

## **4<sup>TH</sup> (now 88<sup>TH</sup>) POLICE PRECINCT STATION HOUSE**

298 Classon Avenue, aka 414-20 DeKalb Avenue, Brooklyn. Built 1889-90, architect-engineer George Ingram, Brooklyn Department of City Works; 1924-26 extension, architect Thomas E. O'Brien.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1933, Lot 121.

On December 17, 2013 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House (Item No. 1). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with provisions of law. Two people, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council and the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, spoke in favor of designation. One person, a representative of Brooklyn Community Board No. 1, spoke in opposition to designation. The Commission also received a letter from City Council member Letitia James in support of designation.

### Summary

The former 4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House, at the southwest corner of Classon and DeKalb Avenues, is an impressive example of Romanesque Revival style architecture. It replaced an earlier station house at Myrtle and Vanderbilt Avenues and during construction was described in the *Brooklyn Eagle* as “palatial,” comparing “favorably with anything of the kind in America.”<sup>1</sup> Completed in November 1890, the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House was designed by George Ingram, a civil engineer who was associated with the Brooklyn Department of City Works in the 1880s. Under Commissioner Thomas W. Carroll, the Department of Police and Excise took significant steps to improve working conditions for Brooklyn’s growing police force. Ingram was asked to develop the basic form and style for numerous station houses and may have been responsible for designing as many as ten police buildings, including two that are designated New York City Landmarks. Faced with red pressed brick and sandstone, the lively street elevations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House feature arched windows with transoms and distinctive molded hoods. The fortress-like exterior is well-preserved, including a picturesque turret that rises asymmetrically above the entrance porch. Following the consolidation of Greater New York in 1898, the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct became known as the 156<sup>th</sup> Precinct, and later the 96<sup>th</sup> Precinct. The 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct originally had a separate patrol-stable-and-cells building which was demolished in the mid-1920s. This structure was replaced by a three-story brick extension that was designed by architect Thomas E. O’Brien, a lieutenant in the police force, to create the impression it was constructed at the same time as the earlier building. In 1953, a Title 1 slum clearance plan for the area around the Pratt Institute was approved by the City of New York. Though most of the scheme focused on developing two superblocks of high-rise apartments, a small group of historic buildings on or near DeKalb Avenue were selected for preservation, including this handsome station house, which has served the Clinton Hill and Bedford Stuyvesant communities for nearly 125 years.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Brooklyn's Police Department

The City of Brooklyn was chartered by the New York State Legislature in April 1834. The following year, in July 1835, the Brooklyn Common Council passed an ordinance establishing a night watch, consisting of two paid captains and a dozen paid watchmen. These men were stationed in Brooklyn City Hall (1845-48, a designated New York City Landmark) and in several branch watch houses. It was their duty to report criminal activity and the location of fires.<sup>2</sup> In 1850, the council replaced the night watch with a "Day and Night" police department modeled on the recently-formed New York system.<sup>3</sup> Brooklyn's first chief of police, John S. Folk, divided the city into four police districts, appointing salaried captains, sergeants, patrolmen, and detectives.<sup>4</sup> In April 1857, however, control of Brooklyn's police force, as well as that of New York, Richmond and Westchester, was transferred to New York State. It would remain part of the Metropolitan Police Commission until April 1870 when the state legislature made Brooklyn's police, once again, independent – with its own officers and board of commissioners.<sup>5</sup> As the population grew, so did the size of the Brooklyn Department of Police and Excise, from 12 precincts with 447 officers in 1870 to 17 precincts with more than a 1,000 officers in 1887. By this time, the headquarters was in the Municipal Building (1876-78, demolished) on Joralemon Street, and the telegraph squad, composed of three operators, was housed in the basement of Brooklyn City Hall.

