



**CITY OF SYRACUSE, MAYOR BEN WALSH**  
**300 South State Street, Suite 700 Syracuse, NY 13202**

Department of Neighborhood and Business Development  
 Jake Dishaw, Zoning Administrator  
 Office of Zoning Administration – P: (315)448-8640 E: Zoning@syr.gov

<b><i>PS-24-01</i></b>	<b><i>Staff Report – September 30, 2024</i></b>
<b><i>Application Type:</i></b>	Designation of Protected Sites and Preservation Districts
<b><i>Project Address:</i></b>	727 Comstock Ave (Tax Map ID: 046.-17-19.0)
<b><i>Summary of Proposed Action:</i></b>	The applicant proposes to designate the subject property as a Protected Site.
<b><i>Owner/Applicant</i></b>	Syracuse University (Owner) Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board (Applicant)
<b><i>Existing Zone District:</i></b>	Planned Institutional, PID Zone District
<b><i>Surrounding Zone Districts:</i></b>	The neighboring properties to the north, south, east and west are located in Planned Institutional, PID Zone District.
<b><i>Companion Application(s)</i></b>	None
<b><i>Summary of Changes:</i></b>	<p>This project was reviewed and approved by CPC during 7/29 meeting. Meanwhile the Syracuse University proposed to demolish the existing structure on the property. The designation proposal was referred to Common Council for final decision.</p> <p>When Common Council was reviewing the designation proposal, the Syracuse University withdrew the demolition proposal on the property at 727 Comstock Ave. Due to the changes of Syracuse University’s project, the SLPB finds it is necessary to modify their application and have CPC review it again.</p>
<b><i>Scope of Work:</i></b>	The Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board proposes to designate the subject property as a Local Protected Site.
<b><i>Staff Analysis:</i></b>	<p><b><u>Factors:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The subject property is eligible to be designated as a local projected site.</li> <li>- The existing structure on the property was built in 1905.</li> <li>- Based on inspection records, the subject property has been vacant since 3/17/2023.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Zoning Procedural History:</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 06/14/1973   SP-73-17   Special Use Permit to establish a care home for residents with drug-abuse related problems.   Approved</li> <li>- 06/03/1981   SR-81-05   Site Plan Review to expand the fraternity house to include 45 beds.   Approved</li> <li>- 12/09/1982   V-82-67   Variance to maintain an unscreened parking area.   Approved</li> </ul>
<b><i>Summary of Zoning History:</i></b>	There was a care home established in the fraternity house on the property in 1973. The fraternity house was expanded in 1981. A variance was granted in 1982 to maintain an unscreened parking area on the property.
<b><i>Code Enforcement History:</i></b>	See attached code enforcement history.
<b><i>Zoning Violations:</i></b>	The proposed lot has no zoning violations.
<b><i>Property Characteristics:</i></b>	The subject property is regular in shape with 100.00 feet of frontage on Comstock Avenue, 100.00 feet along the south property line and a lot depth of 200.00 feet. The total area of the lot is 22,000 SF.

**PS-24-01**

<b>SEQR Determination:</b>	Pursuant to the 6 NYCRR §617.5(c)(38), the proposal is a Type II Action.
<b>Onondaga County Planning Board Referral:</b>	The proposal does not meet the referral criteria for Onondaga County Planning Board pursuant to GML §239-1, m and n.

**Application Submittals:** The applicant submitted the following in support of the proposed project:

- Protected Site Application, including statement of significance, applicable eligibility criteria, images and maps
- Resolution of the Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board (SLPB) to designate 727 Comstock Avenue to be a protected site, dated 9/12/24.
- Correspondence and written testimony received by SLPB regarding proposed designation

**Attachments:**

Protected Site Application: PS-24-01 727 Comstock Avenue  
Correspondence and testimony  
SLPB Resolution dated 9/12/24

