

Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House



DESIGNATION REPORT

Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House

LOCATION

Borough of the Bronx
30 Centre Street, City Island

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

A wood frame house designed in the Stick style and constructed between 1887 and 1893, which is representative of the 19th-century development of City Island.



Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House
(LPC) 2017 (above)

**30 Centre Street, New York City Tax
photo, c. 1940, NYC Municipal Archives**
(left)



Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House

30 Centre Street, the Bronx

Designation List 502 LP-2488

Built: c. 1887-1893

Architect/Builder: possibly Samuel H. Booth

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx,
Tax Map Block 5626, Lot 414

On June 28, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House and the related Landmark Site (Item no. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three people spoke in favor of designation including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Victorian Society New York. No one testified in opposition.

Summary

The Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House was constructed between 1887 and 1893 possibly by Samuel H. Booth, one of City Island's most prolific contractors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The house is a fine example of what historian Vincent Scully referred to as the Stick style. Combining the picturesque house designs of Andrew Jackson Downing and others with the development of balloon framing, the Stick style was popular in the late 19th century in suburban and rural settings, and served as a transitional style between the Gothic

Revival and Queen Anne styles. Samuel Booth moved his family to City Island by 1880 where he established his career as a carpenter and house builder. The Booth family owned the house at 30 Centre Street until 1959 during which time they added a rear porch, a gabled oriel on the east and an angled bay on the west. The house remained unchanged until new owners renovated it in the late-20th or early-21st century, building out the attic on two sides, reconfiguring the attic windows, replacing the first-story windows on the east with a bay window, and replacing some of the historic clapboard with decorative shingles. In spite of these changes, the Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House retains its historic asymmetrical massing, gabled roofs with deep eaves, corner entrance porch, bay window and oriel, and siding, which make it a distinctive example of the Stick style house on City Island.

Building Description

Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House

The Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House is a fine example of a Stick style house and was possibly designed and constructed by Samuel H. Booth who was a carpenter and contractor. The 2½ story wood frame house features the asymmetrical massing common to the style including cross gables; corner entrance porch with gabled roof supported by a turned post and exposed rafter ends, and decorated with vertical boards in a sawtooth pattern; and angled bays. The rear porch first appears on insurance maps in 1897 and the gabled oriel window on the east side in 1918.¹ The house was renovated in the late 20th or early 21st century at which time shed roof dormers were added on the south and west sides building out the attic, an angled bay replaced the existing sash windows on the east side, the attic windows were reconfigured from flat to arched openings, and the rear porch was redesigned with a corner post and contrasting sawtooth pattern decoration similar to the front porch. The historic painted clapboard facades were stripped and refinished with dark wood stain and the clapboard of the gables (including the oriel) was replaced with imbricated shingles and, on the front facade, an additional band of vertical boards with applied decoration.²

Front (North) Facade

Historic

Brick and stone base; possibly historic window at basement; wood clapboards; angled bay window with metal roof supported on carved brackets; some possibly historic two-over-two sash windows at first story; gable with deep eave and historic narrow,

notched bargeboard; corner entrance porch with gabled roof supported by a turned post, featuring exposed rafter ends, bargeboard, and sawtooth-patterned vertical boards.

Alterations

Wooden stoop replaced in kind; attic window reconfigured, sash replaced; storm windows; clapboard of gable replaced above the second story with imbricated shingles, vertical boards with circular applique in a horizontal pattern, and circular and imbricated shingles in a sunburst pattern in apex of the gable; window enframements simplified; door replaced; base of bay window replaced with vertical boards with circular applique layered over contrasting boards in a sawtooth pattern; roof replaced with synthetic slate shingles and snow guards;³ decorative compass rose attached to porch; non-historic light; leaders.

East Facade

Historic

Brick and fieldstone base; wood clapboards; gabled oriel; some possibly historic two-over-two wood sash and small four-light window.

