

LONG ISLAND BUSINESS COLLEGE, 143 South 8th Street (aka 143-149 South 8th Street),
Brooklyn. Built 1891-92; William H. Gaylor, architect

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 2132, Lot 30

On June 25, 2013 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Long Island Business College and the proposed designation of the related Landmark site (Item No. 7). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Two people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of Councilmember Diana Reyna and of the Historic Districts Council. The Commission also received a letter in favor of designation from the Victorian Society of New York. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

Summary

Designed by William H. Gaylor, the Long Island Business College was built by Henry C. Wright, who founded Wright's Business College in Williamsburg in 1873. Like other such colleges of the time, Wright trained clerical workers, primarily young men and women, for careers with the many large banks, insurance companies, and industrial concerns that were proliferating throughout Brooklyn and the then-separate city of New York. Enrollment in Wright's college boomed, and in 1890, he purchased the lot at 143-149 South 8th Street for a grand new home for the school, which would be renamed the Long Island Business College. The \$90,000 building opened with a reception attended by Brooklyn's mayor; Wright called it "perhaps the only [building] in the country erected and devoted solely to the work of business education." Among the school's students was John F. Hylan, who would go on to serve as New York City's mayor from 1918 to 1925. In 1920, the college itself was sold and moved to a different Brooklyn location, and in 1922, the building reopened as Public School 166.



During its time as the Long Island Business College, the building's assembly hall hosted the meetings and lectures of the Brooklyn Philosophical Association, one of the country's leading freethought organizations during the period that has come to be known as freethought's "golden age." Many prominent speakers lectured there, including anarchist Emma Goldman, labor leader and socialist Eugene V. Debs, suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt, future mayor William J. Gaynor, sitting mayor John Purroy Mitchel, and anti-vice crusader Anthony Comstock. In 1943, it became an early home of the Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary of America, serving as both a teachers' academy and as a day and boarding high school for girls. After World War II, the building, which is a significant landmark in the development of South Williamsburg's Jewish community, became a magnet for hundreds of young Holocaust survivors who sought to further their studies.

Gaylor based the school's design on Brooklyn's recent public schools. The building, which combines the Romanesque Revival and Second Empire styles, and incorporates elements of other contemporary styles, features rough-faced brownstone trim, a five-part facade with central tower and end pavilions, slate-covered mansards, and a convex roof with square cap. Well-preserved today, the Long Island Business College building remains a commanding presence in South Williamsburg, one that is as rich in cultural history as it is architecturally.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Williamsburg, Brooklyn¹

Constructed in 1891-92, the Long Island Business College is located on South 8th Street between Bedford and Driggs Avenues in Brooklyn's Williamsburg neighborhood. In 1802, Richard M. Woodhull, a prosperous Manhattan merchant, purchased a 13-acre tract at the foot of present-day North 2nd Street, which he named Williamsburgh after its surveyor, Col. Jonathan Williams. Williamsburgh was incorporated as a village in 1827; its population more than doubled between 1840 and 1845, and grew even more rapidly in the 1850s with the arrival of large numbers of German immigrants. In 1851, the state granted a city charter to Williamsburgh, which then had more than 30,000 residents and was the 20th-largest American city. Industries were attracted to Williamsburgh's East River waterfront by its deepwater piers, available land, and cheap labor provided by a booming population; docks, shipyards, distilleries, foundries, mills, sugar refineries, and glass and pharmaceuticals factories made Williamsburgh a major industrial and commercial center. It would remain independent only until 1855, when Williamsburgh was consolidated with the City of Brooklyn and Town of Flatbush. At that time, the "h" at the end of its name was dropped, and Williamsburg, along with Greenpoint to its north and Bushwick to the east, became known as the "Eastern District."

By the 1850s, a number of institutions had emerged to serve Williamsburg's burgeoning population and thriving businesses. The post-Civil War commercial boom brought redevelopment to Broadway, Williamsburg's most important commercial street and main thoroughfare, one block north of the Long Island Business College. Significant new commercial buildings arose along Broadway, including the Kings County Savings Bank (King & Wilcox, 1868), at 135 Broadway; the Smith, Gray & Company Building (attributed to William H. Gaylor, 1870), now at 103 Broadway; and the Williamsburgh Savings Bank (George B. Post, 1870-75), now at 175 Broadway, all designated New York City Landmarks. Although ferry service between Manhattan and Williamsburg had been a key to the neighborhood's residential and commercial development, population surged with the construction of the Williamsburg Bridge (Lefferts L. Buck and Henry Hornbostel). Proposed in 1883, the bridge opened with considerable fanfare in 1903, serving all forms of transportation, including trolley cars and rapid transit. Thousands of Eastern European Jews from the Lower East Side crossed the bridge to settle in Williamsburg, and Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Russian Orthodox enclaves also developed. Many of the neighborhood's most prosperous residents left during the Depression, and by the late 1930s, Williamsburg, especially the area south of Broadway, was a magnet for Hasidic Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. Puerto Ricans, attracted by the neighborhood's large manufacturing base, settled there in large numbers beginning in the 1950s. Older buildings were demolished for the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and new public housing complexes; the exodus of manufacturing left abandoned industrial and residential buildings in its wake. Starting in the 1970s, musicians and artists began moving to Williamsburg's Northside, which has seen substantial redevelopment and gentrification in the past two decades. In addition to the large Hasidic community on Williamsburg's Southside, the neighborhood has a sizeable Latino population, including Dominican immigrants who began settling in the neighborhood in large numbers in the 1980s; substantial African-American, Italian, and Polish communities are also present in Williamsburg today.