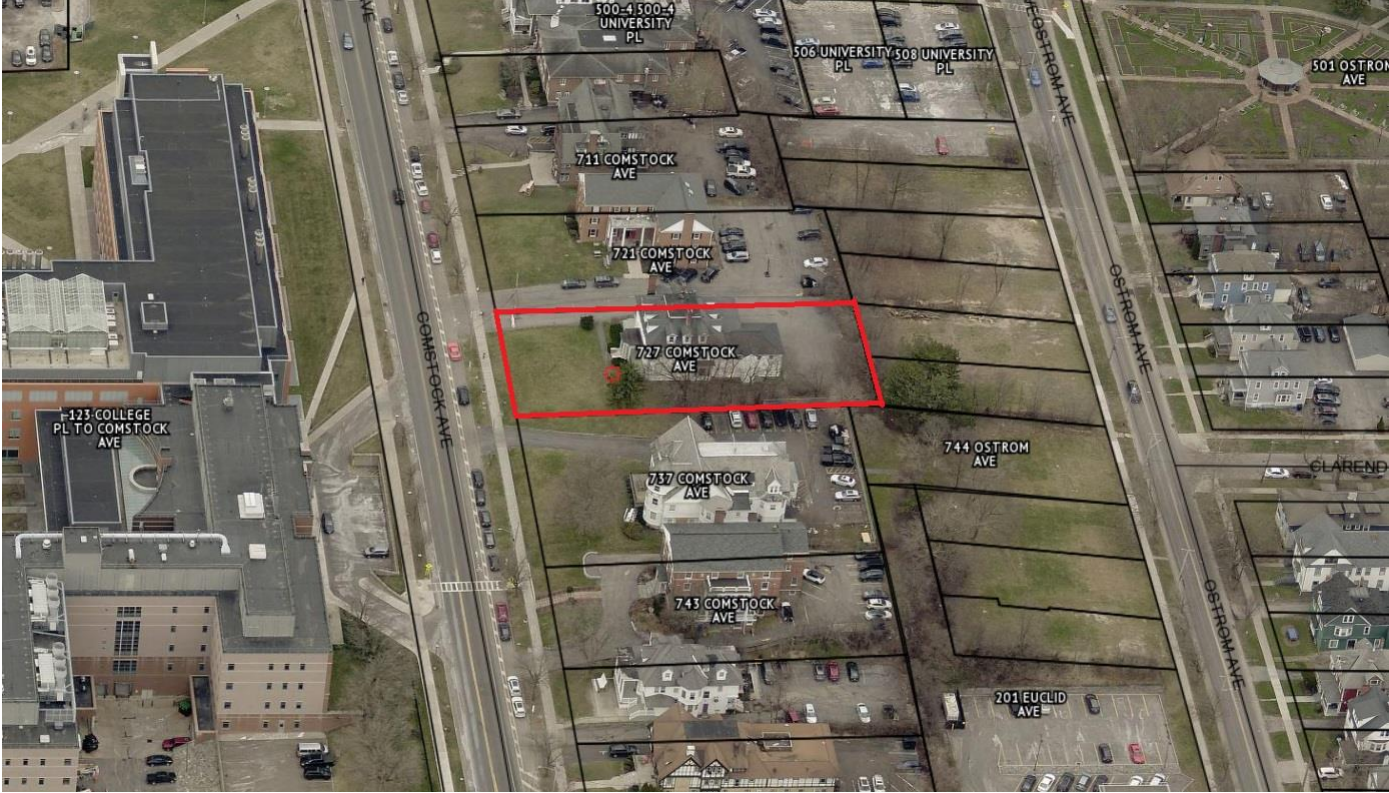
**Context Maps:**

**Figure 1: Zone District of Subject Property**

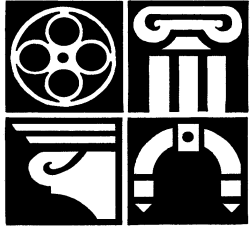


Description: Figure 1 shows the current Zone District of the subject property.  
Image Source: City of Syracuse Neighborhood and Business Development, ReZone Syracuse Zoning Map

Figure 2: Aerial Imagery of Subject Property



Description: Figure 2 shows satellite imagery of the subject property.  
Image Source: ConnectExplorer™, Eagle View Technology Corporation



*SYRACUSE  
LANDMARK  
PRESERVATION  
BOARD*

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Office of Zoning Administration  
**From:** Kate Auwaerter / Staff to SLPB  
**Date:** September 26, 2024  
**Re:** Revised Resolution: Protected Site Designation for 727 Comstock Avenue

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On August 27, 2024, Syracuse University formally withdrew its application for the Demolition of Non-Landmarked Historic Properties for 727 Comstock Avenue. The demolition application was the impetus for the review that led the Landmark Preservation Board to recommend to the City Planning Commission that 727 Comstock Avenue be designated a Protected Site.

In response to the withdrawal of the demolition application, the Landmark Preservation Board voted at its September 12, 2024, meeting to revise its original June 20, 2024, resolution recommending designation of 727 Comstock Avenue as a Local Protected Site to clarify that the application for designation stands independent of Syracuse University's demolition application and that the Landmark Preservation Board has authority to submit an application independent of a demolition application. In addition, the Landmark Preservation Board reaffirmed its finding that 727 Comstock Avenue meets the criteria for individual designation detailed in ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3.A.(3)a.1-3 and Sec.6.3.A.(3)b-c.

Attached are the Protected Site application and the Landmark Preservation Board's revised resolution recommending the designation of 727 Comstock Avenue as a Protected Site. Please forward the application and revised resolution to the members of the City Planning Commission for review pursuant ReZone Art 6., Sec. 6.3.A.(5).e.4.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 315-448-8108 or [kauwaerter@syr.gov](mailto:kauwaerter@syr.gov).

Thank you.

Attachments

Local Protected Site and Preservation District Application



Zoning Administration  
201 East Washington St.  
Syracuse, NY 13202  
(315) 448-8640  
Zoning@syr.gov

For Office Use Only	
Zoning District:	_____
Application Number:	LPS- 24 _____ -01
Date:	6/20/24 _____

Local Protected Site and Preservation District Application

This application may be mailed or delivered in person to City Hall Commons Room 512, 201 E. Washington Street. If you wish to discuss the application with a member of our preservation staff, please call 315-448-8108 or email SLPB@syr.gov.

General Project Information

Property Address: <i>(in the case of a district, attach complete address list with corresponding tax parcel numbers))</i> 727 Comstock Avenue (Estabrook House/Zeta Psi Fraternity)	
Tax Parcel Number: 046.-17-19.0	Lot size (sq. ft.) 22,000 sf
Current ownership: <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Other (if so, explain)	
This application is for designation of the: <input type="checkbox"/> Interior only <input type="checkbox"/> Interior and exterior <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exterior only	
<b>Owner Information:</b> <i>(In the case of a district, include property owner list corresponding to address and tax parcel information)</i>	
Name: Syracuse University	
Mailing Address: 900 S. Crouse Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13244	
<b>Applicant Information:</b>	
Name: Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board	
Mailing Address: 300 South State Street, Suite 700, Syracuse, NY 13202	
Phone: 315-448-8108	Email: slpb@syr.gov
Signature:	Date: 7/24/24

**Local Protected Site and Preservation District Application**



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**Property/ District Information**

<b>Part 1. Property / District Description</b>	
Date(s) of construction: 1905	
Architect(s): Gaggin & Gaggin (architects); J. W. Dawson (mason); Thomas Coon (carpenter) Builder(s):	
Original use: Single family home Present use: Vacant; former fraternity	
<p>Site location: Describe the site and surroundings of the property or overall geography of the district and identify any significant site features that contribute to the designation, including walks, plantings, furnishings, walls, light fixtures, etc.</p> <p>The property is located on the east side of Comstock Avenue with the main facade facing west. The parcel sits at the crest of Comstock Avenue, which slopes down sharply to the north and more gently to the south from the property. The residence sits approximately 70 feet east of the public sidewalk up a sloping site. The front yard is open lawn. A driveway is located on the north side of the parcel leading to a large asphalt parking lot which takes up the rear yard.</p> <p>The east side of the 700 block of Comstock Avenue consists of large, primarily 3-story, frame and masonry residences on large lots sharing the same wide setback from the sidewalk. The west side of 700 block of Comstock Avenue consists of 3- to 4-story institutional buildings belonging to Syracuse University.</p>	
<b>Part 2. Physical Description (Primary Building)</b>	
Exterior building material: (check all that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clapboard</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Brick</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Shingle</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stucco</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Concrete</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Curtain wall</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Masonry block</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other <u>vinyl siding</u></li> </ul>	Structural System: (check all that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wood frame</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Steel frame</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Masonry</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other</li> </ul>
Describe condition: (Excellent/good/fair/ deteriorated)	
The condition is fair to good. The property is vacant with boarded over windows on the ground floor. The roof appears to be sound and the inside of the building is dry. The foundation has no obvious bowing or deterioration.	
Alterations: List all known alterations and approximate dates of alterations:	
Major renovations c. 1980 resulted in the removal of the original window sash and installation of new vinyl sash and siding. Original wood clapboards are visible under the siding. A fire escape was added to the north facade and one roof dormer window was converted to an exit door. A 2-story addition with kitchen, a stairwell, and ramp were added to the rear of the property. Other changes include the replacement of circular columns on the front porch with square columns and the removal of the decorative balustrades on the roof of the house and the portico/porch roofs.	
Related outbuildings: identify associated structures that contribute to the designation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Garage</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Carriage house</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Barn</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Shed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other: <u>N/A</u></li> </ul>	

## Local Protected Site and Preservation District Application



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**Exterior Description:** Describe the overall exterior features and form of the property, such as number of stories, main entrances, porches, window pattern, roof shape and covering, cornice, dormers and architectural detailing, as applicable.

