

Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 16, 2006, Designation List 374
LP- 2192

Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House, 134 Main Street, Staten Island.
Built c. 1850; architect unknown.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond, Tax Map Block 8028, Lot 63

On July 26, 2005, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart 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. Seven witnesses spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society of America, the Historic Districts Council, the Tottenville Historical Society, West Brighton Restoration Society and the Preservation League of Staten Island. No one spoke in opposition. The Commission also received several e-mails in support, a statement of support from the Municipal Arts Society and a letter of support from Councilmember Andrew J. Lanza.



Summary

The Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House, built ca. 1850, is a rare survivor of early Tottenville, an important 19th-century town on Staten Island's South Shore. This vernacular clapboard cottage merges older local building traditions with newer Greek and Gothic Revival modes. Its doorway is an excellent example of the Greek Revival style, while the curvilinear bargeboards are expressions of the Gothic Revival. The richly ornamented 1870s front porch (which probably replaced an earlier porch) features articulated carved posts, cutwork spandrels and an exuberant railing. The entire house is substantially intact. Sharing architectural forms with other Tottenville houses, this is one of the best-preserved houses representing South Shore Staten Island's early building traditions.

Through its succession of owners, the house has close ties to the oyster business which created the town of Tottenville. It was built as an investment on the newly laid-out Totten Street (later called Main Street) by Henry Butler, of a Tottenville family whose ferrymen and millers went back several generations. Three years later it was owned by William H. B. Totten, a grocer, and four years after that by Joseph W. Totten, a partner in an oyster-opening firm. Theodore F. De Hart, an oyster planter, was the owner of longest duration, from 1874 to 1913. 134 Main Street is one of the two oldest houses on this important Tottenville street.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Tottenville

Tottenville is located on the shore of the Arthur Kill near Ward's Point, the southwestern tip of Staten Island and the southernmost point in New York City and New York State. Far from the urban culture of Manhattan, Tottenville remains a small isolated village. Across the Arthur Kill lies the city of Perth Amboy, New Jersey. South of Ward's Point is the Raritan Bay. The village of Tottenville came into being around 1840. Its economy and culture arose from oyster fishing, shipbuilding and ship repair, and agriculture. Its trade routes with New Jersey and New York City linked it to the metropolitan region and the greater world. It became the largest town in Westfield, the historic name for this quarter of Staten Island. Even today, though encroached upon by modern suburban culture, the feeling of a small coastal town prevails with characteristics unlike any other place on Staten Island. Tottenville residents prize their isolated location.

Before There Was Tottenville

Long before Europeans arrived in the New World, Native Americans of the Lenni Lenape group of the Delaware Nation were attracted to the beauty of the elevated shoreline and the abundance of oysters growing in the Arthur Kill and Raritan Bay. Major archaeological evidence of their encampments and burial grounds has been found on Ward's Point. By 1670 the Lenape had sold their land to European colonists and had departed from Staten Island.

Christopher Billopp, an Englishman, was the first European to settle in the area. He arrived in New York harbor with Major Edmund Andros in 1674. Andros became the Royal Governor of New York and Billopp, an officer in the British navy, was commissioned Lieutenant. In 1677 Billopp laid claim to 932 acres on Staten Island, soon thereafter building an imposing two-story stone house on the shore overlooking Perth Amboy. In 1687 he was given a royal charter for 1600 acres (including the original 932 acres) and made Lord of the Manor of Bentley. The manor would include today's Tottenville, Richmond Valley, Pleasant Plains and part of Prince's Bay. Although Billopp stayed on Staten Island only intermittently, his wife apparently lived in the manor house and his land was improved for farming. His grandson Thomas Farmar, who changed his surname to Billopp, inherited the manor in 1732 and lived there full time. Thomas's son Christopher Billopp (1732-1827) lived in the stone house through much of the American Revolution (known as Conference House, a designated New York City landmark). During his ownership the house was plundered both by Hessian soldiers and American patriots and Christopher sought refuge in his father-in-law's house nearby. The Billopp House was the meeting place for the Peace Conference held on Sept. 11, 1776. John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Edward Rutledge met with Lord Howe. The conference was unsuccessful and the war continued. In 1782, Christopher Billopp began to sell portions of the manor. Among the buyers were members of the Totten family. In 1783 Billopp left Staten Island.¹ Sixty years later, this area would become the village of Tottenville.²

The Totten Family

John Totten (d. 1785), a weaver, was probably the first Totten to settle on Staten Island. In 1767 he purchased land on Prince's Bay from the executors of Thomas Billopp.³ Local historians Charles Leng and William T. Davis say that he was an Englishman, who came to Staten Island from Westchester County.⁴

Gilbert Totten (ca. 1740-1819), John Totten's son, purchased four parcels in what would become Tottenville. Gilbert was a farmer and according to the 1790 census owned five slaves. Gilbert and Mary Butler Totten, his wife, were among the founders of the Woodrow Methodist Church, the mother church of Methodism on Staten Island. Impressive Greek Revival obelisks mark their graves in the church's cemetery. In the 1850s two of their great-grandsons resided at different times on Totten Street (later called Main Street) in the small clapboard house that is today's 134 Main Street.

