

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
July 19, 1994, Designation List 259  
LP-1890

**DOLLAR SAVINGS BANK** (now Emigrant Savings Bank), first floor interior, consisting of the two Grand Concourse entrance vestibules, the main banking hall, and the southwest corner stairway leading to the basement; and the basement level interior consisting of the vault lobby; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including, but not limited to, wall surfaces and attached decorative elements including murals, ceiling surfaces, doors, chandeliers and lighting fixtures, decorative bronzework including gates and grilles, and railings; 2516-2530 Grand Concourse, The Bronx. Built 1932-33; 1937-38; architects Halsey, McCormack, & Helmer.

Landmark Site: Borough of The Bronx Tax Map Block 3154, Lot 1001.

On June 2, 1992, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as an Interior Landmark of the Dollar Savings Bank, first floor interior, consisting of the two Grand Concourse entrance vestibules, the main banking hall, and the southwest corner stairway leading to the basement; and the basement level interior consisting of the vault lobby; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including, but not limited to, wall surfaces and attached decorative elements including murals, ceiling surfaces, doors, chandeliers and lighting fixtures, decorative bronzework including gates and grilles, and railings, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 6). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. A representative of bank's current owner, the Emigrant Savings Bank, expressed the bank's approval of designation.

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Summary

The interior of Dollar Savings Bank, the first thrift institution to be organized in The Bronx, is a monumental classicizing Art Deco design. The building was initially constructed in 1932-33 as the bank's Fordham branch office, then enlarged five years later. The initial branch office and the subsequent enlargement were carried out by the noted firm of bank architects, Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, with the same designer, Adolf L. Muller, in charge. Muller's supervision provided consistency in the remarkable and original architectural treatment of the banking room space where each element is an integral part of the architectural program. As initially designed, the interior was a two-story space with structurally uninterrupted tellers' work areas and high clerestories above. An order of elongated terra-cotta corbels, cast in a classicizing Art Deco mode, visually regulated the wall surface. The banking room, an impressive and unobstructed space evoking the strength and stability of savings institutions, achieved its current spatial configuration with a long north-south axis as the result of the 1937-38 enlargement. Elements of the original banking room were replicated, most notably the order of massive corbels, the chamfered corners at the clerestory level, the brass-enclosed vestibule, the bronzework at the window openings, and the chandeliers. The corbel order was integrated with the red marble pilasters on the banking room's new western and eastern walls. The correspondence of the silver-leafed and paneled ceiling's broad ribs with the corbels unifies the enlarged space. The banking room is further enhanced by the five murals on the east wall, painted by Angelo Magnanti, mosaicist and illustrator, which depict scenes of the Bronx's early European settlement. Since 1992, the space, which remains remarkably intact and is accessible to the public, has housed a branch of the Emigrant Savings Bank.

### Bronx Development<sup>1</sup>

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the block formed by the Grand Concourse, East 192nd Street, Valentine Avenue, and East Fordham Road on which the bank is located, was a part of the farm of John Valentine, described as located at Fordham in the Town of West Farms. Only in 1888 did Valentine's heirs begin to sell the land.

Improvements in transportation throughout the nineteenth century not only made the Bronx more accessible to Manhattan but contributed to its growth. The New York & Harlem Railroad (1838), following the Bronx River valley, was opened to White Plains by 1844 and established stations at Morrisania, West Farms (Fordham), and Yonkers. The Third Avenue & Fordham Railroad, a horse car line formed in 1861, though never completed, was succeeded two years later by the Harlem Bridge, Morrisania & Fordham Railroad Company. Electric-powered trolley lines were introduced in 1892. But for the greater part of the century, the high ground just north of Fordham Road between the Harlem and Bronx Rivers remained largely unaffected by the development that redefined the south Bronx.

It was the introduction of the Grand Concourse, begun in 1902 and finished in 1909, running from 161st Street to Mosholu Parkway, which gave access to this ridge and spurred its development. The impetus behind the Grand Concourse,<sup>2</sup> came, in part, from the influential members of the Rider & Driver Club, many of whom belonged to the American Jockey Club and were habitues of the Jerome Park Racing Association Grounds,<sup>3</sup> who advocated a road free of commercial traffic and limited to pleasure driving. Influential Bronx residents favored the new road as well; members of the Haffen family of Melrose were particularly involved with the improvements of the borough's streets and highways.<sup>4</sup> Bronx Borough President Louis Haffen officiated at the ground breaking in 1902. The tree-lined four-and-one-half mile long road was 180 feet wide with a central roadway flanked by outer roadways, although the Concourse's central carriage drive was not paved until 1925 when five- and six-story apartment buildings had replaced single-family houses. This increased real-estate activity was the result of the opening of the elevated branch of the Lexington Avenue IRT over Jerome Avenue, to the west of the Concourse, in 1918, and it was that year that the block created by the Grand Concourse, 192nd Street, Valentine Avenue, and East Fordham Road was subdivided into lots.

With the growth in the area's population during the 1920s, Fordham Road, from Jerome Avenue to Webster Avenue, became lined with retail shops. The Adam Wertheimer Department Store established itself at the northwest corner of the Concourse and East Fordham Road, several movie palaces -- the RKO Fordham, the Concourse, the Valentine, and the Windsor -- were constructed nearby, and automobile showrooms opened further down either side of the ridge. But the most direct impetus to the commercial development of these blocks occurred when the Eighth Avenue IND subway line, which continued uptown under the Grand Concourse, opened in 1931-32. Although the Hub at Third and Willis Avenues was the borough's major shopping district, Fordham Road at the Concourse was fast becoming another. Alexander's, with its main store in the Hub, opened a branch in the remodelled Adam Wertheimer store. The Dollar Bank for Savings, likewise headquartered in the Hub, established a branch first at 2480 Grand Concourse in 1932, then up the boulevard at No. 2516.

### A Brief History of the Dollar Savings Bank<sup>5</sup>

The Dollar Savings Bank of the City of New York, the first thrift institution to be organized in the Bronx (1887), received its charter in 1890 and opened its doors at 2808 Third Avenue, just below the intersection of Third and Willis Avenues and 148th Street.<sup>6</sup> Its founder and first president, John Haffen (1847-1910), was also one of the organizers and served as vice-president of the Twenty-third Ward Bank.<sup>7</sup> Among the Dollar Bank's early trustees were Charles W. Bogart, president of the Twenty-third Ward Bank and George E. Edwards, Haffen's successor as president of the Dollar. These business leaders and their associates represented the vanguard of the borough's commercial developers in the first half of this century.<sup>8</sup> Neither descendants of the Bronx's older landowning families nor scions of the well-to-do city merchants whose estates formed a patchwork across the borough, these men grew up in and around the Hub (in Morrisania, Port Morris and Melrose).

These business leaders, who thought of themselves as "progressives," moved quickly to control the new borough's development. Establishing the Dollar Savings Bank as a mutual savings bank assured that most local savings would not leave the borough.<sup>9</sup> The Dollar Bank's trustees used the savings deposits to fund improvements in the borough.

