

(Former) SUFFOLK TITLE AND GUARANTEE COMPANY BUILDING, 90-04 161st Street (aka 90-02-- 90-04 161st Street, 160-02 -- 160-10 90th Avenue and 90-01 -- 90-03 160th Street), Queens
Built 1929; Dennison & Hiron, architects.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9757, Lot 23.

On January 30, 2001, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the (Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council and the Society for the Architecture of the City. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has received statements in support of designation from the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation, the Friends of Terra Cotta, and the Borough Historian of Queens, Stanley Cogan.

Summary

Constructed in 1929, the (Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building maintains a commanding presence near the business center of Jamaica, Queens. Designed by the distinguished architectural firm of Dennison & Hiron which was known for its bank buildings, this eight-story structure was built at a time of tremendous business prosperity and building activity. The architects used the Art Deco style enhanced with colorful terra-cotta ornament to create a modern and distinctive headquarters for the Long Island-based firm, which was organized in 1925 to insure real estate titles, guarantee mortgages, and make loans. Echoing the dominant shapes of the prominent Art Deco skyscrapers of the period in this smaller building, the architects emphasized the verticality of the structure with continuous masonry piers and a variety of setbacks near the top. This arrangement, along with the brightly-colored, terra-cotta panels by noted sculptor Rene Chambellan that are strategically applied to the crown and the second story, make this a truly unique building in downtown Jamaica, and a rare example of the skyscraper style applied to small buildings outside of Manhattan.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Development of the Area¹

Jamaica, one of the oldest settlements within the current boundaries of New York City, developed into the leading commercial center of Queens County by 1900 and continues to be the largest and most densely-populated neighborhood in central Queens. The Dutch purchased the land in Jamaica from the Jameco Indians in 1655. The following year, Governor Peter Stuyvesant granted a charter to the town, originally known as Rusdorp.

Following the transfer of power from the Dutch to the English in 1664, Rusdorp was renamed Jamaica, after the original inhabitants of the region. Queens County (incorporating present-day Queens and Nassau Counties) was chartered in 1683 and Jamaica was one of the three original governing units established there (along with Newtown and Flushing). Outside the town center, Jamaica was largely an area of farms and pastures. The rural village was officially incorporated by New York State in 1814.

Jamaica's central location in Queens County, and the extensive transportation network that developed in the town during the nineteenth century, transformed the village into the major commercial center for Queens County and much of eastern Long Island. The arrival of the railroads in the 1830s began this evolution.² The rail lines connected Jamaica with other sections of Queens county, Brooklyn, eastern Long Island, and the ferries to New York City. Jamaica's farmland was soon being subdivided into streets and building lots, and many houses were erected.

By the turn of the century, Jamaica's importance as a commercial area became evident in the impressive buildings constructed on Jamaica Avenue, most notably the Beaux-Arts Jamaica Savings Bank Building (161-02 Jamaica Avenue, 1897-98, Hough & Duell),³ and the neo-Italian Renaissance Queens County Register Office (161-04 Jamaica Avenue, 1898, A.S. Macgregor, a designated New York City Landmark). After Jamaica was incorporated into the Borough of Queens and became a part of New York City on January 1, 1898, additional transportation improvements brought increasing numbers of people.⁴ As a result, the population of Jamaica quadrupled between 1900 and 1920.

During the 1920s, when the major mass transit links were in place and private automobile ownership was growing at an extraordinary rate, Jamaica experienced its major expansion as a commercial center. By 1925, lots on Jamaica Avenue between 160th Street and 168th Street had the highest assessed

valuation in Queens County.⁵ Many small-scale commercial buildings were erected in Jamaica at this time, as well as several major office and commercial structures, including the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building on 161st Street (1928-29, George W. Conable) and the J. Kurtz & Sons Store on Jamaica Avenue (1931, Allmendiger & Schlendorf, a designated New York City Landmark). When the Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company chose Jamaica for its new headquarters building in 1929, this was the most prosperous commercial section of the borough. It was also a center for banking and insurance in Queens, with several other banks and title guarantee companies located on the same block.

Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company⁶

The Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company was founded in 1925 for the purpose of insuring property titles, making loans on bonds and mortgages, and selling guaranteed mortgages. The company, with businessman Willard Baylis as president, was organized in Suffolk County, but had offices in Manhattan, Long Island City, Mineola, and Riverhead, as well as Jamaica, Queens. Its slogan was "A Title Company that Knows Long Island." Established during the period of intense business activity of the nineteen-twenties, the company expanded rapidly, and by 1927 had acquired another well-known title company, Clarke & Frost. By 1928, the firm needed larger quarters to accommodate its increasing business and began acquisition of this site near the commercial center of Jamaica, Queens. They hired the architectural firm of Dennison & Hirons, known for its important bank buildings in the newly-popular Art Deco style, to create a distinctive headquarters and unique symbol for this growing business.

