

Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 30, 2001, Designation List 323
LP-2060

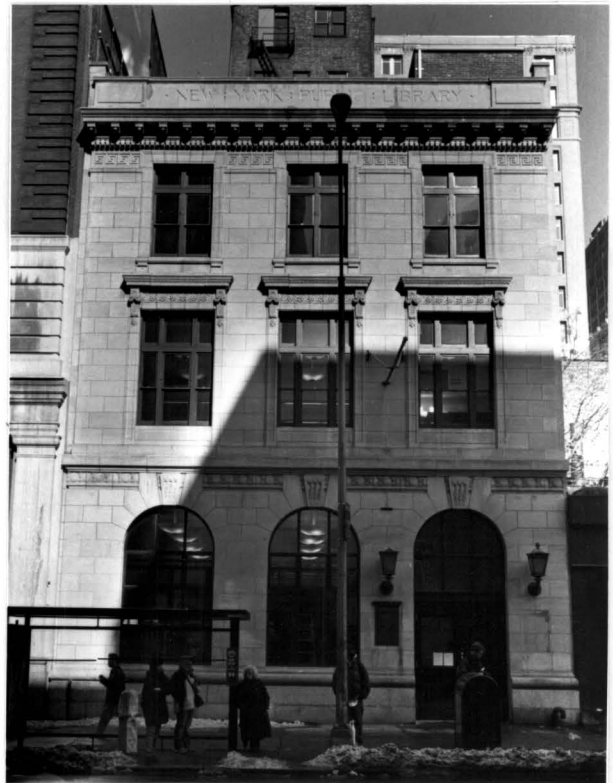
New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch, 209-211 West 23rd Street, Manhattan. Built 1906. Carrère & Hastings, architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 773, Lot 38

On March 28, 2000, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four witnesses spoke in support of the designation including a representative of the library, two members of the Muhlenberg Library Association, and a representative of the Historic Districts Council. The Landmarks Preservation Commission received a statement of support from Council member Christine Quinn and a letter of support from Community Board 4; there were no speakers in opposition.

Summary

Opened on February 19, 1906, the neo-Classical Muhlenberg Branch was the eleventh Carnegie branch built in Manhattan and the twenty-eighth of sixty-seven branch libraries built in New York City, with Andrew Carnegie's 1901 donation of \$5.2 million to establish a city-wide system. The distinguished and prolific architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings designed the Muhlenberg Branch as well thirteen other Carnegie branch libraries and the Main Building of The New York Public Library. The library building is characteristic of the urban Carnegie library type. It features a vertical plan and arched entrance offset to one side, tall, arched and rectangular windows providing abundant lighting, classically-inspired style, and carved stone ornament. The library has played a prominent role in Chelsea's social and civic life for nearly one hundred years.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

History of Chelsea¹

The Chelsea neighborhood's boundaries consist of West 14th Street on the south, West 30th Street on the north, Sixth Avenue on the east and the Hudson River on the west. In 1750 Thomas Clarke, a retired British Army captain, bought the Somerindyck farm, which stretched from 21st to 24th Streets and from Eighth Avenue (just west of the library site) to the Hudson River, which was then at today's Tenth Avenue. He named the area Chelsea, after a soldiers' hospital near London. His daughter Charity Clarke Moore and her husband Benjamin extended the farm south to 19th Street. The Clarke Moore family vigorously opposed the street grids called for in the Commissioners' Plan of 1811. In 1813, however, they deeded the farm to their son, Clement Clarke Moore, and by the 1830s he was developing the area as a residential neighborhood opening streets, leveling and grading the land. Clement Clarke Moore, is best known as the author of "A Visit from St. Nicholas."² He donated the site for the General Theological Seminary in 1825 and became its first professor of Greek, Hebrew, and Oriental languages.

The Seminary became the anchor for Clarke's fashionable development. In 1835 he published a map of the Chelsea development and summarized the deed restrictions, which called for brick or stone houses at least two stories high, 25 feet wide, set back from the street and fenced. The covenants prohibited stables, commercial and industrial buildings. It took 38 years to fully develop the former farm and many of those nineteenth century houses still exist in the Chelsea Historic District.

Twenty-third Street was a major east-west thoroughfare since it was opened in 1839. The wide street was a horse car route by the 1850s. In the 1860s Twenty-third Street between Sixth and Eighth Avenues was a theater district. Pike's Opera House was built in 1868 at Twenty-third Street and Eighth Avenue. Edwin Booth's theater opened in 1869 near Sixth Avenue.

Chelsea was home to a number of ethnic groups, from the Scottish weavers who moved into the area around at Seventh Avenue and 17th Street in the 1820s to the African American neighborhood that developed in the 1860s between 23rd and 40th Streets, west of Sixth Avenue. There were German, Italian and British areas, but Chelsea was known primarily as an Irish Catholic community from the later nineteenth to the

early twentieth centuries. The neighborhood population peaked at 85,000 in 1900.

Late nineteenth century Chelsea was a diverse neighborhood. Industrial development, prohibited in the Chelsea division, grew along the shores of the Hudson River, centered on the busy piers. Tenements were built to house the workers. The Chelsea Hotel, across from the library site, was built in 1885 as the Chelsea Apartment, one of the first cooperative apartment houses. Several movie studios moved into the area in the early twentieth century. Mary Pickford's first films were made in a studio on West 26th Street and the Reliance and Majestic Studios were located on West 21st Street.

In 1930 London Terrace, a large apartment complex on 23rd Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, replaced dozens of nineteenth century row houses. A number of public housing projects were built to the north of 23rd Street from the 1930s to the 1950s. The historic neighborhood was rediscovered in the 1960s, designated a New York City Historic District in 1970 and extended in 1981.