Alterations

Windows at first story replaced with angled bay with carved brackets and standing seam roof; carved brackets added to historic oriel; imbricated shingles in gables; bargeboards of roof and oriel gables replaced; storm windows; attic window reconfigured, sash replaced; window surrounds simplified; chimney painted; enclosed rear porch on base of glass brick, with turned corner post, contrasting vertical boards in a sawtooth pattern similar to main entrance, and stained-glass window of a sailing ship; flower boxes; electrical outlet; leader.

South Facade (partially visible)

Historic

One-story porch with pent roof; clapboards

Alterations

Glass brick base; standing seam metal roof with skylight on porch; contrasting vertical boards in a sawtooth pattern at entrance; arched door enframing; Dutch door with nine-light upper leaf and wood-paneled lower leaf; window surrounds simplified; storm windows; attic built out (from east it reads as a large shed roof dormer with deep eave, clapboarded on east side).

West Facade (partially visible)

Historic

Wood clapboards; gable with deep eave; angled bay window; some possibly historic two-over-two sash windows.

Alterations

Bargeboard of gable replaced; clapboard of gable replaced above second story with imbricated shingles; window enframements simplified; storm windows; attic built out adjacent to historic gable and sided with clapboard; horizontal widow in attic; base of bay window resided similarly to that on the front facade; roof replaced; conduit with wires; dish antenna; electric meter.

Site

Landscaped yard with stone borders, dry-laid stone wall adjacent to sidewalk; mailbox and house number on post; asphalt driveway with concrete apron; non-historic slate walkways from sidewalk and driveway; non-historic shed with board and batten siding, double-doors, and gambrel roof with cupola topped by a copper weather vane featuring a sailboat; non-historic low wood deck with fence and pergola in rear yard; stone well or barbeque pit.

Site History

Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House

Located just south of Pelham Bay Park in Long Island Sound, City Island⁴—originally called Minnewits, or Great Minnefords Island—was part of the roughly 9,000-acre tract encompassing the eastern Bronx and part of eastern Westchester that Thomas Pell (1613-1669) of Fairfield, Connecticut purchased from the Siwanoy Indians in 1654. Pell, a self-taught, English surgeon, arrived in Connecticut to serve in the war against the Pequot Indians in 1836 and remained in Connecticut, investing in land and shipping.⁵ Pell named his estate Pelham in honor of his tutor Pelham Burton.⁶ After Pell's death, Pelham manor passed to his nephew Sir John Pell who was the first of the Pells to live on the estate.⁷ During this time period, as was customary for large landowners, many members of the Pell family were slave owners.⁸ In 1685, Sir John Pell sold City Island to John Smith of Brooklyn. From 1700 to 1761, the island changed hands several times. In 1761 Benjamin Palmer, who had led the construction of the first free bridge in New York at Spuyten Duyvil in 1759, purchased the land for a syndicate whose intention was to transform it into a commercial center that would rival Manhattan.⁹ The island was renamed City Island in honor of this potential development scheme. The project was abandoned during the Revolutionary War when the British occupied the island. Although the plan was revived by Palmer and his associates in the 1790s, it ultimately failed to materialize.

In 1807, most of the island came into the possession of Nicholas Haight, who, in 1818, sold 42 acres at the island's southernmost tip to George

Horton. According to censuses from 1790 to 1820, both Horton and Haight owned slaves. Horton, the Supervisor of Westchester County from the Town of Pelham, promoted the building of five streets including Pilot, Pell, Schofield, and Main Street (now City Island Avenue), the public highway. In the course of the 19th century “parts of the island changed hands many times as they were subdivided and sold.”¹⁰

Initially, City Island was a farming community. The island's first commercial enterprise, a solar salt works, which produced salt from evaporated sea water, was established by E. C. Cooper in the 1820s. Around 1830 Orrin Fordham, a shipbuilder from Connecticut, established an oyster planting business on the east side of City Island.¹¹ “Although it was common knowledge that oyster larvae set on almost any clean underwater object, especially oysters shells, in summertime,”¹² no one in the United States prior to Fordham had deliberately planted shells in order to cultivate oysters. His idea revolutionized the business. In the latter half of the 19th century, oysters became the “chief fishery product of the United States” as well as the “most extensively eaten of all shellfish.”¹³ Fulton Fish Market in Manhattan became the primary clearinghouse for oysters grown not only in the local waters off City Island, Staten Island, and Raritan Bay, but for oysters from Chesapeake Bay, Delaware Bay, and New England, which were shipped from the market across the country and overseas.

