

29 COTTAGE PLACE HOUSE, 29 Cottage Place, Staten Island.
Built: c.1848; altered 1920. Owner: Abraham L. Merrell.

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 1012, Lot 10.

On August 10, 2010, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 29 Cottage Place House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 6). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. A total of six witnesses, including the owner and two representatives of the Preservation League of Staten Island, spoke in favor of the designation. City Council member Kenneth C. Mitchell and State Senator Diane Savino sent letters in support of the designation. There were no speakers or letters in opposition to the designation.

Summary

One of the few surviving saltbox houses on Staten Island's North Shore, this modest two-story Greek Revival frame cottage with later Craftsman details is a significant reminder of Staten Island's vernacular architectural traditions. Built around 1848 for farmer Abraham L. Merrell, the house was leased to tenants until 1918. Its occupants included carpenters and boatmen who were likely employed in Port Richmond's thriving maritime industries. Frederick Schmidt (Smith), who leased the house from around 1899



and whose family purchased the house in 1918, was employed in a nearby white lead works. Three bays wide, two bays deep, 29 Cottage Place is capped by an asymmetrical gabled roof with a short pitch in front and longer slope at the rear. Known as a saltbox roof in New England and a catslide roof in the South, such roofs were a fairly common feature of colonial and early 19th-century houses but do not survive in great numbers on Staten Island and are becoming increasingly rare. Here the house is distinguished by the slight curve of the front roof slope, which is probably the remnant of a flared projecting spring eave, and by its simple but handsome Greek Revival entrance surround, which retains its original sidelights and transom. Altered in 1920 for the Schmidts, the house also displays aspects of the Craftsman Style in the treatment of its porch and windows. Despite some recent changes, 29 Cottage Place retains its original form and fenestration pattern and sufficient Greek Revival and Craftsman details to be a significant reminder of Port Richmond's and Staten Island's vernacular heritage and a visible link to the rich history of the Port Richmond community.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Early History of Port Richmond¹

Port Richmond is located on the north shore of Staten Island, adjacent to the Kill van Kull, the strait between Staten Island and Bayonne, New Jersey. There is evidence that Paleo Indians occupied Staten Island as early as 10,000 B.C.² By the Late Woodlands period (AD 900-1600) considerable land had been cleared for horticulture. Staten Island was then occupied by Munsee-speaking members of the Lenape nation. Europeans were slow to colonize the island because of the resistance they met from Native Americans; however, in 1670, four years after the English takeover of New Amsterdam, the English Governor, Francis Lovelace, “purchased” Staten Island from the Native Americans, who left the island to move westward.³ During the next decade a number of Dutch families from Brooklyn settled along the North Shore in the vicinity of modern-day Mariners Harbor, Port Richmond, and West Brighton. Many settlers brought African American slaves to the area to work on their farms, businesses, and homes.⁴ At the beginning of the 18th century the enclave that eventually became Port Richmond became a transportation hub due to the establishment of a ferry to Bergen Point in present-day Bayonne⁵ and the opening of two roads — one running along the north shore along the route of present-day Richmond Terrace and the other linking the ferry and north shore road to Richmondtown. By the mid 18th century the ferry to Bergen Point had become an important link in a major overland route between New York and Philadelphia and was a transfer point for stage coach service between the two cities.⁶ Usually known by the name of the proprietor of the ferry to Bergen’s Point — Beck’s Ferry, Ryerss’s Ferry, and Decker’s Ferry — but alternately called Dutch Church for the Reformed Church established there in 1715, the enclave became a thriving village, where, according to historian Phillip Papas, “merchants and shopkeepers bought and sold a variety of goods and offered the island’s farmers basic commercial services.”⁷ During the Revolutionary War, the village was a center of military activities. British forces occupied the village from 1776 to 1783, and the ferry landing was an embarkation point for British troops.

During the Federal period and early 19th century the village continued to prosper.⁸ It remained an important stop on the stagecoach route to Philadelphia, was served by two ferries, and had at least one inn, the Continental Hotel (aka Richmond House or St. James Hotel), at 2040 Richmond Terrace, the last residence of Aaron Burr, who died there in 1836. Steam ferries began traveling between Port Richmond and Lower Manhattan in 1823. Port Richmond was also the center of thriving shipping and fishing industries. Several boat builders and sail makers established businesses to service the shippers and the numerous fishermen, sea captains, and oystermen who resided on the North Shore between Port Richmond and Mariners Harbor. Port Richmond’s commercial and industrial base included the 1838 Staten Island Whaling company; the first bank on Staten Island, established in 1838 in conjunction with the whaling company; and the Jewett White Lead Company, which later became part of Dutch Boy Paints and operated into the 20th century.