Dennison & Hirons

Ethan Allen Dennison (1881-1954)
Frederic Charles Hirons (1883-1942)

Ethan Allen Dennison, born in New Jersey, studied architecture at the Godfrey Architectural Preparatory School and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He began his career in the office of Trowbridge & Livingston in New York in 1905, joining with Frederic Hirons to form the partnership of Dennison & Hirons in 1910. Their firm continued until 1929, including the one year (1913) during which they were joined by Percy W. Darbyshire, creating the firm of Dennison,

Hirons & Darbyshire. Dennison won the Medal of Honor of the Society of Diploma Architects of France and was a member of the Beaux Arts Society of New York, as well as the American Society of the French Legion of Honor. After the dissolution of the firm of Dennison & Hirons, Dennison continued to practice architecture in New York as the head of Ethan Allen Dennison & Associates. Much of his later work was in Connecticut, where he lived, and in 1940 he moved his firm to that state.

Frederic Charles Hirons was born in England but moved as a child to Massachusetts with his family. He worked as a draftsman in the Boston office of Herbert Hale from 1898 until 1901 when he began to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1904, he won the Rotch traveling scholarship, and went to Paris to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He won the Paris Prize in 1906, enabling him to continue his studies and travel in Europe through 1909. Hirons was always interested in drawing and the education of young students. He led his own atelier for several years after his return from Europe, taught architecture at Columbia University, was a founder of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design, and served as president of the Beaux Arts Society of Architects. He was named a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor in recognition of his services for architectural education. In 1929 Hirons formed a partnership with F.W. Mellor from Philadelphia for two years, and then practiced under his own name until 1940.

Hirons won the competition for the design of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design in New York (1928, a designated New York City Landmark) as well as several courthouses and war memorials. Early works of the firm of Dennison & Hirons include the whimsical Childs Restaurant in Coney Island, and such neo-Classical style buildings as the Delaware Title & Insurance Company, Wilmington, Delaware, the Kanawha Banking and Trust Co., Charleston, West Virginia, the Purcellville National Bank, Purcellville, Virginia, the National State Bank, Elizabeth, New Jersey, and the Trenton Banking Company, Trenton, New Jersey. Later in their partnership, Dennison & Hirons designed numerous tall bank buildings in the Art Deco style, often collaborating with architectural sculptor Rene Chambellan for the terra-cotta panels. The State Bank and Trust Company of New York at Eighth Avenue and 43rd Street, the Home Savings Bank, Albany, New York, and the Society for Savings, Hartford, Connecticut, as well as the Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building were all Art Deco style office buildings designed by Dennison & Hirons and adorned with Chambellan's characteristic ornament.

The terra cotta used in these buildings was similar to that featured by the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company in a special issue of their magazine devoted to the work of this architectural firm.⁷ This article included an explanation of Dennison & Hirons' method for producing the colored terra-cotta panels used on their buildings. One-quarter scale models were created and painted according to their designs. These were then mounted on the building at their exact locations, so that the colors could be adjusted according to the differing light exposures. After these models were finalized, the Polychrome Department of the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company would create glazes to achieve the desired shades. In this way Dennison & Hirons were able to produce colorful ornament which has remained visually stunning for many years.

Rene Chambellan (1893-1955)⁸

Rene Paul Chambellan became a noted architectural sculptor and model-maker whose sculpture, bas-reliefs, and panels were executed in a number of materials, including bronze, stone, and terra cotta. Born in Union City, New Jersey, he was educated at New York University (1912-14), and the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design (1914-17), and Ecole Julian (1918-19) in Paris and was a student of the sculptor Solon Borglum. He served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army in France in 1917-19. After returning to the United States, Chambellan worked with Raymond Hood and John Mead Howells on the ornament of the Tribune Building (1924) in Chicago, and participated in the design and execution of the ornament of many important buildings of the 1920s and 30s in New York City.⁹ Chambellan did many of the flat, highly stylized designs popular on Art Deco buildings and he worked on several projects with the architects Dennison & Hirons, creating models for the terra-cotta ornament based on Hirons' designs.¹⁰

Art Deco Style¹¹

The Art Deco or Modern classical style of architecture, which primarily appeared in this country from the mid-1920s through the 1930s, has been called an "avant-garde traditionalist" approach to creating a contemporary idiom for buildings of the period.¹² Much of the architecture known as Art Deco was based on accepted, standard forms and construction techniques and most of the architects active in this style had received traditional Beaux-Arts training in which the plan and the design of elevations were the first and most important phases in the design of a building. However, designers and critics of this time expressed the need for a new style which could be deemed

appropriate for the period dubbed the "Jazz Age," with all its accompanying technological developments. Thus buildings were given a modern cast through the use of a characteristic ornament, and a variety of materials, some new and some simply used in a new way. The popular design and ornamental ideas of the period evolved from numerous influences including: the Paris 1925 Exposition International des Arts Decoratifs (from which the Art Deco style took its name), the well-publicized designs of the Vienna Secessionists and the Wiener Werkstatte, and the German Expressionists, as well as American architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, current theatrical set designs, and Mayan and other Native American forms.

