

**SAMUEL PELL HOUSE, 586 City Island Avenue, Borough of the Bronx. Built c. 1876**

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5635, Lot 73

On April 16, 2002, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Samuel Pell House<sup>1</sup> and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Three witnesses, the owner of the building, and representatives of the Historic Districts Council and Municipal Art Society, spoke in favor of the designation. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation. The Commission has received letters in support of the designation from Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion, City Council Member Madeline Provenzano, Bronx Community Board No. 10, the City Island Historical Society, and Rev. Robert J. Moore, pastor of St. Mary, Star of the Sea Church. State Senator Guy J. Velella has written to the Commission indicating that he is not opposed to the designation.

Summary

This imposing residence, constructed around 1876, is a fine and well-preserved example of the free-standing Second Empire style frame houses that once proliferated in the rural areas of New York City but are now increasingly being altered or demolished. Built for oysterman Samuel Pell, it is significant reminder of the enormous wealth that the oyster trade brought to the maritime community of City Island in the nineteenth century. The Second Empire style is unusually well-represented on the island with thirteen surviving houses of which the Pell house is the grandest and best preserved. A five-bay-wide, three-story frame building, the Pell house is sheathed in its original clapboards and retains its historic two-over-two fenestration. It is richly embellished with heavy molded door and window surrounds, bracketed cornices, bay windows, and porches with turned posts and curved wood braces. The unusually well-preserved and elaborately-detailed mansard roof retains its original patterned polychrome slate shingles, pedimented dormers, and decorative metal flashing. Samuel Pell was a descendent of the Pell family that once owned this area of the Bronx. He and his children, who occupied this house until about 1900, were prominent members of the City Island community. In 1907, the house was sold to James Feeley, a partner in a wholesale lace curtain importing firm. In the late 1920s, the house passed to his son Edgar J. Feeley, a prominent attorney and part owner-officer of the New York Giants baseball team, who occupied the house until his death in 1972. It is currently being used as a residence.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### City Island<sup>2</sup>

Located just south of Pelham Bay Park in Long Island Sound, City Island, then called Magnets, or Great Minnefords, Island, was part of the 9,000-acre tract that Thomas Pell (1613-1669) purchased from the Siwanoy Indians in 1654. Pell named his estate Pelham in honor of his tutor Pelham Burton.<sup>3</sup> After Pell's death, Pelham manor passed to his nephew Sir John Pell who was the first of the Pells to live on the estate.<sup>4</sup> In 1685, Sir John Pell sold City Island to John Smith of Brooklyn. From 1700 to 1761, the island changed hands several times. In 1761, Benjamin Palmer purchased the island for a syndicate whose intention was to transform it into a commercial center that would rival Manhattan.<sup>5</sup> The island was renamed City Island in honor of this development project. The project was abandoned during the Revolutionary War when the British occupied the island. It was revived in the 1790s, but ultimately failed to materialize.

In 1807, most of the island came into the possession of Nicholas Haight, who, in 1818, sold 42 acres at the island's southernmost tip to George Horton. Horton, the Supervisor of Westchester County from the Town of Pelham, promoted the building of the five streets, including Pilot, Pell, and Schofield, and the public highway, Main Street (now City Island Avenue). In the first half of the nineteenth century "parts of the island changed hands many times as they were subdivided and sold."<sup>6</sup>

Initially, City Island was a farming community. The island's first commercial enterprise, a solar salt works, which produced salt from evaporated seawater, was established by E.C. Cooper in the 1820s. Around 1830, Orrin Fordham, a shipbuilder from Connecticut, established an oyster planting business on the east side of City Island.<sup>7</sup> "Although it was common knowledge that oyster larvae set on almost any clean underwater object, especially oyster shells, in summertime,"<sup>8</sup> no one in the United States prior to Fordham had deliberately planted shells in order to cultivate oysters. His idea revolutionized the business. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, oysters became the "chief fishery product of the United States" as well as the "most extensively eaten of all shellfish."<sup>9</sup> Fulton Fish Market at the South Street Seaport in Manhattan became the primary clearinghouse for oysters grown not only in the local waters off City Island, Staten Island, Raritan Bay, etc., but for oysters from the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, and New England, which were shipped from the market across the country and overseas.

Between 1847 and 1869, numerous settlers moved to City Island to take part in the oyster business, which became "the chief industry employing the bulk of the male population at City Island."<sup>10</sup> City Islanders also profited by servicing, supplying, and building ships, which supported the island's economy throughout most of the twentieth century. There were many small yards serving the oyster boats throughout the nineteenth century but the first commercial shipyard, D. Carll Shipyard, was established in 1862.<sup>11</sup> After the Civil War, the Carll yard became known for the construction and rebuilding of large luxury yachts. Capitalizing on the Carll shipyard's success, other commercial boatyards were soon established resulting in the construction of numerous luxury and racing yachts including a number of America's Cup winners. The federal government also commissioned vessels from the City Island boatyards during both world wars. After World War II, the leisure-boating industry rose to prominence.

For much of its history City Island was part of the Town of Pelham, Westchester County. It was linked to the mainland by a toll bridge in 1873, which became a free bridge when the eastern Bronx was annexed by New York City in 1895. Limited access to the island discouraged dense development, and as a result the island has retained its small-town atmosphere. Numerous yacht clubs, marinas, and popular seafood restaurants continue to play a role in the island's economy.

