

# Jefferson Avenue Historic District Designation Report



Borough of Westwood  
Westwood Historic Commission  
Prepared by Gregory Dietrich Preservation Consulting  
October 2011

**Property Name: Jefferson Avenue Historic District**

**Property Address: 57–77 Jefferson Avenue  
Cross Streets: Center and Fairview Avenues**

### **Significance Statement**

The Jefferson Avenue Historic District is significant under Criterion 2 for its association with the expansion of Westwood Borough in the late-nineteenth- to early-twentieth-century from a small commercial enclave into a commuter railroad suburb. Following the introduction of passenger rail service linking Westwood to New York City in 1870, the village experienced an initial wave of residential development that radiated outward from its railroad station. Numbers 73 and 77 Jefferson Avenue, designed c.1890 and located within close proximity to the station, embody this first wave of suburban growth. During the early twentieth century, a second wave of development was bolstered by increased passenger rail service and the construction of a water plant that facilitated domestic access to water. This resulted in an unprecedented wave of residential and commercial development in the borough. Numbers 57, 59, and 63 Jefferson Avenue, designed c.1905 along the same block, embody this second, more pronounced wave of suburban growth. Together, these houses represent the transformation of the borough into a thriving commuter railroad suburb.

### **History**

#### Region

Before becoming an incorporated borough, the area that was to become Westwood was originally part of Harrington Township whose establishment by royal charter dated to 1775. In 1840, Harrington was divided into two townships, with the western portion, designated as Washington Township, containing the future Westwood. Encompassing a large territory that was bordered by Hackensack River to the east, New Barbadoes Township to the south, Saddle River to the west, and the New York State boundary to the north, Washington Township boasted six stores, four schools, six grist mills, and 14 sawmills in 1844.<sup>1</sup> By 1861, there were less than 20 dwellings located in the Westwood area.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne T. McCabe & Associates, Inc. Streetscape # 3, *Borough of Westwood, Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan: Historic Preservation Element*. (Wayne T. McCabe & Associates, Inc., Newtown, N.J.:2007) 3.

<sup>2</sup> Bergen County Office of Cultural & Historic Affairs, *Bergen County Historic Sites Survey: Borough of Westwood*, Historic Sites Survey No. 0267-S3 1. (Bergen County Office of Cultural & Historic Affairs, Hackensack, N.J.: 1985) 9.

In 1870, the introduction of the Hackensack and New York railroad facilitated travel between the area that was to become Westwood and New York City via a ferry originating from Jersey City. Located on the east side of Railroad Avenue, the railroad depot received four trains a day running in each direction.<sup>3</sup> The advent of passenger rail service at this time resulted in several hotels being constructed nearby, as well as the first wave of residential development in the immediate vicinity of the depot, while the areas beyond were sparsely populated with farms and mills.<sup>4</sup> Commercial establishments in the area were also sparse during this time, as evinced by a bakery, store, and several coal and lumber sheds.<sup>5</sup> By the 1880s, there were several distilleries, a grocery store, laundry, school, and cigar factories.<sup>6</sup> These businesses were augmented by the opening of a molding, sash, and shutter factory in 1889 which most likely provided architectural elements for many of the homes being constructed in the area during this period.<sup>7</sup>

### Westwood Borough

As the demand for local services increased—commensurate with an expanding population—residents in the Westwood area articulated concerns about the need for fire protection and water, among other things, and subsequently voted to secede from Washington Township and incorporate as a separate borough on May 8, 1894.<sup>8</sup> Among the many improvements precipitated by the borough's independence were the introduction of a dedicated fire department and the completion of a privately commissioned water plant in 1899. According to planner/historian Wayne McCabe, the latter improvement resulted in a "large number of houses to be constructed along newly laid streets."<sup>9</sup> In 1901, there were 828 inhabitants which increased to 1,044 by 1905, and to 1,870 by 1910.<sup>10</sup> Additional improvements by 1910 included increased passenger rail service, as well as the introduction of electricity, telephones, and automobile transportation.

### Jefferson Avenue

By 1886, the property encompassing numbers 57, 59, 63, 73, and 77 was owned by George T. Brickell, a judge and local real estate investor, before being subdivided into individual house lots.<sup>11</sup> His son, Thomas G. Brickell, was involved in banking, real estate, construction, cement block manufacturing, and masonry contracting, as well as the meat business. He was also a director of the First National Bank and built and owned multiple properties, including the Brickell Building on 23-45 Westwood Avenue. In addition to his business activities, he

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<sup>3</sup> Wayne T. McCabe & Associates, Inc., 3.