Long Island Business College and Its Building²

The founder of Long Island Business College, Henry C. Wright, was born in 1843 in a small village near Brockville, Ontario on the St. Lawrence River.³ He received informal business training from his father, who owned his own company, and attended the Friends' College (now Pickering College), followed by the Toronto Normal School. Wright, who married the former Adelaide Brownscomb in 1866, taught in Canadian public schools after his graduation. Around 1870, the Wrights moved to Philadelphia, where Henry worked in an accounting business. After about a year, they moved to Brooklyn, where Henry found employment at a business college. Three years later, he founded his own school, Wright's Business College, on South 6th Street in Williamsburg, which occupied "one unpretentious room with the most meager facilities." Wright was the sole faculty and staff member, "acting as proprietor, principal, teacher, and janitor ... with a mere handful of students."⁴

Commercial colleges like Wright's first appeared in the mid-19th century, paralleling the rise of large banks, insurance companies, and industrial concerns, many of which were located in Brooklyn and the then-separate city of New York. Too complex to be overseen by any single person, these entities required sophisticated, bureaucratic management "based on a steady flow of information from clerical workers."⁵ At that time, few students attended secondary schools—Brooklyn's first public day high school would not open until 1878—and commercial schools offered young people who were not interested in pursuing an academic course entry to the business world via the burgeoning clerical field, which grew from 77,000 workers in 1870 to almost 700,000 in 1900. Primarily, these schools taught the "fine hand" required for drafting business documents, as well as mathematical, compositional, and stenographic skills. Students could be as young as 12 or 13, although they generally ranged from 17 to 20 years of age; schools ranged in size from a few dozen students up to 900. Women initially made up a small fraction of pupils, but typing was seen as "women's work" from its very start, and as typewriter use soared in the 1880s, their enrollment surged. By 1892, one-third of commercial school students were female, and by 1900, three-quarters of all stenographers and typists were women. Around the turn of the 20th century, public high schools began competing with private business colleges by offering similar commercial courses, and within the next two decades, mechanization replaced many clerical positions, leading to a decline in business college enrollment after 1920.

Soon after its founding, Wright's Business College moved to the Kings County Savings Bank Building on Broadway. By 1880, the school had six teachers in addition to Wright, including one woman, Miss M. Rowe, who taught stenography, or phonography as it was known at the time. Wright's college, according to its catalog, was intended to "thoroughly educate boys and young men for a practical business life"—although women had been admitted from the school's earliest years—"and to fit them to enter upon advanced scientific and classical courses of study."⁶ Three general courses were offered; the commercial course, for those embarking on a business career, provided lessons in bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, penmanship, letter-writing, English composition, spelling, grammar, commercial law, business ethics, and "familiar[ity] with all kinds of business papers, from the making out of a simple bill to the most elaborate statements and balance sheets."⁷ Wright's classical course was intended to prepare students for college, including instruction in Latin, Greek, philosophy, mathematics, rhetoric, and history. Wright's third course, the academic course, appears to have been remedial, with instruction in spelling, word definitions, reading, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, grammar, history, penmanship, chemistry, and anatomy. Wright promoted the school's proximity to New York City—"the financial heart of the continent"—as well as its easy access from Manhattan by

ferry and from all parts of Brooklyn by streetcar.⁸ Day and evening sessions were held, and Wright reached out to area business owners and managers in helping to place his students.⁹ The college continued to grow, and by 1887, it had more than 400 students and occupied the entire Kings County Savings Bank Building above the ground floor.¹⁰

By the end of the 1880s, the college had exceeded 500 students, and in 1890, Wright purchased the future site of the Long Island Business College building, a 76'-wide-by-100'-deep plot on the north side of South 8th Street, for \$18,500. As reported in the *Newtown Register*,

It is Mr. Wright's intention to erect thereon in the near future a commodious and handsome college building that will accommodate upwards of 1,000 students. Mr. Wright's present facilities have been taxed to their utmost during the past two years to accommodate the constantly increasing numbers of students, and it has been apparent during this time that increased facilities would soon have to be secured. Mr. Wright, with his keen foresight into business as well as matters educational, has taken the initial step towards what, we are certain, will prove to be an important feature among the growing interests of the Eastern District and a source of large profits to himself.¹¹

In April of 1891, architect William H. Gaylor filed the application for the new building, and on June 23, 1891, its cornerstone was laid. At that time, it was reported that the college's name would be changed to the Long Island Business College with the opening of its new home.¹² On the evening of February 5, 1892, the doors of the new building were thrown open for a reception, with guests including Brooklyn Mayor David A. Boody. The *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that the building, which was lighted entirely by electricity, was "brilliantly illuminated" for the event.¹³ It also noted that the new Long Island Business College had a capacity of 800 students and was "supplied with numerous windows, assuring an abundance of light and ventilation"; its ground floor contained a large assembly room of 60 by 60 feet, and the second and third floors contained six classrooms each. The janitor's quarters, a lunchroom, and "a few classrooms" were located on the top story. The main, central entrance on South 8th Street was for visitors only; male and female students entered through gates on each side of the building.

According to Wright, the building, which cost more than \$90,000, was "perhaps the only one in the country erected and devoted solely to the work of business education."¹⁴ By 1896, the college had its own long-distance telephone, "which has become a necessity of modern life, and is particularly useful to an institution to which many business men have learned to look whenever they need the services of trained assistants."¹⁵ It also contained a bank, which provided students with a convenient place to deposit and withdraw money and for an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the banking process.¹⁶ The school's curriculum had broadened since the 1880s, with Wright adding preparatory courses for the state Regents and federal, state, and municipal civil service examinations. Its geographic reach had also expanded, as the school had started advertising in newspapers as far afield as Hempstead and Sag Harbor, noting its accessibility via the Long Island Rail Road.¹⁷ By 1897, enrollment exceeded 700 students. Among the school's pupils in the 1890s was John F. Hylan, who would go on to serve as New York City's mayor from 1918 to 1925. Hylan, who had moved to Brooklyn in 1888 from his boyhood home in the Catskills, worked as an engineer on a Brooklyn elevated railroad while studying for the Regents exam at nights at the Long Island Business College. After passing the Regents, Hylan enrolled in New York Law School, which he graduated from in 1897.¹⁸

