

BROOKLYN TRUST COMPANY (now Chemical Bank) **BUILDING, first floor interior**, consisting of the Montague Street and Pierrepont Street entrance vestibules and elevator alcoves; the banking hall; and the stairwell and staircase leading to the basement vault area; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces; floor surfaces; windows; doors; chandeliers and lighting fixtures; railings; tellers' counters; decorative metalwork; and attached furnishings and decorative elements; 177-179 Montague Street and 134-138 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn. Built 1913-16; architects York & Sawyer.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 244, Lot 17.

On June 15, 1993, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Brooklyn Trust Company (now Chemical Bank) Building, first floor interior, with the spaces and features listed above, and the proposed designation of the related landmark site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. A representative of the owner expressed uncertainty about the proposed designation, and requested that the hearing be continued to a later date. The hearing was continued on September 21, 1993 (Item No. 2). A total of two witnesses, including a representative of the Brooklyn Heights Association, spoke in favor of designation at the two public hearings. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

Summary

The Brooklyn Trust Company building (now a branch of Chemical Bank), designed by the prominent firm of York & Sawyer, a talented, prolific, and versatile team, was constructed in 1913-16 in a style modeled closely after the *palazzi* of the sixteenth-century Italian High Renaissance. The design of the interior banking hall, a single-



vaulted space, also recalls ancient baths and basilicas as well as Italian Renaissance churches. This interior, gracefully adapted to the imagery and functions of American banking in the early twentieth century, continues to project an image of tradition, stability, and security. Although relatively small, the interior is monumentally scaled and beautifully proportioned, executed by superb craftsmen, in fine materials.

The Brooklyn Trust Company played an important historic role in Brooklyn, from its founding during the aftermath of the Civil War until its consolidation with larger banks beginning in the mid-twentieth century. Its founders, subsequent trustees, and administrators were notable Brooklynites, committed not only to fiduciary but also to community responsibility. Today, the largely-intact interior is a reminder of the importance of the institution in the Brooklyn community. Alterations in response to changing banking procedures and services have been carried out with respect for the original fabric and design.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

History of the Site¹

In the early nineteenth century, the site of the Brooklyn Trust Company building on Montague Street between Court and Clinton Streets, was part of the estate of Hezekiah B. Pierrepont, one of the original developers of Brooklyn Heights as an elegant residential community.² The street was named for a Pierrepont cousin, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (sic), an English author; the lots on the new block were sold by Pierrepont's heirs and in the 1850s the first buildings were erected, among them a mansion for George Taylor.

The completion of Brooklyn's new City Hall in 1849 set the stage for the development of Montague Street between Court and Clinton -- with the residential community of Brooklyn Heights to the west, and the civic center, later Downtown Brooklyn, to the east. Three major cultural institutions decided to erect buildings on this relatively undeveloped Montague Street block: the Brooklyn Academy of Music (Leopold Eidlitz, 1860) and the Brooklyn Art Association (J.C. Cady, 1872) on the south side; and the Mercantile Library (P.B. Wight, 1869) on the north. As early as 1857, the Mechanics Bank had erected a building at the corner of Montague and Fulton (now Cadman Plaza West) Streets. Banks, law firms, title insurance and real estates companies clustered around City Hall. In 1873, the Brooklyn Trust Company converted the Taylor mansion on Montague Street as its headquarters.

History of the Brooklyn Trust Company³

The Brooklyn Trust Company was founded on April 14, 1866, by a New York State Legislative Charter. In the wake of the Civil War, banking throughout the country was in a state of chaos, and measures such as the 1865 Congressional Banking Act were intended to stabilize the national economy. The Brooklyn Trust Company was established "in a response to an urgent demand in Brooklyn for a strong banking institution which should act as executor or trustee" (a novelty in those days).⁴ Presumably this "urgent demand" was the tragic result of war casualties and the many widows and children who found themselves in need of financial guidance. The founders of the bank were highly prominent and socially responsible Brooklynites -- not only trustees, but also trustworthy members of the community.⁵ As the Brooklyn Trust Company grew over the years, it was known for its

conservative investments, and while offering its clients the full services of a commercial bank, it apparently continued to specialize in estate and trust management.⁶

The new bank opened for business in June of 1868, with Ethelbert S. Mills as president. Records of its earliest years reflect a sound investment and return policy. The Brooklyn Trust Company first leased offices at the corner of Court and Joralemon Streets. In 1873 the bank purchased its present corner site on Montague. At the time, 177 Montague Street was occupied by the large mansard-roofed house with gardens, dating from the 1850s, built for George Taylor, a New York lawyer and U.S. Congressman. Converted and gradually enlarged, it was to be the bank's headquarters for forty years. With the Panic of 1873, President Mills apparently believed the bank in danger of collapse, and although never publicly accused of mismanagement, he committed suicide.⁷ After two months of inquiries and investigations, the bank proved solvent, and Ripley Ropes was elected Mill's successor.⁸ From this time forward the Brooklyn Trust Company enjoyed steady growth and an ever-increasing reputation. By 1890 it could be characterized as "unquestionably the leading financial corporation of this city."⁹

After Ropes' presidency, the Brooklyn Trust Company was headed by Christian S. Christensen from 1890 to 1900 and by Theodore S. Miller from 1900 to 1913. In the summer of 1913 Edwin P. Maynard succeeded him. The first two branches of many to come were opened, one at Bedford Avenue and Fulton Street (1903), the other in Manhattan's financial district, at Wall Street and Broadway (1907). In January of 1913 the Long Island Loan and Trust Company merged with the Brooklyn Trust. By this time the bank's capital had increased from the original \$150,000 to \$1,500,000.

The block of Montague Street on which Brooklyn Trust was located had become increasingly commercial. The nine-story Real Estate Exchange (altered) had been built in 1890 at 189-191 Montague. When use of the Art Association building declined, its lower floors were leased to the Peoples Trust Company bank (from 1891). In 1896, the Mechanics Bank erected a new ten-story office building on its original site. The site of the Brooklyn Academy of Music was redeveloped by banking and title companies, including the ten-story Lawyers Title Insurance Company building (Helmle,

Huberty & Hudswell, extent), 188-190 Montague. Interspersed with these new tall office buildings were a series of low, predominantly two- or three-story neo-classical bank and insurance company buildings, constructed in the early 1900s.

It was against this backdrop that the officers of the Brooklyn Trust Company decided in 1913 to demolish their old headquarters and erect a new and larger, up-to-date building. They acquired the property of the Brooklyn Club, behind and to the north, thus consolidating a site along the entire Clinton Street blockfront, between Montague and Pierrepont Streets. Construction of the new building was carried on in two separate campaigns, beginning at the north. While the headquarters in the old Taylor mansion remained open for business, the Brooklyn Club building was razed, and the new section of the building completed in the late summer of 1915. The bank then switched its operations to the new portion of the building, while the second, Montague Street section was built on the site of the old headquarters. The entire new structure was officially opened in September of 1916.¹⁰ The design, with two imposing entrances, north and south, seems to reflect its position in the Brooklyn banking community of the time -- one door leading to the residential community of private clients in Brooklyn Heights, the other directed to the financial and public center of Downtown Brooklyn.

Bank Buildings and Architectural Imagery¹¹

In the years following the Civil War, when New York's banks were proliferating at a rapid rate, the majority of banking institutions catering to private clients -- such as savings and trust companies -- were housed in converted residences or office buildings, rather than in buildings designed specifically for their needs. Corner sites were considered convenient, relatively conspicuous, and thus desirable. The converted Taylor mansion fit this pattern. The building was substantial, reassuring, convenient yet discreet; its architectural style did not proclaim its function.¹²

Some twenty years later, a new trend in bank design for savings and trust companies began to emerge. Volatile economic conditions led bank officers to feel a need to reassure private investors of their bank's stability and security. One way of reinforcing confidence was through a strong public image; this could be accomplished through architecture -- a physical, tangible statement of fiduciary strength -- the bank building as a "modern

strongbox." Appropriate, historic architectural styles served to enhance the image. This attitude toward the architecture of banking was in step with two major architectural currents of the time -- the City Beautiful movement and Academic Classicism -- both of which had arisen in the wake of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. One of the first truly grand neo-classical banks spawned by these movements was the Bowery Savings Bank (1894, McKim, Mead & White). (Its construction was supervised by one of the architects of the Brooklyn Trust Company building, Edward York). The design, with a colossal Corinthian order and a pedimented temple front recalled ancient Roman precedents. Bank design of the period made intentional allusions to Roman temples and also to Greek treasury buildings. They may also have been designed with reference to older, long-established American banks, whose buildings of the early nineteenth century were designed in the Greek Revival style. This Greco-Roman neo-classical style for banks was to remain predominant for the following three decades. The architects of the Brooklyn Trust Company employed variants of the neo-classical style for the majority of their many banking commissions, beginning with the temple-fronted Franklin Savings Bank of 1899.

