

238 President Street House



238 President Street House

LOCATION

Borough of Brooklyn
238 President Street

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

A grand Anglo-Italianate style house built circa 1853 that has served as a single-family home, the Brooklyn Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the residence of the Baezes, one of Brooklyn's most prominent Mexican American families of the early-to-mid 20th century.



238 President Street House, Sarah Moses, LPC
2018

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238 President Street House

238 President Street, Brooklyn

Designation List 510

LP-2612

Built: c. 1853

Architect: Not determined; architect of 1897 expansion Woodruff Leeming

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 351, Lot 12

Calendared: April 10, 2018

Public Hearing: June 26, 2018

On June 26, 2018, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the 238 President Street House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Twenty-one people testified in favor of the proposed designation, including a representative of United States Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, New York State Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon, and New York City Councilmember Brad Lander, as well as representatives of the Historic Districts Council, the Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Association, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Five people representing the ownership and residents of the 238 President Street House also testified in favor of the proposed designation. There were no speakers in opposition to the proposed designation.¹

Summary

238 President Street House

No. 238 President Street is significant as one of Carroll Gardens' largest and most luxurious 19th-century houses and for its rich social and cultural history. It was built circa 1853 as one of a pair of grand semi-detached houses by Edward Kellogg, who moved to Brooklyn with his family in 1838, grew wealthy in local real estate, and achieved renown for his writing on economics. Originally three stories high with an exceptionally wide four-bay facade, this house's immense size and Anglo-Italianate ornament distinguished it as a prominent residence, one with few peers in Carroll Gardens. Early advertisements described the house as "a first class extra wide ... brick house ... built in the best and most thorough manner," and over a period of four decades, 238 President Street would be purchased and sold by a succession of wealthy families who used it as their home.

In 1897, 238 President Street was purchased by Elmira E. Christian, a passionate advocate for early childhood education and Methodist charitable causes. Christian donated the house, in memory of her husband Hans, to the Brooklyn Church Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for its conversion to the Brooklyn Deaconess Home, and built the Hans S. Christian Memorial Kindergarten—the first purpose-built free Kindergarten in Brooklyn—on the adjacent site. Renovations to 238 President Street completed at that time included the expansion of the attic into a harmoniously designed fourth story by the young Beaux-Arts-trained architect Woodruff Leeming; Bishop E. G. Andrews called the converted house "one of the bright spots of Methodism and in

the history of Brooklyn." The building contained a training school and home for deaconesses, who were single women, living communally, who visited the residents of Brooklyn's poor, largely immigrant communities, assisted them in their day-to-day challenges, and spread the gospel among them.

The Deaconess Home relocated in 1938, and in 1939, 238 President Street became the longtime home of Rev. Alberto B. Baez and his family. One of New York City's pioneering Hispanic Methodist ministers, Baez began leading Spanish-language services in Brooklyn in 1917 and in 1920 organized the First Spanish Methodist Church, Brooklyn's only Spanish-language Protestant church at that time. Through the 1920s, Rev. Baez and his wife Thalia, a highly regarded social worker, grew First Spanish Methodist from a tiny congregation to one of thousands with "almost all Latin American countries" represented among its membership, and from c. 1949 until the 1960s they used the adjacent Hans S. Christian Memorial Kindergarten for church services. Alberto and Thalia Baez are also notable as the parents of prominent physicist Albert Baez and grandparents of the internationally renowned musician and activist Joan Baez.

The 238 President Street House remained a church parsonage into the 1970s; in 1974, it was purchased by Michael L. Pesce and the notable television news reporter Rose Ann Scamardella, who converted it to a cooperative apartment house. Today it continues in this use, with its well-preserved exterior reflecting the many layers of its history and its architectural and cultural significance in Carroll Gardens.

Building Description

238 President Street House

The 238 President Street House was built c. 1853 in the Anglo-Italianate style by economist, merchant, and real-estate speculator Edward Kellogg. The architect has not been determined. It was originally one of a pair of opulent, essentially identical semi-detached houses, each 38 feet wide. This house, formerly known as 166 President Street, originally occupied a 75-foot-wide lot which included a 37-foot-wide yard to its west; its twin, 240 (formerly 168) President Street, which adjoined this house on its east, occupied a 100-foot-wide lot. No. 240 President Street was demolished and replaced in 1897 with the four four-story brick flats buildings currently standing at 240 to 246 President Street. The slightly irregular fenestration pattern of 238 President Street, with its entrance in the third bay and the fourth (westernmost) bay extended outward from the rest of the facade, presumably reflects the house's origins as one of a mirrored pair.

No. 238 President Street remained a private single-family residence until 1897, when the house and lot were purchased by Elmira E. Christian and donated by her to the Brooklyn Church Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church to be converted into a residence and training center for Methodist deaconesses. As part of these renovations, which were designed by the architect Woodruff Leeming, the top story was expanded from an attic to a full story. It is presumed that, at that time, the fourth-story lintels were added and the present sheet-metal cornice installed. (No photographs or drawings of the building from prior to this renovation have been found.) Also at that time, the Hans S. Christian

Memorial Kindergarten was built in the former yard west of the house. This building at 236 President Street now occupies a separate lot.

In 1938, the Deaconess Home moved to Park Slope, and in 1939, 238 President Street became the home of Rev. Alberto B. Baez, pastor of Brooklyn's First Spanish Methodist Church, and his family. In 1974, it was purchased by private buyers and converted to an apartment house, its present use. At that time, a historic awning and balconet at the westernmost first-story bay were removed and the entrance surround altered to its present condition.

Today, 238 President Street remains remarkably well-preserved, retaining original and historic elements reflecting its rich, diverse history. It retains its original facade brick, cast-iron door surround, and ornate first-through-third-story cast-iron window sills and lintels, as well as features dating from its conversion to the Deaconess Home, which it served as for more than four decades starting in 1897. These include the building's full fourth story, including its lintels, as well as the arched iron gateway on President Street announcing the site as the Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Description

The 238 President Street House has two publicly visible facades: The main primary facade facing President Street, and the secondary west facade, which is partially visible over the two-story former kindergarten building.

Primary North (President Street) Facade Historic

Four bays; red brick in stretcher bond with occasional header courses, at first through third stories; fourth story (expanded from attic during conversion to Deaconess Home in 1897) faced in matching red brick laid in common bond; classical

cast-iron main-entrance surround with foliate reliefs, side brackets, paneled soffit, and nailhead ornament; historic paired wood main-entrance doors within heavy classical wood frame with columns and paneled reveal; stone step in front of main entrance; brownstone basement with horizontal rustication line; brownstone sills at two easternmost first-story openings; segmental-arch first-through-third-story window openings crowned by cast-iron window lintels with intricate scroll and foliate motifs; bracketed cast-iron sills with curls along lower edge at second and third stories; continuous fourth-story sill molding with projections below window openings; fourth-story window openings with flat lintels ornamented with shells and anthemia (1897); bracketed and paneled metal cornice with foliate reliefs on brackets (1897); stone stoop with historic iron railing; historic under-stoop gate.

Alterations

Paired outer doors with transom (probably not original), present from 1900 to 1960s, removed; light fixture and address plaque at main entrance; intercom on main-entrance reveal; original door-surround brackets and hood (similar to those of 140 and 142 Clinton Street in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District) replaced with features of a slightly different design (1974); brownstone features resurfaced; light fixture and intercom box adjacent to understoop opening; replacement wood windows (matching the historic in configuration) at first through fourth stories; balconet and hood at westernmost first-story opening removed (1974); stoop newel posts replaced with neo-Grec-style cast-iron posts; one-story rooftop addition.

Secondary West Facade

Historic

Red brick in stretcher bond at first through third stories; fourth story (expanded from attic during

conversion to Deaconess Home in 1897) faced in common-bond brick; first-through-third-story segmental-arch openings containing two-over-two double-hung windows, with decorative sills and lintels matching those of main facade; fourth-story window opening with projecting sill and flat paneled lintel (1897).

Alterations

Rooftop addition, HVAC equipment, and television antenna visible over this facade.

Site

Historic iron areaway fence on stone curb and arched wrought-iron gateway with plaque (some letters missing) originally reading “DEACONESS HOME OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH” (1897); concrete and slate areaway with planting beds; stone steps to under-stoop opening; wrought-iron gate in front of west areaway separating this property from 236 President Street (1897).

Site History

238 President Street House

Carroll Gardens²

Before Europeans' arrival, large portions of Long Island, including present-day Brooklyn, were occupied by the Lenape, or Delaware, people. About 15,000 Lenape lived in loosely organized, relatively autonomous groups in seasonal campsites and farming communities within the present-day bounds of New York City. Lenape trails extending southward and eastward from Wallabout Bay and Fulton Ferry on the East River waterfront later evolved into colonial "ferry roads" and ultimately, two of Brooklyn's main transportation axes, Fulton Street and Jamaica Avenue. A subsidiary trail beginning southeast of Fulton Ferry extended through Carroll Gardens toward Gowanus Bay. Improved by settlers during the colonial era, this trail would become known as Red Hook Lane, serving as one of Brooklyn's major arteries into the 19th century. Lenape cornfields existed along this trail near Carroll Gardens' northern boundary with Boerum Hill and near Second and Third Places west of Court Street.