The most well-known buildings of this period were skyscrapers and their overall shape came about as a result of the 1916 Building Zone Resolution of New York which decreed setbacks at various levels of tall buildings to allow light and air to reach the streets in an increasingly dense city. A series of dramatic renderings by architectural renderer Hugh Ferriss (1889-1962) published in *Pencil Points* (1923) and in *Metropolis of Tomorrow* (1929) significantly influenced architects of the period. The drawings and the laws from which they came directed the architects' attention to the building as a whole rather than to a single facade of the structure, thus altering the whole design process. By visualizing buildings "from every possible angle" the architect was transformed from a designer of facades into a "sculptor in building masses."¹³ The zoning law provided architects with a rational basis for the form and appearance of the skyscraper as well as a new source of creativity; historical styles did not seem to express this modern sensibility and consequently, a new "skyscraper style" emerged in the 1920s. Major characteristics of the new style, as generated in part by the zoning restrictions, were sculpted massing, bold setbacks, and ornament subordinated to the overall mass. The dramatic rendering style of Ferriss and others articulated this new modernist aesthetic. In addition, an emphasis on the verticality of the tall building derived from the wide influence of Eliel Saarinen's second-prize winning competition entry for the Chicago Tribune Building in 1923. These same sensibilities and vertical emphasis were also often applied to the design of small buildings during this period, with owners and designers trying to demonstrate their modernity.

Additionally, architects of this period emphasized the decorative capacity of the building's surface.¹⁴ While designing in such a way as to make it obvious that the outer surfaces were not structural but only there to enclose the space, contemporary designers used a

variety of materials. Newly-created metal alloys gave interesting effects, but brick and terra cotta were also favorites because of their wide range of color and textural possibilities. Ornament, usually in low relief and concentrated on specific areas such as the entrance, took the form of angular, geometric shapes such as ziggurats and zigzags, or simplified and stylized floral patterns, parts of circles, or faceted crystalline shapes.

The Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building

In 1928, two lots on the north end of the block bounded by Jamaica and 90th Avenues, and 160th and 161st Streets were purchased in the name of Jessica Baylis, wife of the president of the Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company. One of these was obtained from the Jamaica Lodge of Free-Masons which had a clubhouse there.¹⁵ The Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company erected its building on the site in 1928-29, but did not take title to the property until May, 1930, well after the building had been occupied. The company's offices filled the entire structure, including a large, double-height banking room with a mezzanine which occupied most of the street level space.

The architects Dennison & Hirons designed many bank buildings during their partnership, both skyscrapers and smaller structures, for the sole use of their owners. By erecting its own building, a company's structure became the symbol of the organization and a physical embodiment of the business in the greater community in which it did business. Banks in particular, wanted buildings which would draw customers but also create an image of stability and reliability. Art Deco style buildings were novel enough to attract attention, but not so unusual that they would be seen as eccentric. Dennison & Hirons were able to satisfy the needs of their customers with buildings that were characterized by simple lines, a variety of setbacks near the roofline, and discrete panels of decoration, strategically placed on the building's facades. Frederic Hirons was a draftsman of exceptional ability¹⁶ and he often worked with modeler Rene Chambellan to create unique panels of terra cotta in flat, stylized designs of leaves, flowers, and fountains which added a distinctiveness to each building.

The architects employed all of these elements on the Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building. Eight stories tall, this is one of the larger and more unusual structures in the area, with its irregular massing at the upper stories and its colorful ornament. As seen on the more typical Art Deco style skyscrapers, this building has a distinct base with stone cladding which stops in the piers above the second story and an

irregularly shaped top created by several floors of setbacks. While this type of massing was originally a response to the 1916 Building Zone Resolution when it was applied to tall buildings in Manhattan, here the architects used the same idea for its aesthetic contribution, since the zoning laws would not have required setbacks on a building of this height. Continuous brick piers with recessed windows also emphasize the height of the building, and stress the grid-like pattern of the facade. The spandrels, which feature inset brick panels, reflect the interest among Art Deco architects for textural patterns on the building's skin. The brightly-colored terra-cotta panels which are located on the spandrels between the second and third stories are unique to this building. The flat, stylized designs of leaves, flowers and fountains repeat across each facade, with the panels on the 90th Avenue side different from those on the two narrow ends. Designed to draw attention to the upper floors of the building, brightly-colored and patterned terra-cotta lintels cap the windows of the eighth story and a large terra-cotta panel is located near the top of each of the narrow facades of the building. These sections display a highly stylized eagle holding a shield, a common symbol on bank buildings and similar to one used by Dennison & Hiron on their City National Bank and Trust Company Building in Bridgeport, Connecticut, of the same period.