Howell Taylor Manson (1875-1944), fourth president of the Dollar Savings Bank, initiated the bank's branch expansion. A native of Greenpoint, Brooklyn, he began his lifelong career in banking as a clerk at the Third National Bank (New York) in 1895. After a year at Goldman Sachs, he joined the Gallatin Bank in 1897, becoming an officer in 1902, and remained with the Gallatin through its merger with the National Hanover Bank (1912) until 1920. He joined the board of trustees of the Dollar Savings Bank in 1911, becoming the Dollar's treasurer in 1920 and comptroller two years later. Manson, who was president from 1925 until 1941, embodied the "progressive" spirit of the bank's founders.<sup>10</sup> In 1926 Manson had enlarged the Dollar's headquarters building (1919) at Third Avenue and 147th Street. In 1932 the Dollar Savings Bank merged with the Fordham Savings Bank and located located its first Grand Concourse branch office at No. 2480; that September the Dollar trustees purchased a fifty-foot wide lot near the intersection of the Grand Concourse and Fordham Road.<sup>11</sup> Manson opened the new Fordham branch at 2516 Grand Concourse, designed by Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, in 1933.<sup>12</sup> The following year the Dollar trustees purchased three additional lots north of their new Fordham branch office<sup>13</sup> and subsequently expanded the branch. The enlarged branch opened in January 1939. Again, the architect was the firm of Halsey, McCormack & Helmer.

Manson's successor, Robert M. Catharine, continued the bank's expansion policy. A survey published in 1936 found that the Dollar, once a local institution, had become the eighteenth largest in the nation.<sup>14</sup> By 1948, of the 532 mutual savings banks in the nation, the Dollar had grown to be the sixth largest.<sup>15</sup> In New York State savings per capita increased by sixty percent between 1941 and 1950. State banking laws permitted the Dollar Bank to open two more new branches: the Dollar's Parkchester branch opened in 1948 at Hugh J. Grant Circle and East 177th Street; the branch at 1046 Southern Parkway opened the following year. In 1950 the Grand Concourse building began to be enlarged once again, this time with a ten-story tower. Robert Catharine designated the Fordham branch as the bank's home office in 1951. Three years later the branch at Walton Avenue and East 170th Street was opened. All of this work was designed in the Halsey, McCormack, & Helmer office.

#### Banks and Architectural Imagery<sup>16</sup>

The freestanding bank building, although not a new building type, became more prevalent at the end of the last century when the savings bank industry made itself more accessible to the individual depositor. Edward Hale Kendall's German Savings Bank (1872) on Union Square was an early example in the Second Empire style. Robert W. Gibson's building for the Greenwich Savings Bank (1892) at Sixth Avenue and West 16th Street marked a return to the classical orders from the intervening Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival styles. Other examples of classically-inspired bank buildings include the Bank for Savings (1892) at East 22nd Street and Fourth Avenue, designed by Cyrus L. W. Eidlitz; McKim, Mead & White's Bowery Savings Bank (1893-95, a designated New York City Landmark) at Grand Street and the Bowery; and R. H. Robertson's New York Bank for Savings (1896-97, a designated New York City Landmark) at Eighth Avenue and West 14th Street. The Dollar's earlier headquarters building (1919) at 2792 Third Avenue followed this prototype.

In the 1920s, York & Sawyer strongly endorsed this traditional model for the firm's numerous bank building commissions, including the Greenwich Savings Bank (1922-24) and the Central Savings Bank (1926-28), both designated New York City Landmarks. In the early 1930s another stylistic variation for the bank typology was introduced, a classicizing Art Deco; planar massing and streamlined detailing replaced the classical orders, but scale and spatial arrangement changed very little.

#### The Architects<sup>17</sup>

The architects Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, Inc. maintained an office at 286 Fifth Avenue, Manhattan, from 1928 or 1929 into the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> Hayward S. Halsey had co-founded the architectural and real estate development company of Thomas Bruce Boyd in 1920 and then changed its name to Halsey, McCormack & Helmer in 1925. George H. McCormack (d.1954), who started his professional career as a banker, had been an officer of the Boyd company. Robert Helmer, whose name often followed the firm's full title in its advertisements ("Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, Inc., Robert Helmer, R.A., Architects and Engineers"), was a registered architect in New York.<sup>19</sup> The firm often contracted with consulting engineers, among whom were Lange & Noske. Its first large commission, the Williamsburgh Savings

Bank's 512-foot skyscraper at 1 Hanson Place in Brooklyn, was awarded in 1927; the cornerstone was laid in 1928 and the building was completed a year later.

For more than thirty years Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, Inc., specialized in bank buildings and was involved in the construction or enlargement of over two dozen such structures. From the Williamsburgh Savings Bank tower to the Seaman's Bank for Savings (1955) at 30 Wall Street, the firm designed bank buildings and branch offices for most of the leading savings banks in the metropolitan area as well as in upstate New York, Long Island, and New Jersey.<sup>20</sup> Halsey, McCormack & Helmer advertised assiduously in the *Savings Bank Journal*, and representatives of the firm attended the annual meetings of the National Association of Savings Banks.<sup>21</sup> Like Edward Palmer York, who had won many of his firm's large banking commissions, George McCormack was familiar with bankers and banking as a result of his first career. Halsey, McCormack & Helmer's predominance in bank design in New York in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s can be attributed, in part, to McCormack's connections in banking circles.<sup>22</sup> In 1936 George McCormack accepted Donald Manson's invitation to join the Dollar Bank's board of trustees.

The firm's success is attributable to innovative construction techniques as well. After the First World War, American architects and engineers continued to collaborate in the development of steel-frame construction to achieve even greater spatial flexibility than had been realized in the previous decades. For example, at Halsey, McCormack & Helmer's Williamsburgh Savings Bank Building the steel framing had to accommodate the sixty-three foot-high banking room and superimposed 26-story office tower. New office towers offered only one of the challenges facing architects and their consulting engineers. Halsey, McCormack & Helmer was commissioned to enlarge existing bank buildings in 1931-32 -- the home office of the Dime Savings Bank at 9 DeKalb Avenue in Brooklyn and the Onondaga County Savings Bank in Syracuse, New York, contracting with the civil engineers Lange & Noske to carry out the initial framing alterations. The wide experience gained with the framing of such large commissions prompted these architects and engineers to adapt this flexibility to smaller buildings as well. The clerestories above the tellers' counters on either side of the banking room that Halsey, McCormack & Helmer designed for the Brevoort Savings Bank (1931) interior at 1281

Fulton Street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn were, in fact, trusses erected to eliminate any intrusion of the building's structural frame. The transverse arches over the banking room spring from these trusses.

Stylistically, Halsey, McCormack & Helmer's early work depends upon prototypes created by York & Sawyer. The Romanesque/Byzantine splendor of the Bowery Savings Bank's East 42nd Street branch is evoked in the Williamsburgh Savings Bank's Hanson Place tower and banking room interior. Of the many branch offices Halsey, McCormack & Helmer designed for other banks before 1932, three are in the Romanesque style, and at least twelve more are simpler variations of the classical style exemplified by York & Sawyer's Greenwich Savings Bank (see above).

When Adolf L. Muller joined Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, he appears to have become one of the principal architectural designers. Of the firm's projects for the Dollar Savings Bank, Muller signed the exterior renderings of both the initial Fordham branch office design (dated Sept. 17, 1932) and the addition (dated simply 1937) as well as the working drawings for both the 1937-38 and 1949-52 additions. Born in Brooklyn in 1898, Adolf Lancken Muller studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1919, and completed his graduate degree at Columbia University (1922). He began his career as a draftsman with George B. Post & Sons and then worked in the office of Alfred C. Bossom. In 1924 he moved to Starrett & Van Vleck but may have joined Halsey, McCormack & Helmer in 1930 or 1931.<sup>23</sup> The firm's use of the Art Deco style coincided with Muller's advent. The work that most presages the Dollar's Fordham branch office is the Brownsville branch of the East River Savings Bank (1931-32).

