

**183-195 Broadway**, 183-195 Broadway (aka 833-843 Driggs Avenue), Brooklyn.  
Built: 1882-1883; Herman J. Schwarzmans and William B. Ditmars, architects; Atlantic Iron Works, cast iron.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 2446, Lot 51

On July 10, 1990, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of 183-195 Broadway and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.10). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Six people testified in favor of designation including representatives of the Victorian Society, the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture, the Roebling Chapter of the Society for Industrial Archeology, and the Municipal Art Society. The building's owner requested a continuance. The public hearing was continued on September 11, 1990. The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. A representative of the owner testified in opposition to the designation. Seven people testified in favor of designation including representatives of the Friends of Cast-Iron Architecture, the Municipal Art Society, the Brooklyn Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, and the Brooklyn Historical Society.<sup>1</sup>

On October 8, 2015, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a special public hearing on Backlog Initiative items in the Borough of Brooklyn, including 183-195 Broadway and the related Landmark Site (Item No. II—Borough of Brooklyn Group, A). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Eight people testified in favor of designation, including a representative of Council Member Antonio Reynoso and representatives from the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the Victorian Society, the Historic Districts Council, the Municipal Art Society, and the Guide's Association of New York. The Commission also received written submissions expressing support for designation from the Neighbors Allied for Good Growth, the Waterfront Preservation Alliance, the Sunnyside Gardens Preservation Alliance, and four individuals.

Statements about support for 183-195 Broadway during the backlog process reflect specific testimony given or submitted during the hearing or while the record was open. In addition, the Commission received numerous more general communications about the backlog that were directed at all items on the backlog. These items were not specifically submitted while the record was open. Due to the volume and variety of these more general emails, they are not tallied for individual buildings.



## Summary

The cast-iron facade of 183-195 Broadway is distinctive among cast-iron buildings in New York City for its inventive Neo-Grec design and unusual calla lily ornament, embodying aspects of the Aesthetic Movement. Built towards the end of the heyday of cast-iron fronts in New York, 183-195 Broadway, which was manufactured by the Atlantic Iron Works, is one of only a small number of cast-iron buildings that were constructed in the Borough of Brooklyn.

The building, which was built in 1882-1883 for James R. Sparrow (1810-1886) and his son, James R. Sparrow Jr. (1841-1909), was part of a wave of post-Civil War redevelopment along Broadway, which led to the erection of monumental banks and premier stores, and transformed lower Broadway into Williamsburg's principal artery. Plans for the building were filed by a local Williamsburg architect, William B. Ditmars; however, the building's cast-iron facade was designed by Herman J. Schwarzmenn. Schwarzmenn was a German immigrant, who was the Architect-in-Chief of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. He moved to New York City in early 1878 and designed a variety of buildings including the Mercantile Exchange Building at 628-630 Broadway.

The building originally served as a commercial structure with stores located on the ground floor; however, the completion of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903 transformed the neighborhood and coincided with the conversion of the building to primarily manufacturing use. The current property owners, the Forman Family, purchased the building in 1937 and used it for approximately fifty years as the manufacturing site for their metalware business, which specialized in the production of stamped-metal giftware and produced items such as trays, pitchers, and coffeepots. No. 183-195 Broadway is among the finest cast-iron buildings surviving in Brooklyn.

## DESCRIPTION

### Description

No. 183-195 Broadway was built as a four-story brick and cast-iron commercial building. The building's most prominent facade is its cast-iron facade on Broadway. The building's Driggs Avenue facade is primarily brick with the cast-iron treatment of the Broadway facade continued on its two southernmost bays. The building's other two facades are primarily brick and are unornamented.

