garage on Sycamore Avenue. The western lot was merged around 1963 with the lot to the north which had been separated from the original Babcock Estate (III); that property now has the address of 5260 Sycamore Avenue.

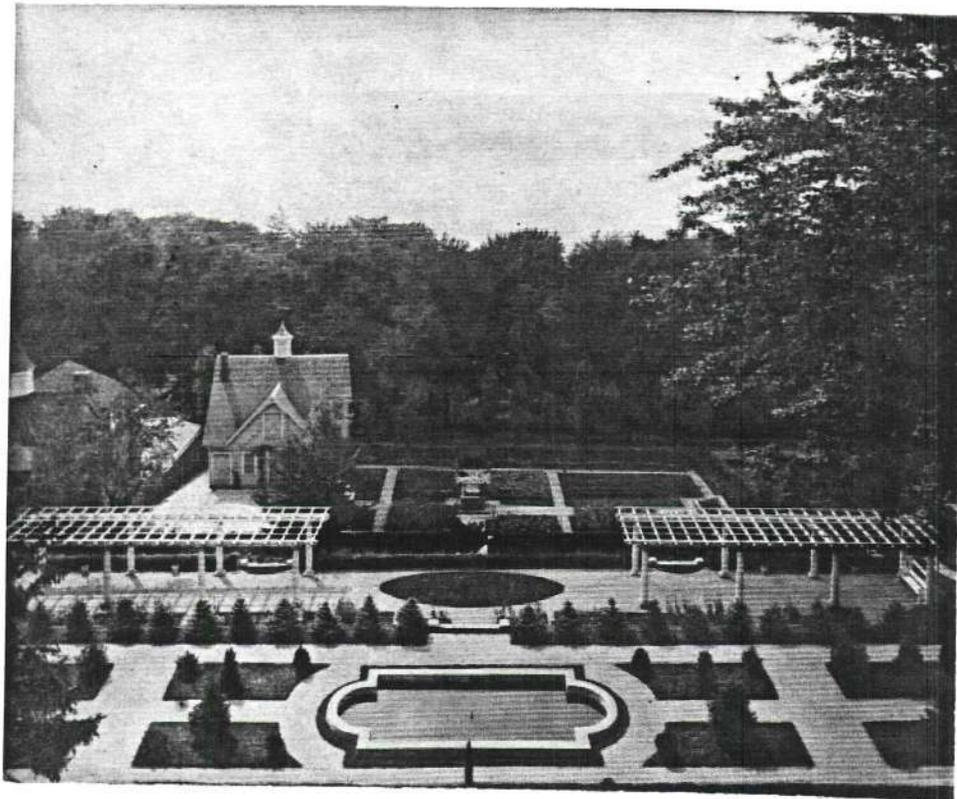
In summary, the Woodworth Estate has been subdivided into two lots, one of which contains the original villa and the other of which, containing a garage, has been merged with a portion of the adjacent estate. The original estate was nearly rectangular in plan. Although subdivided, the property as a whole still retains a strong visual coherence as a single estate. It is bordered by large trees on the north and south, by hedges on Independence Avenue, and by stone walls and hedges on Sycamore Avenue. There is still a semi-circular driveway leading to the house. Turn-of-the-century photographs document the views both west from the house and east from Sycamore Avenue, showing a series of descending terraces with a formal garden and the carriage house in the southwest corner at the foot of the

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Woodworth Villa, c. 1900-1910





Woodworth Estate

view looking west across
grounds, c. 1900-1910

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Woodworth Villa (II.1)
5251 Independence Avenue

N.Y.C. Dept. of Taxes
c.1938

hill. Numerous elements are still in place, including the three steep terraces, stone retaining walls, trellises, a gate leading from Sycamore Avenue, the formal garden with a well, and several flights of steps.

5251 Independence Avenue 5939/442 (II.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; altered 1931 [ALT 68-1931]

ARCHITECT: unknown; Cameron Clark (1931)

ORIGINAL OWNER: William W. Woodworth; Lucille B. Gale (1931)

STYLE: Italianate with neo-classical modifications and additions

Built in 1853, this is the house of the William W. Woodworth Estate. Apart from site plans on various maps that show a cruciform footprint, the earliest documentation that exists of the plan or appearance of this house is from ca. 1900-03. A set of photographs from that period shows the house with a bell-shaped gambrel roof and elaborate bargeboards. (Later records from the Department of Buildings suggest there was a cupola at this time.) The house was smaller -- additions had not obscured the cruciform plan-- and there was a three-level porch at the rear. Bay windows in three of the wings led to both open and closed verandas. The house was light-colored with dark shutters and striped awnings. The view west down the hill showed an extensive formal garden.

Although the house has been altered, aspects of its turn-of-the-century character are still apparent. It is a wood-frame house on a brick and stone foundation. The walls are sheathed in clapboard siding and the roof is slate. In 1931, Lucille B. Gale (later Lucille Gale Knapp) carried out a major renovation designed by Cameron Clark; the gambrel roof was rebuilt as a mansard with dormers, the cupola over the stairhall was removed, and the north wing of the building was rebuilt and enlarged. At some point, some of the porch areas at the front and rear were enclosed and the rear porch was rebuilt at the first story; Alterations to windows and doors include the installation of picture windows flanking the front door. A c. 1938 photograph provides evidence that in subsequent years the existing entrance porch was added and that a canopy was removed from the bay of paired windows above the entrance. In 1958 Knapp added a garage to the front of the north wing designed by Paul K. Fisher (ALT 1-1958). In 1959-60, the swimming pool was added in the back yard.

The house retains its original semi-circular driveway. Rows of very large trees running east to west separate the property from that to the south and north, the Atherton and Babcock Estates, respectively. Several large trees are located to the west of the house.

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5260 Sycamore Avenue (II.2), (III.2), (III.3), and (III.4)

(See Babcock Estate (III) for related structures)

BUILDING TYPE: Garage (II.2)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1913 [ALF 289-1913]

ARCHITECT: Ahneman & Younkheere

ORIGINAL OWNER: Adin G. and Estella M. Pierce

STYLE: Vernacular

At the southwest corner of the what was the Woodworth Estate is a small garage (II.2) which now belongs to the property at 5260 Sycamore Avenue (see Babcock Estate, III). This garage was built in 1913 as an extension to a two-story wood frame stable that was subsequently demolished. Designed by Ahneman & Younkheere for Adin and Estella Pierce, it is a rectangular structure with a bracketed gabled roof and incorporates a stone pier at its southwest corner. The original paneled wood doors with windows in the upper part are intact.

Adjacent to the garage and stepping up the hill in well-defined terraces are the substantial remnants of the gardens of the Woodworth Estate which are documented in turn-of-the-century photographs. A driveway leads from the south side of the garage along the lowest terrace to the house (III.4) which is also part of the property at 5260 Sycamore Avenue. At the lowest level of the property is a stone wall along Sycamore Avenue with a central gate leading into a rectangular garden with four parterres, a central well, and several stone walls. Two levels above, reached by steps, are a pair of trellises.

III. Samuel D. Babcock Estate

Samuel D. Babcock, a very prominent banker and businessman, was a member of the syndicate which established the original Riverdale development. According to the 1853 Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers, he owned the middle one of the first five estates, a lot of roughly 1.2 acres. At that time he also owned a larger estate of close to four acres, just north of the historic district but part of the original Riverdale development, on which he shortly built a large villa called "Hillside" (architect Thomas S. Wall, still standing although altered) where he lived for most of the rest of his life.

The Babcock villa (III.1), now at 5261 Independence Avenue, first appeared on the 1853 map. It was purchased in 1855 by Ann and William Cromwell, who sold it in 1859 and moved into the villa they built on their Sycamore Avenue estate (VII.1, later known as Stonehurst). The property was sold in 1859 to Martin Bates, Jr., who remained there until 1862 when he acquired an estate, also from Babcock, just northeast of the historic district; Babcock then re-acquired this property. In 1863 the Babcock Estate was purchased by George W. Knowlton who retained it until he went bankrupt in 1873 and it was sold to F.J. Ogden. An 1868 map indicates that the estate had a semi-circular driveway and an 1876 map shows a stable and cottage complex (III.2 and III.3) which Ogden had built on Sycamore Avenue at the northwest corner of the property. The upper portion of the stable was subsequently destroyed by fire and in 1914 the remains of the building were altered for a garage. Henry D. Babcock (Samuel's son) owned the estate from 1880 to 1910; Charles H.P. Babcock (Samuel's brother) resided in the house from at least 1891 until 1893 (he died in 1897). William M. and Winifred S. Harris purchased the estate in 1910 and it remained in the Harris family until 1956 when it was bought by Sanford and Lucille Gale Knapp, who by then also owned the Atherton (I) and Woodworth (II) Estates. The Knapps significantly remodeled the house. About 1963 the Knapps subdivided the estate into two lots, one lot with the house on Independence Avenue and the other lot with the cottage and garage on Sycamore Avenue. They constructed a house (III.4) for themselves in 1963 on this latter lot, which was merged with the lot to the south that had been separated from the Woodworth Estate.

In summary, the Babcock Estate has been subdivided into two lots, one of which contains the villa and the other of which contains an altered stable (now garage), a cottage, and a house dating from 1963. The presence of the later house somewhat disrupts the visual continuity of the original estate property. The original estate was a roughly rectangular lot with several terraces descending the hill. It has a stone wall bordering the property on the north, stone retaining walls, a stone wall and hedges along Sycamore Avenue, a semi-circular driveway leading to the Independence Avenue house, a hedge along Independence Avenue, and flights of steps climbing the hill. There are rows of large trees at the south and north sides of the Independence Avenue house which visually separate the property from the adjacent properties, originally the Woodworth and Samuel H. Foster Estates, respectively, and trees to the west of the house.

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Babcock Villa (III.1)
5261 Independence Avenue

N.Y.C. Dept. of Taxes
c. 1938

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5261 Independence Avenue 5939/430 (III.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; altered 1916 [ALT 527-1916] and 1956 [ALT 958-1956]

ARCHITECT: unknown (attributed to Thomas S. Wall); S.L. Harned (1916); Paul K. Fisher (1956)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Samuel D. Babcock; William M. Harris (1916); Lucille Gale Knapp (1956)

STYLE: Neo-Georgian

Built in 1853, this was the house of the Samuel D. Babcock Estate. Designed in the bracketed Italianate style, it was a wood-frame house (later stuccoed) with a T-shaped footprint and had a front porch and a wrap-around rear porch. In 1916, William M. Harris hired S.L. Harned to design alterations which included a bay window in the living room at the north side, a porch enclosure at the west side of the second story, and the stuccoing of the exterior walls of the house. The appearance of the house following those alterations is documented in a c. 1938 photograph. In 1956, Paul K. Fisher remodeled the house for Lucille Gale Knapp which entailed the removal of the existing attic and the replacement of the shallow gabled roof with a hipped roof, the addition of a two-car garage at the front of the south wing of the house, the removal of the front porch and the installation of iron grilles at the doorway, the enclosure of a portion of the west porch for a dining room, the removal of sleeping porches at the rear, and window and door alterations. The semi-circular driveway has been regraded.

5260 Sycamore Avenue 5939/380 (II.2), (III.2), (III.3), and (III.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Stable (now a garage, III.2) and Cottage (III.3)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: c. 1872-76; Stable altered 1914 [ALT 348-1914]

ARCHITECT: unknown; John G. Kleinberg (1914)

ORIGINAL OWNER: F.J. Ogden

STYLE: Vernacular

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House (III.4)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1963 [NB 851-1963]

ARCHITECT: Jerome Robert Cerny and G.R.W. Watland

ORIGINAL OWNER: Lucille Gale Knapp

STYLE: Neo-Dutch Colonial

The property at 5260 Sycamore Avenue is the result of the merger of the two western lots which had been separated from the Babcock (III) and Woodworth (II) Estates. The property consists of a cottage and stable complex built in the early 1870s (stable altered 1914), an automobile garage built in 1913 (see Woodworth Estate, II.2), and a house built in 1963.

The 1876 Yonkers Property Atlas shows a complex of two adjoining buildings with a footprint that matches that of the buildings at the northwest corner of this property today. The residence (III.3) is the southern portion of the complex. This rectangular stuccoed stone building, set into the terraced land, has two stories facing Sycamore Avenue and one story on the uphill side, from which it is entered. The house has a wood entrance door, an asymmetrical gabled roof (now with asphalt shingles), a battered chimney, and six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows with shutters. In 1914 the upper one-and-one-half stories of the stable (III.2), which adjoins the house to the north, were removed. The lower story, built of stone and brick, was converted to a garage with a roof of steel beams that could support six inches of soil. The architect of this alteration was John G. Kleinberg for William M. Harris. The garage has two bays facing Sycamore Avenue and three double-hung wood sash windows, two of them with shutters.

Between the house and the garage at the bottom of the hill and the main house of the Babcock Estate (see III.1) at the top of the hill is a house built for Lucille Gale Knapp in 1963 (III.4). It was sited in a small orchard on a terrace and is known as "Orchard House."² The house was designed in a neo-Dutch Colonial style by Jerome Robert Cerny (of Chicago) and G.R.W. Watland, associated architects. A wood-frame house with a brick veneer, it has two stories at the west and one story at the east from which it is entered. The gabled roof forms a spring eave that spans a two-story porch at the west. Another porch extends from the south side of the house and there is a greenhouse addition. The windows have multipane double-hung wood sash and shutters.

On the north side of the property is a terraced stone stairway that leads from Sycamore Avenue to these buildings. There is also a path between the two houses (III.3 and III.4). At the southwest corner of the property is a small garage (see Woodworth Estate, II.2). A driveway leads from the south side of the garage along the lowest terrace to the house (III.4).

² Lucille Gale Knapp, Letter to Robert Kornfeld, February 22, 1982.

IV. Samuel H. Foster Estate

Samuel H. Foster, an auctioneer and broker, was the only owner of one of the first five Riverdale estates in 1853 who was not part of the syndicate which purchased the land in 1852 for the development of Riverdale; he was the brother of syndicate member Charles W. Foster.

Foster's villa (no longer extant) first appeared on its roughly 1.2-acre estate on the 1853 Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers. Designed in the bracketed Italianate style, the house had a square footprint with porches on the front and rear. A c. 1938 photograph indicates that a mansard roof, typical of the 1870s, had been added to the house. In 1857 Foster sold the property to syndicate member Henry L. Atherton, who had formerly owned the southernmost of the five Independence Avenue estates (I). Atherton retained the property until 1859, when he sold it to Samuel N. and Clara W. Dodge. From 1866 to 1868 it was owned by James Scrymser; according to an 1868 map it had a semi-circular driveway leading to the house. From 1868 to 1872 the estate was owned by John S. Williams; the next owners from 1872 to 1889 were William B. Meeker (a relative of Thomas B. Meeker, owner of the Woodworth Estate, II) and his wife, Mary. The Meekers most likely built a carriage house (no longer extant) which appears on an 1885 map at the southwest corner of the estate. Hugh N. Camp held the property from 1889 until 1892, at which time it was purchased by Orlando P. and Delia Anna Dorman, who used it as a country retreat they called "Auvergne" (they resided on the Upper West Side of Manhattan). The Dormans added a piazza to the north side of the house and most likely built the small outbuilding which appears at the northwest corner of the property on an 1893 map. The estate was subsequently owned by Robert W. Millbanks, a woolens merchant, and his wife, Edith; they who sold it in 1907 to Thomas A. and Myrtie L. Buckner, Sr., who later owned portions of the adjacent Charles Foster Estate (V). In 1908 the Buckners built a new carriage house and dwelling (IV.1) at the northwest corner of the property which replaced the existing outbuilding. Sometime after 1938 the villa was demolished.

By 1946 the estate was subdivided into three lots: two long narrow lots at the east which were sold to Henry L. Sonnenberg and a smaller lot with the carriage house at the west which was retained by Myrtie Buckner. Houses were built at 5271 Independence Avenue (IV.2) in 1955-56 and at 5281 Independence Avenue (IV.3) in 1963; the latter lot was combined with a sliver of land from the Charles Foster Estate to the north.

In summary, the Samuel Foster Estate has been subdivided into three lots, one of which contains the 1908 carriage house and two of which have later houses (the northern lot on Independence Avenue has been merged with a small portion of an adjacent estate). The visual evidence of the original estate is best seen from Sycamore Avenue. The estate was bordered by stone walls, which still exist on the south, northwest, and along Sycamore Avenue, where there is also a gate. The south and north are bordered by rows of trees. The estate is terraced with several stone retaining walls and scaled by flights of steps.

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Samuel Foster Villa
(Demolished)

N.Y.C. Dept. of Taxes
c. 1938

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5270 Sycamore Avenue 5939/386 (IV.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House and Dwelling

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1908 [NB 252-1908]

ARCHITECT: Robert M. Byers

ORIGINAL OWNER: Thomas A. Buckner

STYLE: Colonial Revival

This building was designed as a garage, stable, and dwelling by Robert M. Byers in 1908, when Thomas A. Buckner owned the Samuel H. Foster Estate. It was later converted for use as a residence with an automobile garage.

The building is slightly L-shaped in plan with a triangular projection for the garage entry facing Sycamore in the angle of the L; the space that is now the garage had been converted from a stable yard, apparently sometime before 1920.³ The two-and-one-half-story building is stone at the first story and wood-frame with shingles above. There is a stone chimney on the south side of the building and the bracketed gabled roof (now with asphalt shingles) is surmounted by a cupola. The Sycamore Avenue facade has a large segmentally-arched opening at the ground story which was originally the carriage entrance and is now a window with casement sash. To the north of this opening is an entrance portico leading to a recessed wood door. The windows at the upper story are six-over-six wood sash with shutters. In the front gable is a large opening and in the rear gable is a doorway that is reached by a wood bridge (not original) leading from the top of the steep terrace behind the house; these openings originally provided access to the hayloft. Charles Evans Hughes made alterations in 1951 and 1963 for Carol F. King. In 1951, interior alterations were carried out to convert the building from a two-family dwelling to a single-family dwelling, and in 1963 the interior was further remodeled and the wood deck, accessed by French doors, was added at the south. The garage, which had opened at the north side of the projection, was altered so that it opened at the south side and stone infill was added at the north.

Behind the house is a high, massive retaining wall braced by brick walls and concrete buttresses. The property is bordered along Sycamore Avenue by a stone wall with a trellised gate. The terraces behind the house are scaled by concrete steps on the north and south sides of the site; the steps at the south have decorative iron railings.

³ Letter from Myrtie L. Buckner to the Department of Housing and Buildings, dated Sept. 24, 1951.

5271 Independence Avenue 5939/428 (IV.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1955-56 [NB 618-1955]

ARCHITECT: Hood & Manice

ORIGINAL OWNER: Robert E. Hall

STYLE: Modern

Designed by the firm of Hood & Manice, this house was built in 1955-56 for Dr. Robert E. Hall. Its lot was originally part of the Samuel H. Foster Estate; the villa of the estate, which had been demolished sometime after 1938, was partially situated on the site of this house.

This is a roughly rectangular, one-story wood-frame house on a stone base with an attached one-story garage at its southeast corner. In several ways its modern design harmonizes with its natural setting: its low profile with a broad, shallow gable at the front; its use of materials, including natural wood siding and masonite panels; its orientation to a view of the Hudson River with a predominantly glass rear facade; and its siting which does not disturb numerous landscaping features from the time that the Foster Estate was developed, including a large weeping beech tree at the rear. Behind the house are walled terraces with several flights of steps and a paved path that passes through a wood lattice gateway.

5281 Independence Avenue 5939/425 (IV.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1963

ARCHITECT: unknown

ORIGINAL OWNER: Phillip Polatin

STYLE: Modern

This house was built in 1963 for Phillip Polatin on a lot which was originally part of the Samuel H. Foster Estate; the villa of the estate, which had been demolished sometime after 1938, was partially situated on the site of this house.

This is an irregularly-shaped modern house designed to take advantage of the view and harmonize with its surroundings on a steep site. The house is faced in natural wood siding and surrounded by trees. Set back from

Independence Avenue, it is an inconspicuous one-story structure at the front reached by a wide driveway; only the two-car garage and the recessed entrance are visible. At the west side, the house has two glass-fronted stories linked by a steel spiral staircase and supported on steel pipe columns. The roof above the second story is deeply cantilevered.

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V. Charles W. Foster Estate

Charles W. Foster, an auctioneer, was one of the original members of the syndicate which purchased the land in 1852 for the development of Riverdale. As shown on the 1853 Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers, Foster owned the northernmost of the five Independence Avenue estates, an irregular parcel of roughly 2.3 acres on which a villa was constructed (V.1, now 5291 Independence Avenue). He also jointly owned, with William W. Woodworth, a tract of about seven acres, located between the proposed West Avenue and the railroad tracks, which later became part of the Stone (VI) and Cromwell (VII) Estates.

In 1857 the Foster Estate was purchased by Duncan McDougall, but the house was actually occupied by William S. and Sarah W. Duke who acquired the property in 1860 and owned it until the 1890s. A map from 1876 shows a carriage house (no longer extant) at the southwest corner of the property on Sycamore Avenue. In 1886 the Dukes had the villa remodeled by architect Frederick Clarke Withers, who also designed a new carriage house (V.2) on the site of the existing one. An 1893 map shows that there was a semi-circular driveway (which is no longer extant) leading to the house. George E. and Charlotte Goodrich Wyeth owned the property for a short time between 1894 and 1896. It was then sold to John M. and Anna Dorothea High, and the entire estate remained in the possession of the High family until 1935 when the property began to be subdivided. The Highs retained a large lot on Independence Avenue which contained the house, and four lots, created from the remainder of the property, were initially purchased by Myrtie L. and Thomas A. Buckner, Sr., who owned the adjacent Samuel Foster Estate (IV). After Mr. Buckner's death in 1942, the carriage house (V.2) at 5286 Sycamore Avenue was retained by Mrs. Buckner. In 1949 it was sold to Orwin and Carol King. Two houses were built by the development firm of Sycamore Estates on two of the remaining three lots. No. 5288 Sycamore Avenue (V.3, 1937) was sold in 1946 to Dante Caputo who remodeled it; Caputo, a long-time employee of the New York Life Insurance Company, was married to the Buckners' granddaughter. No. 5294 Sycamore Avenue (V.4, 1938) was sold to Jane McCain in 1946, as was the third lot at 5298 Sycamore Avenue (V.A). A structure was built on the latter lot sometime after 1938, but it does not appear on an aerial photograph of the area taken in 1967 and no building exists there today. The house at 5291 Independence Avenue was deeded to the New York Trust Company during the years 1941 to 1946, and was subsequently sold to various owners. A sixth lot was created in 1952 when the northern portion of the Independence Avenue lot was sold to Henry L. Sonnenberg. He sold the lot in 1959 to Leonard Hankin, who constructed a house (V.5) in 1960 at 5297 Independence Avenue. A sliver of land along the southern edge of the lot at 5291 Independence was added in about 1963 to the lot at 5281 Independence Avenue which had been part of the Samuel Foster Estate (IV). A small garage (V.6) was built behind the house at 5291 Independence Avenue in 1968.

In summary, the Charles W. Foster Estate has been subdivided into six lots: one with the original villa (substantially altered in 1886), one with the carriage house built in 1886, three with twentieth-century houses, and one lot with no buildings. The original estate was the second largest of the first five; while there are six structures on it today, there is still

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Charles W. Foster Villa (V.1)
5291 Independence Avenue

N.Y.C. Dept. of Taxes
c. 1938

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much land that is not built upon, and many large trees and other landscape features survive from the estate era. The site slopes steeply downward in two directions, to the west and to the north, and there are numerous retaining walls (especially at the western end), terraces, and flights of steps. The estate is bordered by large trees and shrubs along West 254th Street, and by stone walls and hedges along Sycamore Avenue and a portion of West 254th Street at the corner. There are concrete steps at the corner of West 254th Street and Sycamore Avenue. The property is bordered along the south by trees near the original house and a stone wall next to the carriage house, and along the east by a hedge.

5291 Independence Avenue 5939/422 (V.1) and (V.6)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House (V.1)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; remodeled 1886

ARCHITECT: unknown; Frederick Clarke Withers (1886)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Charles W. Foster; William S. Duke (1886)

STYLE: Queen Anne

BUILDING TYPE: Garage (V.6)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1968

ARCHITECT: Edward J. Hurley

ORIGINAL OWNER: Patrick J. Quinn

STYLE: Vernacular

This house (V.1) was originally built in 1853 as the villa of the Charles W. Foster Estate. William S. Duke commissioned Frederick Clarke Withers to thoroughly remodel the house in 1886. Cruciform in plan, the house retained its original configuration although it was remodeled in the Queen Anne style popular at the time. A story was added and a picturesque pitched roof was created with dormers, finials, and paneled brick chimneys. The entrance porch was enlarged so that the new porch extended across the entire front of the house, and other porches with balustrades were added. The facade was enlivened with such surface materials as fish-scale shingles in the gables and under the eaves, slate roof shingles, and copper roofing over porches and bays. A round bay was constructed at the rear.

The earliest documentation of the appearance of the house is from drawings prepared by J.H. Thiesen and William W. Schwartz for Mrs. John M. High in 1925. At that time appendages were added to the exterior. An open bay at the second story above the entrance was filled in and enlarged, but the overall character of the existing design was maintained. A photograph

from c. 1938 shows the broad front porch, curved at the center, which was composed of paired Doric columns and topped by a balustrade. There was a projecting bay window at the second story above the entrance.

