

**JAMES L. AND LUCINDA BEDELL HOUSE, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island**  
Built c.1869-74

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 7900, Lot 5

On April 12, 2005 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were six speakers in favor of designation, including representatives of Councilman Andrew J. Lanza, and Congressman Vito Fossella, the Historic Districts Council, the Staten Island Preservation League, and the Tottenville Historical Society. The Commission also received four letters and twenty-four e-mails in support of the designation. Three speakers, including the owner, testified in opposition to designation. The owner also read two letters into the record opposing the designation.

Summary

Constructed between 1869 and 1874, the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House is a fine example of the free-standing Second-Empire style residence and, until it was altered in March 2005, was the best preserved house in the style on Staten Island's South Shore. Second Empire houses once proliferated on the South Shore, where the popularity of the style coincided with a period of growth tied to the opening of the Staten Island Railroad, but they are now becoming increasingly rare. Designed in what was at the time a very up-to-date version of the style, the Bedell House was handsomely proportioned and carefully detailed. It is the only architecturally distinguished Second Empire frame house in Tottenville that retains its historic form and clapboard siding. The house features such historic details as molded window surrounds, cornices, scrolled brackets, and a 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 with molded hoods. The rear two-story wing has a low gabled roof capped by a molded cornice.

James Bedell was part of a prominent family that settled on Staten Island in the eighteenth century. His eldest brother, Isaac P. Bedell, was one of the island's leading carpenter-builders and the founder of the oldest surviving undertaking business in New York City, established in 1841. James Bedell was also 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. By the 1890s James Bedell also established an undertaking business and this house began to be used as a funeral home. In the 1920s, it 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 Carrère & 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. The Bedell House remained in residential use until 2005.



Photograph taken c. 1940.

Shortly prior to and after the building was calendared for public hearing on March 29, 2005, the owner removed historic fabric and details.

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### History of Tottenville<sup>1</sup>

Tottenville is located at the southwestern tip of Staten Island at the most southerly point in New York City and New York State. It was an important habitation and burial site for many Native Americans whose remains have been found in abundance at Ward's Point. The first European settler, Captain Christopher Billopp, an English naval officer, received a patent for 932 acres from the Duke of York in 1688. Billopp built a two-story stone house overlooking Raritan Bay around 1675.<sup>2</sup> In 1687, Billopp's plantation was enlarged to 1,600 acres and given the title "Bentley Manor." By 1700, he had begun operating a ferry across the Arthur Kill to Perth Amboy, New Jersey, part of the land and water route that once connected New York City and Philadelphia. Billopp's heirs, who had actively supported the British during the Revolution, lost this huge property when it was confiscated by State of New York following the war. Partitioned and sold, the former Billopp property continued to be used largely for farming as well as a base for fishing and related maritime activities. Gradually a hamlet formed around the ferry landing and Amboy Road, the path leading to it, and scattered houses were built along the shore. This settlement soon came to be known as Tottenville, after a prominent family that had erected a wharf, Totten's Landing, and were instrumental in starting Bethel Methodist Church. Tottenville's "waterfront flourished in the early nineteenth century as freight and passenger boats docked there on their way to Manhattan."<sup>3</sup> The village became a major center for shipbuilding producing many "vessels of large tonnage" each year. Hundreds of inhabitants were also engaged in the oyster trade.<sup>4</sup> The ferry connections also prompted the development of small summer resorts, restaurants, hotels, and other recreation businesses.

In 1860, Tottenville became the western terminus for the new Staten Island Railroad, establishing an important link between the developing village and the rest of the island. This spurred the growth of the commerce in the village. According to the *Handbook and Business Directory of Staten Island*, published in 1870, "many handsome dwellings and stores" were erected and "evidences of [the village's] prosperity were visible in all its surroundings."<sup>5</sup> During the subsequent decade, the Tottenville post office was established and the village was officially incorporated, the only one chartered on the island's southern and western sections. The village, re-incorporated in 1894, reached a peak of development at the close of the nineteenth century, when many commercial and civic institutions, such as the Tottenville Free Library, several weekly newspapers, the Atlantic Terra Cotta Works (which became one of the largest private employers on Staten Island), and the Tottenville Copper Company, were established. From the 1870s through much of the twentieth century Tottenville was the largest, most populous, and most cohesive settlement in the southern section of Staten Island and retained its individuality as a suburban village. The Bedell House, erected between 1869 and 1874 is a significant reminder of this period of development.