No. 29 Cottage Place: Construction and Early Residents

In 1836 carpenter Peter N. Haughwout and his son Eder V. Haughwout purchased two large tracts from the executors of David Mersereau, which together extended from the east side of Port Richmond Avenue to just beyond the east side of present-day Cottage Place between Church Street and Bond Street.⁹ The Haughwouts had this land laid out into building lots retaining a square block bounded by Park Avenue (formerly Broadway), Bennett Street,

Heberton Avenue, and Vreeland Street for a public park (present-day Veterans Park) that they presented to the Village of Northfield.¹⁰ By 1838, the Haughwouts had sold a number of lots on the blocks between Richmond Street (now Port Richmond Avenue) and Mersereau Street (now Broadway). In 1842, the trustees of Northfield School District 6 purchased the lot at the northwest corner of Heberton Avenue and New Street and shortly thereafter erected a two-story school building.¹¹ In 1843, the North Baptist Church built a modest frame church building on the northwest corner of Park Avenue and Vreeland Street facing on to the west side of the park. (This building was replaced with a brick structure in 1878; the church later changed its name to the Park Avenue Baptist Church.) By 1853 the blocks on the north, south, and west sides of the square had been built up with fine residences. A number of shops and residences had been erected along the Pond Road, now Jewett Avenue, in Port Richmond, just to the east of the Haughwouts' land.

In 1836, when the John Mersereau first mapped the Haughwouts' Port Richmond real estate, the land immediately east of Heberton Avenue was laid out in 25 x 100 foot lots and the remaining triangle of land to the east was undivided. In 1838 Mersereau filed a second map for the Haughwouts in which this eastern parcel was divided into town lots and streets. These included a new street near the eastern edge of the Haughwout property, running southeasterly from Bennett Street to Bond Street, which was originally named Richmond Avenue and later was known as Smith Street and South Street, before being renamed Cottage Place around 1859. By 1841 the Haughwouts had sold the long narrow strip of land to the east of Cottage Place, which varied in width from about 16 feet to about 42 feet, to John Johnson, along with several lots on Ann and Bennett Streets. In August 1841, Peter N. Haughwout repurchased the lots on Bennett and Ann Streets and the strip along the east side of Cottage Place. Haughwout had the strip divided into several lots.¹² This house occupies a lot that originally extended 115 feet along Cottage Place, was 30 feet wide at its northern end and 42 feet wide at its southern end. (The lot was divided into two parts in the early 20th century; 29 Cottage Place occupies the southern portion.) Haughwout sold the lot to marble cutter Orlando W. Buel for \$225 in January 1847.¹³ Buel held the property for a little over a year then sold it for \$260 to farmer Abraham Merrell, who resided in Bulls Head, Staten Island.¹⁴ In both cases the purchase price was appropriate for a town lot but was insufficient to cover the cost of a building. Merrell probably erected the present house shortly after he acquired the land.

Because there are no early directories for Staten Island and no addresses were given in the census and Merrell continued to reside on his farm, it is not possible to determine exactly when the house was built or to identify the early tenants with absolute certainty. Nevertheless, census records suggest that this house was completed by 1850 and was leased to boatman Henry Prall and his wife Elizabeth.¹⁵ In 1860 the likely tenants were 25-year-old German-born cooper, Henry Fachner, his wife Agnes, and their two-month-old son Henry.¹⁶ In 1865 the residents were probably F. Merrill (or Merrell?), a ship builder, his wife, their infant daughter, and an Irish maid. In 1875, 29 Cottage Place was probably occupied by carver Phillip Brewster, his wife Eliza, son Phillip, and his wife Amelia. The residents in 1880 were likely Norwegian-born blacksmith John W. Tanberg his wife, and their two daughters. The 1884 and 1886 Staten Island directories list [Frances] Elizabeth Tranter as the occupant of this house, an English-born widow of hotel keeper Charles Tranter, who probably occupied this house with at least some of her four children.¹⁷