The Long Island Business College continued under Wright's leadership until October of 1907, when he was incapacitated by illness. In May of the following year, Wright, in the

presence of his wife Adelaide and their daughter Lois S. Bissell, entered into an agreement with Edwin Leibfreed, the former dean of the American Commercial Schools Institution, which sought to raise the standards for commercial instruction by training commercial-school teachers.¹⁹ Under this agreement, Leibfreed, for an annual fee of \$7,250, leased the Long Island Business College from Wright for ten years. He was required to operate the school under its existing name and was given the right, at the end of the agreement, to purchase the school and its building from Wright for \$100,000.²⁰ Wright died in 1909, and in 1914, Leibfreed apparently became ill, and the agreement was terminated. At that time, Lois' husband, John Newton Bissell, the former vice president and general manager of the New York-Queens Electric Light and Power Company, became the college's new leader.²¹ Six years later, Bissell sold the school to Drake Business School, which moved it to the Shubert Theater Building on Monroe Street and Broadway and operated it as the Drake Long Island Business College.²² The Long Island Business College building was sold to the City of New York in 1921 and reopened the following year as Public School 166, which had previously been located at South 4th and Havemeyer Streets.²³

The Brooklyn Philosophical Association²⁴

From the year of the building's opening to 1918, the ground-floor assembly hall of the Long Island Business College hosted the meetings and lectures of the Brooklyn Philosophical Association. Founded in 1873 "for the attainment and diffusion of knowledge on scientific, social, ethical, and religious subjects, and for the comparison of ideas by means of lectures and discussions," the association was one of the country's leading freethought associations during the period, between the 1870s and World War I, that has come to be known as freethought's "golden age."²⁵ New York City was a major center of freethought, whose followers reject organized religion and "believe in the use of reason, in the value of ethics, and in the elimination of superstitions of all kinds from the minds of men."²⁶ During this period, freethought was an eclectic movement, and many of its followers held positions that were outside of the political mainstream. In favor of the separation of church and state, and for uncensored political speech and unfettered artistic expression, freethinkers of the time fought for "expanded legal and economic rights for women that went well beyond the narrow political goal of suffrage; the necessity of ending domestic violence against women and children; ... opposition to capital punishment and to inhumane conditions in prisons and insane asylums; and, above all, the expansion of public education."²⁷ Workers' rights and the free dissemination of birth-control information were other major freethinker causes.

Although freethought journals existed at the time—the most influential, the *Truth Seeker*, was published in New York—lectures were the primary means by which freethinkers promoted their ideas to the broader populace, attracting "a larger public that was interested in but did not define itself by religious skepticism."²⁸ In the assembly hall of Long Island Business College, the Brooklyn Philosophical Association hosted several lectures by leading figures of the political left, including anarchist, feminist, and free-love advocate Emma Goldman, who lectured there at least twice, in 1898 and 1906.²⁹ In February of 1898, a lecture by labor leader and socialist Eugene V. Debs, one of the most prominent political figures of the day, "served to fill the hall of the Long Island Business College to its doors."³⁰ Carrie Chapman Catt, who had succeeded Susan B. Anthony as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, spoke there in 1901, and in the following year, the hall hosted writer and feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman.³¹ Hubert Henry Harrison, the Caribbean-American political activist described by A.

Philip Randolph as “the father of Harlem radicalism,” addressed the Association in 1912.³² Perhaps the most surprising speaker was Anthony Comstock, the leader of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, who had been deputized, with the 1873 passage of the so-called Comstock Act, as a special agent of the postal service. In this position, Comstock was empowered with arresting senders of materials deemed to be obscene, including birth-control information and fine-art publications depicting nudes. “Never in all of his vice hunting career did Mr. Comstock face such a turbulent throng,” the *Eagle* reported, as he did “from the exponents of free thought and free love” at his 1902 speech at the Long Island Business College.³³

Other notable speakers hosted by the college’s assembly hall included publisher and prohibitionist Isaac K. Funk, and suffragist and temperance advocate Mary Elizabeth Lease, in 1897; populist politician William Sulzer, who lectured as a congressman in 1898 and again in 1914, following his impeachment as Governor of New York; and judge and future mayor William J. Gaynor, in 1899 and 1901.³⁴ Two leading proponents of birth control, Dr. Frederick A. Blossom and Dr. William J. Robinson, spoke in 1916 and 1917, respectively, and in the latter year, the association also hosted Mayor John Purroy Mitchel and the novelist and minister Bouck White, a major Socialist figure of the time.³⁵

Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary³⁶

Following its 1922 conversion into Public School 166, the Long Island Business College building remained a city school through the 1930s. In March of 1943, the City sold it to Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary of America, which was then located at 505 Bedford Avenue.³⁷

The *Bais Yaakov*, or Beth Jacob, educational movement was established in Krakow in 1917 by Sarah Schenirer. A seamstress who had educated herself in Jewish scripture and philosophy, Schenirer founded the first *Bais Yaakov* school seeking to “fight the spread of secularization and acculturation among Orthodox women—who until then had received no formal Jewish education.”³⁸ By 1937, *Bais Yaakov* schools had been established throughout Poland as well as in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Lithuania, and teacher training seminaries were operating in Krakow and Czernowitz (now the Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi).

In America in the mid-1930s, no schools above the elementary school level existed specifically for Orthodox girls. Williamsburg parents and religious leaders were concerned that their daughters were being secularized by the public schools, where they participated in “social activities that clashed with Orthodox proprieties.”³⁹ The Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary of America, the first such school in the country, was founded in Williamsburg in 1938 by Vichna Kaplan, née Eisen, a star student of Schenirer’s at the Krakow seminary who had recently married the American-born rabbi Boruch Kaplan. The goal of the seminary, which also functioned as a high school for boarding and day students, was to supply teachers for a network of *Bais Yaakov* schools in the U.S. The first American *Bais Yaakov* school was established in Williamsburg; by 1945, others were open in Bensonhurst, Borough Park, Brownsville, East New York, and Brighton Beach.

