

Landmarks Preservation Commission
July 26, 1994; Designation List 260
LP-1875

**ST. PETER'S GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH AT KREISCHERVILLE (NOW FREE
MAGYAR REFORMED CHURCH), PARISH HALL AND RECTORY**

19-23 Winant Place and 25 Winant Place, Charleston, Staten Island.

Church: built 1883; architect/builder unknown. Parish hall: built by 1898; architect/builder unknown. Rectory: built 1926; Royal Daggett, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 7400, Lots 171 and 166.

On October 1, 1991, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville, Staten Island, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 12). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Nine people, including representatives of the congregation of the Free Magyar Reformed Church, testified in favor of designating St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville and other items located in the area. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Summary

The St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church) is representative of the many small churches built for immigrant congregations on Staten Island during the second half of the nineteenth century. The church complex – church, parish house, and rectory – recalls the era when Charleston was known as Kreischerville, as well as the early-twentieth-century period when Hungarian immigrants maintained the separate identity of the small village. Erected in 1883 as the gift of local industrialist Balthasar Kreischer, the church reflects the paternalistic role that industrialists often played in the development of quasi-company towns such as Kreischerville. Though characteristic of the small, wood-framed structures built in the villages of Staten Island and elsewhere, the Carpenter Gothic church, probably designed and built by local craftsmen, is distinguished by its unusual porch that is domestic in scale and form, and by the emphasis on verticality provided by the tall spire and rows of small gabled dormers in the steeply-pitched gable roof. Through its pastor, the Reverend Jacob Ganss, who led the German congregation throughout its existence, the Kreischerville Church was linked with nearby German Protestant congregations. As the Hungarian population in the village of Kreischerville grew, a Magyar Reformed church was established in 1915 and met in St. Peter's church, which the Hungarian congregation soon acquired. The attached parish hall, an early addition to the church, and the rectory, designed by builder/architect Royal Daggett and built in 1926 by the Hungarian congregation, complete the complex, which is enclosed by a distinctive fence with posts of Kreischer brick. The history of the Hungarian congregation, which in 1933 affiliated with the small Hungarian Reformed Church in America denomination (established in 1920), documents the important role that churches played in the lives of immigrant groups.

The Development of Kreischerville

During the early and mid-nineteenth century, the town of Westfield on the southwestern side of Staten Island was a rural area with scattered small settlements; because of the extensive land holdings of the Androvette family, the hamlet near the juncture of Arthur Kill Road and Sharrotts Road was known as Androvetteville.¹ Sharrotts Road connected the community with the village of Woodrow to the east, while the Arthur Kill Road led north to Rossville and the Blazing Star Ferry and also south to Tottenville and additional ferry service to New Jersey. Several small lanes led to the waterfront, much of which was salt marsh, and homes not located near the main roads were near the shore. The residents of Androvetteville included farmers, oystermen, ship joiners, and watermen. By 1850, there were two stores in the hamlet and the West Baptist Church stood north of the intersection of Sharrott's Road and Arthur Kill Road.

The area around Androvetteville changed dramatically in the mid-1850s with the discovery of refractory fire clays in the vicinity, and the purchase of clay deposits and subsequent development of a fire bricks manufacturing works by Balthasar Kreischer.² In 1845 Kreischer and a partner had established a business in Manhattan to produce fire brick – a fire-resistant brick used in many industrial applications. Kreischer soon was sole proprietor of the operation that was one of the first in the United States to provide fire brick. In 1853 Kreischer became aware of refractory clay deposits in Westfield. He acquired several tracts with clay deposits and purchased the rights to mine clay on nearby land. Two years later Kreischer established a brick works at the edge of the Arthur Kill (Staten Island Sound), and in 1858 he enlarged his works on Staten Island with the construction of an addition to the factory for the production of clay retorts (vessels made of fire clay in which coal was heated to produce gas). As Kreischer's brick works and clay mining began to dominate Androvetteville, the area became known as Kreischerville. In 1876 the Staten Island facility was enlarged and at that time the Manhattan plant was closed; the newly-expanded works were destroyed by fire in 1878 and were immediately rebuilt. The Kreischer Brick works was a major producer of building materials in the metropolitan area, and like many operations, maintained a headquarters in Manhattan.

Balthasar Kreischer, who retired from active management of the brick works in 1878, died in 1886; the firm of B. Kreischer & Sons was continued by three of his children: George F., who had joined the company in 1870, Charles C., and Edward B.³ In 1887 George Kreischer entered into

an agreement with the New York Anderson Pressed Brick Company and the Anderson works was built adjacent to the Kreischer facility. The brick works were again badly damaged by fire and rebuilt in 1892. The Kreischer family's involvement with the firm terminated in 1899, its sale forced by financial problems.

