

POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE BUILDING (originally Grammar School 47), 34-1/2 East 12th Street, Borough of Manhattan. Built 1855; architect Thomas R. Jackson for the Board of Education of the City of New York.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 563, Lot 20.

On July 14, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Police Athletic League Building (originally Grammar School 47) and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 3). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. Two witnesses, representing the New York City Police Department and the Union Square Community Coalition, respectively, spoke in favor of the designation. No one spoke in opposition to the designation. The Commission has received letters and other statements in support of designation from the Historic Districts Council and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

Summary

Located on the south side of East 12th Street between Broadway and University Place, this building originally housed Grammar School 47, which was one of the first New York City schools built exclusively for the education of girls at a time when the city was trying to expand learning opportunities for young women. Constructed in 1855 for the New York City Board of Education, it was designed in the Anglo-Italianate style by architect Thomas R. Jackson. This four-story building has a symmetrically-organized facade with two pedimented pavilions flanking a recessed central section. The rusticated brownstone base features prominent arched openings and a central entrance porch with paired Corinthian piers supporting an entablature. Lydia Wadleigh, an advocate of higher education for young women, taught at Grammar School 47, where she founded the 12th Street Advanced School for Girls in 1856. In 1897, this was reorganized as Girls' High School, the city's first official high school for girls. The school was renamed Wadleigh High School in 1900, and moved to a new building on West 115th Street in Harlem in 1902. That year Girls' Technical High School, which was later renamed Washington Irving High School, was established in the East 12th Street school building.

It ceased operating as an educational facility in 1914. Until 1958 it housed the Board of Education's building operations and maintenance offices, when it was turned over to the Police Department's Juvenile Aid Bureau and the Police Athletic League. One of the oldest surviving school buildings in Manhattan, it remains the administrative offices of the Police Athletic League.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Public Education in Nineteenth-Century New York City¹

The Dutch, who founded the first public school in New Amsterdam in 1633, continued to fund public education. The British, however, discontinued this practice, and until the early nineteenth century, only private schools were available. In general, these schools charged a fee, and were accessible only to the children of the city's wealthier families. However, various religious societies provided free education to some poor children. In 1805, the prominent New Yorker DeWitt Clinton, who was concerned about the lack of educational opportunities for a large segment of the population, successfully applied to the state legislature to establish the Free School Society, to provide education for poor children in the city not belonging to or being taught by any religious denomination. At the time, the city had a population of 76,000, many of whom were poor immigrants. The Society's first school was opened on present-day Madison Street near Pearl Street in 1806. The school, which depended on contributions of money and supplies, was an immediate success, but it soon became clear that benevolence alone would not be adequate to effectively operate the school. The Society applied to the legislature for assistance and received a five thousand dollar grant to cover the cost of a new school building and operating expenses.

In 1815, the state legislature permitted the outright public funding of education for the first time, and money was distributed to the Free School Society and to other private education organizations, such as the Orphans' Asylum Society, the African Free School, as well as to religious schools providing education to the poor. Although the schools of the Free School Society were nondenominational, providing mainly rudimentary literacy training, they also taught basic social morality with a Protestant slant, attempting to lessen what was perceived by native New Yorkers as a growing alienation between themselves and the city's working-class immigrants, who were mostly poor and Catholic. In 1824, the Common Council of the City of New York, which distributed the moneys to the schools, voted after great debate to cut off support to the religious schools, but to continue grants to the New York Free School Society despite its Protestant leanings. By then, the Free School Society had become the main provider of public schools, called common schools, in the city.

The name of the organization was changed to the Public School Society in 1826, the same year that its Board of Trustees voted to charge a fee according to the ability of children's families to pay. The combined funding system of charity, tuition, and government grants also proved unsatisfactory, and the Society along with other proponents of free education for all children successfully petitioned the legislature to impose a tax dedicated to the funding of education. In 1829, a property tax system was adopted to provide funds for creation of the Common Schools, which would be operated by the Public School Society.

New York City's first Board of Education was established by the state legislature in 1842. At the time, New York City was experiencing phenomenal growth in its population, which increased tenfold from 1800 to 1850. The new Board consisted of 34 popularly-elected commissioners, two each from the seventeen wards that composed the city. Under the new Board of Education, new schools were chartered to be managed by popularly-elected ward trustees and inspectors, the former charged with the oversight of the schools affairs and appointing teachers, that latter charged with inspecting the schools and certifying teachers' qualifications. The Public School Society continued to operate its own schools until 1853, when these were acquired by the Board of Education,² creating for the city a single, unified and government-funded school system.

