

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
June 15, 1999, Designation List 306  
LP-1995

**Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch**, 240 Division Avenue, aka 226-246 Division Avenue, 197-213 Marcy Avenue, and 241-251 Rodney Street, Brooklyn. Built 1903-05; architect, Richard A. Walker.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2189, Lot 1

On May 5, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers at the hearing. A letter in support of designation was received from Assemblyman Joseph R. Lentol.

Summary

Opened in 1905, the Williamsburgh Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library was the second Brooklyn library building completed with funds from the large gift given by Andrew Carnegie to New York City in 1901. Of the \$5.2 million given by Carnegie for the construction of new library buildings, \$1.6 million was earmarked to build twenty branches in Brooklyn. The Williamsburgh site was among the first chosen because of the huge population in the district and the tremendous need for a new facility there. Richard A. Walker of the architectural firm of Walker & Morris was one of five well-known architects, all with Beaux-Arts training, chosen to design the Brooklyn branches. One of four branches Walker created, the large brick and limestone Williamsburgh Branch with its French-inspired design was called the "finest of all the branch buildings."<sup>1</sup> Situated on a triangular plot of land at the intersection of three streets, its broad Y-plan which includes a rounded rear pavilion housing the book stacks, is extremely well suited to this unusual site.



Courtesy of Brooklyn Public Library

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Brooklyn Libraries<sup>2</sup>

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

The first free library of Brooklyn was the Apprentices' Library, founded by Augustus Graham in 1823, and incorporated in 1824 as the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association. It was located in its own building on the corner of Henry and Cranberry Streets from 1825 until 1836 when it moved to the Brooklyn Lyceum.<sup>3</sup> In 1843, the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association broadened its scope of educational activities and changed its name to the Brooklyn Institute (later becoming the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences) while the library changed its name to the Youths' Free Library.

Near the middle of the century, two other subscription or membership libraries were opened: the Brooklyn Athenaeum Library, and the Brooklyn Mercantile Library. Before long, these two organizations merged their administrations and both were housed in the Brooklyn Athenaeum on the corner of Atlantic and Clinton Streets. In 1867, ground was broken on Montague Street for a new building designed by P.B. Wight, for the Mercantile Library Association; in 1878 its name was changed to The Brooklyn Library.<sup>4</sup> The Brooklyn Library also operated an Eastern District branch, located on Bedford Avenue.

Another private library was started in 1867 by the Union for Christian Work, a relief organization founded in 1865. The private organization received part of its funds from the City of Brooklyn and thus the library was free for persons "of good character who were duly recommended."<sup>5</sup> This library was given to the people of Brooklyn in 1882.

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, The Brooklyn Library grew through gifts of money and private collections (of books, musical scores, etc.) This period also witnessed the development of a number of smaller independent libraries, both reading rooms and circulating collections, in different parts of Kings County. Examples included: the Long Island

Free Library, a circulating library on Atlantic Avenue, near Flatbush Avenue, which was the largest of the local libraries; the Bay Ridge Free Circulating Library, begun in 1888 having been started as a reading room; and Fort Hamilton, another free library opened in 1889. In addition, various public school libraries, while developed for schoolchildren, came to be used by area residents as well. The school library in Brooklyn's Eastern District was probably the largest of this type.

In 1892 the Library of the Union of Christian Work absorbed the Youths' Free Library, thus severing the latter's ties with the Brooklyn Institute (which became the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences), and clearing the way for the establishment of a genuine free public library system for Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Library, however, was not interested in becoming such a free library for fear of losing its pre-eminent position as a scholarly, research institution. Therefore, an act of the New York State Legislature, in 1892, established a new organization to be called the Brooklyn Public Library, as a department of the city government, to be administered by a board of directors. Board members were finally appointed in 1897 and the first branch of the new public library system in the City of Brooklyn was opened in December 1897, in a former public school building in the Bedford section.

Between 1898 and August 1901, Brooklyn developed an eighteen-branch library system, incorporating both new and existing private libraries, as well as an Administration Headquarters, and a Traveling Library Department. Despite the absorption of the City of Brooklyn into Greater New York in 1898, the Brooklyn Public Library remained independent from the New York Public Library.<sup>6</sup>

An agreement between the Brooklyn Public Library and the City of New York in 1902 (ratified in 1903) arranged for the management of the Brooklyn Public Library to be handled by a new private corporation with its own Board of Trustees, also called the Brooklyn Public Library. After this, the still-private Brooklyn Library deeded all its property, including its special collections and endowment funds to the new corporation, adding considerably to the stature of the institution.

### The Andrew Carnegie Gift<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, libraries were seen as an important means of improving the lives of poor Americans and new immigrants, and much effort was spent to make them available in

working class neighborhoods, along with parks, playgrounds, and public baths. Because of the connotation of self-improvement, libraries were favored with gifts from wealthy individuals. Andrew Carnegie, who had been a poor working boy in Pennsylvania and who was the exemplar of the self-made man, attributed much of his own success to the hours he was allowed to spend in the private library of Colonel James Anderson. Carnegie spelled out his philanthropic philosophy in two articles published in 1889 in the *North American Review* and later reprinted as the title essay of his book, *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (1901). Carnegie's aim was "to help those who would help themselves."<sup>8</sup> He was thus continuing a popular charitable tradition when he decided, in 1881, to use a portion of his vast wealth to donate library buildings to some of his favorite towns. He began with towns with which he had a connection, such as Dunfermline in Scotland where he was born, and Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, where he lived after immigrating to this country.