*An Industrial Community.*⁴ The main impetus for the growth of the village of Kreischerville was the provision of housing within walking distance of the brick works. It appears that some of the properties Kreischer acquired for his company's clay deposits already had dwellings on them and that he erected several additional dwellings to house the work force; by the early 1890s the Kreischer family owned around twenty-five houses in Kreischerville. On the parcel immediately north of the works stood one of the existing houses, an old Androvette family dwelling (now No. 122 Androvette Street). By 1875 Kreischer had built two large tenements for workers: a frame building east of the older Androvette house that housed six families and a nearby larger brick structure for twelve households (neither of the tenement buildings is standing). By the mid-1880s, a number of double houses had been built on the Kreischer firm property as housing for workers. The Kreischer firm did not own all of the property in the village, however, and members of families that had long been located in the area, like Peter Androvette, owned their own homes in addition to houses they rented to workers and lots they sold for new construction. Double houses, or semi-detached cottages, would become the dominant housing type in the village, with nearly twenty such structures built, including the Kreischer Street Workers' Houses erected by Androvette c.1890 at Nos. 71-73, 75-77, 81-83, and 85-87 Kreischer Street.

The relative geographic isolation of Kreischerville prompted the development of an entire village with numerous services as well as its own company town culture. Because Kreischerville, like many industrial communities was dominated by, but not entirely controlled by, the local industrialist – in this case Balthasar Kreischer – it can be considered a quasi-company town; the control of Kreischer over the village was tempered by pre-existing development and local interests in the community. In 1863 a Kreischerville post office was established. The Kreischerville school, District School No. 7, which during the mid-1880s served over two-hundred students, was located just north of the center of the village on Arthur Kill Road. Private enterprise appears to have thrived in Kreischerville. During the early 1870s Kreischer helped to establish Nicholas Kilmeyer as proprietor

of a general store in the building that stands at 4321 Arthur Kill Road (at the corner of Winant Place). Soon there were several provision stores in the village and two bakers. The Kilmeyer Union Hotel and Saloon (at the corner of Arthur Kill Road and Sharrotts Road), the Neilsen Hotel (at the corner of Androvette and Kreischer Streets), and a boarding house offered lodging. The Order of Germania Lodge No. 26 met in Kilmeyer's Hall; that group, or the Society for the Support of the Poor of St. Peter's Church, was probably the benevolent society established by 1886 to provide aid to sick or injured workers. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, houses lined Androvette Street, Winant Place, Kreischer Street, Manley Street, Arthur Kill Road, and Sharrotts Road. During the 1890s, the village residents were mainly German and Irish immigrants, most of whom were laborers at the brick works, the clay pits, the International Ultramarine Works (between Kreischerville and Rossville), and the S.S. White Dental Manufacturing Company at Prince's Bay. The village residents included blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, bricklayers, and a tinsmith and plumber, oystermen, and several watermen and boat captains.

According to reminiscences of residents, Kreischer considered the town named after himself to be a family community, and in a paternalistic manner he advanced money to purchase homes and assisted employees through sickness and trouble. Having become an American citizen, he encouraged his employees – mostly German immigrants like himself – to attain citizenship. His force in the community is reflected in memories that there was a "good tight fence around the entire village," and that "the gates were closed early in the evening,"⁵ which perhaps have exaggerated the role of the extensive picket fencing enclosing the yards of village houses

that is documented in historic photographs. As was common in industrial towns, the Kreischer family maintained conspicuous residences. Kreischer built a grand villa-type residence (probably in the 1860s, no longer standing) on the crest of the hills above the factory (on the east side of the Arthur Kill Road) that visually dominated the village. Around 1886 Charles and Edward Kreischer moved into a pair of similar Stick Style wood villas on the east side of Arthur Kill Road; the house built for Charles Kreischer still stands at 4500 Arthur Kill Road (attributed to Palliser & Palliser, it is a designated New York City Landmark).

Around the turn of the century, the population of Kreischerville began to change as did the employment situation. The federal census of 1900 routinely listed "day laborer" as the occupation of many residents, although there were still several small service businessmen in town. As the more limited operation of the brick works after 1899 diminished the immediately local employment possibilities, more workers traveled to the White dental works and the Atlantic Terra Cotta Works (established 1897) in Tottenville.⁶ A significant addition to the predominantly German population was the influx of many workers from Hungary and neighboring areas in Central Europe. In 1900 most of the recent Hungarian immigrants in Kreischerville were single men who boarded in the homes of Anton Killian and John Laslacasca on Arthur Kill Road, George Lasco on Androvette Street, and others. Hungarian families soon occupied other types of housing in the village, including the many double houses; the Magyar population and its social institutions would remain a visible portion of the population of Kreischerville during the twentieth century.

