

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Cobble Villa

other names/site number Villa Clara

2. Location

street & number 657 Laurelton Boulevard

<input type="checkbox"/>	not for publication
<input type="checkbox"/>	vicinity

city or town Long Beach

state New York code NY county Nassau code 059 zip code 11561

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
 I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
 national statewide X local

Roger Purpoint DSHPD 12/8/14
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Jon Edson H. Beall 1-27-15
 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS /
Mediterranean Revival

foundation: Brick
walls: Stucco, Stone

roof: Ceramic Tile
other: _____

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Cobble Villa is located at 657 Laurelton Boulevard within the City of Long Beach in Nassau County. The Long Beach Barrier Island, which extends approximately nine-and-a-half miles, is the westernmost barrier island on the south side of Long Island; the natural island was raised and slightly modified during the early twentieth century. The City of Long Beach is located at the approximate center of the island and is flanked to the east by the Village of Atlantic Beach and to the west by the hamlets of Lido Beach and Point Lookout. The city is laid out in a pattern of divided north-south boulevards; two divided east-west boulevards, one at the center of the island and one at its southern end, and numerous one-way streets run east-west across the island. A boardwalk runs along the beach on the southern shore of the island.

Situated at the intersection of Laurelton Boulevard, a wide, divided road with a grassy median, and West Bay Drive, Cobble Villa faces north toward Reynolds Channel. A red concrete sidewalk runs to the north side of West Bay Drive; many small, private piers and docks extend into the channel. Beyond the channel, a scattering of small, marshy islands in South Oyster Bay separate the barrier island from Long Island. Cobble Villa sits on a flat, grassy lot surrounded by a short hedge. A pyramidal-roofed gazebo, built ca. 1990, supported by round, white posts on stone piers is located in the northeast corner of the lot. A semi-circular driveway runs through the southeast corner of the lot; stone piers with hipped red tile caps topped by small concrete statues anchor gates on each end of the driveway.

The 1914 Sanborn map, created soon after the house was built, indicates that the house sat on .4 acre and was surrounded by empty lots. By 1922, the Cobble Villa lot had been expanded to .7 acre to accommodate a small service building to the east. The Cobble Villa lot was divided between 1945 and 1948; the service building was expanded shortly thereafter, likely to serve as a rental for Long Beach's expanding population. During the late twentieth century, the service building was demolished and two new homes were built on the property. The nominated parcel is the .4 acre lot historically associated with Cobble Villa.

Narrative Description

Cobble Villa, built ca. 1912, is a two-and-a-half story, asymmetrical Mediterranean Revival residence with a varied, multi-gabled roofline covered in red terra-cotta tile. The core of the house is L-shaped in plan and has enclosed sun porches on the north and west elevations; a two-story, gambrel-roofed wing extends to the south and a one-story porte-cochere connects to the house at an angle on the southeast corner. The exterior walls are primarily hollow tile covered in stucco; cobblestone veneer and posts, separated by stucco walls, run along the first floor. While the house retains its exterior form, materials, and design, many of the original windows were replaced as a result of damage from Hurricane Sandy.

Due to its unusual shape and multiple entrances, the house appears to lack a primary façade. The angled porte-cochere dominates the view of the east elevation. The two-bay by two-bay porte-cochere is covered in cobblestone veneer on its east and west elevations and has a plaster wall with a central plate glass window on its south elevation. Large archways, highlighted with white stucco, are located on the east and west elevations to facilitate traffic; on each elevation, a small arched cobblestone parapet mimics the stucco archway below. The upper part of the archway is filled in by a large, plate-glass window. Angled white concrete walls extend from the lower half of the archway and are covered by a red tile roof; wood carriage doors enclose the porte-cochere entrances. A hipped, red tile roof covers the porte-cochere. The house extends four bays to the north of the porte-cochere. To blend with the porte-cochere, the first bay is covered in cobble veneer. A rounded two-bay window projects from the elevation to the north; it retains its original six-over-six curved windows. In the final bay, brick steps lead to a contemporary entrance door to the enclosed sun porch. The second story-and-a-half features a large front-gable that overhangs slightly over the first floor. A one-over-one replacement sash is

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

located in the south bay, and a tripartite, projecting bay window with a red tile roof is located in the north bay. The bay window, as well as the small arched window in the gable, have replacement sash but retain their original wood trim.

The side-gabled roof on the north elevation extends to the height of the first floor. The four easternmost bays form the house's enclosed sun porch; they are divided into two sections by three cobble pillars connected by stucco walls. A tripartite bay window is located in the first section, and the second section has a contemporary window and door. A small hipped-roof dormer with a red tile roof projects from the eastern end of the roofline; a door from the dormer leads to a small, fenced-in sitting porch. A half-circle bay window with a flat roof projects from the next bay; a bank of five arched windows extends around the section. On the second story, a large front-gabled dormer projects through the roofline above the semicircular bay window. The dormer features a large plate-glass window. The front gable has a full pediment supported by brackets and features three arched windows. The final, two-bay section is covered by a one-story, hipped red tile roof and framed by a cobblestone pier on each end. It is filled with stucco and has a contemporary door and window. A semicircular porch with cobblestone walls extends to the north.

