

Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch, 581 Stone Avenue (aka 581-591 Mother Gaston Boulevard, 372-382 Dumont Avenue), Brooklyn.
Built: 1913-1914; William B. Tubby, architect.

Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 3794, Lot 18

On April 7, 2015 the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. At that hearing there were five speakers in favor of the designation, including Council Member Darlene Mealy, David Woloch, Vice President of External Affairs of the Brooklyn Public Library, and representatives from the Historic Districts Council, Society for the Architecture of the City, and Citizens Defending Libraries. There were no speakers in opposition to the designation.

Summary

The Stone Avenue branch of the Brooklyn Public Library opened in September 1914, with the construction funded as part of Andrew Carnegie's gift to the institution. Designed by the noted Brooklyn architect William B. Tubby, it was originally known as the Brownsville Children's Library and is believed to be the only public library of its kind, exclusively serving "grammar and primary grade children." It was conceived by educator Clara W. Hunt, who served as the Brooklyn Public Library's "Superintendent for Work with Children" for 36 years. Designed in the Jacobean Revival style, with a squat corner tower, the tapestry brick facades which incorporate prominent recessed entrances, multi-paned windows, and various stone carvings that express the structure's original use, such as the seal of the Brooklyn Public Library and various small panels illustrating characters in children's literature, such as Aladdin, Robin Hood, and the rabbit from Alice in Wonderland. The partially crenellated parapet contains panels with printer's marks, representing the origins of the printed book. Tubby, who served on the Architects' Advisory Commission for the Brooklyn Carnegie libraries, designed five branches in the borough, including the DeKalb Branch, a New York City Landmark. In 1929, the Brownsville library expanded its mission and began to serve teenagers. In subsequent years, the Stone Avenue branch became a popular meeting place for local organizations, including the Girls Club and the Brownsville Boys Club. Since 1981, the second story has been home to Heritage House, a multi-cultural center founded by community activist Rosetta Gaston.



DESCRIPTION

Description

The Stone Avenue branch of the Brooklyn Public Library is a free standing red tapestry brick and Indiana buff limestone building set on a corner lot, at the intersection of Mother Gaston Boulevard (Stone Avenue) and Dumont Avenue. A possibly historic iron fence partially encloses the site. The library is built to the lot line, and features a projecting corner tower with stone steps leading to two entrance doors. A three-bay wide wing extends out from the middle of the rear wall. The building is topped by a flat roof.

A heavy stone water-table anchors the façade. A projecting brick tower with two doorways and two oriel bay windows is located on the northwest corner. Possibly historic stone staircases with iron railing lead to the doors. Carved stone label molding are at each entrance bay, a stone transom bar separates the tall, multi-paneled wooden doors from the transom window with six glass panes divided by wooden muntins. Above each doorway is the Brooklyn Public Library seal carved in stone.

Corner tower

Historic Features: brickwork; limestone base and steps, corner tower's second story two multi-pane oriel windows, tapered stone base and two small corbels. Stone mullions divide each bay window into three sections. Carved stone label molding and a decorative chamfer cornice at the tower feature carvings referencing characters from children's literature: Aladdin's lamp, Robin Hood's cap, and Alice's rabbit, oak leaves, and acorns separate the second floor from the brick parapet; above the windows are carved stone coats of arms on each side of the tower; of the State of New York, New Amsterdam, New York City, Christopher Columbus and George Washington. Followed by a decorative parapet crenellation that contains carved printer's marks chosen to represent the printed book, a stone cornice crowns the parapet, and continues around the entire building.

Alterations: Non-historic double-leaf wood doors; non-historic iron railings and light fixtures at entrances.

Mother Gaston Boulevard West façade

Historic Features: brickwork, limestone water-table base and trim, tall vertical ribbon casement windows, stone mullions, two brick-and-stone buttresses, horizontal stone tablet; decorative carvings, stone carvings of fleur-de-lis and rosettes, two fir trees, Robin Hood's cap and arrows, relief depicting an open book. Secondary entrance; stone label molding enframements at all second floor casement windows; second band runs parallel to the top of the windows with decorative carvings between each window, of a rabbit, a sword (Excalibur), a bird (Aesop Fables), a cap and spear (Mercury's), and a donkey. A projecting stone chamfer cornice runs the width of the façade wraps the building and separates the second floor from the brick parapet. Topped by a decorative parapet crenellation that contains carved printer's marks, a stone cornice crowns the parapet, and continues around the entire building.

Alterations: wire mesh at most first floor windows; non-historic iron railings; light fixtures, metal double-leaf door and signage at secondary entrance.

Site features: stone recessed stairs and recessed secondary entrance with metal door surrounded by stone curb with possibly historic iron fencing.