### Clinton Hill

Clinton Hill is part of north central Brooklyn, bordered on the west by Fort Greene and on the east by Bedford Stuyvesant. Located on high ground, the most prominent street in Clinton Hill is Clinton Avenue, which was laid out by merchant George Washington Pine in 1834.<sup>6</sup> This wide, north-south thoroughfare was developed with increasingly large free-standing mansions, including impressive residences built for businessman Charles Pratt, a partner in Standard Oil, as well as his three sons. The impact of the family's philanthropy was strongly felt in this part of Brooklyn. In addition to establishing the Pratt Institute on Ryerson Street in 1884, Charles Pratt funded the expansion of several noteworthy institutions, including the Adelphi Academy (Charles Haight, 1886-88), Lafayette Avenue and St. James Place; the Emmanuel Baptist Church (begun 1882), Lafayette Avenue; and the Pratt Institute Library (William Tubby, 1896), Ryerson Street, which was part of the Brooklyn Public Library system until 1940.<sup>7</sup>

The 4<sup>th</sup> Precinct was one of the first police precincts organized in Brooklyn. William E. S. Fales, who authored *Brooklyn's Guardians: A Record of the Faithful and Heroic Men Who Preserve the Peace in the City of Homes*, observed in 1887:

One of the pleasantest precincts in Brooklyn is the Fourth. It covers an aristocratic neighborhood about Clinton Avenue and Fort Greene Park and contains a mixed population of the best and worst classes ... In its long history it has been commanded by many of the best men upon the force.<sup>8</sup>

Located at the corner of Myrtle and Vanderbilt Avenues, the precinct's original station house was close to Fort Greene, between the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment Armory (c. 1873, now apartments) and the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Fales described the three-story structure as "one of the oldest station

houses in the city,” suggesting that a new police facility was already needed, or perhaps, being planned.<sup>9</sup>

### Station Houses

New York City and Brooklyn experienced exceptional growth in the decades following the Civil War. To meet the needs of new and evolving communities, many distinctive civic structures were built, particularly for the police and fire departments. For instance, Nathaniel D. Bush, a staff police sergeant, oversaw the construction and renovation of more than 20 structures for the New York Police Department between 1862 and 1895, and the architect Napoleon Le Brun (after 1888, Napolelon Le Brun & Sons) designed 42 structures for the New York Fire Department between 1879 and 1895.<sup>10</sup> While Bush favored Italianate or Second Empire style aesthetics, the work Le Brun produced was stylistically more varied, from Dutch Renaissance and Romanesque to French Renaissance Revival.

In Brooklyn, however, the situation was different. Neither the police nor fire department employed a full-time architect, relying, instead, on independent firms or the Department of City Works, which oversaw street, sewer and dock construction, as well as the installation of electric lighting fixtures. In 1886, Brooklyn police commissioner Thomas W. Carroll launched a program to evaluate the current condition of precinct station houses. Not only were many commands found to be housed in inadequate quarters, but others were located in leased structures that were only identified by green police lanterns.<sup>11</sup> Based on these findings, the department initiated a program to erect city-owned, specially-designed station houses. This campaign focused on constructing facilities in existing precincts, as well as in newly-created precincts where the population was substantial.

According to *The New York Times*, Carroll requested \$206,000 for “new station houses” – about 14% of the department’s 1888 budget.<sup>12</sup> Under James D. Bell, who succeeded Carroll as police commissioner, a dozen new station houses were begun. In an 1891 report to the Brooklyn Common Council, Mayor David Boody praised the department’s construction program:

When the station houses now under way are completed, Brooklyn will own every station house and they will be commodious and as well equipped as those in any city in the United States. Many improvements have been undertaken in connection with our police service are exercising a decided influence upon the morale of the force. This department seems to be in a commendable state of efficiency.<sup>13</sup>

Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century station houses were generally planned with various rooms for uniformed officers, cells for short-term prisoners, and stables. The muster room, where officers were given their daily duties, was usually located at the front of the main building, near the entrance. It had a large sergeant’s desk and often adjoined the captain’s office and private quarters. On the upper floors were the section rooms, including dormitories and washrooms for the patrolmen, who frequently worked sixteen-hour shifts. There was an independent cell block, temporary accommodations for the homeless or drunk, and a separate structure for the horses and “hoodlum” wagon.<sup>14</sup>

## Construction

In May 1888, the State of New York approved an act “to provide for the erection of a police-station house in the 4<sup>th</sup> police precinct of Brooklyn, and to authorize the issue of bonds.”<sup>15</sup> Brooklyn acquired the 100 x 97’ site from Charles H. Otis in March 1889. Consisting of four 25-foot-wide lots, the vacant property cost \$24,250.

In October 1889, the Brooklyn Department of City Works submitted plans (NB 885, 887) to the Department of Buildings for two structures on the site: a police precinct station house and a patrol stable with a cells extension. The anticipated cost of construction was \$39,000. Dated blueprints and drawings indicate that the design of the 4<sup>th</sup> (and 13<sup>th</sup>) precinct was developed between March 1889 and March 1890.<sup>16</sup> A lengthy description of the 4<sup>th</sup> (and 14<sup>th</sup>) precinct station house was published in the *Brooklyn Eagle* in March 1890. Though the writer reported the building was still “in course of erection,” the various interiors were clearly delineated in the text. The unnamed author boasted:

To say that there are none superior in the United States would be too mild a comparison because no city in the Union possesses any equal to them . . . The buildings are complete in every detail and furnish a model home for the guardians of the peace, while also furnish an impregnable prison for breakers of the law.<sup>17</sup>

Later that year, in November 1890, contractor John J. Cashman completed construction of the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct and “on the 27<sup>th</sup> was formally taken possession of.”<sup>18</sup>

## George Ingram

The 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House was designed by George Ingram (1855-1932), a civil engineer employed by the Brooklyn Department of City Works. Robert Van Buren, the chief engineer, reported in 1888 that “Station Houses, Fire Engine Houses, Police Courts, &c., have been erected under the immediate charge of Mr. Ingram. The plans and specifications have been prepared by him and Mr. [George] Stirrat without paying for any advice from architects.”<sup>19</sup>

Ingram attended the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute.<sup>20</sup> In February 1876 he was appointed a city surveyor and by the early 1880s was employed by the Department of City Works as a draftsman and assistant engineer.<sup>21</sup> During the late 1880s, Ingram worked on numerous civic projects. In addition to overseeing construction of the Carroll Street Bridge (1888-89, a designated New York City Landmark), he developed a standardized station house plan for the police, one that could be modified for individual sites or to meet specific needs. It may have shaped the design of as many as ten structures, most of which were sited on highly-visible corners, such as the 18th Precinct (1890-92) in Sunset Park and the 19<sup>th</sup> Precinct (1891-92) in Greenpoint, both designated New York City Landmarks.<sup>22</sup> Ingram treated each station house as a mini-complex in which the stable, cell block and lodging rooms were housed in separate structures, which were frequently connected to the main building by a recessed passageway. Ingram resigned from the department in late 1889 or early 1890, during the period when the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct – and the nearly identical 13<sup>th</sup> Precinct – were beginning construction.<sup>23</sup> Though he was not identified on the building permits or blueprints, the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that the plans for the 4<sup>th</sup> Precinct “were drawn by Mr. George Ingram, who until lately was connected to the Department of City Works.”<sup>24</sup>

Among the various station houses designed by Ingram, the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct is likely to be the earliest that survives. In subsequent years, he continued to maintain a close relationship

with the police department, building the 15<sup>th</sup> Precinct (demolished), the former 17<sup>th</sup> Precinct, the 19<sup>th</sup> Precinct, and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Precinct. Ingram was also associated with the Brooklyn Institute's Department of Architecture and in 1892 was appointed to the (Bay Ridge) Shore Road Commission. Ingram retired in 1905 and during his later years lived on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Streets, in what is now called Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn.