The west elevation is divided into two masses: the front-gabled house core and the gambrel-roofed wing. A one-story, hipped roof enclosed sun porch runs along the front-gabled section. Each of the four bays is filled with large, replacement, fixed arched windows separated by cobblestone columns; the original arched casement windows were damaged by Hurricane Sandy. Each window sits on a concrete sill over a brick foundation. Four windows light the second story, and a small arched window is located in the gable; each retains its original trim but has replacement sash. The four-bay gambrel roofed wing extends to the south. The original gambrel wing had been obscured by mid-twentieth century additions; the Steele family built a new historically appropriate gambrel roof and covered it in red tile. A one-story concrete porch with a pergola extends along the first floor and connects to the sun porch. Three plate glass windows light the first story of the wing, and two shed-roofed dormer windows extend through the roofline.

The south elevation is divided into three masses: the front-gambrel wing, the front-gabled house core, and the porte-cochere. The south elevation of the gambrel wing is simple; it features a single half-circle window on the first floor, and the overhanging second floor lacks fenestration. The east elevation of the gambrel wing has two contemporary windows on the first floor, and a shed-roofed dormer with three sets of contemporary casement windows on the second floor. A two-story rounded connector melds the gambrel wing to the house core. It has two sets of casement windows on the first story, and a bank of four rectangular windows on the second story. The connector is capped by a red terra-cotta tile roof. To the east of the connector, a single, fixed window is located on the second story of the house core. The porte-cochere extends from the house core to the southeast.

Cobble Villa's interior plan and many historic finishes remain intact. Plasterwork, woodwork, and painting by artist and owner Clara Steele are evident throughout the house. During the thirty years she lived at the house (1976-2006), Clara used Cobble Villa as her primary canvas. Though impressive, her work was generally applied or additive and respected the general plan and materials of the house. For example, she added hand-formed plaster moldings and ceiling decoration throughout the house but retained the historic doors, trim, hardware, and floor plan. In the future, Clara's artwork may be assessed for its significance within a local context.

On the first floor, the interior is divided into a central hallway and staircase, bar, dining room and ballroom, kitchen, and two sun porches. The entrance from the porte-cochere leads to a small anteroom which opens into the central hallway, which runs north-south through the house. The hallway retains its historic trim; a new tile floor was installed after Hurricane Sandy. The bar and small enclosed porch are located to the east of the hallway. Originally used as a music room, the bar was built ca. 1937. It features a large bar table built in the shape of a ship; two false smokestacks are located behind the bar. Doors with circular windows, as well as a round mirror flanked by diamond panels on the ceiling, reinforce the room's nautical theme. The enclosed sun porch is north of the bar; originally, both of the enclosed porches were screened in for use as sleeping porches. The dining room and ballroom, large sun porch, and kitchen are located to the west of the hallway. The dining room and ballroom are connected by a large square entranceway. Both rooms retain their original floors and some of their original trim. The ballroom features an expansive applied decoration on the ceiling that was completed by Clara Steele. The large sleeping porch is located west of the ballroom. Original eight-over-two windows

Cobble Villa

Name of Property

Nassau County, NY

County and State

within the house's rounded wall are encapsulated by the porch. The kitchen, located within the gambrel wing, has been opened up into one large space; it originally included several service spaces. The wing's large beams were exposed during the kitchen remodeling. The landing and Arts and Crafts style staircase are located at the southern end of the hallway. The landing retains its original parquet floor and trim and has a door connecting to the kitchen. The square staircase newel post has a plain base, fluted column, a carved flower on three sides, and is capped by a small statue. The staircase has simple, square balusters, and the additional posts are square and fluted. The staircase runs up to a central landing covered in parquet before reaching the second floor.

The second floor is divided into a central hallway, four bedrooms, and a small chapel. The central hallway runs north-south through the house and retains its original parquet floors and baseboards. Original five-panel doors leading to each of the bedrooms have been retained. Clara Steele created a small chapel in part of the north end of the hallway. It has a rounded wall, and a double door entrance with columns, all covered in applied decoration. A bedroom and sitting room are accessed via a door through the chapel and from the hallway. Both rooms retain original patterned parquet floors and trim and feature substantial applied detail. She also added a dome over her bed which features paintings of her grandchildren. An attached bathroom, updated ca. 1937, has a large soaker tub and green and black tile. The remaining bedrooms, all west of the hallway, also retain original parquet floors and trim. A second bathroom, updated ca. 1937, features similar fixtures and tile.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1912 – 1943

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Elmohar Company

Period of Significance (justification)

Cobble Villa's period of significance begins with its ca. 1912 construction, and ends with Joseph Shalleck's ownership.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Cobble Villa, built ca. 1912, is locally significant under Criterion A for community planning and development and politics for its association with several developers and political players that established Long Beach as a resort. Senator William H. Reynolds, well-known for his real estate developments in New York City and on Coney Island, formed Long Beach Estates with other investors in 1906. Cobble Villa was built as the nascent resort's first showpiece and a demonstration of Reynolds' vision. Within eighteen years, Long Beach developed into a city under his guidance as a developer and politician. Though his development company faltered, Reynolds retained strong cultural and political power in Long Beach. The house's important location, large size, and architectural style made it a symbol of prestige for its later owners. In 1915, Reynolds sold Cobble Villa to one of his real estate partners, J. Harry Meyers. Meyers used the house a centerpiece for a large, planned real estate development along the Reynolds Channel. David Tolins, the newly established as the lawyer for the City of Long Beach, purchased the property in 1925. Tolins worked for the city under six mayoral administrations, a remarkable feat considering Long Beach's political history, and wrote the first history of Long Beach. Joseph Shalleck, an investor and lawyer with connections to the mafia, purchased the property as a vacation home in 1932. Cobble Villa is also locally significant under Criterion C for architecture. The first home completed within the development, Reynolds's Cobble Villa served as personal home, showpiece and model for future construction in Long Beach. Its Mediterranean Revival style, white stucco and red tile roof were required for all new residential construction by Long Beach Estates, Reynolds's development company. Once one among many, Cobble Villa is a rare surviving example of an early estate associated with Reynolds on Long Beach.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Early Development of Long Beach