In 1871, the Board was replaced by the Department of Public Instruction. Instead of being elected, the twelve members of the department, as well as the ward trustees and inspectors, were appointed by the mayor. The Board of Education was reinstated in 1873 with 21 mayoral appointees, three each from seven school districts and five trustees in each ward, appointed by the Board. The ward trustees were abolished in 1896, when management of the schools was transferred to a board of superintendents made up of professional educational managers.

Consolidation of the greater City of New York and the creation of a city-wide central Board of Education of the City of New York occurred in 1898, although the existing New York City Board of Education was retained and renamed the School Board for the Boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx.³ The borough school boards remained responsible for the day-to-day management of the schools until 1901, when full power was transferred to the central board and the borough boards were

eliminated. Management of the schools was then transferred to the Superintendent of Schools and the associate superintendents.

Grammar School 47⁴

The northeastern section of Greenwich Village, where the Grammar School 47 building is located, was the site of two early nineteenth-century farms belonging to Hendrick Brevoort and Captain Robert Richard Randall. These farms were subdivided and developed by the mid-nineteenth century, the western section becoming a fashionable residential enclave, while commercial buildings were constructed in the eastern and northernmost part, especially along Broadway. In 1854, the year before Public School 47 was built, East 12th Street between Broadway and University Place consisted mainly of houses and stables. The area was located in the 15th Ward, which stretched from Houston to 14th Streets, between Fourth and Sixth Avenues.

Grammar School 47 was built in 1855 when the Board of Education had 271 schools under its jurisdiction,⁵ including 95 grammar schools, 101 primary schools, 14 "colored" schools, 29 evening schools for working children, 3 normal schools for teacher training, one free academy,⁶ and 28 corporate and asylum schools.⁷ Since the early 1850s, the Board had been expending much capital on the construction of new schools where needed, and in replacing old school buildings that were considered obsolete, many of which had been acquired from the Public School Society in 1853. In 1855, the 15th Ward, with a population of 24,046, had only two grammar schools, one on Wooster Street near Bleeker Street (demolished) and another on 13th Street near Sixth Avenue.⁸ The Board also wanted to expand educational opportunities for girls, which at that time were considered "far less comprehensive"⁹ than for boys. Many existing grammar schools were reorganized to include female departments, and some schools were opened exclusively for young women. It was the Board's belief that "....separate schools for the sexes contributes greatly to the economy in conducting the school, and in advantages in many other respects."¹⁰

In 1854, the need for an additional school in the 15th Ward and the desire to open a grammar school exclusively for girls¹¹ induced the Board of Education to purchase a 9,664 square foot vacant lot on East 12th Street from George W. and Ann Maria Tucker for \$22,500. Early in the following year, building plans for a new school, prepared by architect Thomas R. Jackson, were approved and

construction funds in the amount of \$29,500¹² were appropriated.

Thomas R. Jackson¹³

Thomas R. Jackson (1826-1901) was born in London, England, and was brought to the United States in 1831. He received his architectural education in the office of Richard Upjohn. In his own practice, established by 1850, he designed theaters, clubs, residences, and schools. Among his well-known projects were the Academy of Music, Wallack's Theatre, and Tammany Hall, none of which survive, and the New York Mercantile Exchange (1884), in the Tribeca West Historic District. The famous mansion he designed for Leonard Jerome (demolished), was one of the most impressive French Second Empire buildings in the United States. Jackson's specialty, however, was commercial buildings, including the former New York Times building (demolished) near City Hall. Examples of store and loft buildings and warehouses built in the 1880s and 1890s to Jackson's designs can be found in the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District and in Tribeca. For Grammar School 47, Jackson chose an austere Anglo-Italianate style, which was popular in the mid-nineteenth century for residential, commercial, and public buildings. The school's rusticated base, pedimented windows, columnar entryway, pedimented pavilions, and bracketed cornice are indicative of the style. Grammar School 47, which was built by mason William B. Rhoades and carpenters Powers & Schoonmaker, was completed and occupied by the end of the year.

Later in life, Jackson was appointed Superintendent of Federal Buildings in New York by the Secretary of the Treasury and remained in that capacity for five years. Trained in his office were George Fletcher Babb, who later founded the firm of Babb, Cook & Willard, Peter B. Wight, and Isaac G. Perry. Jackson practiced through 1900.