The St. Peter's German Evangelical Reformed Church of Kreischerville

Following an attempt to establish a German congregation in Kreischerville in 1879, the St. Peter's German Evangelical Reformed Church of Kreischerville⁷ was incorporated March 13, 1882, with Jasper D. Heitman and Christopher Biel as trustees and William Beekman and Philip Eckert as deacons. The group was formally organized under the direction of the Reverend Leopold Mohn, who was the pastor of the German Evangelical Church in Hoboken as well as director of the "Martha Institute," a private German-American school associated with that church. The name chosen by the congregation, St. Peter's Evangelical Reformed Church, reflects the diverse Protestant denominations represented by the German

immigrants. The use of the neutral name, "Evangelical," which in German usage was equivalent to "Protestant," suggests that the German-speaking congregation probably included Swiss and Alsatian members who had been Calvinists or Reformed, as well as Lutherans. The St. Peter's congregation soon supported a Women's Society, a Society for the Support of the Poor, and a Young People's Society.

In May 1883, the firm of B. Kreischer & Sons acquired from Lewis Androvette a four-acre lot on the north side of Winant Place which bordered the lot on which the Kilmeyer store stood. On July 1st of that same year, a church building was formally presented to the congregation by Mr. Kreischer. "St.

Peterskirche," as it became known to Kreischerville residents, was reported to have cost \$15,000 and was furnished with an unusually good organ, and carved pews and wainscoting. The Kreischer family conspicuously occupied a pew at the front of the church that faced the choir. When the prominent industrialist died in 1886, Kreischer's funeral was held in St. Peterskirche prior to burial in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn. Balthasar Kreischer's will stipulated that his heirs hold the church property in trust for the congregation as long as the family business was carried on by his sons; since the Kreischer firm was sold to Peter Androvette in 1899, in compliance with that provision, the Kreischer heirs conveyed the church property to the congregation the following year.

The construction of a church building by Balthasar Kreischer in the village bearing his name was characteristic of the common practice of paternalistic-oriented industrialists to provide churches, libraries, and community hall buildings in company towns. However, the establishment of a German congregation and the role of benefactor played by Kreischer seem to have occurred at a rather late date in the development of the industrial community of Kreischerville – thirty years after the brick works were opened. The delay may have been related to the dominance of the German-American immigrant community by secular community groups rather than religious ones, and the lack of a truly dominant German Protestant denomination. Or perhaps the Baptist and Methodist congregations in the village had, but no longer, served the community's religious needs.⁸ Nevertheless, Kreischer's ability to reinforce the German heritage he shared with much of his workforce, by worshipping with them in their native tongue in a church building he provided, was a final step in the development of Kreischerville as a quasi-company town. Kreischer's will also provided for the use of the church as a school, a provision that remains unexplained. A public school had been established in Kreischerville by the mid-1870s; Kreischer may have been referring to instruction in the German language. St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville was one of several churches established on Staten Island by the sizeable German

population that began to settle there after 1850; the congregations included the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Port Richmond (incorporated 1852 and name changed 1918); the German Evangelical Church at Stapleton (incorporated 1857); the German-English Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. Paul, West New Brighton (incorporated 1895); and the German Evangelical Lutheran St. John's Church in Linoleumville (now Travis, incorporated 1910).⁹

The German congregation of St. Peter's Church was served throughout its history by one pastor – the Reverend Jacob Ganss. During December 1882, Ganss first preached in Kreischerville, and in 1883, the year he was ordained at New Dorp by the (Dutch) Reformed Church of America (under whose authority many Protestant German churches were organized), he was called as pastor of the church. During his early years on Staten Island, the Reverend Ganss also served nearby congregations; after presiding at a late morning service on Sundays in Kreischerville, he preached in Bergen (now Jersey City), New Jersey during the late afternoon and at an evening service in Hoboken.

The Reverend Jacob James Ganss (1859-1930), a native of Germany, graduated from the University of Mainz, Germany, and did post-graduate work at the University of Basel, Switzerland, before immigrating in 1880, at the age of twenty-one, to the United States where he first settled in Brooklyn. Ganss soon became a tutor at the Dr. Mohn's Martha Institute in Hoboken, where he was also a student in languages. (He received a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Taylor University, Indiana, in 1898.) The Reverend Ganss also served a German congregation in Perth Amboy which was enrolled in 1908 as a congregation in the Reformed Church of America; by 1914 the Reverend Dr. Ganss was preaching at the growing St. Paul's Evangelical Reformed Church in Perth Amboy during the morning and to the smaller congregation on Staten Island in the afternoon. The Reverend continued to serve the Perth Amboy Church from his home (now 4313 Arthur Kill Road, purchased in 1902 from the St. Peter's congregation) on Staten Island until his death in 1930.

A Second Congregation – The Free Magyar Reformed Church

By 1915 a Hungarian congregation had been meeting regularly in the St. Peter's German church. With Reverend Louis Nanassy presiding, the congregation incorporated in June of that year as the Magyar Reformed Church of Kreischerville New York and Vicinity and affiliated with the German

Reformed Church.¹⁰ Through the assistance of the Reverend Jacob Ganss, the Hungarian congregation was able to purchase the church and dedicate it for their use on September 1, 1919. Around the same time, the congregation called as pastor the Reverend Joseph Nagy, who had immigrated in 1911 from

Hungary; with his wife, Helen, and their two children, he resided at 19 Winant Place in what is now the kitchen and bathroom portion of the Parish Hall. In 1922 the Reverend Kalman Toth was installed as pastor, and as the church flourished, plans were made to erect a rectory; the project was realized during the summer of 1926 when a dwelling was built by George Robinson to plans provided by builder/architect Royal Daggett.¹¹ A division in the church occurred in 1933 when the Reverend Toth left to establish another church in Rossville. The congregation in Charleston then reincorporated as the Free Magyar Reformed Church of Staten Island, New York; since that time the church has been affiliated with the Hungarian Reformed Church in America.