York & Sawyer, Architects¹³

York & Sawyer was one of the most prominent and prolific New York architectural firms during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Designing in the Academic Classic tradition, they specialized in educational institutions, hospitals, office buildings, and most importantly bank buildings, receiving approximately fifty such commissions during the architects' long association. With the death of Edward York in 1928, the "golden age" of the firm came to an end, although it continued to flourish and produce work of serious merit.

The York & Sawyer partnership was formed in 1898 by two men who had both enjoyed an education and apprenticeship that would have been envied by virtually any aspiring American architect of the later nineteenth century. Edward Palmer York (1865-1928) first studied architecture at Cornell University and in 1890 entered the offices of the prestigious firm, McKim, Mead & White, serving as assistant to the most flamboyant, and most talented partner, Stanford White. Philip Sawyer (1868-1949) first trained in civil engineering

and then attended Columbia University's Architectural School. He then worked briefly, in 1891, for McKim, Mead & White (when he must have first encountered his future partner) and then headed off to Paris to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts -- at the time considered an essential experience for any young architect who could possibly afford it. He traveled on the Continent, studying and sketching architectural monuments, especially those of classical antiquity. By 1894, he had returned to New York and rejoined McKim, Mead & White.

At this time, McKim, Mead & White was at its zenith. Having just participated in the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, they had become the most famous and most influential proponents of the Classical Revival style -- termed by many later architectural writers and historians the Academic Classic style. Sawyer was later to assess his training at McKim, Mead & White in the 1890s as the best in America, in terms of planning, design and construction, experience and criticism. Sawyer worked at a drafting table; York, at a desk.¹⁴ Perhaps the two young men recognized that the division of duties which they had witnessed first-hand -- White tended to deal with design, Mead with client relations and project management -- was one that would serve them equally well. Certainly, they seem to have emulated these separate roles when they embarked on their own partnership in 1898. York was, in the broadest sense, the businessman; Sawyer, the designer; yet each seem to have contributed to the other's field of expertise.¹⁵

The commission for the Franklin Savings Bank (1899, West 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue, demolished) inaugurated the firm's long association with bank design. York may have used friendly influence and contacts from his days at McKim, Mead & White to garner the firm's initial bank commissions. For example, Governor Levi P. Morton, who recommended the firm to the Franklin Savings Bank, was a client of McKim, Mead & White. By 1909 Sawyer had been appointed an architectural consultant to the U.S. Treasury Department, and supervised the rebuilding of the Treasury in Washington, D.C., as well as the construction of subtreasuries in other cities. In 1911 he was sent to Europe by the department with letters of introduction to bank officers at the federal banks of England, Italy, and Germany in order to study their methods of handling and storing money. By this time the firm had designed a number of banks.¹⁶ Such credentials could hardly have failed to impress

the Brooklyn Trust Company's officers.

York & Sawyer were experts of Academic Classicism, the favored style for banks. As Henry Hope Reed, a longtime champion of the style has noted, the firm had an "unusual grasp of the monumental," "the striking visual effect," and the handling of rustication -- qualities all fully realized in the Brooklyn Trust Company.¹⁷

Design of the Brooklyn Trust Company Building

In 1913, when the officers of the Brooklyn Trust Company commissioned York & Sawyer to replace their outmoded building with new headquarters, the architects evidently suggested a building modeled after an Italian High Renaissance *palazzo*. The style, the building type, and the architectural symbolism were all appropriate to a bank building; the prosperity and artistic wealth of the Italian Renaissance was to a large extent based on huge banking fortunes -- the Florentine house of the Medici perhaps the best known -- and many great banks were housed in *palazzi*. Verona was another Italian city of great financial and commercial prosperity during the Renaissance, and it was to the architecture of the High Renaissance Veronese architect Michele Sanmicheli (1484/5-1559) that York & Sawyer turned for inspiration.¹⁸

Sanmicheli's use of rusticated stone, especially in city gates and *palazzi*, may have been of special interest to Sawyer -- he himself was to be characterized as a "master of rustication" -- and such buildings as the Palazzo Bevilacqua may have been influential. Another prototype for the Brooklyn Trust Company building is Palazzo della Gran Guardia in Verona; the Clinton Street elevation of the bank bears the greatest similarity.¹⁹

The interior banking hall of the Brooklyn Trust Company seems to rely on somewhat more diversified neo-classical sources. Historians have compared its monumentally-scaled, single-vaulted space with not only ancient Roman baths and basilicas, but also with Italian Renaissance church interiors.²⁰ Yet the interior and exterior of the Brooklyn Trust Company, even if relying on separate historic precedents, create an entirely harmonious whole. In the hands of such versatile and talented architects as York and Sawyer, the Academic Classic style is not merely a regrouping of historic, stylistic, and symbolic references, but also an entirely contemporary expression -- the Brooklyn Trust Company building is a quintessential image of its place, its time, and its function.

Description of the Brooklyn Trust Company Interior¹

Banking Hall (Fig. 1)

The banking hall of the Brooklyn Trust Company building is a monumentally scaled, although relatively small and narrow, vaulted rectangular room. Symmetrically disposed, clearly organized, and richly detailed, its spatial organization and stylistic vocabulary evoke a sense of security and serenity, pride and tradition. A design based on Academic Classic principles, the banking hall is clearly indebted to the architecture of the Italian High Renaissance.

The vaulted banking hall is seven bays in length (from south to north) with single entrances at the north and south ends. Monochrome walls revetted with burnished yellow-beige marble harmonize with the polychromy of the elaborately coffered ceiling and the intricate marble mosaic floor. Fine materials and craftsmanship abound.

West and east elevations. Seven large double-height arched windows (mullioned, and containing 61 panes per window) are centered in each bay of the Clinton Street (west) elevation. On the opposite (east) elevation, these windows are mirrored by six blind arches and a round-arched window at the center bay. On both elevations, the blind arches and windows are flanked by smooth-rusticated pilasters on shallow piers, capped by a cornice of classical acanthus and running-dog motifs. A continuous frieze (interrupted by the piers and doorways) encircles the banking hall just beneath the windows. This cast frieze repeats a series of classical heads in profile, along with a bull, within circular medallions. They include the Roman goddess Minerva, the two-faced god Janus, and Alexander the Great -- these subjects being the most easily identified; all seem to be adapted from ancient coins -- fitting symbolism for a bank building. These medallions alternate with classical urns and acanthus rinceaux, flanked by serpent-tailed mythological monsters.

At the center bay of the Clinton Street elevation, a U-shaped marble stairwell (Fig. 2) leads downstairs to the safety deposit vaults of the bank.

¹Significant features in this interior space are underscored as specified in the proposed Rules for Designated Bank Interiors (Public Hearing June 18, 1996). "Significant features" are defined in Section 9-02 of the Rules.

The staircase, with two landings, has a simple balustrade and handrail of polished, veined marble; the walls of the stairwell are revetted in marble, and the stone floors have narrow geometric borders. At the corresponding center bay of the east elevation is a doorway, (Fig. 3) with a polished marble enframing surmounted by a curved pediment with a central beribboned cartouche, and a door of paneled wood with carved rosettes. A similar doorway is located in the fifth bay to the north. (Two simple doorways leading to offices are located in the sixth and seventh bays). Paneled marble tellers' counters are located in front of these elevations. (The inner surfaces of the counters are not subject to this designation.)