Much of the surface area below the shingled eaves has been altered with textured stucco and aluminum siding. The front porch has been removed and a set of plans dating from 1981 shows existing porch areas enclosed, including those flanking the entrance pavilion (which were originally the ends of the large porch) and others at the rear. The original windows have been replaced by aluminum sash. The restored slate roof has historic finials but new flashing. The brick chimneys survive from the period of Withers's remodeling; it is likely that the existing stairhall skylight dates from the 1920s at which time it had replaced a more elaborate lantern designed by Withers.

The garage (V.6), located at the rear, was built in 1968. It is a one-story, stuccoed, concrete block building with a hipped roof that was designed by Edward J. Hurley for Patrick J. Quinn.

The house originally had a semi-circular driveway. The present driveway leads from Independence Avenue along the south side of the house to the garage at the rear. There are stone retaining walls and terraces at the rear, and short flights of steps.

5286 Sycamore Avenue 5939/392 (V.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1886 [NB 1323-1886]

ARCHITECT: Frederick Clarke Withers

ORIGINAL OWNER: William S. Duke

STYLE: Queen Anne

Although maps show a building on this site in 1876, the present building was designed by Frederick Clarke Withers and built in 1886 as a carriage house and stable.⁴ Withers was commissioned by William S. Duke to design this structure in conjunction with the remodeling of the house at 5291 Independence Avenue which originally belonged to the Charles W. Foster

⁴ Willensky and White, A.I.A. Guide, states that this building was constructed in 1856 and remodeled in 1888, however, plans and a New Building Application filed at the Department of Buildings in 1886 indicate that this was not a remodeled building but rather a new structure.

Estate (see V.1).⁵

Original plans for the building show a one-and-one-half-story structure with a gabled roof surmounted by a lantern, a rear shed, and a front-facing dormer. Below the dormer was a double door at the north leading to the large carriage room and a single door at the south for bringing horses to the stable. The wood-frame building is clad in narrow clapboard siding with wood fish-scale shingles in the gables and under the eaves. A large opening in the northern facade originally provided access to the hay loft; it is now a window. Today, the house retains much of its original character on the exterior. In 1935, the building was owned by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Buckner who made interior alterations, replaced the old carriage entrance with a pair of single doors under the central dormer, and added shed dormers to the front and rear. In 1949 Carol F. King commissioned Charles Evans Hughes to make further alterations, mostly to the interior. A deck has been added to the north side of the house.

The north and east sides of the lot on which the house is located have stone retaining walls and steps. At the east, behind the building, these walls step up steeply, making several narrow terraces.

5288 Sycamore Avenue 5939/395 (V.3) and (V.7)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House and Garage

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1937 [NB 222-1937]; altered 1955 [ALT 27-1955]

ARCHITECT: Sarsfield J. Sheridan (1937); Alton L. Craft and Ludwig P. Bono (1955)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Sycamore Estates; Dante S. Caputo (1955)

STYLE: Modern

This house (V.3) was built in 1937 on a lot subdivided from what had been the Charles W. Foster Estate. It was designed by Sarsfield J. Sheridan for the development firm of Sycamore Estates and in 1946 sold to Dante S. Caputo. As built, the house was a one-story wood frame structure in a roughly L-shaped plan. Additions and alterations were made to the house in 1955, designed by Alton L. Craft who was superceded by Ludwig P. Bono. As altered, it is a simple rectangular two-story house with a shallow hipped roof and aluminum siding. The western facade of the house, facing the Hudson River, has large picture windows.

⁵ In the period from 1896 to the 1930s, when the estate was owned by John and Anna High, this building was referred to in the deeds as the "Blue Door Cottage," named for a side entry which was then the principal entry to the dwelling quarters, while carriages entered from Sycamore Avenue.

Access to the house is via a steep stone staircase with an iron pipe railing from Sycamore Avenue and a driveway (shared with 5294 Sycamore Avenue) from West 254th Street. There is a stuccoed rectangular garage (V.7) on the east side of this driveway, built in recent years. Old stone retaining walls survive behind the house.

5294-(5298) Sycamore Avenue 5939/396 (V.4) and 5939/399 (V.A)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House (V.4)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1938 [NB 160-1938]

ARCHITECT: Julius Gregory

ORIGINAL OWNER: Sycamore Estates

STYLE: Neo-Georgian

This house (V.4) was built in 1938 on a lot which had been subdivided from the lower end of the original Charles W. Foster Estate. It was designed in a Neo-Georgian style by Julius Gregory for Sycamore Estates and sold to Jane McCain in 1946. A two-story wood-frame house with a brick veneer, it is rectangular in plan with an attached rectangular garage at the east side. It has multipane double-hung wood sash windows with shutters, a hipped roof, and a large chimney. At the north side of the house is a bay window and an entrance portico; another entrance is located adjacent to the garage which is accessed by a driveway (shared with 5288 Sycamore Avenue) leading from 254th Street.

There are stone walls and steps on the property of undetermined age. The adjacent lot to the north, at the southeast corner of Sycamore Avenue and 254th Street, is now the side yard of the house.

(5298) Sycamore Avenue (V.A)

Lot (no buildings)

This lot was created after 1938 by the subdivision of the Charles W. Foster Estate. It is presently the side yard of the house at 5294 Sycamore Avenue. A structure was built on this property sometime after 1938, but it did not appear in an aerial photograph of the area taken in 1967 and it does not exist today.

There are stone walls along its west (Sycamore Avenue), north (West 254th Street), and east edges, and there is a concrete stairway with curving walls at the corner of Sycamore Avenue and West 254th Street. There are large trees on the property.

5297 Independence Avenue 5939/410 (V.5)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1960 [NB 818-1960]

ARCHITECT: William Schoen

ORIGINAL OWNER: Leonard J. Hankin

STYLE: Neo-Georgian

Built on a lot that was subdivided from that of villa which originally belonged to the Charles W. Foster Estate, this house was designed by William Schoen for Leonard J. Hankin in 1960. It is a rectangular wood-frame house with a brick veneer and has an attached rectangular one-story garage at the south side. The east side of the house, facing Independence Avenue, has two stories. At the rear, because of the sloping site, it has three stories. The house has a flat roof, double-hung windows with shutters, and a modest classical doorway. The property continues the tradition of having a semi-circular driveway to the house from Independence Avenue. The driveway is flanked along the northern curve by a brick cheek wall.

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VI. Henry L. Stone Estate

The Henry L. Stone Estate was established in 1856 on a roughly rectangular parcel of about four-and-one-half acres between Sycamore Avenue and the railroad along the river, south of West 254th Street (only a portion of the original estate is in the historic district). The parcel was assembled under the ownership of silk merchant Henry L. Stone and his wife Mary Elizabeth, and was acquired in two parcels from Henry Atherton, Samuel Babcock, and Charles Foster, three of the original syndicate members who bought the land for the Riverdale development in 1852. At the north end of the eastern parcel, purchased in 1855, was the farmhouse and barn of the Ackerman farm. Originally, a street named West Avenue was to have divided the land between Sycamore Avenue (then "the alley") and the railroad tracks, but the partners agreed in 1856 to de-map West Avenue and widen Sycamore Avenue to twenty-five feet, and at that time the Stones acquired the western parcel of land. Sometime over the next several years the Stones constructed a villa (no longer extant) on the property; the New York City directory of 1859-60 indicates that the Stones were then living in Riverdale.

The first map record of the Stone Estate is that of 1868 which shows a T-shaped house with a semi-circular driveway entered from Sycamore Avenue at the northeast and southeast ends of the property, and a turn-around loop on the north side of the house. An 1876 map indicates that there was a carriage house (no longer extant) at the southeast corner of the property. The name of Henry A. Stone, possibly the son of the original owner, appears on maps of 1891 and 1893 in connection with this property. The 1893 map indicates that the semi-circular driveway was reoriented toward West 254th Street, with entrances at the corners of the property. The estate was repossessed and auctioned to the Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1897 for \$30,000; Mutual Life sold the property in 1899 to Darwin P. Kingsley. By 1901 the original villa had been demolished and Kingsley then built a large U-shaped shingled mansion (no longer extant), designed in the Colonial Revival style by Brite & Bacon. The house was approached by a driveway that was entered from West 254th Street through brick posts (extant) with wrought-iron gates, as well as from Sycamore Avenue near the southeast corner of the property. In conjunction with the house, a new stable was also built to the design of Brite & Bacon (VI.1, now 5255 Sycamore Avenue). Charles W. Leavett, landscape architect, made improvements to the grounds which included terraces with retaining walls and a balustrade. A garage was built in 1908 (VI.2, altered 1958) and the house was enlarged in 1910. Otto Marx owned the estate from 1918 to 1934; the mansion burned in a fire in 1929.

By 1936 the estate was leased from the National City Bank by Mary King, who built a greenhouse (no longer extant). In 1942, the western portion of the estate (not included in the historic district) was donated with adjacent parcels to the south to form Riverdale Park along the railroad. The remaining portion of the Stone estate was subdivided about 1946 into six lots, two of which, at the northwest corner, are not in the historic district. Of the remaining four lots, the two southernmost were merged in 1982 into one large lot which contains the converted stable, the garage, and a tennis court at the west. The lot at the southwest corner of Sycamore

Avenue and West 254th Street was sold in 1955 to Edward and Gabrielle De Vegvar who built a house at 5275 Sycamore Avenue (VI.3) in 1955-56. The de Vegvars had previously owned the carriage house and had converted it to residential use. The lot to the south of this lot (VI.A) has no buildings but contains a paved parking area for the house at 5275 Sycamore Avenue.

In summary, of the original Stone Estate, only a portion (three lots with two separate owners) is included in the historic district. No structures survive from the time that Stone originally developed the estate; a converted stable and an altered garage survive from the time when Kingsley owned the estate and a house from the 1950s is also included. Landscape features of the property include: a large copper beech tree and other large trees on the southern portion of the property and along the southern border, terracing and retaining walls, the entrance posts on West 254th Street added by Kingsley, and a brick wall -- probably of the same vintage -- along the southern property line. A stone wall along Sycamore Avenue, although appearing to date from a later period than most other walls in the district, continues the line of the Stonehurst wall (topped by a wrought-iron fence) which was designed to border the carriage alley. The southern portion of this wall forms the parapet of the retaining wall in front of the carriage house which sits below the grade of Sycamore Avenue.

5255 Sycamore Avenue 5937/498 (VI.1) and (VI.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House (VI.1)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1901 [NB 1141-1901]

ARCHITECT: Brite & Bacon

ORIGINAL OWNER: Darwin P. Kingsley

STYLE: Colonial Revival

BUILDING TYPE: Garage (VI.2)

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1908 [NB 704-1908]; altered 1958 [BN 82-1958]

ARCHITECT: Robert M. Byers (1908); Albert Wheeler (1958)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Darwin P. Kingsley

STYLE: vernacular

The converted carriage house (VI.1) was built as a stable and dwelling in 1901 for Darwin P. Kingsley in conjunction with a large house he constructed on what was originally the Henry L. Stone Estate. Both the house and the carriage house were designed in the Colonial Revival style by Brite & Bacon; the house burned in 1929 and was demolished. The carriage

house is a two-and-one-half-story, rectangular, wood-frame structure with shingled siding and a gabled roof with a lantern. The gable ends, bracketed by modillions, project slightly at the north and south sides of the building. The original carriage entrance was located at the west side of the building; it now contains French doors leading to a terrace. At the east side of the building, a wood bridge (not original) leads from Sycamore Avenue to an entrance at the second story; because the building is situated to the west of a steep terrace along Sycamore Avenue, the ground story is below grade. This doorway and a large second-story opening (now a window) at the south end of the building provided access to the original hay loft and a portion of the original hoisting bar is extant above the window. The building was subsequently converted for residential use in the early 1950s, and window and door infill was modified for that purpose.

At the southeast corner of the lot is a brick garage (VI.2), built in 1908 for Kingsley and designed by Robert M. Byers. As built, it was a one-story skylit building entered from the west. It had a wood cornice and its garage door and windows were framed in brick and bluestone bands. In 1958 it was remodeled by engineer Albert Wheeler; several feet were removed from the north end of the building, the garage door on the west side was sealed with brick, a new garage door was inserted on the north side, and the cornice was removed. The two eight-over-eight double-hung windows on the west side with their bluestone lintels and slightly protruding impost band are all that remain of the embellishment of the original design.

The converted carriage house and garage are situated on a large lot which had more than doubled in size in 1982 when it was merged with the lot to the west (formerly Lot 482). The western end of the lot contains a tennis court. The lot is bordered on its southern boundary by a brick wall, probably dating from the period when Kingsley owned the property, and on its Sycamore Avenue frontage by a stone retaining wall that is topped by a stone parapet wall, like that at the north, which probably dates from the 1950s when the house to the north was built (5275 Sycamore Avenue, VI.3). Access to the carriage house is via sets of steps from Sycamore Avenue and from a driveway that begins in front of the house at 5275 Sycamore Avenue and runs along the eastern side of the property to the garage; the carriage house is surrounded on its north, east, and south sides by brick paving. There is a large copper beech tree to the northwest of the carriage house.

(5265)-5275 Sycamore Avenue 5937/494 (VI.A) and 5937/493 (VI.3)

(5265) Sycamore Avenue (VI.A)

Lot (no buildings)

This lot was created by the subdivision of the Stone Estate about 1946. It is bordered along Sycamore Avenue and parts of its northern and southern property lines by stone walls. It contains a paved parking area for the house at 5275 Sycamore Avenue.

5275 Sycamore Avenue (VI.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1955-57 [NB 689-1955]

ARCHITECT: Burnett V. Vickers; succeeded by Albert Wheeler

ORIGINAL OWNER: Edward and Gabrielle de Vegvar

STYLE: Neo-Colonial

This property consists of a lot at (5265) Sycamore Avenue and another lot with a house (VI.3) at 5275 Sycamore Avenue. Located at the southwest corner of Sycamore Avenue and West 254th Street, the property was originally part of the Henry L. Stone Estate. In 1955, William J. McMahon commissioned Burnett V. Vickers to design a house on this site but died while the house was under construction. The property was bought by Edward and Gabrielle de Vegvar who lived next door at 5255 Sycamore Avenue. The de Vegvars hired engineer Albert Wheeler to complete the house so that it would better complement their own, a converted carriage house built in 1901 (VI.1).⁶

Designed in a neo-Colonial style, this is a two-and-one-half-story wood-frame house with shingled wood siding. It has a gabled slate roof, a brick chimney on the north side, six-over-six double-hung wood sash windows with shutters, and a modest neo-classical entranceway facing Sycamore Avenue. At the rear, the house is three stories due to the downward slope of the site; the basement is brick. A stone wall, probably dating from the time the house was constructed, borders the property along Sycamore Avenue and is continued to the south where it borders the adjacent property (5255 Sycamore Avenue, VI.1 and VI.2). Brick piers that were installed on West 254th Street in 1901, at the time that Darwin P. Kingsley owned the Stone Estate, frame the entrance to a driveway located along the west side of the house (the piers support iron gates probably dating from the 1950s). Another driveway in front of the house leads from Sycamore Avenue to a small paved parking area on the lot at (5265) Sycamore Avenue (VI.A), to the south of the house.

⁶ Letter from Gabrielle de Vegvar to the LPC, April 19, 1988: "My husband and I were always deeply concerned about the architectural style of the house and went to great lengths to ensure that our new house would match the style of the already existing barn."

VII. William D. Cromwell Estate (later Stonehurst)

The Cromwell Estate was established on a roughly square parcel of about nine acres between Sycamore Avenue and the railroad north of Wave Hill (the western portion of the original estate is not in the historic district). The estate, assembled under the ownership of importer William Cromwell and his wife, Ann, in June of 1856, was purchased from original Riverdale syndicate members Henry Atherton, Samuel Babcock, and Charles Foster. Cromwell had been one of the original members of the syndicate when it had purchased the land for the Riverdale development in 1852, but he sold his interests a year later. The Cromwells bought the Samuel Babcock Estate (III) in February of 1855, and were living there when they purchased the land west of Sycamore Avenue. Originally, a street named West Avenue was to have divided their land, but at the time of the Cromwells' purchase the partners agreed in 1856 to de-map West Avenue and widen Sycamore Avenue (then "the alley") to twenty-five feet. Between 1856 and February of 1859, when they sold the Babcock Estate, the Cromwells constructed a large stone Italianate style villa (VII.1), now 5225 Sycamore Avenue (a designated New York City Landmark). The house was located southeast of what was then the center of the estate. William Cromwell died in August of 1859, and his widow sold the estate to Robert Colgate in May of 1860 for \$52,500. Colgate named the estate "Stonehurst." This was originally the largest of the Riverdale estates now included in the historic district.

Photographs of the estate taken in the 1860s show the villa and grounds much as they appear today, with terraces bordered by balustrades with urns and scaled by steps. On an 1868 map the estate is shown with a semi-circular driveway leading to the villa from Sycamore Avenue, and a turn-around loop at the north side of the house (the main entrance). The map indicated structures located on Sycamore Avenue just north and south of each entrance to the driveway; at the north was the stone carriage house (VII.2), now at 5253 Sycamore Avenue, which was probably built at the same time as the villa, and at the south was a cottage (VII.3, later remodeled), now at 5205 Sycamore Avenue. A green house (no longer extant) appears on the map next to the northern property line. A map from 1876 shows more extensive development, with a system of curvilinear paths leading to the carriage house, past a flower garden to a belvedere (no longer extant) near the southern property line, and to a "summer house" (no longer extant) near the western property line. A garden was located in the northwest corner of the property, and additional structures were indicated near the greenhouse and the cottage at the southeast entrance. Although Robert Colgate died in 1885, his name still appears in connection with the estate on an 1893 map; John D. Wood's name had appeared on a map of 1891, and listings in New York City directories suggest that he may have occupied the property from about 1886 to 1892. The 1893 map indicates additional small structures on the property south of the villa and carriage house.

The estate was bought by George W. Perkins in 1902, the year before he acquired the Wave Hill Estate, as he continued to buy much property in Riverdale. Perkins's mother and his father's sister lived at Stonehurst. After Perkins's death in 1920, his widow, Evelina Ball Perkins, sold the estate to Spruille Braden in 1922. In 1937 Mrs. Perkins bought back the

estate from Braden and began the subdivision of the eastern portion of the property that eventually created the eleven lots and two private roads existing today. In 1942 the western portion of the estate along the railroad was donated with adjacent parcels to form Riverdale Park (not in the historic district).

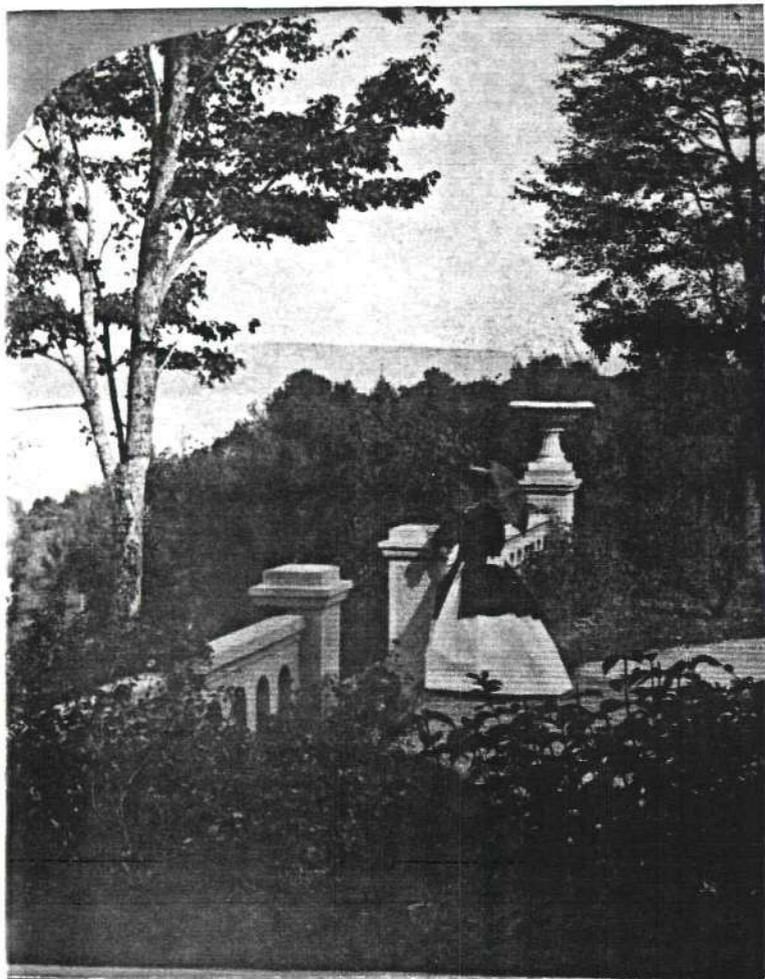
The villa today is situated on the largest lot that resulted from the subdivision (it is, as well, the largest lot in the historic district). Evelina Perkins sold the Stonehurst house to Wallace P. and Mary M. Zachary in 1937 who added a garage (VII.6) to the southeast of the house. The property was in turn sold to John P. and Patricia Cunningham in 1946. The large yard between the house and Sycamore Avenue was once a separate lot but is now merged as part of the lot with the house; a small triangular portion of land on the north side of this yard became a separate lot (VII.B), with the address (5241) Sycamore Avenue, and currently has no buildings.

North of the villa is a private road, at the approximate location of the northern arm of the old estate driveway, which was established to provide access to what is now five lots (all with Sycamore Avenue addresses). The original carriage house (VII.2) is on its own separate lot north of the private road and maintains its relationship to what would have been the estate's northern entrance. This lot was sold in 1937 by Mrs. Perkins in conjunction with the development firm of Sycamore Estates to Alfred and Ruth Olcott. The lot at 5249 Sycamore Avenue was sold in 1937 to Hugh B. Griffiths and a house (VII.4) was constructed that year which incorporated part of an existing estate structure which was moved from its original location close to the carriage house. The lot at 5243 Sycamore Avenue, on the south side of the north private road, was also sold in 1937, to Reginald Lee and Dorothy W. Johnson who built a house (VII.5) on it in 1937-38. In 1946 Mrs. Perkins sold the adjacent lot to the west, at 5245 Sycamore Avenue, to Henry N. Fernald, Jr., who in turn sold the lot in 1950 to Roderic B. Swenson who built a house and garage (VII.8 and VII.9) that year. The lot at 5251 Sycamore Avenue, at the northwest of the foot of the north private road, was sold about 1953 to Walter E. Kelley; a house (VII.10) was erected on it in 1953-54. The lot (VII.A) at the southwest of the foot of the north private road, at (5247) Sycamore Avenue, was sold by Mrs. Perkins to the Cunninghams in 1946 who, in turn, later sold it; it has no buildings.

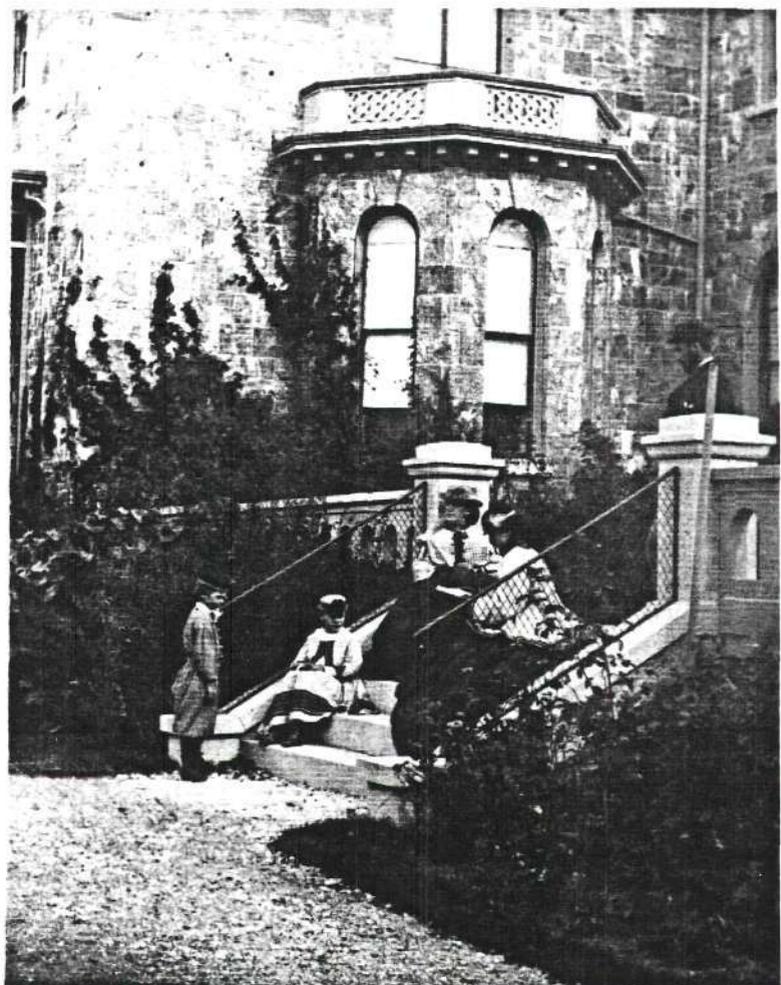
South of the villa are three lots and a private road leading from Sycamore Avenue which is on the approximate location of the southern arm of the estate driveway. The old cottage (VII.3) at the southeast edge of the property was sold by Mrs. Perkins in 1937 to the O'Connell Brothers who passed it on to Edward and Elizabeth McShane. The house was remodeled over several years beginning in 1937. The adjacent lot to the north, at 5209 Sycamore Avenue, was sold by Mrs. Perkins in 1946 to Robert M. Haig, who transferred it to the architect Alton Craft in 1950; Craft designed his own home (VII.7) which was built in 1950-51. The lot at 5215 Sycamore Avenue, at the southwest foot of the south private road, was separated from the villa property in 1969 and a house (VII.11) was constructed on it in 1969-70.

