

GOULD MEMORIAL LIBRARY, Bronx Community College, City University of New York, ground floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, the northeast and southeast stairhalls leading from the entrance vestibule to the basement level, and the stairhall leading from the entrance vestibule to the main (first) floor; main floor interior consisting of the foyer, the former chancellor's room (south offices), the conference room (north office), and the rotunda up to the top of the dome including balconies (second level) and mezzanines (third and fourth levels); basement interior consisting of the foyer and east stairhall; and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited to, all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transoms, metal grilles, hinged bookcases, statuary, attached clocks, decorative lettering, leaded glass, glass vault floors, balustrades, stair rails and newel posts, and columns and half-columns; Hall of Fame Terrace at Sedgwick Avenue, The Bronx.

Designed 1892-96; built 1897-99; architects McKim, Mead & White; Stanford White, partner in charge.

Landmark Site: Borough of The Bronx, Tax Map Block 3222, Lot 62 in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated.

On July 12, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Gould Memorial Library, Bronx Community College, City University of New York, ground floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, the northeast and southeast stairhalls leading from the entrance vestibule to the basement level, and the stairhall leading from the entrance vestibule to the main (first) floor; main floor interior consisting of the foyer, the former chancellor's room (south offices), the conference room (north office), and the rotunda up to the top of the dome including balconies (second level) and mezzanines (third and fourth levels); basement interior consisting of the foyer and east stairhall; and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited to, all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transoms, metal grilles, hinged bookcases, statuary, attached clocks, decorative lettering, leaded glass, glass vault floors, balustrades, stair rails and newel posts, and columns and half-columns (Item No. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. One witness spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Dramatically sited on the heights overlooking the Harlem River, Harlem Flats, and the New Jersey Palisades beyond, the Gould Memorial Library and the related buildings of the former New York University campus stand as one of the triumphs of late nineteenth-century American architecture. Designed at a time when many institutions of higher learning were expanding their facilities, the library is a monument to two great men--architect Stanford White and chancellor Henry MacCracken. The Gould Memorial Library is an imposing, classically-inspired structure constructed of yellow Roman brick with limestone and terra-cotta trim. The use of these materials serves to modulate the building's monumental quality and link it to the surrounding landscape. The restrained exterior stands in vivid contrast to the rich interior with its dramatic flow of spaces and its sumptuous stone and marble detailing. The Gould Memorial Library has long been recognized as among the supreme examples of Stanford White's work. The most fitting comment on the building's architectural importance has come, not from architectural critics or the general public, but from White's peers who in 1919 chose the library as the site for the Stanford White Memorial.¹ Although no longer used as a library, the building retains its original configuration and is a major monument of the former New York University campus.

After two years of planning, New York University was incorporated in 1831 as the University of the City of New York. The university was founded by a group of merchants and professionals who wished to organize a nondenominational school as a counterpoint to the Episcopalian Columbia College. In 1832 Alexander Jackson Davis designed the famous Gothic Revival style building on Washington Square East that housed the university from 1835 until its demolition in 1894.

For its first fifty years the university remained a relatively small institution with fewer than 100 students. It was Henry MacCracken's appointment to the faculty and administration that set the stage for the transformation of the University of the City of New York into one of America's great academic institutions, renamed New York University in 1896. Henry Mitchell MacCracken (1840-1918) was a Presbyterian minister and writer who in 1881 entered the field of education as a professor of philosophy and chancellor of the Western University of Pennsylvania at Pittsburgh. During MacCracken's three years at the Western University he succeeded in moving the school from Pittsburgh to the more rural environs of Alleghany, Pennsylvania, a feat that was to be paralleled during his tenure at New York University. In 1884 MacCracken was offered the chair of philosophy at the University of the City of New York. This offer was not immediately accepted since the position did not offer

opportunities for advancement and would not allow MacCracken to take part in the administration of the university. Thus, in order to gain MacCracken's services, the university created the office of vice chancellor, a position that put MacCracken in charge of the general educational system. In 1891 MacCracken became chancellor, a post that he held until his retirement in 1910.

MacCracken envisioned the creation of a great university in New York that would be a model for other institutions of higher learning in the United States. As early as 1890, when he was still vice-chancellor, MacCracken proposed:

that we keep abreast of the times by building up our University College, with its sixty years of noble record, into an ideal American college in upper New York, to be the pride of the citizens, the most favorite place in that region to be shown to visitors from every country.²

MacCracken believed that the growth of commerce in the Washington Square area was antithetical to the advancement of education and that the undergraduate divisions of the school should be moved to an undeveloped area that was within easy reach of Washington Square. Most importantly, MacCracken believed that by moving the college from the business section of the city it "would fulfill more nearly the American ideal of a college,"³ an ideal that generally led American institutions of higher learning to locate in quiet rural areas where students would be free from the problems and diversions of urban life. In March 1891 the University Council approved MacCracken's proposal and began the search for a site. In June a downpayment was placed on the Bronx property of merchant H.W.T. Mali, one of a number of country estates located on Fordham Heights (later renamed University Heights) in the nineteenth century. At this time the area, then sparsely populated, was seen as being "suggestive of academic seclusion,"⁴ and the choice of this site was highly praised. The Morning Advertiser noted that "no college in the country will command a more interesting landscape,"⁵ and the New York Herald saw the area as "unequaled for picturesqueness."⁶