#### The Design of the Dollar Savings Bank Interior

The interior of the Dollar Savings Bank is the result of the 1932-33 and 1937-38 building campaigns. Such elements associated with bank architecture as classical proportion and trabeation prevailed in the design, but are used in an original manner characteristic of the classicizing Art Deco and befitting the unconventional structure of the building. This structure resulted in a large unobstructed space. The effect is enhanced by stylized classical ornament. Each element is an integral part of the decorative program.

The original two-story interior of the 1932-33 banking room was entered from the Grand

Concourse and oriented on the building's long east-west axis.<sup>24</sup> A marble stairway down to the safe deposit vault lobby was tucked into the room's southwest corner (which remained when the banking room was enlarged, Plate 3). The room was lit by high clerestories along the north and south walls. Two steel trusses, anchored to the building's frame at either end above the teller's area, incorporated the fabric of the clerestory wall.

The banking room achieved its current spatial configuration with a long north-south axis as the result of the 1937-38 enlargement (Plate 2). Elements of the original banking room were replicated, most notably the order of monumental terra-cotta corbels (Plate 4) with the face of each oblong, cantilevered section bearing a panel of angulated reeding, the brass-enclosed vestibules (Plate 3), the chamfered corners at the clerestory level, the bronzework at the window openings, and the chandeliers (Plate 5) composed of vertical cylinders of ribbed opaque glass with fin-like disks and spheres. The order of corbels appears in profile on the east and west walls adjacent to the red marble pilasters separating these walls into bays. The whole north wall of the original banking room was removed, support for the third story was substituted above the banking room ceiling, and a new truss to incorporate a clerestory wall was erected across the entire north end of the new space. While the corbels appear to support the ceiling, they are, in fact, hung from the ceiling beams. The ribbed and paneled ceiling is a stylized version of the coffered ceiling that would have been found in a classical design (Plate 6). Five murals on the east wall depict aspects of early Bronx settlement (Plate 7).<sup>25</sup> Unlike the exterior, there is no explicit use of dollar imagery on the interior.

#### Description of the Interior of the Dollar Savings Bank

*The Entrance Vestibules.* These two vestibules from the Grand Concourse, projecting into either end of the banking room's west wall, are almost identical (Plate 3). Because of the Concourse's northward rise the north vestibule is two steps above the banking room pavement. The steps drop from either side of a stoop fronting the vestibule; a brass railing runs the width of the stoop. Sheathed in brass, inside and out, each vestibule has three glazed swinging doors of brass and a tripartite transom. Vestibule walls, doors, and transoms are articulated in the Art Deco style. The heating registers within the vestibules are faced with ornamental grilles cast in brass. Above them runs

an inscription "Dollar Savings Bank," cast in bronze and flanked by meander motifs. A clock face is the central element of each vestibule's shaped crestings.

*The Banking Room.* A major order of polished red marble pilasters along both the west and east walls define the banking room's broad central section (Plate 2). Clerestories, apparently supported by giant terra-cotta corbels, characterize the hall's north and south ends. A frieze and architrave below the clerestories continues on the east wall. The corbels, in silhouette, are repeated flanking the pilasters. Chamfered corners link the clerestories and the east and west walls.

The tall windows between the pilasters on the west wall contain bronze filigree vertical and horizontal mullions and bronze muntins. The bays below the east wall's architrave are faced with polished limestone. Five murals, depicting the history of the Bronx's early settlement, fill the bays above the east wall's architrave (plate 7).<sup>26</sup> The clerestory windows are presently screened by opaque blinds. The banking room ceiling is of ribbed and paneled plaster, picked out in silver gilt and gold leaf. Decorative motifs (Plate 6), derivative of classical ornamental forms including rosette bosses and emblematic meanders, articulate the intersection of ribs or their soffits. The writing desks are original to the room, as are the chandeliers (Plate 5).

The stairway to the safe deposit vault lobby is in the banking room's southwest corner (Plate 3). An aluminum and opaque glass light fixture hangs above the stairwell. The stairwell, also lit by a small window, is faced with polished limestone; the wainscot and banister is of marble. A brass hand-railing runs down the center of each of the flights, and brass hand-railings are fixed to banister and wainscot also. The lobby's floor is paved with terrazzo (Plate 8) in varied hues and patterns, the walls are faced with marble; the low ceiling is of paneled plaster. The gate and grilles of the safe deposit vault itself are fine examples of Art Deco foliate metalwork and designed to conform to the symmetrically pitched low ceiling.

#### Subsequent History

The Dollar Savings Bank merged with the Dry Dock Savings Bank to become the Dollar Dry Dock Bank on February 10, 1983. Dollar Dry Dock, in turn, was purchased by the Emigrant Savings Bank on February 21, 1992.<sup>27</sup> In conjunction, with this last sale, the Grand Concourse property was divided into two condominium lots, one

encompassing the banking room and adjacent facilities and the other containing the ten-story office block and clock tower.

A number of changes have been made to the banking room to accommodate the changing needs of the savings bank industry. These include the addition of down lights in the ceiling and security cameras at various points around the room. Since 1938, the tellers' counters have been fixed at several different locations throughout the room, including around the room's periphery as well as

down the room's center. The present location of the tellers' counter is in the center of the northern half of the room. Neither this tellers' island nor its surrounding floor surface are included in this designation, nor are the alcoves beyond the east wall of the banking room.

Report prepared by  
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Research Department

## NOTES

1. Sources for this section include: Bronx County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Section 11, Block 3154; Stan Fischler, *Uptown, Downtown* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1976); Benedict Fitzpatrick, *The Bronx & Its People, A History, 1609-1927* (New York: The Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1927); Martha Golden, "The Grand Concourse, Tides of Change," unpublished typescript, New York Landmarks Preservation Commission Scholars Program, 1976; Stephen Jenkins, *The Story of the Bronx* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1912); John McNamara, *History in Asphalt* (Bronx, N.Y.: The Bronx Historical Society, 1984); Lloyd Ultan, *The Beautiful Bronx, 1920-1950* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, Publishers, 1979); Lloyd Ultan and Gary Hermalyn, *The Bronx in the Innocent Years, 1890-1925* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).
2. By 1898 Louis Risso had become Chief Topographical Engineer for the City and two years later proposed a comprehensive plan for the city's development, the first since the consolidation of the five boroughs. In this grand scheme Risso deliberately created boulevards linking the city's newly acquired parkland with its populous urban core. The Grand Concourse connects Van Cortlandt Park with the bridges from Manhattan to the Bronx. See Golden.
3. The suburban character of this ridge, still home to a few estates and old farmsteads, was sustained by the Jesuit College of Saint John (1840, 1843, now Fordham University) to the east and the Jerome Park Racing Association Grounds, leased by the American Jockey Club in 1866, just to the northwest (now the Jerome Park Reservoir).
4. Three of the sons of immigrant brewer Mathias Haffen 1814-1871), were prominent in the transition of the Bronx from an agrarian community to its integration as a part of the City of New York. Of the eldest, John Haffen, see below. His brother Henry Haffen (1852-?) was elected to the New York City Board of Aldermen in 1878 as the representative of the newly annexed Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Wards. In 1894 he became both general foreman and inspector of highways in the Bronx. Louis F. Haffen (1854-1935) was engineer of the Department of Parks, New York City, from 1883 until 1893 when he was made commissioner of street improvements in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth wards. He was the borough's first president, following the consolidation and was re-elected until 1910 when removed from office by state Governor Charles Evans Hughes. A Tammany man, he was charged with misappropriating public funds. Though he sought public office subsequently, he never won it again. However, in his obituary he was remembered as the "Father of the Bronx." Louis F. Haffen obituary, *New York Times* Dec. 26, 1935, p. 17:1.
5. Sources consulted for this section include: William E. Dunkman, *A Study of Savings and Savings Facilities in New York State, 1941-1950* (New York: New York State Bankers' Assoc., 1952); Benedict Fitzpatrick, *The Bronx & Its People, A History, 1609-1927* (New York: The Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1927); *Dollar Savings Bank* (Bronx, 1902); John Haffen obituary, *New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1910, p. 13:6; *Savings Bank Fact Book, 1965* (Albany: Savings Bank Association of New York State, 1965); "Dollar Savings in the Bronx to Have Assets of More than \$100,000.00," *Savings Bank Journal* 13, no. 7 (Sept. 1932), 50; Franklin J. Sherman, *Modern Story of Mutual Savings Banks* (New York: J.J. Little & Ives Co., 1934); *Statement of the Dollar Savings Bank of the City of New York*, Jan. 1, 1917.