The congregation in Charleston maintained an active religious and social program, furthering the goals of the Hungarian community. Services were conducted in the Hungarian language until October 1985, at which time the Hungarian and English services were combined. The church provided Hungarian language classes for children of the congregation from the early 1930s through the early 1950s. The church and the parish hall, with its stage, remain in regular use for worship and as the setting for church-related and social events; when there is no resident pastor, the rental of the rectory helps support the small, independent congregation.

The history of the Magyar church in Charleston illustrates the important role that churches played in the lives of immigrant groups. During the first years of the twentieth century, a period of heavy immigration from Hungary, many Hungarian, or Magyar, churches were organized.¹² The Magyar

churches represented several denominations: Roman Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, Greek Catholic (Byzantine Rite), and those affiliated with the Reformed Church in America. These Hungarian churches in America were noted as particularly careful to maintain the religious traditions of their native land, as well as the Hungarian language which was often taught in church-related schools. In some places, the Hungarian church was the only Magyar "territory" – as property owned (or at least controlled) by the immigrant group – and conceptually it was the one place where the immigrants could truly feel at home. Many congregations celebrated Hungarian national holidays and consciously tried to serve as a bridge between the old traditions and the new way of life in America. The churches sponsored service clubs, which with the Magyar fraternal organizations, were important social links for the immigrant community.

In the aftermath of World War I, the Hungarian churches in America, many of which were formally affiliated with and assisted in building programs by the Reformed Church of Hungary, were advised in 1920 to affiliate with either the Reformed Church of the United States or the Presbyterian Church. In 1924, seven congregations which did not wish to so align themselves formed the Free Magyar (now Hungarian) Reformed Church in America as an independent denomination. The Free Magyar congregations were located in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan. The denomination, with which the Charleston church affiliated in 1933, has remained one of the smaller ones in the United States, with thirty member churches today.

Village Church Architecture

Small, wood-framed churches were erected in the villages and towns of Staten Island during the nineteenth century; many of these churches were Carpenter Gothic in style.¹³ Often a projecting narthex or entrance bay supported the building's tower and steeple, and typically, arched windows with multi-pane sash pierced the walls of the rectangular structure, most of which was devoted to the sanctuary. These churches, like many others across the country, were designed and built by carpenters and had a vernacular, or pattern-book, quality with ornament concentrated at the entrance.

The building erected for the St. Peter's congregation falls into this category of vernacular village church; in some respects, though, its architectural character reflects the involvement of a wealthy benefactor, whose taste was perhaps more apparent in the interior furnishings. The small

building – domestic in scale – has a front porch which is residential in form and detailing, and thus stands in contrast to the common form for a small church with a projecting central entrance bay. While the porch visually grounds the church and relates it to the residential character of the street, the building has an institutional presence due to the elevation of the church on a high foundation and the emphasis on height provided by the steeply-pitched roof and tall spire. The slender, elegant spire rises from the front edge of the roof ridge, in the absence of a projecting bay to support a larger steeple. The vertical emphasis is reinforced by the small gables set just below the roof ridge, which also relieve the simple form of the structure; the dormers, some of which appear to have vented the roof area above the sanctuary ceiling, were design elements as much as functional ones.¹⁴

The designer of the church remains undetermined. Perhaps one of the local architects on Staten Island provided Balthasar Kreisler with plans, or maybe a local carpenter worked from a pictorial image provided by Kreisler.¹⁵ The designer/builder's greater familiarity with residential architecture may account for the cottage-like porch with structural members that are exquisitely modeled with extensive chamfering by a craftsman who was a master of the band saw; surviving late-nineteenth-century residential porches in the Charleston area have turned posts and flat sawn-work brackets and balusters which emphasize a repetition of patterns. Several elements indicate that there was an attention to detail on the part of the designer/builder. The rose window is emphasized by an arched enframing which is similar to the shape of the arched window openings in the side walls. The spire had an open belfry with brackets between the corner members (now filled in by horizontal louvers) and was terminated by a weather vane. Originally, the yard of the church was enclosed by a picket fence with square wood posts; during the 1930s, the present fence with brick piers was constructed.

The parish hall consists of three parts combined by the late 1890s into the present configuration: a dwelling, a large hall to the rear, and an entry that connects with the church building. The entry and

house portions of the structure appear in an 1893 photograph of the church; the rear hall portion appears to be a later addition.¹⁶ According to church tradition, in conjunction with repairs made to the church after a fire during the 1890s, the hall – which has the reputation of being an old local school building (Westfield Township District School 7) – was added to the complex. The hall (originally clapboard-sheathed) has large windows and several doors; there is a stage across the west end of the space. It seems possible that this portion of the structure could have been a school moved to its present location when District School 7 (now P.S. 4) was built in 1896.

