#### United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, Flow to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property				
historic name UNDERHILL-ACKER HOUSE				
other names/site number				
name of related multiple property listing N/A				
Location 1777				
The second secon		Const. Direction		
street & number 4 HAMILTON AVENUE		not for publication		
city or town CROTON-ON-HUDSON		vicinity		
state NEW YORK code NY cou	nty WESTCHESTER code 119	zip code 10520		
3. State/Federal Agency Certification		A		
Signature of certifying official/Title  State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	APO 6/5/2017			
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the Nation	al Register criteria.			
Signature of commenting official	Date			
Title S	State or Pederal agency/bureau or Tribal Government			
4. National Park Service Certification				
I hereby certify that this property is:				
cntered in the National Register	determined eligible for the National Regis	ter		
determined not cligible for the National Register	removed from the National Register			
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## UNDERHILL-ACKER HOUSE

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5. Classification				
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)  Category of Property (Check only one box.)		Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
X private	X building(s)	1	0	– buildings
public - Local	district	0	0	sites
public - State	site	0	0	structures
public - Federal	structure	0	0	objects
	object	1	0	Total
Name of related multiple pro Enter "N/A" if property is not part of	perty listing 'a multiple property listing)	Number of contr in the National R	buting resources prevegister	viously listed
N/A			N/A	
6. Function or Use				
Historic Functions		Current Function		
(Enter categories from instructions.)		(Enter categories from	instructions.)	
DOMESTIC: single dwelling		DOMESTIC: singl	e dwelling	
HEALTH CARE: clinic (doctor	r's office)			
7. Description				
7. Description Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)		Materials (Enter categories from	instructions.)	
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)		(Enter categories from	instructions.) UCK	
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)		(Enter categories from	,	
Architectural Classification		(Enter categories from foundation: BI walls: WOOD	,	

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#### Narrative Description

#### Summary Paragraph

Built in the early 1870s and augmented ca. 1886-1905, the Underhill-Acker House remains an outstanding representation of nineteenth-century domestic architecture rendered in a distinctive Italianate idiom. This two and one-half story wood-frame, clapboarded dwelling, located in the Village of Croton-on-Hudson, Westchester County, New York, was built on a T-shaped plan above a brick foundation and was oriented to command a broad prospect of Croton Point and the Hudson River from its west elevation. The house exhibits physical attributes of the Italianate style as promoted in the mid-nineteenth century Picturesque period by A.J. Downing, among others. These are manifested in its asymmetrical floorplan, cross-gabled roof, terra-cotta chimney pots, projecting bay window, and other decorative devices such as a prominent bracketed cornice and moulded segmental window surrounds. Around 1905 the nominated house's original front porch was replaced with a larger wraparound verandah of Neoclassical inspiration; accommodation had previously been made for the installation of a discreet one-story addition on the north elevation. The latter feature was by all indications erected in association with a contemporary medical practice, it being serviced by its own entry and thus allowing for the separation of domestic and professional spaces within. The building retains the bulk of its original ca. 1873 interior features, including an intact floor plan, struck plaster cornices, marble and marbleized slate mantelpieces, grain-painted paneled wood doors, and hardware, in addition to a largely intact, accessible, at-grade basement kitchen and dumbwaiter system. The nominated building retains exceptional physical integrity to the cited period of significance (ca. 1873-1914) and remains an outstanding representation of the Italianate style with subsequent historic-era modifications. It is a distinctive and highly intact representation of its type and style with relatively minor changes post-dating the historic period.

## Narrative Description

#### Location & Setting

The Underhill-Acker House is located in the municipality of Croton-on-Hudson, an incorporated village that falls within the Town of Cortlandt, Westchester County, New York. This village is situated on the east bank of the Hudson River, across the river from Haverstraw, Rockland County, and 30 miles north of Manhattan, which can be reached from the village by means of the Metro-North Railroad. The nominated house is located at the intersection of Hamilton Avenue and Grand Street—the street address is 4 Hamilton Avenue—in an older residential section of the village characterized by tree-lined streets with freestanding houses with uniform setbacks. The houses that are located near the nominated dwelling are also clapboard or shingle-clad wood-frame buildings and are of roughly contemporaneous construction. These include the dwelling at 6 Hamilton Avenue, a modest cottage of Gothic Revival characteristics, and 41 Grand Street, a commodious frame dwelling, also built in the Italianate taste, which has a prominent bracketed cornice.

The nominated house is separated from Hamilton Avenue and the adjacent cement sidewalk by an expanse of manicured lawn. Large deciduous trees are present on the front lawn, situated in close proximity to the course of the sidewalk and not close to the house. Access to the main entrance, via the front verandah on the east facade, is by means of a bluestone slab walkway; a cut-stone carriage step, once located adjacent to the street, is positioned on the lawn, near the paved driveway that aligns the property's northern boundary. Decorative plantings and shrubs line the house's perimeter, particularly along its eastern and western elevations, and ornamental bushes similarly serve to define the boundary between the nominated property and those properties to the immediate north and south. Behind the house's west, river-front, elevation, the grade drops off in the direction of the Hudson River and this area now presents as a largely open expanse of gently rolling manicured lawn checkered with a few scattered mature trees. In the middle distance of the view shed is the course of the Hudson River, with Croton Point figuring prominently in the southern view shed, beyond which rises the profile of Hook Mountain, which is on the opposite side of the river and immediately north of the Nyacks in Rockland County.