In summary, the portion of the Cromwell Estate (later Stonehurst) included in the historic district was subdivided beginning in 1937 into eleven lots which contain eleven structures (two lots are vacant) and have nine separate owners. This estate was the largest of the seven estates located within the historic district, and the remaining estate features help to establish much of the character of the district. The villa and carriage house survive little altered and the cottage (5205 Sycamore Avenue), though altered, is still in its original location. The villa is surrounded by much landscaped open space; particularly visible from Sycamore Avenue is the yard with large copper beech and other trees. On the west side the grounds are terraced, with balustrades flanking the villa; numerous scattered pieces of stone wall exist. A stone structure set into the hillside, probably used for cold storage, still exists on the lot south of the villa. The northern and southern private roads are located approximately where the arms of the semi-circular estate driveway were; a section of the original driveway, including the turn-around loop to the north of the house, still exists. The estate is bordered on the north by a brick wall, on the south by parts of a stone wall, trees, and along the entire Sycamore Avenue frontage by the original wrought-iron fence set on a stone base which imparts much character to Sycamore Avenue. The two pairs of stone entrance posts survive (the southern pair was moved slightly north to flank the private road).





Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate
c. 1860s



5225 Sycamore Avenue 5937/459 (VII.1) and (VII.6)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1856-58

ARCHITECT: unknown

ORIGINAL OWNER: William D. Cromwell

STYLE: Italianate

This house (VII.1, a designated New York City Landmark) was built in 1856-58 as the villa of the William Cromwell Estate. Under the ownership of Robert Colgate, the estate became known as "Stonehurst."

The exterior of the house, designed in the Italianate style, is little changed from its original appearance. The large house has walls of randomly laid rectangular stone blocks of different sizes. It is square in plan with a round projecting bay on the west side, a segmental projecting bay on the south side, and a rectangular wing on the east side. The principal entrance, which is a round-arched opening containing wood doors, is located in a projecting square bay (with its balustrade removed) below a gable on the north side. Above the bracketed cornice, the hipped, standing-seam metal roof is broken by round-arched dormers trimmed with wood moldings and paneled brick chimneys (the original balustrade around the top of the roof has been removed). Porches flank the entry on the north side and a large round porch faces the view of the Hudson River on the west side (a porch has been removed from the east side and the wall has been stuccoed). The porches are composed of metal latticework. The round- and segmentally-arched window openings contain wood sash windows.

The property is lined along Sycamore Avenue by a wrought-iron fence on a stone base. The driveway to the house (now the southern private road) is flanked on Sycamore Avenue by large stone posts. The fence and the posts probably date from the period when the estate was developed. An 1876 map shows the southern driveway entrance to the property at a location further south than that of the present entrance, near the former gardener's cottage (see VII.3, 5205 Sycamore Avenue). It is probable that the original posts were dismantled and rebuilt at the present location when the private road was established. There are enormous copper beech trees in front of the house.

A three-car garage (VII.6) was added to the property by 1938, southeast of the house. It is a rectangular, wood-frame structure with a hipped roof and stuccoed walls.

5253 Sycamore Avenue 5937/499 (VII.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1856-58

ARCHITECT: unknown

ORIGINAL OWNER: William D. Cromwell

STYLE: Italianate

Built as part of the Cromwell Estate in 1856-58, this carriage house was designed in the same Italianate style and constructed of the same stone as the house (VII.1), now at 5225 Sycamore Avenue. After the estate was subdivided in 1937, the building was converted by the development firm of Sycamore Estates from its original use as a stable and carriage house to a residence. The architect of the conversion was Julius Gregory.

The building is a rectangular structure with a hipped roof, segmental domers, and a massive chimney. It is entered through a door in the old carriage entrance facing Sycamore Avenue which is surmounted by a gable with a large round-arched opening that originally provided access to the hay loft. The window and door openings are segmentally-arched, with granite voussoirs or bluestone lintels. Located on a sloping site, the building has one-and-one-half stories in the front facing the street and two-and-one-half in the rear. The property is bordered along Sycamore Avenue by an iron fence on a stone base; the fence was designed to match the original fence that bordered the Cromwell Estate and which is still extant along Sycamore Avenue to the south. Because carriages needed to be moved in and out of the building at the front, it is possible that originally there was no fence in front of the building.

5205 Sycamore Avenue 5937/512 (VII.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House/Converted Gardener's Cottage

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: c. 1867; altered 1909 [ALT 339-1909], 1937 [ALT 435-1937], and 1943 [ALT 338-1943]

ARCHITECT: unknown; Thomas Greenlees, Jr. (1909); Lucht & Anderson (1937); Harry Lucht (1943)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Robert Colgate; George W. Perkins (1909); O'Connell Brothers (1937); Edward F. McShane (1943)

STYLE: Vernacular

Situated on a lot which was once part of the William Cromwell Estate (later owned by Robert Colgate), this house is thought to have been a gardener's cottage. A building stood on this site, south of the southern driveway entrance to the estate, by 1867-68. A map in 1876 shows an addition to the building and an additional structure near the building. The later building was subsequently demolished. In 1909, shortly after George W. Perkins had bought the estate, the building was altered by architect Thomas Greenlees, Jr.; a story was added, making it two-and-one-half stories, and the building was enlarged. Plans on file at the Bronx Department of Buildings show that the oldest part of the house corresponds to the existing bay on the east side of the house which projects toward Sycamore Avenue. With the 1909 enlargement, the house had wood siding, round-arched windows, and a jerkinhead roof.

In 1937, when the estate was first subdivided, the O'Connell Brothers bought this lot and commissioned the firm of Lucht & Anderson to remodel the house to its present appearance. This entailed adding a brick veneer and porches on the east and west sides, and squaring the window openings. In 1943, Harry Lucht carried out further alterations for Edward F. McShane, reconfiguring the roof to its present peaked profile.

The house has an asymmetrical cruciform plan with gabled roofs and porches at the front and rear. It has brick walls, shingled gables, and a slate roof. Along Sycamore Avenue there is an iron fence and gate on a stone base which may date from the time that the Cromwell Estate was developed; the entrance to the driveway at the north side of the yard has posts which date from a later period. Along the southern property line there is a row of boulders that may once have been a more substantial stone wall and at the rear there are two stone walls which run on a north/south axis.

5249 Sycamore Avenue 5937/477 (VII.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1937 [ALT 314-1937]

ARCHITECT: Julius Gregory

ORIGINAL OWNER: Hugh B. Griffiths

STYLE: Neo-Federal

The early history of this structure appears to be as follows: it was first built c. 1890 as a square building with a small projecting wing, immediately south of the carriage house (VII.2) that belonged to the Cromwell Estate. In 1908 George W. Perkins, who owned the estate at that time, hired Robert Byers to enlarge it and convert it from a storehouse to a dwelling. Previously a one-story brick building, its brick walls were

partially demolished, a two-story wood-frame building with shingled siding was constructed on top, and a passage was built connecting it to the stone carriage house.

In 1937, following subdivision of the estate, the house was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Hugh B. Griffiths who had the house moved about thirty feet to the northwest on the newly established north private road off Sycamore Avenue, expanded on the west side, and remodeled by architect Julius Gregory. As remodeled, the house is designed in a neo-Federal style, with clapboard siding, double-hung six-over-six wood sash windows with shutters, a columned entrance portico leading to a doorway with leaded sidelights and an elliptical fanlight, a massive brick chimney, and a flat roof with a parapet wall pierced by slatted openings. There are fragments of stone retaining walls at the rear.

5243 Sycamore Avenue 5937/502 (VII.5)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1937-38 [NB 387-1937]

ARCHITECT: Roland A. Gallimore

ORIGINAL OWNER: Reginald Lee Johnson

STYLE: Neo-Colonial

Following subdivision of the Cromwell Estate in 1937, this lot was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Lee Johnson who built a house on it. Designed in a neo-Colonial style by Roland A. Gallimore, the two-and-one-half-story house is of wood frame construction with a brick veneer. It is situated at the southwest corner of Sycamore Avenue and the north private road, facing the private road.

Composed of one- and two-story volumes with gabled, shed, and flat roofs, the house has a roughly U-shaped plan with a relatively flat front and its arms opening to the rear. Wood-frame projections include a screened porch at the southwest, a rounded entry vestibule at the north, and a bay window at the west. A one-story shingle-sided wing is located at the southeast. Shuttered double-hung multipane sash windows, shallow eaves with discrete modillions and a fine dentil course, and restrained neo-classical details, along with the clear definition of the parts of the house, give it a traditional character drawing from British and American vernacular sources.

The site was previously crossed by the semi-circular driveway on the estate, and the original stone posts which flanked the entrance to the driveway are still extant at the entrance to the north private road. The lot is bordered along Sycamore Avenue by an iron fence on a stone base which may also date from the time when the Cromwell Estate was developed. In 1946 the lot was enlarged by a strip about twenty-five feet wide on the west. A

triangular portion of the yard facing Sycamore Avenue is on a separate lot listed at (5241) Sycamore Avenue.

5209 Sycamore Avenue 5937/510 (VII.7)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1950-51 [NB 715-1950]

ARCHITECT: Alton L. Craft

ORIGINAL OWNER: Alton L. and Mildred Craft

STYLE: Neo-Colonial

Following subdivision of the Cromwell Estate, this house was built in 1950-51 on a lot at the southwest corner of Sycamore Avenue and the south private road. It was designed by Alton L. Craft for himself and his wife, Mildred.

This is a two-story wood-frame house with a white-washed brick veneer, and a one-story garage at the east; the house is sited so that it faces the south private road. The house has two sections: a main section with a chimney at the west side and a western wing. The house has a gabled roofs with asphalt shingles on both sections and the garage has a hipped roof. The entrance has a wrought-iron portico and the front yard is bordered by an undulating brick wall.

5245 Sycamore Avenue 5937/478 (VII.8) and (VII.9)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House and Garage

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1950 [NB 882-1950]

ARCHITECT: Alton L. Craft

ORIGINAL OWNER: Roderic B. Swenson

STYLE: Neo-Federal

Following subdivision of the Cromwell Estate in 1937, this lot was sold by Evelina Ball Perkins to Henry N. Furnald, Jr., who in turn sold it to Roderic B. Swenson in 1950. Swenson built this house and garage, designed by Alton L. Craft, on the north private road in the same year. Craft also designed a house at 5209 Sycamore Avenue (VII.7) for himself.

The two-story wood-frame house (VII. 8) is roughly square in plan with a hipped roof that is gabled at the rear (south). In 1953 a one-story extension was built at the rear and in 1957 a two-room addition was constructed above the existing extension. The building is neo-Federal in style, with flush wood siding, a neo-classical foliate frieze under the eaves, a symmetrical composition of the front facade, and a modest classical entry surround. The house has multipane wood sash windows and a large multipane bay window at the west side overlooking a deck.

The garage (VII.9), located to the southeast of the house, is a one-story wood-frame structure with a hipped roof and shingled siding. The lot includes stone walls on the north and west sides of the house, and a large copper beech tree.

5251 Sycamore Avenue 5937/480 (VII.10)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1953-54 [NB 1012-1953]

ARCHITECT: Hall & Paufue

ORIGINAL OWNER: Walter E. Kelley

STYLE: Modern

Following subdivision of the Cromwell Estate in 1937, this house was built in 1953 northwest of the foot of the north private road. It was designed by Hall & Paufue for Walter E. Kelley.

This is a one-story house of concrete block construction with stucco and wood exterior finishes. It is a roughly U-shaped structure, opening to the east, with low pitched gabled roofs that have wood bracketed eaves and slate shingles. Each wing of the house has a central chimney. Located on steeply sloping ground, the house is difficult to view from any public vantage point within the district. Portions of the house are visible from Riverdale Park (outside the district) to the west.

5215 Sycamore Avenue 5937/458 (VII.11)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1969-70 [NB 194-1969]

ARCHITECT: Ludwig P. Bono

ORIGINAL OWNER: John P. and Patricia Cunningham

STYLE: Modern

This lot was separated from the property of the Cromwell (Stonehurst) house (VII.1) in 1969. The house, located to the south of the foot of the south private road, was designed by Ludwig P. Bono for Mr. and Mrs. John P. Cunningham who had previously owned the Stonehurst house.

This house is composed of three simple volumes, a square central block with a large chimney at the east end and a steep hipped roof flanked by lower, hipped-roofed rectangular blocks. The eastern wing contains a two-car garage. The house has stucco walls and quoins, double-hung sash windows with shutters, and asphalt roof shingles.

A stone retaining wall and a stone and brick structure, built into a terrace on its north and east sides, occupies a site at the west side of the property that may be the same occupied by a belvedere marked on an 1876 map. The structure is thought to have been used for cold storage and it may once have supported a belvedere on its roof.

(5247) Sycamore Avenue 5937/473 (VII.A)

Lot (no buildings)

This lot, located at the west end of the north private road, adjoins the property at 5251 Sycamore Avenue. It is wooded, with several large trees, and slopes down to the west.

(5241) Sycamore Avenue 5937/503 (VII.B)

Lot (no buildings)

This small triangular lot was carved out of the property of the Stonehurst house and sold to the owner of 5243 Sycamore Avenue in 1969. It contains an enormous copper beech tree.

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VIII. 5200 Sycamore Avenue (Wave Hill Estate)

The roughly pie-shaped lot at 5200 Sycamore Avenue is the only property located within the historic district that was not a part of the early Riverdale development, but rather, it was originally a corner of the Wave Hill Estate to the south which was established prior to Riverdale. William Lewis Morris, a prominent New York lawyer, purchased the land in 1836 and in 1843-44 built a residence on the property (a designated New York City Landmark). Several prominent figures subsequently owned the estate, including publisher William H. Appleton 1866-1899) and financier George W. Perkins (also the longtime owner of the Cromwell Estate, later known as Stonehurst, VII) beginning in 1903. Perkins's widow, Evelina Ball Perkins, sold this parcel in 1923 to Thomas Buckner, Jr., the son of the owners of the Samuel Foster Estate (IV) and (later) part of the Charles Foster Estate (V). The house (VIII.1), designed by Dwight James Baum, was built in 1923-24.

5200 Sycamore Avenue 5939/359 (VIII.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1923-24 [NB 1715-1923]

ARCHITECT: Dwight James Baum

ORIGINAL OWNER: Thomas A. Buckner, Jr.

STYLE: Neo-Dutch Colonial

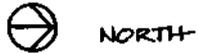
Commissioned by Thomas Buckner, Jr., and designed by Dwight James Baum, this house was illustrated in The American Architect in November of 1924. The house is a two-story wood-frame structure designed in the neo-Dutch Colonial style. It has a brick veneer at the ground story and wide clapboard siding on the gable ends and dormers. The gambrel roof, sheathed in asphalt shingles, has shed and gabled dormers. The house is situated so that its front faces west. The eaves of the roof are extended at the front and rear; this creates porches at the ground story and balconies at the second story. The wood front door has leaded glass sidelights and an arched glazed transom. The windows have multipane double-hung sash.

In 1951, an angled bay window was added to the dining room at the east, a bow window was added to the living room at the west, the second-story dormer at the south end of the west facade was enlarged, a screened porch was added at the south end, and a garage with a rooftop porch was added at the north end. In 1955, a two-room, one-story extension was added at the north end, adjacent to the garage. All of these alterations were in the style of the original. There is a short driveway leading to the garage from Sycamore Avenue and stone steps lead from the driveway to the west side (front) of the house. The lot is bordered by a stone wall along Sycamore Avenue and by an iron fence where it borders the Wave Hill property, of which there is an unobstructed view. There is a stone retaining wall in the yard south of the house.

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KEY

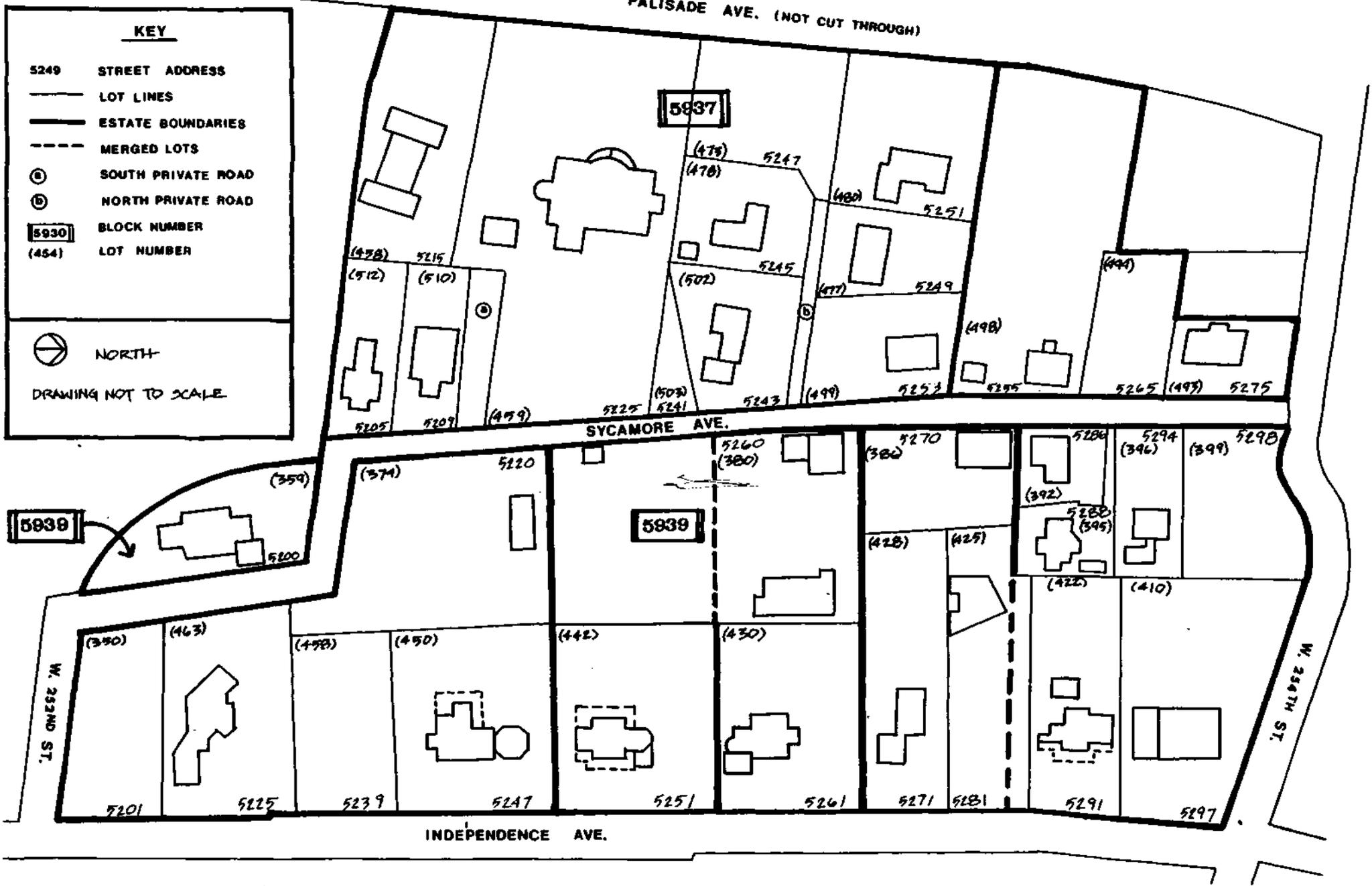
- 5249 STREET ADDRESS
- LOT LINES
- ESTATE BOUNDARIES
- - - MERGED LOTS
- ⊙ SOUTH PRIVATE ROAD
- ⊕ NORTH PRIVATE ROAD
- 5930 BLOCK NUMBER
- (464) LOT NUMBER



NORTH

DRAWING NOT TO SCALE

PALISADE AVE. (NOT CUT THROUGH)



RIVERDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT

BLOCK AND LOT NUMBERS

DESIGNATED 16 OCT. 1990

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RIVERDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Current Photographs
(Arranged by Address)

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INDEPENDENCE AVENUE

Independence Avenue is located at the highest part within the historic district of the steeply sloping site on which Riverdale was developed, beginning in 1853. Fronting on the street were five estates, each with a villa built in 1853. Four of these five villas survive (at 5247, 5251, 5261, and 5291 Independence Avenue), although altered to accommodate new architectural tastes and changing family needs. The villas are oriented with their entrances facing Independence Avenue, but with expansive windows and porches providing views to the west of the Hudson River and the Palisades. Beyond these villas, the land slopes down and is terraced to the west. Three of the villas (at 5247, 5251, and 5261 Independence Avenue) retain semi-circular drives leading from Independence, although there have been changes in grade over the years. The original five estates have been subdivided into ten lots fronting Independence Avenue, and twentieth-century houses have been constructed on four of those lots (at 5225, 5271, 5281, and 5297 Independence Avenue). The other two lots have no buildings, but are planted with grass and trees. That at (5201) Independence Avenue is bordered by a stone wall on the West 252nd Street side. Other landscape features present on the Independence Avenue lots are hedges along the street, specimen trees, and trees which help define the boundaries of the original estates.

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(5201) Independence Avenue 5939/350 (I.B)

Lot (no buildings)

(For full description, see entry on p. 43)



5225 Independence Avenue 5939/463 (I.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

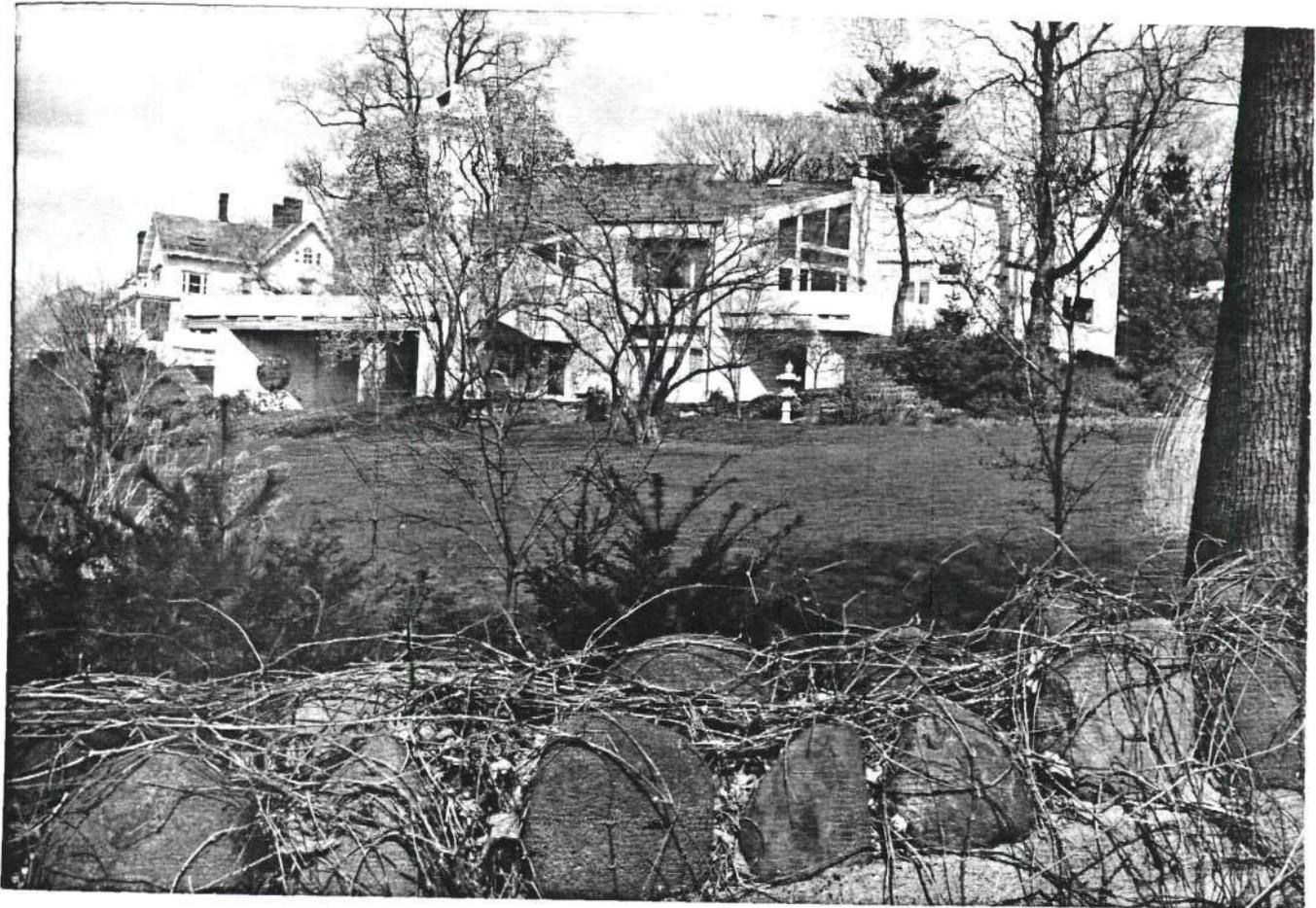
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1980

ARCHITECT: Harold Sussman, Horace Ginsbern & Associates

ORIGINAL OWNER: Herbert L. Abrons

STYLE: Modern

(For full description, see entry on p. 43)



(5239) Independence Avenue 5939/458 (I.A)

Lot (no buildings)

(For full description, see entry on p. 43)