The rectory, built in 1926, is a substantial, vernacular, dwelling; it may have been a standard plan used by Royal Daggett, who appears to have been a builder/architect active on Staten Island during the mid-1920s.¹⁷ Like similar suburban residences, its amenities include a porch spanning the facade, and a freestanding garage near the rear of the lot. The brick steps, built by the congregation during the 1930s from Kreisler brick (at the same time that the church chimney and fence with brick piers were constructed), link the structure with the historic beginnings of the congregation and the village.

Description

The St. Peter's German Evangelical Church, Parish Hall, and Rectory are located on a slight rise on the north side of Winant Place in the village of Charleston. The church building and attached parish hall, at 19-23 Winant Place, and the rectory at 25 Winant Place form a complex united by a fence consisting of posts built of brick of various shades, some with Kreisler markings, that are spanned by lengths of chain-link fencing and gates along the front edge of the yards.

The church building is a one-and-one-half-story structure with a gable end facing the street from which a spire rises above the ridge-line. To the east of the church extends an entry hall that joins the sanctuary with a small dwelling which is used as a kitchen and coat hall. To the rear of the sanctuary and the dwelling extends the parish hall. The sanctuary portion of the church and the south facades of the wing to the east are sheathed with white aluminum siding (installed 1976); the wood elements of the porch, the tongue-and-groove porch flooring and steps, and the foundation (faced with concrete), are painted.

The wood porch that extends across the facade of the church has a shed roof with a central bay which projects as an intersecting gable roof. The

porch is constructed with square posts and beams that are modeled extensively with chamfering. The posts that terminate with capital blocks are flanked by paired brackets at the roof eaves; the posts are connected at balustrade height by a single chamfered horizontal wood member. From the king-post-like bracing at the apex of the porch roof hangs a sign with the name of the church and date of 1916. The exposed rafters (chamfered as well) of the porch roof have carved ends. Wood steps, flanked by modern metal handrails, lead to the central entrance which has paneled double-leaf doors topped by an arched fanlight which is divided by muntins and has leaded glass with a diamond pattern. A rose window, the leaded glass of which incorporates two rondels, is centered in the gable face within an arched enframing. At the front edge of the gable ridge rises a spire which consists of a square tower supported by a flared base; the belfry area is now covered by horizontal louvers. The tall, pyramidal wood spire is sheathed on the top portion with copper and on the lower portion with asphalt material; the spire is terminated by a ball finial and lightning rod which terminates with a star.

The main body of the church is pierced by arched windows set high in the side facades, just

below the projecting boxed eaves; these windows have sash divided into thirds on the exterior and are fitted on the interior with historic leaded colored glass windows. The upper portion of the roof, which is sheathed with dark-colored asphalt shingles, is pierced by several small gabled dormers, the faces of which are covered with aluminum siding. A tall chimney constructed of several shades of Kreisler brick (built during the 1930s) rises from the rear portion of the main block.

The three-bay entrance hall to the east of the sanctuary has a brick stoop (rebuilt during the late spring of 1994) leading to the entrance in the west bay. There is a bulkhead cellar entrance adjacent in the east bay of this portion of the complex. The dwelling portion of the structure has an irregular pyramidal roof from which a chimney extends. A small shed-roofed wood porch (on concrete piers) with an X-braced balustrade extends at one side of the front facade of the structure. Windows in the south and east facades of the entrance hall and kitchen portion of the complex have one-over-one aluminum sash. The exterior walls of the parish hall are sheathed with asphalt sheets. The exposed rafter ends at the eaves of the parish hall are carved on the east and west walls. The parish hall interior is lit by three sets of grouped tall windows -- in the east wall and at the east and west ends of the north facade -- which have four-over-four double-hung wood sash (with exterior storm windows). There is an exterior door near the middle of the north wall of the hall and a door takes the place of one of the windows in the east wall.¹⁸

Concrete walks extend along the fence and lead to the main entrance of the church and the door in

the entry hall. A flag pole stands to the east of the walk and the posts that supported an announcement board remain west of the walk.¹⁹ The portion of the yard in front of the entry is paved with granite blocks adjacent to the building. The remaining portion of the brick walk leading to the porch entrance in the east wing is edged with granite and brick curbing. Brick paving (of sidewalk width) edges much of the church complex; a brick-lined gutter along the west side of the church leads to the street. A driveway separates the church from the rectory.