In 1637, Joris Hansen de Rapelje of the Dutch West India Company "purchased" about 335 acres from the Lenape around Wallabout Bay, and by 1640, Dutch and English settlers claimed title to nearly all of Kings and Queens Counties.³ South Brooklyn—encompassing present-day Carroll Gardens along with Boerum Hill, Cobble Hill, Gowanus, and Red Hook—was primarily agricultural, with laborers including enslaved African American men and women into the early 19th century.

Bounded by Degraw and Hoyt Streets on its north and east, and by 9th Street on its south, Carroll Gardens was considered part of Red Hook until it was severed from the waterfront after World War II by the Gowanus and Brooklyn-Queens Expressways. Its current name dates only from the 1960s, when it was adopted by local residents to distinguish the community from other portions of South Brooklyn.

Carroll Gardens' residential development began in earnest in the 1840s, after Brooklyn extended the street grid to its outermost areas and Henry Pierrepont initiated ferry service between Lower Manhattan and the foot of Hamilton Avenue. Although primarily intended to serve the new Greenwood Cemetery (which Pierrepont had helped establish), the ferry also facilitated commuting to New York. New horsecar lines in the 1850s and '60s further spurred Carroll Gardens' development into an upscale bedroom community, as did the acquisition of Carroll Park for public use in 1850 and the Gowanus Canal project, which sought to raise local property values by draining the area's swamps and channeling the marshy Gowanus Creek into an industrial canal.⁴ Between the late 1860s and early 1880s, developers constructed substantial brownstone-fronted row houses along a group of streets east of Smith Street that had been mapped, along with other blocks between Smith and Henry Streets and 1st through 4th Places, with exceptionally deep front yards in the 1840s. These yards—the neighborhood's eponymous "gardens"—are among its defining features, and in 1973, two of these verdant blocks east of Carroll Park were designated as the Carroll Gardens Historic District.

Like other historic row house districts, Carroll Gardens evolved into a largely working-class area as transportation improvements and changing architectural trends drew white-collar professionals out of the neighborhood to more fashionable areas of Brooklyn. By the 1890s, large numbers of Italian and

Norwegian immigrants were settling in Carroll Gardens alongside its long-established Irish and German American residents; by 1910, the blocks immediately surrounding 238 President Street also included Jewish immigrant families from Eastern Europe, as well as numerous residents of Puerto Rican, Cuban, Spanish, Syrian, Swedish, and Danish descent, many of whom worked on the nearby waterfront.⁵ Neighborhood investment was limited for several decades starting in the 1930s by discriminatory redlining policies, which curbed lending to neighborhoods considered risky investments by the federal government. Generally, those deemed the riskiest neighborhoods bordered industrial areas or had large African American or immigrant populations, and in 1938, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, which made these determinations, gave Carroll Gardens a "D" rating, its lowest investment grade.⁶

The neighborhood traces its name in part to Carroll Park, itself named after the early American patriot Charles Carroll of Maryland as a tribute to the Maryland soldiers of the Battle of Long Island and their sacrifices in defending the "Old Stone House" of Gowanus. Carroll was the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, and when his name was adopted for the neighborhood in the 1960s, it was predominantly Italian American and Roman Catholic. The Carroll Gardens Association, an advocate for the neighborhood's preservation and revitalization, was founded in 1964, and around that time, young professionals, drawn by Carroll Gardens' shops and restaurants, quiet historic streets, and proximity to Manhattan, began moving to Carroll Gardens from other areas of the city. Today, the grand Anglo-Italianate style house at 238 President Street, along with the circa-1840 John Rankin House and the 1851 and 1857 South Congregational Chapel and Church (all designated New York City Landmarks) remain among Carroll

Gardens' most distinguished links to its earliest years of residential development.⁷

Edward Kellogg⁸

The 238 President Street House was constructed, along with the since-demolished house at 240 President Street, as one of a pair of grand semi-detached residences by the influential self-taught economist Edward Kellogg. Born in Norwalk, Connecticut in 1790, Kellogg grew up in Connecticut and Dutchess County, New York, where he received little formal education. In 1817, he married Esther Fenn Warner and in 1820, they moved to New York City where he established the wholesale drygoods firm of Edward Kellogg & Company. Kellogg's business was crippled by the Panic of 1837, which led him to reflect on the Panic's causes and the financial system's structural problems. At that time, paper currency was issued not by the government but by competing private banks, which Kellogg concluded led to financial instability and inequality. Believing that money was too important to be controlled by private interests, Kellogg proposed a "national currency adapted to the needs of the people," universally accepted throughout the country and issued at an interest rate "conducive to the public well-being."⁹

Kellogg's writings were circulated with the assistance of Horace Greeley and issued as the book *Labor and Other Capital* in 1849. Seen as a counterpart of Marx, Engels, and other radical economic philosophers of the time, Kellogg's ideas were embraced by 19th-century populists and agrarian and labor activists, who saw them as beneficial to farmers and the working class. Following his death in 1858, Edward and Esther's daughter Mary Kellogg Putnam repeatedly revised and updated his book, into the 1880s, under the title *A New Monetary System*. Putnam was a notable economist in her own right, serving as the financial

editor of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s newspaper *The Revolution*, where she advocated for the economic “Kelloggism” of her father. Edward, Esther, Mary, and other close family members are buried together in Green-Wood Cemetery; Edward’s headstone contains an epitaph written by Mary commemorating him as “A lover of Justice, a lover of Man ... the author of *A New Monetary System*, the only means of securing the respective rights of labor and property, and of protecting the public from financial revulsions.”¹⁰

Construction and Early History of the 238 President Street House

Shortly after the Panic of 1837, the Kelloggs had moved from New York to Brooklyn, settling in Carroll Gardens. In their new neighborhood, Edward began dealing in real estate, which would soon make him wealthy enough to retire from business and focus on his economics writing. Among his earliest purchases, in September of that year, were properties on the block bounded by President, Carroll, Clinton, and Court Streets, including a large parcel at the southeast corner of Clinton and President.¹¹ This 100-by-240-foot property, purchased from merchant Chester Clark, included the future site of the 238 President Street House and its sister house at 240 President Street (demolished), which would later serve as the Kelloggs’ home.¹²

In 1850, a federal census taker found Edward Kellogg—then 59 years old, with an estate worth \$130,000—along with Esther and Mary, other family members including daughters Harriet and Amelia, and three servants, in their home on Clinton Street near President Street.¹³ Between that year and 1852, Kellogg satisfied three mortgages related to the parcel at the southeast corner of Clinton and President Streets, acquiring it free and clear.¹⁴ Construction on 238 and 240 President Street likely commenced shortly thereafter and was completed by

1854, when Brooklyn directories show the Kelloggs as having relocated from Clinton Street to “President near Clinton”—their new home at 240 President Street.¹⁵

Both houses were definitely finished by 1855, with 238 President Street occupying the eastern portion of a 75-foot-wide lot and 240 President the western end of the adjacent 100-foot-wide lot. They were classified as “first-class” dwellings, reflecting their substantial masonry construction and excellent fire resistance.¹⁶ At a width of 38 feet, each was nearly double the 20-to-25-foot width of the typical Brooklyn row house, and their values far exceeded those of most other houses in the area.¹⁷ At that time, there were no other houses on the south side of President Street between this pair and Court Street.

Kellogg was unable to sell 238 President Street immediately, possibly due to its unusually large size.¹⁸ In January of 1856, it had its first buyer, Frederick Probst, a merchant and immigrant from Hamburg, Germany who commuted to his office on Broad Street in Lower Manhattan.¹⁹ The Probst family apparently occupied the house for only a few years, moving to Yonkers by 1860.²⁰ Probst retained ownership of the house, however, and in 1864, he and Edward Root Kellogg, Edward and Esther’s son, took out joint advertisements offering 238 and 240 President Street for sale. Their advertisements in the *New York Herald* made clear these houses’ opulence, with each described as “a first class extra wide three story and attic brick house ... built in the best and most thorough manner by day’s work for the late Edward Kellogg.” Each house was “precisely like” the other, featuring plate-glass windows and frescoed parlors and halls.²¹

In April of 1864, Probst sold 238 President Street to another merchant, William Barber, and it would remain a private residence for the next three decades.²² Barber was variously described as being

in the storage or provisions business, or as a tobacco inspector.²³ He and his wife Sarah, both English immigrants, lived in the house with their eight children and three Irish-born servants, but in 1867 they sold the house to a prominent Brooklyn lawyer, Daniel P. Barnard.²⁴ Two years later, Caroline E. Currie, the wife of Newfoundland native Richard E. Currie, a shipping and commercial merchant based in Lower Manhattan, purchased the house for \$27,000.²⁵ By 1870, the Curries were living at 238 President with their five children ranging from one to 16 years of age, along with three servants.²⁶