6. The Dollar Savings Bank was founded sixteen years before any comparable institution in the borough; the Bronx Savings Bank was founded in 1906. The Fordham Savings Bank was founded in 1923 and absorbed by the Dollar Savings Bank nine years later.
7. John Haffen's son, John Mathias Haffen (1872- ?), succeeded his father as a director of the Twenty-third Ward Bank. Acquiring a controlling interest in the bank in 1919, he renamed it the Bronx County Trust Company six years later.
8. These included: Brian G. Hughes, vice president of the Dollar under Haffen and Edwards, then president; Frederick Alfred Wurzbach, a founder of the Bronx National Bank (1907); Frederick Berry, subsequently president of Bronx Trust Company; Lloyd I. Phyne, architect and apartment builder; William Henry Steinkamp, president of the Fordham Savings Bank; George W. Fennell, president of the Bronx National Bank; Roderick Stephens of the Stephens Fuel Company; Joseph Buckbee Hare, president of the Central Union & Northern Union Gas Company; and Howell T. Manson, successor to Hughes as president of the Dollar.
9. Mutual savings banks which were banks managed for the benefit of the depositors with the profits returned to the depositors as interest dividends, originated in the early nineteenth century in Scotland, the United States, and in England (the earliest in this country is the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society of 1816; the earliest in New York was The Bank for Savings, 1819).
10. "Banks Continue Building Program," *Savings Bank Journal* 7, no. 12 (Feb. 1932), 52.
11. This was lot 9 with a fifty- foot frontage and 100 feet deep, located 158 feet north of the intersection of the Grand Concourse and East Fordham Road. Bronx County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 849, p. 289.
12. Chapter 248 of the [New York State Banking] Laws of 1923, permitting a savings bank to operate one branch office in the same city in which its main office is located (in the case of New York City, the same borough or county), superceded Chapter 689, Laws of 1892, which required that the usual business of the bank be transacted at the one location of the bank's legal address and nowhere else.
13. Lots 15 and 13 were purchased in May 1934 and lot 11 was purchased in December 1934. Bronx County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 886, p. 337; Liber 887, p. 340; and Liber 908, p. 135.
14. *Savings Bank Journal* 16, no. 12 (Feb. 1936), 9. The survey was conducted by the National Association of Mutual Savings Banks.
15. *Savings Bank Journal* 29, no. 6 (Aug. 1948), 22.
16. For a comprehensive discussion of banks and architectural imagery, see Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Manufacturers Hanover Trust Building Designation Report* (LP-1633), report prepared by Elisa Urbanelli (New York: City of New York, 1988).
17. This section is based on the following sources: *American Architects Directory*, George S. Koyl, ed. (New York: American Institute of Architects, R.R. Bowker, 1962), 501; H. D. Balcom, "Structural Frames of Banks," *Architectural Forum* 48, no. 6 (June 1928), 945-948; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Central Savings Bank Interior Designation Report* (LP-1804), (New York, 1993), report prepared by Charles Savage; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Former New York Bank for Savings and Former New York Bank for Savings Interior Designation Reports* (LP-1634 and LP-1635), (New York, 1988), reports prepared by Charles Savage; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Greenwich Savings Bank and Greenwich Savings Bank Interior Designation Reports* (LP-1766 and LP-1767), (New York, 1992), reports prepared by Charles Savage; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Williamsburgh Savings Bank Designation Report* (LP-0971), (New York, 1977); Harold D. Lauf, *Design of Steel Buildings* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1949); George H. McCormack obituary, *New York Times*, July 23, 1954, p. 17:5; W. T. McIntosh, "Pre-Stressed Footings," *Construction Methods* 14, no. 5 (May 1932), 33-35.
18. James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 32, lists the firm at this address between 1928 and 1940. In George H. McCormack's *New York Times* obituary, 1929 is the year given for the firm's commencement. Adolf L. Muller of Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, was still at this address in *American Architects Directory*.