Following the convention in many Art Deco style buildings of emphasis placed on the entranceway, in this building the two main doors are embellished with surrounds formed of painted ironwork using similar motifs to those found in the terra cotta. In addition a pair of winged griffins in full relief, holding a shield tops each doorway. While the long facade on 90th Avenue has no entrances, its large, ground-story windows have similar, decorative ironwork which has been painted.

Subsequent History

The Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company moved into their new building during the first half of 1929, but their good fortune and success was short-lived. By 1935, the business was bankrupt. Shortly thereafter it was taken over by the state insurance department and its assets, including this building, were liquidated, although the company continued to be listed at this address until 1940.¹⁷

It took many years for the property to clear after the bankruptcy and liquidation. It was finally resold in 1945 to Frederick C. Trump, a large land-holder and developer in Queens and Brooklyn.¹⁸ Trump donated the building to the Greater Jamaica Development

Corporation in the 1980s and the offices are currently used by this group and a number of other not-for-profit organizations.

Description

This eight-story office building has designed facades on 161st Street, 90th Avenue, and 161st Street. The fourth facade overlooks a parking lot and is faced with plain brick. Midway across the fourth facade, rising from the second story, is a narrow light court with a door and window on each story. Near the top of this facade, a neon-lit artwork entitled "Let It Roll" by Cork Mareschi has recently been installed.

161st Street Facade

The main entrance is located on the eastern facade. The building is three bays wide with a double-height ground story. The main entrance to the building, which consists of a non-historic, revolving glass-and-metal doorway with a glass transom, is located in the southern bay, while an entrance to the ground story office space via double glass and bronze doors topped by a transom is located in the northern bay. Perched on the bronze lintel of each doorway is a pair of winged griffins with long fish tails holding a tablet. A large plate glass window above a painted iron railing fills the central bay. Ornate painted-metal, three-dimensional surrounds ornament each of the three ground-story openings and include stylized fountain and flower designs. Above the first story letters denoting "The Title Guarantee Company" are applied to the stone facade, replacing the original sign identifying the Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company.

Above a granite watertable, the two lowest stories are faced in ashlar limestone that changes to brick with a stepped design in the piers between the second and third stories. Multi-colored, terra cotta panels in a stylized fountain design decorate the spandrels between the second and third story windows. Between the third and sixth stories, the spandrel panels are composed of brick in a darker tone, with an inset of an embossed square pattern.

Continuous masonry piers run from the ground floor through the sixth story. Recessed, paired windows with one-over-one, double-hung sash are located within each of the three bays, with a narrow, continuous pier between the two windows in each pair. These piers project slightly above the plain brick cornice at the sixth story level. The building sets back from the street at the seventh story, which is topped by a continuous, plain brick cornice with a narrow stone cap. At the eighth story, the building steps back again and is also narrower, with a single window in each of the two side bays. The four windows at this level are

segmentally-arched, with broad, decorative, terra-cotta lintels. The brick piers continue above this level with a central, stepped parapet ornamented by a terra-cotta eagle holding a shield, which covers mechanical equipment.

90th Avenue Facade

The building is nine bays wide on this elevation. At the ground story are single-pane, double-height windows over painted iron railings. Letters spelling “The Title Guarantee Company” are located between the first and second stories. The design on the second through the sixth stories is the same as on the 161st Street elevation, with terra-cotta and darker brick spandrels, and continuous piers between the bays. The three center bays rise with continuous piers through the eighth story. The three bays on each side step back slightly at the seventh story, and further at the eighth

story. Above this are parapets with recessed bays between brick piers which screen elevator equipment and the water tower.

160th Street Facade

This facade is three bays wide and is almost the same as that on 161st Street. Here the entrance is in the southern bay and is identical to the entrance on 161st Street. The central bay is filled by a ventilating grill and the third bay has a large window opening over painted iron railings. The upper stories have the same arrangement, ornamentation, and setbacks as those on 161st Street.

Researched and written by
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NOTES