The Curries apparently considered selling 238 President Street in 1877, when they advertised the house in the *Brooklyn Eagle* as being “in good order, and one of the most comfortable in Brooklyn.”²⁷ Although willing to exchange it for a “moderate priced place in [the] country,” they apparently never struck a deal and remained there until 1881, when they advertised it again as “pleasantly situated and conveniently arranged for the comfortable accommodation of a large family.”²⁸ It was soon purchased by Etta C. Shattuck, wife of Warren S. Shattuck, a partner in a Lower Manhattan leather-goods company.²⁹ Etta Shattuck was involved in various social causes, and under her ownership, 238 President Street hosted several fundraising events, including a “very attractive bazaar” organized by “five bright little girls of South Brooklyn” in 1890 for the benefit of the Fresh Air Fund.³⁰ In 1897, the house—then described in the *Eagle* as “the old Curry [sic] mansion”—was acquired by Elmira E. Christian for its conversion to the Brooklyn Deaconess Home.³¹ In the same year, its sister house at 240 President Street, which had remained in the Kellogg family into the 1870s and continued to serve as a residence afterward, was demolished, and it and its large yard were replaced with the four four-story flats buildings that stand there today.³²

The Anglo-Italianate Style and the Design of 238 President Street³³

The 238 President Street House is an unusually grand mid-19th-century mansion constructed in an opulent variant of the Italianate style called the Anglo-Italianate. Both styles, which appeared in New York by the late 1840s, were emblematic of the city’s rise as the financial, business, and trade center of the United States. Rooted in the *palazzi* of the Italian Renaissance, Italianate-style houses were embellished with lavish classical ornament projecting boldly from their facades. Presenting a dramatic contrast with the flatter, more restrained facades of the Federal and Greek Revival periods, the showy Italianate style was embraced by the city’s expanding ranks of merchants and other prosperous professionals eager to affirm their social status and display their wealth; by the mid-1850s, it had supplanted the Greek Revival as New York’s dominant residential style. Despite the Italianate’s romantic evocations of Renaissance craftsmanship, its sumptuous ornament largely resulted from industrial advances, including the mass-availability of factory-made cast iron and terra cotta architectural components starting in the 1840s.

Anglo-Italianate houses are distinguished in part by their low stoops. This feature is said to have originated with the architect Alexander Jackson Davis, who, according to Charles Lockwood, “disliked the ubiquitous stoop on New York row houses,” and is believed to have designed the city’s first Anglo-Italianate residences, on West 12th Street, in 1847.³⁴ Segmental- and round-arch windows—often crowned by curved lintels with sinuous foliate ornament—are also common features of the style. The Anglo-Italianate was at its height between the early 1850s and mid-1860s, when it “epitomized the extravagance of Fifth Avenue ... and the elegant city residences of the famed ‘Upper Ten Thousand.’”³⁵ Although most of Manhattan’s

Anglo-Italianate houses have been demolished, several elegant examples remain in the Stuyvesant Square, Chelsea, and Gramercy Park Historic Districts.³⁶ The St. Mark's Historic District contains what is probably the city's finest concentration of Anglo-Italianate residences, including a group of 16 houses completed in the early 1860s and attributed to James Renwick, Jr.³⁷

With its unusually broad four-bay facade, 238 President Street differs from most of the city's Anglo-Italianate houses, which tended to be tall and narrow in response to Manhattan's high land costs. Although the style was less popular in Brooklyn than Manhattan, many well-preserved, though more modest, examples remain there, including the row at 198 to 208 Wyckoff Street (1868, within the Boerum Hill Historic District Extension). Other notable examples in Brooklyn (all within the Brooklyn Heights Historic District) include 23 and 25 Willow Place (1854), which feature restrained segmental-arch terra-cotta lintels; and the red-brick houses with arched lintels at 294 to 298 Hicks Street and 34 Garden Place (all c. 1860s). Especially notable are the pair at 140 and 142 Clinton Street (1855), with their extravagant cast-iron doorways, window sills, and curved Baroque-inspired lintels similar to those of the 238 President Street House. Among the borough's finest Anglo-Italianate residences are the pair at 3 and 5 Pierrepont Place (both 1856-57), designed by F. A. Petersen for the prominent Brooklynites Abiel Abbott Low and Alexander White.³⁸

Originally three stories high with a 38-foot four-bay facade, 238 President Street's immense size and fashionable Anglo-Italianate features distinguished it as an elite residence, one with few peers in Carroll Gardens at the time of its completion. Despite its luxuriousness, its facade has an idiosyncratic, vernacular quality consistent with its design by an unknown, probably local, architect

or builder. Given its unusual asymmetric design—most notably, the fourth bay's outward extension to lend additional breadth to an already expansive facade—and its description, in 1864, as being “precisely like” its sister house, it is presumed to be a mirror image of the demolished 240 President Street.

As part of its 1897 conversion from a private residence to the Brooklyn Deaconess Home, the house's top story was enlarged from an attic to a full story by the skilled young architect Woodruff Leeming.³⁹ Born in Quincy, Illinois in 1870, Leeming graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts before joining the New York architectural firm of Heins & LaFarge as a draftsman. He remained with that firm until founding his own practice in Brooklyn in 1893, the same year he designed the rectory within the South Congregational Church complex (a designated New York City Landmark) at the corner of President and Court Streets.⁴⁰ Leeming was a versatile architect, fluent in a range of styles including the neo-Tudor, Collegiate Gothic, and Beaux Arts, and he enjoyed a distinguished career that included the Coty Building on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue (1907-08, a designated New York City Landmark), the palatial Nassau County Clubhouse on Long Island (1910), and the church house and arcade of Plymouth Church (1913, within the Brooklyn Heights Historic District), as well as the 1907 remodeling, with Chester Hughes Kirk, of Brooklyn's Grace Presbyterian Church (within the Bedford Stuyvesant/Expanded Stuyvesant Heights Historic District).⁴¹ During the 1910s, Leeming served as secretary, and later president, of the American Institute of Architects' Brooklyn chapter.

Although no images of 238 President Street predating Leeming's renovation have been found, his work likely included the addition of its fourth-story lintels, as well as its classical sheet-metal cornice, which is of custom design featuring large consoles

framing the facade's unequally spaced bays. The classical design of these features complements the lintels and other Anglo-Italianate features of the house's lower stories, as well as the facade of the Beaux-Arts-style Hans S. Christian Memorial Kindergarten Building (Hough & Duell, 1897, a designated New York City Landmark) then being constructed, through Elmira Christian's generosity, in the house's former side yard at 236 President Street. The house's west facade retains its original first-through-third-story cast-iron sills and lintels similar to those of the main facade, recalling that for the first four decades of the house's existence, this side facade was fully visible over a nearly 40-foot-wide yard.

Elmira E. and Hans S. Christian⁴²

Elmira E. Christian's donation of 238 President Street for its conversion to the Brooklyn Deaconess Home was made in memory of her late husband, Hans S. Christian, after whom the adjacent kindergarten building at 236 President Street was named.

Hans was born in 1824 in Farsund, Norway, and came to the United States as a sailor in the 1840s.⁴³ When he was 18, his work brought him to New York Harbor where, sometime before 1850, he went to work as a carman in the pharmaceutical trade.⁴⁴ Christian converted to the Methodist Episcopal Church on the Bethel Ship, a church-boat in the Red Hook harbor that ministered primarily to Scandinavian seamen under the direction of the eminent Swedish Methodist pastor Olof Gustaf Hedström.⁴⁵ At that time, the vast majority of Norwegian immigrants continued to the American interior via the Erie Canal and Great Lakes, and Christian was one of the few permanent residents of Norwegian origin in New York City.

As a recent immigrant, Hans S. Christian "worked hard and earned little" for some time in

Manhattan but went on to become "one of South Brooklyn's most influential citizens."⁴⁶ In 1863, he bought out the business of Hiram Travers, a construction materials salesman with a warehouse on Degraw Street. Between 1863 and 1870, he co-founded Christian & Clark, a lime and brick supplier near the Gowanus Canal at 2nd Street. In his losing bid for Brooklyn's Sixth Ward aldermanship in 1870, Christian ran on his reputation as "an honest and self-made man, who has risen to the position he now holds in society by his own manly endeavors. ... He is honest, capable, and true; a man of sterling integrity; of uncompromising honor; and powerful mental caliber."⁴⁷ In 1878, Hans S. Christian was one of 82 incorporators of the Brooklyn Church Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the church assistance organization to which Elmira Christian later deeded 238 President Street for its conversion to the Deaconess Home.

Hans, Elmira, and their son were residents of 251 President Street and were active, longtime members of the First Place Methodist Episcopal Church, where Hans was president of the Board of Trustees and Sunday school superintendent. Both Hans and Elmira Christian were charter members of the Brooklyn Kindergarten Association (later Brooklyn Free Kindergarten Society), an organization formed in 1891 that advocated for and established free kindergartens in Brooklyn. After Hans' sudden death on his walk home from church services in December 1894, Elmira sought to create a memorial to honor his charitable works and commitment to childhood education, and founded the Hans S. Christian Memorial Kindergarten as a monument to him.

Because of the lack of representative coverage of women's accomplishments in the 19th century, less is known about Elmira Christian than about her husband. The daughter of Scottish immigrants, she was born Elmira Stuart in New York

in 1832. She and Hans married before 1850, when he was still a recent immigrant. Consistent with the expectations of the time, Elmira was a housewife and mother; of their three children, only one survived to adulthood. Prior to 1860, the Christians were residents of Lower Manhattan, but like other Norwegian American families in the area, they later moved across the East River to South Brooklyn.

