Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 13, 2009, Designation List 409
LP-2249

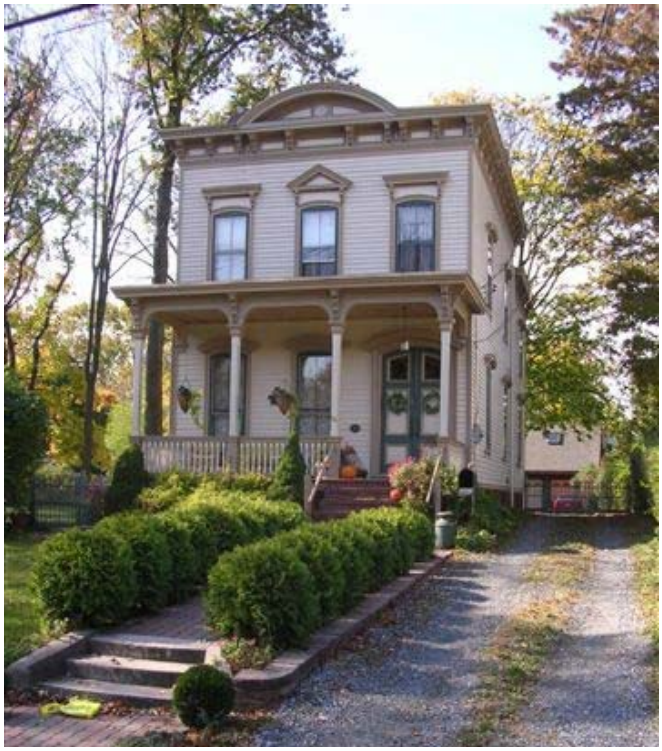
JOHN H. AND ELIZABETH J. ELSWORTH HOUSE, 90 Bayview Avenue, Staten Island. Built c. 1880.

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 6751 Lot 310

On April 10, 2007, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House, 90 Bayview Avenue, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 7). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. There were six speakers, including a representative of the owner of the building and representatives for the Preservation League of Staten Island, Historic Districts Council, the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, the West Brighton Restoration Society and Westerleigh Improvement. The Commission also received statements of support from the Municipal Art Society of New York, the Rego-Forest Preservation Council and others.

Summary

The John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House at 90 Bayview Avenue, Prince's Bay, built ca. 1880, is a vernacular clapboard three-bay town house with a bold and unusual combination of Italianate and Renaissance features. The highly intact house represents a once-common house type on Staten Island—the three-bay Italianate town house with a low, hidden, hipped roof—that has now become increasingly rare. It is unusual for this town house design to be deployed in a rural setting, with severe frontality and dramatic height. It also features a distinctive second-floor window with a triangular pediment and the large curving pediment above the cornice, which is a feature more typically found on commercial structures.



The first owners, John H. Elsworth and his wife, later widow, Elizabeth, resided in the house during a combined tenure of 39 years. Elsworth was an oyster planter, Sheriff of Richmond County from 1889 to 1891, and Richmond County Clerk from 1892 to 1899. Located near Prince's Bay, the premier location for Staten Island's oyster planting industry, the Elsworth House was constructed during the golden age of oyster fishing in the New York metropolitan region and represents the prosperity of that era.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Prince's Bay

Prince's Bay, a few miles east of the southern tip of Staten Island, is a gently curving inlet of the Raritan Bay. Its brackish waters are created by the joining of the fresh waters of the Raritan River, the Arthur Kill, and Lemon Creek, with the salt waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Long before Europeans settled on Staten Island, Native Americans knew the inlet as a fine fishing ground, especially for its shellfish, both clams and oysters. By the 19th century, Prince's Bay had become the focal point of a major oyster industry. Prince's Bay oysters were sought out by discerning diners throughout the nation and even as far away as London, England.[1]

It is not known who gave Prince's Bay its name, or exactly when. The name appears on maps created during the American Revolution. The inlet may be named for the Prince of Orange (1650-1702), the Dutch soldier-prince who ascended the throne of England as William III in 1689. He and his wife Mary ruled England as joint sovereigns.[2]

The community known today as Prince's Bay, with its high rolling streets and views of the bay, is one of Staten Island's more scenic and historically interesting areas. It is bounded on the east by Wolfe's Pond Park and on the west by Pleasant Plains and Mount Loretto, a Roman Catholic institution. Lemon Creek winds through the community on its way to the bay. The former Red Bank Lighthouse, on its high bluff at the edge of Mount Loretto's property, marks the western point of the bay. Seguine Point is the eastern point.