### James L. Bedell, Carpenter and Undertaker

James Laforge Bedell (born January 24, 1833), was twelfth of the fifteen children of John Bedell, a farmer, and his wife Susan Pray Bedell.<sup>6</sup> The Bedells were descended from Robert Bedell, an English-born farmer of French Huguenot-ancestry, who settled in Hempstead, Long Island, by 1657. The Staten Island branch of the family was established around 1740 by his grandson Joseph Bedell (1702-c. 1760/68) who married Hannah Dissoway (d. after 1768). Joseph and Hannah were probably responsible for building the ancient Bedell homestead which stood in Greenridge until 1897. A number of the Bedells rose to prominence in Staten Island during the eighteenth century. Hannah and Joseph's grandson Silas Bedell was a physician who practiced on the island in the 1760s. Their descendent John Bedell was the private secretary to Christopher Billopp and a Justice of the Peace in the 1780s.<sup>7</sup> During the nineteenth century, Rev. Gregory Townsend Bedell (1793-1834) became a prominent Episcopalian minister and his son Gregory Thurston Bedell served as the rector of the Church of the Ascension in New York City (1843-1859) prior to his appointment as the Protestant Episcopal bishop of Ohio. The majority of the Bedells, however, remained on Staten Island living in the vicinity of Greenridge, Pleasant Plains, or Tottenville, where they farmed, were involved in

maritime activities, or worked in the building trades, and where they were among the founders of the Methodist churches in Woodrow and Tottenville.

John and Susan Bedell's eldest son, Isaac Pray Bedell (1816-1909) chose to become a carpenter.<sup>8</sup> He moved to Tottenville and became one of the village's leading house builders. Isaac Bedell and a partner Randolph T. Hill built the Edwards-Barton House (a designated New York City Landmark) at 3742 Richmond Road in 1869.<sup>9</sup> He is also credited with the construction of the Greek Revival Style Bethel Methodist Church (built 1841-42, rebuilt 1867; replaced c.1887).<sup>10</sup> As a carpenter, Isaac Bedell was often called on to build coffins. Finding the business extremely lucrative, he formally began calling himself an undertaker in 1841 while still continuing with his building business. Like his brother, James L. Bedell became a carpenter, eventually specializing in making window sash and blinds. In 1856, he married Lucinda Wood, the daughter of Abraham H. Wood, a ship captain who resided in Tottenville. By 1865 he was successful enough to have purchased a small house on Main Street near the houses of his brother and his wife's parents. Isaac Bedell had a shop directly in back of the Woods' home, and it is possible that the brothers shared the premises. During this period James seems to have tried his hand at furniture making. (He is listed in the 1865 census as a cabinet maker and a descendent of the Bedell family has indicated to the staff of the Staten Island Historical Society that some of his pieces are in their collection.<sup>11</sup>) By 1870, James had returned to blind and sash making, a business he continued until at least 1880, although like his brother Isaac he also made coffins and was listed in the 1875 New York State census as an undertaker.

In 1869, James Bedell purchased the lot on Amboy Road from Mary Ann Garretson, widow of the late Garret Garretson.<sup>12</sup> Bedell built this house by 1874, when its footprint appeared on the map of Tottenville in *Beers Atlas*. James L. Bedell occupied the house with his wife Lucinda, daughter Evilina, and son Henry until his death at age eighty-three on January 6, 1917.<sup>13</sup>

Around 1892 James Bedell began working full-time as an undertaker. He continued in the profession until shortly before his death. Based on directory listings it seems likely that from the 1890s until 1917, at least a portion of this house was used for his business. During the period "most embalming and reposing took place in the deceased's residence,"<sup>14</sup> but it seems likely that at least some viewings would have taken place at the house. Bedell also would have had his office in the house.

James Bedell's undertaking business did not continue after his death because his son chose other business opportunities. Isaac Bedell's firm descended through his branch of the family and continues today as the Bedell-Pizzo Funeral Home, the oldest undertaking business in New York City and one of the two or three oldest in New York State.

#### The Design of the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House

The James L. and Lucinda Bedell House is a fine example of a Second-Empire style house and, until it was altered in March 2005 was the best preserved house in the style on Staten Island's South Shore. An eclectic architectural style based on French Renaissance and Baroque models, the Second Empire style developed in France during the reign of Napoleon III (1852-1870) and became popular in America around 1860. The style's dissemination was aided by the increasing availability of architectural publications during this period, especially architectural handbooks and builders' guides such as E.C. Hussey's *Home Building* (1875), Marcus F. Cummings and Charles C. Miller's *Architecture: Designs for Street Fronts, Suburban Houses, and Cottages* (1868), *Woodward's Architecture and Rural Art* (George E. Woodward, 1867-68), and *Bicknell's Village Builder* (A.J. Bicknell & Co., 1872).<sup>15</sup> The style was well represented on the South Shore where its popularity coincided with the spurt in development following the opening of the Staten Island Railroad as well as a period of great prosperity in the oyster trade and the ship building industry. Among the notable examples were Burbank's Hotel (aka McDowell's Hotel) at the Giffords Lane railroad crossing in Great Kills, L. Stucker's Annadale Hotel, and Stark's Hotel in Tottenville.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the Bedell House, Tottenville had a number of imposing mansard-roofed houses, including several on Main Street in the vicinity of the new railroad station. While some of the Tottenville houses retain historic details and are of architectural interest, only the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House retains its historic form, original clapboard siding, and much of its historic ornamental detailing.