As a member of the Brooklyn Woman's Club, Elmira Christian was instrumental in establishing "the first free kindergarten in Brooklyn" at the Warren Street Methodist Church in 1884, when the concept of kindergarten was somewhat new to Brooklyn.⁴⁸ She became ill around the time of 238 President Street's conversion to the Deaconess Home. Her death on March 28, 1899 after two years of illness left Brooklyn Methodism without "one of the most charitable women in its membership."⁴⁹ At the time of her death, Elmira Christian was well known for her commitment to charitable causes and as an advocate for children's education; in a commemorative statement, the Brooklyn Free Kindergarten Society remembered her as "a woman of unassuming character, nobility of life, and self-sacrificing devotion to duty, whose memory and example will be an inspiration to us in our future labors for the children."⁵⁰

The Deaconess Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church⁵¹

The founder of the Methodist deaconess movement, Lucy Rider Meyer, was a Vermont native who had converted to Methodism as a teenager and later taught chemistry at McKendree College in Illinois. She resigned this position to head up fieldwork for the Illinois Sunday School Association, where her experiences convinced her to found a "school for the purpose of training young women for leadership in Christian work."⁵² This led to the establishment, by Meyer and her husband Josiah, of the Chicago

Training School for City, Home, and Foreign Missions, in Chicago, in 1885. Students were educated in a wide range of subjects, both religious and secular, to prepare them for conducting urban fieldwork, which primarily involved visiting and assisting immigrant families in the city's poorest neighborhoods. In 1887, Meyer approached two of her students, Isabelle Reeves and May Hilton, about founding a nearby deaconess home that would formalize the school's mission of aiding the urban poor, and by March of 1888, there were 12 deaconesses residing in Chicago's deaconess home, the first of its kind in America. Later that year, at a meeting in New York, the church's General Conference sanctioned deaconess work as an official ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Deaconesses' duties, as summarized by the Conference, would be

To minister to the poor, visit with the sick, pray with the dying, care for the orphan, seek the wandering, comfort the sorrowing, save the sinning, and, relinquishing wholly all other pursuits, devote themselves in a general way to such forms of Christian labor as may be suited to their abilities.⁵³

Although this recognition marked a step forward for women in the church, it came soon after the church had denied women the right to serve as clergy or lay delegates. For this reason, it has been viewed as a means of circumscribing women's roles within the church in accordance with the traditional gender norms of the time. Meyer herself viewed deaconess work as rooted in "the mother instinct of woman... and in that wider conception of woman's 'family duties' that compels her to include in her loving care the great needy world-family as well as the blessed little domestic circle."⁵⁴

Deaconess work in the Methodist Episcopal

Church developed within the broader context of the Social Gospel movement, which employed Christian teachings and ethics to address poverty, alcoholism, crime, and other ingrained social problems. Prospective deaconesses were required to be 25 or older, in strong health and good standing in the church, and have a recommendation from their pastor. They also had to be unmarried and otherwise free of family commitments. Throughout their history, deaconesses lived in residences, usually in cities, called “homes,” which “provided community for single women and enhanced their sense of being part of a sisterhood of service,” according to historian Jean Miller Schmidt.⁵⁵ They were unsalaried but received carfare as well as a small stipend for clothing and other necessities. Their austere costume, consisting chiefly of a long black dress and bonnet tied around the neck, was worn “for the sake of economy, to eliminate the need for an expensive wardrobe, and for instant recognition and protection as they worked in dangerous urban neighborhoods.” It also provided “greater accessibility to the poor and a sense of ‘sisterly union.’”⁵⁶

Deaconesses considered their work of ministering to the poor as “practical Christianity.” Following the completion of their training, they were licensed by the church; though similar in many ways to Catholic sisters, they took no official vows and were free to leave at any time. Although more than 1,000 Methodist deaconesses were consecrated by 1910, the deaconess movement was already in decline by that time. Over the following three decades, it would continue to weaken with the decline of the Social Gospel, increasing professional opportunities for women, and the rise of the field of social work.

The Brooklyn Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church⁵⁷

Shortly after acquiring the large house and yard at 238 President Street in 1897, Elmira Christian donated the property to the Brooklyn Church Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Established in 1878 with Hans S. Christian among its founding members, the Society’s primary function was to collect funds from Brooklyn’s wealthier Methodist congregations and redistribute them to churches in need. Much of this funding went into building campaigns, and in its first 25 years, the Society helped three dozen Methodist congregations in Brooklyn and Queens to construct new churches or make major improvements to their old ones. It also helped congregations to pay down their debts and assisted the so-called Downtown churches, which were older, formerly prosperous congregations whose wealthier members had moved to more fashionable neighborhoods. These congregations, located in disadvantaged, largely immigrant areas, depended on the Church Society for help in maintaining their buildings and conducting religious and social outreach.

Elmira Christian acquired 238 President Street with the goal of establishing a kindergarten there and renovating the old mansion into a new home and training school for Brooklyn’s Methodist deaconesses. Interest in establishing a Brooklyn deaconess home had started in 1890 and intensified the following year, when Elizabeth Truslow hosted a “parlor meeting ... attended by enthusiastic women” for the cause in her home at 96 Brooklyn Avenue (Parfitt Brothers, 1887-88, a designated New York City Landmark).⁵⁸ The Woman’s Home Missionary Society (WHMS), which oversaw Methodist missionary and deaconess work across the country, offered spare room in its Working-girls’ Home at 921 Bedford Avenue for the deaconesses, and in early 1892, this institution was renamed the

Deaconess Home and placed under the joint direction of the WHMS and the church's New York East Conference. The home moved to 1034 Bedford Avenue later that year, where it housed a training school for deaconesses as well as an industrial school, which taught domestic skills to young working women and hosted prayer meetings, mothers' meetings, and talks on practical subjects.⁵⁹

By 1896, the home had seven deaconesses in residence and six trainees in its school. With the number of deaconesses increasing, the existing home was becoming inadequate. In addition to their outreach work within Brooklyn's disadvantaged communities, the deaconesses were doing valued work within Brooklyn's Methodist congregations, aiding pastors and teaching Sunday school, among other tasks. Around this time, the Brooklyn Church Society became the third partner in the Deaconess Home, with the objective of funding a new home and training school that would "rank among the largest in the land."⁶⁰ In exchange for the Church's Society's support, the Society would have a say over the assignment of deaconesses among the various Brooklyn congregations.

Elmira Christian purchased the property at 238 President Street in February of 1897 and deeded it to the Brooklyn Church Society two months later.⁶¹ Through the rest of the spring and summer, renovations designed by Woodruff Leeming, including the expansion of the attic into a full story, were completed. The house's interior was converted into 23 rooms, not including the parlor and dining room, and the new fourth floor contained a casual social space, or "haven," where the deaconesses could entertain guests.⁶² The *Brooklyn Eagle* called the new Deaconess Home "a commodious house, greatly improved," noting that both it and the new kindergarten building were "admirably adapted for their work."⁶³

Numerous Methodist dignitaries attended the

home's dedication on November 9, 1897, with Bishop E. G. Andrews calling it "one of the bright spots of Methodism and in the history of Brooklyn."⁶⁴ Although Elmira Christian was unable to attend the dedication due to illness, a letter from her was read. In accepting the keys on behalf of the Woman's Home Missionary Society, Mrs. John A. Secor stated that "It was the spirit of Christ that prompted our sister to give this beautiful home. I hope these keys will not only unlock this home, but unlock the hearts and sympathy of every loyal Methodist in the state."⁶⁵ One year later, the Brooklyn Church Society stated that through Christian's "munificent gift Brooklyn Methodism has the most beautiful and thoroughly equipped Deaconess Home in the denomination."⁶⁶ Crucial to the home's early success was \$10,000 in seed money for the Home's endowment given by George Barlow, a stockbroker who supported numerous Methodist charities.⁶⁷

"Without ostentation or effort at publicity," the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported in 1909, "much practical work is being done ... by a little band of self-sacrificing women who are domiciled in the ivy-covered, old-fashioned brick mansion known as 238 President Street":

Garbed in quiet black habiliments with a dark bonnet and white band, these gentle but effective messengers of happiness ... climb dark stairways, descend into loathsome cellars, and enter filthy alleys leading to rear tenements to find and succor those in need of help, material or spiritual. Their coming and going are devoid of all ceremony; they ask for nothing but to seek out those who are in trouble and, if possible, alleviate their sufferings. Bearing an order for food, an adjustment of the unpaid back rent, or the promise of employment for some idle member of the family, the gentle face of the

deaconess is ever welcome among the needy.⁶⁸

During its time as the Deaconess Home, 238 President Street generally housed about a dozen deaconesses. By 1909, the deaconesses were making about 25,000 visits annually. In that year, they helped hundreds of families, providing free food, clothing, bedding, furniture, medicine, and personal care items, visiting the sick, and finding work for the unemployed. Coal was a precious resource for many Brooklynites who relied on it as both a heat source and cooking fuel, and in 1909, the deaconesses delivered nearly six tons of it, pail by pail, to the needy.⁶⁹ They also distributed thousands of religious tracts and brought hundreds of children to Sunday school.