The seminary made headlines soon after its move to the Long Island Business College building when its executive director, Rabbi Samuel Rubin, enlisted in the Merchant Marine in November of 1944.⁴⁰ Rubin had emigrated to the U.S. in 1938 from Poland; his family members, who stayed behind and later escaped to Czechoslovakia, had gone missing and were presumed killed by the Nazis. “Determined to do as much as he [could] to liberate peoples persecuted by the Nazis,” the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported, Rubin, who was in his 30s, tried to enlist in the Army, but was rejected because of his age. After his swearing-in to the Merchant Marine, Rubin shaved

his beard and reported for training in Sheepshead Bay.⁴¹ Following the war's end, the seminary became a magnet for studious young survivors of the Holocaust. The first was 14-year-old Reise Gruenzweig, who was a survivor of Auschwitz, where most of her family was killed. After nearly starving there and being liberated by the Allies, she stowed away on a ship to the U.S. and was detained for several months on Ellis Island before receiving a visa that allowed her to stay with Brooklyn relatives. Gruenzweig enrolled in Beth Jacob Seminary in 1946.⁴² By 1948, 175 of the school's 600 pupils were European refugees, most of whom had labored in concentration-camp munitions factories and lost all of their European relatives. Many of the girls sought to return to Europe following the completion of their studies, as all of the European seminaries had been destroyed, leaving a dearth of teachers there.⁴³

The seminary remained in the Long Island Business College building until the mid-1960s, when it moved to 132 South 8th Street. The function of the building between this time and 1980, when it was listed as United Talmudical Academy Torah Vyirah, is unclear.⁴⁴ In 1984, Beth Jacob Seminary sold the building to a group of artists including Lars Cederholm, Doug Ohlson, Hiroshi Kariya, Bernard Kirschenbaum, and Susan Weil, who soon converted it into loft spaces. It remains an artists' co-op today.⁴⁵ Having served as the Beth Jacob Teachers' Seminary during its early formative years and as an academic refuge for young Holocaust survivors, the former Long Island Business College building is a significant landmark in the development of South Williamsburg's Jewish community.

William H. Gaylor⁴⁶

The architect of the Long Island Business College, William H. Gaylor, was born in Stamford, Connecticut in 1821 and apprenticed with the prominent carpenter and architect Edwin Bishop before moving to Williamsburgh, where he worked for builders Golder & Folk. Gaylor opened his own architectural office at age 21, and around 1863 "entered on the business of Master Builder."⁴⁷ In 1876, Gaylor, along with architect Arthur Crooks, were appointed by the Brooklyn Board of Aldermen to inspect the city's public buildings for safety.⁴⁸ Six years later, Gaylor was appointed Commissioner of Buildings by Brooklyn Mayor Seth Low, a position he held through Low's administration. Gaylor was a prolific architect, designing public, commercial, and residential buildings throughout Brooklyn. He is most widely known for his cast-iron-fronted commercial buildings, including 2 Wooster Street in Manhattan (1871-73, in the SoHo Cast Iron Historic District), and a series of three buildings erected for the firm of Smith, Gray & Co.: the Lyceum Building (1873-75); 894-896 Greenpoint Avenue (1877-78, in the Greenpoint Historic District); and 126 Broadway (1884, erected by Thomas and William Lamb, builder). The design of the cast-iron-fronted Smith, Gray & Company Building at 103 Broadway in Brooklyn (1870, a designated New York City Landmark) has been attributed to Gaylor, who also designed the Bedford Theater building (1891) at 109 South 6th Street. One of his sons, Edward F. Gaylor, also became an architect, working for his father for 14 years prior to establishing his own practice in 1882.

From the early 1870s to his death, in 1895, Gaylor's office was located at 110 South 8th Street, close to the site of the Long Island Business College building.

Design of the Long Island Business College⁴⁹

William Gaylor based the design of the Long Island Business College on Brooklyn's most modern and impressive schools of their day: the public schools designed by James W.

Naughton, Superintendent of Buildings for the Brooklyn Board of Education from 1879 until his death in 1898.

Brooklyn's public schools began to acquire a readily identifiable character as public institutional buildings in the late 1850s following the appointment of Naughton's predecessor, Samuel B. Leonard, as the school system's chief architect. Leonard's preferred style was the *Rundbogenstil*, or "round-arch style," a German style related to the early Romanesque Revival, which was imported to America in the mid-1840s and introduced to New York by architects Richard Upjohn, James Renwick, and Leopold Eidlitz.

In the 1870s, Leonard changed his approach and began incorporating elements of the French-inspired Second Empire style, chiefly its prominent pavilions and mansard roofs, which add plasticity and verticality to facades and create bold, picturesque rooflines. Red brick and brownstone were the primary materials used. A central entrance tower was often employed in conjunction with the style, functioning as a central pavilion in the design and "carrying the eye upward with pleasant relief."⁵⁰ The use of Second Empire style features elevated the neighborhood public school, giving it an air of cosmopolitan modernity recalling the grand buildings and palaces of Napoleon III's newly redesigned Paris; the mansarded public school with its tower vied with the church steeple as the most prominent element in the skyline of the 19th-century Brooklyn neighborhood. When Naughton succeeded Leonard, he continued his approach, combining the Second Empire with other styles, in works such as Girls' High School (1885-86, with a 1912 addition by C.B.J. Snyder), Public School 71K (1888-89), and Public School 73 (1888, with an 1895 addition), all of which feature five-part main facades, each with a central tower and projecting end pavilions.⁵¹ Girls' High School may have been an especially appealing model for Gaylor and his client, Henry Wright: one of the first public secondary schools in what would become New York City, Girls' High School was among Brooklyn's most prestigious educational institutions, associated with high-achieving girls. Wright undoubtedly sought to convey the same air of distinction and academic quality to the girls and young women who were making up an increasing proportion of his school's enrollment.

