

**NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL**, 48-01 90<sup>th</sup> Street, aka 48-02 91<sup>st</sup> Street, Non-Addressable Building Frontage on 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and 90-14 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Borough of Queens. Built 1920-21, architect C.B.J. Snyder; additions 1930-31, architect Walter C. Martin and 1956-58, architects Maurice Salo & Associates.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 1849, Lot 1.

On February 4, 2003, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of Newtown High School, and the proposed designation of the related landmark site (Item No. 2). The hearing was duly advertised according to the provisions of law. Three people testified in favor of the designation, including representatives of the Department of Education, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Historic Districts Council. There was no testimony in opposition to the designation. The Commission held previous public hearings on the proposed designation on November 18, 1980 (LP-1232) and July 10, 1990 (LP-1797).

#### Summary

Newtown High School, one of Elmhurst's and Queen's most prominent buildings, is a reminder of the long history of commitment and dedication to public education by the people of Queens and New York City. The school is the result of several building campaigns, which began with the construction of a small, wooden school house in 1866 to serve children from the Village of Newtown and the surrounding farms. The school's first expansion took place in 1898-1900, when a much larger, brick building, designed by the architectural firm Boring & Tilton, was added to the site. The school accommodated both grammar and high school students until 1910, when the lower grades were moved out and this facility was renamed Newtown High School, in honor of Elmhurst's historic name. The 1866 and 1898-1900 buildings were subsequently demolished. As Elmhurst's population grew in the early twentieth century, Newtown High School needed to expand. In 1917-18, C.B.J. Snyder, the noted Superintendent of School Buildings for the Board of Education, designed an impressive Flemish Renaissance Revival-style addition to the school, which featured stepped gables and a dramatic 169-foot, centrally-placed tower topped by a cupola and turrets. Snyder's choice of the Flemish Renaissance Revival style showed his awareness of New York's, and particularly Elmhurst's, beginning as a Dutch colony, as well as his respect for Boring & Tilton's turn-of-the-century Flemish Renaissance Revival-style design. It is one of a handful of public schools in New York City executed in this style. The start of construction was delayed until 1920 by the First World War, a fire that destroyed the first set of blueprints, and problems with the contractor. The new wing opened in September 1921. Two handsome, but more simply-designed Flemish Renaissance Revival-style wings, designed by Walter C. Martin, were constructed in 1930-31. In 1956-58, Boring & Tilton's turn-of-the-century wing was replaced by an International Style addition, designed by the Manhattan architectural firm Maurice Salo & Associates. The remarkably intact Newtown High School now serves a diverse body of 4,500 students and more than 200 teachers.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Public High Schools in Greater New York<sup>1</sup>

At the turn of the century, a unified public educational system, including secondary schools, was created in New York City from numerous independently administered school districts, which had a variety of curricula, grade divisions, educational policies, and standards for personnel selection. Several individuals and factors were responsible for developing this system: education reformers, such as Nicholas Murray Butler, whose efforts culminated in the School Reform Law of 1896; the consolidation of New York City in 1898; and the city charter revision of 1901.

Prior to this time, New York City did not have any full-time public high schools, although some courses, including "manual training" (such as cooking, sewing, and woodworking), were offered in evening high schools beginning in the late 1880s. In contrast, the City of Brooklyn opened Central Grammar School in 1878 with two additional grades above the sixth (in 1891, it launched two separate schools, Boys' High and Girls' High); it organized the Manual Training High School in 1893; and Erasmus Hall Academy, established in 1786, became Erasmus Hall High School in 1896. High school courses were also offered in several early Staten Island schools. Some sections of Queens County also opened high schools in the nineteenth century: Flushing in 1875 and Long Island City in 1889. Elmhurst, however, did not get a separate high school until 1910.

Faced with a tremendous shortage of school buildings, the Board of Education embarked on a vast program of school construction after consolidation. The need was exacerbated by the Compulsory Education Law of 1894, which mandated school attendance until age fourteen, and the huge increase in immigration at the end of the nineteenth century (between 1900 and 1910 alone the city's population grew by nearly 39 percent).<sup>2</sup> Plans made to construct the first four new high school buildings -- a girls' school and a boys' school, both in Manhattan, a school in the Bronx, and, at a future date, a manual training school in Manhattan -- culminated in Wadleigh High School for Girls (1901-02), 215 West 114th Street, Manhattan; DeWitt Clinton High School (1903-05), 899 Tenth Avenue; Morris High School (1900-04), East 166th Street and Boston Road, the Bronx; and Stuyvesant High School (1905-07), 345 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan.<sup>3</sup>

### Early History of Elmhurst, Queens, and Newtown High School<sup>4</sup>

At the time of the consolidation of Greater New York in 1898, the three westernmost townships of Queens County - Jamaica, Flushing, and Newtown (now Elmhurst) - voted to become part of New York City. The

remaining towns formed Nassau County. Newtown, which bordered the East River and lay closest to Manhattan, was settled by the Dutch in 1640 and incorporated in 1652. By 1790, its population hovered around 2,000. It remained mainly an agricultural community through the mid-nineteenth century, producing vegetables and fruits for the growing urban markets in Long Island City, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. By 1850, Newtown's population had increased to approximately 7,000.

The site of Newtown High School has been in educational use since at least 1866, when the Newtown School District decided to replace its existing school house, which had room for only 170 of the township's 520 school-aged children. The new school was a two-story, six-classroom building with room for 400 students from the Village of Newtown and the surrounding farming community.<sup>5</sup>

Growth in Newtown continued for the rest of the nineteenth century, spurred by the extension of railroads and street railways throughout Queens County. Real estate developers, such as the Cord Meyer Development Company, one of Queens' major homebuilders, started buying tracts of farmland on the outskirts of the village, hoping to capitalize on Newtown's proximity to Manhattan and Brooklyn. In 1896, Cord Meyer renamed the area Elmhurst, an allusion to the large number of elm trees in the area.

By 1896, Newtown's existing forty-year-old school building was inadequate and plans were made for its expansion. After considering a number of proposals, the Newtown School Board picked a design drawn by the New York architectural firm of Boring & Tilton, consisting of a three-story stone-and-brick building which, when joined to the older wood schoolhouse, would provide seating for 800 students. In 1897, eight adjoining lots were purchased and the existing school was moved to a new foundation to make way for the new 65 by 156 foot edifice. Construction began in early 1898, but was delayed when problems arose with the costs of construction and the performance of the contractor, which were further complicated by the takeover of the project by the expanded Board of Education of the City of New York following the political consolidation of the five boroughs. The new wing was finally opened on May 4, 1900.

Within only a few years, however, the community rapidly outgrew the expanded facility, which housed both elementary and high school students. In 1910, the Board of Education transferred the lower grade students to a newly constructed elementary school nearby and designated the existing school building as a high school named Newtown, after the area's historic name.<sup>6</sup>

Newtown High School's student body continued to increase along with the population of the community. Additional development in Elmhurst was stimulated by improvements in transportation during the 1910s, which included the construction of another Long Island Railroad station, the enhancement of trolley service, new elevated train service above Roosevelt Avenue, and the opening of Queens Boulevard. By the start of the First World War, plans were being made for a further expansion of the school.

#### C.B.J. Snyder's Addition of 1920-21<sup>7</sup>

The Board of Education had considered an enlargement of Newtown High School as early as 1912. The enormous growth in the population of greater Elmhurst produced a 21.7 % increase in Newtown High School's registration in one year. By 1916, the school was grossly overcrowded, having exceeded its capacity to such an extent that several classes were conducted in closets and cloakrooms, as well as in borrowed space in a nearby elementary school.<sup>8</sup> That spring, the Board authorized \$400,000 for an addition to the school, which would be built on the adjacent lots purchased in 1909 for use as a schoolyard, as well as on the site of the original 1866 school building, which would be moved again to another part of the complex.<sup>9</sup> The initial design for the addition called for a tower-less, Flemish Renaissance Revival facade that would continue the overall articulation and appearance of Boring & Tilton's existing design from 1898-1900, which was distinguished by three centrally placed stepped gables and projecting end pavilions with hipped roofs. However, the proposal was soon revised and refined, the updated design retained the Flemish influence of the existing wing, but focused on a dramatic, 169-foot centrally-placed tower topped by a cupola and turrets. The city's Art Commission gave preliminary approval to the design in March 1917, and the Board of Education's architects, led by C.B.J. Snyder, began preparing the working drawings.<sup>10</sup>

Snyder's choice of the Flemish Renaissance style showed his awareness of New York's, and particularly Elmhurst's, beginnings as a Dutch colony, as well as his respect for Boring & Tilton's turn-of-the-century design. Starting in the late nineteenth century, architects in the New York City area incorporated Dutch-inspired motifs into their work, referring to the Dutch colonial history of the greater New York area. Interest in colonial design was also expanding throughout the United States. In New York, residential buildings, churches, carriage houses, skyscrapers, fire houses, and other buildings were constructed with Dutch-inspired features, such as stepped gables, flared eaves, and other Flemish motifs.<sup>11</sup> One of the leading architectural firms of the period, McKim, Mead & White, is generally credited with the

introduction of the Dutch Renaissance Revival in New York City in the Goelet Brothers Offices (1885, demolished) on West 17<sup>th</sup> Street near Fifth Avenue, and in a row of five brick-fronted private houses on West End Avenue and 83<sup>rd</sup> Street (1885, demolished). Snyder had earlier employed the style in his design of DeWitt Clinton High School (1904-06, altered; 899 Tenth Avenue, Manhattan).

In January 1918, the Board of Education realized that the original cost estimate for the addition to Newtown High School, the plans for which were nearly complete, was inadequate and allocated another \$160,000 to the project. In February, a fire in the drafting rooms in the Superintendent's office destroyed the entire set of over 225 sheets of drawings for the Newtown project.<sup>12</sup> It was a huge loss worth several thousand dollars and over a year of work. Copies had not yet been made, and a whole new set of plans had to be produced. In the meantime, congestion at Newtown High School had become acute, forcing the Board of Education to allocate funds for the construction of a temporary building to serve in the interim.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the price of building materials was increasing significantly due to wartime inflation. By the end of the year, the cost of the entire project had risen to \$700,000.

The replacement plans were completed in early spring of 1919, and were given final approval in April by the Art Commission, which found that the proposed buff and gray bricks, granite base, and light-colored terra-cotta trim will "match those of the present building as closely as possible."<sup>14</sup> The start of construction, however, was delayed because, during the bidding process, the lowest price quotes were far in excess of the Board of Education's estimate. Post-war economic inflation continued to be problematic; other school construction projects in the city were also delayed. After much wrangling between Snyder's office, the Board of Education, and the Board of Estimate, which had final say over the granting of construction contracts, a builder was chosen in January 1920. However, the contractor, Dennis E. Connors, reneged on the agreement before building started, claiming that the school could not be completed at the stated price. Thus, bids had to be taken again, and by the time a new contract was awarded to the T.A. Clarke Co. of Brooklyn in June 1920, the estimated price had risen to almost one million dollars. Ground was finally broken on July 1, and by the end of month, excavation of the new foundation and underpinning of the 1898-1900 wing were nearly complete. The cornerstone was laid to much fanfare on December 2, 1920.

The structure was constructed during the first two months of 1921, followed by the installation of electrical wiring in March, plumbing in May, duct work in June, and elevators in July. Finish work, such as the placement

of blackboards, shades, and furniture, took place in August, and the school opened in September 1921. Newtown High School's new wing included fifteen additional classrooms, five laboratories, a music room, a study hall, a lecture hall, two gymnasiums, offices, and an 1,100 seat auditorium named Dillingham Hall at the time of completion. Dr. James Darius Dillingham served as the school's principal from 1894 through the mid-1930s, and oversaw all of the school's expansions during that time. Newtown High School, with this enlargement, now accommodated 1,507 students and 68 faculty. The impressive Flemish Renaissance Revival-style school building with its stepped gables and dramatic tower became an immediate focal point in the Elmhurst community. Elmhurst's other designated New York City Landmarks are the Reformed Dutch Church of Newtown (85-15 Broadway), the Remsen Cemetery (69-43 Trotting Course Lane), the Edward E. Sanford House (107-45 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue) and the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Lodge Number 878 (82-10 Queens Boulevard).

#### The Architect: C.B.J. Snyder<sup>15</sup>

Charles B.J. Snyder (1860-1945), Superintendent of School Buildings, was the architect responsible for the planning, design, and construction of all new and expanded schools in the five boroughs after consolidation in 1898.<sup>16</sup> Appointed to this position in 1891, when he oversaw only Manhattan and the annexed district of the Bronx, Snyder remained in that post until 1923. Little is known of his background beyond his birth in Stillwater, N.Y., and his architectural study with William E. Bishop. He was first listed in New York City directories in 1886, and remained in practice until around 1936. A specialist in school design, Snyder was recognized as a national leader in this regard as early as 1905:

Possibly it was not the best, probably it was not the most economical, certainly it was not the most expeditious way to have all the school-houses the city stood in such sore need of designed and built by the official architect to the Department of Education. But, since that method had to be followed, it is a matter of wonderful good fortune that the official architect chanced to be such a man as is Mr. C.B.J. Snyder, who not only at the outset showed such distinct capacity for his task, but has proved himself a man able to grow as his opportunities opened before him. Mr. Wheelwright in Boston, Mr. Ittner in St. Louis, Mr. Mundie in Chicago, have done excellent service to their respective cities in the way of building school-houses...but they have not had

to do their work under the same sort of pressure that has been put upon Mr. Snyder, and they have not had to adapt their architectural treatment to as closely restricted sites.<sup>17</sup>

Snyder's achievement was particularly remarkable given the scale of new school construction in New York:

The magnitude of the undertaking and the reality of the need for these new school-houses is shown by the fact that, even after several years of active building, there are at this time seventy-seven school-houses in various stages of completeness now in charge of the architect to the Department of Education, while contracts for twenty-four more will shortly be made.<sup>18</sup>

Snyder's concern with health and safety issues in public schools focused on fire protection, ventilation, lighting, and classroom size. The problem of school design in New York was heightened by relatively constricted sites which were necessitated by the high cost of land acquisition. As a result, Snyder introduced the efficient "H-plan" having two side courts, which provided increased light and ventilation, as well as areas for safe recreation.<sup>19</sup> The use of steel skeleton framing for buildings over four stories high allowed for cheaper and faster construction, and an increased number of windows. Because of the need to produce so many buildings in such a short span of time, Snyder's office built upon the design and planning ideas of earlier schools as it produced new ones.

Embracing a variety of architectural styles, Snyder's schools were considered inventive, handsome, and appropriate as civic monuments. His earliest designs continued the Romanesque Revival style of George W. Debevoise, his predecessor as Superintendent of School Buildings, but Snyder later moved into other idioms, such as Jacobean, Flemish Renaissance, Colonial, and Beaux Arts, and he was credited with the introduction of the Collegiate Gothic style to New York public school architecture, a style which he successfully used for more than twenty years. Besides Newtown, Snyder chose the Flemish Renaissance Revival for a handful of other school buildings, the most important being DeWitt Clinton High School in Manhattan.

#### The Need for More Space: Newtown's Additions of 1930-31<sup>20</sup>

Growth in Elmhurst continued through the 1920s due in part to the opening of the Independent Subway (IND) line in Elmhurst with stops along Queens Boulevard in the early 1930s. This encouraged denser development in the form of six-story apartment houses and long rows of adjoining houses, as well as additional commercial and industrial development.

