

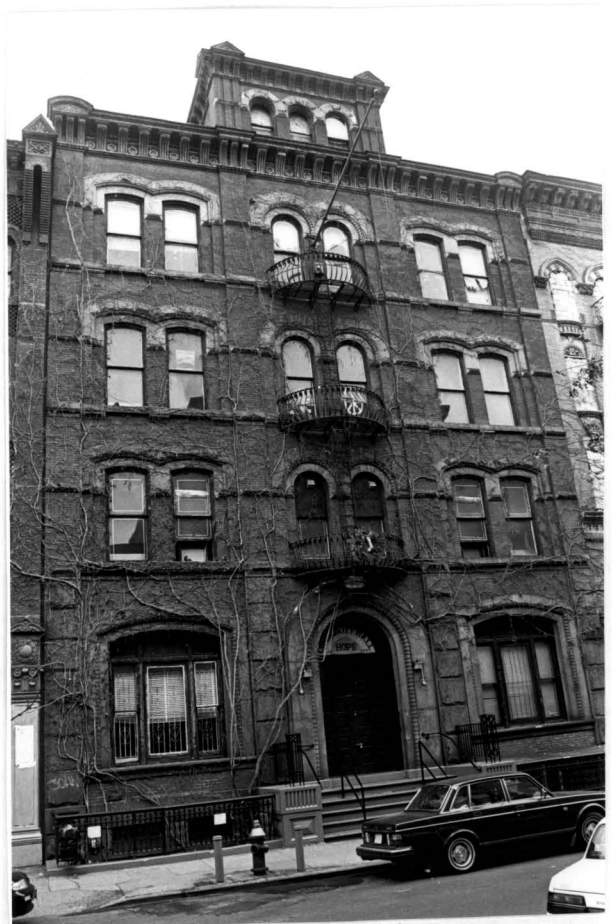
28th POLICE PRECINCT STATION HOUSE (now Hope Community Hall), 177-179 East 104th Street, Manhattan. Built 1892-93; Nathaniel D. Bush, Architect to the New York City Police Department.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1632, Lot 30.

On January 12, 1999, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the 28th Police Precinct Station House (now Hope Community Hall) (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three people spoke in favor of designation: Michael Lugo, Associate Director of Development of Hope Community, Inc.; and representatives of the Historic Districts Council, Place Matters, and East Harlem Historical Organization.¹

Summary

The 28th Police Precinct Station House, located on the north side of East 104th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues, was built in 1892-93 to the design of Nathaniel D. Bush. Appointed Architect to the New York City Police Department in 1862, Bush was responsible for the design of station houses in the city until 1895. This station house was based on a design that Bush had produced for the 25th Police Precinct (1886-87), 153-155 East 67th Street, which represented a significant departure from his earlier, simpler buildings. The Police Department employed this design as a general prototype for a number of later station houses. The midblock 28th Police Precinct Station House, five stories high above a basement, is clad in red brick with gray granite detailing. The design combines elements of the *Rundbogenstil* and the Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles. The three-bay facade is articulated as a grid formed by continuous piers and intermediate cornices. This building ended its service as a police station in 1974, and has been used and owned since 1981 by Hope Community, Inc. Today, with its original exterior nearly intact, it is one of ten Bush-designed station houses in Manhattan known to survive, and remains one of the few significant municipal or institutional buildings from the era of East Harlem's rapid development in the late nineteenth century.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The New York City Police Department in the Nineteenth Century ²

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the number of policemen in New York City remained quite small, despite the growth of the city and the accompanying problems and increase in crime. In 1845, a full-time professional "Day and Night Police" force was established by the state legislature through the Municipal Police Act; in 1853, the force was placed under a Board of Commissioners headed by the mayor. Policing, subject to the influence of local ward politics, was frequently susceptible to corruption. The police were also required to provide a variety of social services, including sheltering the homeless and attending to "drunkards." In 1857, the Republican-dominated New York State Legislature, intending to wrest control from the city's Democratic politicians, created the Metropolitan Police District (consisting of New York City and the surrounding counties), headed by a board of gubernatorial appointees. After Democrats regained the majority in the legislature in 1870, the Metropolitan Police District was abolished and the police in New York City returned to local (Tammany Hall) control. By this time, the size of the force had nearly doubled, but the New York City Police Department struggled to keep abreast of the increasing volume and the changed nature of crime that accompanied the phenomenal growth of the city's population. Due largely to the close connections between policing and politics, the department continued to be "a symbol of corruption in the late nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth."³ Slow to adopt new methods of communication, the New York police force lagged far behind other cities, and adequate police coverage was thus dependent upon a heavy concentration of police station houses throughout the city.

Nineteenth-Century Police Station Houses in New York City ⁴

The Municipal Police Act of 1844 divided New York into police precincts according to ward boundaries, and required that each precinct be furnished with a station house. The Metropolitan Police Act of 1857 also required that a suitable station house be furnished for each precinct. The police station house of the mid- and late-nineteenth century served a variety of functions. The office of the captain and the sergeant's desk were located on the first floor, with sleeping accommodations

provided on the upper floors for the patrolmen who customarily worked long shifts. Each precinct had a small cell block, as well as (after 1857) lodging rooms for the homeless. (In 1896, Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt removed the responsibility of housing the homeless from the police.) As the use of horse-drawn patrol wagons became more common in the latter part of the century, the stable became a standard component of the police station complex.