Between 1847 and 1869 numerous settlers moved to City Island to take part in the oyster business, which became the “chief industry employing the bulk of the male population at City Island.”¹⁴ City Islanders also profited by servicing, supplying, and building ships which supported the island's economy throughout most of the 20th century. There were many small ship yards serving

the oyster boats throughout the 19th century but the first commercial shipyard, D. Carll Shipyard, was established on City Island in 1862.¹⁵ After the Civil War, the Carll yard became known for the construction and rebuilding of large luxury yachts. Capitalizing on the Carll shipyard's success, other commercial boatyards were soon established where luxury and racing yachts, including a number of America's Cup winners were constructed. During World Wars I and II, the federal government commissioned vessels from the City Island boatyards. After World War II, the leisure-boat industry rose to prominence.

For much of its history City Island was part of the Town of Pelham, Westchester County. In 1873 City Island was linked to the mainland by a toll bridge, which became a free bridge when the eastern Bronx was annexed by New York City in 1895. Limited access to the island discouraged dense development and as a result the island has retained its small-town atmosphere. Numerous yacht clubs, marinas and popular seafood restaurants continue to play a role in the island's economy.

Samuel and Mary Booth

Samuel H. Booth was born in Bronxdale, in what was then Westchester County, in 1841, the first of his siblings born in the United States. His father George, a dyer, mother Rachel, and their four eldest children immigrated to the United States from England around 1840. Samuel enlisted in the Union Army in 1862 and served until 1865. He met and married Mary Titus who was born in Oyster Bay, the daughter of a farmer turned merchant. By 1870, the Titus family had moved to Shawnee County Kansas and Samuel and Mary lived on their farm. The couple returned to New York around the mid-1870s and settled on City Island where Samuel worked as a carpenter.¹⁶ His career as a house builder likely dates to 1882 when he was responsible for building a

dwelling on the Scofield estate.¹⁷ Five years later he purchased two 50-foot x 110-foot lots of land on the south side of Centre Street from William H. Scofield, an oyster planter and shipper, whose parents William and Maria had settled on City Island in 1826. In 1889 Booth extended his holdings an additional 187 feet and eight inches to the corner of William Street. As of 1893, insurance maps show the presence of the Booth's home on the property at 30 Centre Street.¹⁸

Samuel H. Booth worked independently as a house builder until the mid-1890s during which time he was responsible for a house for Lawrence and Mary Delmour at 21 Tier Street (1896, a designated New York City Landmark). Shortly thereafter Booth took his sons Egbert and William H. into the firm, renaming it S. H. Booth and Sons. Over the next four decades the firm was responsible for a large number of residential and commercial projects on City Island, for which they were often credited as the architects. Their rare contracts off the island included two buildings for the New York Telephone Company in Westchester and Long Island.

Samuel Booth began subdividing and improving his property after the turn of the century, and constructing homes for two of his other sons, Harry and George.¹⁹ Booth continued to work as a contractor until the early 1920s and died in 1934, his wife Mary died four years later.²⁰

Stick Style

The "Stick style," so named by historian Vincent Scully, developed in the second half of the 19th century. It derived from the melding of two early 19th century developments: the picturesque house designs of Andrew Jackson Downing that were transmitted to home builders through pattern books by Downing and other authors, and the invention of balloon framing made possible by mill-cut lumber and factory-produced nails. Largely seen in suburban and rural settings, these homes formed a transition

between Gothic Revival and the more flamboyant Queen Anne, sharing with these other styles asymmetrical plans and varied massing. An important feature of the Stick style was the reflection of the buildings' skeletal framework on the surface by the ornamental application of vertical, horizontal and diagonal boards to the facade.

