

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
December 11, 1990, Designation List 230  
LP-1628

**HERMAN RIDDER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL**, (Public School 98), 1619 Boston Road, The Bronx. Built 1929-31. New York City Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2939, Lot 93.

On September 15, 1987, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Hermann Ridder Junior High School and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses, including the principal of the school, spoke in favor of designation; two representatives of the Board of Education, Division of School Buildings, spoke in opposition to designation because of concern over planned alterations which have subsequently been carried out.<sup>1</sup>

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

##### Summary

Herman Ridder Junior High School, Public School 98, the Bronx, was the first thoroughly "modernistic" Art Deco style public school building in New York City and the first junior high school to depart in design from a modification of a standard elementary school plan. Designed by the Board of Education's Bureau of Design and Construction, headed by Walter C. Martin as Superintendent of School Buildings, and built in 1929-31, the school was one of the first projects to result from a program initiated in 1927 to erect facilities designed specifically for junior high programs, which prior to this time had been housed in elementary school buildings. The striking design of Herman Ridder Junior High School is representative of the initial phase of American academic modernism in which the Art Deco style influenced both plan-generated massing and modernistic ornamentation of school designs. Several Art Deco elements characteristic of contemporary commercial and industrial buildings were employed in the design, including an entrance tower modeled as a set-back skyscraper, structural emphasis in the pier and window treatment of the classroom facades, and a lively roofline with cresting and pedimented parapets, as well as Art Deco style ornament. The school is "identified" by an extensive iconographic program of academic symbols and exceptional modernistic sculptural figures on the tower. Named for the prominent publisher and philanthropist, Herman Ridder Junior High School exemplifies the union of modernistic trends in architecture and progressive educational ideals, resulting in a civic monument symbolizing hope and achievement.

## The Development of the Morrisania Section of the Bronx<sup>2</sup>

The Herman Ridder Junior High School is located in the Morrisania section of the Bronx at the southeastern edge of Crotona Park, an area, like the rest of the Bronx, which remained essentially rural until the turn of the century. Morrisania, named for the British Army officer Colonel Lewis Morris who owned land in the area in the Revolutionary War era, was first settled by two groups of immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century; a group of Irish who worked on the construction of the Harlem and Hudson River Railroads settled in the area in the early 1840s, soon followed by a large number of German immigrants. The German-American population of the area continued to grow, and by the late-nineteenth century, Morrisania had become predominantly German.

The urbanization of the Bronx followed annexation to the City of New York in 1874 and the subsequent improvement of transportation between the Bronx and Manhattan. The expansion of elevated train lines, particularly the completion of the IRT subway system to West Farms Square just north of Morrisania in 1904, prompted real estate speculation and development, and, ultimately, increases in population in the Morrisania section, and the Bronx as a whole.

During the 1920s there was a tremendous housing boom in the Bronx accompanied by a corresponding increase in population; only the Depression slowed the explosive growth of the borough. The 1930 census documented the 72.8 percent increase in population during the previous decade, and revealed the Crotona Park area to be the geographical center of population in the Bronx. Mirroring this growth, the number of school-age children in the borough increased by 44 percent between 1918 and 1928. During the 1920s thirty-nine elementary and junior high schools and four high schools were erected in the Bronx, as well as additions to nineteen existing buildings.

## A Model Junior High School for the Bronx<sup>3</sup>

The construction of the Herman Ridder Junior High School documents the commitment of the New York City Board of Education to expanding the system of junior high schools in the late 1920s. The junior high school concept had developed in New York City in tandem with the movement in the rest of the United States to better address the educational needs of young teenagers in preparation for their high school years or entrance into the workforce. Junior high schools, known as intermediate schools prior to 1922, were established in New York City during the 1910s, including three in the Bronx; these were begun as experimental departments in elementary school buildings. The number of junior high programs in New York City increased considerably around 1920 as the idea became accepted.

As the 1920s progressed, it became clear to educators that junior high schools should be located in separate, specially-designed school buildings. The standard three curricula -- academic, commercial, and industrial -- and the athletic and music programs required specialized classrooms and equipment. In 1927 the New York City Board of Education initiated a junior

high school construction program to provide these facilities. The first group of junior high schools to be erected included Public School 96, Brooklyn, considered to be the first junior high school designed by the Bureau of Construction and Maintenance; its design was a modification of one of the standard plans which had been developed by the Bureau for elementary school buildings.<sup>4</sup> The Bureau of Construction and Maintenance began to prepare standard specifications for junior high schools, including the type and number of various specialized rooms and the size of classrooms.

