

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, WOODSTOCK BRANCH, 761 East 160th Street,
The Bronx
Constructed 1913-1914; McKim, Mead & White, architects

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx, Tax Block 2657, Lot 30

On January 13, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the New York Public Library Woodstock Branch. Four witnesses spoke in favor of the designation, including a representative of the New York Public Library and representatives of the Municipal Art Society, the Historic Districts Council and the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America.



Summary

Opened on February 17, 1914, the Woodstock Branch of the New York Public Library is the sixty-first Carnegie branch library built in New York City. It is one of nine in the Bronx (eight still extant) and one of sixty-seven in all five boroughs, constructed when Andrew Carnegie donated \$5.2 million in 1901 to establish a city-wide branch library system. The preeminent and nationally influential architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White designed the Woodstock Branch; it was the eleventh of their twelve Carnegie libraries, consisting of three in the Bronx, and nine in Manhattan.¹ The library's classically-inspired style, with its characteristic vertical plan, offset entrance, carved stone ornament, and tall arched first floor windows providing abundant lighting to a simple interior, is characteristic of the urban Carnegie library type. The library has played a prominent role in the neighborhood for nearly one hundred years.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

History of Morrisania²

The Morrisania section of the Bronx was named after the prominent Morris family, local landowners, slaveowners and politicians through several generations from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Before European colonization, the southeastern Bronx was associated with the regionally dominant Wappinger group of Native Americans, part of the broader Algonquian cultural and linguistic group.³ Morrisania became one of the twenty-one townships of Westchester County in 1788, and was annexed to the Town of Westchester in 1791. The construction of the Harlem and Hudson River Railroads, beginning in 1842, resulted in the start of development and an increase in population, particularly an influx of German and Irish immigrants. Morrisania became part of the township of West Farms in 1846, was the most populous section of Westchester County by 1855, and was chartered as a separate town in 1864. When Morrisania was formally annexed to New York City in 1874, along with the western section of the Bronx, it had a population of over 19,000. By the late nineteenth century, Morrisania had a predominantly German population, with its own local brewing industry. Expansion of the elevated railroad lines along Third Avenue beginning in the mid-1880s, and later, the IRT subway system, reaching the area in 1904, helped spur a vast real estate boom. Between 1874 and 1911, the population of the annexed section of the Bronx grew by 1,300 percent, the majority of which occurred after the annexation of the rest of the Bronx in 1895. At the time, the Bronx would have been the seventh largest city in the United States. Starting in the 1930s, the ethnic composition of the area's population changed as earlier groups moved and new immigrant families came to the neighborhood. As early as the 1850s the area of Morrisania in which the library is located was known as Woodstock, allegedly named for Sir Walter Scott's 1826 novel of the same name.⁴ The small village was centered on East 163rd Street and Jackson Avenue, and its residents were largely of German, Hungarian, Russian and Polish origin.⁵ By 1879, city blocks and lots had been laid out, although it was not until the early part of the 20th century that the east-west streets received numbers in place of their former names.⁶ The decision to locate a branch of the New York Public Library in Morrisania represents the growth of the neighborhood and the accompanying expansion of public services.

History of New York City Libraries⁷

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries libraries in New York City were private, institutional, or subscription. The New York Society Library, a subscription library where users paid a membership fee, was established in 1754, and Columbia University opened a library by 1757. Both were destroyed during the Revolutionary War but were rebuilt, and by 1876, Columbia had one of the largest collections in the country. Reading rooms, operated as businesses or by non-profit organizations, made books available to the public, and bookseller Garrett Noel opened the earliest known reading room in 1763.

Institutions including The New-York Historical Society, the Cooper Union, and Union Theological Seminary opened libraries in the first half of the nineteenth century. New York State legislation enabling City support of libraries was passed in the 1830s, but libraries were privately supported for most of the nineteenth century. The Astor

Library, the City's first free public reference library, incorporated in 1849. The Lenox Library, a private collection of rare and reference books, incorporated in 1870. By 1876, there were about ninety various libraries and collections in New York City.

The earliest branch library system was the private New York Free Circulating Library, established in 1878 to provide education and self-help for the poor. Support came from Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and other wealthy New Yorkers, and from public funds beginning in 1887. There were eleven branches by 1901. The smaller Aguilar Free Library Society was started in 1886 to foster the "free circulation of carefully selected literature, in the homes of the people of this City, with distributing branches in localities where the Jewish population was dense."⁸ The organization, later associated with the Educational Alliance, was named after Grace Aguilar, an English novelist and Sephardic Jew. There were four branches by 1901.

History of Bronx Libraries⁹

As early as 1872 a small lending library was operating out of a greenhouse on the William E. Dodge estate in Riverdale. Under the initiative of Miss Grace Dodge, this small library collection led to the founding of the Riverdale Library Association in 1883. Shortly thereafter, Mr. and Mrs. Percy R. Pyne donated funds for the construction of a library on a donated plot of land; the Riverdale Library was the precursor to the Riverdale Branch of the New York Public Library.¹⁰ Another early library was the Van Schaick Free Reading Room, a designated New York City Landmark at Westchester Square, which was donated to the community by local philanthropist Peter C. Van Schaick in 1882-23 and designed by Frederick Clarke Withers. The library was expanded to the designs of William Anderson in 1890, when it was endowed by railroad tycoon and Throg's Neck resident Collis P. Huntington, and renamed. The Huntington Free Library and Reading Room is still administered by its trustees and functions as a non-circulating library open to the public. Church libraries included those belonging to the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip and to the Mott Avenue Methodist Church.