Amboy Road, the main thoroughfare connecting the South Shore with the rest of Staten Island, runs east and west through Prince's Bay. In the colonial period it was known as the King's Highway. Joined with Richmond Road at its eastern end, it runs the length of Staten Island from Tompkinsville on the east coast to the southernmost tip at Tottenville. In the vicinity of Prince's Bay, Amboy Road in 1873 was said to be paved with compacted oyster shells.[3] The Staten Island Railroad, completed in 1860, runs for much of its length nearly parallel to Amboy Road. The Prince's Bay Station was opened in 1860 near today's Seguine Avenue (formerly known as Prince's Bay Road) just south of Amboy Road. In 1878 a visitor described his visit to Prince's Bay:

> From the station a pretty lane, with hawthorn hedges at each side, leads to the fishing settlement, which is celebrated for its oyster beds.. . . . . At the settlement, off which a fleet of schooners and sloops was at anchor, salty-looking men, with red and freckled faces, were coming to and from the boats with baskets of freshly gathered clams. A Prince's Bay clam, when the shell is still wet with brine, is a delicacy not to be hastily spoken of; it is more than delicious, and we kept the captain of an old tavern by the water-side busy for some time. The captain was a tall, thin, loosely jointed man, who opened each bivalve with a constant smile, and occasional nods of the head.[4]

Seguine Avenue ends at the eastern edge of Prince's Bay on Seguine Point. By 1870 the point had been purchased by the Johnson brothers, who created a dental works, later known as S.S. White Dental Manufactory. Earlier in the 19th century the Seguine family had established a dock and palm oil factory there at the water's edge. The Seguines were farmers as well as factory owners.[5] In the 1790 census the Joseph Seguine household included three slaves.[6]

Lemon Creek is fed by natural springs north of Amboy Road. Its estuary provided a protected harbor for oystermen's boats.[7] The Lemon Creek estuary today provides a harbor for fishermen and small pleasure craft of many types.

The small gathering of houses, a few stores and a post office near the train station became known as the Prince's Bay neighborhood. In 1872 the village of Prince's Bay was described as "neat cottages, surrounded with charming gardens embowered among groves and trees of a size and luxuriance suggestive of an origin anterior even to the time of the forgotten prince."[8]

Oyster Planting

Peter Johnson was probably the earliest European settler in the Prince's Bay area. In the late 17th century he secured a colonial land patent that ran south from today's Amboy Road down to the waterfront alongside Lemon Creek.[9] Johnson and most early South Shore residents were primarily farmers, but their land patents often included fishing rights. Several, but not all, of the 18th-century residents in the Prince's Bay area owned slaves, the Menee (Manee) household of ten people included two slaves, and the Vandyck household of twelve people included eight slaves.[10]

In the earliest times oysters were a main source of protein for many residents on Staten Island and throughout New York harbor. Oysters were so plentiful that they were available for all to take freely. They were the food of the common man. Only as they became scarce did oysters become delicacies for the rich and for special occasions.[11] In the first decades of the 18th century laws were enacted by New York and New Jersey to limit oyster harvesting. Access to the oyster beds was given to native residents only. By the early 19th century, with the development of annual dredging of the bay for oysters, the industry was threatened with extinction.[12] To meet the demand of New York's growing population:

> local fishermen founded a different type of oyster industry. It consisted of importing partially grown oysters, termed 'seed,' from other areas, planting them on bottoms in the bay, growing them to three to four inches long (which took only one growing season if they were from Chesapeake Bay) and then marketing them.
>
> The first crew to import seed brought them from Chesapeake Bay in a schooner in the spring of 1825 and planted them on Round Shoal, a many-acre bed with firm sand bottom, off Prince's Bay, Staten Island. The oysters grew well, and the crew recovered and sold them the next fall. In the ensuing years, this crew and others from Prince's Bay, Perth Amboy, and Keyport joined in this endeavor. Within about 20 years various crews were importing as many as 300,000 bushels of seed oysters each year from late February to May from the James, York, Rappahannock, and Choptank rivers and Tangier Sound in Chesapeake Bay.[13]

Development of the oyster planting industry was a turning point in Staten Island history. It eclipsed farming in importance. A highly lucrative industry was born and the economy of the South Shore from Prince's Bay to Tottenville was enriched. The golden age of the oyster industry ran from approximately 1880 to 1905.