1. This section is taken almost in its entirety from: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *La Casina Designation Report* (LP-1940), report prepared by Andrew Dolkart (New York: City of New York, 1996). It is based on H.W. Munsell, *The History of Queens County, New York* (New York: H.W. Munsell & Co., 1882); *Jamaica, Hempstead, Richmond Hill, Morris Park, and Woodhaven: Their Representative Men and Points of Interest* (New York: Mercantile Illustration Co., 1894); Henry Isham Hazelton, *The Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens Counties of Nassau and Suffolk Long Island, New York 1609-1924*, vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1925); Theodore H.M. Prudon, ed., “Jamaica, Queens County, New York: Aspects of its History,” unpublished typescript prepared for Columbia University Graduate Program for Restoration and Preservation of Historic Architecture (1975); New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Former J. Kurtz & Sons Store Building Designation Report*, (LP-1132), report prepared by Virginia Kurshan (New York: City of New York, 1981); Jon A. Peterson, ed., *A Research Guide to the History of the Borough of Queens and its neighborhoods* (Queens: Queens College, Department of History, 1983); Vincent F. Seyfried and William Asadorian, *Old Queens, N.Y. in Early Photographs* (New York: Dover, 1991); New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *(Former) Jamaica Savings Bank Designation Report* (LP-1800) (New York: City of New York, 1992), report prepared by Elisa Urbanelli; “Jamaica,” and “Queens,” in *The Encyclopedia of New York*, Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995); research files of the Landmarks Preservation Commission.
2. In the early nineteenth century, the King’s Highway, which led from Brooklyn to Queens along the route of an Indian trail, had become a toll road, known as the Brooklyn, Jamaica & Flatbush Turnpike. In 1832, the Brooklyn and Jamaica Railroad Company was established. It purchased the turnpike and began construction on a rail line. Two years later the Long Island Railroad (LIRR) was founded. It leased the Brooklyn and Jamaica’s right of way, inaugurating service between Jamaica and a ferry at the foot of Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn in 1836; the line was extended eastward to Hicksville a year later. The opening of the initial Long Island Railroad line through Jamaica established the village as a transportation hub, but other developments increased Jamaica’s importance. In 1850, Jamaica Avenue was converted into a plank road by the Jamaica & Brooklyn Plank Road Company, thus improving road transportation between the Fulton Ferry and Queens County. Horsecar lines began operation on the avenue in 1866 when the East New York & Jamaica Railroad Company inaugurated service; the horsecars were replaced by electric trollies in the mid-1880s. In 1860, the Long Island Railroad began service from a ferry landing at Hunter’s Point to Jamaica, and in 1869 a rival railroad company, the South Side Railroad, began service between Jamaica and Patchogue. For a schematic history of the Long Island Railroad see “Chronology of the Long Island Rail Road” in Peterson, 27-28. For

more detailed information see, Carl W. Condit, *Port of New York*, 2 vol. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) and Vincent F. Seyfried, *The Long Island Rail Road: A Comprehensive History*, 7 vol. (Garden City, Long Island: 1961-1975).

3. The Jamaica Savings Bank Building was designated as a New York City Landmark in 1974, but the designation was subsequently denied by the Board of Estimate. The building was again designated a Landmark in 1992, but this designation was denied by the City Council.
4. These improvements included the widening and repaving of Jamaica Avenue (known as Fulton Street until about 1918) in 1898; the electrification of the Long Island Railroad in 1905-08; the opening of the Queensborough Bridge in 1909; the completion of the LIRR's tunnel beneath the East River in 1910 (the bridge and tunnel obviated the need for ferries, thus cutting commuting time to and from Long Island and Manhattan); and the completion of the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company's elevated railroad on Jamaica Avenue in 1918.
5. Seyfried and Asadorian, 26. The importance of Jamaica's geographic location and the development of the area as a transportation and commercial hub was recognized in the *WPA Guide to New York City*: "Jamaica, the community around Jamaica Avenue and Parsons Boulevard, is the geographical center of Queens. Most of the important Brooklyn and Queens highways that lead to Nassau County and eastern Long Island pass through Jamaica. It is the terminus of the BMT and Independent subways and the principal transfer station of the Long Island Railroad. Along the main thoroughfare, Jamaica Avenue, there has evolved a comprehensive suburban shopping center." *The WPA Guide to New York City* (NY: Random House, 1939; reprinted NY: Pantheon, 1982), 583.
6. The information in this section comes from a series of articles in the Queensborough Magazine, published by the Queens Chamber of Commerce. For many years, each January issue highlighted banks and other financial institutions in Queens. The information here comes from those magazines in 1928, 1929, 1930, and 1931.
7. "Terra Cotta Work of Dennison & Hiron," *Atlantic Terra Cotta* IX (June, 1928), n.p. The only other architectural firm to which an entire issue of this magazine was devoted was McKim, Mead & White in 1927.
8. Information about Chambellan comes from obit., *NYT*, Nov. 30, 1955, 33; LPC, Chambellan files; Stern, et. al.; New York Public Library, Artists files; "Rene Paul Chambellan," *Who Was Who in America* 3 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co., 1963), 147.
9. These included the following projects: the American Radiator Building (1923-24, Raymond Hood), 40 West 40th Street; war memorials at the New York Life Insurance Co. Building (1925-28, Cass Gilbert), 51 Madison Avenue; the figural sculpture on Pratt Institute's Memorial Hall (1926-27, John Mead Howells), 215 Ryerson Street, Brooklyn; the figural sculpture on the interior of the Williamsburgh Savings Bank (1927-29, Halsey, McCormack & Helmer), 1 Hanson Place, Brooklyn; the sculptural decoration, with Jacques Delamarre, on the Chanin Building (1927-29, Sloan & Robertson), 122 East 42nd Street; the terra-cotta panels (and possibly the sculpted reliefs) of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design (1928, Frederic C. Hiron), 304 East 44th Street; the terra-cotta panels on the State Bank & Trust Co. (1927-28, Dennison & Hiron), 681-685 Eighth Avenue; the model of and ornament on the Panhellenic Tower (1927-28, John Mead Howells), 3 Mitchell Place; the model of the Daily News Building (1929-30, Raymond Hood), 220 East 42nd Street; the decoration of the Majestic Apartments (1930-31, Irwin S. Chanin), 115 Central Park West; and the ornament on the Century Apartments (1931, Irwin S. Chanin), 25 Central Park West. Chambellan performed a variety of tasks at Rockefeller Center (1931-33, Associated Architects), including creating architects' models, providing technical assistance to other artists, and executing bronze plaques at the entrance to and stainless doors on the interior of Radio City Music Hall, as well as, with Foster Gunnison, producing the central lighting fixture in the auditorium; designing six bronze fountainhead figures in the Channel Gardens; and executing decorative spandrel panels on the British Building and La Maison Francaise. He was also responsible for the ornament on the Airlines Terminal Building (1940, John B. Peterkin, demolished), 80 East 42nd Street. Of the extant New York buildings listed, only the State Bank & Trust Co. Building is not a designated New York City Landmark.
10. Rayne Adams, "Thoughts on Modern, and Other, Ornament" *Pencil Points* X (January, 1929), pp. 3-16. An illustration on page 8 shows the architect's sketch and a photograph of the model made from the sketch by Chambellan.