*(Note: District nominations require individual survey forms for each contributing property)*

727 Comstock Avenue is a 3-story, frame, Colonial Revival style structure on a raised, white granite foundation. It features a tall hipped roof with three prominent projecting roof dormers on each roof slope (a total of 12 dormers). Three, tall brick chimneys rise above the roofline of the house.

The symmetrically arranged front (west) facade is 5-bays wide with a center entrance under a projecting portico supported by paired, fluted, square columns. Decorative features include full-height, fluted pilasters with elaborate Corinthian capitals at each corner of the main block of the house. The overhanging eaves feature decorative scrolled modillions around three sides of the original block of the house.

The scallop-shaped front portico features a wide, entablature with dentil moldings under projecting eaves. The portico is located at the top of a set of white granite steps. Under the portico is the main entrance which features a center door with two sidelights. Surrounding the entrance is an elaborate triangular pediment with dentil molding supported by fluted pilasters on raised paneled bases with Corinthian capitals to either side of the door and sidelights.

The roof dormers are notable for their size and their scrolled broken pediments and modillions.

The north elevation features a side porch with a narrowly sloped flat roof supported by square fluted columns and decorative modillions under the projecting roof. The porch is accessed by an angled set of stairs. The side entrance features a curved pediment with keystone feature, fanlight and sidelights.

The south elevation features a projecting rectangular bay with a large central fixed-pane window flanked by two narrower fixed windows. The narrow cheeks of the bay feature single rectangular fixed panes. The bay features the same decorative features as found on other elevations of the house including fluted pilasters with Corinthian pilasters, supporting a flat entablature and projecting roof with decorative modillions.

The windows on every facade and in the roof dormers are one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl replacement windows. The wood molding around the windows appears to have been retained. The original wood clapboard siding of the house is covered in vinyl siding. There is a metal fire escape attached to the north facade of the building below the attic story of the house. There is a large, two-story addition on the rear of the house with a ramp. The addition is recessed back from the north and south corners of the house to protect the decorative corner pilasters and capitals that mark the original block of the house.

## Local Protected Site and Preservation District Application



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**Interior Description:** For interior designations, describe the significant interior features, such as interior room arrangement, wall finishes, stairways, decorative woodwork, and other significant features, as applicable.

The former residence has a center hall plan with a large, paneled staircase with ornate balustrade leading to the second floor.

The main rooms and hallway on the first floor retain extensive original wood paneling and decorative trim. The room at the northwest corner of the first floor retains a fireplace with a wooden mantel and decorative tile surround.

The second floor rooms are located off the hall from the main staircase. The rooms feature plain wood trim around the windows and door openings. One bedroom retains a fireplace with wooden mantel and surround.

A narrow staircase leads to the third floor, which is divided into additional bedrooms and bathrooms. Some of the bedrooms feature built-in sets of drawers.

There are hardwood floors throughout the original house.

The full basement includes one finished room with a fireplace. An unusual feature are the banks of radiators that are suspended from the basement ceiling that provided heat to the first floor.



**Local Protected Site and Preservation District Application**



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**Part 3. Historic Landscapes:** In the case of the designation of historic landscapes, describe the natural systems, topography and features that influenced the development and resultant form of the landscape; current land use; location and arrangement of buildings and structures; circulation pattern and features; vegetation; vistas and views; water features; small scale features; and archeological sites, as applicable.

N/A

## Local Protected Site and Preservation District Application



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### Part 4. Criteria for Designation

In order to be designated a Protected Site or Preservation District, a property or district must meet one or more of the following criteria. Please check all that apply:

- association with persons or events of historic significance to the city, region, state or nation;
- illustrative of historic growth and development of the city, region, state or nation;
- in the case of structures, embodying distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or representing the work of a master, or possessing unique architectural and artistic qualities, or representing a significant and distinguishable entity whose component may lack individual distinction;
- in the case of districts, possessing a unique overall quality of architectural scale, texture, form and visual homogeneity even though certain structures within the district may lack individual distinction;
- in the case of interiors, possessing one (1) or more of the characteristics enumerated in 1, 2 or 3 above and, in addition, embodying distinctive characteristics of architectural scale, form and visual homogeneity, which are an integral part of the character of the structure in which the space is contained.

**Statement of Significance:** In a brief opening paragraph, please describe how the property or district meets the eligibility criteria. Attach continuation sheets detailing full history of the property or district, the people and/or events associated with the property or district, and/or the architecturally significant or unique qualities that contribute to the property or district's significance.

The SLPB determined that the property is eligible for designation by meeting the following criteria:

Criterion 1 for its association with prominent local lawyer Charles Scott Estabrook and his wife Laura Curry Estabrook, who commissioned the construction of 727 Comstock Avenue in 1905 and lived in the house for 18 years, which included the formative period of Estabrook's law practice in Syracuse; Criterion 2 for its association with the growth and development of the city's eastside neighborhood; specifically, the development in the late 19th and early 20th century of residential enclaves near Syracuse University that attracted affluent professionals to the Comstock Avenue and Walnut Avenue areas, and for the later evolution of these homes into fraternities and sororities associated with Syracuse University; Criterion 3 as a work of the nationally-known local architecture firm Gaggin & Gaggin, which was responsible for the designs of important local institutional, commercial, and residential properties; and as a high-style Colonial Revival style residence featuring a symmetrical center hall design, tall hipped roof with broken-pedimented roof dormers, prominent front portico, and elaborate decorative details including full-height, fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals located on each corner of the main block of the house, carved modillions under the projecting eaves of the main roof and porches and side bay window, and the highly detailed pedimented front entrance. (See attached pages)

**Sources:** List all sources of data used in preparing the application, including the location of any building plans, documents or photographs. Attach continuation sheets as needed.  
(See attached sheet)

## **PS-24-01 727 Comstock Avenue**

### **Local Protected Site Nomination: 727 Comstock Avenue**

#### **Brief Summary History of 727 Comstock Avenue**

The residence at 727 Comstock Avenue was constructed in 1905 for Charles S. and Laura (Curry) Estabrook. It was designed by the architecture firm of Gaggin & Gaggin. After 18 years, the Estabrooks sold the house to Zeta Psi Fraternity. The residence was associated with Greek life at Syracuse University until 2022 when Syracuse University purchased the property. It is currently vacant.

#### **Historic Context**

*Related to Eligibility Criterion 2: Illustrative of historic growth and development of city, region, state or nation*

The late 1800s and early 1900s saw the rapid expansion of neighborhoods of Syracuse located east of downtown. This growth was made possible in part with the advent of an extensive streetcar network that allowed people to move away from their downtown workplaces. The first streetcar to the eastside was established in the late 1870s along E. Genesee Street. By the early 1900s, street cars ran along Euclid Avenue from Westcott Street to University Place with direct connections back to downtown.