North façade (Dumont Avenue)

Historic Features: brickwork, limestone base and steps; tall vertical ribbon casement windows with molded stone muntins, large center windows, flanked by smaller multi-pane casement windows and door stone enframements featuring stone label molding. A stone band runs the width of the second-story façade and acts as sills for all windows at this level. Four rectangular casement windows with stone label molding enframements, multi-pane windows are divided by stone muntins. A second stone band runs parallel to the top of the windows and contains small decorative carvings between each window with a Cheshire cat, and owl, and a seahorse. A stone chamfer cornice runs the width of the façade and wraps the building. Parapet crenellation with stone printer's marks panels, and a stone cornice crowns the parapet, wraps the building.

Alterations: Non-historic double-leaf wood doors; non-historic iron railings; light fixtures at entrances; windows replaced.

Site features: Stone ramp leads to the first floor tower entrance surrounded by stone curb with possibly historic iron fencing.

South façade

Historic Features: brickwork, and limestone base. First and mezzanine floors contain two sets of small, recessed windows with stone lintels and sills. A single, multi-paned casement window at the second floor, wide stone band runs the width of the façade and acts as sills for windows, and a stone chamfer cornice and brick parapet.

Alterations: brick and stone addition; two first floor 1/1 casement windows with stone lintels and sills, and two large louvered vents with stone lintels and sills at second floor; stone banding and cornice. The eastern façade of the addition contains three rectangle windows with stone lintels and sills at the first floor; smaller windows at mezzanine floor; and one multi-pane window with stone muntins, label molding and sills at second floor.

Site Features: a narrow concrete walkway and grassy areaway with a wood pergola and incorporated seating surrounded by chain-link fencing.

East façade

Historic features: brickwork, and limestone base. Two first floor multi-pane, rectangular, casement windows with stone muntins and enframements, historic one-story brick and limestone extension flanked by two multi-pane windows with stone enframements, second floor stone banding acts as sills for windows; seven multi-pane windows with stone muntins and label moldings at the second floor, stone chamfer cornice, brick parapet, possibly historic copper downspouts at the cornice, parapet crenellation with carved printer's marks, and a stone cornice at parapet.

Extension

Historic features: one-story extension of brick, with a limestone base; two multi-pane, rectangular, casement windows with stone muntins and enframements at north and south sides. East façade is brick; projecting stone chamfered cornice wraps the building on three sides, with possibly historic copper downspouts at cornice, brick-and-stone parapet.

Alterations: some windows replaced; second floor window enlarged to accommodate metal door; two-story metal fire escape.

Site features: large planted areaway and wide bluestone areaway with stone stairs, secondary entrance with metal door stone label molding enframements; possibly historic iron fencing and chainlink fencing.

SITE HISTORY

History of Brownsville¹

The neighborhood of Brownsville is named for Charles S. Brown who purchased land in the area beginning in 1865. New York City real-estate developer Aaron Kaplan's decision to build tenements there in 1887, as well as the construction of the Fulton Street elevated railway in 1889 and the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903, resulted in the transformation of Brownsville into an urban community of mostly Eastern European Jews employed in the garment and building trades. In 1925, the Jewish population in Brownsville and neighboring East New York amounted to the largest concentration of that religious group in New York City. Russian, Polish and Italian immigrants also settled in Brownsville. The Hebrew Educational Society (HES), founded in 1899 to help assimilate Jewish immigrants, opened the first library and reading room in the neighborhood. Brownsville thrived during the early part of the 20th century to the late 1940s, and spurred the political interest of the residents; many were involved in labor radicalism, electing a candidate to the state assembly in 1915 and 1921 and socialists electing a candidate from the American Labor Party in 1936.

A small number of African Americans had lived in eastern Brooklyn since the early 1800s. Beginning in the 1920s, affordable housing attracted more African Americans, and their presence in the neighborhood increased in subsequent decades, particularly after the Second World War. By the first decade of the 20th century, Brownsville had become a densely-populated neighborhood.² As early as 1920 there were 253 working-class black families living in Brownsville, census records reveal that these families maintained a relatively stable existence: the men worked full time as laborers, dock longshoremen; the women were homemakers and children attended school.³ By 1930, the African-American population rose from 253 to 5,062. However, African Americans in Brownsville had no important organizations of their own before the 1930s and many black residents traveled to Bedford-Stuyvesant to worship and socialize. Gradually this began to change, St. Paul's Baptist Church, Brownsville's first African-American church, was founded in 1927. In the later part of the 1920s and into the 1930s the number of black churches in Brownsville, mostly Baptist, would rise to almost 40 African-American churches.⁴