The Kingsbridge Free Library and the Riverdale Library were founded prior to 1900, while the High Bridge Free Library and the Bronx Free Library were both founded in 1901, the latter being mainly an adult education organization. All four were eventually absorbed into the New York Public Library system, which at the time was operating a "traveling" branch that periodically circulated books in neighborhoods not served by a permanent branch.

The New York Public Library and Andrew Carnegie¹¹

The New York Public Library was established in 1895 as a private corporation, which received limited public funds. Formed initially by the merger of the Astor and Lenox Libraries and the Tilden Trust, it was primarily concerned with building a major reference library on the site of the old Croton Reservoir at Fifth Avenue on 42nd Street. The consolidation of New York City in 1898 inspired the growth and unification of the library institutions in the City, including the New York Public Library.

New York was one of the largest cities in the world with a population of three million in 1898 and growing rapidly. It trailed behind other cities in public library support, ranking ninth in per capita spending.¹² A public branch library system was established in 1901 when the New York Free Circulating Library merged with The New

York Public Library. Most of the small independent lending libraries, such as the Aguilar, Webster, Kingsbridge, and Tottenville, joined the New York Public Library, increasing the size of the still inadequate branch network. The promise of a large grant from Andrew Carnegie in 1901 spurred these library mergers. The New York Public Library is still organized into the separate reference and branch systems that were created during this consolidation.

Andrew Carnegie and John Shaw Billings, Director of the New York Public Library, strongly supported the amalgamation of all the library systems, including Brooklyn and Queens libraries, which ultimately chose to remain independent. Today, New York City still has three separate library corporations, The New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, and the Queens Borough Public Library.

In 1901, when the library institutions were large and cohesive enough to suit him, Andrew Carnegie donated \$5.2 million to New York City to build a system of branch libraries in all five boroughs. The grant was divided among the three library systems, with the New York Public Library receiving \$3.36 million, and Brooklyn and Queens allocated \$1.6 million and \$240,000 respectively. The grant bought sixty-seven libraries in all five boroughs, two more than originally envisioned.¹³ In a 1901 letter to John Shaw Billings, Carnegie said that “sixty-five libraries at one stroke probably breaks the record, but this is the day of big operations and New York is soon to be the biggest of Cities.”¹⁴

Andrew Carnegie rose from poverty to become one of the wealthiest men in the United States after he sold his steel business to J.P. Morgan in 1901. He began donating to libraries in 1881, but with the grant to New York City he started the vast, worldwide operation which made him unique in the world of philanthropy.

Andrew Carnegie based his donations on a philosophy of giving he developed in the 1870s and 1880s. He believed that the wealthy should live modestly and, while still living, give away their funds for the good of humanity. He considered seven areas worthy of his philanthropy: universities, libraries, medical centers, parks, meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches. Like other wealthy New Yorkers involved in the social reform movement, he understood the problems facing New York City at the beginning of the twentieth century: the overcrowding from massive immigration, poverty, lack of education and absence of such facilities as baths, playgrounds and libraries. Andrew Carnegie gave away about 90 per cent of his wealth by the time he died in 1911. More than 2,500 Carnegie libraries were built worldwide and over 1,680 in the United States. The library program ended in 1917 but the Carnegie Corporation and twenty other foundations and funds have carried on his aspirations.¹⁵

The inventor of cost accounting, Carnegie gave away his money with great efficiency. His grant provided for the construction of the buildings, but New York City had to contribute the cost of the land as well as the books, the upkeep and the operation of the libraries in perpetuity. The acquisition of sites alone cost the New York Public Library over \$1.6 million, just under half the cost of the buildings.

In 1901, the New York Public Library Board Executive Committee appointed a temporary architects' advisory committee consisting of Charles F. McKim of the firm McKim, Mead & White, John M. Carrère of Carrère & Hastings, and Walter Cook of Babb, Cook & Willard, to advise them on how to proceed with construction. The committee advised that the branches be uniform and recognizable in materials, style, plan and scale and that different site requirements would provide variety. They recommended

forming a committee of two to five architectural firms who would design the buildings in cooperation with each other. Andrew Carnegie objected to the lack of competition in this system but was ultimately convinced that it would be faster and cheaper and would produce a more unified collection. The advisors, McKim, Carrère, and Cook, were fortuitously selected for the permanent committee, and their firms designed most of The New York Public Library Carnegie branches.¹⁶ The architects consulted with the librarians on planning and design, an innovation recently adopted in library design.