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#### Exterior

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The house's plan is predicated on T-shaped massing and consists of two principal intersecting gable-roofed blocks; the north block was oriented with its roof ridge on a roughly east-to-west axis, while the south block, the "stem" of the T, was oriented with its ridge on a roughly north-to-south axis. For purposes of clarity, the northeast elevation (fronting on Hamilton Avenue) will be described as the east elevation, the northwest elevation as the north elevation, the southwest elevation (river side) as the west elevation, and the southeast elevation as the south elevation. The principal entrance to the house from Hamilton Avenue is on the east elevation, where the two blocks forming the T-plan intersect; the doorway and corresponding hall within corresponds with the south block and is shielded beneath the broad verandah. In addition to this original construct, a discreet one-story frame addition adjoins the north elevation; it was added ca. 1886, presumably to serve the needs of a doctor's office, and it now functions internally as a kitchen, allowing this aspect of the house to be contained at first-floor level outside of the core of the ca. 1873 house (the original kitchen from this period was situated in the basement). The house has a wood clapboard exterior trimmed with narrow corner boards, moulded wood window and door surrounds, and a bracketed cornice; the roof of the two main blocks is fitted with asphalt shingle (the main verandah roof is metal, as is that of the bay window on the south elevation and also the projecting basement entrance on the rear elevation). The large verandah and smaller front porch on the east facade were constructed between 1903 and 1907 as per Sanborn mapping and a photograph dating to 1907.

The east facade, the house's principal elevation, is composed of the gable end of the north block and the east side elevation of the south block. The north block has two segmental-arched windows at first and second-story level, in addition to a double window with round-arched heads centered above and just below the gable's apex—this feature is repeated on the remaining two gables. These windows, like all of the house's windows, have louvered wood shutters; all but 10 are original—the rest were salvaged and reused from an adjacent house. The northeast wall of the south block also has two windows at second-story level, in addition to a large double-window and entrance corresponding with the first floor. The entrance consists of double-leaf wood doors with glazed rectangular panels above recessed square wood panels within which are centered a simplified geometric motif. The doors are set within a heavy moulded wood enframement and surmounted by a segmental-arched fanlight fitted with clear glass. The windows at second-story level of the north block and the first story of the south block have rectangular frames that do not correspond with their arched heads, but they are nevertheless hung with two-over-two wood sash—the sash type used for most all of the original principal windows—with three-track storms. Both blocks are terminated at cornice level by deeply projecting eaves which are embellished with sawn brackets spaced widely on a plain fascia; cornices are boxed and moulded. At the gable apex of the north block is a sawn drop pendant which once had a corresponding wood finial, the latter no longer extant; all of the gables once employed this feature. Aligning the full width of the south block and terminating at the south wall of the north block is a verandah of Neoclassical inspiration that incorporates in its design a pedimented motif corresponding with the entrance step and a shallow domed feature which represents the verandah's southeastern terminus. The verandah is enclosed by sections of turned balustrade that are aligned between paneled plinths, above which are unfluted Tuscan order columns that sustain a moulded frieze and cornice. There is additionally a porch that corresponds with the one-story addition, and it is identical in its physical characteristics to the main verandah.

The south elevation consists of the gable end of the south block and the corresponding sections of wall of the north block that extend to the east and west beyond the south block's footprint. At first-floor level, centered outside of what is the house's south parlor, there is a five-sided projecting bay window that accommodates three segmental-arched window openings, below which are paneled aprons; the two narrower and windowless facets of the bay, where it engages the wall, are paneled. This bay has a corresponding moulded wood cornice accented by ornamental brackets and a tin-plated steel roof. Its brick foundation rises upwards from a light-well which functions to bring natural light into the finished basement by means of three small square-shaped

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casement windows. There are two windows with arched heads at second floor level (these being fitted with 3-track storms) and, as on the east façade, a double window with round-arched heads at attic level. The short expanse of wall corresponding with the north block's south wall has one window at first and second-story level, while that on the opposite side of the south block, underneath the back porch, lacks fenestration.

The rear, or west, elevation of the house and corresponding backyard area overlook the Hudson River and surrounding landscape in Westchester and Rockland counties. The rear elevation largely mirrors the opposite façade with the exception of a few details. The exposed brick foundation is more pronounced on this elevation, given the grade differential; projecting forward from it, and corresponding with the gabled end of the north block, is a small enclosed projecting entrance feature which is flanked to either side by windows fitted with six-over-six sash; the latter bring natural light directly into the basement kitchen. This one-story feature has a double-arched window at its center and a paneled door on its south side and it is finished with a simple moulded wood cornice. A flight of bluestone stairs provides communication between the backyard and the back porch, and from there the rear door provides access to the principal floor. The moulded wood cornice and brackets of the porch are original; however, its posts and railing were replaced in the 1960s. The one-story north addition is punctuated by a single window; it has a moulded segmental-arched window surround, two-over-two sash, and, above it, a projecting moulded cornice.

On the north elevation, at second-floor level, there are two asymmetrically placed windows. The roofline is punctuated by a gabled dormer which accommodates paired round-arched windows and which has a corresponding moulded cornice and small decorative brackets. A brick chimney with terra-cotta chimney pots rises from this pitch of the gabled roof (a second chimney of this type rises from the ridge of the south block, while a third is present on the ridge of the north block). The first-story is abutted by the addition, which is fronted by a classically inspired porch matching the characteristics of the main verandah.

As noted, the major post-ca.1873 additions made during the Acker ownership period (1886 to 1914) are the front verandah, the smaller front porch, and the one-story addition that accommodated Acker's medical practice. The second porch leads to the door into the addition, which abuts most of the first story of the north elevation. It was apparently added by Acker in order to function as an office and waiting area for patients. The corresponding porch has a window to the side (on the north wall of the north block) and the addition is accessed through a glazed and paneled door, the glazed portion being a Queen Anne window with square and rectangular-shaped colored glass lights. On the north elevation, the brick foundation of the addition is apparent due to the change in grade moving east to west; it is punctuated by a small opening with a wood door, this feature having once functioned as a coal-chute.