### Plan and Design

The 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House was originally two structures, linked by a “one story covered brick passageway.”<sup>25</sup> The main building, located on the southwest corner of Classon and DeKalb Avenues, is mostly faced with red pressed brick. In comparison to common brick, this material was more expensive and has sharper edges, allowing for a thinner application of mortar. Three stories tall, the arched entrance porch is made of cut freestone, a type of fine-grained sandstone.<sup>26</sup> It sits at the base of a projecting four-story tower, incorporating a “circular turret wall”<sup>27</sup> that begins at the third floor and rises approximately 73 feet. Planned with a spiral staircase, this picturesque feature would have increased the precinct's visibility in a residential area and may have initially served as a lookout. Crowned by a cone-shaped roof covered by “unglazed Japanese terra-cotta tile,” the turret supported a 50-foot-tall flagpole, with a gilt ball at the top. Though the fenestration varies on each floor, all of the windows are subdivided with thick stone mullions and transoms. While the rectangular first-story windows have keyed surrounds, the rest have arched openings with molded hoods that spring from rose-like carvings. To enhance the rhythm of the fenestration, string courses link the hoods at the third story, as well as at the top of the tower.

A “patrol stable and cells extension” was originally located on the south part of the site. Divided in two sections, the two-story stable building was planned for the patrol wagon, with two horse stalls and “electric alarms, automatic unhitching and harnessing apparatus.”<sup>28</sup> There was an arched entrance, as well as an arched opening to the hayloft, flanked by small semi-circular windows. Behind the stable was a one-story building containing eight wrought-iron cells that were described as “unequaled for strength even in the most solid and secure jails in the whole country.”<sup>29</sup> Like the main building, these structures had pressed brick facades and simple stone cornices.

Both structures were designed in the Romanesque Revival style, which originated in Western Europe during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Early examples, mainly castles and churches, drew inspiration from Imperial Roman and Early Christian models. These medieval buildings frequently include arcades, as well as undressed stonework, flat buttressing, and simple towers. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, American architects rediscovered the Romanesque as a variant of – and predecessor to – the Gothic style. Drawing on German, French and Italian sources, some pioneering local examples included the Church of the Pilgrims (1844-46, now our Lady of Lebanon) in Brooklyn Heights and St. George's Church (1846-56) on Stuyvesant Square in Manhattan. These round-arched structures anticipate the subsequent work of Henry Hobson Richardson, the second American architect to train at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. In the 1870s, Richardson adopted the Romanesque and began to specialize in public commissions, designing a diverse group of libraries, train stations, and government buildings on the east coast of the United States. Distinguished by colorful rusticated stonework, round arches and clusters of squat colonnettes, the influence of the “Richardsonian Romanesque” style was widely felt, shaping the character of many notable buildings prior to the ascent of the City Beautiful movement in the early 1890s. Significant examples in New York City include the block-long

south elevation of the American Museum of Natural History (1888-1908), the New York Times Building (1888-89), Boys' High School (1891), and the Brooklyn Fire Department Headquarters (1892) – all designated New York City Landmarks. A sturdy, fortress-like appearance was perceived as especially appropriate for neighborhood fire and police department buildings and similarly “palatial”<sup>30</sup> works are found not only in Manhattan and Brooklyn, but throughout the United States.

### Subsequent Years

When the station house opened in 1890, it had 64 officers, including a captain, four sergeants, and 44 patrolmen. This number increased gradually, reaching 80 in 1917. During the 1890s, the precinct boundaries were smaller than today, incorporating Fulton Street (south), Myrtle Avenue (north), Hudson Avenue (west) and Bedford Avenue (east). The precinct number has changed four times. Following the consolidation of Greater New York, all 80 police precincts were redistricted and renumbered in May 1898. At this time, the 4<sup>th</sup> Precinct became the 56<sup>th</sup> Precinct.<sup>31</sup> By 1908, it was changed to the 156<sup>th</sup> Precinct, and in 1918, the 96<sup>th</sup> Precinct. Since about 1930, it has remained the 88<sup>th</sup> Precinct.