McKim, Mead & White¹⁷

McKim, Mead & White is among the best known and influential of American architecture firms. Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909) and William Rutherford Mead (1846-1928) began working together in 1872 with William Bigelow, forming the partnership McKim, Mead & Bigelow by 1877. Bigelow left the firm in 1879 and Stanford White (1853-1906) replaced him, creating the partnership of McKim, Mead & White. The three men shared early training experience: all had studied in Europe, with McKim attending the Ecole des Beaux Arts; McKim and Mead had formal academic training and had apprenticed with New York architect Russell Sturgis; McKim and White had worked for H.H. Richardson. The three-man partnership ended when Stanford White was murdered by Harry K. Thaw in 1906. Charles McKim, in poor health since a bicycle accident in 1895 and devastated by the loss of his friend as well as the bad publicity, retired in 1907. William Mead stayed on until 1919, but spent most of his time traveling. The talented and experienced junior partners continued the firm's work, with name changes to reflect the new partners, until the 1990s. The prolific firm executed nearly 1,000 commissions between 1879 and 1919, the year William Mead retired.

The firm was best known for its classically inspired designs, although the early work was in the more romantic Shingle style. The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago was a turning point for the firm; Charles McKim held a key role in its planning and design. The exposition captured the public's imagination with its depiction of a brilliant white classical city lit by electric lights. McKim, Mead & White was a leading advocate of the new classical style, which swept the country in the early twentieth century. By the time the Carnegie libraries were built in New York City and in the cities and towns across the country, there was no question that they would be classical in style.

Several of New York City's important designated landmarks are early examples of the firm's free classical style: the Villard Houses (1882-85), an early Italian Renaissance-inspired design; Judson Memorial Church, Tower and Hall (1888-93; 1895-96); King Model Houses (1891-92); the Brooklyn Museum (1893-1915); and the former Bowery Savings Bank (1893-95). The firm was socially prominent and designed houses for the wealthy as well as their clubs, including the Century Association (1889-91), the Harvard Club (1893-94), and the University Club (1896-1900), all designated New York City landmarks.¹⁸

The firm designed four important library buildings at the turn of the twentieth century. McKim designed the Boston Public Library in 1887-1895, one of the first of the new wave of classical public buildings at the end of the nineteenth century. The firm designed two monumental university library buildings in New York, the Low Memorial Library at Columbia University (McKim, 1897) and the Gould Memorial Library (White, 1900) at the former New York University Uptown Campus. Charles McKim's elegant J.

Pierpont Morgan Library (1902-07) is considered one of his finest designs. The Low, Gould, and Morgan libraries are designated New York City landmarks.

Charles McKim was responsible for the design of the firm's twelve Carnegie branch libraries, assisted by William Mitchell Kendall (1856-1941), a graduate of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who entered the firm in 1882 and became a partner in 1906. McKim's Carnegie libraries are the most formal of the collection, faced in stone with lavish use of classical ornament. While keeping to the architects' committee's design guidelines, they have the most variation in the design of their façades. Six McKim, Mead & White Carnegie libraries are designated New York City landmarks: Chatham Square, Hamilton Grange, 115th Street, Schomburg, Tompkins Square, and 125th Street.

Design of the New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch¹⁹

The New York City Carnegie branch libraries share many design characteristics and are clearly recognizable as Carnegie libraries. They were designed to stand out as separate and distinct structures, an innovation in 1901 when most of the branch libraries were located in other buildings. They are classical in style and, with few exceptions, a simplified version of the Beaux-Arts model, similar to most public buildings designed in this period. They are clad in limestone, or in brick with limestone or terra-cotta trim. There are two distinct types, the urban and suburban. In Manhattan and densely developed sections of the Bronx, the Carnegie libraries were designed for mid-block sites, a condition which encouraged vertically-oriented palazzo-like facades and simpler interior layouts characterized by a tripartite scheme: vertical circulation was contained along one solid side wall, and front and rear rooms, separated by a librarians' station, were aligned along a second side wall, typically lined with bookshelves. On less restrictive sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, a freestanding library typically had a symmetrical front with a central entrance leading to a room containing the librarians' station, which was flanked on two sides by large reading rooms. The second floor contained offices or another reading room; the basement accommodated a packing room, boiler and toilets.

The plans of the Carnegie libraries were drawn up in collaboration with the architects' committee and the librarians. The librarians met with the committee at the beginning of the process and commented on the final plans. The majority of the libraries featured offset entrances and stairs, a concession to the librarians. While the architects preferred classical center entrances, the offset entrances and elevated first floors provided for spacious, light-filled reading rooms. A prominent circulation desk afforded control of the entire reading room by a single librarian. There were accessible stacks, an innovation in the early twentieth century; nineteenth century library book stacks were off limits to everyone except the librarians.