History of Manhattan Libraries³

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries libraries in New York City were private, institutional, or by subscription. The New York Society Library, a subscription library where users paid a membership fee, was established in 1754, and Columbia University opened a library by 1757. Both were destroyed during the Revolutionary War but were rebuilt, and by 1876, Columbia had one of the largest collections in the country. Reading rooms, operated as businesses or by non-profit organizations, made books available to the public, and a reading room was opened in Garrett Noel's bookstore in 1797.

Institutions including the New-York Historical Society, the Cooper Union, and Union Theological Seminary opened libraries in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Astor Library, the City's first free public reference library, incorporated in 1849. The Lenox Library, a private collection of rare and reference books, incorporated in 1870. By 1876 there were about ninety libraries and collections in New York City.

At the end of the nineteenth century New York City, with a population of about three million, was one of the largest cities in the world. Few libraries were

accessible to the public, and New York trailed behind other cities in public library support. (In 1901, before the Carnegie bequest, New York City spent nine cents per capita on libraries, comparing poorly with Boston, which spent fifty cents per capita and Buffalo, at forty-one cents per capita.⁴) Several institutions were founded in the 1870s and 1880s to address this social concern. The Aguilar Free Library Society, for example, was started in 1886 to foster the “free circulation of carefully selected literature, in the homes of the people of this City, with distributing branches in localities where the Jewish population was dense.”⁵ There were four branches in 1901 when the library merged with The New York Public Library. The New York Free Circulating Library, established in 1878 to provide education and self-help for the poor, was supported by such wealthy citizens as Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, and Cornelius Vanderbilt, and from 1887 in part by public funds. In 1901 it operated eleven branches located in poor and immigrant neighborhoods.

The New York Public Library and Andrew Carnegie⁶

The New York Public Library was established in 1895 as a private corporation, which received limited public funds. Formed initially by the merger of the Astor and Lenox Libraries and the Tilden Trust, it was primarily concerned with building a major reference library on the site of the old Croton Reservoir at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street. The consolidation of New York City in 1898 inspired the growth and unification of the library institutions in the city, including The New York Public Library.

The New York Free Circulating Library merged with The New York Public Library in 1901 and provided the core of the institution’s branch library system. Most of the small independent lending libraries, such as the Aguilar, Cathedral, Webster, Kingsbridge, and Tottenville, joined The New York Public Library, increasing the size of the still inadequate branch network. The promise of a large grant from Andrew Carnegie in 1901 spurred these library mergers. The New York Public Library is still organized into the separate reference and branch systems that were created during this consolidation.

Andrew Carnegie and John Shaw Billings, Director of The New York Public Library, strongly supported the amalgamation of all of the libraries, including the Brooklyn and Queens libraries, which ultimately chose to remain independent. Today, New York City still has three separate library corporations: The New York

Public Library (consisting of the boroughs of Manhattan, Bronx and Staten Island), the Brooklyn Public Library, and The Queens Borough Public Library.

In 1901, when the library institutions were large and cohesive enough to suit him, Andrew Carnegie donated \$5.2 million to New York City to build a system of branch libraries in all five boroughs. The grant was divided among the three library systems, with The New York Public Library receiving \$3.36 million, and Brooklyn and Queens allocated \$1.6 million and \$240,000 respectively. The grant bought sixty-seven libraries in all five boroughs, two more than originally envisioned.⁷ In a 1901 letter to John Shaw Billings, Carnegie said that:

“Sixty-five libraries at one stroke probably breaks the record, but this is the day of big operations and New York is soon to be the biggest of Cities.”⁸

Andrew Carnegie rose from poverty to become one of the wealthiest men in the United States after he sold his steel business to J.P. Morgan in 1901. He began donating to libraries in 1881, but with the grant to New York City he began the vast, worldwide operation which made him unique in the world of philanthropy.

Andrew Carnegie based his donations on a philosophy of giving he developed in the 1870s and 1880s. He believed that the wealthy should live modestly and, while still living, give away their funds for the good of humanity. He considered seven areas worthy of his philanthropy: universities, libraries, medical centers, parks, meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches. Like other wealthy New Yorkers involved in the social reform movement, he understood the problems facing New York City at the beginning of the twentieth century: the overcrowding from massive immigration, poverty, lack of education and lack of such facilities as baths, playgrounds and libraries. Andrew Carnegie gave away about 90 per cent of his wealth by the time he died in 1911. More than 2,500 Carnegie libraries were built worldwide and over 1,680 in the United States. Today the Carnegie Corporation and twenty other foundations and funds carry on his aspirations.

The inventor of cost accounting, Carnegie gave away his money with great efficiency. His grant provided for the construction of the buildings, but New York City had to contribute the cost of the land as well as the books, the upkeep and the operation of the libraries in perpetuity. This cost was substantial: the

acquisition of sites alone for the Carnegie branches cost The New York Public Library over \$1.6 million, just under half the cost of the buildings.

In 1901, The New York Public Library Board Executive Committee appointed a temporary architects' advisory committee consisting of Charles F. McKim of the firm McKim, Mead & White, John M. Carrère of Carrère & Hastings, and Walter Cook of Babb, Cook & Willard, to advise them on how to proceed with construction. The committee advised that the branches be uniform and recognizable in materials, style, plan, and scale and that different site requirements would provide variety. They recommended forming a committee of two to five architectural firms who would design the buildings in cooperation with each other. Andrew Carnegie objected to the lack of competition in this system but was ultimately convinced that it would be faster and cheaper and would produce a more unified collection. The advisors, McKim, Carrère, and Cook, were fortuitously selected for the permanent committee, and their firms designed most of The New York Public Library Carnegie branches.⁹ The architects consulted with the librarians on planning and design, an innovation which was just becoming accepted in library architecture.