The 12th Street Advanced School for Girls¹⁴

Among Grammar School 47's charter faculty members was teacher Lydia F. Wadleigh (d.1888), a pioneer in the movement for higher education for women in the last half of the nineteenth century. In the face of bitter opposition, Wadleigh founded the 12th Street Advanced School for Girls in 1856.¹⁵ While this school offered advanced courses, its curriculum was not on par with that of the city's Free Academy for Boys and the school was not classified as a free academy by the Board of Education. In 1870 Wadleigh assumed the position of "Lady Superintendent" at the newly created Daily

Female Normal School, which was located on Broadway and 4th Street. The following year it became the New York Normal College, which evolved into today's Hunter College.¹⁶ In 1897, the Board of Education finally established the city's first official public high school for girls and located it in the building of the 12th Street Advanced School for Girls, still known as Grammar School 47.¹⁷ Girls' High School was renamed after Wadleigh in 1900. In 1902, a new building for Wadleigh High School was opened on West 115th Street in Harlem. It is a designated New York City Landmark.

As Wadleigh High School was preparing to move out of the East 12th Street building in the summer of 1902, the Board of Education authorized the establishment of a commercial high school for girls, which opened that September at that location as Girls' Technical High School. The school's name was changed in 1906 to the Washington Irving High School, which continued to occupy the building until it moved to its new home on Irving Place in 1913.

Later History of the Building Including The Police Athletic League¹⁸

After the departure of Washington Irving High School, the building became the home of the Board of Education's Building Bureau, later the Bureau of Plant Operations and Maintenance,¹⁹ remaining in that capacity until it was turned over to the Police Department's Juvenile Aid Bureau and the Police Athletic League in 1958.²⁰ The Police Athletic League had been established in 1914 as the Junior Police Corps by Captain John Sweeney of the New York City Police Department, who offered athletic equipment and a place to play to poor youngsters to keep them off the streets. The success of the organization over the years enabled it to expand both programmatically and geographically. In 1932 Police Captain Edward W. Flynn reorganized it into the Junior Police Athletic League,²¹ establishing a baseball league within the program. In the following years he enlarged the staff, and the PAL developed into one of the city's largest organized recreation programs, which included swim meets, boxing tournaments, and dances. The successful program was copied by police departments in many other cities, which started their own PALs. The Police Athletic League was incorporated as a non-profit organization independent of the Police Department in 1941, and its programs further expanded to include arts and crafts, drama, vocational guidance and training, and job placement. In the 1960s, in response to a changing population with new social problems, the League began offering courses in

remedial reading, drug-abuse counseling, day-care, and educational summer camps. Today, more than 60,000 youths a year take part in activities sponsored by the League. Its administrative offices remain in the building.

Description

This four-story, freestanding building, located on the south side of East 12th Street between Broadway and University Place, is set back from the lot line and has a symmetrically-organized facade, which has been painted, with two slightly projecting pavilions flanking a central section. The rusticated brownstone base at the first story features prominent arched openings, which sit above molded panels and which are topped by scrolled keystones. The main entryway at the center of the base has brownstone steps; paired, panelled Corinthian piers supporting an entablature (with narrow windows between the piers); and paired, recessed panelled wood and glass doors with transoms and a rope molding. A painted sign reading "Police Department, City of New York," is placed below the cornice above the entrance. Another sign, reading "Police Athletic League," with the Police Department shield, is placed on the wall to the left of the entrance. Flanking the entrance, rectangular window openings sit above molded panels. A telephone box is affixed to the wall next to the eastern rectangular window. The original window openings in the two easternmost bays have been converted, respectively to a pedestrian door (ALT 803-1896) and a vehicular entrance (ALT 2003-1921). The arched brownstone molding of the pedestrian door has been damaged.

The upper stories, faced with brick, have crisply articulated window openings with molded surrounds and projecting lintels of brownstone. Those in the central section have alternating curved and triangular pediments on the second and third stories, while those on the fourth story have projecting lintels. The central tier of windows above the entrance are organized as tripartite groups. Window openings contain multi-pane sash. A flagpole extends from the sill of the center window on the third story. A bracketed cornice rises above a decorative frieze. Triangular pediments surmount the end pavilions.