### The Pell Family and the Early History of the Samuel Pell House<sup>12</sup>

A map of City Island published in 1867 shows that most of the buildings were concentrated at the middle of the island, primarily on Main Street (now City Island Avenue), Prospect Street (now Carroll Street), and Orchard Street (now Hawkins Street).<sup>13</sup> Other enclaves had developed at the southern end of the island along Pilot Avenue (now Pilot Street) and at the northern end of Main Street near the Ferry landing at present-day Bridge Street. Most of the remaining undeveloped land was held by the estate of Gilbert Washington Bowne (1824-1853).<sup>14</sup> Eventually, Bowne's property on the northern part of the island passed to his niece, Elizabeth Rodman Bowne King (1845-1882), wife of John M. King. In September 1875, Elizabeth King had the property surveyed and mapped for development.<sup>15</sup> In December 1875, oysterman Samuel Pell purchased a prime parcel located near the existing houses along Main Street.<sup>16</sup> The site extended 100 feet along the east side of Main

Street and ran 200 feet through the block to the west side of Minnieford Street. Pell also purchased a 100-foot-wide lot on the west side of Main Street that extended 100 feet westward to Eastchester Bay. The later purchase gave him riparian rights in the bay, an important asset for his business, since the *New York Times* reported in 1878 that the waterfront below the bridge was used to store away the “millions of oysters and clams .... awaiting shipment to the New York market.”<sup>17</sup>

Samuel Pell (c.1821-94), the son of Thomas and Maria Pell, was a descendant of the Pell family of Pelham Manor.<sup>18</sup> By 1850 he was living on City Island and earning his living as an oysterman. Sometimes referred to as Captain Pell, he was the owner of an oyster boat and seems to have been one of the leading oystermen on the island. He married Elizabeth Scofield (1831-68), daughter of William and Maria Scofield, whose family had settled on City Island in the 1830s. The Pells had twelve children, most of whom were still living at home when Samuel Pell erected his new house on Main Street (now 586 City Island Avenue), presumably in 1876, shortly after he bought the property. The size of the house, which had fifteen rooms, including five bedrooms a parlor, music room, breakfast room, and servants quarters, is indicative of the size of his family as well as of the lucrativeness of the oyster business in the 1870s. According to the federal census of 1880, three of Samuel Pell’s sons (Henry Scofield, Samuel Willard, and Daniel) followed him into the oyster business. Henry S. Pell soon switched to the real estate business and became one of the most successful brokers on City Island and was according to Bronx historian Randall Comfort, a “very active instigator for public improvements” and an important figure in local Democratic politics.<sup>19</sup> Samuel Pell’s eldest son, Sherman T. Pell (1853-?) became a provision merchant in the South Street Seaport and later entered the real estate business. Samuel Pell’s eldest daughter Lydia (1848-1925) married her kinsman Charles E. Scofield (1791-1880) and continued to live on City Island. The second-eldest daughter, Irene (later Hepburn, 1852-1942) kept house for the family assisted by her sister Mary Agnes (1855-?) and three live-in servants.

Sherman T. Pell (who probably lived briefly in this house prior to his marriage) was elected a Supervisor of Westchester County from the Town of Pelham in 1886 and served in that position until April 1893.<sup>20</sup> Shortly after the election, his successor reported that Pell, who was responsible for receiving the funds collected by the tax collector, had failed to turn over the town books and funds entrusted to him.

An inquiry was launched and Pell fled to Florida. In June 1893, it was discovered that Sherman Pell had forged the signature of the town clerk on loans in the town’s name from the Broadway Savings Institution. Samuel Pell and his son Percy were among the bondsmen for Sherman T. Pell. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, a little over a month before the Town of Pelham brought suit against him and Percy for \$10,000, Samuel Pell sold this house and the lots on the west side of Main Street to his daughter Lydia Scofield, who had inherited considerable property from her late husband and had developed an extensive and successful real estate business.

Samuel Pell died in March 1894.<sup>21</sup> Lydia Scofield and her son Fletcher moved to this house which she occupied with her unmarried brothers and sisters.<sup>22</sup> She was probably responsible for certain small alterations.<sup>23</sup> Sometime prior to 1906, Lydia and Fletcher Scofield moved to Brooklyn. The Pells also moved out of No. 586, but most of the family continued to reside on City Island.<sup>24</sup> Writing about Lydia Scofield in 1906, Randall Comfort noted that the Pell family continued to be “looked upon as one of the oldest and most respected of that part of the borough, where they settled so many years ago, and have been identified right up to the present with the upbuilding of City Island.”<sup>25</sup>

#### The Design of the Samuel Pell House

The Samuel Pell House is the most imposing and best preserved of the Second-Empire style houses on City Island and is a fine example of the building type. An eclectic architectural style based on French Renaissance and Baroque models, the Second Empire style developed in France during the reign of Napoléon III (1852-1870) and became popular in America around 1860. The style’s dissemination was aided by the increasing availability of architectural publications during this period, especially architectural handbooks and builders’ guides such as E.C. Hussey’s *Home Building* (1875), Marcus F. Cummings and Charles C. Miller’s *Architecture: Designs for Street Fronts, Suburban Houses, and Cottages* (1868), *Woodward’s Architecture and Rural Art* (George E Woodward, 1867-68), and *Bicknell’s Village Builder* (A. J. Bicknell & Co., 1872).<sup>26</sup> The style was well represented on City Island where its popularity coincided with a spurt in development following the opening of the City Island bridge as well as a period of great prosperity in the oyster trade and the newly emerging ship building industry. Perhaps the most notable example was the Bay View Hotel (demolished) at Bridge Street and City Island Avenue, on the former Bowne-King estate. In addition to the

Pell House, the island had several other imposing three-story Second Empire residences, including the still extant houses at 577 Minnieford Street, 128 City Island Avenue, and 186 Cross Street, all of which have been greatly altered (577 Minnieford Avenue is currently being restored). There were also many mid-sized and small one-and-one-half-story and two-story mansarded houses of which nine examples survive in varying states of preservation.<sup>27</sup> These include the semi-detached houses at 84-86 Schofield Street, the pair of houses with elevated basements and second-story mansards at 87 and 91 Carroll Street (both considerably altered), and the L-shaped house at 562 City Island Avenue.

