Landmarks Preservation Commission
June 20, 2000; Designation List 315
LP-2062

BEDFORD PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, 2988 Bainbridge Avenue (aka 301 East 201st Street), The Bronx. Built 1891-92; Edgar K. Bourne, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Bronx Tax Map Block 3299, Lot 1.

On April 25, 2000, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Bedford Park Congregational Church and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Eight witnesses spoke in favor of the designation including the pastor, the President of the Board of Trustees, and three members of the church and representatives of the Historic Districts Council and Bronx Landmarks Task Force. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation. The Commission has received letters of support for this designation from Councilwoman June Eisland and Congressman Eliot L. Engel.

Summary

Erected in 1891-92 to the designs of Edgar K. Bourne, the Bedford Park Congregational Church survives as a rare example in New York City of a small rustic late-nineteenth-century suburban church. Bedford Park Congregational exemplifies such churches in its asymmetrical massing accentuated by a picturesque tower and other projections and in its incorporation of architectural forms and features associated with Queen Anne and Shingle style buildings. It is constructed of rough-dressed fieldstone and features a shingled Richardsonian Romanesque style tower, squat buttresses, round-arched windows with voussoirs, and a timber-framed Queen Anne style porch. The plan of the building, which includes a vestibule, Sunday school meeting room, and auditorium-plan worship space, is typical of Congregational churches from the period and is expressed in the exterior design of the building. Bedford Park was a planned suburban community for middle-class families developed in the1880s after the model of the renowned London suburb of the same name. Founded in 1889 by the prominent Congregational minister, Shearjashub Bourne, who was the architect's father, the Bedford Park Congregational Church was the first major social institution in the neighborhood and has remained a vital part of the community.

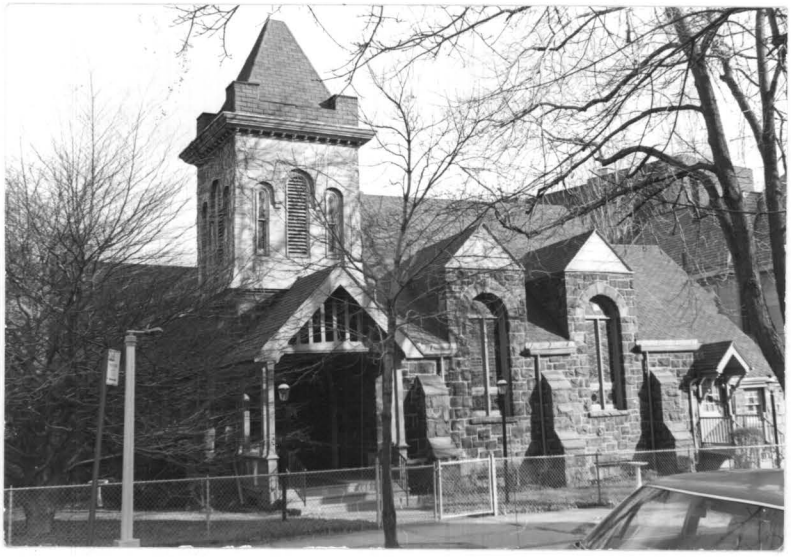


Photo: c. 1978

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Bedford Park[1]

In the 1860s, the neighborhood now known as Bedford Park lay entirely within the vast property owned by financier Leonard Jerome's Jerome Park Villa Site Improvement Company. A noted sportsman, Jerome helped to organize the American Jockey Club, which leased a 230-acre tract from the improvement company in 1866 for a racetrack, Jerome Park [erected on the site of present-day Lehman College]. To ensure that the racetrack would be easily accessible and to further development in the area, Jerome persuaded the Township of West Farms to finance a paved boulevard, Central Avenue (now Jerome Avenue), linking the Central (Macomb's Dam) Bridge to Central Avenue in Yonkers. Jerome then began selling off his other Bronx properties including the future Bedford Park tract, which he sold to George Caulfield in November 1869.

In 1872, Caufield sold the twenty-five acre Bedford Park tract to three partners: the dry goods merchant Horace B. Claflin, the realtor Daniel R. Kendall, and Charles L. Anthony. After Anthony's death in 1874, his share passed to his partners. They established a corporation, the Twenty-Fourth Ward Real Estate Association, to develop the property. Streets were laid out and the blocks were subdivided into house lots, but buildings were not erected until the early 1880s.[2] The boundaries of the subdivision were Webster Avenue (aka Berrian Avenue) on the east, Brook Street (now East Mosholu Parkway South) on the north, Bainbridge Avenue (aka Williamsbridge Avenue) on the west, and Southern Boulevard on the south. Southern Boulevard, opened in 1882, was a wide boulevard extending from Jerome Avenue near Jerome Park to East 133rd Street and Third Avenue in the South Bronx, where it opened on to the Harlem River (now Third Avenue) Bridge to Manhattan. With this transportation link in place, the developers erected about a dozen houses. The developers then persuaded the New York & Harlem River Railroad Company to run a few commuter trains each day to the Jerome Park railroad station which was located just to the west of the subdivision.[3]

In 1884, newspaper accounts extolled the virtues of the new development which had been named Bedford Park after the renowned London suburb. The Bronx development was intended for "New Yorkers of moderate means" who would be given "a chance to become owners of comfortable homes on easy terms."[4] Like its English counterpart, Bedford Park was built up with "pretty cottages" in the Queen Anne style, planned to be "convenient and comfortable" as well as "unique" in design.[5] The houses ranged in size from cottages of seven or eight rooms to much bigger structures, "more like ... mansions."[6] They were located on large lots that provided ample space for gardens. Near the railroad station, shops, built low and on ground apart from the residences so as not to mar "the villa effect," provided such "immediate domestic necessities as those from butcher and druggist."[7]

Skillful marketing and the promise of additional amenities, such as the opening of the New York Botanical Garden in 1891, helped to make Bedford Park a success. By 1890, the development had about 560 residents, mostly families. With no church closer than the Fordham Methodist Church at 196th Street and Marion Avenue, the American Home Mission Society sent the Reverend Shearjashub Bourne to Bedford Park in 1889 to see if the residents would be interested in establishing a church.

Congregationalism and the American Home Mission Society[8]

The Pilgrims brought Congregationalism to America in the 1620s. In 1643, a group of English settlers from New England and Virginia formed the first Congregational church in New York City. A few more churches were established during the eighteenth century but the number of Congregationalists remained small in New York. The Evangelical movement in the 1820s, known as the Second Great Awakening, led to the establishment of new congregations and to the formation of the General Association of New York in 1824. Congregationalism finally attained prominence in New York in the mid-nineteenth century, largely due to Henry Ward Beecher, probably the most famous minister of his day, who promoted a progressive, liberal Christianity in his sermons at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn between 1847 and 1887.[9]

Congregationalism experienced its greatest growth in the period between 1870 and 1920. Contributing to this was the Congregationalists' continued emphasis on both foreign and domestic missionary work and their establishment of regional associations and the National Council of Congregational Churches that enabled individual churches to coordinate efforts and pool resources. The Congregationalists' theological liberalism

emphasizing the human capacity for self-improvement and social progress appealed greatly to the growing middle class. The church's domestic missionary activities centered around two national organizations, the American Home Missionary Society, founded in 1826,[10] which provided financial assistance to congregations that were unable to support a minister, and the American Missionary Association, formed in 1846, which was primarily concerned with setting up schools and churches for African Americans, Native Americans, and Chinese-Americans. Headquartered in New York City, the American Home Missionary Society raised money through contributions from churches, individuals, and statewide missionary organizations, known as auxiliaries. Working through the state societies or through experienced clergymen that it employed as agents, the Society hired and paid the salaries of missionaries who were expected to live in the communities they served. By 1892, there were approximately 2,000 ministers employed by the Society. Most were assigned to the Western states and territories, however, missionaries were also assigned to city neighborhoods to work with recent immigrants and to suburban areas such as Bedford Park to organize new congregations.