#### Southwest Facade (Broadway):

*Historic Features:* The Broadway facade is a tripartite composition with the first and second, and third and fourth stories separated by strong horizontal elements. The building's facade consists of 15 bays divided into five identical vertical sections of three bays, separated on the first floor by cast-iron piers made to imitate ashlar stone and by large fluted pilasters on the upper stories. Upper portion of the first-story piers are incised and feature highly stylized fleur-de-lis. Two-story fluted pilasters at the second and third story of the building each feature a tall, slender calla lily at the base and are terminated by abstracted Ionic capitals. The individual bays on the second story are separated by one-story fluted pilasters with angular bases and console brackets featuring floral swags. The third-story bays are separated by one-story tapered pilasters, reminiscent of freestanding pedestals, featuring leaves and drapery. A frieze above the third story features Greek fretwork. The fourth-story bays are separated by slender Ionic columns and the building is crowned by a bracketed cornice with dentils. The building's architrave features semi-detached flowers with stems and the paneled frieze features rosettes.

*Alterations:* First-story storefronts have been altered; one cast-iron pier removed or obscured; roll-down gate; air conditioning unit; electrical boxes; light fixtures; signage.

#### Northwest Facade (Driggs Avenue):

*Historic features:* The cast-iron treatment of the Broadway facade is continued on the Driggs Street facade at the two southern bays. The remainder of that facade is executed in brick with the two northernmost bays and the slightly-recessed segmental-arched entrance grouped between two full-height brick piers. The first-story features recessed segmental-arched window openings with keystones and corbeled brickwork designed to suggest the presence of columns. The second- and third-story windows are square-headed and feature projecting metal sills and lintels. The lintels feature fluted brackets with guttae and incised decorative detail. The fourth-story windows feature segmental-arched openings with flush lintels and projecting sills. The cornice is continued from the Broadway facade.

*Alterations:* First-story windows appear to have been reduced in size; one first-story window has been filled-in and another replaced with a vent; entrance obscured by a series of roll-down gates; signage, light fixtures, and conduit at first story; pipe; light fixtures above cornice.

#### Southeast Facade:

*Historic features:* Originally a party wall that is now exposed.<sup>2</sup>

*Alterations:* Windows added with security grilles at the first story and wooden shutters at the fourth story; light fixtures; large painted sign.

#### Northeast Facade:

*Historic features:* Thirteen-bay brick facade; tall windows openings at the first story; projecting stone window sills and flush stone window lintels; metal ties in the shape of stars; dentils.

*Alterations:* Replacement windows ; fire escape at three easternmost bays surrounded by protective metal fence; doors providing fire escape access at upper stories with three-over-three

transoms; non-historic gutters and downspouts; security grilles at first-story windows; electrical boxes and conduit; mechanical units and signage at first story; light fixtures; hatches.

*Addition:* On the northeast corner of the property is a brick elevator shaft, which possibly dates from the 1930s.<sup>3</sup> A door, which provides entry to the shaft, is located on Driggs Avenue.

Alterations include the addition of light fixtures and conduit, bricked-up openings, metal brackets emerging from the brick near the top, large advertisements affixed to the walls with brackets, and a roll-down door on Driggs Avenue.

