

LEFFERTS-LAIDLAW HOUSE, 136 Clinton Avenue (aka 134-138 Clinton Avenue) Borough of Brooklyn. Main house built c. 1836-40; southwest wing built c. 1835, moved to present site c. 1836-40; southeast wing built prior to 1855.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1887, Lot 84

On July 31, 2001, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Lefferts-Laidlaw 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 the law. Two witnesses, one appearing on behalf of the Historic Districts Council and the other speaking on behalf the Society for the Architecture of the City, testified in favor of the designation. No one spoke in opposition. The Commission has received three letters in support of the designation including a letter from Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol. The Landmarks Sub-Committee of Brooklyn Community Board 2 voted unanimously in support of the designation.

Summary

Built in three sections, the Lefferts-Laidlaw house is a rare surviving example of a freestanding, temple-fronted Greek Revival style structure in Brooklyn. It may be the only remaining temple-fronted Greek Revival style residence in Kings County. In form and decoration, this residence is typical of the designs popularized by the builders' guides of the period, exhibiting such distinctive characteristics as a temple front with a pedimented gable roof, columns, and corner pilasters. The Lefferts-Laidlaw House typified the villas that were erected in Brooklyn's early suburbs in the early-to-mid nineteenth century and is one of a handful of such buildings that survive today. The house retains much of its historic clapboard siding and decorative moldings. It was constructed during an expansive period of suburban development in the Wallabout area after the creation of the Brooklyn Navy Yard during the early nineteenth century. In the early 1840s this house was occupied by engineer Marshall Lefferts, who later achieved prominence as an inventor and as the commander of the Seventh Regiment during the Civil War. Other notable residents included A. Orville Millard, an attorney, judge, and civic leader, who owned the house from 1843 to 1854, and leather merchant William Mannheim, who owned the house from 1867 to 1881. The house was restored between the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is still used as a residence.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Development of the Wallabout Area¹

In 1624 a small group of Walloons (French-speaking Protestants from an area now in Belgium) settled around the westernmost inlet of Long Island's north shore which was named *Waal-bogt*, Wallon's Bay, by the Dutch. In 1637, Joris Jansen Rapalje sought to establish clear title to land by purchasing 337 acres on Wallabout Bay from the Canarsee. In 1640, another 400 acres was purchased by his son-in-law Hans Hansen Bergen. Peter and Jan Montfort were granted the land that would be the site of Clinton Avenue in 1641. It later passed to the descendants of Martin and Annetje Ryerszem (Ryerson) who settled in the Wallabout area in the late seventeenth century. The Wallabout area remained in the hands of a small number of inter-related families until the early nineteenth century. During the American Revolution, between 11,000 and 12,000 American prisoners of war died in the prison ships moored in Wallabout Bay and were buried along the shoreline.

Following the Revolution, a Queens County entrepreneur, John Jackson, purchased a large tract along the western shore of the Wallabout that encompassed a mill pond, a mill, and a residence. Taking advantage of an existing dock on the property, Jackson together with his brothers, Treadwell and Samuel, built a small shipyard and about ten houses for their workers. In 1801, Jackson sold forty acres of his Wallabout property to the United States government for use as a navy yard. The Commandant's Quarters and several brick storehouses and office buildings were constructed in 1805-06. The War of 1812 and the incorporation of Brooklyn Village in 1816 spurred the rapid growth of the yard. In 1824 the Federal government purchased an additional thirty-five acres on Wallabout Bay for a Naval Hospital and in 1848 acquired the land between its two earlier purchases. This third parcel was bounded on the north by the low water mark and on the south by Flushing Avenue.

This period of Navy Yard growth was paralleled by the development of surrounding neighborhoods including the area south of the yard. In 1833 John Spader (a descendant of the Ryersons) and Manhattan auctioneer George W. Pine entered into an agreement to develop Spader's farm, which extended east to west between the current Vanderbilt and Waverly Avenues and from the river to Jamaica Turnpike to the south. Pine and Spader had Clinton Avenue (named for Dewitt Clinton) laid out at the center of the tract. It was planned as a wide tree-lined boulevard. They intended to attract wealthy residents wishing to build large

suburban villas. Clinton Avenue was an ideal location for suburban residences since it was reasonably close to the Fulton Ferry and downtown Brooklyn. On the other hand, it was far enough from the city to assure a quiet lifestyle. In addition Clinton Avenue was located on the crest of a hill which provided excellent views of the East River and Manhattan. This location was also regarded as particularly healthy and therefore desirable because at the time it was believed that germs bred in low-lying swamps.

By the late 1830s and 1840s Clinton Avenue was lined with freestanding villas, many built of wood.² The houses were set back from the street and surrounded by large lawns. The lots extended to the rear streets (Vanderbilt and Waverly Avenues) on which carriage houses were built. These large plots were usually landscaped and planted with gardens. The elegance of the mansions and beauty of the gardens gave the street a character that was unique in Brooklyn and made it one of the most fashionable in the city. The architecturally distinguished Lefferts-Laidlaw House is an important survivor from this initial development of the Wallabout-Clinton Hill area as a suburban neighborhood.

The Lefferts-Laidlaw House: Construction and Pre-Civil War Occupants

The Lefferts-Laidlaw house site was originally part of a 100-foot-wide by 246-foot-deep tract on the west side of Clinton Avenue that Manhattan merchant Henry Ryer purchased from George Washington Pine in 1834.³ Ryer divided his property into four twenty-five-foot-wide lots. In May 1835, Ryer sold the lot of present-day 136 Clinton Avenue to Richard H. White, a carver, who had a business on Fulton Street in Brooklyn.⁴ White must have immediately built a house on the property since he was listed as living on Clinton Avenue near Myrtle Avenue in the Brooklyn City directories for the years 1835-36 and 1836-37. In December 1835 Henry Ryer sold the three remaining lots to William T. Ryer, for \$5,000.⁵ Six months later, in May 1836, William Ryer sold the twenty-five-foot-wide lot at 134 Clinton Avenue to Brooklyn merchant Rem Lefferts for \$1,200.⁶ In July 1836, Henry Ryer repurchased the two lots at 138 and 140 Clinton Avenue, paying \$4,500 for the properties.⁷ The difference in purchase price between the properties suggests that a house had been erected at 138-40 Clinton Avenue while No. 134 remained vacant.