In the first decades of the 20th century, pollution of New York's waterways necessitated the closing of the metropolitan area's oysterbeds. Around 1916 outbreaks of typhoid fever were traced to oysters from the Lower Bay and the Kill van Kull. The *New York Times* carried numerous stories about the pollution of the Hudson River and all the coastal waters near New York City. Pollution was slower to reach Prince's Bay, but by 1927 it had. "In 1927, the last of the Raritan Bay beds closed, marking the end of oystering in New York City. A New Yorker could no longer wade out or row out from shore and catch dinner. New York families could no longer earn a living harvesting the sea they lived next to."[14]

John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth

John H. Elsworth (1843-1899), an oyster planter and elected official, was the first owner of 90 Bayview Avenue. He was born in Bayonne, N.J. His father was William Elsworth, captain of a "coasting vessel" and a leading citizen of the town.[15] William Elsworth and his brothers were involved in all aspects of the oyster business: acquiring and planting seed, harvesting and selling oysters. Four simultaneous listings in NYC street directories of the 1880s read "oysters."[16] The corporate name was J. & J. W. Elsworth, the initials of Joseph Elsworth (1830-1902) and James Watson Elsworth (1845-1916). Their boats were docked in Bayonne at the foot of 35th Street on the New York harbor side and at the foot of 25th Street on the Newark Bay side. In Manhattan their sales were conducted at the foot of Charles Street on the Hudson.[17] They also had boats and an oyster-packing house on Staten Island's Lemon Creek.[18] In the fall of 1880 the Lemon Creek plant packed 400 barrels of oysters a week for shipment to London.[19] In 1886 the Elsworths shipped 30,000 bushels of seed oysters to California.[20] Joseph Elsworth was also a skillful skipper and yachtsman.[21] James Watson Elsworth was primarily an oyster dealer and businessman.[22] Philip Elsworth (1828-1909), another brother, was a designer of yachts. These three men were John H. Elsworth's uncles.

John was educated in Bayonne's local schools. Early in life he became involved in the oyster-planting business with his uncles.[23] He came to live in Staten Island in 1877, the year of his marriage to Elizabeth Waters Jones (1849-1937). She was the daughter of James S. Jones, a farmer of Snow Hill, Maryland. The 1870 census for Worcester County, Maryland, shows the Jones family with daughter Elizabeth, aged 18, living in Snow Hill. Her father was apparently prosperous because there were numerous servants in the Jones household.[24] Snow Hill, on the Chesapeake Bay, was the home of many oystermen and a source of oyster "seed." Oysterman Elsworth no doubt met his future wife on trips to Maryland.[25] John and Elizabeth Elsworth had no children. Elsworth purchased the half-acre lot that became 90 Bayview Avenue on April 7, 1879.[26]

On Staten Island Elsworth was in partnership with oyster planter Peter Polworth.[27] Polworth is listed in Staten Island directories under the heading "Oyster Dealers and Planters."[28] Like Elsworth, he resided on Bayview Avenue. The 1907 atlas shows "J and JW Ellsworth" (John's uncles: Joseph and James Watson Elsworth) owning property on the east side of Bayview Avenue right beside Lemon Creek. This would have been where the uncles kept their oyster boats and equipment for use on Prince's Bay and where the packing house was located.

According to local historian Ira K. Morris, John Elsworth had participated in local politics since his youth in Bayonne. He became Sheriff of Richmond County on Jan. 1, 1889, after winning the nomination on the Republican ticket. He continued in office through 1891. "At the close of his official term Justice Cullen of the Supreme Court and the members of the Richmond County Bar...paid a high tribute to the manner in which Mr. Elsworth had performed his duties during his entire term."[29] The following is an account of the sheriff removing squatters from the private land of a Republican leader named McRoberts:

> There were many battles and fence wars between McRoberts and the squatters. Sheriff Elsworth was called on the scene with a posse of deputies, and, after a battle, succeeded in evicting the squatters from the beach, and for many days the beach was under the protection of Sheriff Elsworth, who afterward handed Mr. McRoberts a bill for $1,600, including salaries for the deputies, for 100 days, and $250 for his own services.[30]

In 1892 Elsworth was elected Richmond County Clerk, an office he held with honor until his death in 1899. In 1897 he fell unconscious in front of the County Clerk's office at

Richmond.[31] He died at 90 Bayview Avenue. John and Elizabeth are buried in the Moravian Cemetery, New Dorp.[32]

After John's death Elizabeth continued to live on Staten Island. The 1900 Census for Westfield indicates that she and her sister Emily Hopkins were living in Pleasant Plains on Church Street.[33] The 1907 atlas indicates that Elizabeth was still the owner of 90 Bayview Avenue. The 1920 Census indicates that two of her sisters were living with her there. All are listed as widows. Later in 1920 she sold the house to Spencer A. Jones.

The Design of 90 Bayview Avenue

The Elsworth House is a three-bay Italianate town house, built ca. 1880. It combines Italianate decorative features with Staten Island vernacular building traditions.

