

**ALDERBROOK HOUSE**, 4715 Independence Avenue, the Bronx  
Built c.1858-59

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5926, Lot 76

On December 15, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Alderbrook House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two people spoke in favor of designation, including a representative of the Historic Districts Council. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. On February 9, 2010, Bronx Community Board 8 voted in favor of designation.<sup>1</sup>

Summary

Overlooking the Hudson River in the Riverdale neighborhood of the Bronx, the Alderbrook House is a rare example of a mid-19th-century Hudson River villa in New York City. Probably built by Oscar C. and Ada Woodworth Ferris between 1858 and 1859, Alderbrook is one of the two oldest villas in The Park-Riverdale, an exclusive residential development begun in 1856, and the only one of Park-Riverdale's early villas to remain in use as a single-family residence. From 1864 into the 1890s, it was the country house of industrialist and banker Percy R. Pyne, his wife Albertina Taylor Pyne, and their three children; following Percy's 1895



death, Alderbrook fell into disuse until its purchase in 1921 by Viola Nadelman, the wife of the renowned sculptor Elie Nadelman, to serve as the couple's summer home.

Born in Poland in 1882, Elie Nadelman was recognized in 1911 as being within "the first rank of present-day artists." He moved to New York in 1914 and married Viola five years later. In the early 1920s, the Nadelmans began amassing a folk art collection that was without peer in the United States and one of the finest in the world, and in 1926 they opened the first folk art museum in the country, located west of the Alderbrook House near Palisade Avenue, to house their collection. Following the 1929 stock market crash, they moved full-time to Alderbrook, where Elie created hundreds of small plaster figures, inspired by ancient Greek votive figures, that came to define his late career. He committed suicide at Alderbrook in 1946, but Viola, who played a key role in promoting her husband's legacy, continued to live at Alderbrook until her death in 1962. Major retrospectives of Nadelman's work were mounted at the Museum of Modern Art in 1948, and at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1975 and 2003.

Influenced by the designs and publications of Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux, Alderbrook is a picturesque residence, exhibiting both Italianate and Gothic Revival characteristics. Remarkably well-preserved, the house retains its generous veranda, gabled roofline featuring deep flared eaves, brackets, and gable trusses, and tall brick chimneys with grouped flues and decorative niches. Few Hudson River villas remain in New York City; with its exceptional connection to a renowned 20th-century artist and his work, Alderbrook is truly unique.

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### The Early Development of Riverdale<sup>2</sup>

Before the arrival of European settlers, present-day Riverdale, like most of the Metropolitan Area, was the territory of Lenape Indians. Under the Dutch, in 1646, the land between the Bronx and Hudson rivers extending from the Harlem River to what is now Yonkers' northern boundary came under the patroonship of Adriaen Van der Donck, whose honorific title *jonkheer* ("squire") gave Yonkers its name.<sup>3</sup> Most of Van der Donck's property was later acquired by Frederick Philipse I, who owned ship, lumber, and lime-kiln businesses, rented land to farmers, and was active in the African and West Indian slave trades; his land was confiscated by the state after Philipse's great-grandson, a Loyalist, fled to England with his family during the American Revolution. In 1785, the old Manor of Philipsburg was divided into parcels and sold off, and much of present-day Riverdale was acquired by George and William Hadley, two local men who were farmers and slaveholders.<sup>4</sup> At that time, present-day Riverdale lay within the Township of Yonkers in southern Westchester County; it would ultimately be annexed by New York City, along with the rest of the western Bronx, in 1874.

By the late 1830s and 1840s, well-to-do city dwellers increasingly sought to escape to the country for the summer. Artists, writers, reformers, transcendentalists, religious leaders, and politicians promoted a view of the countryside as fostering health, virtue, and democratic values; cities, by contrast, were often associated with congestion, disease, poverty, corruption, vice, and stifling summer heat. Between 1830 and 1850, New York City more than doubled in size to over 500,000 residents, most of whom lived below 42nd Street. During this period, many of the city's established residential areas were threatened by industrial and commercial encroachment, and sizeable professional and merchant classes emerged, whose members settled new neighborhoods throughout the city but also had the desire and means to maintain their own country houses.

The Hudson Valley's scenic charms and advantages as a location for country houses were already well-known: by the 1830s, Thomas Cole was attracting wide attention for his romantic Hudson Valley landscapes, Washington Irving was building Sunnyside, his picturesque riverside cottage near Tarrytown, New York, and one observer noted, in 1835, that the valley was particularly "adapted ... for villas and country seats.... The day is not distant when the entire banks of the Hudson will be dotted with villas of the refined and elegant."<sup>5</sup> In 1843-44, William Lewis Morris and his wife, nee Mary Elizabeth Babcock, constructed the Greek Revival style Wave Hill house overlooking the Hudson just below present-day West 252nd Street. With the completion of the Hudson River Railroad to Poughkeepsie in 1849, the land along the Hudson's sparsely developed eastern shore jumped in value, and more estates were soon constructed.

Although the Lower Hudson Valley had less-dramatic topography than the river's Highlands and upper reaches, its proximity to New York City and views of the Palisades made it an extremely desirable residential location. In 1852, William G. Ackerman, who had acquired, from George Hadley, a 100-acre farm adjoining Wave Hill on the north, sold the property to a group of businessmen who planned a development of villas called "Riverdale" beside the nearby railroad station. William Woodworth, a former United States Congressman who was an active Yonkers real-estate developer as well as contractor for the construction of the Hudson River Railroad between Spuyten Duyvil and Hastings-on-Hudson, appears to have been the leader of the group; the other four members were financier Samuel Babcock, auctioneer Charles W. Foster, and importers Henry L. Atherton and William D. Cromwell. Initially conceived as a summer retreat, Riverdale is the earliest-known suburban railroad development in New York City. It would ultimately lend its name to the vast surrounding neighborhood stretching from West 239th Street to the Bronx's northern boundary; the core of the initial Riverdale development is now the Riverdale Historic District.

During this period, Riverdale received considerable press attention, and more villas were soon constructed. In 1856, woolens merchant Henry F. Spaulding and three other businessmen—Henry L. Atherton, William Kent, and financier Levi P. Morton, who would go on to serve as Governor of New York and U.S. Vice President—purchased a large parcel between present-day West 247th Street and

Wave Hill from the estate of Wall Street broker Russell H. Nevins. Spaulding and the others divided the property, which Nevins had left mostly untouched, into 13 lots of between 1½ and 4 acres, and called their new development “The Park-Riverdale.”<sup>6</sup> Planned just after Llewellyn Park, New Jersey, a pioneering suburban development designed by Alexander Jackson Davis that incorporated a rustic park, The Park-Riverdale featured a five-acre “ornamental pleasure grounds” to be shared by its residents as a “place of common resort and recreation.”<sup>7</sup> Those purchasing property in The Park-Riverdale were bound by restrictions that were meant to maintain the development as a place of “private residences only and not thickly built upon,” including bans on “any mechanical or manufacturing business or any grocery market or other place for the sale of any articles whatsoever.”<sup>8</sup> Owners were prohibited from building more than one house on each lot; decisions regarding the park were made collectively by the owners of The Park-Riverdale’s properties.