Most early Manhattan station houses were located in leased buildings, including former residential structures, that were adapted by the city to meet basic departmental needs. Around 1854, Chief of Police George W. Matsell complained to the mayor of

the inadequate accommodations of the station houses, their unsanitary condition and general dilapidation, [so that] an inspection and report of the various station houses were caused to be made, from which it appears that the necessity for reform and improvement was urgent. Chief Matsell, in view of these facts, suggested that two or three eminent architects should be invited to draw plans for a model station house, and that thereafter all station houses be required to be built according to the plan adopted. ⁵

Although no immediate such action was taken toward a model station house design, an Architect to the New York City Police Department, Nathaniel D. Bush, was appointed in 1862. The *Annual Report* of the Metropolitan Police Board that year further commented on the sorry state of police buildings:

When the station houses of New York and Brooklyn . . . were transferred to the Board of Police, many were so out of repair as to be unfit habitations; others were so limited in size, that policemen after serving their tours of duty on post were compelled to occupy beds that had just been vacated by their companions. Several of the stations were designated pest-houses by the police surgeons, so fruitful were they of disease. The cellars of the station-houses were divided into cells for prisoners and lodging rooms for the houseless poor. The latter were crowded nightly to their utmost capacity, and so defective was the ventilation, that the stench from these rooms

poisoned the atmosphere of the whole building. ⁶

The Police Department began a concerted effort in the 1860s to secure or build permanent station houses, to renovate existing facilities, to improve health conditions, and to separate prisons and lodging houses from the main buildings by locating them in the rear. One historian of the police department noted, however, that "the city could never keep pace with its geographical expansion and the rate of obsolescence of older buildings. . . . Even though the need was often expressed, New York was behind such cities as Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Boston in providing accommodations for the police."⁷ Overcrowding of patrolmen's quarters and prisons, unsanitary conditions, and adequate ventilation were continual problems in the station houses to the end of the century.

Nathaniel D. Bush: Architect to the N.Y.C. Police Department ⁸

Little is known of the background of Nathaniel D. Bush (c. 1821-1897), though he was born in New York State and moved to Brooklyn around 1867. He was appointed Architect to the New York City Police Department in 1862, and became a detective sergeant in the department's detective squad in March 1876. Bush retired from the force in June 1887, apparently the result of the Police Board of Commissioners' enforcement of the policy that all men on the force over the age of sixty must retire. Bush moved to Nyack, N.Y., but returned to Brooklyn by 1894, and continued to be listed in Brooklyn directories as an architect. He was the architect for New York City's police station houses until April 1895, when the *New York Times* ran a notice that Bush had "resigned because age has unfitted him to perform his duties properly."⁹ After that, the new police commission under Roosevelt solicited designs from many architects. (That of John DuFais for the new 9th Police Precinct Station House (1896-97), 133-137 Charles Street, was the first to be selected under this system.) Bush was buried in Highland Mills, Orange County, N.Y.

Over the course of three decades, Bush had a significant impact on police station house design in New York City. An observer noted in 1872 that "the new [Bush-designed station house] buildings are models of their kind, and the old ones are being improved as rapidly as possible."¹⁰ From his office in police headquarters at 300 Mulberry Street, Bush had "built, reconstructed or repaired" more than twenty police structures by 1885, when Police

Department historian Augustine E. Costello wrote that Bush had

found the Police station houses in a very crude condition. But little had been done in the line of "modern improvements," and they had been run up, so to speak, to meet pressing emergencies, and without much, if any, regard for the comfort of the men, or the sanitary or architectural advantage of the houses. Mr Bush went to work at once with characteristic energy, and in a few years our station houses began to put on very different appearances. The old ones were repaired and remodeled, and new ones designed; and thus the work went on until to-day these station houses are models for all others over the United States. ¹¹

Bush's earlier designs incorporated simplified versions of several contemporary historical styles, mostly the Italianate, Second Empire, and Renaissance Revival. The earliest known extant building by Bush is the 18th Police Precinct Station House (1864-65), 325-327 East 22nd Street, built to replace one at 163 East 22nd Street that had been destroyed by a crowd during the Draft Riots of July 1863. Others of the ten known surviving Bush-designed station houses in Manhattan include those for: the 3rd Precinct (1868, conversion of an 1850s residence), 160 Chambers Street; 5th Precinct (1868), 19-21 Leonard Street (included in the TriBeCa West Historic District); the 10th Precinct (1868), Essex Market, 105-107 [originally 87-89] Eldridge Street; the 14th Precinct (1870-71), 205-207 Mulberry Street; the 32nd Precinct (1871-72), 1854 Amsterdam Avenue (a designated New York City Landmark); and the 6th Precinct (1881-82), 19-21 Elizabeth Street. Bush's later station house designs, after the late 1870s, began to depart from his earlier, simpler ones and incorporated elements of the *Rundbogenstil* and the Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles. Bush's most significant design departure was for the 25th Police Precinct Station House (1886-87), 153-155 East 67th Street (a designated New York City Landmark). The Police Department employed this design as a general prototype for at least four later station houses, including those (also extant) for the 28th Precinct (1892-93), 177-179 East 104th Street; and the 8th Precinct (1893-94, altered), 194 Sixth Avenue [originally 24-26 MacDougal Street].¹²

