



Inter-Office Memorandum

DATE: June 13, 2024

TO: Raymond Meyer, Construction Code Official
Tanya Marione, Acting Zoning Official

FROM: Maggie O'Neill, Principal Historic Preservation Specialist *mon*
Rachel Craft, Hunter Research, Inc.

SUBJECT: 384 Communipaw Avenue, Block 20003, Lots 20-22, Ward A
Historically Block 2054, Lots 30-31
B-24-0808

After assessing **384 Communipaw Avenue, Block 20003, Lots 20-22, Ward A; Historically Block 2054, Lots 30-31**, the building possesses historical significance or integrity that prevents it from demolition. 384 Communipaw, also known as the former Jackson Funeral Home, is a key-contributing building to the eligible Communipaw-Lafayette Historic District and to the Bergen-Lafayette neighborhood overall, as it is one of the few remaining pre-civil war examples of the original intent of the neighborhood.

The 1938 City Tax Assessor's card notes a date of construction of "abt. 1880," though cartographic and stylistic evidence suggest an earlier construction date of *circa* 1850-60. The building first appears along Communipaw Avenue on the M. Dripps *Map of the Five Cities of New York, Brooklyn, Jersey City, Hoboken & Hudson City* of 1860. It appears on later Sanborn Map Company maps (1896 and 1911) as a two-and-one-half-story with full-height basement, T-plan, brick building with a wood-frame open front-porch at the corner of Communipaw Avenue and Van Horne Street. 384 Communipaw Avenue was identified in the historic resource inventory of the *Jersey City Historic Preservation Master Plan Element* (2024). The building is mentioned as a particular subject in the *Phase One New Jersey Historical Sites Inventory Survey of the City of Jersey City Inventory* (1985) as a two-and-one-half-story with basement "Tuscan Villa" that had an "irregular rectangular asymmetric" shape; "3 bays to each section;" a brick exterior; "windows [were] of 1/1 or 2/2 wood double type[with] smaller window on [the] attic and beveledere [*sic*] level, casement window." The building also had "a flat roof" and "cornices covered by aluminum siding; arched stone lintels and sills" and its "entry [was] elevated with wooden double doors and an elaborate overdoor." Although the survey of 1985 noted the building had experienced modern alterations, it was still identified as an eligible resource. The *Phase Two Survey Recommended List of Site Eligible for the National Register* (1986) further expanded on the significance of the building: "This building, in good condition and only slightly altered (the cornices have been covered over with flat strips of aluminum), is eligible for inclusion on the National Register on the basis of Criterion C. It is a two and a half story structure, set on a high basement, with a square, glazed observation cupola mounted in the center of its flat roof. L-shaped in plan and built of red brick with limestone sills and lintels, the house conforms, in the pattern of its design, to that of the detached suburban Italianate villas that began to make their appearance within and along the edges of American cities in the 1840's. The realty and building contracting firm of Keeney and Halladay, who were responsible for the laying out of this area of the city in building lots in 1856, intended it to become an upper middle class residential suburb, conveniently near downtown Jersey City. This intention went largely unfulfilled. The significance of the Jackson Funeral Home, built c. 1860 (little building was accomplished in this neighborhood until after the Civil War), lies in the fact that it is the only house, surviving virtually intact, existing in Lafayette illustrative of the developers' original intentions for the area."

384 Communipaw Avenue, also known as the former Jackson Funeral Home, is a two-and-one-half-story with full-height basement, three-bay, brick, Italianate-style building with a two-story with full-height basement, three-bay, brick extension to its side (southeast) elevation that retains many of its original character-defining features. A photograph attached to the tax card of 1938 shows these details, including a cupola housing two sets of small, paired and arched windows atop its flat roof; deeply overhanging eaves shielding its cornice; three sliding windows set into the cornice's frieze at the half-story; segmentally arched, 2/2 windows at the first and second stories decorated with carved lintels; and an ornate bracketed lintel over its raised, side-hall entry. All of these details are hallmarks of the Italianate style. Today, the building's exterior materials are comprised of some replacements, including vinyl sashes at the second story and a modern door at its entry. First-story and basement-level windows have been covered with plywood. Its entry has been modified and covered with non-original framing to accommodate its modern door. Though its cornice has been covered with aluminum siding, it is clear from current photographs that the character-defining cornice survives under the siding. The building has also received design-altering additions to its rear elevation, though these alterations were extant when it was surveyed and found to be eligible in 1985. Overall, these alterations have not significantly diminished the dwellings historic character, thus retaining its integrity of materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The building has been historically associated with John Hudson, who appears as its owner on the G.M. Hopkins & Co. *Combined Atlas of the State of New Jersey and the County of Hudson* of 1873, as well as modern associations with the Jackson Funeral Home. In its current condition, the building does appear to meet the criteria for historic, architectural or cultural significance.

The building is located on the eastern corner of the intersection of Communipaw Avenue and Van Horne Street. It is approximately 160 feet to the northwest of the Communipaw-Lafayette Historic District, which received an Opinion of Eligibility from the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office in February 1995. Some modern intrusions have diminished the building's integrity of setting and the continuity of the block, but it is still mostly filled by intact Italianate- and Second Empire-style buildings. 384 Communipaw Avenue occupies a prominent corner of and contributes to this streetscape, as well as the immediate setting of the Communipaw-Lafayette Historic District. To this extent, the removal of the building at 384 Communipaw Avenue would negatively affect the historic character of the surrounding Communipaw neighborhood.

CC: HPC
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