The Woodstock branch followed the urban branch model. Occupying a modest mid-block site two blocks west of the major north-south thoroughfare of Prospect Avenue, the library presented to the street a simple palazzo-type façade of Indiana limestone and shared brick party walls with its neighboring structures. Located left of center on the facade, the library's main entrance led into a vestibule containing a stairway to the basement and a short flight of stairs and another doorway giving onto the main reading room. A stairway leading to the first-floor mezzanine, second and third floors

was located along the left (west) wall of the main reading room. A bathroom, work room, and librarian's office were located beyond this stairway, along the left wall. Directly above these facilities on the mezzanine level were a second bathroom, a kitchenette, and a staff room. A U-shaped circulation desk occupied the front of the main reading room; the middle of the room was taken up by book stacks arranged in ranks parallel to the building's long axis; and a reading and reference section occupied the back of the room. The tall, rounded first-floor windows were south-facing and designed to provide ample daylight for reading. A reading court and garden were located behind the building. On the second floor was the children's reading room, and another general reading room occupied the third floor. Each floor contained approximately 5,500 square feet of space.²⁰

Architecturally, the Woodstock branch is almost identical to McKim, Mead & White's West 40th Street branch (1913), and appears to be a simpler version of the firm's designs for Tompkins Square (1904), Hamilton Grange (1906), and 115th Street (1909). McKim, Mead & White's urban palazzo style is characterized by a three-story, three-bay façade with an offset entrance; a rusticated stone base (or, in a few cases, the entire façade rusticated); quoining; rounded windows on the first and second floors and square windows on the third; sills resting on console brackets and pedimented lintels; carved tympana; balustrades below windows or along the parapet; and a frieze surmounted by a simple limestone cornice.²¹

Construction and Subsequent History²²

The New York Public Library selected the sites for the Carnegie libraries with approval from the City. Because every community wanted a Carnegie library, site selection was the only part of the smooth-running building process where there was any contention. The Carnegie branches were intended to stand out in their communities, to be centrally located and, if possible, to be near schools and other civic structures. John S. Billings stated this position in 1901:

Every one of these buildings ought to be of one distinctive and uniform type, so that the most ignorant child going through the streets of the City will at once know as Carnegie Library when he or she sees it.²³

The New York Public Library Executive Committee hired New York attorney Alanson T. Briggs to propose library sites and act as agent to the libraries and liaison to New York City. After identifying densely populated neighborhoods, he looked for centrally located sites in these neighborhoods. George L. Rives, Secretary of The New York Public Library, described the philosophy behind site selection in 1901:

The trustees are of the opinion that in establishing branch libraries it is of great importance to establish them, as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well frequented streets. In some measure the same principles should be applied that would govern in the selection of a site for a retail store. 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.²⁴

Sites were approved by Board of Estimate and Apportionment. Many neighborhoods were vying to be chosen by the library as branch sites, and letters and signed petitions from residents, church groups, lawyers and real estate developers, YMCA boards, and

even contractors were submitted to the New York Public Library's Site Committee, urging consideration for particular sites.²⁵

The Woodstock Branch was initially planned for a prominent site at the northeast corner of the intersection of Prospect Avenue and East 163rd Street, a transportation and commercial hub in Morrisania. The site had been identified and was being considered by the New York Public Library as early as 1908. By 1912, however, records indicate that the City had obtained title (on behalf of the New York Public Library) to the present mid-block site located a few blocks west of the site originally proposed. The reason for this change of site remains unclear, although lots located on side streets were generally less expensive than lots located on major avenues.²⁶ Demolition began at the new site on the north side of East 160th Street in March 1912, and in early October plans submitted by the architects were approved separately by the Advisory Board of Architects, the Committee on Circulation, and the Executive Committee. The E.E. Paul Company was selected as contractor, having built several of the other Carnegie libraries. For the Woodstock Branch, the contractors erected a steel-frame building and probably employed the Clinton Fireproofing System, a wire-mesh and concrete fireproofing system for steel construction.²⁷ Construction of the Woodstock Branch cost \$116,000, almost \$2,000 less than the estimate. The site had been purchased for \$14,000, bringing the total cost of the library to approximately \$130,000.²⁸ The seventh Carnegie library to open in the Bronx—after Mott Haven, Kingsbridge, Tremont, High Bridge, Morrisania, and Melrose—the Woodstock Branch opened on February 17, 1914 with 11,000 books on its shelves. At the opening ceremony, representatives of the New York Public Library and the Board of Education gave speeches and musical entertainment was provided by the Music School Settlement.²⁹

In 1967 the library was closed for major renovations carried out by the Department of Public Works. These included window replacement, steam cleaning and repointing of the limestone façade, repointing of exposed brickwork, installation of air conditioning and an elevator, upgrading of mechanical systems, and other modifications for code compliance. During the renovation, the fanlights over the first-story window and door openings were sealed, as were the second and third-story windows in the left bay. Changes to the interior included a new entrance vestibule and new wall partitions.³⁰ A second major renovation was undertaken beginning in 2002, supported by City Council funding. The first phase of work included new paint for the interiors, installation of telecommunications wiring, and furniture cleaning. The second phase, recently begun, is to include interior reprogramming and new interior finishes; installation of new mechanical systems, lighting, and telecommunications wiring; a new design for an ADA-compliant front entry; and cleaning and restoration of the façade, including the installation of replica bronze lanterns, a new banner pole and façade lighting. The restoration architect is the New York-based firm of Helpert Architects, who also renovated the 67th Street Branch in Manhattan (Babb, Cook & Willard, 1905).³¹

Over its 95 years of existence, the Woodstock Branch has been a positive social force and an anchor in a community beset by economic disinvestment, inadequate public services, and periodic violence. Beginning in the 1970s, the South Bronx experienced economic crises and waves of arson and violence that earned the area a reputation as one of the poorest and most dangerous in the entire city.³² During these difficult years, the Woodstock Branch – like library branches all over the city – faced successive budget cuts

that resulted in reduced or irregular hours and cuts in services. The second floor, originally used as the children's reading room, has been closed since a budget cut in 1975, while the third floor and basement have gone unused due to a lack of basic maintenance.³³ The current renovation plan will reopen the second and third floors, and promises to breathe new life into the Woodstock Branch as it approaches its hundredth birthday.