When Newtown High School opened its new wing



in 1921, the school was already at capacity. Within a few years its became evident that the school needed a further expansion. Preliminary plans, produced by Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings, were submitted to and approved by the Art Commission in October 1928. The proposal included two, four-story brick wings that echoed the design of the existing buildings. The Art Commission gave final approval in March 1929. In June, Martin submitted a revised design that eliminated the fourth story of the southeast wing.

In July 1929, the Board of Education budgeted 2.4 million dollars for the project, which included modifications to the wings built in 1898-1900 and 1919-21, as well as the demolition of the original 1866 building and the section built in 1919 as a temporary structure. The Board approved the design in October. In November, the Royal-Rice Construction Co., Inc., was awarded the contract.

Construction commenced in early 1930, but was delayed by the discovery of boulders on the site while the foundation was being excavated. After they were removed, progress was very rapid. Both wings were largely completed by the end of the year, and the students were admitted on February 2, 1931. The new wings, which provided the school with an additional 1,716 seats,<sup>21</sup> had thirty-five new classrooms, another gymnasium, and a variety of shops, art rooms, and specialty rooms, including one called the "girls' corrective training room." In addition, a bridge was built from the southeast wing to the auditorium.

#### Walter C. Martin<sup>22</sup>

Walter C. Martin assumed the position of Superintendent of School Buildings in 1928.<sup>23</sup> Prior to his appointment by the Board of Education, he designed many buildings in the Bronx in the 1910s and 1920s while in private practice, and served as the city's Tenement House Commissioner. As the Superintendent of School Buildings, he supervised the emergence of the "modernistic academic" style in New York City. The designs of the Seward Park High School in Manhattan (finished under Martin's supervision, 1928-29) and the Brooklyn Industrial High School for Girls (now the Sarah J. Hale High School, 1929-30) combined Art Deco-inspired ornamentation with modern classical elements. With the design of Herman Ridder Junior High School (the Bronx, 1931, a designated New York City Landmark), bolder steps were taken with the style; the modernistic elements were well-integrated with only lingering references to classical architecture.

Martin's designs for the Newtown High School additions were somewhat simplified echoes of the Flemish-inspired style of the earlier wings. He retained the stepped gables, the brick quoins, the splayed brick window lintels, and the elaborately-detailed

frontispieces, but eliminated the hipped, slate-covered roofs and gabled dormers. He substituted brick for granite at the foundations and topped the buildings with flat roofs that feature battlemented, brick parapets.

#### Later History<sup>24</sup>

Demographic changes followed the Second World War as Elmhurst evolved from an almost exclusively middle-class suburban community with a large Jewish and Italian population to one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the city. Beginning in 1948, the Board of Education embarked on an unprecedented capital campaign for the construction, expansion, and modernization of school facilities. By 1956, there were 250 projects completed, underway, or in the planning stages. Of these, two hundred were for new structures, including additions, which together would provide 200,000 new seats. According to the Board of Education,

Never before in the history of public education, anywhere in the world, was more education space provided or more money expended in so short a period<sup>25</sup>

Just about every neighborhood in the city benefitted from the effort, which altogether cost over a half billion dollars. There were so many projects in process that the Board had to contract out most of the design work to local architectural firms. In addition, the Board considered the design of these new schools to be a complete departure from their pre-war facilities. According to the Board,

the monumental concept of school design has just about disappeared. Brand new structures of simple lines, straightforward and unrestrained design have taken their place.<sup>26</sup>

Many of these new schools were low, sprawling buildings in campus-like settings. Other design departures included the use of modern materials, such as steel, concrete, aluminum, and glass, the lowering of ceiling heights, the reduction of stairways, and the use of elevators and escalators. Some of the major school designs during this period include the New York High School of Printing (West 49<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, Kelly & Gruzen), Public School 34 (730 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, Harrison & Abramovitz), and the East Queens High School (Hillside Avenue & 229<sup>th</sup> Street, Queens, Eggers & Higgins).

In early 1955, the modernization of Newtown High School was added to Board of Education's capital agenda. The Board determined that the oldest, existing wing of the school, built in 1898-1900, was deficient in a number of areas that could not be improved through renovation. So, it decided to construct a replacement

wing at a cost of 1.6 million dollars. The architectural firm of Maurice Salo & Associates of Manhattan was contracted to produce the new wing.<sup>27</sup> The firm's International Style design for the addition consisted of a four-story and basement brick block, fronted by a low pavilion faced in limestone, aluminum, and glass. The necessary approvals by the Art Commission, the Board of Education, and the Board of Estimate had been received by the end of 1955. In January 1956, the contractors, Frank E. Freeman, Inc., and the Mandel Bros. Construction Corp., were chosen.

The estimated date of completion, which was set for March 1957, had to be moved back several times. Initially, the builder encountered delays in obtaining the demolition permit for the existing wing. Then, a steelworkers strike caused another delay. This was followed by a fire at the construction site, and additional strikes at limestone quarries and pipe manufacturers, as well as by cement workers and mechanics. The wing was finally completed in February 1958.

By the 1980s, immigrants from 112 countries had settled in Elmhurst, including people from China, Colombia, Korea, India, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Pakistan, Peru, and Guyana. The present-day 4,500-student body and 200-teacher roster at Newtown High School reflect the presence of these ethnic groups.

### Description

*General Description of the Site* – Newtown High School occupies the entirety of its rectangular block. The brick building consists of four distinct sections that are reflective of the various building campaigns beginning in 1920. The main three-story section (1920-21), dominated by the tower, sits on the northern side of the block, and includes a raised basement, a dormered attic story, and a two-story auditorium wing. It is fronted by a landscaped lawn facing 90<sup>th</sup> Street. The northeast wing (1930-31) is rectangular in plan and has four stories above a raised basement. The southeast wing (1930-31) has an L-shaped plan and is three stories above a raised basement. The school's latest wing (1956-58) is located at the southwest corner of the block where the original school of 1898-1900 stood until it was demolished in 1956. This wing consists of a four-story and basement brick section that is set back from 90<sup>th</sup> Street and fronted by a one-story and basement pavilion constructed of limestone, aluminum, and glass. The complex has two courtyards. One is located on the south part of the block between the auditorium and two of the wings; it is not visible from the street. The other courtyard is located on the north side of the block between the auditorium and the northeast wing. It is visible from 91<sup>st</sup> Street. In addition, an enclosed brick bridge connects the auditorium to the southeast wing. The site is enclosed by

a wrought-iron fence. There are several non-historic installations common to all the facades. These include non-historic security lights and electrical conduits, non-historic security grilles at the basement and first-story windows, and non-historic applied signs. In addition, most of the windows have non-historic, aluminum, multi-pane sash, ranging from four-over-four at the smaller openings to sixteen-over-sixteen at the larger windows. The dormers have non-historic, single-pane, aluminum casements.

*The Main Building (1920-21)* – The main facade, facing 90<sup>th</sup> Street, is divided horizontally into six wide bays, including the projecting, five-story tower. Each bay contains windows arranged in groups of five or six. The foundation consists of rock-faced granite ashlar topped by a smooth stone water table. The facade has projecting window sills on the first and second floors, a denticulated band at the level of the third-story window sills, and brick quoins surrounding the windows and at the corners. The third story is topped by a bracketed, terra-cotta cornice. The attic story features stepped gables, hipped roofs covered with slate tiles and copper flashing, and gabled dormers featuring flared eaves and open pediments. Historic, copper leaders drain the roof.

The main entryway sits at the base of the tower. It is approached via an elaborate, tripartite, terra-cotta portico, featuring granite steps, arched openings, flat pilasters, architraves, and scrolled keystones. The platform of the portico is paved with brick and ceramic tiles. The portico is topped by a scrolled pediment, cartouches, coats-of-arms, incised lettering spelling out "Newtown High School," and a surmounting balustrade topped with urns. The vaulted ceiling of the portico is outlined with terra-cotta tiles. The doorways are topped by lunettes featuring elaborate terra-cotta tilework. The tower features cornices with corbeled brackets; turrets with conical roofs; stepped gables with multi-pane fanlights; a slate-tile-covered, concave mansard roof with gabled dormer and copper flashing; balustrades with urns; a lantern with arched openings; and a domed cupola with surmounting turret.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue facade is three bays wide with grouped fenestration. Articulated and detailed similarly to the 90<sup>th</sup> Street facade, it features an elaborate secondary entryway at street level that is characterized by a tripartite, terra-cotta frontispiece with detailing that is similar to the main portico on 90<sup>th</sup> Street. The central doorway is topped by a multi-pane fanlight and the central cartouche has inscribed lettering spelling out "Boys."

The rear elevation, which is partially visible through the north courtyard from 91<sup>st</sup> Street, is a full four stories above a raised basement. It features a rock-faced granite ashlar foundation, grouped fenestration, projecting window sills, brick quoins around the windows, and a

battlemented roof parapet. This elevation has non-historic glass block at the first-story windows, and non-historic, one-over-one aluminum sash at the fourth story.

The brick auditorium wing, which is located on the eastern side of the block along 91<sup>st</sup> Street, is two-and-a-half stories above a raised basement. It is constructed of rock-faced granite ashlar and is topped by a slate-tile-covered hipped roof with dormers. The north facade, which is eight bays and has brick quoins at the corner, contains the tall, auditorium windows at the first story. They consist of paired, double-hung sash, sitting within a series of relieving arches that are surrounded by brick quoins and topped by tympani with terra-cotta borders of blue tiles and a central festoon. A denticulated bandcourse sits at the level of the second-story window sills. The second-story windows also contain paired sash and brick quoins, and are topped by splayed, brick lintels in a continuous band. The second story is topped by a bracketed, terra-cotta cornice. The gabled roof dormers feature flared eaves and open pediments, and the roof is flashed with copper. A one-story, angled entry pavilion to the auditorium sits in the courtyard. Built of terra cotta, it features recessed doorways, terra-cotta panels with swags, an elaborate terra-cotta tympanum with a scrolled keystone above the main bank of doors, and a surmounting scrolled pediment with a central cartouche.

The east facade of the auditorium wing, which faces 91<sup>st</sup> Street, is distinguished by the projecting central pavilion with a stepped gable flanked by stone urns on podiums. There is an elaborate, street-level auditorium entryway, which extends into the first story and consists of a terra-cotta frontispiece with an arched doorway surrounded by a molded architrave, a scrolled keystone, decorative ribbon, a scrolled pediment with supporting brackets, and a central cartouche with a surmounting turret. There is an arched window with a multi-paned fanlight at the first-floor level above the frontispiece, and arched windows with terra-cotta tympani flank the central pavilion. At the second story, the pavilion has a centrally-placed window with paired sash flanked by single-sash windows. The central pavilion is flanked by paired fenestration. There are also windows on the return walls of the pavilion at the level of the second story. The gable has a single, arched window with a terra-cotta tympanum, and the roof features gabled dormers. The ornamentation of this facade is similar to the others.

The south facade of the auditorium wing is similar to the north facade, except that the westernmost bays are obscured by mechanical equipment and the school's projecting brick chimney, while the second bay from the southeast corner contains the bridge to the 1930-31 wing of the school.

*The Northeast Wing (1930-31)* – The brick northeast wing, which sits at the corner of 91<sup>st</sup> Street and 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue, is four stories above a raised basement and has

a one-story, setback roof pavilion. The 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue facade contains four bays, three of which have grouped fenestration, the fourth of which contains a street-level entryway and stairwell windows. The foundation is built of brick and is topped by a smooth, terra-cotta water table. The windows have brick quoins and splayed brick lintels. There is a denticulated bandcourse at the level of the fourth story sills. The roof features a battlemented parapet, while the roof pavilion has plain brick walls and a modest, copper cornice.

The five-bay, 91<sup>st</sup> Street facade, has fenestration only at the center bay; the other bays are delineated by shallow brick piers. Its ornamentation is similar to the 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue facade. An elaborate entryway, similar to the auditorium entryway on 91<sup>st</sup> Street, is located at ground level and extends into the first story. The four-bay south facade, which faces the courtyard, is similar to the 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue facade.

*The Southeast Wing (1930-31)* – The brick southeast wing is an L-shaped building located at the corner of 91<sup>st</sup> Street and 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It is three stories high above a raised basement with an areaway. The 91<sup>st</sup> Street facade has nine bays; the end bays project slightly and are topped by stepped gables. The foundation is brick and is topped by a smooth stone water table. The facade features grouped or paired fenestration with projecting sills, splayed brick lintels, and brick quoins. The third-story sills sit in a denticulated band. At the end bays, the central pair of windows is topped by tympani extending into the gables and containing terra-cotta swags. The end bays also feature denticulated moldings above the third story. The center section of this facade is topped by a brick roof parapet with a surmounting dentil course.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue facade has four bays and ornament that is similar to the 91<sup>st</sup> Street facade. The easternmost bay is not fenestrated above the basement. The remaining three bays are comprised of two sections of grouped fenestration flanking a narrower central section containing an entryway, the stairwell windows, and a surmounting stepped gable. An elaborate entryway, similar to the auditorium entryway on 91<sup>st</sup> Street, extends from ground level to the first story. The facade is topped by a battlemented roof parapet. An enclosed, brick bridge, which arches above the alleyway to the south courtyard, leads from the second floor to the auditorium.

*The 1956-58 Wing* – This wing sits at the southwest corner of the site at the intersection of 90<sup>th</sup> Street and 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It is comprised of a one-story and basement, curtain-walled pavilion along 90<sup>th</sup> Street and a four-story-and-basement brick section that is set back behind the pavilion. Along 90<sup>th</sup> Street, the limestone, aluminum, and glass pavilion features a grid of eight bays, separated by limestone piers, that are further broken down by windows grouped into fours. The

spandrels contain grooved aluminum panels. The roof has an aluminum railing at its perimeter. The pavilion turns the corner onto 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue where the gridded curtain wall continues for three bays. The brick facade on 90<sup>th</sup> Street has eight bays with grouped fenestration, and is topped by a brick parapet. The brick facade on 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue has three bays, one of which is a gridded curtain wall similar to the lower pavilion. The 50<sup>th</sup> Avenue facade also contains a secondary entryway at

ground level and a brick roof parapet. A brick penthouse is setback on the roof.