Among the features of the Stick style are cross gables, a steeply pitched roof, deep overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends, cladding of clapboards, shingles, or a combination of both, exposed roof trusses and rafters, corbeled chimneys and various window types such as bays, casements and double-hung sash and ornamental use of wooden members to reflect a house's structure. The Booth house reflects these elements of the Stick style with its asymmetrical footprint, wood clapboarding, cross gabled roofs with deep eaves and bargeboards (two replaced), projecting oriel, prominent bay on the front facade and the corner porch with its turned post and decorative sawtooth-pattern boards. Although not original to the house, the imbricated shingles of the gables are common to the style.²¹

Conclusion

The Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House remained in the possession of the Booth family until 1959. Alterations made by the Booth family prior to the 1930s, and those made by subsequent owners, have maintained the historic character of this stick style house. The house retains its asymmetrical massing, crossed gables, corner porch, oriel and much of its original clapboarding. It is a distinctive example of the Stick style and the late-19th century residential development of City Island.

Report researched and written by

Marianne S. Percival

Research Department

Endnotes

¹ *Insurance Maps of the City of New York* (New York: Sanborn-Perris, 1897), v. B, sheet C; *Insurance Maps of the City of New York: Borough of Bronx* (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1918), v. 18, pl. 94.

² The assessment is based on a comparison of the 1940 and 1985 tax photographs and recent LPC photographs. Research in the Department of Buildings' files did not provide additional detail.

³ New roof being installed at time of designation.

⁴ This section on the early history of City Island is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Samuel Pell House Designation Report (LP-2115)* (New York: City of New York, 2002), prepared by Gale Harris; LPC, *21 Tier Street House Designation Report (LP-2063)* (New York: City of New York, 2000), prepared by Loreta Lorraine; LPC, Bronx Survey (New York: City of New York, 1978), 148-149; Department of City Planning, Waterfront and Open Space Division, "There Is an Island...": *City Island's Growth and Development*, prepared by Jolanta M. Grajski (New York: City of New York, 1999); Department of City Planning, Waterfront & Open Space Division, *City Island: A Maritime History of City Island* prepared by Jolanta M. Grajski (New York: City of New York, 1999); Lloyd Ultan, "City Island," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 231; Stephen Jenkins, *The Story of the Bronx* (New York: G. B. Putnam's, 1912), 39, 48-49, 51-56, 427-432; Lockwood Barr, *Ancient Town of Pelham* (Richmond, VA: The Dietz Press, 1946), 12-44, 80-87; Alice Payne, *City Island: Tales of the Clam Diggers* (Floral Park, NY: Graphicopy, 1969).

⁵ Lloyd Ultan, *The Northern Borough: A History of the Bronx* (Bronx, NY: Bronx County Historical Society, 2009), 12-13.

⁶ "Town of Pelham-Official Website" <http://www.townofpelham.com>.

⁷ The Robert and Marie Lorillard Bartow House (1836-42), now the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, a designated New York City Landmark, was built for Robert Bartow, a descendant of the Pells, on a site not far from Sir John Pell's original manor house. The original manor house was occupied from 1675 to 1790 by four generations of the Pell family and aside from the period between 1813-1836 (when it was owned by the LeRoy family) its site remained in the Pell family for 234 years until it was acquired by the City of New York as part of Pelham Bay

Park.

⁸ United States Census records for Pelham, Westchester County, 1790, 1810.

⁹ Barr, 82; LPC, Bronx Survey, 148. See also the Benjamin Palmer Papers, manuscripts collection, The New-York Historical Society; Ultan, *Northern Borough*, 74-75.

¹⁰ Payne, 10.