The construction of Public School 98 in the Bronx was proposed in July, 1927, to reduce congestion in three of the eleven existing junior high schools in the Bronx, Public School 30, Public School 40, and Public School 61. A site was found near Public School 61 on Boston Road, a prominent thoroughfare, and adjacent to the recreational facilities of Crotona Park. Considerable effort went into the planning of Public School 98, and the school was the first in New York City to depart from a modified elementary school building design. In September, 1929, the Superintendent of School Buildings presented plans for a model junior high school with all the recommended facilities and a distinctive exterior design meant to demonstrate the "educative value of artistic effects."<sup>5</sup> The school was named the Herman Ridder Junior High School in honor of a successful German immigrant, the self-made publisher of the Catholic News who succeeded Oswald Ottendorfer as publisher of the New Yorker Staats-Zeitung and who was also respected for his contributions to education and community service. Herman Ridder Junior High School, which opened in September, 1931, and accommodated 3,090 students, was erected during 1930-31 at a cost of \$1,800,000.<sup>6</sup> The school was considered outstanding in its imposing appearance and its advancement of the aims and goals of the junior high school, as well as a symbol of hope and accomplishment.

### The Modernization of School Architecture

The 1920s were a period of change in the design of American school buildings, with a gradual move away from established norms in building type and design toward modernized and standardized educational facilities. The hold of the strong tradition of the Collegiate Gothic or "scholastic" style of school buildings lessened as other styles joined the repertory, including the Colonial Revival, Renaissance Revival, and regional styles such as the Mission Revival style in California. Despite the emergence of different stylistic treatments, however, the "American school house" remained, typically, a brick clad structure with stone ornament and an imposing entrance tower; there was the strong feeling that a school building, above all, should look like a school building with the appropriate amount of civic monumentality and be designed in good taste with appropriateness to its community setting.

While school buildings remained stylistically traditional prior to 1930, the progressive aspect of school design was less visible on the exterior. Great strides were made in planning for school size and programs, the standardization of plans and classroom requirements, the sophistication of mechanical systems, and the provision of campus-like settings; the

increasing specialization of school design was directed at producing efficient and economical school buildings. Concern with the practical aspects of school design in the 1920s greatly overshadowed interest in the detailing of the exterior of the building, which at times lacked a vitality in design.

By the end of the decade, advancements had been made in planning and constructing school buildings, although progressive educators and designers were urging a more visible modernization of school exteriors. Around 1928, as the Art Deco style was gaining in popularity and acceptance, it began to be used as another type of ornamentation for the brick-clad school; in the earliest examples, the detailing of the brick sheathing and trim at entrances, parapets, and windows were executed modernistically. Around 1930 school designs appeared that were more truly characteristic of Art Deco style architecture, with complex, plan-generated massing, functional designs, and well-integrated ornamentation programs, such as the Newark Public School of Fine & Industrial Art (Guilbert & Betelle, 1930-31) and the Herman Ridder Junior High School. At about this same time, in the more avant-garde realm of private school design, the International style was appearing in the work of Howe & Lescaze and others. As the 1930s progressed, the bold forms and massing strategies of the Art Deco style were emphasized rather than ornamentation and there was an increasing influence of the European International style in public school design.

When American school designers turned to modernistic ornament for schools, their primary sources of inspiration, both theoretically and practically, were industrial and commercial buildings. The aesthetic austerity and fenestration of many school designs in the mid-1920s had already prompted a comparison of schools and factory buildings. The image of an industrial America was a strong influence on the art and national consciousness of the 1920s, and the idea of a building designed as a machine for a specific use was popular in architectural theory. Architect Wallace K. Harrison expressed an ideological approach to school design by asserting that "the [school] building must be, to a certain extent, industrial in character as it is a machine for education..."<sup>7</sup> The massing of a large, low school building was similar to that of a factory or warehouse, where an elevator shaft was frequently treated as a tower at the entrance. The skyscraper, which dominated all architectural imagery in the late 1920s, was linked to academia with the design for the projected fifty-four-story "Cathedral of Learning" for the University of Pittsburgh (Charles Z. Klauder, 1925-37) which was conceived to dominate the city both physically and psychologically. The designs of tall buildings provided prototypes for wall treatment and entrances, as well as for the massing of the traditional school tower.