Report prepared by  
Donald Presa  
Research Department

### NOTES

1. This section is based on the following: New York City, Bd. of Education, *The First Fifty Years: A Brief Review of Progress, 1898-1948* (New York: [1948]), 2-20; Gary Hermelyn, *Morris High School and the Creation of the New York City Public High School System* (New York: Bronx Co. Historical. Soc., 1995); and Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), public school files.
2. NYC, Bd. of Education, *New York City School Buildings 1806-1956* (New York: Bd. of Ed., 1956), 34.
3. Of these, Wadleigh and Stuyvesant are designated New York City Landmarks, and Morris is located within the Morris High School Historic District; its auditorium is also a designated New York City Interior Landmark.
4. This section is based on the following sources: "History of Newtown High School," from the Newtown High School Home Page, 2003; "How Elmhurst Got Its Name Told by Frederick Reiner," *The Queens Ledger*, March 27, 1942; LPC, *102-45 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue House* (LP-1292), (New York, 1987); *New York Newsday* (Nov. 12, 1989); "Plans For School at Newtown - October 9, 1866," typed manuscript of the Newtown School District; James Riker, Jr. *The Annals of Newtown in Queens County, New York* (New York: D. Fanshaw, 1852), 258; and Vincent A. Seyfried, *Elmhurst: From Town Seat to Mega Suburb*, published by Vincent A. Seyfried, 1995, pp. 93-125, 137-147.
5. A 400 pupil-sized facility would be considered adequate because, according to the school board, not every school-aged child was expected to attend.
6. Because of its location near the many farms that existed in central Queens at the time, Newtown High School was the city's first academic school to offer courses in agriculture. A separate agricultural school was opened nearby in 1942.
7. This section is based on the following: *Atlas of the Borough of Queens, City of New York* (New York: E. Belcher Hyde, 1929), v. 2A, pl. 5; City of New York, Art Commission, "Newtown High School Addition," applications and records, 1916-1919; "History of Newtown High School," (2003); *Journal of the Board of Education of the City of New York* (New York: Board of Education, 1916), 371-72, 432, 970; (1917), 1142, 2079; (1918), 61, 63, 380, 1105, 1416, 1663; (1919), 95, 1235, 1314-16, 1786, 2128; (1920), 35, 152, 358, 749-50, 919, 1172, 1489-90, 1634, 1698-99, 2191; (1921), 440, 684, 838, 1132, 1377, 1461; LPC, *Engine Company 252* (LP-1931), prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart (New York, 1995; \_\_\_\_\_. *Fire Engine Company 253* (LP-1986), prepared by Matthew Postal (New York, 1998); "New Addition to Newtown High School," *The Newtown Register* (October 17, 1917, October 25, 1917); Seyfried, 115, 117; and "Start Work Soon on Newtown Addition," *Brooklyn Eagle* (Jan. 5, 1919).
8. *Journal*, 371-72, 432.
9. The move took place in late 1917.
10. One of the Art Commissioners appointed to the Newtown High School addition committee was the architect William A. Boring, a principal in the firm Boring & Tilton, which had designed the section of the school built in 1898-1900. Art Commission records indicate that Boring took a special interest in the enlargement of his earlier design, and conferred directly with Snyder on several occasions.



11. Among the most prominent Dutch-inspired buildings in the city are the West End Collegiate Church and Collegiate School (Robert Gibson, 1892-93; a designated Landmark) on West End Avenue and West 78<sup>th</sup> Street and the William Baylis Carriage House (Charles W. Romeyn, 1899; a designated Landmark) at 168 East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street, both in Manhattan.
12. The office was located at the Board of Education headquarters, which were located at the time in Manhattan on Park Avenue and 59<sup>th</sup> Street.
13. It was a one-story concrete and wood structure, containing twelve rooms, that was sited in such a way that construction of the permanent annex could take place around it. At the time, it was reported that over 200 of Newtown's pupils were located in six borrowed classrooms at nearby Public School 89, which consequently needed the space. In addition, classes were also being conducted in cloakrooms, the teachers' room, and the library at Newtown. The temporary building opened in January 1919. It was later remodeled into workshops, and was demolished in the early 1930s during the next expansion of the school.
14. Art Commission, "Newtown High School Addition," application approved April 16, 1919.
15. This section has been adapted from LPC, *(Former) Stuyvesant High School Designation Report* (LP-1958), prepared by Jay Shockley (New York, 1997), and includes the following sources: "Charles B.J. Snyder," *Who Was Who in America* 4 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1968); Michele Cohen, "C.B.J. Snyder, Superintendent of School Buildings, Sets the Stage for Public Art," *The Municipal Engineers Journal*, v. 85, Issue II (1998), 21-38; Snyder obit., *National Architect* 2 (Jan. 1946), 13; LPC, *Public School 27 Designation Report* (LP-1895), prepared by Virginia Kurshan (New York, 1995); Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 71; James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 73; Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Massengale, *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1983), 78-87.
16. The following schools designed by Snyder are designated NYC Landmarks: Public School 67 (High School of the Performing Arts) (1893-94), 120 West 46th Street, Manhattan; Public School 27 (1895-97), 519 St. Ann's Avenue, the Bronx; Public School 166 (1897-99), 132 West 89<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan; Public School 31 (1897-99), 425 Grand Concourse, the Bronx; Morris High School (1900-04), East 166th Street and Boston Road, the Bronx (in the Morris High School Historic District); Wadleigh High School for Girls (1901-02), 215 West 114th Street, Manhattan; Curtis High School (1902-04), 1922, 1925, Hamilton Avenue and St. Mark's Place, Staten Island; Public School 91 addition (1905), 1257 Ogden Avenue, the Bronx; (Former) Stuyvesant High School (1905-07), 345 East 15th Street, Manhattan; Boys' High School additions (c.1905-12), 832 Marcy Avenue, Brooklyn; Westfield Township District School No. 7 addition (1906-07), 4210 Arthur Kill Road, Staten Island; (former) Public School 28 (1907-08), 276 Center Street, Staten Island; Girls' High School addition (1912), 475 Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn; Flushing High School (1912-13), 35-01 Union Street, Queens; and Public School 72 annex (1912-13), 1674 Lexington Avenue, Manhattan.
17. "The Excellent Character of Mr. Snyder's Work," *American Architect & Building News*, July 29, 1905, 33.
18. Ibid.
19. C.B.J. Snyder, "Public School Buildings in the City of New York" (Part 1), *American Architect & Building News*, Jan. 25, 1908, 30.
20. This section is based on the following sources: *Journal of the Board of Education* (1928), 2408; (1929), 1782, 2279, 2445-47, 2620-21, 2657, 2889; (1930), 310, 1159, 2044, 2049; (1931), 306; and "Newtown High School Addition," applications and records, 1928-29.
21. The school now had space for 3,740 pupils.
22. This section is based on the following sources: LPC, *Herman Ridder Junior High School, (Public School 98)*, (LP-1628), report prepared by Betsy Bradley, Research Department (New York, 1990), and Robert A.M. Stern et al, *New York 1930*, 443.
23. He followed William Gompert in that position.

24. This section is based on the following sources: City of New York, Board of Education, *New York City School Buildings 1806-1956* (New York: Board of Education, 1956), viii, ix, 39, and 41-43; *Journal of the Board of Education* (1955), 595, 1341, 2102, 3621; (1956), 121, 1402, 3046, 3764; (1957), 312, 3564; (1958), 515; "Michael L. Radoslovich," obit., *American Institute of Architects Journal* (Sept. 1975), 50; "Newtown Graduates Serve the World," *Newtown Register* (May 21, 1964); "Newtown High School," *Newsday* (Nov. 12, 1989); "Newtown High School Addition," applications and records, 1955-58; Newtown High School Home Page, 2003; "Maurice Reinholt Salo," *American Architects Directory*, ed. George S. Koyl (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1962), 609; Vincent Seyfried, "Elmhurst," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed. Kenneth W. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 373; and Stern et al, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1987), 244-5.
25. *New York City School Buildings 1806-1956*, 39.
26. *Ibid.* 41.
27. Maurice R. Salo (b.1904) was a graduate of Columbia University's School of Architecture. He was a partner in the firm of Magoon & Salo (1943-54) and principal of Maurice R. Salo & Associates (1954-59). Later, he formed the partnership of Salo & Thorsland. His other works includes buildings at both the West Point Military Academy and the Air Force Academy at Plattsburgh, N.Y. The Board of Education's chief architect was Michael L. Radoslovich (1903-1975), who served in that position from the late 1930s until 1969. Prior to that, Radoslovich had been associated with the firm Max O. Urbahn Associates. He was awarded the Municipal Art Society's gold medal of honor in 1960 for his efforts to place works of art in public school buildings. His noted work includes the design for Public School 41 (1959, 41 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, within the Greenwich Village Historic District).

## **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 Newtown High School 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.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, Newtown High School is one of Elmhurst's and Queen's most prominent buildings; that it is a reminder of the long history of commitment and dedication to public education by the people of Queens and New York City; that it began with the construction of a small, wooden school house on the site in 1866; that the school's first expansion took place in 1898-1900, when a much larger, brick building, designed by the architectural firm Boring & Tilton, was added to the site; that in 1910 the facility was renamed Newtown High School, in honor of Elmhurst's historic name; that the 1866 and 1898-1900 buildings were subsequently demolished; that in 1917-18, C.B.J. Snyder, the noted Superintendent of School Buildings for the Board of Education, designed an impressive Flemish Renaissance Revival-style addition to the school; that this addition features stepped gables and a dramatic 169-foot, centrally-placed tower topped by a cupola and turrets; that Snyder's choice of the Flemish Renaissance Revival style showed his awareness of New York's, and particularly Elmhurst's, beginning as a Dutch colony, as well as his respect for Boring & Tilton's turn-of-the-century Flemish Renaissance Revival-style design; that Newtown High School is one of a handful of public schools in New York City executed in this style; that the wing was constructed in 1920-21; that two handsome, but more simply-designed Flemish Renaissance Revival-style wings, designed by Walter C. Martin, were constructed in 1930-31; that in 1956-58, Boring & Tilton's turn-of-the-century wing was replaced by an International Style addition, designed by the Manhattan architectural firm, Maurice Salo & Associates; that Newtown High School now serves a diverse body of 4,500 students and over 200 teachers; and that the building remains largely intact.

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 Newtown High School, 48-01 90<sup>th</sup> Street, aka 48-02 91<sup>st</sup> Street and 90-14 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 1849, Lot 1 as its Landmark Site.



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

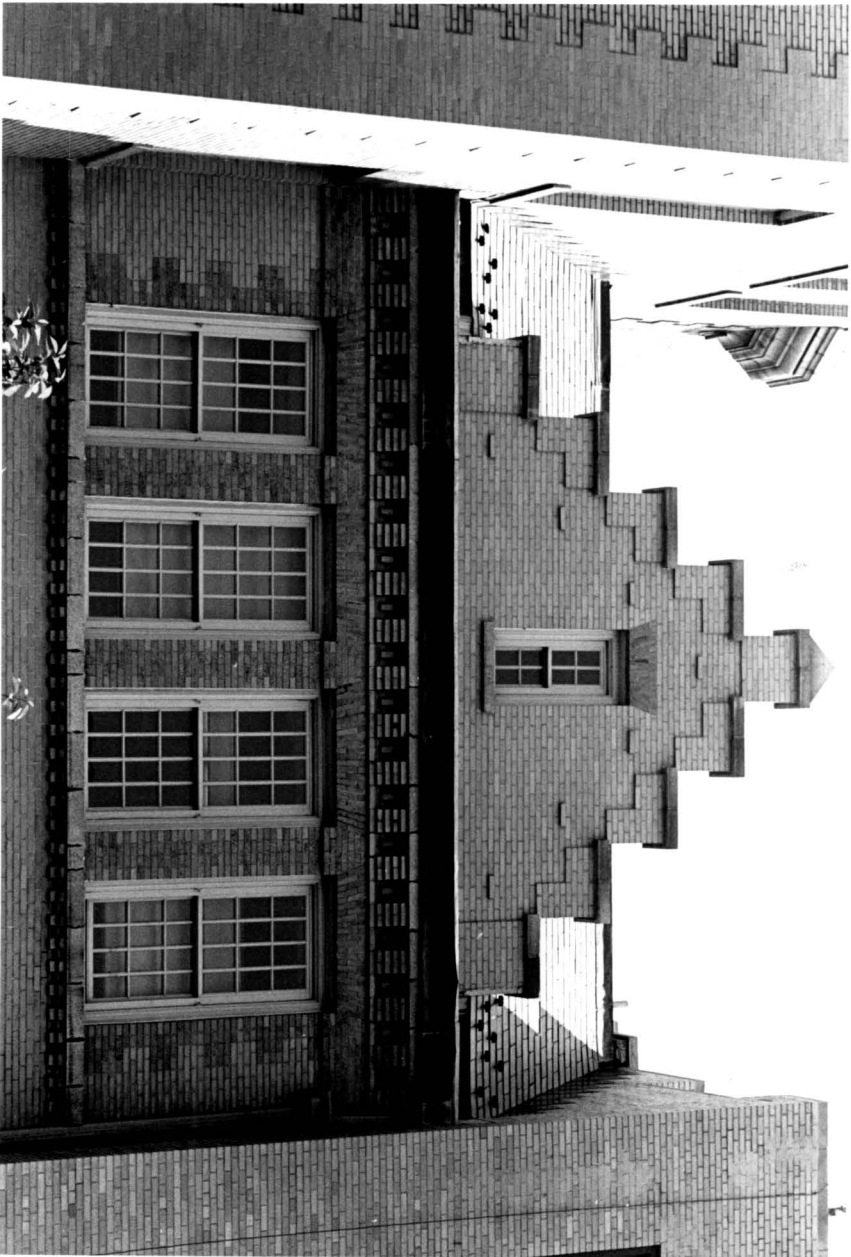
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