Description

The Woodstock library is a three-story, three-bay brick structure clad in rusticated limestone on its primary, south-facing façade. The east and west-facing facades of the library are exposed brick party walls. The primary façade follows a base-shaft-capital scheme, with arched first-floor windows and an offset entrance; a molded water table and arched windows at the second floor; and rectangular third-floor windows surmounted by a bas-relief frieze, denticulated cornice and parapet. The entire façade projects forward from a thin border of ashlar, creating the effect of a frame around the building. On the first floor in the left bay, the arched entrance contains a non-historic metal double-door with a glass transom below a non-historic sign reading "The New York Public Library/ Woodstock Branch." The arch above the sign has been filled in and a security light installed; originally, the arch contained a fanlight. Two non-historic metal lanterns flank the entrance, and a non-historic plaque below the lantern on the left reads "NYPL/The New York Public Library/ Woodstock Branch." To the right of the entrance, the second and third bays have an arched opening containing a pair of four-over-four double-hung sash windows with an engaged balustrade in the spandrel panel below and a fanlight above. The three first-floor arches are accented by limestone voussoirs.

The second floor is marked by a molded limestone water table, and directly above this are three windows, each comprising a pair of narrow six-over-four double-hung sash separated by a thin pilaster-type mullion. Each window is surmounted by a tympanum with a running motif around the border and a bas relief carving in the center. Reading from left to right, the tympanum carvings depict the following subjects: an anchor and laurels below the Latin inscription *Anchora Spei* ("Anchor of Hope"), set within a concave rosette-decorated roundel; an open book flanked by foliated scrolls; and an anchor clasped by two hands below the Christian symbols Chi and Ro and the Latin inscription *Concordia* ("Peace"), set within a concave rosette-decorated roundel. The three second-floor window arches are accented by limestone voussoirs.

Four limestone pilasters rest on the water table and terminate at the bas-relief frieze below the cornice; the pilasters are evenly spaced across the façade and accentuate the three-bay composition. The three third-floor windows are rectangular and each comprises a pair of narrow six-over-four double-hung sash separated by a thin pilaster-type mullion. The windows sit above simple sills set flush with the façade, and are unified under a continuous lintel that also reads as the architrave supporting the bas-relief frieze and cornice.

The bas-relief frieze runs the width of the façade, interrupted in the center by a molded panel containing the inscription "NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY." The bas-relief frieze is composed of an alternating motif of flours-de-lys and bundles of acanthus leaves. Surmounting the frieze is a band of bolection, and projecting above this is the

denticulated limestone cornice. Above the cornice is a parapet framed by limestone coping; the center section of the parapet steps up slightly.

Report prepared by
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NOTES

¹ Of the twelve McKim, Mead & White Carnegie libraries, the following six are designated New York City landmarks, all located in Manhattan: Chatham Square (1903), Tompkins Square (1904), 125th Street (1904), 135th Street (now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture) (1905), Hamilton Grange (1906), and 115th Street (1909). Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy: the Carnegie Libraries of New York City* (New York: Cooper Union and NYC Department of General Services, 1996).

² This section was adapted from the following sources: Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Morris High School Designation Report* (LP-1258), (New York: City of New York, 1982), with additional information from Louis F. Haffen, *Borough of the Bronx: A Record of the Unparalleled Progress and Development* (New York: Bronx Borough President, c. 1909), 3 and John McNamara, *History in Asphalt: The Origin of Bronx Street and Place Names* (Bronx: The Bronx County Historical Society, 1984), 29, 80, 172, 353, 548. See also William Howard Adams, *Gouverneur Morris: An Independent Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 4; Woodstock Branch Records, 1913-1989. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York City; John McNamara, "The Bronx in History: Old Woodstock Community Was Peopled by Germans," Woodstock clippings file, Bronx Historical Society; *Map of Kings County: with Parts of Westchester, Queens, New York & Richmond* (New York: Matthew Dripps, 1872); *Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of the Bronx* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1879, 1893); and *Insurance Maps Borough of Brooklyn* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1891, 1909).

³ Eugene J. Boesch, Ph.D. "Archaeological Evaluation and Sensitivity Assessment of the Prehistoric And Contact Period Aboriginal History of the Bronx, New York." (Research study submitted to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1996), 13-14.

⁴ McNamara, *History in Asphalt*, 548.

⁵ "25th Anniversary, 1939," Box 5, Woodstock Branch Records; McNamara, "The Bronx in History."

⁶ McNamara, *History in Asphalt*, 80, 353. East 160th Street was previously known as Findlay Street and later Denman Place.