## **SITE HISTORY**

### Williamsburg, Brooklyn<sup>4</sup>

Williamsburg's post-Civil War business boom and transportation improvements, such as widespread trolley service, brought renewed development to the neighborhood. Broadway became "the preferred address for monumental banks, the location of Williamsburg's premier stores, the center for entertainment, and the nexus for most of Williamsburg's ferry-going travels."<sup>5</sup> Broadway served as the main thoroughfare with the New York Ferry Co., located at the foot of Broadway and the East River, providing service to Grand and Roosevelt Streets in Manhattan. Significant new commercial buildings arose, including the Kings County Savings Bank (1868, King & Wilcox), 113 (later 135) Broadway, (a designated New York City Landmark); Smith, Gray & Co. Building (1870), (a designated New York City Landmark); 95 (later 103) Broadway; and Williamsburgh Savings Bank (1870-75, George B. Post; Peter B. Wight, interior), 139-149 (later 175) Broadway, (a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark). Built in 1882-1883, 183-195 Broadway was part of this wave of commercial redevelopment.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, political leaders in Williamsburg began to push for the construction of an additional bridge over the East River to connect Williamsburg to Manhattan. In addition to improving the transportation of goods and people, it was believed that a bridge would also result in further development on Broadway. Construction of the Williamsburg Bridge began in 1896 and resulted in the demolition of many of the buildings directly surrounding 183-195 Broadway. The bridge opened to considerable fanfare in 1903, serving all forms of transportation, including trolley cars and rapid transit. It resulted in the exodus of thousands of individuals from the Lower East Side. The majority of the people were Eastern European Jews that settled in Williamsburg, but enclaves of Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian Orthodox immigrants also developed. By the late 1930s, Williamsburg, especially the area south of Broadway, was a magnet for Hasidic Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. Puerto Ricans, attracted by the neighborhood's large manufacturing base, settled there in large numbers beginning in the 1950s. Older buildings were demolished for the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and new public housing complexes; the exodus of manufacturing left abandoned industrial and residential buildings in its wake. Starting in the 1970s, musicians and artists began moving to Williamsburg's Northside. The neighborhood has seen substantial redevelopment in the past two decades. In addition to the large Hasidic community on Williamsburg's Southside, the neighborhood has a sizeable Latino population, including Dominican immigrants who began settling in the neighborhood in large numbers in the 1980s; substantial African-American, Italian, and Polish communities are also present in Williamsburg today.

### James Sparrow & Son and the Construction of 183-195 Broadway<sup>6</sup>

In May of 1882, James R. Sparrow and James R. Sparrow Jr. purchased the property on the northeast corner of Broadway and Driggs Avenue from the Brooklyn Library Building Fund Association.<sup>7</sup> Plans were filed in September of that same year, by the architect William B. Ditmars, for five four-story iron and brick business buildings.<sup>8</sup> By March 1883 work on the building was almost complete. An article in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* specified that that the building's first story was to be used as stores with the upper floors reserved for businesses. It also credited Herman J. Schwarzmunn with designing the cast-iron facade of the building. It is unclear if Schwarzmunn completely replaced Ditmars as the architect for project or if Schwarzmunn's contribution was limited to the cast-iron facade.<sup>9</sup>

James R. Sparrow was born in Wilmington, Delaware on October 20, 1810.<sup>10</sup> His obituary in the *New York Tribune* stated that he moved to New York at a young age.<sup>11</sup> He first appears listed in a New York City Directory in 1839-1840 working as a carter. He appears to have then entered the whaling trade, first as a manufacturing of casks and later in oil, with a business at 240 Front Street in Lower Manhattan. By 1853-54 James Sparrow had entered the boot and shoe jobbing trade, which he was involved in with his son, James R. Sparrow, Jr., until his death in 1886. In addition to shoes, James R. Sparrow and his sons, George and James R. Sparrow Jr., appear to have been involved in the iron trade. The 1860 and 1865 census list James R. Sparrow as an iron merchant, and in the 1870 census, he is listed as a retired iron merchant. Their connection to the trade may have contributed to their decision to choose a cast-iron facade in the construction of 183-195 Broadway in 1882. From his first appearance in a New York City directory in 1839 until 1865, he appears to have lived with his family in the Lower East Side. By 1865, James Sparrow and his family had settled in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. The 1875 New York State census lists Sparrow and his son, James R. Sparrow Jr., as real estate speculators and by the time of his death in 1886, he had established himself as a well-known developer in Brooklyn. His obituary in the *Brooklyn Eagle* described him as "the first man in Greenpoint to build on a large scale."<sup>12</sup>

### The Architects: William B. Ditmars & Herman J. Schwarzmunn<sup>13</sup>

William B. Ditmars was born in New York in c. 1839. At the age of 21, he is listed in the 1860 federal census as an architect. He appears to have practiced primarily in Brooklyn until his death in 1883, and in his later years, he kept an office in the vicinity of the Williamsburg Bridge on Broadway.<sup>14</sup> He designed a large variety of structures, but appears to be best known for his design of the 1876-78 Brooklyn Municipal Building (demolished around 1915). Other significant extant works include the St. Elias Greek Rite Catholic Church, on Kent Street between Franklin Street and Manhattan Avenue, which falls within the Greenpoint Historic District and Temple Beth Elohim at 274 Keap Street.