In 1864, *Godey’s Lady’s Book* enthused that “if we were asked to point out the most delightful place for a residence on [the Hudson], we should at once mention Riverdale.”<sup>9</sup> *Villas on the Hudson*, a collection of illustrations published in 1860, included photographs and plans of the Atherton villa (within the Riverdale Historic District), Babcock’s “Hillside” villa (extant but altered; north of the historic district), and H.F. Spaulding’s villa (Thomas S. Wall, architect).<sup>10</sup> The Spaulding residence was one of eight villas, including Alderbrook, to be completed in The Park-Riverdale in its first 20 years; almost all of these houses have been demolished or extensively altered. Alderbrook (c.1858-59), along with the Spaulding villa, is one of the two oldest Park-Riverdale villas still standing, and is the only one of the development’s early villas to remain in use as a single-family residence.<sup>11</sup>

### The Pyne Family and Alderbrook<sup>12</sup>

From its early years into the 1890s, Alderbrook was the country house of Percy Rivington Pyne and his family. Born in England in 1820, Pyne attended Christ’s Hospital, a prestigious boarding school for poor children. He emigrated to the United States in 1835 and was hired as a clerk by Moses Taylor (1806-1882), who had recently founded his own firm focusing on Cuban trade. Taylor would ultimately become the “chief figure in the great raw-sugar trade,” specializing in a commodity harvested by slaves in what was then a Spanish colony.<sup>13</sup> When he hired the teenaged Pyne in 1836, Taylor “began what was to be his closest, most valuable, and most enduring association”; for the rest of Taylor’s life, Pyne would serve as his right-hand man, initially managing his Cuban operations as Taylor extended his business operations into finance and industrial investment.<sup>14</sup> In 1849, Taylor reorganized his firm as Moses Taylor & Company, making Pyne a quarter-partner. Six years later, Pyne married Taylor’s daughter, Albertina Shelton Taylor, and the couple soon had three children: Moses Taylor Pyne (born 1855), Percy R. Pyne Jr. (born 1857) and Albertina Taylor Pyne (born 1859). Taylor and Pyne thrived during these years, as their firm invested in iron and coal fields and the railroads that carried their products to urban markets. Although Pyne prospered primarily through his partnership with Taylor, he became an industrial leader in his own right, serving as vice president of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, and as a director of several large banks and other firms.<sup>15</sup> Upon Taylor’s 1882 death, Pyne succeeded him as president of the National City Bank (the forerunner of Citibank) and Albertina inherited between \$5 million and \$10 million.<sup>16</sup>

Alderbrook was one of the earliest houses in The Park-Riverdale, but its architect and exact date of construction are unknown. In 1857, Alderbrook’s site was purchased by Oscar C. Ferris, who paid \$25,000 for two lots totaling nearly six acres at the southeastern corner of Park-Riverdale.<sup>17</sup> Little is known about Ferris, who was in his early 20s at the time, and whose wife Ada was the daughter of Riverdale developer William Woodworth; Ferris apparently came to own several Manhattan properties over his lifetime, leaving an estate worth \$3 million when he died in 1903.<sup>18</sup> The Ferrises likely constructed the Alderbrook House in 1858-59, as an 1860 directory is the first to show Oscar’s home address as “Riverdale,” and the 1860 Census apparently places Oscar, Ada, their two young children, and three Irish-born servants at the site.<sup>19</sup> In 1861, Ferris sold the property to Catharine Lorillard Spencer, the third wife and widow of Naval Captain William Augustus Spencer.<sup>20</sup> According to reminiscences written in the late 1890s or early 1900s by Moses Taylor Pyne, the Pyne family summered in several locations in

and around New York City between 1856 and 1863, but “In December 1863,” he recalled, “my father bought ‘Alderbrook’ in Riverdale from Mrs. Catharine Lorillard Spencer and early in the following May we moved there. For 32 years, it was the center of family life.”<sup>21</sup> (The name “Alderbrook” may have been inspired by a popular collection of stories by Fanny Forester published in 1847.)<sup>22</sup>

Soon after purchasing Alderbrook, Percy Pyne began expanding the estate, spending nearly \$19,000 to acquire an additional 11 acres of adjoining property from Peter V. and Eliza King, and from Joseph and Julia Delafield, in 1865 and 1866.<sup>23</sup> In Manhattan, the Pynes lived at 25 East 22nd Street, in a house that was Moses Taylor’s wedding present to Albertina; according to Moses Pyne, “It was the custom of the family to move up to the country about May 10th and to remain there till about the 10th of November, thus dividing the year into two equal portions of city and country.”<sup>24</sup> During their time in Riverdale, Moses Pyne recalled, his father “rode horseback a great deal, bathed and rowed on the Hudson. I have known him to rise at daybreak, row across the Hudson, climb the Palisades, smoke a cigar on top, and return in time for a bath and breakfast with his family and then catch the 7:57 train to New York.”<sup>25</sup>

Moses Taylor Pyne would ultimately serve as general counsel for the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western and become one of Princeton University’s greatest benefactors, “devoting ... much of his fortune to helping Princeton grow from a college to a university.”<sup>26</sup> His 1871 diary, written when Moses was 15 years old, provides a glimpse into life in one of the country’s most exclusive summer communities, where Moses’ best friends were the children of industrialist William E. Dodge and his wife, Sarah—whose estate lay just south of Alderbrook, across what is now West 247th Street—and where the Pynes’ neighbors included the Harrimans, the Colgates, the Motts, and in 1870 and 1871, the Roosevelts, who were summering at Wave Hill.<sup>27</sup> Typical of his experiences was a day in June, when Moses, Percy Jr., and the Dodges’ son Cleve “went down to the docks and took a row. We rowed up to Mt. St. Vincent and coming back ... Percy and I took a swim. Then we rowed down to the rock where we saw Ellie and,” as the future President was then known, “Teedie Roosevelt.”<sup>28</sup> On Independence Day, Moses and his friends began “fir[ing] off firecrackers and torpedoes” at Alderbrook at 5:30 in the morning, climbed the Palisades, played ball, and watched the evening fireworks before the Pynes welcomed their neighbors, including the Harrimans and Roosevelts, over for a party.<sup>29</sup>

Alderbrook remained at about 18 acres in 1876, but, as Moses later explained, “As each of us children married, [Percy] bought additional property so that each of us had a house near.”<sup>30</sup> In January of 1890, Alderbrook, which the *Times* described as “Percy R. Pyne’s fine old country place,” experienced a fire while the Pynes were in Manhattan. “Although the house itself suffered only the loss of two floors and a staircase in the main wing,” the *Times* explained, “the many pictures, statues, and other art treasures in the building were destroyed.”<sup>31</sup>

In declining health, Percy Pyne stepped down as president of the National City Bank in 1891.<sup>32</sup> He died in Rome, where he had been spending the winter, in 1895, with nearly all of his estate going to his wife.<sup>33</sup> The Alderbrook House fell into disuse, as sons Percy Jr. and Moses choose to summer elsewhere: Percy at “Upton Pyne,” his Bernardsville, New Jersey estate, and Moses at “Drumthwacket,” the Princeton, New Jersey mansion that he purchased in 1893 and is now the New Jersey governor’s residence.<sup>34</sup>

#### Elie and Viola Nadelman at Alderbrook<sup>35</sup>

The Alderbrook House remained within the Pyne family until 1921, when it was purchased by Viola Nadelman, the wife of the renowned Polish-born sculptor Elie Nadelman.<sup>36</sup> Born in Warsaw in 1882, Nadelman moved in 1904 to Paris, where he exhibited four works at the 1905 Salon d’Automne. Along with other Parisian artists of the time, Nadelman began developing an artistic vocabulary that looked for inspiration to ancient Greece, seeking to “recover a simplicity and emotional restraint absent from academic art” and “find a new classical language appropriate to the modern, international community in which they lived.”<sup>37</sup> His first solo exhibition opened at Paris’ Galerie E. Druet in 1909, and in 1911, the *New York Times* reported that Nadelman’s work had “created what can only be described as a furor in Continental artistic circles ... [T]he recent exhibition of sculpture by Nadelman in Paris raised him at once in the estimation of French critics to the first rank of present-day artists.”<sup>38</sup> Around this time,

Nadelman began nurturing his signature style, which was unprecedented in combining a mastery of Greek aesthetics with a contemporary sensibility. Nadelman exhibited at New York's 1913 Armory Show, and moved to New York in 1914. In 1917, he exhibited two sculptures—*Seated Woman* and *The Singer*—that scandalized the New York art world by depicting people in modern dress. Although he initially disliked New York, Nadelman soon became enchanted by its vaudeville, figure skating, and circus performers, who began to influence his work: his *Dancer (High Kicker)* of c.1918-19 is said to have been inspired by a photo he kept in his studio of the vaudeville star Eva Tanguay.