East Harlem ¹³

As Manhattan's population pushed northward into East Harlem (the area roughly bounded by East

96th and East 142nd Streets, from Fifth Avenue to the Harlem River) in the late nineteenth century, development was spurred by the opening of the Second and Third Avenue elevated railway lines to 125th Street in 1879-80. Third Avenue had previously become identified as the neighborhood's major commercial street. A wave of residential construction began to fill the area with tenements, French flats, and rowhouses. Along with this development came new facilities for social, cultural, and religious institutions, as well as buildings for municipal services.¹⁴ East Harlem emerged largely as a working-class community, with influxes over the years of, among others, German, Irish, Russian, Scandinavian, Jewish, and Italian immigrants. The neighborhood, experiencing a second era of residential development after 1903 as "Old Law" tenements were remodeled and "New Law" tenements replaced older rowhouses, became one of the most densely populated sections of Manhattan. Beginning after World War I, East Harlem became home to a large Puerto Rican community, resulting in the name "Spanish Harlem," although it has been familiarly known as "El Barrio" since World War II.

East Harlem had been served as early as 1844 by a police station in the House of Detention on East 125th Street, between Third and Park Avenues; this housed the 12th Precinct until a new station house was constructed on the same site in 1870 (Nathaniel Bush, architect; demolished) at 146-148 East 126th Street. This precinct became the 29th Precinct in 1887, at which point it covered the area between 110th and 145th Streets, from Seventh Avenue to the Harlem River, and Randall's and Ward's Islands. Costello characterized this precinct in 1885 as "grow[ing] daily. More third and fourth-rate houses have been put up here within the past five years than in any other command."¹⁵ The precinct to the south of this was the 27th Precinct. This had been established as the 23rd Precinct by 1863, was served by a station house (1873, Nathaniel Bush, architect; demolished) at 432-434 East 88th Street, and was re-numbered the 27th Precinct in 1887. Its jurisdiction extended from East 79th Street to East 110th Street, from Fifth Avenue to the East and Harlem Rivers. Costello characterized it in 1885 as "a precinct that is being built up, and there is yet unbuilt territory on which to erect homes for thousands. Within five years one-quarter of what was bare ground has been covered with comfortable houses of superior construction."¹⁶ As the East Harlem district became more populated and developed in the late nineteenth century, another

precinct and a new police station house were needed.

The 28th Police Precinct Station House¹⁷

The Police Department's *Annual Report* for 1890 noted that "Lots for the location of a Station-house on the east side for a Precinct to be made up from portions of the Twenty-seventh and Twenty-ninth Precincts, are now being negotiated for, and when the purchase is completed plans and specifications for the erection of a new Station-house will be at once prepared."¹⁸ The *Annual Report* the following year remarked that "Plans and specifications for a new Station-house in East One Hundred and Fourth street are about completed, and work will soon be commenced on the proposed new structure."¹⁹ The site chosen was on the block between Lexington and Third Avenues; the adjacent lot to the west was occupied by Engine Company No. 53 (1884, N. LeBrun & Son) at 175 East 104th Street. Nathaniel Bush filed an application in April 1892 for a five-story station house, expected to cost about \$52,000, as well as for a two-story brick prison and lodging house, at the rear of the lot, to cost \$8000. Construction was begun in May 1892, and completed in June 1893; the contractor was John H. Deeves & Brother. The precinct's police force occupied the building on June 28. The jurisdiction of the new 28th Police Precinct extended from East 96th Street to East 116th Street, and from Central Park (and from Sixth Avenue above 110th Street) to the East River, as well as Ward's Island.

Faced in red brick and gray granite, the midblock station house is five stories high above a basement. The three-bay facade is articulated as a grid formed by continuous piers and intermediate cornices. The first floor originally had an office with the sergeant's desk, the captain's rooms, and sitting rooms. The second through fourth stories held the sergeant's rooms and dormitories for the patrolmen. This building was based on a design that Bush had produced for the 25th Police Precinct Station House (1886-87), 153-155 East 67th Street, which was a significant departure from the earlier Bush-designed station houses. He appears to have been inspired by New York skyscraper and commercial building design of the previous decade, combining elements of the *Rundbogenstil* and Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles. The Police Department employed this previous design as a general prototype for the 28th Police Precinct Station House, but in a simplified and less expensive variation.

Later History²⁰

After Consolidation, New York's police precincts were re-numbered in May 1898, and the 28th Precinct became the 29th Precinct. It was re-numbered the 39th Precinct in 1908, became the 13th Precinct in 1924, and in 1929 was designated the 23rd Precinct. The East 104th Street station house served this precinct until a combined facility for the 23rd Police Precinct and the Fire Department opened in 1974 (Milton F. Kirchman, architect) at 164 East 102nd Street. The old station house was put to use as "Hope Community Hall" by Hope Community, Inc., a non-profit housing organization founded in 1968 to "develop, revitalize and beautify East Harlem, a community which had experienced many years of abuse, neglect and abandonment."²¹ Purchased at auction in 1981, the building was used by the organization until 1993; it is currently awaiting renovation.

Description

The midblock station house, faced in red brick with gray granite detailing, is five stories high above a basement. The three-bay facade is articulated as a grid formed by continuous piers and intermediate cornices. Windows are one-over-one double-hung wood sash.