The Reverend S. Bourne and the Founding of the Bedford Park Congregational Church [11]

The Reverend Shearjashub Bourne, the minister that the American Home Missionary Society sent to Bedford Park, was a respected clergyman nearing retirement age who had previously founded a congregation. Rev. Bourne was born in Bristol, Rhode Island, in 1822. He was a descendent of the colonist Richard Bourne, who had served as a missionary to the Native American tribes in Massachusetts, and his family had included a number of prominent clergymen and jurists, including his grandfather Benjamin Bourne, the first congressman from Rhode Island. Rev. Bourne graduated from Yale in 1849 and from the Andover Seminary in 1853. He was ordained at the Congregational Church in Flushing in 1854, where he served as minister, 1854-59. In 1859, he was sent to Harlem to found a Congregational Church, which was erected on East 125th Street near Second Avenue in 1862 (demolished). In 1863, he married Susan Ketchum, the daughter of Elizabeth (Phoenix) Ketchum and Edgar Ketchum, a prominent attorney, political figure, and abolitionist.[12] Bourne served as minister of the Harlem Congregational Church (later known as Pilgrim Church) until 1871. He subsequently served as pastor at the Congregational churches in Ellington, Connecticut (1872-75), Paterson, New Jersey (1875-83), and Barrington, Rhode Island (1883-89).

Rev. Bourne first visited Bedford Park in September 1889. That day he "walked about the town" and paid calls and "put up notice in the R.R. station."[13] The following Sunday, September 29, 1889, he held a worship service in the parlor of Mrs. Daniel Gugisperg that was attended by seven people. Almost immediately the congregation began meeting in a store near Webster Avenue and Southern Boulevard. In December, a Sunday School was opened with seven adults and twenty-one children in attendance. In January 1890, the Ladies Aid Society was organized, and in February a Young People's Society for Christian Endeavor was formed. In 1890, the congregation began meeting in a hall on Rockfield (203rd) Street. Within a few months, Rev. Bourne had convinced the congregation of the need for a church building. In June, four lots were purchased from the Twenty-Fourth Ward Real Estate Company. The company, which would have regarded the church as an attractive amenity for the development, "donated about 1/3 of the cost" and offered the lots at "a very reasonable price."[14] Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on November 22, 1890. In December, the Bedford Park Congregational Church filed papers for a Certificate of Incorporation[15] as a step towards obtaining a construction loan, and began raising funds. Rev. Bourne used his extensive connections to solicit contributions from his former congregation at Pilgrim Church in Harlem, from the Broadway Tabernacle Church, and from the Congregational Union. Generous cash contributions were received from a number of individuals, notably State Senator William Watson Niles, a prominent attorney and resident of the Twenty-Fourth District who became the first president of the church Board of Trustees. Senator Niles also donated a large stained glass window with sidelights for the north wall of the Sunday School. The Pilgrim Church of Harlem donated a church bell inscribed with the motto of the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."[16]

The cornerstone for the new church was laid on February 21, 1891. In June 1891, Rev. Bourne's son, Edgar K. Bourne, filed plans with the Department of Buildings for a stone-and-shingle-clad church at an estimated cost of $6,000. Construction began in July and was completed in March 1892.[17] The new church, "a symbol of the growth and permanence of the community,"[18] was dedicated on April 26, 1892.

Edgar K. Bourne[19]

Edgar K. Bourne, the son of Rev. S. Bourne and Susan Ketchum Bourne, was born in Harlem in 1865. It is not known where he was educated but it is likely that he received his architectural training in Rhode Island since he seems to have lived with his parents until the early 1900s. Bourne established his own architectural office in New York City around 1890. The Bedford Park Congregational Church is apparently one of his first works. Another early commission was the Harlem Library (now the Greater Bethel A.M.E. Church, 1891-92) at 32 West 123rd Street, in the Mount Morris Park Historic District. His commissions included a seven-story neo-Renaissance style apartment building at 2394-2398 Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard (1901) and a bow-fronted rowhouse combining neo-Classical and Renaissance Revival style elements at 62 Hamilton Terrace (1901-02), in the Hamilton Heights Historic District, and the Wee Burn Golf Club in Noroton, Connecticut (c. 1899). Edgar K. Bourne was not listed in the New York City directories for a period of years, suggesting that he left the city. From 1910 to 1925, he was employed either as an architect or draftsman for the Public Services Commission and its successor, the Transit Commission, the state agencies charged with building the subways. In 1917, he moved back to Bedford Park to an apartment on East 199th Street near Bainbridge Avenue.

The Design of the Bedford Park Congregational Church[20]

When the Bedford Park Congregational Church was erected in 1891-92, it stood in an open field on the edge of a sparsely developed suburb. The generous size of the lot permitted a more complex and expansive massing than would have been possible in an urban site; however, the knowledge that buildings could be constructed to the south and east of the church led the architect to emphasize the two street facades.

The plan of the church was standard for the period. It is comprised of the entrance vestibule, the main worship space, which is treated as an open auditorium with seating facing a raised platform chancel, and a Sunday school meeting room which would have been separated from the main auditorium by operable partitions or parterres that could be opened when necessary. (The rooms are now completely open to one another).[21] As is typical of these churches, the entrance vestibule is marked a prominent tower, the rectangular auditorium has a high pitched roof and the smaller Sunday school wing has a lower roof.

The church's exterior design draws on a solution popular in the 1880s and early 1890s for small churches in suburban and rural settings and in resorts in which designers worked in a rustic manner freely blending forms derived from a number of late-nineteenth-century styles. Many of these churches incorporate architectural forms and features associated with Queen Anne and Shingle style buildings, notably open porches and porte cocheres. They usually have an asymmetrical massing accentuated by picturesque towers and other projections. Some use Gothic forms such as pointed-arch openings or Romanesque Revival style elements to enhance the ecclesiastical feeling. Among the rare surviving examples in New York City, dating from the period when Riverdale was a rural suburb, is the Riverdale Presbyterian Chapel, now Edgehill Church of Spuyten Duyvil (1888-89, Francis H. Kimball, a designated New York City Landmark, 2550 Independence Avenue, Bronx). A small asymmetrical church nestled into a hillside, it combines elements from the Romanesque Revival, neo-Tudor, and Shingle styles in an extremely picturesque manner. Other examples in the suburbs of New York City include Potter & Robertson's Queen Anne style Christ Church, Oyster Bay (c. 1877-78), Charles Rich's boulder-and-shingle-clad Christ Church, Short Hills, New Jersey (1883-84), and William Appleton Potter's St. Mary's, Tuxedo Park (1887-88, altered 1897, and 1901).[22]