Despite the resentment of some local white residents, African Americans lived in Brownsville without incident. Unlike other New York neighborhoods, there were no threats or attacks upon black families and that alone made Brownsville a more desirable neighborhood for African Americans.⁵

By 1940 Brownsville was home to nearly 8,000 African Americans, a little over six percent of the population. The overwhelming majority lived in the oldest section of the neighborhood with the most decrepit housing stock. After the Second World War, Robert Moses proposed the construction of public housing for the area to replace the aging building stock. By 1950 the African-American population in Brownsville totaled 14,209 and would continue to grow, despite the fact that Jewish residents continued to dominate the district in the years just after the war.⁶

During the optimistic years of the 1940s and 1950s Brownsville became a more diverse community where progressive politics and racial integration were evident at the social centers of the community including Betsy Head pool, (a New York City Landmark) with its integrated pool and lifeguard staff. Black and white children were separated by gender only and not by race, sharing locker rooms and the pool deck.⁷ The Brownsville Children's Library was open to all children regardless of race. The Brownsville Boys Club maintained an integrated softball team throughout the 1940s that forged solidarity among its members.

By the 1960s, the Jewish population was in rapid decline, this was accelerated by an influx of African Americans mainly of Caribbean origins. By 1968 only 5,000 Jews remained in the neighborhood and most were elderly.⁸ Throughout the late 1960s to mid-1980s, Brownsville faced even more challenges, as crime and violence took a heavy toll on the neighborhood. However, in the late 1990s community-based organizations grew and increased their advocacy services, crime decreased dramatically, thus, increasing economic stability to the Brownsville neighborhood.

Today Brownsville is home to over 86,000 residents, and has one of the largest concentrations of public housing in the nation.⁹

Brooklyn Libraries¹⁰

Early in the 19th century, a number of small libraries and library associations (both free and subscription) were started in Brooklyn. The first seems to have been a commercial circulating library begun in 1809 by Joseph Pierson; around that same time the Brooklyn Union Sabbath School also made books available to its students. While neither of these endured, they represent the beginning of numerous attempts to create collections of reading material for Brooklyn's growing population. The first free library in Brooklyn was the Apprentices' Library, founded by Augustus Graham in 1823, and incorporated in 1824 as the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association.

Near the middle of the 19th century, two additional subscription or membership libraries opened: the Brooklyn Athenaeum Library, and the Brooklyn Mercantile Library. Before long, these two organizations merged and were housed in the Brooklyn Athenaeum on the corner of Atlantic and Clinton Streets. In 1867, ground was broken on Montague Street for a new building for the Mercantile Library Association; in 1878 its name was changed to The Brooklyn Library.¹¹ This private organization received part of its funds from the City of Brooklyn and thus the library was free for persons "of good character who were duly recommended."¹² The library was given to the people of Brooklyn in 1882.

The Brooklyn Public Library was established in 1892 by an act of the New York State Legislature, as a department of the city government, to be administered by a board of directors. The first branch of the new system opened in 1897 in a former public school building in the Bedford section. Despite the absorption of the City of Brooklyn into Greater New York in 1898, the Brooklyn Public Library remained independent from the New York Public Library. Between 1898 and 1901, Brooklyn developed a 16-branch system, incorporating both new and existing libraries, as well as an Administration Headquarters and Traveling Library Department. An agreement between the Brooklyn Public Library and the City of New York in 1902 (ratified in 1903) arranged for the management of the Brooklyn Public Library to be handled by a new private corporation with its own Board of Trustees, also to be called the Brooklyn Public Library. After this, the still-private Brooklyn Library deeded all its property, including its special

collections and endowment funds to the new corporation, adding considerably to the stature of the institution.

The Andrew Carnegie Gift ¹³

At the end of the 19th century, libraries were seen as an important means of improving the lives of poor Americans and new immigrants, and considerable effort was spent to make them available in working class neighborhoods, along with parks, playgrounds, and public baths. Because of the connotation of self-improvement, libraries were often favored with gifts from wealthy individuals. Andrew Carnegie, who had been a poor “working boy” in Pennsylvania and was the exemplar of the self-made man, attributed much of his success to the hours he spent in the private library of Colonel James Anderson.¹⁴ He was continuing a popular charitable tradition when he decided, in 1881, to use a portion of his vast wealth to donate library buildings to some of his favorite towns. He began with towns with which he had a personal connection, such as Dunfermline in Scotland, where he was born, and Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, where he lived after immigrating to this country.