Photo: Carl Forster, 2003



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens

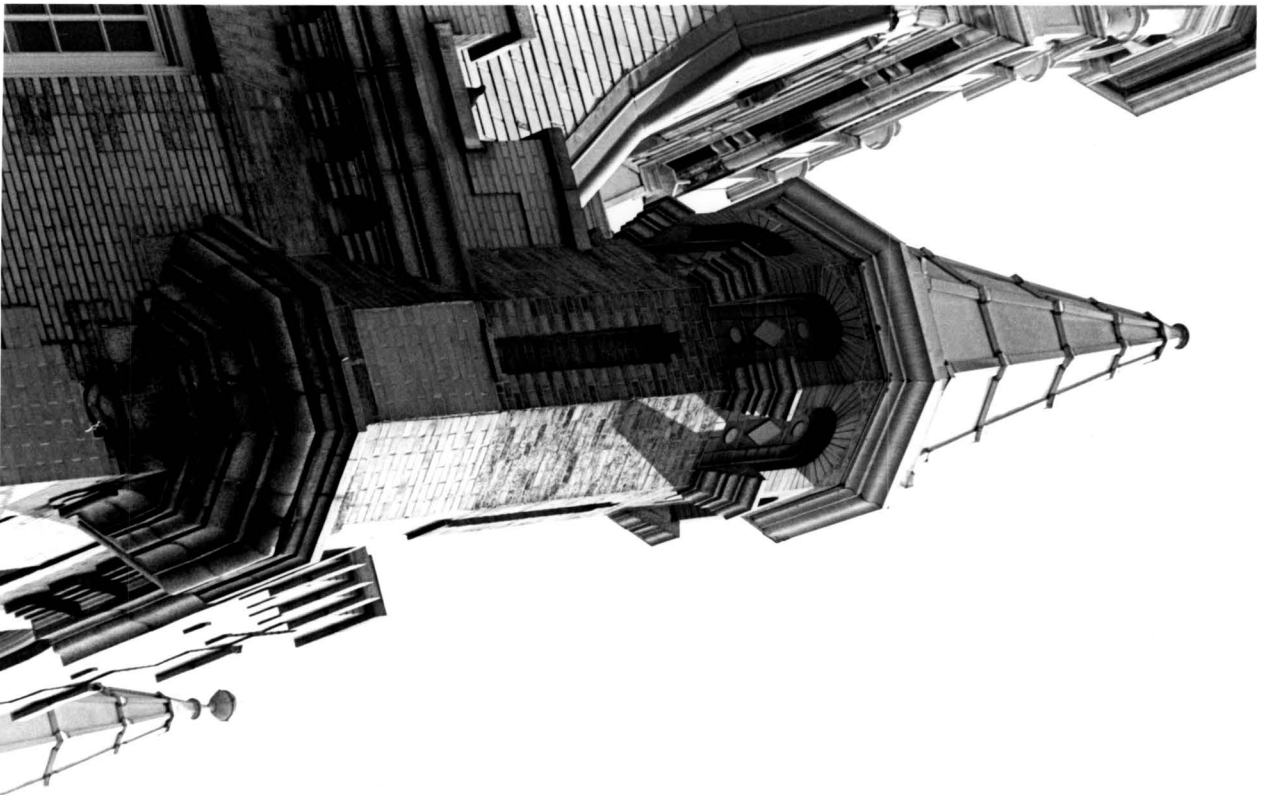
Photo: Carl Forster, 2003



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

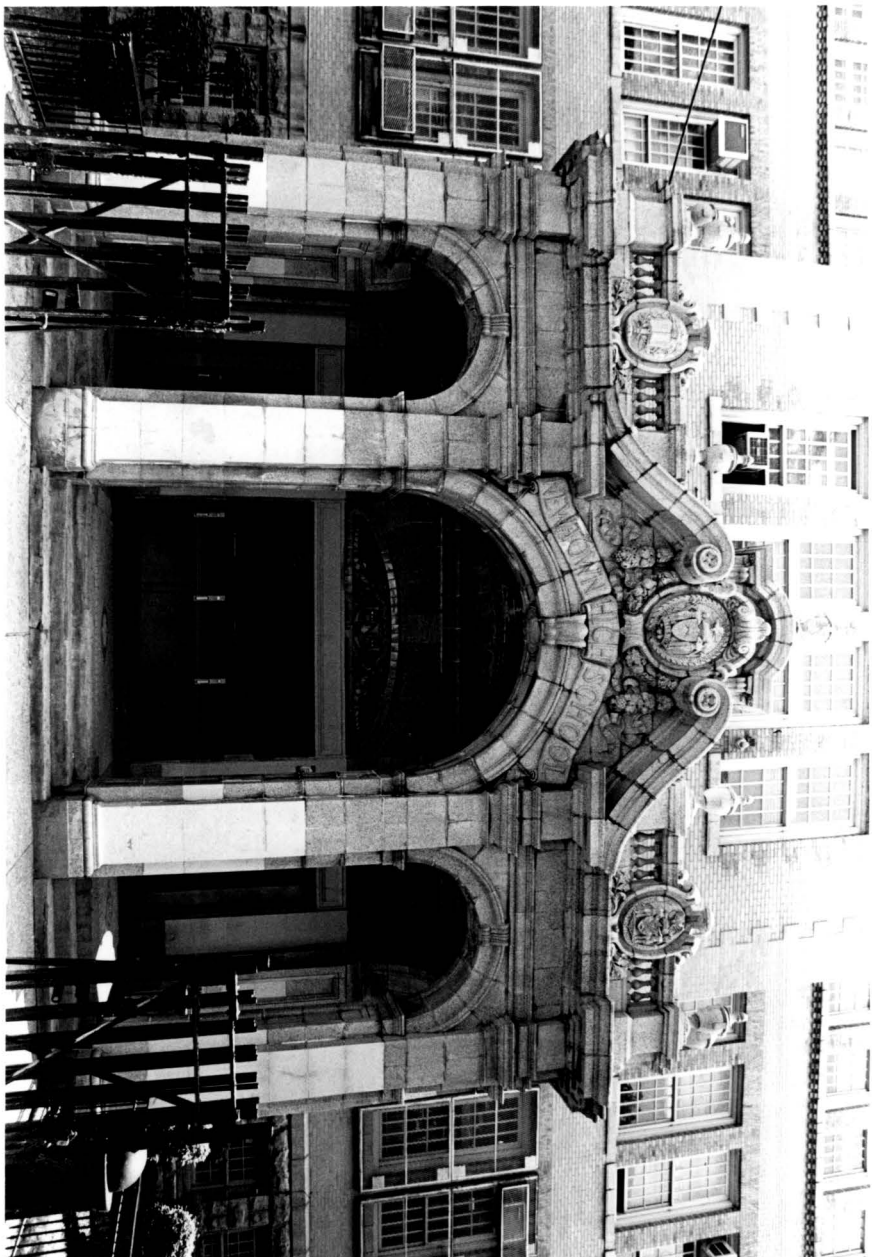
Photo: Carl Forster, 2003





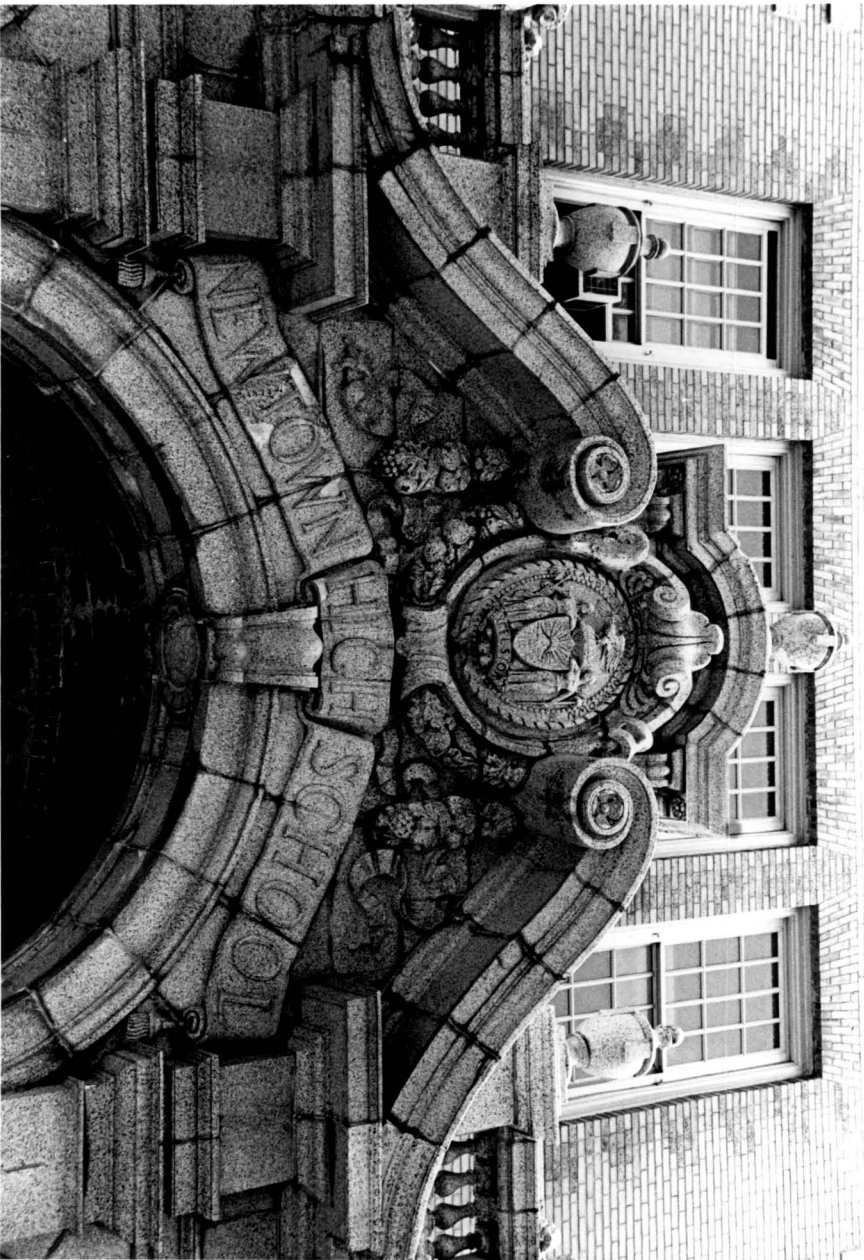
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

Photo: Carl Forster, 2003



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

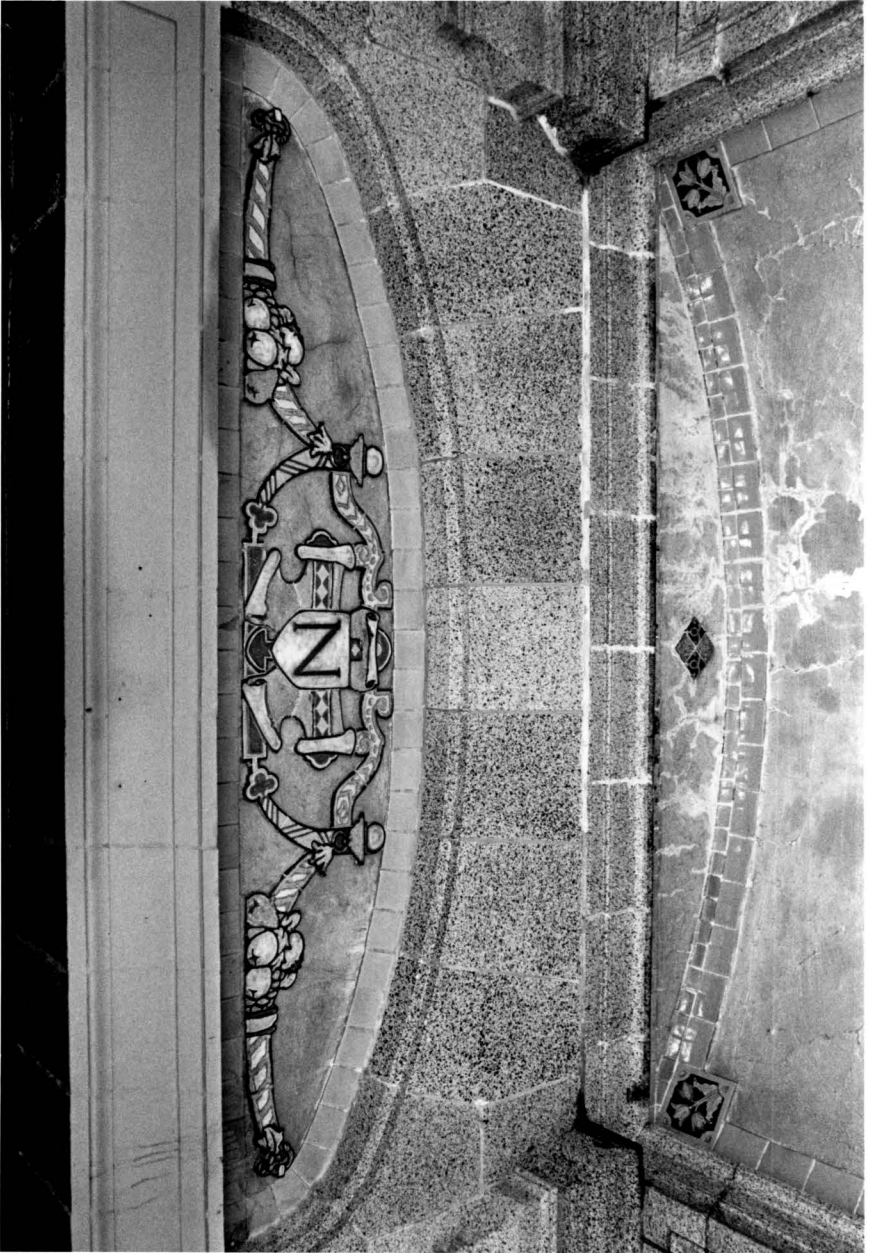
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



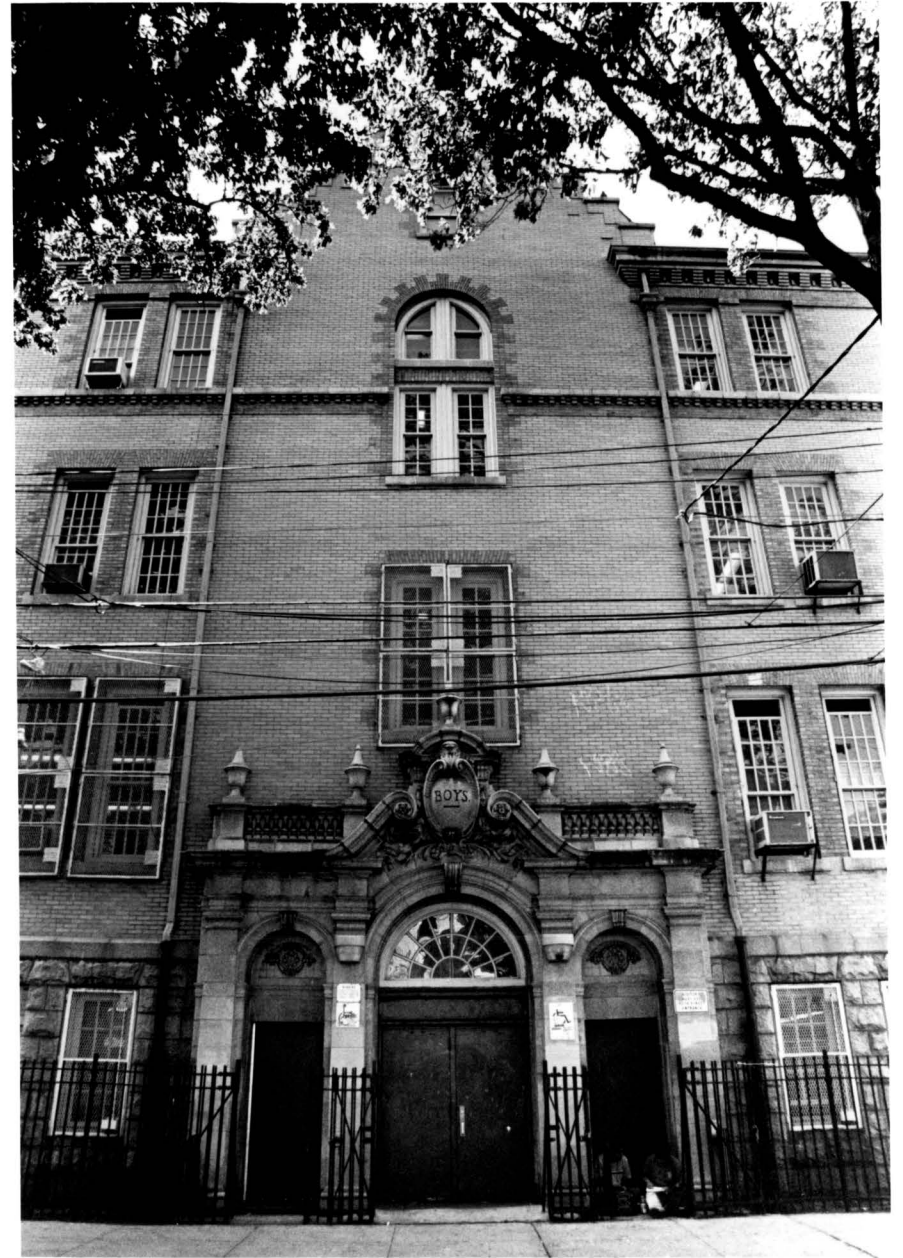
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