Due to its location on a barrier island, the area that would become Long Beach was not attractive for year-round human habitation. The Rockaway Indians and later European settlers and farmers used the island primarily for fishing, oystering, and harvesting salt hay. In 1849, a lifesaving station was established on the otherwise empty beach. By the late nineteenth century, Long Island had become popular as a summer vacation destination. Trading the summer heat of the city for Long Island's cool ocean breezes, families stayed in hotels, rented cottages, and occasionally built summer homes.¹

Hoping to make money from this trend, investors associated with the Long Island Railroad saw opportunity in the Long Beach barrier island's close proximity to the city. After visiting the island in 1879 with Thomas Sharp, the Long Island Railroad's receiver, William H. Bartlett arranged a 20 year lease of the land from East Rockaway Inlet to Luce's Inlet from the Town of Hempstead. After agreeing to spend \$25,000 on the improvement of the island, Bartlett signed the lease over to Sharp. Working quickly, a crew of 300 builders managed to complete the Long Island railroad line to the island, as well as the Long Beach hotel by the summer of 1880.²

When it opened on July 17 of that year, the 900-foot building was advertised as the world's largest hotel. The rail line, which connected to Long Beach from Lynbrook, brought tourists and locals to enjoy the resort and the fresh ocean air. The expansive, Queen Anne style hotel featured a 25-foot-wide porch, restaurants, cafes, bars, and wine rooms. In addition to the hotel, the developers built 22 small cottages that families could rent by the season. The incredible success of the hotel

¹ Roberta Fiore et. al., *Long Beach* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2010), 7.

² Will Hughes, *A History of Long Beach, 1500-1944* (Garden City, N.Y.: Beech Street Publishing Co., 1982), 3-4; "A Vast Hostelery," *New York Herald*, July 18, 1880.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

led developers to extend the line to Point Lookout and build another resort the following year. Within a decade, however, Long Beach hotel struggled to be profitable as tourists moved on to newer resorts.³

Creating Long Beach

William H. Reynolds was born in Brooklyn on February 29, 1868. Though he came from a family of limited means, Reynolds's aggressive real estate and development activities had made him a millionaire at age 21. He became a state senator at 24, a stockbroker at 26, and declared bankruptcy at 29. Reynolds returned to real estate with a focus on improving Brooklyn's neighborhoods. In addition to developing four new neighborhoods (Bedford Stuyvesant, Borough Park, Laurelton and South Brownsville), he also established the Montauk Theatre, Jamaica Racetrack, and Dreamland on Coney Island.

After hearing rumors that New York City was interested in buying the Long Beach island for a convalescent home or park, Reynolds focused his attention on Long Beach. Whether by selling the land to New York City or expanding the current resort, the owner of the island stood to make significant financial gain. In 1906, Reynolds formed Long Beach Estates and began purchasing land on the Long Beach sandbar. The company purchased the Long Beach Hotel in the spring of 1907, and envisioned developing a community of summer cottages around it. In May, Long Beach Estates held a grand opening sale of lots in Long Beach; the company brought "pioneer investors" out on a special train to convince them of the enterprise. On July 29, at the height of the summer season, the Long Beach Hotel burned. After being awakened by the night watchman, Reynolds and Sen. Patrick H. McCarren went through the hotel waking guests and helping them from the burning building. Though all eight hundred guests survived, the building was completely lost.⁴

Undaunted by this setback, Reynolds continued with his plans for the island resort. He envisioned and advertised Long Beach as the "Riviera of the New World." As a publicity stunt, he brought elephants from Coney Island to assist with the creation of the 2.1 mile boardwalk. For two years, the Atlantic Gulf and Pacific Dredging Company employed crews running three steam dredges day and night all week to create the 1000-foot-wide, 40-foot-deep, five-mile-long channel that separated Long Beach from the mainland. The new waterway became known as the Reynolds Channel. Much of the dredged material was pumped onto the island to fill marshes and meadowlands, raise it to a minimum height of nine feet above sea level, and make it somewhat rectangular to make it easier to lay out streets and building lots.⁵

Long Beach Estates hired well-known landscape engineer Charles Leavitt to lay out Long Beach's street plan. Long Beach's grid plan made the most of the available land, while its numerous, wide divided avenues offered a sense of grandeur to the resort. The company installed modern sewer, gas, and electric infrastructure and helped to beautify the new avenues by building sidewalks and curbs and planting shade trees. It also quickly completed a new central hotel, the Nassau Hotel, which opened in June 1909. In addition, the Estates Corporation rebuilt the hotel's boardwalk on a grander scale by lining it with electric lights.⁶

Initial construction at Long Beach was supervised by Estates Corporation. Reynolds and the directors brought wealthy speculators and private buyers out to the site; others came on private cars carried by the Long Island Railroad. By 1909, Long Beach Estates had sold more than three million dollars of property. On November 6, 1909, the Estates of Long Beach deeded 18 parcels of land to the Elmohar Corporation, Reynolds's development company. Elmohar established

³ "A Vast Hostelry," *New York Herald*, July 18, 1880; Henry Isham Hazelton, *The Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, Counties of Nassau and Suffolk, Long Island, New York, 1609-1924* (New York: Lewis Historical, 1924).

