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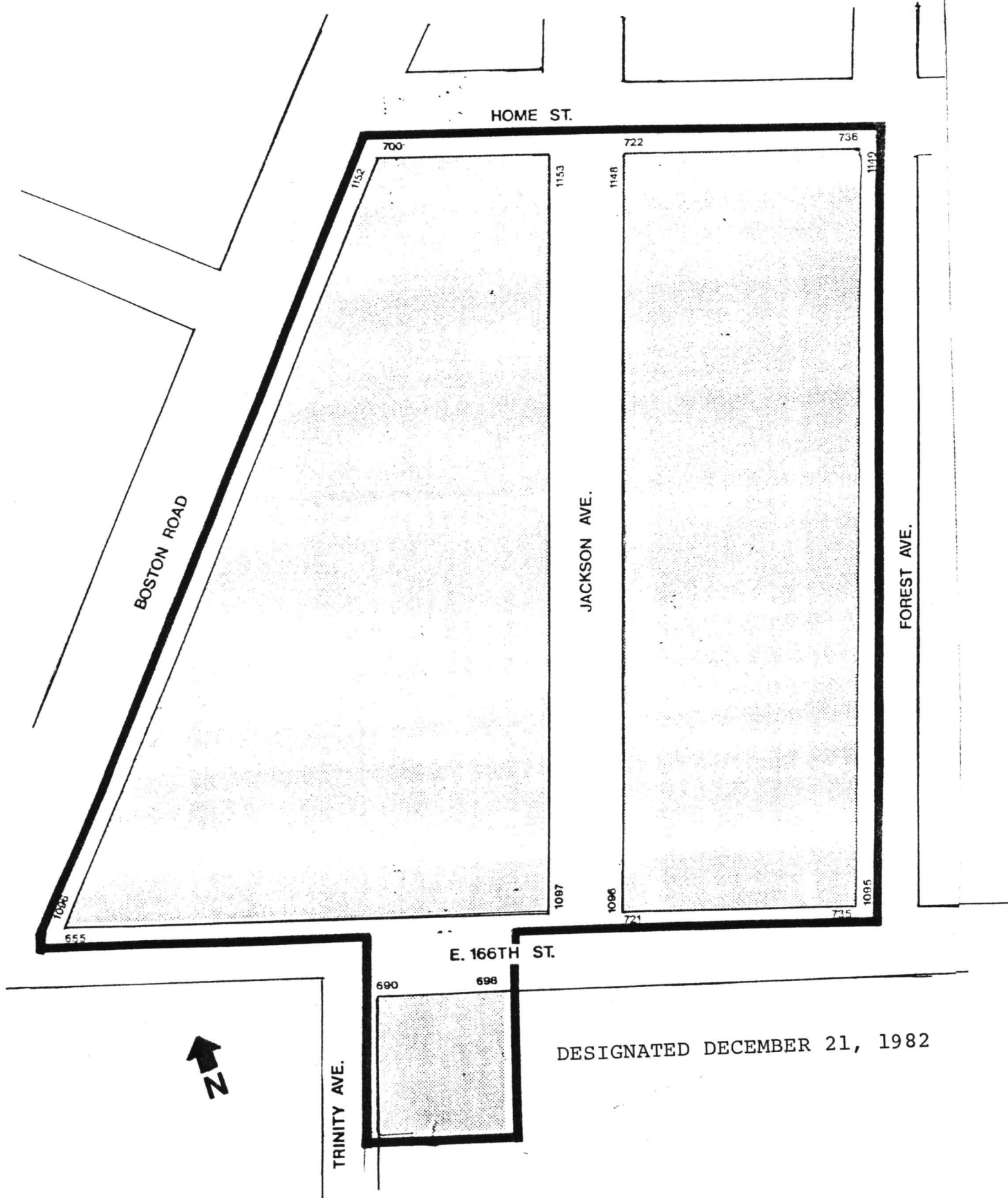
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MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT  
LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION



DESIGNATED DECEMBER 21, 1982

Landmarks Preservation Commission

December 21, 1982      Designation List 162  
LP-1258

MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT, Borough of the Bronx.

The property bounded by a line extending westerly along the southern curb line of Home Street, southerly along the eastern curb line of Boston Road, easterly along the northern curb line of East 166th Street, southerly across East 166th Street and along the western property line of 690 East 166th Street, easterly along the southern property line of 690 East 166th Street, northerly along the eastern property line of 690 East 166th Street, northerly along the eastern property line of 698 East 166th Street, and across East 166th Street, easterly along the northern curb line of East 166th Street, northerly along the western curb line of Forest Avenue, to the point of beginning.

Testimony at Public Hearing

On August 11, 1981, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on this area which is now proposed as an Historic District (Item No. 14). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of the law. Fourteen persons spoke in favor of the proposed designation including representatives from the South Bronx Development Corporation, the Morris Avenue Block Association, the Morris Landmark Committee, 163rd Street Improvement Council, and Bronx Community Board No.3. There were no speakers in opposition to the proposed designation. The Commission received many letters including a letter from Fred Samuel of the City Council and much correspondence in favor of designation.

## HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INTRODUCTION

The Morris High School Historic District lies east of Boston Road and extends to Forest Avenue at East 166th Street. An area which remained predominantly rural until the turn of the twentieth century, these blocks blossomed with the construction of the impressive Collegiate Gothic style Morris High School in 1901. Parallel development of the adjoining streets with remarkably cohesive rows of picturesque houses in a Free Classical style began in 1900. These buildings have survived the radical alterations of the South Bronx in recent years with relatively few changes. The district represents a high point of design and development in the early growth of the South Bronx as a major metropolitan area.

The Morris High School Historic District is part of a larger area which has an extensive history. In 1670 Colonel Lewis Morris and his brother Richard, officers in the British army, bought 12 square miles of land in New York. Included in the land purchase was the farm of Jonas Bronck. (It was after Bronck that the Borough of the Bronx was eventually named.) During the American Revolution the Morris property was used by the British as a military camp and became the site of much military activity. Deriving its name from the Morris family, the area became known as Morrisania.