The Italianate style appealed to the romantic sensibilities of mid-19th-century Americans. The height of Italianate buildings and their elaborate decorative forms contrasted with the earlier massive forms of the Greek Revival style. The Italianate style was introduced to American builders by architect Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892). His book *Rural Residences* (1837) included designs for picturesque cottages in the Italianate style. The style became highly popular by the third quarter of the century. Later, designs in the Italianate style were available to local builders through plan books such as *Bicknell's Village Builder* (1872).[34]

The dramatic trim of the Elsworth House, its pediments and brackets, are aspects of the Italianate style inspired by Italian Renaissance buildings, which in turn were forms inspired by Greek and Roman architecture. A prominent feature of the Elsworth House is the central, second-floor window with its triangular pediment. Such pediments were seen on imposing buildings in post-colonial America, such as the White House and other large public buildings.

A second dramatic feature of the Elsworth House, the large curving pediment above the cornice, is usually found on commercial buildings. The house stands on a large sloping lot, back a considerable distance from the street. It is unusual to have a tall three-bay town house placed in a sparsely settled area. Its severe frontality and dramatic height, increased by the segmental pediment, suggest an urban setting where buildings are located adjacent to the street.

The designer and builder of the Elsworth House are not known.[35] The rectangular three-bay plan of the Elsworth House, its wood frame construction, and front porch of four columns, all reflect vernacular building traditions of Staten Island.

Three-bay Italianate town houses of the 1880s are found throughout Staten Island. The most common type has a gable roof with the gable end facing the street. The second type, which is less common, has a low hip roof that is invisible from the street. The Elsworth House is of this second type; however, the unique placement on its lot and the bold combination of stylistic features make it stand out from the norm.

Individual features of the Elsworth House are found in other Staten Island buildings. The Hamilton Park Cottage (ca. 1864), 105 Franklin Avenue (designated New York City Landmark) has Renaissance-style cornices for its second-floor windows. Triangular pediments were added to the windows of Sailors' Snug Harbor's front row dormitory buildings (designated New York City Landmarks) during their enlargement and remodeling in the 1880s. Richard Smyth, an English-born builder on the Snug Harbor staff, designed these additions. The Employee Cottages at Sailors' Snug Harbor, also designed by Smyth and built ca. 1885, have features found on the Elsworth House: windows with segmental heads and the low, undecorated arches of the porch cornices.

Later Owners

Spencer A. Jones**,** an advertising copy writer, and Helen, his wife, owned the house for a little over a year during 1920-21.[36] Eugene Buhlman**,** a foreman at S.S. White Dental Co., Prince's Bay, and Katherine, his wife, owned the house from 1921 to 1930. Buhlman was born in Switzerland and immigrated to America in 1884.[37] Fred Schumacher and Mabel F. Schumacher**,** his wife, owned the house in the 1930s.[38] Homer E. Marshall, a realtor, and Eleanor E. Marshall**,** his wife, purchased the house on December 7, 1950. During their tenure it became a two-family house. Homer died in 1957 and Eleanor continued to live in the house until 1961.[39]

Chuck Wayne (1923-1997), an innovative jazz guitarist, was the owner and resident of 90 Bayview Avenue from 1961 to 1991. He was born in Brooklyn and began a musical career at an early age. He made record albums and worked with Woody Herman and the George Shearing Quintet, becoming music director for Tony Bennett during the 1950s. He was prominent in the New York jazz scene and is noted for a distinctive swinging bebop style. Sought after as a teacher, he wrote instructional books.[40] Russell Powell**,** a restoration carpenter and president of Island Housewrights, and Gayle M. Powell**,** his wife, purchased the property on July 12, 1991[41] and completed a comprehensive restoration of the house.

Description

90 Bayview Avenue is a two-story, three-bay clapboard town house with elegant Italianate trim. It has a four-columned single-story front porch. The house rests on a brick basement of medium height. A two-story wing of lower height is contiguous in the rear. The shallow hip roof is invisible from the street. The windows are large and trimmed with segmental heads and prominent segmental cornices. The clapboard is painted a light tan color and the trim is a darker tan. A bracketed cornice surrounds the house. Centered on the façade above the cornice is a dramatic segmental pediment.

The Main Block: The main block of the house is rectangular, 22 by 32 feet.
On **the façade** the porch is supported by four square beveled solid wood columns on high square bases and with square capitals. Above the capitals large console brackets reach up to hold the cornice, which conceals a Yankee gutter. Between the columns an elegant low-arched architrave crosses between the columns. The porch railing is composed of turned spindles. Six modern brick steps lead up to the porch.