⁴ Hazelton, *The Boroughs*; "Be a Pioneer Investor at Long Beach, the New Atlantic City," Advertisement, *New York Sun*, June 23, 1907; "Long Beach Hotel Destroyed by Fire," *Amsterdam Evening Reporter*, July 29, 1907; "870 Persons Driven from Beds as Long Beach Hotel Burns," *New York Herald*, July 30, 1907.

⁵ Hazelton, *The Boroughs*.

⁶ Hazelton, *The Boroughs*; Fiore et. al., *Long Beach*, 30-32.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

zoning restrictions that mandated that properties cost \$25,000 to build, take up a minimum of two building lots, and be at least 100 by 100 feet. A Mediterranean style with white stucco walls and red tile roofs was required for all residences.⁷

Cobble Villa

Cobble Villa was constructed ca. 1912 on one of the parcels owned by the Elmohar Corporation. Situated on the opposite end of the island from the hotels, business district, and boardwalk, it offered a sense of privacy and a quiet island retreat. Senator Reynolds used Cobble Villa both as his private residence and as a model home. A 1915 advertisement stated that the house was decorated by Louis Green and had 10 rooms, three baths, and three open fireplaces. It also featured a billiard room, steam heat, electricity, a telephone, sleeping porches and sun parlor, garage, wine cellar, and laundry. The house's large lot was planted with trees and flowers and had a chicken house and vegetable garden. Cobble Villa's striking architecture, expansive interiors, and fine finishes were designed to impress. Reynolds entertained potential buyers in the grandiose residence and awed them with its views of the Reynolds Channel. While he was living there, Reynolds kept his yacht *Day Dreamer* anchored at the house's private dock as an advertisement for Long Beach's luxurious lifestyle.⁸

No specific information about Cobble Villa's architect has been found. However, at least the first five *Estates of Long Beach* homes sold to private clients were designed by the architectural firm of Kirby, Petit, and Green; it is likely that they also designed Reynolds's model home. The firm, and particularly John C. Petit, had worked with Reynolds on earlier development projects. Kirby, Petit, and Green were the primary designers of Dreamland on Coney Island. Reynolds's master builder, Ed Johnson, also likely worked on Cobble Villa.⁹

Designed in keeping with the corporation's zoning restrictions, Cobble Villa reflected Reynolds's vision of Long Beach as the Riviera of the East. The requirement for large houses built with stucco walls and red tile resulted in designs for summer residences inspired by popular eclectic styles with a Mediterranean flair, such as the Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission styles. This architectural genre, which referenced quaint Mediterranean villages, picturesque ruins, and sunny, exotic locations, appealed to the romantic tastes of the period. As it provided a sense of travel to Europe without the hassle, the styles became associated with resorts and the travel and entertainment industries. The popularity of the style was also associated with a resurgence of interest in and restoration of historic Spanish Colonial missions in Florida and California. As the style's simple key features, including stucco, tile roofs, parapets, and arcades, were strictly exterior, architects relied on the Arts and Crafts style for the interior. The Arts and Crafts style's emphasis on simplicity and natural materials was well-suited to the creation of a comfortable and luxurious, but not overly ornate, interior.¹⁰

After six years of Reynolds's dedicated work, the Village of Long Beach was incorporated in 1913. John G. Gerhard, the cashier and member of a New York importing firm who had lived in Long Beach for three years, was elected as the village's first mayor. The young village purchased the rights to the streets and infrastructure from the Estates Corporation soon thereafter. Though he did not hold a formal office, Reynolds wielded immense power over the direction of the community as president of the Estates Corporation. Elections for village offices in the "richest incorporated village in the United States" were contentious and often resulted in the installation of Reynolds's friends and business associates.¹¹

⁷ Hughes, *A History*, 7.

⁸ "The Most Beautiful Home in or around Long Beach For Sale." Advertisement, *New York Herald*, October 10, 1915.

⁹ Carl Ballenas, *Jamaica Estates* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 53; National Register of Historic Places, House at 226 West Penn Street, Long Beach, Nassau County, 2008.

¹⁰ David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 26 (1967), 132, 136.

¹¹ Fiore et. al., *Long Beach*, 73; "Election Stirs Long Beach," *New York Herald*, June 18, 1916; "Long Beach Blossoms as Full Fledged Town," *New York Tribune*, July 13, 1913.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

J. Harry Meyers

J. Harry Meyers, a business associate of Reynolds from Philadelphia, became involved in Long Beach's real estate boom soon after the village was incorporated. In June of 1914, his development company purchased 700 acres of land on Long Beach to build a "high class residential colony." The following March, Meyers purchased Cobble Villa, which sat near the center of his landholding. In addition, he also purchased five adjoining lots and built a small garage. Though J. Harry Meyers and his wife, Hattie, established Cobble Villa as their primary residence, Meyers started advertising the house for sale again by October. While his motivations are unclear, it is possible that he used the advertisement strategically. Similar to Reynolds, Meyers may have drawn potential buyers to his home as a model and then interested them in purchasing their own lot with the same impressive view.¹²

Soon after these major purchases, Meyers became closely involved in local politics. Months after suing to remove a member of the village board who did not suit his politics, he successfully ran for the position of village treasurer. He also continued to purchase property on Long Beach and soon owned the entire water frontage west of the railroad station. Meyers organized the Bay Boulevard Construction Company to take over much of his real estate holdings; the company soon began building large homes facing the channel.¹³

