



PUBLIC HEARING MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

6:00 PM

Common Council Chambers

City of Poughkeepsie Common Council Public Hearing;

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to the Charter and Codes of the City of Poughkeepsie, one Common Council Public Hearing will be held on **Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 6:00pm**, in the Common Council Chambers, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 62 Civic Center Plaza, Poughkeepsie, NY for the purpose of receiving comments on:

The Proposed Nomination of 52 South Hamilton Street, Currently Known as “Vassar Warner Home” as a Local Historic Landmark

- I.** Welcome
- II.** Roll Call
- III.** Public Participation
- IV.** Adjournment:

**CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK
COMMON COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARINGS
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to the Charter and Codes of the City of Poughkeepsie, one Common Council Public Hearing will be held on **Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 6:00pm** respectively, in the Common Council Chambers, 3rd Floor, City Hall, 62 Civic Center Plaza, Poughkeepsie, NY for the purpose of receiving comments on:

1. The Proposed Nomination of 52 South Hamilton Street, Currently Known as “Vassar Warner Home” as a Local Historic Landmark

When: Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 6:00 PM (EST)

Location: Common Council Chambers, 3rd FL, City Hall, 62 Civic Center Plaza, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Dated: January 22, 2025

Respectfully submitted,

Jamar M. Cummings
City Chamberlain

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE, SETTING A PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE PROPOSED NOMINATION OF 52 SOUTH HAMILTON STREET, CURRENTLY KNOWN AS “VASSAR WARNER HOME” AS A LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

(R-25-12)

INTRODUCED BY CHAIRMAN WILSON, COUNCILMEMBER SHOOK, PATTERSON THOMPSON, HENRY, MENIST, BROWN, JAMES AND GRANT

WHEREAS, 52 South Hamilton Street, known as “Vassar Warner Home,” City of Poughkeepsie is owned by Vassar-Warner Home; and

WHEREAS, Richard J. Schuster, in his capacity as Chairman for Save Vassar-Warner, has applied for and is desirous of securing a designation of 52 South Hamilton Street as a local historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, the City of Poughkeepsie Historic District and Landmarks Preservation Commission (hereinafter “HDLPC”) held a public hearing on December 12, 2024 and January 9, 2025 regarding the nomination of 52 South Hamilton Street as a local historic landmark; and

WHEREAS, the HDLPC voted in favor of the proposed nomination and approved the application on January 9, 2025; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 19-4.5(4)(f) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Poughkeepsie, the HDLPC’s approved application was forwarded to the Common Council for consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Common Council is required to hold a public hearing prior to the designation of any historic landmark; and

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Chamberlain be, and she hereby is authorized and directed to publish a Notice of Public Hearing to be held **Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.** concerning the designation of 52 South Hamilton Street as a local historic landmark.

SECONDED BY COUNCILMEMBER _____ .



**CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK
BUILDING DEPARTMENT
(845) 451-4007
(845) 451-4006 (FAX)**

HISTORIC DISTRICT & LANDMARKS NOMINATION FORM

LOCATION (For District nominations, attach list of all properties)

Street and Number: 52 S. Hamilton Street

NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name (if any): Old Ladies Home

Other Names (if any): Vassar-Warner Home

CLASSIFICATION

| Ownership of Property | Category of Property |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s) |
| Owner: <u>Vassar-Warner Home</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> District |
| Address: <u>same</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> Site |
| City: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Structure |
| State/Zip: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Object |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public | |
| Owner: _____ | |
| Address: _____ | |
| City: _____ | |
| State/Zip: _____ | |

FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Functions or Uses:
Independent and Assisted Living Facility for Women Seniors

Current Functions or Uses:
Independent and Assisted Living Facility for Seniors

NAME OF ARCHITECT (if known): 1898 Rear Addition by Corydon Wheeler

ATTACHMENTS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION: Describe the historic and current conditions of the property on one or more continuation sheets, and attach the sheets to the application.

MAPS: Please attach a map of the subject property or properties.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Please attach photographs of the property or properties.

Nomination Form
Page 2

Statement of Significance: Mark "X" in all of the applicable boxes below for the criteria qualifying the property for local register listing.

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- Property is associated with the lives of person significant in our past.
- Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
- Property is listed, or is eligible for listing, on the State and/or National Registers of Historic Places.

Narrative Statement of Significance: Explain the significance of the property, in terms of the boxes checked above, on one or more continuation sheets, and attach the sheet(s) to the application.

Bibliography: Cite any books, articles or other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets, and attach the sheet(s) to the application.

Form Prepared by:

Name/Title: Applicant: Save Vassar-Warner
Organization: Richard J. Schuster, Chairman
Street: (Researched by: Holly Wahlberg, Historian)
City/State/Zip: _____
Telephone: 203-885-9285 richardjschuster@gmail.com
Date: October 1, 2024

HDLPC RECOMMENDATION

The HDLPC hereby certifies that this application does does not meet the criteria for designation as a local historic district, landmark or landmark site, and recommends approval of the application to the Common Council in accordance with the provisions of Section 19-4.5(3) of the Zoning Ordinance.