Reflecting these national trends in school design were the changes in school building architecture in New York City, controlled by the Superintendent of School Buildings who supervised the design and construction of all city school buildings for the Board of Education. An era in school design passed with the retirement of C.B.J. Snyder in 1923 after over thirty years as Superintendent of School Buildings; Snyder had introduced the Collegiate Gothic style and made improvements in the



planning of schools. William Gompert, who succeeded Snyder, supervised the extensive school building program which peaked in the mid-1920s, when as many as sixty-four buildings were completed in a year. This period of school design was marked by the need for economy and increasing standardization in design and construction. Gompert designed schools in the accepted range of revival styles, including the Georgian Revival style that became popular in the 1920s, and tentatively explored the use of modern design in the detailing of the De Witt Clinton High School, the Bronx, which featured "modernistic features designed in a careful way."<sup>8</sup>

Walter C. Martin, who assumed the position of Superintendent of School Buildings in 1928, supervised the emergence of the "modernistic academic" style in New York City. The designs of the Seward Park High School in Manhattan (finished under Martin's supervision, 1928-29) and the Brooklyn Industrial High School for Girls (now the Sarah J. Hale High School, 1929-30) combined Art Deco-inspired ornamentation with modernized classical elements applied to the brick-clad structures, resulting in an incipient modernistic approach characteristic of the first phase of Art Deco style schools. With the design of Herman Ridder Junior High School and Public School 107 (the Bronx, 1931) bolder steps were taken with the style; the modernistic elements were well-integrated with the lingering references to classical architecture -- the pedimented entrance surrounds, the implied dome, and pilasters with capitals. This pioneering use of a "modernistic" aesthetic for the design of Herman Ridder Junior High School, which extended to the interior of the school as well, reflects the maturation of Art Deco style school design about 1930.

The decision by the Board of Education to use a modernistic style for the Herman Ridder Junior High School in the Bronx reflects the increasing popularity and acceptance of the Art Deco style in that area of the city. The Board of Education was admittedly conservative in its approach to the use of new styles for public schools, an attitude confirmed in the Board of Education's description of the design of Public School 98, which noted the necessity for "crystallized public approval" of modern architecture before it could be proposed in a school design.<sup>9</sup> This new approach to school design did not preclude the use of more traditional styles; modernistic designs would only be used for some new school buildings and the contextual setting of a new school building would remain an influential factor in the selection of a style for that structure. Herman Ridder Junior High School was planned and built, apparently by no coincidence, during the same years that Art Deco style apartment buildings were introduced in the Bronx, most notably along the Grand Concourse. The extensive use of ornament on the school reflects not only the early stage of the architectural style, but also an attempt to present a decorative building with ornament placed in traditional locations, and thus appealing to the general public.

## "Modernism in Architecture Has Reached the Schools"

"Modernism in architecture has reached the schools," declared the New York Times, as it presented the design of Herman Ridder Junior High School in 1929.<sup>10</sup> The design of the school emphasized the expression of structural features and incorporated several elements popular in Art Deco style tall buildings. The wall treatment, with projecting piers and vertical window bays, was a direct borrowing from tall building design, noted by Martin as "exemplified by some recent skyscrapers."<sup>11</sup> A tower at the main entrance, with "set-back terraces, reminiscent of Babylonian temples" was modeled in the form of a set-back skyscraper. The Art Deco style ornament, executed in a variety of polychromatic materials, featured "colored enamel tiles borrowed from a later age." Added to these commercial- and industrial-inspired design elements was an iconographic program with numerous references to educational ideals which announced, without a doubt, the purpose of the building.

The treatment of the facades of the classroom wings in the manner of tall buildings was a definite departure from the more typical organization of school building facades in which banks of windows indicated the placement of each classroom.<sup>12</sup> This "skyscraper motif" was expected optimistically, in fact, to provide better lighted classrooms.<sup>13</sup> The articulation of the vertical bays of the facades, with piers projecting beyond recessed bays of windows and spandrel panels, was the characteristic wall treatment of Art Deco style tall buildings which expressed steel-frame construction and reinforced the vertical lines of the building. The street facades of Herman Ridder Junior High School have a strong rhythm created by wide piers which terminate in stepped cresting above the parapet level alternating with simpler, flat ribs between the paired windows. In the typical configuration of factory buildings, entrance and end pavilions of the facades of the school are accentuated; with their pedimental terminations rising above the main parapet level, they enliven the roofline and act as vertical counterpoints to the long expanses of the classroom facades.