The rectory, a two-and-one-half-story house with a gable-roofed main block, is sited close to the church, leaving a large yard to the west. The rectory, sheathed in aluminum siding (installed 1977), is on a foundation that is a combination of smooth and rock-faced concrete block; lattice screens enclose the porch foundation between the concrete block piers. The porch has a closed balustrade and square posts supporting the hipped roof that nearly spans the facade. Steps constructed of various shades of Kreisler brick lead to the porch. The central entrance has a storm door and modern wood door. The three-bay facade has window openings with one-over-one aluminum sash; there is a smaller window with similar sash centered in the attic gable face. Wood steps lead to a rear entrance. To the rear of the house there is a fenced play yard and a garage and shed building which is clad in asphalt sheathing.

Report prepared by
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NOTES

1. In this report the current names of streets will be used, although many of the thoroughfares were known by different names during the nineteenth century, according to historic atlases and deed descriptions. Arthur Kill Road had many names, including Fresh Kills Road, Shore Road, and Riverside Avenue. Around the turn of the century, Winant Place was known as Weber Street, Manley Street was Maple Street, and Androvette Avenue might have been known as Steinway Avenue (after the Kreisler family's friends and in-laws, the William Steinway family of piano manufacturers).
2. Sources on Balthasar Kreisler and his business include: Mabel Abbott, "Kreislerville: A Forgotten Chapter in Staten Island History," *Proceedings of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences* 11 (Jan. 1949), 31-43; the Kreisler Papers, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (SIIAS); Charles William Leng & William T. Davis, *Staten Island and its People* (New York, 1930); *Prominent Men of Staten Island, 1893* (New York: A. Y. Hubbell, 1893); Richard M. Bayles, *History of Richmond County, Staten Island, New York* (New York, 1887); J.J. Clute, *Annals of Staten Island, from Its Discovery to the Present Time* (New York, Press of Chas. Vogt, 1877); Asher & Adams, *Pictorial Guide to American Industry* (1876, rpt. New York, Routledge Books, 1876), 82; and Moses King, *King's Handbook of New York* (Boston, 1892), 880, 881, 886, 887.
3. Though the name of the Kreisler firm changed as the sons joined the firm, perhaps it was best known as B. Kreisler & Sons.
4. This section on Kreislerville is based on numerous deeds in the Richmond County, Office of the Register; *The*

Standard Directory of Richmond County for the Year 1893-1894 (New Brighton, NY: Robert Humphrey, 1893); *United States Census, Richmond County, New York* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1870, 1900, 1910, and 1920); the New York State Census listings for 1875 and 1915; S.C. Judson, *Illustrated Sketch Book of Staten Island, New York, Its Industries and Commerce* (New York: S.C. Judson, 1886); Gustav Kobbé, *Staten Island: A Guide Book, with Illustrations and a Road Map* (New York; Gustav Kobbé, 1890); Clute; *Staten Island Illustrated, Borough of Richmond, New York City*, (New Brighton: Staten Island Chamber of Commerce, 1911); Shirley Zavin and Elsa Gilbertson, "Kreischerville/Charleston Walking Tour" in *Staten Island Walking Tours* (Preservation League of Staten Island, 1986); Charles L. Sachs, *Made on Staten Island: Agriculture, Industry, and Suburban Living in the City* (New York: Staten Island Historical Society, 1988); and the following maps: F.H. Walling, *Map of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York* (New York: D.A. Fox, 1859); F.W. Beers, *Atlas of Staten Island, New York* (New York: J.B. Beers & Co., 1874); J.B. Beers, *Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond Co., New York* (New York: L.E. Neuman & Co., 1887); *Insurance Maps of the Borough of Richmond, City of New York* (New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1898, corrected up to 1911); *Atlas of the Borough of Richmond, City of New York*. 2nd ed. (New York: E. Robinson, 1907); *Borough of Richmond, Topographical Survey* (New York: September, 1913).