The double entrance door is in the right bay. A massive architrave (7½ inches wide) surrounds the doorway with its segmental head. A deep segmental cornice (or hood) extends out across the head. The double doors are of three panels. The lower panels are square and the middle are tall rectangles, while the upper glazed panels are curved at the top. The doors are painted dark green with tan panels and trim.

The two windows to the left of the doorway are very tall, extending up to the height of the doorway and down to within six inches of the porch floor. Their surrounds are of medium width (4¾ inches) compared to the doorway. All windows have iron pintels but are without shutters. Each window has a segmental cornice. The sash are two-over-two. Aluminum storm windows protect the sash and both are painted dark green.

On the second floor are three windows with segmental heads and two-over-two sash. These windows are of the same width as the first-floor windows, but one-third shorter. Each has a bracketed cornice. The cornices of the outer two windows are straight while the center cornice is gabled. Two brackets lift the cornices above the head of the window.

The brackets of both house and porch are formed of two flowing curves, the top larger curve coming outwards, almost like a comma, and the smaller curve going inward at the bottom. This could be called a reverse-S curve. The architrave of the entablature is created with several

horizontal moldings. The frieze is divided by curving brackets holding the cornice. Between the brackets the frieze is decorated with moldings in a rectangular shape simulating panels. The brackets are spaced irregularly to emphasize the large segmental cornice above the entablature. Within this segmental cornice is a solid round bull's-eye decoration.

The low hip roof has an unusual feature not visible from the street. The dramatic segmental pediment is not a simple parapet. Like a blind dormer, the area behind the cornice is enclosed with a segmental arched roof joined into the front hip.

The south elevation is of three bays. On the first floor there are two windows with segmental heads, segmental cornices and bracketed sills. The third bay (nearest the rear of the house) contains a bay window. This bay window is composed of three sash. The larger center sash is parallel to the body of the house, and the narrower side windows are angled to create the bay. The bay window rests on a solid brick foundation. Moldings create rectangular recessed panels below the windows and a bracketed cornice is above the windows. Pilasters with simple bases and capitals mark the corners of the bay and where the bay joins the main block.

The second floor has two windows directly above those of the first floor and with the same decoration. The second window is blind and shuttered. The third window, which is above the bay window, is a paired window with similar trim but without brackets below the sill.

The north elevation of the main block is of two bays. Two windows like those of the south elevation are found on both the first and second floors. The windows of the two floors are spaced directly above one another. The first floor window nearest the façade is a blind shuttered window. The elevation has two metal conduits located just behind the porch and second bay.

The west elevation of the main block is mostly hidden by the rear wing, but includes several courses of clapboard below the frieze. The southwest corner includes one second-floor window above the rear porch.

The Rear Extension (16 x 17 feet): a rectangular wing, in the style and materials of the main block, and of original date to it, is joined flush on the rear (western) elevation. Its two-story height is lower than the main block.

The south elevation of the wing is recessed from the main block and a one-story porch fills the recessed area. The eastern half of the original porch is filled in to create an interior space. One modern double six-paned window is centered in this enclosed space. The porch is supported with a corner column in the Italianate style like those of the front porch. A pair of brackets supports the cornice above the column. The porch floor is of modern brick. On the south wall of the wing is a modern door and to its left is a small rectangular window with leaded glass. Four brick steps lead up to the porch.

The second floor of the south elevation has two windows with two-over-two sash trimmed in the manner of the main block's windows. An entablature with bracketed and paneled cornice like that of the main block, but slightly smaller, surrounds the wing.

The west elevation of the wing has only one window. It is a modern Anderson window and is on the second floor.

The north elevation of the wing is flush with the main block and has two windows, one centered on each floor. They are trimmed in the style of the windows of the main block. The first-floor window is double. The second-floor window is single.

The Site: The lot slopes upward from the street and levels off where the house stands about 40 feet away from the street. The house occupies the right half of the lot. At the rear near the lot line is a non-historic one-and-a-half-story workshop.

Report by
Barnett Shepherd, Consultant

NOTES

[1] Mark Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster: History on the Half Shell* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006), 248.

[2] *Holden's Staten Island: The History of Richmond County,* edited and compiled by Richard Dickenson (Staten Island, New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2002), 369.

[3]*Richmond County Gazette,* Oct. 9, 1873. Clipping in the Prince's Bay file, Archives of the Staten Island Museum.

[4]W. H. Rideing, "A Spring Jaunt in Staten Island," *Harper's Magazine,* (Sept. 1878), 555. The "old tavern by the water-side"could be the Abraham Manee House, a designated New York City Landmark. It is a pre-Revolutionary War building facing the bay at Seguine Avenue and was originally the Seguine family homestead. In the 19th century it was for a time known as Purdy's Hotel.