Tottenville, the Town the Oyster Built

Gilbert Totten's original farm was near Dissosway's mill in the northeastern part of what would become Tottenville. Gilbert and Mary were the parents of eight children. One of their sons, John Totten, Sr. (1771-1846), who married Anne (Nancy) Cole (1773-1840), had 12 children, five of whom can be documented as significant to Tottenville's history. They are James Totten (1797-1879), blacksmith; John Totten, Jr. (1801-1872), oysterman;

Abraham C. Totten (1804-1877), “mariner”; Ephraim J. Totten (1806-1891), sea captain and merchant; and William Totten (b.1813), dock and shipyard superintendent. These vocations indicate the family’s affiliation with the oyster fishing and maritime trades.

According to one local historian, the name Tottenville may have been in use as early as 1832.⁵ The Bethel Methodist Church was built in 1841 on Amboy Road on land given by John Totten, Sr. The church was a social as well as a religious center for Tottenville. In 1852 one of their famous oyster suppers netted \$275.10.⁶ The first printed reference to the name “Tottenville” is found on Butler’s Map of 1853. This map shows an unnamed Main Street with about 20 houses leading to “Totten’s Landing” on the Arthur Kill. The landing became the terminus for the ferry to Perth Amboy, superseding Billopp’s Landing at the foot of Amboy Road. By the 1870s Main Street had become the locale for homes of the elite. Oysterman John Totten, Jr. and sea captain-merchant Ephraim J. Totten lived there.

The oystermen needed ship repair facilities and the first facility, superintended by William Totten, was built at the foot of Main Street alongside Totten’s Landing. Many additional ship repair facilities would be established in the following decades. Shipbuilding was underway by 1847, with the construction of the Rutan family shipyard near the foot of Amboy Road. In 1860 Tottenville became the terminus of the Staten Island Railroad, which afforded access for commuters to Staten Island’s North Shore and Manhattan. For many decades the Staten Island Railroad operated the ferryboat Maid of Perth to Perth Amboy. Several hotels-boarding houses were located on Main Street near Totten’s Landing.

By the 1880s Tottenville had entered the golden age of oyster fishing, as the 1886 Picturesque Staten Island and Illustrated Sketch Book of Staten Island indicate:

To arrive in Tottenville is to become sensible of the importance of the oyster. Anchored out in the Kill; made fast to the little wharves; under sail in the offing, white-hulled oyster sloops meet the eye on every side. Below the bluffs, the beach is lined with oyster floats, upon which the bivalves in the fall are taken to the fresher waters of New Jersey rivers to be fattened for the market; oyster shells are everywhere. The largest and most comfortable houses in and about the village, we are told, belong to oystermen, active and retired, whose modest fortunes have been raked from the great oyster-beds covering the bottom of the Lower Bay from Staten Island to Keyport. Here the oyster is king.⁷

Comfortable, tidy and sometimes elegant cottages and residences appear on every street of this thriving village. It is a pretty little town, and no one can help but be favorably impressed with its appearance; the location is high and dry; the streets which are regularly laid out and well kept, run on a gentle slope to the water. It has also the reputation of being healthful and salubrious.⁸

Ship repair and shipbuilding companies flourished into the 20th century. A major new industry, Atlantic Terracotta, opened its factory in 1897. By 1906 it employed over 450 men. The Tottenville Copper Company was also established during this period, later becoming the Nassau Smelting Company.

The closing of the Raritan Bay oyster beds in 1925 marked the end of an era. Oyster beds were declared unsafe due to water pollution. About 1915 “authorities found that some shipments from the bay were making people as far away as Chicago sick with typhoid fever and intestinal diseases.... New York dealers became reluctant to purchase oysters from the bay. The industry declined, and finally in 1925 oyster planters abandoned the bay amid much negative newspaper publicity about polluted oysters being sold.”⁹

The rise of the automobile brought suburban life and more change. The Outerbridge Crossing opened in 1928. The opening of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in 1964 and the construction of interstate highways on Staten Island fostered rapid population growth on the South Shore. Tottenville has been discovered by upwardly mobile homeowners seeking a suburban retreat.

Early Owners of 134 Main Street

Henry Butler (1821-1899) built the house at 134 Main Street after he acquired the lot from John Totten, Jr., for \$250 on October 11, 1849.¹⁰ This may be one of the first houses on the street. Butler may have been related to the Totten family through Mary Butler Totten, wife of Gilbert Totten. Isaac Butler, of an earlier generation than Henry Butler, operated the Perth Amboy ferry from 1788 to 1828.¹¹ After 1803 the Butler family acquired

Dissosway's mill.¹² The "J. J. Butler Store" appears on Main Street on Dripps' Map of 1850. Henry Butler is listed in the Richmond County Census of Westfield for 1855 and other years, but his vocation is not given.