Faced with Philadelphia brick and Connecticut brownstone, the Long Island Business College is four stories high. One story taller than the typical Naughton school and sited on a comparatively narrow lot, it has a strong vertical thrust that makes it an especially imposing presence on South 8th Street. As with many of Naughton's later schools, the building mixes the Second Empire style with other contemporary influences. Its symmetrical five-part main facade with end pavilions and central tower crowned by a convex mansard roof with a square cap, and its slate-covered mansards crowning the second and fourth bays, are representative of the Second Empire style, while its rough-faced brownstone trim, curved bricks, and round-arch-headed openings are characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque, which was then at the height of its popularity in Brooklyn. The finely carved ornament within the spandrels of the main-entrance arch, as well as the columnar third-story mullions and carved rosettes at the second through fourth floors, are classical in influence and typical of the contemporaneous Queen Anne style. Italianate influence is seen in the grouped round-arch-headed dormer windows crowned by heavy moldings; the brick corbelling above the fourth-story windows of the central tower and end pavilions is a holdover from the early Romanesque Revival used by Leonard for his early Brooklyn schools.

The building remains well-preserved. Today, the Long Island Business College building remains a commanding presence in South Williamsburg, one that is as rich in cultural history as it is architecturally.

Description

The Long Island Business College is a three- and four-story educational building on the north side of South 8th Street, designed in the Second Empire and Romanesque Revival styles, and incorporating elements of the Queen Anne, Italianate, and early Romanesque styles.

Primary South 8th Street Facade

Historic: Five-bay facade with projecting central tower and end pavilions; four-story main facade with straight and curved red Philadelphia brick and smooth- and rough-faced brownstone; brownstone stoop with cheek walls; round-arch-headed main-entrance opening flanked by pilasters with granite shafts and brownstone foliate capitals with egg-and-dart moldings; rough-faced brownstone main-entrance arch with pointed voussoirs and classical foliate ornament within the arch spandrels; historic main-entrance door frame with twisted engaged columns, classical denticulated transom bar, and wood transom frame; bluestone basement sill; square-headed basement window openings; rough-faced brownstone basement with smooth lintelcourse; smooth-faced brownstone first-story sillcourse; rough-faced brownstone blocks flanking main entrance, first story of end pavilions, heads and sills of first-story windows, and central second-story bay; square-headed first-story window openings crowned by pointed flat arches; round-arch-headed second-story window openings with rough-faced brownstone keystones and springers on central bay; square-headed third-story windows with classical columnar mullions and egg-and-dart moldings on central bay; window openings crowned by brownstone arches with chamfered corners at fourth story of central bay and third story of second and fourth bays; segmental-arch-headed window openings with rough-faced brownstone springers at second story of outer bays; segmental-arch-headed window openings with rough-faced brownstone springers and keystones at second story of second and fourth bays; round-arch-headed windows with rough-faced brownstone springers at third and fourth stories of outer bays; rough-faced brownstone panels and brownstone corbel blocks decorated with carved rosettes at second through fourth stories; mansard roofs faced with octagonal slate shingles crowning second and fourth bays; tripartite round-arch-headed dormer windows crowned by heavy moldings; corbelled brick coursing crowning central and end bays; denticulated cornices; convex mansard roof with square cap crowning central bay.

Alterations: Sash replacement at all stories; brownstone stoop and portions of brownstone trim resurfaced; two basement window openings filled with stucco panels; westernmost upper basement sash replaced with wood panel with metal grille and conduit; security grilles at basement and first story; main-entrance doors replaced; non-historic light fixture on main-entrance transom bar; cornices above third story of second and fourth bays replaced or covered with metal; bird spikes on dormer windows; visible rooftop railings over second and fourth bays; removal of shallow pyramidal roofs with finials that originally crowned the end pavilions; replacement roofing materials on convex mansard roof over central bay.

Secondary East Facade and South Facade of East Wing

Historic: Four stories at southern portion, and three-story east wing and northern portion of east facade; red brick laid in common bond; square-headed window openings with plain (flush) stone lintels and plain projecting stone sills; primary facade cornice continued to southern portion of east facade; corbelled and denticulated brick cornice at northern portion of east facade and south facade of east wing; brick chimneys.

Alterations: Security grille at southernmost second-story window; replacement sashes; three chimneys painted and/or parged; metal downspouts.

Secondary West Facade and South Facade of West Wing

Historic: Four stories at southern portion, and three-story west wing and northern portion of west facade; red brick laid in common bond; square-headed window openings with plain (flush) stone lintels and plain projecting stone sills; primary facade cornice continued to southern portion of west facade; corbelled and denticulated brick cornice at northern portion of west facade and south facade of west wing; brick chimneys.

Alterations: Security grilles, conduit, camera, and light fixtures at basement and first story; replacement sashes; dryer vents at first through third stories; metal downspouts; three chimneys painted and/or parged.

Site Features

Concrete front areaway with bluestone border, and non-historic metal hatch and grille; non-historic metal gate in front of western portion of property, shared with adjacent lot; non-historic metal gate in front of concrete east areaway.

Report researched and written by
Michael Caratzas
Research Department

NOTES

¹ This section is largely adapted from the sections on Williamsburg in LPC, *Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House Designation Report* (LP-2268) (New York: City of New York, 2007), prepared by Matthew A. Postal; LPC, *St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sunday School and Parsonage Designation Report* (LP-2418) (New York: City of New York, 2011), prepared by Virginia Kurshan; LPC, *Smith, Gray & Company Building Designation Report* (LP-2161) (New York: City of New York, 2005), prepared by Jay Shockley; and *Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York Designation Report* (LP-2471) (New York: City of New York, 2012), prepared by Jay Shockley. Other sources include Judith Berck and Cathy Alexander, "Williamsburg(h)," in Kenneth T. Jackson, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 1403; and John B. Manbeck, Editor, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven, Connecticut: Citizens Committee for New York City/Yale University Press, 1998), 206-11.