The 1788 Morrisania became one of 21 townships in Westchester County. At the time of the 1788 Township Act the question of selecting a site for the national capital was of interest. Lewis Morris (fourth generation and best known as a signer of the Declaration of Independence), attempted to have Morrisania made the capital of the United States "because of its healthfulness and salubrity."<sup>1</sup> Though he failed in his campaign, by 1800 he and his brother, Gouverneur Morris had both erected mansions on their estates in Morrisania which, in 1791, had become annexed to the Town of Westchester.

The construction of the Harlem and Hudson River Railroads beginning in 1842, resulted in an influx of Irish immigrants, many of them railroad workers, into the Morrisania/Westchester area since its location was convenient to the railroad construction sites.

In 1846 Morrisiana became part of a new township called West Farms, which had been "carved out of Westchester." As the railroads continued to expand, so too did the population of the area. Revolutions in Europe in 1848 brought many German immigrants. Between 1850 and 1855 the population of Morrisania grew by approximately 8,000, and it became the most populous section of Westchester County.

With Gouverneur Morris as the first supervisor, Morrisania became a town in 1864. It received a village charter which "conferred upon the trustees nearly all the powers of a city corporation without the incidental expenses..."<sup>2</sup> Road improvements were made and building construction increased. In 1874 with a population over 19,000, Morrisania (along with two other towns) became formally annexed to New York City. The area was known as "the annexed districts" and was under the administrative auspices of the Public Parks Department until 1891.

Expansion of the elevated train lines, beginning in the mid-1880s, deeply affected the Morrisania area. In 1904 the IRT subway system reached the annexed district, and a real estate boom followed. Increased population required improved school facilities. In 1904 Morris High School opened, and by 1915 Morrisania was fully developed.

By the late 19th century this section of Morrisania had become predominantly German, with a subsequent development of the brewing industry. The Fidelio, Lion, and Liebermanns breweries were located on Third Avenue between 167th and 169th Streets. The famous Eichler brewery was further south on St. Ann's Avenue at 156th Street.

An account by Leo Weiger, who grew up in the area, recalls the aroma of cooking hops and malt that permeated the neighborhood and the sight of the gray Percheron dray horses pulling wagons loaded with wooden kegs of beer. McKinley Square Theater featured vaudeville acts and such movies as The Ten Commandments and Birth of a Nation. To the north was Niblo's Garden, a large summer beer garden featuring a German band for outdoor dancing, a brass marching band made up of schoolboys from St. Augustine's, and German delicacies. Tax records for 1905 show that most of the homeowners in the Morrisania area were German.<sup>3</sup> Other residents were Jewish, Irish and Italian immigrants. Most lived in one- and two-family brick or frame houses. By 1930 the more prosperous members of the community began moving out. After the Second World War, Black families found Morrisania a desirable area in which to find good reasonably-priced housing, and in the 1950s, as was the case in many areas of New York City, Morrisania gained a Puerto Rican population.

The Morris High School Historic District lies east of Boston Road at 166th Street. The district includes Morris High School, Trinity Episcopal Church of Morrisania, and brick rowhouses along Jackson and Forest Avenues. The immediate neighborhood was known in the mid-nineteenth century as Eltona after Robert H. Elton, who had purchased the property from Gouverneur Morris, built his home near the present high school site, and began subdividing the land as early as the 1850s. Thomas Rogers, a prominent Wall Street financier, built his own home around 1872 on a smaller section of the same land. Around 1900 the Rogers' estate was divided for sale. The largest portion went to the city for Morris High School, designed in 1900 by C.B.J. Snyder; and another portion for the section of Jackson Avenue extending from 166th Street to Home Street. The remaining portion was subdivided into lots upon which brick rowhouses were built. The lots were purchased by a number of developers. Perhaps due to the demand for brick rowhouses, speculation occurred. Between 1906 and 1907, for example, No. 1114 Jackson Avenue, a brick rowhouse, changed owners five times.

The houses in the district were designed by local architects Warren C. Dickerson, John H. Lavelle, Harry T. Howell, and Hugo Auden.

Warren Dickerson, best known of the four residential architects and responsible for the majority of the houses in the district, was born on Long Island in 1853 and educated at the Cooper Institute. After working as a carpenter for several years he opened an architectural office in San Diego and later moved to San Francisco. Dickerson returned to New York in 1893 and developed an extensive and successful architectural practice. Rowhouse construction drastically declined after 1906 as land costs increased, frame construction was banned, and an amendment to exempt three-family rowhouses from costly provisions of the Tenement House Law failed. Nothing is known of Dickerson's career after 1905. Dickerson's work was described in 1899 in the following manner:

"...in the line of fine residences and apartments, [it] not only represents beautiful exterior finish, but is equally noted for utility. Probably no other architect in New York has a larger practice in these lines of buildings than Mr. Dickerson."<sup>4</sup>

Dickerson's work is also represented in New York in the similar rowhouses of the Longwood and Mott Haven Historic Districts in the Bronx, and in the Mount Morris Park Historic District in Manhattan.

Though little is known about the careers of Lavelle and Howell, their houses in the Morris High School Historic District were also built within the years 1900 to 1906. John H. Lavelle, a builder-architect, apparently working with his mother, Catherine A. Lavelle, as developer, moved among several areas of the city building houses. Lavelle is listed in the New York City directories between 1900 and 1907

as practicing at 722 Jackson Avenue, not far from the neighborhood in which his buildings were being constructed.

Harry T. Howell was listed between 1897 and 1901 as doing general architectural designs from three office locations, all in the vicinity of Brook Avenue and East 138th Street in the Bronx. Other designs for rowhouses by Howell survive from 1900 in the Mount Morris Park Historic District in Harlem. Despite the fact that three architects were involved, a strong and sensitive continuity of style was maintained throughout the Morris High School Historic District.

Hugo Auden designed just one building within the historic district in 1904, a tenement at 1095 Forest Avenue. No other buildings or information about this designer are known.