Dripps' Map of 1850 shows "J. Fischer" residing in the house. The 1855 Census lists James W. Fisher, aged 30, "oysterman." Apparently Henry Butler built the house as an investment and rented it to Fischer. Butler sold the house four years after purchasing the lot.¹³

William H. B. Totten (b. ca. 1831) purchased the house on Nov. 28, 1853.¹⁴ The 1855 Census lists him as merchant, residing in a brick house valued at \$3,000 and probably did not live in the 134 Main Street house. It appears that he invested in Tottenville real estate over many years. On Beers' Atlas of 1887 "W. H. B. Totten" appears beside two Main Street buildings at the corner of Washington Street, which appear to be commercial buildings. In the 1898 atlas he owns these buildings as well as a residence on Broadway nearby and four identical houses around the corner on Butler Avenue. The 1917 atlas shows him also owning waterfront property at the foot of Butler Avenue. At some point William H. B. Totten moved to Manhattan and became a grocer, then a commission merchant and later president of the Irving Savings Bank.¹⁵ His wife was Mary L. Totten. He owned the house for only two and one-half years before selling it to his cousin, Joseph W. Totten.

On March 25, 1856, Joseph W. Totten (1832?-1858) purchased the house for \$1,400 from W. H. B. Totten. Joseph was the son of John Totten, Jr. and Elizabeth Butler Totten. According to the 1855 Census, he was a partner in an oyster-opening firm that produced 12,000 gallons annually and employed 15 persons. He owned the house for less than three years.

On Dec. 16, 1858, the house was sold for \$1200 to Mary L. Totten, wife of W. H. B. Totten, the earlier owner.¹⁶ In less than one year she sold the house to Cornelius Dissosway.

Cornelius Dissosway (1833-1902) purchased the house for \$1,500 on Nov. 28, 1859.¹⁷ He was a ship captain, according to local historian B. J. Joline.¹⁸ He is listed, but without his vocation being given, in the 1865 Census for Westfield, with the value of his house given as \$1800. His wife was Mary J. Dissosway. He was a board member of the Woodrow Methodist Church.¹⁹ Beers' Atlas of 1874 reads "Capt. C. Dissosway" beside a house three doors south of 134 Main Street. He is buried in the Bethel Church cemetery.²⁰ In the late 18th century his grandfather had owned Dissosway's mill.²¹

Theodore F. De Hart (1830-1913) purchased the house for \$2,600 on March 20, 1874.²² He was the son of Henry De Hart, a Tottenville oysterman. Theodore's wife was Elizabeth Jane De Hart (1834-1909), daughter of David Decker.²³ Theodore is listed as an "oyster planter" in the 1875 Census along with three of his brothers. Oyster planters acquired oyster seed from Maryland or Virginia and planted them in the waters around Staten Island. Long poles rising from the water marked the presence of oyster beds. There the seed matured over a year's time and were harvested. De Hart was no doubt the owner of a Staten Island skiff, a small boat designed specifically for use in the waters around the Island and perhaps another larger boat for carrying the oysters to market in Manhattan. The oyster business of the City of New York was centered on the Hudson River at the feet of West 10th and Charles Streets.²⁴

Theodore De Hart resided at 134 Main Street until his death in 1913. This is the longest residency by far of any owner. Theodore and his wife Elizabeth J. De Hart are buried in the Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery.²⁵

Mina (also called Elmina) De Hart Cole was the only child of Theodore F. De Hart and Elizabeth J. De Hart. She was residing at 134 Main Street at the time of her father's death and inherited the house as his sole heir.²⁶

From 1849 to 1913 the owners of the De Hart House were members of Tottenville families prominent in the town's most important industry, the oyster industry. Main Street, as its name implies, was Tottenville's most important street.

The Design of 134 Main Street

The house at 134 Main Street was constructed around 1850 as a simple three-bay, one- and one-half story, clapboard cottage. Its rectangular plan of hall and parlor, end placement of the fireplace and straight gable roof, follows a long tradition of vernacular residential architecture on Staten Island since the first houses appeared in the late 17th century. Its newness is found in its wide Greek Revival doorway, small low second-story windows and wavy bargeboards at the gable ends. The wing on the south side may be original, or may have been added a short time after the house was built. The dramatic porch on the front and one side of the house and the bay window on the wing are clearly later additions, as are the three rear wings.

The small second-story windows probably echo the "eyebrow windows" of the Greek Revival style seen

in Staten Island houses of the 1830s and 1840s. An example of eyebrow windows may be seen in the Stephens House and Store (a designated New York City Landmark) at Historic Richmond Town. Here at 134 Main Street they are not placed in the frieze, to light the attic, but are in the main wall below it. A design for a farmhouse found in Minard Lafever's *Young Builder's General Instructor* (1829) shows three small horizontally shaped windows placed below the frieze and an illustration of "an unimproved farmhouse" from A. J. Downing's *Albany Cultivator* (1846) shows three windows similar to Lafever's placed well below the frieze. Whether or not our builder knew of these designs cannot be ascertained, but this design is a free interpretation of these forms and emphasizes an older approach to a new idea.

The dramatic carved porch posts with plinths and capitals, the railing and the charming scrollwork date most likely to the 1870s, as do the large scroll brackets. Similar posts and brackets are found nearby at 7484 Amboy Road, the James L. and Lucinda Bedell House (ca. 1870), a designated New York City landmark. The teardrop centered in the spandrels is often found in Eastlake decoration. It was a form favored by Tottenville carpenters, as it is found not only on these two houses, but on at least ten other houses in the area.