Starting in the 1870s, affluent members of the professional classes began purchasing and building homes on the city's east side. The wealthy enclave of Walnut Park, located just north and west of Syracuse University, was developed between 1870 and 1900. As noted by local historian, Dr. Samuel Gruber, Comstock Avenue was the southernmost "expression" of this early upscale development on the city's east side. Advertisements appeared frequently in the local newspapers offering "choice" lots along Comstock Avenue. By the early 1900s, Comstock Avenue featured several large homes. On the east side of block, they all featured a similar deep setback from the street and overlooked the growing university and the city and lake beyond.

The residence at 727 Comstock Avenue was constructed in 1905 for Charles S. and Laura (Curry) Estabrook literally at the high point of the area. They selected the local firm of Gaggin & Gaggin architects to design the house on a location, as one news article stated, "... considered about the best available residence property in that part of the city, commanding as it does a fine view of the university campus, the city, lake and country beyond." (Syracuse Herald, May 5, 1905). The Estabrooks thought well enough of the area that in 1910, Estabrook hired Ward Wellington Ward to design a house at 819 Comstock Avenue for his mother and stepfather, Theron and Caroline Sears Estabrook Barnum.

Beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, the advent of the automobile and introduction of new technologies changed where people could live and how people lived in their homes. Large mansions that required multiple live-in servants were no longer practical or economical. As people began to leave the city for the suburbs and exurbs, the city's "mansion rows" such as along James Street and West Onondaga Street declined and transitioned from single family homes to multi-family or were demolished.

The University Hill neighborhood was also in transition. As families moved away, many of the large houses around Walnut Park and between Comstock Avenue and College Place (a block to the west) were sold to sororities and fraternities and converted the homes to dormitory-style living. Greek life at Syracuse University was established in 1871, a year after the university's founding. As the university expanded so did the number of fraternities and sororities. By 1925, there were 32 men's chapters and 21 women's chapters on campus. This growth was reflected in the neighborhoods closest to the university campus. The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from 1911 identified two residences as fraternity

houses within the two blocks bounded by Comstock Avenue (east) and College Place (west), Euclid Avenue (south) and University Avenue (north). By 1941, there were 26 Greek-letter affiliated houses within this area, establishing it as a center of Greek life at the university. The Estabrooks sold their home to Zeta Psi Fraternity in 1923 and moved to Fayetteville. The house at 727 Comstock Avenue became one of the many properties affiliated with Greek life at Syracuse University.

### **Ownership History**

*Related to Criterion 1: Association with persons or events of historic significance to the city, region, state or nation.*

#### **Estabrook Family**

Charles Scott Estabrook was born on 23 June 1879 in Binghamton, Broome County, NY. He was the oldest of the two sons of Dr. Charles Gouder Estabrook and Caroline Miranda Sears. He was educated in the public schools and graduated from Cornell University in 1900 with a law degree and was admitted to the New York bar within a year.

After graduation, Estabrook established a private law practice in Syracuse. In 1904, he went into partnership with his brother Williams Sears Estabrook, operating the firm of Estabrook & Estabrook. The firm continued to grow as they took on new partners. In 1920, William Harding joined the firm, which became Estabrook, Estabrook & Harding. The firm evolved later into Estabrook, Burns, Hancock and White, then, Hancock, Estabrook, Ryan, Shove and Hurst. The law firm, Hancock and Estabrook, continues to bear the Estabrook name and maintains its headquarters in downtown Syracuse today.

In addition to his busy law practice, Mr. Estabrook was equally active in the community. He was elected to the Board of Counselors of the Syracuse Home Association in 1913 and served as the president of the board from 1929-1952. He was a member of the Board of Directors of Syracuse Trust Co. and the successor to that bank, the Marine Midland Trust Company and served as their attorney. His other board work included terms as member and vice-president of the board of the Post-Standard Company and was a trustee of Oakwood Cemetery. He served as president of the board of the University Hospital of the Good Shepherd and was on the board of the Syracuse Foundation. His professional associations were as a member of the Onondaga County Bar Association, the New York Bar Association and the American Bar Association. For a time, he served as a commissioner of deeds.

On September 6, 1905, Estabrook married Laura J. Curry, daughter of Henry M. and Harriet G. Curry of Pittsburgh at Curry's summer home in the Magnolia Community in Massachusetts. Laura's father was in the steel industry in Pittsburgh and was associated with Andrew Carnegie.

Like many women of her time and social class, Mrs. Estabrook was active in the social and charitable activities of the city. Her name appears frequently in the newspaper recounting her participation in or as hostess of teas, luncheons, receptions, dinners and other social activities. She was one of the founding members of the Rummage Shop, a charitable organization, the Girl Scouts, the Visiting Nurse Association and Community Chest. She was a member of the auxiliary of the University Hospital of the Good Shepherd for over 50 years and served on its board of directors for about 25 years. She and her husband were members of the Onondaga Golf and Country Club. The family were members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where Mr. Estabrook had served as a vestryman and warden.

The Estabrooks first and only home in Syracuse was the residence built at 727 Comstock Avenue. On July 9, 1905, the Syracuse Herald announced that Charles Estabrook had purchased a lot from James M.

Gilbert on Comstock Avenue to build a “fine Colonial home in Comstock Avenue” for him and his new wife. The family lived in the house for 18 years. During this time, their family grew to four children. Census information indicates that they had three live-in servants, a cook, maid and a nurse for the children. In 1923, the Estabrooks sold their home on Comstock Avenue to Zeta Psi fraternity and relocated to their new home in Fayetteville, designed by Ward Wellington Ward.

#### Zeta Psi Fraternity

Zeta Psi Fraternity was founded at New York University in 1847. The gamma chapter was founded by seven charter members at Syracuse University in 1875. It was originally located at 805 University Avenue. In intervening years, it was located in other areas near campus and at 8 Crouse Avenue before moving to Comstock Avenue. An article in the Syracuse Journal on 25 August 25, 1922, recorded that Zeta Psi Fraternity was considering the purchase of the Estabrook house at 727 Comstock Avenue as their new chapter house and expected the purchase deal to be closed within a week. The article described the house as "one of the finest in the hill section" and it could be "converted into a home for fraternity use without alteration." The grounds were described as spacious and that with the conversion of the Estabrook house there would be four fraternity houses in that section of Comstock Avenue. The fraternity purchased the house for \$43,000. In October 1923, they held an open house at their new location for the other fraternities and sororities at the University.

Although the fraternity went through periods when it was inactive at the university (1887-1905, 1973-1975, 1993-1998), once it acquired 727 Comstock Avenue it maintained its ownership. After the national chapter closed the fraternity in Spring 2007, it continued to lease the property to other Greek organizations until it was purchased by Syracuse University in October 2022.