A five-bay-wide, three-story frame building, the Pell house has the boxy form characteristic of Second Empire buildings.<sup>28</sup> It is sheathed in its original clapboards and retains its original two-over-two fenestration. Its overhanging cornice with bracketed eaves is capped by an unusually well-preserved and elaborately-detailed mansard roof that retains its original patterned polychrome slate shingles, pedimented dormers, and decorative metal flashing. The one-story veranda extending across the width of the primary facade retains its original arched wood trusses, molded cornice, and elongated stylized brackets. The handsome turned balustrades and tapered porch columns may also be original and certainly are historic.<sup>29</sup> As is typical in many Second Empire houses of the period, the center bay of the primary facade is emphasized by a wide entrance with paired doors (the original doors have been replaced) and by paired windows at the second and third stories. The first story windows opening on to front porch extend from the floor to the ceiling. All of the doors and windows are handsomely detailed with molded surrounds capped by cornices. The side elevations feature two-story polygonal bays that are enriched by recessed panels on the spandrels beneath the windows and are capped by projecting cornices with small paired brackets. Pairs of scroll brackets with pendant decorations are employed for the main cornice above the second floor and small single brackets support the triangular pediments above the dormers. The stylized curvilinear design of the brackets beneath the main cornice is especially noteworthy.

It seems likely that a local carpenter-builder was responsible for the design of the Pell house since it shares a number of features in common with other City Island houses of the period. Especially noteworthy are the similarities between this house and the neighboring cottage at 562 City Island Avenue which also occupies a portion of the former King Estate and presumably was built at about the same time as the Pell house.

Both houses have slightly flared mansard roofs with pedimented dormers; their moldings and brackets have almost identical profiles; and their roofs are enriched with similar decorative slate patterns featuring rosettes of red and grey-green hexagonal slates. Another variant of this roof (albeit with segmental-arched dormers but very similar massing and an almost identical tile pattern) is employed for the mirror-image semi-detached houses at 84-86 Schofield Street. The three-story house at 186 Cross Street has a flared mansard with triangular pedimented dormers with moldings similar to those of the Pell House. The Italianate-style William H. Schofield House at 65 Schofield Street (built c. 1865) has arched panels on its entrance doors that were identical to those of the original Pell house doors (replaced in the 1990s). Moreover, the moldings employed for the window frames and entrance surrounds of the two houses are very similar. That the Pell house shares these elements with an Italianate building is indicative of the tendency to blend architectural styles prevalent in mid-nineteenth-century vernacular architecture. The transitional nature of the design is also evident in the deep overhang of the eaves, a feature more often associated with Italianate houses than Second Empire style buildings. Nevertheless, in most respects the Pell House was a very up-to-date design, comparable to such models as the design for a "French or Mansard Roofed House" (Design No. 11) that appeared in *Woodward's Architecture* in 1868 or the "French roof villa" (plate 28) published in E. C. Hussey's *Home Building* in 1875.

While there were once many such houses in the rural towns and villages that were incorporated into New York City in the 1890s, well-preserved examples are becoming increasingly rare. Today, the handsomely proportioned and detailed Samuel Pell House, which remains in good condition and retains its original form and most of its decorative detailing, is a significant reminder of the Second Empire farmhouses and village residences that once proliferated in New York City.

#### The Feeley Family

In September 1907, this house and the waterfront property across Main Street were purchased by James J. Feeley.<sup>30</sup> Born in New York City in 1862 to an Irish-immigrant family, James Feeley entered the dry goods business, working in various capacities for a number of firms. In 1889, he married Elizabeth V. Fitzer (born 1870) and they had six children. In the late 1890s, the Feeleys moved from West 105<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan to City Island where they rented a house on Main Street. Around 1900, Feeley and William S.



Cameron established James J. Feeley & Co., a firm dealing in imported lace curtains, located at 141 Fifth Avenue in the wholesale textile district. Feeley acted as a traveling salesman for the firm. By 1910, his eldest son, James E. Feeley (1890-1971), who resided with his parents at No. 586, had also joined the firm as a salesman.<sup>31</sup> The Feeleys' eldest daughter, Vera E. Feeley (1891-1974), was also living in the house and was teaching school. Also at home were their son, Edgar P. Feeley (1892-1974), who was attending New York Law School, and their daughters, Florence (1896-1975) and Loretta (1898-1966), who were at school.

After Elizabeth V. Feeley died in 1923, her interest in the house passed to her husband. In 1925, Feeley had the old carriage house/garage at the rear of his property enlarged and converted to a dwelling.<sup>32</sup> In August 1925, he subdivided the lot and conveyed the newly altered building (589 Minnieford Avenue) and a lot measuring 75 feet by 75 feet to Vera Feeley.<sup>33</sup> Soon after, a two-car garage was constructed on the remaining twenty-five-foot-wide frontage on Minnieford Avenue to serve the main house at 586 City Island Avenue. Following James J. Feeley's death in 1928, his son Edgar purchased 586 City Island Avenue from the other heirs and James and Edgar jointly acquired the waterfront property at 583 City Island Avenue.

By the early 1920s, Edgar Feeley had entered the law offices of Leo J. Bondy. Early in his career Bondy had become counsel to broker Charles A. Stoneham, who purchased the National Amusement Company, the parent company of the New York Giants baseball team in 1919.<sup>34</sup> With baseball commanding almost all of Bondy's attention, Edgar Feeley became a partner in the law firm and handled most of its general business. Following Bondy's death in 1944, Feeley was elected treasurer of the National Exhibition Company and took over the Giants legal affairs. He also received stock in the company, was involved in its decision-making process, and often acted as spokesman for the team.<sup>35</sup> When the Giants decided to move to the West Coast in 1957, Feeley elected to remain in New York where he acted as custodian and rental agent for the Polo Grounds stadium until the team's ground lease expired in 1962.<sup>36</sup> Feeley also kept up his general law practice. He was very active in the legal affairs of City Island and eventually acquired a number of properties on the island including the 21 Tier Street House which is now a designated New York City Landmark. At his death in 1972, No. 586 passed to Feeley's mistress Tyne Burne, an antiques dealer with a shop in Scarsdale, who had been living with him. She continued to occupy the

house until 1983. It passed briefly through the hands of Louis and Richard Mazzella. Alvin Good and Patrick Henney owned the property from 1984 until 1987. From 1987 to 2000, it was occupied by Cynthia and Vladimar Kvetan. It is currently owned by Michele French and has remained in residential use.