Report prepared by
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Research Department

NOTES

1. This section is based on the following sources: Board of Education, *New York City School Buildings 1806-1956* (New York: Board of Education, 1956), 1-7; Wm. Oland Bourne, *History of the Public School Society of the City of New York* (New York: Geo. P. Putnam's Sons, 1873), vii, 576, 591; Carl F. Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban School System, New York City, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 186-189; David Ment, "Board of Education," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 121-122; and A. Emerson Palmer, *The New York Public School, Being a History of Free Education in the City of New York* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1905), 140.
2. The Public School Society was \$150,000 in debt. In the agreement with the city, the Society transferred the entirety of its \$604,000 in property assets to the Board of Education, and the city paid off the Society's outstanding debt. (Bourne, 591). The transfer included seventeen grammar schools and 53 primary schools.
3. The Brooklyn Board of Education became the School Board for the Borough of Brooklyn, and separate school boards for Queens and Richmond were also created.
4. This section is based on the following sources: *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York for the Year Ending January 1, 1856* (New York: Wm. C. Bryant & Co., 1856), 4, 6, 19, 20, 34-35, 65-70, 84, Appendix I: "Report of the City Superintendent, S.S. Randall," 11, 16; *Journal of the Board of Education of the City of New York, 1854* (New York: W.C. Bryant & Co., 1854), 172; (1855), 35, 47; *Maps of the City of New York* (New York: William Perris, 1854), v. 5, plate 65; Terry Miller, *Greenwich Village and How it Got That Way* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1990), 78-79, 114-116; New York County, Office of the Register, Deeds Liber 662, Page 695, from NYC Board of Education, *Annual Financial and Statistical Report of the Transactions of the Board of Education of the City of New York, 1906-1908*, 75; and Jan Seidler Ramirez, "Greenwich Village," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 506-509.
5. This was an increase of nine over the previous year.
6. The free academy offered secondary education and was an equivalent to a modern-day academic high school. The New York Free Academy expanded its programs after the Civil War and became City College in 1866.
7. These included schools located at private institutions such as New York Orphan Asylum, the Mechanics' School Society, the Leake and Watts Orphan House, the Female Guardian Society, the Colored Orphan Society, and the Five Points House of Industry.
8. Built in 1843-44, and altered in 1858-59, this building is located in the Greenwich Village Historic District. It now serves as the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center.
9. *Fourteenth Annual Report*, "Report of the City Superintendent, S.S. Randall," Appendix I, 16.
10. *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 37.
11. Although the Board of Education stated in its annual report for 1855 that Grammar School 47 was to be occupied exclusively by girls, the annual report for the following year mentions the existence of a Boys' Department within the building.
12. The final cost of constructing the building was \$33,000.
13. This section is based on the Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Architects' Appendix," *Tribeca West Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1713), (New York, 1991), and includes the following sources: Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 43; Thomas R. Jackson obituary, *American Architect and Building News* 71 (Feb. 19, 1901), 49-50; Thomas R. Jackson obituary, *American Art Annual*, ed. F.N. Levy (New York, 1903), vol. 4, 141; *Key to the Architects of Greater New York* (New York: Forbes & C., 1900), 39; *Key to the Architects of Greater New York* (New York: Forbes & Co, 1901), 42; LPC, Research Files; LPC, "Architects' Appendix," *Ladies Mile Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1609), (New York, 1989); James Ward, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 39; Norval White and Elliot Willensky, *ALA Guide to New York City, 2nd ed.*