The Bedell House is comprised of a three-story mansarded main block, a rear two-story wing with a shallow gabled roof, and one-story shed-roofed extensions on both the east and west sides of the house. The main block is three bays wide and two bays deep and has the boxy form characteristic of Second Empire buildings. The house is sheathed in its original clapboards and retains its molded window surrounds (although many of the decorative lintels were recently removed). Some windows still have their original two-over-two fenestration. The one-story veranda retains its original carved posts. The porch was also embellished with scrolled brackets and arched spandrels and featured railings with jigsaw trim similar to those seen on the nearby Drake-Dehart House at 134 Main Street, a 1840s Greek Revival house that was updated in the 1870s. (These elements were removed from the Bedell House in March 2005). Like many village houses of the period, the Bedell House has a side hall plan, with a wide bay emphasizing the entrance on the east side of the façade. Though recently modified, this entry still retains its handsomely detailed multipane sidelights and transom and wood door with multipane window, all probably dating from the 1920s and the work of owner-architect Chester A. Cole. One of the house's finest features is the two-story polygonal bay enriched by recessed spandrel panels and projecting cornices supported by paired scroll brackets. (The scrolled brackets that originally extended beneath the first story cornice were recently removed, but original brackets survive at the second story.) The bay also is also has blind louvered shutters used in place of windows in the narrow end bays at the second story. These blind louvered shutters matched the louvered shutters that were recently removed from the other windows on the house and probably were original to its design. Crowning the main portion of the house is a handsome flared mansard roof that retains its molded metal flashing and original segmental arched dormers with molded hoods. The rear wing has a low gabled roof which is capped by a molded cornice. The cornices on both the front and rear wings were originally embellished with paired scrolled brackets. Most of the brackets survive on the west façade but have been removed from the other facades.

It seems likely that James Bedell or Isaac Bedell was responsible for the design of this house which is handsomely proportioned and carefully detailed. A very up-to-date design, it is comparable both in plan and detailing to a house design prepared by architect D. Provoost of Elizabeth, New Jersey, published in the *Supplement to Bicknell's Village Builder* (plate 1) in 1872.

While there were once many such houses in the rural towns and villages that were incorporated into New York City in the 1890s, today examples are becoming increasingly rare. The well proportioned and detailed James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, which retains its original form, clapboard siding, and a good deal of its decorative detailing, is a significant reminder of the Second Empire farmhouses and village residences that once proliferated in New York City.

#### Later Owners: The Coles and the Simonsons

After James L. and Lucinda Bedell's deaths in 1917 and the death of their daughter Evilina Stoney almost immediately afterwards, 7484 Amboy Road passed to Henry (Harry) S. Bedell.<sup>17</sup> By January 1920, Harry, a clerk at the S.S. White dental products company in Prince's Bay, was sharing the house with his cousin Ralph M. Cole, a photo printer, Ralph's wife and daughter, and mother, Blanche M. Cole<sup>18</sup>. In November 1920, Harry sold the house to Blanche Cole. She was the daughter of Captain Abel and Mary (Palmer) Martin and widow of Abram Cole (1856-?), a partner in Cole Brothers, a large lumber and coal business near Tottenville, and a prominent figure in Staten Island Republican politics. In 1923, Mrs. Cole conveyed the house to her younger son, Chester A. Cole who moved there with his family.<sup>19</sup>

Chester Cole (1881-1958) was an architect who attended Pratt Institute and studied architectural drafting at the atelier of architect Donn Barber.<sup>20</sup> After leaving Barber's office, he worked for the leading architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings where he was involved in the design of the Richmond County Courthouse (1913-19, a designated New York City Landmark). He left Carrère & Hastings to serve in the Engineering Corps of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I. Following the war, he became associated with the firm of the prominent Staten Island architect James Whitford, Sr. While working with Whitford, Cole was responsible for the restoration of the Conference House (completed 1930). He also worked on renovations to the U.S. Capitol Building. In 1940, he was instrumental in organizing an exhibition of new building materials,

structural techniques, and new home designs keyed to the new federally-insured home loan program. In organizing the program he worked closely with the Richmond County Federal Savings and Loan Association in Tottenville. His association with the Richmond County Savings and Loan Association grew, and from 1949 until his retirement in 1952 he served as its president. Cole also served as president of the Staten Island Society of Architects and the South Shore Lions Club and was a post-commander of the Beauvais-Hudson American Legion Post.