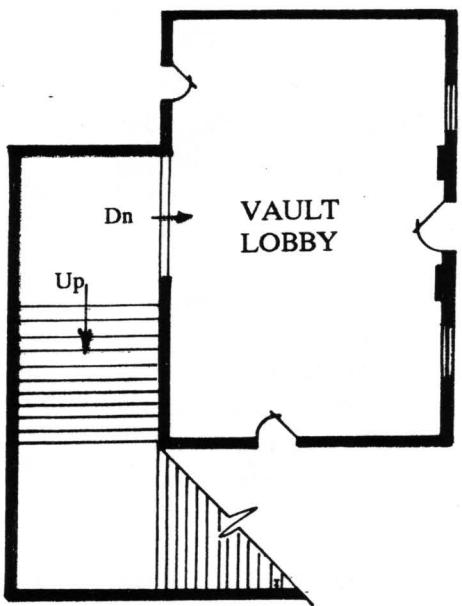
19. Helmer was located at 286 Fifth Avenue from 1915 to 1917. Perhaps World War I interrupted his professional career. Then, following the war, he returned to this address.
20. In a full-page advertisement of its representative bank buildings, small photos of each bank frame a map of the five contiguous states and this list: the Citizens' Bank, White Plains, N.Y.; National Savings Bank, Albany, N.Y.; Flatbush Savings Bank, Brooklyn, N.Y.; East New York Savings Bank, Brownsville branch, Brooklyn; West Side Savings Bank, New York City; the Dime Savings Bank alteration, Brooklyn; Kings County Savings Bank, Brooklyn; Dime Savings Bank, Bensonhurst branch; Brooklyn; Port Chester Savings Bank; First National Bank, Binghamton, N.Y.; Brevoort Savings Bank, Brooklyn; Dime Savings Bank, Flatbush, Brooklyn; Ridgewood Savings Bank, Queens; National City Bank, Troy, N.Y.; South Shore Trust Co., Rockville Center, N.Y.; Greenburgh Savings Bank, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.; Williamsburgh Savings Bank, Brooklyn; and Peoples Bank & Trust Co., Passaic, N.J. *Savings Bank Journal* 13, no. 4 (June 1932), 51. Additional bank buildings by Halsey, McCormack & Helmer published in *Savings Bank Journal*: Mechanics Savings Bank, Cohoes, N.Y., 7, no. 2 (April, 1931), 26; Onondaga County Savings Bank, Syracuse, N.Y., 7, no. 12 (Feb., 1932); Lincoln Savings Bank, Flatbush branch, Brooklyn, 13, no. 8 (Oct. 1932), 29; Savings Bank of Richmond Hill, Queens, 16, no. 7 (Sept. 1935); Greenpoint Savings Bank, Flatbush branch, Brooklyn, 17, no. 11 (Jan. 1937), 50-51; Staten Island Savings Bank, St. George branch, 17, no. 12 (Feb. 1937); Citizens Savings Bank, branch interior, ground floor alteration, General Electric Building, 570 Lexington Ave., New York, 19, no. 8 (Oct. 1938), 52; and the Harlem Savings Bank, branch at Broadway and 207th Street, 30, no. 12 (Feb. 1950), 21.
21. E. M. Benjamin, H.J. Dickson, and George McCormack represented the firm at the annual National Savings Banks Association meeting in 1932 at the Waldorf-Astoria, *Savings Bank Journal* 13, no. 4 (June 1932), 155.
22. There were two other architecture firms that sustained extensive practices in bank design in the East, Tilghman-Moyer Company of Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Hutchins & French in Boston.
23. In the *American Architects Directory* (1962) Muller lists his advent at Halsey, McCormack & Helmer as 1937. Perhaps this is a typo. If not, 1937 may have been the year he was given greater responsibility at the firm. The evidence of the signed rendering (1932) suggests the earlier date. In his later work -- the alterations to the New York Bank for Savings at 81 Eighth Avenue (1940 and 1952) in Manhattan, for example -- his authorship is acknowledged: in the working drawings for the 1940 alteration are signed "Adolf L. Muller, R.A., Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, Inc."; in 1952 the drawings bear only his name, "Adolf L. Muller, R.A." and the name of the firm is omitted.
24. An incomplete collection of blueprint drawings for the original branch office, dated Nov. 21, 1932, and Dec. 29, 1932, exists on site.
25. Angelo Magnanti (d.1969) executed these murals. Magnanti, born and trained in Italy, had worked with Halsey, McCormack & Helmer at the Williamsburgh Savings Bank, undertaking the mosaic ceiling of the banking room. He also executed work in the Supreme Court Building in Washington, the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, and churches in the New York metropolitan area. The central mural, "Welcoming Settlers at Fort Schuyler," was the last of the five and was installed in 1957. *Savings Bank Journal*, 19, no. 11, (Jan. 1939), 21. Magnanti was a commercial artist as well; he illustrated advertisements like that for Bonded Floors, *Architectural Forum*, 48, no. 6 (June 1928), 31. A painted mural, an allegory representing thrift, had decorated the east wall of the 1931-32 banking room. This may have been Magnanti's work.
26. From north to south, left to right, they are titled: Erecting the First Stone House (1938); The Original Bridge Connecting the Bronx with Manhattan (1938); Welcoming Settlers at Fort Schuyler (1957); Early Settlers Gathering at the First Community House (1938); Jonas Bronk buying the Land from the Indians (1938).
27. Letter from Robert J. Sofia, Vice President, Emigrant Savings Bank, to Charles Savage, February 9, 1994.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this Interior, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Dollar Savings Bank (now Emigrant Savings Bank), first floor interior, consisting of the two Grand Concourse entrance vestibules, the main banking hall, and the southwest corner stairway leading to the basement; and the basement level interior consisting of the vault lobby; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including, but not limited to, wall surfaces and attached decorative elements including murals, ceiling surfaces, doors, chandeliers and lighting fixtures, decorative bronzework including gates and grilles, and railings, has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City, and the Interior or parts thereof are thirty years old or more, and that the Interior is one which is customarily open and accessible to the public and to which the public is customarily invited.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Dollar Savings Bank Interior is a monumental classicizing Art Deco design which served as the headquarters of the first thrift institution to be organized in the Bronx; that the interior of the Dollar Savings Bank, the result of building campaigns carried out in 1932-33 and 1937-38 were carried out by the noted firm of bank architects, Halsey, McCormack & Helmer, with the same designer, Adolf L. Muller, in charge; that Muller's supervision provided consistency in the remarkable and original architectural treatment of the banking room space where each element is an integral part of the architectural program; that such elements associated with bank architecture as classical proportion and trabeation prevailed in the design, but are used in an original manner characteristic of the classicizing Art Deco and befitting the unconventional structure of the building; that this structure resulted in a large unobstructed and impressive space which evokes the strength and stability of savings institutions; that the effect is enhanced by stylized classical ornament; that the banking room is further enhanced by the five murals on the east wall, painted by Angelo Magnanti, mosaicist and illustrator, which depict scenes of the Bronx's early European settlement; and that since 1992, the space has housed a branch of the Emigrant Savings Bank and is remarkably intact.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 (formerly Section 534 of Chapter 21) 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 an Interior Landmark the Dollar Savings Bank (now Emigrant Savings Bank), first floor interior, consisting of the two Grand Concourse entrance vestibules, the main banking hall, and the southwest corner stairway leading to the basement; and the basement level interior consisting of the vault lobby; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including, but not limited to, wall surfaces and attached decorative elements including murals, ceiling surfaces, doors, chandeliers and lighting fixtures, decorative bronzework including gates and grilles, and railings; 2516-2530 Grand Concourse, The Bronx, and designates Bronx Tax Map Block 3154, Lot 1001, as its Landmark Site.