Carrère & Hastings¹⁰

The important architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings designed many of New York City's most prominent structures, including the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations (1898-1911), Grand Army Plaza (1913), the Manhattan Bridge Arch and Colonnade (1905), and the Staten Island Borough Hall (1903-07) (all designated New York City Landmarks). John Mervin Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) met in Paris while studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Carrère, whose previous education was in Switzerland, graduated in 1882 and Hastings, who briefly attended Columbia University, graduated in 1884. Their architectural style was heavily influenced by their studies in Paris. Both men were hired out of school by the office of McKim, Mead & White and in 1885 they founded their own firm.

The firm's earliest commissions were churches and hotels in Saint Augustine, Florida, designed for the famous and prescient developer and partner in Standard Oil, Henry Flagler. Their early hotels include the Ponce de Leon (1888) in St. Augustine, the Laurel-in-the-Pines (1889-90) in Lakewood, New Jersey, and the Hotel Jefferson (1893-94) in Richmond, Virginia. The

majority of their significant work was in New York City, but they were responsible for the House and Senate Office Buildings (1906) in Washington, D.C. and Woolsey and Memorial Halls (1906) at Yale University.

Carrère & Hastings designed a wide variety of building types. They introduced the French Beaux Arts style townhouse to New York City with the Richard Hoe House (1892, 9 East 71st Street, demolished) and the Dr. Christian A. Herter House (1892, 819 Madison Avenue, part of the Upper East Side Historic District), influencing a generation of urban residential building.¹¹ Early, important houses include the Henry T. and Jessie Sloane House (1894-96, now the Lycée Francais) at 9 East 72nd Street and the John Henry and Emily Vanderbilt Sloane Hammon House (1902-03, now the Russian Consulate) at 9 East 91st Street. The versatile firm designed the Globe Theater (now the Lunt-Fontanne Theater, 1909-10) at 203-17 West 46th Street and First Church of Christ, Scientist (1899-1903) at 1 West 96th Street. All of these buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.

The firm won the competition for The New York Public Library Main Building in 1897. This monumental Beaux-Arts style building was a major influence on early twentieth century Beaux-Arts architecture in New York. The firm proceeded to design fourteen classically-inspired Carnegie branch libraries in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island from 1904 to 1929. Four of their six branches in Manhattan have survived: the Hudson Park, Muhlenberg, Epiphany, and Washington Heights Branches.

John Carrère lived on Staten Island and helped plan the borough's Civic Center. The firm designed several of the major buildings in the Civic Center area, including the above-named Staten Island Borough Hall, the Richmond County Courthouse (1913-19, both designated New York City Landmarks), the St. George Branch Carnegie library (1907), and the old Ferry Terminal, (1908, burned). The firm was responsible for several other buildings on Staten Island, including three other Carnegie branch libraries, the Tottenville (1904, a designated New York City Landmark), Port Richmond (1905, a designated New York City Landmark) and Stapleton (1907) libraries, the Vanderbilt model houses (1900) in Clifton, and the Hughes Memorial Branch Library (1928). While Thomas Hastings was said to be the firm's main designer, John Carrère had an interest in urban planning, writing *City Improvement from the Artistic*

Point of View in 1908. Many of the firm's commissions involved planning and siting, such as Grand Army Plaza, the Manhattan Bridge Approach, and the Staten Island Civic Center. All of the libraries on Staten Island take advantage of their sites. The St. George Branch, located on a hill overlooking the harbor, is dramatically sited. The other libraries are prominently located on large corner lots surrounded by lawns, allowing ample natural light. They stand out as public structures yet remain in context with their low-rise residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Carrère and Hastings were active and influential in the architectural profession; both served as directors of the American Institute of Architects and both were elected Fellows. Carrère was a director of the American Academy in Rome and member of the Beaux Arts Society, the New York City Art Commission and Federation of Fine Arts. Hastings was president of the Architectural League of New York. John Carrère died in an automobile accident in 1911 and Thomas Hastings continued the work of the firm, which included the remaining Carnegie libraries, and the Standard Oil Building (1920-26, with Shreve, Lamb & Blake) at 26 Broadway and the Cunard Building (1917-21, with Benjamin Wistar Morris), at 25 Broadway (both designated New York City Landmarks).

Site Selection and Construction

The sites for the Carnegie libraries were selected by the New York Public Library with approval from the City. Every community wanted a Carnegie library and site selection was the only part of the smooth-running building process where there was any contention. The Carnegie branches were intended to stand out in their communities, to be centrally located and, if possible, to be near schools and other civic structures. The library trustees believed that if the libraries were in conspicuous positions, like retail stores, the public would use them more. John S. Billings stated this position in 1901:

Every one of these buildings ought to be of one distinctive and uniform type, so that the most ignorant child going through the streets of the City will at once know as Carnegie Library when he or she sees it.¹²

In Manhattan, the New York Public Library Executive Committee hired New York attorney Alanson T. Briggs to propose the sites and act as agent for the library. After identifying the densely populated

neighborhoods, he looked for centrally located sites in these neighborhoods. George L. Rives, Secretary of the New York Public Library, described the philosophy behind site selection in 1901:

The Trustees are of the opinion that in establishing branch libraries it is of great importance to establish them, as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well frequented streets. In some measure the same principles should be applied that would govern in the selection of a site for a retail store. The fact that a branch library is constantly before the eyes of the neighboring residents so that all are familiar with its location will undoubtedly tend to increase its usefulness.¹³

The Muhlenberg Branch was intended to serve the area from 14th to 34th Streets and Seventh Avenue to the Hudson River. A 1901 letter to John S. Billings stated that it

would greatly inure to the personal comfort of residents of that section, and also would have the effect of altering social conditions in those neighborhoods.¹⁴

The library was built next to the large YMCA building (1902-04) and directly to the south of the YMCA dormitory, which fronted on 24th Street. It was the policy of the Carnegie Committee to locate branches near public buildings such as schools, baths, and social service centers, or such institutions as YM/YWCA's.¹⁵

The Muhlenberg site was acquired in three parcels for over \$61,000. The YMCA owned the western part of the site and sold it to the City for \$27,000. The eastern parcel was bought from Lizzie E.C. Kempton for \$25,000 and the rear plot was acquired by condemnation for \$9,317.37.¹⁶ The existing buildings on the site were demolished. The cost of the new library building was approximately \$80,000.