5. Kreischer's paternalistic dominance of the village is recounted in "Balthasar Kreischer's Memory to be Honored Tomorrow by Steuben Society Ceremony," *Staten Island Transcript*, May 29, 1936, Kreischer Papers, SIIAS and by Abbott, p. 36-37.
6. The brick works closed during a brief building slump in 1906 and for good in 1927 according to William Franz, "For Half-Century, Kilns Burned," the *Staten Island Advance*, Mar. 27, 1986, and "City Rural Area is Dying Slowly," *New York Times*, August 1966, in the Kreischerville Vertical File, The Staten Island Historical Society; and "Thoughts at Random -- Kreischer & Kaolin," *Staten Island Transcript*, April 10, 1936.
7. Information on the Kreischerville church and the Reverend Ganss was compiled from Ira K. Morris, *Morris's Memorial History of Staten Island, New York* (West New Brighton, Staten Island: 1900); "Rev. Dr. Jacob James Ganss," in Leng & Davis, 424-425; *Prominent Men of Staten Island*, 139; Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 148, page 277; Liber 285, page 362; Liber 296, page 380; *Fest-Zeitung 10-Jährigen Bestehens St. Peterskirche* (1893), SIIAS; "History of St. Paul's Evangelical Reformed Church," by The Reverend Charles W. Krahe, Jr., in William C. McGinnis, *History of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, 1651-1958* (Perth Amboy: American Publishing Co., 1958), 95-98; Daniel Van Winkle, ed.-in-chief, *History of the Municipalities of Hudson County, New Jersey, 1630-1923* (New York and Chicago: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1924), Vol 1, 336; and Judson.
8. The West Baptist Church congregation, which had erected a building on the west side of Arthur Kill Road in 1847 near the community cemetery that remains, was noted as being without a pastor in 1877 and again in 1896. The Methodist Episcopal Church (also referred to as the Androvette Chapel or the Androvette Methodist Episcopal Church), had erected a church building on the east side of the Arthur Kill Road in 1870, which it used until 1884, when the church corporation dissolved. The St. Peter's congregation had first met in the Methodist Episcopal church's small building.
9. These congregations filed incorporation papers with the Richmond County Office of the Register; it is not known how closely the date of incorporation reflects the establishment of a congregation.
10. Certificate of Incorporation Liber 4, page 408, recorded June 18, 1915; this incorporation appears to have been overlooked by the congregation which has dated its organization to 1916. Under the direction of the Reverend Toth, the church was affiliated briefly with the Episcopalian denomination. The date that Hungarian congregation acquired the church, a purchase made possible by a mortgage from Janos Szucs, remains unclear. The author is indebted to Linda Hauck, Secretary of the Board of Elders, for providing information about the Free Magyar Reformed Church and "The Brief History of the Free Magyar Reformed Church of Staten Island," in the 1944 *Souvenir Book of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Free Magyar Reformed Church*, 16-17.
11. New Building Application 1926-863 filed May 13, 1926, for a two-story, 30' by 30' dwelling owned by the Magyar Reformed Church.
12. Information on the Free Magyar Reformed Church in America and other Hungarian congregations was found in Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1951), 164-165; "History of the Magyar Reformed Church, Free Magyar Reformed Church" by The Rev. Dezso Abraham in McGinnis, 102-105; Julianna Puskas, *From Hungary to the United States* (1880-1914), (Budapest: Akadémiai

- Kradó), 20, 191-210; and Endre Sebestyén, "Magyars in America," *The Hungarian Quarterly* 197 (Autumn, 1941), 228-246.
13. Several churches are pictured in Dorothy Valentine Smith, *This Was Staten Island* (Staten Island Historical Society, 1968), 12-25 and other texts on Staten Island.
 14. The historical appearance of the church is documented in a photograph that appeared in *Fest-Zeitung 10-Jährigen Bestehens St. Peterskirche* (1893) and in New York Public Library, *Photographic Views of New York City, 1870s - 1970s* (Ann Arbor, 1981), fiche 1265/B4 (1927).
 15. The carpenters who lived in Kreischerville in 1893-94 (when a directory is available) included Charles Beckmann, John Burgess, Theodore Faurote, and William Winant.
 16. Although the house might have been the first residence of the Reverend Ganss, the parsonage, according to the Beers Atlas of 1887, was the dwelling on Arthur Kill Road (owned by B. Kreisler). The 1898 Sanborn atlas depicts the church and parish hall with its present configuration.
 17. Little is known about Daggett; according to the New Building Permit docket, he was listed as the architect for two houses built by the Sorenson Construction Company on Eltingville Boulevard and for a house built on Pleasant Plains Avenue in 1925 and 1926.
 18. Historic photographs indicate that the porch on the kitchen had a stick balustrade. Photographs and the corner boards remaining under the asphalt sheathing suggest that the additions to the church building were clad in horizontal sheathing.
 19. There are several non-historic exterior lights, including a spotlight above the main entrance to the church and one hanging behind the sign that lights the steps, a pair of spotlights near the south end of the east facade mounted near the eaves, a spotlight mounted on the west side of the kitchen wing, a lantern fixture near the entrance on the kitchen wings, and pairs of spotlights mounted above two fence posts aimed at the facade of the church and the flagpole.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church), Parish Hall, and Rectory has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church) is representative of the many small churches built for immigrant congregations on Staten Island during the second half of the nineteenth century; that the church complex – church, parish house, and rectory – recalls the era when Charleston was known as Kreischerville, as well as the early-twentieth-century period when Hungarian immigrants maintained the separate identity of the small village; that, erected in 1883 as the gift of local industrialist Balthasar Kreischer, the church reflects the paternalistic role that industrialists often played in the development of quasi-company towns such as Kreischerville where pre-existing development and other local interests tempered the control of the industrialist; that though characteristic of the vernacular, wood-framed structures built in the villages of Staten Island and elsewhere, the Carpenter Gothic church, probably designed and built by local craftsmen, is distinguished by its porch that is domestic in scale and form, and by the emphasis on verticality provided by the slender spire and rows of small gabled dormers in the steeply-pitched gable roof; that through its pastor, the Reverend Jacob Ganss, who led the German congregation throughout its existence, the Kreischerville Church was linked with nearby German Protestant congregations; that as the Hungarian population in the village of Kreischerville grew, a Magyar Reformed church was established in 1915 and met in St. Peter's church, which the Hungarian congregation soon acquired; that the attached parish hall, an early addition to the church, and the rectory, designed by architect Royal Daggett and built in 1926 by the Hungarian congregation, complete the complex which is enclosed by a distinctive fence with posts of Kreischer brick; that the history of the Hungarian congregation, which in 1933 affiliated with the small Free Magyar Reformed Church in America denomination established in the United States in 1920, documents the important role that churches played in the lives of immigrant groups.