At Bedford Park, Bourne drew on Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Shingle style models. The principal feature of the design is the church's low square tower with its triple arched windows profiled by drip moldings and pyramidal roof set off by a cornice and parapet. Bourne's tower design may have been inspired by Henry Hobson Richardson's Romanesque Revival style Immanuel Baptist Church, Newton, Massachusetts (1884-86) which was illustrated in the *American Architect & Building News* in 1887. Bourne also seems to have been influenced by Richardson's Romanesque Revival style designs in his use of rough-faced squared ashlar and tall arched window openings containing a pair of windows topped by an arched transom. The articulation of the auditorium, with stepped buttresses and double height window bays terminating in tall gables, seems to be an abstracted reinterpretation of features found in Gothic Revival style churches such as George Fletcher Babb's First Presbyterian Church in Englewood, New Jersey

(1870). The gabled timber-framed porch with bargeboards and decorative rafters is a Queen Anne style element.[23] The continuity of surface between the upper portion of the gabled walls, the roof, and the upper portion of the tower, which were originally all covered with square-cut wood shingles laid in horizontal rows, is characteristic of the Shingle style. The combination of a stone base with shingled upper walls and roof, the undulating treatment of the shingled upper portion of the tower with its flaring base and concave curves profiling the windows, the simple moldings, and the rustic chimney stack that interrupts and cuts off a portion of gable on the north wall are also typical features of the Shingle style.

Later History of the Bedford Park Congregational Church and the Bedford Park Community

Building the new church placed a severe financial strain on the new Bedford Park congregation, which was forced to seek continued financial assistance from the American Home Mission Society to pay Rev. Bourne's salary. In the light of the circumstances, Edgar Bourne waived his $350 fee for architectural services and even made a small cash contribution to the building fund.

As the neighborhood continued to develop in the 1890s, the situation eased. By 1899, the congregation was able to build a parsonage next door at 309 East 201st Street to house the family of Rev. Weyland Spaulding, who had taken over as minister in 1895, following Rev. Bourne's retirement. In 1902, under the Reverend James W. Cool, a separate Sunday school building, known as the Lyceum, was erected to the east of the church at 3008 Bainbridge Avenue.[24] (The buildings are on separate tax lots and are not part of this designation.) Presumably it was at that time that the partitions were removed separating the auditorium from the Sunday school in the church building. In 1903, a basement passage was constructed linking the church with the Lyceum.[25] In 1908, a 9' x 17' frame-and-stucco extension was constructed on the east side of the church for organ space. The following year a stone-and-frame addition was constructed on the south side of the church to expand the space occupied by the pulpit and choir and to provide a separate entrance for the choir and the minister's retiring room.[26]

By the early 1900s, the boundaries of the Bedford Park neighborhood had expanded and the population had grown to about 2,000 people. The growth of the neighborhood was substantially aided by the extension of Suburban Rapid Transit system's elevated line to Fordham Road in 1900 and to Bedford Park in 1902. The construction of Mosholu Parkway (begun 1903), which linked nearby Bronx Park and the New York Botanical Garden with Van Cortlandt Park, contributed greatly to the desirability of the neighborhood. Large villas were constructed along the Parkway, and Bedford Park became a fashionable neighborhood whose residents included the movie producer, William J. Fox. The opening of the Jerome Avenue subway in 1918, which connected to the Lexington Avenue, Sixth Avenue, and Ninth Avenue elevated lines, and the expansion of the Third Avenue elevated to 200th Street, set off a building boom in the neighborhood.

The Bedford Park Congregational Church also prospered. By 1913, the congregation had grown to 240 members. In the 1920s, the church was sufficiently well-off to employ both a minster, the nationally-known orator William T. Boult, who was responsible only for preaching to the congregation, and an assistant pastor, who was responsible for ministering to the congregation. In 1936, the Lyceum was rebuilt and renamed the Church House, dedicated to serving as a center for social programs and community activities.

After World War II, the Bedford Park neighborhood experienced another small building boom. The population remained middle class, but became older as younger families moved to the suburbs. By 1953, when Rev. William G. Kalaidjian became the minister, "the church had only fifty-five members and there was talk of closing it." Rev. Kalaidjian reversed the trend. He opened up the church to a large number of civic organizations. In the 1950s, he raised money to have the church's historic stained glass windows releaded and protected by glazing, to have new windows installed in the church narthex and rear of the sanctuary, and the window of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane installed over the altar. In the 1960s, the church's interior was renovated and new gas lamps were installed on the church lawn. By 1989, the church had around 200 members.

Reverend Kalaidjian retired from the Bedford Park Congregational Church in 1996. In 1998, the Reverend Christopher Ponnuraj, who had been performing pastoral duties as a consulting minister, was installed as the church's thirteenth minister. At present, due to the changing demographics of the neighborhood, the congregation numbers about sixty. The church and Church House continue to be used by a wide variety of civic groups. The Bedford Park Congregational Church remains an important social and physical presence in the neighborhood.

Description

The Bedford Park Congregational Church occupies a trapezoidal corner lot that extends ninety-five feet along East 201st Street and fifty-seven feet along Bainbridge Avenue. A non-historic chain-link fence borders the property on the west, north, and east. On the south, the paved alley between the church and the parsonage at 309 East 201st Street is used for parking (The parking space occupies a portion of both the church and parsonage lots.) Non-historic iron gas lamps flanking the non-historic concrete entrance paths were installed in 1964. The historic marble block (probably a stepping stone for mounting horses) and non-historic iron hitching post next to the northern entrance path also probably were installed in the 1960s. To the north of the church the ground level has been raised about a foot since the building was constructed. There is a non-historic wood-and-glass sign with iron legs set at a diagonal to the street corner. A tall non-historic metal flagpole is located near the northeast corner of the lawn.

The church features a mixture of Richardsonian Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Shingle style elements. A one-story building resting on a low basement, it is approximately forty-feet-wide and eighty-feet-deep. The asymmetrically-massed building is composed of four parts: the entrance tower with a projecting wooden porch; the main auditorium, which is almost square in plan and is lit by tall windows that extend into high dormers on the gabled roof; the lower gable-roofed Sunday school wing, which opens into the main auditorium; and the 1909 gable-roofed choir addition. The lower portions of the entrance tower and the east, west, and north walls are constructed of rough-faced gneiss blocks laid in a random pattern. (The eastern facade is blocked from view by the adjacent Church House.) The gables, the upper portion of the tower, and the south wall are faced with non-historic asbestos shingles. The gabled roof and the parapet and pyramidal roof surmounting the tower are covered with non-historic asphalt shingles. The original molded wood cornices are preserved on the raking eaves, and historic molded galvanized metal cornices extend along the edge of the roof. The building retains most of its original stained glass windows in wood surrounds. The wood moldings, cornices, window surrounds, and porch are painted. Almost all the windows are covered with a protective plexiglass sheeting. The multipane wood sash on the east and west walls of the choir addition are original, but the colored glass in many of the windows dates from the 1950s. Some of the basement windows have been sealed.

Tower-- The western facade facing East 201st Street is dominated by the recessed entrance tower which has a stone base set off by stepped buttresses and a wood entrance porch that abuts the south wall of the auditorium. There is a carved date stone at the base of the wall near the edge of the porch. The porch is approached by wood steps that have non-historic wrought-iron railings. The porch is sheltered by a gabled roof which is supported by original paired square wood posts. The posts rest on wood pedestals sided with historic wood shingles. (There are non-historic metal brackets, probably for flags, on the front of the pedestals). Original wood balusters and railings extend between the pedestals. The front part of the gable is embellished with a decorative screen of wood posts and wide molded bargeboards. The exposed rafters supporting the porch roof have decorative carvings. A non-historic hanging iron and glass lantern is suspended from the center of the roof. A non-historic painted sign hangs from a beam above the entry. The wood porch floor appears to be original. The round-arched front entrance is set off by a stone surround and dressed stone voussoirs. The opening contains original paired wood doors with a stained finish.