In January 1892 MacCracken sought Stanford White's voluntary assistance in designing the new campus for the University. Stanford White (1853-1906) and his partners in the firm of McKim, Mead & White designed some of the major American buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and their work exerted widespread influence throughout the country. White's assistance was requested, not only because he was a leader in the field, but also because his family was associated with the University. A letter to White, dated January 22, 1892, clearly shows that MacCracken hoped to interest White in donating his services to the University:

Relying upon the interest that you take in New York University, both because it was the Alma Mater of your father, Mr. Richard Grant White of the Class of '39-- a name honored among us, and because you yourself are an honorary alumnus of '81, I solicit such aid in connection with our present movement as you can give, and especially in the way of professional suggestions....⁷

White seems to have graciously accepted MacCracken's solicitation, for three days later he wrote to MacCracken suggesting that the old Washington Square building be moved to the new campus and used as a chapel, library, and museum of science. In addition, White proposed that the buildings on the Mali property be transformed

into halls, and that two new buildings be erected.⁸ White's idea for preserving Davis' original building was seriously considered by the university and White drew plans for the campus with the old structure set at the edge of the Heights, flanked by a nearly symmetrical arrangement of buildings laid out to form three sides of an open rectangle facing an athletic field (see illustration). This early effort at historic preservation was accepted by New York University's Executive Committee, but only on the condition that the citizens of New York assist in paying for the move. The building was considered to be of such great historical significance that the university did not feel that it should take full responsibility should its "obliteration" be necessary.⁹ The university was unable to raise money to save the building and this early scheme was eventually abandoned. Despite this rejection, the idea of a symmetrical group of buildings flanking a centrally-placed library, all set on the western edge of the site, became the model for the final campus design.

Before construction began on the Bronx site, two issues had to be resolved. The first of these involved a possible merger with Columbia. Shortly after New York University announced that it planned to buy the Mali Estate, Columbia announced its intention to purchase land on Morningside Heights.¹⁰ Like New York University's property, that of Columbia was located in a sparsely developed area north of the commercial center of the city and the land was dramatically sited with spectacular rural views. Since both universities would be seeking the donation of large sums of money, it was suggested that they merge or form a federation. Although this idea was seriously considered by both institutions, it was finally rejected, probably because of the problem of religious affiliation.¹¹ Thus, major new campuses were designed concurrently for both Columbia and New York University. While Stanford White was working with New York University, his partner Charles McKim was designing Columbia. The two designs have much in common, but the contrasts between them provide a fascinating glimpse at the aesthetic sensibilities of these two great architects.

The second problem concerned the use of the university's Washington Square land. From the inception of MacCracken's idea, he planned to retain the old site and build an income-producing structure that would help to support the university and which could be converted to use by the graduate school at a later date. The removal of the university was contingent upon finding a tenant for this space and it was not until March 1894 that the American Book Co. agreed to lease seven stories of the proposed building. With the move now a certainty, the old building was demolished in May 1894 and work was begun on transforming the Mali property. The Chancellor's Report notes that "perhaps a briefer period was never set for the erection of buildings sufficient for the reception of a College and School of Engineering, with a Faculty of nearly twenty teachers and nearly two hundred students."¹² By October 1, 1894 the university had moved uptown with classes held in converted buildings, including a gymnasium that was formed by connecting two barns.

Although the Washington Square building had not yet been rented, MacCracken requested that White submit plans for the new campus in February 1894.¹³ The first of White's buildings to be designed and completed was the Hall of Languages which opened on November 1894. This building, located to the south of the site intended for the library, bears a close conceptual relationship to the north building drawn by White in his initial plan for the campus. The small Havemeyer Laboratory set in the south arm of the plan, was completed a few months later.

The preliminary design for the library seems to date from late in 1894, shortly after an anonymous donor, who turned out to be Helen Miller Gould, offered to pay the entire cost of building the library.¹⁴ Helen Miller Gould was the oldest daughter of financier Jay Gould, who had donated \$25,000 to the building fund and had promised additional donations prior to his death in 1892. The earliest sketch for the library illustrates the general form that the building would take--a Greek cross with a central, domed reading room. This early plan differs from the final design in a number of important features including the use of a high rounded dome with a lantern, an interior rotunda with round-arched openings and Ionic columns, and a Corinthian colonnade set into the dome. While the Executive Committee was considering White's design, MacCracken asked him for "a description of the Library as it appears to your 'mind's eye'."¹⁵ White's description was as follows:

The style of the building, like the Language Hall now built, and the corresponding hall on the East (Cornelius Baker Hall of Philosophy, not built until 1912), is severely classic, but the play of parts caused by the four wings and the prolongation of the front wings, and the transition of the octagon to the arches, will give the building a picturesque effect.¹⁶

Clearly White did not wish to create a monumental classical design that would overpower the spectacular rural landscape that had been carefully chosen as an appropriate site for the university. By creating shallow side and rear wings and a deep front wing White broke up the grandeur of the design, giving it a "picturesque effect" that fit the picturesque setting.

The Executive Committee seems not to have been satisfied with White's initial plan and decided to hold a competition for the library to which White, George B. Post, Henry Hardenburgh, and Richard Morris Hunt were invited to enter.¹⁷ It is unclear as to whether any of these architects submitted plans to the university, but by 1896 White was in charge of the design and construction of the library.