The library opened on February 19, 1906. It was the eleventh Carnegie library built in Manhattan and the twenty-eighth to be built in New York City. The library was known as the Muhlenberg branch from its opening. It might have been named after William Augustus Muhlenberg (1796-1877), the first rector of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion at Sixth Avenue and 20th Street, home of the first boy choir in America and the first Sisterhood in the Anglican Communion. He was a religious activist who was also responsible for the opening of St. Luke's Hospital on Fifth Avenue.¹⁷

Design

The New York City Carnegie branch libraries share many design characteristics and are clearly recognizable as Carnegie libraries. They are separate and distinct structures, an innovation in 1901 when most of the branch libraries were located in other buildings. Each is classical in style, being a simplified version of the Beaux-Arts model. Architects preferred the classical style because it was the recognized style for public buildings in this period. They are clad in limestone, or in brick with limestone trim. There are two distinct types, the urban and the suburban. The suburban branch is sited in the less densely built-up areas of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island and Queens. It is freestanding, one-to-two-stories high, located on a corner, and set back from the street on a lawn. The urban branch is located in densely populated Manhattan and sections of the Bronx. It is vertically oriented, sited on mid-block with buildings on both sides, and built to the building line.

The Muhlenberg Branch embodies the major characteristics of the urban branches. It is located in mid-block, in a prominent position on a busy cross street. The three-story, three-bay library building is faced in limestone, with large arched and rectangular windows. The entrance is at the side bay, like nearly all three-bay urban Carnegie libraries. The building is typically classical in style, with a prominent modillioned cornice topped by a parapet with the words "New York Public Library" carved in the stone. The use of smooth limestone facades with first floor arched windows is a characteristic of both Carrère & Hastings and Babb, Cook & Willard Carnegie libraries, illustrating the collaboration of the architects through the architects' committee.

The architects' committee drew up the plans of the Carnegie libraries in partnership with the librarians. The librarians met with the committee at the beginning of the process and commented on the final plans. The plans featured accessible stacks, a central librarian's desk, and light, spacious, reading rooms, all innovations at the time. The Muhlenberg Branch followed this scheme, with a rectangular layout, rooms filled with natural light, adults' reading room on the first floor, children's reading room on the second floor, an auditorium on the third floor and a custodian's apartment in the rear penthouse. The books were located in freestanding shelves accessible to the public. The architecture critic Russell Sturgis, described a similar branch (Tompkins Square) in 1905 as practical, with a great deal of daylight in the reading rooms.¹⁸

Subsequent History

The Muhlenberg Branch has continuously operated as a library since its opening in 1906 and has been an important community institution, as originally intended. Today, the library maintains reference collections on the history of Chelsea and on the local fashion industry. The building was recently renovated by R.M. Kliment & Frances Halsband Architects.

The library is remarkably intact but has undergone some alterations over the years. The front steps were removed in 1920, along with the iron pipe rail fence in front of the building. The vestibule was altered at that time. The two basement windows were filled in with granite to match the base, possibly during the same renovation. The door and windows have been replaced. A brick elevator bulkhead was added to the east side of the roof.¹⁹

Description

The Muhlenberg Branch Library is a three-story, three-bay masonry structure with a rectangular plan. The Classical Revival style building is faced in Bedford Indiana limestone with a Milford Maine granite base. Located in the middle of the block on busy, two-way West 23rd Street, it is adjacent to the YMCA.

The arched entrance doorway, located at the eastern side of the façade, is treated in the same manner as the two first floor windows. The three openings are arched, with decorative keystones. Replacement painted steel double doors are set below a six-light transom, also non-historic. The first floor windows have arched, twelve-light painted steel casement replacement sash. Four-sided bronze lanterns with foliated brackets flank the doorway. A bronze pineapple crowns each lantern and "New York Public Library" is etched into the glass panels. This type of projecting lantern graced nearly all of the Manhattan Carnegie libraries. There is a period bronze Carnegie Library plaque to the left of the entrance.

The first floor is set apart from the upper floors by a molded stone cornice with a decorative circle-and-sheaf frieze broken by the keystones. Pedimented stone enframements surround the tall rectangular second floor windows. The pediments are supported by foliated brackets with swags. There is a foliated-circle frieze below the pediments and shallow stone panels below the sash. A slightly projecting sill above the first floor cornice runs the width of the façade. The shorter rectangular third floor windows have a simpler stone surround with bracketed sills and eared lintels. The upper floor windows have replacement, double-hung

wooden sash with fixed transoms and wooden mullions separating the sash.

A projecting stone cornice is composed of foliated modillions, a row of dentils, and a decorative frieze in a Greek fret pattern with a slim molded stone band below. Like the first floor, the third floor windows pierce the cornice frieze. This gives the impression of a façade composed of four pilasters rising from the first floor cornice to Greek-key capitals. The stone parapet above the cornice reinforces this design with slightly projecting panels at both ends. The parapet is incised in the center section with "THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY."