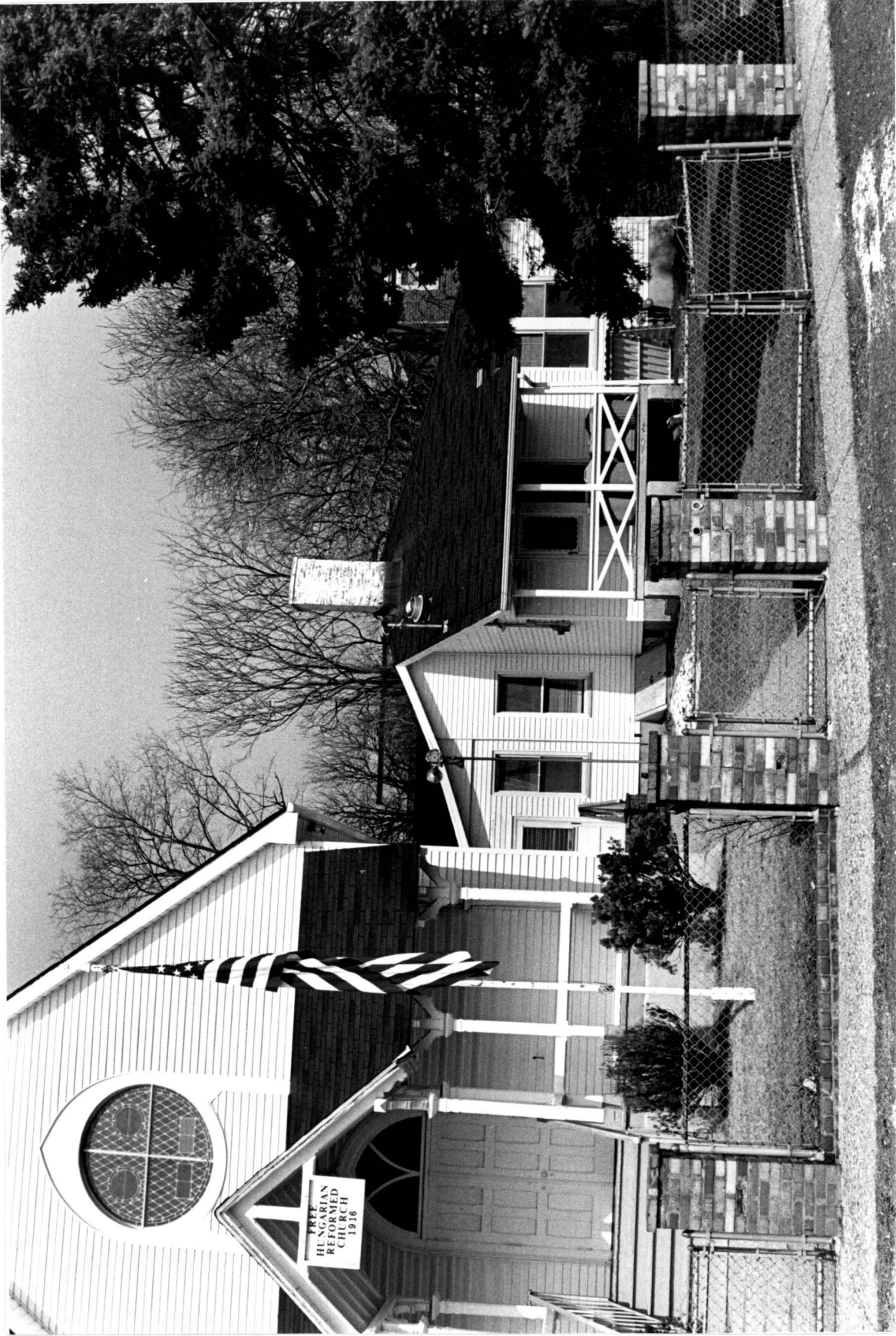
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church), Parish Hall and Rectory, 19-23 Winant Place and 25 Winant Place, Charleston and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 7400, Lots 171 and 166, as its Landmark Site.



St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church)
19-23 Winant Place, Charleston, Staten Island.



St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church) and Rectory, 19-23 Winant Place and 25 Winant Place, Charleston, Staten Island.



St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church) and Parish Hall.
19-23 Winant Place, Charleston, Staten Island.



St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church) 19-23 Winant Place, Charleston, Staten Island.



St. Peter's German Evangelical Church at Kreischerville (now Free Magyar Reformed Church) and Rectory, 19-23 Winant Place and 25 Winant Place, Charleston, Staten Island.