On December 31, 1919, Nadelman married Viola Speiss Flannery, a wealthy, educated widow who had traveled widely and was knowledgeable about art.<sup>39</sup> Initially, the Nadelmans lived in the Hotel Savoy, but they soon purchased two 1888-89 rowhouses at 4 and 6 East 93rd Street (within the Carnegie Hill Historic District) and hired Walker & Gillette to combine them into a single residence.<sup>40</sup> The long-vacant Alderbrook House, which Viola purchased as their summer residence, lacked heating, plumbing, and utilities; “gaping holes in the ceilings made it possible to look through three stories.”<sup>41</sup> The Nadelmans began restoring the house and converted the estate's carriage house (not part of this designation) into a studio for Elie.<sup>42</sup> In 1922, Viola gave birth to the couple's only child, Elie Jagiello (later changed to Elie Jan) Nadelman.

Nadelman did not exhibit between 1921 and 1925; during these years, he taught at the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design and continued to create sculpture in his Alderbrook and East 93rd Street studios. At the same time, the Nadelmans amassed a collection of folk and applied art that was the largest in the United States and “one of the most geographically and chronologically diverse collections ... anywhere in the world.”<sup>43</sup> Their collection soon grew to nearly 15,000 objects, and in 1926, they opened the Museum of Folk and Peasant Arts (later shortened to Museum of Folk Arts) in a new three-story building located at the southwestern corner of what was then the much-larger Alderbrook estate, near Palisade Avenue. It was the first folk art museum in the United States.

In 1928 and 1929, Elie Nadelman received two important architectural commissions, for the main-entrance frieze of Walker & Gillette's Fuller Building (1928-1929, a designated New York City Landmark) and for a bronze statue, *Oceanus*, which crowned the main entrance to the Manhattan Company Building at 40 Wall Street (H. Craig Severance; Yasuo Matsui, associate architect; Shreve & Lamb, consulting architect, 1929-30, a designated New York City Landmark).<sup>44</sup> The Nadelmans' fortunes took a turn for the worse, however, following the 1929 stock market crash. Although they moved permanently to Alderbrook and started renting out their Manhattan home, they continued to struggle, and in 1933, they sold Alderbrook to a corporation that subdivided the majority of the estate for new houses while allowing the Nadelmans to remain, as renters, in the Alderbrook House. By 1934, their museum was in danger of closing; three years later, they sold selected pieces to Abby Aldrich Rockefeller for her folk art museum in Colonial Williamsburg and a large portion of the collection to The New-York Historical Society. The Nadelmans reacquired the Alderbrook House in 1936.<sup>45</sup>

After the United States entered World War II, Elie Nadelman chaired Riverdale's Russian War Relief Committee, served as an air warden, and taught drawing and sculpture to wounded veterans at Bronx Veterans Hospital. Nadelman, who was Jewish, became increasingly despondent as he received frequent word of the deaths of his relatives at the hands of the Nazis. Plagued by a painful and worsening heart condition, still reeling from the loss of his and Viola's folk art collection, and feeling that he had accomplished his artistic goals, Nadelman committed suicide at Alderbrook on December 28, 1946.

When the Alderbrook estate was subdivided in 1933, Nadelman had moved his studio from the estate's former carriage house into the extant eastern wing of the Alderbrook House, which was apparently Alderbrook's former kitchen. (The extant large skylight opening in the roof of this wing was likely created by Nadelman when he converted this space into his studio.)<sup>46</sup> With the loss of the carriage house and its kiln, Nadelman began working on a smaller scale, producing the works that defined his late career: cast-plaster figures, small enough to be held in the hand and inspired by the terra-cotta votive figures of ancient Greece. Shortly after Nadelman's death, Lincoln Kirstein, who would soon found the New York City Ballet with George Balanchine, discovered hundreds of these figures on tables in Alderbrook's attic and studio; these rooms, with the figures lying undisturbed, were photographed by

Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1947. Two years later, Philip Johnson, who was close friends with Kirstein, acquired a copy of Nadelman's *Two Circus Women* (1930) from the Nadelman estate and installed it in his iconic Glass House (1949) in New Canaan, Connecticut, where it remains today.<sup>47</sup> Kirstein—who, along with Viola, did the most to promote Elie Nadelman's legacy following his death—had *Two Circus Women* enlarged to mammoth scale and installed in the lobby of the New York State Theater, which was designed by Johnson, and which opened in 1964 as the home of the Ballet.<sup>48</sup>

Viola Nadelman remained at Alderbrook until her death in 1962 at age 84. In her obituary, the *Times* noted that Alderbrook had “become a shrine for admirers of [Elie Nadelman's] work,” and that she had played a key role in organizing a 1948 Elie Nadelman retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>49</sup> The Whitney Museum of American Art, which holds many Nadelman's works in its permanent collection, mounted major Nadelman retrospectives in 1975 and 2003. The Nadelmans' son, diplomat E. Jan Nadelman, inherited Alderbrook upon his mother's death; upon returning to the United States in 1972 after many years abroad, he found Alderbrook to be in extensive need of repair, particularly of its deteriorated veranda, and hired the historic preservation architect William A. Hall (1923-2004) to undertake this work.<sup>50</sup> Jan Nadelman died in 2007, and the house remained within the Nadelman family until 2009.<sup>51</sup>

### Design of the Alderbrook House<sup>52</sup>

The Alderbrook House is an outstanding and well-preserved example of a mid-19th-century villa influenced by the designs and writings of Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux, two of the most significant figures in country-house design during the period. Born in 1815 in the Hudson River town of Newburgh, New York, Downing introduced English ideas on rural landscape design and architecture to the American public through a series of essays in the journal *The Horticulturalist* and in a group of books, including *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841), *Cottage Residences* (1842), and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850). Vaux, who was born in London in 1824, met Downing in 1850; Downing asked him to move to the United States to join him in his Newburgh office. Downing died in a steamboat accident in 1852, but Vaux continued to practice in collaboration with Frederick Clarke Withers, whom Downing had taken into his practice just before his death. In 1857, Vaux published *Villas and Cottages*, a collection of his country-house designs, many of which were created in collaboration with Downing and Withers. Like Downing's publications, *Villas and Cottages* reached a wide audience and was enormously influential; Downing's books were frequently reprinted following his death, and *Villas and Cottages* would be expanded and re-released in 1864, and reprinted in 1867 and 1874. Alderbrook's location overlooking the Hudson River makes the house particularly significant: largely because of Downing's and Vaux's work, the Hudson Valley was the country's premier location for the development of new cottage and villa forms during the period of Alderbrook's construction. While hundreds of Hudson River villas were constructed between New York City and Albany in the middle of the 19th century, many have been destroyed or extensively altered and only a handful remain in New York City, making Alderbrook a rare survivor.<sup>53</sup>

When Alderbrook was constructed, two general terms were used to classify non-urban houses other than farmhouses. A cottage, according to Downing, was a smaller dwelling for “industrious and intelligent mechanics and working men,” while a villa was “the country house of a person of competence or wealth sufficient to build and maintain it with some taste and elegance.”<sup>54</sup> Through their writings and house designs, Downing and Vaux sought to develop and promote “a suitable domestic architectural style” for the United States.<sup>55</sup> Although they did not advocate adapting an existing style for country houses, Downing and Vaux did identify certain styles that they considered the most appropriate to draw upon: both approved of the Gothic and the “Italian style,” with Downing also offering designs for villas inspired by Norman and Romanesque architecture. Downing particularly liked “the English cottage, with its many upwardly pointing gables, its intricate tracery, its spacious bay windows, and its walls covered with vines and flowering shrubs,” believing that it best represented “the domestic virtues, the love of home, rural beauty, and seclusion.”<sup>56</sup> Vaux's country houses were generally composed of “a blend of

motifs inspired by the past but imaginatively reinterpreted to create a distinctive style that he believed to be peculiarly adapted to contemporary American use.”<sup>57</sup>