⁷ This section was adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report* (LP-2098) (New York: City of New York, 2001), report prepared by Mary B. Dierickx.

⁸ Harry Miller Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library* (New York: 1923), 241.

⁹ This section was adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch (originally McKinley Square Branch) Designation Report* (LP-1996) (New York: City of New York, 1998), report prepared by Donald Presa.

¹⁰ Riverdale Branch Records, 1955-1985. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library. Manuscript finding aid, retrieved from the New York Public Library website December 18, 2008

(<http://www.nypl.org/research/manuscripts/arc/arc8rive.xml>); Shirley M. Milord and Renee Kotler, "Public Libraries in the Bronx," mimeographed (Bronx, NY: Bronx Borough Office, New York Public Library, n.d.), 2.

¹¹ This section was adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report*.

¹² In 1901, before the Carnegie bequest, New York City spent nine cents per capita on libraries, comparing poorly with Boston, which spent fifty cents per capita and Buffalo, at forty-one cents per capita. Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: a History of its Founding and Early Years* (New York: the New York Public Library, 1973), 215.

¹³ The original 1901 agreement called for sixty-five libraries but in 1902 the estimated cost per branch was lowered and the total number was optimistically established as a maximum of seventy-three. Because of rising costs the number of branches totaled just two more than the original sixty-five. See Dierickx for more details.

¹⁴ Andrew Carnegie to John Shaw Billings, 1901, Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, NY.

¹⁵ No new grants were given after 1917. Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 217.

¹⁶ McKim, Mead & White designed twelve of the thirty-nine Carnegie branches, Carrère & Hastings designed fourteen, and Babb, and Cook & Willard designed eight. Their successor firms, Babb, Cook & Welch; Cook, Babb & Welch; and Cook & Welch designed another three. James Brown Lord designed the first Carnegie library, the Yorkville branch, but this was actually planned before the grant was given, and Herts & Tallant were responsible for the major renovation of the Aguilar branch, which they originally designed in 1899.

¹⁷ This section on McKim, Mead & White was adapted from Dierickx, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Designation Report* and is based on their entry in "Architect's Appendix," LPC, *Upper East Side Historic District Designation Report* (LP-1051) (New York: City of New York, 1981), 1297-1300; Leland Roth, "McKim, Mead & White" in *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Adolf K. Plazcek, ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 140-149; LPC, *(Former) James Hampden and Cornelia Van Rensselaer Robb House Designation Report* (LP-2026) (New York: City of New York, 1998) report prepared by Gale Harris; Leland Roth, ed., *McKim, Mead & White 1879-1915* (New York: Arno Press, 1977); Leland Roth, *McKim, Mead & White, Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); and Mosette Broderick, "McKim, Mead & White, in Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 708-709.

¹⁸ Villard Houses: 451-57 Madison Avenue; Judson Church: 51-55 Washington Square South; King Model Houses: West 139th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues; Brooklyn Museum: 200 Eastern Parkway; former Bowery Savings Bank: 130 Bowery; Century Association: 7 West 43rd Street; Harvard Club: 27 West 44th Street; University Club: 1 West 54th.

¹⁹ This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report* and LPC, *New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch (originally McKinley Square Branch) Designation Report*. Sources for this section include Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy* and Russell Sturgis, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building* 3 vols. 1902. Reprint (Detroit: Gale Research Company, Book Tower, 1966).

²⁰ Dierickx, 121.

²¹ Dierickx; Roth, *McKim, Mead & White 1879-1915*, plate 198.

²² This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report*; LPC, *New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch (originally McKinley Square Branch) Designation Report*.

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- ²³ John S. Billings to Andrew Carnegie, November 9, 1901, New York Public Library Collection, New York Public Library Archives, New York, NY.
- ²⁴ Harry Miller Lydenberg, "Moving the New York Public Library," *Library Journal* 36 (June 1911), 296-297, as cited in Dain, 237.
- ²⁵ Letters, Box 19, Alanson T. Briggs Records, 1901-1913, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York, NY.
- ²⁶ Box 17, Alanson T. Briggs Records; Mark Allen Hewitt, et al., contributors. *Carrère & Hastings, Architects*, 2 vols. (New York: Acanthus Press, 2006), 327.
- ²⁷ Buildings Department records show that the Clinton Fireproofing System was specified for all floor arches. Founded in the late 19th century by Massachusetts textile magnates Horatio and Eurastus Bigelow, the Clinton Wire Cloth Company manufactured and sold electrically-welded wire cloth for use in the reinforcement of concrete, with application to floors, arches, ceilings, columns, roofs, etc. "Factory and Industrial Management," *The Engineering Magazine* (vol. 27, April-September 1904), viii. Retrieved from Google Book Search March 20, 2009; "The History of Clinton," Town of Clinton website (accessed March 20, 2009, <http://www.clintonmass.com/history.shtml>).
- ²⁸ Box 18, Alanson T. Briggs Records; Dierickx, 121.
- ²⁹ Invitation, Box 2, Woodstock Branch Records.
- ³⁰ Box 2, Woodstock Branch Records; Dierickx, 121.
- ³¹ "Historic 1914 Woodstock Library Reopens after Painting," press release, November 6, 2002 (retrieved from the New York Public Library website December 18, 2008, <http://www.nypl.org/press/2002/woodstock02.cfm>); "The New York Public Library's 67th Street Branch Reopens on December 1 After a Full Renovation" press release, December 1, 2005 (retrieved from the New York Public Library website March 23, 2009, <http://www.nypl.org/press/2005/67thstreetRO.cfm>).
- ³² Jackson, 145.
- ³³ Seth Kugel, "For Readers, Wait at Library Is Not for Books, But for Space," *New York Times* (December 30, 2001), CY 7.