<sup>4</sup> Bergen County Office of Cultural & Historic Affairs, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne T. McCabe & Associates, Inc., 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>10</sup> Bergen County Office of Cultural & Historic Affairs, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, A.H., *Atlas of Bergen County, 1776-1876*. (C.C. Pease, Reading, Pa.:1876) 111. New York Times, "George T. Brickell." (30 January 1896).

was also mayor of Westwood for five years, postmaster for four, and a town collector.<sup>12</sup> Following his father's death in 1896, he inherited his father's property. Thomas died ten years later in 1906.

Based on the styles of the Jefferson Avenue properties, numbers 73 and 77 were most likely constructed c.1890 by George T. Brickell during the first wave of suburban residential development in the borough, while nos. 57, 59, and 63 Jefferson Avenue were most likely constructed c.1905 during the second wave of residential development in the borough by his son, Thomas. Since their construction, the majority of houses in the row have been subjected to front, side, and rear additions in order to accommodate single-family expansions or mixed-use and/or multi-family conversions.

### **Description**

The Jefferson Avenue Historic District embodies Westwood's suburban residential development of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which featured single-family dwellings moderately set back from the street with outbuildings, consisting of carriage houses (later garages) and sheds, located to the rear of the lots. The cohesiveness of this row is derived from its similarity in bulk (2½-story frame houses), its irregularity of massing (multiple gable-front dormers and bays), its wraparound porches, and surviving elements (select columns, door/window entablatures, wooden doors, ribbon windows). Numbers 73 and 77 were designed in the Queen Revival style c.1890, and featured irregular roofs with multiple gable fronts and bays, while nos. 57, 59, and 63 were designed in the Colonial Revival style c.1905, and feature American Foursquare plans augmented by multiple dormers and bays.

57 Jefferson Avenue, Block 1503, Lot 13

c.1905. Colonial Revival. Part of a speculative row of single-family dwellings that include nos. 59 and 63. 2½-story, 3-bay American Foursquare covered in a combination of wood clapboard siding and shingles under a cross-gabled, hipped roof with dormers. Roof is covered in asphalt shingles with wide eaves and cornice returns, and the foundation consists of artistic cement block units which were most likely made by Thomas G. Brickell's Concrete Construction Manufacturing in Westwood.<sup>13</sup> A wraparound porch supported by fluted Ionic columns connected by a bowed balustrade is located along the north and west elevations. The entry is flanked by a pair of wooden pilasters under a wooden entablature. The façade features a double-story, tri-partite bay, as well as a hipped-roof dormer that contains a pair of ribbon windows with colored lights. Other windows consist of 1/1 wood-sash units throughout. Dwelling is minimally set back from Jefferson Avenue and features a lawn and shrubs in the front yard and a driveway leading to a wood-frame garage in the rear.

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<sup>12</sup> Bergen County Standard, 12 August 1909, n.p.

<sup>13</sup> Bergen County Office of Cultural & Historic Affairs, 15.

59 Jefferson Avenue, Block 1503, Lot 14

c.1905. Colonial Revival. Part of a speculative row of single-family dwellings that include nos. 57 and 63. 2½-story, 3-bay American Foursquare covered in asbestos siding (re-sided in 1958) under a cross-gabled, hipped roof with dormers. Roof is covered in asphalt shingles with moderate eaves and pent roofs, and the foundation is parged with stucco. A wraparound porch supported by wooden posts connected by a slatted balustrade is located along the north and west elevations. The entry contains a wooden door under a wooden entablature. The first floor features a tri-partite bay, as well as a hipped-roof dormer. The west elevation features a ribbon window with colored lights. Other windows consist of 1/1 wood-sash units throughout. Dwelling is minimally set back from Jefferson Avenue and features a lawn and shrubs featuring a mast and a 19<sup>th</sup>-century anchor in the front yard (installed by the previous owner who was involved in commercial maritime operations) and a driveway leading to a parking lot in the rear.

63 Jefferson Avenue, Block 1503, Lot 15

c.1905. Colonial Revival. Part of a speculative row of single-family dwellings that include nos. 57 and 59. 2½-story, 3-bay American Foursquare covered in vinyl siding (initially re-sided in 1956; re-sided again in 1985) under a cross-gabled, hipped roof with dormers. Two large gable-front dormers along the north and west elevations were most likely added in 1987.<sup>14</sup> Roof is covered in asphalt shingles with vinyl soffits, featuring moderate eaves and pent roofs; the foundation is parged with stucco. A wraparound porch supported by wooden posts connected by a slatted balustrade is located along the north and west elevations. The entry contains a wooden door under a modest wooden entablature. The first floor features a tri-partite bay, as well as a large gable-front dormer. Windows consist of 1/1 wood-sash units throughout. Dwelling is minimally set back from Jefferson Avenue and features a lawn and shrubs in the front yard and a driveway leading to a parking lot in the rear.