During the summer of 1916, J. Harry Meyers became the focus of newspaper headlines as his wife sued for divorce. Though they had been married since 1887, Hattie Meyers claimed that her husband was having an affair and had established a second home in Rockville Centre. Due to J. Harry Meyers's extensive landholdings and habit of putting the title to properties under Hattie's name, the divorce proceedings were prolonged. Hattie Meyers appears to have retained several pieces of property, including Cobble Villa, after the divorce; the property remained in her name until 1925.¹⁴

Long Beach's Resort Era

An economic downturn as a result of World War I affected Reynolds's development company. Long Beach Estates declared bankruptcy in 1918, and the company's remaining 1,301 lots were auctioned in 1922. The Estates Corporation's zoning restrictions were lifted after it went bankrupt in 1918. By that time, Long Beach had developed into a successful resort town. Several hotels lined the beaches, and numerous famous entertainers performed and vacationed in the city. From the 1920s through the 1940s, Long Beach flourished. During Prohibition, Long Beach became infamous as a safe harbor. Much of the liquor brought through Long Beach went to New York City, or to the 28 speakeasies on Long Beach's West Beech Street.¹⁵

In 1922, Long Beach was formally incorporated as a city. William Reynolds had been serving as mayor of the village. After a controversial campaign, Reynolds was elected to be the city's first mayor by a landslide. Reynolds planned a massive celebration of both the incorporation and his election which included a circus, parade, and appearances by Will Rogers and Eddie Foy, among others. Only a year into his administration, Reynolds's leadership was challenged by numerous lawsuits accusing him of fraud and graft. After an investigation by a special grand jury created by New York Governor Al Smith, Reynolds was indicted on counts of political bossism and misappropriating municipal funds. When Reynolds was jailed, local supporters stopped by clock in the tower of city hall in his honor.¹⁶

¹² "Long Island Realty in \$1,000,000 Deal," *New York Herald*, June 12, 2014; "\$50,000 Long Beach Deal," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 1, 1915; "Getting Away from 'The Heart of Things' at Long Beach," *New York Herald*, October 8, 1915; "The Most Beautiful Home in or around Long Beach For Sale." Advertisement, *New York Herald*, October 10, 1915.

¹³ "3 Trustees Quit Long Beach Board," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 8, 1915; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 13, 1915; *New York Herald*, June 18, 1916; "All Cash for 200 Long Beach lots," *New York Herald*, May 28, 1915.

¹⁴ "Meyers Seeks Land Title," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 6, 1916; *The Daily Long Island Farmer*, July 31, 1916.

¹⁵ Fiore et. al., *Long Beach*, 99.

¹⁶ Hughes, *A History*, 8-12.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

David B. Tolins

After his election in 1925 as the city of Long Beach's second mayor, William J. Dalton hired David B. Tolins as the city's corporation counsel. Tolins, the son of Russian immigrants to New York City, had been educated at Cornell. He returned to New York City to practice law and was a partner in the firm of Kaufman & Tolins on Broadway in New York City during the early 1920s. Dalton had hired Tolins in 1924 during the legal and political battle following Senator Reynolds's conviction and must have been impressed by his performance. David and Dorothy Tolins moved to Long Beach and purchased Cobble Villa on April 13, 1925.¹⁷

Though Long Beach was still a young city, its relative wealth and political background resulted in plenty of work for Tolins to do as the city's corporation counsel. Tolins's legal skill and straightforward nature made him an asset to Long Beach. Unlike previous corporation counsels, who had been appointed with each new political leader, Tolins worked for six different mayors who represented multiple political parties. His thirteen years of work clearly strained him. When he unexpectedly resigned from the office to return to private practice in 1938, Tolins stated that he "would not again accept any public office, elective or appointive, in Long Beach or elsewhere." In addition to the opportunity for consistent legal work that Long Beach had offered, it appears that Tolins may have been attracted to the city itself. Long Beach offered a glamorous lifestyle and certainly did not lack in interesting stories. Tolins researched and wrote the first history of Long Beach; it was published in 1932.¹⁸

After the stock market crashed in 1929, David and Dorothy Tolins struggled financially. In an attempt to reorganize their finances and keep their home, they transferred ownership of Cobble Villa to and from one another several times before finally losing the house to foreclosure in 1932. Dorothy filed for bankruptcy in 1936. The house remained vacant and in the hands of speculators until 1937.¹⁹

Joseph Shalleck

In 1937, Joseph Shalleck, a New York City lawyer, purchased Cobble Villa. Shalleck was well-known for his association with organized crime in New York City. In 1930, he had been disbarred for bribing a juror in a federal mail trial; his conviction was later overturned by a judge with connections to organized crime. Shalleck continued practicing law, but largely as a known representative of the mafia. After the Lindbergh baby was kidnapped in 1932, Shalleck issued a statement to the press that mafia leaders were doing everything they could to help retrieve the child.²⁰

Joseph Shalleck had become involved in Long Beach by the 1920s. He served as the treasurer of the Sea Breeze Foundation, which was created to establish a bathing club at Trenton Avenue and Beach Boulevard in Long Beach. The Sea Breeze Bathing Club called for member subscriptions to build the club building and pool but failed to open until May 1930, a year after the leadership promised. Renovation work by the current owner uncovered a stash of Sea Breeze Club membership and towel tags under the patio at Cobble Villa. While there is no evidence that the club used the house, Shalleck must have had them as a result of his connection with the club.²¹

Shalleck primarily used Cobble Villa as a seasonal vacation home. Benjamin Shalleck, Joseph's brother, was married to Lillian Roth, a famous film actress, from 1933 to 1939. During the late thirties, the couple visited Cobble Villa often. Under Shalleck's ownership, the former music room was converted into the nautical-themed bar and the nearby sleeping porch

¹⁷ "Alumni Notes," *Cornell Law Quarterly* (1917), 70.