#### **Architectural Significance**

*Related to Eligibility Criterion 3: In the case of structures, embodying distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or representing the work of a master, or possessing unique architectural and artistic qualities, or representing a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.*

#### Gaggin & Gaggin Architects

The residence at 727 Comstock Avenue was the design of important local architectural firm of Gaggin & Gaggin. The July 9, 1905, Syracuse Herald article announcing the new development, noted that “the house will be pure Colonial in style, three stories high, of frame surmounting a white granite foundation.” A July 15, 1905, article in the Post Standard identified Gaggin & Gaggin as the architects, J.W. Dawson as the mason, and Thomas Coon as the carpenter for the project. A September 28, 1905, article in the Post Standard noted that a “striking feature of the exterior [of the house] is the large number of dormer windows. These windows were built at a mill and set in place in one piece.”

Gaggin & Gaggin was founded in 1902 by brothers Thomas Walker Gaggin, Sr., and Edwin Hall Gaggin. Both Gaggins were graduates of Syracuse University’s architecture program. After studying abroad at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, France for two years, Edwin Gaggin returned to Syracuse to join the faculty of architecture at Syracuse University. Thomas Walker Gaggin completed his graduate studies in architecture at Columbia University before returning to Syracuse also to join the university’s architecture faculty before opening a new architectural firm with his brother.

Over the almost 30-year history of the firm, Gaggin & Gaggin won a number of notable commissions including the L.C. Smith Tower in Seattle (1912-14), which was the city’s first skyscraper. Local

commercial and institutional designs of note include: Lyman Smith Hall, Syracuse University (1900-02); Machinery Hall, Syracuse University (1907); and the Masonic Temple Building, 318 Montgomery Street (1915-1917).

The firm had multiple residential commissions as well including a number in Norwich, NY for the Eaton Family. Local commissions include 401 University Place, the former Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity House, Syracuse University (1902-03) which is now used as the Goldstein Alumni and Faculty Center; 703 Walnut Avenue, former Horace Wilkinson House (1905); and the 973 James Street, Chapin House (1915, demolished).

The firm favored Colonial Revival and Neo-Classical high-style residential designs. The house at 727 Comstock Avenue is an early and fine example of Colonial Revival-style architecture, featuring a symmetrical center hall design, tall Mansard roof with pedimented roof dormers, and projecting front portico. Elaborate decorative details include the full-height, fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals located on each corner of the main block of the house, carved modillions under the projecting eaves of the main roof and porches and side bay window, and the highly detailed pedimented front entrance. As noted by Dr. Gruber, the house “exemplifies the highest standards of domestic architecture at the time....In its location, architecture, and architectural detailing, it was designed by the young and wealthy Estabrooks to be seen and admired.”

### **Integrity Analysis**

To be determined eligible for designation as a protected site a property must also retain historic integrity, or the ability to convey its significance through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and/or association. Historic integrity measures the degree to which the historically significant materials, features, and characteristics of a resource still exist.

Location: The property retains a high degree of integrity of location as the house has not been moved and remains in its original location.

Design and workmanship: The house retains a high degree of design and workmanship. It retains its original Colonial-Revival style form, massing, and pattern of window and door openings. The style is characterized by its square, box shape with a tall Mansard-hip roof with prominent roof dormers on every side. The main façade is symmetrically arranged around the front entrance which is located under an extended portico with its original set of granite steps. Originally, the porch columns were round, but were replaced at some point with square fluted columns. The number and location of the columns have not changed, nor has the footprint of the porch changed. The property also features a side porch with square columns. As with the front porch, these columns were originally round. The replacement columns match the number and location of the original columns. The porch also retains the angled steps that are visible in historic photographs.

The house features narrow clapboard siding that is currently covered in vinyl siding. Although the wood siding has been covered, the aesthetic of a clapboard sided house has been retained even with the vinyl siding which is a non-standard, narrow width. When the siding was installed, the original wood window trim was retained. The location of the hardware used to attach the former window awnings is still visible around the window trim.

The addition on the rear of the house was constructed in such a way as to minimize the damage to the design integrity of the house. Where it meets the original main block of the house, the rear addition is stepped back to protect the corner pilasters and capitals. The addition is narrower and also lower than

the house, so that the rear facing roof dormers were neither obscured nor removed. The rear addition is minimally visible from the street.

A metal fire escape has been attached to the north façade and an attic story window has been converted into a door. These alterations, although out of character with the house, are minor and could be reversed.

Evidence of the workmanship that defines the Colonial Revival style of the house include the full-height, fluted pilasters crowned by Corinthian style capitals, modillions under the projecting eaves, and broken pedimented roof dormers. An outstanding example of the workmanship is the front entrance door which features a center entrance and sidelights separated by fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals supporting a projecting cornice with modillion details. Other important features include the tooled, white granite foundation and porch piers.

Materials: The material integrity of the house is fair. The house has experienced material loss, including the loss of the original window sash, original exterior doors, original porch columns and portions of the porch trim. The original clapboards have been covered (although not removed) with vinyl siding, which also covers other features such as areas of the foundation walls as well as the freeze board below the main cornice. The siding will have to be removed to determine if these features still exist. The original east façade (below the attic story) was removed for the installation of the rear addition. Nonetheless, the house retains a significant amount of original material, including its white stone foundation, original window trim, decorative trim detail around the front door, porches and side bay window, cornice moldings, and other decorative features including the corner pilasters and capitals.

Setting: The original setting of the property as part of a larger residential neighborhood has been altered with the expansion of Syracuse University eastward. The Life Science Complex now blocks the original views from the property toward the west. In addition, Syracuse University demolished the houses facing Ostrom Avenue, which backed onto the eastern property line of 727 Comstock Avenue.

However, character-defining features of the property's setting have been retained. The house sits deep on its lot with a wide sloping lawn that extends to Comstock Avenue. The house remains highly visible at the crest of Comstock Avenue. To its immediate east and west are large, 2 and 3-story residential properties, which share similar deep setbacks with wide grassy lawns fronting Comstock Avenue, all of which are important context of the early residential neighborhood that evolved into a "fraternity row".

Feeling and Association: The property retains a high degree of integrity of feeling and association. The property retains sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, materials and setting to convey to the viewer its historic significance as an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, architect-designed Colonial Revival-style mansion built for a prominent Syracuse family. Its later conversion to a fraternity and its association with student Greek life at Syracuse University reflects the continuation and evolution of its history.