Just a month prior to buying No. 134, Rem Lefferts and his brother-in-law John Laidlaw purchased the

Richard White house (No. 136), paying \$1,300 and assuming \$1,500 in mortgages.⁸ It appears that Lefferts and Laidlaw had White's small one-and-one-half story (now two-story) house with one-story kitchen wing moved to the rear of the lot. There it became part of the service wing for a free-standing two-story Greek Revival-style temple-fronted villa that Rem Lefferts erected at No. 134. While it is not certain when the main portion of the house was built, it probably was erected prior to May 1840 when Rem Lefferts' sister-in-law Amelia Lefferts was listed as living next door to Henry Ryer on Clinton Avenue in the Brooklyn directory. The one-story, two-room-deep wing that extended between the main portion of the house and the rear kitchen wing may have also been constructed c. 1836-40; it definitely was standing by 1855 when it was represented on the Perris Atlas.

Amelia Ann Cozine Lefferts (1782-1878) was the daughter of Margaret Roosevelt Cozine and John Cozine, a New York City attorney who was appointed a judge of the New York State Supreme shortly before his death in 1796.⁹ In 1814 she married Leffert Lefferts, Jr. (1791-1868), the eldest of the ten children of Sarah Cowenhoven Lefferts (1775-1856) and John L. Lefferts (1763-1812), a farmer who owned considerable property in Kings and Queens Counties including an eighty-three acre homestead at Bedford Corners (present-day Bedford-Stuyvesant). Leffert and Amelia had five children, born between 1815 and 1825, but by the late 1830s they had separated and Amelia was living at Bedford Corners.¹⁰

Amelia Lefferts occupied the Lefferts-Laidlaw House for three years with her three unmarried children,¹¹ including her son Marshall. Born in Brooklyn, Marshall Lefferts (1821-1876) attended public elementary school.¹² At fifteen he worked briefly as a clerk in a hardware store and then found employment on the staff of engineer John S. Stoddard. According to the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Stoddard was then engaged in a survey of Brooklyn and Marshall Lefferts "soon became assistant engineer, and in recognition of the value of his services Marshall Street was named in his honor."¹³ After three years with Stoddard, Lefferts was hired by David Bates Douglass to assist in surveying and laying out Greenwood Cemetery (c. 1838-39). About the time his family moved to this house, he took a job with the importing firm, Morewood & Co, which dealt extensively in zinc wire and other materials used for telegraph lines. In later years, after he moved from the house, Marshall Lefferts achieved prominence as an engineer and businessman. He played a leading role in the development of the telegraph industry in this

country, working at various times for the American Telegraph Company (parent of AT&T), Western Union, and for his own firms.¹⁴ In the early 1850s, he formed the firm of Marshall Lefferts & Brother with his brother, John A. Lefferts, which specialized in the manufacture of galvanized iron and iron roofing materials and telegraph and other wires.¹⁵ Lefferts was responsible for a number of inventions which aided in perfecting the telegraph and the process for galvanizing iron. He also attained prominence as a soldier. In 1851, he joined the Seventh Regiment of the New York State National Guard as a private; he became its Lieutenant-Colonel the following year, and its Colonel in 1859. When the Civil War broke out he led the regiment in the defense of Washington, D.C. Promoted to the rank of general, he served as military governor of Frederick, Maryland; he also was in command of the Seventh Regiment when it helped quell the Draft Riots in New York in 1863.

In November 1843, Rem Lefferts¹⁶ sold the property to his brother-in-law Judge A. Orville Millard (1809-?), husband of Sarah Lefferts Millard (1805-1849). A native of Ulster County, A. Orville Millard moved to New York City in 1830 to study law.¹⁷ He was admitted to the bar in 1833 and opened an office on Nassau Street in New York City. He married Sarah Lefferts in 1839 and settled in Bedford Corners near her relatives. He served for several years as one of the supervisors of Brooklyn and was a founding member of the Board of Education. In 1843, he was appointed Master of the Court of Chancery, which dealt with equity matters such as divorces, foreclosures, and the dissolution of partnerships. He served in that capacity until the state courts were reorganized in 1847. He then resumed his law practice opening an office on Wall Street in Manhattan. In 1849, Sarah Millard died following the birth of her sixth child. Sometime during 1850, A. Orville Millard ceased his practice and seems to have left the New York area. In 1853, he returned to this house, which he occupied with his family until it was purchased by real estate investor Robert Bage in April 1854.¹⁸ Millard then moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant where he was involved in real estate development.

Bage kept the house for only a month, selling it in May 1854 to Frances Peed, wife of Charles N. Peed, a partner in his real estate firm.¹⁹ Bage retained ownership of the western part of the lot facing Vanderbilt Avenue, which was later sold to a developer. Born in Brooklyn in 1830, Charles Peed attended public schools and began working at age fourteen in the offices of the *Brooklyn Daily Advertiser*. He worked for the paper for eight years,

“serving in all branches of the printer’s trade”²⁰and as a police and city reporter before taking charge of the financial affairs of the paper as its cashier and bookkeeper. Following the death of the paper’s senior owner and editor, he became a partner in the real estate firm of Bage & Sothen. He served briefly as Commissioner of Deeds & Conveyances for Kings County during 1854, then in 1855 formed the firm of Peed & Cole, Auctioneers, which dealt in real estate and general goods. He remained in the auction business until 1872, then purchased an interest in the Pierrepont House Hotel in downtown Brooklyn, and later took over proprietorship of the Mansion House.

The Peeds occupied No. 136 Clinton Avenue for about two-and-one-half years selling the house to Selina and Jesse Cunningham in December 1857. The house was occupied by lessees through the Civil War years, a time of rapid growth at the Brooklyn Navy Yard when there was enormous demand for housing in the Wallabout neighborhood.

The Design of the Lefferts-Laidlaw House

The Lefferts-Laidlaw House is a rare surviving example of a freestanding, temple-fronted Greek Revival building in Brooklyn and may be the only remaining temple-fronted Greek Revival residence in Kings County. The Greek Revival style, which “dominated American architecture from the late 1820s to the late 1840s.”²¹ grew out of a increasing recognition of the importance of ancient Greece as a source of western culture during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Archaeological discoveries in Southern Italy and Greece and the publication of measured architectural drawings of ancient Greek buildings, notably Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens*, also sparked interest in Greek architecture. Americans were especially receptive to the style due to their identification with Greece as the cradle of liberty and sympathy with the Greek war for independence (1821-30).