The horizontality of the Main Street house, emphasized by the front wing, reflects the farmhouse tradition more than the village tradition and underscores the rural atmosphere of early Tottenville. The lot size of slightly more than one third of an acre, much wider than the usual 25-foot village lot, allowed the builder to place the wide elevation of the house across the front. This long front placement of the house is seen on several other smaller Tottenville lots.

Another house of very similar design is found nearby at 7647 Amboy Road. Here can be seen the same broad placement of the house on the lot, the Greek Revival doorway, the low second-floor windows, and the adjoining wing. In this house the original porch with square Greek Revival columns survives. The similarities of the two houses suggest a common carpenter-builder.

The Greek Revival style was first used by builders on Staten Island in the 1830s in public buildings like Sailors' Snug Harbor (1831) and the Third County Courthouse at Richmond (1837). (The Third County Courthouse and portions of Sailors' Snug Harbor are designated New York City Landmarks.) Private residences include simple three-bay houses from the late 1830s in Stapleton and Richmond. Jasper Cropsey (1823-1900), the Hudson River School painter who grew up in Rossville and practiced architecture briefly, designed the Greek Revival Moravian Church in New Dorp in 1843. While by 1850 this style was no longer new, its popularity continued. The Greek Revival style, chosen for the earliest buildings in Tottenville, is also exemplified in large porticoed houses such as the William H. Rutan House (ca. 1848) and the Henry Hogg Biddle House (ca. 1850, a designated New York City Landmark).

Although plan books by Asher Benjamin and Minard Lafever popularized the Greek Revival style throughout America, rarely did local builders use plans as presented, rather they chose aspects of the designs that suited their needs and mixed designs freely. Lafever presented only two complete houses in *Modern Builder's Guide* (1833). Daniel D. Reiff in *Houses from Books* (2001) states:

Most Greek Revival houses are very different from Lafever's two plates. In fact, one of the most popular vernacular types for farmhouses and small urban dwellings has very little in common with either Lafever design: no freestanding columns, one rather than two wings, and an abbreviated pediment with the horizontal member interrupted to allow the insertion of windows in the half-story above.²⁷

This description sounds like 134 Main Street.

The Gothic Revival style is rare in Tottenville. Staten Island's first resident architect, William Ranlett (1806-1865), built several cottages in the Gothic style on the North Shore. Richard Upjohn (1802-1876) designed a Gothic cottage for Thomas Taylor, who owned property near Prince's Bay, but this house was apparently never built (only a single drawing for it exists today in the collections of the Avery Library). A. J. Davis (1803-1892) designed a Gothic cottage for Mr. Hasbrouck of Concord. A drawing of this house, which still exists today, was published in *The Horticulturist*, March 1847. Tottenville's buildings of the 1850s are nearly all in the Greek style and conform to the vernacular carpenter-builder tradition. They are expressive of conservative knowledge and preferences.

The wavy bargeboards at the gable ends of the house are usually associated with the Gothic Revival style. Wavy bargeboards are found on at least two other Staten Island houses of the early 1850s, namely the Dr. Samuel

MacKenzie Elliott House on Delafield Place in Livingston and the Parsonage at Historic Richmond Town. These two houses (both designated New York City Landmarks) are fully within the Gothic style. The wavy bargeboards at 134 Main Street could have coexisted with the Greek doorway and may be original, making the house an early expression of eclecticism and an example of Gothic Revival details on the South Shore of Staten Island.

Later Owners of 134 Main Street

Fannie B. Decker may have inherited 134 Main Street through Elizabeth J. De Hart's daughter, Mina Cole. No deed has been found. Fannie B. Decker may have been a relative of Elizabeth J. De Hart.²⁸

William Wilson and his wife Margery D. Wilson purchased the property on Jan. 22, 1945 from Fannie B. Decker, then residing in Hampton, Virginia.²⁹ They were residing in the house at the time of the purchase. The following was written about the house during the Wilson residency:

The Cornelius Dissosway mansion ..., now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William Wilson, was one of Tottenville's most beautiful residences. Its spacious rooms and French windows are most attractive. Passers-by have paused to note its elegance, when lights have gleamed from within.³⁰

Maurine J. LeCato of 321 Clove Road purchased the property from the Wilsons on Jan. 26, 1950.³¹ On May 8, 1968, Benjamin F. Bedell and Marie Bedell of Tottenville purchased the property from Maurine LeCato.³² Benjamin Franklin Bedell (1916-ca. 1995) was the owner of a grocery store at 111 Main Street. He was born in Perth Amboy. After service in World War II he purchased the Main Street store and came to live in Tottenville. His grandfather John Bedell owned the first drug store in Tottenville.

Description

134 Main Street is a white clapboard cottage composed of five rectangular parts with a dramatic porch. It rests on a low foundation, which is hidden from view.

The main block of the house is one and one-half stories, three bays wide and two bays deep. It has a gable roof, the long side facing the street. All the roofs are clad in non-historic asphalt shingles. A single-story, ell-shaped porch with a shed roof extends across the front and north elevations. The walls are sheathed with original white-painted wide clapboard. The first floor sash windows are two-over-two panes and the front windows of the second floor are three panes wide and hinged at the top. These small windows are placed well below the frieze. The sash windows of the north side are six-over-six panes. The architraves on both the first-floor and second-floor windows are plain. There are canted wood sills. All windows have original green painted louvered shutters with wrought-iron tie backs.