A non-historic brick elevator bulkhead has been added to the east side of the roof. A replacement aluminum flag pole is attached to the second floor façade between the two easternmost windows. A modern banner is attached to the façade at the first and second floors between the two easternmost windows.

The secondary east façade is brick, with one window each on the second and third floors in the center of the façade, just to the south of the chimney. The sash is 12-light casement.

Report by
Mary Dierickx, Consultant

NOTES

1. This section on Chelsea was derived from: Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 578-579, 1025-1027; the Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Pantheon Books, reprint, 1982, originally published 1939) 122-124; Kenneth T. Jackson, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1995) 1190; Andrew Roth, *Infamous Manhattan* (New York: Citadel Press, Carol Publishing Group, 1996) 199-201, 231; I.N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan, 1498-1909* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1918-28) v. 5; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Chelsea Historic District Extension Designation Report*, (New York: City of New York, 1981).
2. Moore's authorship of "A Visit From St. Nicholas" has recently been questioned by scholars, but he published the poem and is inextricably connected to it.
3. This section on Manhattan libraries also appears in Landmarks Preservation Commission, *New York Public Library, Tompkins Square Branch Designation Report* (New York: City of New York, 1999), prepared by Mary B. Dierickx (LP-1998). The section is based on Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy, The Carnegie Libraries of New York City* (New York: Cooper Union and NYC Department of General Services, 1996) 21-24, *The Encyclopedia of New York City* 667-670, Landmarks Preservation Commission, *New York Public Library, Aguilar Branch Designation Report*, (New York: City of New York, 1996), prepared by Joseph C. Brooks (LP-1837), and Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: A History of its Founding and Early Years* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1973) 209-247.
4. Dain, p. 215.
5. Harry Miller Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library* (New York, 1923) 241.
6. This section on The New York Public Library and Andrew Carnegie is adapted from Mary Dierickx 19-43 with additional information from Dain, p. 209-247; Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1917); Landmarks Preservation Commission, *The New York Public Library, Tottenville Branch Designation Report* (New York: City of New York, 1991), prepared by David M. Breiner (LP-1867) and Landmarks Preservation Commission, *The New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch Designation Report* (New York: City of New York, 1998), prepared by Donald G. Presa (LP-1996).