² Sources for this section include "Henry C. Wright," *Penman's Art Journal* (May 1909), 24; Gary Hermalyn, *Morris High School and the Creation of the New York City Public High School System* (Bronx, New York: Bronx County Historical Society, 1995), 8; John F. Hylan, *Autobiography of John Francis Hylan, Mayor of New York* (New York: The Rotary Press, 1922), 39-49; "Long Island Business College," in Henry Ward Beecher Howard and Arthur N. Jervis, Eds., *The Eagle and Brooklyn: The Record of the Progress of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1893), 758; "Prof. Henry C. Wright," *New York Times*, April 13, 1909, 9; Jack Spiegel, "Pens Brief History of Long Island Business College," *Brooklyn Eagle* (1951?); Janice Weiss, "Educating for Clerical Work: The Nineteenth-Century Commercial School," *Journal of Social History* (Spring 1981), 407-423; Henry C. Wright, *Annual Catalogue of Wright's Business College* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Times Print, 1880), 9; Henry C. Wright, *Prospectus of the Long Island Business College* (Brooklyn: Long Island Business College, 1896); and Henry C. Wright, *Business Training at the Long Island Business College* (Brooklyn: Long Island Business College, 1897).

³ Wright's obituary gives his birthplace as "Rockville," but this is clearly an error. The Wrights' marriage record lists his birthplace as Algonquin, which is a village near Brockville, and the 1861 Canadian Census shows him living in Augusta in Grenville County, which borders the St. Lawrence River just east of Brockville, Ontario. According to *The Eagle and Brooklyn*, Wright "was born in Canada on the St. Lawrence." See Ontario, Canada, Marriages 1801-1928, Ancestry.com (www.ancestry.com), accessed July 22, 2013; and Canada Census (Augusta, Grenville County, Canada West: 1861), accessed through AncestryLibrary.com, July 22, 2013.

⁴ "Long Island Business College," *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 9, 1900, 63.

⁵ Weiss, 414.

⁶ Wright 1880, 9.

⁷ Wright 1880, 18.

⁸ Wright 1880, 14.

⁹ By 1882, Wright changed the school's name to "The Business College and Eclectic Academy of Brooklyn," stating that the school "takes a step forward in the business education of the day by providing additional studies in the arts and sciences for the choice of its students, and thus qualifying them to rank in general intelligence and culture with educated people in other walks of society." See "The Business College and Eclectic Academy of Brooklyn" (Advertisement), *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 19, 1882, 3; "Our Schools: Openings of Public and Private Institutions," *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 15, 1883, 1. The college appears to have reverted to its original name soon afterward.

¹⁰ "Wright's Business College" (Advertisement), *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 30, 1887, 1.

¹¹ "Wright's Business College," *Newtown Register*, May 1, 1890, 8.

¹² "Buildings Projected," *Real Estate Record and Guide* (April 25, 1891), 677; "Affairs in Brooklyn," *New York Herald-Tribune*, June 23, 1891, 12.

- ¹³ “Long Island Business College: Mayor Boody and Prominent Educators Inspect the New Building,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, February 6, 1892, 4.
- ¹⁴ Wright 1896, 11.
- ¹⁵ Wright 1896, 12.
- ¹⁶ The bank may have been a branch of the Kings County Co-Operative Building and Loan Association, which elected Wright its vice president in January of 1896. See “The Association Elects Officers,” *New York Herald Tribune*, January 29, 1896, 16.
- ¹⁷ “Long Island Business College” (Advertisement), *Hempstead (N.Y.) County Sentinel*, n.d.; “Long Island Business College” (Advertisement), *Sag Harbor Express*, February 27, 1896, n.p.
- ¹⁸ At that time, law school applicants were required to pass Regents exams in several different subjects, including English composition, history, government, Latin, algebra, and plane geometry.
- ¹⁹ William C. Stevenson, “Qualifications of Commercial Teachers,” in National Educational Association, *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting Held at Asbury Park and Ocean Grove, New Jersey, July 3-7 1905* (Winona, Minnesota: National Educational Association, 1905), 673.
- ²⁰ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 3074, 422 (May 18, 1908).
- ²¹ “John Newton Bissell,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1936, 17; Kings County, Officer of the Register, Conveyance Liber 3497, 304 (July 15, 1914).
- ²² “Drake Long Island Business College” (Advertisement), *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 22, 1926, 4.
- ²³ “Education Budget is \$143,549,610,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, August 26, 1920, 6; “Brooklyn to Get 12 New Schools if Plan is O.K.’d,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 26, 1920, 16; “Three Brooklyn Schools Still Used Despite Fire Peril Warning,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 20, 1921, 3; “\$70,000 Paid for L.I. Business College to Be Used as P.S.,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 8, 1921, 3; “P.S. 166 to Be Housed in Old Business College,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, November 16, 1921, 8; Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 4075, 500 (September 26, 1921).
- ²⁴ Sources for this section include Tom Flynn, Ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2007), 52-55, 141-43, 207-10, 343-46, 364-65, 367-68, 681-82, and 823-26; Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 148-85; and Gordon Stein, *The Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1985), 247-48.
- ²⁵ Brooklyn Philosophical Association, *Facts Worth Knowing!* (New York: Peter Eckler, 1878), 1; Jacoby, 152.
- ²⁶ Stein, 247.
- ²⁷ Jacoby, 154.
- ²⁸ Jacoby, 156.
- ²⁹ “Bows to No Man: Emma Goldman Lectures on ‘The Aim of Humanity,’” *Syracuse Daily Journal*, February 14, 1898, 2; Candace Falk, Ed., *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003), 479.
- ³⁰ “Debs on Social Problems,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, February 21, 1898, 12.
- ³¹ “Mrs. Catt’s Address,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, March 23, 1901, 5; “Women’s Club Work in Town and Country,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 26, 1902, 11.
- ³² Jeffrey Babcock Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918*, 157-58.
- ³³ “Warm Time for Comstock at Philosophical Society,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 8, 1902, 8. For another account of Comstock’s appearance, see “Mr. Comstock Denounced,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1902, 2.
- ³⁴ Funk was a co-founder of the Funk & Wagnalls Company. “The Saloon Vote: Dr. Funk Says Republicans Are Afraid of Losing It,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, March 1, 1897, 12; “Contradicted Mrs. Lease: The Kansas Woman’s