The patrol stable was altered in 1915-17. At this time, the stalls and hoist were removed and replaced by an interior stairs. These changes converted the south building to a traffic squad station, possibly for storing motorcycles. In 1923, the police department filed plans to replace this structure with a three-story brick extension containing detective quarters, a garage and prison, as well as a dormitory. The estimated cost of these improvements was \$75,000 and work was completed in 1926. In addition to employing identical round arches and molded hoods, the architect carefully matched the color of the pressed brick and stone. These decisions create the impression that the new extension and the recessed bay were erected at the same time as the main building.<sup>32</sup>

Thomas E. O'Brien (d. 1932) was the architect of the extension. A Bronx resident and police lieutenant, he studied architecture at the Cooper Union and headed the Bureau of Repairs & Supplies at the New York Department of Police starting in 1895. O'Brien designed numerous station houses and supervised the alterations to the 4<sup>th</sup> Precinct stable in 1915. Located in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan, most of his designs are in the neo-Renaissance palazzo style. O'Brien was officially named Superintendent of Buildings of the New York Police Department in 1929. At this time, *The New York Times* described him as a licensed architect who had been “responsible for the design of nearly all the police buildings erected in last few years.”<sup>33</sup> The New York Police Commissioner Grover Whalen praised O'Brien, saying he was “worth many times his salary for what he has saved the city.”<sup>34</sup>

In July 1953, a major slum clearance plan was approved for downtown Brooklyn and 14 blocks in the area surrounding the Pratt Institute.<sup>35</sup> Completed in 1965, this project included two superblocks of high-rise apartment buildings. To accomplish this, several north-south streets were closed, including Emerson Place, one block west of Classon Avenue. Numerous 19<sup>th</sup>-century row houses were demolished but a small group of historic structures along DeKalb Avenue were deliberately spared, including buildings within the Pratt campus, as well as the 88<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House, which currently stands between the Classon Playground and Public School 270.<sup>36</sup>

## Description

The 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct is located in Clinton Hill, at the edge of Bedford Stuyvesant, in Brooklyn. Three stories tall, the station house is divided into two main sections, linked by a short recessed section. The facades that face Classon Avenue and DeKalb Avenue, as well as the north part of the rear facade, are faced with red pressed brick and sandstone, while the other facades are standard reddish brown brick.

*Historic features:* red pressed brick, brown sandstone trim, turret with cone-shaped roof, double-hung fenestration with transoms, hanging lighting fixture and glass-panel wood entrance doors inside entrance porch, ironwork in basement windows facing DeKalb Avenue, south extension garage door, iron fencing with bracing along Classon and DeKalb Avenues.

*Alterations:* flagpole above entrance, lighting fixture above entrance, iron railings at entrance, lighting fixtures flanking garage, lighting fixtures and piping on DeKalb Avenue, aluminum-framed windows, window air conditioning units, aluminum fencing and rusting pipes to right of entrance on Classon Avenue, aluminum fencing at rear of site, semi-enclosed fire stairs with doors openings (1920s) and ventilation pipe on rear facade, lighting fixtures on south facade.

Report researched and written by  
Matthew A. Postal  
Research Department

## *NOTES*

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<sup>1</sup> “New Station Houses: Palatial Homes Provided for the Wielders of the Club,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, March 9, 1890, 8. This article provides a detailed description of the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House.

<sup>2</sup> *Ordinances of the City of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn, 1850), 178-183.

<sup>3</sup> The New York system, modeled on London’s Metropolitan Police Force, was established in 1845.