[5] Around 1837 Joseph H. Seguine built a Greek Revival house on high ground overlooking the Lemon Creek estuary and the bay. Its four-columned portico facing the bay provides extensive views of the Raritan Bay and the New Jersey highlands beyond. Today the Joseph H. Seguine House is a designated New York City Landmark.

[6] United States Census, 1790, Richmond County, Westfield, p. 232.

[7]The name "Lemon Creek" may refer to the pollution of the creek caused by privies, which drained into it, and the waste on its banks discarded by fishermen.

[8]*Richmond County Gazette,* (Oct. 9, 1872).

[9]*Map of Staten Island, Richmond County, N.Y. Showing the Colonial Land Patents from 1668 to 1721.* Prepared under the direction of Frederick Skene, State Engineer and Surveyor, 1907. Copy in the Staten Island Historical Society Archives.

[10] United States Census, 1790, Richmond County, Westfield, pp. 229, 230, 232, 233. The Abrm. Cole Junr, John Marshall, James Johnson, Abrm. Johnson, Jacob Winant, Isaac Menee and Peter Winant houses are listed with no slaves, the Abrm. Cole Senr. Household included five slaves, Cornelius Cole and Abrm Menee both included two, Joseph Seguin and John Andervat both included three, John Marshall included seven.

[11]Kurlansky, 29.

[12]Clyde L. MacKenzie, Jr., *The Fisheries of Raritan Bay* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 30.

[13]MacKenzie, 31.

[14]Kurlansky, 282 and MacKenzie, 148.

[15]Ira K. Morris, *Morris's Memorial History of Staten Island, New York* (West New Brighton, Staten Island, New York: Published by the Author, 1900). v. II, p. 509.

[16]*Trow's New York City Directory*, 1880-81, 1884-85, 1885-86, 1887-88.

[17]*Bayonne Centennial Historical Revue, 1861-1961* (Bayonne, New Jersey: Bayonne Centennial Committee), no pagination.

[18]MacKenzie, 78.

[19]MacKenzie, 63.

[20]*Bayonne Centennial Historical Revue.*

[21]*Prominent Men of Staten Island, 189.* (New York: A.Y. Hubbell, Publisher, 1893), 77.

[22]*Trow's New York City Directory*, 1893-94, 394. Dates and other biographical information for the Elsworth brothers were provided in part by Richard Simpson from the archives of the Moravian Cemetery, Staten Island.

[23]Morris, v. II, p. 509.

[24]*Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1870.* Worcester County, Maryland, 2nd Election District. I thank Linda Cutler Hauck for locating this citation and other census records.

[25]Barnett Shepherd, "How Sandy Ground Began and Flourished," from *Sandy Ground Memories* by Lois A. H. Mosley (Staten Island, New York: Staten Island Historical Society, 2003), 22-23.

[26]Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 128, p. 267.

[27]*Prominent Men*, 77. After he came to Staten Island John H. Elsworth apparently was not part of his Bayonne uncles' oyster business.

[28]*Trow's Business and Residential Directory of the Borough of Richmond, New York* (New York: Trow Directory, Printing and Bookbinding Co., 1898), 32.

[29]*Prominent Men*, 77.

[30]"Republican Leader Sued," unidentified, undated newspaper clipping. Collection of Russell Powell.

[31]*New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1897.

[32]John H. Elsworth's will is on file in the Surrogate's Office, St. George. File P3020. Elizabeth is his sole beneficiary. Documents in the Surrogate's file provide names of John's uncles and an aunt and other descendants.

[33]*Population Schedules of the Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900.* Richmond County, Fifth Ward, Sheet 12.

[34]Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1733-1950: A History and Guide* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 91-93. In Bicknell's presentation Second Empire houses predominate, but they include Italianate features akin to those of the Elsworth House.

[35]The post and beam construction with mortise and tenon found in the Elsworth House suggests a local vernacular builder.

[36]Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 510, p. 371 and *Population Schedules of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920.* Richmond County, Fifth Ward, Sheet 9A.

[37]Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 545, p. 161, and *Population Schedules of the Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930.* Richmond County, Fifth Ward, Sheet 1A.

[38]Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 704, p. 537.

[39]Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1142, p. 296, and interview with Russell Powell.

[40]Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1537, p. 71; Liber 1904, p. 263; Wikipedia; and www.billcrowbass.com.

