

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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1857 ANTHONY AVENUE HOUSE, Borough of the Bronx. Built 1896; architects Neville & Bagge.

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2802, Lot 35.

On June 14, 1983, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 1857 Anthony Avenue House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.11). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation. No witnesses spoke in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Located at the corner of Anthony Avenue and Mount Hope Place, this handsome chateausque style house is one the few surviving large suburban residences which once characterized the Bronx. Constructed in 1896 for a prosperous stone dealer, Edwin Shuttleworth, the house was designed by Neville & Bagge, a New York firm specializing in residential architecture. Their design is highlighted by exceptionally interesting sculptural detail.

History

By the late 1890s, the North Side, as the Bronx was then commonly called, was a prosperous suburb of Manhattan. A promotional publication of the period boasted "It would be difficult to find within many miles radius of New York more delightfully picturesque scenery than is to be found on the North Side." ¹ Citing "the magnificent system of parks and parkways recently opened to the public," one ebullient contributor, W. W. Niles, Jr., asked his readers to picture a Saturday afternoon in any North Side park:

The band plays...The scene is as animated and attractive as any furnished by Hyde Park or the Bois de Boulogne....Everyone is in holiday attire...from the laborer enjoying his half-holiday with his wife and children to the millionaire in his stately Victoria.²

Another contributor to this same publication, architect Albert E. Davis, proclaimed the Bronx "the banner home ward" of New York City, and backed up this assertion with statistics (Ninety percent of the dwellings in the Bronx's 24th Ward were occupied by single families) and with photographs.³ Davis illustrates no apartment or tenement buildings, only a few row houses, but rather, a host of freestanding wooden houses, large by today's standards, the majority in versions of the popular Shingle and Queen Anne

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styles. One house, built of stone, sporting elaborate carved detailing, stands apart from the mainstream. The residence of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Shuttleworth, it is located on Anthony Avenue in the section known in the 1890s as Mount Hope.

Constructed in 1896, the Shuttleworth house represents a phase in the transformation of the Bronx from a sparsely populated area of farmland and small villages to a huge urban community. By the 1860s a number of wealthy New Yorkers had built summer retreats in the Bronx, and in 1874 the Township of West Farms (incorporated 1846) was annexed to the City of New York and was officially termed the Annexed District. The vast park system was laid out in 1883 and in the course of the 1890s transportation improvements, intended to make the Bronx more readily accessible from Manhattan, were undertaken. The Department of Street Improvements was established in 1890 and plans for the impressive, ten-lane Grand Concourse and Boulevard proposed in 1892. The Third Avenue elevated railway was extended as far as the Tremont section by 1891.

It was in this area that Edwin and Elizabeth Shuttleworth chose to live. By the 1890s there was a thriving Tremont community, with churches, schools, a business and shopping district and two nearby parks, Crotona Park, notable for its athletic facilities, and Claremont Park, with its hilly scenery and fine views. The name Tremont seems to have derived from three "mounts" in the area--Mount Hope, Mount Eden and Fairmount--at the suggestion of one Hiram Tarbox, a chronometer and watch manufacturer, who also acted as the area's first postmaster. An alternate tradition claims that a manufacturer of fire hose, John Metcalf, originally of Boston appropriated "Tremont" from the famous avenue of his native city.⁴

The Shuttleworth property is located on the hill named Mount Hope (Mount Hope Place bounds the property on the north) and originally overlooked the Millbrook Valley. (Anthony Avenue, the namesake of a local landowner, Charles L. Anthony, had formerly been known as Prospect Avenue, no doubt because of the view.) The land had originally been part of the Buckhout farm and the Buckhout farmhouse still stood to the north in a glen famous for its echoes (now recalled by the street name, Echo Place.) The hillside site must have been considered a healthy one in the nineteenth century, since the House of Rest for Consumptives was located just to the south of the Shuttleworth property, which this institution at one time owned. Presumably rising real estate values made the sale of the land advisable. By the 1890s "covenants against nuisances" had been introduced which were intended to keep the neighborhood strictly residential.⁵

The Clients

When the Shuttleworths purchased their property in early 1896, they were living in Manhattan at 94th Street and Madison Avenue in a five-story tenement. Clearly, their move to the Bronx was a step up in life. The migration of the middle class to the Bronx at the turn of the century seems to prefigure the exodus of the working class from the slums of the Lower East Side in the decades to follow. Edwin Shuttleworth was a prosperous small businessman, a stone dealer specializing in "free stone" (such as granite and limestone which cuts "freely" in all directions, rather than brownstone which does not). He had a stone yard at 434 East 104th Street in Manhattan, a building trades district at that time. By the mid-1890s the

upper reaches of the West Side in Manhattan were rapidly developing and Shuttleworth may well have been supplying stone for this construction. At any rate, the architects he selected for his own house, the firm of Neville & Bagge, were heavily involved in the development of the Upper West Side (and appear to have done very little work in the Bronx.)⁶