In 1887, 89-year-old Abraham Merrill sold this house to David Decker of Northfield.¹⁸ Decker continued to lease the house to tenants and by 1898 had constructed a second house at 23

Cottage Place (originally 17 Cottage Place) on the northern half of the lot. Tenants at 29 Cottage Place (then No. 21) included carpenter John W. Guyon who resided there from around 1892 to around 1894. By 1899 No. 29 was being leased by Frederick Schmidt (aka Smith), a German-immigrant worker in a plaster mill, who resided in the house with his wife Annie and their three children.¹⁹ In 1918 the Schmidts' daughter Lena Sophia Schmidt purchased the house from Elizabeth Bruce Decker, David Decker's widow.²⁰ It remained in the ownership of the Schmidt family until 1941.²¹

The Design of 29 Cottage Place

Built on a shallow lot that only extended back about 35-40 feet from the street, 29 Cottage Place is a relatively modest frame house with a three-bay-wide, one-room-deep, two-story gable-roofed front section and a shed-roofed 1½ story rear wing. The house's most distinctive features are the slightly curved profile of the front slope of its roof, which is probably the remnant of a flared projecting spring eave, its Greek Revival entrance surround, and its shed-roofed rear wing.

Curved roof slopes were a relatively common feature for vernacular Staten Island buildings in the first half of the 19th century where they invariably terminated in flared overhanging eaves.²² Flared projecting spring or bell-cast eaves were widely used on Staten Island from the late 17th century on and became firmly embedded in Staten Island building tradition. The earliest surviving example of a spring eave on Staten Island is found on the Billop House (c.1676, a designated New York City Landmark), at the southern tip of Staten Island. It has a relatively slight flare since the eaves extend a little more than a foot beyond the front wall. Used with both gable and gambrel roofs, the spring eave on Staten Island and elsewhere in the New Netherland area, evolved into a deeper overhang over the course of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Supported at the front by posts, it eventually formed a façade-wide covered porch on the building's principal elevation.

The introduction of the Greek Revival style to Staten Island coincided with the island's transition, initiated by the introduction of regular steam ferry service, from a sparsely settled, largely agricultural community to the home of several major institutions and large-scaled planned developments, such as New Brighton, Stapleton, and Port Richmond.²³ Much of the new development was designed for wealthy New York City merchants, who were aware of the latest architectural styles. Beginning in the 1820s and proliferating in the 1830s, knowledgeable versions of the fashionable Greek style were employed for both residential and institutional buildings.²⁴ In the 1840s and 1850s the Greek Revival was supplanted by more picturesque styles, including the Gothic Revival and Italianate, for prestigious architect designed commissions but in those same decades the Greek Revival was taken up by local Staten Island builders and blossomed in vernacular houses built by the hundreds from one end of the island to the other.

While most of Staten Island's vernacular Greek Revival dwellings employ a simplified version of the style, it is evident that the columned facades of the island's high style residences and institutional buildings erected in the 1830s had a significant impact. Although there were exceptions, local builders did not, on the whole, attempt to duplicate the columned porticos of such buildings as the Caleb Ward House (c. 1835, Seth Geer, a designated New York City Landmark) or the temple-fronted residences built on Richmond Terrace in New Brighton during the 1830s. Instead they applied the traditional deep spring eave to a standard 19th century residential design – a longitudinally planned, two-story house of three or five bays. The spring

eave was carried on giant supports (usually coffered piers or classical orders) to form a façade-wide quadristyle or hexastyle portico. Dozens of residences employing this combination of Greek Revival Style porticos and spring eaves were built on all sections of the island. The curved slope of the roof of 29 Cottage Place, the current termination of eaves in a simple fascia board nailed to exposed rafters rather than a decorative cornice, and the depictions of this house with a front porch on early maps all argue for this house having been originally built following this vernacular tradition with a spring-eaved quadristyle porch. Most likely, the spring eave, porch columns, and porch floor were removed in 1920 when the house was raised three feet necessitating the construction of a new porch.

This house also features a Greek Revival entrance surround with narrow sidelights and a transom, which retain their historic fenestration. Articulated with Tuscan pilasters, paneled dados, and simple moldings this handsome surround reflects the Greek Revival preference for simple forms and flat surfaces.