- (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1978), 49, 78, 564; and Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: Hennessy and Ingalls, 1970), 318.
14. This section is based on the following sources: Department of Education, *Directory of the Board of Education of the City of New York*: (1881), 102; (1894), 87; (1901), 38; and (1908), 58; *Journal of the Board of Education of the City of New York* (New York: W.C. Bryant & Co., 1902), 1350, 1677; (1906), 1602; and (1910), 1213; LPC, *Wadleigh High School for Girls/(now) Wadleigh School* (LP-1840), prepared by Pat Garbe (New York: City of New York, 1994); NYC Board of Education, Public School File Cards for Public School 47, Wadleigh High School, and Washington Irving High School (Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University); NYC Board of Education, *Annual Report of the City Superintendent* (1902), 73.
 15. In 1855, the City Superintendent of Schools recommended unsuccessfully to the Board of Education that a Free Academy for Girls be established in the new Grammar School 47.
 16. "In Memory of Miss Wadleigh," *New York Times*, November 11, 1888, p.16.
 17. The number 47 was dropped from the school's name at that time, and was re-assigned in 1899 to a new Public School 47, located at East 23rd Street and Second Avenue. While Girls' High School/Wadleigh High School occupied the East 12th Street building, a one-story extension containing water closets was built at the rear (New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Manhattan, ALT 469-1897) and several interior alterations were made, including the replacement of the original wooden main staircase with an iron and stone stairway (ALT 1070-1900).
 18. This section is based on the following sources, Muriel Fischer, "'My PAL,' 100,000 Strong," *New York World-Telegram*, February 9, 1965, 29; New York City Police Athletic League, "The Story of an Idea: The Police Athletic League," March 31, 1938, promotional pamphlet; New York Telephone, *Manhattan Address Telephone Directory* (New York: 1929-1965); "P.A.L. Adds Culture to Sports Program," *New York Times*, April 24, 1977, 47; Suzanne Rostler, "Eight Decades as Kids' PAL," *Daily News*, March 13, 1994, 22; and Stephen Weinstein, "Police Athletic League [PAL]," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 913.
 19. Alterations made during this time included the installation of an interior elevator, removal of front fire escapes that had been installed before 1908, installation of a vehicular doorway in front, and removal of the front fence (ALT 2003-1921, C.B.J. Snyder, architect); the construction of one-story and two-story rear additions (ALT 1675-1934, ALT 461-1938) both designed by Board of Education architect Walter C. Martin; and numerous interior modifications.
 20. The following year, the water tower on an adjacent building collapsed causing extensive interior damage to 34 1/2 East 12th Street. Repairs were made by the Department of Public Works (ALT 868-1959).
 21. Its name was shortened to the Police Athletic League in 1936.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Police Athletic League Building has a special character and 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 Police Athletic League Building, originally Grammar School 47, was constructed in 1855 for the New York City Board of Education; that it was designed in the Anglo-Italianate style by architect Thomas R. Jackson; that the four-story building has a symmetrically-organized facade with two pedimented pavilions flanking a recessed central section; that the rusticated brownstone base features prominent arched openings and a central entrance porch with paired Corinthian piers supporting an entablature; that Lydia Wadleigh, an advocate of higher education for young women, taught at Grammar School 47, where she founded the 12th Street Advanced School for Girls in 1856; that in 1897, this was reorganized as Girls' High School, the city's first official high school for girls; that the school was renamed Wadleigh High School in 1900, and moved to a new building on West 115th Street in Harlem in 1902; that in 1902, Girls' Technical High School, which was later renamed Washington Irving High School, was established in the East 12th Street school building; that Former Grammar School 47 housed the Board of Education's building operations and maintenance offices between 1914 and 1958, when it was turned over to the Police Department's Juvenile Aid Bureau and the Police Athletic League; that it is one of the oldest surviving school buildings in Manhattan; and that the building remains largely intact on the exterior.

Accordingly, pursuant to 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 the Police Athletic League Building (originally Grammar School 47), 34 1/2 East 12th Street, Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 563, Lot 20, as its Landmark Site.

