

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Pelham Bay Park, Shore Road (N. of
Bartow Circle near City Island Avenue)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Bronx, New York

VICINITY OF

10th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New York

Bronx

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of New York (International Garden Club of America)

STREET & NUMBER

414 Washington Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Pelham

VICINITY OF

New York 10803

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Bronx County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

851 Grand Concourse

CITY, TOWN

STATE

New York

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

New York State Division for Historic Preservation Historic Resources Survey

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

New York State Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Albany

New York

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The descriptions are based on Landmark reports and Joseph Downs article.

The west entrance to Bartow Mansion gives a first impression austerity that is a lasting one, from the severe, cut stone of the facade relieved only by a heavy white painted cornice and beveled quoins dressed stone, and the outsweeping iron balustrade flanking the double paneled doors. The rich planting of trees, shrubs, and perennials planted so wisely and maintained as well through the past thirty-five years, did much to soften the forbidding exterior.

The entrance hall, with a formally balanced arrangement of "Greek" door and window architraves, painted white against Pompeian pink walls, typifies a fresh neo-classic design in American houses. The shallow niche, repeated on the east and west facades, originally held sculptures, now lost, to strengthen the classic tie, a happy scheme to achieve dignity in an unexpected way. A marble bust of a Roman emperor now stands opposite the entrance door; at the right, above a large Empire sofa, hangs a classical version of the Prodigal Son, by Benjamin West. The hall lantern and wall lights are earlier than the house, dating from the late eighteenth century.

The floor plan is symmetrical on either side of an axis running east-west and reflects the symmetrical design of the central section of the exterior. The spacious entrance hall is flanked by two small rooms, north and south of the hall. To the east, double parlors with French doors opening to the garden are mirror images of each other.

An elegant freestanding staircase, rising from the entrance hall in curving sweeps, extends from the ground floor to the attic. It is lit by small clerestory windows at the peak of the roof. The graceful balustrade, which terminates in a volute with a turned newel post, is supported by handsome turned balusters. The doors and windows of the hall are enframed by paneled pilasters beneath low pediments of wood. A plaster dentiled cornice and central ceiling rosette of acanthus leaves provide decorative accents.

The Parlor and Dining Room are distinguished by spaciousness of scale, dignity of plan, and the use of symmetrically balanced elements. The pediments enriched with spread eagle and winged cupid, and pilasters carved with acanthus and honeysuckle, give a new understanding of the Greek Revival at its best. Following contemporary precedent, the walls here have been painted pale reddish brown, to offset the marble-white woodwork, mahogany doors, and black floors. The lustrous satin curtains of copper color and robin's-egg blue, with under curtains of white mull, repeat the colors in the old French carpet. On the walls are portraits by Waldo and Jewett from the 1830's. The fine chandelier and mantel lamps, with original hurricane shades, were made about 1810; the bronze table lamps are a decade or two later. The mantel clock is French, of gilded bronze, flanked by a figure of Washington. The Empire furniture is suitable in scale to its background. The paintings in all the rooms were lent

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1836-42

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This lovely house-museum is one of the best preserved Greek Revival structures in the style of Minard Lefever remaining in this country. Still a country estate, open to visitors, it is beautifully appointed and maintained by the Garden Club of America.

Joseph Downs described the property:

"Bolton's Guide to New Rochelle published in 1842 takes note of a country house that still stands facing the Sound at Pelham Bay, New York. ". . . The present proprietor has lately erected a fine stone house in the Grecian style, which presents a neat front, with projecting wings. . ." The fortunate owner was Robert Bartow, a descendant of Sir John Pell, second lord of the Manor of Pelham, whose house had stood near the same site from 1675 until it was destroyed soon after the Revolution.

Bartow Mansion with its simple gray ashlar exterior, ample scale, and rich interior detail, represents the best freely creative work done in the Greek Revival style. It may have been designed by the architect Minard Lefever (1797-1854), who was trained as a carpenter in upstate New York and came to Manhattan in 1828. He published three books of architecture between 1829 and 1835. The Young Builder's General Instructor, 1829; The Modern Builder's Guide, 1833; and The Beauties of Modern Architecture, 1835. Lefever was probably the most talented American designer of his time, and his work is characterized by bold modifications of classical Greek precedent. The rooms at Bartow Mansion reflect the crisp, imaginative detail that Lefever achieved in his interiors.

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Historic American Building Survey

1936 Federal

Library of Congress Washington, D.C.