The houses in the Morris High School Historic District are two- and three-story brick residences built for two families along Forest and Jackson Avenues. These buildings were designed in a Free Classical manner that incorporates elements of the English, Flemish and Italian Renaissance Revivals. Particularly notable and fine features include angular and round bays, picturesque variations of roof forms such as low turreted mansards and Flemish stepped gables, and extremely elaborate wrought-iron railings, fences, and grilles. Similar materials used for all of the structures include buff or tan brick, limestone trim and galvanized metal cornices. Classical motifs appear in the cornice patterns, in limestone plaques, and in individual elements such as pedimented windows and classical orders. Corner tenement buildings frame the blockfronts and use similar elements in a compatible manner.

Built in the last phase of the development of the rowhouse as it evolved in New York City, few groups of houses of this quality of design and cohesiveness were either built or survive in the Bronx today. Picturesque and elaborate in rich details within a similar unified format, these blockfronts create a unique sense of the rich past of the South Bronx.

## MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT

BOSTON ROAD, between Home Street and East 166th Street.

The original Boston Post Road followed an Indian trail across the northern Bronx to Westchester, carrying the monthly post between New York and Boston as early as 1672. After the Revolutionary War Colonel Lewis Morris attempted to influence the relocation of the Post Road to pass through his manor lands, but was unsuccessful until 1794 when John B. Coles built a bridge across the Harlem River. Coles' Boston Road was the extension from the bridge at East 135th Street to East 164th Street. Later extensions to the city limits followed the present route and created the Boston Road as it is known today.

### EAST SIDE

Nos. 1100-1150 is the western edge of the block containing Morris High School described under Nos. 657-697 East 166th Street.

EAST 166TH STREET, between Boston Road and Jackson Avenue.

### NORTH SIDE

No. 657-697 is the main elevation of Morris High School. Designed by C.B.J. Snyder for the New York City Board of Education, the building was completed in 1904, and was the first major public high school to open in the Bronx.

In 1898 the Consolidated School System of Greater New York was established. For the first time in the history of the city, the five boroughs were united in the planning of an educational system. One result of this planning was the construction in each of the five boroughs of a spectacular Collegiate Gothic school building. The use of this unified architectural style acted as a vehicle for the new Consolidated system to unite its educational agenda. These grand neo Gothic edifices were: in Manhattan, DeWitt Clinton High School; in Queens, Flushing High School; in Brooklyn, Erasmus Hall High School; in Staten Island, Curtis High School; and in the Bronx, Morris High School.

C.B.J. Snyder, who became the first Superintendent of School Buildings for the new Consolidated School System of Greater New York in 1898, introduced the neo-Gothic style to New York City public school design and is best known for these successfully-designed neo-Gothic high school buildings. Snyder's interest in the Gothic was, obviously, not unique. John Ruskin had successfully promoted the revival of medieval Christian aesthetics in Victorian England. By the end of the 19th century, American architects had modelled universities and colleges after this Gothic Revival in England. The University of Chicago, Princeton, City College of New York, Lehman College in the Bronx and many others, all exemplify this trend. The Lexington Avenue building of Hunter College, built by Snyder in 1913, has been described as "the last gasp of John Ruskin."<sup>5</sup> It is not surprising then that the use of the Gothic style extended into the designs of elementary and secondary schools, or that Morris High School generally has been recognized as a splendid example of English collegiate Gothic architecture and "a model of Public School Gothic."<sup>6</sup>

Morris High School, considered by many to be C.B.J. Snyder's masterpiece, is situated at the highest point in the Bronx. The school was intentionally situated on Boston Road, a major thoroughfare in the area, in order to provide easy access to the community. On December 5, 1900, the New York City Board of Education issued \$469,383.00 in high school bonds to Louis Wechsler, the contractor for the construction of Peter Cooper High School. The name of the building memorialized the American industrialist and founder of Cooper Union. Begun in 1901, by the time of its comple-

tion in 1904 the school's name had been changed to Morris High School in honor of Gouverneur Morris and his family's role in the early history of The Bronx. To this day, the towering high school is the centerpiece of the neighborhood, literally crowning the Borough of The Bronx. The magnificent auditorium inside the school is also designed by Snyder in a Gothic style worthy of the grand exterior.<sup>7</sup>

Built of buff colored brick with limestone and terra-cotta trim, the high school is an elaborate and lavishly decorated design. A modified 'H'- or 'E'-shaped plan includes the long rectangular central block from which the great central tower rises, projecting end pavilions and the elaborate apsidal auditorium which extends from the center rear of the central block. The building sits on a high raised basement and rises five stories to include an attic floor level.

Banked groups of six-over-six, wood sash windows are used uniformly around the facades set off by string courses above the first and fourth floors. The attic level is accented by pedimented dormers which encompass paired pointed arch windows, while the gabled ends of the pavilions feature high Tudor arch windows which dominate the building corners. Side projections in the pavilions terminate in gables with pointed arch windows and terra-cotta ornament. The steeply pitched intersecting gabled roofs are covered in standing seam copper.

The great central tower, which can be seen from great distances, rises to a height of approximately 189 feet. Octagonal corners rise to form elaborate turrets and are pierced by lancet windows. The school's main entrance, a two-story Tudor arch opening with tracery windows and clustered-pier door surround is set at the base of the tower. It is approached by a generously proportioned double flight of steps. A three-story oriel extending from the third through the fifth floors is surmounted by windows similar to those in the gable ends. A band containing the inscription "Morris High School" is placed above this. The patterns created by terra-cotta corner quoins, window surrounds and Gothic style decorative motifs become increasingly complex as they terminate in the narrow lancet windows and crenellated parapet of the tower. The lawn in front of the main facade is enclosed by a handsome wrought-iron fence set on a stone base.

The rear auditorium wing of two-story height terminates in an octagonal end. Masonry buttresses in the decorated Gothic style frame large Tudor arch window openings filled with stained glass and tracery. The hipped roof is edged by a crenellated parapet broken by pinnacles capping the buttresses. Notable in itself, the interior of the auditorium was also designed by C.B.J. Snyder with important murals by E.W. Deming, A.F.M. Górgaut, H.L. Towle and others.