### Description

The Samuel Pell House occupies an L-shaped through-the-block lot which has a frontage of 100 feet along City Island Avenue and a frontage of about twenty-five feet along Minnieford Avenue. A non-historic chain link fence with a non-historic center gate extends along the western edge of the property bordering on City Island Avenue. The southern boundary is established by six-foot-high non-historic wood picket fence that extends eastward to the rear yard of 589 Minnieford Avenue. The wood fence continues northward for about twenty-five feet along the eastern boundary of the property then continues as a chain link fence. The remainder of the boundary is established by the garage opening on to Minnieford Avenue and by a low wrought iron gate. The north boundary is fenced with a combination of chain link (near City Island Avenue and Minnieford Avenue) and a center length of wood pickets. Although the metal gate opening on to Minnieford Avenue probably dates from the early twentieth century, it was not installed at its present location until mid-October 2002. The much-altered non-contributing one-story **garage** was added to the property in the 1920s, and expanded in the 1940s or 1950s.<sup>37</sup>

The house is set back about eighteen feet from the street. A non-historic concrete path extends from the front gate to the front porch. Non-historic concrete paths also extend in front of the porch, along the sides and rear of the house and across the rear yard to the garage. To the south of the entrance path is a non-historic electric lamppost (installed between 1987 and 1991) that replaced a historic gas-lit lamppost. In the rear yard near the path leading to the garage is a second lamppost which has a non-historic metal pole but is topped by the historic framework for a gaslight.

The Second Empire style Pell House is an L-shaped building, comprised of a three-story main block, which is five bays wide and two bays deep, and a one-and-one-half-story rear kitchen wing, which is two bays wide and two bays deep. The house rests on a stone base which is lit by low wide basement windows that are set deep into the wall. (Because they are set so far back, it is impossible to tell whether they retain historic sash.) The upper walls of the house are sheathed with lapped-clapboards and its window and door openings are set off by molded wood surrounds.

The sides elevations of the main block have angled two-story window bays. Most of the windows have historic two-over-two wood sashes. Many of the windows are also protected by historic top-hung wood-framed casement storm sash with two lights joined by a horizontal glazing bar. The facades are crowned by overhanging wood cornices enriched with paired brackets. The building's most striking feature, the elaborate mansard roof, remains intact, retaining its original bracketed pedimented dormers, polychrome slate shingles, metal flashing, and brick chimneys. (The chimneys have been parged with stucco and have non-historic flue caps but otherwise retain their original form.) The wood porches that extend across the front of the building and the south side of the kitchen wing retain their historic turned columns, original stylized brackets, curvilinear bracing, and molded cornices.

**The Main Block** The house's **primary facade**, facing westward to City Island Avenue, has a symmetrical five-bay design with a wide center bay which has a double-door entrance at the first story and paired windows. The one-story front porch is approached by a single wood stoop. The crawlspace beneath the porch is screened from view by diamond pattern wood lattices. (A portion of the front lattice is missing at the north corner of the porch.) The porch retains its historic wood flooring, turned posts, turned balusters, and molded railings. The ornamental arched bracing, stylized elongated brackets, wood ceiling, and flat overhanging roof with molded cornice appear to be original. A non-historic light fixture has been installed under the overhanging eaves on the northwest corner of the porch. There is a non-historic light fixture at the center of the porch ceiling. The porch roof has been covered with non-historic roofing materials.

The central entrance is set off by a heavy molded surround which contains non-historic metal and plexiglass doors and an original double-light transom resting on a molded wood transom bar. Flanking the entrance are non-historic metal light fixtures. The floor-length square-headed windows have molded surrounds capped by molded cornices and contain historic two-over-two wood sash windows. On the upper stories, the narrower paired windows in the center bay retain historic one-over-one wood sash; the other windows have historic two-over-two wood sash. The mansard is lit by three dormers that are capped by molded triangular brackets set off by tiny brackets. The wide center bay has historic one-over-one wood sash; the outer bays have historic two-over-two wood sash. The south window has a historic top-hung two-light casement storm window. Although the original

hexagonal slate roof tiles remain in remarkably good condition for their age, there are two areas between the north and center dormers that have been patched with rectangular tiles. In addition the pendant decorations have been removed from the crowning cornice brackets beneath the south dormer.

The **north facade** of the main block is articulated by a wood-framed two-story-plus-basement five-sided angled bay at the west end of the facade and by a line of square-headed windows at the east end of the facade. A non-historic rubber hose projects from the west corner of the bay's basement window. A non-historic plastic telephone junction box has been installed on the paneled spandrel beneath the center window. A section is also missing from the wood baseboard beneath the paneled spandrels on the second floor. At both the first and second stories, the two narrow windows at the corners of the bay contain historic one-over-one wood sash while the three wider center windows contain historic two-over-two wood sash. The second story of the bay also has historic wood storm windows. The center storm has two-over-two lights. The eastern storm windows are two-light top hung wood casements with central glazing bars.

At the east end of the facade, the windows retain their historic two-over-two wood sash. The second-story window also has historic two-over-two wood storm sash. There is a non-historic light fixture immediately to the east of the first story window. The mansard on the north facade is pierced by two dormers which have historic one-over-one wood sash.

The design of the **south facade** of the main block is identical to that of the north facade. All of the windows retain their historic sash (They have two-over-two wood sash except for the one-over-one windows employed for the narrower lights at the sides of the bay.) Only the dormers have storm sash. These are top-hung wood-framed casements used on the north facade. A non-historic light fixture with paired spotlights has been installed at the center of wall on level with the top of the first-story windows. A small light fixture is set just a few feet above it parallel with the base of the second story windows. A metal downspout (installed prior to 1940) extends from the metal cornice at the top of the mansard to overhanging cornice between the second and third stories. One of the scroll brackets at east corner of the facade has been removed to provide room for a downspout that extends to the base of the house. The wood planking beneath the eaves is loose in several places.

The **rear facade** of the main block, which faces east, is largely concealed by the intersecting kitchen wing. However, the northern third of the facade and the third-story mansard are visible. At the first and

second stories, the wall is articulated with a single line of windows that retain their original molded surrounds and two-over-two wood sash. The dormer windows on the mansarded third story retain their historic two-over-two wood sash. A non-historic metal bulkhead enclosure beneath the first story window provides access to the cellar. There is a large hole in the planking under the eaves of the main cornice.