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 New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch 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, the New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch, built in 1914, was the seventh branch library built in the Bronx and the thirty-fifth branch library in New York City to be built with funds provided by the \$5.2 million gift from Andrew Carnegie to New York City for the purpose of establishing a city-wide branch library system; that it opened to the public on February 17, 1914 with an inventory of 11,000 books; that it was designed by the nationally famous and influential architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, which designed twelve Carnegie branch libraries as well as many of the major public and private buildings in New York City; that the classically inspired style that was the hallmark of the firm's library designs as well as a major characteristic of New York City's Carnegie libraries and other public buildings of the period is articulated through the tripartite composition, rusticated limestone façade with classical cornice and frieze, arched and rectangular door and window openings, and other features; that it is characteristically sited in mid-block; that the Woodstock Branch has been culturally, visually and historically an important component of its community for almost one hundred years which was the original intent of the Carnegie branches; and that the exterior of the building has retained its significant architectural characteristics.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provision of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2657, Lot 30, as its Landmark Site.

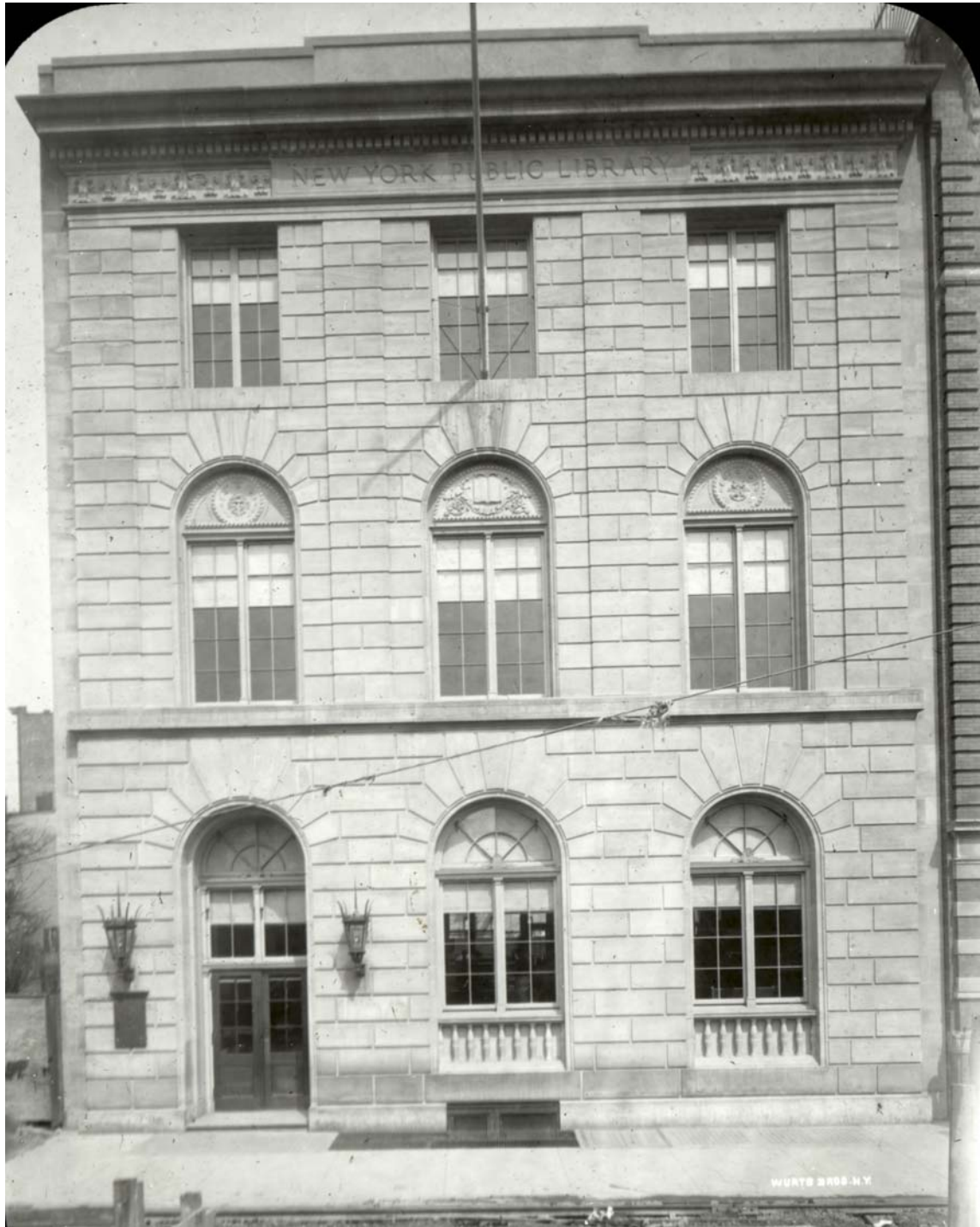
Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Pablo Vengoechea, Vice-Chair
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Margery Perlmutter,
Stephen Byrns, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Commissioners



New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch
761 East 160th Street, Borough of the Bronx
Photo: Michael Caratzas, 2008



New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch
Detail, main (south) facade
Photo: Michael Caratzas, 2008



New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch: General view, 1914
Photo: New York Public Library ID 101009



New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch: Patrons in main reading room, n.d.