11. Much of the information in this section is adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Barclay-Vesey Building Designation Report* LP-1745 (New York: City of New York, 1991), report prepared by David Breiner; LPC, *The Long Distance Building of the American Telephone & Telegraph Company Designation Report* LP-1747 (New York: City of New York, 1991), report prepared by David Breiner; LPC, *Western Union Building Designation Report* LP-1749 (New York: City of New York, 1991), report prepared by Betsy Bradley; Rosemarie Haag Bletter, "The Art Deco Style," *Skyscraper Style, Art Deco New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); David Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (NY: Preservation Press, 1996), and the Landmarks Preservation Commission research files.
12. Bletter, 41.
13. Corbett, "Architecture," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1929), 275, quoted in LPC, *Barclay-Vesey Building*, 4.
14. The idea of the surfaces of buildings being treated with little depth, literally as a skin around the framework came from the work of architects of the Chicago School, which in turn can be traced back to the writings of German architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879). In an essay he included as one of the four basic components of architecture the "enclosure of textiles, animal skins, wattle or any other filler hung from the frame or placed between the supporting poles." Bletter, 61.
15. Queens County Registers Office, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 715, p.165.
16. Rayne Adams, "Master Draftsmen, XXI Frederic C. Hiron" *Pencil Points* VIII (July, 1927), pp. 397-410.
17. Queens County Registers Office, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 3737. P. 5931, and New York City Telephone Directories, 1935-1945.
18. Queens County Registers Office, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 5037, p. 517.

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 (Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building has a special character, and 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 (Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building was built in 1929 and designed by the well-known architectural firm of Dennison & Hirons; that this eight-story office building was constructed for the Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company whose purpose was to insure mortgages and bank loans, and specialized in such business on Long Island; that the company, in order to make a strong statement of its presence in the business district of Jamaica, Queens, hired an architectural firm which was known for its modern designs in the Art Deco style; that the architects used many elements consistent with tall Art Deco buildings, such as continuous vertical piers with recessed windows, decorative spandrels with textured brick designs, and a varied roofline; that the noted architectural modeler, Rene Chambellan helped create unusual and colorful terra cotta ornament which was placed above the second story and at the crown, and which contributes to a prominent and truly unique building in downtown Jamaica.

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 (Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building, 90-04 161st Street (aka 90-02 -- 90-04 161st Street, 160-02 -- 160-10 90th Avenue, and 90-01 -- 90-03 160th Street), and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9757, Lot 23 as its Landmark Site.



(Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building
90-04 161st Street, Queens
Photo courtesy of Jamaica Development Corporation



(Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building
160th Street Facade
Photo: Bill Neeley



(Former) Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building
Corner of 160th Street and 90th Avenue
Photo: Bill Neeley