Instead of formulating rigid design rules for cottages and villas, Downing and Vaux laid out a series of principles and guidelines and illustrated them through dozens of renderings; many of the houses shown in *Villas and Cottages* had already been constructed in the Hudson Valley by the time of the book’s publication. “Living on the shores of the Hudson,” Downing wrote, “we are naturally partial to picturesque architecture,” which harmonized with “the wildness or grandeur of nature.”<sup>58</sup> He felt that features such as a steep roof and “boldly varied outline” added to a house’s picturesqueness, and that a country house “should always have a tendency to spread out and extend itself on the ground, rather than to run up in the air.”<sup>59</sup> Vaux believed that the essence of the picturesque lay in its “well-balanced irregularity,” and like Downing, considered bay windows and verandas to be among the most important domestic features, calling the veranda “perhaps the most specially American feature of a country house.”<sup>60</sup> Vaux also provided specific advice on materials and colors, approving of “hard brick set in good mortar” left bare, covered with limewash, or painted, and writing that a cottage or villa should not be white, but of a color that made the house blend into the surrounding landscape.<sup>61</sup> Chimneys deserved special attention and should be constructed without clay pots, according to Vaux; they could be made attractive by grouping the flues and including “set-offs” in the brickwork.<sup>62</sup>

As it stands today, the Alderbrook House is composed of a main, western portion and an eastern wing, which appears not to be original to the house. Unlike the main house, the wing has a mansard roof; it also has segmental-arch-headed windows at its first floor and decorative bargeboards, which do not appear elsewhere on Alderbrook, as well as a dogtoothed brickwork, which was a popular decorative feature in the 1880s and 1890s, more than two decades after Alderbrook was constructed.<sup>63</sup> It has been suggested that the wing was originally a separate building on the Alderbrook estate that was later moved to, and attached to, the house; historic maps seem to indicate that the wing was added between 1893 and 1914.<sup>64</sup>

The main portion of Alderbrook exhibits many characteristics that reflect Downing’s and Vaux’s influence, including its horizontal spread, the “balanced irregularity” of its long north and south facades, its picturesque, varied roofline with steep intersecting gables, and its tall brick chimneys with grouped flues and decorative niches. A representative Hudson River villa, Alderbrook is oriented with its west facade turned towards the river, allowing views up the Hudson from a two-story bay window and from its generous veranda, which wraps around to the north and south facades. The house is constructed of red brick, which has been painted a buff color; whether it was originally painted is unknown. Its designer, who remains unknown,<sup>65</sup> appears to have followed Vaux’s advice that features such as round-headed windows and curved roofs “will always have an easy, agreeable effect, if well-managed”; indeed, the house’s flared eaves are among its most engaging features.<sup>66</sup> To Downing, flared eaves echoed “the grand hollow or mountain curve formed by the sides of almost all great hills rising from the water’s edge,” making the curved roof an especially appropriate and attractive feature for a house, like Alderbrook, that overlooked a great river.<sup>67</sup>

Given Downing’s and Vaux’s eclecticism, it should not be surprising that the Alderbrook House defies easy style categorizations. Although it lacks the lancet windows that are the signature feature of the Gothic Revival style, its heavy gable trusses are frequently seen on Gothic Revival residences. Its round-headed and circular window openings connect it with the contemporaneous Italianate style, however, and the house’s deep eaves supported by large brackets identify the house more closely with the Italianate than the Gothic style. It is perhaps best to describe Alderbrook as a restrained mid-19th-century villa exhibiting both Italianate and Gothic influences.

Today, Alderbrook remains remarkably unchanged from its early years, having experienced few alterations other than the apparent addition of its eastern wing, probably in the late 19th or early 20th century. Following Alderbrook’s 1890 fire, Percy R. Pyne hired architect Benjamin Sillman—who had collaborated with James Mace Farnsworth on several notable buildings, including the Morse Building (1878-80, with later additions) and the Temple Court Building (1881-83), both designated New York City Landmarks—to repair and renovate the house’s interior. Sillman also apparently raised the bay window

on Alderbrook's north facade from one to two stories at that time.<sup>68</sup> Other changes include the removal of circular elements from within the house's gable trusses, and the removal of a picket railing that extended along the outer edge of the porch roof, between the late 1920s and the mid-1940s; the previously mentioned installation of skylights in the roof of the eastern wing, apparently as part of Elie Nadelman's conversion of the wing into his studio during the 1930s; and the removal of finials from atop Alderbrook's west gable and large south gable after the 1940s. Historic photographs into the early 1970s show historic louvered shutters flanking many of the house's window openings, but all of these appear to have been removed. After 1927—probably in the early 1970s, when extensive work was performed on the veranda, much of it restorative—the entrance adjacent to the porch on Alderbrook's north facade saw its portico, which was crowned by an angular pediment, replaced by a hood.<sup>69</sup>

### Description

The Alderbrook House consists of a three-story main house, which was constructed c.1858-59, with a two-story wing attached to its east facade. The wing appears to have been added to the house at least 20 years after Alderbrook's construction. Both the house and the eastern wing are of red brick painted buff, although this paint has worn off in some spots. The house and wing are described separately below.

*South Facade of House:* This facade faces West 247th Street and consists of a three-story projecting central portion flanked by 2½-story western and eastern portions. The central portion features a two-story, three-sided projecting bay containing round-headed window openings. The first-floor window openings on the bay have bracketed sills, are crowned by double-rowlock arches, and contain one-over-one, double-hung wood windows with round-headed top sashes and historic wood brickmolds. The first floor of the bay is crowned by iron brackets, which support a continuous balconet featuring an ornate, low iron railing. The window openings at the bay's second floor have plain, projecting sills and contain two-over-two, double-hung wood windows with round-headed top sashes and historic wood brickmolds. Each of the second-floor window openings is crowned by a double-rowlock arch. The bay is crowned by wood fascia with continuous molding and rafters with exposed tails supporting a pitched roof covered with non-historic asphaltic material and topped by iron cresting. Two non-historic metal light fixtures are attached to the body of the house flanking the bay at the second floor. The two third-floor window openings are set within the triangular gable above the projecting bay. These openings have plain, projecting sills, are crowned by double-rowlock arches, and contain four-over-four, double-hung wood windows with round-headed top sashes. Running vertically along the eastern edge of the central portion of the facade is a metal downspout. The lower portion of this downspout extends from the ground to the second floor; it is of patinated copper and is crowned by a brown leader head. Two non-historic brown-colored downspouts empty into the leader head.

The western portion of the south facade has, at its ground floor, a single-story wood porch that wraps around to the west and north facades of the house. The porch features grouped Tuscan columns supporting open-spandrel segmental arches, which in turn, support a pitched roof with exposed rafter tails. The porch roof is covered with a non-historic asphaltic material. A round-headed entrance opening behind the porch contains a pair of paneled wood doors with large rectangular panes, crowned by a half-round wood-framed glass transom. Two square-headed window openings are present at the second floor. Each of these has a bracketed wood sill, is crowned by a plain, flush stone lintel, and contains a pair of four-over-four double-hung wood sashes.

The eastern portion of the south facade has two square-headed openings with bracketed wood sills at its first floor. Each of the first-floor window openings contains a two-over-two double-hung wood window and is crowned by a plain, flush stone lintel. A non-historic metal dryer vent has been installed between the two first-floor window openings; small electrical boxes are present just east of the eastern and western windows. The second floor has three square-headed window openings, each crowned by a plain, flush stone lintel. The largest of the three, the central opening, has a bracketed sill and contains a pair of four-over-four double-hung wood windows. The opening immediately to its west has a plain,



projecting sill and contains a wood awning sash; the opening immediately to the east of the central opening has a plain, projecting sill and contains a two-pane casement window with a horizontal muntin. The eastern portion of the south facade is crowned by a triangular gable containing an oculus with a pair of half-round wood sashes.

The yard in front of this facade is thickly planted. Two metal grates surrounded by brick borders are present in the ground directly in front of the eastern section of the south facade. A non-historic air-conditioning compressor sits on the ground just east of the projecting central portion of the south facade.

*East Facade of House:* The east facade features two square-headed window openings within its second-floor gable. The southern opening, which is the wider of the two, contains a pair of one-over-one, double-hung wood windows. The northern opening contains a four-over-four, double-hung wood window with round-headed upper panes within the square-headed top sash.