On the north side of the tower there is a rectangular opening which contains a pair of historic stained glass casement windows and a transom in a molded wood surround. The windows and transom are covered by a protective plexiglass sheeting. Beneath the window is a small rectangular basement window which has been sealed.

Originally sheathed in wood shingles and now covered with asbestos shingles, the upper portion of the tower flares gently at its base. Each face of the tower is articulated by recessed arched openings. The larger center openings contain original wood louvers; the narrow side lights retain their original one-over-one wood sash. A heavy bracketed galvanized-metal cornice extends along the top of the tower. It is surmounted by a low asphalt shingled parapet and pyramidal roof bearing a non-historic metal cross.

Auditorium -- The west wall of the auditorium is articulated by stepped buttresses and by two narrow stone-faced, gabled window bays which extend from the base of the building to the attic. Each of the bays contains a small square-headed basement window and a tall arched window opening with a rough dressed stone sill and smooth-faced voussoirs. The southern basement window is divided by a narrow muntin into two lights and contains clear glass; the northern basement window opening has been sealed. The auditorium windows retain their original wood

window surrounds with tall pivoting center lights divided by wood mullions. The windows have their original leaded stained glass. The stained glass is covered with sheets of plexiglass which are attached to the wood window sash. The gable pediments are faced with asbestos shingles. The simple molded aluminum trim which edges the gables is non-historic. The gabled north and south walls of the auditorium retain their original wood raking cornices but have been covered with asbestos siding. The north gable is pierced by a square window set off by a circular wood molding. The window retains its original angled wood tracery, but the glass has been removed and the window sealed.

Sunday School Wing – The west facade of the Sunday school wing is pierced by a rectangular window opening which is set directly beneath the eaves of the gabled roof. The window has a rough-faced granite sill and contains a wood casement window with leaded stained glass. A plexiglass sheet has been attached to the wood window frame to protect the stained glass. The gabled north facade of the Sunday school wing was designed to accommodate a large stained glass window depicting the Good Shepherd and two smaller side lights, all of which still survive. The Good Shepherd window is protected by a tripartite protective glass covering, which was installed in the 1950s. The tripartite window frame has a rough-hewn stone sill and is divided by heavy wood mullions. Curved wood brackets extend from the mullions to the overhang beneath the projecting portion of the gable, which is covered with non-historic asbestos shingles. The east corner of the gable is chamfered where it abuts an original stone chimney stack. The stonework is damaged on the north face of the stack near the rectangular flue hole, but the rest of stack is in good condition. At the basement of the north facade there is a large segmental-arched window. When the ground level was raised in front of the church, an areaway was created which is lined with a stone retaining wall. This is topped by a non-historic chain-link fence that matches the fence bordering the property.

Choir Addition-- The west wall of the choir addition is faced with fieldstone and is surmounted by a steeply pitched roof. On the north end of this facade there is wood stair with historic wood railings. The stair leads to a paneled door with a multi-light window. The doorway is surmounted by an arched transom which is divided by wood muntins into four lights. A gabled hood over the door is supported by curved brackets and has molded bargeboards at its eaves. The small rectangular window opening has a rough-hewn sill and is topped by the molded cornice edging the eaves of the gabled roof. The window retains its original six-over-six wood sash. The non-historic colored glass in the window and transom probably dates from the 1950s. This glass is protected by sheets of plexiglass which have been attached to the window frames. There is a concrete stairwell with non-historic pipe rails leading to a basement entrance directly beneath the first-story entrance. The basement entrance has a non-historic metal door with a small window.

Above a low painted stone foundation, the gabled south wall of the choir wing is faced with asbestos shingles. The wall has several projections at its center and is pierced by rectangular windows which retain their original heavy molded wood surrounds and wood sash. At the corners of the basement there are horizontal windows which contain nine-light casements. A row of four windows at the center of the basement have six-over-six wood sash (the glass has been covered with paint). A six-over-six window at the west corner of the first story contains non-historic colored glass probably dating from the 1950s and is protected by a sheet of plexiglass which has been attached to the window frame. There is also a multi-light sash window with clear glass at the apex of the gable.

Report prepared by
Gale Harris
Research Department

NOTES

1. This section on the development of the Bedford Park neighborhood is drawn from the following sources: Kathleen W. Bukofzer, "Bedford Park: A Victim of Its Own Success," (M.S. thesis, Planning, Columbia University, 1983); Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), 966, 1126; John McNamara, *History in*

Asphalt (rev. ed., New York: Bronx County Historical Society, 1984), 24,144-145, 233; Jerome Park Conservancy, "Preservation Report: History and Evaluation of the Jerome Park Reservoir," draft report, 1988, 26-29; and the entries on "Bedford Park," "Jerome Park," and "Jerome Park Racetrack," in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

2. During the interim, the developers were able to secure access to gas and water lines, to have the streets cut through, and begin planting elm and maple trees.

3. Racetrack goers changed at the station from the Harlem Railroad's main line to a spur line to the racetrack; travel time to the city was thirty minutes.

4. "Pleasant Homes Near At Hand, Working in the City and Living in the Country," *New York Times*, February 16, 1884, p. 7.

5. Ibid.

6. "Uptown Improvements: What Is Being Done to Build up and Beautify the Twenty-Fourth Ward," *New York Daily Graphic*, April 19, 1884, p. 370.

7. Ibid.

8. This discussion of Congregationalism is based on the following: "Congregationalists," *Encyclopedia of New York*; "Congregationalism," *Columbia Encyclopedia,* 2nd ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950); John von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620-1957* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1992); David G. Horvath, ed., *A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the Papers of the American Home Missionary Society 1816 (1826-1894) 1936* (Glenn Rock, N. J.: Microfilm Corp. of America, 1975), 1-7.

9. Beecher's Sunday sermons were so popular that the Fulton Ferry from Manhattan to Brooklyn came to be known as "Beecher's Ferry." See "Beecher, Henry Ward," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964); Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 729. Other notable Congregationalist ministers included the leading revivalist and reformer Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) and the noted abolitionist Joseph P. Thompson (1819-72), both of whom were associated with the Broadway Tabernacle Church.

10. The American Home Missionary Society was formed by the Congregational, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Associate Reformed churches. Shortly after the Society was founded, the Reformed churches withdrew. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists, who were very similar in belief, agreed that a church formed by either group was permitted to secure a minister of either persuasion, while retaining its own form of government. (Under Congregationalism each congregation has free control of its affairs while under Presbyterianism, the congregations in a given area are governed by a presbytery made up of the ministers and at least one elder from each congregation). As the denominations began to strengthen their separate identities, the Presbyterians became dissatisfied with the American Home Missionary Society. In 1861, they withdrew completely from the society, leaving it entirely in the control of the Congregationalists. In 1893, the Society was renamed the Congregational Home Missionary Society. It still exists under that name.