¹¹ Department of City Planning, *Maritime History of City Island*, 2-5; James Richardson, "American Oyster Culture," *Scribner's Monthly*, 15 (December 1877), 225-237; Alfred Fordham, "City Island: Its History and Growth," *City Island News*, October 1, 1953; John M. Kochiss, *Oystering from New York to Boston* (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport, Inc., 1974).

¹² Kochiss, 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, ixix.

¹⁴ Fordham.

¹⁵ Richard F. Welch, *An Island's Trade: Nineteenth-Century Shipbuilding on Long Island* (Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1933), 35.

¹⁶ At the time of the 1880 Census the family was residing on City Island, the three eldest children's place of birth is given as Kansas; the next child, age two, was born in New York. Ancestry.com, *1890 Veterans Schedules* [database on-line] Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2005; United States Census records, 1850-1880; "Samuel H. Booth (1841-1934)-Find a Grave Memorial (<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&Grid=144999142&ref=acom>, accessed October 12, 2017).

¹⁷ "City Island," *The Chronicle* (Mt. Vernon), April 21, 1882, 3.

¹⁸ Westchester County Clerk's Office, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1104, p. 56-62 (January 20 and 25, 1887); Liber 1211, p. 181-184 (November 11, 1889). The Scofield's who were farmers, were among the four largest land holders on the island. Department of City Planning, Waterfront and Open Space Division, "There Is an Island..." 4; United States Census records, 1870; *City Island* ([New York]: Sanborn, 1893), sheet 3.

¹⁹ "Plans Filed for New Buildings," *The Sun*, July 30, 1903; "Bronx Building Plans," *New York Herald*, October 15, 1908, 2.

²⁰ United States Census records 1910-1930; *Real Estate*

Record and Builders Guide, various issues 1887-1922; “Samuel H. Booth (1841-1934)-Find a Grave Memorial (<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&Grid=144999142&ref=acom>, accessed October 12, 2017) ; “Building Reports,” *Highland Democrat* (Peekskill), December 28, 1928.

²¹ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984, 2004), 154-156; William Morgan, *The Abrams Guide to American House Styles* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004), 154-166; Cyril M. Harris *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 317-318; Vincent J. Scully, *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* Rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 2.

Findings and Designation

Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House

Street, Borough of the Bronx and designates
Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 5626 Lot 414
as its Landmark Site

Meenakshi Srinivasin, Chair

Wellington Chen
Michael Devonshire
Michael Goldblum
John Gustafsson
Jeanne Lutfy
Adi Shamir-Baron
Kim Vauss
Commissioners

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 Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House has a special character and a special historic 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 special qualities, the Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House was constructed between 1887 and 1893; that it was possibly designed by Samuel H. Booth a carpenter and house builder; that Samuel Booth moved to City Island with his family prior to 1880; that Samuel Booth became one of City Island's most prominent contractors; that the Booth house is a fine example of the Stick style found in 19th century rural and suburban America; that the Stick style derived from the merging of the picturesque house designs of Andrew Jackson Downing and others and the development of balloon framing; that the Stick style was a transitional form between Gothic Revival and Queen Anne; that the house was owned by the Booth family until 1959; that later owners renovated the house in the late 20th or early 21st century; that these alterations did not affect the house's historic asymmetric massing, gabled roofs with deep eaves, corner entrance porch, form and material which make it a distinctive example of the Stick style on City Island and a representative of the island's 19th century development.

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 Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House, 30 Centre