Cole married Vida Van Name, of Mariners Harbor. They had one son, Chester A. Cole, Jr. (1922-?) who grew up in this house and became a shipping company executive.<sup>21</sup> The Coles resided at 7484 Amboy Road, described in Leng & Davis's *Staten Island and Its People* "as their charming and comfortable residence at Tottenville built some years ago in old village days," until 1945.<sup>22</sup>

Chester Cole sold 7484 Amboy Road to Earle M. Simonson (1899-1974), an attorney, who worked for the New York Telephone Company for thirty-six years.<sup>23</sup> Earle Simonson was the son of James Simonson, a prominent Tottenville attorney and political figure who had been a director of the Richmond County Federal Savings and Loan Association. In addition, to this link with Cole, both Earle Simonson and his wife Margaret were active in the Conference House Association. Earle Simonson eventually became president of that organization and Margaret Simonson was also active in the local chapter of the DAR, which had been named for Chester Cole's ancestor, Abram Cole. It seems likely that this interest in history, architecture, and historic preservation on the part of the Coles and Simonsons was responsible for their excellent stewardship of the Bedell House which remained remarkably well maintained and intact throughout their ownership. The house passed from Earle Simonson to his widow in 1974 and was sold by her to William and Violette Johnson in 1982.<sup>24</sup> In 1991 it passed solely into the ownership of Violette Johnson. She sold it to the present owner in February 2005.

#### Description

Until early March 2005, the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House was the best preserved Second Empire style house on the South Shore of Staten Island. In the weeks prior to designation, a number of changes were made to the house. These included the removal of historic ornament, removal of some clapboard sheathing from the dormers and eaves of the mansard roof, removal of the rear window and gutter from the rear portion of the mansard roof, removal of the center carved post and rails from the front porch, removal of a brick pier and latticework screens from beneath the porch. All of the house's historic louvered shutters were also removed.

The house is located on an irregularly shaped lot that has a frontage of about seventy-five feet on Amboy Road and is about 135 feet deep on its west side and 153 feet deep on its east side. Chain link fences extend along the east and west boundary lines. To the west of the house a brick driveway leads to a carriage house in the back yard. A non-historic chain link fence and gate extends from the west side of the house to the western fence. A wood slat fence also surrounds the rear yard wood deck that adjoins the southeast corner of the house.

The house is set back about seventeen feet from the street. A non-historic concrete path extends from the front sidewalk to the front porch and wraps around the east side of the house leading to a secondary entrance.

The house has an irregular plan. It is comprised of a three-story mansarded main block, which is three bays wide and two bays deep, a rear two-story L-shaped wing with a shallow gabled roof, a one-story plus basement shed roofed ell at the southwest corner of the building, and a one-story enclosed porch at the southeast corner of the building. The house rests on a high (painted) brick basement which is lit by low wide windows. The upper walls are sheathed with historic lapped clapboards. Its windows have molded wood surrounds. The western façade of the main block has an angled two story bay window. Most of the windows have replacement sash but historic two-over two sash survive in the center and western second story windows of the main façade and in the southern second story window of the west façade on the main block. Historic six-over-six wood windows survive in the first story windows on the rear elevation. Many of the windows are protected by non-historic storm windows. The handsome mansard roof has been reclad with non-historic asphalt shingles.

**Main Block** The house's **primary façade** facing Amboy Road has a three-bay design with the entry bay at the east corner of the façade. The one-story wood porch is approached by a wide wood stoop. The railings at the sides of the steps originally had heavy turned newel posts which were replaced by simpler non-historic wooden posts with orbed caps (the caps were removed and pieces of posts have been removed with a jigsaw in March-April 2005). The railings retain their historic wood hand and bottom rails but all of the stiles have been removed. Until March, the crawl space beneath the porch was screened from view by historic diamond pattern wood lattices. These were removed at the same time as the center brick pier that supported the porch. The porch retains its historic wood flooring and ceiling and three of its original turned posts. The center post and original railings were removed in March 2005, except for a small section of bottom railing which survives on the east side of the porch. Until March, the posts were enriched with molded caps and molded bands set just above the railings. The porch was also embellished with scrolled brackets and arched spandrels (recently removed). In addition, a portion of the fascia board that protected the rafters of the porch roof has been taken down.

Between March 28 and April 8, 2005 plywood sheets were installed between the porch posts in place of the railings. These are held in place by thin wood braces which are nailed to the columns and façade. The wood no trespassing sign was installed on the east post between March 18 and March 28.