The placement of a tower above the entrance to a public school has been a traditional feature of school design since the mid-nineteenth century;<sup>14</sup> a modernistic interpretation of this feature emerges in the design of Herman Ridder Junior High School. The tower, with "terraces and modernistic lines," rises from the main story where it defines the entrance lobby to one story above the juncture of two classroom wings at the corner of Boston Road and East 173rd Street. The set-back sixth story, a two-stage cylindrical form embraced by four planar window bays, serves as the base of the implied dome.<sup>15</sup> The tower appears to draw on more recent sources of inspiration, as well as the Babylonian temples Martin cited. With the suggestion of a domed termination and sculptural figures emerging from piers, the tower appears to have been inspired by well-known and admired prototypes: the Nebraska State Capitol (Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1920-32) which in turn appears to draw upon the design of the Helsinki Railroad Station (Eliel Saarinen, 1906-14), with its modeled piers and set-back upper stage expressed by alternating planar and curved forms. The inventive form of the school tower, however, also declares its proximity to the city of skyscrapers. The uninterrupted rise of the tower from the street to its setbacks suggests the zoning-

generated skyscraper forms of New York City and the characteristic Manhattan silhouette of set-back skyscrapers rising above neighboring buildings.

The ornamentation of the building incorporates both abstract elements executed in the Art Deco manner and a distinctive iconographic program. Geometric and abstracted ornament includes panels with star medallions and foliate and floral designs placed at spandrels and parapets. These designs enhance the polychromy of the building, employing a dark red-brown background which also appears in the dark brick of the window spandrels of the classroom wing facades and contrasts with the light tones of buff-colored limestone and yellow brick. The iconography of the stylized figurative elements features many traditional academic symbols -- male and female students in profile, the open book, the lamp of knowledge, and, in the larger plaques on the tower, representations of the educational goals of knowledge (the lamp), art (the Pantheon), and music (the lyre). Another use of classicist design appears in the modernized pedimented entrance surrounds which are, nonetheless, quite similar to entrances to contemporary skyscrapers in scale and emphasis.

The sculptural figures which terminate the piers of the tower are exceptional examples of modernistic sculpture on a public school building. These female figures holding open books are a traditional academic subject presented in a decidedly modernistic manner. They can be considered among the descendants of Eliel Saarinen's lamp-holders that emerge from the piers flanking the entrance of the Helsinki Railroad Station, which include Lee Lawrie's figures on the Nebraska State Capitol and the Los Angeles Public Library (Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1921-26), as well as the interior and exterior angels of the Church of Heavenly Rest in New York City (Hardie Philip of Mayers, Murray & Philip, 1927-29). The school's abstracted robed figures with naturalistic heads are executed in the style popularized by Lawrie -- a limited realism with simplified and stylized details. The placement of the figures on the school near the top of all four facades of the tower, rather than near the entrance, as in many other examples, enhances their visibility and gives an academic aura to the commercial form of the skyscraper-like tower.

#### Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings<sup>16</sup>

The architectural career of Walter C. Martin (1887-?), who served as Superintendent of School Buildings from 1928 to 1938, was marked by civic service. Martin, a native of the Bronx, received his architectural training at Cooper Union while working from 1901 to 1914 in the office of Charles S. Clark, an architect who had a practice in the Bronx. Martin was involved in the design of the Bergen Building (the Bronx municipal office building, 1932 Arthur Avenue) in 1912 while working for Clark and in the enlargement of the building in 1916. Little is known about Martin's design work during the years he maintained his own practice from 1914 to 1918. Martin was appointed Deputy Tenement House Commissioner for the Bronx in 1918; from 1926 to 1928 he served as Tenement House Commissioner for the City of New York and was concerned with health and safety issues.

Martin was elected in 1928 to the position of Superintendent of School Buildings, the director of the Bureau of Construction and Maintenance of the New York City Board of Education. In this capacity, Martin supervised a staff of several hundred and oversaw the conclusion of the extensive construction program of city schools which began after World War I. Martin left the Board of Education in 1938 when the Bureau of School Construction and Maintenance was divided into two agencies; little is known of his architectural practice after this period.