Montague Street (south) elevation. The main entrance (Fig. 4) to the banking room is located on this elevation. The revetted marble walls with smooth-rusticated pilasters on shallow piers at each corner support a broad, arched architrave, infilled with octagonal coffers and trapezoidal panels. A circular bronze open-work clock is centered above the entrance doorway. The double-height doorway is surrounded by a finely crafted frame. The broad molding of the doorframe is a delicate, cast relief of flowers, leaves and vines, along with classical urns, birds and mythological creatures, ox skulls and cornucopia -- an ancient Roman vocabulary of ornament, revived during the Renaissance. Capped by a Renaissance-style shield, and surrounded with classically-inspired cornices, the doorway is surmounted by a rectangular relief panel, inscribed in Roman lettering, "COMMERCE DEFIES EVERY WIND, OUTRIDES EVERY TEMPEST AND INVADES EVERY ZONE." This inscription is flanked by reliefs of nude classical youths, holding cornucopia and shallow bowls, and surmounted by winged lions to each side of a classical urn. The doorway has a bronze and glass single-height modern revolving door with an original bronze and glass transom above.

Pierrepont Street (north) elevation. This elevation is almost a mirror image of the Montague Street elevation, with a few noteworthy differences. In the panel above the doorway, the inscription proclaims, "SOCIETY IS BUILT UPON TRUST AND TRUST UPON CONFIDENCE IN ONE ANOTHER'S INTEGRITY." Two steps lead to single-height double doors in the original enframing. These doors are also set below a bronze and glass transom.

Ceiling. The vaulted ceiling of the banking hall is an elaborate design, polychromatic and finely detailed.²¹ Executed in plaster relief, the ceiling is painted in warm tones of gold, beige, green, and blue. Borders of elaborate floral relief surround rows of octagonal coffers interspersed with small lozenges. (Fig. 5) (The coffers number 52 per row, north to south, and twelve per row from the springing of the vault, east to west. The fourth rows from the springing of the vault contain small non-historic recessed lights.) Parabolic lunettes (Fig. 6) surmount the arches at each bay and contain ornate oval metal ventilator grilles. At the center of the second, middle and sixth bays, large circular medallions with an elaborated Greek key border and a central floral pattern of gold leaves appear. Large chandeliers are suspended from them. (Fig. 7) Distinctive and handsome in design, these chandeliers are circular in shape and executed in open-work bronze, with five tiers of small light bulbs. The central tier of the design contains a frieze of caryatids in classical drapery separated by crossed struts. These figures not only support the weight above with their heads -- the typical caryatid function -- but also employ raised arms. The other tiers are composed of foliate brackets.

Floor. (Fig. 8) The polychromatic marble mosaic floor is geometrically patterned and divided into seven major sections, reflecting the seven bays of the east-west elevations. Executed in green, porphyry, light beige, and gray marble and stone, the style is known as Cosmato work. Small tesserae are used to form an intricate variety of rectangular and curving borders, some enframing large circular paving stones.

Attached furnishings. Originally, three very fine bronze and glass customer-service writing tables, (Fig. 8) neo-classical in design, complemented the chandeliers. One survives, presently located at the center bay. The eight cabriolet legs reinforced by crossed struts are the most distinctive elements of this beautifully crafted table. Caryatids surmount thin animal-shaped legs and clawed feet, a stylistic conceit which derives from ancient furniture.

Montague Street entrance vestibule and elevator alcove (Fig. 9)

The Montague Street entrance vestibule, a small room, has walls of revetted polished light gray marble with chamfered corners. On the east and

west walls are identical rectangular relief panels; a beribboned shield with an eagle in profile (Fig. 10) is flanked by garlands with suspended bunches of fruit and leaves.²² Four metal ventilator grilles appear beneath the relief panel of the west wall. The polychromatic plaster relief ceiling (Fig. 11) is dominated by a single large circular medallion with anthemion, and surrounded by a rectangular Greek key border. At the four corners are pairs of serpent-tailed monsters. Suspended from a central gold rosette is a fine hexagonal bronze and glass chandelier. The floor continues the cosmato mosaic of the banking hall. An alcove at the east contains modern elevator doors, and a bronze and glass door leading to a stairwell. A pedimented bronze directory box and a bronze letter box are mounted on the walls.

Pierrepont Street entrance vestibule and elevator alcove

The Pierrepont Street entrance vestibule and elevator alcove are almost mirror images of the Montague Street entrance vestibule and elevator alcove with similar detail on the walls, ceiling, and floor. (This vestibule does not have a letter box.)

Alterations

Although the interior of the Brooklyn Trust Company building is remarkably intact and very well-maintained, certain alterations have been made over the years to accommodate inevitable changes in banking procedures and services. The most significant changes have been made to the tellers' counters, which were originally surmounted by bronze cages. These were replaced in 1994 by plexiglass and wood partitions. The counters once located at the south end of the building have been removed and replaced at the southwest by a unobtrusive bank of automatic teller machines (ATMs). At the southeast, a grouping of glass and wood partitions now provides counter and office space for bank employees. A marble balustrade (like that at the northwest corner of the building) originally enclosed an area on the east wall opposite the stairwell. Other unobtrusive alterations have been made throughout the interior, including additional ventilator grilles, marble planters, and an alarm system panel. These alterations have not compromised the interior's integrity; the physical fabric is essentially intact, and has been treated with sensitivity and respect.²³

Subsequent History

In the summer of 1913, Edwin P. Maynard became bank president.²⁴ Under his administration, the bank continued to flourish. The new Montague Street headquarters were constructed and branch offices in Bay Ridge and Flatbush opened. In 1927 Maynard became Chairman of the Board of Trustees and George L. McLaughlin was appointed president. They were to steer the bank through its period of greatest growth, not only in the final boom years of the late 1920s, but also those of the Great Depression. In 1929, the Mechanics Bank, one of Brooklyn's oldest and largest commercial banks, was consolidated with the Brooklyn Trust. Through further mergers during the 1930s, the bank acquired branches in Queens and Staten Island. In this period the bank had thirty-one branches throughout the city.²⁵ Under McLaughlin, who was a fan of the Brooklyn Dodgers, the bank, continuing its original

concern with estate management, handled the estates of all the baseball club's original owners.²⁶

The Brooklyn Trust Company, through further mergers and acquisitions, became an amalgamation of more than a dozen banking institutions, always retaining its preeminence and founding name. In 1950, a merger with Manufacturers Trust Company, a bank with its own old Brooklyn history, legally ended the separate existence of the Brooklyn Trust Company. In its turn, the Manufacturers Trust merged, in 1961, with the Hanover Bank, forming the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company. Thirty years later, this bank merged with Chemical Bank. The Chemical Bank of today is a descendant and heir to much of the banking history of New York.²⁷

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NOTES

1. This discussion is based on Anthony Robins, "Montague Street, Downtown Brooklyn," *Building Blocks of Brooklyn A Study of Urban Growth* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Rediscovery and The Brooklyn Educational Alliance, 1979), 29-62. See also LPC, *Dime Savings Bank Designation Report*, LP-1907 (New York: City of New York, 1994), prepared by David M. Breiner; Clay Lancaster, *Old Brooklyn Heights: New York's First Suburb* (New York: Dover Publications, 1979).
2. Pierrepont envisioned this development as a suburban enclave connected to Manhattan by the Fulton Ferry. See Robins, 31, and Henry R. Stiles, ed. *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, New York, from 1683 to 1884* (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co., 1884), 129. This link to Manhattan was further facilitated by the 1853 opening of the Wall Street ferry line at the west end of Montague Street.
3. This history is based on the following sources, some to be more specifically cited below. *Rambles About Historic Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Trust Co., 1916) foreword, and *Historic Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Trust Co., 1941) foreword, the second publication a revised edition of the first; Stiles; *New York Times*, articles from 1873 to 1967; *Brooklyn Trust Company Charter and by-laws* (Brooklyn, 1868); "The Story of Two Buildings; the Brooklyn Trust Company Building and its Original The Palazzo Gran Guardia" (c.1931), typescript, 4.
4. *Rambles and Historic Brooklyn*, v.
5. Many of the original incorporators of the Brooklyn Trust Company merited lengthy biographies in Stiles. Among them: Henry E. Pierrepont; respected scion of a prominent Brooklyn family, his life was "one of trusts." He was involved with the Brooklyn ferry system and deeply committed to the cultural life of his community. He served as president of the Academy of Music and the Brooklyn Club, and was a strong supporter and patron of the Art Association, Mercantile Library, and Long Island Historical Society. He was also a founder of Greenwood Cemetery. (Stiles, 443-444). J. Carson Brevoort; a serious naturalist, numismatist and bibliophile, he served as the first president of the Long Island Historical Society and donated much of his collections and library to the Society and the American Museum of Natural History. (Stiles, 1319-20). Daniel Chauncey; he was a builder who extended his interests to banking and insurance. When the Brooklyn Trust Company "got into trouble" in 1873 he acted with "strict honor...[and] unraveled affairs without compensation." (Stiles, 625-626). Jasper W. Gilbert; a