Base The central entrance has a broad round-arched granite surround enclosing a paneled reveal, original wood paneled doors, and a transom. Two non-historic light fixtures are affixed to the entrance surround (and replace earlier sconces). The entrance is reached by steps with metal railings, flanked by cheek walls surmounted by later historic wrought-iron railings; the cheek walls originally held pole lamps (that have been removed). An

areaway flanks the entrance steps, fronted with historic wrought-iron railings; the basement level has two exposed windows on each side of the entrance (three of the windows have iron bars over them). The eastern portion of the areaway has metal stairs (with a metal mesh cover) that lead to a basement entrance beneath the main entrance steps. Large, segmental-arched window surrounds in the outer bays contain tripartite windows with transoms. The piers on the first story are rusticated granite.

Upper Section The second through fourth stories have paired round-arched windows set below stone arches in the center bay, and paired segmental-arched windows set below segmental stone arches in the outer bays. The center bay of each story has historic fire escapes with curved, decorative wrought-iron balconies. The upper sash of the two central windows on the second story have been covered with wood. According to a c. 1938 photograph, a flagpole has been placed in the center of the fourth story at least since that time. The fourth story is capped by a bracketed metal neo-Grec style cornice with pedimented terminations above the end piers. The fifth story, only the width of the central bay, contains three round-arched windows (with missing panes and covered with wood) and is capped by a similar bracketed cornice.

Jail/Lodging House Structure The original two-story jail/lodging house structure, located at the rear of the Landmark Site and separated from the station house by a yard, is not visible from the street.

Report prepared by
JAY SHOCKLEY
Research Department

NOTES

1. This building was previously heard (LP-1834A) at a public hearing on July 15, 1991.
2. "Police," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1995), 910-912; Moses King, *King's Handbook of New York* (N.Y.: Moses King, 1893), 523-529; James F. Richardson, *The New York Police: Colonial Times to 1901* (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1970).
3. "Police," 912.
4. Richardson; Augustine E. Costello, *Our Police Protectors: History of the New York Police from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (N.Y.: A.E. Costello, 1885); LPC, *19th Police Precinct [Brooklyn] Station House*

- and Stable Designation Report (LP-1703)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1993), prepared by Betsy Bradley; New York State, Bd. of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police, *Annual Report* (1862-1865).
5. Costello, 133.
 6. NYS, BCMP, *Annual Report* (1862), 3.
 7. Richardson, 169.
 8. Costello; LPC, architects files, *32nd Police Precinct Station House Designation Report* (LP-1389)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1986), prepared by Nancy Goeschel, and *19th (originally 25th) Police Precinct Station House Designation Report* (LP-2018)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1999), prepared by Jay Shockley; *Long Island, N.Y., 1870 Census Index* (Bountiful, Utah: Precision Indexing, 1989), 196; NYC Police Dept., *Annual Report* (1885-1898); "More Retirements," *New York Times* [hereafter *NYT*], Mar. 30, 1887, 8; "Their Active Duty Over," *NYT*, June 25, 1887, 8; *Brooklyn City Directory* (1894-1899); N.D. Bush, Brooklyn Death Certificate No. 17594 (Oct. 29, 1897); Bush obit. listing, *New-York Daily Tribune*, Oct. 30, 1897, 7; "New Police Stations in New York," *Harper's Weekly*, Sept. 7, 1895, 845; Robinson, *Atlas of the City of New York and Part of the Bronx* (1885); Sanborn, *Manhattan Land Book* (1997-98).
 9. "Police Architect Bush Resigns," *NYT*, Apr. 24, 1895, 9. Thanks to John Reilly, retired policeman, for finding this article.
 10. James D. McCabe, Jr., *Lights and Shadows of New York Life; or the Sights and Sensations of the Great City* (N.Y.: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970), reprint of 1872 edition, 179.
 11. Costello, 452-453.
 12. Only two of Bush's station house buildings remain in police use today, the 25th (now 19th) Police Precinct Station House, 153-155 East 67th Street, and the 6th (now 5th) Police Precinct Station House, 19-21 Elizabeth Street. Among the now-demolished station houses designed or "re-built" by Bush were those for: the 8th Precinct (1868), 128 Prince Street; the 31st Precinct (1869), 134 [originally 434] West 100th Street; the 29th Precinct (1869), 137-139 West 30th Street; the 4th Precinct (1870), 9-11 Oak Street; the 27th Precinct (1870), 9 Church Street; the 20th Precinct (1870), 434-436 West 37th Street; the 12th Precinct (1870), 146-148 East 126th Street; the 23rd Precinct (1873), 432-434 East 88th Street; the 19th Precinct (1877), 163 East 51st Street; the 30th Precinct (1879), 270 West 126th Street; and the First Precinct (1884), Old Slip. The now-demolished station houses for the 30th Precinct (1889), 438 West 125th Street (22 LaSalle Place); and the 24th Precinct (1890-92), 150 West 68th Street, were based on the design prototype of the 25th Police Precinct Station House.
 13. Costello; LPC, *Public School 72 Designation Report* (LP-1836)(N.Y.: City of New York, 1996), prepared by Mary B. Dierickx and Jeffrey Baumoel; Federal Writers' Project, *New York City Guide* (N.Y.: Octagon Books, 1970), reprint of 1939 edition, 265-270.
 14. Among these institutions were: Public School 72 (1879, David I. Stagg), 1674-1686 Lexington Avenue, at East 105th Street; St. Cecilia's R.C. Church (1883-87, N. LeBrun & Sons), 120 East 106th Street; New York Public Library, Aguilar Branch (1898-99; 1904-05, Herts & Tallant), 172-174 East 110th Street; and St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral (1901-02, John Bergesen), 15 East 97th Street. All of these buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.
 15. Costello, 375.
 16. Costello, 381.
 17. LPC, Shockley; NYC, Dept. of Buildings, Manhattan, Plans, Permits and Dockets (NB 565-1892); "Buildings Projected," *Real Estate Record & Guide*, April 9, 1892, 586; NYC Police Dept., *Annual Report* (1891-93); "Pleased With the New Station," *N.Y. Daily Tribune*, Apr. 5, 1893, 9; "Opening a New Police Station," *NYT*, June 29, 1893, 9; "New Police Station Opened," *NYT*, July 2, 1893, 16.
 18. NYC Police Dept., *Annual Report* (1890), 14.