## **Conclusion**

The property at 727 Comstock Avenue (Estabrook House/Zeta Psi Fraternity) is eligible for local designation under Criterion 1 for its association with prominent local lawyer Charles Scott Estabrook and his wife Laura Curry Estabrook, who commissioned the construction of 727 Comstock Avenue in 1905 and lived in the house for 18 years, which included the formative period of Estabrook's law practice in Syracuse; Criterion 2 for its association with the growth and development of the city's eastside neighborhood; specifically, the development in the late 19th and early 20th century of residential enclaves near Syracuse University that attracted affluent professionals to the Comstock Avenue and Walnut Avenue areas, and for the later evolution of these homes into fraternities and sororities

associated with Syracuse University; and Criterion 3 as a high-style Colonial Revival residence designed by the locally significant and nationally-known architecture firm Gaggin & Gaggin. Finally, the property retains sufficient historic integrity of location, design and workmanship, materials, setting, feeling and association to convey its historic and architectural significance.



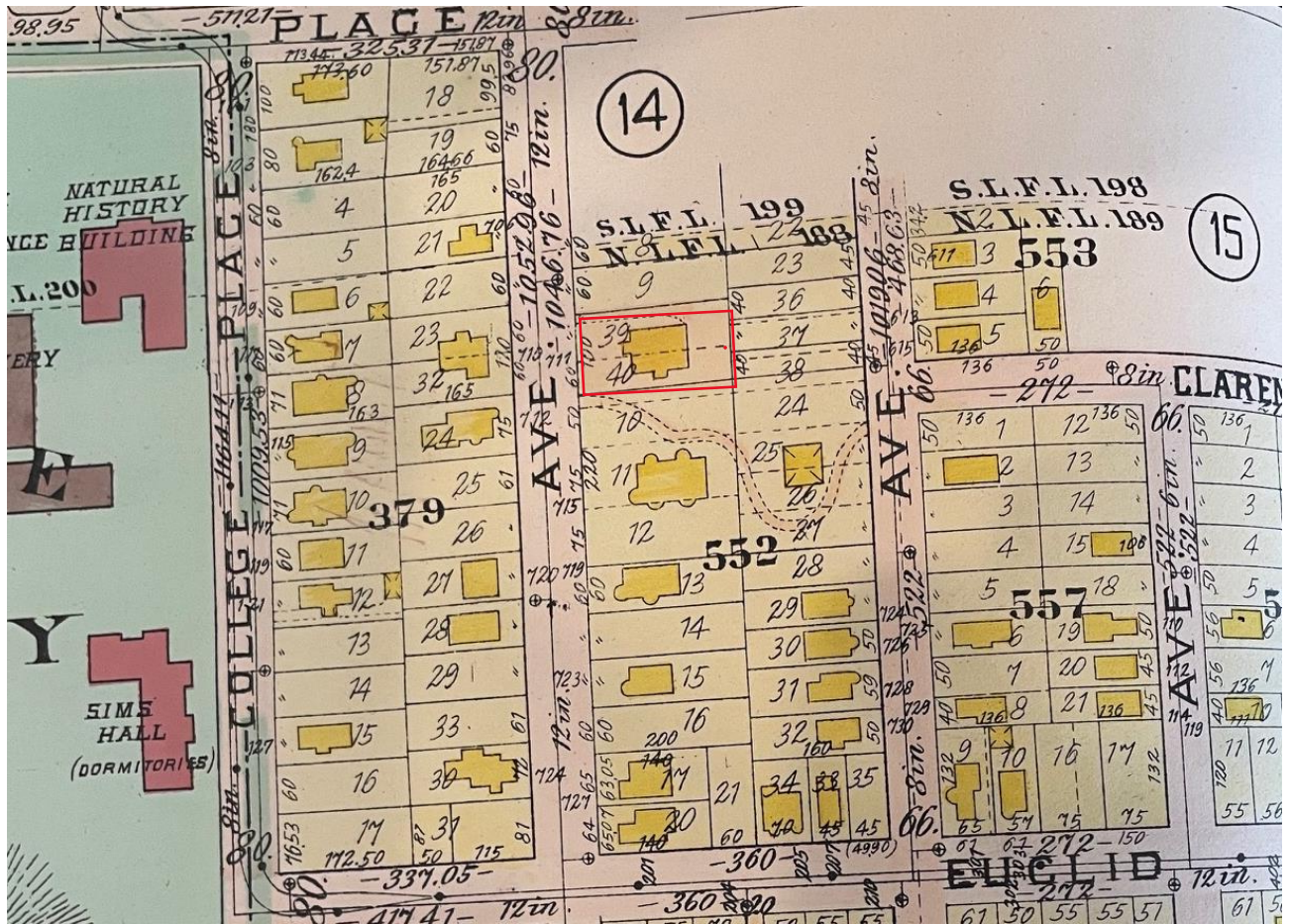


Undated photograph of 727 Comstock Avenue, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/1928-fraternity-houses-may-be-nicer-than-yours>