lawyer and judge on the State Supreme Court, he made some of the earliest rulings in favor of school integration. (Stiles, 1275). Alexander McCue; another respected lawyer and judge, he made seminal rulings on medical malpractice and abortion rights. Accused of wrong-doing in relation to the Brooklyn Trust Company during the Panic of 1873, he was later exonerated. (Stiles, 1234-1235 and *NYT*, July 22, 1873; 5:1). John T. Runcie; he began his career in the “segar business” and later expanded his interests to Brooklyn real estate, horse-drawn railways and ferries. (Stiles, 608). William Wall; from humble beginnings as a ropemaker, he rose to head an innovative cordage company, “the largest business of the kind in the country”, and served in the U.S. Congress during the Civil War. (Stiles, 719-20). James Weaver; beginning in the manufacture of window sash, and blinds, he became involved with Brooklyn real estate, banking and insurance. (Stiles, 846). Other members of the Board of Incorporators were Henry J. Cullen, Daniel F. Fernald, Wm. M. Harris, William B. Lewis, John H. Prentice, Cornelius J. Sprague, and Alfred M. Wood.

6. The Brooklyn Trust published pamphlets such as “Some useful information” of 1903, intended to inform clients about the bank’s capabilities and responsibilities in terms of estate and trust management.
7. “Death in the Surf A Prominent Brooklynite Drowned at Coney Island The Body Found,” *NYT*, July 16, 1873; 8:5; and July 21, 1873; 5:3.
8. According to the *NYT*, July 22, 1873; 5:1, Ropes was the first to bring the bank’s problems to public attention. He had begun his career as a “South American trader,” was active in independent Brooklyn politics and served on the State Board of Charities and Correction. He was to suffer a fatal heart attack at his desk at the Brooklyn Trust in 1890. (*NYT*, May 19, 1890; 5:2 (obit.))
9. *Industries and Wealth of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: American Publishing and Engraving Co., 1890), 89.
10. Samuel B. Moore, “The Brooklyn Trust Company. Half a Century’s Banking Success,” *Brooklyn Life*, Jan. 13, 1917, 12-13, 26, and Jan. 16, 1915, 31. See also typed annotations (1931) on verso of photograph, Director’s Office, Chemical Bank, 177 Montague Street. The Pierrepont Street site was first occupied in the 1840s by the Greenleaf Female Institute (illus. Moore, 26) which was taken over by the Brooklyn Club. See also *Atlas of the Borough of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: E. Belcher Hyde, 1903) v. 1.
11. This discussion is based in part on LPC, *Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company Building Designation Report*, LP-1633 (New York: City of New York, 1988), prepared by Elisa Urbanelli. See also Robert A.M. Stern, et al, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 177ff, and Robins, 55.
12. The building is illustrated in *Kings Views of Brooklyn* (New York: Moses King, 1905; Arno Press, rpt. 1980), 50.
13. This discussion is based in part on LPC, *Greenwich Savings Bank Designation Report*, LP-1767 (New York: City of New York, 1992), prepared by Charles Savage. For further bibliography see p. 8 of that report. See also LPC, “Architects’ Appendix,” *Upper West Side/ Central Park West Historic Designation District Report*, LP-1647 (New York: City of New York, 1990), and Henry Hope Reed, “York & Sawyer,” *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Free Press, 1982), vol. 4, 460-461.
14. Philip Sawyer, *Edward Palmer York (with a biographical sketch by Royal Cortissoz)*, (Stonington, Connecticut, 1951), 19, 23.
15. William Louis Ayres (1874-1947), another McKim, Mead & White “graduate” was invited to join York & Sawyer in 1901. A draftsman and designer, he was made partner in 1910, and played a long and important role in the firm. Another former McKim, Mead & White draftsman, Lindley Murray Franklin (1875-1960), also became a partner in 1910. His role in the firm is least documented. A fifth partner, Frederick Staples Benedict (1861-1936) was in charge of personnel and office management.
16. Among them, the Provident Savings Bank, Baltimore (1902); the National Commercial Bank, Albany (1903); the American Security and Trust, Washington, D.C. (1904); the Rochester Trust and Safe Deposit Company, Rochester (1905); and the Guaranty Trust Company, New York (1912).
17. Reed, 460-461. York & Sawyer were awarded commissions all over the United States and in Canada.

In New York a number of their buildings have been designated Landmarks, including the New-York Historical Society, the Federal Reserve Bank, the Central Savings Bank, and the Greenwich Savings Bank.

18. Otto Teegen, a draftsman with York & Sawyer, recalled in testimony before the Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1975, that Philp Sawyer used Sanmicheli as a favored source. See LPC, *Central Savings Bank, First Floor Interior, Designation Report*, LP-1804 (New York: City of New York, 1993), prepared by Charles Savage, 11. For Sanmicheli, see Douglas Lewis, "Sanmicheli," *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, vol. 3, 648-653.
19. Reed, 460-461. "The Story of Two Buildings"; Photograph of the Palazzo della Gran Guardia with type notes on verso (Director's office, Chemical Bank, 177 Montague). This *palazzo* has also been attributed to a follower of Sanmicheli. Another interesting, closer parallel can be made with a modern *palazzo*-style building which Sawyer could well have known through his travels, the San Carlo Opera House (1810-12) in Naples by Antonio Niccolini. It features a rusticated, arcuated base and a double-height colonnade at the *piano nobile*, with linked two-story fenestration. See H. R. Hitchcock, *Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 13, 54, pl 23B.
20. Lancaster, 63; Stern, 177-190.
21. This work is attributed to Elmer E. Garnsey whose work also appears in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and the New York Custom House. ("The Story of Two Buildings," typescript, 3). "Painting and decorating" are attributed to Charles Grimmer & Son (LPC files).
22. The eagle is, of course, a national symbol, associated with United States currency. Almost always depicted with outstretched wings -- symbolic of protection -- it is rare to see the eagle at rest. Perhaps here, at the doorway to the bank, the symbolism has more to do with the eagle's famed keen eyesight -- keeping a vigilant "eagle eye" on the bank's security.
23. The most extensive alterations were apparently undertaken in 1953, when the bank was a branch of the Manufacturers Trust Company. This program of "modernization and improvement" is described and illustrated in the *Annual Report* of 1953. It was at this time that the bronze tellers' cages and marble balustrades were removed. A photograph of around 1941 in *Historic Brooklyn*, illustrates the interior before renovation.
24. Maynard, a self-made man, was known at the time of his death as the Brooklyn Borough's "Man of Charity," especially involved with Liberty Loan drives during World War I, and the United Hospital Fund. Rising through the ranks of the Brooklyn Savings Bank, he was made president in 1912, but left to head the Brooklyn Trust. *NYT*, Nov. 11, 1949; 25:1 (obit.)
25. A Brooklyn branch office in Park Slope (Seventh Avenue and Carroll Street) was opened in 1930. It is of special interest because the new building on a corner site, although a more modest brick structure, was modelled in architectural terms after the Montague Street headquarters -- a clear example of "bank imagery" intended to reassure the bank's clientele. For a contemporary illustration, see *Brooklyn Life*, April 26, 1930, cover.
26. McLaughlin, son of a Brooklyn ferry boat captain, earned a law degree and served as City Police Commissioner and later Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, before his long and successful career in banking. *NYT*, Dec. 8, 1967; 42:1 (obit.)
27. "Growth of a Bank. A history of Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company," *Topics*, 3ff. (Manufacturers Hanover Trust, New York) September, 1962; "Manufacturers Hanover Trust Corporation" [a brief history and charts of merger history], Chemical Bank library archives. See also *NYT*, Jan. 18, 1961: 1:1 and Jan. 1, 1992; I: 47:4.
The author and the Landmarks Preservation Commission wish to thank the following Chemical Bank employees who facilitated access and provided information: Anthony Forte, vice president; Lew Pasquin, Mary Mannion, and Mark Shapiro.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Brooklyn Trust Company (now Chemical Bank) Building, first floor interior, has a special character, and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City, is customarily accessible to the public, and is thirty years old or more.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Brooklyn Trust Company Building (now a branch of Chemical Bank), was designed by the prominent firm of York & Sawyer, a talented, prolific, and versatile team; that it was constructed in 1913-16 in a style modeled closely after the *palazzi* of the sixteenth-century Italian High Renaissance; that the design of the interior banking hall, a single-vaulted space, also recalls ancient baths and basilicas as well as Italian Renaissance churches; that this interior, gracefully adapted to the imagery and functions of American banking in the early twentieth century, continues to project an image of tradition, stability, and security; that although relatively small, the interior is monumentally scaled and beautifully proportioned, with fine materials executed by superb craftsmen; that the Brooklyn Trust Company played an important historic role in Brooklyn, from its founding during the aftermath of the Civil War until its consolidation with larger banks beginning in the mid-twentieth century; that today, architecturally, the largely-intact interior is a reminder of the importance of the institution in the Brooklyn community; and that alterations in response to changing banking procedures and services have been carried out with respect for the original fabric and design.