The first Greek Revival building in the United States is generally thought to have been William Strickland’s Second Bank of the United States (1818) in Philadelphia. Modeled after the drawings of the restored facade of the Parthenon in the *Antiquities of Athens*, the bank was treated as an isolated Doric temple. Faced in marble, it employed an order of columns and entablature that adhered closely to the proportions and details of its Greek model. As architectural historian William Pierson has observed that the temple form soon was established as “the primary motif of the Greek Revival.”²²

*At the idealistic level the temple lived for the Americans as a noble object, a building form which was expressive of those qualities, both real and imagined, which they admired in ancient Greece and which they longed to achieve themselves.*²³

Whenever possible a temple-form building was set in isolation so that it “stood apart from its environment as an object of large and simple beauty, poised, rhythmic, and absolute.”²⁴ The expressive dignity of the temple form made it especially appropriate for government and public buildings.²⁵ While the peripteral temple, with a single row of columns on all four sides of the building, was the ideal, it was too expensive and too inflexible in plan for most uses. Many buildings took the form of a prostyle temple with a portico of columns at the front of the building. In some cases a pilaster order was substituted for columns to reduce costs. In others a small portico or colonnade of Greek orders was used as a focal point of a facade. Rowhouses and modest buildings might have door and window surrounds and/or a cornice incorporating Greek motifs. These elements were made accessible to carpenters and builders through nationally-circulated journals and architectural handbooks such as Asher Benjamin’s *American Builder’s Companion* (6th edition, 1827) and Minard Lafever’s *Modern Builders’ Guide* (1833) and *The Beauties of Modern Architecture* (1835), which contained designs adapted from such sources as Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens*.²⁶

In Brooklyn notable examples of Greek Revival public buildings included Brooklyn City Hall, now Brooklyn Borough Hall (begun 1836, constructed 1845-48, a designated New York City Landmark), a free-standing building featuring a hexastyle gabled portico of giant Ionic columns, and the United States Marine Hospital, later U.S. Naval Hospital at the Brooklyn Navy Yard (1830-38, wings 1840, c. 1862, Martin E. Thompson, a designated New York City Landmark), which has a recessed porch articulated by eight giant classical stone piers. Brooklyn also boasted a number of temple-form religious buildings including the First Reformed Dutch Church (1834-35, Minard Lafever, destroyed 1886) and the First Free Congregational Church, later the Bridge Street African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church, now Polytechnic Institute, Wunsch Hall (1846-47, a designated New York City Landmark). The Greek Revival style was widely used for rowhouses in the borough’s older neighborhoods, such as Brooklyn Heights and Cobble Hill and many of these houses

survive today. There were also a number of freestanding Greek Revival mansions, farmhouses, townhouses, and villas (elegant free-standing suburban and rural residences set within picturesquely landscaped grounds).²⁷ Among the temple-fronted houses were Arlington House (c. 1839, demolished), the mansion of James Bennett, Esq., located about a block from the Lefferts-Laidlaw House, which had temple fronts on three of its facades and the prostyle temple-fronted Matthew Clarkson Jr. mansion at Flatbush and Church Avenues (c. 1835, demolished). The Lefferts-Laidlaw house was also an example of a prostyle temple-front house and today it is probably the only remaining free-standing temple-fronted residence in the borough. Smaller in scale than Clarkson and Bennett mansions, the Lefferts-Laidlaw house typified the villas that were erected in Brooklyn's early suburbs in the 1830s and 1840s and were occupied by merchants and professionals. Because Greek Revival villas tended to be set on relatively generous plots, they have largely been replaced by later structures and the Lefferts-Laidlaw house is one of the handful of such buildings that survive today in Brooklyn.²⁸

Like many Greek Revival mansions the Lefferts-Laidlaw House originally had an elaborate entrance surround. This featured a shouldered architrave, rosettes, palmettes, and scrolled ornaments and was probably inspired by the designs in Minard Lafever's *Modern Builders' Guide* and *The Beauties of Modern Architecture*. The fluted columns capped by a heavy Corinthian order may also have been based on an illustration in Lafever's *Modern Builders' Guide*. Interestingly, historic photographs reveal that the demolished Henry Ryer house next door had a similar, perhaps identical, entrance and employed the same column capitals. This suggests that both houses may have been erected by the same builder or may even have been designed by the same architect.²⁹

The Lefferts-Laidlaw House eventually lost its original columns and the decorations were stripped from the shouldered entrance surround when brick-textured cladding was applied to the first story of the facade, probably in the 1950s. Nevertheless, it retained its original temple form. Careful restoration in the late 1970s uncovered the house's original siding and decorative detailing. Today, the house survives as a well-preserved and exceptionally rare reminder of Brooklyn's Greek Revival heritage.

Later History of the House

In 1866, this house was purchased by James Cosgrove, a cooper, who operated a business on Burling Slip in Manhattan. He and his family occupied

the house for only a year prior to his selling it to William Mannheim (1820-?), a German immigrant who owned a tool and hardware business on Mott Street in Manhattan. The Mannheim family occupied this house until 1881. At the time, German-emigrés made up a majority of the population of nearby Williamsburg and Bushwick, the later known familiarly as "Dutchtown," from a mispronunciation of *Deutsch*.

In 1881, following her husband's death, Louise Mannheim sold the house to Mary J. Wilson (1821-?), a widow with three adult sons and a teenage daughter who lived with her. Alexander, the eldest son, earned his living as a clerk in a dry goods business and later as a real estate broker. His brother Frank was employed as a bookkeeper in a dry goods firm and later as a clerk at a newspaper. His brother John was also a bookkeeper at a dry goods firm and his sister Helen remained at home to help with the housekeeping. The Wilsons occupied the house for over forty years. Eventually the house passed to Frank W. Wilson and was divided into a two-family residence by 1935. In 1948, the executors of Frank Wilson's estate sold the building to Anthony and Yolanda Ingenito. They occupied one of the apartments for about twelve years, selling the building to Ruth Sojak in 1960.

Photographs show that the house retained its historic appearance through the mid-1930s. Probably during the 1940s or 1950s the original columns were removed and replaced with square pillars. The building's facades were faced with asphalt shingles and a brick-faced synthetic siding was applied to the main facade at the first story. The southern end of the building's historic lot was given over to a driveway that was shared with 140 Clinton Avenue.