90th Avenue facade details

(Former) Suffolk Title Guarantee Company Building



161st Street facade details

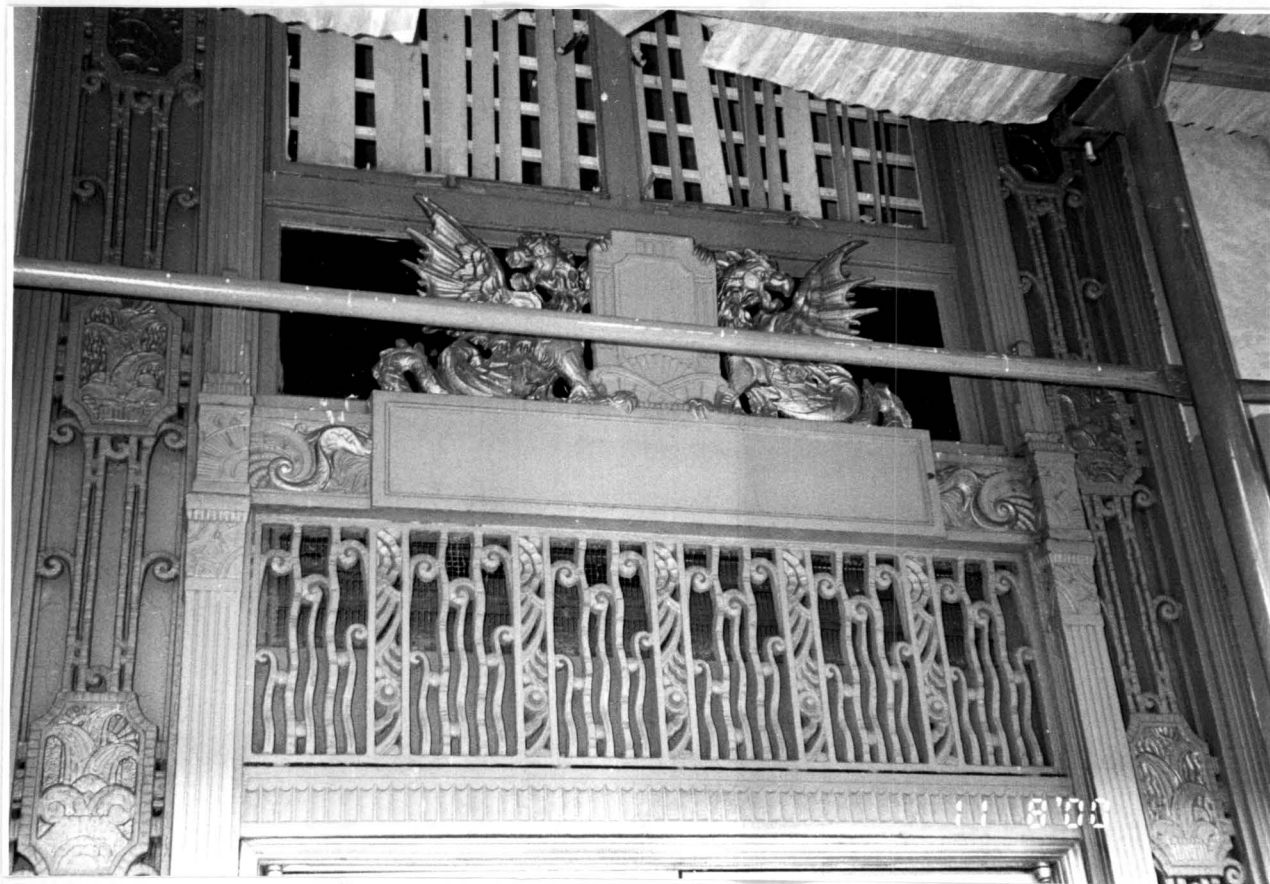
Photos: Bill Neeley



Details at roofline, 161st Street

(Former) Suffolk Title Guarantee Company Building

Detail of main entrance, 161st Street



Photos: Bill Neeley



(Former) Suffolk Title Guarantee Company Building
Detail, terra-cotta panels
Photo: Bill Neeley