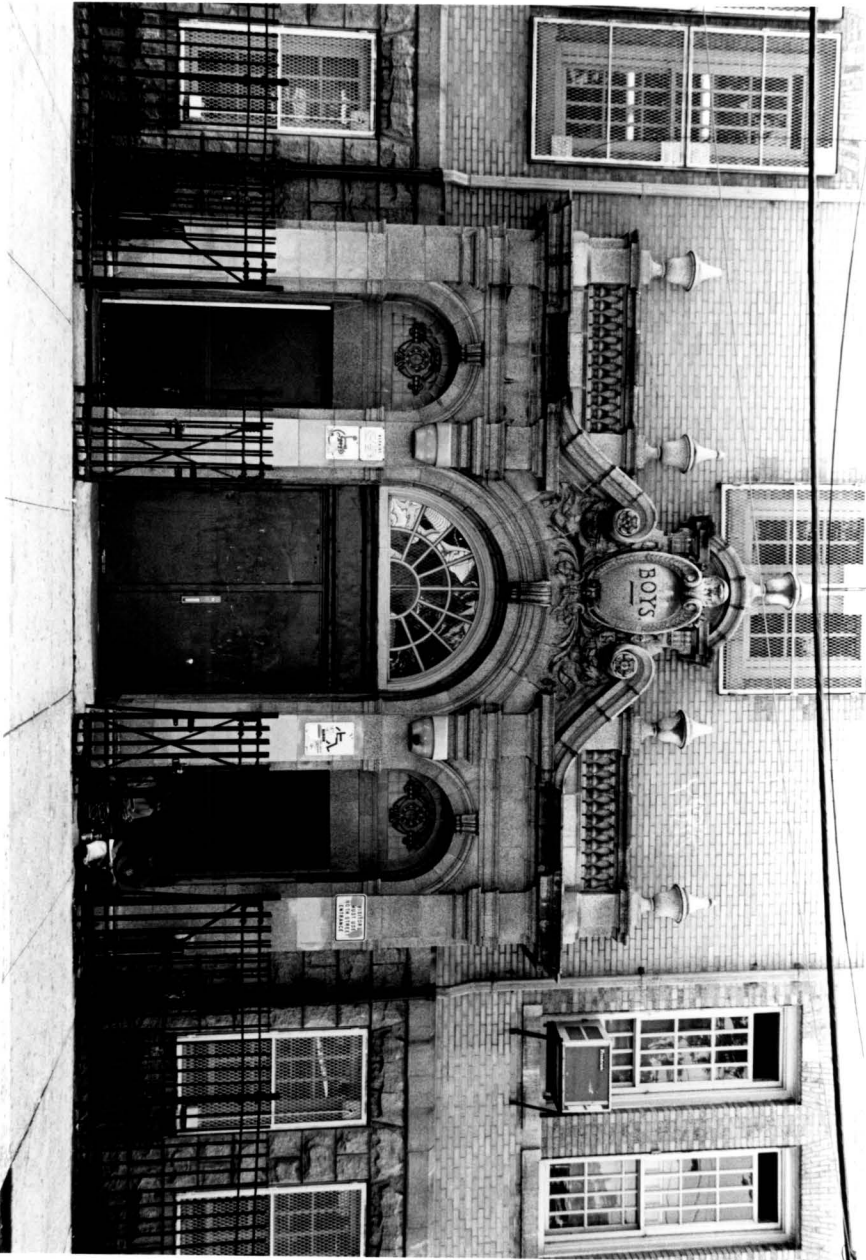
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*

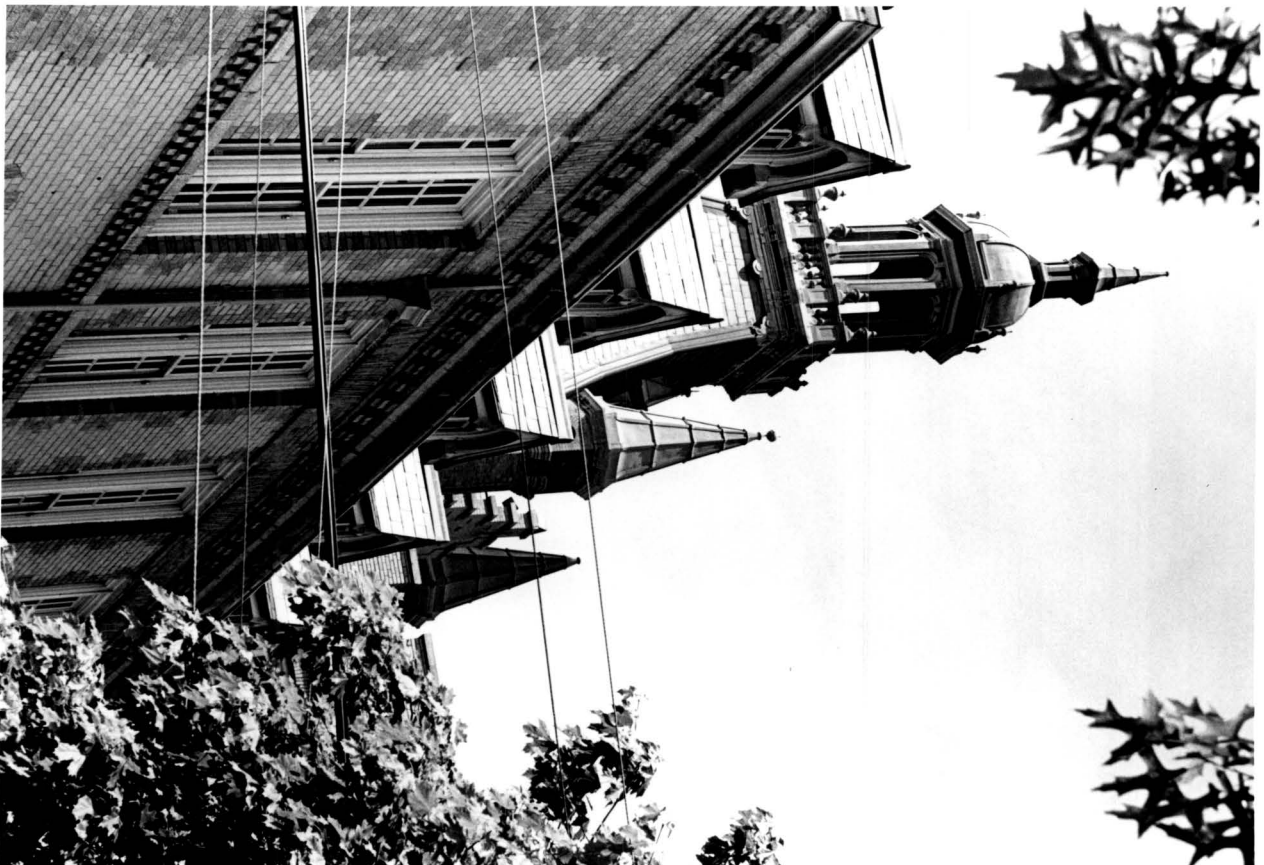




Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Main wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Northeast wing (1930-31)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



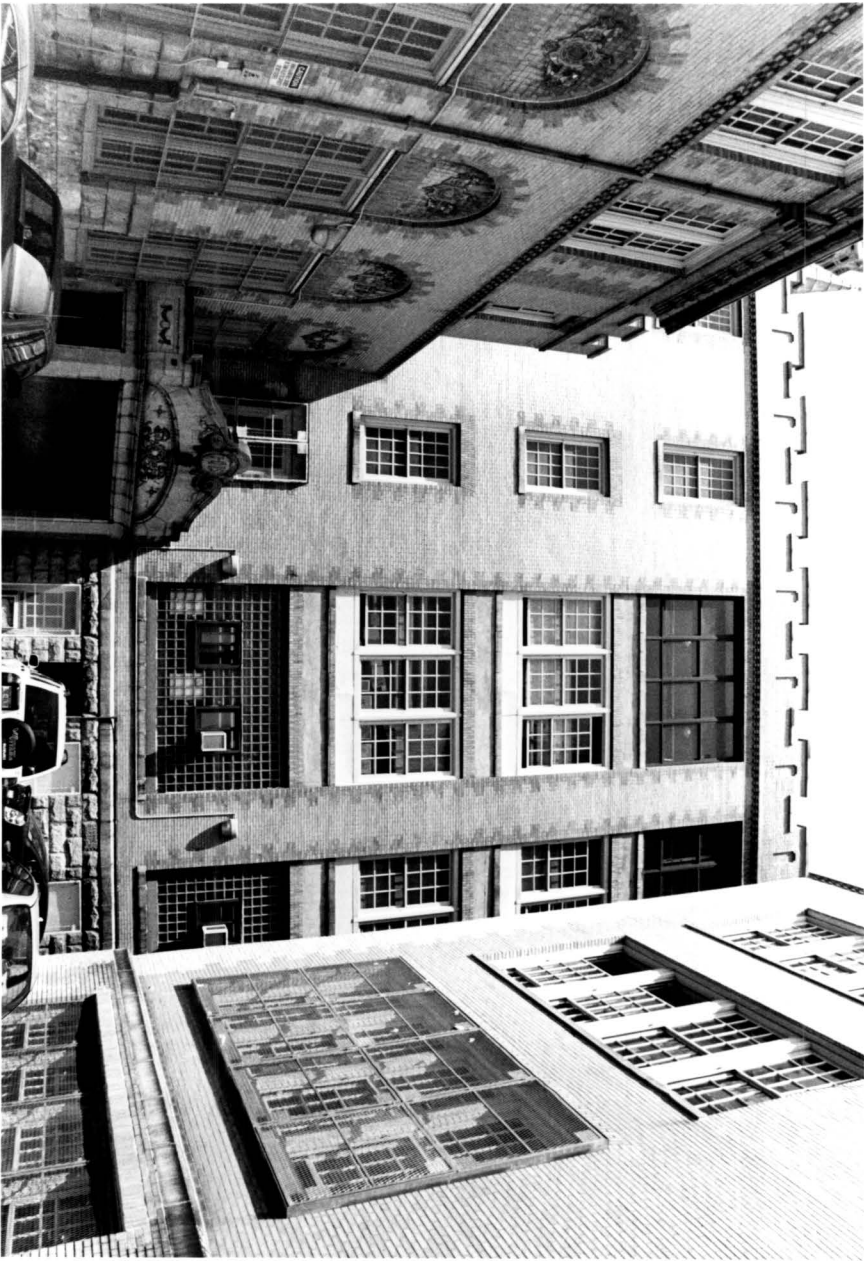
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Northeast wing (1930-31)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Northeast wing (1930-31)

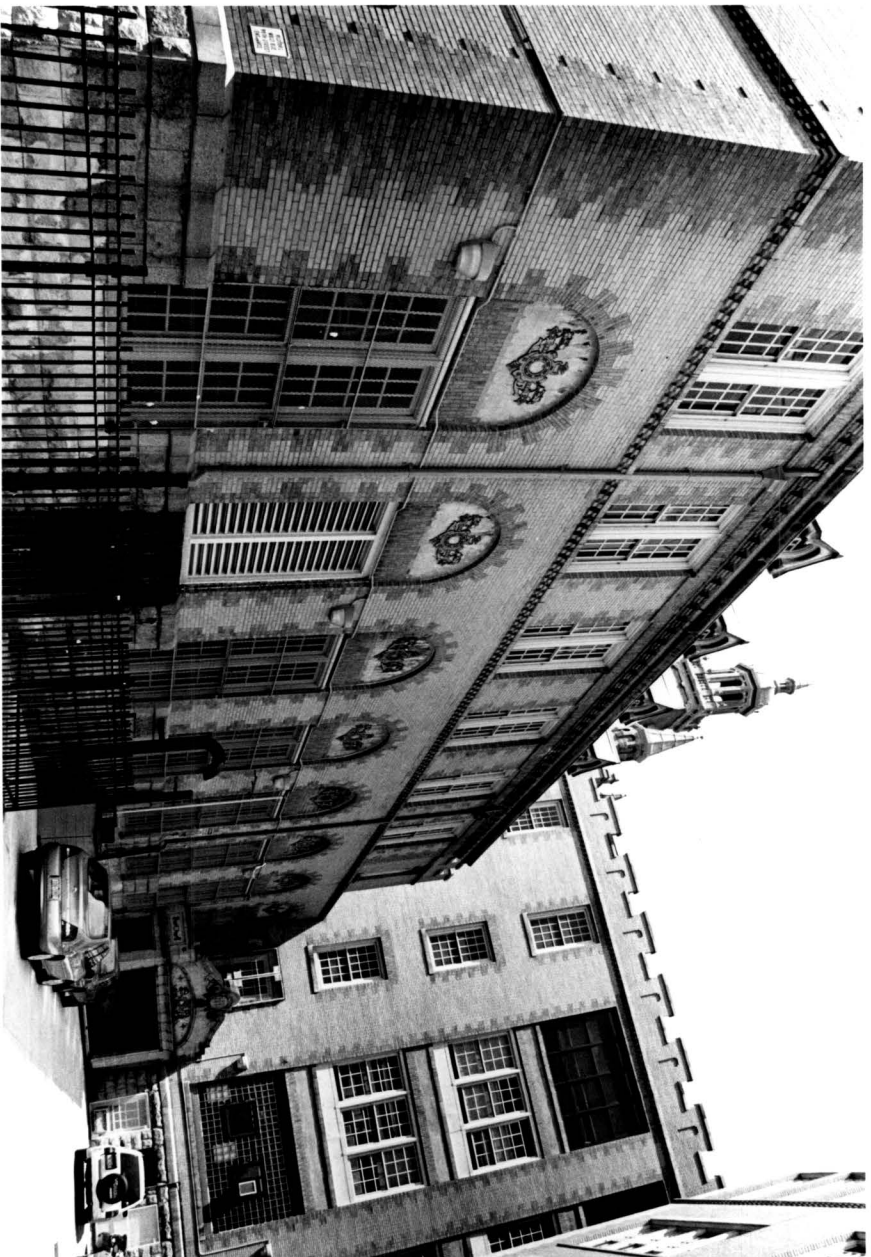
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
North courtyard