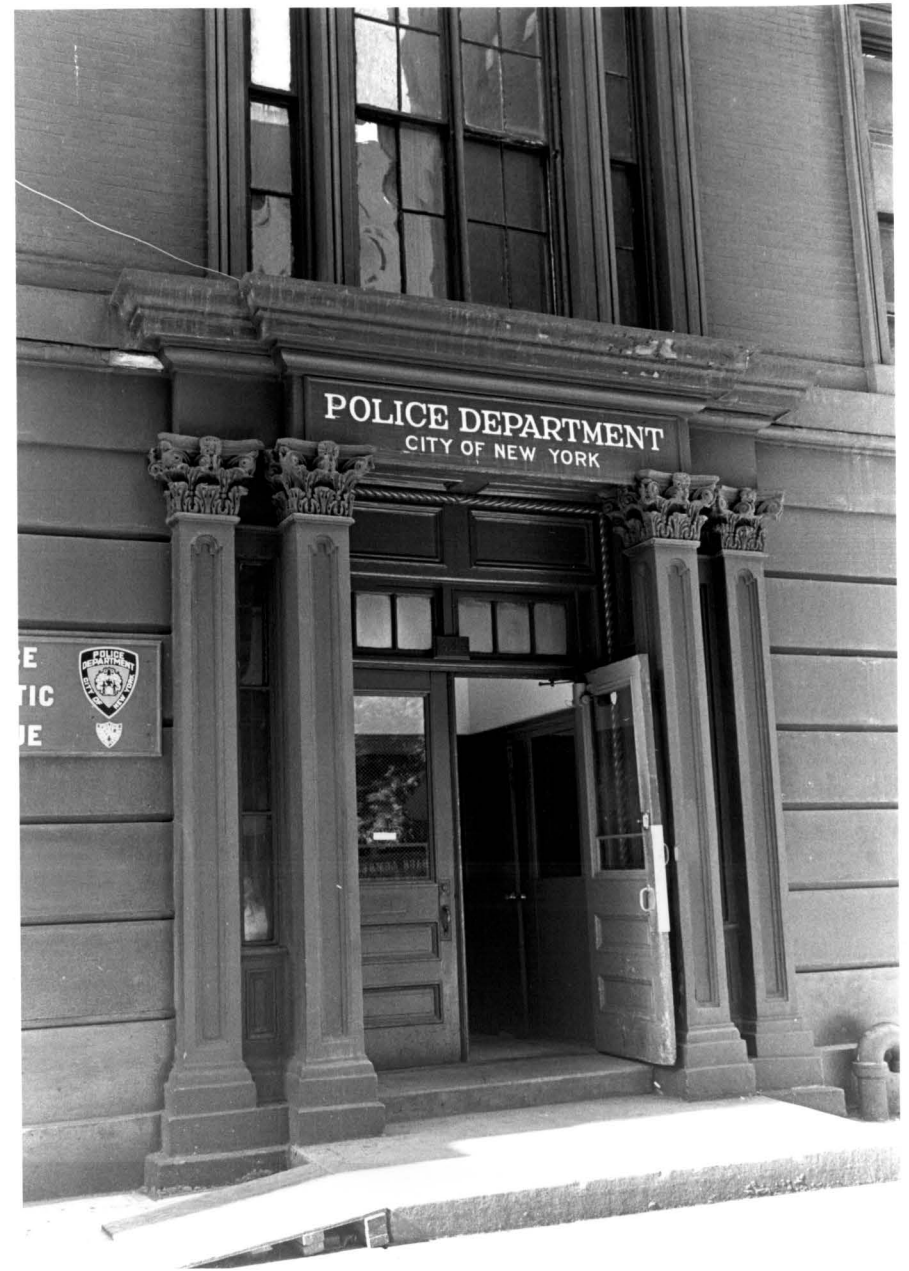


Police Athletic League Building (originally Grammar School 47), 34 1/2 East 12th Street
Borough of Manhattan

Photo: Carl Forster, 1998



Detail of recessed central section of the facade.
Photo: Carl Forster, 1998.



Detail of the central entrance porch with paired
Corinthian piers. Photo: Carl Forster, 1998



Detail of base, with vehicular entrance installed in 1921.

Photo: Carl Forster, 1998.



Detail of first-story windows.

Photo: Carl Forster, 1998.



Detail of second story, central bay.

Photo: Carl Forster, 1998.