#### Interior

The interior of the house has been exceptionally well maintained and exhibits outstanding physical integrity of plan and finishes to the ca. 1873-1914 period. The first floor contains the stair hall, parlor, living room, dining room, and current kitchen. Of these, the kitchen is located in the one-story addition and thus outside of the ca. 1873 footprint. Entering via the front door, the east to west hallway functions as the principal circulation axis of the house. It provides communication with the back door and rear porch; with the staircase, which is positioned directly off of the hall on the north side; to the parlor, on the south side of the plan; and to the dining room and the living room on the north side of the plan. The open-stringer staircase is framed by a plaster elliptical arch which springs from two enriched ancons. The staircase balusters exhibit characteristic turned profiles for this period and the newel post is also of a typical type—having an octagonal base and main section— as is the handrail. In the hallway is a lighting fixture which is suspended from an elaborate rectangular plaster ceiling medallion adorned with roses, violets and lilies. The doors in the house are all paneled and generally of the four-paneled type with white porcelain knobs and tulip-form escutcheon plates. On the first floor, struck plaster cornices are present in the hall and all of the rooms, the moulding profile

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being repeated throughout the house. The mouldings of the ancons framing the elliptical arches around the house (among them the parlor bay window) are adorned with acanthus leaf and scroll and petal enrichment; however, the ancons in the first floor hall, framing the stairs, exhibit different styling. Wood baseboards were employed throughout the interior and windows and doors are trimmed with heavy architraves with characteristic rounded mouldings. Flooring is in many areas covered with wall-to-wall carpeting, though there are exceptions, such as the parquet border in the dining room, and the striped hardwood flooring in the doctor's wing.

South of the hall is the parlor, which can be entered by means of two separate doorways which open on either side of a projecting chimney breast which is centered against this room's north wall. The fireplace has a roundarched opening with metal insert and is fitted with a white marble Italianate-style mantel which has a keystone motif, paneled spandrel panels, and a curved front mantel shelf. The corners of the chimney breast are chamfered, with a rounded molding set within the chamfer. This corner chamfering occurs at several instances in the house, smoothing out right-angled corners. Opposite the fireplace, on the south wall, is a bay window which is framed by an elliptical plaster arch which springs from enriched plaster ancons. The windows have louvered interior shutters; while period appropriate, these are not original to the house. Below the windows are paneled wood aprons which are contained within the moulded wood architraves that surround the windows and extend downwards to the floor. As for the doors, they are of a four-paneled type with mortise locks which have white porcelain knobs and tulip-form escutcheons. The doors are faux grained to present as mahogany and they represent the standard door type found throughout most of the house.

North of the hall, across from the dual entrances to the parlor, is the living room. This room has a fireplace situated against its west wall; the mantel differs from that in the south parlor as it exhibits more of an Eastlake or Neo-Grec influence, with incised detail finished in gold leaf, and it appears to have been fashioned from ebonized slate. There is also a large wood cabinet against the west wall that may well date to the original ownership period. To the west of this room is the dining room, which contains a chandelier suspended from a plaster ceiling medallion, circular in shape, and decorated with peaches, apples, strawberries and raspberries connected by a garland motif. The wood chair rail, dark wood baseboards and patterned parquet flooring are original. The parquet was laid around the perimeter of the room with carpeting occupying the center section; a groove in the floor prevents the latter from slipping. A fireplace with slate mantel which is similar to that in the living room is located against the north wall of this room; windows along the west wall provide for views towards the Hudson River.

The mantelpiece in the dining room, like that in the living room, also appears to have been fashioned from slate in imitation of dark marble. They have similar details, among them squared openings with rounded edges and pilasters flanking the firebox opening. The friezes are adorned with incised carving, consisting of a circle at the center, all highlighted in gold leaf. Only the decorative designs inside these carvings differ from one room to another. The living room fireplace has a ceramic tile hearth extension that appears to represent a turn-of-the-century installation.

Between the dining room and the living room is a short passage which contains an original marble sink, a dumbwaiter, and storage spaces; immediately north of this passage, and accessed from it, is a half bathroom. On the north side of the house, in the one-story addition, is the current kitchen, which communicates directly with the dining room, and which also can be accessed from the living room.

The second floor of the house has a similar plan to the first floor, the partitioning in large measure matching the position of the walls below. The stair landing is flanked by three bedrooms located in the same configuration as the three principal rooms downstairs. Although these rooms lack the struck plaster cornice work present on the principal floor, they are nevertheless well finished and exhibit many of the decorative

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features employed in the main public rooms, such as moulded wood trim, one marble mantelpiece, and gilt picture mouldings (which are also found in the first and second floor hallways). The master bedroom, located on the south side of the plan above the south parlor, has a fireplace with an Italianate-style mantelpiece similar to the one in the parlor on the first floor; it is centered against the north wall and corresponds with a projecting chimney breast. Although their openings both have a rounded arch, these two mantels nevertheless employ different decorative elements and they were crafted from different marbles; that in the parlor mantelpiece was fashioned from a clear white marble while that on the second floor has gray veins. The hearth extension is laid with three rows of ceramic tile which are embellished with floral and animal decoration. This room has a circular ceiling medallion from which a chandelier is suspended; it is embellished with three-dimensional lilies and leaves. There are two closets located against the west wall in this room, these being divided by a small niche with window that is set behind a decorative plaster arch. The other two bedrooms are finished in similar terms, though simpler and without dedicated fireplaces.

The half-story historically accommodated the needs of the house's domestic staff. It has an ample ceiling height and is provided with natural lighting by means of the three paired windows which occupy their respective gables as well as the dormer which punctuates the north pitch of the north block's roof. The areas that fall without each of the finished rooms are used as storage space, accessed by means of small doors, given that the ceiling is too low for mobility in certain places. The original lead-lined water cistern, which functioned in relation to a gravity-fed water system, remains in situ in one of these storage spaces. Door hardware on this level consists of iron rimlocks and brown "mineral" knobs.

The house's basement contains the original kitchen, complete with a pantry and a dumbwaiter, the latter feature which communicates with the passageway adjacent to the living room. Against the north wall of the kitchen, which is the northwestern room on this level—below the dining room—is a plastered brick chimney breast which accommodated the house's cooking stove. It is presently fitted with an 1899 stove cast by Richardson & Boynton. Also located in the kitchen, on the opposite wall, is the pump which conveyed water from a cistern originally located in the wall behind it to the attic cistern. The basement also contains an area used by the current owner as a repair shop, the pantry with an original wooden hung-shelf, and storage areas; one of these likely functioned at one time as a laundry room. The windows glass in the kitchen contains engraved names and dates, perhaps done by the domestic helpers of the house. The original lead water and drain pipes can be traced from marks running along wood battens on the sides of walls and on the ceiling. Many cast lead pipe fasteners remain extant.