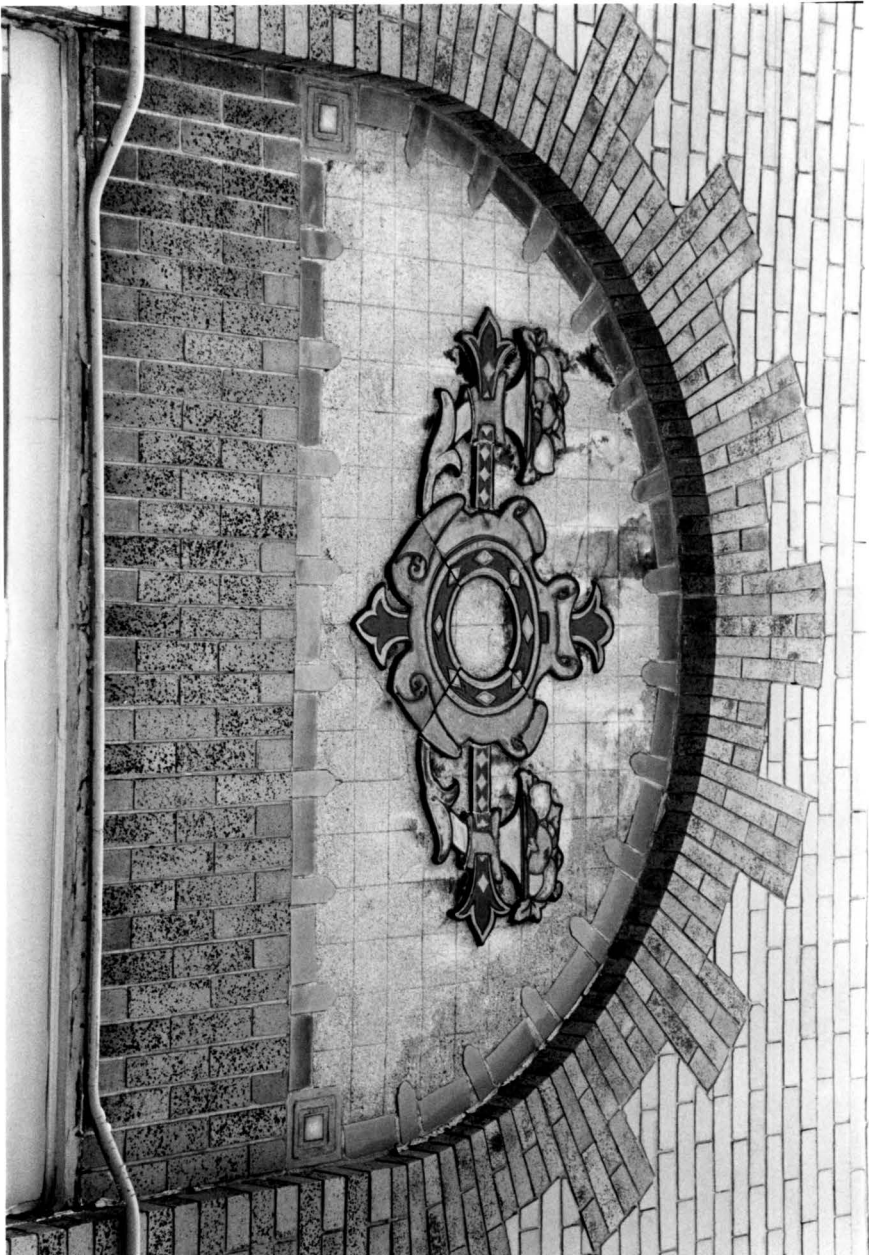
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



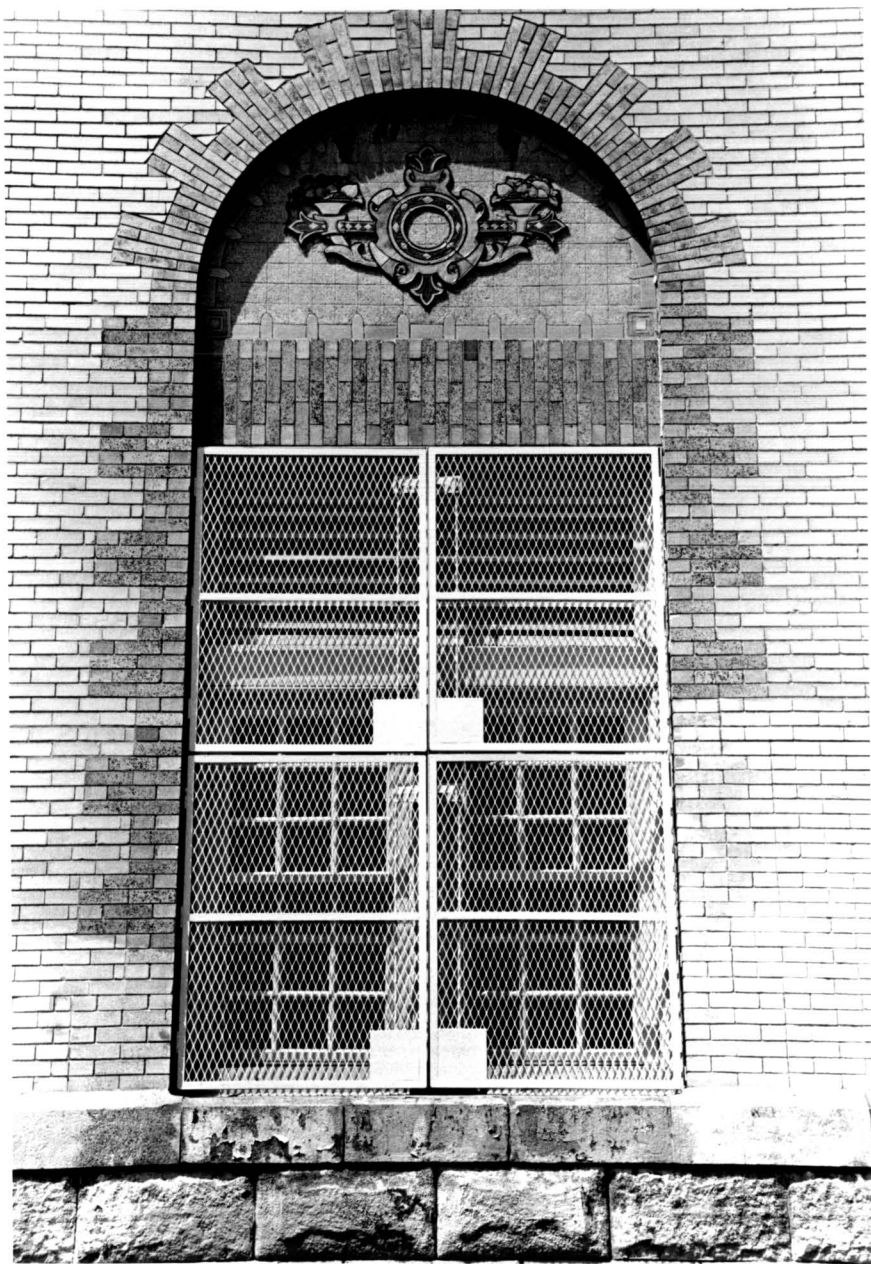
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

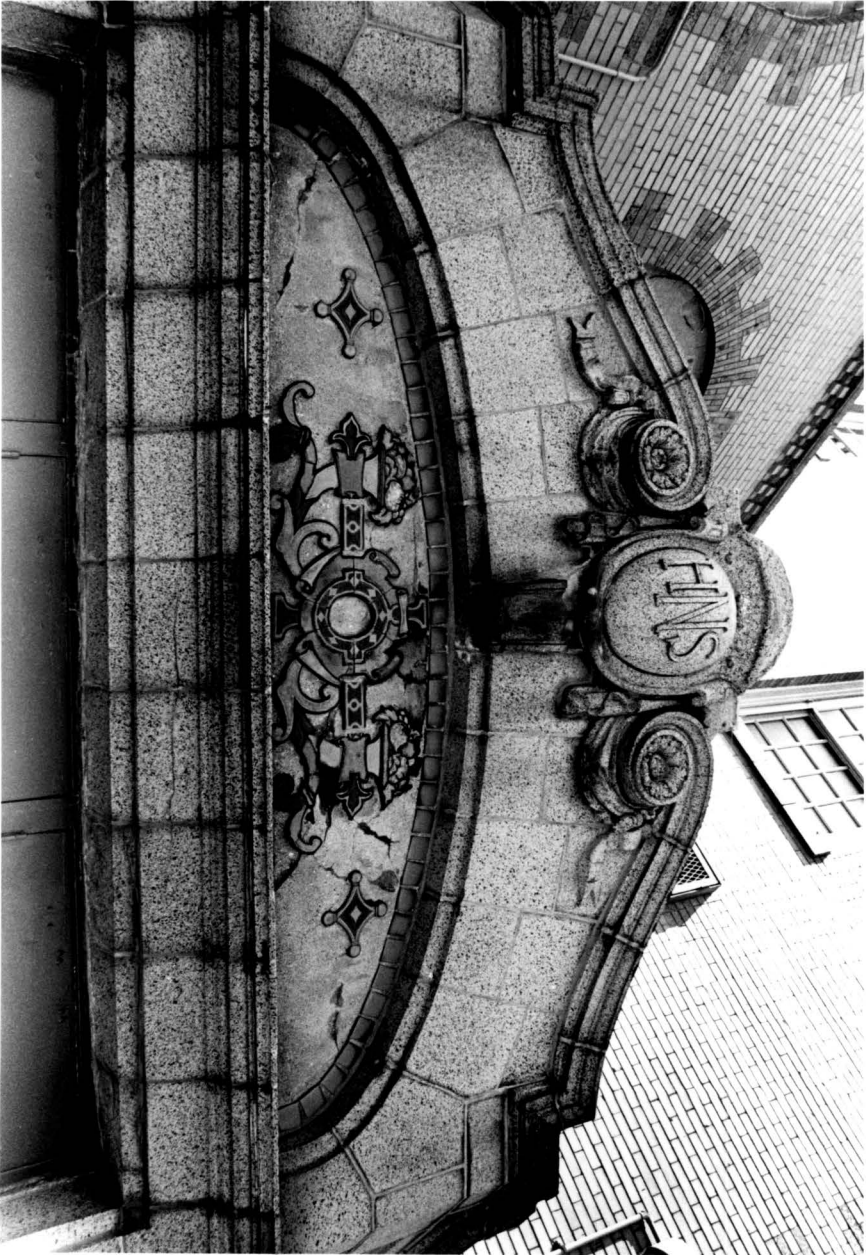
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



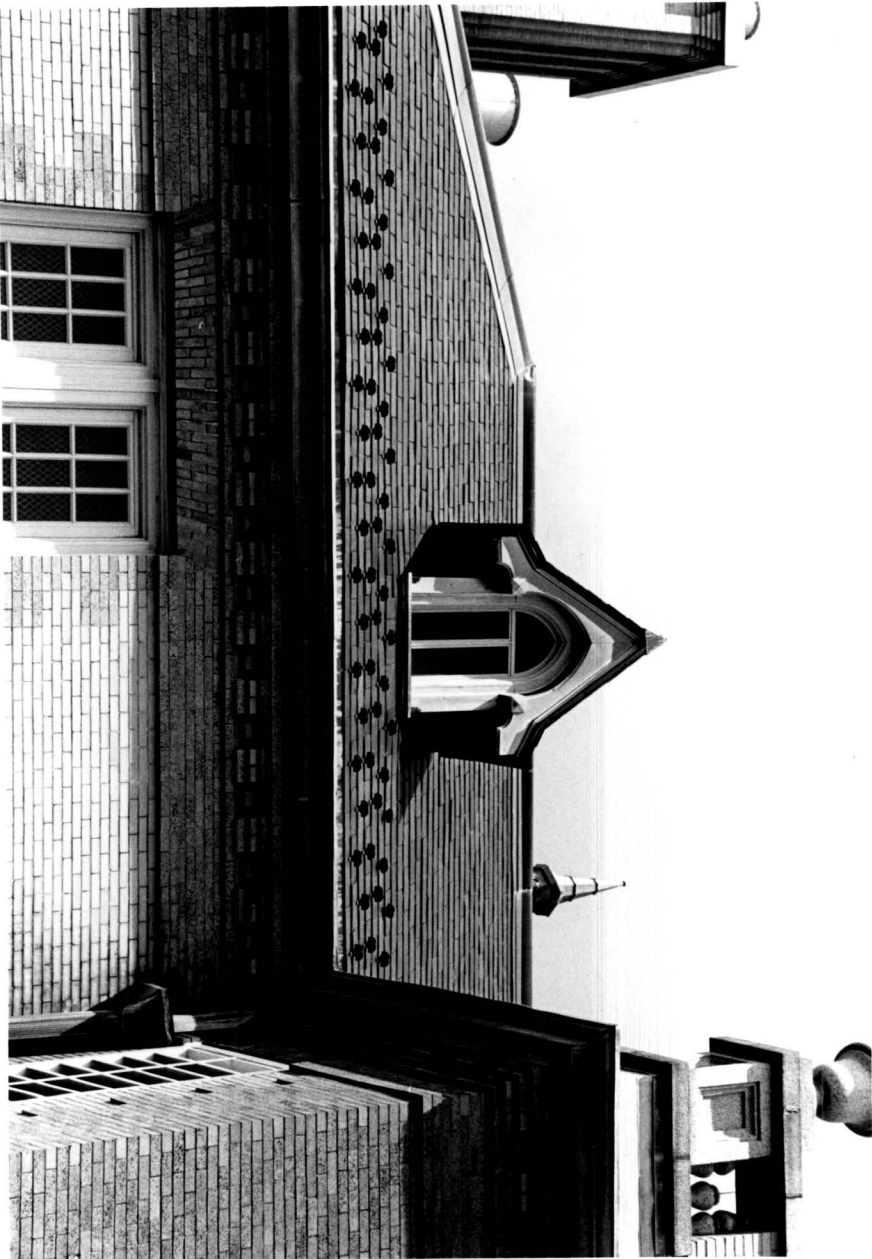
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

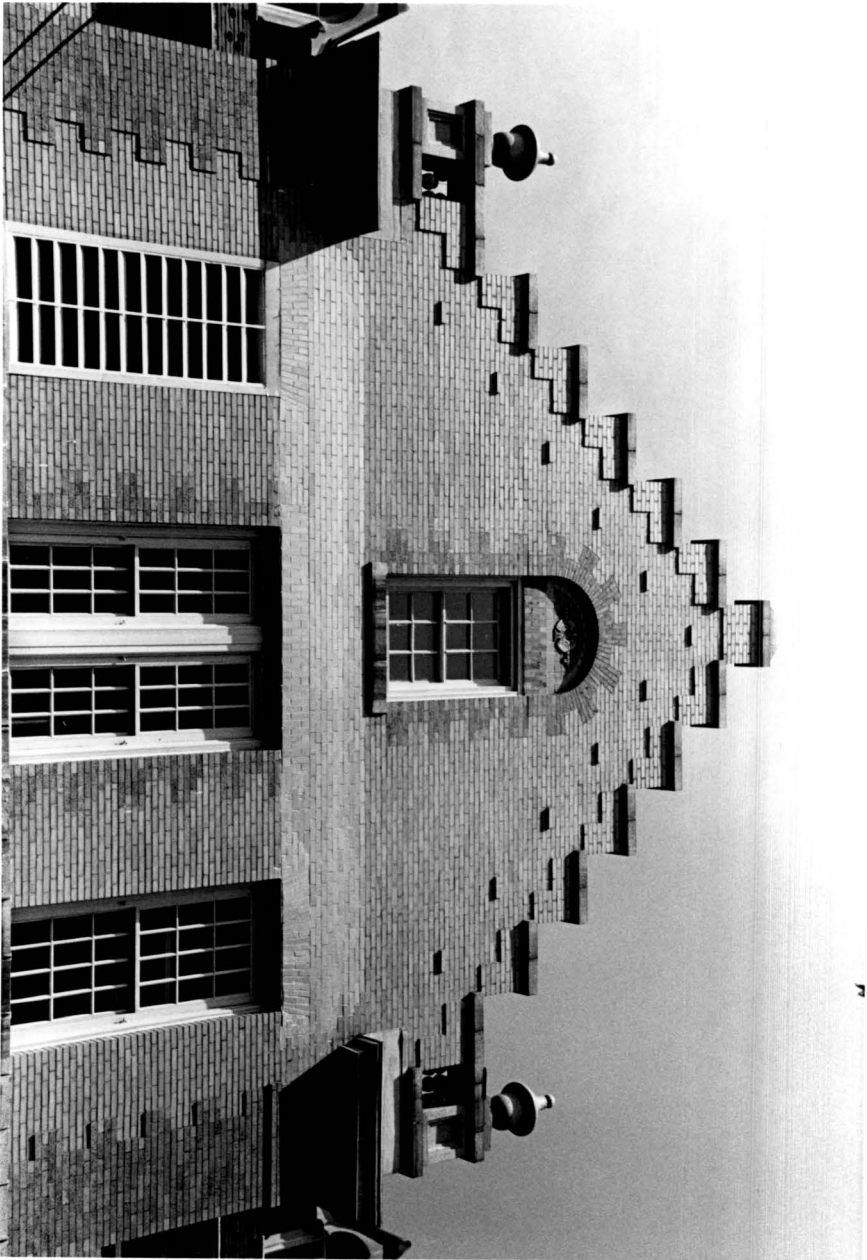
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