The entrance at the east corner of the façade contains a historic multi-light wood and glass door that probably dates from the 1920s or 1930s. It is set off by small-paned multi-light sidelights and a transom. The transom is still capped by a heavy molding but the side sections of the surround have been removed. The doorway is protected by a non-historic storm door. To the west of the entry, there is a non-historic metal mailbox (now smashed) and a sign warning of poison on the premises. The first story windows retain their original molded surrounds but have lost their molded cornices (removed March-April 2005). The windows have non-historic one-over-one sash and are protected by non-historic storm windows. At the second story, the windows also retain their molded surrounds but have lost their decorative molded cornices. The center and western window retain historic two-over-two wood sash windows, the eastern window has one-over-one replacement sash.

The fascia board beneath the overhanging eaves of the mansard roof was originally embellished with paired scroll brackets (removed in March 2005). The molded gutter at the edge of the eaves remains intact. The mansard is lit by three segmental arched dormer windows that are capped by original molded wood hoods. In late March and early April 2005 portions of the clapboard siding was removed from all three dormers. All three windows have non-historic one-over-one windows.

The **west façade** of the main block is articulated by a two-story five-sided angled bay at the south end of the façade and by a line of square-headed windows at the north end of the façade. The north windows retain their molded surrounds and the second story window still has its original molded lintel and two-over-two wood sash. Both windows are protected by non-historic storms. The angled bay still retains its original articulation including the recessed panel decoration employed for the spandrels beneath the windows and the molded cornices that cap the first and second story. The scrolled brackets that originally extended beneath the first story cornice were recently removed, but original brackets survive at the second story. The windows at the first story contain non-historic one-over-one sash. The second story windows retain historic wood one-over-one sashes that are protected by non-historic storm windows. The blind louvered shutters used in place of windows in the narrow end bays are an original feature of the design. The western façade is the only part of the house that retains its heavy paired scrolled brackets beneath the roof eaves. The molded metal flashing at the edge of the mansard remains largely intact except at the southwest corner of the façade where it was pulled away from the façade in late March-early April. The dormers remain intact but have replacement one-over one sash.

The **east façade** of the main block is articulated by two lines of square-headed windows which retain their molded surrounds except for the molded cornices that were partially stripped in March 2005. The northern first story window has been sealed for some time (the infill is faced with non-historic shingles). The other windows have one-over-one replacement sash with non-historic storm windows. There is also a smaller window at the south end of the façade that was probably installed in

the early-mid twentieth century. It has one-over-one sash and is protected by non-historic storm windows. The brackets have been removed from beneath the eaves. The dormers contain one-over-one replacement sash.

The **south (rear) façade** of the main block is mostly concealed by the rear wing. The mansard roof, which is visible, has recently been altered by the removal of the clapboard sheathing beneath the eaves, the gutter, and moldings. The window has been removed from the single attic dormer.

**Rear Wing** The **west wall** of the rear wing features a pair of tall narrow windows in a molded surround (molded cornice recently removed) in the southern two-story section of the wing and a small square window in the one story section of the wing at the first story. Single square headed windows are employed at the second story. All of the windows retain their molded surrounds. The northern window has its original molded lintel. All of the windows have historic one-over-one wood sash and are protected by non-historic storm windows. The small first story window is sheltered by a vinyl awning. Both the roof of the one story extension and the two story wing retain their original molded cornices. Original paired brackets survive beneath the northern section of the second story cornice but were recently stripped from the first story cornice and southern section of the second story cornice.

The **south (rear) wall** of the rear wing is pierced by two small first story windows that retain historic six-over-six wood sash. These flank the remains of a brick chimney that had at some time in the past been capped at the first story. Single scrolled brackets survive beneath the eaves over the overhanging cornice. The one story extension on the east side of the wing is sheltered by a shed roofed porch supported by a single historic turned post. At the west corner of the façade there is a historic wood and glass door similar in design to the early twentieth door at the front entrance. The entry is also protected by a non-historic storm door.

The **east wall** of the rear wing is largely concealed from view by the one story east extension. The second story windows retain their original molded surrounds but their molded lintels have been removed. They have non-historic one-over-one sashes which are protected by non-historic storm windows. The scrolled brackets have also been stripped from the eaves.

The one-story east extension is comprised of a historic clapboarded entrance porch which was extended in early-mid-twentieth century by an angled bay with non-historic facing materials and metal window sash. The wood and glass door is similar in design to the doors used on the front and rear facades.