Between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the house was restored by owners Allen Handelman and Richard Arnow. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

Description

The Lefferts-Laidlaw House is located on a rectangular mid-block lot which extends fifty-two feet along Clinton Avenue and is 120 feet deep. The ground slopes to the west and the house is set back about thirty feet from the street and about five feet above street grade. The front yard is bordered by a masonry retaining walls topped by metal fences. The low east wall along Clinton Avenue is faced with stucco. It supports a non-historic iron picket fence which has two gates. These open onto small areaways that are bordered by non-historic masonry retaining walls. The areaways are paved with concrete. Non-historic concrete steps lead to a historic semicircular path

composed of bluestone pavers. On the north side of the yard, the retaining wall and iron picket fence with lead fleur-de-lis caps are historic. On the south side of the yard, the concrete wall with brick coping and chain link fence are non-historic. The non-historic gravel driveway to the south is shared with the house at 142 Clinton Avenue and lies partially on both properties.

The Greek-Revival-style frame house was restored in the late 1970s. The house is irregular in plan and is composed of three distinct elements – the gable-roofed temple-fronted two-story main house, the one-story flat-roofed southeast wing, and the two-story rear (southwest) wing. The main house and southeast wing rest on a rubble fieldstone foundation. The foundation of the rear wing is also stone. The upper walls of all three sections are faced with mid-nineteenth-century wood clapboards. Many of the window surrounds appear to be original but much of the window sash has been replaced.

Main House: The facade of the main portion of the house is three bays wide and features a gabled portico that extends about eight feet in front of the facade wall. The porch is approached on its south corner by a wood staircase. The stairs are flanked by wood pedestals that are articulated with recessed panels. The staircase and plinths date from the late 1970s-early 1980s but their design is based on historic photographs of the house from c. 1900. The wood porch floor and giant Corinthian columns also date from the late 1970s-early 1980s. The columns support an Ionic entablature and a pediment that retain their original molded trim. The tympanum area of the pediment is faced with historic wood clapboards which are laid flush. The round metal louvered window at the center of the tympanum is non-historic. The facade wall is faced with lapped clapboards and framed by corner boards that are slightly tapered to suggest pilasters with classical entasis. A non-historic mailbox has been installed on the south pilaster adjacent to the front door. The entrance has a cast-stone surround ornamented with rosettes; it was installed in the 1970s-1980s to replicate the original surround shown in historic photographs. The paneled wood door with six-light window probably was installed in the late 1930s or 1940s. The first-story windows have non-historic wood surrounds and contain non-historic six-over-nine wood sash. The second-story windows are partially hidden by the porch entablature. The windows retain their original heavy wood surrounds but have non-historic six-over-six wood sash. The windows on both stories were installed as part of the 1970s restoration and were believed to replicate original conditions. The louvered window shutters are non-historic but replace shutters seen in

historic photographs of the house. The historic light fixture that is suspended from the porch ceiling near the main entrance was installed during the restoration and is not original to the house.

Used as a fireplace wall, the north elevation is faced with lapped clapboards set off by tapered corner boards. There is a non-historic wood trellis at the eastern corner of the first story. At the western end of the facade the one-story shed-roofed porch has been enclosed and faced with clapboard siding. The main portion of the house is capped by its original molded wood frieze and cornice, which remain largely intact.

The south elevation of the main part of the house is largely concealed by the one-story south-east wing. The wall is also sided with clapboards, framed by corner boards, and capped by wide entablature. The frieze is pierced by two horizontal attic windows. The east opening contains non-historic wood-framed inward-opening casements. The west opening has a pair of non-historic sliding single-light windows.

The gabled roof of the house is covered with non-historic asphalt shingles. The two chimneys near the north wall were significantly repaired or rebuilt when the house was restored. There is a metal television antenna at the center of the roof.

Southeast wing: The one-story flat-roofed south-east wing rests on a rubble foundation. A historic photograph of the house shows that the basement was originally lit by at least one window located on the facade near the main portion of the house but at present the lower of the wall is hidden by vegetation. The front wall of the wing is covered with narrow flush-laid clapboards, the south wall is sheathed in wider lapped clapboards. The front wall is articulated by a pair of simple molded windows containing historic six-over-six wood sash. A pair of windows with historic six-over-six wood sash are located at the western corner of the south facade. The facades are capped by a historic wood frieze but the cornice and block modillions were installed in the 1970s. A non-historic light fixture has been installed at the center of the south facade. The brick chimney at the center of the roof was rebuilt in the 1970s.

Southwest (rear) wing: The rear wing is comprised of two elements: the two-story flat-roofed former Richard White house, which serves as the kitchen wing for the main house and a small two-story hyphen with a slightly sloping shed roof. The south wall of the hyphen is faced with lapped clapboard siding. Only the second story is visible from the street. It is lit by a historic multipane wood window. The small section of east wall visible above the gabled roof of the main house is covered with synthetic roofing material. With

the exception of the wood corner boards the kitchen wing has been largely refaced. The east wall is sheathed with lapped aluminum siding that conceals a second floor window visible in a c. 1900 photograph of the house. The south wall is covered with wood shingles. At the second story there is a historic wood framed window with one-over-one wood replacement sash. A one-story shed-roofed porch extension conceals most of the first story. It is sheathed in plywood that has been partially covered with aluminum siding and is lit by a non-historic single-light window.

Historic elements on this wing include the narrow beveled corner post at the junction of east and south walls, the wide corner post treated as a simple pilaster at the junction of the south and west walls and the wood fascia and molded cornice which cap the wing. The cornice is partially concealed by aluminum flashing.

Report prepared by
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Notes

1. This section on the early development of Wallabout is based on John A. Strong, *The Algonquain Peoples of Long Island from the Earliest Times to 1700* (Interlaken, NY: Books, 1997), 152, 163-165; Joan Geismar and Stephen Oberon, *Stage 1-A Cultural Resources Documentary Study and Assessment of Potential Impact, Proposed Navy Yard Cogeneration Facility*, prepared for Blasland and Bouck Engineers, PC, 1993 (on file with Landmarks Preservation Commission Environmental Review Department), 15-26; United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Lefferts-Laidlaw House, prepared by Merrill Hesch, 1985; Landmarks Preservation Commission [LPC], Brooklyn Survey Vanderbilt Avenue Proposed Historic District, 1977, np ; LPC, *Vinegar Hill Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1952), prepared by Donald Presa (New York: City of New York, 1997), 3-5; LPC, *Clinton Hill Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2017)(New York: City of New York, 1981), 3-4; Henry W. Stiles, *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, New York, from 1683-1834*, 2 vols. (New York: W.W. Munsell & Co, 1884) , v. 1, 145; Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstone, The New York Row House, 1783-1929* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 217-19.
2. Other villas were scattered about the area.
3. Kings County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 42, p. 88; Liber Mortgages, Liber 45, p. 430. For the development map of the Spader property see Conveyance Liber 38, p.115.
4. Conveyance Liber 50, p. 285.
5. Conveyance Liber 58, p. 364.
6. Conveyance Liber 60, p. 405.
7. Conveyance Liber 62, p. 376.
8. Conveyance Liber 59, p. 6.
9. This biographical section on Amelia Cozine Lefferts and Leffert Lefferts is based on material found in the Lefferts Papers, boxes marked Marshall Lefferts, misc. papers, and Lefferts Genealogy in the New York Historical Society [NYHS], Manuscript Dept; Mary Ann McKesson, Genealogical Scrapbook, NYHS, library; Teunis Bergen, *Genealogy of the Lefferts Family* (Brooklyn, printed privately, 1878); New York

State, Supreme Court, *The North Farm of Leffert Lefferts; Proceedings in Partition*, (Brooklyn: New York State, 1880).