Motion: Elisati
Second: Kyle Neiswender
Votes: 6 0 0
Ayes Nays Abstentions

[Signature]
Signature of Chairman
Date: 1/9/2024

Vassar-Warner Home: 52 South Hamilton – Local Register Nomination (2024)

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Description:

Monumental Greek Revival-style structure; three stories plus raised basement; brick; classical pediment, entablature, and full-height Ionic columns; porches at each story; sandstone belt course; 6/6, 4/4 windows; double, glazed doors; similar turn of the century wing at rear by Corydon Wheeler. (description taken from the National Register of Historic Places listing for “South Hamilton Street Row,” 1982)

Significance Statement:

- Possesses special character or historic or aesthetic interest or value as part of the cultural, political, economic or social history of the locality, region, state, or nation
- Represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood
- Is identified with historic personages
- Embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style

Once a Boys Boarding School:

Vassar-Warner was built in 1835 as the second site of Dutchess County Academy, a prestigious private school for boys founded in 1791. By 1834, the school had outgrown its simple four room schoolhouse on the corner of Cannon and Academy Streets. A hilltop parcel on the village outskirts along S. Hamilton Street was purchased as the site for a new Greek Revival style school building whose stately presence and towering columns became the embodiment of the school’s well-respected classical curriculum.

But by the close of the Civil War, several of Dutchess County Academy’s key faculty members had died, and competition from public schools was steadily increasing. In 1869, the Academy closed its doors and sold its grand school building at auction for \$14,000. The Academy’s Board of Trustees then donated the entire \$14,000 to the construction of a new public high school and city library on Washington Street.

The “Old Ladies Home”:

The building’s new owner was Jonathan Rowland Warner, an elderly gentleman with a substantial fur trading fortune. With little more than a year to live, Warner decided to bestow some of his fortune on his childhood hometown by converting the old Dutchess County Academy into an “Old Ladies Home.” His generosity included \$25,000 for remodeling the old school building and an additional \$10,000 for the establishment of an endowment fund.

Despite ill-health, or perhaps because of it, Warner threw himself into the project. He died three months before the Home opened in 1871, but his efforts were remembered by a speaker at the Home’s opening ceremony who described Warner as “feeble in health, and with disease flooding his heart strings, sick, weary, fainting, unable to sit or walk; yet with an energy disease could not subdue, he seemed to recuperate by the mere force of will, and gave his personal supervision to all details...”

But Warner was by no means working alone. A small band of 20 local women had already been planning to establish what they referred to as an “Old Ladies Retreat.” Their leader was 57 year old quaker, Miss Alice M. Fowler of 137 Academy Street. By 1870, the women had achieved state approval for their new

non-profit venture and had even accepted the donation of a plot of land. But despite this success, Fowler's band of women could not raise enough capital to construct a building or establish an endowment without the help of a male philanthropist. Unable to continue moving forward, Alice Fowler turned to Jonathan Rowland Warner, someone she probably had met when her family had lived in Utica where Rowland had spent much of his life as a well-known hatter, fur trader and banker before returning in poor health to his native Poughkeepsie.

Perhaps Alice Fowler met with Warner at her home at 137 Academy Street or went to visit him at Poughkeepsie's Northern Hotel where Warner was a boarder – as was Fowler's cousin, Joseph Smart. But wherever they met, Fowler's entreaties for Warner's help had phenomenal impact. Warner agreed to purchase the grand but defunct Dutchess Academy building on S. Hamilton Street and pay for its transformation from a school into an "Old Ladies Retreat."

His generosity was conditional, however, on three things: only *protestant* indigent women were to be admitted, the facility would be overseen by an all male board of trustees and the community would have to raise enough money to match Warner's endowment fund. Over the following year, Fowler led a successful community fund drive, and the "Old Ladies Home" opened in 1871 with Fowler as the first president of the Home's "Board of Lady Managers." While the all male Board of Trustees saw to investing the endowment and maintaining the Home's exterior, the Lady Managers raised funds, furnished rooms and saw to the needs of residents.

Philanthropy and Expansion:

By 1897, the "Old Ladies Home" was fully occupied but with such a long waiting list that local philanthropist and cough drop manufacturer W. W. Smith approached the Board of Trustees with an offer to fund a rear addition of 27 new rooms. The addition, designed by Poughkeepsie architect Corydon Wheeler, was completed one year later in 1898, giving the building its present T-shaped configuration.