White did not have a totally free hand in the design. In fact, the building illustrates the late nineteenth-century revival of the Renaissance ideal of a work of art jointly created by the artist and patron, for Chancellor MacCracken had a tremendous input in the design, making suggestions for improvements and rejecting ideas submitted by White. An example of the relationship between these two men can be seen in a letter MacCracken wrote to White in September 1896:

This figure of half a million, without ambulatory, or museum, or wall, or architects' fees, or library-stacks and stairways, or furniture, or organ, or sculpture, or conduits, or lighting, or plumbing is rather bewildering. The additional trouble with me is that I cannot say to the Committee that the building is satisfactory on the interior. I am still dissatisfied with the reading room which I fear will have a barn-like rotunda, dimly lighted, never warm in coldest weather--Then we do not get interior richness, with 24 sham marble columns. I should have esthetic pangs

every time I saw them. Domes, although imposing are dreary things to live in--Therefore can you not give us an attractive sketch, embodying features which would enable me conscientiously to advocate the expenditure...I enclose sketch embodying my suggestions. I realize that visitors will expect to find an interior rotunda, but better a little disappointment of that kind, than great failure to meet practical aims.¹⁸

Although MacCracken's drawing has been lost, many of the features that he noted, such as the size of the dome and the sham marble columns, were redesigned in accord with his suggestions. In a 1901 letter to White, MacCracken listed some of the ideas that he had contributed to the design of the building. These included the removal of column supports on the balconies, the use of book doors, book cases, and Tiffany panels as partitions between the reading room and the seminary rooms, and the enlargement of windows in the skylight of the dome, "without this change, MacCracken wrote, "for which I may claim credit, the library to-day would be an utter failure for library purposes."¹⁹

The plan of the library is one of the most striking features of the design. The library is laid out as a Greek cross with a circular reading room articulated by sixteen columns of Connemara Irish Green Marble and crowned by a coffered dome. The reading room, located in the center of White's complex, forms the symbolic heart of the university, and the entire campus was designed with the reading room as the focus. The major campus vista is down a long allée of trees that leads directly to the library.²⁰ The reading room is surrounded by seminary rooms and stacks that are set into the short arms of the Greek cross. The long east arm of the cross houses the Chancellor's office, a conference room and the main staircase that leads from the entrance portico to the rotunda. In the basement, located below the reading room, was a chapel.

Such a library plan was extremely popular during the late nineteenth century, but its roots can be traced to English Renaissance and Baroque buildings. The earliest known plan for a central library is Sir Christopher Wren's preliminary design for Trinity College, Cambridge, inspired by Palladio's Villa Rotunda. Wren's design called for a square building with shallow projections, a columnar portico, and a round reading room, dome, and lantern with twelve Corinthian columns.²¹ Although Wren's library was not constructed in this form, the circular Radcliffe Library (Radcliffe Camera) at Oxford was erected in 1737-49. The earliest plan for this building was drawn by Nicholas Hawksmoor. Inspired by Wren's design for Trinity College, Hawksmoor established the idea for a round library for Oxford. The Radcliffe Library was carried out by James Gibbs with a domed design that actually was inspired by that of St. Peter's, Rome. It was the construction of Sydney Smirke's British Museum Library (1854), with its massive central rotunda, that led to the widespread interest in round, centrally-planned libraries. The earliest rotunda library in the United States was Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia Library built between 1817 and 1826. The interior central space of this building

was not left open, however, but was divided into two floors to facilitate the needs of the university.²³ The next notable centralized library was Edward Potter's Chancellor Green Library at Princeton (1873), a small octagonal building designed in the High Victorian Gothic style. Of greater importance is the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. designed by Smithmeyer & Pelz and built over an extensive period of time from 1873 to 1897. As a major governmental project the design was widely publicized.

Both Stanford White's Gould Memorial Library and Charles McKim's Low Library at Columbia (1893-98) show the influence of the British Museum and Library of Congress projects. Symbolically both the Gould and Low libraries hold a similar place at the center of their university communities. Both of these buildings are classically-inspired structures with finely-massed domes, and each is the most commanding presence on its campus. Despite these similarities, the buildings are quite dissimilar in their impact. White laid out the New York University campus to take advantage of its rural setting. The buildings face a large open lawn; an ambulatory, later redesigned as the Hall of Fame, was placed to the rear of the library to take advantage of the spectacular views to the west. The design for the Gould Library, with its mottled yellow brick, terra-cotta ornament, projecting entrance pavilion, and low dome, shows White's romantic proclivities. The design does not overpower the landscape, and the classical forms are freely interpreted to make a monumental statement while at the same time blending with the setting. On the other hand, McKim's plans for Columbia turn away from the surrounding environment. The campus is walled off from its setting, and the library, which is located above a series of raised terraces, is rigidly symmetrical and is fronted by a massive decastyle Ionic portico. It is crowned by a massive dome so that the building totally dominates its surroundings and is reminiscent of the grandeur of Imperial Rome, a symbol that was clearly seen as appropriate for the library of the city's oldest university.