[41]Richmond County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 3062 , p. 141.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

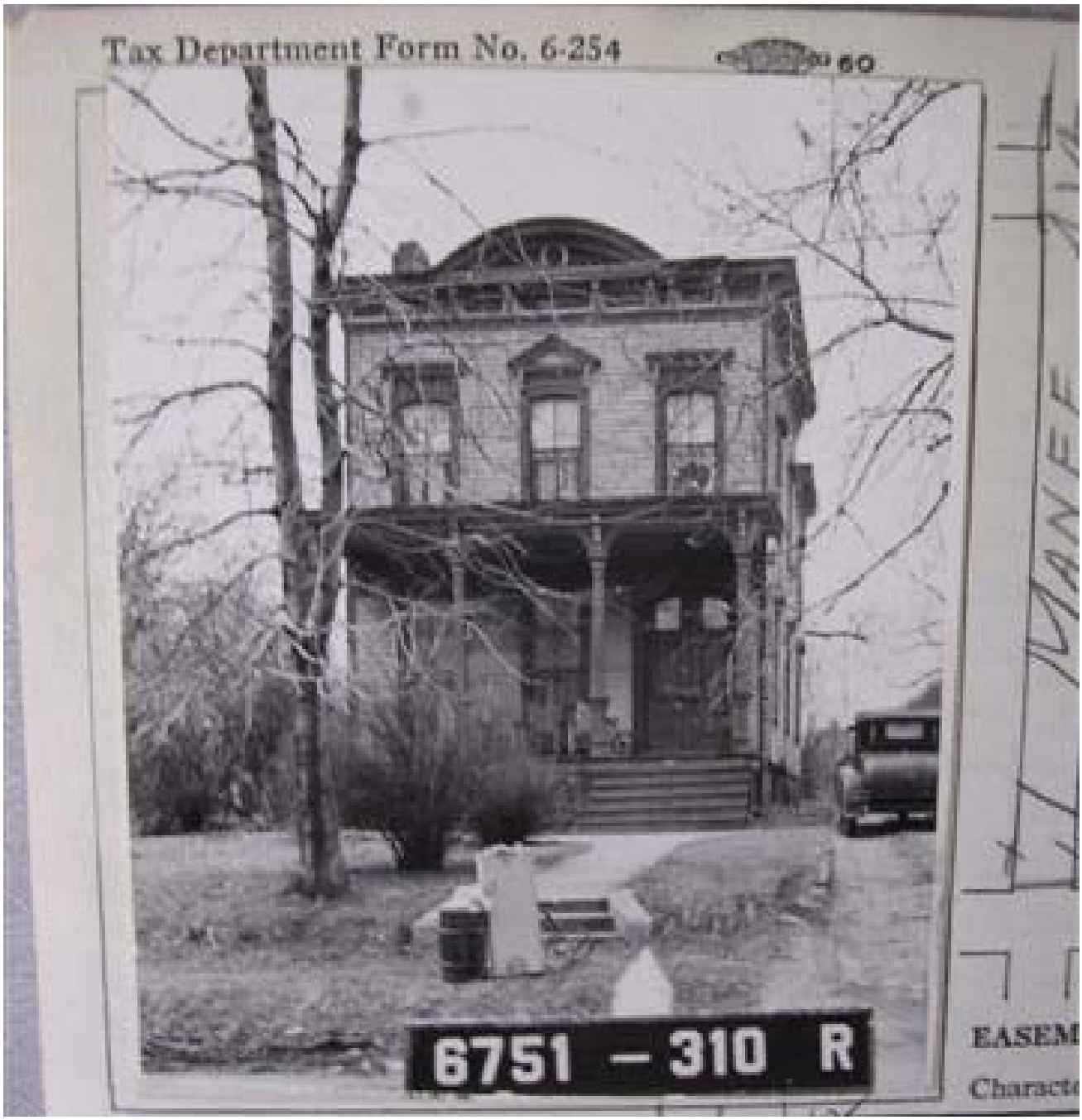
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House has a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development,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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities the John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House, constructed c. 1880, is significant for its architectural design as a vernacular clapboard three-bay town house with a bold and unusual combination of Italianate and Renaissance features; that the highly intact house represents a once-common house type on Staten Island, the three-bay Italianate town house with a low, hidden, hipped roof that has become increasingly rare; that it is made unusual through its town house designed deployed in a rural setting, its severe frontality and dramatic height; that is also features a distinctive second floor window with a triangular pediment and the large curving pediment above the cornice, which is a feature more typically found on commercial structures; that the first owners, John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth resided in the house for 39 years; that Elsworth was an oyster planter, Sheriff of Richmond County from 1889 to 1891 and Richmond County Clerk from 1892 to 1899; that the house is located near Prince's Bay the premier location for Staten Island's oyster planting industry and that the Elsworth House was constructed during the golden age of oyster fishing in the New York metropolitan region and represents the prosperity of that era.

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 designated as a Landmark the John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House, 90 Bayview Avenue, Borough of Staten island and designates Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 6751, Lot 310 as its Landmark Site.