*North Facade of House:* Most of the north facade is visible from a pathway located on property that is mapped as Independence Avenue, but is owned by the Alderbrook Association. The house's north facade, like the south facade, comprises three sections. It is faced with red brick laid in stretcher bond, and is painted a buff color. Its central portion projects from the facade and contains a two-story, three-sided projecting bay containing round-headed window openings crowned by double-rowlock arches. The first-floor window openings have bracketed sills and contain one-over-one, double-hung wood windows with round-headed top sashes. The first floor of the bay is crowned by iron brackets, which support a continuous balconet featuring an ornate iron railing. The window openings at the bay's second floor have bracketed projecting sills and contain one-over-one, double-hung wood windows with round-headed top sashes. The projecting bay is crowned by a wood fascia and rafters with exposed tails supporting a pitched roof covered with non-historic asphaltic material and topped by ornate iron cresting. Two third-floor window openings are set within the gable above the bay. These openings are crowned by double-rowlock arches and contain two-over-two, double-hung wood windows with round-headed top sashes. The east face of the projecting central portion of the north facade features a square-headed first-floor opening with a flush brownstone lintel, containing multi-pane wood sashes. (The lower portion of this opening is obscured by plantings.) The second floor of the projection's east face has a round-headed opening with a plain, projecting sill and contains multi-pane wood sashes, including a round-headed top sash. This face of the central projection also contains a non-historic brown metal downspout.

Between the central portion of the facade and the porch at the western end of the facade is a round-headed entrance opening containing double-leaf doors with large rectangular panes, crowned by a half-round wood-and-glass transom. The entrance opening is surrounded by a molding and flanked by large, carved wood brackets on grouped pilasters supporting a large hood with exposed rafter tails and a molded cornice. (This hood replaced an earlier entrance portico crowned by a angular pediment, which is visible in a c.1927 photograph.)<sup>70</sup> This entrance is reached from the yard by three steps. As on the south facade, the porch features grouped Tuscan columns supporting open-spandrel segmental arches, and the roof has exposed rafter tails.

The second floor of the western portion of the north facade features two large square-headed openings, each filled with a pair of multi-pane wood doors.

The eastern portion of the north facade features four square-headed window openings with bracketed sills, two at each of the first and second floors. Each of these openings has a flush stone lintel and contains a pair of four-over-four, double-hung wood windows. The triangular gable at the third floor contains an oculus with a pair of half-round wood sashes. A historic patinated copper downspout runs along the eastern edge of this portion of the north facade.

A bluestone walkway leads from the Independence Avenue pathway to the entrance on the western portion of the facade. A non-historic modern lamppost is present in the north yard.

*West Facade of House:* The west facade, which looks toward the Hudson River, is partially visible from Spaulding Lane. The house's porch extends the full width of this facade at the first floor. This facade contains a two-story three-sided projecting bay with round-headed openings, which have bracketed sills at

the first floor. The bay has a pitched roof with exposed rafter tails that is covered with a non-historic asphaltic material. A decorative iron railing is present on the roof of the projecting bay. There are two round-headed openings within the triangular gable at the third floor. All of the second- and third-floor window openings on this facade contain two-over-two, double-hung wood windows with round-headed top sashes. The first floor window openings appear to contain one-over-one double-hung windows with round-headed top sashes. This facade fronts a thickly planted yard, which slopes downward toward the adjoining property.

*Roof of House:* The deeply overhanging, intersecting-gable roof is supported by large carved wood brackets. It features molded and flared eaves; each pair of eaves on the west and east facades, and within the central portion of the north and south facades, is crowned by a heavy decorative wood truss composed of a single horizontal and vertical member. Historically, each of these trusses also contained a pair of circular elements, which are visible in photographs dating from the 1920s. The roof is covered with non-historic asphalt shingles. It has four brick chimneys, all essentially identical, but with the westernmost chimney turned perpendicular to the others. Each chimney has a high base crowned by individual brick corbels supporting a continuous brick-and-stone ledge. The upper portion of each chimney features three round-headed niches on its long side, and one round-headed niche on its short side. Each of these niches is crowned by a gauged-brick round arch; above the arches are two projecting brick courses, a projecting stone cornice, and a metal cap. A pyramidal skylight is present between the two central chimneys. The house's gutters appear to be non-historic.

*South Facade of Eastern Wing:* The wing's south facade contains three segmental-arch-headed window openings at its first floor, and one round-arch-headed window opening within the triangular gable at the second floor. All of these openings have plain projecting sills and are crowned by gauged-brick arches. A single, continuous dogtoothed brick course runs below each of the first- and second-floor sills. The central first-floor opening is slightly higher and wider than the other two first-floor openings; it contains a two-over-two, double-hung wood window, while each of the windows flanking it contains a one-over-one, double-hung wood window. The second-floor opening contains a one-over-one, double-hung wood window with a round-headed top sash. A square-headed door opening crowned by a flush stone lintel is present at the eastern end of this facade, as is a non-historic brown metal downspout. The opening contains a paneled wood door, painted gray.

*East Facade of Eastern Wing:* This facade's projecting first floor contains two large square-headed openings. A non-historic light fixture has been installed between these two openings. The southern of these openings is filled with one-over-one, double-hung wood windows set within a large wood frame, while the other opening contains a non-historic roll-up garage door. A continuous dogtoothed brick course runs between these two openings.

*North Facade of Eastern Wing:* This facade features a round-headed entrance reached by a stone step that features a molded wood frame and half-round wood-and-glass transom. Large carved wood brackets with quatrefoils support a pitched entrance hood, which is covered with non-historic asphalt shingles and slopes down to a non-historic metal gutter. Just east of the entrance is a non-historic metal light fixture. A single dogtoothed brick course runs outward from the entrance in both directions, just beneath the level of the plain projecting sills of two round-headed window openings to its east. Each of these openings is crowned by a gauged-brick arch and contains a one-over-one, double-hung wood window with round-headed top sash. A large non-historic metal electrical box has been installed just east of the western window of these two; the conduit extends vertically up to the gable. A diamond-shaped element, possibly a decorative panel or opening filled with wood, is present between the two first-floor windows. A single round-headed window opening containing a one-over-one, double-hung window with round-headed top sash is present within the triangular gable at the second floor; a single dogtoothed brick course runs just below the plain, projecting sill of this opening. A non-historic alarm horn is attached to the window frame or reveal of this opening.

*Roof of Eastern Wing:* The wing has a mansard roof with intersecting gables and flared eaves. It is crowned by a molding, which is continuous except where it is pierced by gables on the north and south facades, and by a gable dormer on the east facade. A continuous sawtooth motif ornaments the gable eaves on the north and south facades. On the east facade, a shed roof with exposed rafter tails in front of the mansard covers the wing's ground-floor projection. This shed roof contains a large skylight opening, probably installed by Elie Nadelman when he converted the wing into his studio, containing four non-historic skylights. The gable dormer of the east facade features a horizontal wood member joining its two eaves and contains a pair of one-over-one, double-hung sashes. An additional skylight is present on the roof, just north of the dormer. The roof is covered with non-historic asphalt shingles.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The building was previously heard at public hearing on June 23, 1970 (LP-0714).

<sup>2</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from LPC, *Riverdale Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1663) (New York: City of New York, 1990), researched and written by Jay Shockley, Elisa Urbanelli, Marjorie Pearson, Gale Harris, Michael Corbett, and Betsy Bradley; and from the LPC draft designation report for the Greyston (William E. and Sarah T. Hoadley Dodge, Jr., Estate) Gatehouse (LP-2396) (2010) prepared by Jay Shockley. Other sources include *Christ Church, Riverdale: A History, 1866-1941* (New York: Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of Christ Church, Riverdale-on-Hudson, 1941); Thomas H. Edsall, *History of the Town of Kings Bridge* (New York: 1887); Albert Fein, *Wave Hill, Riverdale, and New York City: Legacy of a Hudson River Estate* (Bronx: Wave Hill, Inc., 1979); Evelyn Gonzalez, *The Bronx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 6-18; Robert S. Grumet, "American Indians," in Kenneth T. Jackson, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 25-28; Mary E. Kane, *Yesterday in Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil* (Bronx: Riverdale Neighborhood and Library Association, 1947); Regina M. Kellerman and Ellen DeNooyer, *The History of Wave Hill* (1978); Mary Delaney Krugman, *The Architectural and Historical Resources of Riverdale, The Bronx, New York: A Preliminary Survey* (Riverdale Nature Preservancy, 1998); "Levi P. Morton Dies at Rhinebeck Home on 96th Birthday," *New York Times*, May 17, 1920, 1; J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Westchester County, New York Including Morrisania, Kings Bridge, and West Farms, Which Have Been Annexed to New York City*, vol. 1, part 2 (Philadelphia: I.E. Preston & Company, 1886), 744-66; and Lloyd Ultan, "Riverdale," in Jackson, Ed., 1,008.