Herman J. Schwarzmunn was born in Germany and was the son of Joseph Anton Schwarzmunn, a well-known painter and decorator in Munich. He attended the Royal Military School in Munich and served as a Lieutenant of Artillery in the Austro-Prussian War. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 21 and settled in Philadelphia. He was first employed as Assistant Engineer in Fairmont Park and then later as Chief Engineer of Design. He is best known for his work as Architect-in-Chief of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, for which he designed many of the buildings including Memorial Hall, (which is listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Landmark). He

practiced for a short time with George Pohl, Hugo Kafka, and Edward O. Schwagerl, before moving to New York in 1878, where he initially had an office on Nassau Street. He worked under the name of H. J. Schwarzmänn & Co. until 1884, when he partnered with Alfred Buchman and formed Schwarzmänn & Buchmann.<sup>15</sup> In New York City, his surviving work includes 125-133 East 91<sup>st</sup> Street, a row of Neo-Grec row houses in the Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District, and The New York Mercantile Exchange building at 628-630 Broadway in the NoHo Historic District. Schwarzmänn retired in 1888 and died in New York in 1891.

### Cast-Iron Architecture and the Atlantic Iron Works<sup>16</sup>

The rise of cast iron as an architectural material, widely used for the facades of commercial buildings in the United States from the 1850s to the 1890s, can be attributed to a number of technical and economic factors. The use of the material was particularly popular in New York City. Initially promoted and manufactured by James Bogardus and Daniel D. Badger, the material was touted for its lightness and strength, ease of construction, durability, supposed fireproof nature, and low cost. Cast iron provided an inexpensive alternative to costly elaborate stone-carving, as it was created in molds that could be reused to create a repetitive pattern. The entire facade could be assembled in the fitting shop, given a coat of paint and the individual members numbered before being separated and shipped to the building site for reassembly.

Compared with Manhattan, Brooklyn had relatively few buildings that incorporated significant amounts of iron in their facade. The 1886 Robinson *Atlas of the City of Brooklyn* illustrates that less than 50 such buildings existed throughout the entire borough of Brooklyn, with many only incorporating cast-iron store fronts on what was otherwise a masonry facade. Today, approximately half of these buildings remain in various states of intactness. In 1886, the majority of the cast-iron buildings in Brooklyn were located along Fulton Street and a small collection of impressive examples survive on one block within the Brooklyn Academy of Music Historic District. With the exception of Fulton Street and downtown Brooklyn, the only other concentration of cast-iron buildings in the borough existed on or near Broadway in Williamsburg.

By the late 1880s, cast iron began losing popularity and few buildings with cast-iron facades exist from after 1890. It ceased to be a major architectural material due partly to technical difficulties in applying a cast-iron facade to the taller buildings that the newly available steel skeleton construction made possible and questions that arose concerning its effectiveness as a fire resistant material. With the knowledge that buildings of cast iron were not in fact fireproof, however, particularly after the Boston and Chicago fires of 1872 and the 1879 New York fire that destroyed rows of such structures on Worth and Thomas Streets, restrictive revisions were made to the New York City building code in 1885. This contributed to ending the era of cast-iron fronts in the city, although they continued to some extent through the 1890s.