**Samuel H. and Mary T.
Booth House
30 Centre Street
Sarah Moses (LPC), 2017**



Booth House, north facade
Sarah Moses (LPC), 2017



Gable detail, north facade
Sarah Moses (LPC), 2017



Booth House from northeast
Sarah Moses (LPC), 2017

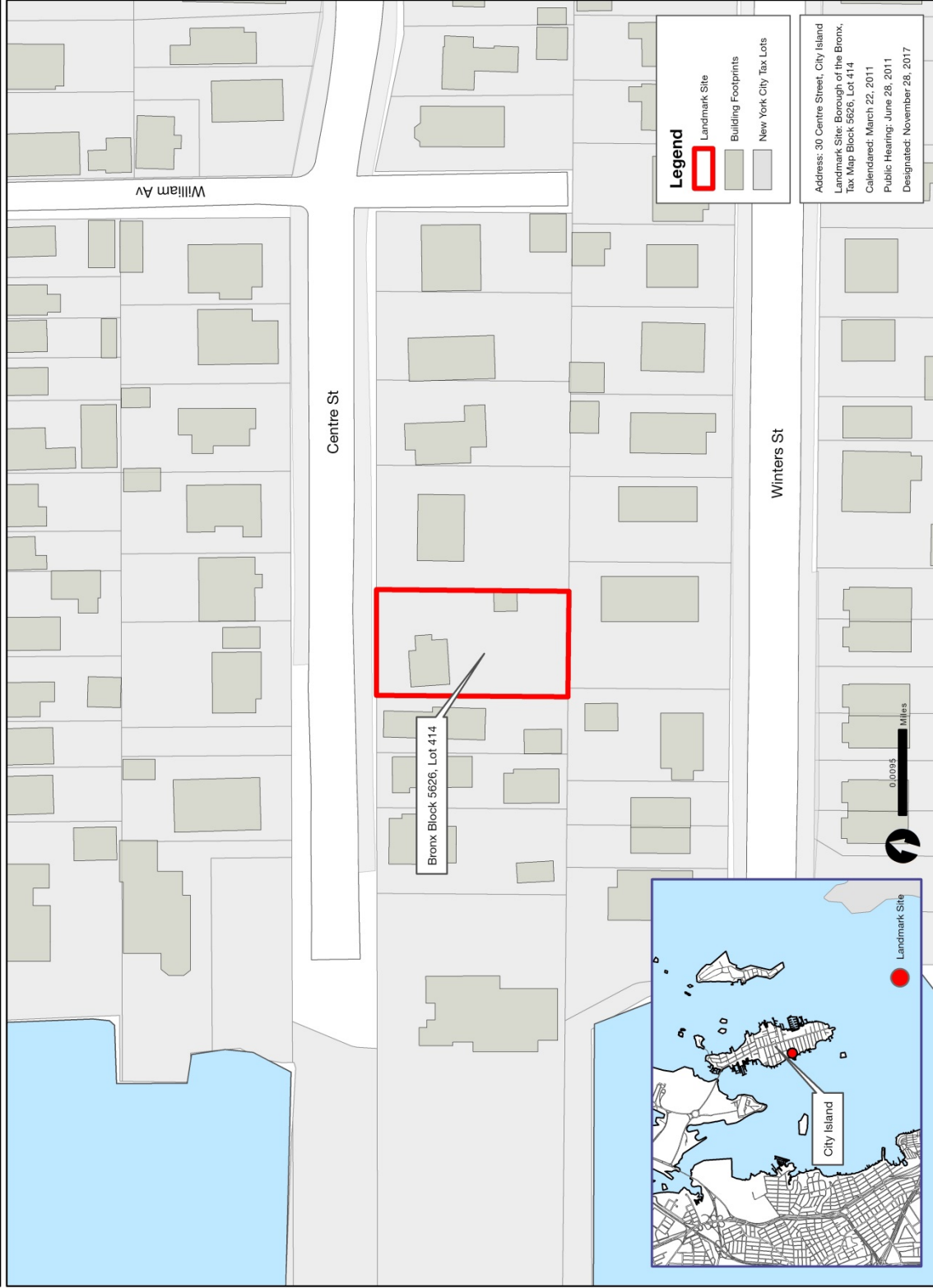


Back porch detail
Sarah Moses (LPC), 2017



Booth House
Sarah Moses (LPC), 2017

Samuel H. and Mary T. Booth House (LP-2488)



Graphic Source: MapPLUTO, Edition 16v2, Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, DHW, Date: 11.28.2017