19. Ibid. (1891), 11.

20. Information on the precinct numbers was supplied by John Reilly. Elliot Willensky and Norval White, *A.I.A Guide to New York City* (N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 454.

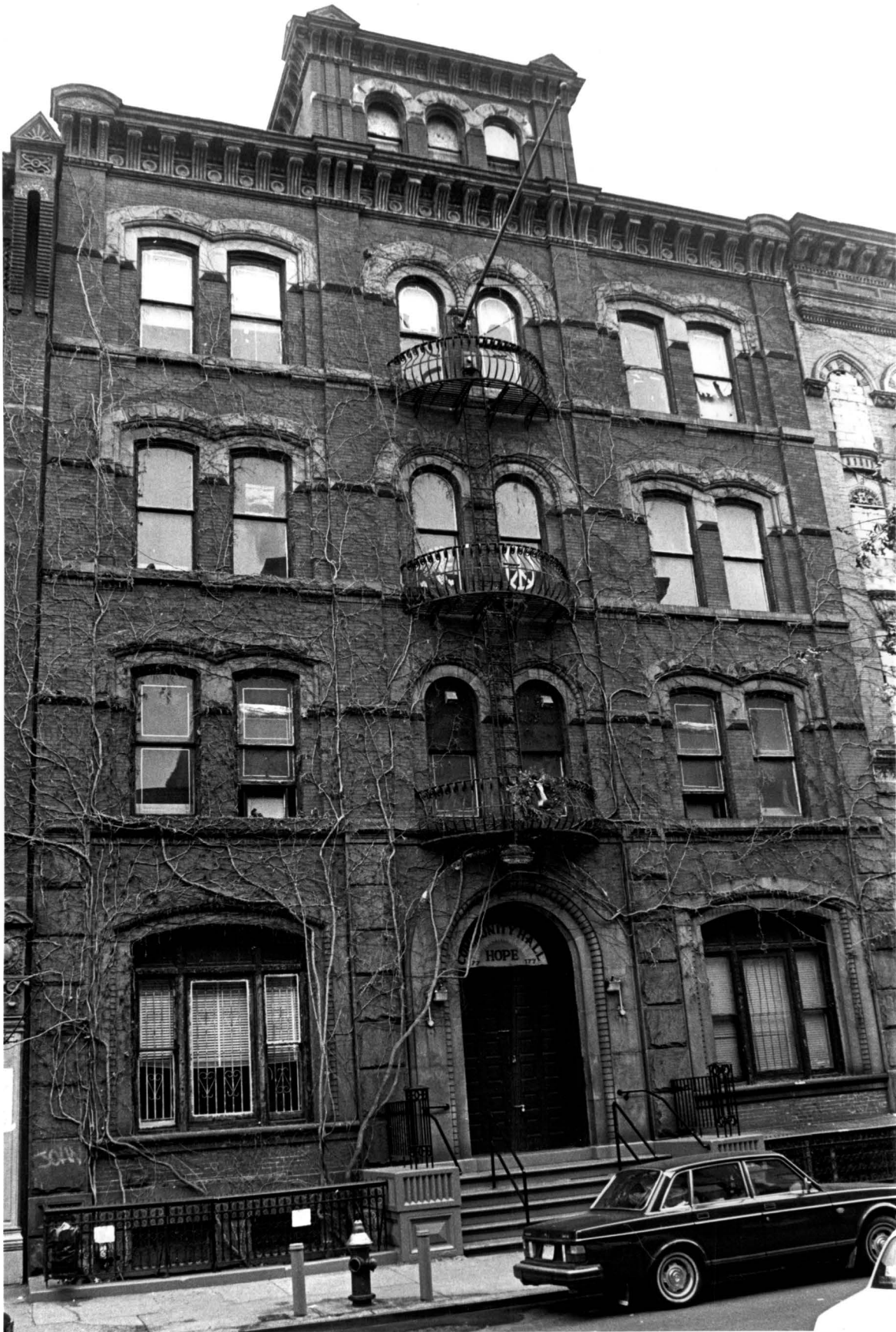
21. Hope Community, Inc., *Annual Report* (1988), 9.