In late 1908, the deaconesses opened an industrial school in the adjacent Kindergarten Building at 236 President Street. Initially housing a sewing program for immigrant girls, it was founded by the Deaconess Home with the “deep conviction that we should somehow reach and help the foreigners ... in our immediate neighborhood.”⁷⁰ No. 238 President Street served as the Brooklyn Deaconess Home until 1938, when it moved to 902 President Street in Park Slope.⁷¹

Alberto and Thalia Baez and the First Spanish Methodist Church⁷²

No. 238 President Street remained under the Church Society’s ownership after the deaconesses left. By 1939, it was home to two pillars of Brooklyn’s Hispanic community, the Rev. Alberto B. Baez and his wife Thalia.

From 1920 to 1961, Rev. Baez led the First Spanish Methodist Church of Brooklyn. Now known as Immanuel-First Spanish United Methodist Church, this congregation traces its origins to Clemente A. Mayo, a Mexican immigrant who came to “preach the gospel to the Hispanic people of New

York” in 1892.⁷³ The city’s earliest-known Hispanic Methodist minister, Mayo conducted services in Manhattan’s Washington Square Church and in the First Methodist Episcopal, or “Sands Street” Church in Brooklyn Heights. At the Sands Street Church, in 1893, Mayo established the first Hispanic Methodist congregation in New York City, with nine active members.

Alberto Baez was born into a Catholic family in San Luis de Potosí, Mexico, in 1888 and attended school in Puebla. There, he became exposed to Methodism through the work of a local ministers’ training school, the *Instituto Metodista Mexicano*. Baez enrolled in the school and in the course of his studies, he fell in love with the director’s daughter, Thalia Valderrama. Following their marriage, Thalia and Rev. Baez taught at the Methodist Institute of Querétaro, Mexico, before immigrating to the United States and establishing a church in the small town of Alice, Texas, in 1915. Their time in Texas was difficult: their devotion to Methodism made them outcasts among much of the Mexican community there, and in 1917, according to their son Albert, they “went to Brooklyn on free passes supplied by my *tio*, Fernando Carrera.”⁷⁴

Despite Clemente Mayo’s success in establishing a Hispanic Methodist congregation in Brooklyn two decades earlier, no such church existed in New York City when the Baezes came here. But soon after their arrival, Rev. Baez began preaching to a group of 35 faithful in the same Sands Street Church where Mayo had preached in the early 1890s.⁷⁵ For the next two years, Rev. Baez apparently worked as a schoolteacher while leading Spanish-language services, as a volunteer, at Sands Street each Sunday.⁷⁶ Attendance steadily increased, and in 1920, the First Spanish Methodist Church was organized as Brooklyn’s only Spanish-language Protestant church, with Rev. Baez leading its services on Sunday afternoons.⁷⁷

Located at the corner of Clark and Henry Streets, Sands Street Church (which has been demolished) adjoined Brooklyn's largest Hispanic community.⁷⁸ In 1925, the editor of *La Prensa*, Jose Torres-Perona, estimated that about half of New York City's 80,000 Hispanics lived in Brooklyn, with most residing in and around the Downtown area in a section roughly bounded by Gold Street, Union Street, and Front Street along the waterfront. Immigrants in this area hailed from Spain and from countries throughout Latin America, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Chile, and Argentina. Women often worked in factories doing fine embroidery and needlework, while men generally held industrial and waterfront jobs, working as "stokers, oilers, stevedores, cigar makers, sugar refiners, and general factory workers," among other occupations, according to the *Brooklyn Eagle*.⁷⁹

Alberto Baez was ordained as a Methodist Episcopal minister in 1925.⁸⁰ By that time, Thalia was working for the Y.W.C.A.'s International Institute, which conducted social outreach among Brooklyn's immigrant girls.⁸¹ As secretary of the Institute's Hispanic Department, Thalia did "much to iron out ... difficulties and misunderstandings" among Brooklyn's Spanish-speaking immigrants, according to the *Eagle*.⁸² She also directed productions showcasing Latin American music and culture for a wider audience, including an extensive 1929 program featuring "the dramatization of six true Latin American folk songs," a performance by the Hispanic Orchestra—in which Thalia played the *salterio*—as well as Mexican dances that carried "the audience out of Brooklyn and into more southern climes."⁸³ She coordinated numerous children's productions at the Institute, including its annual Christmas pageants, as well as children's operettas such as "The Legend of the China Poblana," written by her sister, Mrs. Themis V. P. Rojo, and translated into English by Thalia's daughter Mimi.⁸⁴ During

Europe's march toward war, in 1934, Thalia Baez directed a pageant called "The Way of Peace" at Brooklyn's Central Methodist Episcopal Church.⁸⁵

First Spanish Methodist flourished under the leadership of "Father B." and "Mother B.," as they were fondly known to their congregants. In 1928, the church was reported to have "a constituency of 3,000[;] 550 attended their Christmas evening celebration and conversions constantly occur at their services."⁸⁶ Hundreds were baptized by Rev. Baez between 1922 and 1930, a period in which "almost all Latin American countries were represented" among its membership.⁸⁷ In 1928, the church established a new Spanish Mission House at 161 Clinton Street (1849, within the Brooklyn Heights Historic District) to house its social activities, along with the Baezes themselves, who lived there with the family of Thalia's sister, Hebe Lavara; six roomers from New York, Mexico, and Puerto Rico; and a Puerto Rican-born live-in cook.⁸⁸

By 1931, First Spanish Methodist had relocated from the Sands Street Church to the Warren Street Methodist Episcopal Church, located near Smith Street, which served an exceptionally diverse community.⁸⁹ First Spanish Methodist remained at the Warren Street Church until at least the late 1930s. Its largely Puerto Rican membership by that time was reflected in a 1935 letter from Rev. Baez to President Roosevelt expressing the challenges faced by the community and concluding that "If anything is ever going to be done for the Puerto Ricans in Brooklyn and I can be of any help, I will be more than happy to do all in my power to help better their condition in general."⁹⁰

The Baezes at 238 President Street⁹¹

By April of 1939, the Baezes had moved from their previous home, in Bay Ridge, to 238 President Street.⁹² It would remain their home until Alberto's retirement from the church in 1961, ten years after

Thalia's death. Shortly after settling there, Rev. Baez signed a letter, along with 44 other Brooklyn ministers, urging President Roosevelt to maintain the American embargo on war materials to belligerent nations and condemning "any move which would make profits for us out of the blood being shed."⁹³ At that time, 238 President Street also housed another family of Mexican descent, as well as First Spanish Methodist's Christian Center, which hosted a Christmas party in December of 1939 for the neighborhood's disadvantaged children.⁹⁴

First Spanish Methodist Church appears to have continued holding services in the Warren Street Church at that time and relocated to the former Kindergarten building at 236 President Street in 1949, when the Warren Street Church closed.⁹⁵ Thalia Baez's funeral was held in the church's new location at 236 President Street in 1951. Period photographs appear to indicate the use of 238 President Street as a church school by the early 1960s.

According to Rev. Ernesto Vasseur, who succeeded Rev. Baez as the church's minister, "The death of Mrs. Baez ... was a great blow for Alberto and for First Spanish.... Limited by his solitude, his age, and his declining health, he still carried on faithfully and was able to maintain the life of the congregation."⁹⁶ Even after his retirement, Rev. Baez continued to take children to Villa Hermosa, a summer camp he and Thalia had established in the 1930s in Pine Bush, New York. Rev. Baez died in December of 1963, and he and Thalia are buried close to the camp, in Pine Bush.⁹⁷ In 1966, First Spanish Methodist merged with Immanuel Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church and moved to Immanuel's home at 424 Dean Street, where it continues to this day as Immanuel-First Spanish United Methodist Church.

Alberto and Thalia Baez left a remarkably rich legacy. Founders of New York City's oldest

Spanish-speaking Methodist church—the forerunner of dozens of other such churches throughout the Metropolitan area—they are also remembered for their distinguished children and grandchildren. Their son Albert (1912-2007), who was born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States with his parents as a young boy, earned a doctorate in physics from Stanford University and helped pioneer the field of X-ray optics by co-inventing the X-ray reflecting microscope. From 1961 to 1967, he served as UNESCO's first director of science education, and in his honor, in 1995, the Hispanic Engineer National Achievements Award Conference established the Albert V. Baez Award for Technical Excellence and Service to Humanity. A pacifist and convert to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Baez and his wife Joan Bridge Baez (1913-2013) were the parents of the singer-songwriter Mimi Fariña (1945-2001) and the internationally renowned folk musician and social and political activist Joan Baez (born 1941).⁹⁸

Later History⁹⁹

Following Rev. Baez's retirement, 238 President Street continued to serve as the parsonage of First Spanish Methodist, and later, Immanuel-First Spanish United Methodist Church. Rev. Ernesto Vasseur lived there until 1973 or 1974, when it was sold to Carroll Gardens residents Paolo and Maria Bennici.¹⁰⁰ The Bennicis apparently made a few exterior changes to the house, including the removal of a historic awning and balconet from the westernmost first-story bay, and the replacement of the molded hood and foliate ornament crowning the main-entrance surround with decoration based upon the westernmost first-story window lintel.¹⁰¹ After only two months, the Bennicis sold 238 President Street to New York State Assemblymember Michael L. Pesce and Rose Ann Scamardella, who converted it to an apartment house.¹⁰²

One of the city's pioneering female

television broadcasters, Scamardella is a Brooklyn native who graduated from Marymount Manhattan College and worked for the city's Human Rights Commission. From there, she was recruited for ABC-TV's Eyewitness News, where she became a staff reporter. In 1978, Scamardella was promoted to co-anchor, making her the first woman to hold that position for one of the city's three network stations, and by 1980, she was "perhaps the city's best known anchorwoman," according to the *New York Times*.¹⁰³

Judge Pesce immigrated from Italy with his family at the age of 12. He graduated from Boys' High School in Brooklyn, City College of New York, and the Detroit College of Law, and worked as a Legal Aid lawyer in the Bronx. In 1972, he was elected New York State Assemblyman from Carroll Gardens. Since 1981, he has served as Judge of the city's criminal and civil courts, Justice of the Kings County Supreme Court, and as Presiding Justice of the Appellate Term, Second, 11th, and 13th Judicial Districts, of the New York Supreme Court. Early in their ownership, Pesce and Scamardella replaced all of the house's main-facade windows with wood windows in their historic configurations, which remain today.¹⁰⁴ The house continues in use as an apartment house, its well-preserved exterior reflecting its diverse history, including its early years as an elite single-family residence, its later period as the Brooklyn Deaconess Home, and its time as the home of the Baezes, one of Brooklyn's most notable Mexican American families of the early-to-mid 20th century.