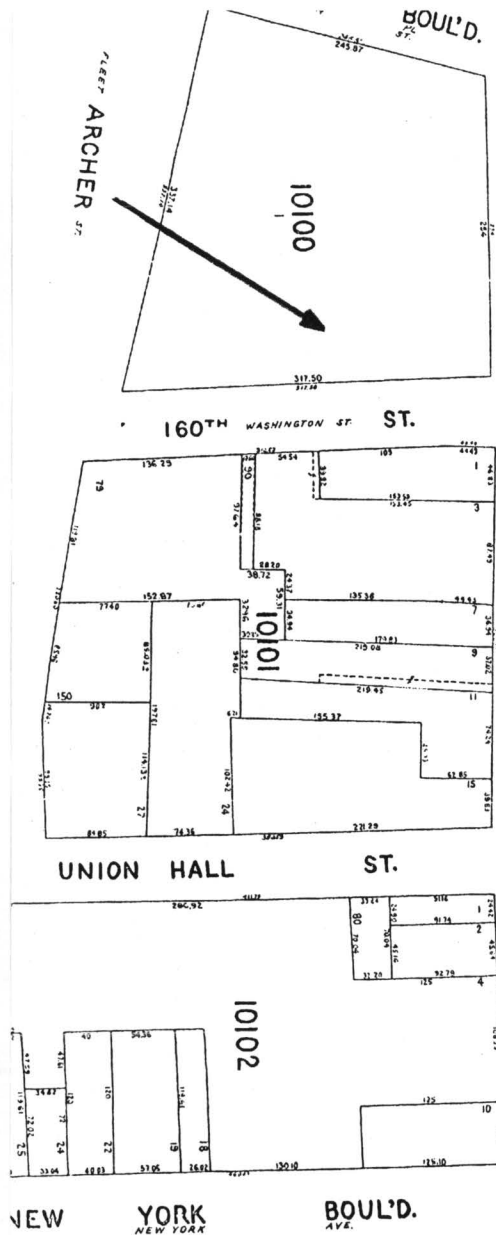
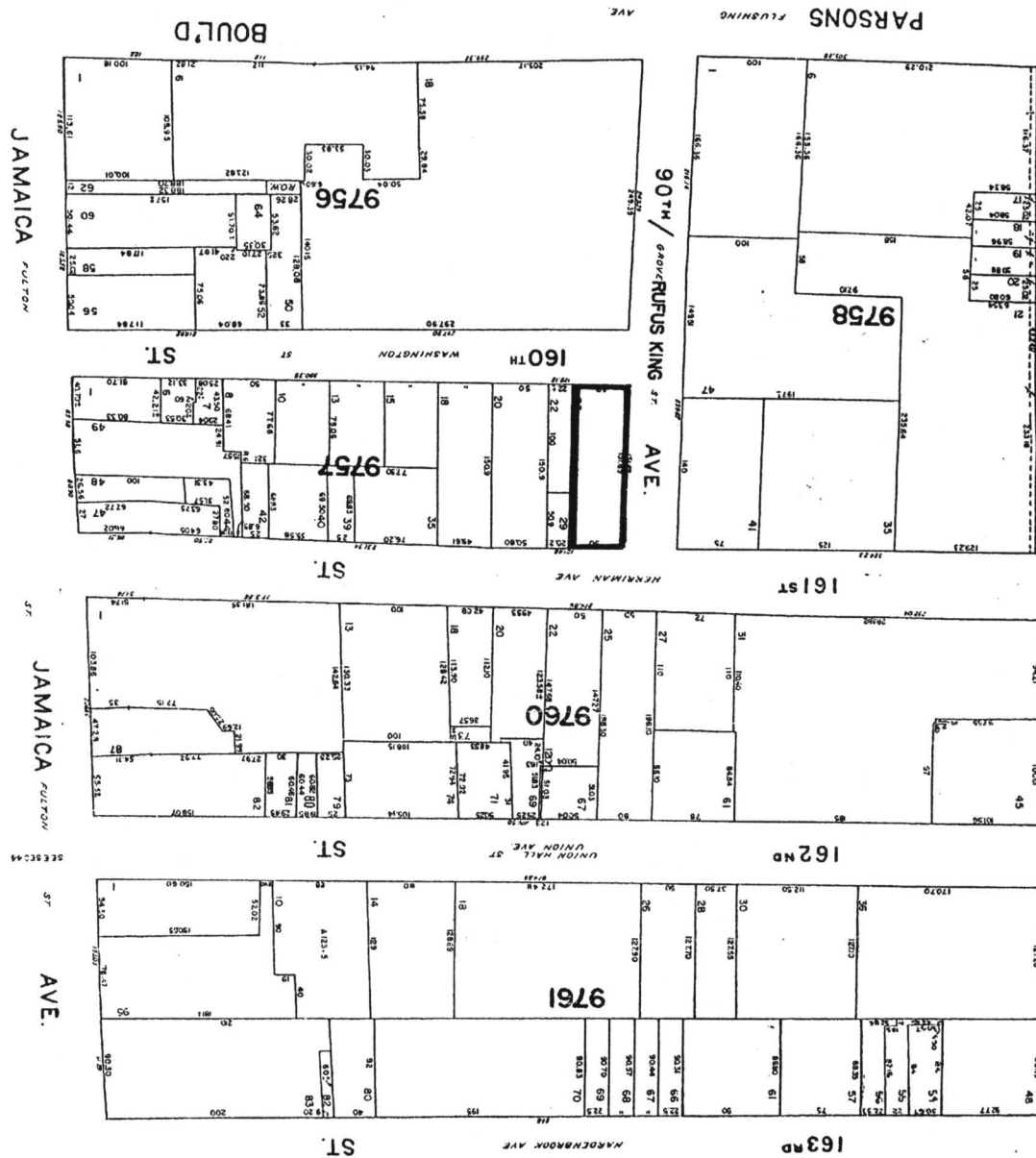


(Former) Suffolk Title Guarantee Company Building
 90-04 161st Street (aka 90-02 - 90-04 161st Street, 160-02 - 160-10 90th Avenue, and 90-01 - 90-03 160th Street), Queens
 Landmark Site: Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9757, Lot 23
 Source: Sanborn Building & Property Atlas, Queens, 2000, vol.6, pl.23.

89TH SWEETON AVE.

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AVE. AVE.



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