During the last years of the 19th century, Carnegie expanded his grant process, donating 26 libraries in 1899, with a total of 204 by 1903. Using the practical abilities he developed during his business career, Carnegie, demanded that the localities acquire the sites and tax their populations to provide money for books and upkeep in return for his gift, which would be used to construct the actual buildings. Through his Carnegie Corporation, established in 1911 and one of the first such philanthropic foundations, he institutionalized his generosity, with the goal of improving the standard of living of the working poor. By 1917, Carnegie had given over \$41 million to more than 1,400 communities (mostly small towns) throughout the United States for the construction of 1,680 library buildings.

By basing his gifts on specific criteria, Carnegie was able to remove the sense of paternalistic charity so often found in earlier donations. He was also able to impose certain design aesthetic and, after 1908, allowed his secretary to approve all library designs. As a result, there is a general harmony and continuity among the numerous Carnegie libraries. He insisted, and the local government concurred that they be modest rather than extravagant, with practical interior planning to get the best value for his money. While each building is distinct, there are similar design characteristics among the Carnegie branches. In Brooklyn they are freestanding masonry buildings faced with red brick and limestone trim.¹⁵ One or two stories high, they have visually prominent, entrances reached by a flight of stairs, the style of most of the buildings was classical, with stone ornament consisting primarily of columns, pilasters, pediments, cornices, quoins, and keystones. Large windows take up much of the facades. In addition, Carnegie was concerned with the siting of the libraries and wanted them to stand out as libraries with a central location, preferably close to other institutions such as schools or YM/YWCA's.

It was felt that it was desirable to establish the libraries as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well-frequented streets.... The fact that a branch library is constantly before the eyes of the neighboring residents so that all are familiar with its location will undoubtedly tend to increase its usefulness.¹⁶

Although Andrew Carnegie lived in New York City and served for many years as a trustee of the New York Free Circulating Library, at first he considered the city's system too wealthy for his gift. By 1901, however, he changed his mind and offered to fund the branch

library system for New York City. Between 1901 and 1929, Carnegie donated \$5.2 million for 67 branch library buildings in all five boroughs. Of that amount, the Brooklyn Public Library received \$1.6 million.

The Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries

In 1901, the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library, and representatives of Andrew Carnegie reached an agreement which called for the construction of 20 branch libraries in Brooklyn.¹⁷ A committee was appointed to select the sites for these buildings and to oversee their construction. The Carnegie Committee was chaired by David A. Boody (former Mayor of Brooklyn and President of the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Public Library), with members Daniel W. McWilliams, John W. Devoy, and R. Ross Appleton.

For the designs of these branches, the Carnegie Committee first hired Professor A.D.F. Hamlin of Columbia University as consulting architect.¹⁸ Hamlin established an Architects' Advisory Commission consisting of the following individuals or firms from Brooklyn: Lord & Hewlett, R. L. Davis, Walker & Morris, Raymond F. Almirall, and William B. Tubby, future architect of the Brownsville Children's Branch Library. Hamlin's goal was to create a "unity of general type and character ... without the sacrifice of that individuality which gives interest to a design." The procedure called for each of the five architects on the advisory commission to create a preliminary design for one branch, in consultation with the entire commission, a librarian, and Hamlin himself, thus gaining the collective wisdom and judgment of the entire group. These preliminary designs would then go to the Carnegie Committee to help them reach conclusions about what features and requirements would be needed at all the libraries. The committee would frame final instructions for the architects who would prepare the working drawings. After this, the rest of the 15 branches would be assigned to the architects.

The Stone Avenue Branch¹⁹

The formerly private Brooklyn Library collection, in addition to several small independent libraries, formed the core of the Brooklyn Public Library by 1902. These independent facilities, including Brownsville, Bedford, Fort Hamilton, Washington Irving, and Flatbush, were soon housed in Carnegie buildings.

Brownsville was distinct from other Brooklyn neighborhoods in that it had two Carnegie libraries. The first was the Brownsville Branch, at 61 Glenmore Avenue which opened in 1908.²⁰ Located in the heart of the immigrant community, the library had signs in Yiddish, and English books translated into Yiddish and by 1909, the annual circulation was 330,000—the largest of any library in Brooklyn.²¹

To ease overcrowding and decrease demands on the facility the library administration proposed an additional children's branch.²² The "Children's Branch" library was the 19th of 24 Carnegie branches of the Brooklyn Public Library, and was completed in 1914. It opened its doors to all children below high school age, and was the first library of its kind in the country dedicated solely to children.²³ The cost of the site was \$15,000 and the total cost with construction and its furnishings was \$87,206. The first Superintendent of the Children's Department of the Brooklyn Public Library, Clara W. Hunt, collaborated directly with the architect W.B. Tubby & Sons as well as planners to specifically make the building a children's branch. On September 24, 1914 the Brownsville Children's Library officially opened, equipped with over 8,000 volumes.²⁴ In 1929 the branch extended its resources to teenagers, and became the meeting place to several organizations, including the Girls Club and the Brownsville Boys

Club, which held planning meeting here for several years. In 1937 the Library Association of America held its annual convention in New York City. Its members, impressed with its innovations toured the Brownsville Children's Library and acknowledged it as one of the most outstanding juvenile institutions in the United States.²⁵ After World War II, the neighborhood experienced great change, tenements were raised to give way for low-income housing projects and the population was uprooted and resettled. Juvenile readership declined, and the name was changed to the Stone Avenue Branch. At this time, the institution started to serve patrons of all ages, and has continued to serve the Brownsville community.