Another unusual vernacular feature of the design is the asymmetrical gabled roof with a short pitch in front and longer slope at the rear. Known as a saltbox roof in New England and a catslide roof in the South, such roofs were a fairly common feature of colonial and early nineteenth century houses with the lower lean-to-roofed area at the rear invariably used for service rooms and kitchens. Early examples on Staten Island included the rear addition of the Billop House, depicted in an engraving published in 1846, and the Abraham Bodine House, formerly located on Harbor Road north of Forest Avenue in Mariners Harbor. At 29 Cottage Place the shed roof rear wing was built with a change in slope causing a break in the roofline. The photograph files at the Staten Island Museum contain a number of images of mid-19th-century houses, all probably now demolished, that are similar in form to 29 Cottage Place with two-story side-gabled main blocks, and one or 1½ story rear shed-roofed wings and a similar break in the slope of their rooflines. These include the Braisted farmhouse in Watchogue, the Seaver House at 1718 Richmond Road, and a house on the south side of Old Place Road. The Seaver House and the Old Place Road house also had spring-eaved porches and shed-roofed rear wings and were probably very similar in profile to 29 Cottage Place prior to its being altered. The William H. Rutan House (c. 1848-50) at 6 Shore Road in Conference House Park at Tottenville is a larger version of the saltbox house with a spring-eaved portico. It is five bays wide, has a 2½ story main block resting on a banked stone basement, and a two story rear wing. The main portion of Decker farmhouse at 435 Richmond Hill Road (1810, altered c. 1841, a designated New York City Landmark) was enlarged and remodeled in the 1840s to create a saltbox with a spring-eaved portico. With a 1½ story main block and one story rear wing it is even smaller in scale than 29 Cottage Place. Today the saltbox house type is becoming increasingly rare in Staten Island and the 29 Cottage Place House appears to be one of the few surviving examples on the North Shore, thus, though altered the 29 Cottage Place House, which retains its original massing and distinctive roofline, is a significant reminder of Staten Island's vernacular traditions.

Later History

In 1920 two years after this house was purchased by Lena Schmidt (Smith) she conveyed the property to her mother Anna Schmidt.²⁵ That year the Schmidts made a number of changes to the house in keeping with the then popular Craftsman Style. These included raising the house three feet so that it rested on a basement of rusticated concrete blocks and replacing the front porch with a one-story flat-roofed porch with square posts and clapboard balustrades.²⁶ While

the house seems to have retained its original fenestration pattern, most of the window openings were slightly enlarged and received new surrounds and windows. The c. 1940 tax photos shows that the windows (at least on the front of the house) had paired casements topped by narrow transoms. (By 1980 these windows had been replaced by two-over-two windows.) The main entry retained its Greek Revival surround but its original door was replaced by a multi-light wood-and-glass door. The front eaves were removed and the rafter boards exposed. The original clapboards were replaced with shingles (replaced by clapboards), which were painted or stained a dark color with the window and porch trim painted a lighter shade, following the preferred fashion for Craftsman houses.

After her husband died and her children moving to their own homes, Anna Schmidt (Smith) continued to occupy this house, supplementing her income by taking in boarders. In 1930, when the census was taken, she had two lodgers, both immigrant carpenters from Norway.²⁷ Anna Schmidt died in 1940 and the house passed to her daughter Lena who sold it to Ethel I. Lawes in 1941. Ethel Lawes resided in the house until 1963 when it was purchased by Sidney and Ethel Barr. John Foxell, the present owner, acquired the house in 1986 and has made a number of changes to the exterior and grounds, including constructing prayer and spirit houses on the grounds and signage commemorating the Catholic activist and journalist Dorothy Day, who had a cottage at Spanish Camp on Staten Island. Despite these changes the house retains its original form and fenestration pattern and sufficient Greek Revival and Craftsman details to be a significant reminder of Port Richmond's and Staten Island's vernacular architecture.

Description

Historic: Two-story frame vernacular Greek Revival saltbox with Craftsman elements from 1920 remodeling; house raised in 1920s; rusticated cast block basement; three-bay front facade; one-story 1920s wood front porch; main entrance in southern bay; Greek Revival entrance surround with original sidelights and transom; 1920s eight-light paneled wood door; original fenestration pattern (windows widened in 1920s); 1920s window frames; wood four-light storms; side gable roof with curved slope at front on main block; shed roofed 1½ story rear service wing; some sections of roof eaves retain historic wood moldings.