**Barn/Garage** At the southwest corner of the lot is a historic barn which probably dates from the late-nineteenth century. It is a two-story gable-roofed frame building which retains its historic lapped clapboarding (some siding is missing). The gabled roof has slightly overhanging eaves. It is covered with diamond-pane asphalt shingles dating from the early twentieth century. The first-story of the **south wall** has a large vehicle entrance with a pair of large wood plank doors. The second story is pierced by three windows. The center and east windows have non-historic sashes. The west window has a historic six-over-six wood sash window with whitewashed window panes. The **west wall** has two windows with molded surrounds at the second story. Both of the windows contain historic six-over-six wood sash windows. The south window remains largely intact. The top sash of the north window was recently destroyed. The **east wall** had a second story loading door which was recently removed leaving the opening unprotected. Clapboard siding was also recently removed from the wall near the opening. The second story of the **south wall** has two window openings which retain their historic multipane wood sash windows.

Report Researched and Written by  
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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This section on the development of Tottenville is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Westfield Township District School No. 5/now Public School 1 Annex Designation Report*, prepared by Betsy Bradley (LP-1868)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1995, 2; Marjorie Johnson, "Tottenville," in Kenneth Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1192; *Holden's Staten Island: The History of Richmond County* edited and compiled by Richard Dickenson (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2002); *Handbook and Business Directory of Staten Island* (New York: Staten Island Railroad, 1870), 38; Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People: A History, 1609-1929* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1930), v. 1; Angie Mangino, "Tottenville Businesses of the Past," *Staten Island Register*, Sept. 12, 2000, Aug. 28, 2001 posted on the internet @ [www.geocities.com/tottenville10307/BusinessOfPast.html](http://www.geocities.com/tottenville10307/BusinessOfPast.html).

<sup>2</sup> In 1776 the Billopp house was the site of an unsuccessful peace conference between the British commander Lord Howe and Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge. The Billopp House-Conference House is a designated New York City Landmark.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, 1192.

<sup>4</sup> *Handbook*, 38.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> This information on the Bedell family is based on Edna Bedell, "Bedell Family Genealogy," c. 1982, in the Bedell family genealogy files, Staten Island Historical Society; "Happy Event at Bedell Funeral Home," *Star Reporter Newspapers*, July 1991, 3 [copy available in the "funeral homes," clipping file, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, hereafter SIIAS]; Bedell family genealogy files, SIIAS, box 1, folder 2, box 4, folder 9; Leng & Davis, v. 2, 859, v. 3, 300-301; Richard M. Bayles, *History of Richmond County, Staten Island* (New York: 1887), 415, 417, 499; Ira K. Morris, *Morris's Memorial History of Staten Island* (New York: Memorial Publishing Co. 1898-1900), v. 2, 55-56; various entries for the Haven family and Bedell family especially "Descendents of Robert Bedell," @ <http://www.longislandgenealogy.com>

<sup>7</sup> John Bedell was one of several Loyalist members of the family who emigrated to Canada following the Revolution. See William and Harlow McMillen, "The Oath of Allegiance Signed by the Inhabitants of Staten Island on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1776," *Staten Island Historian*; "The Loyalist Collection at the University of New Brunswick @ [www.lib.unb.ca/collection/loyalist](http://www.lib.unb.ca/collection/loyalist); Loyalist Institute: Queen's Rangers, Deposition, 1779," @ <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/qar/qardeposition1.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> This section on Isaac Pray Bedell and James Bedell and their families is based Edna Bedell, "Bedell Family Genealogy;" Leng & Davis, v. 3, 300-301; Pat Salmon, exhibition notes for a forthcoming exhibition on cemeteries and funeral homes at the SIIAS, "Happy Event;" Stephannia Cleaton, "Founding a Funeral Museum," *Staten Island Advance*, Mar. 17, 1991; James L. Bedell, genealogy index card files, Staten Island Historical Society; United States Census Office, *Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*, New York, Richmond County, Westfield, Roll 587, p. 117; *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860*, New York, Richmond County, Westfield, Roll 850, p. 256; *Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870*, New York, Richmond County, Westfield, Roll 1086, p. 357; *Population Schedules of the Tenth Census of the United States, 1880*, New York, Richmond County, Tottenville, p. 366A; *Population Schedules of the Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, New York, Richmond, Fifth Ward, E.D. 613, sheet 8; *Population Schedules of the Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, New York, Richmond, Fifth Ward, E.D. 1333, sheet 14B; New York State Census, 1855, Richmond County, Westfield, families, 23, 59, 347; New York State Census, 1855, Richmond County, Westfield, families, 108, 109, 110; New York State Census, 1855, Richmond County, Westfield, p. 13; Staten Island Directories, 1892/93, 1893/94, 1895/96/ 1897/98, 1899, 1900, 1903, 1910, 1912, 1914.

<sup>9</sup> The specifications for this commission survive in the Edwards-Barton Papers, Staten Island Historical Society.

<sup>10</sup> For the Bethel Methodist Church see *Holden's Staten Island*, 57, 88, 101, 164.

