

**JAMAICA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUILDING**, 89-31 161<sup>st</sup> Street, Borough of Queens. Built 1928-29; George W. Conable, of Conable, Smith & Rowley, architect.

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens, Tax Map Block 9760, Lot 27

On September 15, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 2). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provision of law. Three people spoke in favor of designation including representatives of the Central Queens Historical Association, New York Landmarks Conservancy, and Historic Districts Council. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission received letters of support from Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, State Senator Shirley L. Huntley, Councilmember James F. Gennaro, the Hillcrest Estates Civic Association, Four Borough Neighborhood Alliance, and Queens Preservation Council.

### Summary

The Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building was constructed in 1928-29 near the heart of the Jamaica business district. Designed by architect George W. Conable, who had been responsible for the several prominent buildings in Jamaica, the building is a handsome example of the Georgian Revival style popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Founded in 1919 as the Jamaica Board of Trade to promote the area to businesses and residential developers, the Chamber of Commerce by 1926 had grown to a membership of nearly 500 when Secretary Max C. Bunyan suggested that the organization would benefit from having a building of its own, part of which could be rented out to support the work of the Chamber.

To reflect the prominence of the Chamber of Commerce within the burgeoning Jamaica business community, Conable designed a ten-story tall structure with a distinguished facade based on 18<sup>th</sup>-century American and British precedents. Above the terra-cotta base with its central entrance in the style of a triumphal arch, Conable emphasized the building's verticality through the division of the upper brick facade by cast-stone quoins into three sections, capping the wide center section with a prominent three-story pavilion that terminates in a pedimented temple. At the time of its dedication the building, which remained the Chamber's home until 1999, was described by the *Long Island Daily Press* as a "decided asset to the community."<sup>1</sup>

The remarkably intact Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building remains a significant example of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century office buildings that were constructed in downtown Jamaica as the area turned into the financial center for Long Island.



## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### The Development of Jamaica<sup>2</sup>

Historically an important crossroads of Long Island, the area of downtown Jamaica developed as a result of its central location and extensive transportation systems. Around 1836, the Long Island Rail Road, which had been incorporated in 1834, began running a trunk line from the foot of Atlantic Avenue to Jamaica and then eastward from Jamaica to eastern Long Island, making Jamaica a pivotal hub. This improved transportation encouraged non-agricultural business activity in the Jamaica area; industrial enterprises sprang up along the railroad, particularly after 1850 when the former toll road of the Brooklyn, Jamaica & Flatbush Turnpike Company was sold to a group of Jamaica businessmen who incorporated as the Jamaica & Brooklyn Plank Road Company. Following the Civil War, new modes of transportation continued to transform Jamaica by further facilitating commutation to New York City. The East New York & Jamaica Railroad Company established horse car lines along Fulton Street (renamed Jamaica Avenue in 1920) in 1866 replacing them 21 years later with electric trolleys.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw Jamaica evolve into a retreat for urban residents, who patronized its numerous inns and saloons on weekend excursions and built large summer homes. The permanent population of Jamaica also increased steadily throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and brought with it the subdivision of farms into house lots and a proliferation of new development, as well as the growth of Jamaica's downtown. The pressure for housing increased, resulting in street regularization and somewhat denser residential development following the incorporation of Queens into the City of New York in 1898. The 1901 *Atlas of the Borough of Queens* shows two- and three-story brick and frame structures clustered along Fulton Street and freestanding frame houses and stables, on lots mostly ranging from 50 to 100 feet in width, in the surrounding streets including a substantial dwelling on the future site of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building.

In 1898 Fulton Street, under the jurisdiction of the local government, was widened and repaved. Local business and political leaders seized the opportunity to praise the numerous advantages of Jamaica—a place with a traditional village character, yet poised to enter a new age—in an effort to encourage commerce, promote residential development, and raise property values.<sup>3</sup> The perceived positive impact of the impending consolidation was declared by one source in 1894: “The days of Greater New York can now be seen not very far ahead, when Jamaica will naturally form the most eastern point to which the consolidated elevated railroad can be expected to run ... very likely before the end of this [century].”<sup>4</sup>

Although it would be 1918 before the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company extended its elevated train service from Cypress Hills to 168<sup>th</sup> Street along Fulton Street, the decade before World War I saw several other significant transportation improvements. The Long Island Rail Road was electrified in 1905-08 followed by the opening of the railroad tunnels beneath the East River in 1910 enabling direct access between Pennsylvania Station and the towns of Long Island with a major hub in Jamaica. Surface transportation to Queens was further enhanced by the opening of the Queensboro Bridge in 1909. With this improved accessibility to Jamaica's downtown, the population of Jamaica quadrupled between 1900 and 1920 and by 1925 the lots on Jamaica Avenue between 160<sup>th</sup> and 168<sup>th</sup> Streets had the highest assessed valuation in Queens County.<sup>5</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s several major office and commercial structures including the J. Kurtz & Sons Store (1931, Allmendinger & Schlendorf), Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building (1929, Dennison & Hiron) (both designated New York City Landmarks) and

the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building had joined the Jamaica Savings Bank (1897-98, Hough & Duell, a designated New York City Landmark).