Alterations: House faced with replacement clapboard (originally clapboard; shingled in 1920s?); basement masonry painted; basement windows sealed; stained glass in most first- and second-story windows, front porch trim added, signage; stoop and rails replaced; light fixture; mailbox; framed serape representing Our Lady of Guadalupe.

South wall: Basement entrance hatch; first floor entry with wood deck and stoop; wood shutters first and second-story windows; light fixture near entry.

North wall: first floor entry with wood stoop and landing; light fixture; wood shutters first and second story windows; through wall air-conditioners; signage.

Roof: Asphalt shingles, vent pipe with weather vane at south west corner roof; chimney box vent with weather vane at center of ridgeline; brick chimney at rear; vents sealed on rear slope

Site:

Historic: House faces Cottage Place; bluestone sidewalks.

Alterations: Wood fence at front; side and rear wood fences; wrought iron and masonry benches; wood, glass, and shingle prayer house (south lawn) and wood, glass, and shingle spirit house (north lawn), sign board, mail box stanchion, metal and glass, metal lamp posts; sun dial.

Sources: New York City Fairchild Aerial Surveys, “Aerial View of Port Richmond,” April 8, 1928, Staten Island Historical Society, PH 1 Port Richmond General Views: Aerial Views, P 26.9 (N).

Report Written and Researched by
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NOTES

¹ This section on the early history of Port Richmond is based on William A. Starna, “American Indian Villages to Dutch Farms: The Settling of Settled Lands in the Hudson Valley,” and Firth Haring Fabend, “The Reformed Dutch Church and the Persistence of Dutchness in New York and New Jersey,” in Roger Panetta, ed. *Dutch New York: the Roots of Hudson Valley Culture* (Yonkers: Hudson River Museum, 2009); Margaret Lundrigan, *Staten Island: Isle of the Bay* (Charles, S.C.: Arcadia, 2004); Richard M. Bayles, *History of Richmond County, Staten Island, New York* (New York: L. E. Preston & Co., 1887); Ira K. Morris, *Memorial History of Staten Island* (New Brighton, Staten Island: printed privately, 1900), 2, 275-77.

² Most of the evidence of this early occupation has been found in the area between Rossville and Tottenville.

³ The Native American “system of land tenure was that of occupancy for the needs of a group” and that those sales that the Europeans deemed outright transfers of property were to the Native Americans closer to leases or joint tenancy contracts where they still had rights to the property. Reginald Pelham Bolton, *New York City in Indian Possession*, 2d ed. (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1920; reprint 1975), 7, 14-15; Robert Steven Grumet, *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1981), 69, as cited in LPC, *Noho Historic District Extension Designation Report* (LP-2287), report prepared by Marianne S. Percival and Kathryn Horak (New York: City of New York, 2008), 6.

⁴ Phillip Papas, *That Ever Loyal Island: Staten Island and the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 19. Slave owners among the 18th century residents of Port Richmond included members of the Ryerrs, Mersereau, and Corsen families. See Richard Dickenson, “Extracts: Slavery in Wills, 1679-1786,” *Staten Island Museum Proceedings* 37, n. 1 (2005-06), 15-33.

⁵ This road led directly to Bergen, now Jersey City.

⁶ The north shore road also provided access to several other ferries on the Kill Van Kull and Arthur Kill, notably the ferry to Elizabeth, New Jersey, and the ferry at the foot of Morningstar Road, owned by Dutch Church members Joshua and John Mesereau. The road to Richmondtown (Port Richmond Avenue) was a primary route to the island’s governmental center and its inland farming community.

⁷ Papas, *Island*, 14.

⁸ This section on Port Richmond in the 19th and 20th centuries is based on Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Pantheon Books, reprint, 1982, originally published 1939), 620; *Holden's Staten Island: the History of Richmond County Revised Resource Manual*, ed. Richard Dickenson (Staten Island, New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2003); Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1930) 348; Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1995) 929, 1112-1118; Phillip Papas and Lori Weintrob, *Port Richmond* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Press, 2009); Preservation League of Staten Island, *Port Richmond Walking Tour*, brochure, [c.1995].

⁶ Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber Z, p. 409, 413. See "Map of Part of the Real Estate Belonging to David Mersereau, deceased," surveyed by John Mersereau, filed Apr. 9 1837, file map 18; "Map the Property of Peter N. Haughwout and Eder Haughwout at Port Richmond," surveyed by John Martineau, filed June 29, 1838, Richmond County, Office of the Register, file map 20.