11. Sources for the biographical section on Rev. S. Bourne include his obituaries in the *New York Times*, Mar. 23, 1900, p.7, and *The Congregational Year-Book*, 1901, p. 17; Susan Ketchum Bourne, obituary, *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1908, p.13. The discussion of the early history of the Bedford Park Congregational Church is drawn from Bukofzer, 27-28; and from the following sources in a bundle marked "Old Records, Deeds, Starting of Church, Manse, etc.: Historical Data," in the Bedford Park Congregational Church Archive: "Steps Along the Way," *Bedford Park Congregational Church Golden Anniversary Yearbook,1939*, pp. 4-5; "A Brief History of the Bedford Park Congregational Church," *103th Anniversary Yearbook*, 1992, pp. 4-5; "Bedford Park Congregational Church Holds Celebration of 40 Years Religious Service," unidentified newspaper clipping; Letter from S. Bourne to Fred Williams, November 19, 1890.

12. The night before the Bourne's wedding, Edgar Ketchum's Harlem house was set on fire by rioters in the early stages of the Draft Riots.

13. *Bedford Park Congregational Church Golden Anniversary Yearbook*, 1939, 4.

14. Anna K. Revi, Request for Evaluation, Bedford Park Congregational Church, May 5, 1998, in the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Bedford Park Congregational Church Research File.

15. New York County Clerk, Division of Old Records, Certificate of Incorporation, 00099-90.

16. The bell had been donated to Pilgrim Church by Rev. Bourne's father-in-law Edward Ketchum. The inscription is a reference to the anti-slavery sentiments shared by Ketchum, Rev. Bourne and the other founders of Pilgrim Church.

17. New York City Department of Buildings, New Building Docket 893-1891.

18. Bukofzer, 27.

19. This section on Edgar K. Bourne is based on Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice New York City 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1980), 17; James Ward, *Architects in Practice New York City 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 9; New York City Directories 1889-1925; Landmarks Preservation Commission, Architects Files.

20. Portions of this discussion of the design of the Bedford Park Congregational Church are adapted from Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Tremont Baptist Church Designation Report*, prepared by Donald Presa (LP-2048) (New York: City of New York, 2000), 3-5; LPC, *Edgehill Church of Spuyten Duyvil Designation Report* (Riverdale Presbyterian Chapel), prepared by Andrew Dolkart (LP-1086) (New York: City of New York, 1980), 3-4. See also the discussion of suburban and country churches in Sarah Landau, *Edward T. and William A. Potter: American High Victorian Architects, 1855-1901* (New York: Garland, 1979), 188-204; and Stern, 969. For Congregational churches, see the *Congregational Year Book*, 1879-1900. For auditorium plan churches, see Stern 299-314; and Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "Spiritual Armories: A Social and Architectural History of Neo-Medieval Auditorium Churches in the U.S, 1869-1910," (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Minnesota, 1991).

21. The auditorium plan was enormously popular with evangelical Protestant congregations, such as Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists in the 1880s and 1890s. The first church in the United States to feature the auditorium plan appears to be the Plymouth Church (1849-50, Joseph C. Wells), located on Orange Street in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District. It has a nearly square auditorium with straight rows of pews facing a stage and was reputably designed to enhance Beecher's oratory performance. A decade later, the Luther Place Memorial Church (1870, architect unknown) in Washington, D.C., was constructed with a similar plan. Other auditorium churches, apparently influenced by these two prototypes, soon followed, reaching a peak in the 1880s that continued through the 1890s before subsiding during the first decade of the twentieth century. Other early auditorium-plan churches in New York City include the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church (1883, Carl Pfeiffer, 705 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan), the New York Presbyterian Church, now the Metropolitan Baptist Church (1884, John R. Thomas and Richard R. Davies, a designated NYC Landmark, 151 West 128th Street, Manhattan), and the Emmanuel Baptist Church (1888, Francis H. Kimball, a designated NYC Landmark, 279 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn). Hundreds more auditorium churches were built in the United States in the 1890s and 1900s, including several in New York City. These include the Greene Avenue Baptist Church, now the Antioch Baptist Church (1887-92, Lansing C. Holden and Paul F. Higgs, a designated NYC Landmark, 828 Greene Avenue, Brooklyn), the Greenwood Baptist Church (1900, A. Leicht, 461 6th Street, Brooklyn), the Tremont Baptist Church (1904-12, William H. Birkmire, a designated NYC Landmark, 324 Tremont Avenue, Bronx) and the Abyssinian Baptist Church (1922-23, Charles W. Bolton & Son, a designated NYC Landmark, 132 West 138th Street, Manhattan). The churches, which typically contain seating arranged in semicircular rows facing a central platform, represent a manipulation of interior space to accommodate as many congregants as possible and afford fewer visual obstructions. In these structures, preaching, rather than ceremony, takes center stage.

22. Among the other notable examples were William Ralph Emerson's Church of St. Sylvia, Mount Desert, Maine (1880-81), Rotch & Tilden's Church of the Holy Spirit, Mattapan, Massachusetts (c.1886), Harvey and Charles Ellis' Grace Church, Scottsville, New York (1885), and Gilbert & Taylor's German Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, St. Paul, Minnesota (1890).

23. A drawing for the church that appears on the program for the dedication service shows that Bourne had originally intended to match the porch with decorative timbering on the gabled auditorium bays and the gabled north wall of the Sunday School wing. He subsequently modified this design prior to construction to accommodate a large stained glass window with sidelights and provide a chimney for a fireplace in the Sunday school.

24. NBD 444-1902; Henry Schweitzer, architect. Known as the Lyceum, the Sunday school building was used as community center for such activities as lectures and theatrical events. (A 1907 advertisement in the church archive announces Freed's Popular Moving Picture Show offering both a movie and vaudeville show to benefit the church.)

25. ALT 517-1908.

26. ALT 247-1909; Carl P. Johnson, architect. See also "Report at the Close of the Pastorate of Albert T. Tamblyn," 1913, in the Bedford Park Congregational Church archive.

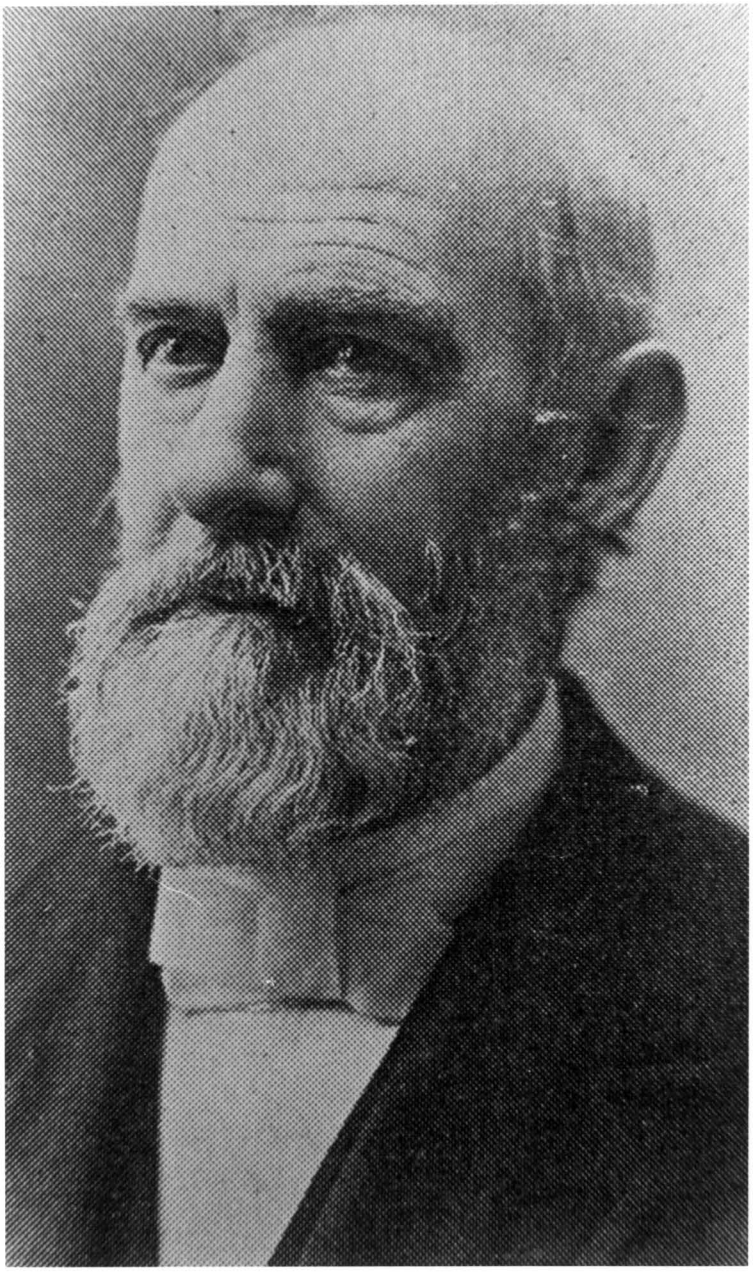
FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Bedford Park Congregational Church has a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