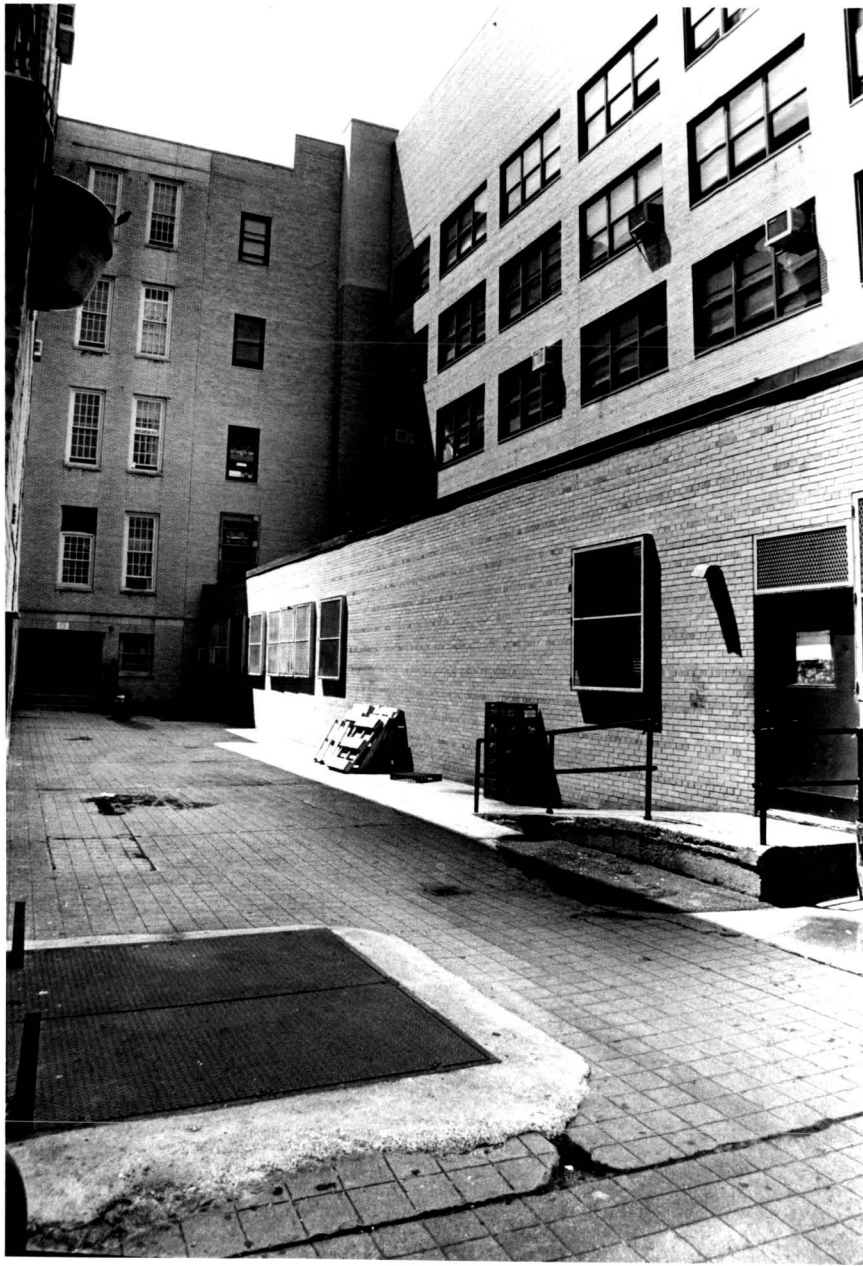
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Auditorium wing (1920-21)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



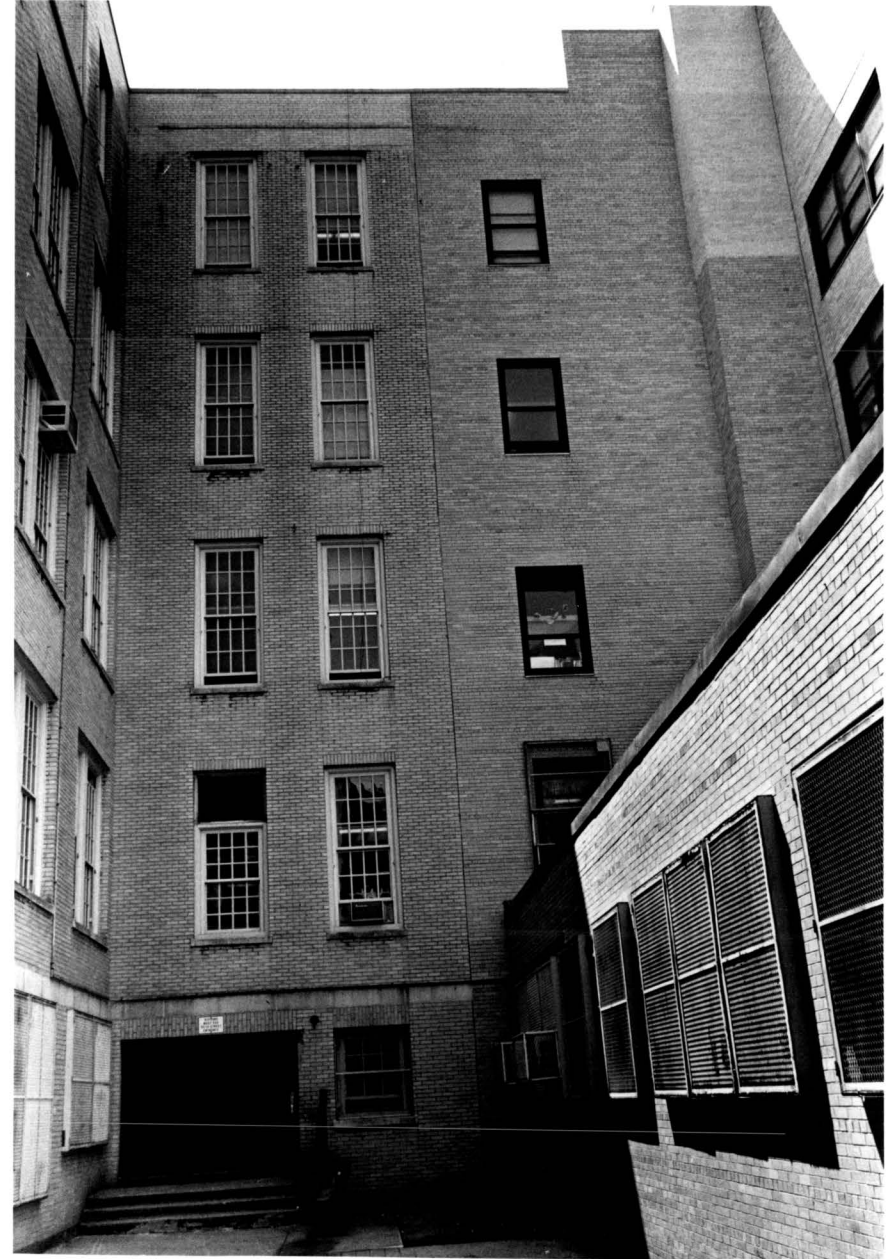
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Bridge between auditorium and southeast wings

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
South courtyard

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
South courtyard

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
South courtyard

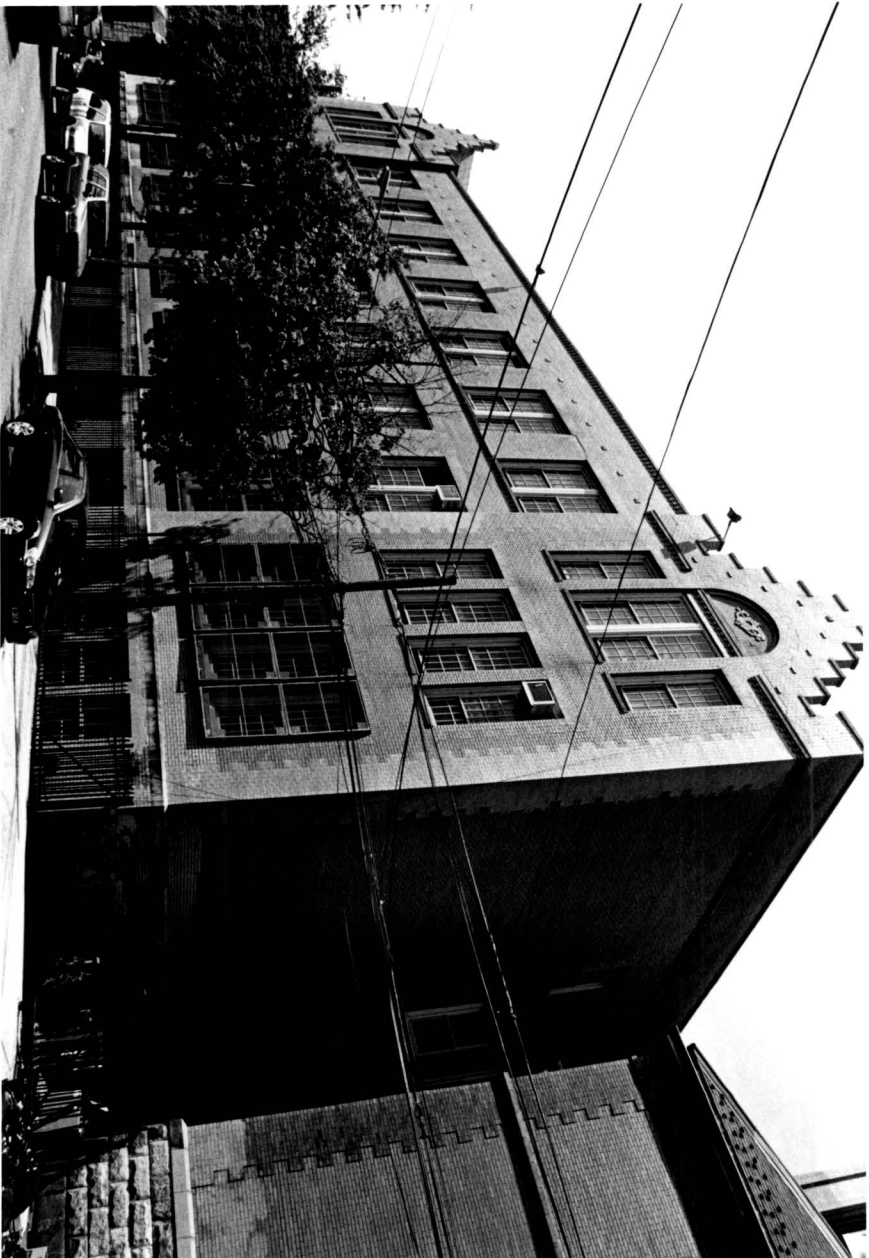
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





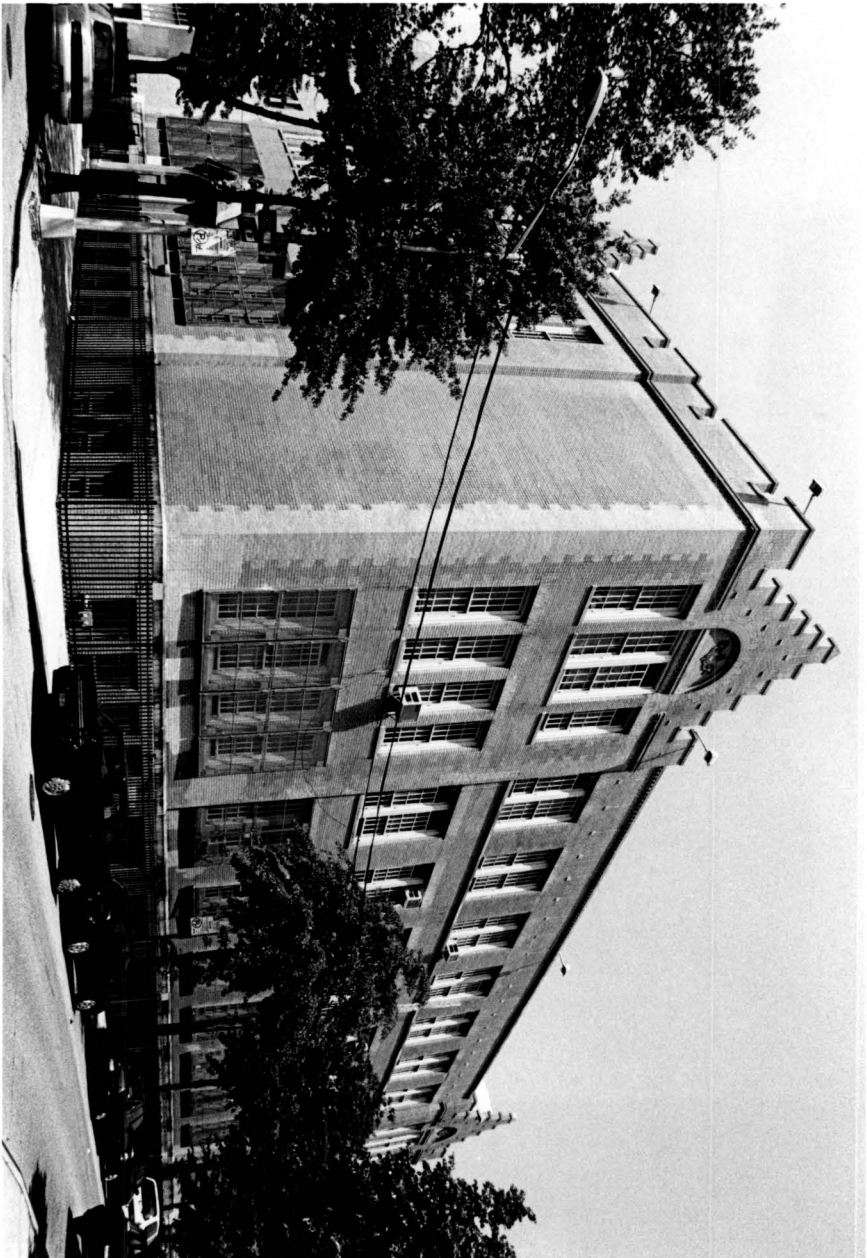
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
South courtyard

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southeast wing (1930-31)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