In consulting with Neville & Bagge, Shuttleworth no doubt specified the use of stone, and according to Building Department files, acted as his own superintendent of construction.⁷ Plans and elevations of the house, also on file, suggest that in addition, Shuttleworth had a hand in the design, especially in the carved detailing of the house. The Neville & Bagge plans may not have been drawn up specifically for this commission, but rather on speculation, as was often the case with these architects.⁸

The Architects

Aside from the novel sculptural detail, the house is the creation of Neville & Bagge. Thomas P. Neville and George A. Bagge opened offices in the early 1890s on West 125th Street and their firm maintained an extremely prolific practice lasting well into the 1920s. They specialized in residential work including row houses, tenements, and tall apartment buildings. Although their work was not restricted to the Upper West Side--they are represented in the Chelsea and Clinton Hill Historic Districts--they were responsible for literally hundreds of residential buildings stretching northward from the West Seventies into Harlem, a rapidly developing area at the turn of the century. The majority of these buildings are still standing. Neville & Bagge often worked with construction companies rather than private clients, and were early recognized as competent architects who, on the Upper West Side, "succeeded by their numerous examples in raising the standard of an entire neighborhood from one of debasement to at least of respectability."⁹ The firm employed the popular styles of the period, and fine, representative examples of their work are included in the Hamilton Heights and Mount Morris Historic Districts. They seem to have developed stock solutions to the design of apartment buildings. Executed in red brick with limestone trim, the apartment buildings had courtyards which conformed precisely to the specifications of the so-called New Law of 1901. Among their numerous apartment buildings were Reed House (1906) at Broadway and 121st Street, The Netherlands (1909) at Riverside Drive and 86th Street, and the Cornwall (1910) at Broadway and 90th Street.

The Design

The house, as projected by the architects, was a rather straightforward example of the French Renaissance "chateausque" style, first introduced to this country some two decades earlier by the prominent architect Richard Morris Hunt. Closer parallels to Neville & Bagge's design exist in the work of other first rank architects of the period, including McKim, Mead & White, and H.H. Richardson. Rough-faced ashlar walls with symmetrical circular corner towers topped by "candle snuffer" roofs (which characterize Neville & Bagge's design) are paralleled in the work of the former firm, while the varying widths of the rough-faced stone courses, and the use of red mortar with light stone are distinctly "Richardsonian." Comparatively speaking, the Shuttleworth house is more modest and less innovative than the works of the masters. Neville and Bagge have grafted

the chateausque style onto a rather conventional house type. The tower roofs of the Shuttleworth house, for example, are underscaled while the large, typically American veranda has been attached to, rather than integrated with, the design. The plan is comfortable and spacious, with a central hall and stairway flanked by two rooms to each side. ¹⁰

The carved detail of the house as depicted in Neville & Bagge's elevations is classical and typical of the French Renaissance, with griffins, fleur-de-lis and foliate ornament. The central gable at roof level finds parallels in Hunt's work, and ultimately derives from the chateaux of the Loire Valley. But the detailing actually applied, although also classical in inspiration, is distinctly idiosyncratic and gives the Shuttleworth house its unique character. It seems likely that Shuttleworth himself commissioned a master stone craftsman and allowed him free reign.

The entryway is intended as a tour-de-force, with boldly carved, large scale male and female terms flanking the door. Terms, in which the upper part of the human body springs from a rectangular stone block, have ancient Graeco-roman antecedents and were reintroduced beginning in the late sixteenth century. They are part of a repertory belonging to what has been called "a prolonged baroque tradition of architectural and monumental sculpture,"¹¹ and it is this tradition to which the stone carver of the Shuttleworth house belongs. The very formal, frontal figures, which probably represent minor deities, have strong classical facial features and are clothed in classical draperies. The shafts below the figures are adorned with hanging clusters of fruit (possibly an allusion to hospitality) which are carved in high relief. The terms support volutes in the form of dolphins, while the tympanum is ornamented with rich scrolls of classical acanthus foliage. The keystone, continuing the marine theme of the dolphins, shows a bearded god, most likely Neptune.

Other details especially worth noting are the medallion portrait heads affixed to the towers and the Mount Hope Place elevation of the house. Presumably they all depict famous men, since one is clearly William Shakespeare. The combination of Ancient motifs with the Bard suggests no thematic program, but rather a compendium of favorite motifs, most likely those of the craftsman.