¹⁸ "Tolins Is Now for a Change at Long Beach," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 22, 1938; The only known remaining copy of Tolins' history is in the Long Beach Library reference department.

¹⁹ Deed research, Cobble Villa file; "Bankruptcy Petition Heard," *Long Island Daily Press*, March 31, 1937.

²⁰ David Pietrusza, *Rothstein: The Life, Times, and Murder of the Criminal Genius who fixed the 1919 World Series* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 302, 380.

²¹ Berlin v. Sea Breeze Foundation, 1929.

Cobble Villa

Name of Property

Nassau County, NY

County and State

was enclosed for use as a card room. The updates to the upstairs bathrooms also occurred in this period. By the early 1940s, Shalleck's use of the property grew more infrequent. A raid led by Mayor Theodore Ornstein in July 1943 discovered a gambling operation at the property. The mayor reported that the house was luxuriously furnished and noted that a ham and chicken sandwich buffet bar and free drinks were available to the gamblers. Newspaper articles suggested that Shalleck had sold the house several years prior. He quietly sold the property that December.²²

Later Ownership

During the mid-twentieth century, the property was owned by a series of owners and holding companies. In 1947, the property was divided; the additional lots added by J. Harry Meyers were separated to build new homes. John Peri Sr., a local painter and building contractor, purchased the home on February 2, 1970. Peri bought, repaired, and sold properties frequently, but the Cobble Villa was a special case. His family never lived in the property but instead used it to host lavish parties, weddings, and special occasions.²³

The Steele family, which currently owns the house, purchased it from the Peri family on July 3, 1976. Dan Steele served in the army during World War II and retired from the military as a Chief Warrant Officer III. His wife Clara, an Italian immigrant from Trieste, was a locally well-known artist especially praised for her trompe l'oeil work. She painted and decorated a number of rooms in the house, including: baroque figures on the living room ceiling; a domed sky with portraits of her grandchildren in her bedroom; and a chapel addition. Her works were featured in the *New York Times*, on PBS Channel 13, in various Long Island libraries, and continue to be on display through special tours of the home. Though an aspect of the house's history, Clara's work has not been a focus of this nomination. After more time has passed, it will be possible to assess the significance of Clara Steele's work within a local or regional artistic context.

One of the few remaining Mediterranean style residences from Long Beach's early history, Cobble Villa is particularly significant as William Reynolds's model home for Long Beach Estates. Reynolds briefly lived in the house and used it to help sell the idea of Long Beach as a wealthy resort colony. The house's expansive plan, large lot, complex, Mediterranean design reflects Reynolds aspirations as well as the type of client he sought to attract. Due to the house's pedigree, large size, and prominent location, it became home to a series of Long Beach developers and leaders. Cobble Villa retains its architectural integrity, and is notable for its direct connections to the early history and development of Long Beach.

²² Deed research and notes, Cobble Villa file; "Bookie Raids," Long Island Daily Press, August 1, 1943; "Three Cleared of Gambling in Long Beach Mansion," *Long Island Daily Press*, September 4, 1943.

²³ Nassau County, New York [map], 1914, 1922, 1950, 1955, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – New York."

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Cobble Villa file, Courtesy Long Beach Island Landmarks Association and Daniel Steele.

Fiore, Roberta et. al. *Long Beach*. Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2010.

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Hughes, Will. *A History of Long Beach, 1500-1944*. Garden City, NY: Beech Street Publishing Co., 1982.

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Nassau County Archives. Old Country Road, Mineola, New York.

Nassau County, New York [map], 1914, 1922, 1950, 1955, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – New York."

National Register of Historic Places. House at 226 West Penn Street. Long Beach, Nassau County, 2008.

Pietrusza, David. *Rothstein: The Life, Times, and Murder of the Criminal Genius who fixed the 1919 World Series*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003.

Newspaper Articles

"3 Trustees Quit Long Beach Board," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 8, 1915.

"870 Persons Driven from Beds as Long Beach Hotel Burns," *New York Herald*, July 30, 1907.

"\$50,000 Long Beach Deal," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 1, 1915.

"A Vast Hostelry," *New York Herald*, July 18, 1880.

"All Cash for 200 Long Beach lots," *New York Herald*, May 28, 1915.

"Be a Pioneer Investor at Long Beach, the New Atlantic City," Advertisement, *New York Sun*, June 23, 1907.

"Bankruptcy Petition Heard," Long Island Daily Press, March 31, 1937. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 13, 1915.

"Bookie Raids," Long Island Daily Press, August 1, 1943.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

"Election Stirs Long Beach," *New York Herald*, June 18, 1916.

"Getting Away from 'The Heart of Things' at Long Beach," *New York Herald*, October 8, 1915.

"Long Beach Blossoms as Full Fledged Town," *New York Tribune*, July 13, 1913.

"Long Beach Hotel Destroyed by Fire," *Amsterdam Evening Reporter*, July 29, 1907.

"Long Island Realty in \$1,000,000 Deal," *New York Herald*, June 12, 1914.