The cast-iron front of 183-195 Broadway was produced by the Atlantic Iron Works, which was located at 706 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan near the East River. It emerged out of a partnership between Daniel D. Boyce (1819-1898) and John Rogers McIntire (1818-1873), which began under the name of Boyce & McIntire in the early 1860s.<sup>17</sup> Daniel D. Boyce and John Rogers McIntire purchased the property on East 12<sup>th</sup> Street on Dec 30, 1865.<sup>18</sup> From 1877-1878, under financial strain, the firm underwent several changes with James J. Burnet and his son, Gilbert J. Burnet, eventually becoming the proprietors and Daniel D. Boyce remaining as superintendent.<sup>19</sup> Cast-iron fronted buildings produced under the name the Atlantic Iron Works include the Mercantile Exchange building at 628-630 Broadway (1881), designed by Herman J.

Schwarzmann, and 687 Broadway (1885-1888), (both in the NoHo Historic District), and 268 Canal Street (1886) (in the Tribeca East Historic District).<sup>20</sup> An 1886 advertisement in the *New York City Directory* shows that the firm produced an array of products including iron stairs, railings, roofs, and cornices.<sup>21</sup> By 1888, the firm had been in decline for a number of years and the proprietors, James J. Burnet and his son, were sold out to cover their loans.<sup>22</sup> The Atlantic Iron Works may have continued operating until about 1896.<sup>23</sup>

### Design

The Neo-Grec style, which originated in Paris in the 1840s and was brought to the United States by Richard Morris Hunt, began to appear in New York after the Civil War.<sup>24</sup> No. 183-195 Broadway is an unusual example of the Neo-Grec style. It incorporates aspects traditionally associated with the Neo-Grec style in New York City, such as incised detailing, fluted pilasters, bracketed windows sills and lintels, and abstracted detail, with a plasticity, seen in its thick garlands, heavy console brackets, and semi-detached flowers below the frieze, that is rarely seen in Neo-Grec designs in the United States during this period, but is evident in the French Neo-Grec architecture of the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>25</sup>

While most of the building's detail is Neo-Grec in style, aspects of its design, particularly the calla lilies, demonstrate the influence of the Aesthetic Movement on American architecture. The American Aesthetic Movement of the 1870s and 1880s was a movement that was "characterized by the belief that a beautiful domestic environment would promote moral and spiritual fulfillment."<sup>26</sup> Its impact was primarily on the decorative arts; however, it influenced a wide range of fields including architecture.<sup>27</sup> The movement, which grew out of British reform ideas of the 1830s, gained widespread popularity in the United States at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876.<sup>28</sup> The Exposition also exposed many Americans for the first time to Japanese art and exotic Moorish decorative objects, and their influence is readily apparent in the American Aesthetic Movement.<sup>29</sup> Herman J. Schwarzmann's cast-iron building at 632 Broadway, begun in 1881, embodies many aspects of the Aesthetic Movement.<sup>30</sup> Of particular note are the clusters of calla lilies at the second story, a flower which Schwarzmann also featured prominently on the base of the second and third story pilasters at 183-195 Broadway. Oscar Wilde, England's leading aesthete, viewed both the calla lily and the sunflower, as examples of "perfect natural beauty."<sup>31</sup>

The calla lily, a native flower of South Africa and Madagascar, was first imported to America in the mid-19th century.<sup>32</sup> It became a favorite subject of artists. It was depicted in paintings by artists such as John La Farge (*Calla Lily*, 1862) and Louis Comfort Tiffany (*Calla Lily*, 1865) and appears in an 1875 sketch by the Philadelphia architect Frank Furness. Early depictions of the flower in American art tended to include the calla lily among a bouquet of other types of flowers, but by the later decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the calla lily was frequently painted as either a single bloom or clusters of calla lilies as is seen in Schwarzmann's designs.<sup>33</sup>

### Occupants & Later Ownership

Early commercial occupants of the building included Howe's furniture warehouse and Jacob Brothers' piano and organ store.<sup>34</sup> After James R. Sparrow's death in 1886, the building continued to be owned by his descendants. From 1904 until at least 1909, the police department leased part of the building for use as a station house for the 184th Precinct.<sup>35</sup> The transformation of the neighborhood after the construction of the Williamsburg Bridge appears to coincide with the conversion of 183-195 Broadway from commercial space to primarily manufacturing uses. In