Description

The Shuttleworth residence, a large two and one-half-story free standing house occupies a corner site. The neighboring houses are of the same period but do not enjoy the same architectural integrity. (The adjacent house on Anthony Avenue, originally owned by a Dr. Hurd, has had its scalloped shingles covered with composition siding.) The property has a steep grade on Anthony Avenue with rough-faced ashlar retaining walls surmounted by a wrought-iron railing which arches over the stairway. These stairs, also with railings, ascend in two straight flights, the upper one broader, to the veranda. A photograph taken soon after the completion of the house shows that this treatment is not original, and was added with the regrading of the street, which, judging by the style of the work, must have occurred quite early on. ¹² At the back of the property is a rustic style garage with a "twigged" gable. (Buildings Department records include plans

of 1900 for an "automobile house" by Neville & Bagge, but they are of a different style from the garage which was built in that year.) The house is constructed in rough-faced ashlar of a light gray color with contrasting red mortar. The stone is laid in a regular pattern of wider and narrower courses with smooth bands articulating the lintel levels. The one-story veranda has wood columns with stone capitals of unconventional design; they are essentially of the composite order, but with the volutes inverted. The balustrade of the veranda, originally of wood, has been replaced with wrought-iron railings.

The facade of the house has two full-height corner towers each with conical roofs. The larger of these is to the north. The main body of the house under a hipped roof has a broad projecting square central bay at both the first and second stories, topped by metal cresting, and visually capped by a pedimented dormer with carved detail and three urn-like finials. The veranda, with a molded metal cornice, begins at the northern wall of the smaller tower, conforms to the curve of the larger tower, and ends at the edge of the tower on the Mount Hope Place elevation. The windows are all two-over-two, surrounded by striated stone quoining.

The Mount Hope Place elevation includes a three-sided full height bay topped with metal cresting and surmounted by a pedimented carved dormer. The rear elevation includes a large gable at the attic story and a small wood one-story extension off the kitchen. The southern elevation which faces a narrow passageway is amply fenestrated and continues the format of the other elevations. The exceptional sculptural detailing is described above.

Conclusion

The North Side became part of the Borough of the Bronx of Greater New York in 1898. From 1890 to 1900 the population of the Bronx more than doubled to some 200,000 people. But even more dramatic change was on the horizon, and it is a measure of this change that by 1914 Tremont alone claimed this same number of people. The advent of the automobile, the further extension of the elevated railway, and the completion of the Grand Concourse in 1909 attracted building speculators in abundance. The heyday of the Bronx had arrived, and the large houses of the 1890s soon gave way to streets lined by apartment buildings. The Shuttleworth residence is one of the few extant examples of its decade and type, and a fine example of the chateausque style. Almost more surprisingly it is today a virtually unaltered, single family residence in an area of multiple dwellings. Although a somewhat poignant reminder of the halcyon days of the Bronx, on the other hand, it provides a source of neighborhood pride, an architectural symbol of historical continuity and survival.

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Research Department

Footnotes

1. Albert E. Davis, "organizer." The Great North Side of the City of New York and Greater New York Above the Harlem (New York, 1897), p.119.

2. Great North Side, p.189 and p.192-193.
3. Great North Side, p.107ff.
4. See "History of Tremont", (Bronx County Progress Edition, 1914); Bronx County Historical Society Files: "Tremont."
5. See Bronx County. Office of the Register. Liber, Deeds and Mortgages. Conveyances Liber 22, p.319, John Frischka to Elizabeth Marsden Shuttleworth, March 2, 1896. The covenants, which followed a standard formula, required houses of two stories with a basement, and forbade non-residential structures, from slaughterhouses to corner bars.
6. The neighborhood of the Shuttleworth stone yard, according to the Bromley Atlas of 1898, included other stone yards, stone "works," a lumberyard, sawmill, and foundry. It seems likely that Shuttleworth and Neville and Bagge first met in professional surroundings.
7. New York City Buildings Department, Borough of the Bronx, Dockets re Block 2802, lot 35.
8. The plans and elevations on file with the Buildings Department are detailed but are not labeled as work for Shuttleworth (although minor plans for a garage in 1900 are.) The purchase date of the property, roughly one month prior to the beginning of construction, does not argue in favor of much consultation between client and architect.
9. C.H. Israel, "New York Apartment Houses," Architectural Record, 11 (July 1901), 476ff.
10. The house was quite luxuriously planned by today's standards. Across from the front parlor was the smoking room; there were servants' quarters reached by back stairs; a domed skylight lit the main stairhall, parquet floors ranged from white mahogany to quartered hazel. On the other hand, there was a single bathroom upstairs, and the servants' lavatory was in the basement next to the wine cellar.
11. James M. Dennis, Karl Bitter, Architectural Sculptor 1867-1915. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p.3.
12. Great North Side, p.196.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

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 1857 Anthony Avenue House has a special character, 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 1857 Anthony Avenue house is one of the few extant, large freestanding suburban houses once widely seen in the Bronx; that it was built in 1896 for a prosperous stone dealer and was one of the few stone houses in an area where frame architecture predominated; that it characterizes a phase in the transition of the Bronx from a rural to an urban community; that designed by Neville & Bagge, a prolific New York architectural firm specializing in residential work, it is a fine example of the "chateausque" style, embellished with exceptionally interesting sculptural detail in the baroque, classical tradition; that it is a rare representative of its times and type; and that it is a neighborhood symbol of historical continuity and pride.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the 1857 Anthony Avenue house, 1857 Anthony Avenue, Borough of the Bronx, and designates Tax Map Block 2802, Lot 35, Borough of the Bronx, as its Landmark Site.