5247 Independence Avenue 5939/450 (I.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; altered 1886 [ALT 572-1886], 1910 [ALT 454-1910], and 1914 [ALT 246-1914]

ARCHITECT: Thomas S. Wall; Isaac Van Steenburgh (1886)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Henry L. Atherton; Mary McGill (1886)

STYLE: Gothic Revival with Colonial Revival additions

(For full description, see entry on p. 41)



5251 Independence Avenue 5939/442 (II.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; altered 1931 [ALT 68-1931]

ARCHITECT: unknown; Cameron Clark (1931)

ORIGINAL OWNER: William W. Woodworth; Lucille B. Gale (1931)

STYLE: Italianate with neo-classical modifications and additions

(For full description, see entry on p. 51)



5261 Independence Avenue 5939/430 (III.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; altered 1916 [ALT 527-1916] and 1956 [ALT
958-1956]

ARCHITECT: unknown (attributed to Thomas S. Wall); S.L. Harned (1916); Paul
K. Fisher (1956)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Samuel D. Babcock; William M. Harris (1916); Lucille Gale
Knapp (1956)

STYLE: Neo-Georgian

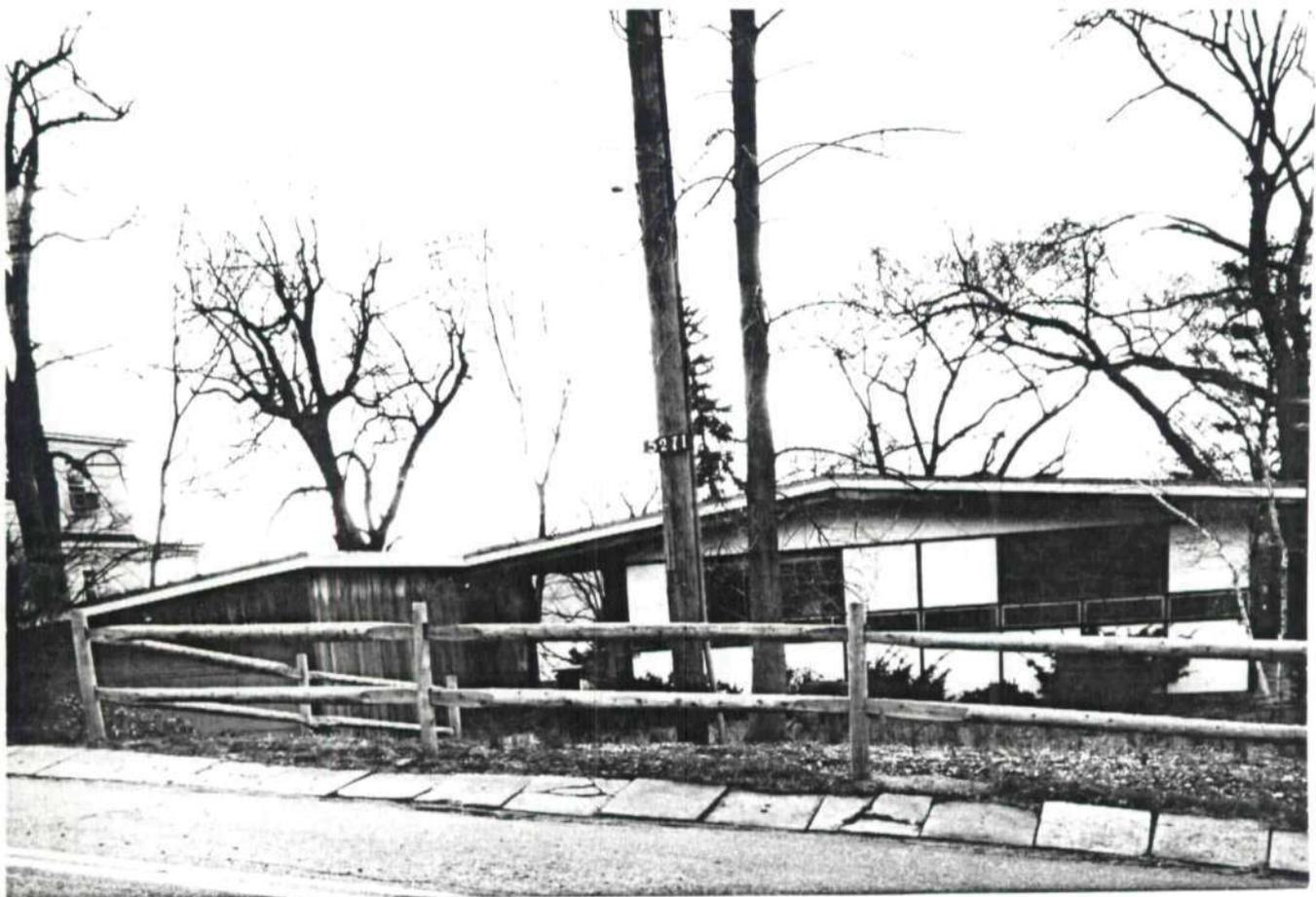
(For full description, see entry on p. 57)



5271 Independence Avenue 5939/428 (IV.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1955-56 [NB 618-1955]
ARCHITECT: Hood & Manice
ORIGINAL OWNER: Robert E. Hall
STYLE: Modern

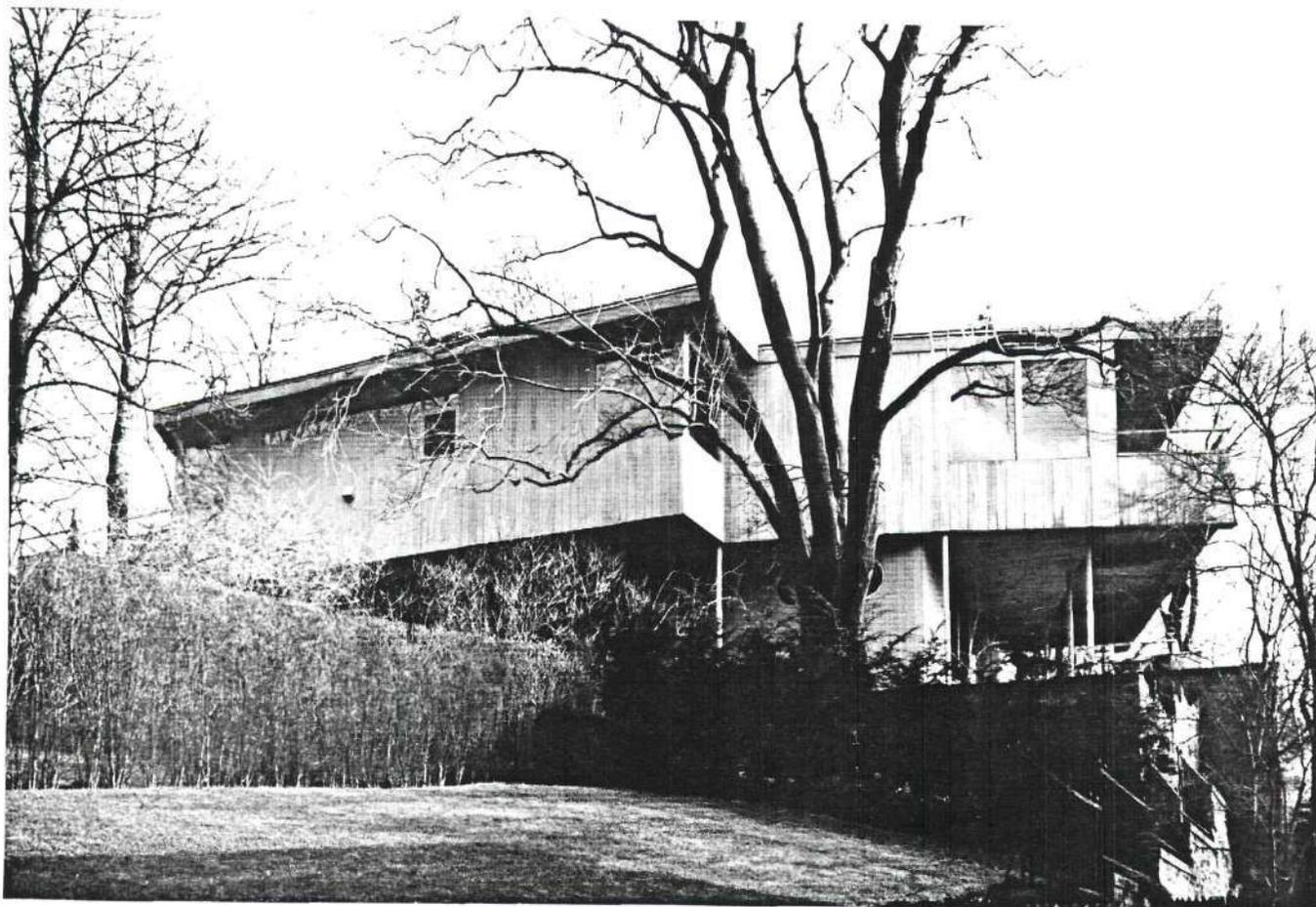
(For full description, see entry on p. 64)



5281 Independence Avenue 5939/425 (IV.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1963
ARCHITECT: unknown
ORIGINAL OWNER: Phillip Polatin
STYLE: Modern

(For full description, see entry on p. 64)



5291 Independence Avenue 5939/422 (V.1) and (V.6)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House (V.1)
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1853; remodeled 1886
ARCHITECT: unknown; Frederick Clarke Withers (1886)
ORIGINAL OWNER: Charles W. Foster; William S. Duke (1886)
STYLE: Queen Anne

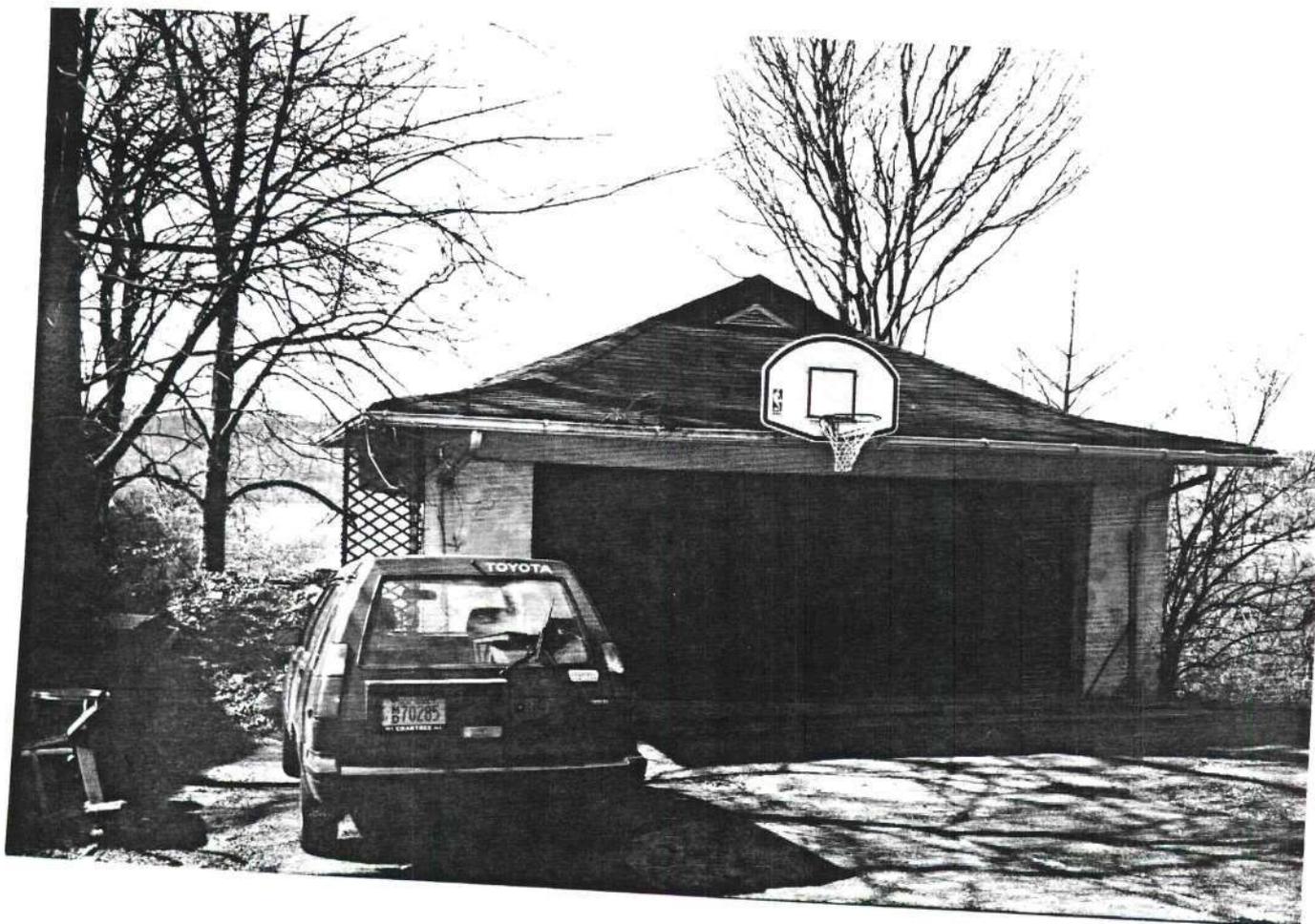
(For full description, see entry on p. 71)



5291 Independence Avenue 5939/422 (V.1) and (V.6)

BUILDING TYPE: Garage (V.6)
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1968
ARCHITECT: Edward J. Hurley
ORIGINAL OWNER: Patrick J. Quinn
STYLE: Vernacular

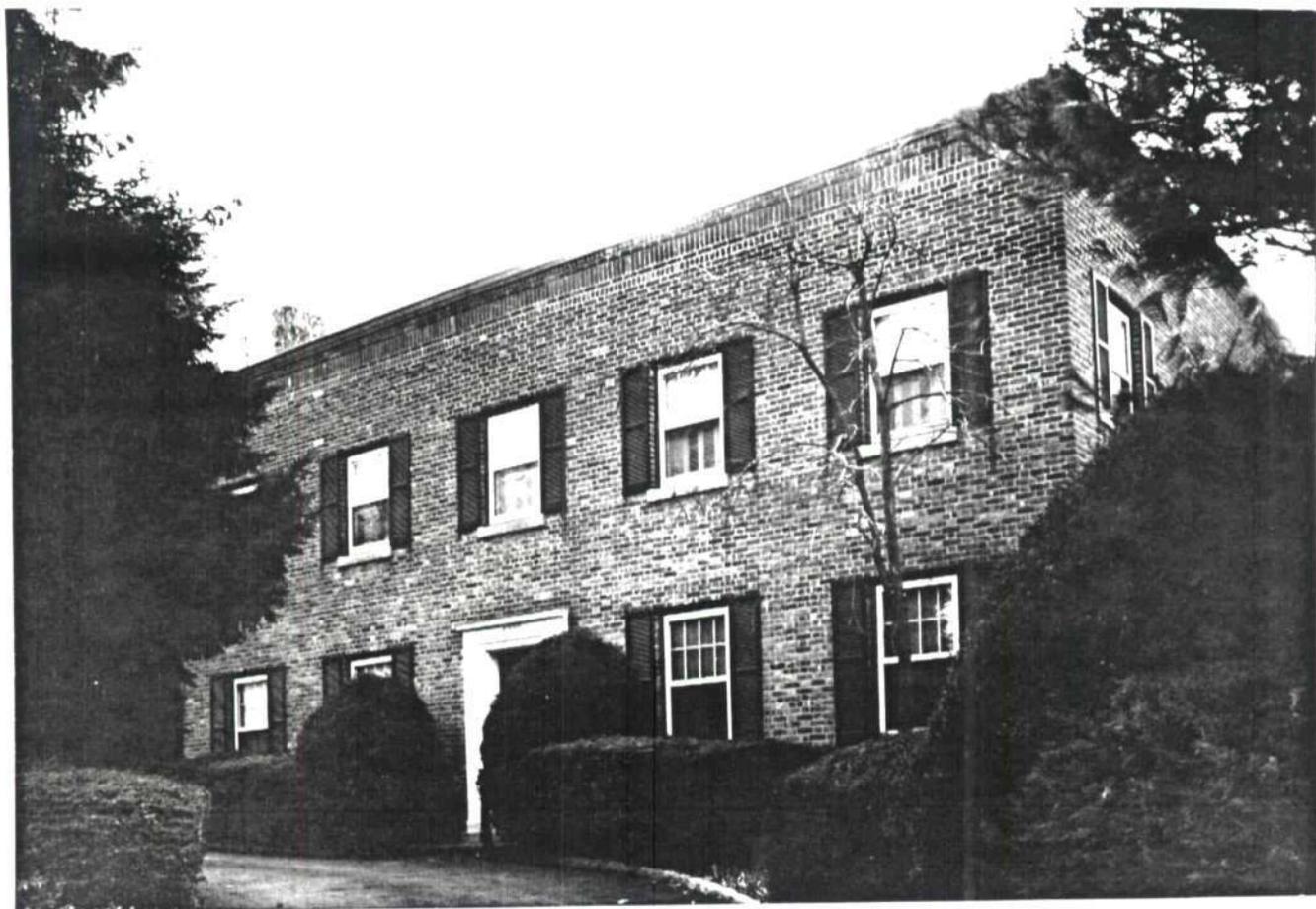
(For full description, see entry on p. 71)



5297 Independence Avenue 5939/410 (V.5)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1960 [NB 818-1960]
ARCHITECT: William Schoen
ORIGINAL OWNER: Leonard J. Hankin
STYLE: Neo-Georgian

(For full description, see entry on p. 75)



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SYCAMORE AVENUE

Sycamore Avenue, the carriage alley of the original Riverdale development, follows the curving line of a pre-existing road (Ackerman's farm road). Only twenty-five feet wide, it retains many qualities which recall its original function. These include the continuous stone walls (which also have entrance posts and gates) along the east side, the long expanse of wrought-iron fence set on a stone base (with stone entry posts) of the Cromwell Estate (later Stonehurst) along the west side, and the drainage system network of bluestone and cobbled street gutters and culverts. Beyond the walls the sloping land is terraced upward to the east.

The first five estates developed in Riverdale extended westward through the block, from Independence Avenue down the sloping site to the carriage alley (Sycamore Avenue). Carriage houses, and later garages, were built at the base of the terraced slope. Similarly, the Stone and Cromwell Estates, extending west from Sycamore Avenue toward the Hudson River, had carriage houses located close to Sycamore Avenue. Today Sycamore Avenue is lined with five carriage houses dating from the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century, one nineteenth-century cottage attached to part of a stable from the same date which was later altered into a garage, and two early twentieth-century garages.

The Cromwell Estate (later Stonehurst) retains its original Italianate style stone villa, built c.1856-58. Set well back from Sycamore Avenue, it is oriented with its entrance facing north and a round bay with a curved metal porch facing west. Like the villas on Independence Avenue, the Cromwell (Stonehurst) villa was approached by a semi-circular carriage drive. The approximate position of this drive is recalled by the north and south private roads, still marked by the original gate posts, leading to the west off Sycamore Avenue.

The southern portion of Sycamore Avenue is accentuated by the curving line of the road which gives the buildings facing the curve a particular visibility. On one side is a lot, subdivided from the Wave Hill estate, with a house designed by Dwight James Baum and built in 1923-24. On the other side of the road, a driveway flanked by rows of cherry trees leads to a converted carriage house, built on the Atherton Estate in 1903.

Portions of the Cromwell, Stone, and Charles W. Foster Estates began to be subdivided for the construction of single-family suburban houses after 1935. While several of the lots so developed face directly onto Sycamore Avenue (the houses at 5205, 5209, 5243, 5275, and 5294 Sycamore Avenue), other properties with Sycamore Avenue addresses are set further back into the terraced slopes. Those houses to the west of Sycamore Avenue are oriented to the north and south private roads while those to the east are reached by driveways.

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5200 Sycamore Avenue 5939/359 (VIII.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1923-24 [NB 1715-1923]
ARCHITECT: Dwight James Baum
ORIGINAL OWNER: Thomas A. Buckner, Jr.
STYLE: Neo-Dutch Colonial

(For full description, see entry on p. 93)



5205 Sycamore Avenue 5937/512 (VII.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House/Converted Gardener's Cottage

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: c. 1867; altered 1909 [ALT 339-1909], 1937 [ALT 435-1937], and 1943 [ALT 338-1943]

ARCHITECT: unknown; Thomas Greenlees, Jr. (1909); Lucht & Anderson (1937); Harry Lucht (1943)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Robert Colgate; George W. Perkins (1909); O'Connell Brothers (1937); Edward F. McShane (1943)

STYLE: Vernacular

(For full description, see entry on pp. 86-87)



5209 Sycamore Avenue 5937/510 (VII.7)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1950-51 [NB 715-1950]
ARCHITECT: Alton L. Craft
ORIGINAL OWNER: Alton L. and Mildred Craft
STYLE: Neo-Colonial

(For full description, see entry on p. 89)



5215 Sycamore Avenue 5937/458 (VII.11)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1969-70 [NB 194-1969]
ARCHITECT: Ludwig P. Bono
ORIGINAL OWNER: John P. and Patricia Cunningham
STYLE: Modern

(For full description, see entry on p. 90)



5220 Sycamore Avenue 5939/374 (I.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1903 [NB 173-1903]
ARCHITECT: Clarence L. Sefert
ORIGINAL OWNER: Mary McGill
STYLE: Colonial Revival

(For full description, see entry on p. 42)



5225 Sycamore Avenue 5937/459 (VII.1) and (VII.6)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1856-58
ARCHITECT: unknown
ORIGINAL OWNER: William D. Cromwell
STYLE: Italianate

(For full description, see entry on p. 85)



(5241) Sycamore Avenue 5937/503 (VII.B)

Lot (no buildings)

(For full description, see entry on p. 91)



5243 Sycamore Avenue 5937/502 (VII.5)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1937-38 [NB 387-1937]
ARCHITECT: Roland A. Gallimore
ORIGINAL OWNER: Reginald Lee Johnson
STYLE: Neo-Colonial

(For full description, see entry on p. 88)



5245 Sycamore Avenue 5937/478 (VII.8) and (VII.9)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House and Garage
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1950 [NB 882-1950]
ARCHITECT: Alton L. Craft
ORIGINAL OWNER: Roderic B. Swenson
STYLE: Neo-Federal

(For full description, see entry on p. 89)



(5247) Sycamore Avenue 5937/473 (VII.A)

Lot (no buildings)

(For full description, see entry on p. 91)



5249 Sycamore Avenue 5937/477 (VII.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1937 [ALT 314-1937]
ARCHITECT: Julius Gregory
ORIGINAL OWNER: Hugh B. Griffiths
STYLE: Neo-Federal

(For full description, see entry on p. 87)



5251 Sycamore Avenue 5937/480 (VII.10)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1953-54 [NB 1012-1953]
ARCHITECT: Hall & Paufue
ORIGINAL OWNER: Walter E. Kelley
STYLE: Modern

(For full description, see entry on p. 90)



5253 Sycamore Avenue 5937/499 (VII.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1856-58

ARCHITECT: unknown

ORIGINAL OWNER: William D. Cromwell

STYLE: Italianate

(For full description, see entry on p. 86)



5255 Sycamore Avenue 5937/498 (VI.1) and (VI.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House (VI.1)
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1901 [NB 1141-1901]
ARCHITECT: Brite & Bacon
ORIGINAL OWNER: Darwin P. Kingsley
STYLE: Colonial Revival

(For full description, see entry on pp. 78-79)



5255 Sycamore Avenue 5937/498 (VI.1) and (VI.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Garage (VI.2)

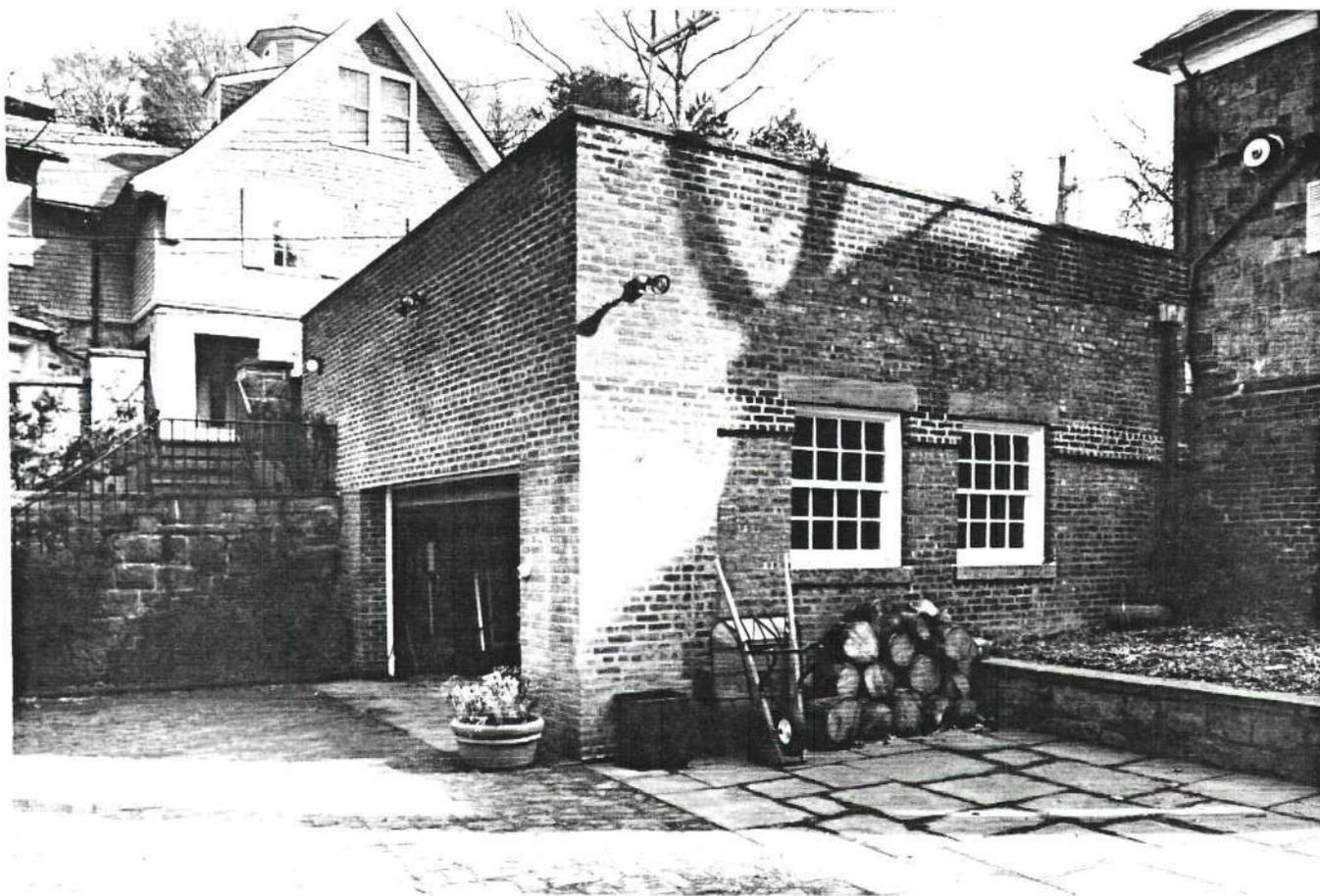
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1908 [NB 704-1908]; altered 1958 [BN 82-1958]