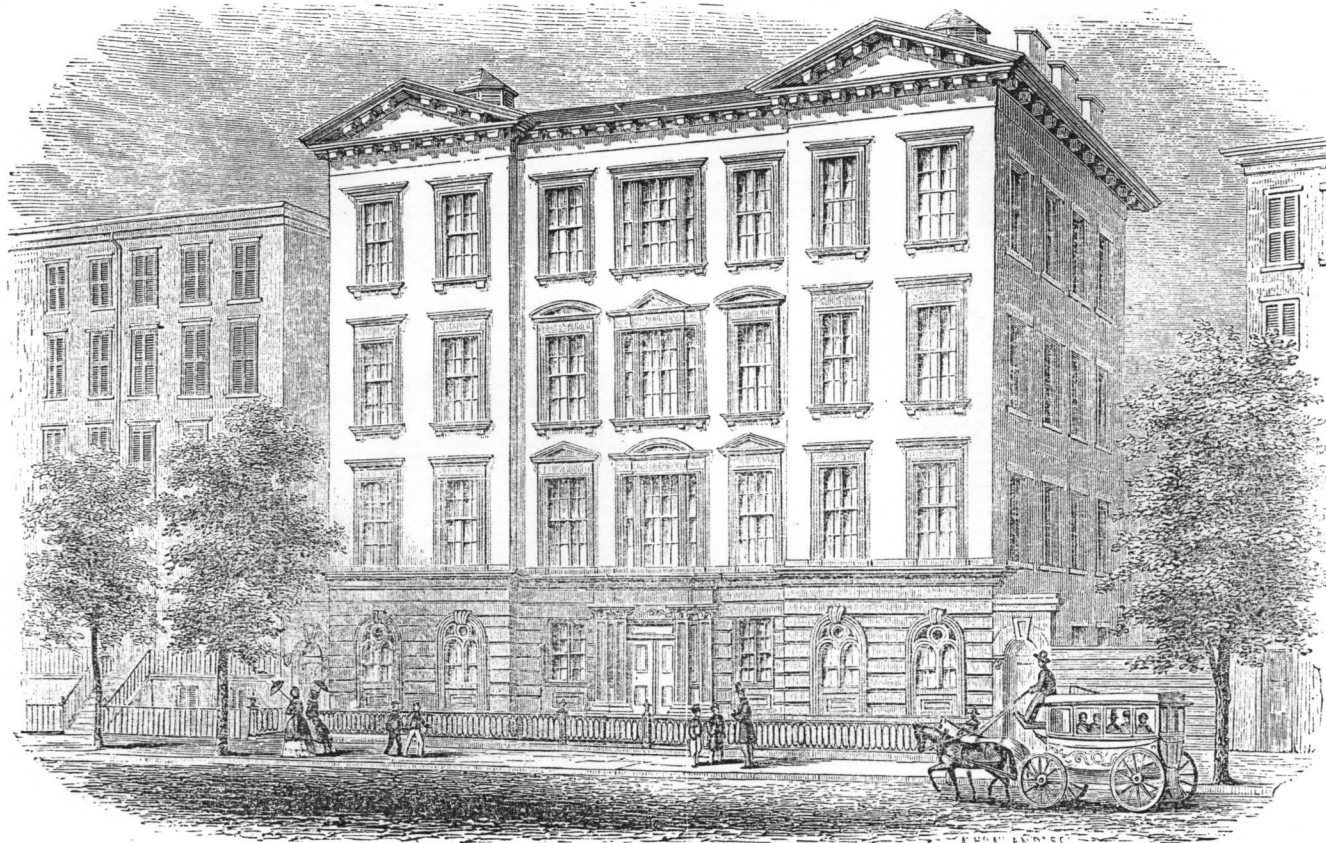
Detail of fourth story, central bay.

Photo: Carl Forster, 1998.



Detail of fourth-story windows, cornice, and pediment.

Photo: Carl Forster, 1998.



WARD SCHOOL No. 47, TWELFTH STREET, NEAR UNIVERSITY PLACE, FIFTEENTH WARD.

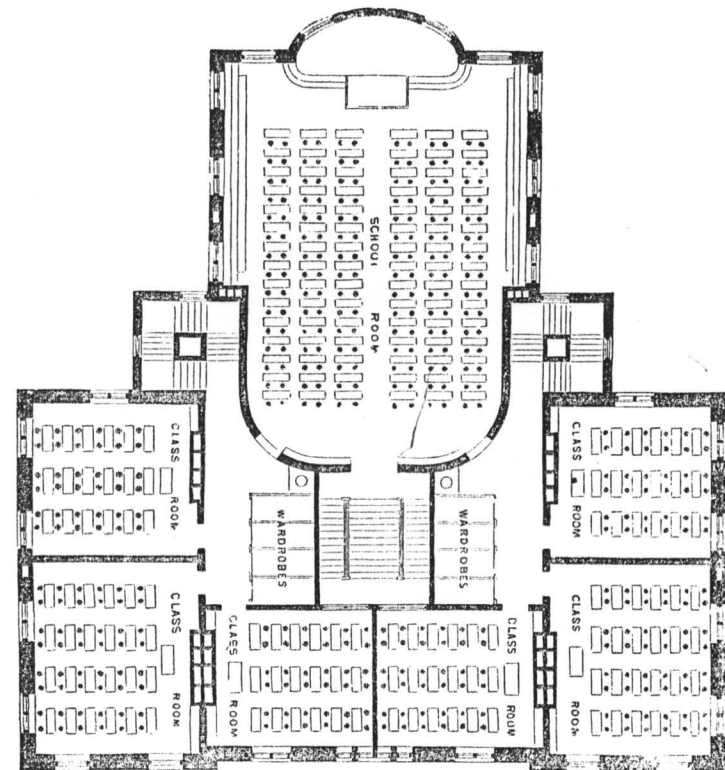
Police Athletic League Building (originally Grammar School 47), 34 1/2 East 12th Street, Manhattan.
Original 1855 rendering. From *New York City Board of Education Archives*, *Milbank Memorial Library*, *Teachers College*, *Columbia University*.