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

By basing his gifts on specific criteria, Carnegie was able to remove the sense of paternalistic charity so often found in earlier donations. He was also able to impose certain design standards on the buildings and, after 1908, allowed his secretary to approve all library designs. As a result there is a certain harmony and continuity of design among the numerous Carnegie libraries. He insisted that they be modest rather than extravagant, with practical interior planning to get the best value for his money. Since local governments did not want to see their money spent in a wasteful manner, the contribution of public funds also dictated unpretentious structures. Nonetheless, the designers wanted these

structures to be recognized as distinctive, public buildings. While each is distinct, there are similar design characteristics among the Carnegie branches. In Brooklyn, where land was less expensive than Manhattan, the twenty branches are freestanding, masonry buildings faced in red brick with limestone trim.<sup>9</sup> One or two stories high, they have prominent, (mostly) centrally-located entrances reached by flights of stairs. The style of the buildings was classical, with stone ornament consisting primarily of columns, pilasters, pediments, cornices, quoins, and keystones. Large windows fill much of the facade. In addition, Carnegie was concerned with the siting of the libraries and wanted them to stand out as libraries, with a central location, preferably close to other institutions such as schools or YM/YWCA's. It was felt that it was desirable to establish the libraries

as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well-frequented streets....The fact that a branch library is constantly before the eyes of the neighboring residents so that all are familiar with its location will undoubtedly tend to increase its usefulness.<sup>10</sup>

Although Andrew Carnegie lived in New York and served for many years as a trustee of the New York Free Circulating Library, at first he considered the city's system too wealthy for his gift. By 1901 however, he changed his mind and offered to fund the branch library system for New York City. Between 1901 and 1929, Carnegie donated \$5.2 million for 67 branch library buildings in all five boroughs. Of that amount, the Brooklyn Public Library received \$1.6 million.

#### The Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries

In 1901, an agreement was reached between the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library, and representatives of Andrew Carnegie which called for the construction of 20 branch libraries in the Borough of Brooklyn.<sup>11</sup> A committee was then appointed to select the sites for these buildings and to oversee their construction. The Carnegie Committee was chaired by David A. Boody (former Mayor of Brooklyn and President of the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Public Library), with members Daniel W. McWilliams, John W. Devoy, and R. Ross Appleton. *The Brooklyn Eagle* later declared that this committee would have a very difficult job dealing with an eager and large population. "The Committee will have its judgment taxed to the utmost in deciding where to put the new libraries and give every part of the

borough the benefit of the added library facilities..."<sup>12</sup> By 1901, the Committee had decided on the general areas where the first five Carnegie libraries would be built: Williamsburgh, Fulton, Stuyvesant, Carroll Park, and Bedford.<sup>13</sup>

For the designs of these branches, the Carnegie Committee first hired Professor A.D.F. Hamlin of Columbia University as consulting architect.<sup>14</sup> Hamlin established an Architects' Advisory Commission consisting of the following individuals or firms: Lord & Hewlett, W. B. Tubby, R. L. Daus of Daus & Otto, Richard A. Walker of Walker & Morris, and R. F. Almirall. Hamlin's goal was to create a "unity of general type and character . . . without the sacrifice of that individuality which gives interest to a design." The established procedure called for each of the five architects on the advisory commission to create a preliminary design for one of the first five sites, in consultation with the entire commission, a librarian, and Hamlin himself, thus gaining the collective wisdom and judgment of the entire group. These preliminary designs would then go to the Carnegie Committee to help them reach conclusions about what features and requirements would be needed at all the libraries. The Committee would then frame final instructions for the architects who would prepare the working drawings. After this, the rest of the fifteen branches would be assigned to the architects. Since most of the members of the commission were trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the designs had distinctive, classical French tendencies.

Raymond F. Almirall was selected secretary of the Architects' Advisory Commission. In a 1904 interview, Almirall compared the plans for Brooklyn's Carnegie branches with those for Manhattan which, he felt, were too much alike.

In Brooklyn we are working to fit each building to its environment, to make each serve the needs of its individual neighborhood and surroundings. While we have sought originality of design externally, our chief concern has been the internal arrangement. This varies in details widely in the different buildings according to their ground plans.<sup>15</sup>

In July 1906, Almirall was the featured speaker at the meeting of the American Library Association in Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island. In his talk, Almirall called for, "a common basis of design and of construction with a proper discrimination between essentials and non-essentials, as they may appear in the various applications."<sup>16</sup>

#### Richard A. Walker/ Walker & Morris<sup>17</sup>

Richard A. Walker (1871-1951)  
Charles Morris (1869-1930)

Richard Amerman Walker, a native New Yorker, studied at the Polytechnic Institute before traveling to Paris where he trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts for five years. Upon his return to the United States, he worked for a time in the offices of Warren & Wetmore, Carrere & Hastings, and Richard Morris Hunt, before forming his own firm, in 1896, with Charles Morris, who had also been a student at the Ecole. With offices in lower Manhattan, these architects gained a variety of commissions throughout the metropolitan area, including large suburban homes in Long Island and New Jersey, and school buildings in Hasbrouck Heights (1905) and Metuchen (1909), New Jersey.

