

MRS. D. ARCHIE PELL HOUSE /PELL-BULL-COTTRELL HOUSE

**11 Francis Street
Newport, RI**



This striking Queen Anne-style house at 11 Francis Street was designed by Boston architect Clarence S. Luce in 1881 for Mrs. Duncan Archibald Pell, who brought Luce to Newport for this, his first commission in the city. Today's Francis Street is part of an area in the Top of the Hill that was developed from farmland in the 1870s by canny entrepreneurs Alfred Smith and Joseph Bailey. The Pell family summered at the house from 1881 – 1900, followed by Dr. Henry Bull, who owned the house from 1900 - 1909.

The next family to own the house were the Robert C. Cottrell family and descendants, who owned the house from 1909-1983. Samuel Middleton Cottrell Barker, 10th generation Newporter, late historian of the Top of the Hill organization, and former President of the Board of the Newport Historical Society, inherited the house from those relatives. Robert C. Cottrell, Sam's grandfather, was engaged in a furniture and undertaking business on Thames Street, and was mayor of Newport in 1906. Robert's daughter, Catherine, stayed in the house after growing up there, and rented apartments there in the 1930's.

The architect, Clarence Sumner Luce (1852 - 1924), came from an established Massachusetts family, started his career as a draftsman, and began an architectural practice in Boston by the late 1870s. In 1882, he had moved his practice to Newport, where he set up shop in the Vernon House at the corner of Clarke and Mary Streets. Luce specialized in residential buildings, chiefly Queen Anne Revival and Shingle-style houses on the East Coast.

Luce was well-known for his quirky, personalized Queen Anne residences. In 11 Francis Street, he employed many typical decorative motifs on the house, from carved panels to coffered plaques. However, the small gable on the Everett Street side, covered with glass-embedded

cement, is a unique feature: it is thought to be the first use of that particular ornamental exterior detail on a summer cottage in Newport.

The Newport Mercury of April 30, 1881, described the house:” Mrs. D. Archie Pell’s cottage... has a picturesque and broken outline, and is diversified by bay windows projecting piazzas ... It comprises two and a half stories. The first story is clapboard and the second, shingled, while the gables are finished in cement and glass...the house has five rooms on the first floor, six on the second, and three on the third...The library is a very beautifully finished apartment, with ornamentations of carved pressed brick. The dining room is finished in black walnut. The hall is wainscoted in redwood, the same wood that is used for the staircase. The building is supplied with the latest in improved steam apparatus. The exterior is painted in bronze green on the first storey; the second is finished in natural wood with spar varnish. The cost of the cottage is about \$8000, and the builder was James Rudolph”

Before Clarence Luce moved on to New York City in 1885, he had been responsible for the design of an important series of buildings during the decade leading up to the flowering of the shingle style in Newport. Only one of the houses has since been demolished; nine still remain in the Kay/Catherine/Old Beach Historic District.

Information compiled by Susan Kieronski

Sources:

Appendix A: Buildings in the Kay Street-Catherine Street – Old Beach Road Neighborhood

Recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey

The Kay-Catherine-Old Beach Road Neighborhood in Newport, statewide preservation report n-n-1, RI Historic Preservation Commission

Website, National Architectural Historians

Buildings of Rhode Island, William H. Jordy, with Ronald J. Onorato and William McKenzie Woodward, NY: OUP, 2004, p. 556.