10. Leffert lost his share of his parents estate when he failed to repay money he had borrowed to set himself up in business. In 1848 he assigned the income he received from the estate of his uncle Nicholas Cowenhoven for Amelia's support but during the late 1830s and early 1840s it seems probable that she was receiving financial assistance from her husband's family. Rem Lefferts, a childless stockbroker and real estate investor, whose personal wealth was listed at \$150,000 in *The Wealthy Men and Women of Brooklyn and Williamsburgh* of 1847, would have been amply able to provide such help.
11. United States, Bureau of the Census, Census of 1840, Kings County, p.742.
12. This biography of Marshall Lefferts is based on *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone *et al.* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), v. 6, 140-41; *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, v. 10, 243; Jeffrey I. Richman, *Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery* (Brooklyn: Greenwood Cemetery, 1998), 91-92; Margot Gayle and Carol Gayle, *Cast Iron Architecture in America: The Significance of James Bogardus* (New York: Norton & Co., 1998), 134, 154-155, 188, 190, 192.
13. *Dictionary of American Biography*, v. 6, 140.
14. In 1849 Marshall Lefferts organized and became president of the New York, New England & New York State Telegraph Company which merged with the Morse interests in the early 1850s. He returned to the telegraph business in 1861 as executive manager of the newly formed American Telegraph Company and during the late 1860s headed the commercial news division of Western Union. In 1869, he assumed the presidency of the Gold and Stock Telegraph Company, serving in that capacity until his death in 1876.
15. In 1853 Marshall Lefferts and Brother supplied the iron roof for the former Branch Bank of the United States Building on Wall Street which was being converted to the Federal Assay Office. In 1855, Marshall Lefferts and cast-iron pioneer James Bogardus, who had also been involved in the Assay Office project, collaborated on a plan for the cast iron Tompkins Market and Seventh Regiment Armory Building at Third Avenue at East 6th Street in Manhattan (constructed 1857-60; demolished). On the Assay Office and Seventh Regiment projects see Margot and Carol Gayle, 132-134, 142, 151-155, 188-192. *Architectural Elements: The Technological Revolution*, ed. Diana S. Waite (Princeton: The Pyne Press, 1973), has a biographical sketch of Lefferts and reproduces several pages from the Lefferts brother's 1854 catalog of products.
16. Rem Lefferts had bought out John Laidlaw's half interest in the lot at 136 Clinton in November 1840. See Conveyance Liber 96, p. 234.
17. Conveyance Liber 115, p.150. This biographical sketch of Millard is based on Stiles, v. 2, 1297; and New York City and Brooklyn directories, 1839-55.
18. Conveyance Liber 357, p.307.
19. Conveyance Liber 381, p. 467. This section on Charles N. Peed is based on Stiles, v. 1360-1361; *The Eagle & Brooklyn*, 978.
20. *The Eagle & Brooklyn*, 978.
21. Charles Lockwood, *Bricks & Brownstone* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 55. For a discussion of the Greek Revival style see *ibid*, 55-97; William H. Pierson, Jr. *American Buildings and Their Architects*, v. 1, *The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1976), 430-432;

Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (1944; Rpt. New York: Dover, 1964); Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 178-195; Robert K. Sutton, *Americans Interpret the Parthenon*; Morrison H. Heckscher, "Building the Empire City: Architects and Architecture," in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861* (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 169-183.

22. Pierson, 436.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Notable examples include the United States Customs House in New York City, (now Federal Hall National Memorial) (1833-42, Town & Davis, Samuel Thompson, William Ross and John Frazee, a designated New York City Landmark), Sailors' Snug Harbor Administration Building on Staten Island (1831-33, Minard Lafever, a designated New York City Landmark), and Founder's Hall at Girard College in Philadelphia (1833-47, Thomas U. Walter).
26. On the influence of architectural handbooks see Sutton 51-62; Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Winterthur Portfolio* 19 n. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 1984), 128-150; Sally Ann McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) also examines the impact of the building plans and designs published in the agricultural journals of the period.
27. Villas were considered particularly appropriate for sites along a waterfront or on a hill. For a discussion of this building type and its association with early suburban development see Pierson, 296-298; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Riverdale Historic District Report* (LP-1663) (New York: City of New York, 1990), 11-14.
28. These include the Bennet-Farrell-Feldmann House at 119 95th Street in Bay Ridge, a frame house with one-story columned portico, built c. 1847, that originally overlooked New York Harbor from Shore Road; the John Rankin House, a handsome brick Greek Revival style villa, built c. 1840, when the area known as Carroll Gardens was still largely rural, and the Joseph Steele House, a frame house, at 200 Lafayette Avenue in Clinton Hill, incorporating Greek Revival and Italianate style elements, built c. 1850. The Bennet-Farrell-Feldmann, Rankin, and Steele houses are designated New York City Landmarks. The Rankin house is within the Carroll Gardens Historic District; the Steele house is within the Clinton Hill Historic District.
29. While probably not a widespread practice, there is evidence that some early nineteenth century developers supplied designs to purchasers of vacant lots. This practice was usually associated with elite urban developments such as the town house row (1832-33) on Washington Square North between Fifth Avenue and University Places (now a part of the Greenwich Village Historic District) and the row of thirteen private stables originally extending from 122 to 144 West 18th Street, built in 1864-66, which were erected by individual owners employing a common design. (Nine of the stables survive, the six most intact having been designated New York City Landmarks.)