Photo: New York Public Library ID 101011

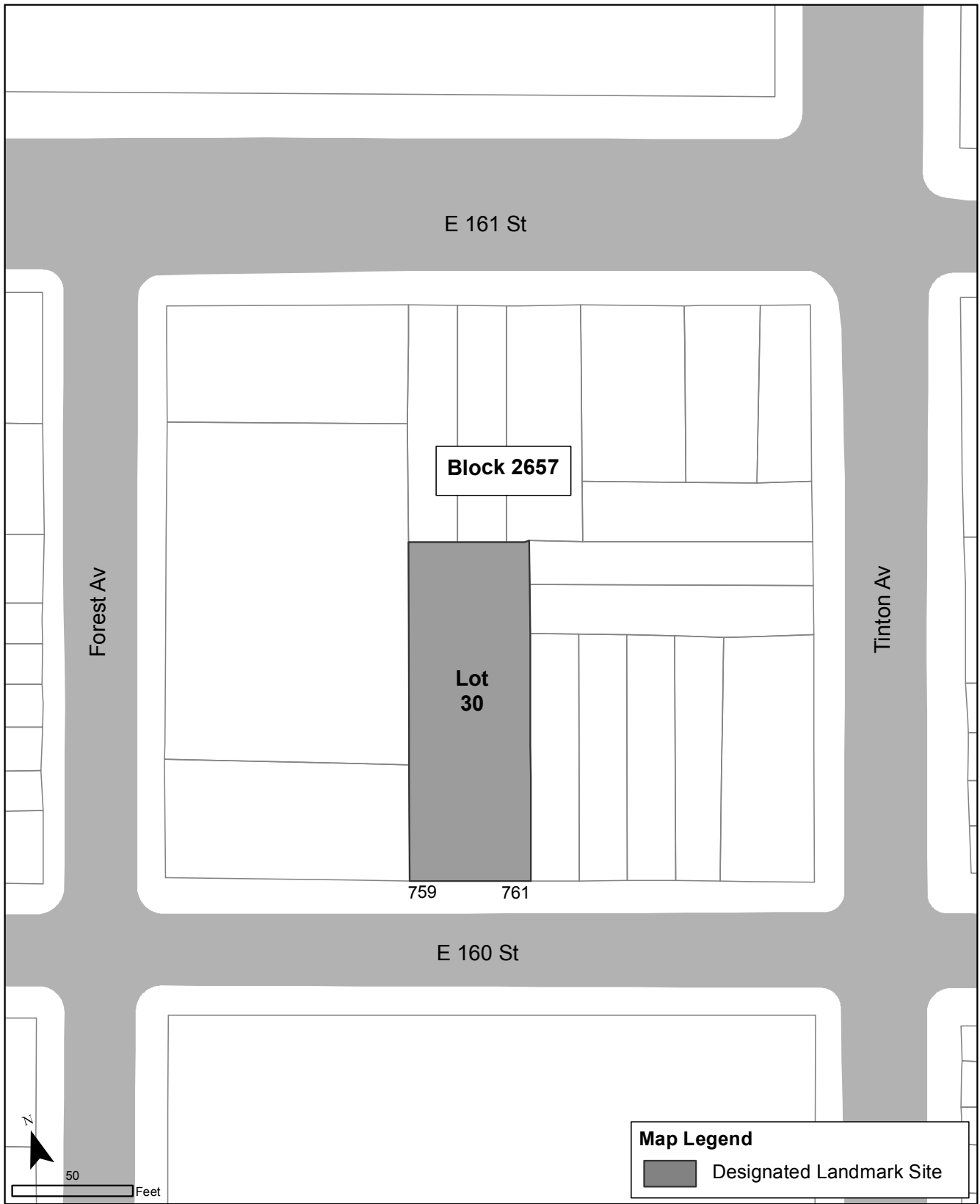


New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch: Details, carved tympana depicting the Latin words for “Anchor of Hope” (top) and “Peace” (middle), and a carved depiction of an open book (bottom)

Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



New York Public Library, Woodstock Branch
Details, "New York Public Library" sign (top),
fleur-de-lys and acanthus leaf motifs on the bas-relief frieze (bottom)
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, WOODSTOCK BRANCH (LP-2322), 761 East 160th Street
(aka 759-761 East 160th Street). Borough of Bronx, Tax Map Block 2657, Lot 30.

Designated: April 14, 2009