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 28th Police Precinct Station House (now Hope Community Hall) 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 28th Police Precinct Station House was built in 1892-93 to the design of Nathaniel D. Bush, the Architect to the New York City Police Department responsible for the design of station houses in the city from 1862 until 1895; that this station house was based on a design that Bush had produced for the 25th Police Precinct (1886-87), 153-155 East 67th Street, which represented a significant departure from his earlier, simpler buildings, and that the Police Department employed this design as a general prototype for a number of later station houses; that, combining elements of the *Rundbogenstil* and the Renaissance Revival and neo-Grec styles, and clad in red brick with gray granite detailing, the three-bay facade is articulated as a grid formed by continuous piers and intermediate cornices; that, with its original exterior nearly intact, it is one of ten Bush-designed station houses in Manhattan known to survive; that this building ended its service as a police station in 1974, and has been used and owned since 1981 by Hope Community, Inc.; and that it remains one of the few significant municipal or institutional buildings from the era of East Harlem's rapid development in the late nineteenth century.

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 28th Police Precinct Station House (now Hope Community Hall), 177-179 East 104th Street, Borough of Manhattan, and designates Manhattan Tax Map Block 1632, Lot 30, as its Landmark Site.



28th Police Precinct Station House, 177-179 West 104th Street
Photo: Carl Forster