<sup>11</sup> Carlotta Defillo, notes, Bedell family genealogy file, Staten Island Historical Society.

<sup>12</sup> Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 80, p. 207.

<sup>13</sup> "Dies Day After Wife," *Staten Islander*, Jan. 10, 1917, p. 1; "Obituary, Mrs. Frank Stoney," *Staten Islander*, Jan. 17, 1917, p. 4.



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<sup>14</sup>This information on late-nineteenth-early twentieth-century funeral practices is based on an interview with Joseph Bedell, great-grandson of Isaac Bedell, who headed the Bedell firm in the late twentieth century, described in “Happy Event,” p. 8.

<sup>15</sup>For architectural pattern books during this period see Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1738-1950* (University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press, 2000); Robert Guter and Janet Foster, *Building by the Book: Pattern-Book Architecture in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1992); Lawrence Grow, *Old House Plans: Two Centuries of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Main Street Press, 1978).

<sup>16</sup> These buildings are illustrated in Brian Merlis and Bob Stonehill, *Staten Island in Old Post Cards* (Brooklyn: Israelowitz Publishing, 2002), 7, 25, 123.

<sup>17</sup> Conveyances, Liber 517, p. 487.

<sup>18</sup> *Population Schedules of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, New York, Richmond County, Westfield Township, ED 1623, sheet 6A. For the Cole family see also *Prominent Men of Staten Island* (New York: AY Hubbell, 1893), 25; “Chester Abram Cole,” Leng & Davis, v. 3, 200.

<sup>19</sup> Conveyances, Liber 566, p. 234. Mrs. Cole then moved to 30 Brighton Avenue, Ralph Cole to 7451 Amboy Road. See *Population Schedules of the Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930*, New York, Richmond County, Assembly District 2, ED 43-288, sheet 6A.

<sup>20</sup> This information on Chester Cole’s career is based on Leng & Davis, v. 3, 200; “Chester A. Cole, Sr., South Shore, Architect,” *Staten Island Advance*, Mar. 22, 1958, 2; “Chester Cole, 76, Architect, Dead,” *New York Times*, Mar. 23, 1958, p. 89; “Planning of Home Shown in Exhibit,” *New York Times*, Feb. 4, 1940, p. 14; “Study Priorities in Building Work,” *New York Times*, p. RE1.

<sup>21</sup> For Chester Cole, Jr. see “Shipping News: Union Approved,” *New York Times*, Jan. 17, 1958, p. 45; “Policemen in Japan Are Taught English by U.S. Housewife,” *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1961, p. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Leng & Davis, v. 3, 200

<sup>23</sup> Conveyances, Liber 919, p. 357. For the Simonsons see “Earle M. Simonson,” *New York Times*, Feb. 7, 1974, p. 40, “James Simonson, 78, Once State Attorney,” *New York Times*, Nov. 5, 1946, p. 24; “Jane Simonson Engaged to Wed Robert Calman,” *New York Times*, May 4, 1958, p. 104.

<sup>24</sup> Conveyances, Liber 2216, p. 455. For the later transactions see Conveyances, Reel 3, p. 4285, Reel 3298, p. 311.

## 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 James L. and Lucinda Bedell 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 James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, constructed between 1869 and 1874, is a fine example of the free-standing Second-Empire style frame residence; that Second Empire style houses once proliferated on Staten Island's South Shore, where the popularity of the style coincided with a period of growth tied to the opening of the Staten Island Railroad, but they are now becoming increasingly rare; that the Bedell house was designed in what was for the time a very up-to-date version of the style and was handsomely proportioned and detailed; that it is the only architecturally distinguished Second Empire frame house in Tottenville that retains its historic form, historic clapboarding, and considerable historic detailing; that its historic details include molded window surrounds, cornices, scrolled brackets; and a two-story polygonal bay enriched by recessed panels and molded cornices; that the main portion of the house is crowned by an imposing mansard roof which retains its segmental arch dormers with molded hoods and the rear wing is capped with low gabled roof enriched with a molded cornice; that owner James Bedell was part of a prominent Staten Island family that included a number of the island's leading carpenters and undertakers; that when the house was built in the early 1870s, James Bedell was a carpenter and cabinet maker but by the 1890s he had become an undertaker and the house was used as a funeral home; that in the 1920s the house was acquired by architect Chester Abram Cole, a leader in the architectural profession on Staten Island who worked on the design of the Richmond County Courthouse and was responsible for the restoration of the Conference House; that it was subsequently acquired by Earl M. Simonson, an attorney for the New York Telephone Company and civic leader, who served as president of the Conference House Association.