New York City Landmarks Commission

1966

305 Broadway

New Yor New York

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by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The grandeur achieved in the dining room by the architect a century ago is evident in the dining room. For the restoration of these handsome rooms, an attempt was made to follow the homogeneity that the background reflects, by using the same colors upon the woodwork and walls in both rooms, and the same design and fabric at all five windows, giving minor contrasts by reversing the colors, as the architect did by replacing eagles with cupids on the pediments of the dining room. The chairs and tables are mahogany, a wood that was still the favorite of cabinetmakers in the 1830's. The mantel garniture is Siena marble and bronze, and matches the marble mantel below. The chandelier is a fine example of 1810, and, like a similar one in the parlor, was the generous gift of Harry Harkness Flagler. The walls are hung with New York landscapes painted by Jasper F. Cropsey, Thomas Doughty, and Asher B. Durand.

The Chief architectural interest is confined to the first-floor rooms. Above stairs, the bedrooms are finished with plain, molded trim, and severe white marble mantels. The rooms are high-ceiled and spacious, with ample walls for the high-post beds and great wardrobes essential in early nineteenth-century houses. The background here is painted lavender, from a wall color found in Ackermann's Repository of the Arts dated 1837, and the woodwork is white. The mahogany bed is a fine example of New York design, made about 1820.

This beautifully-scaled quiet house affords a magnificent view of Long Island Sound. The complex with its lovely garden also includes a small burial ground for the Pell family and a carriage house.

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Robert and Maria Lorillard Bartow and their children occupied the house described by Bolton until 1888, when it was acquired, together with adjoining lands, by the City of New York for park purposes. In 1914 the International Garden Club leased the house for its headquarters, and started the development of the gardens and rehabilitation of the house. In 1939 it was taken over by the late Mayor LaGuardia as a summer "White House."¹ It was restored with the advice of curators from the Metropolitan Museum, the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of the City of New York."

New York City Landmarks Commission reports note the transitional character of the structure-the rather austere Federal exterior and the gracious Greek Revival interior:

"The architectural decoration of the interior of the Bartow-Pell Mansion is Greek Revival in style, in contrast to the exterior of the building, which is an unusual example of a country seat of the earlier Federal period. The stylistic inconsistency between the interior and exterior of this impressive country residence may be explained by the fact that when Bartow purchased the property from Herman Leroy in 1836, he may have desired a more fashionable, up-to-date residence, in keeping with the social background of the well-to-do Bartow family. The late Federal ironwork at the entrance of the house and the general simplicity of the exterior design point to a date of erection during the Leroy occupancy, earlier than the 1836 date that has previously been assumed.

The history of the Bartow-Pell property goes back to 1654, when Thomas Pell purchased over 9,000 acres from the Indians, commemorated by a tree northwest of the mansion, planted on the spot where that event took place. Thomas Pell became the first Lord of the Manor of Pelham, which was named after him and confirmed by a Patent granted by Governor Nicolls on October 6, 1666. The Bartow-Pell Mansion thus stands on land which was once a part of the Manor of Pelham. The property then passed through successive generations of Pells until 1790, when John Bartow, the son of Bathsheba Pell and Theophilus Bartow, purchased a part of the property from the Pell family.

¹Downs, Joseph, Great Houses (Antiques) 1973, Pyne Press, p. 274

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From 1794 on, Herman Leroy, who had served as the first Consul General from Holland to the newly formed United States, began to purchase property in Pelham. Leroy and his brother-in-law, William Bayard, were among the largest landowners in the City, with huge holdings in western New York State. Founded in 1790, Leroy, Bayard and Company was one of the most highly respected and successful shipping firms in New York. Leroy was a director of the Bank of the United States and president of the Bank of New York. One of his daughters married Daniel Webster and a son married into the Hamilton Fish family. In 1813 Herman Leroy purchased 200 additional acres from John Bartow, a transaction witnessed by Aaron Burr, who at that time was married to a Bartow. In 1836, Robert, a grandson of John Bartow and the husband of Maria Rosina Lorillard, purchased the same 200 acres from the Leroy family. Thus, many of New York's most prominent families--Pell, Bartow, Bayard, Leroy, Fish, Lorillard and Aaron Burr--were associated with the historic Bartow-Pell property.

The interior of this country residence, in its spaciousness and elegance, provided a fitting setting for the life of the prominent families who lived here until 1888, when the property was turned over to the City by Mrs. Robert Bartow. The house was unused until 1914, when restoration was begun by the architectural firm of Delano & Aldrich under the auspices of the International Garden Club."²

²New York City Landmarks Commission report, 1975.

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Hamilin, Talbot. Greek Revival Architecture in America. New York: Dover
Publications, 1964.

NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission. Report on Bartow-Pell Mansion.