### Description

The Herman Ridder Junior High School building, with four stories above a raised basement, has an irregular plan due to the configuration of the lot in the block bounded by Boston Road, Crotona Park East, Suburban Place, and East 173rd Street, the Bronx. Two classroom wings extend along Boston Road and East 173rd Street; a six-story tower rises to a height of 133 feet at the juncture of these wings and marks the main entrance. A third wing, extending from the Boston Road wing through the middle of the block to Crotona Park East, houses an auditorium and two gymnasiums. Above a raised basement sheathed in granite, the first story of the steel-frame structure is clad in limestone, as are the tower, several entrance pavilions, and the parapet. The piers of the street facades, and the interior court elevations, are sheathed with yellow brick.

The centerpiece of the design is the tower, square in plan and set at an angle at the acute corner formed by the intersection of Boston Road and East 173rd Street, in which the main entrance to the school is located. The tower defines the entrance lobby and houses classrooms on the upper stories and, originally, music and band practice rooms at the fifth and sixth stories. It rises in three bays, the center one projecting slightly. Terra-cotta panels in the spandrels of the center bay express the educational ideals of "Knowledge," "Music," and "Art,"<sup>17</sup> while those in the side bays are of a star medallion design, executed in grayed metallic tones with a dark red-brown background.<sup>18</sup> The piers framing the center bay terminate at the fifth-story setback with curvaceous limestone lamps of knowledge, while those of the side bays evolve into carved female figures holding open books. The fifth story is treated identically on all four exposed sides of the tower. Emerging from this level is a three-stage, cylindrical, flat-topped implied dome. At the sixth story piers project above the central bays of the lower portion of the tower as window surrounds, and create an alternating curved and planar form. Terra-cotta bands of stylized foliate and floral motifs edge the setbacks, and similar panels at the same level above each window continue this horizontal accent. Two shallow setbacks at the flat-topped terminus of the tower suggest a dome. The tower is linked to the wings on each side by a limestone bay with wide piers flanking a window bay that has stepped reveals and spandrels in a star-medallion design.

A stylized pedimented entry, which projects in three stages from the base of the tower, is edged with a scored cornice, an extension of the limestone band that separates the first story from the upper stories, and a



band of decorative rondels. The name of the school, "P.S. 98 Hermann<sup>19</sup> Ridder Junior High School" is carved in relief lettering above the entrance. Moderne style lamps flank the replacement triple doors above which is a large multi-pane transom; decorative metalwork at the lower edge of the transom has been removed. The original cast-iron fence which surrounds the school has a more ornate section in front of the entry; gates, incorporating "PS 98 HRJHS" in the design, are hung from granite posts with rounded, carved tops. A cornerstone with the date 1930 and octagonal rondels with the City and Board of Education seals, above the windows flanking the entrance on the first story, complete the identification of the school.

The classroom wings along Boston Road and East 173rd Street are divided into bays of two windows by wide modeled piers; narrower ribs rise between the windows. Spandrels at the third- and fourth-story levels feature terracotta panels -- with profiles of male and female students, the lamp of knowledge, and an open book -- surrounded by a vertical stripe pattern created through the use of several shades of dark red-brown brick. At the parapet level the spandrel area is filled with paired panels of stylized foliate designs; the piers and ribs project above the panels to form stepped cresting faced in limestone. All of the windows are single and paired with six-over-six double-hung wood sash.<sup>20</sup> Those on the fifth story of the tower, with segmentally-arched heads, are much taller and have a third multi-pane sash; the windows at the sixth story have multi-pane sidelights.

The auditorium entrance, near the middle of the Boston Road facade, is accentuated by a stylized pedimented surround which projects from a limestone pavilion that terminates above the parapet in a abstracted pedimental form. Stepped piers, which form part of the door surround, are enriched with carved panels; below, the light fixtures have been removed. A panel with "Auditorium" in relief carving is located above the entrance; the doors and transom are replacements. Banks of four windows on the upper stories of this section are separated by spandrel panels in the star medallion pattern and topped by larger panels. The pediment features an octagonal plaque with an open book; extending above is a flagpole. Flanking this entrance are the original freestanding notice boards.