Design and Construction

The Brooklyn Public Library's first Carnegie branch in Brownsville quickly became the busiest branch in the borough, and library officials contemplated expanding the structure or building a second branch in the area. The Stone Avenue site was acquired in 1912 and the budget was approved in January 1913. Contracts were signed in July 1913 and by the end of the year construction was underway. The library opened on September 24, 1914. The cost was \$87,000. F. J. Kelly's Sons, who built two earlier Carnegie branches with Tubby, was the contractor.²⁶

For the working-class residents of Brownsville, William Tubby & Sons produced a "fairy-tale" building.²⁷ Clara W(hitehill) Hunt (1871-1958) helped plan the library and is likely to have played a role in choosing the images that enliven the facades. Hunt worked for the Brooklyn Public Library as "Superintendent of Work with Children" for 36 years, organizing the children's rooms in each new branch. In a 1914 article, she thanked J(osiah) T. Tubby, Jr. (1875-1958), who worked with his older brother, William Tubby, after attending the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.²⁸ Hunt described the Brownsville library as "wonderfully fine, attractive and satisfactory."²⁹

Embellished with castle-like features, Tubby designed a monumental civic structure that stood out from the neighborhood's tenements, frame buildings, and pushcarts. Though Hunt described the library as "Collegiate Gothic" – a style associated with many 19th and early 20th century American schools – Tubby's design is closer to the Jacobean Revival (or Jacobethan) style.³⁰ During the Jacobean period in early 17th century England, many grand houses were built combining various Gothic, Renaissance, and Mannerist motifs. Notable examples include: Charlton House (c. 1607-12) and Hatfield House (c. 1611). Though aspects of the style were revived during the late 19th century, the Jacobean style had limited impact in urban areas. Exceptions include Tubby's William H. Childs Mansion (1900-03) in the Park Slope Historic District and 1025 Park Avenue (1905, a New York City Landmark). Typical design features included brick facades with stone trim, distinctive gables, bay windows, casement windows with leaded glass, and heraldic sculptural elements.

Faced with red-and-black tapestry brick and contrasting Indiana limestone, Tubby's exterior incorporates many elements associated with the Jacobean Revival style. These include a squat corner tower, elaborate door and window surrounds with drip moldings, projecting bay windows, stone buttresses, mullions and muntins, as well as a partially crenellated parapet. The elevations that face the street are also enlivened by relief panels and decorative moldings. Installed where they would be most visible, the greatest concentration is on the sides of the tower, as well as above the rear entrance facing Stone Avenue.

Hunt, in consultation with the architects, developed the iconographic program that identifies the building and its pioneering educational mission. Executed in low relief, these elements were intended to interest the library's young readers and are credited to E(ugene)

Romero, who produced the models, and the firm Rochette & Parzini, who did the carvings. The Stone Street façade originally featured a carved sign with Gothic-style lettering (now covered), flanked by the small carvings of the initials AC and FPH -- Andrew Carnegie, who financed the branch, and Frank P. Hill, the chief librarian. Other vertical panels illustrate the seal of the library, as well as that of the United States, New York State, among others. Between the windows on the upper story are small sunken reliefs inspired by children's literature, such as the rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland* and King Arthur's sword in the anvil. At the top of the façade are groups of printer's marks. These incised emblems may have been chosen for their association with early children's literature or, more likely, the origins of the printed book.