On the primary façade an elaborate front porch with widely spaced carved wood posts (five along the front and three more along the north side) provides the initial impression of the house. The square white-painted posts are beveled at the edges and divided by large moldings demarcating a pedestal base and a capital. Springing from the capitals are cut-wood spandrels in an elegant scroll pattern forming a low arch. In the center of the arch is a trefoil teardrop. The posts support a plain entablature. Elongated console brackets above each capital reach up to support the cornice hiding the Yankee gutters. Two moldings decorate the cornice. The plank ceiling of the porch is painted light blue. A porch railing extends between the posts at the height of the pedestal bases. Just below the top rail is a wide board with cutouts of alternating diamonds and circles. This board and the lower rail hold turned spindles. The porch posts and rail are remarkably intact.

The porch is two steps up from the modern concrete sidewalk with the lower step being a single wide brownstone block. The front doorway sheltered by the porch is in the Greek Revival style with plain broad outer pilasters supporting the entablature and narrower pilasters directly beside the door opening. The pilasters have simple blocked bases and capitals. Between the pilasters are narrow sidelights of three glass panes. Below the panes is a coffered panel. The shallow entablature is of three parts. Dentils below a molding divide the architrave from the shallow frieze. The cornice is composed of two thick moldings. The original door is hidden by a modern wood black-painted storm door.

A shallow frieze marks the wall of the main block. Inserted into the frieze are widely spaced thin brackets holding the cornice and Yankee gutter. This cornice-gutter has a classical return at each end.

On the north façade of the main block extends a porch of the same design as that of the main façade, and contiguous with it. Two second-story windows, one on either side of the chimney, have plain architraves and sills.

A modern louvered vent is inserted into the attic wall to the right of the chimney. A dramatic curvilinear bargeboard decorates the gable end of roof. The peak of the bargeboard forms a gothic arch. A wide, stepped brick end chimney rises from the body of the house at the peak of the roof. It appears to have been enlarged on its south side and this alteration is banded to the whole with a metal strip.

The west façade is partially hidden by the two-story addition. Only the northern end of the west façade is visible. It has one two-over-two sash window on the first floor. The clapboards of the west façade are considerably wider than those of the front and sides.

The south façade is mostly hidden by the one and one-half story addition. Its curvilinear bargeboard matches that of the north façade. A large metal triangular louver is at the peak of the attic.

The south wing, also of one and one-half stories, is joined flush to the main block of the house, although the height is lower. This wing has a gable roof. On the first floor facing the street is a very large bay window composed of four sash windows, two-over-two panes. On the second floor are three-pane windows like those of the main block. The south elevation has six over six sash windows with louvered shutters. They are covered with modern aluminum storm windows.

The south wing contains a large bay window on the first floor, which spans across its entire east façade. It is composed of four, round-headed sash windows. The sash are painted black. Two large windows parallel to the street are two-over-two. Two smaller one-over-one windows are slanted to create the bay. The wall below the windowsills is decorated with moldings in a rectangular shape. The roof of the bay window has a deep cornice with molding. The cornice is supported by heavy sinuous curving brackets, placed below the cornice in the space between each of the windows.

On the second story are three small windows similar to those of the main block. Above these windows is a deep plain entablature and cornice holding a Yankee gutter. The cornice returns on each end of the wing. A modern aluminum down spout is located at the northern end of the gutter.

The south façade has one six-over-six sash window on the first floor and two on the second floor. The windows are flanked by louvered green-painted shutters. The gable end of the roof is decorated with a curvilinear bargeboard of the same type as that of the main block of the house.

The west façade is hidden by the rear wing. The north façade is hidden by the main block of the house.

Directly behind the south wing and flush with it is a one-story rear addition. It is two bays deep and two bays wide and has a shed roof. It too is clad with white painted clapboard. Two windows on its south side are obstructed by a modern fence. The one-story rear addition has a shed roof. The south façade has two two-over-two windows with shutters. They are hidden by a modern chain-link fence. The west façade is hidden by a vine-covered lattice structure. The roof of this latticework is supported by large wood cutwork brackets. Partially visible over the rear door is a hood, which is also supported by the same type bracket. The clapboard siding is twice the width of the clapboards on the front and side elevations of the house. The north façade is hidden by the two-story wing. The east façade is hidden by the south wing.

Directly behind the main block and flush with it and the second wing is a two-story rear wing. It is one bay deep and two bays wide and has a shed roof. Its roof extends over part of the roof of the main block. The windows are two panes over two panes. The two-story rear wing is joined to the main block of the house. The east façade is hidden. The roof extends over the rear slope of the roof of the main block. On the south façade the first floor is hidden by the one-story rear addition. The second floor of the south façade has one two-over-two sash window with a plain architrave. The walls are covered with wide clapboard. The shed roof has a very thin cornice. A brick chimney rises near the south edge of the roof. It has a tall metal ventilator cap. The first floor of the west façade is hidden by the west wing. The second floor has two two-over-two sash windows each flanked by green louvered shutters. These windows have modern aluminum storm windows. A Yankee gutter extends slightly beyond the wall. The north façade of the two-story rear wing is clad in wide clapboard. A single window on the first floor is composed of two frames side by side with six panes each. It has a plain architrave. There is a two-over-two sash window on the second floor. The second-floor window is spaced somewhat to the right of the lower window, not directly above it. These windows have no shutters. On this wing approximately one and one-half feet of the brick foundation is exposed.