Entrance pavilions at the west end of the Boston Road facade and the north end of the East 173rd Street facade, faced in limestone, also project above the main parapet level. The upper stories of these sections, identical to the bays linking the tower to the side wings, are single windows flanked by wide piers. The entrance on Boston Road has a stepped pediment edged with an extension of the scored ground-story cornice. One of the original light fixtures remains in place to the west of the metal replacement doors. The entrance on East 173rd Street has metal replacement doors in a simple scored surround with carved corner blocks.

On the Crotona Park East facade two limestone entrance pavilions frame the slightly recessed facade; the gabled roof over this wing is set back from the parapet. The pavilions are similar to those on the other facades, with stepped piers supporting a stylized pediment that rises above the parapet level. The single bays of windows and spandrels are topped by rondels depicting "Racing" on the east pavilion and "Games" on the west



pavilion; elongated medallions flank the rondels. Identical entrances to the two gymnasiums feature stylized pedimented surrounds; piers with curved tops and carved panels flank the small shouldered pediments in which "Boys Gymnasium" on the east entry and "Girls Gymnasium" on the west entry are carved in relief lettering. Both entries are filled with four metal doors below a transom area of brick infill. The upper portion of the recessed central portion of the facade is treated similarly to the other street facades. The shorter windows at the second story have four-over-four double-hung wood sash while those at the third and fourth stories have eight-over-eight wood sash. The first story of the facade is a blank wall (behind which is the auditorium stage); the lower portion of this facade has been painted brown. The original cast-iron fence remains in place in front of the recessed central bays.

The visible rear and court elevations are sheathed in yellow brick. The design of the rear wall of the Boston Road classroom wing is an abstraction of the pier and window configuration of the main facades; single and paired windows with six-over-six double-hung wood sash in extremely shallow vertical bays are flanked by piers implied by the cresting which extends above the limestone-coped parapet. This pattern of pier cresting is extended above the blank west wall of the Boston Road wing. Elongated medallions enrich the upper walls of the auditorium wing where visible from the street. The horizontal parapet is coped with limestone.

#### Subsequent History

The Herman Ridder Junior High School now serves as an intermediate school (grades 6-8). It also enrolls adults in a model parent education program. The school has had a strong music and theatre arts program, and its graduates include Metropolitan Opera diva Regina Resnick and the actors Al Pacino and Hal Linden. The building exists in a remarkably intact condition; the few minor alterations to the street facades include the replacement of original doors and transoms and the loss of some exterior light fixtures.

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## NOTES

1. On August 11, 1981 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Herman Ridder Junior High School and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (LP-1250, Item No. 6). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four witnesses, including the principal of the school, spoke in favor of designation and the Commission received one letter in support of designation. In 1985 the Commission received two additional letters in favor of designation.
2. This section is based on information in LPC, Morris High School Historic District Designation Report; Price; and NYT, Mar. 23, 1932.
3. This section is based on information in the Bronx Department of Buildings New Building Application 70-1930; Board of Education, Annual Reports, Journal of the Board of Education, Report of the Committee to Survey Junior High Schools of the City of New York; Harrison and Dobbin; Price; Board of Estimate & Appropriations, Minutes; NYT, Jan. 12, 1928, June 7, 1928, Feb. 4, 1929, Sept. 3, 1929, Dec. 31, 1929, and Nov. 24, 1931.
4. In late 1927 and early 1928 plans were underway for the following Junior High Schools: Public Schools 96, 223, 227, and 228 in Brooklyn, Public School 142 in Queens, and Public School 164 in Manhattan. The designs of all of the schools in Brooklyn and Queens were modifications of the four-story, U-shaped "M-type" plan of elementary school. Journal of the Board of Education, 1927.
5. NYT, Sept. 3, 1929. The school is featured in the "Junior High" section of Harrison and Dobbin, and many of the unidentified photographs of junior high classrooms are of Herman Ridder Junior High School, upon comparison with photographs in the Department of Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University.
6. The school was built by the firm of Psaty & Fuhrman, Inc. The limestone was supplied by the Steinberg Cut-Stone Co., Inc. and the terra-cotta decorative features were supplied by the Conkling Armstrong Terra Cotta Co. of Philadelphia reported Architecture and Building.
7. Harrison and Dobbin, 2.
8. NYT, Sept. 3, 1929.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. All quotes in this paragraph are from the Superintendent of School's description of the design in the NYT, Sept. 3, 1929.