Children ascended a short flight of steps to enter the corner vestibule (the interior is not landmarked). To the right, on Dumont Avenue, was the registration desk, while on the left, adjoining Stone Avenue, the loan desk. These long, narrow spaces were planned to control circulation. Not only did they permit children to "come in under cover" but it prevented the "incoming and outgoing crowd from interfering with one another."³¹ Most of the floor was occupied by a spacious double-height reading room containing a reference desk and fireplace. Surrounded by windows on most sides, *The Brooklyn Eagle* observed: "The ceilings are high and the windows are long and wide, so as not to exclude one single sunbeam that wants to come in and enjoy the good times."³²

William Bunker Tubby (1858-1944)³³

Born in Des Moines, Iowa, Tubby graduated from Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute in 1875. He worked in the architectural offices of Ebenezer L. Roberts until beginning his own firm in 1883. Continuing this practice until his retirement in 1942, Tubby became a major New York architect, creating important buildings in a variety of styles, and was especially known for his Romanesque Revival style designs. The house he created for Charles Millard Pratt at 241 Clinton Avenue (1893, located in the Clinton Hill Historic District) is one of the city's finest examples of this style. His creativity and expertise can also be seen in several homes in the Park Slope Historic District: the neo-Jacobean mansion designed for William H. Childs (1900-01, 53 Prospect Park West, now the Brooklyn Ethical Culture Society Meeting House), the Romanesque Revival style home at 234 Lincoln Place (1889), and the Queen Anne style row at 864-872 Carroll Street (1887). His institutional designs include the Renaissance Revival style library building for the Pratt Institute, (1896-97, a designated New York City Landmark),³⁴ the Romanesque Revival style 83rd Police Precinct House in Brooklyn (1894-95, a designated New York Landmark) and the Flemish Revival style Wallabout Market (demolished) a produce market near the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Outside New York City, Tubby created designs for a library and municipal hospital in Greenwich, Connecticut, where he lived, a YMCA building in Westport, Connecticut, the Nassau County Court House in Mineola (1901), as well as numerous houses on Long Island and Connecticut. As a member of the Architects' Advisory Commission for the Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries, Tubby designed five library buildings, the first being the DeKalb Branch (1905), and his last library, designed specifically for children, the Brownsville Children's Library, now the Stone Avenue Branch Library.

Subsequent History

In 1953-1955 the library was renovated, and the roof was rebuilt in 1976 and 1994. Upon completion of a \$270,000 renovation in 2014, the Stone Avenue Branch celebrated its centennial.³⁵

To better serve the community, a new learning institution, Heritage House was introduced to the Stone Avenue Branch Library in 1981. Rosetta Gaston, born in 1885, was a pioneer, advocate, and community activist. She was devoted to educating youth and fighting for civil rights³⁶ and founded Heritage House in 1981, a multi-cultural center that focuses on culture, the arts, education and history located in the Stone Avenue Branch library. The Heritage House opened its doors with the goal of educating both young and old about African-American culture. The Heritage House functions as a library/ museum and is home to a variety of books, and historical photographs of prominent African-Americans. Art includes sculptures, graffiti by local artists, and photo collages depicting the history of Brownsville. Stone Avenue was renamed Mother Gaston Boulevard in 1981.

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NOTES

¹ The information in this section was taken from: "Brownsville," in *The Encyclopedia of New York*, Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 184-5; Alter F. Landesman, *A History of New Lots* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977); Wendell E. Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002); Kenneth T. Jackson and John B. Manbeck, *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

² The information in this section was taken from Rae Glauber, *All Neighborhoods Change: A Survey of Brownsville, Brooklyn, U. S. A.* This is dated 1963 and was found in the Library files, Brownsville, at the Brooklyn Public Library, with no other, more specific identification.

³ The information in this section was taken from: U. S. Census Bureau, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1917); U. S. Census Bureau, *Negro Population in the United States, 1920-1932* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1934).

⁴ The information in this section was taken from: Clarence Taylor, *Black Churches of Brooklyn*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 76.

⁵ The information in this section was taken from: Alfred Kazin, *A Walker in the City*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951), 141.

⁶ The information in this section was taken from: Landmarks Preservation Commission, (LPC) *Betsy Head Play Center* (LP-2240), (New York: City of New York, 2008) prepared by Amanda B. Davis, 6.

⁷ The information in this section was taken from: Marta Gutman, "Race, Place, and Play: Robert Moses and the WPA Swimming Pools in New York City," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 67, (December 2008), 546-552.

⁸ The information in this section was taken from: Ilana Abramovitch and Seán Galvin, *Jews of Brooklyn*, (Hanover, NH : University Press of New England, 2002), 43.

⁹ The information in this section was taken from: "A Brownsville Sanctuary, 100 years and Counting," *The New York Times*, April 18, 1914,

¹⁰ The history of the library system in Brooklyn has been compiled from the following three theses: Margaret B. Freeman, *The Brooklyn Public Library: A History* (New York, Pratt Institute 1966); Marcia McKee, *A Brief History of the Brooklyn Public Library* (New York, 1968); and Louis Feipel, *Historical Information Regarding the Brooklyn Public Library* (Brooklyn, 1937).

¹¹ This was a different institution from the current Brooklyn Public Library. The Montague Street building was a Victorian Gothic design by architect P. B. Wight.