Joined behind this two-story wing is a modern small one-story west wing of one bay by one bay. This wing is clad in modern horizontally laid broad synthetic siding painted white. It has modern aluminum windows. This modern non-historic wing extends from the rear two-story wing. The roof is a low gable with wide

overhanging eaves. The gable end faces west. The walls and eaves are covered with modern siding painted white. Its east façade is hidden by the two-story wing. The south façade of the wing has one door and no windows. The door is off center, closer to the rear wing. There is a wall light fixture on the west side of the door. On the west façade a modern aluminum window is centered on the wall. The north façade also has one modern aluminum window. Like the door it is not centered on the wall, but closer to the rear wing.

The house is located on a rectangular lot with a frontage of 76 feet on Main Street and a depth of 204.60 feet. The lot slopes gradually upward from the street. The house stands about 15 feet from the modern sidewalk. An agate concrete sidewalk leading to the porch is three steps up from the public sidewalk. A chain-link fence runs along the southern boundary.

A gravel driveway extends along the northern boundary, leading to a non-historic one-car garage. There is a small board and batten structure midway in the backyard near the southern boundary. It has a gable roof. The gable end of one bay faces the street. The side elevation is of two bays. It measures approximately 10 by 20 feet. The southern elevation is on the boundary line. The northern elevation has a single door and a six-over-six window.

Report prepared by
Barnett Shepherd, Consultant

NOTES

¹ “Conference House: A History of the Billop House of Staten Island,” by J[ackie] Haley, NYC Parks Department Museum Consultant. This unpublished manuscript in my possession provides information about the Billopps.

² The French Map of Staten Island showing the location of Hessian campsites made during the War of Independence reveals the sparsely populated area which would become Tottenville with widely spaced houses only along the shore. A road coming from the center of the Island (today’s Amboy Road) leads southwesterly to a ferry landing opposite Perth Amboy. The only building nearby is identified “C. Billop.” A second road (part of today’s Arthur Kill Road) branches off northwesterly toward the Arthur Kill and a mill belonging to “C. Laforge.” Near the intersection of the two roads is the footprint of a house identified as belonging to “G. Totten.” The area on the map between the ferry and the mill is without any houses.

³ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber D, p. 584.

⁴ A formal history of the Totten family of Staten Island has not been written. Several unpublished papers on the Totten family are in vertical files at the Staten Island Historical Society. Three published sources provided information. Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People*, 1929, Vol. III, p. 14, provides concise information. Rosemary Fitzgerald, “Artist John Bradley and the Totten Portraits,” *Staten Island Historian*, January 1971, pp. 42-44, is more comprehensive. Marjorie Scribner Wilcox, *The Tottens of America*, Heritage Books, Inc., 1994, copy located at the New York Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Division, 42nd Street, is a recent study of a midwestern branch of the Totten family. She states that Silas Totten, who settled on Long Island from England, was the father of Gilbert Totten.

⁵ Leng and Davis, Vol. III, p. 14.

⁶ A. Y. Hubbell, *The History of Methodism and the Methodist Churches of Staten Island*, 1898, p. 62.

⁷ *Picturesque Staten Island, Gateway to New York Harbor In Pen and Pencil*, 1886, p. 30.

⁸ *Illustrated Sketch Book of Staten Island, New York, Its Industries and Commerce*, 1886, p. 147.

⁹ Clyde L. MacKenzie, Jr., *The Fisheries of Raritan Bay*, Rutgers University Press, 1992, p. 148.

¹⁰ Richmond Count Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 20, p. 104.

¹¹ Herbert R. Reed, “The Tottenville-Perth Amboy Ferry,” *Staten Island Historian*, October 1960, p. 33.

¹² Loring McMillen, “Dissosway’s Mill: Old Mills of Staten Island, Part Eight,” *Staten Island Historian*, October 1951, p. 25.

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- ¹³ Henry Butler and his wife Margaret L. Enders Butler (1832-1896) are buried in the Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery (Vosberg #975 and 976), as are his parents Henry Butler (d. 1866) and Catharine Ann Butler (d. 1872) (Vosberg # 332 and 333). These dates are taken from their gravestones.
- ¹⁴ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 32, p. 628.
- ¹⁵ Untitled, unpublished typescript by Alberta Scott in the Totten family vertical file at the Staten Island Historical Society Library.
- ¹⁶ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 43, p. 403.
- ¹⁷ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 45, p. 93.
- ¹⁸ Benjamin Franklin Joline, "Tottenville in Retrospect," 1950, p. 35, unpublished manuscript in the Tottenville Branch of the New York Public Library.
- ¹⁹ Hubbell, p. 36.
- ²⁰ Vosberg, Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery, # 1192.
- ²¹ McMillen, p. 26.
- ²² Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 106, p. 134.
- ²³ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 501, p. 498 (for a property on South Avenue) provides this identity.
- ²⁴ *Illustrated Sketch Book of Staten Island*, pp. 33-34.
- ²⁵ Vosberg, Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery, # 788.
- ²⁶ Richmond County Surrogate's Court Letters of Administration, File A5262.
- ²⁷ Daniel D. Reiff, *Houses from Books, Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture, 1733-1950: A History and Guide*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 55.
- ²⁸ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 501, p. 498 (previously cited) provides this identity and states that Elizabeth J. De Hart was a daughter of David M. Decker.
- ²⁹ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 890, p. 308.
- ³⁰ "Our Fathers Have Told Us: Tottenville Facts and Traditions, Told by Lovers of Their Hometown." 1935. Unpublished typescript in the Tottenville Branch of the New York Public Library. This quotation is found on page 9, in the section titled "Main Street," by Miss Ada De Hart.
- ³¹ Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1105, p. 195.
- ³² Richmond County Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1817, p. 150.