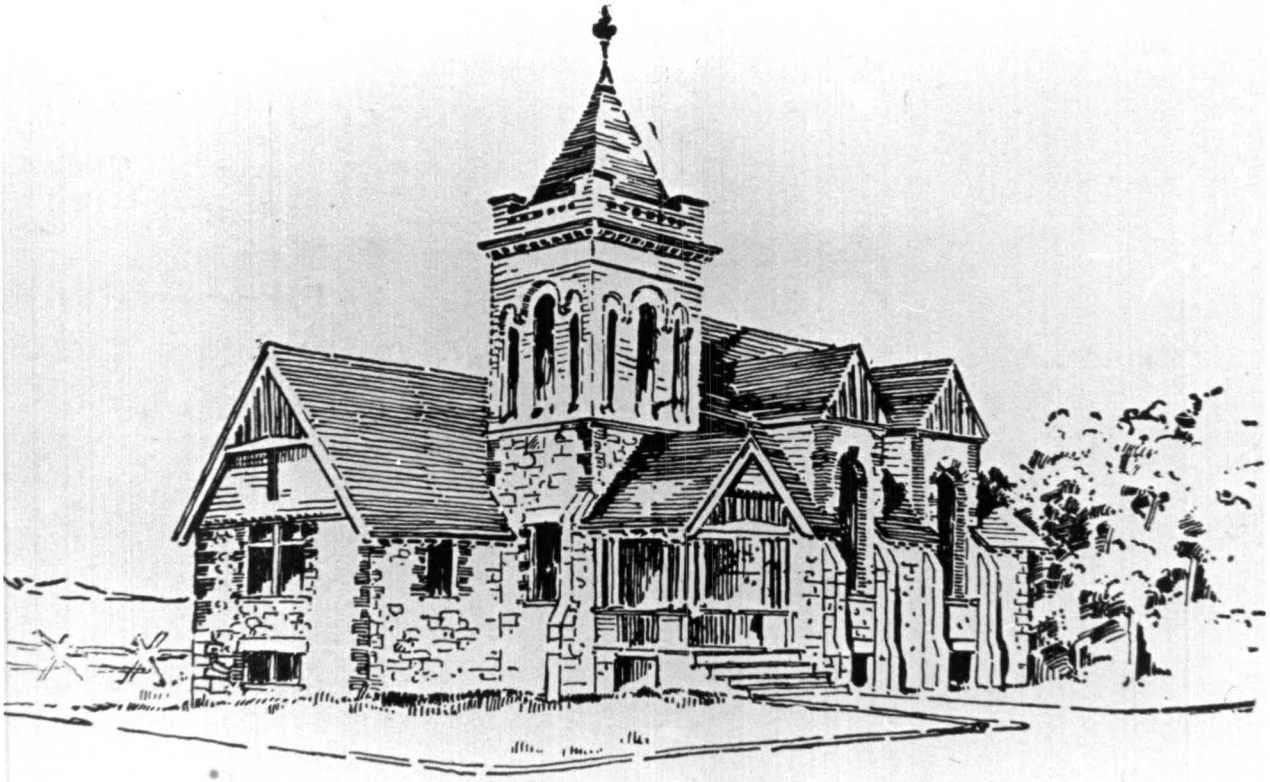
The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Bedford Park Congregational Church, designed by architect Edgar K. Bourne and built in 1891-92, survives today as a rare example in New York City of a small suburban church with a rustic design; that the design of the church incorporates an eclectic mixture of late-nineteenth-century-styles and typifies such churches in its asymmetrical massing accentuated by a picturesque tower and other projections; that it is constructed of rough-dressed fieldstone and clad in shingled wood and features a shingled Richardsonian Romanesque style tower, squat buttresses, round-arched windows with voussoirs, and a timber- framed Queen Anne style porch; that the plan of the building, which is expressed in the exterior design, is typical of Congregational churches of the period; that Bedford Park was a planned suburban community developed in the 1880s; and that, founded in 1889 by Rev. S. Bourne, the Bedford Park Congregational Church was the first major social institution in the neighborhood and has remained a vital part of its community.

Accordingly, pursuant to 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 Bedford Park Congregational Church, 2988 Bainbridge Avenue (aka 301 East 201st Street), Borough of the Bronx, and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3299, Lot 1, as its Landmark Site.

Bedford Park Congregational Church, 2988 Bainbridge Avenue (aka 301 East 201st Street), Bronx
East 201st Street facade
Photo: Carl Forster