At a standing room only dedication ceremony for the new rear wing, Smith moved with simple modesty among those gathered – one reporter noting that a stranger observing the crowd would not even be able to recognize Smith as "the man of the hour." Residents of the Home shook his hand and simply said, "God bless you." By the time Smith died in 1913, he had contributed \$140,000 in cash and building improvements to the Home he referred to as the "Vestibule of Heaven."

A Special Sense of Place:

In 1974, the "Old Ladies Home" merged with another of Poughkeepsie's finest Victorian institutions, the "Home for Aged Men" founded by the Vassar family in 1881; and in 1986, these male seniors began sharing 52 S. Hamilton with female residents. With both sexes now under one institutional umbrella, a new name was needed for the facility. To recognize the original financial benefactors of both the men's home and the women's home (but unfortunately, not recognizing Alice Fowler), the building at 52 S. Hamilton was renamed, "Vassar-Warner Home."

Over the years, Poughkeepsie churches as well as individual donors provided furnishings for Vassar-Warner's parlors, bedrooms, dining room and infirmary. Residents themselves added to the facility's strong sense of character by bringing with them some of their own furnishings and unique treasures. This produced a distinctly non-institutional atmosphere, unusually rich in history and charm. In service

to the community for almost 8 generations, Vassar-Warner offered seniors the opposite of a cold “cookie cutter” medical/senior care environment. A warm, historic atmosphere of vintage charm became the Home’s signature feature along with an exterior of striking Greek-Revival style.

Summary:

The origins of Vassar-Warner illustrate the way in which 19th century women, with few opportunities outside marriage and child rearing, began building leadership skills through philanthropy – banding together to take care of each other, even when men controlled the financial resources necessary to build charitable institutions designed for the needs of women and children. When New York State women finally won the right to vote in 1917, jubilant suffragists made their way to the “Old Ladies Home” where they stood on the sidewalk and shouted, “In the Name of Our Grandmothers!” to the “old ladies” cheering and waving from the balcony above.

Vassar-Warner is also a distinguished Greek Revival architectural survivor from a period in the city’s history where little has survived. As a former private boarding school, this building also links us to the era when Poughkeepsie was renowned as the “city of schools” filled with educational institutions (almost all now demolished) that attracted numerous families and teachers throughout much of the 19th century. The building is associated with one of Poughkeepsie’s most important citizens, W. W. Smith who took a particularly keen interest in helping the “Old Ladies Home” expand and thrive. Once limited to helping protestant women only, Vassar-Warner’s evolution into a community anchor welcoming seniors of both sexes, all races and any religion or income level reflects 20th century progress toward social, racial and religious equality.

Bibliography:

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“Jonathan R. Warner’s Will” Daily Press August 19, 1871.

“Death of a Female Philanthropist” Evening Enterprise January 17, 1893; Eagle-News January 18, 1893.

“Alice M. Fowler, Prominent Friend” Eagle-News July 13, 1895.

Obituary: Alice M. Fowler Daily Eagle January 18, 1893.

“Miss Fowler Forms Association” Daily Eagle January 10, 1870.

“Old Ladies Home Opens” Telegraph November 8 and 11, 1871.

“Old Ladies Home Celebrates 65 Years” Star-Enterprise November 7, 1936.

“Comfortable Home Where Aged Ones Find Rest” News-Telegraph September 24, 1898.

“Breaking Ground – Addition to Old Ladies Home” Daily Eagle September 24, 1897.

“Silver Anniversary of Old Ladies Home” News-Telegraph November 7, 1896.

“Old Ladies Home” Courier July 22, 1894.

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“Old Ladies Home” Dutchess Farmer December 27, 1870.

“Old Ladies Home” Eagle January 12, 1870.