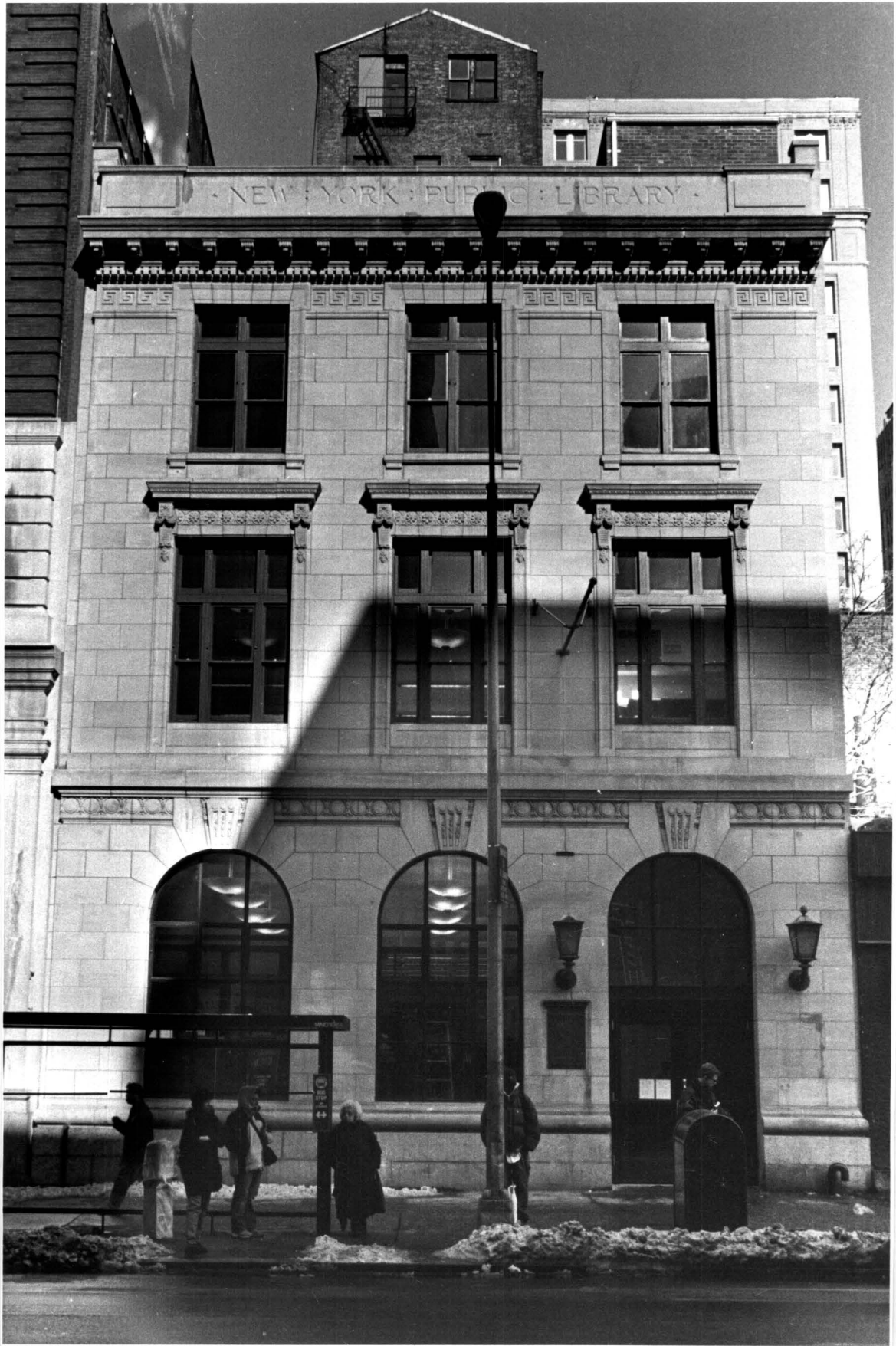
7. The original 1901 agreement called for sixty-five libraries but in 1902 the estimated cost per branch was lowered and the total number was optimistically established as a maximum of seventy-three. Because of rising costs the number of branches totaled just two more than the original sixty-five. See Dierickx for more details.
8. Andrew Carnegie, letter to John Shaw Billings, Director of The New York Public Library, March 12, 1901, in the "Brooklyn Collection" Brooklyn Public Library.
9. Carrere & Hastings designed fourteen of the thirty-nine Carnegie branches, McKim, Mead & White designed twelve, and Babb, Cook & Willard designed eight. Their successor firms, Babb, Cook & Welch, Cook, Babb & Welch, and Cook & Welch designed another three. James Brown Lord designed the first Carnegie library, the Yorkville branch, but this was actually planned before the grant was given, and Herts & Tallant were responsible for the major renovation of the Aguilar branch, which they originally designed in 1899.
10. This section was adapted from *Tottenville Designation Report, op. cit.*, with additional information from Channing Blake, "Carrere & Hastings" in Adolf Placzek, ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Free Press, 1982) p. 387-88; "The Works of Messrs. Carrere & Hastings," *Architectural Record* 27 (January, 1910) p. 1-120; David Gray, *The Architecture of Thomas Hastings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933); "John Mervin Carrere Obituary," *New York Times*, March 2, 1911, p. 9; Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessy & Ingalls, 1970) p. 109-110; 269-271.
11. Robert A.M. Stern, et. al., *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987) p. 325-29.
12. John S. Billings, letter to Andrew Carnegie, November 9, 1901, NYPL Collection, NYPL Archives.
13. NYPL Executive Committee Minutes as quoted in Dain, 237.
14. M. Dougall Hawkes, Esq. letter to John S. Billings, August 19, 1901, NYPL Archives, Carnegie Libraries, RG6, Business Office, Muhlenberg Folder #2.
15. Dierickx, p. 27.
16. NYC Department of Finance, *Real Estate Owned by the City of New York Under the Jurisdiction of the Presidents of the Boroughs* (New York: City of New York, 1908). The original plan was for the NYPL to purchase the YMCA dormitory site on 24th Street and trade for the site on 23rd Street, but apparently this did not happen and the NYPL bought the 23rd Street site from the YMCA. Letters from A.T. Briggs in NYPL Archives, Carnegie Libraries, RG5, Box 6, A.T Briggs, Folder 1.
17. Encyclopedia of NY, p. 780, WPA Guide, p. 153.
18. Russell Sturgis, "The Carnegie Libraries in New York City" in *Architectural Record*, 18 (March, 1905) 237-246.
19. NYC Department of Buildings *Block & Lot Folders*, located at the NYC Archives:
 - Alt286/20 – "Removal of present entrance steps projecting beyond building line and of the present area railings. The installing of vault lights, flush sidewalk lift door, and sidewalk construction over present area. The installing of new entrance vestibule steps inside of present vestibule and the cutting of new opening in cellar wall where shown." Eugene Cotter, architect
 - Elev329/55 - install dumbwaiter
 - Alt982/54 – new plumbing throughout building including 4th floor custodian's quarters
 NYPL Archives, Carnegie Libraries, RG6, Business Office, Building Plans, Specifications & Maintenance, Box 9, "Muhlenberg 1920-68 Folder":
 - 1920 – work includes iron window grilles at 1st floor, entrance steps and vestibule flooring, installation of new granite steps, marble wainscot and steps in vestibule, wiring and new fixtures in 3rd floor auditorium
 - 1956 - \$93,965 expended for general construction, plumbing, heating, and electrical
 - 1941 – electrical work