**The Rear Wing** The **north wall** of the two-story rear wing is articulated into two bays. At the first story, there is window on the east side of the wall and an entry at the far west end of the wall where it meets the main block. The window has a molded surround that matches the windows on the main part of the house. The rear wing retains its historic two-over-two wood sash and has a two-light top-hung storm window. The entry is approached by a low non-historic wood stoop. It is sheltered by a small open porch which retains its original wood roof with molded cornice and decorative brackets but is supported by a non-historic replacement wood post. The paneled wood and glass door is historic and probably was installed in the 1890s. The window enframements for the mansarded second story match those used on the main part of the house. The windows retain their original two-over-two wood sash and the eastern window also has its historic top-hinged two-light wood storm sash.

A one-story porch extends across the width of **south wall** of the rear wing. It is approached by a non-historic wood stoop. This porch was partially enclosed from c. 1950 to at least 1987. It retains its historic wood flooring, turned posts, arched bracing, brackets, and overhanging cornice but has lost its balustrades and railings. The first story facade is articulated into three bays. At the western corner of the facade there is doorway with a molded surround that includes a transom with paired lights. The wood

door is decorated with six recessed panels and appears to be historic though perhaps not original. The windows are identical to those on the north wall and retain their two-over-two wood sash. They have wood one-over-one top-hung storm windows. At the second story the mansard is lit by two windows. The eastern window retains its historic two-over-two wood sash. The western window retains its original casings but the center muntins have been removed and the clear glass was replaced by stained and opalescent art glass set with leaded came (probably dating from the mid-1890s-early-1900s).

The **east (rear) wall** of the rear wing is has one window opening on its north side at the first story and a pair of dormer windows lighting the second-story mansard. The basement windows have been sealed shut with concrete. The first story window matches the other windows on the rear wing. It retains its historic two-over-two wood sash and top-hung storm window. There is a small horizontal hole in the clapboarding near the north end of the wall. A non-historic light fixture has been installed almost directly below the north dormer. The dormer windows also have their historic two-over-two sash and the southern window retains its historic storm window. The brick chimney at the center of the roof near the east wall retains its original form, but has been parged with stucco and is capped by a cage-like construction of recent date.

Report prepared by  
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#### NOTES

1. This item was heard as the 586 City Island Avenue House.
2. This section on the early history of City Island is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, *21 Tier Street House Report*, prepared by Loretta Lorraine, (LP-2063) (New York: City of New York, 2000); LPC, *Bronx Survey* (New York: City of New York, 1978), 148-149; Department of City Planning, Waterfront & Open Space Division, *"There is an Island...": City Island's Growth and Development*, prepared by Jolanta M. Grajski (New York: City of New York, 1999); Department of City Planning, Waterfront & Open Space Division, "A Maritime History of City Island", draft report prepared by Jolanta M. Grajski, 1999 (copy available at the LPC in the "City Island," Bronx current research file); Lloyd Ultan, "City Island," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 231; Stephen

Jenkins, *The Story of the Bronx* (New York: G.B Putnam's, 1912), 39, 48-49, 51-56, 427-432; Lockwood Barr, *Ancient Town of Pelham* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, Inc., 1946), 12-44, 80-87; Alice Payne, *Tales of the Clamdiggers* (Floral Park, NY: Graphicopy, Inc., 1969).

3. "Town of Pelham – Official Website" @ <http://www.townofpelham.com>.
4. The Robert and Marie Lorillard Bartow House (1836-42), now the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, a designated New York City Landmark, was built for Robert Bartow, a descendant of the Pells, on a site not far from Sir John Pell's original manor house. The original manor house was occupied from 1675 to 1790 by four generations of the Pell family and aside from the period between 1813-1836 (when it was owned by the LeRoy family) its site remained in the Pell family for 234 years until it was acquired by the City of New York as part of Pelham Bay Park.
5. Barr, 82; LPC, *Bronx Survey*, 148. See also the Benjamin Palmer Papers, manuscripts collection, The New-York Historical Society.
6. Payne, 10.
7. This information on oystering on City Island is based on the Dept of City Planning, "Maritime History of City Island," 2-5; James Richardson, "American Oyster Culture," *Scribner's Monthly*, 15 (Dec. 1877), 225-237; Alfred Fordham, "City Island: Its History and Growth," *City Island News*, Oct. 1, 1953; John M. Kochiss, *Oystering from New York to Boston* (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport, Inc., 1974).
8. Kochiss, 17.
9. Ibid, ix.
10. Fordham, "City Island: Its History and Growth," Oct 1, 1953.
11. Richard F. Welch, *An Island's Trade: Nineteenth-Century Shipbuilding on Long Island* (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., 1993), 35.
12. This discussion of Samuel Pell and his family is based on United States Census Office, *Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, New York, Westchester County, Roll 615 -- Town of Pelham, p. 384; *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, New York, Westchester County, Roll 882 -- Town of Pelham, p. 445; *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*, New York, Westchester County, Roll 1115 -- Town of Pelham, p. 107; *Population Schedules of the Tenth Census, 1880*, New York, Westchester County, Town of Pelham, Supr. Dist 3, ED 120, p. 182; Randall Comfort, *History of Bronx Borough, City of New York: compiled by the North Side News* (Bronx, NY: North Side Press, 1906); New York City Directories, 1882/83, 1891/92, 1893/94, 1897/98, 1900/01-1906/07; tombstone inscriptions for the Pell and Scofield family members at the Pelham Cemetery, City Island.; transcribed articles from the *City Island Drift* in the City Island Historical Society.
13. *Atlas of New York and Vicinity* (New York: F.W. Beers, 1867).
14. Andrew Findlay, surveyor, "Map of Part of the Real Estate of Gilbert W. Bowne, Dec'd on City Island, Town of Pelham, County of Westchester, NY, 1858," New York Historical Society.
15. J. J. Mc Cormick, CE, surveyor "Property of Elizabeth R. B. King, City Island, Town of Pelham, Westchester Co., NY," June 21 1875, filed Westchester County, Office of the Register, Sept. 20, 1875.
16. Westchester County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds & Conveyances, Liber 905, p. 293.