<sup>4</sup> “Brooklyn Intelligence,” *The New York Herald*, January 9, 1851, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Laws of the State of New York, Volume 1* (New York, 1870), 364, viewed at Googlebooks.com

<sup>6</sup> LPC, *Clinton Hill Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2107) (New York: City of New York, 1981)

<sup>7</sup> These buildings are designated New York City Landmarks except for the Adelphi Academy which is part of the Clinton Hill Historic District, designated 1981.

<sup>8</sup> William E. S. Fales, *Brooklyn’s Guardians* (Brooklyn, 1887), 259.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>10</sup> Many Manhattan police station houses and fire department buildings are designated New York City Landmarks, or are located in historic districts.
- <sup>11</sup> *19<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House and Stable Designation Report*, prepared by Betsey Bradley (LP-1703) (New York: City of New York, 1993), 3. Many sections of this report rely on her research.
- <sup>12</sup> “Brooklyn’s Expense Budget,” *The New York Times*, May 18, 1887, 2.
- <sup>13</sup> *Message of Honorable David A. Boody, Mayor of Brooklyn* (1892), 10.
- <sup>14</sup> Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman. *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 1999), 138; “New Station Houses,” March 9, 1890.
- <sup>15</sup> *The General Statutes of New York State for the Year 1888*, Chapter 376, xxxiii.
- <sup>16</sup> These blueprints and drawings are in the collection of the Municipal Archives, Department of Records.
- <sup>17</sup> “New Station Houses,” March 9, 1890.
- <sup>18</sup> Cashman lived in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, at 110 Milton Street. A successful mason and builder, he was a member of the Brooklyn Board of Education and served as a trustee of the Brooklyn Public Library. Cashman retired in 1902. He built station houses for Brooklyn police precincts 18 and 20, as well as Public School 9, a designated New York City Landmark. See “John J. Cashman,” *The New York Times*, January 9, 1936, 21; *Annual Report of the Department of Police and Excise* (Brooklyn, 1891), 8.
- <sup>19</sup> *Annual Report, 1887* (Brooklyn: Department of City Works, 1888), 32. Also see Christopher Gray, “Palatial Homes for the Wielders of the Club,” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2011, viewed online.
- <sup>20</sup> See “Third Reunion of the Alumni of the Polytechnic Institute,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 14, 1889, 1.
- <sup>21</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Union*, February 26, 1876, 1; “Resigns,” *Brooklyn Standard Union*, February 4, 1890, 1.
- <sup>22</sup> Over the next two decades, additional precincts were designed by William B. Tubby, Horgan & Slattery, and Walter Parfitt.
- <sup>23</sup> The former 13<sup>th</sup> precinct is located at Tompkins and Vernon Avenues. It is now used as housing. See “New Thirteenth Precinct,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, June 8, 1890. In regard to Ingram, the *Brooklyn Eagle* commented: “He is rather independent and if he gets out he will at once step into a more lucrative place. There are several openings for him.” See “He Wants To Go,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 17, 1889, 6. Also see “Resigns.”
- <sup>24</sup> “New Station Houses,” March 9, 1890.
- <sup>25</sup> The former 19<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct (1891-92), a designated Landmark in Bushwick, has a similar plan but in reverse, retaining the original passageway, stable, and cell block on the right of the main building.
- <sup>26</sup> The color of the brick was said to be identical to the Adelphi Academy in Clinton Hill, and the stone was quarried in East Newark, New Jersey. In other precincts, Ingram used “Anderson pressed brick, which are among the finest made” and “Baltimore pressed brick” as well as “Lake Superior brown stone.” See “New Station Houses, March 9, 1890; “New Station Houses,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 2, 1890.
- <sup>27</sup> This expression is taken from the new building permit.
- <sup>28</sup> “New Station Houses,” March 9, 1890.
- <sup>29</sup> “New Station Houses,” March 9, 1890; “96<sup>th</sup> Precinct Police Station,” *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the State Commission of Prisons* (1918), 164.
- <sup>30</sup> “New Station Houses,” March 9, 1890.
- <sup>31</sup> *Annual Report for the Year 1898* (New York: Police Department, 1899), 21, 80-81.
- <sup>32</sup> The other two facades are conventional brick with a brownish red color. While the side (south) facade, which originally stood close to another building, has no windows, the rear facade has arched openings. O’Brien also added the black metal fire stairs at the rear of the main building.