Robert. B. Tierney, Chairman
Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice-Chairman
Diana Chapin, Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter,
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners

John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House
90 Bayview Avenue
Staten Island
Photo: Barnett Shepherd, 2008

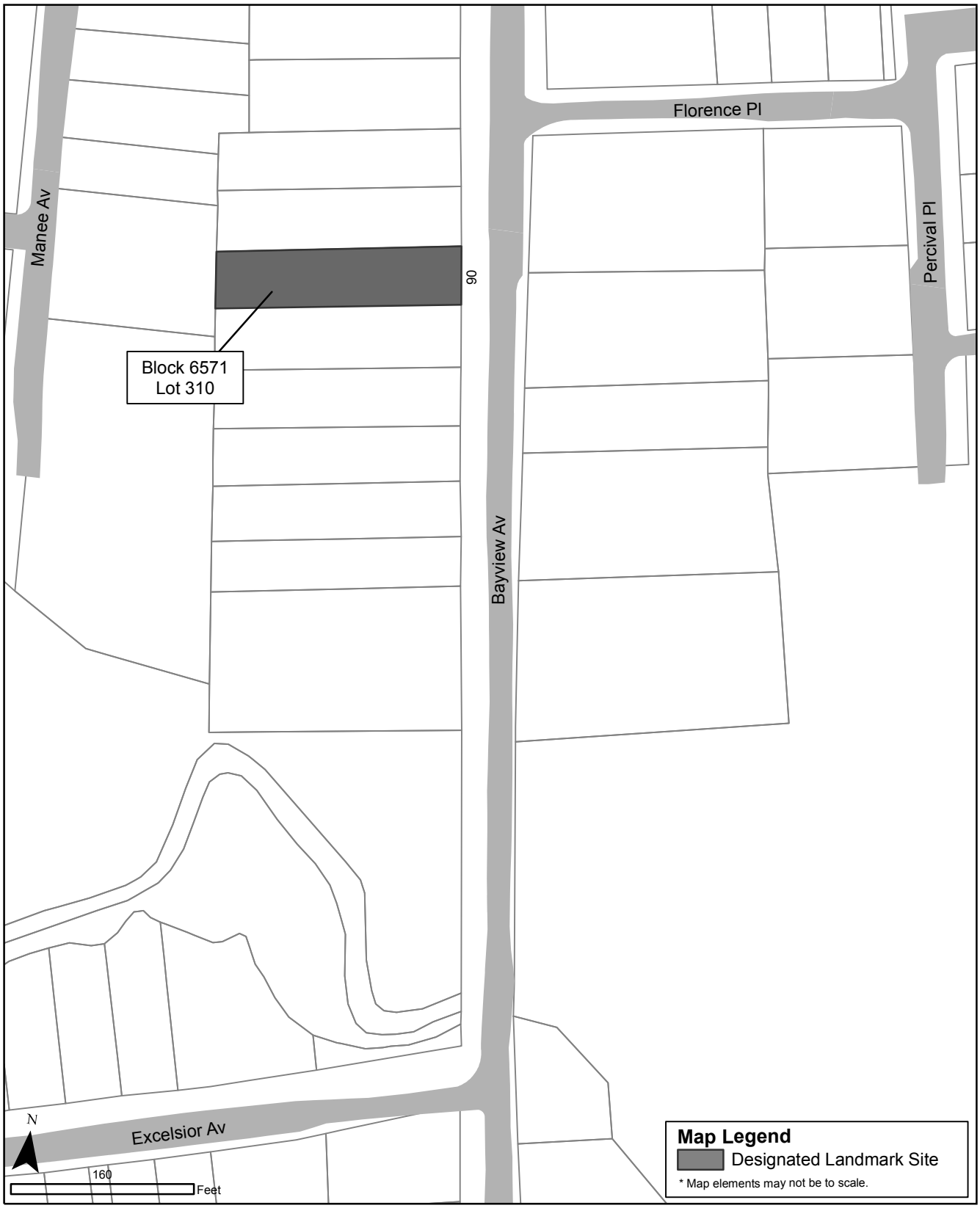


John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House
New York City Tax Photo, c. 1940

John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House
Rear views
Photos: Barnett Shepherd, 2008

John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House
Side Elevations
Photos: Barnett Shepherd, 2008

John H. and Elizabeth J. Elsworth House
Porch Details
Photos: Barnett Shepherd, 2008



JOHN H. AND ELIZABETH J. ELSWORTH HOUSE (LP-2325), 90 Bayview Avenue.
Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 6751, Lot 310.

Designated: January 13, 2008

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 06C, December 2006.
Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, JM.