17. *New York Times*, August 25, 1878 quoted in Bernard Witlieb, "City Island: An Informal History," *The Island Current*, Sept. 1978, p. 10.
18. Samuel Pell gravestone, Pelham Cemetery, City Island. For his genealogy see the Pell chart in Barr, facing p. 36.
19. Comfort, 263. John McNamara, *History in Asphalt: The Origin of Bronx Street and Place Names* (Bronx: Bronx County Historical Society, 1984), p. 198, suggests that Pell Place on City Island was named in honor of Henry Scofield Pell.
20. This information on Sherman T. Pell is based on Barr, 172; "Mr. Pell is Supervisor of Pelham," *New York Times*, Apr. 7, 1893, p. 5; "Pelham Citizens to be Fined," *New York Times*, Apr. 30, 1893, p. 3; "No Tidings Yet of Mr. Pell," *New York Times*, May 28, 1893, p. 9; "Signatures Were Forged," *New York Times*, June 11, 1893, p. 8; "Pells of Pelham Sued," *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 1893, p. 8.
21. "Funeral of Mr. Samuel Pell," *City Island Drift*, Mar. 31, 1894.
22. In 1900, Samuel Willard Pell (1858-1941) continued to earn his living as an oysterman, although the business had become considerably less lucrative due to over-fishing and pollution in the bay. Henry S. Pell (1856-1923) remained one of the most successful real estate brokers in this section of the Bronx. Daniel S. Pell (1816-1916) was working as a bookkeeper while he studied for his commission as a Hellgate pilot (granted in 1902). Cyrus Pell (1866-1930) earned his living as a night watchman and later as a clerk. Florence Pell (Flora, 1865-1955) helped keep house for the family.
23. These may have included changes to the porches (see note 24 below) and the installation of opalescent glass in one of the second story windows in the kitchen wing.
24. Henry and Cyrus moved to 110 Bay Street where Henry also had his real estate office. Daniel lived on Washington Street, then Horton Street, and later moved to Henry's house. Samuel resided with his brother Percy S. Pell at 636 City Island Avenue, near the newly reconstructed City Island Bridge (opened 1901), for which Percy served as bridgetender.
25. Comfort, 269.
26. For architectural pattern books during this period see Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1738-1950* (University Park, PA: Penn. State Univ. Press, 2000); Lawrence Grow, *Old House Plans: Two Centuries of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Main Street Press, 1978).
27. They are the houses at 84-86 Schofield Street, 87 and 89 Carroll Street, 562 City Island Avenue, 319 City Island Avenue, 160 Horton Street, 183 Horton Street, and 157 Schofield Street. No. 522 Minnieford Avenue is a flat roofed house with a "false front" which reads as a low mansarded attic. No. 244 City Island Avenue has been so altered that it is longer recognizable as a Second Empire Style house.
28. On American Second Empire domestic architecture see: Grow, 45-53; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 241-253.
29. While jigsawn elements were more common during the 1870s, the way that pilaster responds to the posts are fitted into the clapboard siding suggests that these elements are original. If they are not, it seems likely that the posts and balustrades were installed in the 1890s, when such turned elements were in vogue.
30. Bronx County, Liber Deeds & Conveyances, Liber 73, p. 102; Mortgages Liber 81, p. 369.

31. Prior to 1915, James J. Feeley opened a boating business on his waterfront property across the street from this house which was managed by his son James. According to the New York State census of 1915, James E. Feeley (1889-1971) continued to reside with his parents at No. 586.
32. New York City Dept. of Buildings, Bronx, Alteration permit 17-1925.
33. Bronx Conveyances, Liber 511, p. 192.
34. When Stoneham died in 1935, his son, Horace C. Stoneham, became president of the Giants. Bondy, the executor of the Stoneham estate, was elected vice-president of the team.
35. See for example "Congress Fears Gardella's Action May Kill Baseball; Player is Urged to Withdraw Suit," *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1949.
36. The Mets played their first two seasons in the stadium
37. Comparison of some maps raises the question of whether a portion of the adjacent house at 589 Minnieford Avenue encroaches slightly on to this building lot in the vicinity of the garage for 586 City Island Avenue. It is not the intent of this designation to include any portion of 589 Minnieford Avenue in this designation.