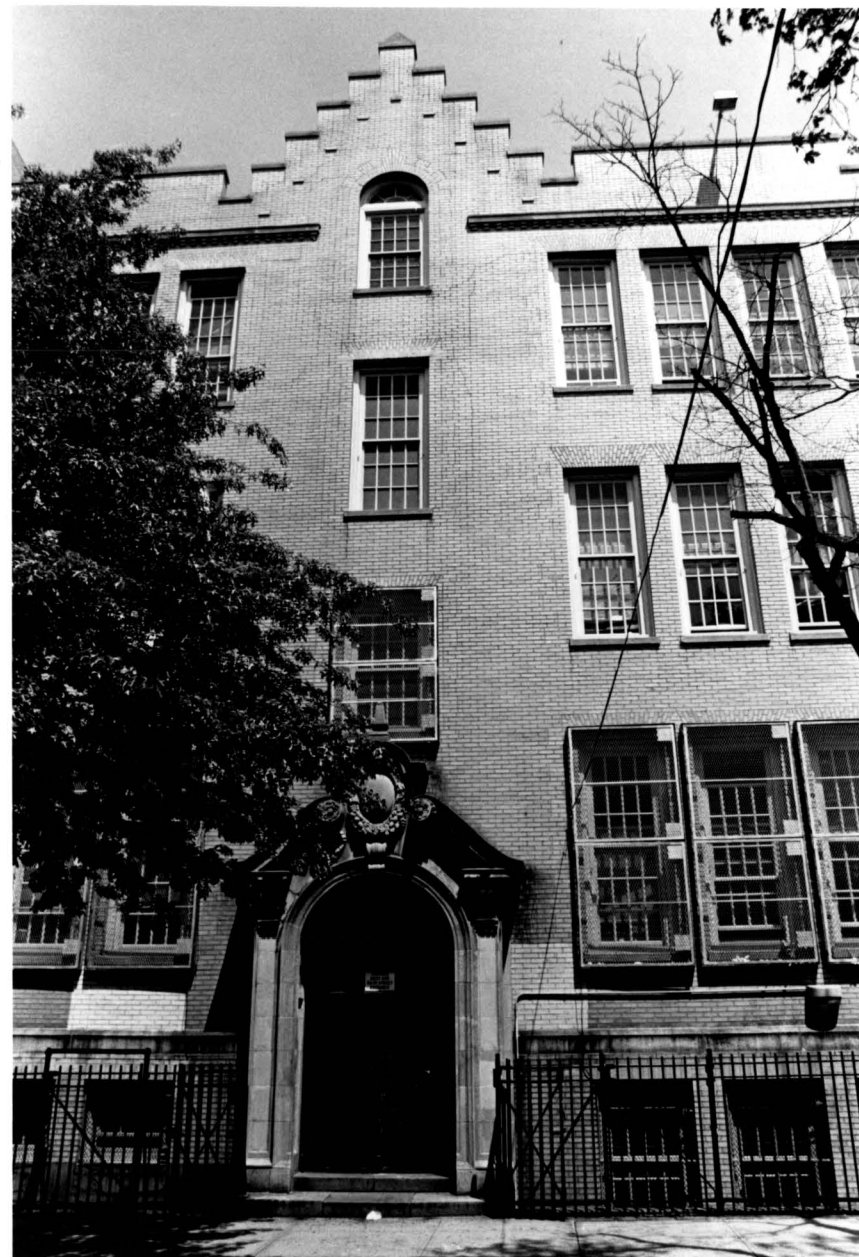
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southeast wing (1930-31)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southeast wing (1930-31)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southeast wing (1930-31)

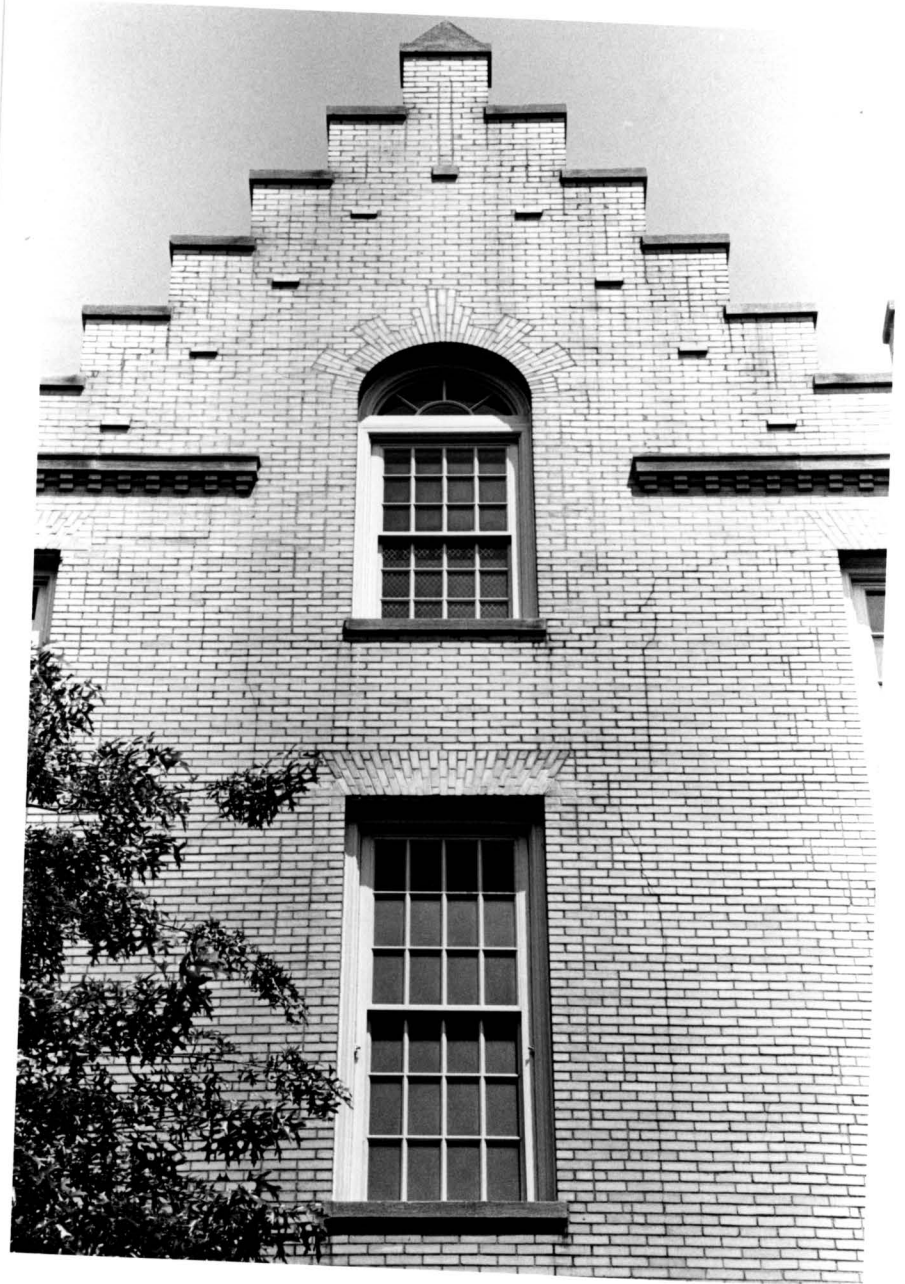
*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*





Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southeast wing (1930-31)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southeast wing (1930-31)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*



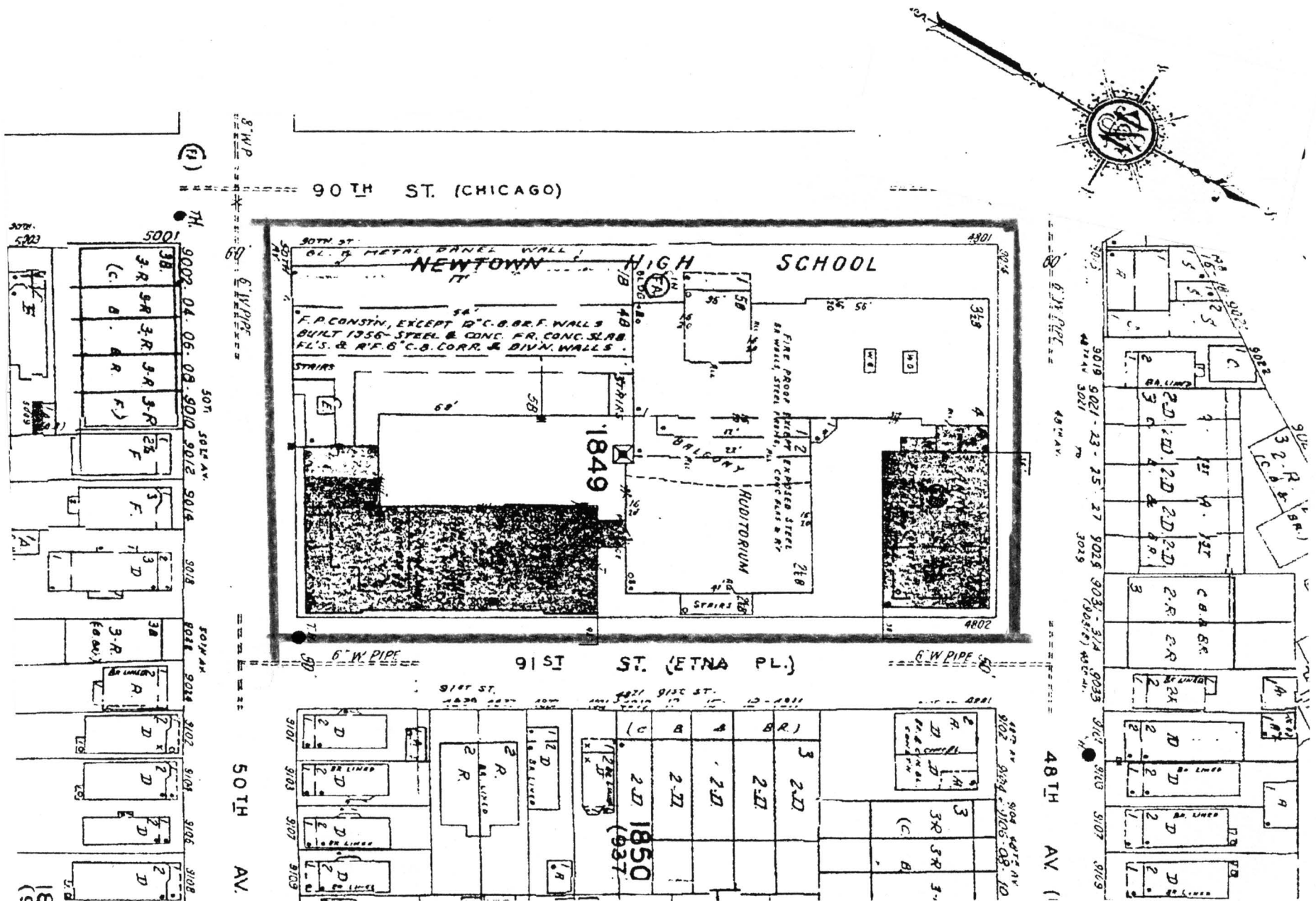
Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southwest wing (1956-58)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*

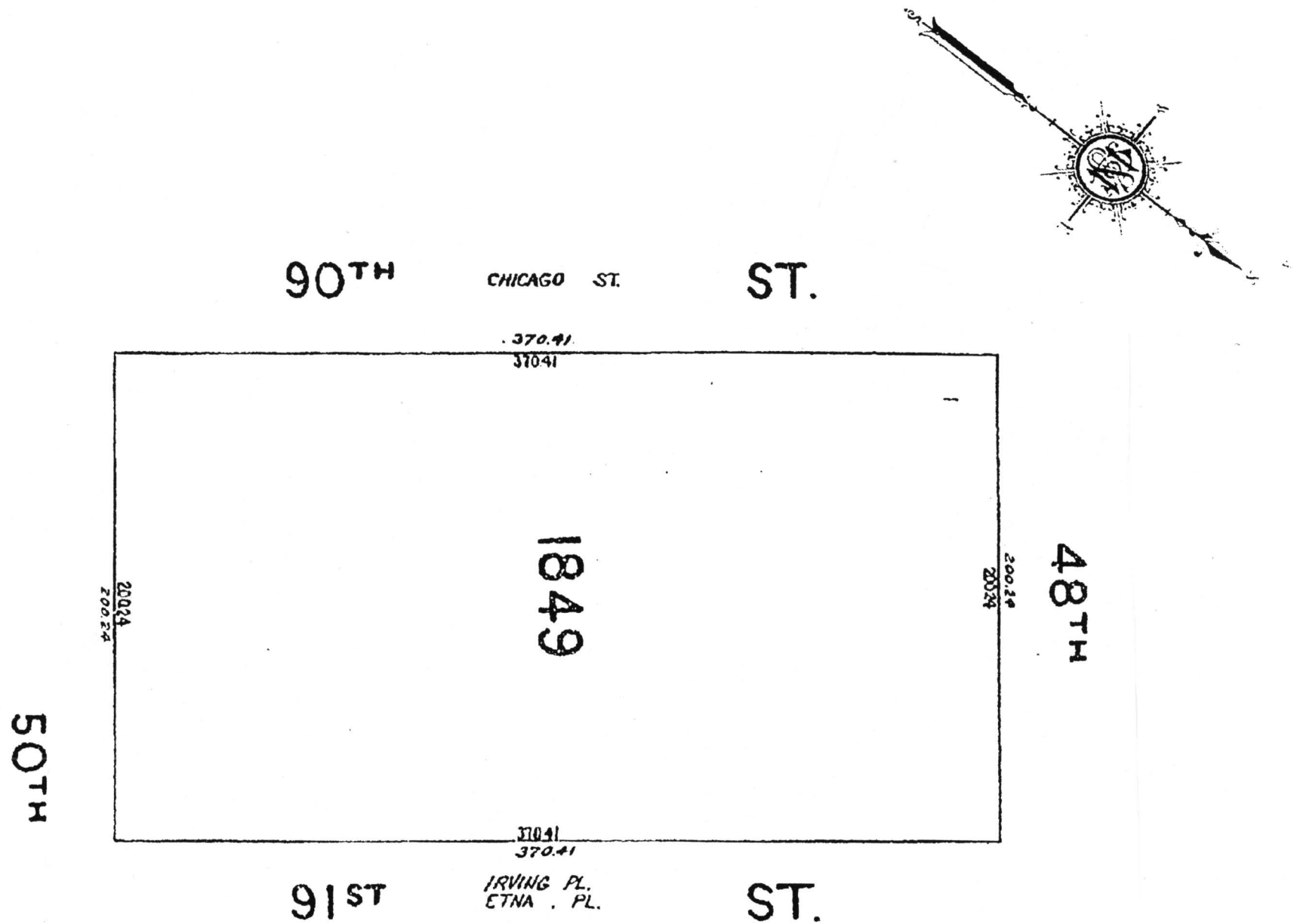


Newtown High School, Borough of Queens  
Southwest wing (1956-58)

*Photo: Carl Forster, 2003*







Newtown High School, 48-01 90<sup>th</sup> Street, aka 48-02 91<sup>st</sup> Street and 90-14 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Borough of Queens. Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 1849, Lot 1. Graphic Source: New York City Department of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map.