Findings and Designation

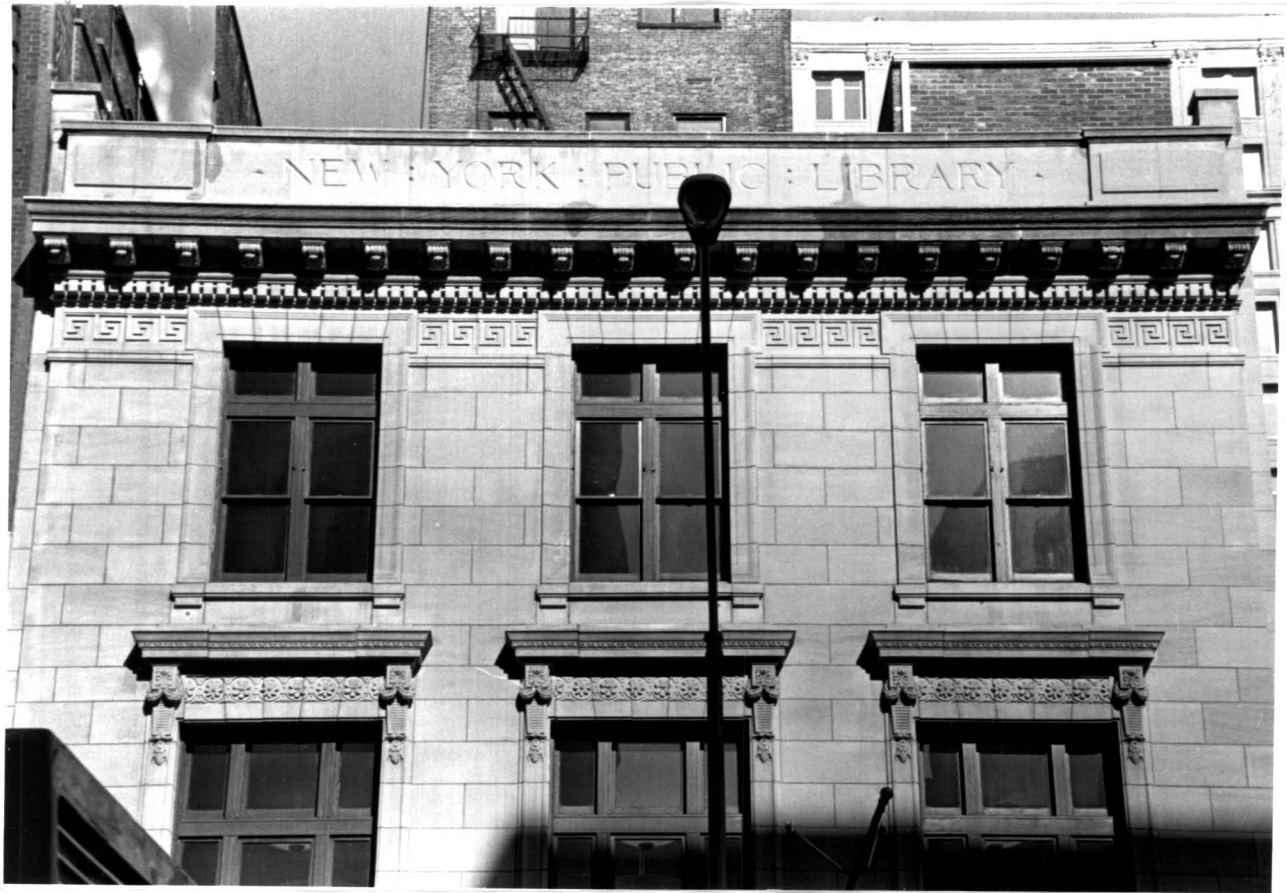
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that The New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch, has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, The New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch, was built in 1906; that it was the eleventh Carnegie library built in Manhattan and the twenty-eight of sixty-seven libraries built with funds provided by the \$5.2 million gift from Andrew Carnegie to New York City for the purpose of establishing a city-wide branch library system; that it was designed by the prestigious and influential architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings; that the classically-inspired style that was the hallmark of the firm's library designs as well as a major characteristic of New York City's Carnegie libraries and other public buildings of the period is articulated through the symmetrical composition, arched and rectangular door and window openings marked by such classical ornament as carved keystones and pediments, modillioned cornice, parapet with "New York Public Library" carved in the stone, and other features; that it is characteristically sited in mid-block; that the Muhlenberg Branch has been culturally, visually, and historically an important component of its community for more than ninety years which was the original intent for the Carnegie branches; and that the exterior of the building has retained its significant architectural characteristics.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark The New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch, 209-211 West 23rd Street, Manhattan, and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 773, Lot 38, as its Landmark Site.



New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch
209-211 West 23rd Street, Manhattan
Photo: Carl Forster



New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch
Window and stone details
Photos: Carl Forster





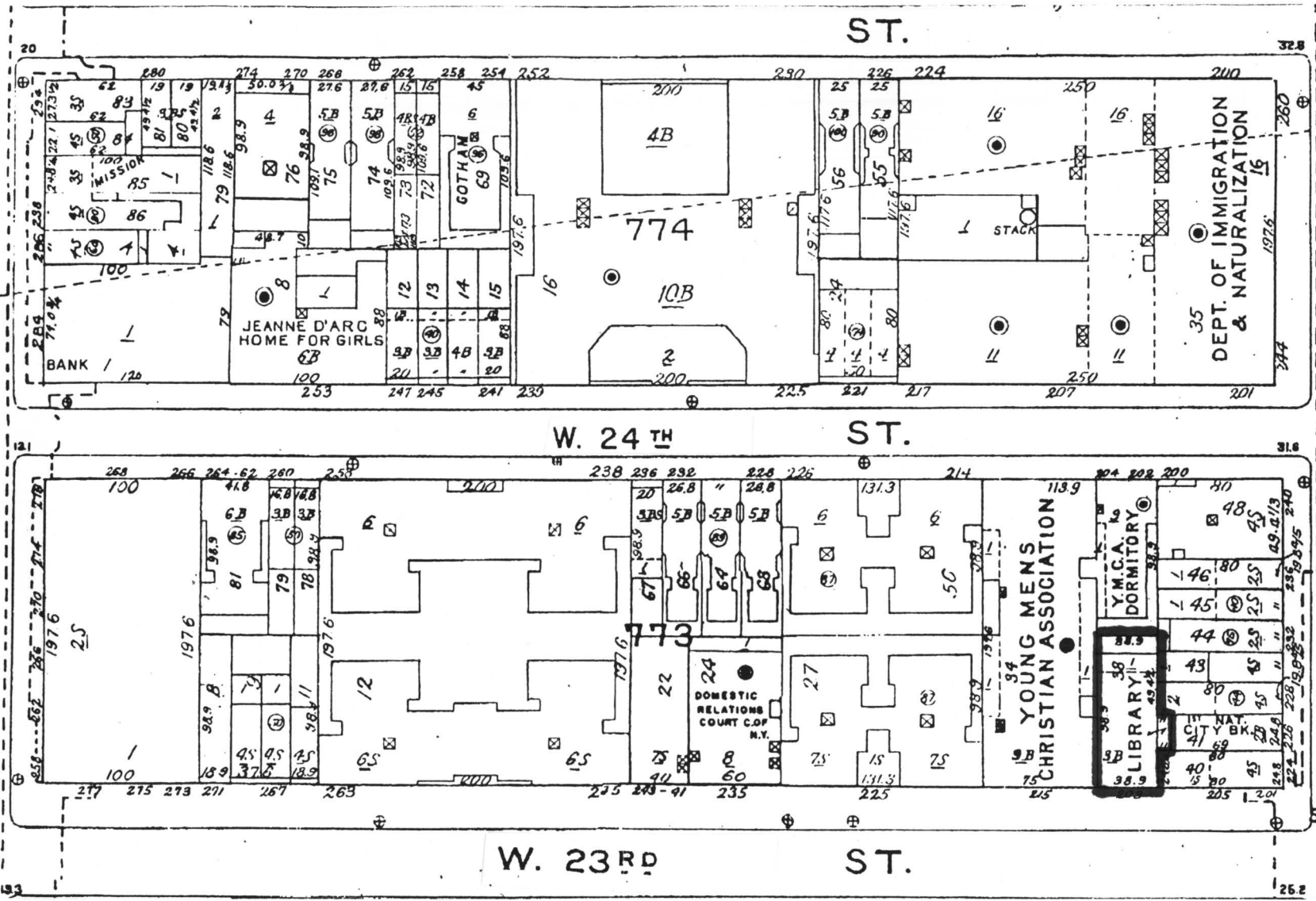
New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch
Ground story details, doorway and light fixture
Photos: Carl Forster