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Lefferts-Laidlaw House, built between c. 1835 and c. 1840, may be the only remaining temple-fronted Greek Revival style residence in Kings County; that it is a rare surviving example of a freestanding, temple-fronted Greek Revival style structure in Brooklyn; that in form and decoration, this residence is typical of the designs popularized by the builders' guides of the period, exhibiting such distinctive characteristics as a temple front with a pedimented gable roof, columns, and corner pilasters; that it typifies the villas that were erected in Brooklyn's early suburbs in the 1830s and 1840s and is one of a handful of such buildings that survive today; that the house retains most of its historic clapboard siding and decorative moldings; that it was constructed during an expansive period of suburban development in the Wallabout area after the creation of the Brooklyn Navy Yard during the early nineteenth century; that in the early 1840s this house was occupied by engineer Marshall Lefferts, who later achieved prominence as an inventor and as the commander of the Seventh Regiment during the Civil War; that the house was restored in the late 1970s-early 1980s and is still used as a residence; and that the Lefferts-Laidlaw House survives today as a well-preserved and exceptionally rare reminder of Brooklyn's Greek Revival architectural heritage.

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 Lefferts-Laidlaw House 136 Clinton Avenue, Brooklyn and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1887, Lot 84 as its Landmark Site.

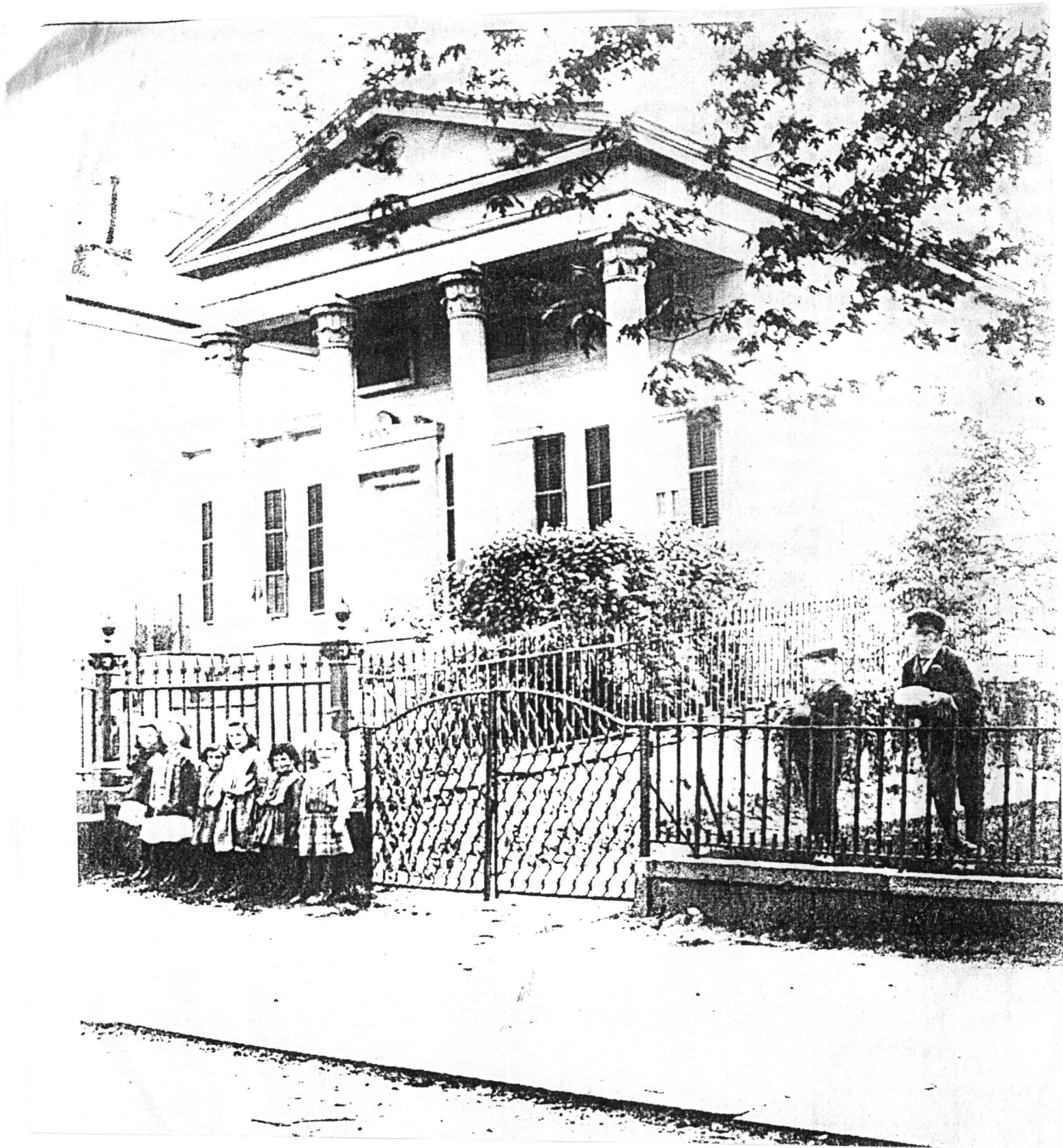


Lefferts-Laidlaw House

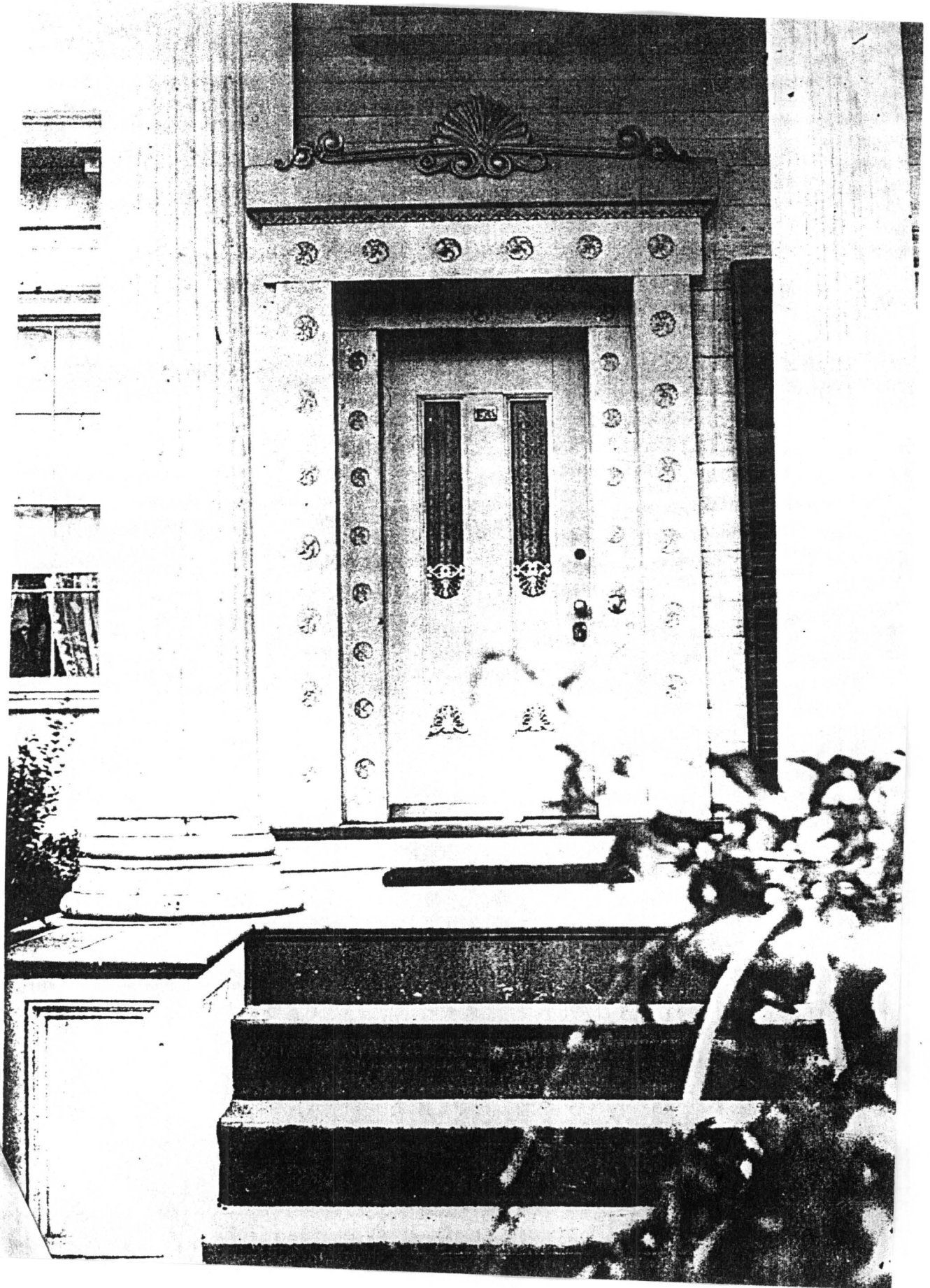
136 Clinton Avenue (aka 134-138 Clinton Avenue), Brooklyn

Main house built c. 1836-40; southwest wing built c. 1835, moved to present site c. 1836-40; southeast wing built prior to 1855

Photo: Carl Forster



Historic photograph of the Lefferts-Laidlaw House, c. 1900
Photo source: Library of Congress



Historic photograph of the entrance, c. 1900
Photo source: Library of Congress



A. O. Millard



Marshall Lefferts



Chas. N. Peed

Top Right: Marshall Lefferts who lived in the house from c. 1840 to 1843
Top Left: A. Orville Millard who owned the house from 1843 to 1854
Bottom Right: Charles N. Peed who owned the house from 1854 to 1857



The temple-fronted portico of the Lefferts-Laidlaw House
Photo: Carl Forster



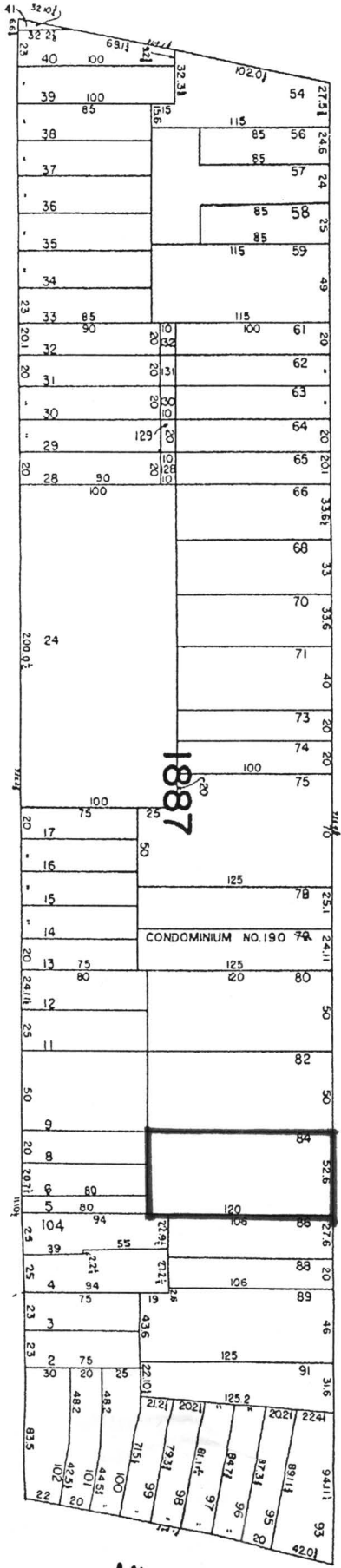
Details of the historic siding and moldings on the main portion of the house
Photos: Carl Forster



Top: View from the southeast
Bottom: Detail of the southwest and southeast wings
Photos: Carl Forster

VANDERBILT

AVE.

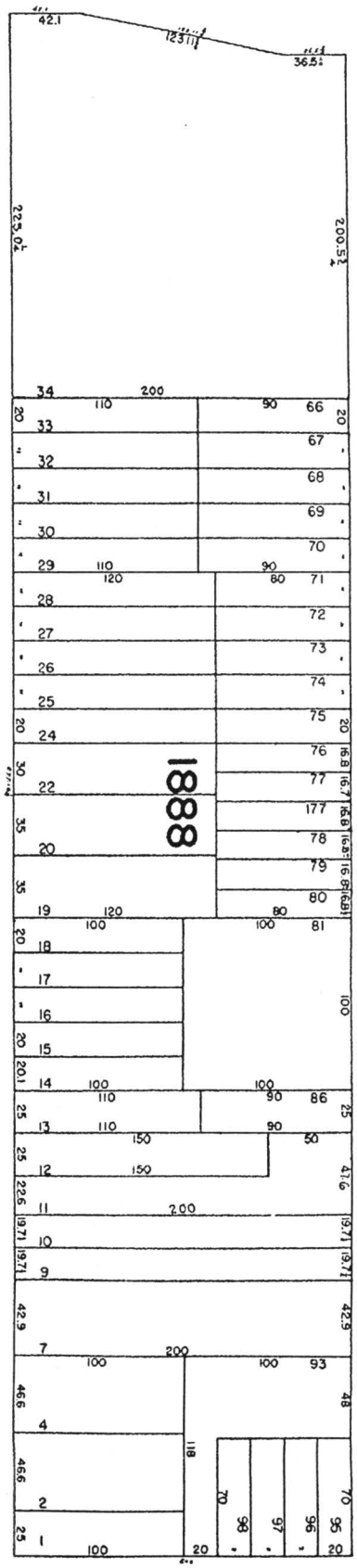


MYRTLE

AVE.