ARCHITECT: Robert M. Byers (1908); Albert Wheeler (1958)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Darwin P. Kingsley

STYLE: Vernacular

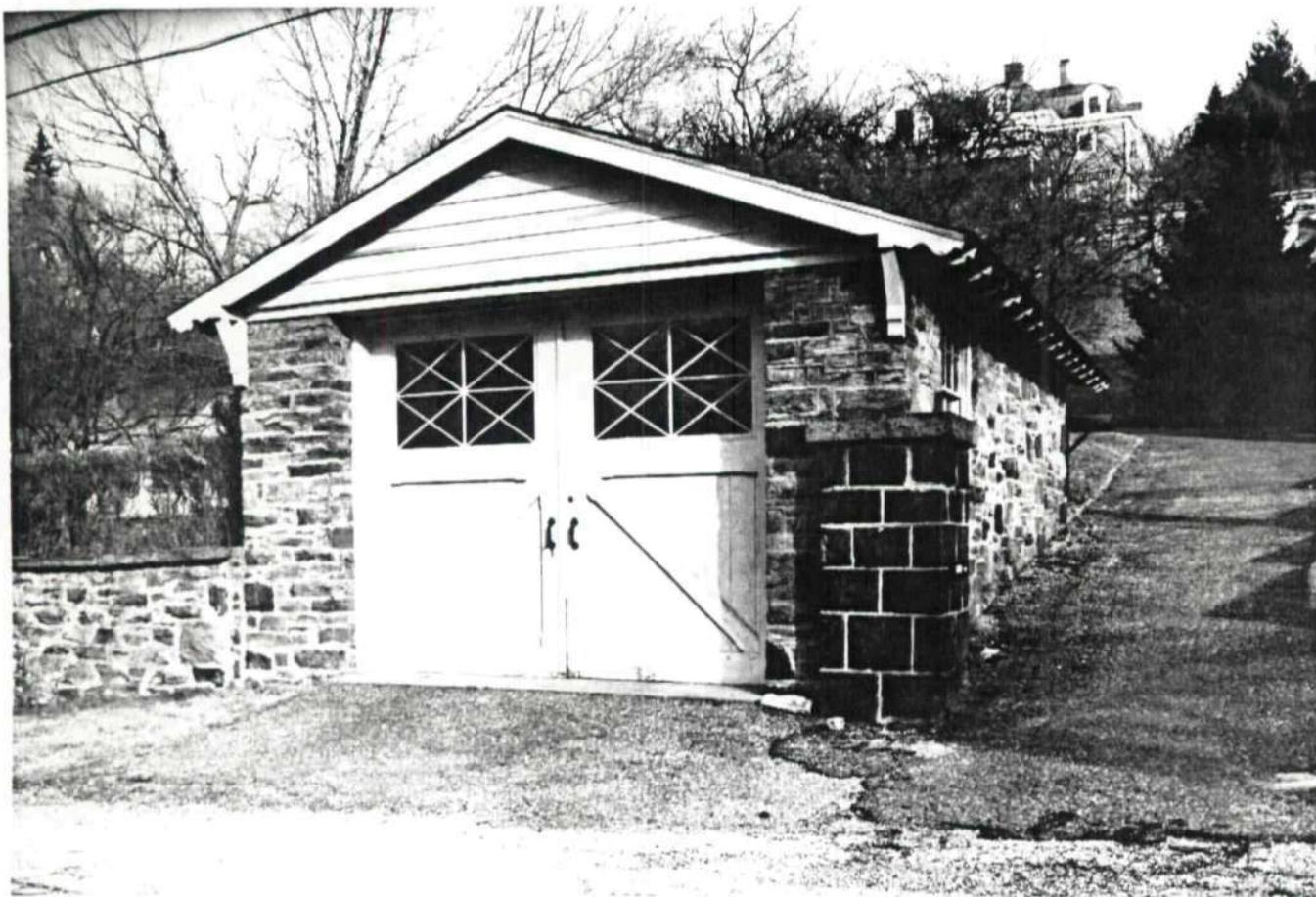
(For full description, see entry on pp. 78-79)



5260 Sycamore Avenue 5939/380 (II.2), (III.2), (III.3), and (III.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Garage (II.2)
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1913 [ALT 289-1913]
ARCHITECT: Ahneman & Younkheere
ORIGINAL OWNER: Adin G. and Estella M. Pierce
STYLE: Vernacular

(For full description, see entry on p. 52)



5260 Sycamore Avenue 5939/380 (II.2), (III.2), (III.3), and (III.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Stable (now a garage, III.2)

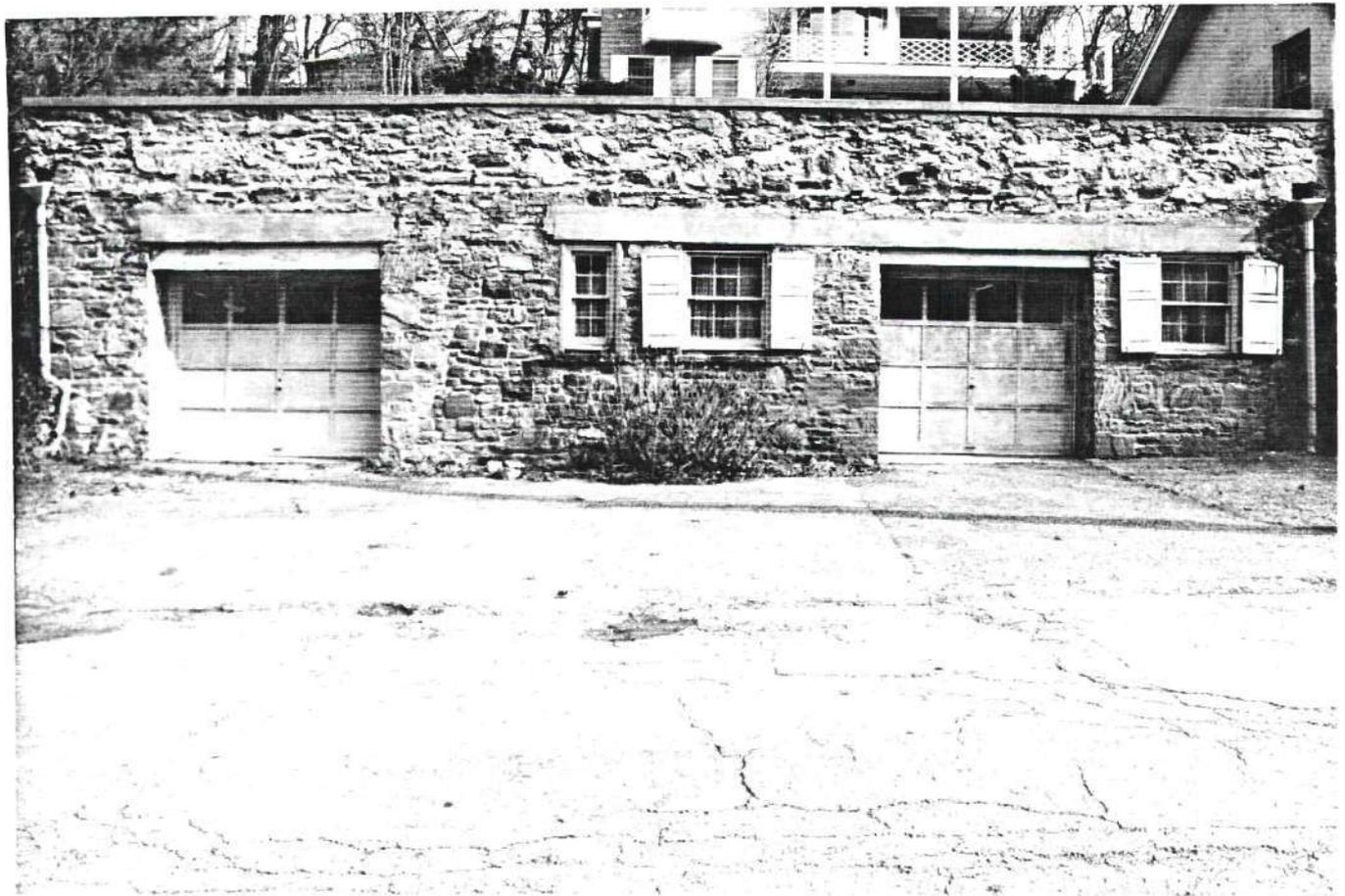
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: c. 1872-76; altered 1914 [ALT 348-1914]

ARCHITECT: unknown; John G. Kleinberg (1914)

ORIGINAL OWNER: F.J. Ogden

STYLE: Vernacular

(For full description, see entry on pp. 57-58)



5260 Sycamore Avenue 5939/380 (II.2), (III.2), (III.3), and (III.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Cottage (III.3)
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: c. 1872-76
ARCHITECT: unknown; John G. Kleinberg (1914)
ORIGINAL OWNER: F.J. Ogden
STYLE: Vernacular

(For full description, see entry on pp. 57-58)



5260 Sycamore Avenue 5939/380 (II.2), (III.2), (III.3), and (III.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House (III.4)
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1963 [NB 851-1963]
ARCHITECT: Jerome Robert Cerny and G.R.W. Watland
ORIGINAL OWNER: Lucille Gale Knapp
STYLE: Neo-Dutch Colonial

(For full description, see entry on pp. 57-58)



(5265)-5275 Sycamore Avenue 5937/494 (VI.A) and 5937/493 (VI.3)

(5265) Sycamore Avenue (VI.A)

Lot (no buildings)

(For full description, see entry on pp. 79-80)



(5265)-5275 Sycamore Avenue 5937/494 (VI.A) and 5937/493 (VI.3)

5275 Sycamore Avenue (VI.3)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1955-57 [NB 689-1955]

ARCHITECT: Burnett V. Vickers; succeeded by Albert Wheeler

ORIGINAL OWNER: Edward and Gabrielle de Vegvar

STYLE: Neo-Colonial

(For full description, see entry on pp. 79-80)



5270 Sycamore Avenue 5939/386 (IV.1)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House and Dwelling
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1908 [NB 252-1908]
ARCHITECT: Robert M. Byers
ORIGINAL OWNER: Thomas A. Buckner
STYLE: Colonial Revival

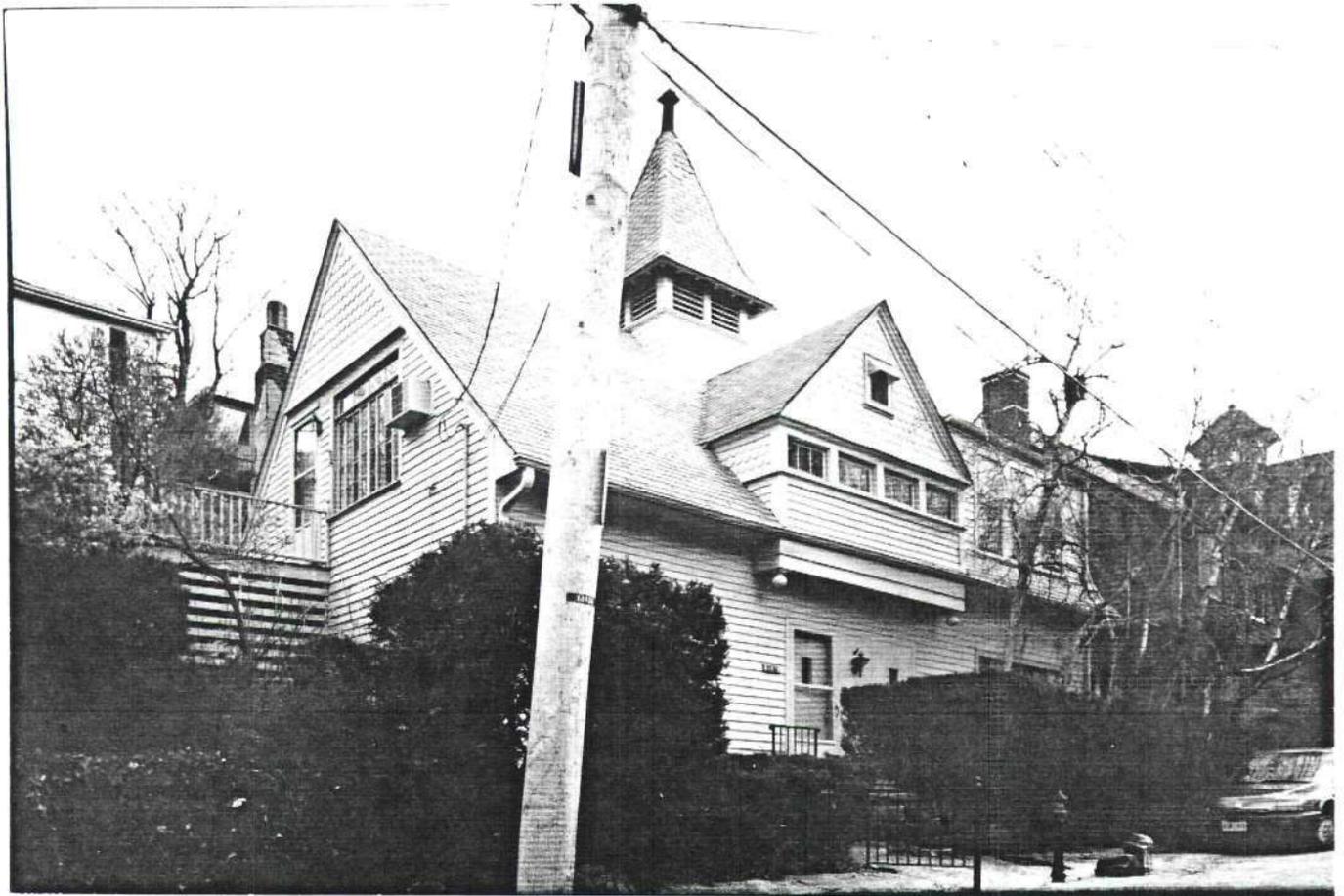
(For full description, see entry on p. 63)



5286 Sycamore Avenue 5939/392 (V.2)

BUILDING TYPE: Converted Carriage House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1886 [NB 1323-1886]
ARCHITECT: Frederick Clarke Withers
ORIGINAL OWNER: William S. Duke
STYLE: Queen Anne

(For full description, see entry on p. 72)



5288 Sycamore Avenue 5939/395 (V.3) and (V.7)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House and Garage

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1937 [NB 222-1937]; altered 1955 [ALT 27-1955]

ARCHITECT: Sarsfield J. Sheridan (1937); Alton L. Craft and Ludwig P. Bono
(1955)

ORIGINAL OWNER: Sycamore Estates; Dante S. Caputo (1955)

STYLE: Modern

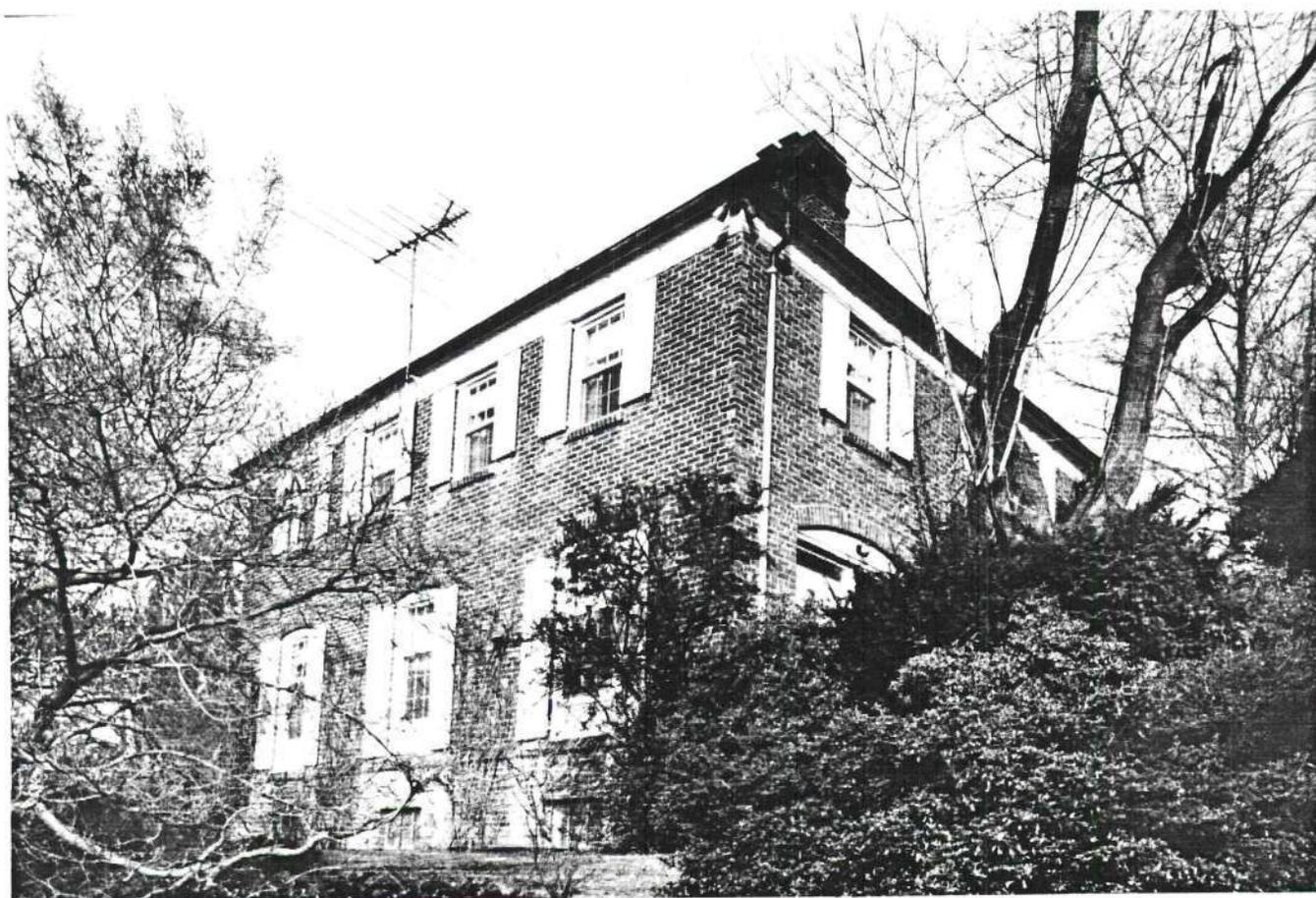
(For full description, see entry on p. 73)



5294 Sycamore Avenue 5939/396 (V.4)

BUILDING TYPE: Freestanding House
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1938 [NB 160-1938]
ARCHITECT: Julius Gregory
ORIGINAL OWNER: Sycamore Estates
STYLE: Neo-Georgian

(For full description, see entry on p. 74)



(5298) Sycamore Avenue 5939/399 (V.A)

Lot (no buildings)

(For full description, see entry on p. 74)



OWNERS APPENDIX

HENRY L. ATHERTON (dates undetermined)

Little is known about Henry L. Atherton. A member of the original syndicate which developed Riverdale, Atherton was a successful importer who lived at No. 39 10th Street in Manhattan during the 1850s; Samuel D. Babcock (see), another partner in the syndicate, was Atherton's next-door neighbor. Atherton was also a member of the Union Club. In addition to the estate (I) he owned as part of the original 1853 development of Riverdale, Atherton developed estates north and east of the present historic district where he lived at different times. He sold the estate property (with the villa now at 5247 Independence Avenue) to William and Harriet Young in 1855.

CHARLES H.P. BABCOCK (1824-1897)

Born in Stonington, Conn., Charles H.P. Babcock was the brother of Samuel D. Babcock (see), a member of the original syndicate which developed Riverdale. A successful banker, Babcock served as secretary of the Central Trust Company from the time of its founding in 1877; his brother and Henry F. Spaulding (see) were also founders. He began his career as a clerk with Francis Skinner & Company, a leading firm of domestic commission merchants in Boston which subsequently established a New York branch. Babcock spent ten years as a dry goods importer, a partner in the firm of Babcock & Milnor. After retiring from the mercantile business, he assumed a position as one of the vice-presidents of the Guaranty and Indemnity Company before his involvement with Central Trust. He was also involved in other banking activities with his brother.

Charles Babcock was a longtime resident of the Riverdale area, and lived at the Samuel D. Babcock Estate (III) in the early 1890s. For many years, Babcock served as a vestryman of Christ Church in Riverdale (a designated New York City Landmark) which was built in 1865-66 on Babcock family land. Charles Babcock was married to a daughter of Richard L. Franklin, who had developed an estate in Riverdale that was located just outside what is now the historic district. His brother, Samuel Babcock, married Franklin's other daughter.

Charles H.P. Babcock obituary, New York Times, Mar. 26, 1897, p. 7.

HENRY D. BABCOCK (1846-1918)

Henry D. Babcock, the son of Samuel D. Babcock (see), was a stock broker who began his career in his father's banking firm. He was a partner in the Stock Exchange firm of Hollister & Babcock. Involved in many charitable and social organizations, Babcock was treasurer of St. Luke's Hospital, director of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and a vestryman of St. Thomas's Church, and was a member of the Union, Metropolitan, and University Clubs. In addition, he was a member of

the board of directors of the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. Between 1880 and 1910, he owned the estate (III) which his father had developed in 1853 as a member of the syndicate that established Riverdale.

Henry D. Babcock obituary, New York Times, June 2, 1918, p. 21.

SAMUEL DENISON BABCOCK (1822-1902)

A prominent financier, Samuel D. Babcock was born in Stonington, Conn., and was a member of the original syndicate which developed Riverdale. During the 1850s, at the time that Riverdale was first being developed, Babcock's next-door neighbor on 10th Street in Manhattan was another syndicate member, Henry Atherton (see). Babcock began his career in the mercantile concern of P. & J.S. Crary in New York City. At the age of nineteen he entered into the Baltimore firm of Peabody, Riggs & Company which had just opened a New York branch. Babcock was made a junior partner in 1845. In 1853, about the time that he was involved with developing Riverdale, Babcock organized the banking firms of Babcock Brothers & Company of New York and Babcock & Company of Liverpool, England. One of the founders with his brother, Charles, and Henry F. Spaulding (see) of the Central Trust Company, Babcock was also president of the International Bell Telephone Company. Perhaps inspired by the example of his mentor George Peabody, the Baltimore philanthropist who financed the Peabody Estates in London, Babcock was also involved in the building of low-cost housing and was a founder of the Improved Dwellings Association and the City and Suburban Homes Corporation. In addition to having large real estate holdings in Riverdale, Babcock was president of the Central, Manhattan, Colonial, and New York Real Estate Associations. In addition, Babcock was vice-president (1870-1874) and president (1875-1882) of the New York Chamber of Commerce and sat on the board of the Guaranty Trust Company.

Babcock sold his Independence Avenue estate (III) in 1855 and later reacquired the property. He also developed a larger estate, known as "Hillside," north of the historic district; the villa, built in 1853-55, was designed by Thomas S. Wall (see Architects Appendix) who is known to have been responsible for several other villas within the larger Riverdale area, including the Atherton villa (I.1), and had carried out other commissions for Babcock. Babcock's brother, Charles H.P. Babcock (see), and his son, Henry D. Babcock (see), later owned the Independence Avenue estate. Babcock was a member and generous patron of the National Academy of Design, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Fine Arts Association, the American Museum of Natural History, and the American Geographical Society. He held memberships in the Union and Century Clubs. Samuel Babcock led the effort to found the Riverdale Institute (1862-63) and Christ Church in Riverdale (1865-66, a designated New York City Landmark) which were built on Babcock family land. He was married to a daughter of Richard L. Franklin, who had developed an estate in Riverdale that was located just outside what is now the historic district. His brother, Charles Babcock, married Franklin's other daughter. Babcock died in Lenox, Mass.