Other institutional designs included the small Children's Hospital for St. John's Guild in New Dorp, Staten Island (1901), the Whitehall Ferry Terminal (1907) at the lower tip of Manhattan, and a private school, The Berkeley Institute in Brooklyn (1896, Lincoln Place, Brooklyn, altered). In addition to the four Brooklyn Carnegie libraries, this firm was also responsible for the Ogden Free Library in Walton, New York (1899-1901). The partnership continued until 1912, after which Walker remained in practice by himself. Among his later works were the ambulatory gates in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York.

Although Walker & Morris did not maintain Brooklyn offices, Walker lived in Brooklyn and their Berkeley Institute must have given them a certain renown in Park Slope. They were chosen as one of the five architectural firms to serve on the Architects' Advisory Committee for the Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries, perhaps because of their Beaux-Arts connections. In addition to this Williamsburgh branch, Walker created the Red Hook Branch (demolished), the Arlington (originally the East) Branch, and the Macon Branch Libraries.

#### Development of Williamsburgh, Brooklyn<sup>18</sup>

The area now known as Williamsburgh, known locally as the Strand, was originally part of Bushwick, one of the first six towns comprising King's County. Originally settled by the Dutch, the area ran from Wallabout Bay to Bushwick Creek, remaining primarily rural in character until well after the Revolutionary War. In 1802, Richard M. Woodhull, a prosperous Manhattan merchant, purchased a thirteen-acre tract at the foot of present-



day North 2nd Street. After having it surveyed by his friend Colonel Jonathan Williams, Woodhull named the area in his honor and began to sell lots there. He also started a ferry service to Rivington Street in New York from the foot of North 2nd Street, which he called the Williamsburgh Ferry. Although Woodhull ran into financial difficulties, his development plans were continued by Thomas Morrell and others, so that, in 1827, the area was incorporated as the village of Williamsburgh with a population of 1,007. Although the village was comprised of 23 farms at the time, the first map, dated 1833 shows a rectangular grid similar to that which exists today, with a few houses and a ferry pier along the waterfront. Growth was rapid, and in 1835 the town's limits were extended. By 1840, Williamsburgh could claim six churches, several schools, two shipyards, and numerous factories, supported by a population of 5,094 people. Several ferry lines ran between this part of Brooklyn and Manhattan, providing convenient connections for workers and commercial opportunities for small businesses, and helping the industries which, in the 1850s, were being established along the East River waterfront.<sup>19</sup> The population of Williamsburgh more than doubled between 1840 and 1845, and grew at an even greater rate during the late 1840s and early 1850s when there was an influx of German immigrants to the area. When Williamsburgh became a city on January 1, 1852, its population was 35,000 and it was the twentieth largest city in America. It remained an independent municipality for only a few years however, before consolidating with the City of Brooklyn on January 1, 1855. After this, the area became known as Brooklyn's Eastern District, referring to that area of Brooklyn lying north and east of the Naval Hospital and Flushing Avenue. A further impetus to growth came with the opening of the Williamsburgh Bridge in 1903, enabling both surface cars and trains to transport people over the river more easily. Considerable population growth had already occurred before the end of the century since plans for the bridge had begun to be discussed in 1883, with construction starting in 1896.

#### The Williamsburgh Branch Library

As the town of Williamsburgh grew, so did interest in educational and cultural activities among its inhabitants. The first school was established in 1820 and by 1852, the City of Williamsburgh counted 6,700 students on its rolls, distributed among numerous school buildings. The Williamsburgh Lyceum, founded in 1838 was a

location for lectures and debates. The Brooklyn Library, in addition to its Montague Street building, maintained an Eastern District Branch on Bedford Avenue, near South Ninth Street. School libraries were started in Williamsburgh in 1848, and were available free to anyone who lived in the district. In 1866, Public School No.16 vacated its building at the corner of South Third Street and Driggs Avenue which was re-employed for the consolidated libraries of Public Schools 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 23. With 18,000 volumes in 1892, this library, known as the Eastern District School Library, was one of the largest and most well-used of this local type.<sup>20</sup>

Among the numerous branch libraries added to the Brooklyn Public Library system during the first years of its development, was the Williamsburgh Branch, established in October 1899. Its first home was at 380 Bedford Avenue. Immediately, it was the recipient of more than 7,000 books from the Eastern District School Library, which had been donated to the Brooklyn Public Library the previous spring.<sup>21</sup> By 1900 this site was already too small to accommodate the heavy use it received, and the branch was moved to a larger building at 474 Bedford Avenue. In April 1904, a local newspaper noted that this branch had broken all Brooklyn records for the highest number of books in circulation, and it was 25 percent higher than it had been the previous year.<sup>22</sup>

The site for the Williamsburgh Branch was among the first four planned in 1901, due to the neighborhood's large population and heavy library usage. After Hamlin's architectural committee began to work on designs, bids were received for the first sites in the summer of 1903. The cornerstone for the Williamsburgh Branch was laid with great ceremony on November 28, 1903.<sup>23</sup>

The location chosen for the Williamsburgh branch was highly praised. Set between three streets, Division, Marcy and Rodney Avenues, the site was centrally located and easily accessible by public transportation.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the open space on all sides would allow the library to be seen at its best advantage and may have been a consideration in the scale of the building which was somewhat grander than the other branches. Although the library replaced numerous small shops and dwellings, this section was in the process of converting to more institutional uses. The Brooklyn Bureau of Charities was located nearby and the Eastern District High School and a YMCA were being planned.