¹⁰ This discussion of the development of the Haughwout parcel is based on the "Descriptive Sketch of Port Richmond," in *Stapleton, Tompkinsville, New Brighton, West New Brighton, Clifton, and Port Richmond: Their Representative Businessmen & Points of Interest* (New York: Mercantile Publishing Co, 1893), 78-80; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Public School 20 Annex Designation Report* (LP-1627), report prepared by Dr. Shirley Zavín and Nancy Goeschel (New York: City of New York, 1988); James Butler, *Map of Staten Island or Richmond County, New York* (New York: Mayer & Co, 1853).

¹¹ This was one of the first schools on Staten Island that was more than a one-room building. It was replaced by Public School 20 in 1891. A large annex designed by James Warriner Moulton was added to the building in 1897.

¹² Conveyances Liber 8, 277.

¹³ Orlando W. Buel (c. 1818-94) was born in New York State and settled on Staten Island in 1836, establishing a marble cutting business in Port Richmond. He died in 1894 and is buried in Fountain Cemetery. His son Horace E. Buel is listed in *Prominent Men of Staten Island* (New York: AY Hubbell, 1893).

¹⁴ Conveyances Liber 17, 1848. The conveyance was recorded in July 1848 without an exact date being given for the transfer. Civil War era tax assessments indicate that Abraham L. Merrell (1798-1888) resided in Bulls Head (United States Tax Assessment Lists, 1865, NARA series M603, NARA roll 39; Annual Lists, 1866, District 1, NARA series M603, NARA roll 40) in the 1860s. Comparison of census records with historic atlases also indicates that Merrell and his wife Eleanor and grandson Abram D. Decker lived on a farm in Bulls Head through 1880. Merrell was residing with Decker in Graniteville when he died in 1888. See United States Census, 1860, New York, Richmond County, Northfield, 342; New York State Census, 1875, Richmond County, Northfield, 2nd Election District, 15; United States Census, 1880, New York, Richmond County, Northfield, ED 305, 38.

¹⁵ United States Census, 1850, New York, Richmond County, Northfield, 323. This house was located next to the home of Daniel and Gertrude Smith at 23 Cottage Place (old 23 Cottage Place). Because the Smiths occupied their house from at least 1850 through the 1890s and a number of other residents remained on the block for long periods of time comparison of the census with historic atlases and beginning in 1880s permits us to tentatively identify the residents of No. 29. No. 29 Cottage Place is marked on Walling's 1859 Map where it is identified as "A Merrills."

¹⁶ United States Census, 1860, New York, Richmond County, Northfield, 277.

¹⁷ See "Charles Tranter," United States Census, 1850, New York, Richmond County, Northfield, 317; United States Census, 1880, New York, Richmond, Northfield, 1st Election District, ED 304, 34; United States Tax Assessment Lists, 1863, New York, District 1, Annual Lists, 1862-63, NARA series M603, NARA roll 38.

¹⁸ Conveyances, Liber 177, 405. Decker and his wife Elizabeth resided on Shore Road in Northfield according to United States Census, 1880, New York, Richmond, Northfield, 1st Election District, ED 304, 13.

¹⁹ United States Census, 1900, New York, Richmond County, Ward 3, ED 599, 16. See also United States Census, 1910, New York, Richmond County, Ward 3 ED 1304, 16B; New York State Census, 1915, Richmond, Ward 3AD 1, ED 15, 28.

²⁰ Conveyances Liber 482, 186.

²¹ Conveyances Liber 840, 175.

²² This discussion of the use of spring eaves in conjunction with the Greek Revival Style is adapted from the *Mary and David Burgher House Designation Report* (LP-2367), prepared by Tara Harrison (New York: City of New York, 2010), 4-6