Both libraries have extremely grand interiors, but the articulation of the interior spaces and details again reflects the contrast between the two designs. The grandeur of the exterior of Low Library is echoed on the interior. The richly decorated entrance lobby is separated from the reading room by a double screen of heavy Ionic columns. The reading room is octagonal in shape and is demarcated by Ionic columns and massive piers that support a low dome. The interior is lit by monumental semicircular windows modeled after those of Roman public buildings. In contrast, the Gould Library reading room is entered through a long narrow stairhall modeled after Renaissance prototypes. This staircase leads to a landing with a relatively small portal through which one gains a tantalizing view of the reading room beyond. The expansiveness of the central rotunda opens up slowly as the visitor passes through the door. Thus, White has created a superbly modulated enfilade leading from the exterior allée of trees, to the entrance portico and stairway, and then to the culminating feature--the rotunda. Instead of the angular octagonal form of Low Library, the Gould interior is formed by a series of undulating curves that include the rotunda, balconies, floor pattern, and dome. The proportions of the interior elements are much lighter than at Columbia and the entire interior has a more open and graceful appearance.

The seminary rooms located in the alcoves surrounding the rotunda were considered to be one of the great innovations of the Gould Library design:

The unique feature of the Library proper, from an educational point of view, is the apportionment of twenty departments of learning, each being given

a seminary-room with a stack-room adjoining.²⁴

Each of the three levels of the library contained six seminary rooms. The first tier was designed to house the six departments of Philosophy and History: Religion and Education, Philosophy, Economics and Sociology, Political Science, History, and Statistics; the second tier housed the language departments: Oriental, Greek, Latin, Romance, Teutonic, and English; and the third tier housed Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics, Geology, Biology and Medicine, Engineering, and Useful and Fine Arts. General stacks were located between these rooms and a system of pneumatic tubes was designed to deliver books to the seminary rooms and the general reading room. This arrangement of the library was probably MacCracken's idea and he noted that there were four advantages to the system:

1. It gave the head professor an opportunity to know the available books,
2. It bestowed a "quasi proprietorship" on the head professor,
3. It gave students of a department "a home feeling," and
4. "It enables even the casual visitor to understand better the scope of the library, its present accumulations, and its principal needs."²⁵

Construction on the library finally began in 1897 and was completed in 1899. The size of the library collection increased dramatically with the erection of the new building. In 1894 the library owned 13,189 volumes, while in 1901 the new building housed 40,615 volumes. The library was designed to allow for the conversion of the administrative offices and the auditorium, located beneath the reading room, to book stacks, thus enabling the library to accommodate easily one million volumes.

Description

The stairhall, administrative offices, and central reading room of the Gould Memorial Library form one of the great surviving interiors dating from the period of American architectural history that has come to be known as the American Renaissance. The interior spaces are among the finest designs of Stanford White and reflect his adherence to scientific eclecticism-- "the assemblage of pieces from the past...to create harmonious wholes."²⁶ At this building White combined forms and ideas from the Roman Pantheon and from Renaissance palaces to create an original and highly sophisticated work of art.

The library is entered through an exterior portico of six Corinthian columns and a pair of bronze doors.²⁷ Beyond the doors the visitor stands in a small vestibule that is flanked by bronze lamp standards. The main stairway rises directly in front and subsidiary staircases leading to the basement chapel are set on either side. The barrel-vaulted side stairways, with their handsome railings, lead to a foyer and hallway set in front of the chapel. From the vestibule one gains a glimpse of the reading room located at the end of the

grand staircase. A sense of the polychromatic richness of the interior is established immediately upon entering the building by the use of stained-glass windows and bands of red, yellow, black, and white mosaic tile for the floor. The vestibule ceiling is in the form of a shallow dome and forms the first of a progression of domes that culminates in the dome of the reading room. A handsome revolving door has been placed within the vestibule.

The short vestibule leads directly to the lower landing of the staircase. This area also has a mosaic floor. Heavy wooden doors on either side lead to offices. From this landing rise the twenty-four Tennessee-marble steps of the barrel-vaulted stair hall. The stairway is modeled after Renaissance prototypes referred to by White in answer to a critical letter of MacCracken's:

I am sure that the staircase as it is designed is all right... I do not see how it will be possible to treat it any other way....Certainly neither the Gold Staircase (of the Ducal Palace) nor the Vatican Staircase look like tunnels, and the New York University one will look far less so, as it is very much more lofty and very much shorter.²⁸

The staircase is an extremely successful part of the design, symbolically serving as the stairway to knowledge. It is only upon reaching the top of the stairs, or after ascending the stairway to knowledge, that the dome of the reading room (the crown of the storehouse of knowledge) begins to come into sight.

The stairway is articulated by two pairs of stone pilasters--one pair at the bottom and one pair towards the top of the steps. The middle pilasters support bronze torches capped by glass globes. The lower two-thirds of the stairway walls are faced with Portland stone. A band embellished with a Vitruvian scroll pattern separates the stone walls from panels of highly-polished, pale-yellow, Cippolini marble. Above these panels is an entablature that supports a coffered barrel vault.

The upper stairway landing is similar in form to the lower landing and vestibule, with a mosaic floor, bronze lamps, and a shallow dome. In the center of the dome is a roundel of green Tiffany stained glass from which hangs a glass globe lamp. The shallow arms of this landing continue the decorative pattern of the stairway--Portland stone walls topped by Cippolini marble panels. Lunettes with round niches that were intended to house portrait busts are located at either end of the landing and above the entrance to the reading room. The original administrative offices of the university are located on either side of the stairway. These elegantly appointed offices, with their wood paneling and fireplaces, remain substantially intact, although they are no longer regularly used.