¹² Feipel, 5.

¹³ The information on the Carnegie gift and the libraries built from it was adapted from Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy, The Carnegie Libraries of New York City* (New York: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, 1996), Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free To All, Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), and LPC, *New York Public Library, Tottenville Branch* (LP-1867), (New York: The City of New York, 1995) prepared by David Breiner.

¹⁴ See Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1917), 345-351.

¹⁵ The one exception to this was the Red Hook Branch, built in 1915 by Richard A. Walker. This building, which is no longer extant, was constructed in a Mediterranean Revival style, with stuccoed walls, wide, overhanging eaves and a deep cornice pierced by attic windows.

¹⁶ Dierickx, 27, 65.

¹⁷ *The Brooklyn Eagle*, July 24, 1901. Although this amount of money was supposed to fund 20 libraries for the Borough of Brooklyn, 21 libraries were actually built.

¹⁸ The information about the design process comes from a newspaper clipping entitled "Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries," dated 1901 and found in the Library Scrapbooks, 1904-05, at the Brooklyn Public Library.

¹⁹ Pritchett, 25-26.

²⁰ Dierickx, 65.

²¹ Pritchett, 25. Residents often waited in line for hours to gain access to the libraries' holdings, after-school hours were the most crowded.

²² The information in this section was taken from: Gerald Sorin, *The Nurturing Neighborhood the Brownsville Boys Club and Jewish Community in Urban America, 1940-1990* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 39-41.

²³ *The Brooklyn Eagle*, September 25, 1914, 18.

²⁴ *The New York Times*, September 26, 1914, 11.

²⁵ *The Brooklyn Eagle*, June 26, 1937.

²⁶ Kelly's Sons also built the DeKalb (1905) and Leonard (1908) branches.

²⁷ *Brooklyn Eagle*, January 17, 1915, 2.

²⁸ See "All Souls Church, City of Plainfield, Union County, New Jersey," National Register of Historic Places, 2009, section 8, 23.

²⁹ Clara Whitehall Hunt, "Brooklyn Opens the First Children's Branch," *The Library Journal*, 39, (January-December, 1914), 762.

³⁰ Hunt felt the Collegiate Gothic style was fitting because it recalled the Ruby School, the setting for the 1857 novel *Tom Brown's School Days*. Hunt, 762.

³¹ Hunt, 762.

³² *Brooklyn Eagle* January 17, 1915, 2.

³³ The information about William B. Tubby was compiled from research files of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, specifically: "W. B. Tubby; Architect Here for 61 Years," *The New York Times* (May 10, 1944), 19; Henry R. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970); and "Tubby, William Bunker," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 33 (New York: James T. White & Co., 1941), 567.

³⁴ The information in this section was taken from: LPC, *Pratt Institute Library* (LP-2011), (New York: City of New York, 1981) prepared by Marjorie Pearson, 2.

³⁵ Some of the information in this section was taken from: "Stone Avenue Library Unveils \$1.7M Renovation" *The Brooklyn Eagle*, October 10, 2005; *The Brooklyn Eagle*, April 21, 2014.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Stone Avenue branch of the Brooklyn Public Library opened in September 1914, with the construction funded as part of Andrew Carnegie's gift to the institution; that it was designed by the noted Brooklyn architect William B. Tubby, it was originally known as the Brownsville Children's Library and is believed to be the only public library of its kind, exclusively serving "grammar and primary grade children;" that it was conceived by educator Clara W. Hunt, who served as the Brooklyn Public Library's "Superintendent for Work with Children" for 36 years; that it is designed in the Jacobean Revival style, with a squat corner tower, the tapestry brick facades incorporate which prominent recessed entrances, multi-paned windows, and various stone carvings that express the structure's original use, such as the seal of the Brooklyn Public Library and various small panels illustrating characters in children's literature, such as Aladdin, Robin Hood, and the rabbit from Alice in Wonderland; that the partially crenellated parapet contains panels with printer's marks, representing the origins of the printed book; that Tubby, who served on the Architects' Advisory Commission for the Brooklyn Carnegie libraries, designed five branches in the borough, including the DeKalb Branch, a New York City Landmark; that in 1929, the Brownsville library expanded its mission and began to serve teenagers; and that in subsequent years, the Stone Avenue branch became a popular meeting place for local organizations.

Accordingly, pursuant to provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 3794, Lot 18 as its Landmark Site.