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 find that the Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House has a special character and a 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 Theodore H. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House, built ca. 1850, is a rare survivor of early Tottenville, which is an important 19th-century town on Staten Island's South Shore; that this vernacular clapboard cottage merges older local building traditions with newer Greek and Gothic Revival style modes; that its doorway is an excellent example of the Greek Revival style, while the curvilinear bargeboards are expressions of the Gothic Revival style; that the richly ornamented 1870s front porch features articulated carved posts, cutwork spandrels and an exuberant railing; that the house is significantly intact; that this is one of the best-preserved houses representing South Shore Staten Island's early building traditions; that through its succession of owners, the house has close ties to the oyster business which created the town of Tottenville; that it was built as an investment on the newly laid-out Totten Street (later Main Street) by Henry Butler who was from a Tottenville family that went back several generations; that three years later it was owned by William H. B. Totten, a grocer, and that four years after that by Joseph W. Totten, a partner in an oyster-opening firm; that Theodore F. De Hart, an oyster planter, was the owner of longest duration from 1874 to 1913; and that the De Hart House is one of the two oldest houses on this important Tottenville street.

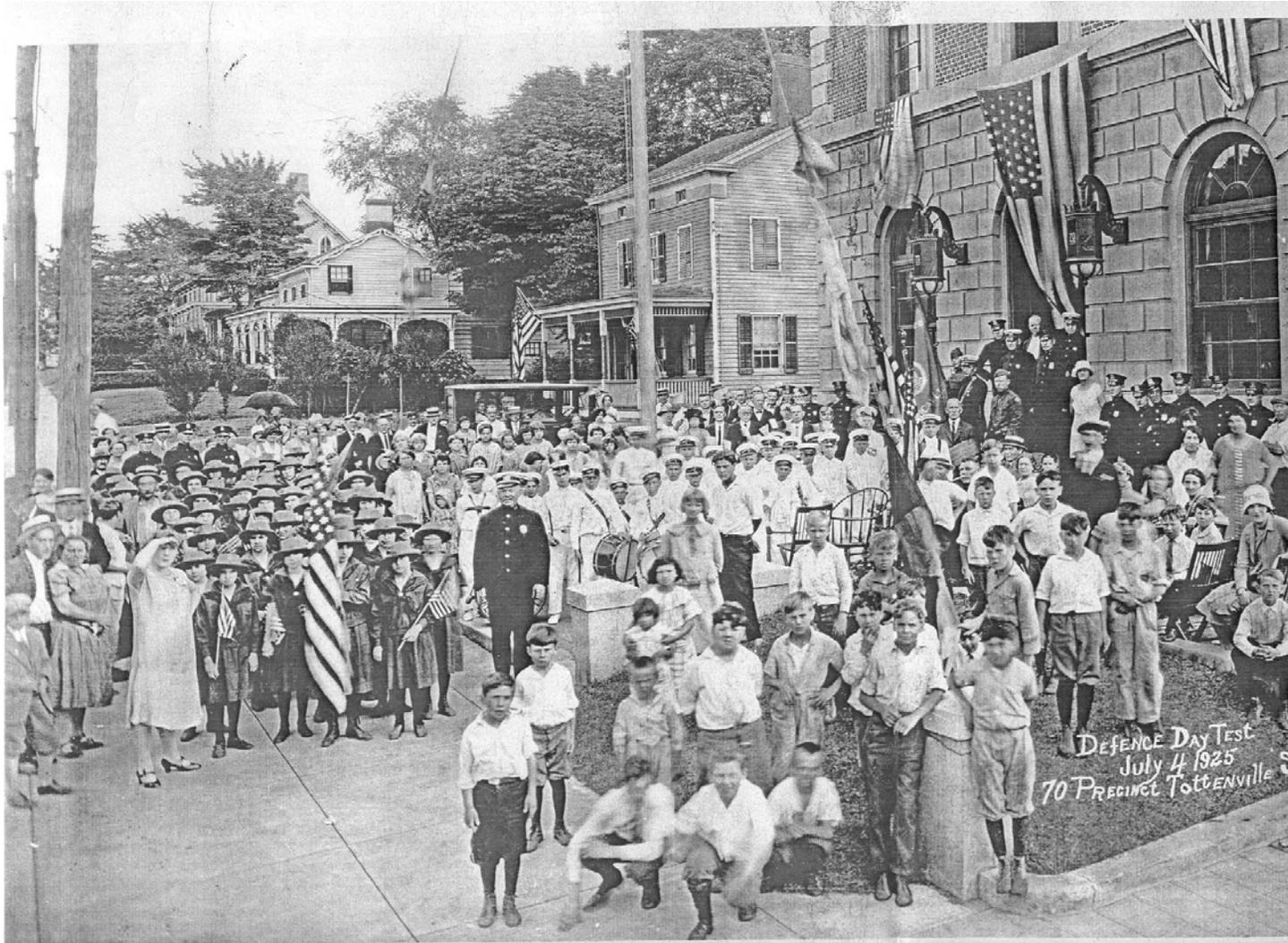
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Theodore H. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House, Borough of Staten Island, and designates as Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 8028, Lot 63 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Richard Olcott, Jan Pokorny, Elizabeth Ryan



Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House
134 Main Street
Staten Island
Photo: Barnett Shepherd



Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House
134 Main Street, Staten Island
Photo Courtesy of Staten Island Historical Society



Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House
134 Main Street, Staten Island
Photos: Carl Forster





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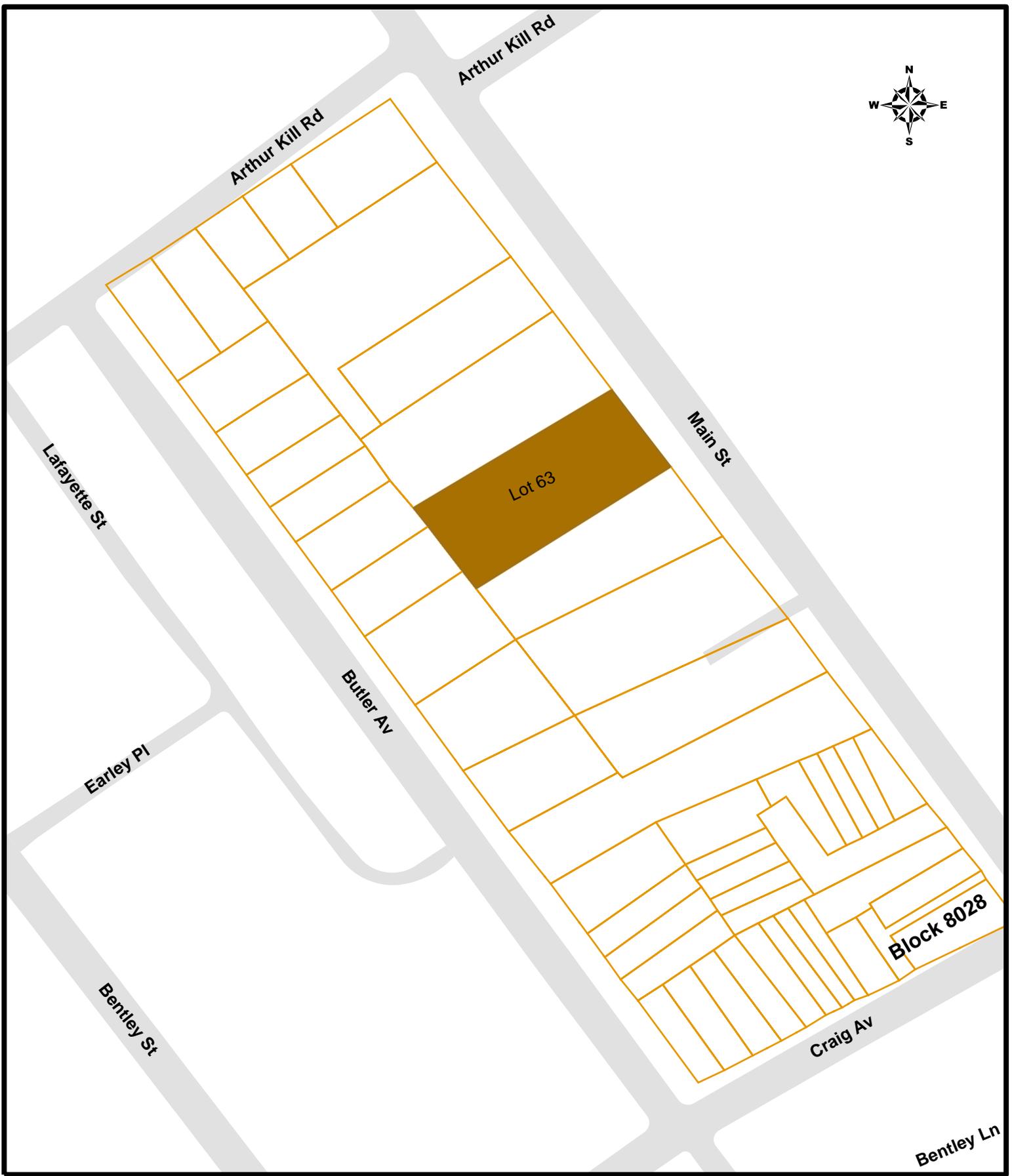


Theodore F. and Elizabeth J. De Hart House
134 Main Street, Staten Island

Photo: Barnett Shepherd



Photo: Carl Forster



Drake Dehart House, 134 Main Street (LP-2181), (AKA: 134 Garage), Staten Island.
Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 8028, Lot 63
Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 03C, December 2003