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<sup>33</sup> “Lieut T. E. O’Brien Named by Whalen Superintendent of Buildings,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1929, 27; “Thomas O’Brien Dies; Architect of Police Force,” *The New York Herald Tribune*, February 14, 1932, 20.

<sup>34</sup> “Lieut T. E. O’Brien Named by Whalen Superintendent of Buildings.”

<sup>35</sup> “Moses Plans Doom of Brooklyn Slum,” *The New York Times*, July 13, 1953, 1; *Slum Clearance Plan under Title I of the Housing Act of 1949: Pratt Institute Area* (New York: Committee on Slum Clearance, July 1953). According to this report, 93% of the residential structures in the area were built prior to 1902.

<sup>36</sup> Both the public school and playground date to circa 1960.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, history, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the 4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House is located at the southwest corner of Classon Avenue and DeKalb Avenue in Brooklyn; that it is an impressive example of Romanesque Revival style architecture; that during construction it was described by a writer in the *Brooklyn Eagle* as “palatial” and comparing “favorably with anything of the kind in America”; that it was completed in November 1890 and was designed by George Ingram, a civil engineer who was associated with the Brooklyn Department of City Works during the 1880s; that under Commissioner Thomas W. Carroll, the Department of Police and Excise took significant steps to improve working conditions for Brooklyn’s growing police force; that Ingram was asked to develop the basic form and style for numerous station houses and may have been responsible for designing as many as ten police department buildings, including two that are designated New York City Landmarks; that the lively street elevations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct Station House are faced with brick and sandstone; that the arched windows incorporate transoms and prominent molded hoods; that the fortress-like exterior is well-preserved, including a picturesque turret that rises above the entrance porch; that following the consolidation of Greater New York in 1898 it became known as the 156<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct and later the 96<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct; that the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct originally had a separate patrol-stable-and-cells building which was demolished in the mid-1920s; that this modest structure was replaced by a three-story brick extension that was designed by architect Thomas E. O’Brien, a lieutenant in the police department, to create the impression that it was constructed at the same time as the earlier building; that in 1953 a Title 1 slum clearance plan for the area around the Pratt Institute was approved by the City of New York; and while most of the scheme focused on developing two superblocks of high-rise apartment buildings, a small group of historic buildings on or near DeKalb Avenue were selected for preservation, including this handsome station house, which has served the Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant communities for nearly 125 years.

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 4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House, 298 Classon Avenue (aka 414-20 DeKalb Avenue) and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1933, Lot 21, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner, Michael Goldblum  
Christopher Moore, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



**4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House**  
298 Classon Avenue, aka 414-20 DeKalb Avenue, Brooklyn  
Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1922, Lot 121  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014*



4th PRECINCT STATION HOUSE.

**4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House**

*Annual Report of the Department of Police and Excise of the City of Brooklyn for the year 1890*  
*Courtesy: Brooklyn Central Library – Brooklyn Collection*