The only major addition that has been made since the original school was completed in 1904 is a three-story wing, containing food service and gymnasium facilities, which stands adjacent to the auditorium and is connected to the east pavilion along Jackson Avenue. Approved by the Art Commission of New York City in 1950 and completed in 1955, the facade of the addition is in buff brick and limestone to blend with the original block, though it is not designed in the Gothic style. Eric Kebbon, then Superintendent of School Buildings, Design and Construction for the Board of Education, was the architect. In 1982, prior to the designation of the district, the upper portion of one of the main tower's corner turrets was dismantled. The feasibility of restoring the turret has not yet been determined.



EAST 166TH STREET, between Jackson Avenue and Forest Avenue

NORTH SIDE

No. 721 is described under No. 1096 Jackson Avenue.

No. 735 is described under No. 1095 Forest Avenue.

EAST 166TH STREET, at the southeast corner of Trinity Avenue.

SOUTH SIDE

**No. 690**, the Trinity Episcopal Church of Morrisania, is the oldest building in the district and is located to the south of the two main blocks of the district across from Morris High School. The initial congregation formed in 1868 and laid the cornerstone of the present building in 1874. An 1880 foreclosure on the property led to a new congregation occupying the building under the name of the Church of the Holy Faith. A rectory (just outside the district border to the east of the church) was built in 1889 and the cornerstone for the Parish Hall, called Smith Memorial Hall, was laid in 1905. In 1906 under the guidance of Reverend Clifford S. Gregg, who had previously been the curate of St. Bartholomew's Church in Manhattan, the Morrisania church was redecorated and polychromed in Victorian Gothic style. The first parish, still meeting in the neighborhood, joined with the newer group in 1923 and reverted to the name of Trinity Church.

Between 1874 and 1900 the church stood in near isolation between the Rodgers and Cauldwell estates, though it served a surprisingly large constituency in the southern Bronx, far beyond the scale suggested by the relatively small building. A modest though distinctive example of the High Victorian Gothic style, the building is a notable addition to the district. The architect of the church is unknown and has not, as yet, been located in the church records.<sup>8</sup>

The red brick church sits on an elevated site facing East 166th Street, adding greatly to the strong visual and architectural quality of the street established by the Morris High School. The High Victorian Gothic design is composed of a high central nave section with steeply pitched roof flanked by low side aisles. Small, narrow pointed arch windows with fine stained glass light the aisles and a clerestory level on three sides. The gabled entrance porch repeats the steep verticality of the nave and contains paneled double doors set in a pointed-arch opening. Serving as the Parish Hall, the later (1905) Smith Memorial Hall is at the rear of the church and repeats the red brick facing and pointed-arch windows of the main building in a compatible and sympathetic manner. It rises above a rough stone base. The rectory, located to the east of the church, has been excluded from the district because of the extensive loss of architectural integrity resulting from residing.

FOREST AVENUE, between East 166th Street and Home Street.

Forest Avenue recalls the nearly forgotten early settlement called Forest Grove. A part of Gouverneur Morris' lands, the area was also known as Shingle Plain and later, in the mid-nineteenth century, Woodstock.

WEST SIDE

No. 1095 (also known as 735 East 166th Street) is a five-story tenement of brick and stone designed to house fourteen families. Typical in tenement designs of the period, the building follows a Renaissance Revival format of tripartite horizontal divisions and end bays articulated by brick quoins. A curved corner bay linking the two major facades provides a distinctive element. The first story base includes entrances on both street elevations and a corner store. The second through the fourth floors are set off from the other floors by string courses and contain single windows with double-hung sash except at the end bays, where the windows are paired. The top story follows

the same window format and is crowned by a pressed metal cornice including a dentil band, modillion blocks and scrolled brackets at the end bays. Decorative ironwork is used for the Jackson Street fire escape and a high fence along East 166th Street. Designed by Hugo Auden in 1904 for Thomas Quinn at an estimated cost of \$40,000., the building is unchanged except for the infill of the storefront.

Nos. 1097-1113 are a row of nine two-family houses designed by Warren C. Dickerson and completed in 1903 for Thomas Quinn at an estimated cost of \$8,000. each. Three stories high with basements, the structures are placed along the street with alternating mirror image facades and are nearly identical. The two-story curved window bays which dominate each facade feature decorative scrolled wrought-iron panels along a third story balcony and fronting a single French casement window at the first floor. The first story windows have diamond-patterned wood transom sash and dentiled transom sills (surviving at Nos. 1101, 1105, and 1107). The metal roof cornices have block modillions punctuated by larger scrolled brackets at the corners similar to the majority of the houses on the block. The paired stoops have solid railings with square newel-posts. The door surrounds incorporate narrow shelf lintels with brackets linked to a limestone band which extends continuously across the facades of the buildings, punctuated by keystones. The doors have large single plate glass panels with square headed transoms. The elevation designs vary only in the alternate use of Ionic columns (Nos. 1097, 1103, 1105, 1111, 1113) and paneled Ionic pilasters (Nos. 1099, 1101, 1107, and 1109) to frame the doorways. Nos. 1097, 1099, 1103, 1109 and 1111 are presently sealed and have suffered the loss, in part, of window sash and original doors.

Nos. 1115-1121 are four two-family houses also completed in 1903 according to the designs of W.C. Dickerson. Built for developers William Crockett and Archibald Hamilton, the estimated cost was \$8,000 for each building. The quality of Dickerson's work is well represented in this group and other similar designs on the street, with certain architectural motifs being repeated in different combinations. This careful interrelationship gives the block both its continuity and its colorful diversity.

Nos. 1115-1117. These paired two-family brick houses feature more austere two-story curved window bays than most of the other buildings on the block, having solid brick balustrades at the third floor balconies. However, the extreme elaboration of the stepped wrought-iron stair railings more than compensates in creating a striking addition to the streetscape. At the third floor of each house a tripartite square window with engaged columns caps the window bay balcony, while round-arch windows with keyed surrounds complete the floor. The metal roof cornice has small modillions and classical wreath motifs in the frieze. The square doorways are framed by limestone quoins and include carved wreaths in the corners.