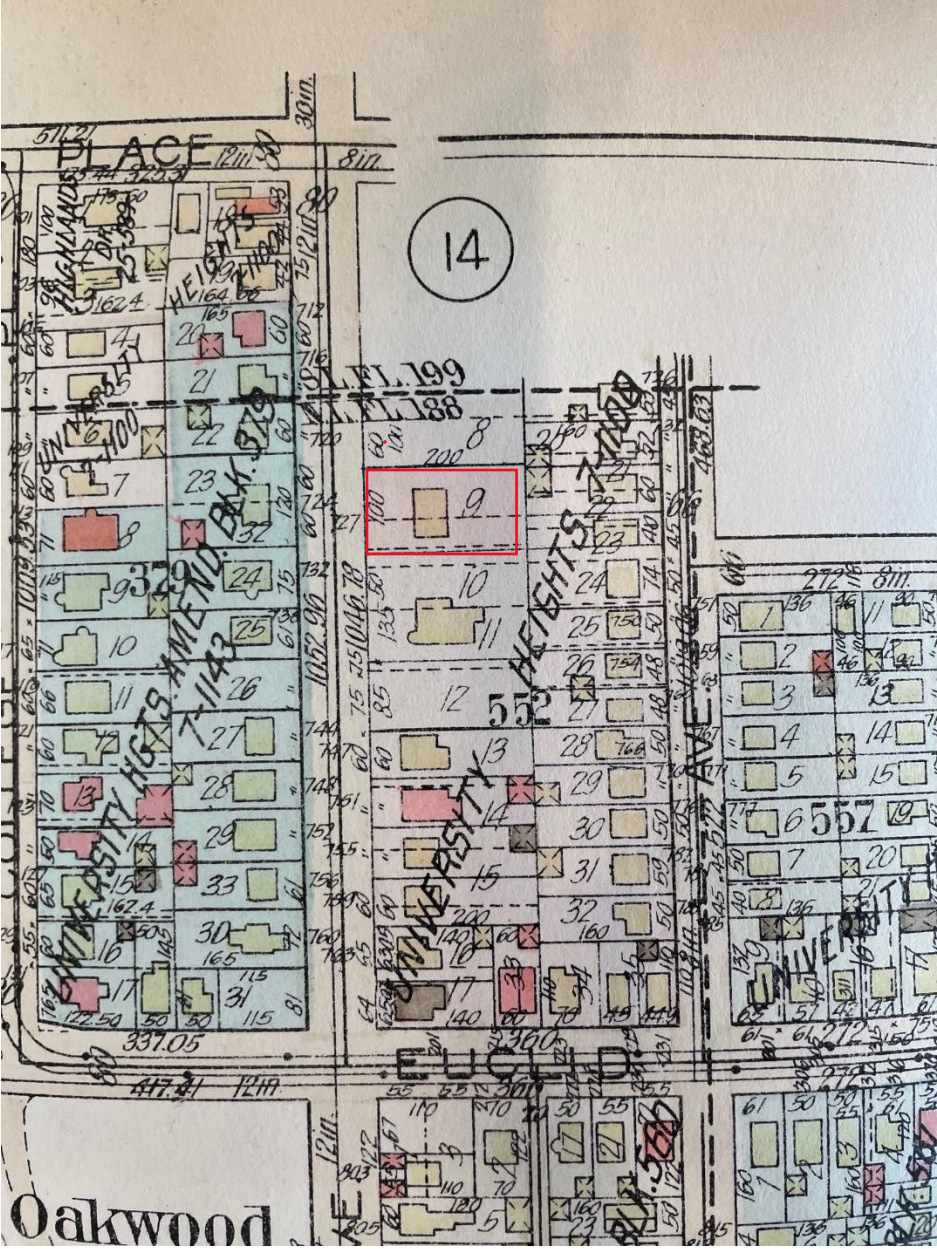


Undated photo of 727 Comstock Avenue, Onondaga Historical Association files

1908 Hopkins Atlas (house number shown as 711 Comstock)



1924 Hopkins Atlas (house number shown as 727)



Current Images of 727 Comstock Avenue



727 Comstock Avenue: West (main) and north facades



727 Comstock Avenue: West (main) and south facades



727 Comstock Avenue: North and east facades



727 Comstock Avenue: South façade, bay window



727 Comstock Avenue: West façade, roof dormer detail



727 Comstock Avenue: West façade, entrance portico



727 Comstock Avenue: West façade, entrance portico, main door detail (photo credit: Hilary Donohue, 2024)

Context Images



View of eastside of Comstock Avenue, view north of 727 Comstock Avenue



View of eastside of Comstock Avenue, view south of 727 Comstock Avenue





View of westside of Comstock Avenue, view south of 727 Comstock Avenue

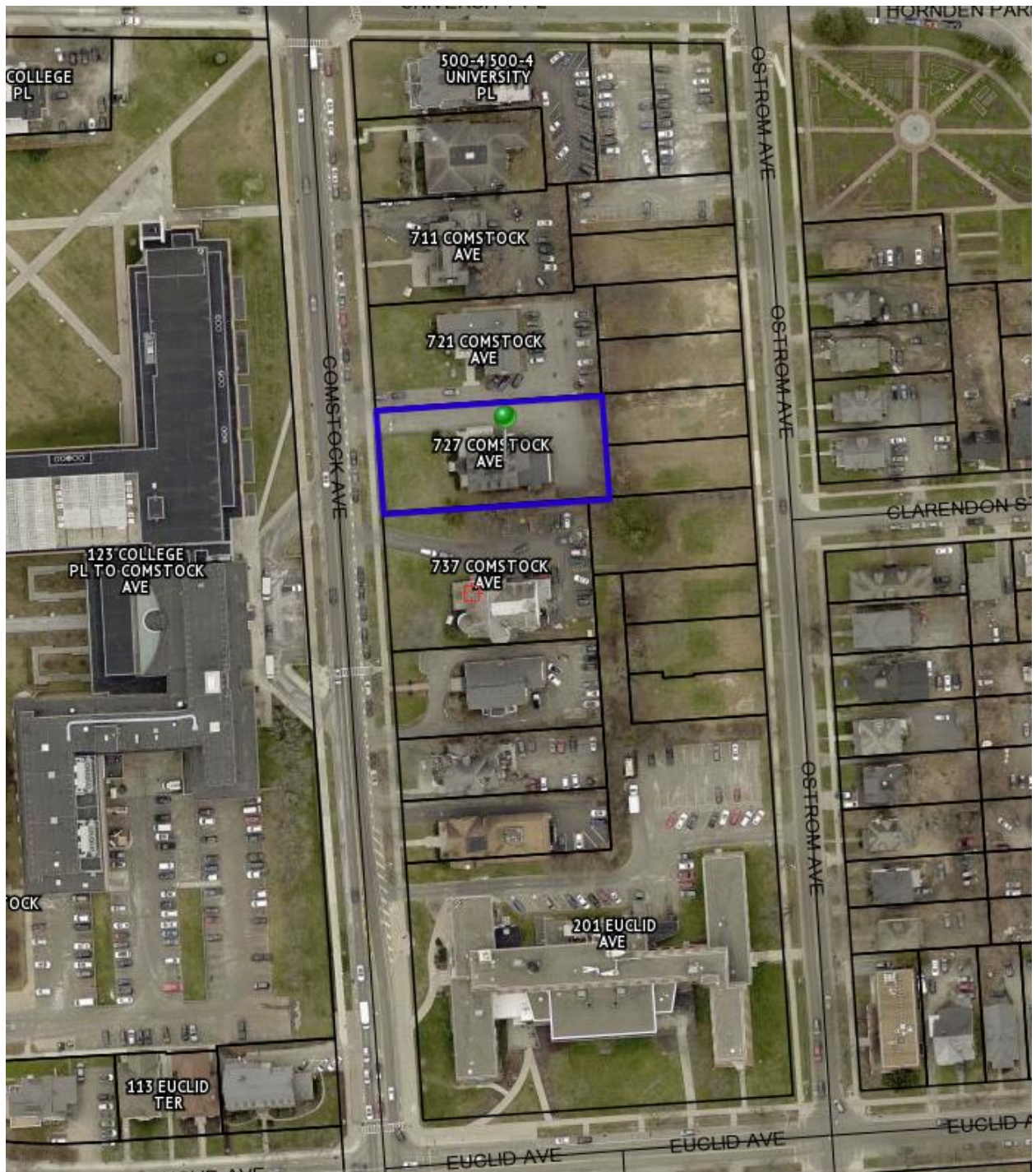


View of westside of Comstock Avenue, view south of 727 Comstock Avenue

Existing Neighborhood Context



Current Context, 700 block of Comstock Avenue



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Edwin Hall Gaggin: <https://pcad.lib.washington.edu/person/2502/> (University of Washington)  
Thomas Walker Gaggin: <https://pcad.lib.washington.edu/person/2503/> (University of Washington)  
Undated view of 727 Comstock Ave: <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/1928-fraternity-houses-may-be-nicer-than-yours>  
Zeta Psi: <https://dailyorang.com/2007/08/closing-the-chapter-following-multiple-violations-national-zeta-psi-shuts-down-campus-fraternity/>