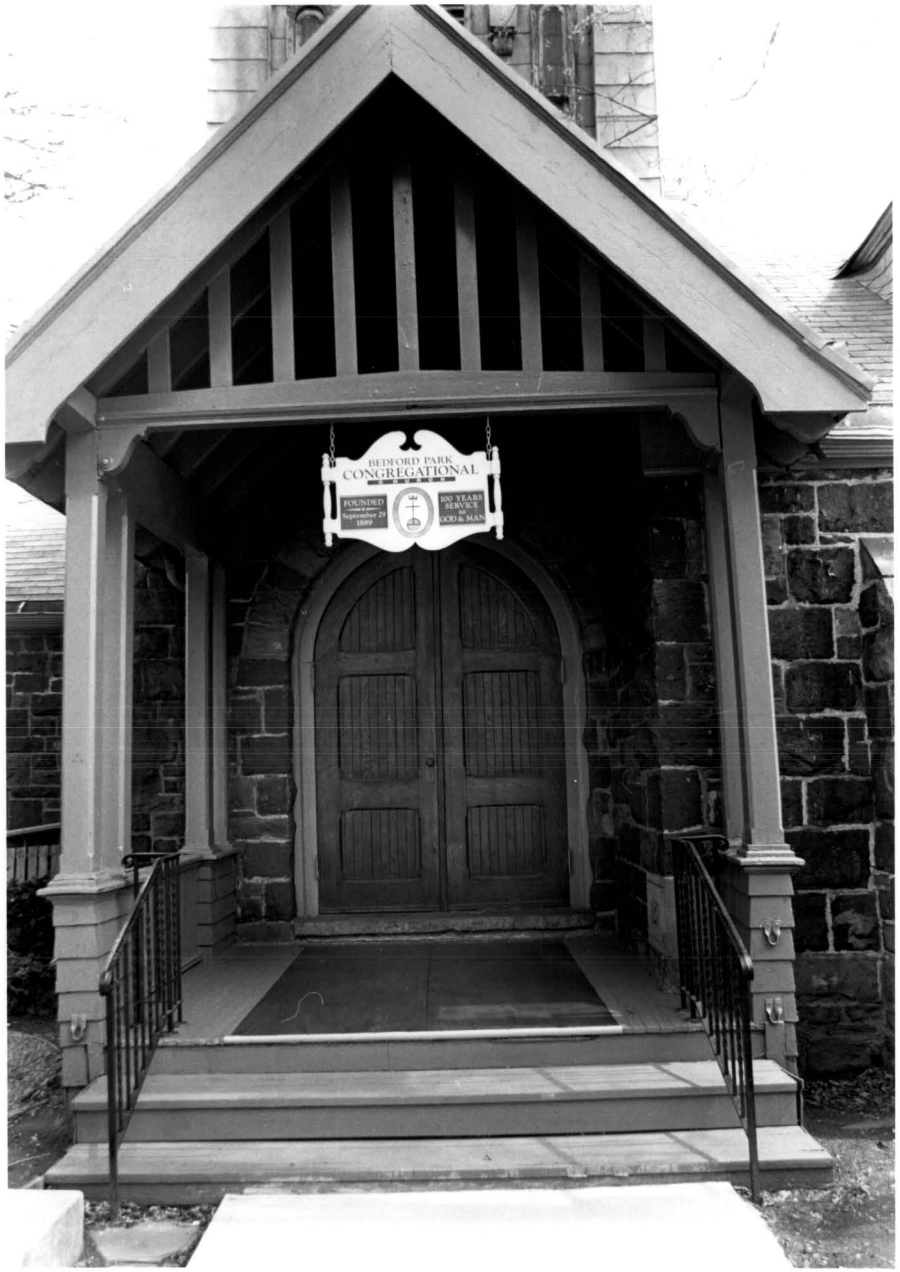


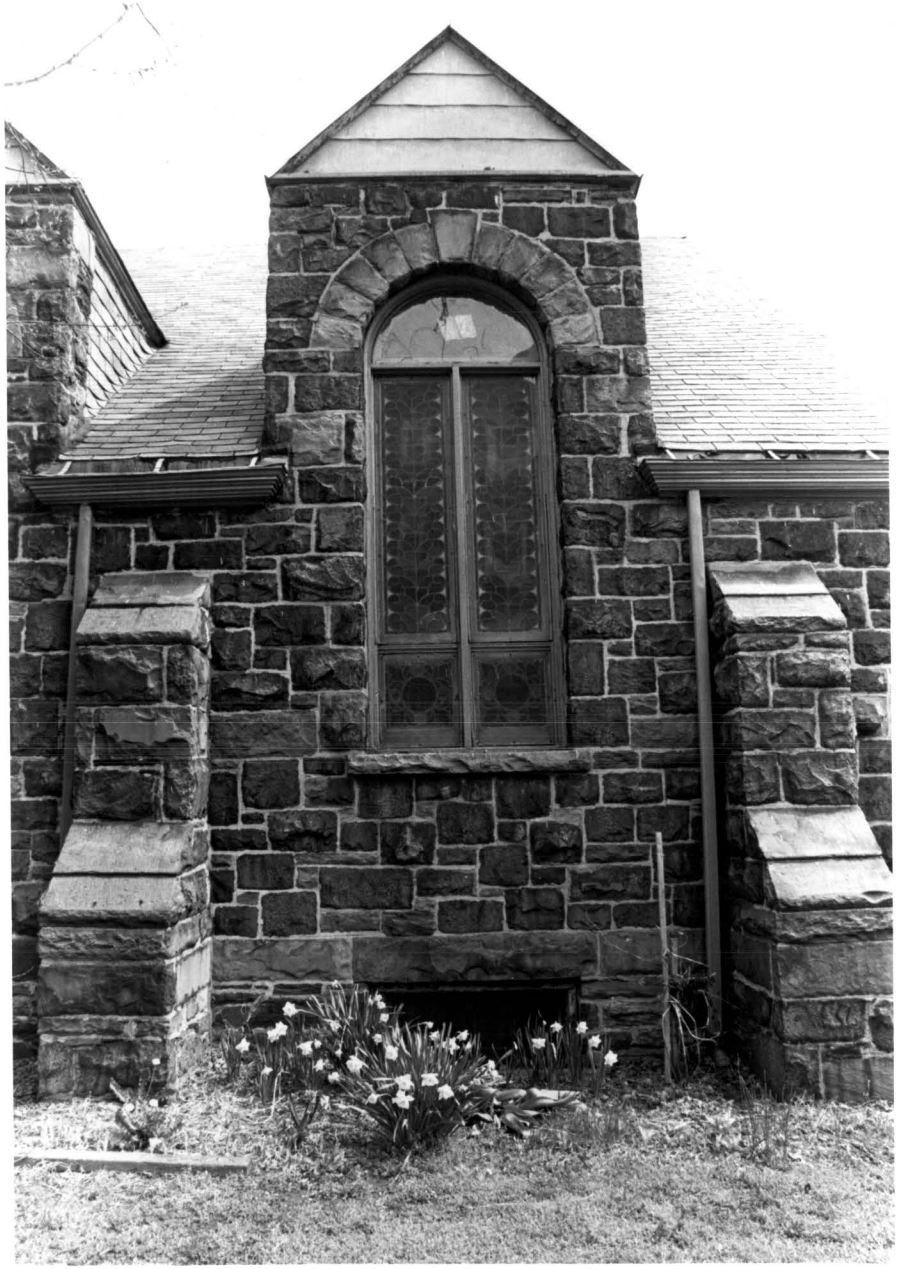
Photograph of Reverend Shearjashub Bourne, the church's first minister
Source: Bedford Park Congregational Church Golden Anniversary Yearbook