Nos. 1119-1121, are very similar to Nos. 1115-1117; however, the far more elaborate angled window bays make them distinctive. The classical style details of the pressed metal bays include paneled spandrels, pilasters, and friezes of wreaths. Stone balustraded railings front third floor balconies, and Ionic columns are used in the tripartite windows of the third floors. The elaborate lintels and surrounds of the square headed windows are similar to those of Nos. 1115-1117. The round-arch entrances with plate glass doors and transoms are approached by stoops with elegant paneled railings and newels of scrolled wrought iron. No. 1121 is presently sealed and has suffered greatly from the loss of the pressed metal and balustrade elements from the oriel.

Nos. 1123-1133, date from 1902. W.C. Dickerson was the architect for these six two-family houses for investor William Crockett at an estimated cost of \$8,000. each.

Nos. 1123-1125, have the same design, by Warren C. Dickerson, as the houses described under Nos. 1115-1117 Forest Avenue with the substitution of paired round-arch windows above the balcony for the tripartite square window. They are also identical to Nos. 1131-1133 Forest Avenue.

Nos. 1127-1129. These houses, with their elaborate angled bays, balustraded balcony, and paneled wrought-iron railings, are identical in design to the residences described under Nos. 1119-1121. With plans filed one year earlier, these structures show the first use of this particular design.

Nos. 1131-1133 are identical in design to Nos. 1123-1125 Forest Avenue and to the design described at Nos. 1115-1117 Forest Avenue with the substitution of paired round-arch windows for the tripartite square window at Nos. 1115-1117.

Nos. 1135-1143 is a row of five buildings designed by Harry T. Howell in an A-B-A-B-A pattern for John Linch at a cost of \$11,000. each. Only slightly less sophisticated in the use of various architectural elements, the group is a perfect complement to the Dickerson designs on the block.

No. 1135. The two-story curved window bay of this brick facade is simply divided by string courses and capped by a solid parapet. The pressed metal roof cornice includes a rinceaux frieze. The entrance with a stone surround repeats the lintel from the bay windows and is framed by pilasters. Other windows have splayed lintel with keystones. The brownstone stoop is flanked by fine wrought-iron railings with cage newels in a pattern of straight spindels and curled elements, a pattern used on the five buildings in this row.

No. 1137, similar to No. 1135, differs from it in the use of an angled bay, rather than a curved bay, and more elaborate window lintels in a Renaissance style of scrolled, triangular and segmental forms in stone. Other details of cornice, doorway and stoop railings are the same, except for a foliate spandrel in the door surround.

No. 1139 is identical to the design described at No. 1135 in the same group of five buildings built for John Linch.

No. 1141, with its angled bay and pedimented window lintels, is identical to the residence described at No. 1137.

No. 1143, the last in this row, is identical to No. 1139 and to the design described at No. 1135 except for the window bay which rises a full three stories to the cornice line. At its northern end the bay terminates in a flat edge that related to the line of the tenement building at No. 1145 (also designed by Howell) which stood at the lot line rather than being recessed to accommodate a stoop, as the row houses do.

No. 1145, a vacant lot, is discussed under No. 736 Home Street.

HOME STREET, between Boston Avenue and Forest Avenue.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Home Street was called Lyons Street after James L. Lyons. Leading to the extreme eastern end of the Morrisania manor lands and to the "home" of William H. Fox, the street assumed its present name some time around 1900.

HOME STREET, between Boston Avenue and Jackson Avenue.

SOUTH SIDE

No. 700 is the playing yards and the rear edge of Morris High School described under No. 657-697 East 166th Street.

HOME STREET, between Jackson Avenue and Forest Avenue.

#### SOUTH SIDE

No. 722 is described under No. 1146-1148 Jackson Avenue.

No. 736, at the south west corner of Forest Avenue, is also known as 1145 Forest Avenue. Presently a vacant lot, this was the site of a five-story tenement building for sixteen families which has been recently demolished. A brick fronted building with a corner storefront, the structure was designed by Harry T. Howell for M. Quick in 1904.

JACKSON AVENUE, between East 166th Street and Home Street.

Part of Rowland Robbins' farm in the 1850s, this street was called Robbins Street soon after the Civil War when it was one of the few streets in East Morrisania. In 1905 it was renamed Jackson Avenue, probably after Washington and Rosetta Jackson, landowners in the vicinity of nearby St. Mary's Park.

#### WEST SIDE

Nos. 1149-1197 is the eastern edge of the block containing Morris High School described under Nos. 657-697 East 166th Street.

#### EAST SIDE

Nos. 1096-1104 include five buildings: four two-family rowhouses and a corner store with apartments above. Designed by Warren C. Dickerson in 1902 for developer Thomas Quinn, this group continues the Free Classical style and fluid curved corners and bays utilized along Forest Avenue. The pressed metal cornice of modillion blocks punctuated by large scrolled brackets unites all five units. Constructed according to two fairly distinct designs, these buildings nonetheless were filed under one building permit.

No. 1096, (also known as 721 East 166th Street), is three stories high. The lower floor, containing two much altered storefronts, is separated from the upper floors by a string course which supports rusticated brick piers framing the building's curved corners and the entrance bay. Two-over-two double-hung wood sash windows are capped by limestone lintels with raised keystones contrasting with the buff brick walls. Window sash, doors and storefront elements have been lost since the building was sealed.

Nos. 1098-1100 are mirror image rowhouses, though the curved bay of No. 1098 extends out to meet the party wall of No. 1096, complementing the curved corner bay of that building. Both buildings are sealed and have lost window sash and entrance doors. Limestone trim is used for string courses at each floor level, the window lintels with raised keystone, and the bracketed shelf lintel above the entrance doors. The low paired stoops retain fragments of the bold wrought-iron railings in a hoop and scroll pattern. The fire escapes are later additions.

Nos. 1102-1104 are the most interesting designs in this group with a wide wooden frieze which incorporates the third story windows with classical surrounds and diamond-patterned sash. The three-story curved brick window bays help create the fluid line of

the street wall along the entire block. Limestone trim is used for string courses on the bay windows, the lintels with raised keystones, and the door lintels with console bracket keystones. The single leaf doors have been modified but retain simple rectangular transoms. Portions of the once elegant wrought iron railings, similar to the design for Nos. 1098-1100, remain on the paired stoops.