King's Notable New Yorkers, 220.
National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 289-290.

FRANCIS McNEIL BACON (1835-1912)

A financier and philanthropist, Francis McNeil Bacon was born in Dorchester, Mass. Relocated to New York in 1853, Bacon began a profitable career in the dry goods business. In 1860 he became a partner in the firm of Hurlbert, Volkenburgh & Company and one year later organized the firm of Francis M. Bacon & Company. In 1873, by which time he had moved to California, Bacon founded the firm of Haines, Bacon & Company, commission merchants dealing in woolens. He soon returned to New York and from about 1876 until 1882 owned the Atherton Estate (I). In 1887 his firm became Bacon, Baldwin & Company which changed to Bacon & Company in 1892. A distinguished and highly-regarded businessman, Bacon also had connections to financial circles in New York. He was the director of the National City Bank and the Atlantic Mutual Life Insurance Company, and held positions in the Metropolitan Trust Company and the Seaman's Bank for Savings.

Bacon's religious affiliations were also strong. He was a treasurer and trustee of the Church of the Holy Communion in New York, a member of the Trinity Church Association and of the Protestant Episcopal Society for Promoting Religion and Learning, and a trustee of St. Luke's Hospital in New York. Socially, he belonged to the Union, Union League, Merchants', Century, and Players' Clubs. In 1862 Bacon married Margaret Rogers. He remarried, in 1879, to Katherine Paris.

King's Notable New Yorkers.
National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. 17, 437.

MARTIN BATES, JR. (1814-1883)

Born in Boston, Mass., Martin Bates was a successful furrier. Beginning his career in his father's fur business, Bates came to New York in the early 1840s and continued in the same trade, establishing Martin Bates, Jr. & Company. In addition, Bates served as a director of the American Exchange National Bank, a trustee of the Mutual Life Insurance Company, and a trustee of the Central Trust Company which he had helped to found along with Samuel D. Babcock (see), Charles Babcock (see), and Henry F. Spaulding (see), all of whom resided in Riverdale. His affiliation with these businessmen also extended to the organization of the Riverdale Institute and Christ Church in Riverdale of which he was a vestryman.

Bates owned the Samuel D. Babcock Estate (III) from 1859 until about 1862; he then moved to an estate just north of the present historic district. It seems that Riverdale was a summer residence for Bates because during this period his home is listed in directories as 10 West 17th Street in Manhattan.

Martin Bates obituary, New York Times, Jan. 3, 1883, p. 5.

SPRUILLE BRADEN (1894-1978)

A prominent diplomat with many ties to Central and South America, Spruille Braden was born in Elkhorn, Mont. With a background in engineering, he was involved in mining and negotiated contracts with Westinghouse Electric Company in 1920 for the electrification of the Chilean State Railways. During his career he held directorships of the American Ship and Commerce Corporation and Pennsylvania Coal and Coke, among other companies. Braden had numerous assignments as ambassador and special representative of the U.S. President, beginning in 1935. He held various posts as ambassador to Columbia, Cuba, and Argentina as well as many other diplomatic positions and was the recipient of decorations from several foreign countries including Brazil, Chile, Peru, Columbia, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Haiti. He was the author of Diplomats and Demagogues: The Memoirs of Spruille Braden, published in 1971.

In 1922, Braden purchased Stonehurst from Evelina Ball Perkins, widow of George W. Perkins, and resided there until 1937 at which time Mrs. Perkins reacquired the property.

Who Was Who, Vol. 7, 1977-1981, 67.

THOMAS A. BUCKNER (1865-1942)

Born in Bloomington, Ill., Thomas A. Buckner was the son of Walker Buckner, a general manager of the New York Life Insurance Company (N.Y.L.I.C.) for the region that included Wisconsin, Iowa, and South Dakota. Thomas A. Buckner began his career with N.Y.L.I.C. in the Milwaukee, Wis., headquarters and at the age of twenty-one became an insurance agent in Iowa. His success attracted the attention of George W. Perkins (see), who was inspector of agencies in Chicago at that time. Perkins later resided in Riverdale, as did Darwin P. Kingsley (see), another N.Y.L.I.C. executive. Buckner moved up through the ranks of the N.Y.L.I.C. organization, moving to New York in 1898 to become superintendent of agencies. In 1900 he became fourth vice-president of the company and was made director in the following year. He eventually became president in 1931 and was made chairman of the board in 1936, a post from which he retired in 1941 to chair the finance committee. Like his colleagues Perkins and Kingsley, Buckner is credited with making many contributions to the American life insurance industry in general and to the growth of N.Y.L.I.C. in particular, such as the reorganization of agencies by setting up branch offices and the establishment of benefit and incentive programs.

Buckner and his wife, Myrtie Lewis Buckner, owned the Samuel H. Foster Estate (IV) from 1907 until the 1940s. They also later owned portions of the adjacent Charles W. Foster Estate (V). Their son, Thomas A. Buckner, Jr., built a house (VIII.1) at 5200 Sycamore Avenue in 1923-24.

Thomas A. Buckner obituary, New York Times, Aug. 9, 1942, p. 43.

HUGH N. CAMP (1827-1895)

Prominent in the sugar refining industry until 1870, Hugh N. Camp became very active in real estate development. He also established a cement business, H.N. Camp & Sons, and was for many years the treasurer of the St. Joseph and Old Run Lead Companies. Camp's institutional affiliations included memberships on the building committee of St. Luke's Hospital and of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History, and trusteeships of the Five Points House of Industry and the Skin and Cancer Hospital. Socially, Camp belonged to the Century, Union League, City, Vaudeville, Grolier, and New-York Athletic Clubs. From 1889 until 1902, he lived at the Samuel H. Foster Estate (IV).

Hugh N. Camp obituary, New York Times, Sept. 22, 1895, p. 5.

NEWTON CARPENTER (dates undetermined)

Little is known about Newton Carpenter. He was a commission merchant and lived at 15 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan prior to purchasing the William Woodworth Estate (II) in 1859. Carpenter owned the property until about 1868. He was a founder and warden of Christ Church in Riverdale (1865-66, a designated New York City Landmark), and an early board member of the Riverdale Institute.

ROBERT COLGATE (1812-1885)

The eldest of three sons of William Colgate -- founder of the well-known soap business and the man for whom Madison University in Hamilton, N.Y., was renamed in 1890 -- Robert Colgate worked in his father's business until the age of twenty-two. Under the firm name of Colgate, Pollen & Colgate, Robert Colgate (with his uncle Charles and George P. Pollen) went into the business of manufacturing dye products in 1833. When his uncle retired four years later, Colgate and Pollen expanded the business to include paints, oil, and glass. Establishing a factory in Brooklyn in 1845, Colgate then founded the Atlantic White Lead and Linseed Works and pioneered the manufacture of white lead for use in paints. In 1854, Colgate took over the entire business which became Robert Colgate & Company; eventually all of his four sons joined him in the firm.

In 1832, Colgate had suffered from cholera which left him with progressive paralysis for the rest of his life. Perhaps due to this personal experience, he became involved with the Hospital for the Ruptured and Crippled, among other charities. His philanthropy extended to other fields as well. Colgate was one of the founders of the American Museum of Natural History and served as its vice-president.

Colgate married twice; his first wife, Cornelia Francis Weyman died in 1842 and his second wife whom he married in 1844, Mary Elizabeth Riggs, died in 1866. In 1860 Colgate purchased the Cromwell Estate (VII) and named it "Stonehurst," where he lived until his death. He was active in the

Riverdale community, helping to found the Riverdale Presbyterian Church in 1863. Before the church was officially organized, Colgate established a Sunday school at Stonehurst.

Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 2, 299 (William Colgate).

Robert Colgate obituary, New York Times, July 6, 1885.

Truman Abbe and Hubert Abbe Howson, Robert Colgate the Immigrant, (New Haven, 1941), 90-91.

Scharf, Vol. 1, 766.

William Tieck, Riverdale, Kingsbridge, Spuyten Duyvil.

JOHN PHILLIP CUNNINGHAM (1897-1985)

Born in Lynn, Mass., John P. Cunningham was a successful advertising executive. Beginning as an artist and copywriter, Cunningham became a partner in the Newell-Emmet Advertising Agency in 1930 and held that post for twenty years. In 1950 he became executive vice-president of Cunningham & Walsh, Inc., and in 1954 assumed the presidency of that firm, the position he held until the time of his death. Among his other social and professional affiliations, Cunningham served as chairman of the board of the American Association of Advertising Agencies (1954) and belonged to the Union League, University, Harvard, Lotos, and Riverdale Yacht Clubs.

In 1924, Cunningham married Patricia Fitzpatrick. The Cunninghams purchased the Cromwell Estate (later Stonehurst, VII) in 1946 and resided there until about 1970 when they built a house at 5215 Sycamore Avenue on a lot which had been separated from the Stonehurst property.

Who Was Who, Vol. 8, 1982-85, 95.

WILLIAM D. CROMWELL (1818-1859)

Little is known about William D. Cromwell, who was the head of an importing business in the mid-nineteenth century. A member of the original Riverdale syndicate, Cromwell developed a large Sycamore Avenue estate (VII) with a villa and carriage house about 1856-58. While these buildings were under construction, Cromwell and his wife, Anna, lived at the Babcock Estate (III). Cromwell died in 1859 and his widow sold the property in 1860 to Robert Colgate. Under Colgate's ownership, the estate became known as "Stonehurst."

SAMUEL N. DODGE (1802?-1865)

Little is known about Samuel N. Dodge. He was listed in the 1850 census as an artist and in directories of the 1850s and early 1860s as a merchant dealing in artists' paints. With his wife, Clara, Dodge owned the Samuel Foster Estate (IV) from 1859 until the time of his death. He was a founder, with Robert Colgate (see) and James Scrymser (see), of Riverdale Presbyterian Church in 1863.

The Citizens' and Strangers' Pictorial and Business Directory for the City of New York and its Vicinity, 1853, (New York, 1853), 253.

George C. Croce and David H. Wallace, The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America 1564-1860, (New Haven, 1957), 182.

ORLANDO PORTER DORMAN (dates undetermined)

Born in Ellington, Conn., Orlando Porter Dorman began his mercantile career at the age of nineteen as a dry goods salesman in Hartford, Conn. He soon entered into partnership in the firm of Dorman & Baldwin which became Dorman & Company two years later. Once he moved to New York City in the early 1850s, he entered the large importing firm of Lee & Case (later W.H. Lee & Company) eventually becoming a partner. During the Civil War, Dorman left the dry goods business and embarked on a career in finance, opening a Wall Street bank, O.P. Dorman & Company (later Dorman, Joslyn & Company). In 1866 he became president of a large manufacturing company, which lasted ten years, and eventually organized the Gilbert Manufacturing Company, a very successful dress goods concern. Dorman founded the Dorman Library in San Juan, Puerto Rico; for that and other philanthropic efforts he became the fourth American to be made Chevalier of France.

Dorman and his wife, Delia Anna, resided at the Charles Foster Estate (V) from 1892 until the first decade of the twentieth century. The Dormans had a residence in the city at West End Avenue and West 76th Street; at that time, the estate in Riverdale, known as "Auvergne," was their country retreat.

C. Mitchell Harrison, New York State's Prominent and Progressive Men, Vol. 2, 1900, 109-110.

WILLIAM S. DUKE (dates undetermined)

Little is known about William S. Duke. He was listed in directories as having been a broker and auctioneer in Manhattan, first at 117 Front Street, then at 77 Cedar Street, and then at 119 Broadway. It is probable that through this business he knew Charles W. (see) and Samuel H. Foster (see), also auctioneers. Duke and his wife, Sarah, began leasing the Charles Foster Estate (V) in 1856. The Dukes owned the property between 1860 and 1894 and in 1886 commissioned Frederick Clarke Withers to carry out major alterations to the house and build a new carriage house on the property (V.2, 5286 Sycamore Avenue).

CHARLES W. FOSTER (1805-1865)

Little is known about Charles William Foster, a member of the original syndicate which developed Riverdale. With his brother, Samuel H. (see), he had an auction business, S.H. & C.W. Foster, which was located at 41 Broad Street and later at 61 Broadway. Socially, he was a member of the Century

and Union Clubs. Charles Foster owned the northernmost of the Independence Avenue estates (V) from 1853 until 1857 when it was sold to Duncan McDougall. He also purchased the Woodworth Estate (II) in 1853, when the house was built, and sold it in 1857 to William Underhill. During the early years of the Riverdale development, Foster was the largest shareholder among the syndicate members until he sold out in 1857. His brother, Samuel, also sold out at this time, which may have been due to the financial panic.

Charles W. Foster death notice, New York Evening Post, August 16, 1865.
Frederick Clifton Pierce, Foster Genealogy (Chicago, 1899).

SAMUEL H. FOSTER (1804-1861)

Little is known about Samuel Henry Foster, who appears on the 1853 Map of Riverdale in the Town of Yonkers as the owner of one of the Independence Avenue estates (IV). With his brother, Charles W. (see), he had an auction business, S.H. & C.W. Foster, which was located at 41 Broad Street and later at 61 Broadway. He was a member of the Union Club. Samuel Foster owned the estate from 1853 until 1857 when it was sold to Henry L. Atherton (see), one of the original Riverdale developers and presumably a relative of Foster's wife, Eliza Robinson Atherton Foster. His brother, Charles, also sold his Riverdale holdings at this time, which may have been due to the financial panic.

Samuel H. Foster death notice, New York Evening Post, July 23, 1861.
Frederick Clifton Pierce, Foster Genealogy (Chicago, 1899).

LORING R. GALE (d.1912 [1913?])

Born in Honesdale, Pa., Loring Robertson Gale was the eldest son of William Gale with whom he moved to Pike Mills, Pa., about 1880 and established the W. & L.R. Gale Tannery in 1881-82. Soon after the tannery was built, the name of the town was changed to Galeton. Gale married Elizabeth Bently about 1903 and in 1907 the Gales relocated to New York and purchased the Atherton Estate (I). The property was later owned by their daughter, Lucille, who subsequently married Sanford Knapp (see).

"Galeton's Oldest Industrial Plant Ordered Torn Down and Junked," article from local Galeton newspaper dated August 7, 1930, submitted to the IPC by Robert K. Currin, Historical Society, Coudersport, Pa., Oct. 4, 1990.

HUGH B. GRIFFITHS (1897-1960)

A graduate of the Riverdale Country School, the Mount Hermon School, and Harvard in the class of 1918, Hugh B. Griffiths began his successful career in the sales department of the Ward Baking Company in 1919. He later became associated with the firm of Standard Brands and was the manager of the firm's frozen products division at the time of his death.

In 1937 Griffiths built a house at 5949 Sycamore on a lot which had been separated from the Cromwell property and lived there until he died.

Hugh B. Griffiths obituary, New York Times obit., Jan. 17, 1960, p. 86.

WILLIAM M. HARRIS (dates undetermined)

Little is known about William M. Harris. Apparently, he was a lawyer with the New York Life Insurance Company (N.Y.L.I.C.). From 1910 to 1942, Harris owned the Samuel D. Babcock Estate (III). His son, Gilbert Harris, owned the property from 1942 until 1956 when it was sold to Lucille Gale Knapp. George W. Perkins, Thomas A. Buckner, and Darwin P. Kinglsey, also top executives at N.Y.L.I.C., were neighbors of Harris in the Riverdale community.

JOHN M. HIGH (1870-1924)

The son of a real estate operator in Chicago, John M. High began his career on the Pacific Coast with the Pantasote Company. Relocating to New York City in about 1900, High advanced with that company, soon assuming charge of sales in the steam and electric railway fields. He eventually became manager of the railroad department. High was also the secretary and director of the Agasote Millboard Company of Trenton, N.J., and a director of the Tuco Products Corporation.

High and his wife, Anna, were longtime residents of Riverdale. The High family lived at the Charles W. Foster Estate (V) from 1896 until the 1930s. The estate was known as "Highwolde" during the period when the Highs owned it.

John M. High obituary, New York Times, April 26, 1924, p. 15.

ALBERT GALLATIN HYDE (1825-?)

Born in northern Vermont, Albert Gallatin Hyde moved to New York City in 1848 and was employed by the dry goods firm of Adriance, Strang & Company. Eight years later he became a partner in the firm of Skeel, Sweetzer & Company. In 1861 Hyde went into business for himself, founding A.G. Hyde & Company which lasted until 1875. It was during this period that Hyde and his wife, Marie Louise Shaw, whom he had married in 1851, owned the Woodworth Estate (II). In 1881 Hyde organized the firm of Hyde & Burton for the manufacture of cotton goods. This firm was reorganized in 1889 as A.G. Hyde & Sons when Hyde brought his two sons into the business. The company prospered for many years.

A longtime member of the Union Club, Hyde's other social affiliations included the Merchants', Larchmont Yacht, and New York Yacht Clubs, and the New England Society.

C. Mitchell Harrison, New York State's Prominent and Progressive Men, Vol. 2, 175-176.

DARWIN PEARL KINGSLEY (1857-1932)

A successful life insurance underwriter, Darwin P. Kingsley was born in Vermont. He moved to Colorado in 1881 and in 1883 became editor of the Grand Junction News. The next year he served as one of Colorado's delegates to the National Republican Convention. Gaining exposure in Colorado politics, in 1886 Kingsley was elected State Auditor and Insurance Commissioner. It is in this post that Kingsley may have met George W. Perkins (see) with whom he later became involved in the New York Life Insurance Company (N.Y.L.I.C.).

In 1889 Kingsley relocated to Boston and entered the N.Y.L.I.C. branch in that city. He was transferred to N.Y.L.I.C.'s New York office in 1892 to become superintendent of agencies. From that position, he moved up the ranks of the company, becoming president in 1907 and finally chairman of the board in 1931. Along with Perkins, Kingsley is given credit for have made many improvements in N.Y.L.I.C.'s corporate structure and he contributed much to the firm's success and expansion.

Among his social affiliations, Kingsley was a member of the Union League, University, and Merchants' Clubs. In 1884 he married Mary Mitchell, who died in 1890. Five years later, he married again to Josephine McCall whose father was president of N.Y.L.I.C. at that time. Kingsley acquired the Stone Estate (VI) in 1890 and resided there until the 1910s. In 1901 he made various improvements to the property, building a new house (burned 1929) and a barn and stable. In 1908 he added a garage.

N.Y.L.I.C. War Stories, 1920.

New York State's Prominent and Progressive Men, Vol. 1, 1900, 216-217.

Who Was Who, Vol. 1, 679.

SANFORD R. (1904-1971) and LUCILLE GALE KNAPP

A native of Yonkers, Sanford R. Knapp was a mining engineer and geologist. He spent ten years with the Aluminum Company of America and then developed manganese and silver mines in Montana, eventually establishing the Taylor-Knapp Mining Company of Phillipsburg, Mont.

Knapp's wife, Lucille Gale Knapp, is the daughter of Loring R. Gale (see) who had acquired the Atherton Estate (I) in 1907. The Knapps later owned this estate and subsequently the Woodworth (II) and Babcock (III) Estates. The Knapps carried out various alterations to the properties they owned in the district and in 1963 built a house at 5260 Sycamore Avenue (III.4).

Sanford R. Knapp obituary, New York Times, Mar. 8, 1971, p. 36.

GEORGE WILLARD KNOWLTON (1839-1931)

A banker and manufacturer, George W. Knowlton was born in Watertown, N.Y. In the course of his long career in finance and in the paper mill industry, Knowlton was president of the Watertown National Bank, Knowlton Brothers, Inc., the Ontario Paper Company, and the St. Regis Paper Company. His philanthropic interests included the Jefferson County (Ala.) Orphan Asylum.

Married in 1862 to Frances G. Clarke (who died in 1898) and in 1870 to Gertrude Ely, Knowlton owned the Babcock Estate (III) from 1863 until 1873 when he went bankrupt. He was a founder, with several of his neighbors, of Christ Church in Riverdale.

George Willard Knowlton obituary, New York Times, Mar. 18, 1931, p. 25.
Who Was Who, Vol. 1, 688.

GEORGE and MARY L.H. MCGILL (dates undetermined)

Little is known about George and Mary L.H. McGill, who owned the Atherton Estate (I) from 1882 until 1907. George McGill is listed in directories around the turn of century as having had a fastener business at 25 Park Place in Manhattan. The McGills had several alterations made to the main house on the property and had a carriage house built on the Sycamore Avenue side of the property.

OTTO MARX (1869-1963)

A prominent banker and businessman, Otto Marx was born in Birmingham, Ala., and attended college in New York. Beginning as a cashier at the Jefferson County Savings Bank in his hometown, from 1887 to 1901, he then organized the firm of Otto Marx & Company, a bond and banking business. He retired from the company in 1943. Marx served as director of many companies throughout his career: the General Dynamics Corporation, the Associated Dry Goods Corporation, Hahne & Company, James McCreery & Company, Lord & Taylor, Avondale Mills, the Otmar Real Estate Corporation, and Canadair, Ltd., among others. Socially, Marx was a member of the Lotos, Bankers, City Midday, and Century Country Clubs.

In 1918, Marx acquired the Stone Estate with the house that had been built in 1901 by Darwin P. Kingsley (see). The house was destroyed by fire in 1929 and Marx sold the property in 1934.

Otto Marx obituary, New York Times, June 1, 1963, sect. D, p. 21.
Who's Who in New York, 1952, 751.
Who Was Who, Vol. 4, 1961-68, 617.

THOMAS B. MEEKER (dates undetermined)

Little is known about Thomas B. Meeker, a Wall Street broker. In the mid-1870s he is listed in directories as residing in Riverdale, perhaps as a renter of the Woodworth Estate (II). From 1880 to about 1904 it appears that he owned that estate with his wife, Grace.

WILLIAM B. MEEKER (dates undetermined)

William B. Meeker was a banker and was also involved in coal mining and shipping. He was a member of the Union Club. With his wife, Mary, he owned the Samuel H. Foster Estate (IV) from 1872 until about 1889.

GEORGE WALBRIDGE PERKINS (1862-1920)

Corporate organizer, financier, conservationist, and philanthropist, George W. Perkins was born in Chicago, the son of a pioneer in the American insurance field. Perkins began his career early in life as an office boy in the Chicago office of the New York Life Insurance Company (N.Y.L.I.C.). In 1888 he was appointed agency director in Denver, Colo., and then became inspector of agencies for the Rocky Mountain district; it is in Colorado that he may have met Darwin P. Kingsley (see) with whom he was later associated at N.Y.L.I.C. In 1892 Perkins relocated to New York and was promoted quickly through the ranks of N.Y.L.I.C., becoming vice-president in 1903. Perkins was an influential and innovative businessman; he was responsible for significantly restructuring the insurance industry and brought about revolutionary change at N.Y.L.I.C. In 1900, although he maintained connections with N.Y.L.I.C. until 1906, he became a partner in the prestigious banking firms of J.P. Morgan & Company of New York, Drexel, Morgan & Company of Philadelphia, and Morgan, Harjes & Company of Paris. He helped found and held directorships of the U.S. Steel Corporation, the International Harvester Corporation, and the International Mercantile Marine Company, among other large firms.

In 1910, Perkins retired from banking and devoted himself to public affairs and to writing and speaking about corporate organization and administration. Among other innovations, he advocated profit-sharing and health benefits for employees based on length of service and productivity. About 1912, Perkins also became politically active, serving as chairman of the national executive committee of the Progressive Party, although he never sought political office.

As early as 1893, Perkins began acquiring property in Riverdale. He bought the Cromwell Estate (later Stonehurst, VII) in 1902 and Wave Hill (just south of the present historic district) one year later. Evelina Ball Perkins (1866-1960), whom he married in 1889, continued to own the Stonehurst property for many years after her husband's death and was very active in the subsequent development of the area of historic district. An ardent conservationist, George Perkins organized efforts to preserve the character and the natural environment of Riverdale. He was president of the New York Palisades Interstate Park Commission, a member of the board of the

New York Botanical Gardens, an honorary vice-president of the Park District Protective League, and a trustee of the New York Scenic and Historic Preservation Society. He was affiliated with numerous organizations concerned with politics, the arts, and social science, and belonged to the Metropolitan, Union League, Army and Navy, and New York Yacht Clubs, among others.

Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 7, 1962, 471-472.

King's Notable New Yorkers, 276.

National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. 15, 33-34.

N.Y.L.I.C. War Stories, 1920.

ADIN G. PIERCE (d.1944)

Little is known about Adin G. Pierce. In 1930 he retired as president of the New York fireproofing firm which bore his name. With his wife, Estella, he purchased the William Woodworth Estate (II) in 1910 and owned it until about 1930. The Pierces built a garage on the property.

Adin Pierce obituary, New York Times, July 27, 1944, p. 17.

A. EMIL SCHMITT (dates undetermined)

A physician, A. Emil Schmitt owned the Woodworth Estate (II) from 1904 until about 1910. He was a founder in 1909 of the Riverdale Health League.

JAMES ALEXANDER SCRYMSER (1839-1918)

Born in New York City, capitalist and telegraph promoter James Alexander Scrymser was the son of James Scrymser, who had large land holdings in Yonkers and dealt in real estate with William W. Woodworth (see), the leader of the syndicate that developed Riverdale. The younger Scrymser enlisted in the 12th New York Infantry in 1861 and served in the Civil War. Upon his return to New York, Scrymser became involved in the growing industry of telegraph communication. He projected and organized the International Ocean Telegraph Company, incorporated in 1865; among the firm's first projects was the installation of cables between Florida and Cuba. When the company was acquired by Jay Gould in 1878 and annexed to the Western Union system, Scrymser resigned as the head of the company and turned his attention to developing telegraph lines in Mexico and Central America. He became the chief executive of the Mexican Cable (later Telegraph) Company in 1881 and later established the Central and South American Telegraph Company, connecting the United States via Galveston, Tx., to sixteen countries. By 1893, more than 5,000 miles of cables and land lines had been laid under Scrymser's leadership. Socially, he was a member of the Century Club.

