



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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News Release
April 12, 2005

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION DESIGNATES AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK IN STATEN ISLAND

“Despite the recent removal of some historic elements, the Bedell House still retains the proportions and many significant details of a Second Empire-style building,” said Robert B. Tierney, Chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. *“It is important that the Commission has taken this step to designate this landmark in Tottenville.”*

James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island

Constructed between 1869 and 1874, the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House is a fine example of a free-standing Second-Empire style frame residence, and until it was altered in March 2005 in an attempt to thwart landmark designation, was the best preserved house in the style on Staten Island’s South Shore. Second Empire style houses once proliferated on the South Shore, where the popularity of the style coincided with a period of prosperity and growth tied to the opening of the Staten Island Railroad, but they are now becoming increasingly rare.



1940 Tax Photo

A three-bay wide, three-story frame building, the Bedell House is the only architecturally distinguished Second Empire frame house on the South Shore that retains its historic clapboard siding. The house’s one-story front veranda features handsome turned posts and a molded cornice and the windows still retain their molded surrounds. The western façade retains its two-story polygonal bay enriched by recessed panels and molded cornices. The imposing flared mansard roof that extends over the main portion of the house has segmental arched dormers that retain their molded hoods.

James Bedell was part of a prominent family that settled on Staten Island in the eighteenth century and included a number of the island’s leading carpenters and undertakers. His eldest brother, Isaac P. Bedell, who lived nearby on Main Street in Tottenville, was one of the island’s leading carpenter builders, responsible for the Edwards-Barton House (1869) at Historic Richmond Town, among other works. As a carpenter, Isaac Bedell was often called on to build coffins and in 1841 he established an undertaking business that survives today as the oldest undertaking business in New York City. James Bedell also became a carpenter and cabinet maker and by the 1870s, when this house was built, specialized in making window blinds and sash. It seems likely that he or his brother Isaac was responsible for the design and construction of this house.

In the 1920s, the house was acquired by architect Chester Abram Cole. A leader in the architectural profession on Staten Island, Cole was associated with the nationally prominent firm of Carrere & Hastings prior to entering the firm of the well-known Staten Island architect James Whitford. Cole is probably best known for his work in restoring the Conference House, a designated New York City Landmark. In 1945, the Bedell House was acquired by Earl M. Simonson, an attorney for the New York Telephone Company, who later served as president of the Conference House Association.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the New York City agency responsible for designating and regulating New York City's landmarks. To date, the Commission has designated 1,120 individual landmarks, 104 interior landmarks, 9 scenic landmarks, and 83 historic districts.