Nos. 1106-1114. John H. Lavelle served as architect for this group of five rowhouses designed for his mother, Catherine A. Lavelle, in 1902. At a cost of approximately \$17,500. for each two-family building, these designs are notably elaborate in decorative detail illustrating the Free Classical style at its most eclectic.

No. 1106 presents the most distinctive facade in this group of designs by Lavelle. Linked to the next building by its pressed metal cornice with classical swags, the building differs from its neighbor in its high basement, dog-leg stoop and shallow third story windows. Transoms above the first and second floor windows and small third floor windows contain elongated sash with colored glass set in diamond patterns. String courses create wide horizontal bands across the window bay. Above the main entrance, the limestone lintel is in a pseudo Medieval or Gothic style with a pediment flanked by split spindles. The present solid stuccoed stair railings appear to be an alteration from more elaborate wrought-iron railings, possibly similar to the pattern utilized at Nos. 1108-1114.

Nos. 1108-1114 are paired mirror image designs. Prominent classical motifs of rinceaux curves, shells, urns and swags are incorporated in limestone bracketed shelf lintels above the entrance doors, in typanum spaces in the semicircular window lintels and along the pressed metal cornice with corner brackets. The full-height curved window bays have rusticated brick piers and limestone string courses and shelf lintels above the windows. Spandrel panels in the bays are formed of billeted brick. The double leaf doors with plate glass panels are capped by rectangular transoms. The stair railings of wrought-iron, though less elaborate than on most of the buildings on the block, are patterned of twisted posts and elongated curves. No. 1110 is presently sealed. Alterations include the doorway of No. 1108, a fire escape addition on Nos. 1112 and 1114, and severe damage to the railings.

Nos. 1116-1122. Built in 1901, this group of four two-family rowhouses are the earliest of John H. Lavelle's designs for this block. As in all his buildings, Catherine A. Lavelle was owner/developer. Particularly distinctive in the use of round and hipped roof turrets in combination with a false mansard, the designs are similar to W.C. Dickerson's work in the Longwood Historic District in the Bronx.

Nearly identical to the buildings described under Nos. 1108-1114 Jackson Avenue from the cornice level down, Nos. 1120 and 1122 have angled bays with hipped roofs while Nos. 1116-1118 have the usual curved bay but with a conical roof. The stair railings are also similar, using a simple twisted post with wrought-iron scrolls. No. 1118 is presently sealed and has lost doors and window sash. The cornice of No. 1122 has been boxed in aluminum siding. Undoubtedly the roof surfaces were originally covered with slate.

Nos. 1124-1144, were all designed in 1900 by Warren C. Dickerson for three different developers. By far the most picturesque of the designs in the historic district, this group is unusual in its use of Flemish gables with false mansard roofs and stepped ends at the party walls above otherwise very familiar Free Classical style Dickerson rowhouse designs. Two stories high on raised basements with attics, the buildings use Roman brick in combination with limestone trim. The original wrought-iron railing pattern appears to have uniformly been the same hoop and scroll pattern used on Nos. 1098-1100. Surviving pantiles on a section of No. 1136, compatible with

the stylistic elements of the buildings, suggest that this was the original roofing material for the rest of the group which are now covered in asphalt shingles. Small pedimented roof dormers may have been removed during re-roofing of two of the buildings.

Nos. 1124-1132. Dickerson's design for Thomas Quinn was erected for an estimated cost of \$6,000 per house. Five rowhouses reflect Dickerson's skill as a designer of cohesive and lively streetscapes. Within the overall similarity of each facade various rhythms and interchangeable decorative elements create rich textures in the group as a whole. The pressed metal roof cornices with dentil molding and flat frieze punctuated by end brackets unite the group. Nos. 1124, 1128, and 1132 have angled bays with stepped Flemish gables, double hung diamond-patterned window sash in the gables which complements the similar brick pattern of the gable peak, and second floor limestone lintels with raised keystones. Nos. 1126 and 1130 have curved bays, paired pedimented roof dormers, and simple molded full surrounds at the second story windows. The window bays of Nos. 1124 and 1132 have brick piers with foliate capitals while Nos. 1126, 1128, and 1130 have brick piers with limestone banding. (No. 1128 has rock faced bands.) The "A-B-C-B-A" rhythm of the doorways provides an elegant individual note for each entrance: Nos. 1124 and 1132 are pedimented, Nos. 1126 and 1130 have square-headed surrounds with bracketed shelf lintels, and No. 1128, with the most elaborate door surround, has a round arch on Ionic piers with a raised foliate keystone. Nos. 1124, 1128 and 1132 have lost the stone cap moldings which outlined their decorative gables. All the decorative wrought-iron stair railings and fences appear to have been replaced with the possible notable exception of the grille on the entrance door of No. 1128; however, the modern replacements suggest a reasonable alternative for the ornate original designs.

Nos. 1134-1136 were built for Archibald Hamilton. The close relationship in design between these and Nos. 1138-1144 can perhaps be explained by Hamilton's relationship to their developer, William Crockett, as the two men were obviously connected, joining in partnership as developers at Nos. 1115-1121 Forest Avenue in 1903. All of these buildings share identical pressed metal cornices with console brackets, limestone door hoods with transom lights and side split spindles set on corbels carved in the form of heads. The double-leaf doors have plate-glass panels.

No. 1134's most distinctive element is its flattened curved bay with leaded transom lights above each window. The attic gable is curved. The entrance doorway of No. 1134 has been altered along with a portion of the cornice while the roof may also have had a dormer window similar to the other structures in the group.

No. 1136 has a single curved bay and a triangular attic gable. A portion of the original pantile roof survives. Oddly this is the only building in the group with six-over-six window sash. The entrance door has been altered.