### *Other Resources:*

Gruber, Samuel. "Remarks Regarding 727 Comstock Avenue," Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board Public Hearing, June 20, 2024.  
Onondaga Historical Association block files, city directories and census data

**A RESOLUTION  
TO DESIGNATE 727 COMSTOCK AVENUE  
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13210  
AS A PROTECTED SITE**

We, the duly appointed members of the Landmark Preservation Board of the City of Syracuse, do this 12<sup>th</sup> day of September 2024, adopt the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the procedure to designate 727 Comstock Avenue as a local protected site was initiated as a result of Syracuse University submitting a Demolition of Non-Landmarked Historic Properties application for the property, per ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3 C; and

**WHEREAS**, after determining the property eligible for designation pursuant to ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3 C.(3).d, the Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board initiated the designation procedure pursuant to ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3 C.d.ii; and

**WHEREAS**, on August 27, 2024, Syracuse University formally withdrew the Demolition of Non-Landmarked Historic Properties application; and

**WHEREAS**, the Landmark Preservation Board's application for designation does not mention SU's demolition application and pursuant to ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3 A.(1)-(2), an application for designation can stand independent of any demolition application; and

**WHEREAS**, the Landmark Preservation Board fulfilled the procedures for designation of a Local Protected Site per ReZone, Art. 6, Sec.6.3 A(5), including holding a public hearing on June 20, 2024, independent of any demolition application; and

**WHEREAS**, at its September 12, 2024 meeting, having already fulfilled the required procedures and evaluated the criteria for designation of a Local Protected Site with respect to 727 Comstock Avenue, the Landmark Preservation Board voted to revise its original June 20, 2024, resolution recommending designation of 727 Comstock Avenue as a Local Protected Site; to clarify that the application for designation is and can stand independent of Syracuse University's demolition application; and

**WHEREAS**, a demolition application can act as the impetus for designation of a Local Protected Site, pursuant to ReZone, Art. 6, Sec. 6.3 A.(2), the Landmark Preservation Board has authority to submit an application independent of a demolition application; and

**WHEREAS**, the Landmark Preservation Board reaffirms its finding that 727 Comstock Avenue meets the criteria for individual designation detailed in ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3.A.(3)a.1., 2., and 3.:

Criterion 1. Association with persons or events of historic significance to the city, region, state or nation;

Criterion 2. Illustrative of historic growth and development of the city, region, state or nation;

Criterion 3. In the case of structures, embodying distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or representing the work of a master, or possessing unique architectural and artistic qualities, or representing a significant and distinguishable entity whose component may lack individual distinction.

and;

**WHEREAS**, 727 Comstock Avenue is eligible for designation under Criterion 1 for its association with prominent local lawyer Charles Scott Estabrook and his wife Laura Curry Estabrook, who commissioned the construction of the house in 1905 and lived in the house with their growing family for 18 years, years which included the formative period of Estabrook's law practice in Syracuse; and

**WHEREAS**, 727 Comstock Avenue is eligible for designation under Criterion 2 for its association with the growth and development of the city's eastside neighborhood; specifically, the development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century of residential enclaves near Syracuse University that attracted and encouraged affluent professionals, including the Estabrooks, to build large-scale homes in the Comstock Avenue and Walnut Avenue areas; and

**WHEREAS**, beginning in the 1920s, due in part to the increased availability of the automobile and changing lifestyles, families began to move out further from the city to the suburbs and exurbs, resulting in the turnover in ownership of the mansion homes on University Hill, many of which were sold to Syracuse University-affiliated sororities and fraternities and converted to dormitory style residences; and

**WHEREAS**, the Zeta Psi fraternity purchased 727 Comstock Avenue from the Estabrooks in 1923 and the house became associated with Greek life at Syracuse University until Syracuse University purchased the house in 2022; and

**WHEREAS**, 727 Comstock Avenue is eligible for designation under Criterion 3 for its association with the architecture firm Gaggin & Gaggin, who the Estabrooks commissioned to design 727 Comstock Avenue in 1905; and

**WHEREAS**, Gaggin & Gaggin was a significant local architecture firm, founded by brothers Thomsas Walker and Edwin Hall Gaggin in 1902, responsible for the designs of important local institutional properties including Lyman Smith Hall (Syracuse University), Machinery Hall (Syracuse University) and the Masonic Temple Building (Montgomery Street), and residential structures such as the Horace Wilkinson House (Walnut Avenue), Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity/Goldstein Alumni and Faculty Center (Syracuse University), and the former Chapin House (James Street – demolished); and

**WHEREAS**, Gaggin & Gaggin designed 727 Comstock as a high-style Colonial Revival style residence featuring a symmetrical center hall design, large Mansard-style hipped roof with broken-pedimented roof dormers, prominent projecting front portico, and elaborate decorative details, including full-height, fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals

located on each corner of the main block of the house, carved modillions under the projecting eaves of the main roof and porches and side bay window, and the highly detailed pedimented front entrance; and

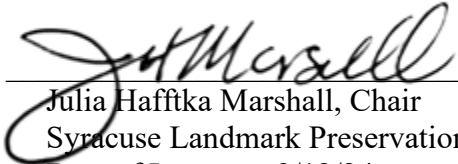
**WHEREAS**, 727 Comstock Avenue meets the criteria for designation contained in ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3.A.(3)b.; and

**WHEREAS**, 727 Comstock Avenue retains sufficient historic integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, setting, feeling and association to convey its historic and architectural significance as an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, architect-designed Colonial Revival mansion built for a prominent Syracuse family, which was later purchased by a fraternity and became associated with student Greek life at Syracuse University.

**WHEREAS**, 727 Comstock Avenue meets the criteria for designation contained in ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3.A.(3)c., such that the designation of the Protected Site shall apply to the exterior of the property including, but not limited to, the principal structure and its exterior building components, and site features including natural and human-made features; and

**WHEREAS**, the criteria detailed in ReZone Art. 6, Sec. 6.3.A.(3)d.-f., are not applicable to the subject site and warrant no further consideration.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the duly appointed members of the Landmark Preservation Board of the City of Syracuse, do this 12<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2024, submit this revised and substituted resolution to the City Planning Commission recommending that the property located at 727 Comstock Avenue, Syracuse, New York, 13210, be designated a Protected Site per ReZone Art.6, Sec.6.3.A.(3)a.1, 2, and 3, and Sec.6.3.A.(3)b-c., for the designation of Local Protected Sites and that the designation shall apply to the exterior of the house and site.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Julia Hafftka Marshall, Chair  
Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board  
Date of Issuance: 9/12/24