In the period from 1866 to 1868, Scrymser owned the Samuel H. Foster Estate (IV). With Robert Colgate (see) and others, he helped found the

Riverdale Presbyterian Church in 1863.

Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 8, 521.

King's Notable New Yorkers, 417.

Who Was Who, Vol. 1, 1097.

HENRY FOSTER SPAULDING (1816-1893)

A successful merchant and financier, Henry F. Spaulding was born in Vermont and came to New York in the 1830s. In 1850 he organized the firm of Spaulding, Vail & Fullen which imported woolen goods. During the Civil War, Spaulding became a commission merchant and established the firm of Spaulding, Hunt & Company (later Spaulding, Swift & Company). By 1875 he left the mercantile business and embarked on a financial career. He was one of the organizers, with the Babcocks (see Charles H.P. and Samuel D.), of the Central Trust Company and served as president for eight years. He was also the longtime head of the Mechanics' National Bank, a director of the Equitable Life Assurance Company, and founder of the New York and Yonkers Insurance Company.

An active member of the Chamber of Commerce, Spaulding was also involved in public affairs. He served on the committee which was formed to overthrow the notorious Tweed Ring in New York City government and sat on the Croton Aqueduct Board. Socially, he belonged to the Century Club. One of the founders, with the Babcocks, of Christ Church in Riverdale, Spaulding owned the Woodworth Estate (II) from 1876 until 1880, although his name reappears in connection with the property on an 1893 map. In addition, Spaulding was the leader of a syndicate of four businessmen who developed the Park Riverdale section south of Wave Hill where he maintained a large estate, known as "Parkside," which had a villa designed by Thomas S. Wall.

Century Club Report, 24.

National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Vol. 3, 1893, 265-266.

HENRY L. STONE (dates undetermined)

Little is known about Henry L. Stone, the developer of the Stone Estate (VI). He is listed in New York City directories from the 1850s and 1860s as a merchant of silks; in 1859-60, about the time his estate was developed, his home address appears as Riverdale. He was a founder, with several of his neighbors, of Christ Church in Riverdale.

WILLIAM UNDERHILL (dates undetermined)

An importer of china, William Underhill had his business at 22 Vesey Street in the 1850s. As early as 1855 he is listed in directories as a resident of Riverdale and between 1857 and 1859 he owned the William W. Woodworth Estate (II).

JOHN S. WILLIAMS (1814-1876)

A senior member of the shipping firm of Williams & Guion, John S. Williams owned the Samuel Foster Estate (IV) from 1868 until 1872. With Stephen Guion, he organized the Black Ball Line of Liverpool, England, which merged about twenty-five years later with another steamship company to form the Williams & Guion Line. Williams was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the Produce Exchange, and the Maritime Exchange.

John S. Williams obituary, New York Times, Nov. 13, 1876.

WILLIAM W. WOODWORTH (1807-1873)

The leader of the syndicate that originally developed Riverdale, William W. Woodworth served from 1845 to 1847 as Representative (Democrat) from the district of Dutchess and Columbia Counties in the United States Congress. His political career began in Hyde Park, N.Y., where he served as supervisor in 1838, 1841, and 1843; he was also appointed judge of Dutchess County in 1838 and 1843.

In 1848, Woodworth received the contract to build the section of the Hudson River Railroad between Spuyten Duyvil and Hastings, prompting his move to Yonkers in the following year. In 1850 he purchased a large tract of land in Yonkers between Broadway and the Hudson River from Josiah Rich and James Scrymser (whose son later resided in Riverdale) and held three-eighths interest in the railroad depot. In conjunction with the purchase, Woodworth acquired the Philippe Manor Hall where he resided until 1868 when he sold the property to Yonkers. Woodworth had large land holdings in Yonkers and his real estate activities had a major impact on the development of that city. In 1857 and 1858 he was elected president of Yonkers and in 1870 receiver of taxes. Woodworth sold out of the Riverdale syndicate in 1854.

Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress, 1789-1961, 1848-1849.

Who Was Who, The Historical Volume, 668.

William W. Woodworth obituary, The Statesman, (Yonkers newspaper), Vol. 18, Feb. 20, 1873.

William W. Woodworth obituary, The Yonkers Gazette, Feb. 15, 1873.

WILLIAM YOUNG (dates undetermined)

William Young was an editor and publisher of a literary magazine, The Albion, described as "a New York weekly devoted chiefly to the reprinting of articles from English journals" which was founded in 1822 and published until 1875. Socially, he was a member of the Century Club. Between 1855 and 1861, Young owned the Atherton Estate (I).

Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), Vol. 1, 797, Vol. 2, 128.



SAMUEL DENISON BABCOCK



HENRY DENISON BABCOCK



FRANCIS McNEIL BACON



GEORGE WALBRIDGE PERKINS



JAMES ALEXANDER SCRYSER



HUGH N. CAMP

Credit: NYT



ROBERT COLGATE

Credit: Tieck, Riverdale...



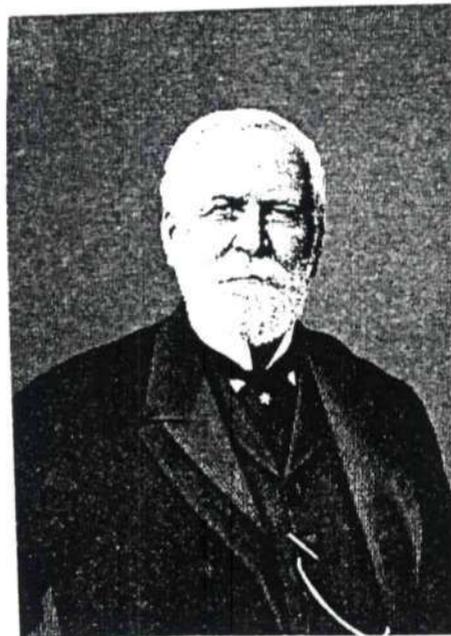
ORLANDO P. DORMAN

Credit: Harrison



LORING, ELIZABETH and
LUCILLE GALE

Credit: Currin



ALBERT G. HYDE

Credit: Harrison



DARWIN P. KINGSLEY

Credit: Harrison

ARCHITECTS APPENDIX

AHNEMAN & YOUNKHEERE

Charles E. Ahneman
Disry Younkheere

5260 Sycamore Avenue garage

Carpenter Charles E. Ahneman and cabinetmaker Disry Younkheere formed a partnership as carpenters and builders in 1892. By 1899 they were listed as architects in New York business directories, specializing in the design and construction of wood-framed cottages. As builders and contractors the firm was responsible for the construction of many houses designed by Dwight James Baum (see). In 1913, the firm added a garage extension to a two-story wood-frame stable that was subsequently demolished. The surviving structure remains in use as a garage.

Dennis Steadman Francis, Architects in Practice New York City, 1840-1900 (New York, 1979), 11, 84.

William A. Tieck, Riverdale, Kingsbridge, Spuyten Duyvil, New York City (New York, 1989), 204.

DWIGHT JAMES BAUM (1886-1939)

5200 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house

Baum, born in Little Falls, New York, received his architectural training at Syracuse University, graduating in 1909. He opened his own office in New York City in 1914, specializing in residential designs. The geographic extent of his practice varied from a villa in Newport for Count Alphonso to John Ringling's mansion in Sarasota, Florida, but the majority of his residential commissions were in the New York City area, including many in Riverdale and Fieldston (where he built his own home and office). Baum was adept in a wide variety of styles including variants of the Colonial, the Italian Renaissance, the French Classic, and the Tudor, but most of his residential clients appear to have preferred the Colonial-inspired styles. Notable work in Riverdale includes the Riverdale Country Club (1920, demolished), the Anthony Campagna residence (1922), Christ Church parish house (1923), and the Armour Hall addition (1928) to the Wave Hill house, as well as houses for Cleveland H. Dodge, Charles Evans Hughes, Jr., and Dr. Wade W. Wright. His only work within the boundaries of the Riverdale Historic District is the house at 5200 Sycamore Avenue, designed for Thomas A. Buckner, Jr., and built in 1923-24. Illustrated in the American Architect (November 1924), it was designed in a neo-Dutch Colonial style.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, Arthur Hammerstein House Designation Report (LP-1282), report prepared by Marjorie Pearson (New York, 1982).

"Baum, Dwight James," Macmillian Encyclopedia of Architects, ed. Adolf K. Placzek (New York, 1982), vol. 1, p. 155.

"Baum, Dwight James," National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, vol. 29, pp. 302-303.

LUDWIG P. BONO

5215 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house
5288 Sycamore Avenue alterations

Ludwig P. Bono, a member of the American Institute of Architects since 1946, based his architectural practice in the Bronx. Within the Riverdale Historic District Bono designed the modern house at 5215 Sycamore Avenue, built in 1969-70 on land formerly belonging to Stonehurst. In 1955 he carried out alterations to the house at 5288 Sycamore Avenue, superceding the design of Alton L. Craft (see).

American Architects Directory, (New York, 1962), 67.

BRITE & BACON

James Brite (1864-1942)
Henry Bacon (1866-1924)

5255 Sycamore Avenue carriage house

Henry Bacon is chiefly remembered for his monumental public work, especially the design of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., completed the year before his death. But Bacon's career encompassed a whole range of building types including private houses.

Like Bacon, James Brite received his architectural training in the firm of McKim, Mead & White. The two formed their partnership in 1896. Laurel Hill (1897), a mansion in Columbia, South Carolina; plans for the American University (c.1897) in Washington, D.C.; and the design of the Jersey City Public Library (1897), won in competition, were all early commissions of the firm. The firm designed several private houses in New York City such as the neo-Jacobean Charles Hudson House (1898-99), 3 East 76th Street, before the partnership was dissolved late in 1902. Brite continued to design large country estates, such as Darlington (1904-07) for George Crocker in Ramapo Hills, N.J., and the Braes (1912) for Herbert L. Pratt in Glen Cove, L.I. Brite also designed Pratt's house on Clinton Avenue in Brooklyn.

The firm's work in the Riverdale Historic District was undertaken for Darwin P. Kingsley who commissioned both a large freestanding house and a carriage house. Built in 1901, they were designed in the Colonial Revival style. The house, which faced onto Sycamore Avenue, was demolished about 1929. The carriage house (converted for residential use in the 1950s) still

survives at 5255 Sycamore Avenue.

Dennis Steadman Francis, Architects in Practice New York City, 1840-1900 (New York, 1979), 13, 18.

Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects Appendix," Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report (LP-1051), (New York, 1981),

Liisa and Donald Sclare, Beaux-Arts Estates, A Guide to the Architecture of Long Island (New York, 1980), 95-96.

James Ward, Architects in Practice New York City, 1900-1940 (New York, 1989) 4, 10.

Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), (Los Angeles, 1970), 28-29, 77.

ROBERT M. BYERS

5255 Sycamore Avenue

garage

5270 Sycamore Avenue

garage and stable

5261 Independence Avenue

alterations

Robert M. Byers was active in the New York City area in the years prior to World War I. In 1908 he undertook two commissions in the Riverdale Historic District. For Darwin P. Kingsley, he designed a brick automobile garage at 5255 Sycamore Avenue. Thomas A. Buckner, Kingsley's associate at the New York Life Insurance Company, commissioned Byers to design a building for garage, stable, and residential use. This is at 5270 Sycamore Avenue. Two years later Byers was the architect in charge of installing all new mechanical systems into the house at 5261 Independence Avenue, then owned by William M. Harris. In the 1910s Byers was commissioned by George Perkins to carry out work at the Wave Hill Estate.

Regina Kellerman and Ellen DeNooyer, "The History of Wave Hill," unpublished typescript, Nov., 1978.

James Ward, Architects in Practice New York City, 1900-1940 (New York, 1989), 12.

JEROME ROBERT CERNY (1901-)

5260 Sycamore Avenue

freestanding house

Jerome Robert Cerny, educated at the Armour Institute of Technology (now the Illinois Institute of Technology), established his architectural firm in Chicago in 1930. He became known for his residential and institutional designs, many of which were carried out in the Chicago suburbs. Lucille Gale Knapp commissioned Cerny to design the neo-Dutch Colonial house at 5260 Sycamore Avenue. It was constructed in 1963 with G.R.W. Watland as associated architect.

American Architects Directory, (New York, 1962), 111.

CAMERON CLARK (1887-1957)

5251 Independence Avenue alterations

Cameron Clark, educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the American Academy in Rome, was active in residential construction in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, and the Virgin Islands. He also designed model homes for such magazines as Good Housekeeping, House Beautiful, House and Home, and Ladies Home Journal. Clark also received commendations for his work in civic architecture in New York and Connecticut. He was a chairman of the post-war planning council of Fairfield, Connecticut, a director of the Greenfield Hill Improvement Association and the Fairfield County Planning Association, as well as a member of the Manhattan Advisory Planning Board, and served as consulting architect to the Manhattan Borough President between 1943 and 1945.

As part of his residential practice, Clark altered older buildings to add modern amenities and to make them more up-to-date. An example in Manhattan is the brownstone-fronted rowhouse at 130 East 74th Street, which had its stoop removed, a story added, and its front extended in several stages over a period of fifteen years (1920-1935). Within the Riverdale Historic District, Clark undertook a major renovation to the house at 5251 Independence Avenue in 1931 for Lucille B. Gale, rebuilding the roof and rebuilding and enlarging the north wing.

Cameron Clark obit., New York Times, March 24, 1957, p. 86.
Who's Who in America, (Chicago, 1938).

ALTON L. CRAFT (1894-1960)

5209 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house
5245 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house and garage
5288 Sycamore Avenue alterations

Alton L. Craft, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, had a long attachment to Riverdale. He designed the neo-Colonial house, built in 1950-51, at 5209 Sycamore for himself and his wife, Mildred. The neo-Federal style house and garage at 5245 Sycamore Avenue were built in 1950 for Roderic B. Swenson. In 1955 Craft received a commission to enlarge the existing house at 5288 Sycamore Avenue, but his design was superceded by that of Ludwig P. Bono (see).

Alton L. Craft obit., New York Times, December 26, 1960, p. 23.

PAUL K. FISHER

5251 Independence Avenue garage
5261 Independence Avenue alterations and additions

Paul K. Fisher was active in the Riverdale Historic District during the 1950s, carrying out a number of commissions for Lucille Gale Knapp. He designed a garage added to the front of the north wing of the house at 5251 Independence Avenue in 1958, and he remodeled the house at 5261 Independence Avenue in 1956 and added the garage at the front of the south wing of the house.

ROLAND A. GALLIMORE

5243 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house

Roland A. Gallimore designed the neo-Colonial house at 5243 Sycamore Avenue for Reginald Lee Johnson and Dorothy Maloney Johnson, following the subdivision of the Stonehurst estate in 1937. It was built in 1937-38.

THOMAS GREENLEES, JR.

5205 Sycamore Avenue alterations and additions

In 1909 Thomas Greenlees, Jr., a Bronx architect, enlarged an existing building at 5205 Sycamore Avenue for residential use. John Stahl was the mason and William Greenlees was the carpenter for this work. Later alterations have subsequently obscured this design.

JULIUS GREGORY (1875-1955)

5249 Sycamore Avenue alterations and additions
5253 Sycamore Avenue alterations
5294 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house

Julius Gregory, born in Sacramento and educated at the University of California, was a specialist in the design of freestanding houses. He served as an architectural consultant for House and Garden magazine, for which he designed the "Ideal House," and for House Beautiful, developing the "Pacesetter House." He tended to favor traditional styles while using modern techniques and planning concepts. His work within the Riverdale Historic District follows this pattern. The house at 5249 Sycamore Avenue was moved to its present site in 1937 and remodeled by Gregory in the neo-Federal style. The carriage house on the Stonehurst estate, now at 5253 Sycamore Avenue, was converted to residential use by Gregory in 1937. For the development firm of Sycamore Estates, Gregory designed the neo-Georgian

style house at 5294 Sycamore Avenue, built in 1938.

Julius Gregory obit., New York Times, December 6, 1955, p. 38.

HALL & PAUFUE

George Berrian Hall
Reynold E. Paufue

5251 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house

George Berrian Hall and Reynold E. Paufue, both graduates of Columbia University, formed a partnership in 1926. Among the firm's works were apartment building complexes in Westchester County, churches, and public buildings for several towns in Westchester County. Within the Riverdale Historic District, the firm designed the house at 5251 Sycamore Avenue, built in 1953-54 for Walter E. Kelley.

American Architects Directory, (New York, 1962), 277, 538.

S.L. HARNED

5261 Independence Avenue alterations

In 1916 William M. Harris hired S.L. Harned, whose office was then at 848 Herkimer Street, Brooklyn, to design alterations for the house at 5261 Independence Avenue. These included a bay window in the living room at the north side, a porch enclosure at the west side of the second story, and the stuccoing of the exterior walls of the house.

HOOD & MANICE

Theodore Hood (b. 1919)
Hayward F. Manice (b. 1917)

5271 Independence freestanding house

Theodore Hood, born and educated in Romania, also received an architecture degree from Yale University. He began his American architectural career with the firm of Harrison & Abramovitz and worked on the United Nations Headquarters Planning Commission. In 1954-59 he was in partnership with Hayward F. Manice. Manice, also a graduate of Yale, met Hood while in the Harrison & Abramovitz office. Prior to forming his partnership with Hood, he worked for the National Broadcasting Company and the firm of R.B. O'Connor and W.H. Kilham, Jr. He later joined the firm of Rogers & Butler.

Hood & Manice undertook many residential commissions as well as several engineering projects. In the Riverdale Historic District, the firm designed a house for Dr. Robert E. Hall, built in 1955-56.

American Architects Directory (New York, 1962), 323, 459.

CHARLES EVANS HUGHES III (1915-1985)

5270 Sycamore Avenue alterations
5286 Sycamore Avenue alterations

Charles Evans Hughes III, born in New York City, was educated at Brown University and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Between 1946 and 1960 he was associated with the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill where he originated the design of the Manufacturers Trust Company bank (1958) at Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street. He also conducted his own practice in the firm of Hughes Cecil Goodman Architects and developed a specialty in historic preservation work. A resident of Riverdale, although not within the historic district, he undertook alterations work on two carriage houses on Sycamore Avenue within the historic district to convert them for residential use. That at 5286 Sycamore was done in 1949; the work at 5270 Sycamore was done in two phases — 1951 and 1963. The client for both buildings was Carol F. King.

American Architects Directory, (New York, 1962), 332.

Charles Evans Hughes III obit., New York Times, January 10, 1985, p. D23.

EDWARD J. HURLEY

5291 Independence Avenue garage

Edward J. Hurley designed a garage, built in 1968 behind the house at 5291 Independence Avenue.

JOHN G. KLEINBERG

5260 Sycamore Avenue alterations

In 1914 John G. Kleinberg, with an office at 1831 Marmion Avenue in the Bronx, altered an earlier stable structure, now located at 5260 Sycamore Avenue, for use as a garage, removing the upper one-and-a-half stories of the stable building which had burned.

LUCHT & ANDERSON

Harry Lucht

5205 Sycamore Avenue alterations

The firm of Lucht & Anderson of Cliffside Park, New Jersey, remodeled an existing house at 5205 Sycamore Avenue in 1937, adding a brick veneer and porches on the east and west sides. In 1943 Harry Lucht, then in independent practice, made changes at the attic story and reconfigured the roof.

WILLIAM SCHOEN

5297 Independence Avenue freestanding house

William Schoen, a Bronx architect, designed the house at 5297 Independence Avenue for Leonard J. Hankin. It was built in 1960.

CLARENCE L. SEFERT

5220 Sycamore Avenue stable and carriage house

Clarence L. Sefert had an active practice in New York City at least until 1936. In the Riverdale Historic District, he designed a large building to serve as a stable, coach house, and dwelling, for Mary McGill. Colonial Revival in style, it was built in 1903 and is one of the handsomest buildings of its kind surviving in the historic district.

James Ward, Architects in Practice New York City, 1900-1940 (New York, 1989), 69.

SARFIELD J. SHERIDAN

5288 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house

The development firm of Sycamore Estates commissioned a one-story house from Sarsfield J. Sheridan at 5288 Sycamore Avenue, built in 1937. The house was subsequently enlarged by Alton L. Craft (see) and Ludwig P. Bono (see).

HAROLD SUSSMAN, HORACE GINSBERN & ASSOCIATES

5225 Independence Avenue freestanding house

This architectural firm was responsible for the freestanding house, erected in 1980 for Herbert L. Abrons, at 5225 Independence Avenue. This is the most recent building constructed within the boundaries of the Riverdale Historic District.

ISAAC VAN STEENBURGH

5247 Independence Avenue additions and alterations

Isaac Van Steenburgh modified the 1853 house at 5247 Independence Avenue for Mary McGill in 1886, adding a two-story, wood-frame polygonal structure at the north side, making changes in the roofline and chimneys, and building out the front wall of the house.

BURNETT V. VICKERS

5275 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house

Burnett V. Vickers was commissioned in 1955 to design a house at 5275 Sycamore for Willim J. McMahon. The client died while the house was under construction and Vickers's design was completed by Albert Wheeler (see).

THOMAS S. WALL (1812-1877)

5247 Independence Avenue villa (freestanding house)
5261 Independence Avenue (attributed) villa (freestanding house)

Thomas S. Wall was born in Ireland and came to New York in 1849. He was first listed in city directories as an architect in 1852-53, and until 1861-62 practiced at various addresses on Nassau Street and Broadway while living in Manhattan. In about 1862 he moved his residence to Morrisania, then a part of Westchester County that would later become part of the Bronx, and his office to 21 Nassau Street. Wall's son Edward, also an architect, was listed at this address from 1869 to 1872, bridging the years of his father's apparent retirement. Wall's last year to be listed as an architect was 1870-71 when he was on South Boulevard in Morrisania.

Wall obtained important commissions from socially prominent clients only three years after his arrival in the United States at the age of 37, by which time he must have already practiced in Ireland and therefore brought him the experience of that country. He maintained a relationship with at

least one of these clients throughout most of his career. He had a characteristically varied practice -- although he designed a large number of villas -- and he was an adept designer of contemporary styles.

Wall's work was illustrated with photographs and floor plans of several of his houses in A.A. Turner's Villas on the Hudson of 1860. Two of these were in Riverdale, the residence of Samuel D. Babcock known as "Hillside," still standing (but altered) on a block north of the district, and "H.L. Atherton's Villa" at 5247 Independence Avenue within the district. "H.F. Spaulding's Villa," known as "Parkside" and now part of the Riverdale Country School, was built south of Wave Hill in Park-Riverdale. Two others were outside of Riverdale, the residence of Bartlett Smith in Washington Heights and "F.A. Thompson's Villa" in Tubby Hook. Conventional in plan and stylishly picturesque in appearance, employing the Italianate or Gothic Revival style, with slightly projecting bays and wings, lively roof profiles, bracketed eaves or bargeboards, and wide porches, these were characteristic of suburban villa architecture of the time. In addition to Atherton's villa, the villa on the Samuel D. Babcock Estate, now at 5261 Independence Avenue, is attributed to Wall, by virtue of his longstanding association with Babcock. It is also probable that Wall designed the other early villas in Riverdale, given their general form and character, and the speed with which they were erected, following the beginnings of the Riverdale development. A villa known as Belvoir in Yonkers, of 1854, has also been attributed to Wall.

The Manhattan docket books listing New Building applications reveal that in 1866 Wall designed a three-story brick dwelling near 125th Street and Second Avenue, and two brick buildings with iron columns near West Broadway and Leonard Street (all demolished), the latter for his client Samuel D. Babcock. These were the last buildings that were designed by Wall, but in 1868 his son Edward designed two dwellings and five warehouses, one of them also for Babcock.

Dennis Steadman Francis, Architects in Practice New York City, 1840-1900 (New York, 1979), 79.

A.A. Turner, Villas on the Hudson (New York, 1860).

John Zukowsky and Robbe Pierce Stimson, Hudson River Villas (New York, 1985), 33, 45.

G.R.W. WATLAND

5260 Sycamore Avenue

freestanding house

G.R.W. Watland of New York was the architect associated with Jerome Robert Cerny of Chicago in the design of the neo-Dutch Colonial house for Lucille Gale Knapp, built in 1963 at 5260 Sycamore Avenue.

ALBERT E. WHEELER

5255 Sycamore Avenue alterations
5275 Sycamore Avenue freestanding house

Albert E. Wheeler was the son of Albert E. Wheeler, a building contractor who was active in the development of Fieldston during the 1910s. Albert E. Wheeler, the son, was noted in building records in 1956 as a civil engineer whose office was at 4455 Tibbett Avenue, and in 1957 under the firm of Albert E. Wheeler & Assocs., Land Surveyors and City Surveyors, located at 6031 Broadway. He redesigned the partially-completed house at 5275 Sycamore Avenue in a neo-Colonial style for Edward and Gabrielle de Vegvar. The work was completed in 1957. In 1958, for the same client, Wheeler altered the garage at 5255 Sycamore Avenue which had been designed by Robert Byers (see).

William A. Tieck, Schools and School Days in Riverdale, Kingsbridge, Spuyten Duvvil, New York City (Old Tappan, N.J., 1971), p. 97.