Nos. 1138-1144 are four two-family houses designed by Dickerson for William Crockett at a cost of \$6,500 each. Obviously designed in conjunction with Nos. 1134-1136, these buildings share numerous design traits such as doorway surrounds, stairways, railings and pressed metal cornices.

No. 1138 is almost the mirror image of the building described under No. 1136, although the window bay is angular rather than curved and the stairway and doors are unaltered. An air conditioner pierces the basement wall.

Nos. 1140 and 1142 are also nearly mirror image buildings. In this case No.

1140 has transom lights at the first story only, an angled bay and rusticated piers. No. 1142 has transoms above a string course at all the windows and a curved bay. The entrance steps and railings of No. 1140 below the landing have been replaced. No. 1142 is presently sealed and has lost its window sash and doors. The cornice has been boxed in aluminum and a dormer may have been removed at the time of re-roofing.

No. 1144 is the mirror image of the building described under No. 1134. The double plate glass door and dormer windows remain unaltered.

EAST SIDE

Nos. 1146-1148 (also known as 722 Home Street) is presently a vacant lot. The building designed by Warren Dickerson in 1904 for William Crockett on this site was a five-story tenement with a brick and stone facade occupied by fifteen families. The building was recently demolished.

TRINITY AVENUE, south of East 166th Street.

EAST SIDE

No. 12 is the side elevation of Trinity Episcopal Church of Morrisania and its Parish Hall to the rear of the main building, both described under No. 690 East 166th Street.

Report prepared by  
Deborah Schwartz  
Charles J. Hasbrouck  
Bronx and Manhattan Department  
New York City Landmarks Preservation  
Commission

Typed by Barbara Sklar

## FOOTNOTES

1. Stephen Jenkins, The Story of the Bronx (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons 1912), p. 3.
2. Frederick Shonnard and W.W. Spooner, History of Westchester (New York: Harbor Books, 1974), p. 147.
3. Landmarks Preservation Commission. Bronx Survey (New York: City of New York, 1978), p. 27.
4. Union History Company, History of Architecture and the Building Trades of Greater New York (New York: The Union History Co., 1899), p. 368.
5. Norval White and Elliot Willensky, eds., AIA Guide to New York (New York: Collier Books, 1978), p. 228.
6. Ibid., p. 317.
7. A more extensive account of the history and development of Morris High School can be found in the designation report for the Morris High School Interior, prepared by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, November 23, 1982.
8. Rev. Wendell C. Roberts, One Hundredth Anniversary of the Trinity Episcopal Church of Morrisania: 1874-1974 (Bronx: Trinity Church, 1974).

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this area, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Morris High School Historic District contains buildings and other improvements which have a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value which represent one or more periods or styles of architecture typical of one or more eras in the history of New York City and which cause this area, by reason of these factors, to constitute a distinct section of the city.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Morris High School Historic District was originally part of Morrisania, one of twenty-one townships established by the State Legislature in Westchester County in 1788; that the historic district contains some of the best examples of the turn-of-the-century architecture that transformed The Bronx into an urbanized area following the opening of the I.R.T subway system; that Morris High School, designed by C.B.J. Snyder, is an outstanding example of that architect's work, the use of the Collegiate Gothic style in New York City, and of school designs erected by the Board of Education of the City of New York; that the high school has a unique and prominent visual identity in neighborhoods of the South Bronx; that the Trinity Episcopal Church of Morrisania, the earliest surviving structure in the area, having served an extended congregation for many years, is a fine example of the Victorian Gothic style; that the Morris High School Historic District has an especially cohesive character as a result of the fact that almost all of the residences were designed between 1900 and 1904 by



architects Warren C. Dickerson, John H. Lavelle and Harry T. Howell, and exhibit elements of the Free Classical style; that these houses were conceived as an architectural ensemble and although the same house designs appear frequently throughout the Historic District, a variety of details and roof lines dispels any sense of monotony; that the use of the window bays, elaborate ironwork and picturesque roofline elements contributes a pleasing sense of variety to the streetscape; and that a uniformity of scale, consistency of style and relative architectural intactness give the Morris High School Historic District a special sense of place.

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 Historic District the Morris High School Historic District, Borough of The Bronx, containing the property bounded by a line extending westerly along the southern curb line of Home Street, southerly along the eastern curb line of Boston Road, easterly along the northern curb line of East 166th Street, southerly across East 166th Street and along the western property line of 690 East 166th Street, easterly along the southern property line of 690 East 166th Street, northerly along the eastern property line of 690 East 166th Street, northerly along the eastern property line of 698 East 166th Street and across East 166th Street, easterly along the northern curb line of East 166th Street, northerly along the western curb line of Forest Avenue, to the point of beginning.