While the house's wood frame is largely obscured from view, the floor framing for the first floor is nevertheless visible in the basement and consists of sawn hemlock joists with cross bridging. Also visible is the counter ceiling system that provided soundproofing between the basement service areas and the first floor, among other advantages; it is in essence a second dropped ceiling beneath the level of the floorboards, fitted with boards held in place by nailing strips, the void between being filled with what would appear to be stone aggregate and lime mortar. This same system was also employed between the first and second floors.

#### Conclusion

Notwithstanding those upgrades rendered ca. 1886-1905, the Underhill-Acker House remains an outstanding and highly intact example of Italianate-style domestic architecture with the bulk of its spatial and finish features

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Other differences between the two mantels include the difference between the carvings on their spandrels: on the first floor mantelpiece in the parlor the arch is flanked by shapes with sharp corners, while on the mantel in the second floor master bedroom these shapes are filleted with a circular shape. The keystone of the parlor mantel is an elaborate S-shaped scroll, while the one on the second floor resembles an escutcheon; also, the mantelshelf on the first floor has a wavy ogee profile, while that on the second floor is straight and square.

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intact. It retains a high degree of historic-period physical integrity with only minor changes, among them discreet back porch columns added by the previous owners in the 1960s.

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8. State	ement of Significance	
Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)		Areas of Significance
		(Enter categories from instructions.)
A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	ARCHITECTURE HEALTH/MEDICINE
ХВ	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	
X C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the	
	work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant	Period of Significance
	and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.	ca. 1873-1914
D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.	Significant Dates
		ca. 1873; ca. 1899-1901
	a Considerations " in all the boxes that apply.)	
Property is:		Significant Person
		(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
A	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.	ACKER, THOMAS JEFFERSON
В	removed from its original location.	Cultural Affiliation
C	a birthplace or grave.	N/A
D	a cemetery.	
Е	a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	Architect/Builder
F	a commemorative property.	unknown
G	less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.	

## Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance, ca. 1873 to 1914, is initiated with the house's construction for the Sands family and terminates at 1914, the year in which Dr. Thomas J. Acker, for whom significance is claimed, died. All those physical features contained within this time frame are deemed significant in the context of the nomination.

## Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

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#### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Underhill-Acker House, located on Hamilton Avenue in the Village of Croton-on-Hudson, Westchester County, New York, is a historically and architecturally significant resource. The house, originally built ca. 1873, served as the home and medical office of Dr. Thomas Jefferson Acker (1837-1914), a highly respected member of the medical community and prominent local citizen, between 1886 and 1914. The Underhill-Acker House is the resource most closely associated with Dr. Acker during the period in which he made his most significant contributions to medicine. As presently constituted the dwelling largely reflects the original early 1870s building campaign along with modifications made under Acker's direction between his acquisition and ca. 1905; it remains an outstanding example of Italianate-style domestic architecture with exterior modifications that reflect the revived interest in classically inspired architecture at the dawn of the twentieth century in America. Although built in the post-Civil War period, the house's T-shaped plan and sedate exterior characteristics are akin in spirit to the Picturesque architecture of the antebellum era and efforts to promote this Romantic inspired style as appropriate for American domestic architecture by Andrew Jackson Downing, among others. The interior is highly intact to the early 1870s period, both in terms of its spatial characteristics and finishes, and as such offers an excellent portrait of contemporary architectural fashion and domestic preferences. The nominated house is being nominated in association with NRHP Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, given it is an excellent and highly intact representation of Italianate-style domestic design with subsequent historic-period modifications. It is additionally being nominated under Criterion B, in the area of Health/Medicine, for its association with Dr. T.J. Acker, who resided there from the mid-1880s until his death in 1914, and who maintained his medical practice there and built the small north addition sometime immediately after his purchase of the property. At the time of his passing Acker was noted in a period obituary as "the leading physician and a prominent citizen of Croton-on-the-Hudson," and surviving account ledgers and other documentary sources attest to his importance in the field of medicine. Acker's shingle, which reads "T.I. ACKER M.D." in gold leaf lettering, remains in the nominated house to this day.

#### Historical Context & Ownership Overview

Croton Point, the southern tip of present-day Croton-On-Hudson, was originally inhabited by the Kitchawank Indians. These lands were purchased by the Dutch; in 1682 they were acquired by Cornelius Van Bursam and in 1686 by Stephanus Van Cortlandt (1643-1700), the patroon of Van Cortlandt Manor and the first nativeborn mayor of New York City. In the early nineteenth century what is now the Village of Croton-On-Hudson was known as Croton Landing, a reference to the river landing at the Brook Street dock, located less than a quarter mile west of the nominated property. This was an active regional river landing at the time when the Hudson River continued to be a preeminent transportation conduit—during the age of the sloop and later yet the steamboat— and it satisfied a variety of needs, including serving as a shipping point for local brickyards and for farmers who sought to market their products in New York City, including those in the interior as far away as Yorktown. The prosperity of this landing was in large measure due to the efforts of the Underhill family. In 1804 Robert Underhill, who owned flour mills along the river, purchased most of the lands in this area, consisting of approximately 250 acres. After he died in 1829, his son, William A. Underhill, founded the brick yards in Croton Landing and a small village grew up around this industry. Large scale brick manufacturing was initiated about 1830 and during the nineteenth century there were 34 Hudson River brickyards located along the banks of the Hudson in the Town of Cortlandt alone. Joining Underhill in his business was [his nephew] Richard Tallcot, a machinist, and Richard Walker, who was charged with overseeing the transportation of the finished product. In 1915, the Underhill brickyard ceased operations, the result of the exhaustion of the clay supply along the riverbank.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Marian F. Graves, "Croton Point," 1957.