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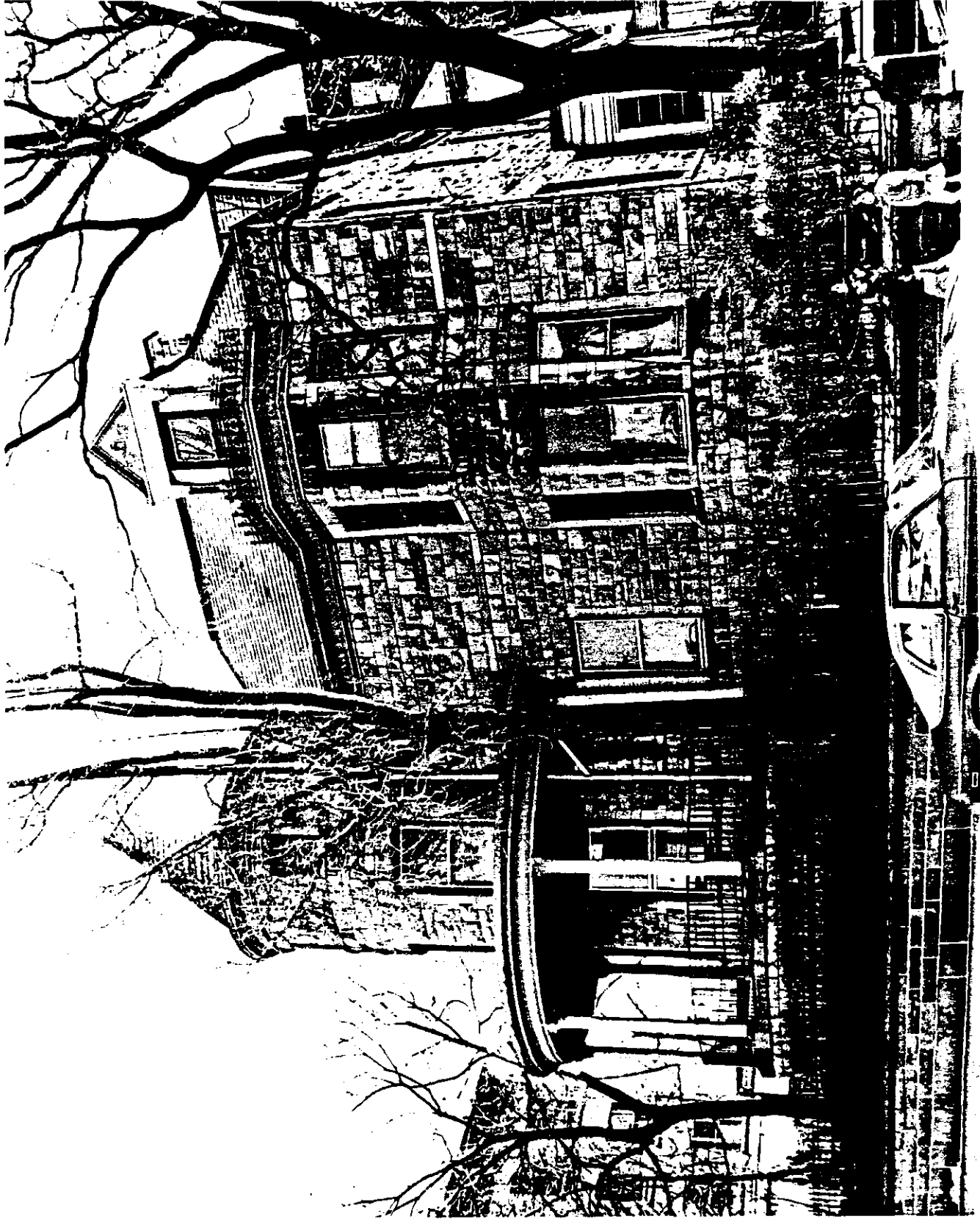
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1857 Anthony Avenue house

Photo: Carl Forster

Neville & Bagge
1896



1857 Anthony Avenue house

Neville & Bagge
1896

Photo: Carl Forster



1857 Anthony Avenue house

Photo: Carl Forster
detail: main entrance

Neville & Bagge
1896



1857 Anthony Avenue house

Photo: Charles Savage
detail: main entrance

Neville & Bagge
1896