The entrance to the reading room is through a pair of doors set into a simple eared enframement crowned by a bracketed pediment. The simplicity of the entrance enframement is a foil to the ornate reading room. The reading room, designed to be the major space on the campus, and set at the center of the complex, is the symbol of the intellectual pursuits embodied by the university. Although the scale of the room is extremely grand and it is constructed with the finest materials, the space is not overwhelming. The room has a warm tone created by the muted colors of the stone and marble used and by the human scale of the bookcases and doors that surround the central colonnade.

The most prominent elements of the reading room are the sixteen green Connemara marble column shafts that were imported from the west coast of Ireland and the magnificent coffered dome that covers the entire space. The use of Connemara marble for the columns created a number of problems in the construction of the library. As previously noted, White's early designs for the library called for sham marble columns, but in his letter of September 3, 1896 MacCracken noted that "I should have esthetic pangs every time I saw them: (see p.4). Eight days later White suggested to MacCracken that the columns be of Connemara marble:

I find that columns in Library dome can be made of Connemara Irish Green Marble for forty-one thousand dollars. This is the marble they endeavored to use in Columbia, but which had to be abandoned because it was impossible to get the marble in so large diameter. It is the most beautiful green marble in the world, and it would be a great thing to use it after having had to give it up in Columbia.²⁹

Clearly White believed that this material was quite beautiful, but the letter also expresses the sense of competition between White (and undoubtedly MacCracken) and his partner Charles McKim in their contemporaneous university designs. At some point MacCracken was led to believe that the rotunda columns would each be carved from one piece of stone. When he found that this would not be possible, he sent a protest to White.³⁰ MacCracken must have been appeased, for by April 1898 the marble contractor, Robert C. Fisher & Co. of Houston Street, had promised to finish work on the Connemara drums.³¹ Each column is divided into six drums and they form what was considered to be "the most extensive display of these marbles in the world."³² Each column rises from a base of white Vermont marble and is capped by a Corinthian capital that was covered with a gold-colored metal applied by the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Co.³³ The Corinthian columns support a full entablature composed of an architrave ornamented by a Greek fret band, a bracketed cornice, and frieze carved with the inscription:

AND CHIEFLY THOU SPIRIT THAT DOST PREFER BEFORE
ALL TEMPLES THE UPRIGHT HEART AND PURE INSTRUCT
ME FOR THOU KNOWEST WHAT IN ME IS DARK ILLUMINE
WHAT IS LOW RAISE AND SUPPORT

Above the entablature of the colonnade is an open balcony with plaster railings in a classical openwork pattern, set between plaster pedestals. Each pedestal is ornamented with a glass mosaic panel designed by Tiffany and each supports a plaster statue of a classically-garbed maiden.

The rear wall of the balcony forms the drum of the crowning dome. Enclosed book cabinets have been built into this level. Between the drum and the coffered dome is a band inscribed:

BUT WHERE SHALL WISDOM BE FOUND AND WHERE IS
THE PLACE OF UNDERSTANDING MAN KNOWETH NOT THE
PLACE THEREOF NEITHER IS IT FOUND IN THE LAND OF
THE LIVING THE DEPTH SAITH IT IS NOT IN ME AND
THE SEA SAITH IT IS NOT WITH ME DESTRUCTION
AND DEATH SAY WE HAVE HEARD THE FAME THEREOF

The plaster dome is composed of coffers with central rosettes. These coffers diminish in size as they move towards the central skylight which has been closed off.

Each of the twelve Corinthian columns that decorates the rotunda of the reading room is echoed by an engaged fluted Corinthian column at the wall. The floor in the passage between the two colonnades is laid with panels of white, yellow, and black marble. These engaged columns separate the seminary room, book stack, and stairway alcoves. These alcoves are divided into three levels; on each level the alcoves are divided into three vertical sections. On the first level, the end sections are used as bookcases, while the central area contains either a door or a bookcase that is placed on rollers to form a book door. Written in gold letters above and below the bookcases and doors are the names of important intellectual figures. The second alcove to the right of the entrance (clockwise) contains a wooden table inscribed with the Latin phrase:

MVLTOOVE SATIVS EST PAVCIS TE AVTORIBVS TRADERE QVUM
ERRARE PER MVLTOS

Above the first level in each alcove is a small iron balcony with a glass floor that forms the second level of stacks. The second-floor alcoves are arranged in a similar manner to those below with iron bookcases and book doors and names printed in gold.

A prominent iron balcony extends over this second level. This ornamental balcony forms the floor of the third tier of alcoves. This level is arranged in the same manner as the others; however, large panels of smokey green, red, and blue Tiffany glass, set in the same classical pattern as the railing of the main reading-room balcony, are located above each book shelf.

All of the features of the library were designed to form a single unified whole. White was responsible not only for the design of the building, but also for the decorative fixtures as well. Drawings by White for the various lighting fixtures, furniture, art bookcases, and a clock survive and White oversaw the work of the artisans and craftsmen who supplied decorative work for the building. In 1898 he wrote to MacCracken in order to clarify his position:

We feel certain that it is your, as well as the donor's and the committee's desire to have the building a complete and whole work of art and one thoroughly homogeneous in style, and we are sure, if for no other reason, that it would be a detriment to the building, and cause confusion, to have any of the details controlled by other than its designers³⁴

The desire to create a unified building composed of many separate elements was one of the ideals of architects who had trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition. The Gould Memorial Library is one of the buildings in New York City that best

exemplifies this tradition and the work of the stone cutters, mosaicists, iron founders, plasterers, wood carvers, stained-glass makers and others are combined to form the unified, subtly modulated design that survives today. Although New York University abandoned its University Heights campus, selling it to Bronx Community College in 1973, and the library building is no longer in regular use, most of the original design features remain.³⁵ Although emptied of all of its books and no longer serving its original function, the interior of the Gould Memorial Library remains one of Stanford White's masterpieces and is among the supreme examples of interior design in America.