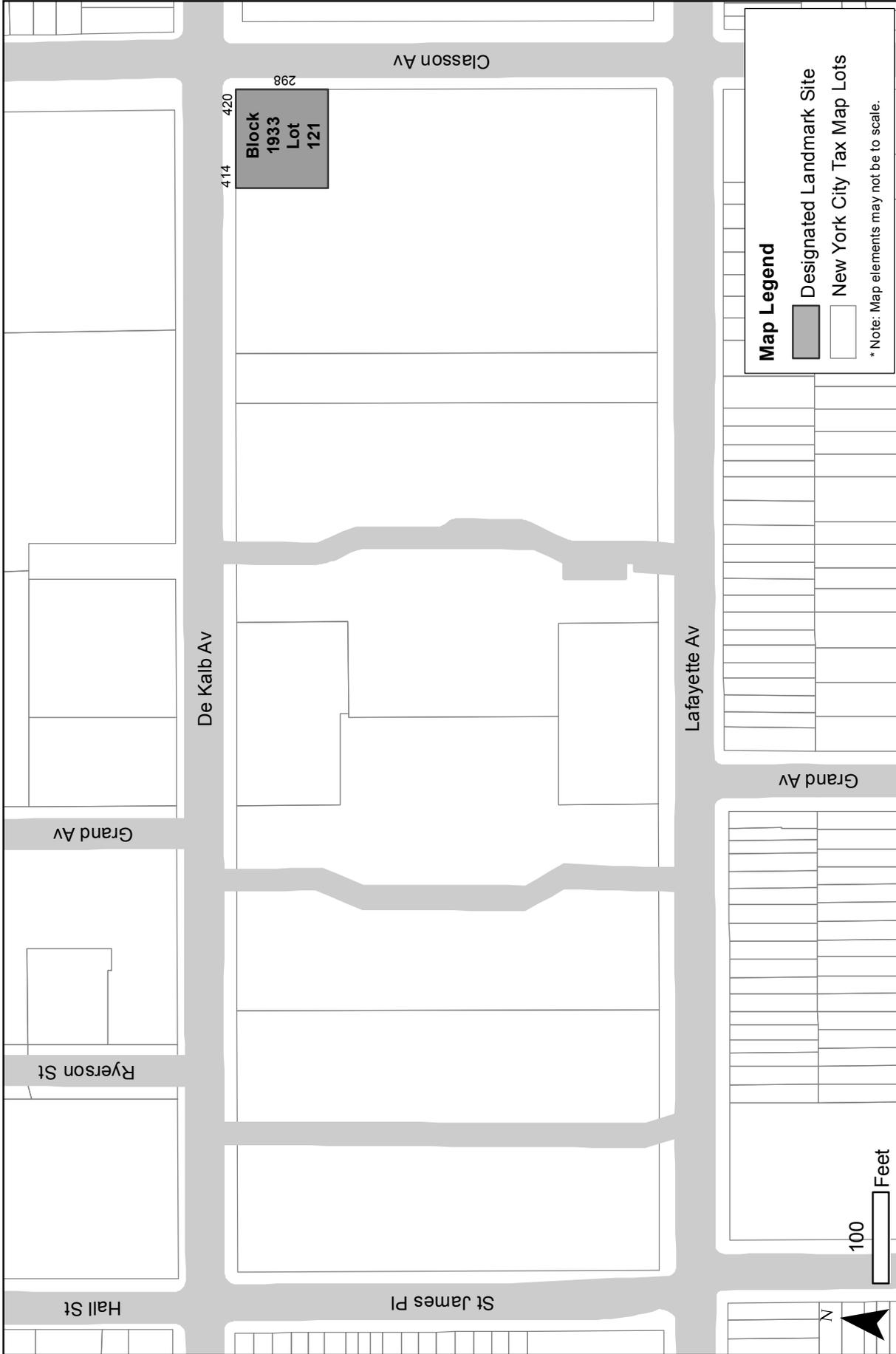
**4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House**  
DeKalb Avenue facade and rear (west) facade  
*Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014*



**4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House**  
Classon Avenue, extension, 1924-26  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014*



**4<sup>th</sup> (now 88<sup>th</sup>) Police Precinct Station House**  
South facade and Classon Avenue facade  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2014*



**Map Legend**

- Designated Landmark Site
- New York City Tax Map Lots

\* Note: Map elements may not be to scale.

**4TH POLICE PRECINCT STATION HOUSE, NOW 88TH POLICE PRECINCT (LP-2562), 298 Classon Avenue (aka 414-420 DeKalb Avenue)**  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 1933, Lot 121

**Designated: January 14, 2014**