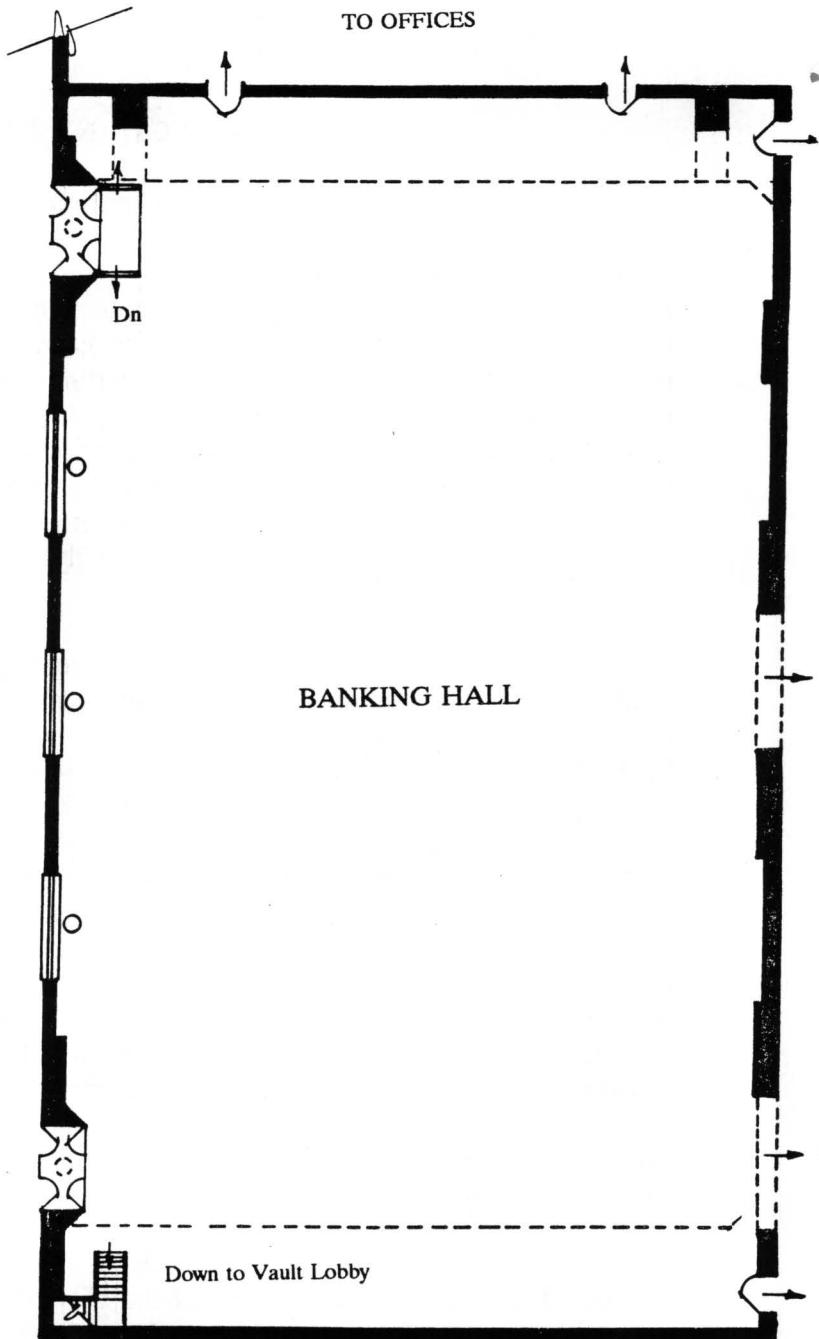
BASEMENT LEVEL

North ↗

Note: This drawing is not to scale

Plate 1.

GRAND CONCOURSE



FIRST FLOOR

DOLLAR SAVINGS BANK  
FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR  
AND  
BASEMENT LEVEL INTERIOR  
2516-2530 Grand Concourse, The Bronx

Designated: July 19, 1994  
Landmarks Preservation Commission

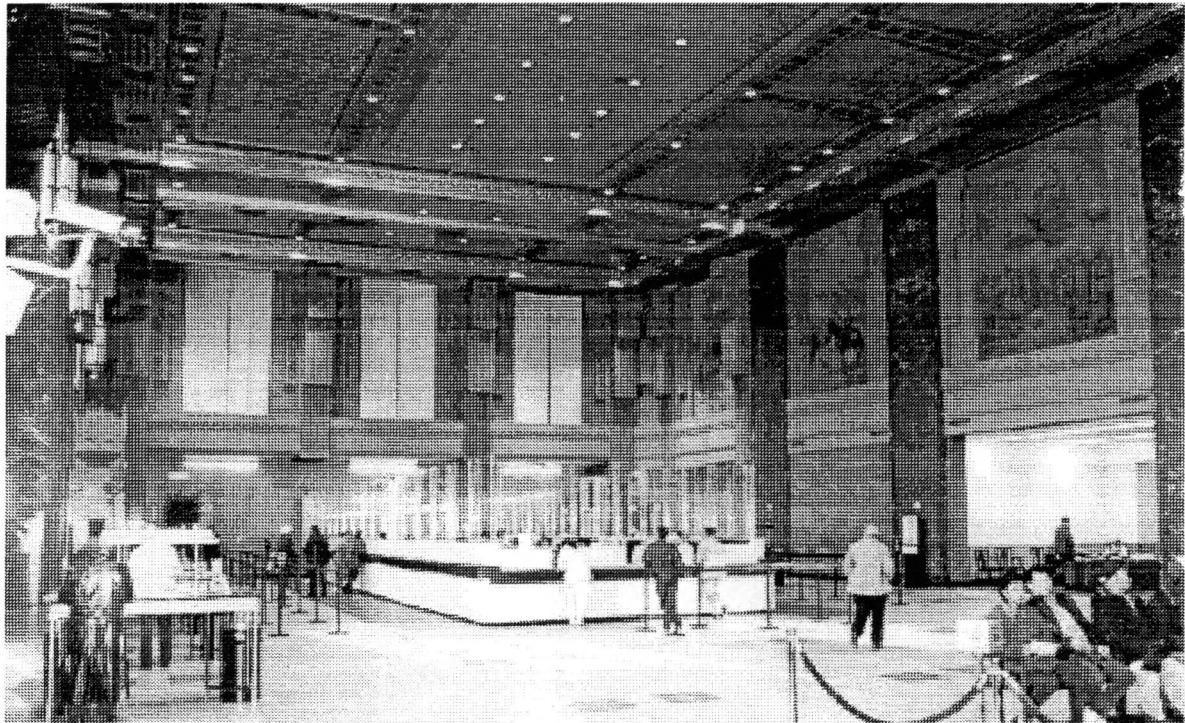


Plate 2.      Banking Room

(Carl Forster)

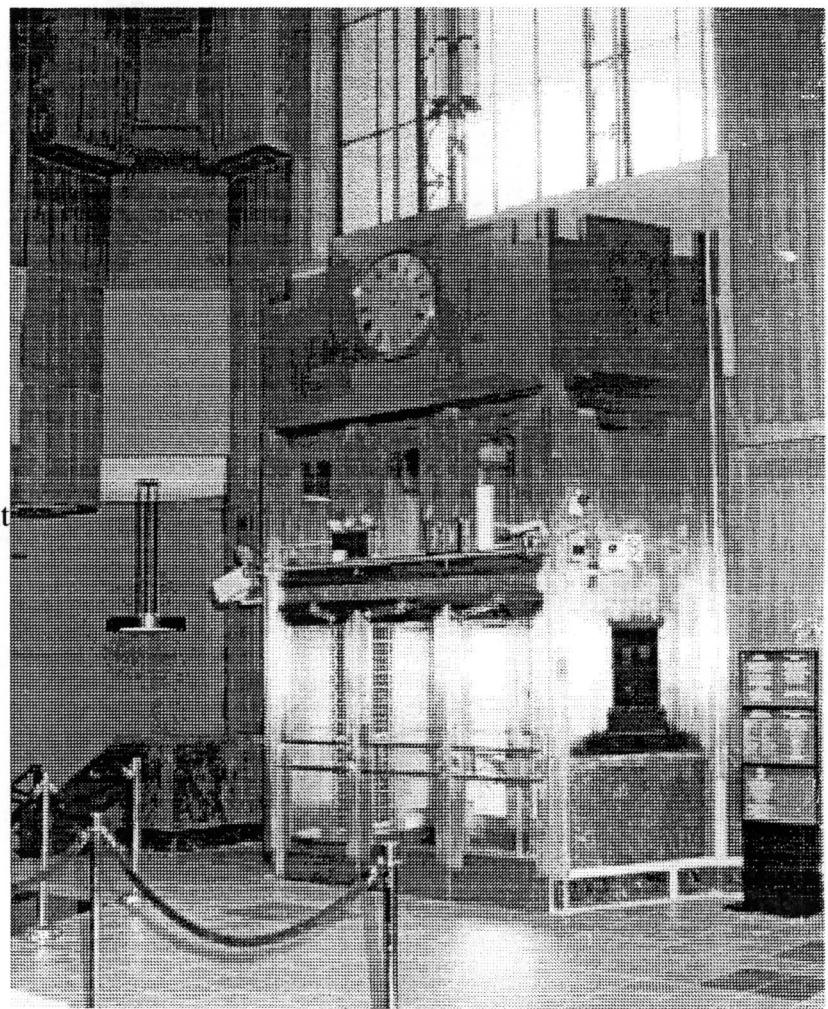


Plate 3.      Vestibule and Safe Deposit  
Staircase. (Carl Forster)