"Meyers Seeks Land Title," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 6, 1916.
New York Herald, June 18, 1916.

The Daily Long Island Farmer, July 31, 1916.

"The Most Beautiful Home in or around Long Beach For Sale." Advertisement, *New York Herald*, October 10, 1915.

"Three Cleared of Gambling in Long Beach Mansion," *Long Island Daily Press*, September 4, 1943.

"Tolins Is Now for a Change at Long Beach," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 22, 1938.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .32 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 612280 4494378
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

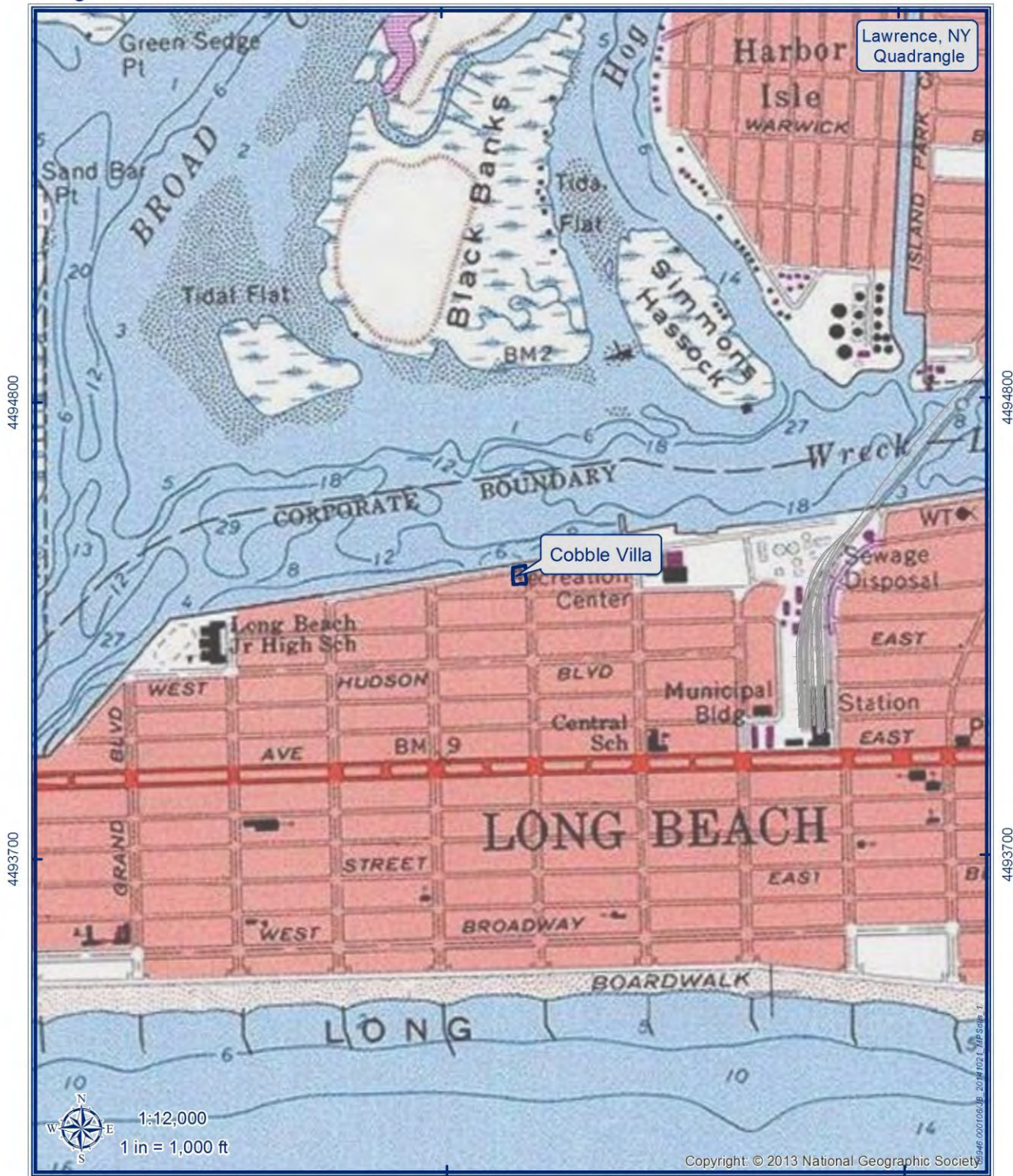
The boundary incorporates the entire lot on which Cobble Villa was originally built. Though the lot was expanded historically to create additional garden and service space, the additional land was divided from the house in 1947. The division restored the original dimensions of the lot.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