December of 1911, the family of James R. Sparrow, Jr. leased the building to Frederick Wohl, superintendent of Berlin Knitting Mills, a clothing manufacturer.<sup>36</sup> In 1912, Berlin Knitting Mills was listed in the *Annual Industrial Directory of New York State* as employing 10 men and 20 women in the manufacturing of sweaters.<sup>37</sup> Subsequent occupants include a large variety of businesses, many of which appear to have been involved in manufacturing and, in particular textiles, these include the Mohair Sweater Mills, Fredericks Spinning Company, and Brite Yarn Corporation.<sup>38</sup> The descendants of James R. Sparrow, Jr. held on to the property until June 12, 1934, when the building was foreclosed upon by the Williamsburg Savings Bank.<sup>39</sup>

The property was purchased by Benjamin and Sol Forman in March of 1937 and was transferred shortly thereafter to the Forman Brothers Inc.<sup>40</sup> The children of Russian immigrants, who came to the United States in 1890, Benjamin and Sol Forman grew up in Lower Manhattan.<sup>41</sup> In 1923, Benjamin Forman filed incorporation papers for the Forman Brothers Inc. along with his wife Sarah and Thomas F. Garvey.<sup>42</sup> The 1930 census lists Benjamin Forman as a manufacturer of silverware and his brother Sol as a foreman in the metalware business.<sup>43</sup> The family business, first known as the Forman Brothers Inc. and later as the Forman Family Inc., specialized in the production of stamped-metal giftware and produced items such as trays, pitchers, and coffeepots. No. 183-195 Broadway was used as a factory for the business, while the family continued to lease some of the building's space to other occupants.<sup>44</sup> The Forman Family metalware business continued to occupy 183-195 Broadway until the early 1980s when Sol Forman closed the metalware business due foreign competition.<sup>45</sup>

Significant to the building's later history is Peter Luger Steakhouse. Located across the street at 178 Broadway, the restaurant, which opened in 1887, was a favorite place of Sol's to entertain clients.<sup>46</sup> When the restaurant closed in 1950, Sol purchased it and turned it into a family business.<sup>47</sup> The *New York City Address Directories* from the 1970s and 1980s list 183-195 Broadway as the administrative and executive offices for the steakhouse.<sup>48</sup>



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This item was previously heard on November 18, 1980 and continued on February 10, 1981 (LP-1223). The item was heard again on June 12, 1984 (LP-1504).

<sup>2</sup> *Atlas of the City of Brooklyn* (New York: Robinson, 1886).

<sup>3</sup> Elevator shaft may have been constructed in the 1930s as two alterations that date from 1934 are present for elevators under the property on the Department of Buildings website (drawings could not be located).

<sup>4</sup> Sources from this section are largely adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Long Island Business College Designation Report (LP-2544)*, (New York: City of New York, 2013), prepared by Michael Caratzas; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Smith, Gray & Company Building Designation Report (LP-2161)*, (New York: City of New York, 2005), prepared by Jay Shockley. Additional sources include: "Preservation Plan for Williamsburg Brooklyn," Columbia University Master of Science in Historic Preservation Program, (May 2001), 9-13.

<sup>5</sup> "Preservation Plan for Williamsburg Brooklyn," Columbia University Master of Science in Historic Preservation Program, (May 2001), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Sources for this section include: *New York City Directories* (1839-1886); U.S. Census (1840, 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880), New York State Census (1855, 1865, and 1875), "James R. Sparrow Dead: Well Known Seventeenth Ward Builder Suddenly Expires," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug 9, 1886.

<sup>7</sup> Kings County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances.

<sup>8</sup> Kings County, New Building Docket Index (1882), New Building Number 845.

<sup>9</sup> "Massive Buildings: The New Structures Erected on Broadway for Business Purposes," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Mar 16, 1883; Several sources have suggested that the 183-195 Broadway was constructed for Sparrow's shoe jobbing business. While Sparrow and his son were involved in the shoe jobbing business at the time of the building's construction their business address was listed as 373 Manhattan Avenue from 1880-1886, well after construction of 183-195 Broadway was complete.