Report prepared by
Andrew S. Dolkart
Research Department

FOOTNOTES

1. In 1919 a group of artists and patrons was organized to memorialize Stanford White. At the meeting of December 1, 1919 the committee, which was headed by architect Thomas Hastings, decided that the memorial should be a pair of bronze doors to be placed at the entrance to the Gould Memorial Library. White's son, Laurence Grant White, was chosen as the designer of the memorial which was dedicated on December 10, 1921. The doors are composed of eight panels, each with a symbolic figure in relief. The panels represent aspects of White's life and career and were contributed by sculptors who had worked with White. The themes are "Inspiration" and "Generosity" by Andrew O'Connor, "Architecture" and "Decoration" by Phillip Martiny, "Painting" and "Sculpture" by Herbert Adams, and "Mosaic" and "Drama" by Adolph Weinman. Lion's heads were designed by Ulysses Ricci and the door pulls by Janey Scudder.
2. New York University. Chancellor's Report, Vol.12, 1897, p.22.
3. Chancellor's Report, p.22.
4. Transcript (Boston), October 24, 1895 (in New York Historical Society, "McKim, Mead & White Scrapbook," p.140).
5. Morning Advertiser, April 8, 1894 (in New York Historical Society, "McKim, Mead & White Scrapbook," p.139).
6. New York Herald, May 25, 1895 (in New York Historical Society, "McKim, Mead & White Scrapbook," p.140).
7. Letter dated January 22, 1892, Henry MacCracken to Stanford White. McKim, Mead & White Papers, New York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.
8. Letter dated January 25, 1892, White to MacCracken. McKim, Mead & White Papers.
9. Henry Mitchell MacCracken Papers, Box 22, folder 2. New York University Archives, New York, N.Y.
10. This plan was made public on December 7, 1891.
11. Chancellor's Report, p.27.
12. Chancellor's Report, p.32.
13. Letter dated February 7, 1894, MacCracken to White. McKim, Mead & White Papers.
14. On January 17, 1895 MacCracken wrote to White noting that the drawings for the library had been received. The earliest surviving drawings of the library are undated.
15. Letter dated May 16, 1895, MacCracken to White. McKim, Mead & White Papers.
16. McKim, Mead & White Papers.
17. Letter dated May 31, 1895, MacCracken to White. McKim, Mead & White Papers. Paul R. Baker, in his book Richard Morris Hunt (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980), notes that Hunt was too ill to participate in this competition (p.525).
18. Letter dated September 3, 1896, MacCracken to White. McKim, Mead & White Papers.

19. Letter dated October 17, 1901, MacCracken to White. MacCracken Papers.
20. The landscaping of the campus was planned by Vaux & Co. and was financed by Helen Miller Gould.
21. The Wren Society, 5(1928), p.32 and plates XVIII-XXI.
22. See Nikolaus Pevsner, A History of Building Types (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.102.
23. McKim, Mead & White's reconstruction of Jefferson's rotunda at the University of Virginia is a similar project, but it was begun after both Gould and Low had been designed and was probably not a direct influence on these designs. Work on the University of Virginia began in early 1896, shortly after the fire of October 27, 1895.
24. Chancellor's Report, pp.35-36.
25. Henry Mitchell MacCracken, Quadrennial Report of the Chancellor, 1901, p.105.
26. Richard Guy Wilson, "Architecture, Landscape, and City Planning," in The American Renaissance 1876-1917, Exhibition Catalogue (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1979), p.75.
27. These doors are the Stanford White Memorial which replaced the original bronze doors in 1921 (see note 1).
28. Letter dated May 2, 1898, White to MacCracken. MacCracken Papers, Box 24.
29. Letter dated September 11, 1896, White to MacCracken. McKim, Mead & White Papers.
30. Letter dated September 29, 1897, MacCracken to White. McKim, Mead & White Papers.
31. Letter dated April 22, 1898, White to MacCracken. McKim, Mead & White Papers.
32. MacCracken Papers, Box 24, folder 1.
33. Letter dated July 21, 1898, V.B. Canfield to MacCracken. MacCracken Papers. This letter lists the design work that the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Co. was requested to undertake at the Gould Memorial Library. This work included painting, mosaics, plastering, leaded glass, and enriched relief and ornamental moldings in the dome, capitals, and pilasters. Tiffany designed a major window for the auditorium that illustrated Strength, Justice, and Goodness--the three elements of perfect character to be sought by young men. This window was destroyed by a bomb blast during the student demonstrations of the 1960s.
34. Letter dated January 11, 1898, White to MacCracken. MacCracken Papers, Box 24, folder 3.
35. Much of White's furniture, including chairs, tables, and book cases survives, although it is unappreciated and uncared for.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