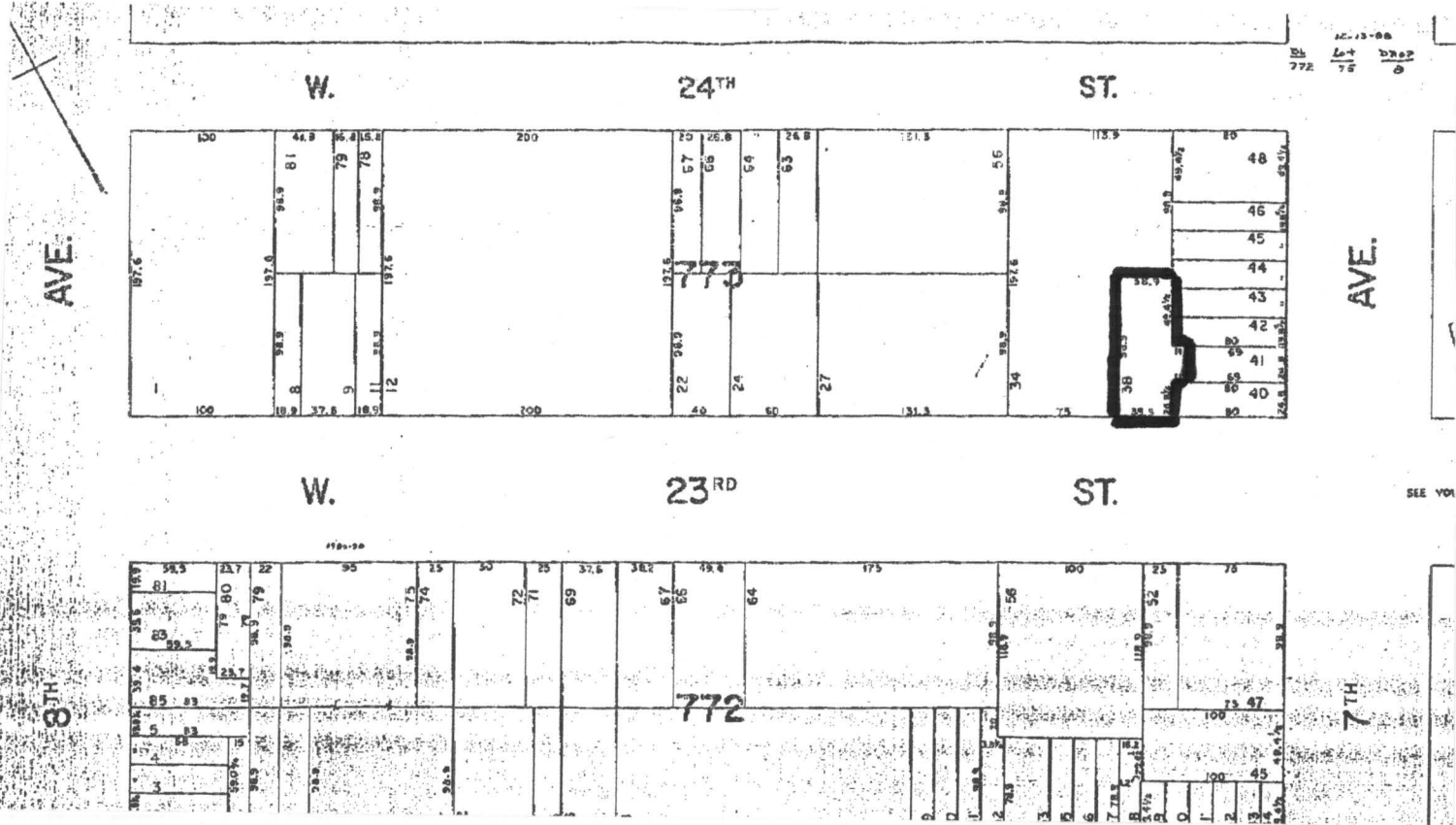
New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch
Details, window and plaque
Photos: Carl Forster

SUBWAY
EIGHTH AVE.

SEVENTH AVE.



New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch
209-211 West 23rd Street, Manhattan
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 773, Lot 38
Source: Sanborn Manhattan Landbook, 1999-2000



New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch
 209-211 West 23rd Street, Manhattan
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 773, Lot 38
 Source: New York City Department of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map