Endnotes

¹ Before it was calendared, the Commission also received 297 letters and email messages in favor of the proposed designation, including letters from State Senator Brian Kavanagh, Community Board 6, the Cobble Hill Association, and musician Joan Baez.

² Portions of this section are adapted from LPC, *Carroll Gardens Historic District Designation Report* (LP-0696) (New York: City of New York, 1973), 1-3; and Jessica Baldwin and Margaret Herman, "The Historical and Architectural Development of the District," *Boerum Hill Historic District Extension Designation Report* (LP-2599) (New York: City of New York, 2018). Other sources include Nan Ellin, "Carroll Gardens," in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City Second Edition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 207; John B. Manbeck, ed., *The Neighborhoods of Brooklyn* (New Haven: Yale, 1998), 54-57; and Reginald Pelham Bolton, *Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922), 129-46.

³ Although European settlers considered their "purchases" of property from Native Americans to be outright acquisitions, the European concept of holding title to land was foreign to the Lenape, who considered these transactions as customary exchanges of gifts smoothing the way for settlers' temporary use of the land for camping, hunting, fishing, and the cultivation of crops.

⁴ The horsecar lines included one along Court Street in 1854 and Smith Street in 1862, as well as the South Brooklyn and Bergen Street Railroad, which linked Hoyt and Sackett Streets with the Hamilton Avenue Ferry by the mid-1860s. Originally laid out as a private garden, Carroll Park was acquired for public use through an act of the New York State Legislature in 1850, but was not improved until 1870. Although it was approved in the late 1840s, work on the Gowanus Canal languished for more than a decade, and it was primarily completed between 1866 and 1874.

⁵ United States Census (Brooklyn, Kings County, New York: Ward 5, Enumeration District 78), 1910. "Syria" had a different meaning then than it does now. At that time, Syria was an enormous territory within the Ottoman Empire encompassing present-day Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and Jordan. Most Syrian

immigrants at that time were from present-day Lebanon, and would describe themselves today as Lebanese. For additional information, see *(Former) St. George's Syrian Catholic Church Designation Report* (LP-2167) (New York: City of New York, 2009), prepared by Michael Caratzas.

⁶ Appraisal Department, Home Owners' Loan Corporation, *Residential Security Map* (New York: Hagstrom Company, 1938).

⁷ LPC, *440 Clinton Street (John Rankin) House Designation Report* (LP-0628) (New York: City of New York, 1970); LPC, *South Congregational Church, Chapel, Ladies Parlor, and Rectory Designation Report* (LP-1245) (New York: City of New York, 1982), prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart.

⁸ Sources for this section include Edward Kellogg and Mary Kellogg Putnam, *A New Monetary System* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1861), xi-xiii; "Kellogg, Edward," in James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Volume III* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 505; Chester McA. Destler, "The Influence of Edward Kellogg Upon American Radicalism, 1865-96," *Journal of Political Economy* (June 1932), 338-65; "Kellogg, Edward," in William Bridgwater and Elizabeth J. Sherwood, *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Second Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 1044; "Edward Kellogg," in Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography, Volume V* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 302; and Ann D. Gordon, *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Volume 3* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), n6, 199.

⁹ Kellogg & Putnam, xii and xiii.

¹⁰ "Edward Kellogg," Findagrave.com website (www.findagrave.com/memorial/61955661/edward-kellogg), accessed June 14, 2018.

¹¹ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 78, 115 (September 28, 1838).

¹² Street numbers do not appear to have been assigned for these houses until the early 1860s. Initially, 238 and 240 President were known, respectively, as Nos. 166 and 168. Edward Kellogg's widow Esther remained at No. 168 (240 President Street) at least until 1861, four years before the family sold it. See J. Lain, *Brooklyn City Directory for the Year Ending May 1st, 1862* (Brooklyn: J. Lain, 1861), 229.

¹³ United States Census (Brooklyn, Kings County, New York), 1850. Brooklyn directories list the Kelloggs at

"Clinton c[orner] President" at that time. See, for example, *Hearnes' Brooklyn City Directory* (Brooklyn: Henry R. and William J. Hearne, 1850), 199.

¹⁴ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 215, 326 (April 16, 1850); 292, 525 (August 5, 1852); and 296, 216 (September 21, 1852).

¹⁵ *Hearnes' Brooklyn City Directory* (Brooklyn: Henry R. and William J. Hearne, 1854).

¹⁶ William Perris, *Maps of the City of Brooklyn* (New York: 1855), title page and plate 32.

¹⁷ In the 1855 New York State Census, 238 and 240 President Street were valued at \$16,000 and \$14,000 respectively, while other masonry single-family dwellings occupied by professionals in the surrounding area were valued at \$5,500 to \$7,500. New York State Census (Brooklyn, Kings County, 1855).

¹⁸ Kellogg appears to have rented the house in 1855 to real-estate professional Warren Beman, whose household included his wife Johanna, their two young sons, Johanna's brother, and two Irish American servants. The 1855 New York State Census placed them next to the Kelloggs in an equally opulent house, strongly suggesting that they were occupying 238 President Street at that time.

¹⁹ The cost was \$24,000. Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 626, 307 (January 17, 1856); W. H. Smith, *Smith's Brooklyn Directory for the Year Ending May 1st, 1857* (Brooklyn: Charles Jenkins, 1856), 247.

²⁰ United States Census (Yonkers, Westchester County, New York), 1860.

²¹ "First Class Extra Wide Three Story and Attic Brick Houses" (Advertisement), *New York Daily Herald*, February 17, 1864, 6.

²² The price was \$21,000. Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 628, 215 (April 29, 1864).

²³ See J. Lain, *The Brooklyn City Directory* for the years 1866, 1867, and 1868 (all Brooklyn: J. Lain and Company, 1865, 1866, and 1867, respectively), 19, 20, and 23.

²⁴ New York State Census (Brooklyn, Kings County, 1865); Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 745, 110 (March 8, 1867).

²⁵ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 924, 284 (November 24, 1869).

²⁶ United States Census (Brooklyn, Kings County, New York), 1870.

²⁷ "For Sale—House—Or Exchange" (Advertisement),

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, February 2, 1877, 3.

²⁸ “For Sale—House—238 President St” (Advertisement), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 3, 1881, 3.

²⁹ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 1427, 367 (May 27, 1881); “Warren S. Shattuck” (Obituary), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 30, 1906, 24.

³⁰ “For the Fresh Air Fund,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 29, 1890, 4.

³¹ “Gift to the Church Society,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 8, 1897, 16.

³² “New Buildings,” *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide* (March 27, 1897), 541.

³³ Sources for this section include Charles Lockwood, *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Row House, 1783-1929* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 125-225.

³⁴ Lockwood, 156.

³⁵ Lockwood, 156.

³⁶ These include 206, 212, and 214 East 16th Street (Robert Voorhies, 1852), which feature elaborate segmental-arch terra-cotta lintels and foliated cornices; 451 West 22nd Street (Philo Y. Beebe, 1854), with its ornate cast-iron lintels crowned by scrolls recalling those of the 238 President Street House; and 135 to 143 East 18th Street (1855), which have low three-step stoops, intricate iron railings and fences, and arched cast-iron lintels supported by heavy consoles. LPC, *Stuyvesant Square Historic District Designation Report* (LP-0893) (New York: City of New York, 1975); LPC, *Chelsea Historic District Extension Designation Report* (LP-1088) (New York: City of New York, 1981); and LPC, *Gramercy Park Historic District Designation Report* (LP-0251) (New York: City of New York, 1966).

³⁷ LPC, *St. Mark’s Historic District Designation Report* (LP-0250) (New York: City of New York, 1969).

³⁸ LPC, *Brooklyn Heights Historic District Designation Report* (LP-0099) (New York: City of New York, 1965).

³⁹ “Alterations,” *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide* (May 8, 1897), 818. Portions of this paragraph are adapted from LPC, *Coty Building Designation Report* (LP-1534) (New York: City of New York, 1985), prepared by Marjorie Pearson, 3-4; and Marianne Percival, “Architects’ and Builders’ Appendix,” in LPC, *Bedford Stuyvesant/Expanded Stuyvesant Heights Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2496) (New York: City of New York, 2013), 610. Other sources include Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessey

& Ingalls, 1970), 368.