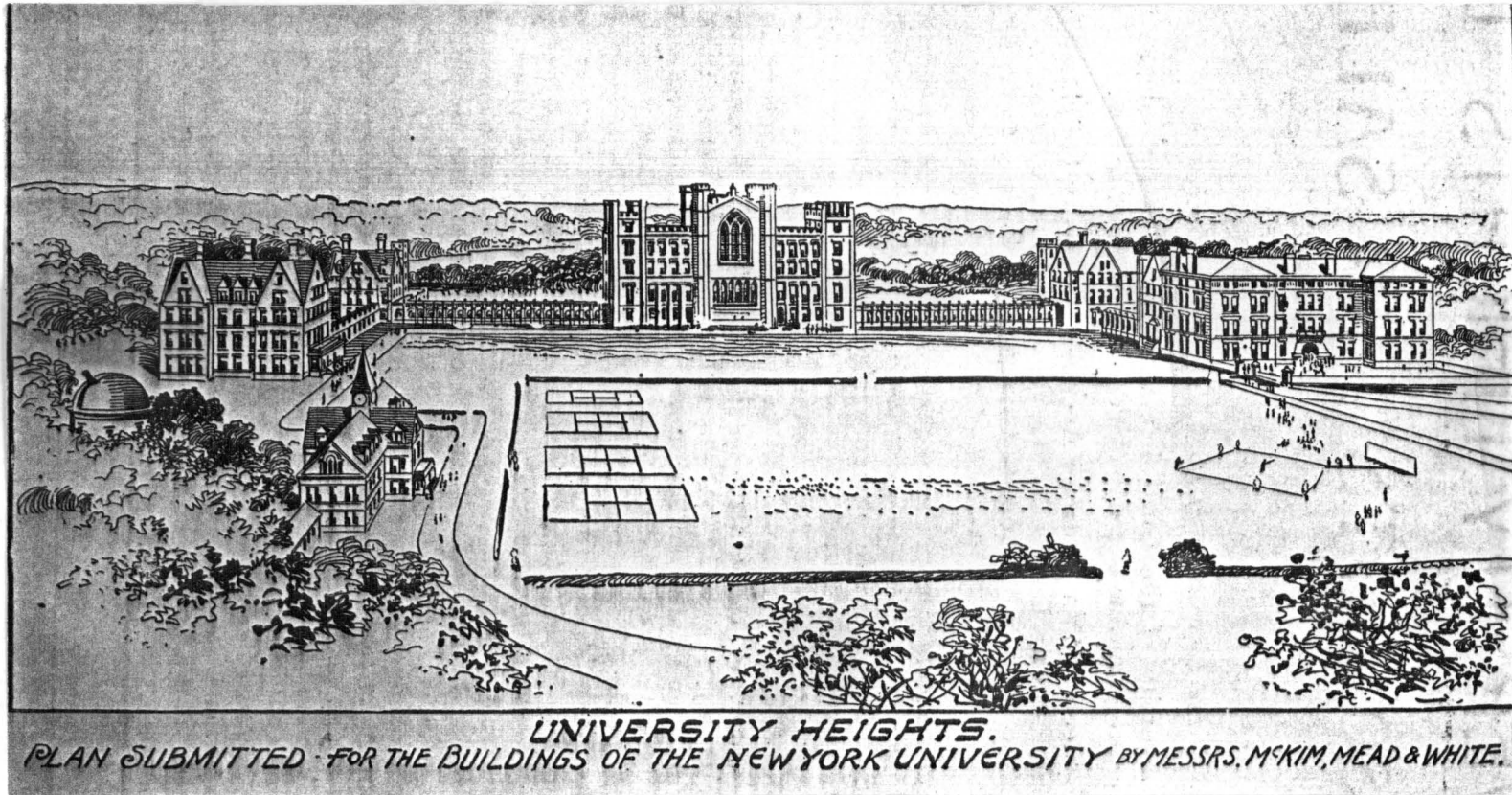
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Gould Memorial Library, Bronx Community College, City University of New York, ground floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, the northeast and southeast stairhalls leading from the entrance vestibule to the basement level, and the stairhall leading from the entrance vestibule to the main (first) floor; main floor interior consisting of the foyer, the former chancellor's room (south offices), the conference room (north office), and the rotunda up to the top of the dome including balconies (second level) and mezzanines (third and fourth levels); basement interior consisting of the foyer and east stairhall; and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited to, all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transoms, metal grilles, hinged bookcases, statuary, attached clocks, decorative lettering, leaded glass, glass vault floors, balustrades, stair rails and newel posts, and columns and half-columns, has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City, and that the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Gould Memorial Library Interior is one of the masterpieces of architect Stanford White, one of America's most prominent late nineteenth-century designers; that the interior is beautifully massed and richly detailed, forming a dramatic enfilade from the entrance portico and vestibule, up a Renaissance-inspired flight of stairs, to the main reading room; that the main reading room, which is in the form of a rotunda, is one of the great interior spaces in New York City; that the library was designed with the finest materials, including polychromatic tile floors, marble imported from all over the world, including the unusual Connemara Irish Green marble, Portland stone, Tiffany stained glass, and bronze lamps; that the building is a monument to the two great men who were involved with its construction--Stanford White and Chancellor Henry MacCracken; that the building exemplifies the Beaux-Arts ideal of a unified building composed of many separate elements; and that the interior is one of the supreme examples of interior design in America.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Interior Landmark the Gould Memorial Library, Bronx Community College, City University of New York, ground floor interior consisting of the entrance vestibule, the northeast and southeast stairhalls leading from the entrance vestibule to the basement level, and the stairhall leading from the entrance vestibule to the main (first) floor; main floor interior consisting of the foyer, the former chancellor's room (south offices), the conference room (north office), and the rotunda up to the top of the dome including balconies (second level) and mezzanines (third and fourth levels); basement interior consisting of the foyer and east stairhall; and the fixtures and components of these spaces, including but not limited to, all lighting fixtures, wall and ceiling surfaces, floor surfaces, doors, transoms, metal grilles, hinged bookcases, statuary, attached clocks, decorative lettering, leaded glass, glass vault floors, balustrades, stair rails and newel posts, and columns and half-columns, Hall of Fame Terrace at Sedgwick Avenue, Borough of the Bronx and designates Tax Map Block 3222, Lot 62, in part consisting of the land on which the described building is situated, Borough of the Bronx, as its Landmark Site.