The design of the Williamsburgh Branch is in keeping with the French Beaux-Arts training and

orientation of most of the chosen architects. Clad in red brick with limestone trim, the expansive, two-story building is symmetrically arranged around a bold, projecting central pavilion defined by stone quoins which emphasize the round-arched entry. Like Brooklyn's other Carnegie buildings, it is freestanding on its lot, and its shape is particularly well adapted to its unusual triangular site. Bowed, one-story projecting wings at each side reflect the rounded rear extension which provides a practical space solution for the two stories of book stacks needed for the library. Double-height, round-arched windows on both wings and grouped windows at each projecting end provide necessary lighting to the interior spaces and reading rooms, and are given distinction on the outside by stone keystones and caps. A broad stone watertable above the basement and a stone cornice and entablature below a brick parapet provide a visual enframement for the entire composition. The building's contrasting materials, strongly horizontal lines, and symmetrical arrangement contrast with its graceful curves and delicate ornament to create a distinctive building with great presence in the bustling neighborhood.

#### Description

The Williamsburgh Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library fills the entire triangular lot formed by the intersection of Division, Marcy, and Rodney Avenues. It is sited on a raised, grassy lot surrounded by an original iron fence. Faced in brick with limestone trim, the building sits on a raised basement and is two stories high, with smaller, one-story wings to each side. It is shaped in a wide "Y" plan, with the rear section of the building projecting in a semi-circular arrangement. Wide, paved areaways, set off by concrete walls, are located in the front and in the rear of the building. Most of the windows have been covered by one-over-one metal storm sash and the windows underneath cannot be clearly seen. On the basement and first story levels, the window openings are also covered by plain metal grates.

The Division Avenue facade is symmetrically arranged with a three-bay wide center section, parallel to the street, flanked by wings which angle in slightly. Within this center section, the middle bay projects, forming a pavilion where the building's main entrance leads to a small lobby. To each side is a three-bay wide, two story wing with single-story extensions on each end. The expansive windows on the main story of each wing indicate the presence of large interior reading rooms.

The main approach to the library (enclosed by a recent gate), is located in the center of the Division Avenue street front. It is marked by three steps up to a concrete plaza with low, rounded end walls topped by a low iron fence. Another stairway, flanked by a continuation of the low walls leads up to the building's main entrance. To each side of this stairway, other stairs lead down to the wide areaway and another entrance which is located under the stoop. The areaway has both paved and grassy areas. It is set off by a high concrete wall topped by a plain iron railing. The basement windows follow the same arrangement as those of the upper stories and are covered with projecting grates. The window openings are topped by flat arches in brick. A wide stone water table separates the basement from the upper stories.

The entrance pavilion is defined by stone quoins along each edge. Windowless, metal doors are located within a wide, stone-trimmed round archway crowned by a fluted keystone and embellished with a paneled Gibbs surround. Separating the doors and the transom is a stone panel engraved with the word "Williamsburgh," while the transom itself is covered by a two-part storm sash. Large, squared copper and glass lanterns hang on each side of the main entrance.

At the second story is a tripartite window set on a continuous projecting stone sill with modillion blocks. Another stone panel is set into the wall below the center section of the window, while a flagpole projects at an angle just above this. The windows, which are covered by storm sash, have double-hung, eight-over-one sash in the center section and four-over-one sash on each side. Above the second story is a stone frieze and cornice carried on modillion blocks, topped by a stone parapet bearing the engraving "Brooklyn Public Library."

Recessed to each side of this central pavilion is a narrow bay with a single, square-headed, window with double-hung storm sash in each story. At the first story the window is covered by grating and is topped by a small transom. Above this the lintel is formed of stone at the keystone and corners, with brick voussoirs between them. A stone block marks the impost level on each side of the window. On the second story, a window with double-hung sash is set on a plain stone sill with a plain stone lintel.

Original drainpipes mark the change of angle of the walls. Each side is marked by three bays, with those on the ground story having round-arched openings and paired, rectangular ones above. Each arched opening is edged by a brick archivolt with a stone keystone and impost blocks. The windows

within the arches are tripartite with tripartite transoms, again covered by storm sash and metal grilles. Flat stone panels are centered and inset in the recessed brick below each window. At the second story, the paired windows are linked by a narrow wooden pilaster and share a plain stone sill and lintel. These windows have storm sash but no grilles.

Above the second story is a wide stone frieze and stone cornice. A brick parapet rises above this, interrupted at each bay by paired panels of corbelled brick, joined by a plain stone sill.