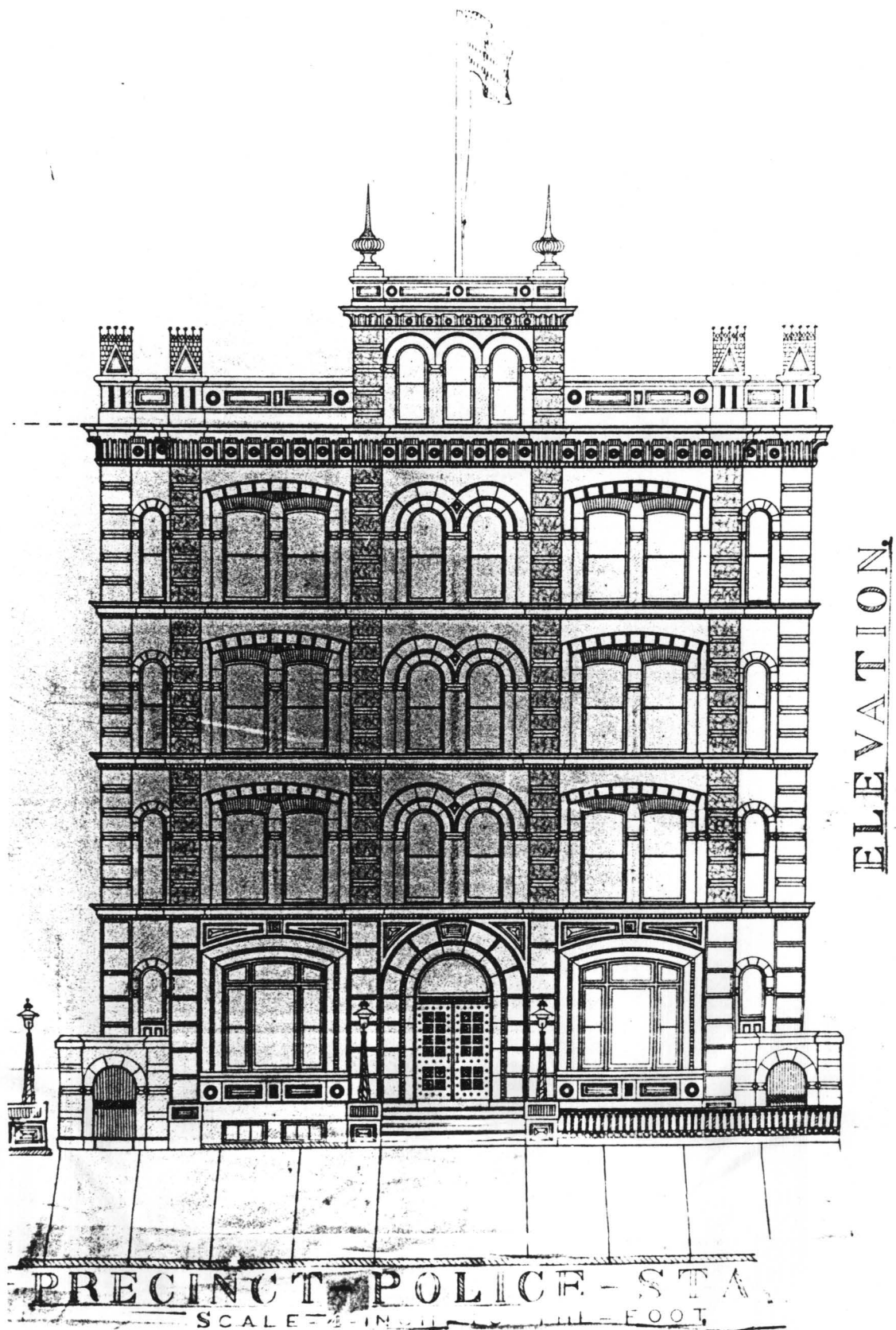


(upper) **Nathaniel D. Bush**

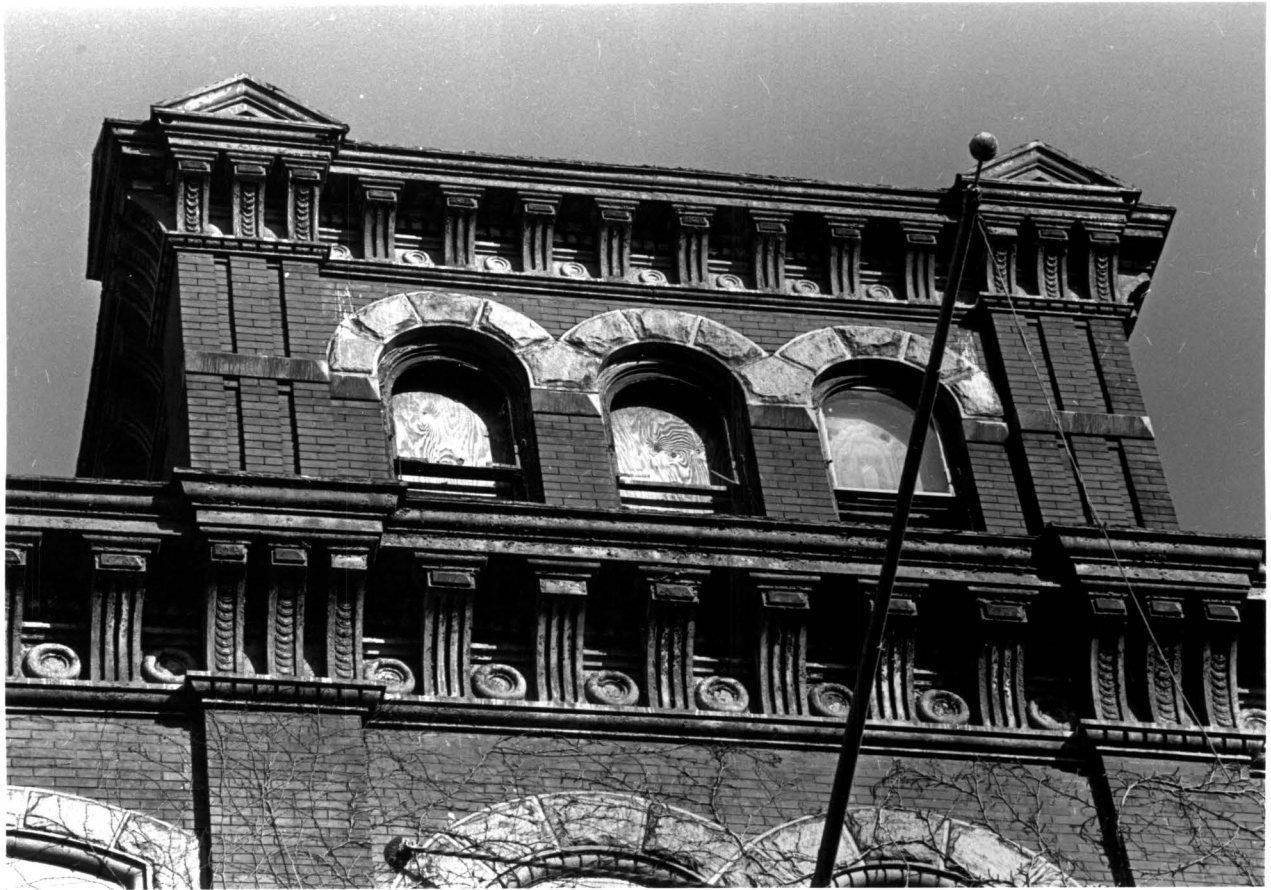
Source: Costello

(lower) **Sketch of 28th Police Precinct Station House**

Source: *New-York Daily Tribune* (April 5, 1893)



Drawing of 25th Police Precinct Station House (1886-87. Nathaniel D. Bush). 153-155 West 67th Street