FREDERICK CLARKE WITHERS (1828-1901)

5291 Independence Avenue alterations and additions
5286 Sycamore Avenue stable and carriage house

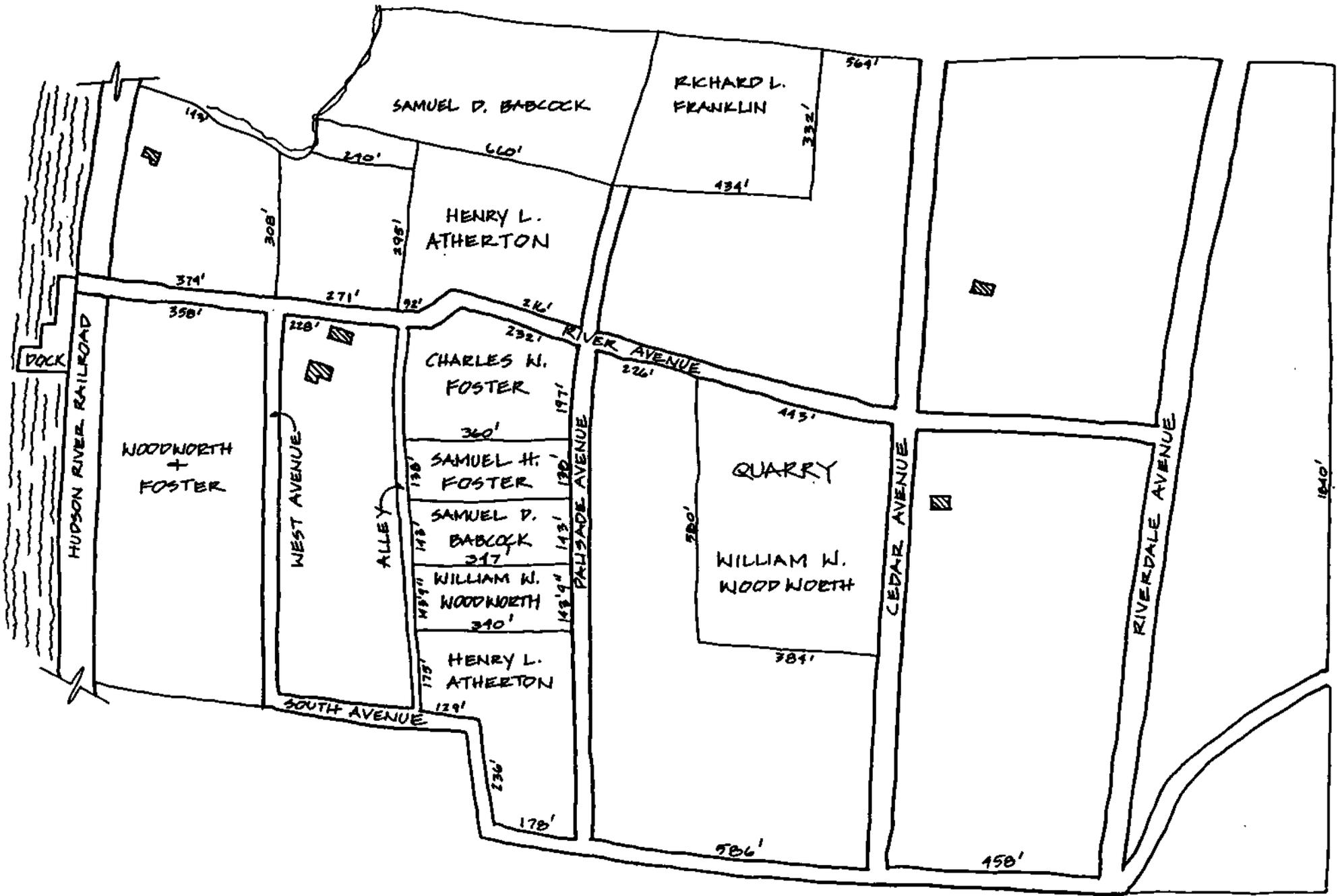
Frederick Clarke Withers, born in England, immigrated to the United States in 1852 at the invitation of Andrew Jackson Downing. Following Downing's death he formed a partnership with Calvert Vaux with an office in Newburgh, New York, which lasted until 1856. Much of their work was published in Vaux's Villas and Cottages (1857). Withers then maintained an independent practice, attracting clients who desired large country houses and designing churches. He was associated again with Vaux as well as Frederick Law Olmsted in the firm of Olmsted, Vaux & Co. between 1866 and 1871. He branched out into institutional work during the 1860s and '70s, most notably exemplified by the Jefferson Market Courthouse (1874-78) on Sixth Avenue in New York. While Withers is known as a Victorian Gothic architect, his later work shifted into the Queen Anne style. His work in Riverdale shows this tendency. For William S. Duke in 1886, Withers remodeled the house at 5291 Independence Avenue in the Queen Anne style, adding a story, creating a picturesque roof, and adding porches. Withers also designed the carriage house and stable, now located at 5286 Sycamore Avenue, with stylistic characteristics that related it to the remodeled house. This building bears a strong resemblance to the stable and carriage house Withers designed for the James Roosevelt Estate in Hyde Park, New York, also built in 1886.

Dennis Steadman Francis, Architects in Practice New York City, 1840-1900 (New York, 1979), 83.

Robert Kornfeld, Letter to the LPC, Sept. 10, 1990.

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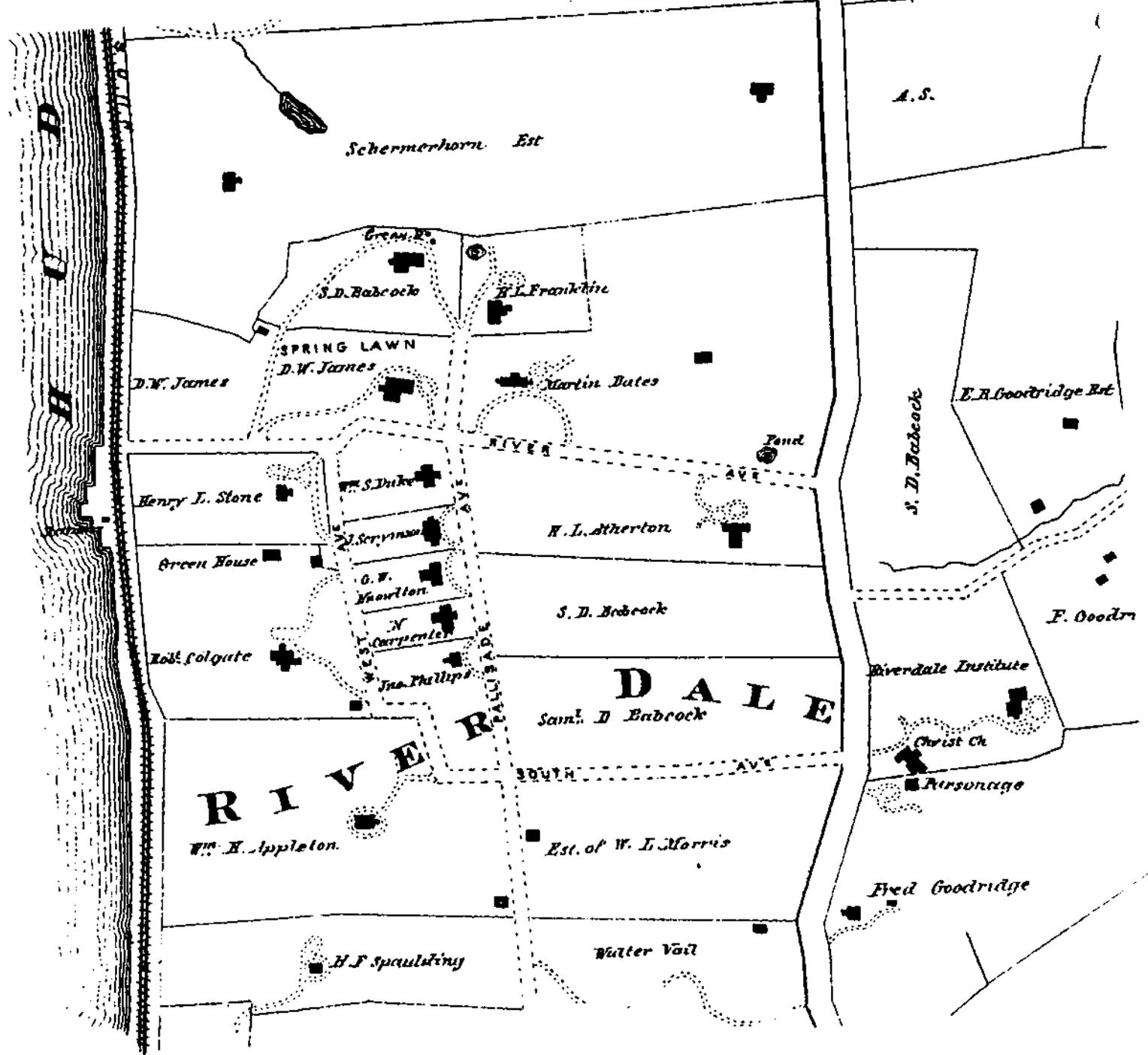


MAP OF RIVERDALE IN THE TOWN OF YONKERS

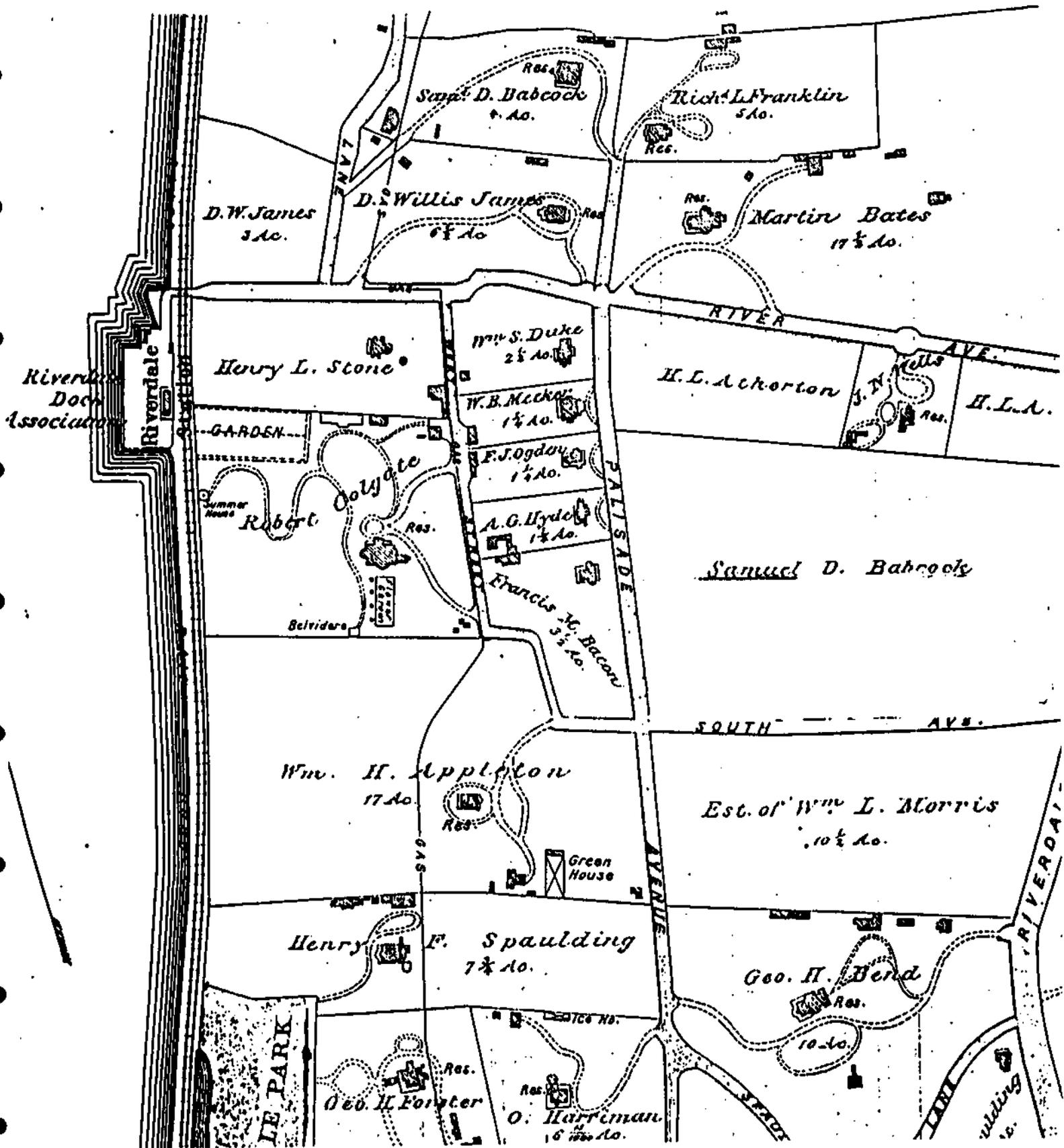

 (NOTE: MAP NOT TO SCALE)

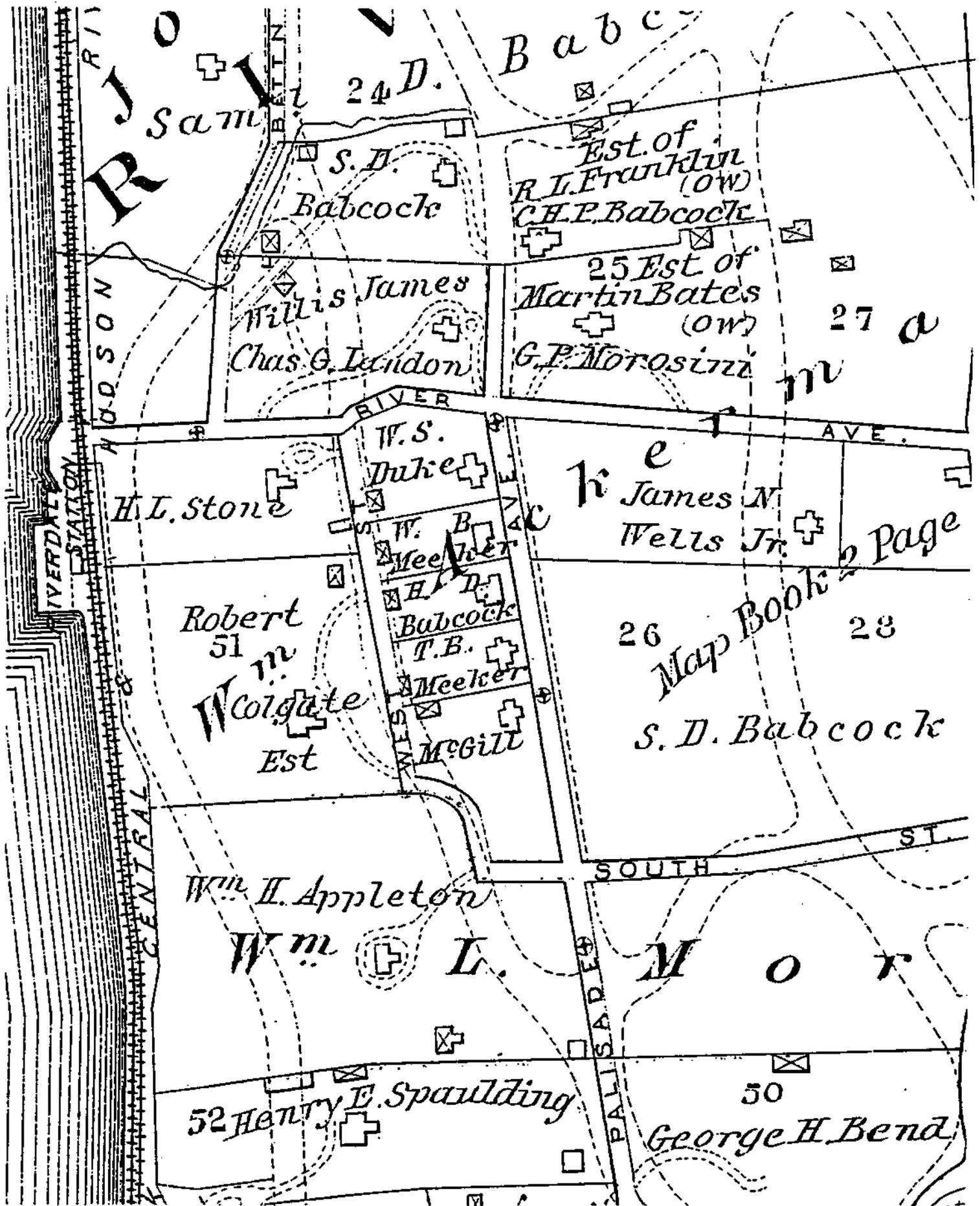
(ORIGINAL MAP FILED 12-29-1853)

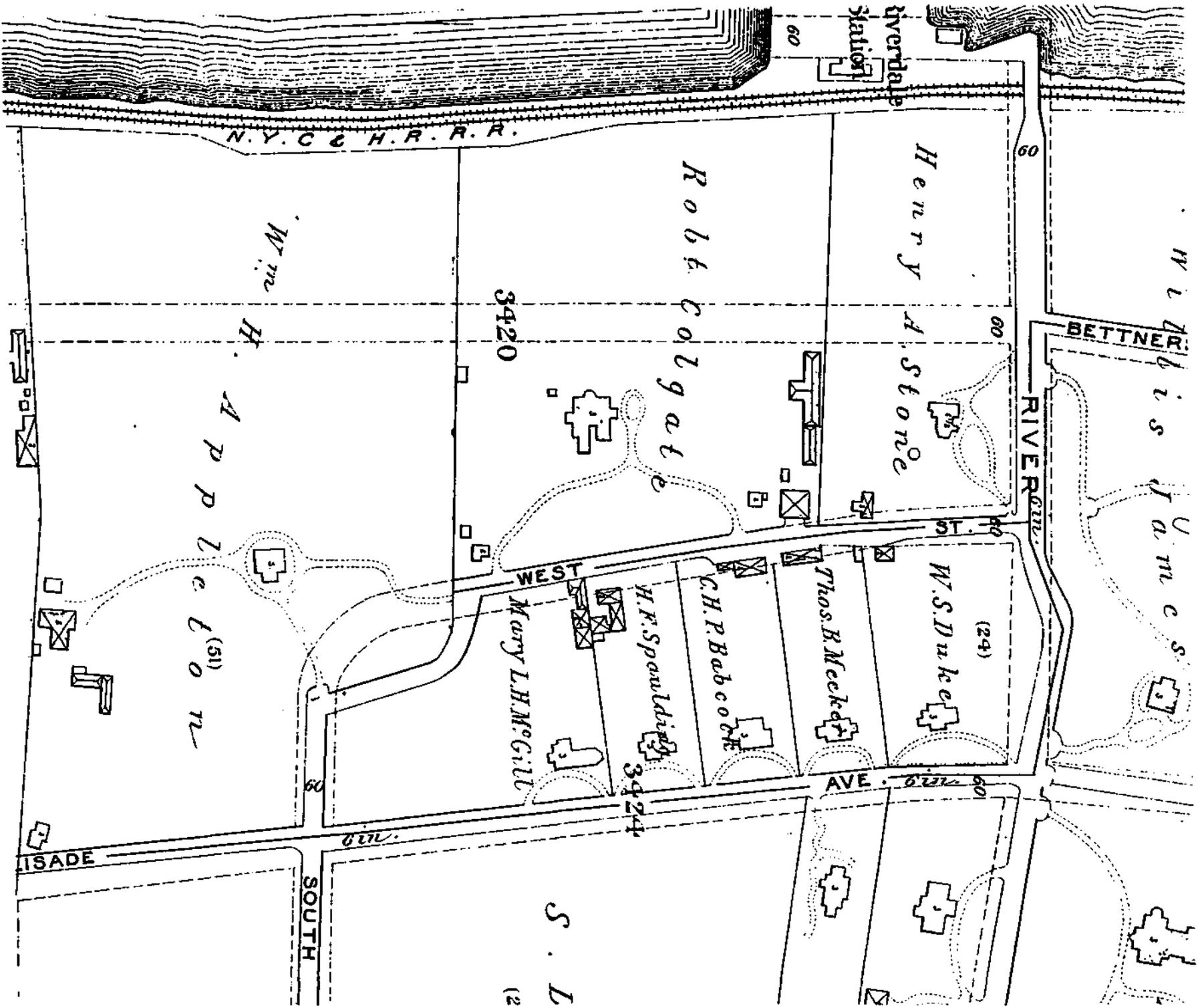
DESIGNATED 16 OCT. 1990



Beers, Atlas, 1868







FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this area, the Riverdale Historic District contains buildings and other improvements which have a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value and which represent one or more eras in the history of New York City and which cause this area, by reason of these factors, to constitute a distinct section of the city.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Riverdale Historic District encompasses about fifteen acres of steeply sloping land overlooking the Hudson River with views to the Palisades in New Jersey and contains thirty-four buildings of several types; that these buildings are situated on landscaped lots, once comprising larger estate properties, that are linked and defined by landscaping and original estate features including stone border and retaining walls, terraces, steps, paths, and driveways, cobbled street gutters, individual specimen trees, and rows of trees and hedges; that the historic district, the nucleus of a 100-acre parcel purchased in 1852 from William Ackerman for a suburban development which was given the name "Riverdale," includes the first portion to be immediately developed, and is also the most visually cohesive part of the original Riverdale development which survives; that Riverdale is the earliest known railroad suburb in New York City and has most of the features commonly associated with the American romantic suburb of the mid-nineteenth century including genesis by a group of businessmen, an appropriate name associated with natural features, picturesque site, landscaping, and architecture, connection to the city by accessible transportation, and a layout adapted to the topography, in this case incorporating an existing road (Ackerman's farm road); that the area of the Riverdale Historic District corresponds to seven original estates linked by a carriage alley (now Sycamore Avenue) and one parcel later subdivided from the adjacent Wave Hill Estate with the core of five lots (corresponding to the present-day block bounded by West 254th Street on the north, West 252nd Street on the south, Independence Avenue on the east, and Sycamore Avenue on the west) comprising the first portion of Riverdale to be developed; that each of these lots received a freestanding villa (at least one of which was designed by Thomas S. Wall) facing Independence Avenue, which was completed by the end of 1853, as well as stables and carriage houses; that the two larger estates (the Cromwell Estate [later Stonehurst] and the Stone Estate) between the carriage alley (Sycamore Avenue) and the Hudson River were developed by the end of the 1850s; that the configuration of these seven parcels of property remained intact until 1935, even though the villas were altered to accommodate new architectural tastes and changing family needs, such as the shift to year-round living; that among the architects responsible for these changes was Frederick Clarke Withers, who thoroughly remodeled the house at 5291 Independence Avenue in 1886; that the picturesque, physical interrelationship among the outbuildings and continuous stone walls and wrought-iron fence along the carriage alley, as well as the interrelationship of these buildings to the houses either up or down the sloping sites, is unique in New York City; that in some cases, these outbuildings were designed to relate stylistically to the villas, such

as the carriage house on the Cromwell (Stonehurst) Estate (5253 Sycamore Avenue) and that designed by Frederick Clarke Withers at 5286 Sycamore Avenue in conjunction with his work on the house at 5291 Independence Avenue; that in other cases, these buildings have a more vernacular character, but still incorporate picturesque features and relate to the landscape; that, with one exception, the twentieth-century houses within the district followed the subdivision of the seven original parcels, beginning in 1935 with the Cromwell [Stonehurst] Estate and the Charles W. Foster Estate; that most of these houses are designed in traditional architectural styles, such as the neo-Colonial and neo-Federal, use natural materials, and are sited in such a way that they relate to the overall landscape and topography of the seven original estates; that many of them are also oriented to the north and south private roads leading from Sycamore Avenue which were created from the approximate position of the Cromwell (Stonehurst) carriage drive; that carriage houses and stables -- no longer necessary for horses and carriages -- were subsequently converted for residential use; that today the Riverdale Historic District is characterized by several building types -- villas of the 1850s with later alterations, stables and carriage houses of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (later converted for residential use), and houses mostly from the second and third quarters of the twentieth century -- which reflect the changing nature of suburbanization from the mid-nineteenth to present; that equally characteristic of the district are landscaping and estate features, including stone border and retaining walls, terraces, steps, paths, and driveways, cobbled street gutters, and rows of trees and hedges, which survive throughout the district; and that the historical significance of the Riverdale Historic District also comes in part because of its prominent residents over several generations, many of them related by the close ties of business and family, who have sought to preserve its character as a distinct suburban development.

Accordingly, pursuant to Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21) 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 an Historic District the Riverdale Historic District containing the property bounded by a line beginning at the intersection of the western edge of the paved roadbed of Independence Avenue and the southern edge of the paved roadbed of West 254th Street, extending westerly along the the southern edge of the paved roadbed of West 254th Street, southerly along the western property line of Tax Map Block 5937, Lot 494 ([5265] Sycamore Avenue), southerly along part of the western property line of Tax Map Block 5937, Lot 494 ([5265] Sycamore Avenue), westerly along the northern property line of 5255 Sycamore Avenue, southerly along the western property lines of 5255 through 5215 Sycamore Avenue, easterly along the southern property lines of 5215 and 5205 Sycamore Avenue, easterly along a line extending easterly from the southern property line of 5205 Sycamore Avenue to the intersection of the western property line of 5200 Sycamore Avenue, southerly and easterly along the western property line of 5200 Sycamore Avenue, easterly across the roadbed of West 252nd Street and easterly along the northern edge of the paved roadbed of West 252nd Street, and northerly along the western edge of the paved roadbed of Independence Avenue, to the point of beginning.

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