At each end of these wings is a single-story extension. Each is one bay wide, with paired, rectangular windows with transoms and stone and brick lintels. At each end of these extensions is a bowed bay with three windows, each of which have stone and brick lintels. A flat stone panel is inset beneath the larger, central window. A similar stone frieze and cornice with a brick parapet top this wing. The second story, recessed behind this lower wing, has two bays with paired, rectangular windows in a similar style to those on the front of the building.

Many of the same design motifs are carried out on the rear of the building, where the two angled bays meet at a projecting, semi-circular section which houses the library's stacks of books. The same materials and fenestration continue around the entire building, as does the cornice and brick parapet. The one-story wing extensions carry paired windows as on the front, and each angled wing has three bays with arched openings on the first story and rectangular ones above. On each side the arched opening in the center bay of the first story has been filled in with bricks. The second story center bays are also different. On the side facing Marcy Avenue, the center bay is comprised of two narrow windows, with brick between them, set on separate sills but with a continuous lintel. On the Rodney Avenue facade, the squared window of this center bay has been bricked in, but maintains its stone sill and lintel.

On each side, between the wings and the rounded center section is a single bay which projects out from the wings. A plain door at the basement level, below the water table, with a small, rectangular window has a flat stone sill and lintel above it. Above this, at a level between the first and second stories, is a narrow, rounded window, similar to those on the first story, set within a brick archivolt, with a stone keystone and impost blocks.

Beyond this is a semicircular extension which has thirteen window openings around it. Set on a raised basement with windows aligned with those above, this section has a series of two rectangular windows linked vertically by a paneled copper spandrel. The lower one sits directly on the stone water table while the upper one is topped by a stone and brick lintel. Above this section is a shallow conical roof covered in standing seam copper. This leads to a smaller circular section set back at the third story. A single bay with a pair of rectangular windows joins this round section to the rest of the building at this level. This small rounded section has three bays with three windows in each. These window openings are squared, with original wood sash, pivoting windows, set between a plain stone sill and lintel. A broad stone frieze and cornice crown these windows, with a plain brick parapet above.

On the rear, the areaway is in two parts, extending from one end of the two-story wing to the other, except for several bays near the middle of the rounded section. Set off by a concrete retaining wall, each section of the broad areaway is reached by a set of stairs leading down near the beginning of the rounded section. Much of the small yard behind the building is covered with vegetation and it is completely enclosed by the iron fence.

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#### NOTES

1. This comment was part of a speech by Thomas P. Peters, editor of the *Brooklyn Times* at the opening of the Williamsburgh Branch.
2. The history of the library system in Brooklyn has been compiled from the following sources: Margaret B. Freeman, *The Brooklyn Public Library: A History* (New York, 1966); Marcia McKee, *A Brief History of the Brooklyn Public Library* (New York, 1968); and Louis Feipel, *Historical Information Regarding the Brooklyn*

*Public Library* (Brooklyn, 1937).

3. Beginning in 1839, the Brooklyn Lyceum Building was also the location of the Brooklyn City Library, a subscription library which continued to function until 1851. Eventually its collection of books was divided between the Long Island Historical Society and the Youths' Free Library of Brooklyn Institute.
4. This was a different institution from the current Brooklyn Public Library.
5. Feipel, 5.
6. During the late nineteenth century while the various private libraries and reading rooms in Brooklyn were being established and consolidated, the same activity was occurring in Manhattan. In 1895, the privately-owned Astor and Lenox Libraries, and the Tilden Trust were brought together to form the Reference Department of the New York Public Library. The New York Free Circulating Library was established in 1878 with both public funds and the generous donations of wealthy New Yorkers, and in 1901 became the Circulation Department of the New York Public Library.
7. The information on the Carnegie gift and the libraries built from it was adapted from Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy, The Carnegie Libraries of New York City* (New York: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, 1996), Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free To All, Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), and LPC, *New York Public Library, Tottenville Branch Designation Report* (LP-1867) (New York: The City of New York, 1995) report prepared by David Breiner.
8. See Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1917), 345-351.
9. The one exception to this was the Red Hook Branch, built in 1915 by Richard A. Walker. This building, which is no longer extant, was constructed in a Mediterranean Revival style, with stuccoed walls, wide, overhanging eaves and a deep cornice pierced by attic windows.
10. Dierickx, 27.
11. *The Brooklyn Eagle*, July 24, 1901. Although this amount of money was supposed to fund 20 libraries for the Borough of Brooklyn, 21 libraries were actually built.
12. *Eagle*, Oct. 20, 1901.
13. "Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries," 1901. Unidentified clipping in the *Scrapbooks* of the Brooklyn Public Library, 1904-05.
14. "Five Districts..."
15. "Types of the Carnegie Libraries in the City," *The Sun*, May 29, 1904.
16. "Paper by Brooklynite Read at Narragansett," *The Brooklyn Eagle*, July 5, 1906.
17. Information on these architects was compiled from: "Richard A. Walker," *The New York Times* (Dec. 2, 1951), 91; Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 79; James Ward, *Architects in Practice in New York City, 1900-1940* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989), 81; "Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries," 1901, unidentified clipping in the *Scrapbooks* of the Brooklyn Public Library.
18. Information on the history of Williamsburgh is taken from the following sources: Samuel Reynolds, *A History of Williamsburgh* (Williamsburgh, NY: Joseph C. Gandor, 1852); Eugene L. Armbruster, *Brooklyn's Eastern District* (Brooklyn, NY, 1942); LPC, *Williamsburgh Savings Bank Interior Designation Report* (LP-1910) (New York: City of New York, 1996), report prepared by Gale Harris; and Harry W. Havemeyer, *Merchants of Williamsburgh, Frederick C. Havemeyer, Jr., William Dick, John Mollenhauer, Henry O. Havemeyer* (New York, 1989).