28th Police Precinct Station House

(upper) cornice detail; (lower) upper section of building

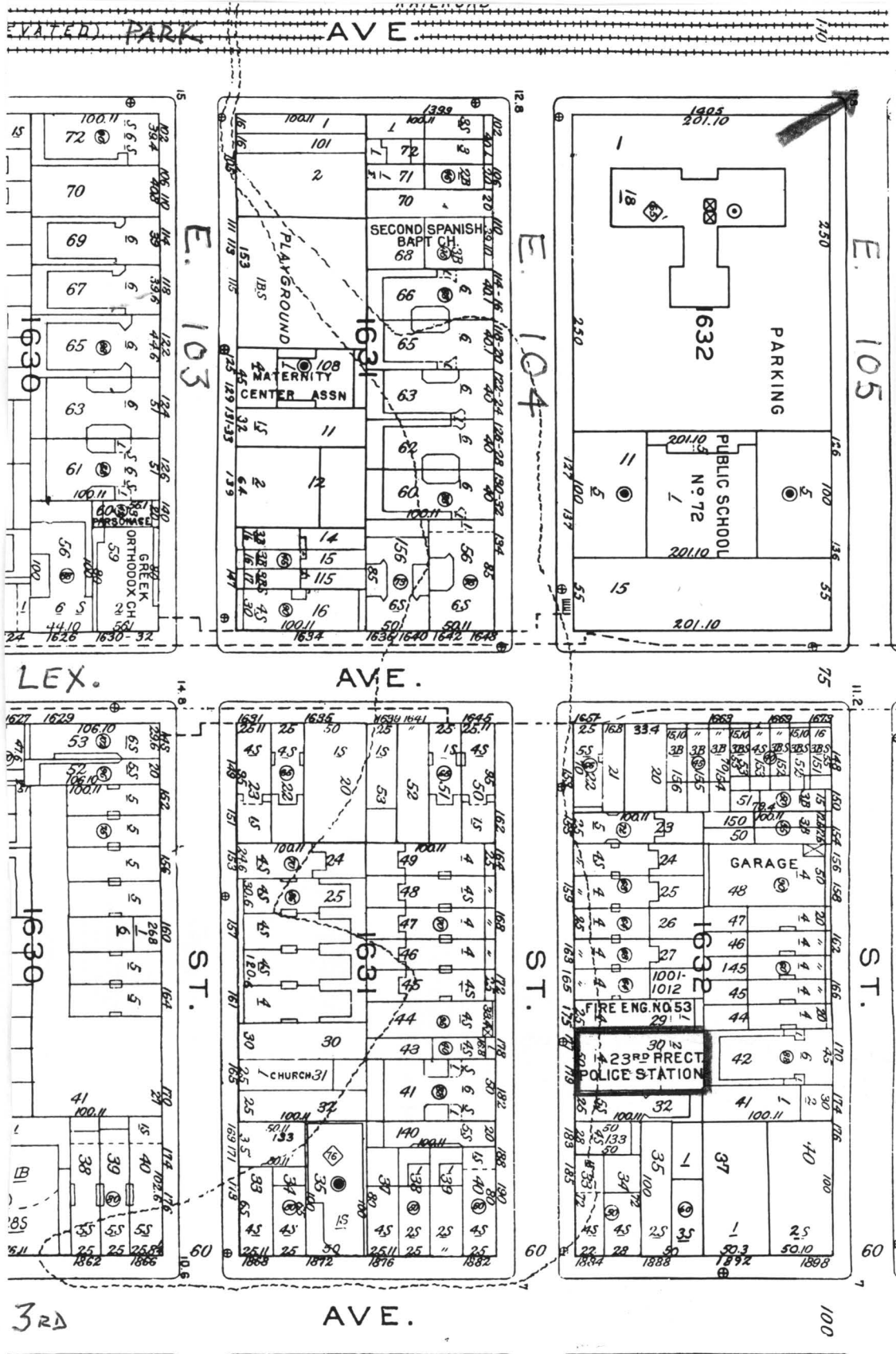
Photos: Carl Forster



28th Police Precinct Station House

(upper) fire escape balcony; (lower) base of building

Photos: Carl Forster



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104TH

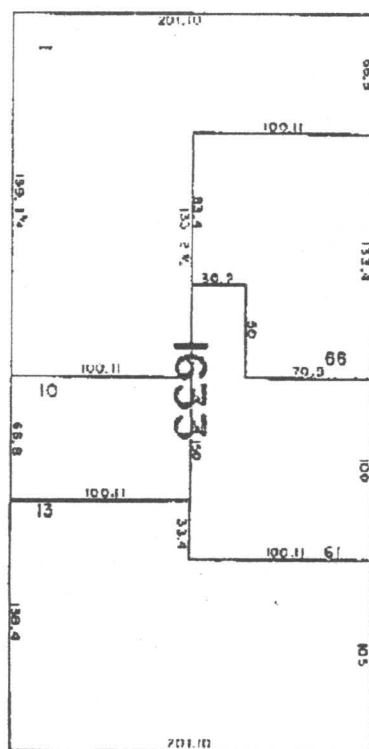
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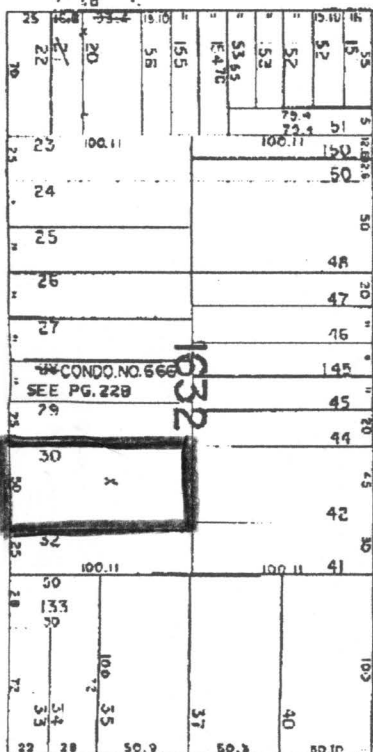
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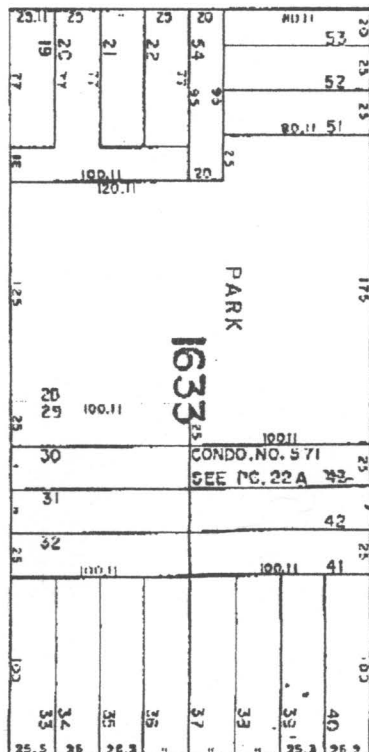


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