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The nominated house was among those which were built in the vicinity of the early brickyards and the older hamlet that had developed as a direct result of the commercial activity at Croton Landing. Although the house only appears in regional atlases beginning in 1893, its distinctive Italianate-style features offer clear evidence that it was erected many years prior. In examining conveyance records for the property in question, there is a discernible spike in the pricing of the land, which was bought by Phebe Ann Haviland Sands from Richard D. Tallcot in 1873 for \$2,000 and then sold to Charlotte A. Underhill in 1876 for \$5,500, indicating that a dwelling had been erected in the interim. The seemingly modest purchase price might be in part explained by the economic depression set off by the market crash in 1873, which had wide-ranging repercussions. The circumstances of the sale by Sands to Underhill in 1876 are not currently known, but it appears the house was erected for Sands. Phebe Ann Haviland Sands (1808-1892) was the widow of William M. Sands—the couple had wed in 1832 as per Quaker records, the Sands family being prominent in the Hudson Valley Friends community—and in 1870 they were residing in Ossining, Westchester County, in a household with a domestic servant, W.M. Sands being the proprietor of a large lime works.<sup>3</sup> They were by all indications prosperous, as William Sands claimed \$11,500 in personal estate, while Phebe Ann Sands claimed \$8,000 in real estate. William M. Sands died in Croton in October 1872.<sup>4</sup> His widow apparently purchased land, built a house, and then sold it in the years immediately after his death. In 1876 Phebe Sands was involved in a lawsuit with John Hogan centering on the lime works which had been operated by her husband at Hastings-on-Hudson and later transferred to J.L. Barton; the jury was unable to come to a verdict and by all indications the case was dismissed.<sup>5</sup> Phebe Ann Sands's place of residence in 1875 is unclear in the New York State census; but by 1880 she was residing in Moreau, Saratoga County, where the federal census indicated she was a widow without occupation residing as a boarder. She died in Glens Falls, Warren County.

The Underhills were the first family whose residency in the nominated house is definitively captured in census records. The 1880 federal census for Croton Landing indicates that the Underhill family—consisting of Robert Underhill, an accountant; Charlotte, his wife; the couple's daughters, Adelaide and Frances; and their young servant, Charles Cole—were residing there, where they were the neighbors of the Tallcots. William Morton's land was cited as adjacent to 4 Hamilton Avenue in the 1914 map of Croton-on-Hudson by G.W. Bromley & Company. Richard D. Tallcot, the brick-maker who initially sold the land in question to Phebe Ann Sands, was Robert Underhill's cousin. Robert Underhill and Richard Tallcot's uncle was William A. Underhill, the brick manufacturer whose brickyards contributed to the creation of the early village near where 4 Hamilton Avenue is located.

Robert Underhill, who like William Sands came from a family of Quakers, was married to Charlotte A. Haight in June 1858 by Friends' Ceremony at Croton Point. They lived on 352 State Street in Brooklyn at first and probably moved to Croton in 1876, into the house at 4 Hamilton Avenue that was built sometime between 1873 and 1876. In 1886 the Underhills sold the nominated house, at the same price for which they had bought it, to Dr. Thomas Jefferson Acker, a local allopathic practitioner who moved from his house on Grand Street, a dwelling which remains extant to this day.

Dr. T.J. Acker was a well-known and admired figure in the Croton-on-Hudson community. The preeminent local physician there at the time, Acker's patient visiting logs are preserved in volumes at the Croton Historical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Phebe Ann Haviland Sands's brothers—Robert Barclay Haviland, Edmund Haviland, Daniel G. Haviland, James C. Haviland, David Haviland and Richard Field Haviland—were all merchants in New York from about 1820 onward and originally engaged in the earthenware and French china business. In the years that followed a number of them were responsible for establishing a considerable manufacturing interest and for importing "Haviland" brand China. Information courtesy of Christopher Sirmons Haviland, The Haviland/de Havilland Heritage Society; personal correspondence with owners, March 2016.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Obituary, The World: New York, 10 October 1872.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Court Proceedings, "John Hogan against Phebe Ann Sands," Eastern State Journal (White Plains), 15 September 1876.

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Society. Acker was born in Ossining, Westchester County, in 1837, the son of John and Jane Maria Tompkins Acker. He was a descendant of Wolfert Acker (1667-1753), who occupied a tenant house later bought by Washington Irving, who named it "Wolfert's Roost" prior to transforming it into "Sunnyside." Acker received his early education in district and private schools in Ossining and later at the Claverack and Hudson River Institute at Claverack, Columbia County. He initiated his medical studies with Dr. G.J. Fisher of Ossining, prior to entering Bellevue Hospital Medical College in New York City, from which institution he graduated with the degree of M.D. in March 1865. In a 1903 publication by the college, Acker was described as a respected physician member of the medical community:

[Acker] has won a wide reputation as a highly successful general practitioner, and is an esteemed and influential member of the community. His essays on "Diphtheria" and "Animal Products Used as Medicines" have been printed in the Transactions of the New York State Medical Association. He is a Fellow of the New York State Medical Association, permanent member of the American Medical Association, honorary member of the New York State Association of Railway Surgeons, and a member of the Westchester County Medical Association, the Improved Order of Red Men, and the Order of Foresters. For forty years he has been a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was a Trustee of the church at Croton-on-Hudson in 1872-76 and 1894-96, was a member of the Building Committee that erected the church building, and is now President of the Epworth League of that church. Dr. Acker was married on May 10, 1866, to Frederica Mason, and has one daughter, Ella May Acker, born on November 24, 1883.<sup>7</sup>

Following his graduation from Bellevue, Acker practiced medicine at Pine's Bridge in Westchester County before relocating to Croton-on-Hudson in 1867. Prior to residing at the nominated house, he lived on Grand Street in a dwelling that remains extant; the nominated house on Hamilton Avenue is nevertheless the one more clearly associated with his mature period of professional endeavor, and it was there that he often saw patients. It was in Croton, as noted in his obituary, that he "soon built up a wide and successful practice, taking rank among the most prominent physicians and surgeons in Westchester County."

At the time of the 1900 federal census Acker was recorded as residing in the nominated house along with his wife, Frederica, and daughter, Ella May, in addition to two domestics, 20-year old Irish native Lizzie Quinn, and 17-year old New York native Janice Stewart. A decade later the household still consisted of Acker, his wife, and unmarried daughter; however, the Ackers no longer kept domestic staff in the house by that date.