19. Among the earliest industries in Williamsburgh were distilleries, hat and glue factories and a carpet factory. By the mid-1850s however, the sugar industry was beginning to establish itself along the waterfront in Williamsburgh, with the 1857 opening of the modern Havemeyer, Townsend & Company, ultimately the largest sugar refinery in the United States. By 1887, seven modern sugar refineries had been established along the Williamsburgh waterfront, producing more than half of the sugar consumed in the country.
20. Feipel, 6.
21. Feipel, 10.
22. *New York Times*, Brooklyn Edition (April 2, 1904).
23. The Williamsburgh branch was chosen to represent all the new sites at a large cornerstone-laying ceremony, at which Mayor Seth Low presided, on November 28, 1903. Unidentified clippings in the *Scrapbooks of the Brooklyn Public Library*.
24. Division Avenue originally marked the dividing line between Brooklyn and Williamsburgh, which was indicated by an old stone fence. The specific block where the library was constructed was known originally as the Cedar Woods. The other streets meeting at this property are Marcy Avenue, named for William Learned Marcy, Captain in the War of 1812, and governor of New York (1833-39), and Rodney Street, named for Cesar Rodney, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a general in the Revolutionary War.

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

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

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch building, built in 1903-05 was the second Brooklyn branch library constructed with money from Andrew Carnegie's gift; that the Williamsburgh section of Brooklyn was developed early and had a large and active population with a strong desire for educational institutions such as libraries; that Andrew Carnegie's gift to Brooklyn of \$1,600,000 for the construction of 21 branch libraries helped establish the importance of the Brooklyn Public Library throughout the borough; that the Architects' Advisory Commission, assigned to oversee the designs of the Brooklyn Carnegie libraries, led to a uniformity of scale and general design type within which the architects created a wide range of individual structures; that this building's architect, Richard A. Walker, was one of five architects chosen for the Advisory Commission, and created four other branches for the borough; that the Williamsburgh branch was the largest and "finest" of the Carnegie branches, set on an impressive triangular lot which allowed the building to be seen from all sides; that the broad, Y-plan with spreading wings and a circular rear projection is particularly well-suited to its site; and that the red-brick and limestone building employs French-inspired ornament and planning with its projecting, central entranceway and limestone keystones and quoins to create an impressive, well-used local library building.

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 Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch, 226-246 Division Avenue, aka 197-213 Marcy Avenue, and 241-251 Rodney Avenue, Brooklyn, and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2189, Lot 1, as its Landmark Site.



BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Williamsburg  
UNDERHILL, Photographer, NEW YORK  
B-16579

Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
Photo: Brooklyn Public Library - Brooklyn Collection  
Underhill, c. 1910



Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
240 Division Avenue, Brooklyn  
*Photo by: Carl Forster*