Meenakshi Srinivasan, Chair

Adi Shamir Baron, Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire,
John Gustaffson, Roberta Washington, Commissioner



Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch

Borough of Brooklyn

Tax Block: 3794, Tax Lot: 18

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2015)



Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
West façade Mother Gaston Blvd.; East façade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2015)





Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
North façade Dumont Avenue; South façade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2015)





Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
North and West entrances
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2015)





**Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
Details**

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2015)





Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
Details

Photo: Christopher D. Brazeel (2015)





**Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
Details**

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2015)



Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch c.1914
Photo Source: Brooklyn Public Library





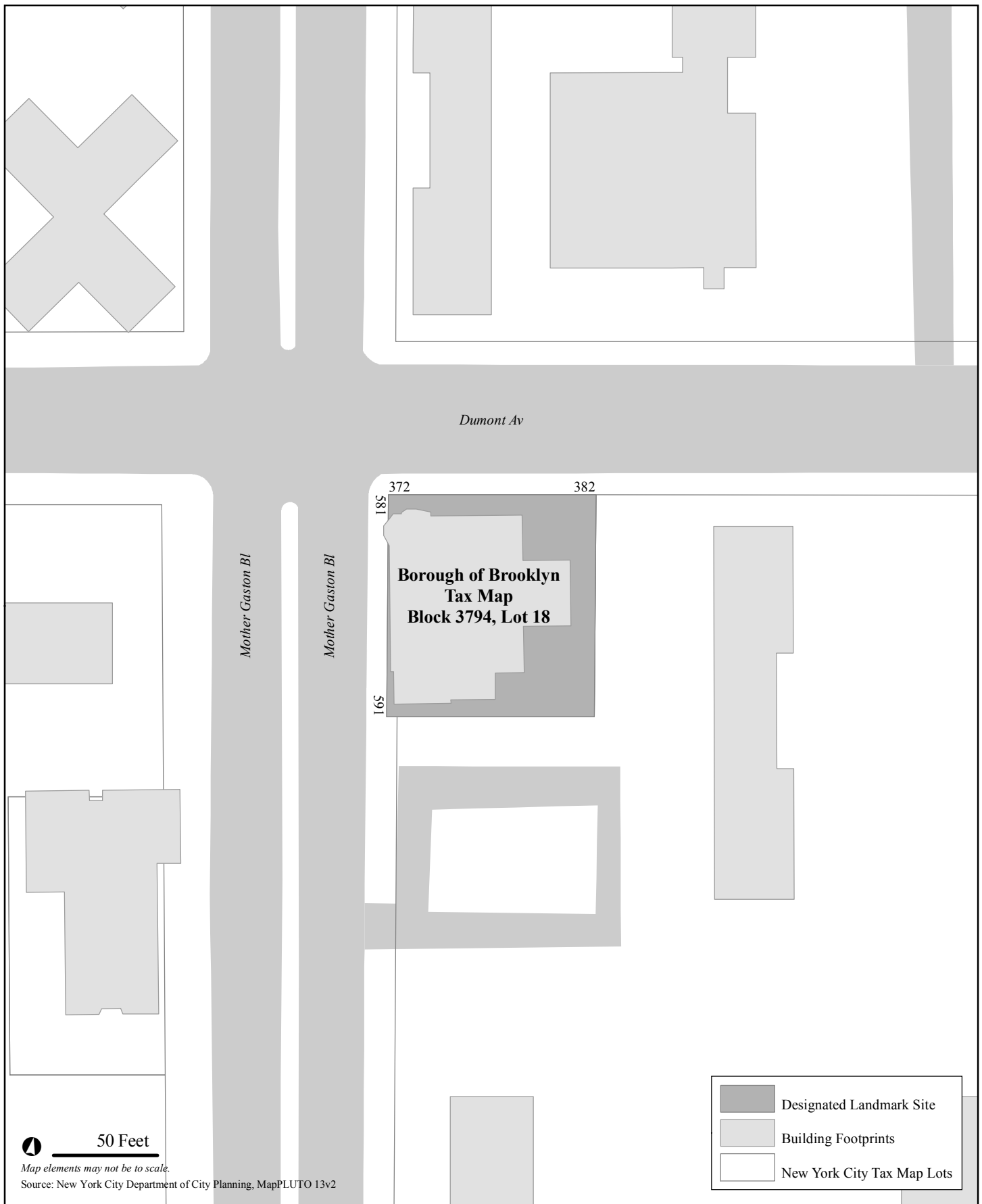
Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch c.1920s
Photo Source: Brooklyn Public Library



Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch c.1960
Photo Source: Brooklyn Public Library



Brooklyn Public Library Stone Avenue Branch
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2015)



Brooklyn Public Library, Stone Avenue Branch (LP-2568)
581 Stone Avenue (aka 581-591 Mother Gaston Boulevard; 372-382 Dumont Avenue).
Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 3794, Lot 18
Designated: April 14, 2015