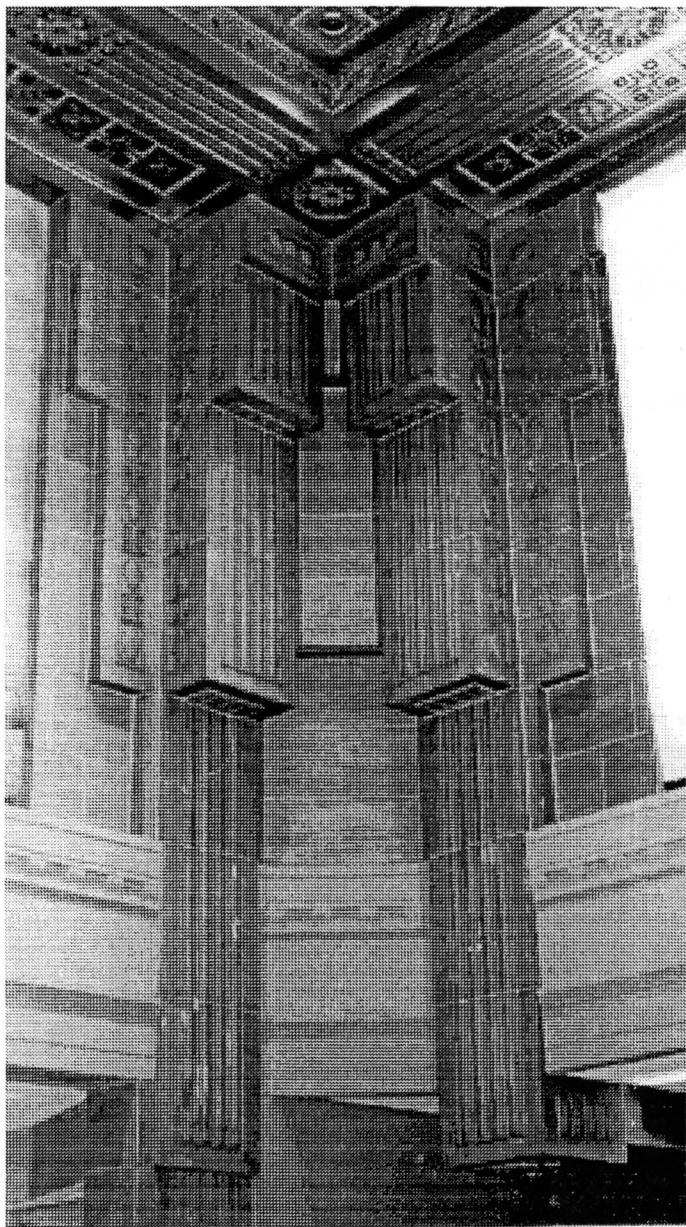


Plate 4. Detail, corbels, northeast corner, banking room.  
(Carl Forster)

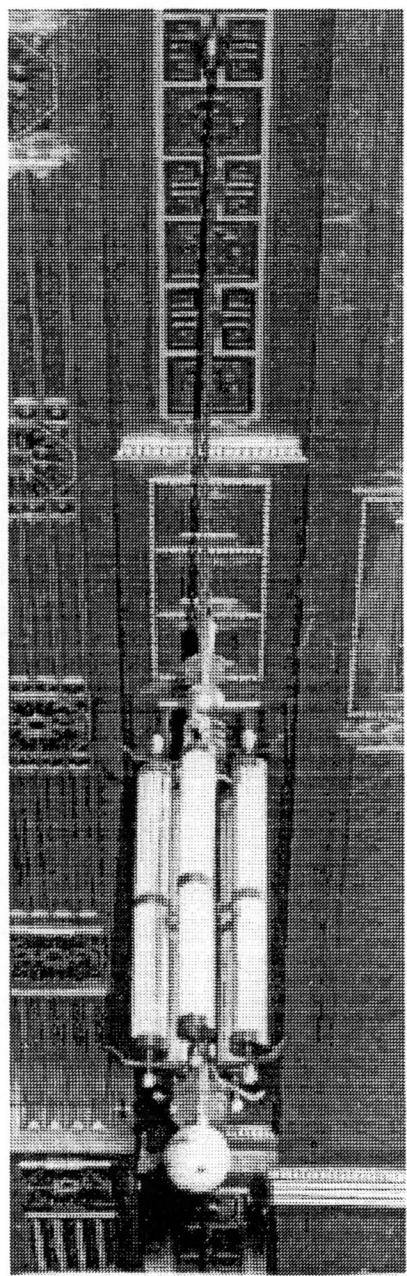


Plate 5. Chandelier, banking room.  
(Carl Forster)

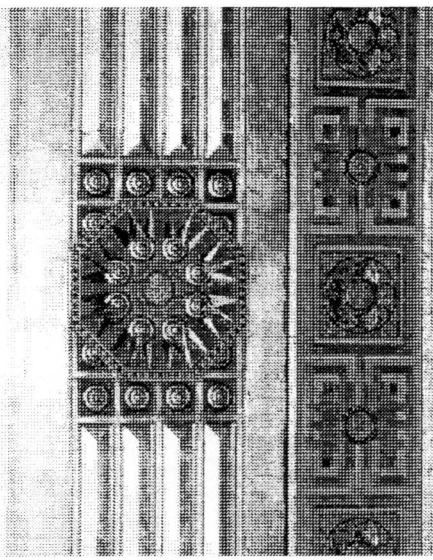


Plate 6. Detail, banking room ceiling.  
(Carl Forster)