Countless period newspaper accounts attest to Acker's dispensation of his medical duties in the Croton area in this period; the following represents one such account:

While a horse and surrey belonging to Jerome D. Anderson, and driven by Clarence Anderson, was descending Mt. Airy hill on Thursday, a wheel of the surrey collapsed. This caused a second wheel to go, and the occupants of the surrey were thrown out. They were badly bruised and were taken to Dr. T.J. Acker's office, where the physician dressed the injuries.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the many period accounts relating to his medical practice and the services he rendered to the sick and injured, local newspapers also followed his various travels, among them trips he made to Colorado, Georgia, Ohio, and to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois, which Acker indicated was

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Obituary, "Thomas Jefferson Acker, M.D.," The Highland Democrat, 21 February 1914.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, ed., Universities and Their Sons: New York University, vol. 2 (Boston: R. Herndon Co., 1903),84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Obituary.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> "Neighborhood News," The Highland Democrat, 19 August 1899.

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"worth going to see." There was also concern expressed locally, in 1892, when Acker had fallen badly ill: "Dr. T.J. Acker, Croton's beloved physician, is seriously ill at his home. Everybody hopes he will recover."

At the annual meeting of the Medical Society of the County of Westchester, conducted at White Plains in November 1914, a short time after his passing, Acker's death was noted and his contributions to the field outlined; the following passage formed the summation:

The testimony of friends and patients in the community, where for nearly a half century he lived and practiced, tells a story of self-sacrificing labor and devotion in ministering to the ills of others.

What better measure of a man's life than the testimony of those whom he has lived among and served.<sup>12</sup>

Following Dr. Acker's death, his wife, Frederica, inherited the house, where she lived with her daughter, Ella May Acker, and the latter's husband, William Burdick, an automobile dealer. The Ackers' daughter, Ella May, eventually inherited the house but donated it to the Methodist Episcopal Church when she died, as she was separated from Burdick and did not have any children. In turn, the church sold the house to Jack and Eleanor Cooper in 1964. Ten years later the current owner, Marc Shenfield, who presently resides there with his wife, Lauren, purchased it from the Coopers. The couple has proved outstanding stewards with a keen interest in the house's preservation.

#### Architectural Analysis

The Underhill-Acker House is an excellent representation of nineteenth-century American domestic architecture executed in the Italianate style. This architectural style, which featured many permutations and distinct sub-types, ranks among the most prevalent American architectural styles of the nineteenth century; having been first introduced in the 1830s, it continued to find expression into the 1880s. The style's earliest manifestation, the so-called Italian villa, with its characteristic tower, proved a highly popular style in the Hudson Valley and was favored by architects such as A.J. Davis and broadly popularized by the Newburgh author, horticulturist and domestic critic Andrew Jackson Downing. Although, according to Downing in his watershed 1850 book, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, the style was not "essentially country-like in character," it was nevertheless "remarkable for expressing the elegant culture and variety of accomplishment of the retired citizen or man of the world." The Italianate style, which came to embrace other distinctive subtypes, among them the cubic-massed house with hipped roof and cupola, offered an alternative to the contemporaneously popular Gothic Revival. Like the Gothic mode, the Italian mode was also inspired by English examples, as noted by Downing following his return from England, where he had viewed "spacious Italian villas, more Italian than in Italy." <sup>14</sup>

The design and detailing of this well-preserved nineteenth-century house are akin to the style as promoted in the antebellum Picturesque period by Downing and others. The exterior clearly lacks the architectural exuberance and proliferation of detail that came to characterize the Italianate style in the post-Civil War period; it is instead relatively sedate and quietly composed and thus more in keeping with earlier expressions. Downing was inspired by the British landscape gardener and architect, John Claudius Loudon, whose *Encyclopaedia of* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>The Highland Democrat, 4 June 1898; Ibid., 9 May 1896; Ibid., 10 June 1899; 21 October 1893.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Ibid, 5 December 1892.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>New York State Journal of Medicine, vol. XV, no. 1 (January 1915), 41.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Downing, The Architecture of Country Houses, Design XXI, "A Villa in the Italian style."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Downing quoted in Francis R. Kowsky, *Country, Park and City: The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 32.

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Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture (1833) and the Suburban Gardener, and Villa Companion (1838) served as an apt model for his own books, among them his 1842 book Cottage Residences, which was republished many times. The house's location certainly satisfied Downing's general mandate relative to site specificity, whereby "the plan of the house should be arranged so as to take advantage of the views of the landscape, making it irregular as need be." The interior, which provides stunning vignettes of the surrounding Hudson River and valley landscape, indicates the permeation of Downing's philosophies, which were carried forward by his English born and trained protégés, Calvert Vaux and Frederick Clarke Withers, following his demise in 1852.

A large body of period architectural source material from the 1850s to the early 1870s was examined while looking for a direct source for the house's design, among them books by A.J. Downing, Calvert Vaux, Gervase Wheeler, Samuel Sloan, Henry Hudson Holly, Marcus Cummings, and George Woodward, among others, and house designs which were published in the *The Horticulturist*. To this time no specific precedent has been found for the design, except for small details, notable among them the concept—as manifested in the master bed chamber—of closets flanking a niche with arched opening and corresponding window; this concept can be traced to Calvert Vaux and it appears in his 1857 book *Villas & Cottages*. <sup>15</sup>

The T-shaped plan composed of two engaged gable roofed blocks, the general massing of the nominated house, became more prevalent in the 1840s and was among the plan types illustrated by Downing in *Cottage Residences*. Among these was the plate illustrating "A Villa in the Italian Style, Bracketed," though the similarities between the two buildings are of a general nature, as Downing's design included a tower, vertical board-and-batten exterior sheathing, and detailing of a more robust nature, in addition to different staircase and fireplace locations. The arrangement of a kitchen basement, although not favored by Downing, was nevertheless employed in this instance, and was at times used by period architects, among them Vaux, when there were restraints placed upon a building's footprint and the manner in which it would integrate with its setting.