²³ The buildings of Greece had become widely known in the late eighteenth century following the publication of archaeological surveys, the most influential being James Stuart and Nicolas Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens* of 1762. An increased desire for distinction from England after the War of 1812 and identification with and sympathy for the people of Greece during their own war for independence (1821-30) further emphasized the importance of Greek classicism. In addition to its idealistic roots, the widespread popularity of the style is attributed to the distribution of builders' guides and pattern books available in the early nineteenth century, including Asher Benjamin's *American Builder's Companion* (1806), as well as *Modern Builder's Guide* (1833) and *The Beauties of Modern Architecture* (1835) by Minard Lafever. Further contributing to its appeal, the Greek Revival style was very adaptable. It reached all levels of building, from monumental high-style to vernacular in civic, commercial and residential architecture. Found in all regions of the country, it was the dominant style of architecture in the United States from approximately 1820 to 1850 (later in some areas). See Alan Gowans, *Styles and Types of North American Architecture, Social Function and Cultural Expression* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 89; Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1944); W. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States 1800-1850* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002); McAlester; Massey and Maxwell, *House Styles in America* (New York: Penguin Studio, 1996); Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Lefferts-Laidlaw House Designation Report* (LP-2099), prepared by Gale Harris, (New York: City of New York, 2001); LPC, *Gillett-Tyler House Designation Report* (LP-2231), prepared by Tara Harrison (New York: City of New York, 2007).

²⁴ The institutional examples are the Main Building at the Seaman's Retreat (Abraham Maybie, 1834-37) and the main buildings at Sailors Snug Harbor, the Administration Building – Building C (1831-33, Minard Lafever) and flanking dormitories – Buildings B and D (1831-41, Minard Lafever). Among the residential examples are the nearby Caleb T. Ward House at 141 Nixon Avenue (c. 1835, Seth Geer) and Temple Row, a group of Greek Revival mansions which once extended along Richmond Terrace in New Brighton. The only survivor of these six buildings constructed by developer Thomas E. Davis is 404 Richmond Terrace (c. 1835). All of the examples are designated New York City Landmarks, except for 404 Richmond Terrace which is part of the St. George/New Brighton Historic District.

²⁵ Conveyances Liber 509, 193.

²⁶ New York City, Department of Buildings, Staten Island, Alteration permit 211-1920.

²⁷ United States Census, 1930, New York, Richmond County, Port Richmond, AD 2, ED 43-347, 8A.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of the building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 29 Cottage Place House has a special character, 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 their important qualities, the 29 Cottage Place House, a modest two-story Greek Revival frame cottage with later Craftsman details constructed around 1848 as a rental property for farmer Abraham L. Merrell, is one of the few surviving saltbox houses on Staten Island's North Shore and is a significant reminder of Staten Island's vernacular architectural traditions; that leased to tenants until 1918, its occupants included carpenters and boatmen who were likely employed in Port Richmond's thriving maritime industries; that Frederick Schmidt (Smith), who leased the house from around 1899 and whose family purchased the house in 1918, was employed in a nearby white lead works and that through its occupants the house provides a significant link to commercial and maritime history of this Staten Island community; that the 29 Cottage Place House is capped by an asymmetrical gabled roof with a short pitch in front and longer slope at the rear known as a saltbox roof in New England and a catslide roof in the South; that such roofs were a fairly common feature of colonial and early 19th-century houses but do not survive in great numbers on Staten Island and are becoming increasingly rare; that the house is also distinguished by the slight curve of the front roof slope, which is probably the remnant of a flared projecting spring eave, and by its simple but handsome Greek Revival entrance surround, which retains its original sidelights and transom; that altered in 1920, the house also displays aspects of the Craftsman Style in the treatment of its porch and windows; that despite some recent changes, 29 Cottage Place retains its original form and fenestration pattern and sufficient Greek Revival and Craftsman details to be a significant reminder of Port Richmond's and Staten Island's vernacular heritage a tangible and a visible link to the rich history of the Port Richmond community.

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 29 Cottage Place House, 29 Cottage Place, Staten Island, and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 1012, Lot 10 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Frederick Bland, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner,
Michael Goldblum, Elizabeth Ryan, Commissioners



29 Cottage Place House, 29 Cottage Place, Staten Island
 Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 1012, Lot 10
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee , 2011



29 Cottage Place House
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



29 Cottage Place House
Photo: New York City Department of Taxes, c. 1939



29 Cottage Place House
Photo: New York City Department of Finance., c. 1985



29 Cottage Place House
View from the southwest
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011



29 Cottage Place House
South façade
Photo: Gale Harris, 2011



29 Cottage Place House
Entrance
Photo: Gale Harris, 2011



29 COTTAGE PLACE HOUSE (LP-2447), 29 Cottage Place
 Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 1012, Lot 10

Designated: October 25, 2011