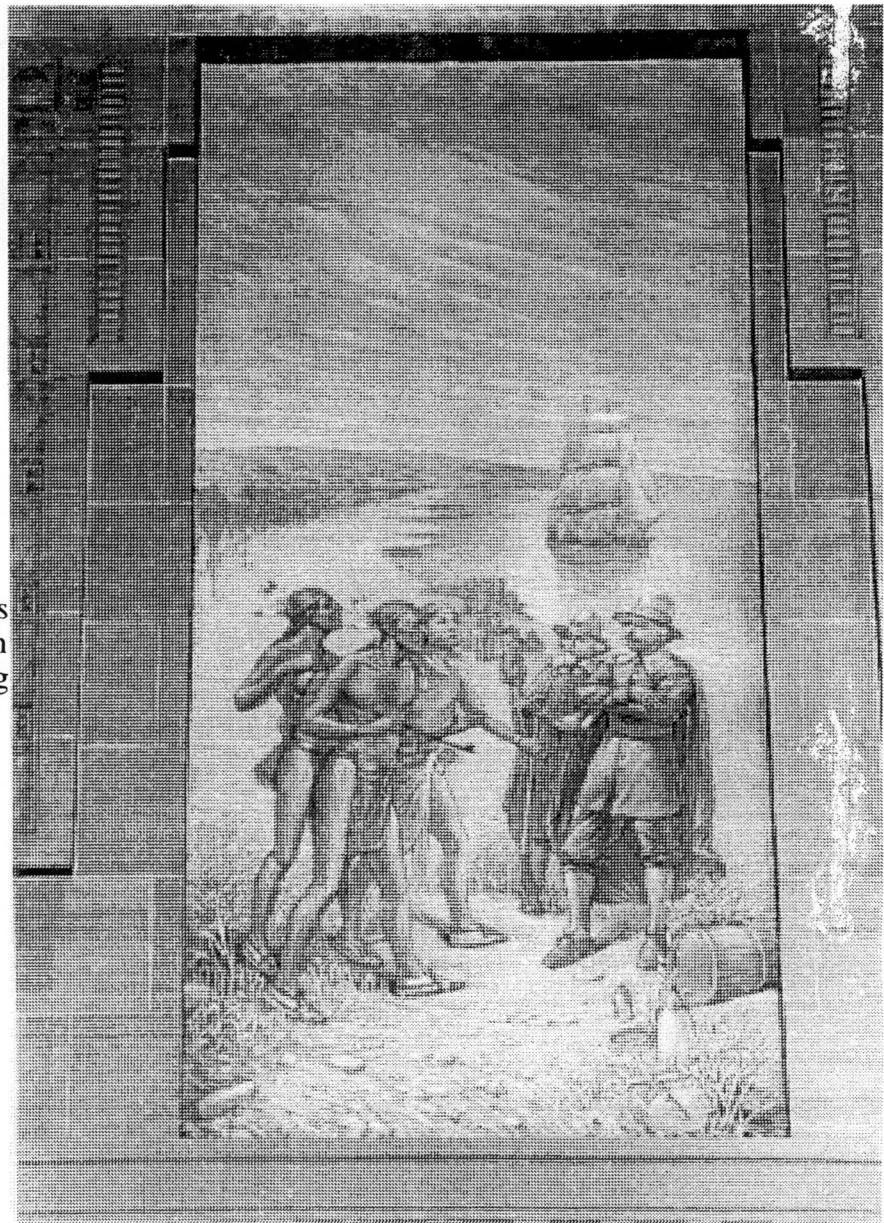


Plate 7. Angelo Magnanti, "Jonas Bronck buying the land from the Indians." Mural, banking room.  
(Carl Forster)



Plate 8.

Safe Deposit Vault lobby.

(Carl Forster)

## ATTACHMENT TO LP-1890

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
July 19, 1994, Designation List 259  
LP-1890A

**DOLLAR SAVINGS BANK** (now Emigrant Savings Bank), first floor interior, consisting of the two Grand Concourse entrance vestibules, the main banking hall, and the southwest corner stairway leading to the basement; and the basement level interior consisting of the vault lobby; and the fixtures and interior components of these spaces, including, but not limited to, wall surfaces and attached decorative elements including murals, ceiling surfaces, doors, chandeliers and lighting fixtures, decorative bronze work including gates and grilles, and railings; 2516-2530 Grand Concourse, The Bronx.

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 3154, Lot 1001.

*Designated a New York City Interior Landmark as the Dollar Savings Bank (now Emigrant Savings Bank) on July 19, 1994*

On May 14, 1996, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed amendment of the Interior Landmark designation of the Dollar Savings Bank (now Emigrant Savings Bank) interior to incorporate the underscoring of the significant features identified in the Description section of the designation report as specified in the Rules for Alterations to Designated Bank Interiors (Item No. 1). The hearing was advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses testified in favor of the amendment. Three representatives of various banks stated that they had no objections to the proposed amendment. There were no speakers in opposition to the amendment.

### Description of the Interior of the Dollar Savings Bank\*

The Entrance Vestibules. These two vestibules from the Grand Concourse, projecting into either end of the banking room's west wall, are almost identical (Plate 3). Because of the Concourse's northward rise the north vestibule is two steps above the banking room pavement. The steps drop from either side of a stoop fronting the vestibule; a brass railing runs the width of the stoop. Sheathed in brass, inside and out, each vestibule has three glazed swinging doors of brass and a tripartite transom. Vestibule walls, doors, and transoms are articulated in the Art Deco style. The heating registers within the vestibules are faced with ornamental grilles cast in brass. Above them runs an inscription "Dollar Savings Bank," cast in bronze and flanked by meander motifs. A clock face is the central element of each vestibule's shaped crestings.

\*This description has been excerpted and slight modified from the original designation report for LP-1890. The plate numbers are those in the original report. Significant features in this interior space are underscored as specified in the Rules for Alterations to Designated Bank Interiors. "Significant features" are defined in Section 9-02 of the Rules.

ATTACHMENT TO LP-1890

The Banking Room. A major order of polished red marble pilasters along both the west and east walls define the banking room's broad central section (Plate 2). Clerestories, apparently supported by giant terra-cotta corbels, characterize the hall's north and south ends. A frieze and architrave below the clerestories continues on the east wall. The corbels, in silhouette, are repeated flanking the pilasters. Chamfered corners link the clerestories and the east and west walls.

The tall windows between the pilasters on the west wall contain bronze filigree vertical and horizontal mullions and bronze muntins. The bays below the east wall's architrave are faced with polished limestone. Five murals, depicting the history of the Bronx's early settlement, fill the bays above the east wall's architrave (Plate 7).<sup>1</sup> The clerestory windows are presently screened by opaque blinds. The banking room ceiling is of ribbed and paneled plaster, picked out in silver gilt and gold leaf. Decorative motifs (Plate 6), derivative of classical ornamental forms including rosette bosses and emblematic meanders, articulate the intersection of ribs or their soffits. The writing desks are reproductions of an original writing desk. The chandeliers are original to the room (Plate 5).

Stairwell and Safe Deposit Vault Lobby. The stairway to the safe deposit vault lobby is in the banking room's southwest corner (Plate 3). An aluminum and opaque glass light fixture hangs above the stairwell. The stairwell, also lit by a small window, is faced with polished limestone; the wainscot and banister is of marble. An iron hand-railing runs down the center of each of the flights to the second landing and continues in a brass hand-railing, and brass hand-railings are fixed to banister and wainscot also. The lobby's floor is paved with terrazzo (Plate 8) in varied hues and patterns, the walls are faced with marble; the low ceiling is of paneled plaster. The gate and grilles of the safe deposit vault itself are fine examples of Art Deco foliate metalwork and designed to conform to the symmetrically pitched low ceiling.

A number of changes have been made to the banking room to accommodate the changing needs of the savings bank industry. These include the addition of down lights in the ceiling and security cameras at various points around the room. Since 1938, the tellers' counters have been fixed at several different locations throughout the room, including around the room's periphery as well as down the room's center. The present location of the tellers' counter is in the center of the northern half of the room. Neither this tellers' island nor its surrounding floor surface are included in this designation, nor are the alcoves beyond the east wall of the banking room.

*NOTES*

1. From north to south, left to right, they are titled: Erecting the First Stone House (1938); The Original Bridge Connecting the Bronx with Manhattan (1938); Welcoming Settlers at Fort Schuyler (1957); Early Settlers Gathering at the First Community House (1938); Jonas Bronk buying the Land from the Indians (1938).

ATTACHMENT TO LP-1890

FINDINGS AND AMENDED DESIGNATION

The Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Interior of the Dollar Savings Bank (now Emigrant Savings Bank) has significant features as identified in the Description section of the designation report (LP-1890) as adopted by the Commission on July 19, 1994.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provision 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 amends its designation report to incorporate underscoring of the significant features in the Interior identified in the Description section of the designation report as specified in the Rules for Alterations to Designated Bank Interiors.