<sup>10</sup> "Death of a Greenpoint Builder," *The Brooklyn Union*, August 9, 1886, 8.

<sup>11</sup> "Obituary Notes," *New York Tribune*, Aug 10, 1886, 5.

<sup>12</sup> "James R. Sparrow Dead: Well Known Seventeenth Ward Builder Suddenly Expires," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug 9, 1886.

<sup>13</sup> Sources for this section include: Sandra L. Tatman for American Architects and Buildings, "Schwarzmann, Herman J. (1846-1891)"(November 18, 2015): [https://www.americanbuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/92696](https://www.americanbuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/92696); Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects' Appendix," *Expanded Carnegie Hill Historic District Designation Report (LP-1834)*, (New York: City of New York, 1993), prepared by Marion Cleaver; Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects' Appendix," *NoHo Historic District Designation Report (LP-2039)*, (New York: City of New York, 1999), prepared by Virginia Kurshan; Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles, 1970), 88, 542-543; *Trow's New York City Directory* (1882); "Obituary: Hermann J. Schwarzman," *Architecture & Building*, Vol. 15, (Oct 3, 1891), 163.

<sup>14</sup> "William B. Ditmars," *The Brooklyn Union*, Nov 1, 1883.

<sup>15</sup> The last mention of an active project under the name of H. J. Schwarzmann & Co. in the *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* occurred on March 1, 1884, (page 226). The first reference to Schwarzmann & Buchmann in the *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* occurred on February 16, 1884, (page 174).

<sup>16</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Baumann Brothers Furniture and Carpets Store Designation Report (LP-2123)*, (New York: City of New York, 2008), prepared by Jay Shockley; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District Designation Report (LP-0768)*, (New York: City of New York, 1973), 12-17. Information regarding the prevalence of cast-iron fronted buildings in Brooklyn was acquired from: *Atlas of the City of Brooklyn* (New York: Robinson, 1886).

- <sup>17</sup> “An Old Resident Gone: Death of Daniel D. Boyce of Greenpoint on Thursday Morning,” *The Daily Star*, Dec 3, 1898; Advertisements for the Atlantic Iron Works all state that the firm was established in 1861.
- <sup>18</sup> Kings County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances.
- <sup>19</sup> “Business Embarrassments,” *New York Herald*, Feb 22, 1878, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> Margot Gayle & Edmund V Gillon, Jr., *Cast-Iron Architecture in New York*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1974), 34; Walter Grutchfield, “Atlantic Iron Works,” <http://www.waltergrutchfield.net/atlantic.htm>.
- <sup>21</sup> *New York City Directory* (1881).
- <sup>22</sup> “Business Troubles,” *New York Times*, Mar 20, 1888, 2.
- <sup>23</sup> “An Old Resident Gone,” *The Daily Star*, Dec 3, 1898; Advertisement, *The Chronicle*, Mar 7, 1890, 1.
- <sup>24</sup> Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Bedford Stuyvesant/Expanded Stuyvesant Heights Historic District Designation Report (LP-2496)*, (New York: New York City), 17, essay prepared by Donald Presa.
- <sup>25</sup> Josephine Grieder, “The Search for the Néo-Grec in Second Empire Paris,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 2011), 178-187.
- <sup>26</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement* (N.Y.: Rizzoli Intl. Publics., 1986), quote appears on the dust jacket.
- <sup>27</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, 23.
- <sup>28</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, 19-20.
- <sup>29</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, 152, 159.
- <sup>30</sup> “Three New Buildings,” *New York Times*, Apr 20, 1881, 8
- <sup>31</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, 228.
- <sup>32</sup> Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, *Georgia O’Keeffe: And the Calla Lily in American Art, 1860-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1; Dorothea Dix, compiler, *The Garland of Flora* (Boston: S.G. Goodrich, 1829), 41.
- <sup>33</sup> Georgia O’Keeffe Museum, 10.
- <sup>34</sup> *Brooklyn City Directories* (1885-1887).
- <sup>35</sup> *Proceedings of the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund of the City of New York* (New York: New York City, 1904), 643, 712-713, 674-679; *The City Record*, Vol. 36, Part 10, Oct 7, 1908.
- <sup>36</sup> Kings County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; “Mill Hands May Strike,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 24, 1913, 16.
- <sup>37</sup> *Annual Industrial Directory of New York State*, Vol. 1 (Albany: State Department of Labor, 1913), 132.
- <sup>38</sup> *New York City Address Directories* (1929-1937).
- <sup>39</sup> Kings County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> U.S. Passport Application for Benjamin Forman, Dec 20, 1922; U.S. Census 1910 and 1920; New York State Census 1905.
- <sup>42</sup> Division of Corporations, New York State Department of State.
- <sup>43</sup> U.S. Census 1930.
- <sup>44</sup> Douglas Martin, “Sol Forman, 98, Owner of Famed Steakhouse,” *New York Times*, Nov 27, 2001; *New York City Address Directories* (1937-1986); “About Peter Lugers,” *Peter Luger Steakhouse* (December 10, 2015), <http://peterluger.com/about-peter-lugers/>.
- <sup>45</sup> Douglas Martin.