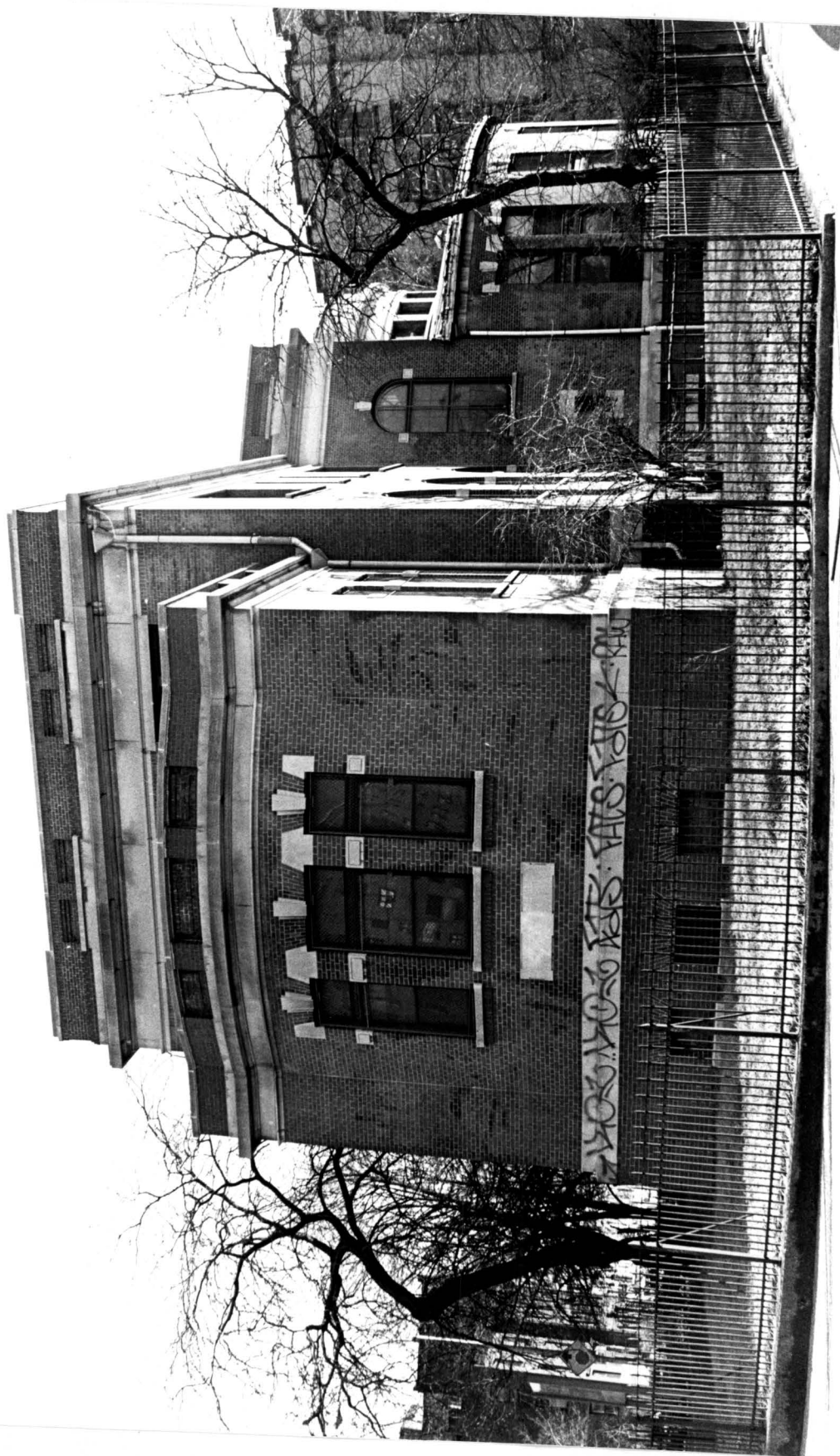




Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
240 Division Avenue, Brooklyn  
*Photo by: Carl Forster*



Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
Rear Facade  
*Photo by: Carl Foster*



Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
Side Wing  
Photo By: Carl Foster