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 an Interior Landmark the Brooklyn Trust Company (now Chemical Bank) Building, first floor interior, consisting of the Montague Street and Pierrepont Street entrance vestibules and elevator alcoves; the banking hall; and the stairwell and staircase leading to the basement vault area; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including but not limited to, wall and ceiling surfaces; floor surfaces; windows; doors; chandeliers and lighting fixtures; railings; tellers' counters; decorative metalwork; and attached furnishings and decorative elements; 177-179 Montague Street and 134-138 Pierrepont Street, Borough of Brooklyn, and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 244, Lot 17, as its Landmark Site.



Fig. 1, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Banking hall, view from the south
Photo: Carl Forster



Fig. 2, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street
U-shaped marble staircase, view from first landing
Photo: Carl Forster



Fig. 3, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Doorway, east elevation
Photo: Carl Forster

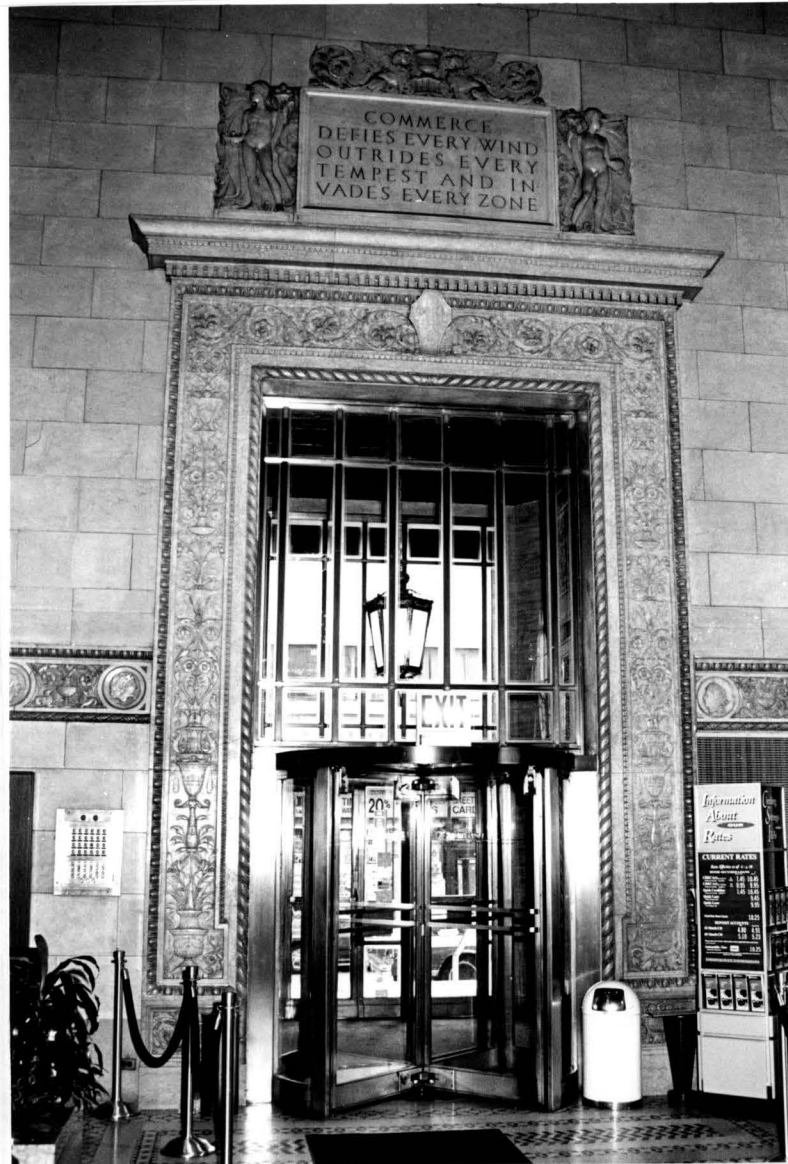


Fig. 4, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
View of south doorway from banking room
Photo: Carl Forster

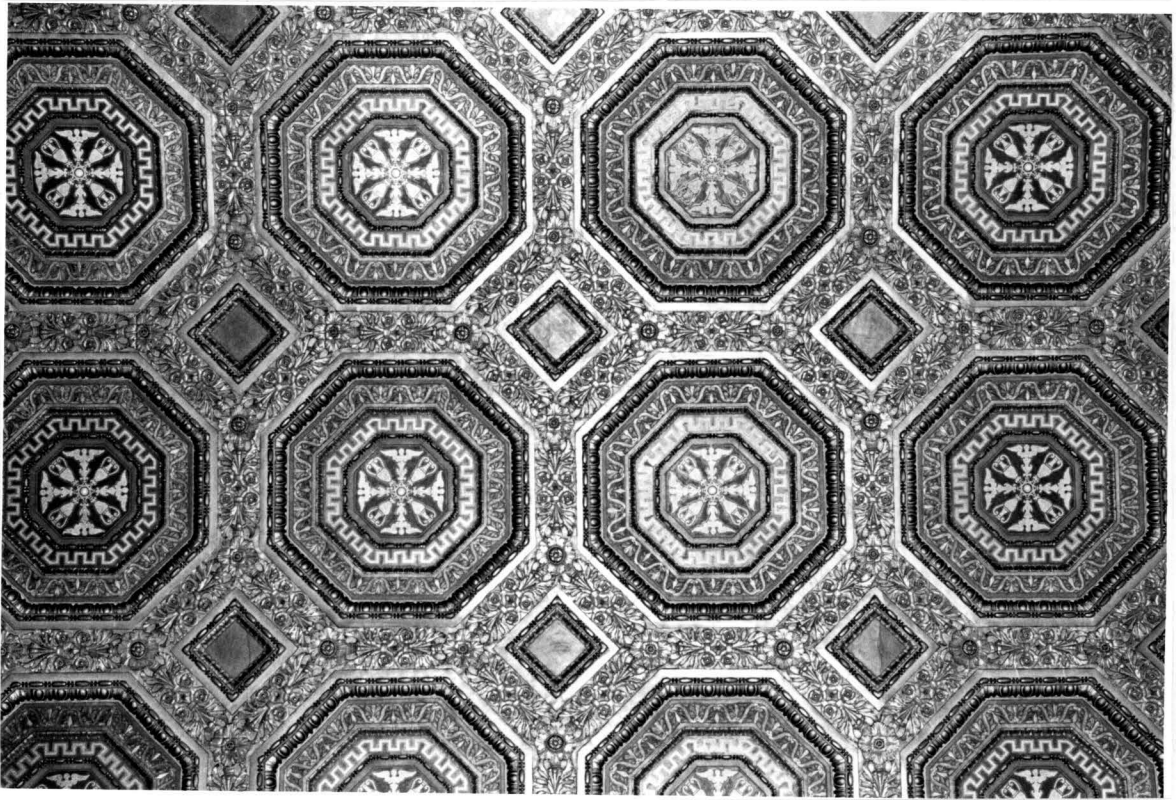


Fig. 5, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Detail of vaulted ceiling in banking room
Photo: Carl Forster