12. The use of single and paired windows in a school design seems to coincide with the use of the Georgian Revival style, and perhaps the introduction of better artificial lighting. Standards in the 1920s recommended window area to be 20 percent of the floor of the room, and as long as this ratio was met, a bank of windows was not required. The use of paired windows was an accepted alternative to the bank of windows in school design until the influence of the International style prompted the use of large expanses of windows.
13. NYT, Sept. 3, 1929.
14. The entrance tower in school design originated with the use of the French Second Empire style and first appeared in New York City on Public School 56, Manhattan, in 1868; see LPC, Public School 73, Brooklyn, Designation Report.
15. The first rendering of the school design, published in 1929 in the NYT and Architecture depicts the tower with a conical termination and tall, slender lamps at the set back, features that gave the tower a more emphatic vertical emphasis.
16. This section is based on NYT, June 7, 1928, June 16, 1928, May 11, 1938, May 19, 1938; Journal of the Board of Education, June 15, 1928, 1420. Martin was considered the architect of the school, though the Home News (Sept. 9, 1929) probably most accurately attributed the design to the labors of the 347 members of the architectural staff of the Board of Education. Others have attributed the design to Eric Kebbon, who succeeded Martin in 1938; no record of Kebbon's involvement with the design of Herman Ridder Junior High School has yet been documented.
17. In the panel between the second and third stories a boy and a girl in profile flank the lamp of knowledge above the inscription "In Knowledge there is Power,"; in the panel between the third and fourth stories a lyre is flanked by a male playing a horn and a female playing a lyre which illustrate "Music"; the panel between the fourth and fifth stories represents "Art" with a depiction of the Pantheon.
18. The material of these panels has not been determined. A description of the building refers to colored enamel tiles.
19. Hermann is misspelled in this carving. Ridder used the American spelling for Herman. This error was noticed after the opening of the school. NYT, Nov. 27, 1931.
20. All of the windows, except those on the tower, have replacement wood sash. Wire mesh screens have been placed over the windows on the first and second stories. The lower row of panes of some windows have been shortened for the insertion of vents; the regular pattern of this alteration suggests one vent per classroom.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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 Herman Ridder Junior High School has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Herman Ridder Junior High School, built in 1929-31, was the first thoroughly modernistic Art Deco design for a New York City public school; that, designed by the Board of Education's Bureau of Design and Construction under the supervision of the Superintendent of School Buildings, Walter C. Martin, it was the first junior high school to depart in design from a modification of a standard elementary school plan and was built as one of the first junior high schools erected in a program initiated in 1927; that the striking design of the school is representative of the initial phase of American academic modernism in which the Art Deco style influenced complex, plan-generated massing and an emphasis on the expression of structure in addition to ornamentation; that the design of the school draws on the popular Art Deco elements of contemporary commercial and industrial buildings, including the pier and window treatment of the facades, the use of vertical entrance pavilions, a lively roofline with cresting and pedimented parapets jutting above the main parapet level, and ornament placed in bands and panels at spandrel and parapet locations; that the design of the entrance tower, modeled similarly to a New York City skyscraper with set-back upper stories, is an inventive interpretation of the traditional school building entrance tower; that the ornamentation of the school building features an unusually extensive iconographic program which incorporates panels with many traditional academic symbols and exceptional modernistic sculptural figures on the tower; and that Herman Ridder Junior High School, a model junior high school building with an arresting appearance, exemplifies the union of modernistic trends in architecture and the progressive educational ideals of the New York City Board of Education in the late 1920s, and serves as a civic monument symbolizing educational excellence.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21), 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 the Herman Ridder Junior High School, Borough of the Bronx, and designates Tax Map Block 2939, Lot 93, Borough of the Bronx, as its Landmark Site.