Brooklyn Debut Not Wholly Successful,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, October 11, 1897, 5; “Sulzer for Expansion,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, October 10, 1898, 3; “Philosophical Talks,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 26, 1914, 5; “Coming Events,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 14, 1899, 7; and “Justice Gaynor in Critical Mood,” *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, May 20, 1901, 12.

³⁵ “Birth Control Critics Rapped,” *New York Call*, December 11, 1916, 8; “To Speak on Birth Control,” *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, February 25, 1917, 5; “Mitchel Defends Gary System; Hits Tammany Attacks,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 5, 1917, 9; “I’m a Good Citizen, Bad Patriot’—White,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 5, 1917, 17.

³⁶ Sources for this section include Pearl Benisch, *Carry Me in Your Heart: The Life and Legacy of Sarah Schenirer, Founder and Visionary of the Bais Yaakov Movement* (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2003), 433-62; Gershon David Hundert, Ed., *The Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, Volumes 1 and 2* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008), 175-76 and 1670; Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 112-13 and 366-67; and Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, Eds., *Encyclopedia Judaica Second Edition* (Detroit: Thomson/Gale 2007), vol. 3, 533.

³⁷ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 6301, 406 (March 18, 1943).

³⁸ Hundert, 175.

³⁹ Benisch, 437.

⁴⁰ “Family Lost, Rabbi Goes to Sea,” *New York Post*, November 17, 1944, 20; “Rabbi Joins up to Avenge Family,” *Utica (N.Y.) Daily Press*, November 17, 1944, 1; “Rabbi’s a Seaman Now to Help in Liberation,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 18, 1944, 8.

⁴¹ “Rabbi’s a Seaman Now to Help in Liberation.”

⁴² “Indelible Memory,” *Binghamton Press*, November 8, 1946, n.p.; “From Silesian Death Camp to School in U.S.,” *Holley (N.Y.) Standard*, July 24, 1947, 2.

⁴³ “Girls Branded in Nazi Camps Find Happiness in Boro School,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, January 18, 1948, 13.

⁴⁴ *New York City Address Telephone Directories, 1929 to 1993* (New York: New York Public Library, 1983-1994).

⁴⁵ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Reel 1353, 615 (November 3, 1982); Kings County, Office of the Register, Mortgage Reel 1581, 26 (November 8, 1984); “Sayonara, Park Avenue,” *New York Observer*, April 14, 2003 (accessed online at <http://observer.com/2003/04/sayonara-park-avenue>); email message from Martina Salisbury to Michael Owen of LPC, September 11, 2013. According to Salisbury, who currently resides there, “the building had been abandoned for quite some time when the artists bought it.”

⁴⁶ This section is largely adapted from LPC, *Smith, Gray & Company Building Designation Report*, 4. Other sources include Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1840-1900* (Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 89; and Henry Reed Stiles, *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History, and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, N.Y., from 1683 to 1884* (New York: W.W. Munsell, 1884), 580-81.

⁴⁷ Stiles, 581.

⁴⁸ “Inspection: The Aldermanic Investigation of Public Buildings,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 14, 1876, 2.

⁴⁹ Portions of this section are adapted from LPC, *Public School 86 Designation Report* (LP-1808) (New York: City of New York, 1991). Other sources include LPC, *Girls’ High School Designation Report* (LP-1246) (New York: City of New York, 1983); LPC, *Public School 73 Designation Report* (LP-1289) (New York: City of New York, 1984); and LPC, *Public School 108 Designation Report* (LP-2008) (New York: City of New York, 1981), all prepared by James T. Dillon.

⁵⁰ *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York, for the Year Ending December 31, 1868* (New York: Evening Post Steam Press, 1869), 14, cited in LPC, *Public School 73 Designation Report*, 4. “The use of a central entrance tower for a school first appeared in New York in 1868 with the

completion of P.S. 56, a Second Empire design, in the Chelsea section of Manhattan,” according to the P.S. 73 designation report.

⁵¹ This approach would continue into the 1890s, in works such as Public School 108 (James W. Naughton, 1895) which, although primarily Romanesque Revival in style, has an imposing main facade separated into pavilions linked by deeply recessed wings.

