

PUBLIC SCHOOL 65K, 158 Richmond Street, Cypress Hills, Borough of Brooklyn. Built 1870; front and rear extensions 1889; James W. Naughton, architect of Extensions.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 4126, Lot 47.

On October 9, 1979, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of Public School 65K 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. Six witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Public School 65K, in the Cypress Hills section of Brooklyn, was originally built in 1870 and given its present Romanesque Revival facade by James W. Naughton in 1889. The building still functions as a public school and serves as a living reminder of the long history of public education in Kings County.

Cypress Hills was originally a village in the town of New Lots which, for 200 years prior to 1852, had been part of the larger township of Flatbush. Although a school had been established in Flatbush in the 1650s, it was not until 1740 that the population of the town had increased to the point that its eastern section, the "New Lots," could be separated into an independent school district. A school house was erected near the present intersection of Schenck and New Lots Avenues and stood until 1810 when it was replaced by a larger building next to the New Lots Reformed Church. In 1847, a new second school district was established within New Lots consisting of all of East New York and Cypress Hills and a new school building for this district was built on Vermont Avenue near Fulton Street. This district was in turn divided in 1856, creating a separate district for Cypress Hills. However, it was not until 1870 that a two-story high brick building was erected for the school still existing as the central section of the present building. Until then, students had been required to use the basement of a nearby Methodist church.¹ Nearly twenty years later, after Cypress Hills had been subsumed into the burgeoning City of Brooklyn the school was expanded by adding extensions to the front and rear of the already existing structure. The present facade we see is the front extension of the 1889 alteration.

The architect of the extensions and present facade, James W. Naughton (1849-98), was born in Ireland and brought to Brooklyn by his parents at the age of eight and educated in the public and private schools of the city. At the age of fifteen, Naughton went west, settling in Milwaukee where he worked as an apprentice in the architectural office of J. & A. Douglas. In 1859, having completed his apprenticeship, he entered the University of Wisconsin at Madison to study architecture. After two years, he returned to Brooklyn and continued studying architecture at the Cooper Union in Manhattan. He was active in Brooklyn poli-

tics and, for two years between 1874 and 1876, he served as Superintendent of Buildings for the City of Brooklyn. In 1879, he succeeded Samuel B. Leonard as the Superintendent of Buildings for the Board of Education of the City of Brooklyn and held that position for nearly twenty years until his death in 1898.² All the school buildings built in Brooklyn during the twenty years prior to the Incorporation of Greater New York in 1898 were designed by Naughton.

Public School 65K is a modified version of the early Romanesque Revival style which was imported to this country from Germany in the mid-1840s and introduced to New York by the architects, Richard Upjohn, James Renwick and Leopold Eidlitz. The earliest example of this style in New York and one of the first in the country is Upjohn's Church of the Pilgrims (1844-46) on the northeast corner of Henry and Remsen Streets in Brooklyn Heights. Typical features of the style are the use of brick and brownstone either singly or in combination, pilaster strips, arched corbel tables and round-arched openings. The round arch is the predominant characteristic of the style which is also called the Round Arch style. During the thirty years following its first appearance here, it was one of the most popular styles of architecture, used not only for churches but for schools, hospitals, charitable institutions, loft buildings, office buildings, breweries, and industrial buildings. Many of the school houses built before the Civil War in Brooklyn by Samuel B. Leonard were in this early phase of the Romanesque Revival.

Public School 65K stylistically follows this earlier or first phase of the Romanesque Revival which Leonard had established as a fitting style for schools in Brooklyn. Naughton kept the traditional style although he modified it to make his building a contemporary design rather than an imitation of an earlier mode. He also incorporated elements of other styles into the facade, further distinguishing it from its predecessors. The use of terra-cotta plaques is derived from the Queen Anne Style and the tympana of the second floor windows are ornamented with Gothic-derived trefoils. The school is brick and stands two-stories high over a stone basement with a slightly projecting central tower that rises above the roofline. A molded archivolt enhances the compound round-arched entrance which is in the base of the tower. On either side of the entrance are terra-cotta shields with the date of the building and diminutive columns. Over the arch is an entablature with the name of the school on terra-cotta plaques and above this an ornamental terra-cotta band. The second floor windows of the tower are square-headed with stone lintels while those at the third are round-arched. The tower roof entablature is enhanced by a frieze with terra-cotta plaques and is crowned by a balustrade. All the windows of the main section of the school are arched with brick voussoirs and stone archivolts. However, there are compound segmental-arched windows on the first floor and round-arched windows with terra-cotta tympana on the second. The frieze of the roof entablature is ornamented with terra-cotta plaques.

Some of the elements of the facades are carried around to the side facades, but because these were secondary facades, they are simple and functional. The band courses of the main facade are continued onto the sides, and the first floor windows have simple segmental arches while the windows on the on the second are square-headed with stone lintels. The 1870 central section of the school that is visible from the street is two-

stories high, pierced by square-headed windows with stone lintels, and crowned by a modillioned cornice

Of the many handsome school buildings which proudly stood in Brooklyn's 19th-century neighborhoods, Public School 65K is one of the few that survives and continues to serve the purpose for which it was originally built. The school is a living link with the area's past and a symbol of the concern for education first shown by the Dutch and continued through the centuries by the people of Brooklyn.

FOOTNOTES

1. Henry R. Stiles, ed., A History of Kings County Including the City of Brooklyn, Vol. I, (New York: W.W. Munsell & Co., 1884), pp. 306-318.
2. Henry B. Howard, ed., The Eagle and Brooklyn: History of the City of Brooklyn From its Settlement to the Present Time, (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1893), p. 726.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Public School 65K has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that among its important qualities, Public School 65K is a Romanesque Revival style, brick school house; that it was designed by James W. Naughton, architect of the Board of Education of the City of Brooklyn from 1879 until 1898; that the facade is an 1889 addition and extension to an 1870 building; that the design incorporates elements of the Gothic and Queen Anne styles; that it is one of the few 19th-century school buildings remaining in the city; that it still is used as a school house, the original function for which it was built over 100 years ago; and that it is an important reminder of the long history of public education in Brooklyn.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark Public School 65K, 158 Richmond Street, Cypress Hills, Borough of Brooklyn and designates Tax Map Block 4126, Lot 47, Borough of Brooklyn, as its Landmark Site.

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Public School 65K
158 Richmond Street

Architect:
James W. Naughton