<sup>3</sup> Van der Donck's "Remonstrance of New Netherland" of 1649 "called for a democratization of New Netherland but also urged the emancipation of the children of New Netherland's ostensibly free black families," according to Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris, Eds., *Slavery in New York* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 46.

<sup>4</sup> William owned nine slaves, and George five slaves, in 1790, according to that year's United States Census (Township of Yonkers).

<sup>5</sup> Freeman Hunt, *Letters About the Hudson River and Its Vicinity, Written in 1835 and 1836* (New York: Freeman Hunt, 1836), cited in W. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States, 1800-1850* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), 130.

<sup>6</sup> *Map of The Park-Riverdale, Belonging to Messrs. H.F. Spaulding, W. Kent, L.P. Morton, and H.L. Atherton* (1856, Office of the Westchester County Clerk).

<sup>7</sup> On Llewellyn Park, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 76-86.

<sup>8</sup> The quoted text in this sentence and the previous sentence appears in the property conveyance from Henry L. Atherton to Oscar C. Ferris, Office of the Westchester County Clerk, Liber 358, Page 250 (May 1, 1857).

<sup>9</sup> “The Riverdale Institute,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (May 1864), cited in Kane, 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Villas on the Hudson: A Collection of Photo-Lithographs* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1860).

<sup>11</sup> The eight early Park-Riverdale villas are visible on *Property Atlas of the City of Yonkers, Including the 24th Ward of New York City* (New York: E. Belcher Hyde, 1876). Krugman’s 1998 survey of Riverdale’s historic architecture found only three of the early Park-Riverdale villas remaining: Alderbrook, the former Spaulding villa, and the former George H. Forster residence. Both the Spaulding and Forster villas are now part of the Riverdale Country Day School.

<sup>12</sup> Sources for this section include Phyllis B. Dodge, *Tales of the Phelps-Dodge Family: A Chronicle of Five Generations* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1987), 243-7, 279-81, 297, 304, 311; “Historical Note,” in Richard Salvato, Ed., *Moses Taylor Papers, 1793-1906* (New York Public Library Humanities and Social Sciences Library Manuscripts and Archives Division), 5-12; Daniel Hodas, *The Business Career of Moses Taylor: Merchant, Finance Capitalist, and Industrialist* (New York: New York University Press, 1976); John Moody and George Kibbe Turner, “Masters of Capital in America: Wall Street; The City Bank: The Federation of Great Merchants,” *McClure’s Magazine* (May 1911), 73-76; “An Old Merchant’s Death” (Moses Taylor obituary), *New York Times*, May 24, 1882, 10; Moses Taylor Pyne, *Descendants of Galceran de Pinos in Spain, France, England, and America* (New York: Tobias A. Wright, 1915); Moses Taylor Pyne, 1871 Diary and Genealogical Notes Collected for Inclusion in *Memorials of the Family of Pyne*, Moses Taylor Pyne Papers (1686-1939), Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University; and “Percy Rivington Pyne” (obituary), *New York Times*, February 16, 1895, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Moody and Turner, 74.

<sup>14</sup> Hodas, 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> These included the Farmers’ Loan and Trust Company, Consolidated Gas Company, Lackawanna Iron and Steel Company, Western Union Telegraph Company, and Chicago and Northwestern Railway.

<sup>16</sup> “Moses Taylor’s Will,” *New York Times*, June 1, 1882, 8. The value of Moses Taylor’s estate at the time of his death has been estimated at between \$20 million and \$45 million, according to figures in “Moses Taylor’s Will” and in “Historical Note,” 5.

<sup>17</sup> Office of the Westchester County Clerk, Liber 358, Page 250.

<sup>18</sup> “Married,” *New York Daily Times*, November 27, 1855, 8; “Will of Oscar C. Ferris,” *New York Times*, February 22, 1903, 2.

<sup>19</sup> The 1860 U.S. Census shows them in the Town of Yonkers, apparently close to Henry F. Spaulding and his family, as the census taker visited the Ferrises just before the Spauldings.

<sup>20</sup> Nathaniel Goodwin, *Genealogical Notes, or Contributions to the Family History of Some of the First Settlers of Connecticut and Massachusetts* (Hartford, Conn., 1859; reprinted by Clearfield Company, Baltimore, 2008), 322.

<sup>21</sup> Moses Taylor Pyne, Genealogical Notes Collected for Inclusion in *Memorials of the Family of Pyne*.

<sup>22</sup> For more on Emily C. Judson, whose pen name was Fanny Forester, see Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer, *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 297-8.

<sup>23</sup> Office of the Westchester County Clerk, Liber 603, Page 85 (June 1, 1866); Liber 612, Page 369 (December 12, 1865); Liber 612, Page 375 (October 17, 1866); and Liber 617, Page 299 (December 31, 1866).

<sup>24</sup> Moses Taylor Pyne, Genealogical Notes Collected for Inclusion in *Memorials of the Family of Pyne*.

<sup>25</sup> Moses Taylor Pyne, Genealogical Notes Collected for Inclusion in *Memorials of the Family of Pyne*.

<sup>26</sup> “Moses Taylor Pyne Papers, 1686-1939 Finding Aid,” Princeton University Library Manuscripts Division,

accessed online at: [arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/cf95jb50q](https://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/cf95jb50q).

<sup>27</sup> The Dodges' house, Greyston (James Renwick, Jr., 1863-64), is a designated New York City Landmark.

<sup>28</sup> Moses Taylor Pyne, 1871 Diary. Dodge, 245, also notes that Theodore Roosevelt's childhood nickname was Teedie.

<sup>29</sup> Moses Taylor Pyne, 1871 Diary.

<sup>30</sup> Moses Taylor Pyne, Genealogical Notes Collected for Inclusion in *Memorials of the Family of Pyne*. In 1882, Percy purchased the Mott estate directly west of Alderbrook for Moses and his new wife; following the 1884 wedding of daughter Albertina—the reception was held at Alderbrook, which was “beautifully decorated with flowers,” according to the *New York Times*—Percy “built a house on the hill above him” for the newlyweds, according to Moses Pyne's genealogical notes (“A Wedding at Riverdale,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1884, 4). In 1891, Percy bought the former Forster estate, Oakdale, which adjoined Moses' property on the north, for Percy R. Pyne Jr. and his new wife. Both the Forster and Mott estates are shown on the 1876 *Property Atlas of the City of Yonkers, Including the 24th Ward of New York City*. The purchase of Oakdale was reported in the *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* (May 23, 1891), 832. The Percy R. Pyne Jr. House (1909-11, McKim, Mead and White) at 680 Park Avenue in Manhattan, later the Center for Inter-American Relations, is a designated New York City Landmark.

<sup>31</sup> “Art Treasures Destroyed: A Costly Blaze in Mr. Pyne's House at Riverdale,” *New York Times*, January 25, 1890, 8.

<sup>32</sup> “President Pyne Retires,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1891, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Percy R. Pyne, Last Will and Testament (1888).

<sup>34</sup> “M. Taylor Pyne, Leader in Big Projects, Dead,” *New York Tribune*, April 23, 1921, 9; “Percy R. Pyne is Dead at 73,” *New York Evening Sun*, August 22, 1929; “Percy R. Pyne Dies; Noted Financier,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1929, 13; “Percy R. Pyne, Philanthropist, Banker, Is Dead,” *New York Tribune*, August 23, 1929; and “The History of Drumthwacket,” accessed online at: [www.drumthwacket.org/history.html](http://www.drumthwacket.org/history.html).