Police Athletic League Building (originally Grammar School 47), 34 1/2 East 12th Street, Borough of Manhattan, c. 1908, from *New York City Board of Education Archives*, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University.

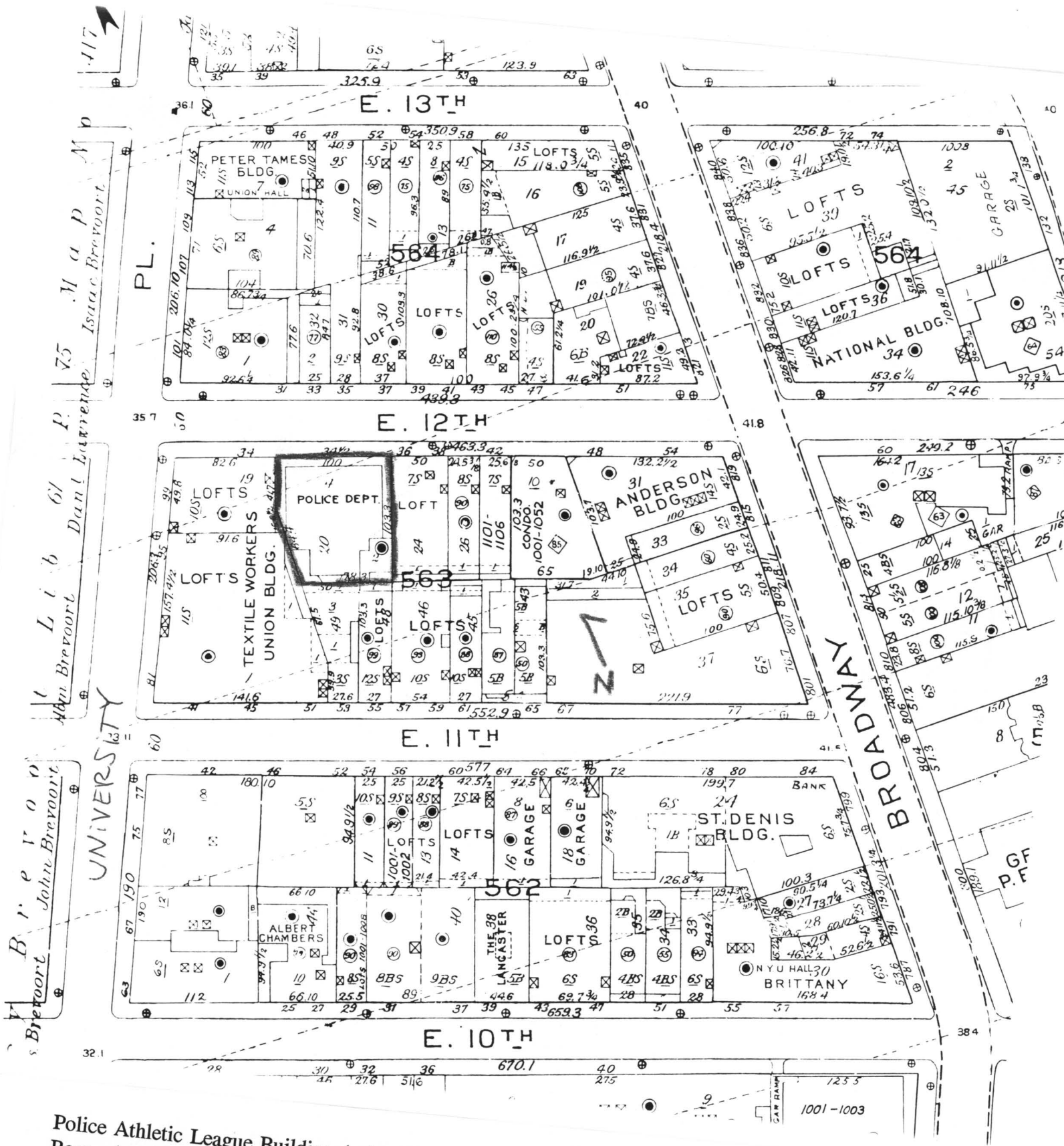


Police Athletic League Building (originally Grammar School 47), c.1965. LPC files.



IV.

Typical original floor plan. New York City Board of Education Archives, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University.



Police Athletic League Building (originally Grammar School 47), 34 1/2 East 12th Street,
 Borough of Manhattan. Landmark Site: Manhattan Tax Map Block 563, Lot 20.
 Graphic Source: *Manhattan Land Book of the City of New York*, 1997-98, Plate 30.