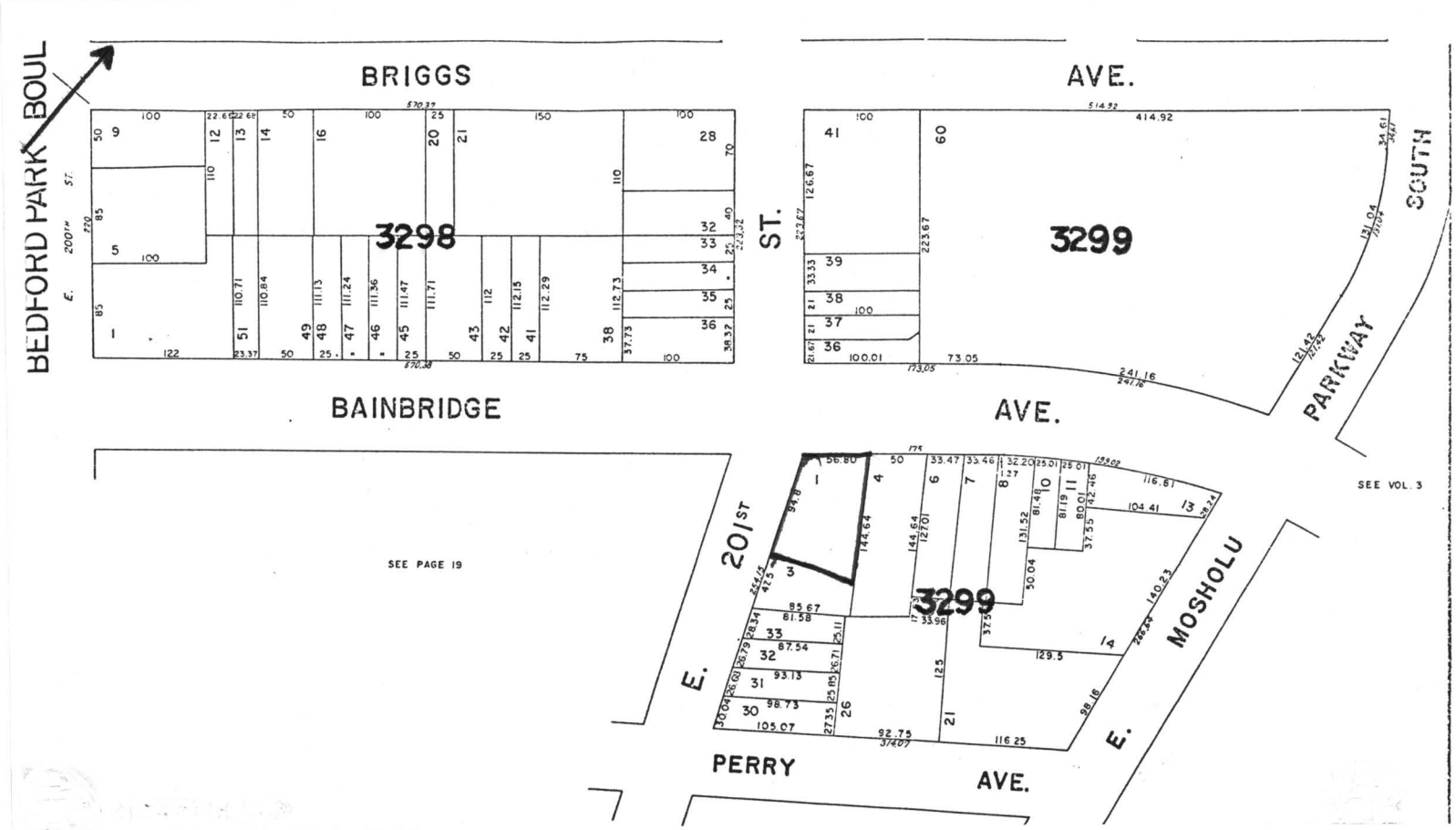
Edgar K. Bourne, Unexecuted scheme for the Bedford Park Congregational Church, c. 1891
Historic view of the church from the northwest, c. 1892
Photo and drawing: Bedford Park Congregational Church Archive

Bedford Park Congregational Church, 2988 Bainbridge Avenue (aka 301 East 201st Street), Bronx
Bainbridge Avenue facade
Photo: Carl Forster

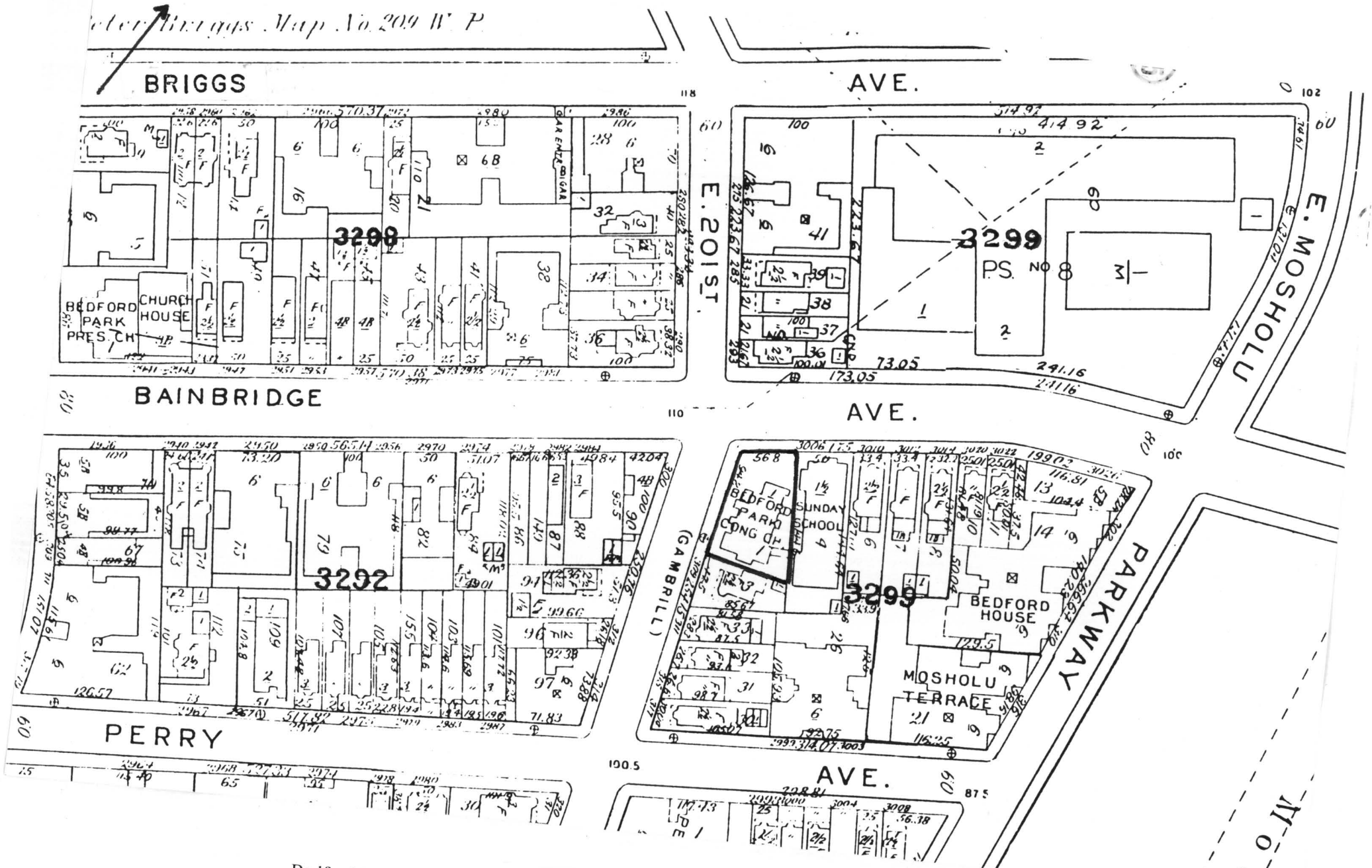




Details of the entrance and a window bay on the East 201st Street facade
Photos: Carl Forster



Bedford Park Congregational Church, 2988 Bainbridge Avenue (aka 301 East 201st Street), Bronx
Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3299, Lot 1
Source: Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map



Bedford Park Congregational Church, 2988 Bainbridge Avenue (aka 301 East 201st Street), Bronx
Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3299, Lot 1
Source: *Sanborn Landbook, The Bronx,* 1999