## **FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION**

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

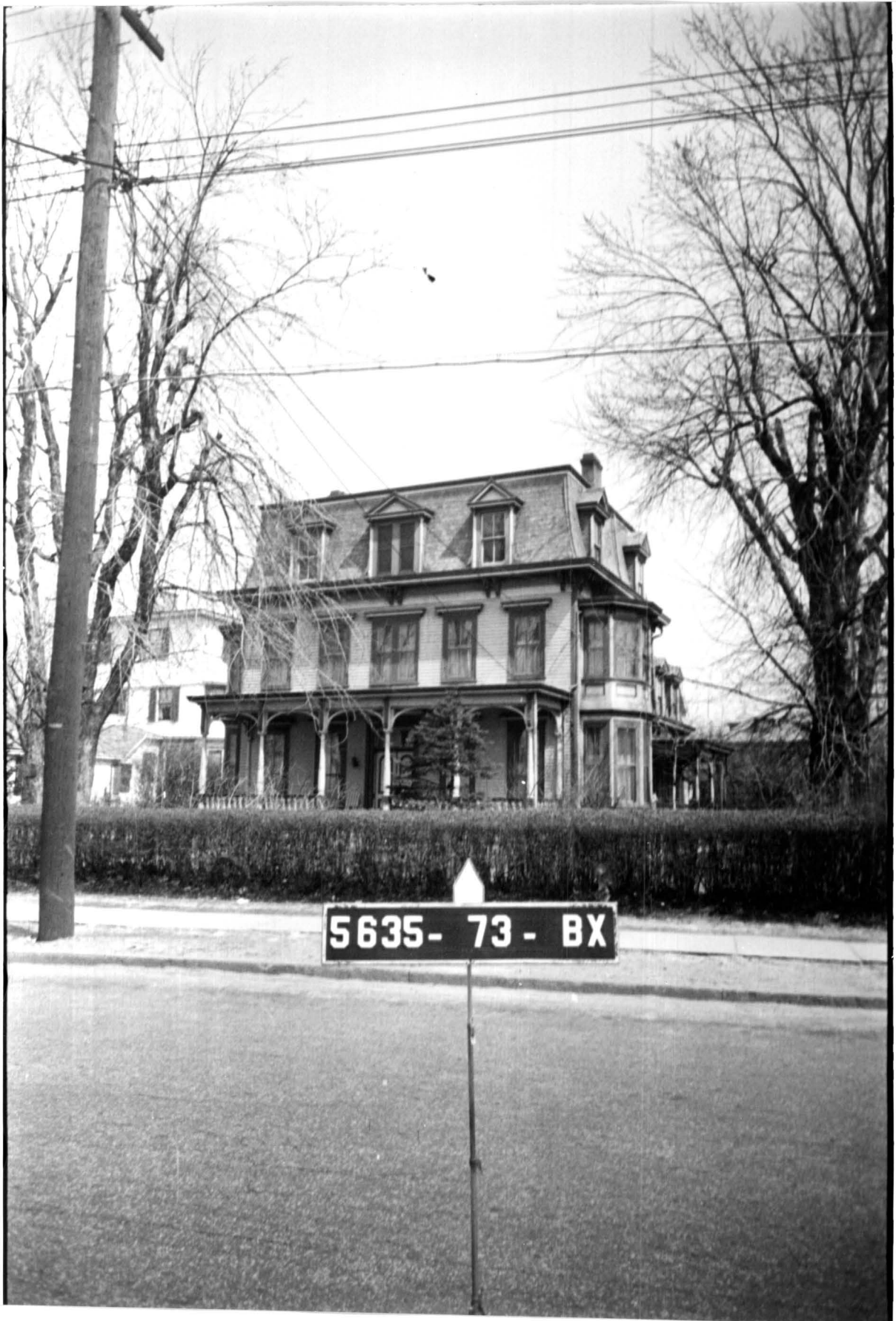
The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Samuel Pell House, built for oysterman Samuel Pell c.1876, is a fine and well-preserved example of the free-standing Second Empire style houses that once proliferated in the rural areas of New York City but are now increasingly being altered or demolished; that it is significant reminder of the wealth that the oyster trade brought to the maritime community of City Island in the nineteenth century; that the Second Empire style is unusually well-represented on City Island with thirteen surviving examples of which the Pell house is the grandest and best preserved; that this five-bay-wide, three-story frame house retains its original clapboards and two-over-two fenestration and is richly embellished with heavy molded door and window surrounds, bracketed cornices, bay windows, and porches with turned posts and curved wood braces; that it is crowned by a well-preserved and elaborately-detailed mansard roof that retains its original patterned polychrome slate shingles, pedimented dormers, and decorative metal flashing; that Samuel Pell was a descendent of the Pell family that once owned this area of the Bronx and that he and his children, who occupied this house until about 1900, were prominent members of the City Island community; that in the twentieth century the house was long occupied by members of the Feeley family notably Edgar J. Feeley, a prominent attorney and part owner of the New York Giants baseball team.

Accordingly, pursuant to the 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 Samuel Pell House, 586 City Island Avenue, Borough of the Bronx, and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5635, Lot 73, as its Landmark Site.



Samuel Pell House, 586 City Island Avenue, Bronx  
Photo: Carl Forster





"Tax" Department Photograph, c. 1940

Photo source: New York City Department of Records and Information Services, Municipal Archives



Samuel Pell House, 586 City Island Avenue, Bronx  
View from the northwest  
Photo: Carl Forster



Details of the front porch and first story windows  
Photos: Carl Forster



Top: Detail of the second story windows and mansard roof on the primary facade  
 Bottom: Detail of the dormer windows on the south facade of the kitchen wing  
 Photos: Carl Forster





Detail of the bracketed eaves on the main portion of the house  
Photo: Carl Forster