<sup>35</sup> Sources for this section include Barbara Haskell, *Elie Nadelman: Sculptor of Modern Life* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2003); Hilton Kramer, “Elie Nadelman” (book review), *New York Times*, November 11, 1973, 417; Hilton Kramer, “Sculptor Nadelman Created a Scandal Dressing His Work,” *The New York Observer*, April 20, 2003, accessed online at: [www.observer.com/node/47418](http://www.observer.com/node/47418); Hilton Kramer, “Sculptures at the Whitney Restore Nadelman to Glory,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1975, 47; Anne M. Lampe, *Elie Nadelman and the Influence of Folk Art* (Lancaster, Pa.: Demuth Museum, 2010); James Panero, “The House Gods of Elie Nadelman,” *The New Criterion* (May 2003); and Suzanne Ramljak, with Avis Berman, Valerie J. Fletcher, Klaus Kertess, and Cynthia Nadelman, *Elie Nadelman: Classical Folk* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 2001). The author wishes to thank Cynthia Nadelman, who is the granddaughter of Elie and Viola Nadelman, for her assistance in completing this section.

<sup>36</sup> Bronx County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 318, Page 160 (June 24, 1921); “Home Buyers at Riverdale,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1921, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Haskell, 29.

<sup>38</sup> “‘La Mysterieuse,’ by the New Polish Sculptor, Elie Nadelman,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1911, C3.

<sup>39</sup> “To Wed Polish Sculptor: Mrs. Viola Flannery Engaged to Elie Nadelman,” *New York Times*, December 25, 1919, 13; “Wed Sculptor Nadelman,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1920, 19.

<sup>40</sup> LPC, *Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1834) (New York: City of New York, 1993), 204.

<sup>41</sup> Haskell, note 120, 208.

<sup>42</sup> According to the Nadelmans' granddaughter, Cynthia Nadelman, the carriage house remains on West 247th Street and is currently a private residence. Cynthia Nadelman, email to author (September 17, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Haskell, 151-2.

<sup>44</sup> *Oceanus* was later removed from the building and is believed to have been lost or destroyed. See LPC, *Manhattan Company Building Designation Report* (LP-1936) (New York: City of New York, 1995), prepared by Jay Shockley.

<sup>45</sup> It is possible that in 1935 through 1937, the Alderbrook House served as the clubhouse for the Columbia Yacht Club while the Nadelmans lived elsewhere, although the evidence on this issue is contradictory. The club had been evicted from its longtime home on the Hudson River at 86th Street in 1934 for the West Side Improvement project, which included the covering of the New York Central Railroad tracks, the construction of the Henry Hudson Parkway, and the expansion of Riverside Park. In 1935, the *New York Times* reported that the club had converted the 22- or 23-room “old Percy R. Pyne mansion in Riverdale at 247th Street” into its new home. The *Times*’ description of the new clubhouse matched that of Alderbrook in some ways, but stated that the mansion was then occupied by Philip B. Weld, a broker, and made no mention of the Nadelmans, even though the newspaper had published several recent articles about their folk art museum. The *Times* also stated that the clubhouse was “set back about 400 feet from the river,” while an 1890 alteration record gives the location of the Alderbrook House as 1,200 feet east of the Hudson. In June of 1937, as the club moved from Riverdale to a new home on City Island, the *Times* described the Riverdale clubhouse as being “at the foot of 247th Street and the Hudson River,” seemingly in a completely different location from the Alderbrook House. Contemporary telephone directories also give the location of the Columbia clubhouse as West 247th Street and the Hudson River. See “Gigantic Water Pageant Planned by Dr. Harriss for Columbia Y.C.,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1935, S5; “New Columbia Y.C. Ready for Opening,” *New York Times*, July 14, 1935, S5; “New Plant Opened by Columbia Y.C.,” *New York Times*, July 21, 1935, S5; “Yacht Club Gets Base in Riverdale,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1935, 26; “Yacht Club Landing Open,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1937, 87; Fire Department, City of New York, Bureau of Inspection of Buildings, alteration record no. 156 (filed February 5, 1890); and *New York City Telephone Directories, Bronx, Microfilm, 1929-1973/74* (New York: New York Public Library, 1957-1976) for 1935 through 1937. *Times* articles about the folk art museum include “Folk Art Museum to be Opened Here,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1935, 19; and “Folk Arts Museum Opening to Public,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1935, 20.

<sup>46</sup> In an October 27, 2010 interview with the author, Cynthia Nadelman identified the Alderbrook House’s extant eastern wing as the location of Elie Nadelman’s studio following the loss of the carriage house. A c.1940s photograph provided by Ms. Nadelman of the inside of the studio shows the skylight opening, although the skylights themselves appear to have been replaced.

<sup>47</sup> On the *Two Circus Women* in the Glass House, see: [philipjohnsonglasshouse.org/preservationatwork/artrestoration/nadelman/](http://philipjohnsonglasshouse.org/preservationatwork/artrestoration/nadelman/).

<sup>48</sup> On the New York State Theater and the installation of Nadelman’s work there, see Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1960: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Second World War and the Bicentennial* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 691-5.

<sup>49</sup> “Mrs. Elie Nadelman, 84, Dies; Was Widow of the Sculptor,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1962, 29. She also played an important role in organizing other Nadelman exhibitions in the U.S. and Europe.

<sup>50</sup> Grace Glueck, “Living with Art, Indeed,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1974, SM116. On William A. Hall, see Penelope Green, “2 Parents + 2 Boys + 2 Weimarers = 1,000 Square Feet,” *New York Times*, September 18, 2005, K4; “Hall Partnership Architects, LLP: Firm History,” accessed online at: [www.hallarchitect.com/firmprofile.php?typeid=2](http://www.hallarchitect.com/firmprofile.php?typeid=2); and George S. Koyl, Ed., *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1962), 279.

<sup>51</sup> “E. Jan Nadelman, 85, Served as U.S. Diplomat,” *Riverdale Press*, December 6, 2007. Bronx County, Office of the Register, Document 2009031300306001 (March 2, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from LPC, *121 Heberton Avenue House Designation Report* (LPC-2120) (New York: City of New York, 2002), prepared by Gale Harris; and LPC, George B. and Susan Elkins House Designation Report (LP-2207) (New York: City of New York, 2006), prepared by Michael D. Caratzas. Other sources include William Alex and George B. Tatum, *Calvert Vaux: Architect and Planner* (New York: Ink, Inc., 1994); J. Stewart Johnson, “Introduction,” in A.J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (D. Appleton & Company, 1850; reprinted by Dover Publications, New York, 1969), v-xv; W. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in*

*the United States, 1800-1850* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002); Henry Hope Reed, "Introduction," in Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857; reprinted by Da Capo Press, New York, 1968), v-xiv; and John Zukowsky, "Castles on the Hudson," *Winterthur Portfolio* vol. 14, no. 1 (Spring 1979), 73-92.

<sup>53</sup> According to LPC, *Riverdale Historic District Designation Report* (17), "Of the original seven villas built in the 1850s within the Riverdale Historic District, five were built in 1853 on Independence Avenue, four of which survive, and two were built slightly later on Sycamore Avenue, one of which survives." Of the surviving villas, the only one that has not been substantially altered from its original appearance is the Cromwell Villa (also known as Stonehurst), a designated New York City Landmark located at 5225 Sycamore Avenue.

<sup>54</sup> Downing, 40, 257.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, x.

<sup>56</sup> Downing, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Alex & Tatum, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Downing, 345, 344.

<sup>59</sup> Downing, 344, 33

<sup>60</sup> Vaux, 39, 99.

<sup>61</sup> Vaux, 62.

<sup>62</sup> Vaux, 94.

<sup>63</sup> On dogtooth as an architectural feature during this period, see page 11 of LPC, *Estey Piano Company Factory Designation Report* (LP-2195) (New York: City of New York, 2006), prepared by Michael D. Caratzas.

<sup>64</sup> Stephen F. Byrns, email to Mary Beth Betts (December 7, 2009); George W. and Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of New York, 23rd and 24th Wards* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Company, 1893); *Insurance Maps of the City of New York, Borough of the Bronx*, vol. 13 (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1914).