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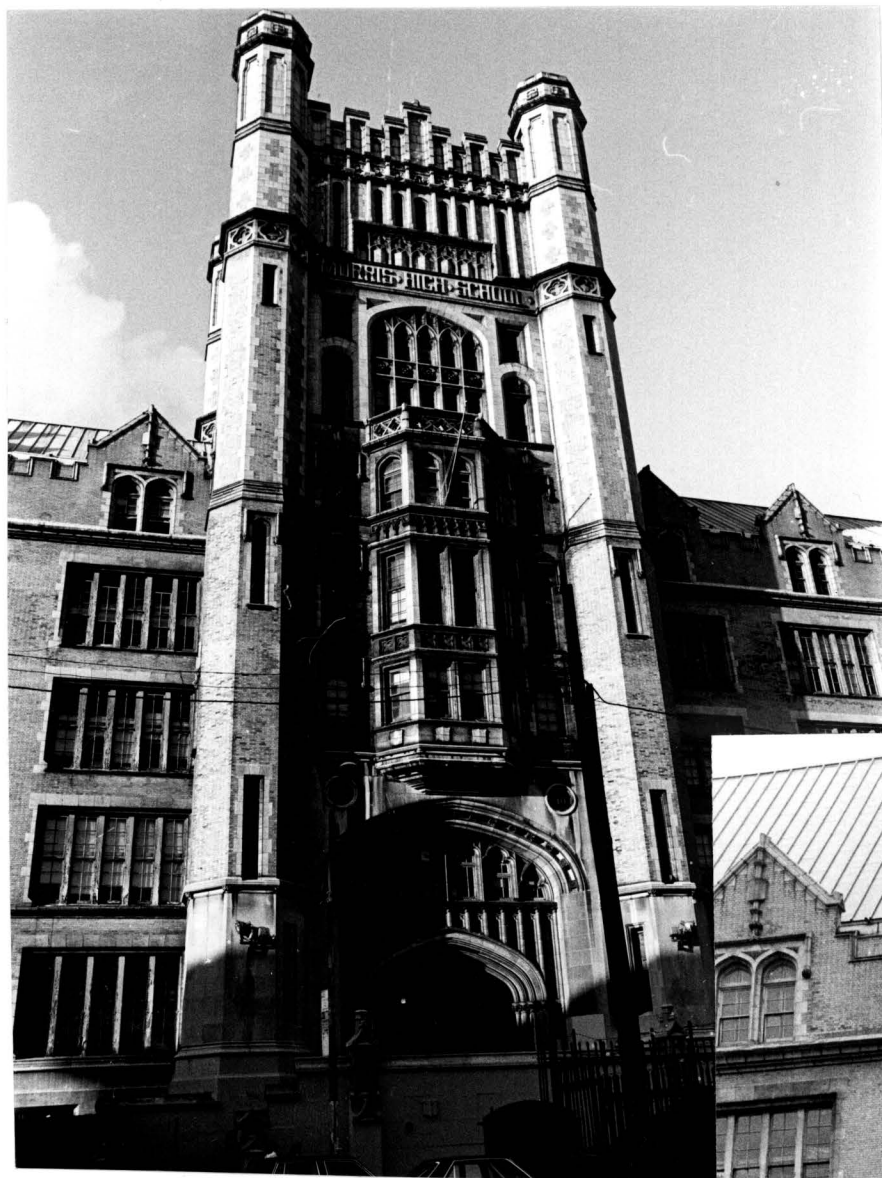
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Morris High School at 166th Street  
Architect C.B.J. Snyder,  
for the Consolidated Board of Education  
of New York City  
Photograph: postcard view, ca. 1904,  
northeast



Morris High School, 1901-1904  
East 166th Street  
Architect C.B.J. Snyder  
for the Consolidated  
Board of Education  
of New York City  
Photograph: Deborah Schwartz



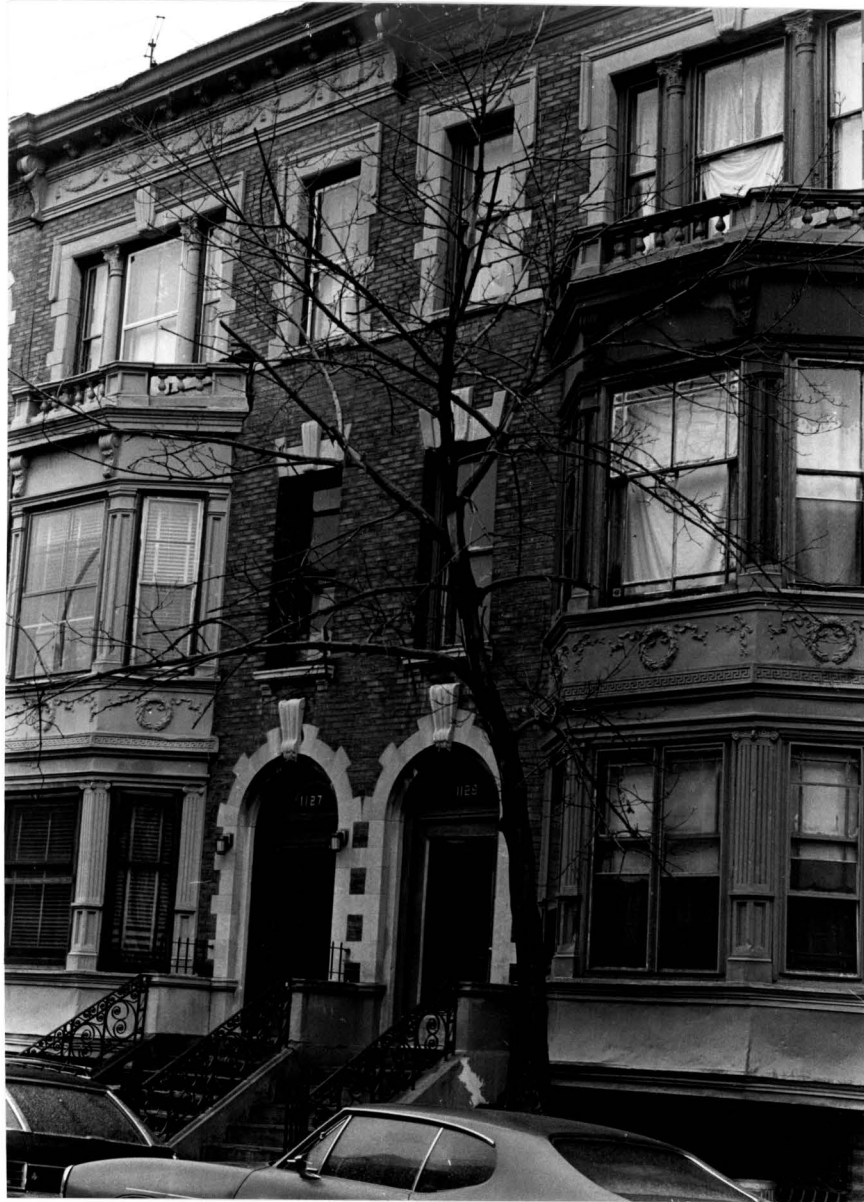
Trinity Episcopal Church of Morrisania, 1874  
Architect unknown  
Photograph: Deborah Schwartz



Jackson Avenue, east side,  
between East 166th Street and  
Home Street  
Photograph:LPC



Forest Avenue, west side, between  
between East 166th Street  
and Home Street  
Photograph: LPC



1127-1128 Forest Avenue  
Architect Warren C. Dickerson  
Photograph: Deborah Schwartz