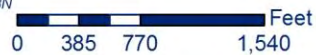
Nassau County, NY
County and State

Cobble Villa
Long Beach, Nassau Co., NY

657 Laurelton Blvd.
Long Beach, NY 11561



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



 Cobble Villa

Tax Parcel Data:
Nassau Co. RPS
nassaucountyny.gov/mynassauproperty

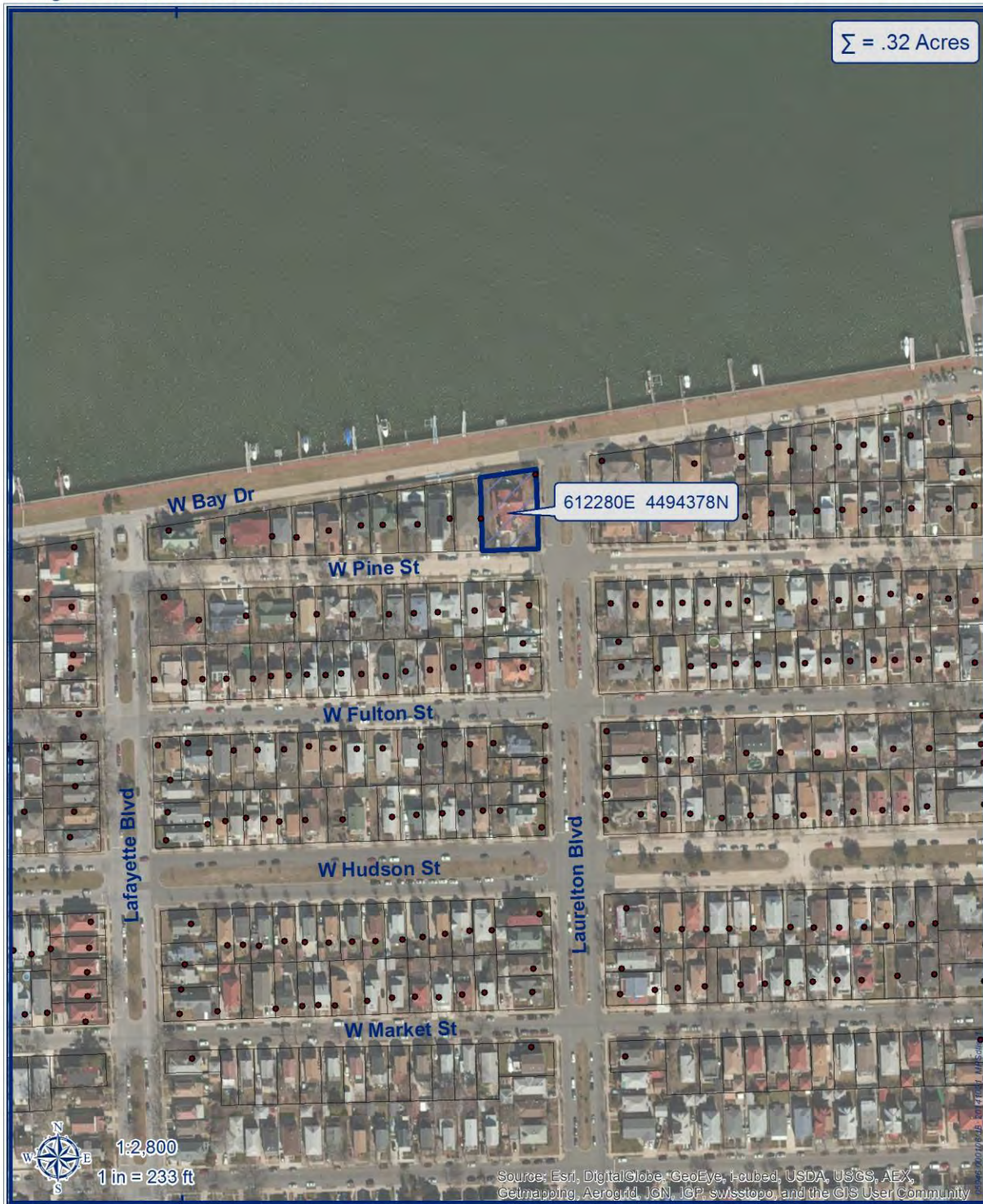


Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

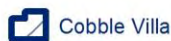
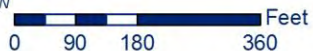
Cobble Villa
Long Beach, Nassau Co., NY

657 Laurelton Blvd.
Long Beach, NY 11561



612100

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



Tax Parcel Data:
Nassau Co. RPS
nassaucountyny.gov/
mynassauproperty



Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Betsworth (NY SHPO)
organization New York State Historic Preservation Office date October 20, 2014
street & number P.O. Box 189 telephone 518-237-8643 ext. 3296
city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188
e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Cobble Villa

City or Vicinity: Long Beach

County: Nassau State: NY

Photographer: Jennifer Betsworth

Date Photographed: May 27, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0001
North and east elevations and setting, facing southwest

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0002
East elevation, facing west

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0003
North and East elevations, facing southwest

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0004
West elevation, facing southeast

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0005
South elevation, facing north

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0006
Porte Cochere, details, facing southeast

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0007
Interior, First floor hallway, facing south

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0008
Interior, Dining room and ballroom, facing south

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0009
Interior, Bar, facing west

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0010
Interior, Stair landing, facing south

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0011
Interior, Staircase, facing east

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 0012
Interior, Chapel, facing north

NY_Nassau Co_Cobble Villa_ 00013
Interior, Second floor hallway, facing south

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Daniel Steele
street & number 657 Laurelton Boulevard telephone 516-889-2485
city or town Long Beach state NY zip code 11561

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Cobble Villa
Name of Property

Nassau County, NY
County and State



New York Herald, October 18, 1915



STOP



VILLA DE CLARA









VILLA CLARA

657















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Cobble Villa
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Nassau

DATE RECEIVED: 12/12/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/21/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/05/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/27/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001214

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 1.27.15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECEIVED
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
AT
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189
518-237-8643



Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

8 December 2014

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to enclose the following five nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Mount Saviour Monastery, Chemung County
Hanover Square Historic District Boundary Expansion, Onondaga County
Cobble Villa, Nassau County
House at 325 Piermont Street, Rockland County
Mary Louise Booth Girlhood House, Suffolk County

Please feel free to call me 518.237.8643 x 3261 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office