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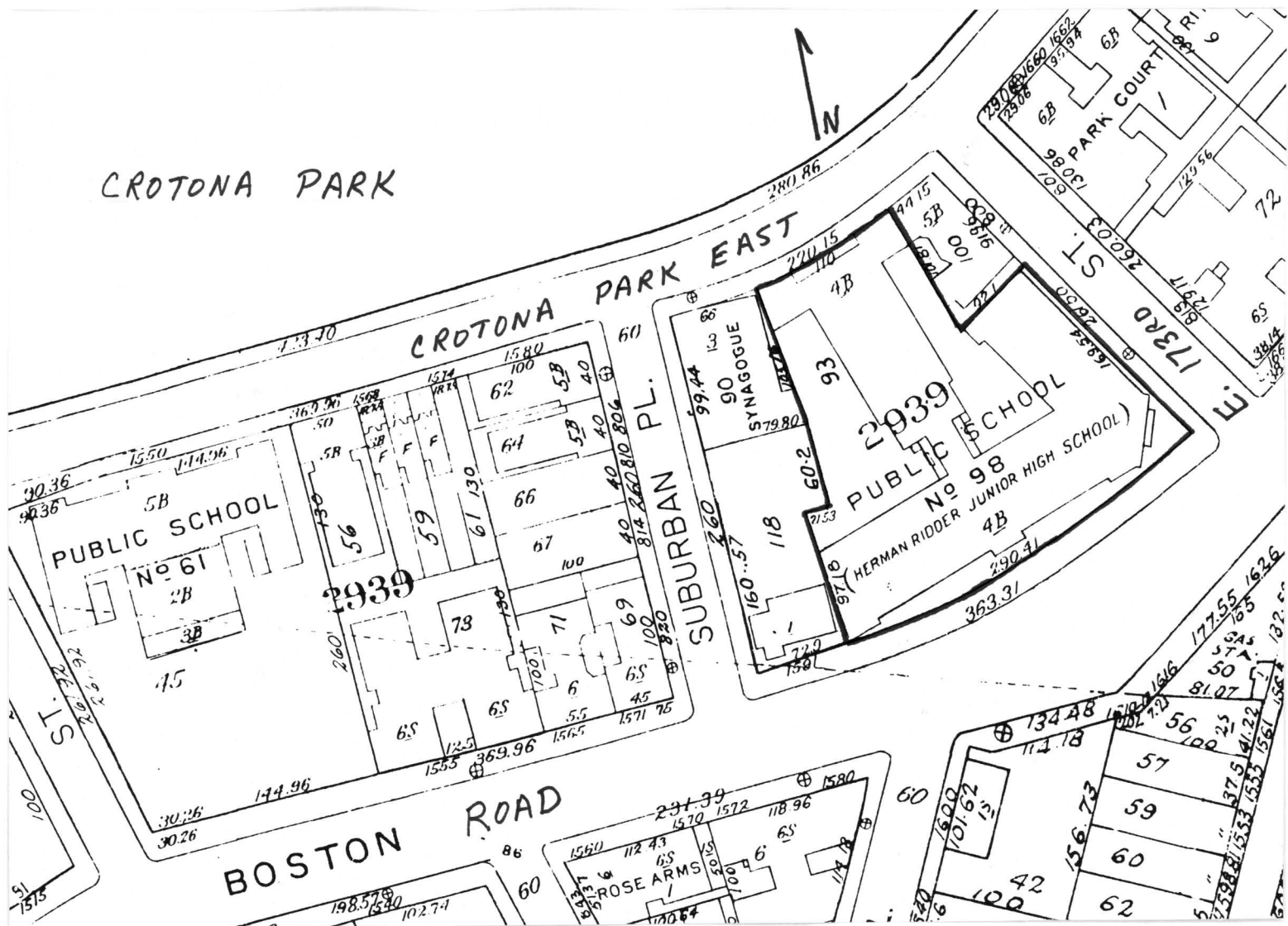
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Herman Ridder Junior High School Landmark Site, the Bronx.  
Block 2939, lot 93.

Graphic Source: Real Estate Atlas of New York, Bronx Land Book  
1983 Edition



Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
1932

Photo credit: Department of Special Collections, Milbank  
Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University.



Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
Boston Road facade. Photo credit: Carl Forster



Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
East 173rd Street facade.

Photo credit: Carl Forster





Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
Crotona Park East facade.

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Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
Entrance tower at Boston Road and East 173rd Street.

Photo credit: Carl Forster



Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
Entrance tower termination. Photo credit: Carl Forster





Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
Classroom wing detail, Boston Road facade. Photo credit: Carl Forster



Herman Ridder Junior High School, 1619 Boston Road, the Bronx. 1929-31.  
Board of Education, Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings.  
Auditorium entrance, Boston Road facade. Photo credit: Carl Forster