

Parker Castle
Perth Amboy, Middlesex County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

Parker Castle
Perth Amboy, Middlesex County, New Jersey

Owner: Parker Estate

Date of Erection: Stone part 1702; wood section
before Revolutionary War

Architect:

Builder: John Parker - for stone part
James Parker - for wooden section

Present Condition: Fair

Number of Stories: Three

Materials of Construction: Foundation - rubble stone

Exterior walls - older part
stone, later part flush
siding

Interior walls - the ends of
the rooms panel, plaster
sides and ceiling, hallway
wainscot and plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - pitch, shingles

Historical Data:

The ancestor of the present Amboy family of Parkers was Elisha Parker who settled in Woodbridge on a grant of 182 acres made in 1675. A son of his by his second wife, John Parker, was the builder of the stone section of the castle. He had two sons, John and James, both of whom fought with distinction in the French and Indian War. It was James who

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carried on the succession and who probably built the frame addition to the castle sometime before the Revolutionary War. According to Whitehead (page 137) when the wooden section was built the stone section was "reduced in height one story".

James Parker II was a very prominent man in Perth Amboy when William Franklin was governor. He served for three years, starting at 1771, as Mayor of the city. At the outbreak of the Revolution, he was appointed one of the delegates to the Provincial Congress. Unfortunately for himself, as later events proved, he did not attend Congress. His wife was a Royalist and the daughter of a staunch Tory, the Reverend William Skinner. Parker assumed a cloak of neutrality standing neither with his king nor his adopted country. Early in 1775 he left the castle and moved with his family to a place near Morristown called Bethlehem, where he built a residence called Shipley. His neighbors suspected him of being a Royalist and he was placed in jail at Morristown where he spent a period of several months.

Parker stayed at Shipley until 1783 when he and the family moved to New Brunswick. Sometime afterward he went to Perth Amboy where through the influence of friends and because of his declared neutrality, he was able to secure his castle which was nearly added to the list of confiscated houses in Perth Amboy. During the war it had been used by the British alternately as a barracks and a hospital.

It was to Parker Castle that the Royalist Society of Perth Amboy came to say goodbye before sailing for England. Most of the members of Amboy society either returned to England or went to Canada. After the Revolution Elizabeth, or Betsy Parker as she was called, ruled over the Parker Castle. Many interesting pictures of the early

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times of the Republic are to be found in her clever letters to friends.

Bibliography:

Mills, W.J. Historic Houses in New Jersey Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1902

Whitehead, William A. Contributions to the Early Histories of Perth Amboy and Adjoining Country with Sketches of Main Events in New Jersey During The Provincial Era New York, Appelton and Company, 1856

Field Book and Drawings of Survey

Walter C. Rust
Supervising Historian

Approved:

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Reviewed Aug 20, 1936 T.T.W.