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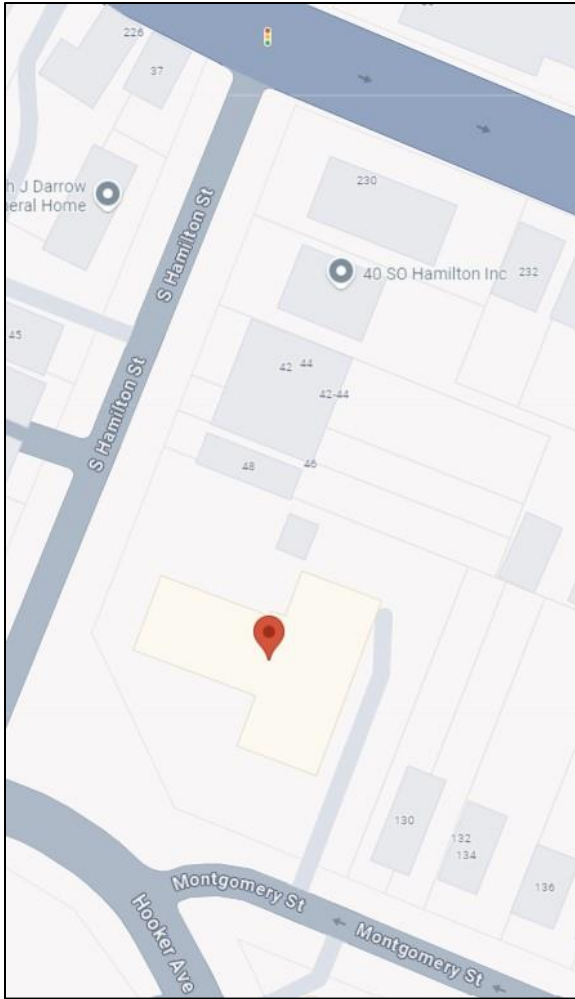
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 "Old Ladies Home Infirmary" Daily Eagle October 18, 1898.
 "Lawn Party and Sail for Old Ladies" News-Telegraph June 9, 1900.
 "Funds Needed for Old Ladies Home" Courier February 3, 1901.
 "Smith Has Dinner at Old Ladies Home" Daily Eagle June 13, 1902.
 "Old Ladies Home an Attractive Spot" Daily Eagle September 6, 1904.
 "Treasurer's Report for Old Ladies Home" News-Press November 6, 1908.
 "Annual Report of Old Ladies Home" Daily Eagle November 8, 1913; November 11, 1916.
 "Suffrage Parade Stops at Old Ladies Home" News-Telegraph July 12, 1913.
 "Many Gifts for Old Ladies Home" Eagle-News November 16, 1920.
 "Hanging of Portrait of Vassar" Courier May 10, 1931.
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 "Old Ladies Home Keeps Name" Poughkeepsie Journal January 23, 1966.
 "The Old Ladies Home: 100 Years of Service" Poughkeepsie Journal October 10, 1971.
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Map: 52 S. Hamilton, Vassar Warner Home

Front West Facade



Rear East Facade

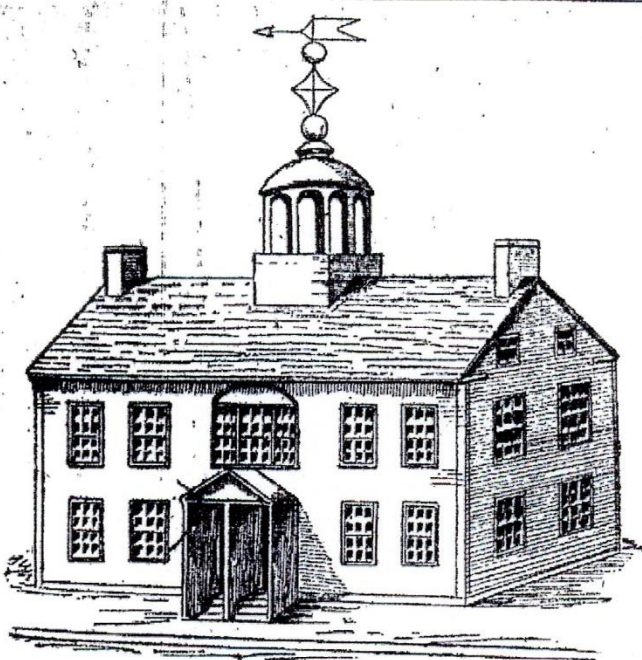


North Façade

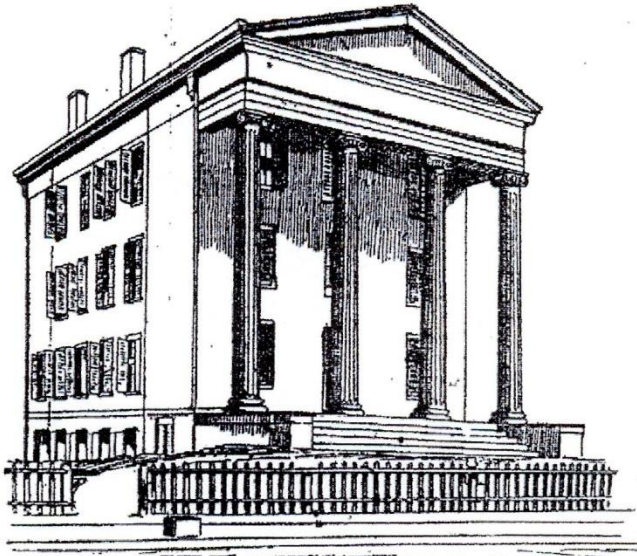


South Façade

1791 and 1835 views of Dutchess County Academy



**THE OLD ACADEMY, ERECTED ON THE CORNER OF
ACADEMY AND CANNON STREETS**



**THE NEW ACADEMY, (NOW OLD LADIES' HOME),
CORNER MONTCOMERY AND SOUTH
HAMILTON STREETS.**



Vassar-Warner Home by Nestor Madalengoitia 2003