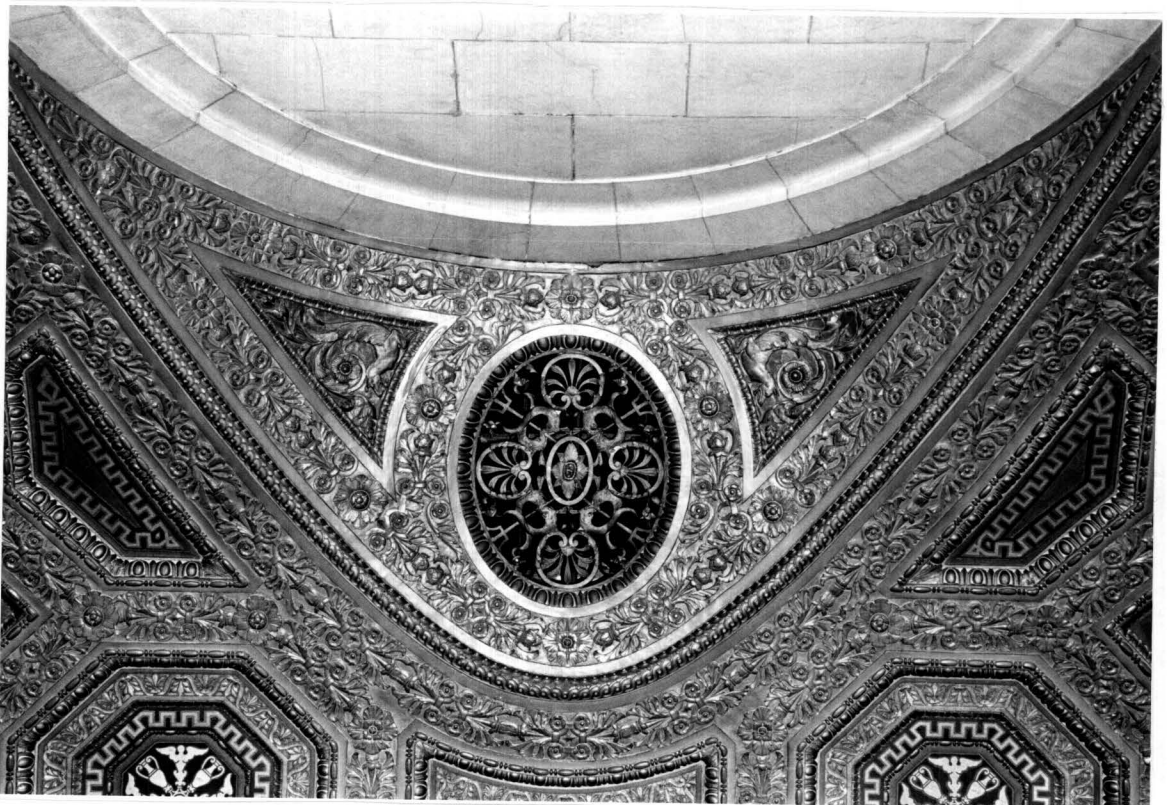


Fig. 6, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Detail of parabolic lunette and oval ventilator grille
Photo: Carl Forster



Fig. 7, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Bronze chandelier
Photo: Carl Forster

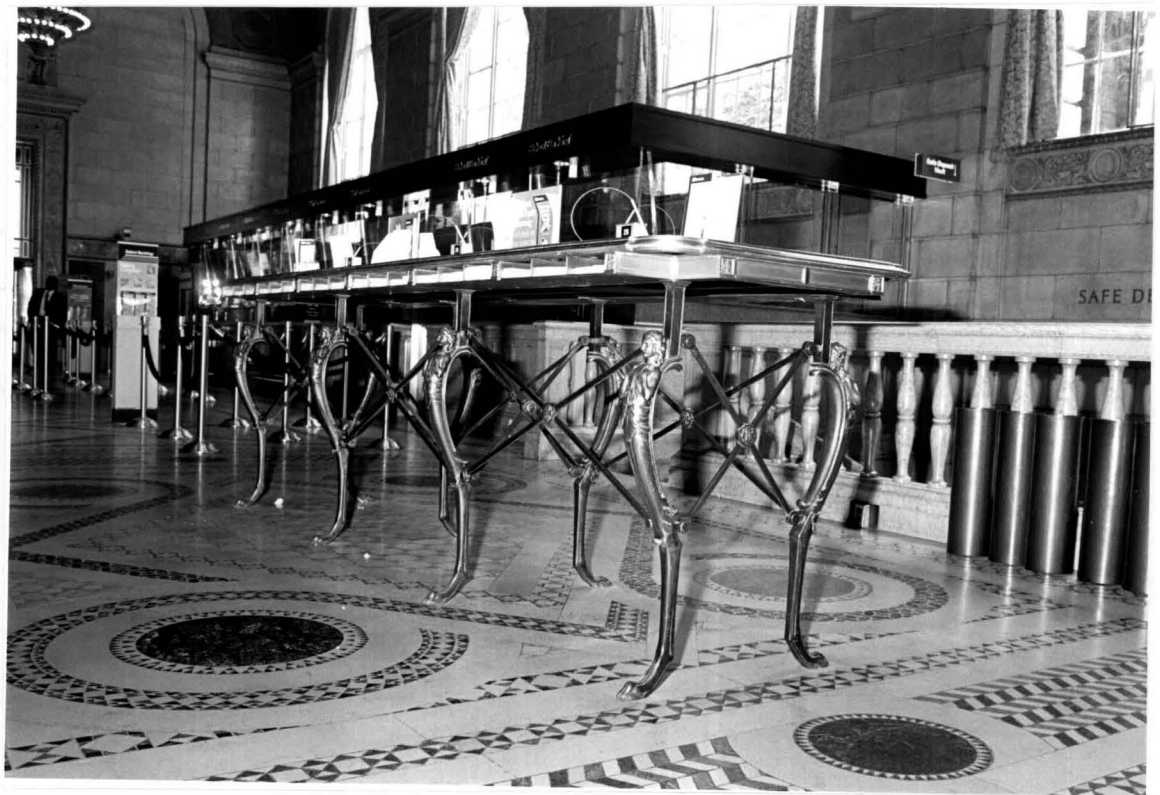


Fig. 8, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Marble mosaic floor and original bronze and glass customer-service writing table
Photo: Carl Forster



Fig. 9, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
 177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
 Montague Street elevator alcove
 Photo: Carl Forster



Fig. 10, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Detail of eagle in profile
Photo: Carl Forster