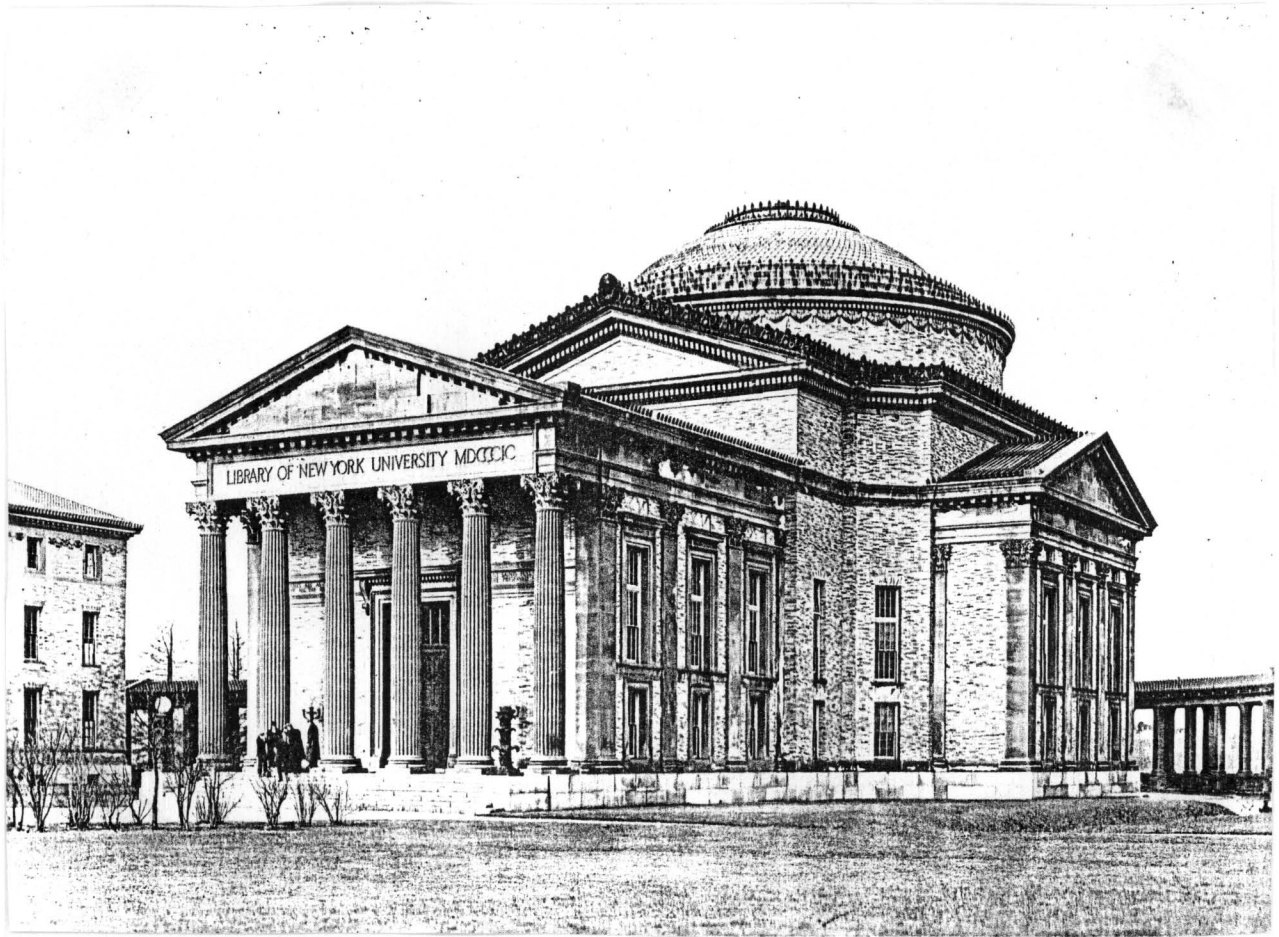
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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY. Stanford White's plan for moving the Washington Square building to University Heights. 1892.

Courtesy: New York University Archives



GOULD MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Early Twentieth Century View
Former New York University Campus,
University Heights, The Bronx

Courtesy: New York University Archives



GOULD MEMORIAL LIBRARY ROTUNDA
Former New York University Campus,
University Heights, The Bronx

Photo: Carl Forster

Architect: Stanford White,
1897-99



GOULD MEMORIAL LIBRARY MAIN STAIRCASE
Former New York University Campus,
University Heights, The Bronx

Photo: Carl Forster

Architect: Stanford White,
1892-99