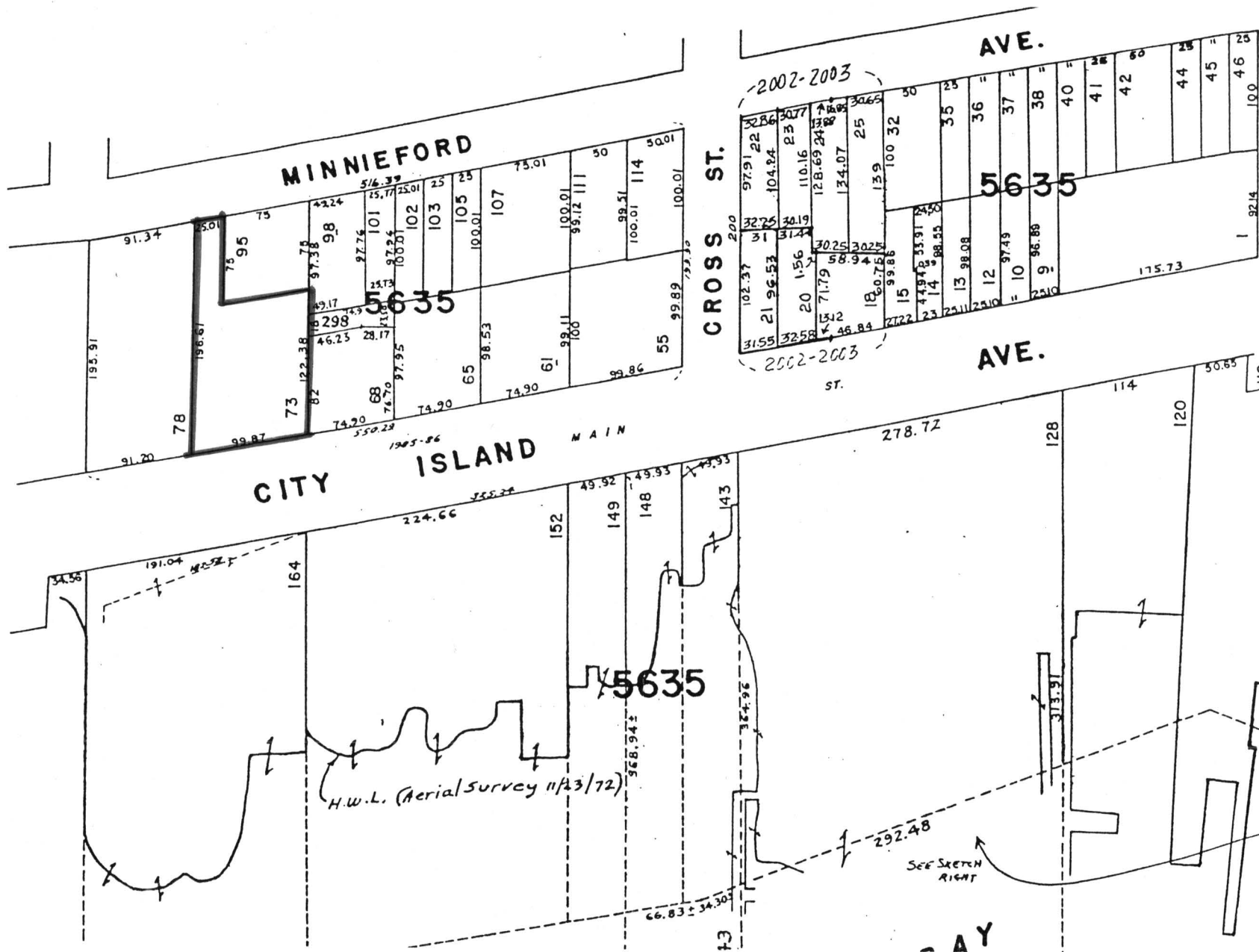


Detail of the second story bay window on the north facade  
Photo: Carl Forster



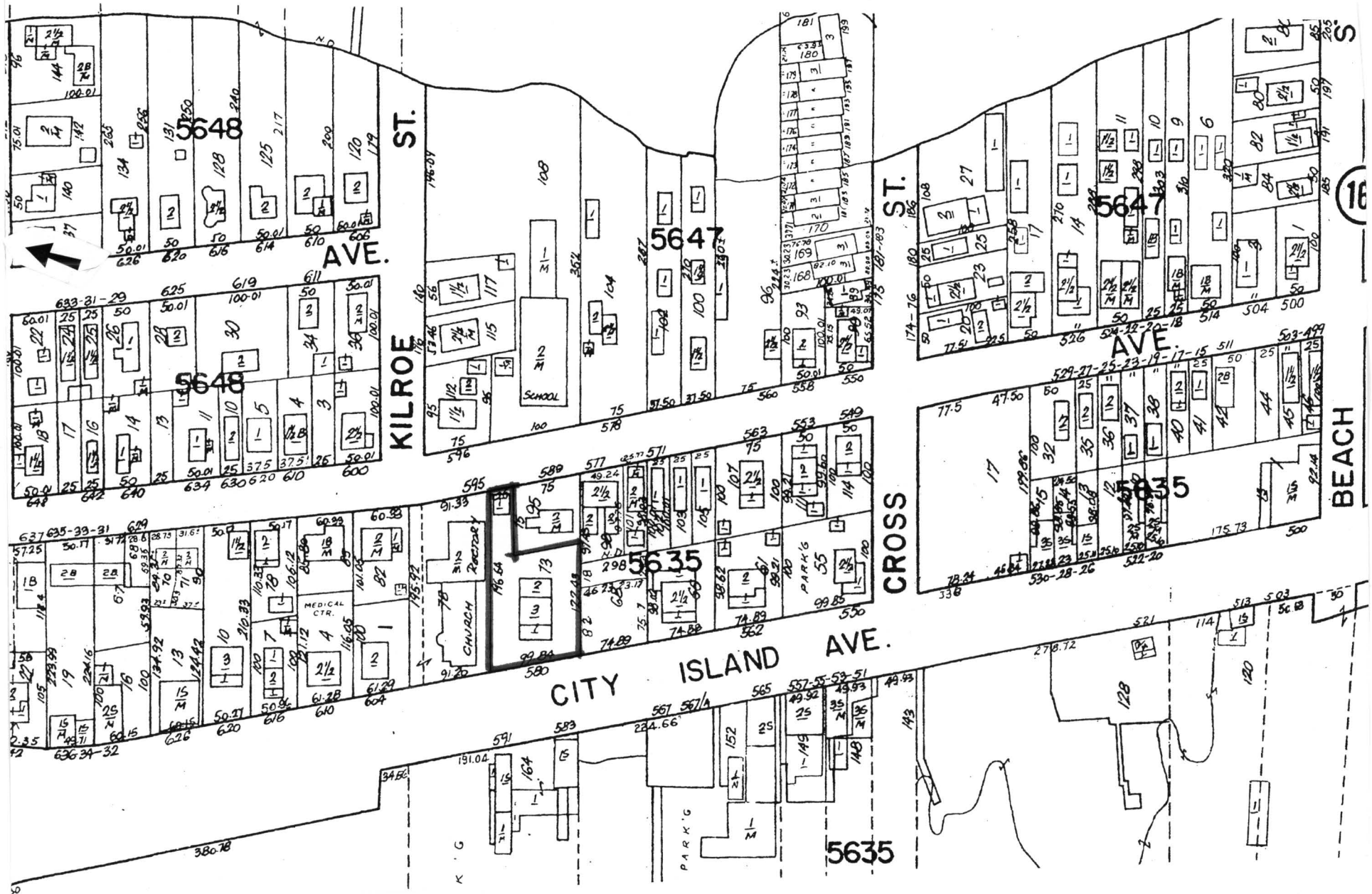
Kitchen wing, south facade  
Photo: Carl Forster

SEE PAGE 9



Samuel Pell House  
 586 City Island Avenue, Bronx  
 Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5635, Lot 73  
 Source: Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map





Samuel Pell House  
 586 City Island Avenue, Bronx  
 Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5635, Lot 73  
 Source: Sanborn Landbook, the Bronx, New York, 2000, sec. 2, pl. 160