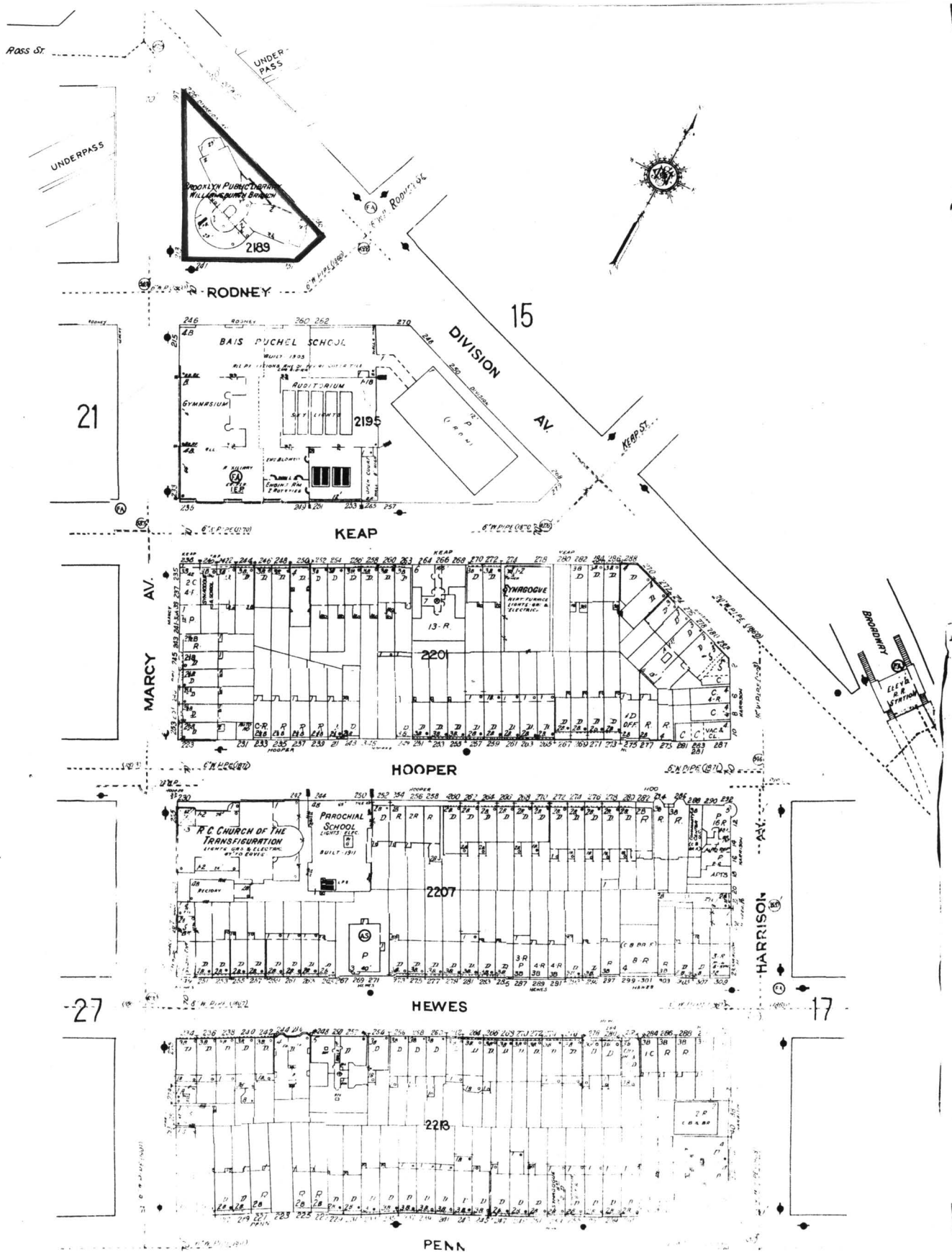




Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
Main Entrance

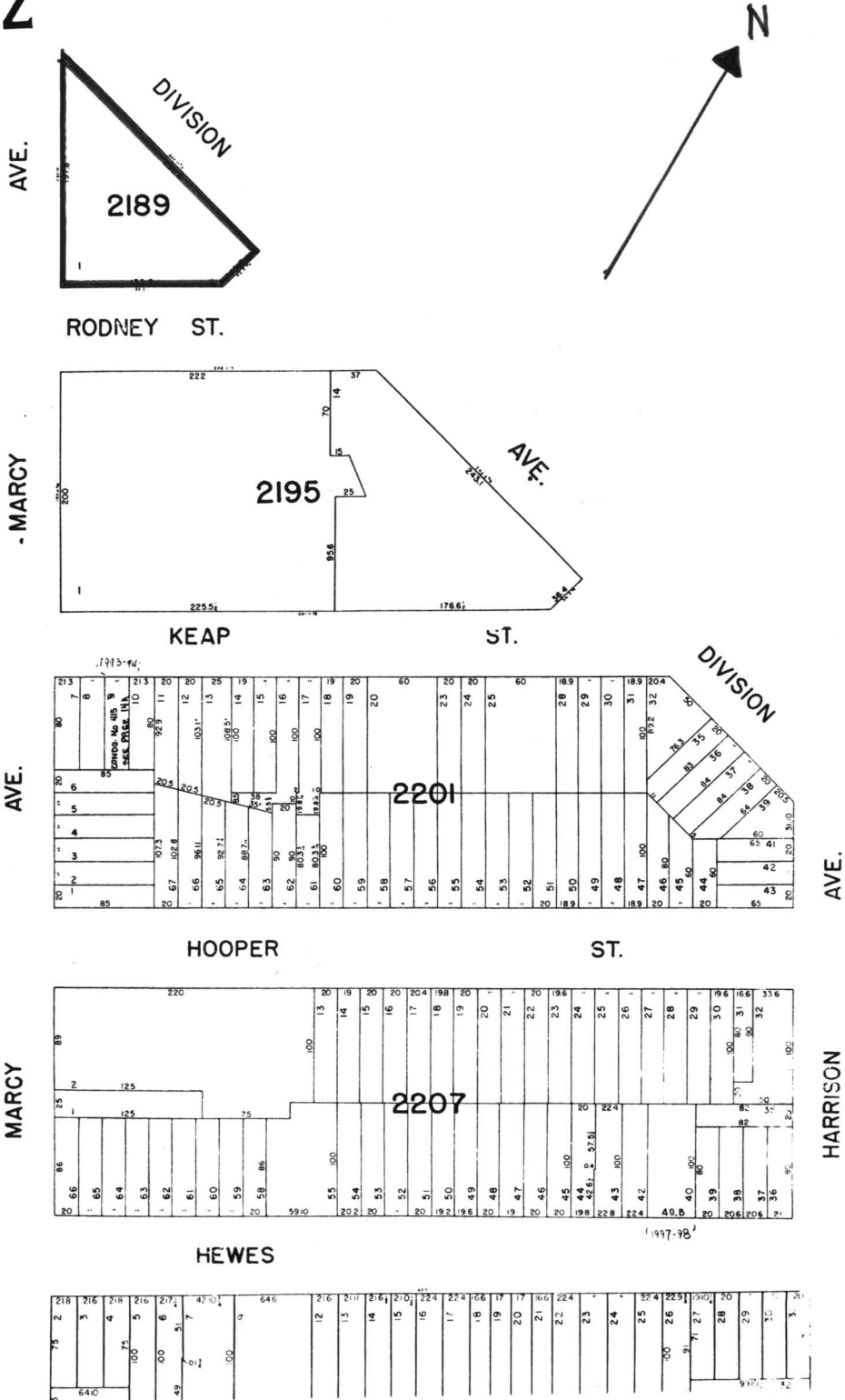
*Photo by: Carl Forster*





Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
 240 Division Avenue, Brooklyn  
 Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2189, Lot 1  
 Source: *The Sanborn Building & Property Atlas*, Brooklyn, NY, vol.3, plate 22

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Brooklyn Public Library, Williamsburgh Branch  
 240 Division Avenue, Brooklyn  
 Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 2189, Lot 1  
 Source: Department of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map