73 Jefferson Avenue, Block 1503, Lot 16

c.1890. Queen Anne. Part of a pair of single-family dwellings that includes no. 77. 2½-story, 3-bay single-family dwelling covered in aluminum siding under an irregular roof surmounted by a pair of large shed-roof dormer additions which most likely date to the late twentieth century. Roof is covered in asphalt shingles with vinyl soffits and the foundation is brick parged with stucco. A wraparound porch supported by turned wooden posts connected by a slatted balustrade is located along the north and west elevations. The upper rear porch was enclosed in 1953. The entry contains a pair of wood-and-glass doors next to a tripartite, double-story bay. Windows consist of 1/1 wood-sash units throughout. Dwelling occupies a double lot, is minimally set back from Jefferson Avenue, and features a lawn and shrubs in the front yard and a driveway leading to a parking lot in the rear.

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<sup>14</sup> Borough of Westwood Building Inspector Notes: 63 Jefferson Avenue, November 1987.

77 Jefferson Avenue, Block 1503, Lot 17

c.1890. Queen Anne. Part of a pair of single-family dwellings that includes no. 73. 2½-story, 3-bay single-family dwelling covered in aluminum siding under a side-gable roof with a large gable-front dormer, and a large rear shed-roof dormer addition with skylights which most likely dates to the late twentieth century. Roof is covered in asphalt shingles with vinyl soffits and the foundation is brick. A wraparound porch supported by wooden posts connected by a slatted balustrade is located along the north and west elevations. The entry contains a pair of wood-and-glass doors next to a tripartite, double-story bay; the roof features gingerbread fretwork terminating in corner pendants. Windows consist of 6/6 wood-sash units throughout. Dwelling is minimally set back from Jefferson Avenue, and features a lawn and shrubs in the front yard and a driveway leading to a parking lot and wood-frame garage in the rear.

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**Jefferson Avenue streetscape, view southeast from no. 57.**