<sup>46</sup> Douglas Martin.

<sup>47</sup> Douglas Martin; today, the building features several prominent ads for Peter Luger Steakhouse, which remains one of New York City's longest running restaurants.

<sup>48</sup> *New York City Address Directories* (1970-1986).

## **FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION**

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that 183-195 Broadway has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, history, and cultural characteristics of Brooklyn.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, 183-195 Broadway is distinctive among cast-iron buildings in New York City for its inventive Neo-Grec design and unusual calla lily ornament, embodying aspects of the Aesthetic Movement; that the facade was built towards the end of the heyday of cast-iron fronts in New York and was manufactured by the Atlantic Iron Works; that the structure is one of only a small number of cast-iron buildings that were constructed in the Borough of Brooklyn; that the building, which was built in 1882-1883 for James R. Sparrow (1810-1886) and his son, James R. Sparrow Jr. (1841-1909), was part of a wave of post-Civil War redevelopment along Broadway, which led to the erection of monumental banks and premier stores, and transformed lower Broadway into Williamsburg's principal artery; that the design for the building's cast-iron facade was designed by Herman J. Schwarzmann, a German immigrant, who was the Architect-in-Chief of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia; that the building's conversion from commercial to manufacturing use coincided with the neighborhood's transformation that resulted from the completion of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903; that the building's current owners, the Forman Family, purchased the building in 1937 and used the building for approximately fifty years as the manufacturing site for their metalware business; and that the building is among the finest cast-iron buildings surviving in Brooklyn.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark 183-195 Broadway, and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2446, Lot 51, as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Wellington Chen,

Michael Devonshire, Michael Goldblum, John Gustafsson,

Jeanne Lutfy, Adi Shamir-Baron, Kim Vauss, Commissioners



183-195 Broadway (aka 833-843 Driggs Avenue)  
 Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 2446, Lot 51  
*Photo: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2014*



183-195 Broadway  
*Source: Friends of Cast Iron Architecture*  
*Photo: Peter M. Lerman, July 1990*



183-195 Broadway  
Driggs Avenue Elevation  
*Photo: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2014*





183-195 Broadway  
Upper Story and Cornice Detail  
*Photo: Corinne Engelbert, 2015*



183-195 Broadway  
Third-Story Detail  
*Photo: Corinne Engelbert, 2015*



183-195 Broadway  
Facade Detail  
*Photo: Sarah Moses, 2016*





183-195 Broadway  
Foundry Mark  
*Photo: Corinne Engelbert, 2015*