CLINTON

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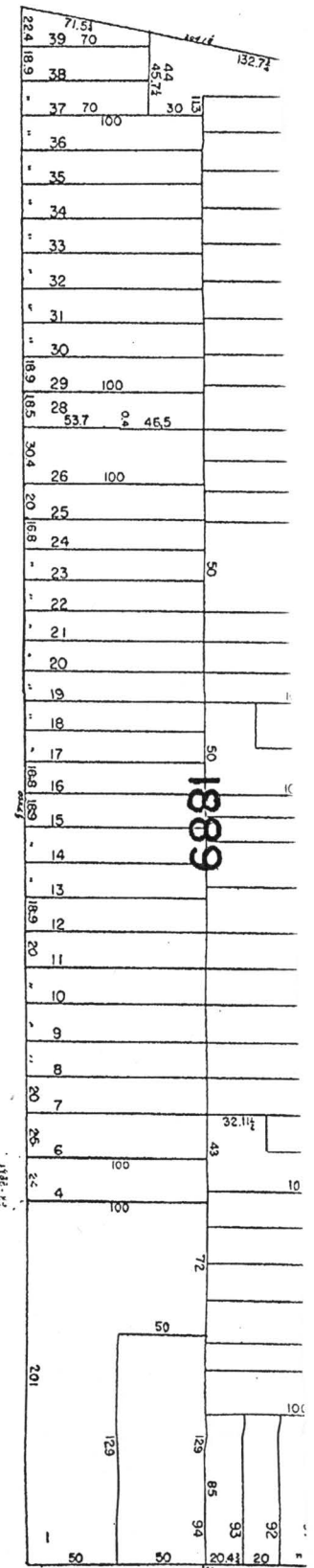


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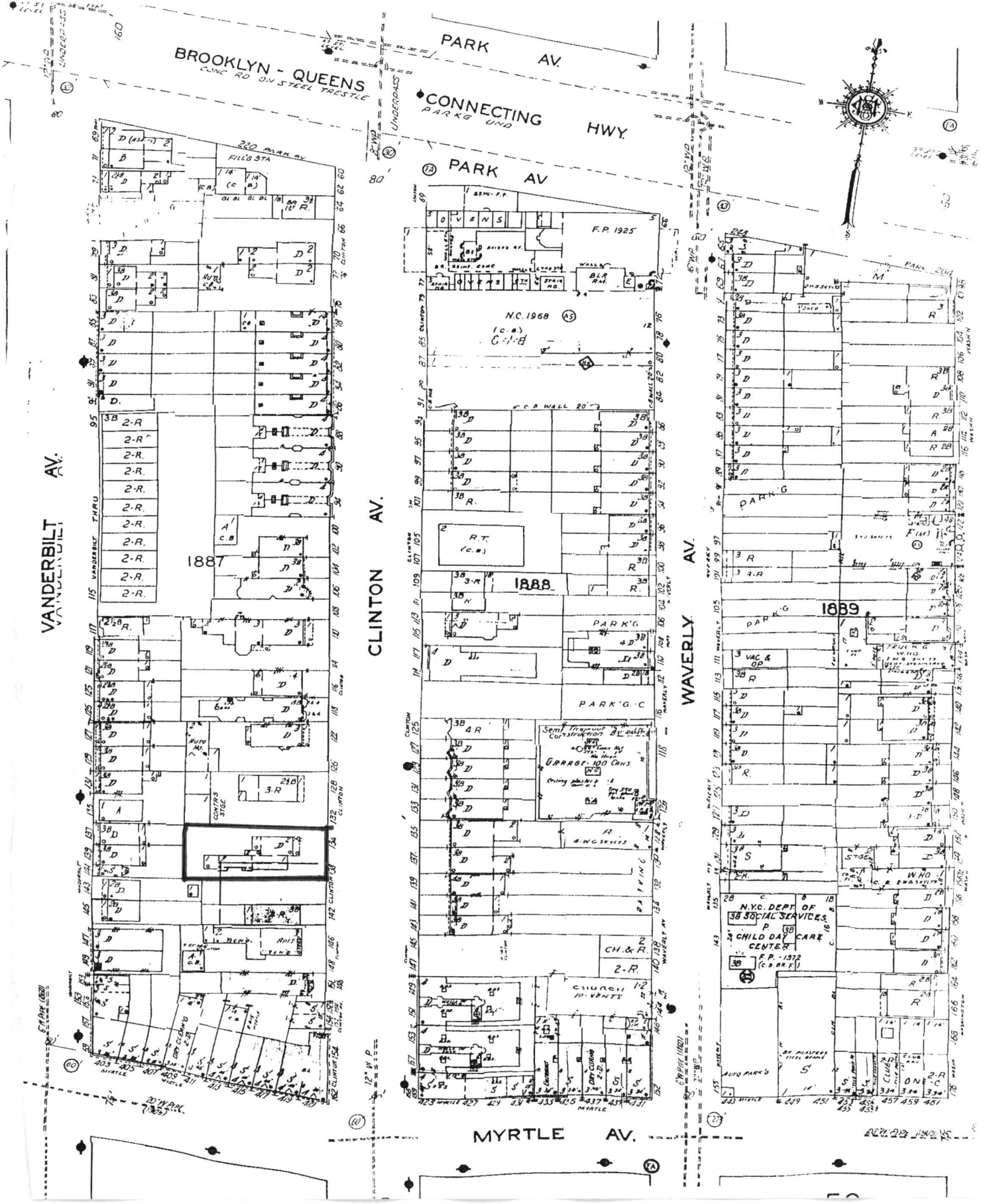


WAVERLY

AVE.



Lefferts-Laidlaw House
 136 Clinton Avenue (aka 134-138 Clinton Avenue), Brooklyn
 Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1887, Lot 84
 Source: Sanborn Building & Property Atlas, 1999



Lefferts-Laidlaw House
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