⁴⁰ LPC, *South Congregational Church, Chapel, Ladies Parlor, and Rectory Designation Report* (LP-1245) (New York: City of New York, 1982), prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart.

⁴¹ Robert B. MacKay, Anthony Baker, and Carol A. Traynor, *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860-1940* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 26.

⁴² This section is adapted from text written by Sarah Moses for LPC, *Hans S. Christian Memorial Kindergarten Designation Report* (LP-2611) (New York: City of New York, 2018).

⁴³ In various publications, Hans S. Christian is referred to as Hans S. Christiansen, his apparent birth name, or as Henry or Harry S. Christian; see David Mauk, *The Colony That Rose from the Sea: Norwegian Maritime Migration and Community in Brooklyn, 1850-1910* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 80. Birth and death dates for Hans S. and Elmira Christian are taken from their grave marker in Green-Wood Cemetery, Section 26123, Lot 143, Grave 8-9.

⁴⁴ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 27, 1894, 1. A carman was a driver of a cart, wagon, streetcar, or other mode of transport.

⁴⁵ The first service on the Bethel Ship was held in 1845. Hedström is known to have met incoming ships from Scandinavian countries, given out bibles and other religious materials, and invited the sailors or immigrants onboard to visit the Bethel Ship. See Wade Crawford Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions, Vol. 3: Widening Horizons, 1845-95* (New York: The Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, 1957), 271-273.

⁴⁶ “Hans S. Christiansen,” *Nordisk Tidende*, January 5, 1895. “Mrs. Christian Dead,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 28, 1899, 1.

⁴⁷ “The New Alderman of the Sixth,” *Brooklyn Daily Union* (Brooklyn, New York), November 5, 1870,

⁴⁸ “When in the eighties the Woman’s Club took up the work I was very much pleased, and contributed my mite.” Elmira Christian quoted in *Fifth Annual Report of the Brooklyn Kindergarten Free Kindergarten Society for the Year Ending October, 1896* (New York: ____, 1896), 19-20. At the time, the Warren Street Methodist Episcopal Church was at 303 Warren Street.

⁴⁹ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 28, 1899, 1.

⁵⁰ *Ninth Annual Report of the Brooklyn Free Kindergarten Society*, (New York: ____, 1900), 17.

⁵¹ The main sources for this section are Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodism, 1760-1939* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1999), 197-212; and "Constitution, By-Laws, Rules, Etc. of the Brooklyn Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church," an undated pamphlet in the collection of the United Methodist Archives and History Center, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey.

⁵² Cited in Schmidt, 198.

⁵³ Cited in Schmidt, 201.

⁵⁴ Cited in Schmidt, 202.

⁵⁵ Schmidt, 204.

⁵⁶ Schmidt, 203.

⁵⁷ Sources for this section include Rev. Henry C. Whyman, *A History of the Brooklyn and Long Island Church Society* (The Society, 1978); Brooklyn Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Deaconess Souvenir* (Brooklyn: The Home, 1896); *Twenty-fifth Anniversary, 1878-1903: Brooklyn Church Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Brooklyn: The Society, 1903); as well as the Annual Reports of the Brooklyn Deaconess Home for the years 1893, 1902 through 1904, 1906, and 1908 through 1911. The 1911 report is housed at Union Theological Seminary's Burke Library; the others are at Drew University's United Methodist Archives in Madison, New Jersey.

⁵⁸ Deaconess Home and Training School of the New York East Conference, 7. On the Truslow Home, see LPC, *John and Elizabeth Truslow House Designation Report* (LP-1964) (New York: City of New York, 1997), prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart. The Truslows were active in several philanthropic endeavors, with John serving as a founder and trustee of the New York Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, and as a director of the Methodist Episcopal Hospital, American Bible Society, Brooklyn Bureau of Charities, and Brooklyn Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor.

⁵⁹ The school's leaders believed that "The establishment of true home life among the working classes would solve the problems of intemperance, pauperism, and vice," and that teaching young working women homemaking skills would prepare them "to meet the responsibilities of life, and thereby may prevent much sin and suffering." Deaconess Home and Training School of the New York East Conference, 8.

⁶⁰ Brooklyn Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church 1896, 13.

⁶¹ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber

6 (Section 2), 470 (February 1, 1897); and Conveyance Liber 9 (Section 2), 268 (April 13, 1897).

⁶² "Home for Deaconesses," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 10, 1897, 7.

⁶³ "News of the Churches," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 10, 1897, 7; "Home for Deaconesses."

⁶⁴ "Home for Deaconesses."

⁶⁵ "Home for Deaconesses."

⁶⁶ *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Brooklyn Church Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 40.

⁶⁷ Brooklyn Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *Annual Report for the Year Ending April 30th, 1910*, 5; "\$130,000 Left to Charity," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 8, 1898, 14.

⁶⁸ "A Deaconess' Life Work," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 10, 1909, 2.

⁶⁹ The deaconesses also arranged for admittance to hospitals, made funeral arrangements, brought floral bouquets to people confined to their homes, took children to the aquarium and local museums, and provided free trips for mothers and their children to the seashore and countryside.

⁷⁰ 1909 *Annual Report*, 16.

⁷¹ "Methodists Mark Golden Jubilee of Deaconess Home," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 17, 1942, 12.

⁷² Sources for this section include Alfredo Cotto-Thorner, "The Northeastern Jurisdiction," in Justo L. Gonzalez, ed., *Each in Our Own Tongue: A History of Hispanic United Methodism* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1991), 106-112; Ernesto Vasseur, "Biography of the Rev. Alberto B. Baez," in *101st Anniversary of the Temple at 424 Dean Street, 56th Anniversary of "First Spanish"* (Brooklyn, New York: Immanuel-First Spanish United Methodist Church, 1976), 13-15; William Ralph Ward, Jr., *Faith in Action: A History of Methodism in the Empire State, 1784-1984* (Rutland, Vermont: Academy Books, 1986), 55-57; Beth Patkus, "Hispanic Ministries in Brooklyn and Manhattan," *C. Wesley Christman Archives New York Annual Conference Newsletter* (Spring 2014), 1, 3; and New York Telephone Company, *Brooklyn New York City Telephone Directory* (New York: 1930-1965); United States Census (Brooklyn, Kings County, New York), 1920, 1930, 1940; and New York State Census (Brooklyn, Kings County), 1925.

⁷³ Henry C. Whyman, *The History of Ethnic Ministries in the New York Conference: The United Methodist Church*,

cited in Cotto-Thorner, 107.

⁷⁴ “Excerpts from the Testimony of Albert Baez, Greenbrae, California,” in Rodolfo F. Acuna and Guadalupe Compean, eds., *Voices of the U.S. Latino Experience, Volume 2* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 747.

⁷⁵ Accounts of how Rev. Baez came to preach at the church differ. According to Vasseur, “15 days after his arrival, Rev. Baez was invited to preach to a small group of Latin Americans at Sands Street Memorial Church” (Vasseur, 14). Alberto and Thalia’s son Albert recalled that after the Baezes arrived in Brooklyn, “an American woman ... started inviting Spanish-speaking people to her house on Sundays and then invited my father to act as a minister. After a while, my father went to the ... minister of [Sands Street] church and said, ‘Here’s a group of Spanish-speaking people, they need a place to worship, would you let us use your church on Sunday afternoons?’ In less than a year, the Spanish congregation exceeded the American congregation, and that began a 40-year career for my father in Brooklyn” (“Excerpts from the Testimony of Albert Baez,” 746).

⁷⁶ Baez was listed as a teacher in the 1920 U.S. Census.

⁷⁷ At that time, the Baezes, including seven-year-old Albert and five-year-old Mimi, along with Thalia’s mother Emilia, were living at 1454 Bedford Avenue, a four-story walkup near Park Place, which still stands. The earliest-known appearance of Rev. Baez in the Brooklyn press is in a church notice in the Christmas Eve, 1920 edition of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. The notice stated that Rev. William M. Nesbit, minister of First Methodist Episcopal, would be delivering the morning sermon, and Alberto Baez would deliver the “Spanish sermon” at 4 p.m., with a bilingual watch meeting planned for New Year’s Eve. “First Methodist Episcopal” (Church Notice), *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 24, 1920, 3.

⁷⁸ Sands Street Memorial Church, officially First Methodist Episcopal Church of Brooklyn, was built in 1889 and demolished in 1947. It succeeded the congregation’s previous home, which was constructed on Sands Street in 1810 and demolished for the approach to the Brooklyn Bridge, constructed between 1869 and 1883. See “Wreckers Soon to Demolish Historic Church,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, January 19, 1947, 7.

⁷⁹ “40,000 Latins in Brooklyn, Welded by Common Tongue, Ignore Cosmopolitan Urge,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 5, 1925, 24D. This article is notable in part for its inclusion of a photo of young Albert and Mimi Baez dressed in traditional Mexican costume under the heading “Mexican Children Who Attend Public School

No. 8, Brooklyn.”

⁸⁰ Rev. Baez joined the church’s New York East Conference upon his ordination. “7 Men to Become Ministers in M. E. Church at Jamaica,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 19, 1925, 4.