Notable among the house's exterior features are its segmental-arch windows and prominent cornice brackets, features which formed a decided break from the Neoclassical aesthetics of the Greek Revival style popular in the previous era. Also of note are the south parlor's projecting bay window and decorative chimney pots, features which were promoted by Downing; the former offered a bridge between the house and landscape, while the latter—while more commonly equated with Gothic Revival architecture— brought notice to the chimneys and thus alluded to the fireplaces within. Inside the house, the marble mantelpieces in the parlor and second floor master bedroom are also representative of the Italianate style, as are the rounded moulding profiles of doors and windows and the turnings of the staircase newel posts and balusters. The slate mantelpieces in the dining room and living room, while aesthetically different from the marble ones, represent Neo-Grec influence but are nevertheless plausible in date to ca. 1873; those of a similar type are illustrated in a catalog of marbleized slate mantels published ca. 1875 by French & Sennett of Syracuse, New York. It is not presently known whether they are original to the house or retrofits made by Dr. Acker during his occupancy after 1886. Also characteristic of the 1870s period are the various plaster ceiling medallions and prominent struck plaster cornices used in the house's principal spaces, decorative features which offered an increased sense of refinement to these spaces.

Given the lack of specific information relative to the house's construction, physical features of the building were carefully studied for manufacturing information. In the basement and first-floor parlor, the window

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Calvert Vaux, Villas & Cottages (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>French & Sennett, Marbleized Slate Mantelpieces: Illustrated Catalog (ca. 1875).

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casement fastener is marked "Hopkins and Dickinson – Patn – Mar -30 -69," indicating the patent dates to 1869; this company was a major manufacturer of hardware based in New York City in this period. In the attic, another piece of hardware is marked "Burchells Pat Aug 1860." The former, in particular, confirms a date of construction after 1869, and thus reaffirms the ca. 1873 construction date. The mechanical systems of the house are also worth noting, as, according to the bicentennial booklet prepared by the Croton Historical Society in 1978, the nominated house is believed to be one of the first in Croton to employ a gravity-fed water system. Both the indoor plumbing and the use of a counter-ceiling between the basement and main floor and the first and second floors are indicators of the house's quality of construction and relative sophistication.

The first notable alteration appears to have been made by Dr. Acker after he purchased the house in 1886; this was the addition on the north side, presumably done in direct association with his medical practice. This feature appears on the 1897 Sanborn fire insurance map and predates the reworking of the main verandah and the addition of the smaller porch to it, which, as per documentary sources, occurred between 1903 and 1907. It allowed for the separation of professional and domestic functions by creating a second dedicated entrance and interior space for Acker's medical practice. Acker's improvements to the house garnered occasional references in period newspapers, among them that which indicated, in November 1899, that he was "adding many improvements to his residence," and one which followed in December:

In our items last week in reference to the many improvements to the residence of Dr. T.J. Acker, we omitted saying that a large verandah would be erected. The work was commenced on it on Monday by Contractor A. Tompkins, who has a large corps of men at work. When completed the Doctor will have not only a very useful addition but a "thing of beauty and joy forever. <sup>17</sup>

As noted, while this account would suggest the present main verandah, that feature is confirmed to have been constructed between 1903 and 1907. This feature and the smaller porch that fronts the north addition reflect a revival of interest in classical architecture in America that occurred in the early twentieth century, in part resultant from the influence of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, which Acker himself attended. The north addition has newer moldings, window frames and exterior hardware than the rest of the exterior, and it exhibits features which link it stylistically to the Queen Anne style, which gained considerable popularity during the 1880s.

#### Conclusion

The Underhill-Acker House remains an impressive and highly intact example of Italianate-style domestic design with modifications that largely date to the historic period. A building of considerable architectural value in the local context, it is additionally significant for its association with Dr. Thomas Jefferson Acker, a prominent Croton citizen and member of the contemporary medical community in Westchester County.

Developmental history/additional historic context information  $N/\Lambda$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>The Highland Democrat, 25 November 1899;

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#### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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#### Maps (in chronological order)

Philip G. Van Wyck Property in Croton-on-Hudson, 1850.

Beers, F. W. Atlas of New York and Vicinity, 1868.

G.W. Bromley & Co. Atlas of Westchester County, Cortland, Croton Landing, 1881.

Beers, F. W. Atlas of the Hudson River Valley, 1891.

Bien, Joseph Rudolf. Atlas of Westchester County New York, 1893.

Hyde, E. Belcher. 12 Atlas rural country district north of New York City, 1908.

G.W. Bromley & Co., Atlas of Westchester Co NY, vol. 2, 1914.

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## **UNDERHILL-ACKER HOUSE** WESTCHESTER CO., N.Y. Name of Property County and State Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data: preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been State Historic Preservation Office Other State agency requested) previously listed in the National Register Federal agency previously determined eligible by the National Register Local government designated a National Historic Landmark University Other recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #\_ Name of repository: recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 10. Geographical Data Acreage of Property .46 acres (Do not include previously listed resource acreage.) **UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.) 4562095 Zone Northing Easting Northing Easting 2 Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

## Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination is shown on the enclosed mapping, which was drawn at a scale of 1:24,000, 1: 12,000, and 1:3,000. All maps are entitled "Underhill-Acker House, Croton-on-Hudson, Westchester [County], New York.

#### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary reflects the current legal tax boundary for this parcel, which consists of .46 acres of land. All of this land is historically associated with the Underhill-Acker House and the cited period of significance, ca. 1873-1914. No additional or "buffer land" has been included within the nomination boundary.

city or town

(Expires 5/31/2012)

zip code

#### UNDERHILL-ACKER HOUSE WESTCHESTER CO., N.Y. Name of Property County and State 11. Form Prepared By Mayssa Jallad; edited by William E. Krattinger, NYS Division for Historic Preservation name/title NYS DHP organization date February 2017 Peebles Island State Park PO Box 189 telephone (518) 268-2167 street & number city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188 e-mail William.Krattinger@parks.nv.gov **Additional Documentation** Submit the following items with the completed form: Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map. **Continuation Sheets Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.) Photographs: Photographs by William E. Krattinger (January 2017) and Mayssa Jallad (June 2016). TIFF file format, original digital files at NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Waterford, NY 12188. 001 EXTERIOR, principal elevation, view looking to southwest 002 EXTERIOR, south elevation, view showing bay window 003 EXTERIOR, west (river) elevation, view looking to northeast 004 EXTERIOR, north elevation, view looking to south 005 INTERIOR, first floor, view of parlor showing chimney breast, fireplace and mantel 006 INTERIOR, first floor, view showing living room; door to medical office center rear 007 INTERIOR, second floor, view showing south bedchamber 008INTERIOR, second floor, view in hallway showing detail of arch ancon 009 HISTORIC VIEW, ca. 1905, showing Dr. T.J. Acker in front of nominated house **Property Owner:** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.) Marc Shenfield name street & number Same as nomination address telephone

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

state

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

(Expires 5/31/2012)

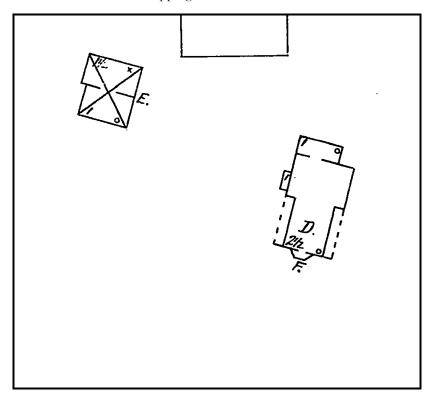
## WESTCHESTER CO., N.Y.

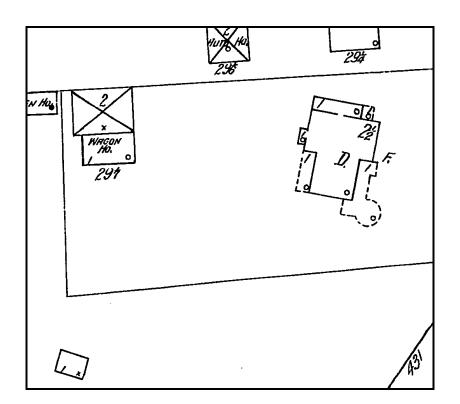
County and State

## UNDERHILL-ACKER HOUSE

Name of Property

Sanborn fire insurance mapping: TOP, 1897; BOTTOM, 1911.





Datum: North American 1983

Units: Meter

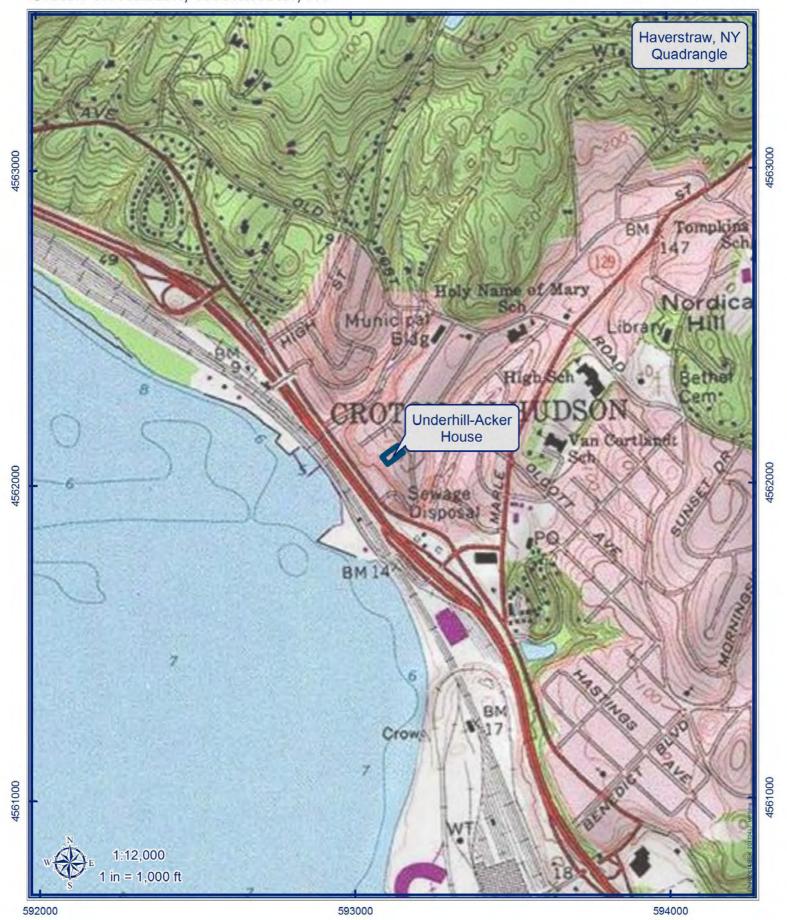
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Underhill-Acker House

and Historic Preservation



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N Projection: Transverse Mercator Datum: North American 1983

Units: Meter







Datum: North American 1983

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and Historic Preservation























## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Nomination					
Property Name:	UnderhillAcker House					
Multiple Name:						
State & County:	NEW YORK, Westchester					
Date Recei 6/9/201		ist: Date of 16th Day: 8/2/2017	Date of 45th Day: 7/24/2017	Date of Weekly List: 7/27/2017		
Reference number:	SG100001363					
Nominator:	State					
Reason For Review:						
X Accept	Return	Reject <b>7/2</b>	<b>4/2017</b> Date			
Abstract/Summary Comments:						
Recommendation/ Criteria	B and C, health/medicine (A	Acker) and architecture				
Reviewer Alexis A	Abernathy	Discipline	Historian			
Telephone (202)35	64-2236	Date				
DOCUMENTATION:	see attached comments	s : No see attached S	LR : No			

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



# Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO Governor ROSE HARVEY Commissioner



2 June 2017

Alexis Abernathy National Park Service National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following four nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Bagg's Square East Historic District, Oneida County Buffalo Public School 77, Erie County Underhill-Acker House, Westchester County United Presbyterian Church of Davenport, Delaware County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank

National Register Coordinator

New York State Historic Preservation Office