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 Long Island Business College 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, the Long Island Business College was designed by William H. Gaylor and built by Henry C. Wright, who founded Wright's Business College in Williamsburg in 1873; that the college trained clerical workers, primarily young men and women, for careers with the many large banks, insurance companies, and industrial concerns that were proliferating throughout Brooklyn and the then-separate city of New York; that the Long Island Business College building opened in 1892 with a reception attended by Brooklyn's mayor; that Wright called the building "perhaps the only [building] in the country erected and devoted solely to the work of business education"; that among those attending college in the building was John F. Hylan, who would go on to serve as New York City's mayor from 1918 to 1925; that during its time as the Long Island Business College, the building hosted the meetings and lectures of the Brooklyn Philosophical Association, one of the country's leading freethought organizations during the period that has come to be known as freethought's "golden age"; that many prominent speakers lectured to the Brooklyn Philosophical Association in the building's assembly hall, including anarchist Emma Goldman, labor leader and socialist Eugene V. Debs, suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt, future mayor William J. Gaynor, sitting mayor John Purroy Mitchel, and anti-vice crusader Anthony Comstock; that, in 1943, the building became an early home of the Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary of America, serving as both a teachers' academy and as a day and boarding high school for girls, making it a significant landmark in the development of South Williamsburg's Jewish community; that following World War II, hundreds of girls who were European refugees and Holocaust survivors were educated in the building; that the building's design was based on the designs of recent Brooklyn public schools; that the building's design combines the Romanesque Revival and Second Empire styles, and incorporates elements of other contemporary styles, featuring rough-faced brownstone trim, a five-part facade with central tower and end pavilions, slate-covered mansards, and a convex roof with square cap; and that the Long Island Business College building remains a commanding presence in South Williamsburg, rich in cultural history and architecturally.

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 Long Island Business College, 143 South 8th Street (aka 143-149 South 8th Street), Borough of Brooklyn, and designates Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2132, Lot 30 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Frederick Bland, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner, Michael Goldblum,
Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



Long Island Business College
143 South 8th Street (aka 143-149 South 8th Street), Brooklyn
Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2132, Lot 30
Photo: Michael Caratzas, 2013



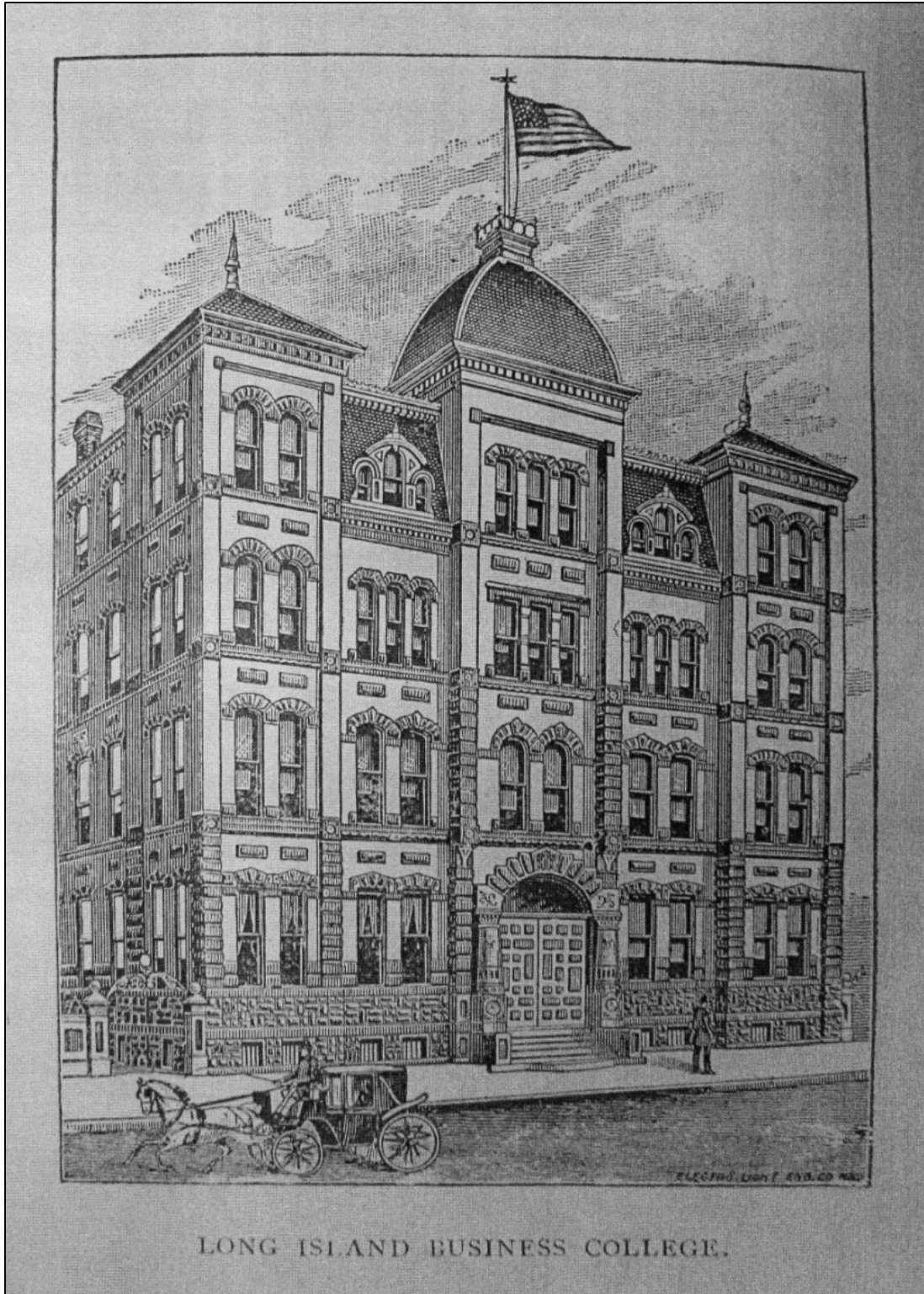
Long Island Business College
Photo: LPC, 2012



Long Island Business College
Main Entrance
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2013



Long Island Business College
Historic Rendering
Source: Henry C. Wright, Prospectus of the
Long Island Business College
(Brooklyn: Long Island Business College, 1896)



Long Island Business College
Historic Rendering

Source: *Henry C. Wright, Prospectus of the Long Island Business College*
(Brooklyn: *Long Island Business College*, 1896)



LONG ISLAND BUSINESS COLLEGE (LP-2544), 143 South 8th Street (aka 143-149 South 8th Street)
 Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 2132, Lot 30

Designated: September 17, 2013