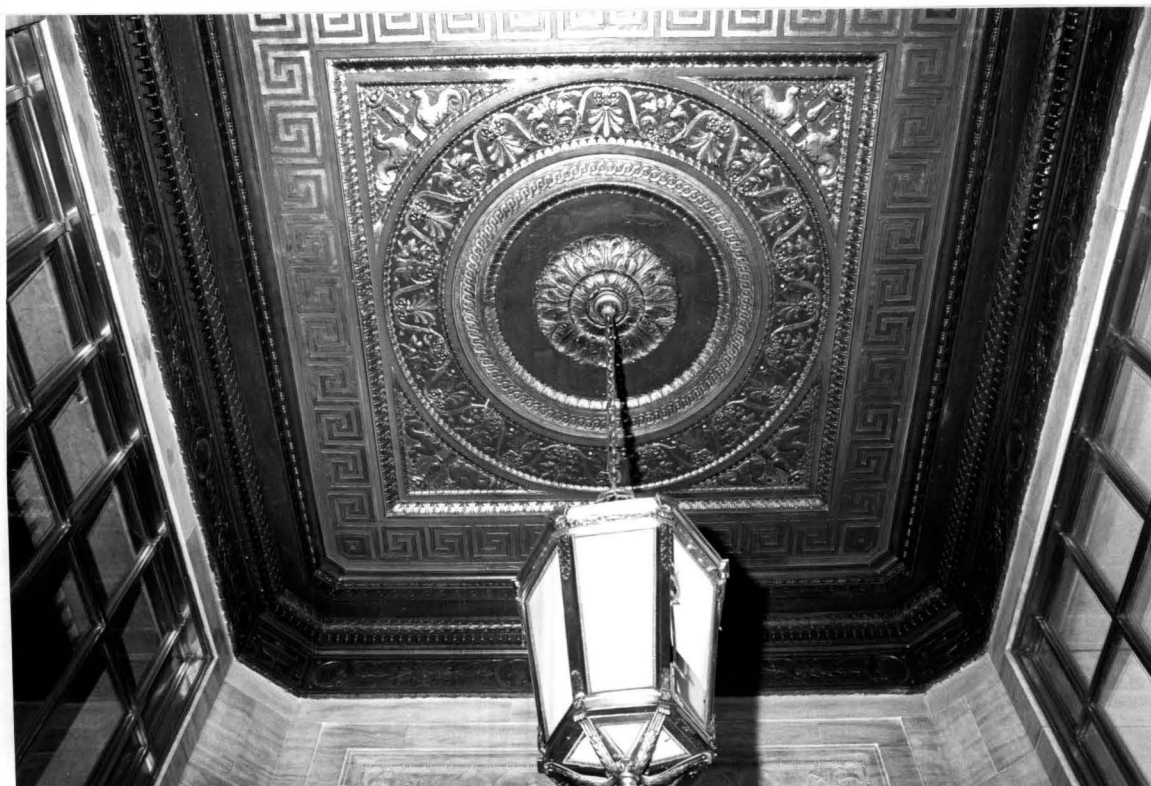
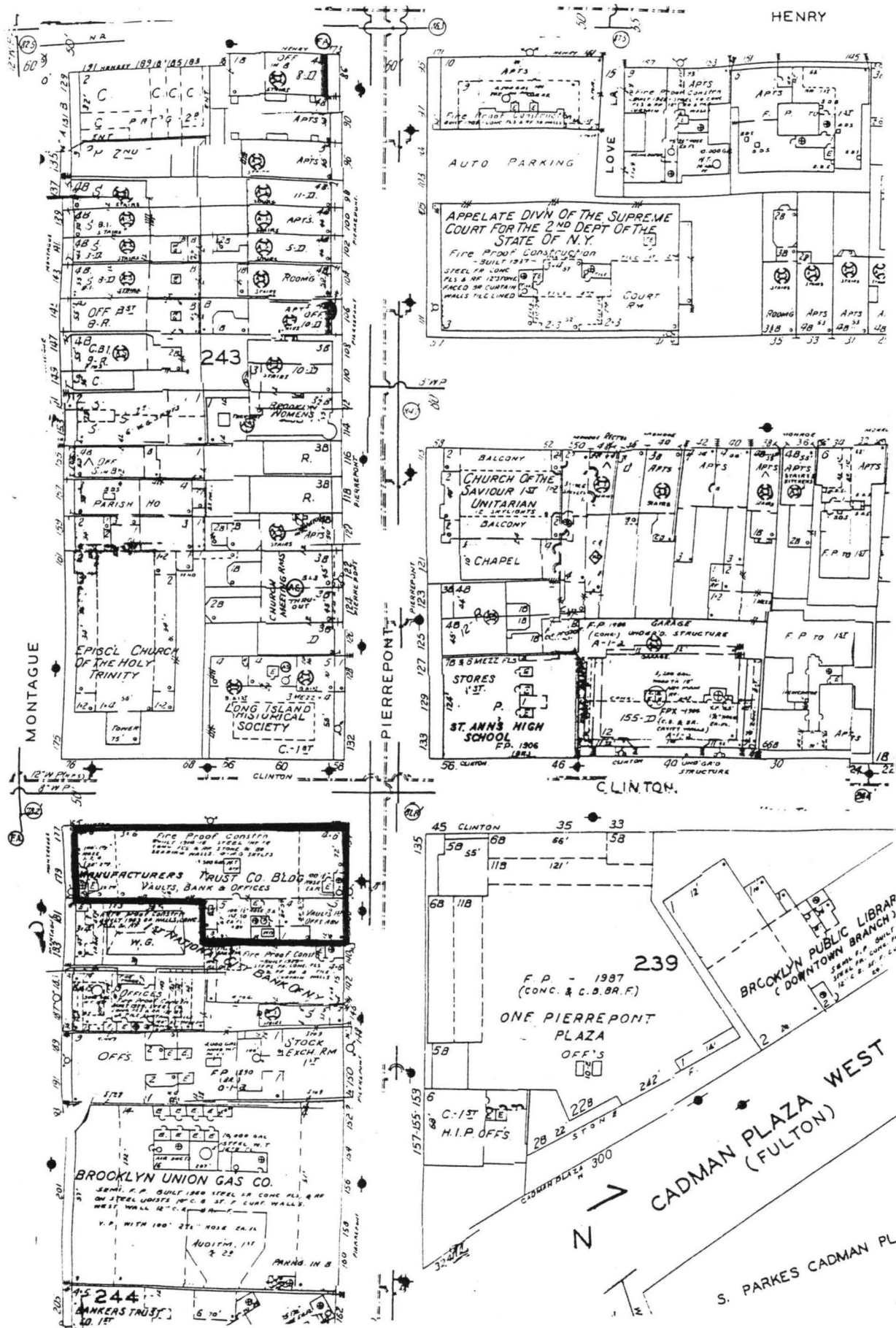
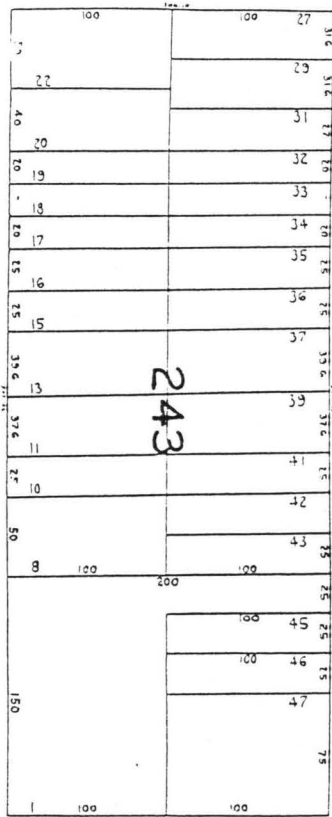


Fig. 11, Brooklyn Trust Company Building
177-179 Montague Street, Brooklyn
Ceiling of Montague Street vestibule
Photo: Carl Forster



Brooklyn Trust Company (now Chemical Bank) Building
 177-179 Montague Street and 134-138 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn
 Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 244, Lot 17
 Source: Sanborn Building and Property Atlas of Brooklyn, 1994, vol. 2, pl. 19

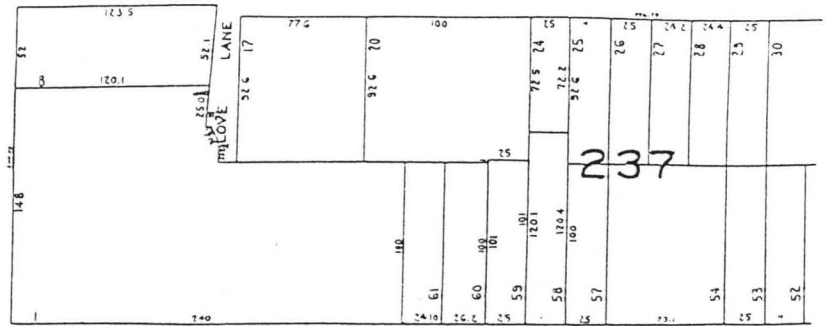
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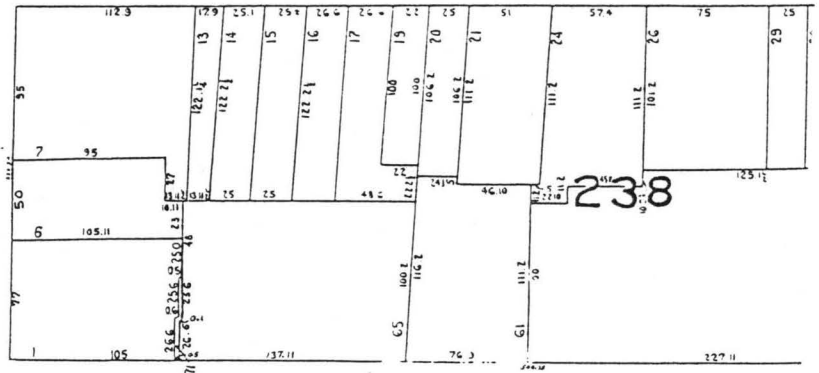
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PIERREPONT