⁸¹ In 1925, according to that year’s New York State Census, the family was living at 227 Fulton Street, which has been demolished. On the International Institute, see “Many Races Join in Dedication of Y.W.C.A. Building,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 22, 1928, 7.

⁸² “40,000 Latins in Brooklyn....”

⁸³ “Bit of Latin America Finds Its Way to Central Y.W.C.A.,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 1, 1929, 11.

⁸⁴ “Y.W.C.A. Girl Reserves,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 23, 1933, 19.

⁸⁵ “Pageant Features Post-Holiday Show,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 28, 1934, 30. For references to other adults’ and children’s performances directed by Thalia Baez, see the following articles, all in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*: “Who Is the Saint?,” May 10, 1924, 9; “Church Triumphant Depicted in Pageant,” November 25, 1929, 5; “International Program at James M. E. Church,” February 17, 1930, 9; “Y.W.C.A. Girl Reserves,” April 17, 1932, 27; “Y.W.C.A. Girl Reserves,” May 8, 1932, 28; “Y.W.C.A. Girl Reserves,” December 25, 1932, 28; “Y.W.C.A. Girl Reserves,” February 19, 1933, 24; “Dr. Munson Resigns M. E. Society Post,” May 13, 1933, 3; and “Y.W.C.A. Girl Reserves,” December 3, 1933, 26.

⁸⁶ District superintendent for the Methodist Church, cited in Patkus, 1.

⁸⁷ Vasseur, 14.

⁸⁸ “Spanish Methodists Open Mission House,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 15, 1928, 33.

⁸⁹ According to the *Brooklyn Eagle*, in 1931, the church claimed “the record for variety in nationality of ... children enrolled” in its summer Bible school, which had African American and Native American students, as well as pupils from Italy, Puerto Rico, Syria, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Lithuania, Ireland, and Denmark, among other countries. See “Vacation School Is ‘International,’” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 17, 1937; and “Old Church Changes With Neighborhood,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 8, 1931, 20A.

⁹⁰ “Letter from Pastor Alberto Baez to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Administration, October 11, 1935,” in Acuna and Compean, 546.

⁹¹ Sources for this section include those cited at the

beginning of the previous section.

⁹² The 1938 Brooklyn telephone directory lists the Baezes at 555 Ovington Avenue, a garden apartment building that still stands.

⁹³ “45 Boro Ministers Urge Retention of Embargo in Letter to F.D.R.,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 20, 1939, 2.

⁹⁴ “Christmas Party,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 9, 1939, 5.

⁹⁵ Although Vasseur stated that the church relocated in 1939 to President Street, telephone directories continued to list First Spanish Methodist at the Warren Street Church through the 1940s, while listing Rev. Baez separately at 238 President.

⁹⁶ Vasseur, 14-15.

⁹⁷ “Rev. Alberto Baldomero Baez,” *Findagrave.com* (www.findagrave.com/memorial/130462987/alberto-baldomero-baez), accessed August 22, 2018.

⁹⁸ “Albert Baez, 94, Scientist and Singers’ Father, Dies,” *New York Times*, March 27, 2007, B7; “Albert V. Baez,” *Hispanicphysicists.org* ([www.hispanicphysicists.org/recognition/bio\(baez\).html](http://www.hispanicphysicists.org/recognition/bio(baez).html)), accessed August 22, 2018.

⁹⁹ Sources for this section include “Rose Ann Scamardella is Married,” *New York Times*, July 9, 1973, 39; John Mariani, “Nobody Doesn’t Like Rose Ann,” *Village Voice*, June 2, 1975, 116-17; Judy Klemesrud, “Anchorwomen: Late Break in Local News,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1980, B8; Bob Liff, “Justice Served in Kitchen: Judge Presided as Strike Loomed,” *New York Daily News*, December 18, 1999; Cara Buckley, “Toasting 40 Years of Breaking News and Happy Talk,” *New York Times*, November 10, 2008, A24; and “Judge Profile: Michael L. Pesce,” *New York Law Journal* website (judges.newyorklawjournal.com/profile/Supreme_Court,_Appellate_Term,_Second_and_Eleventh_Judicial_District_s/Michael_Pesce/Michael_Pesce-360.xml), accessed September 4, 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 723, 940 (July 12, 1974).

¹⁰¹ Interview with Judge Michael L. Pesce, Brooklyn, New York, July 10, 2018.

¹⁰² Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 738, 791 (September 19, 1974).

¹⁰³ Klemesrud.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Judge Michael L. Pesce.

Findings and Designation

238 President Street House

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the 238 President Street House has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and culture characteristics of New York City.

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 238 President Street House and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 351, Lot 12 as its Landmark Site.



238 President Street House, 238 President Street, Brooklyn

Sarah Moses, LPC, September 2018



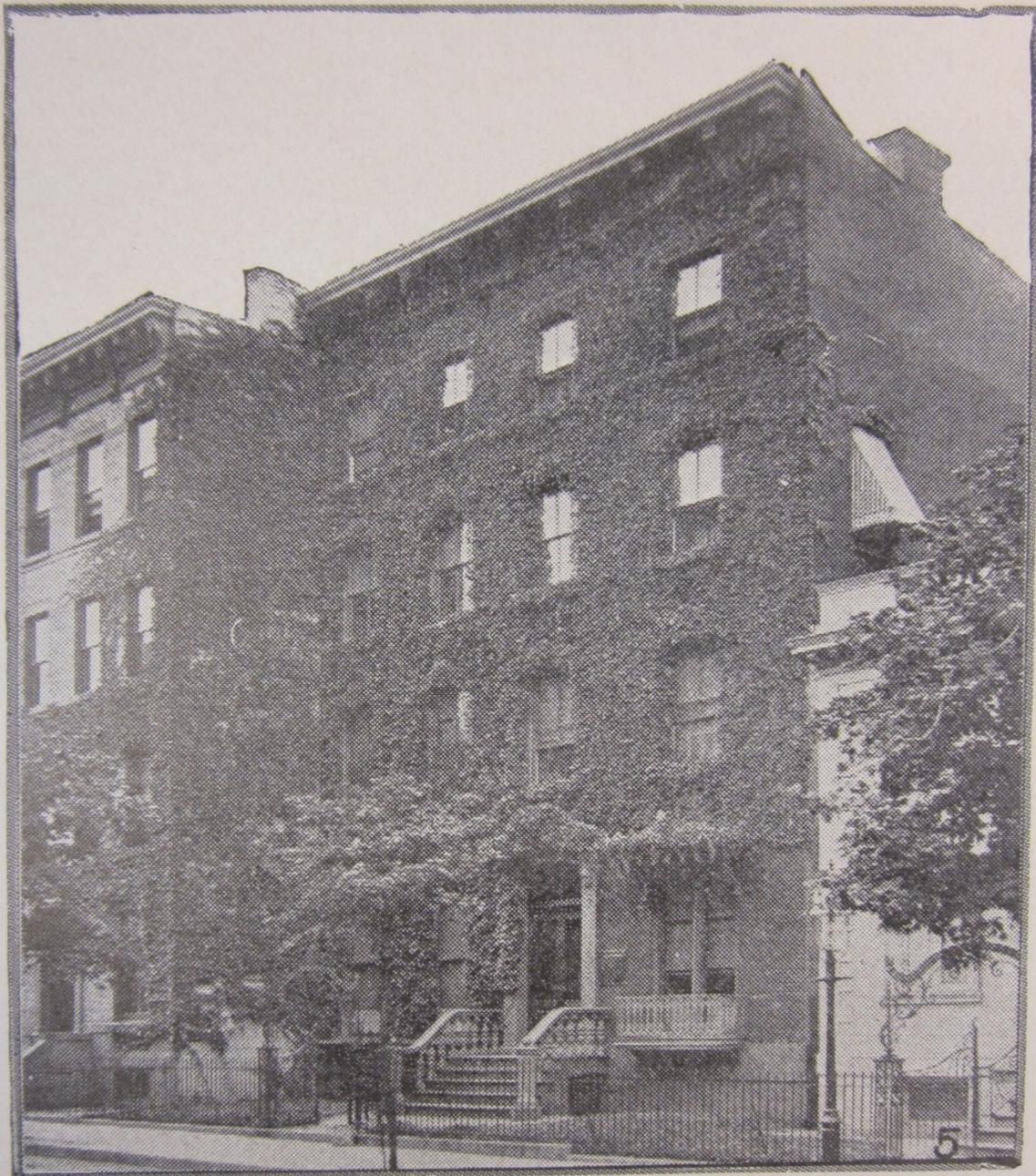
238 President Street House

Sarah Moses, LPC, September 2018



1897 gate reading “Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church”

Sarah Moses, LPC, September 2018



**THE BROOKLYN DEACONESS HOME OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
238 PRESIDENT STREET.**

238 President Street House, c. 1900 photo

Annual Report of the Brooklyn Deaconess Home of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Year Ending April 30, 1906 (1906)



c.1940 Tax Photograph

Municipal Archives, c. 1938-1943



Hans S. Christian



Elmira E. Christian

Portraits of Hans S. Christian and Elmira E. Christian

Brooklyn Church Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1903



Thalia and Rev. Alberto B. Baez, undated photo

Courtesy of Immanuel-First Spanish United Methodist Church, 422-424 Dean Street, Brooklyn, New York; and C. Wesley Christman Archives, New York Conference, 20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, New York