**Jefferson Avenue streetscape, view southwest from no. 77.**



**57 Jefferson Avenue, view southwest.**



**59 Jefferson Avenue, view southwest.**



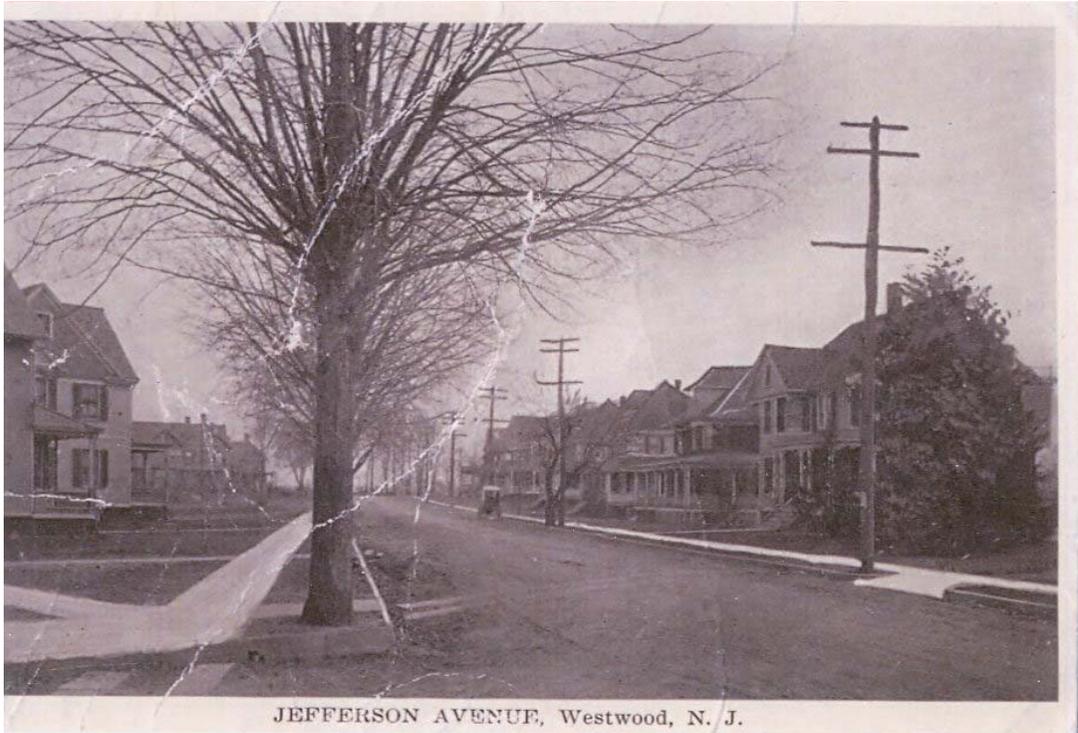
**63 Jefferson Avenue, view south.**



**73 Jefferson Avenue, view southwest.**



**77 Jefferson Avenue, view south.**



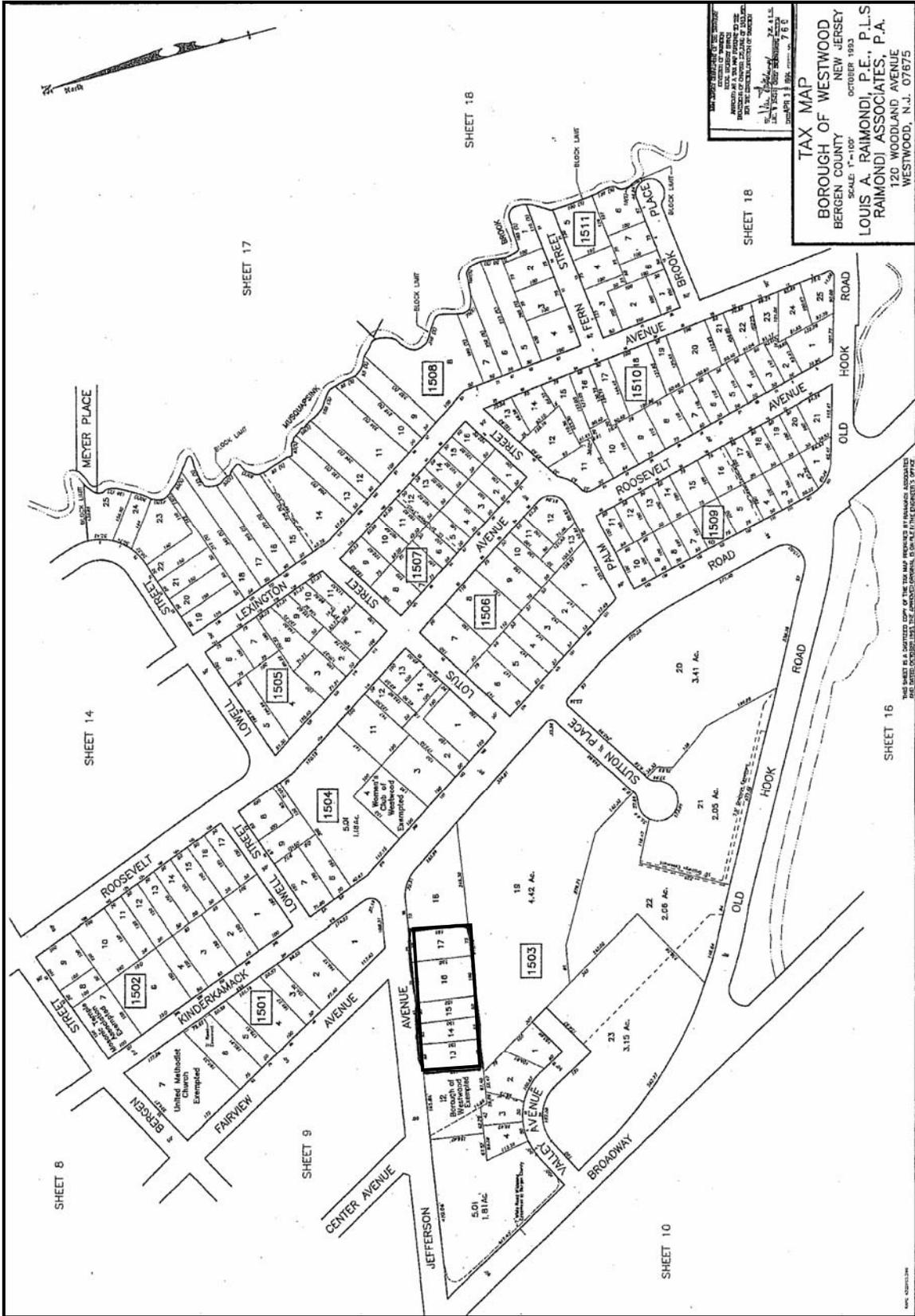
**Jefferson Avenue, view southeast from Center Avenue, 1913.**



**Jefferson Avenue, view southwest from Fairview Avenue, c.1900.**



**73 Jefferson Avenue (aka Mrs. Wallace's House), view southeast.**



THE PROPERTY SHOWN ON THIS MAP IS THE PROPERTY OF THE BOROUGH OF WESTWOOD, NEW JERSEY, AS SHOWN ON A TAX MAP PREPARED BY THE BUREAU OF TAXATION AND REVENUE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STATUTES OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY.  
 DATE OF MAP: 10/1/83  
 SCALE: 1" = 100'  
 TAX MAP  
 BOROUGH OF WESTWOOD  
 BERGEN COUNTY  
 NEW JERSEY  
 OCTOBER 1983  
 SCALE: 1" = 100'  
 LOUIS A. RAIMONDI, P.E., P.L.S.  
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Jefferson Avenue Historic District Boundary