<sup>65</sup> It is possible that the Alderbrook House was designed by Thomas S. Wall, who is known to have designed the Atherton Villa (5247 Independence Avenue), and is believed to have designed the Babcock Villa (5261 Independence Avenue) in the Riverdale Historic District. According to the *Riverdale Historic District Designation Report* (166), "It is also probable that Wall designed the other early villas in" the historic district. A restrained Gothic Revival style composition, the Atherton Villa, as originally constructed, appears as if its design could have come from the same hand that designed Alderbrook. For a historic photograph of the Atherton Villa, see page 36 of the Riverdale report.

<sup>66</sup> Vaux, 54.

<sup>67</sup> Downing, 345.

<sup>68</sup> Fire Department, City of New York, Bureau of Inspection of Buildings, alteration record no. 156 (filed February 5, 1890).

<sup>69</sup> These historic features are shown in copies of photographs dating from 1925, 1927, c.1928, and c.1946-47 provided by Cynthia Nadelman, and in a 1970 photograph taken by an LPC staff member.

<sup>70</sup> A copy of this 1927 photograph of the house's north facade, provided by Cynthia Nadelman, is in the LPC's files.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Alderbrook 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 Alderbrook House is a rare example of a mid-19th-century Hudson River villa in New York City; that it was probably built by Oscar C. and Ada Woodworth Ferris between 1858 and 1859; that it is one of the two oldest villas in The Park-Riverdale, an exclusive residential development begun in 1856; that it is the only one of The Park-Riverdale's early villas to remain in use as a single-family residence; that it was the country house of industrialist Percy R. Pyne, his wife Albertina Taylor Pyne, and their three children from 1864 into the 1890s; that the house was purchased in 1921 by Viola Nadelman, the wife of the renowned Polish-born sculptor Elie Nadelman, to serve as the couple's summer home; that Elie Nadelman was recognized in 1911 as being "within the first rank of present-day artists"; that in the early 1920s, the Nadelmans began amassing a folk art collection that was without peer in the United States and one of the finest in the world; that in 1926, they opened the first folk art museum in the United States just west of the Alderbrook House, near Palisade Avenue; that following the 1929 stock market crash, Viola and Elie Nadelman moved full-time to Alderbrook, where Elie Nadelman created hundreds of small plaster figures that came to define his late career; that Elie Nadelman committed suicide at Alderbrook in 1946; that Viola Nadelman, who played a key role in promoting her husband's legacy, lived at Alderbrook until her 1962 death; that major retrospectives of Elie Nadelman's work were mounted at the Museum of Modern Art in 1948, and at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1975 and 2003; that the Alderbrook House was influenced by the designs and publications of Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux; that it is a picturesque residence, exhibiting both Italianate and Gothic Revival characteristics; that the Alderbrook House is remarkably well-preserved, retaining its generous veranda, gabled roofline featuring deep flared eaves, brackets, and gable trusses, and tall brick chimneys with grouped flues and decorative niches; and that the Alderbrook House is unique as a mid-19th-century Hudson River villa in New York City with an exceptional connection to a renowned 20th-century artist and his work.

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 Alderbrook House, 4715 Independence Avenue, the Bronx, and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5926, Lot 76 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice Chair  
Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire,  
Joan Gerner, Michael Goldblum, Margery Perlmutter, Commissioners





Alderbrook House  
4715 Independence Avenue, the Bronx  
Block 5926, Lot 76  
South Facade  
*Photo: Michael D. Caratzas, 2009*



Alderbrook House  
North Facade  
*Photo: Michael D. Caratzas, 2010*



Alderbrook House  
West Facade  
*Photo: Michael D. Caratzas, 2009*



Alderbrook House  
South Facade of Eastern Wing  
*Photo: Michael D. Caratzas, 2009*



Alderbrook House  
East Facade of House and East Facade of Eastern Wing  
*Photo: Michael D. Caratzas, 2010*



Alderbrook House  
East and North Facades of Eastern Wing  
*Photo: Michael D. Caratzas, 2010*



Alderbrook House  
Western Portion of House, 1925  
*Photo Courtesy of Cynthia Nadelman*



Alderbrook House  
North Facade, c.1927  
*Photo Courtesy of Cynthia Nadelman*

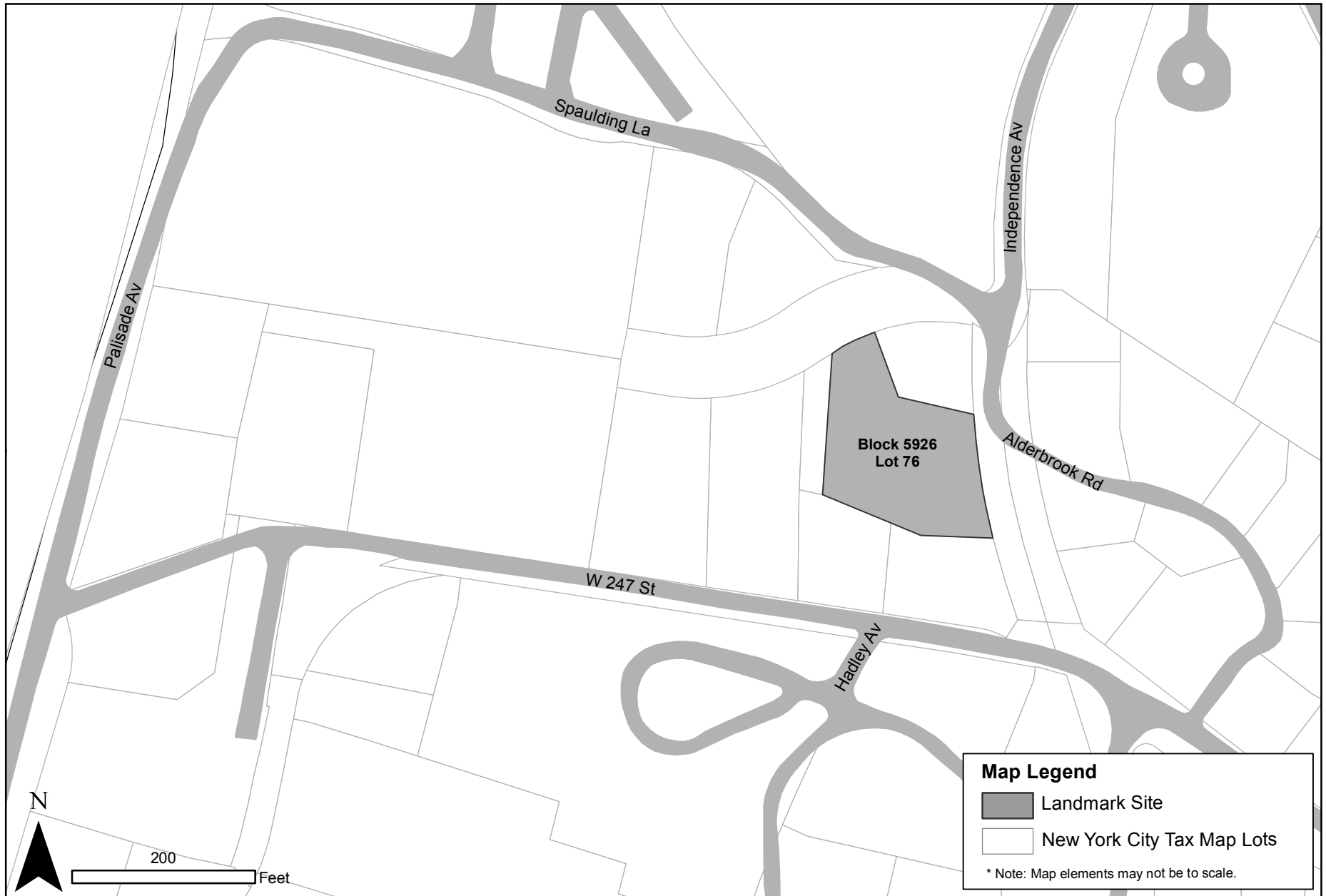




Alderbrook House  
West and South Facades, c.1928  
*Photo Courtesy of Cynthia Nadelman*



Alderbrook House  
South Facade, 1970  
*Photo: LPC*



ALDERBROOK HOUSE (LP-2399), 4715 Independence Avenue  
 Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx, Tax Map Block 5926, Lot 76

Designated: December 14, 2010