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 James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Borough of Staten Island and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 7900, Lot 5 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Stephen Byrns, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Richard Olcott, Thomas Pike, Jan Pokorny, Elizabeth Ryan, Vicki Match Suna, Commissioners



James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, c. 1940  
Photo source: New York City Department of Records and Information Services, Municipal Archives



James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, August 2004  
Photo: Tara Harrison



James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, August 2004

Photo: Tara Harrison



James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, April 2005  
Photo: Gale Harris



James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, March 2005  
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James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, April 2005  
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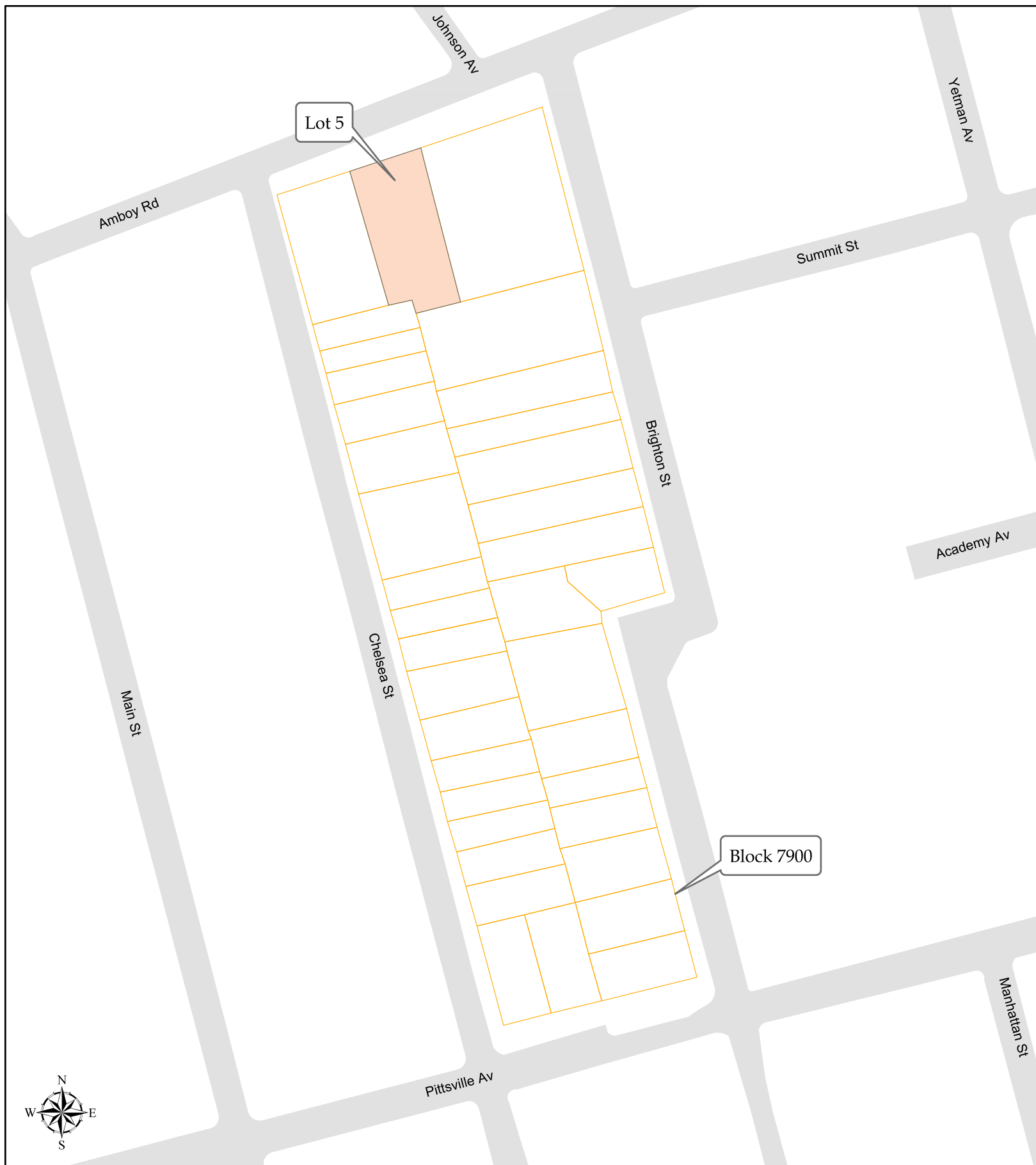
James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, April 2005

Photo: Gale Harris



James L. and Lucinda Bedell House, 7484 Amboy Road, Staten Island, April 2005

Photo: Gale Harris



James L. and Lucinda Bedell House  
Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 7900, Lot 5  
Source: Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO Edition 03C, December 2003



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

Source: Sanborn Staten Island Landbook, Volume 5, Plate 531, 2001