HENRY

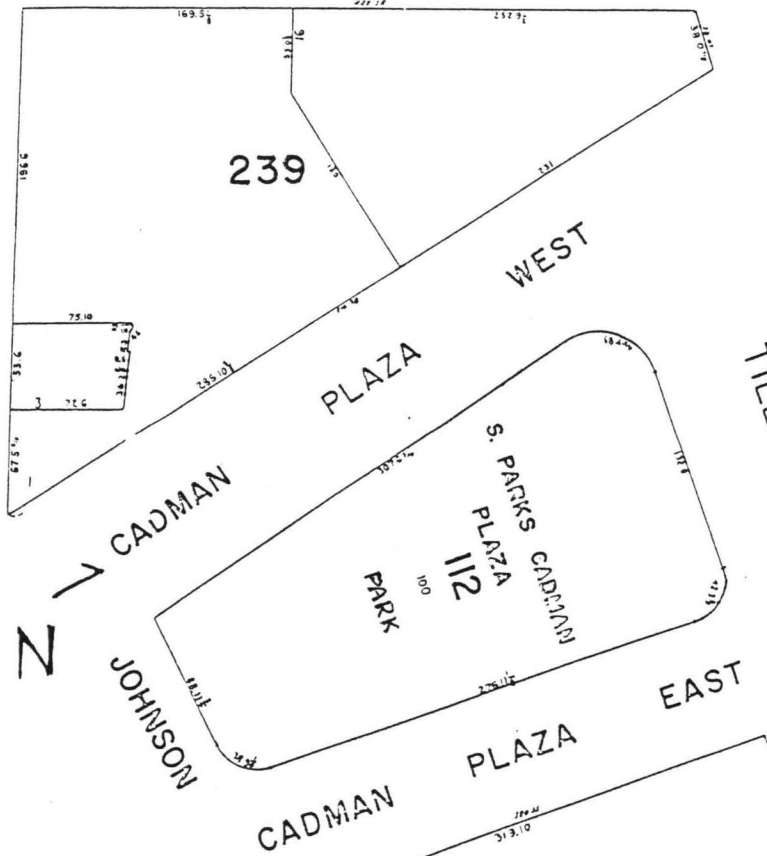
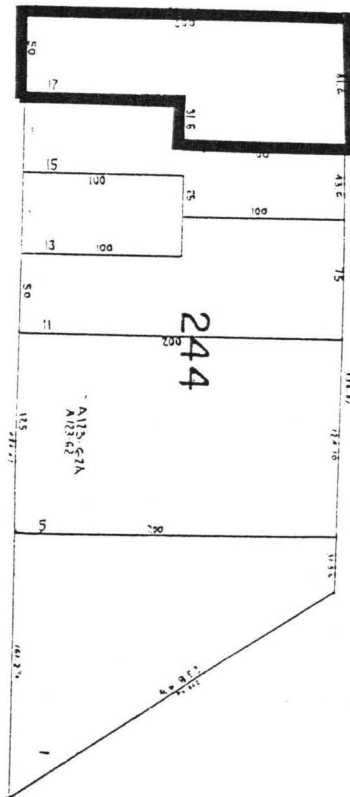


MONROE



CLINTON

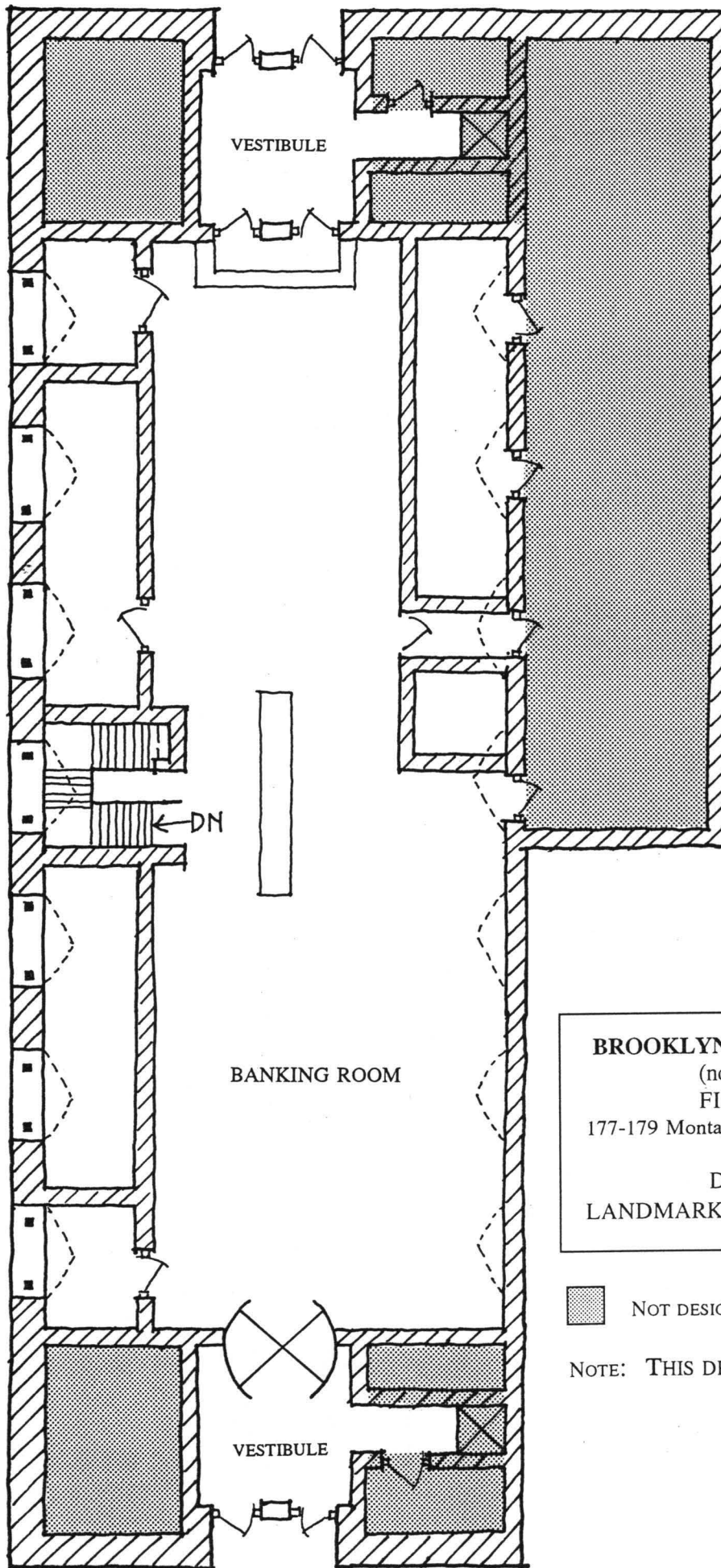
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Brooklyn Trust Company (now Chemical Bank) Building
177-179 Montague Street and 134-138 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn
Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 244, Lot 17
Source: Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map

PIERREPONT STREET

CLINTON STREET



BROOKLYN TRUST COMPANY BUILDING
(now **CHEMICAL BANK**)
FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR

177-179 Montague Street and 134-138 Pierrepont Street
BROOKLYN

Designated June 25, 1996

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION



NOT DESIGNATED AS INTERIOR LANDMARK

NOTE: THIS DRAWING IS NOT TO SCALE

MONTAGUE STREET