### History of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce

The Jamaica Chamber of Commerce or, as it was originally known, the Jamaica Board of Trade, was conceived at a meeting of 17 civic-minded businessmen and community leaders<sup>6</sup> and incorporated on May 23, 1919 for the purpose of promoting the development of Jamaica as a residential community and commercial center.<sup>7</sup> The Board's first home was in the Butler Building on the corner of Jamaica Avenue and Parsons Boulevard where various committees worked to improve streets and infrastructure as well as promote the advantages of Jamaica's central location with access to the city and Long Island communities to new businesses. Among their early successes were the construction of the new Jamaica High School (William H. Gompert, 1925-27 a designated New York City Landmark) and the securing of a new building for the Queens Borough Public Library on Parsons Boulevard.<sup>8</sup>

By the mid 1920s, the Board had outgrown its first home and moved farther out Jamaica Avenue to the Stuart Building between 163<sup>rd</sup> and 164<sup>th</sup> Streets. The growth of greater Jamaica at this time was substantial. New residential developments were being constructed and once residential streets around Jamaica Avenue were transformed as the business district expanded. By the late 1920s Jamaica had become a major financial center for Long Island as numerous banks, trust companies, and bond and mortgage companies opened offices there.<sup>9</sup>

The Board of Trade itself continued to grow, its membership composed of business and professional men and women had expanded to almost 500 by 1926. In July 1927, the name of the organization was changed to the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce to reflect the broader scope of the organization's interests. Within a year a committee was created to consider construction of the Chamber's own building, an idea that had been first suggested in 1926 by Secretary Max C. Bunyan as a means to improve the work of the organization, that:

[A] building of its own, properly equipped, would be a big help towards making the Jamaica Board of Trade 100 percent efficient and...that such a building could be erected, a part of it being set aside for offices and other business purposes, and that it could be operated at a profit to the organization.<sup>10</sup>

Under the presidency of Major Oscar Erlandsen, a civil engineer, a building corporation, the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, Inc., was formed to raise funds and oversee the project. To finance the design and construction of the building 5,000 shares of preferred stock with par value of \$100 a share were offered for sale to the members with no one member being allowed to purchase sufficient numbers of shares to take a controlling interest. A large plot of land on the east side of 161<sup>st</sup> Street (formerly Herriman Avenue) was purchased in June 1928.<sup>11</sup>

### Georgian Revival Style and the Design of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce

In August 1928, plans were submitted by George W. Conable, a Jamaica resident and member of the Chamber, for a ten-story office building with commercial ground floor that would include seven stories of rentable office space and two stories reserved for the offices, meeting and dining rooms of the Chamber of Commerce. Ground was broken on August 27<sup>th</sup> and construction commenced in October.<sup>12</sup> The building was dedicated on May 20, 1929 and was praised by the *Long Island Daily Press* as "a decided asset to the community, and a building that can hold its own in an architectural beauty contest."<sup>13</sup>

Conable, who was known for his refined adaptation of historically-based designs, turned to 18<sup>th</sup> -century American and English precedents for his two buildings in the central Jamaica business district, the Georgian Revival style Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building and the earlier, Colonial Revival style Central Queens Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (Y. M. C. A.). Popular in the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these styles were at their peak in the conservative post-World War I era. Conable adapted the Georgian Revival style's symmetrical arrangement, contrasting materials and enriched ornament to emphasize the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building's height. Cast-stone quoins divide the mass of the upper facade through the seventh story; above it Conable set back the outside bays to focus on the building's distinctive three-story pavilion with its pedimented temple.

#### George W. Conable (1866-1933)<sup>14</sup>

Architect George Willard Conable was born in Cortland, New York on October 4, 1866 and graduated from the Cortland State Normal School (now SUNY Cortland) in 1886. Four years later he graduated from Cornell University with a bachelor's degree in architecture. He furthered his architectural training in the offices of C. P. H. Gilbert and Barney & Chapman. In 1905 he entered the office of Ernest Flagg where he was responsible for the preparation of the plans and working drawings of the Singer Building (1905-08, demolished).

In 1908, Conable designed Trinity Lutheran Church and parsonage at 164 West 100<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, the same year he entered into partnership with Hobart B. Upjohn, a specialist in the design of churches.<sup>15</sup> From 1908 to 1914, the firm of Upjohn & Conable designed many churches of all denominations in New York and other states. Among the firm's commissions within New York City was Trinity Lutheran Church and Parish House (1913-14) in Staten Island, which is now included in the St. Paul's Avenue-Stapleton Heights Historic District.

Conable returned to independent general practice in 1914 specializing in churches, schools, and hospitals. Among his commissions were St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the Bronx, Trinity Lutheran Church in Schenectady, the bathing pavilions and other buildings at Oakland Beach, Rye, New York, Main Hall of Wagner College, Staten Island, the New Hyde Park Public School in Nassau County, and the Central High School in Cortland, New York. Conable was particularly active in Jamaica where he designed the Central Queens Branch of the Y. M. C. A. and Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building and served as consulting architect, in association with William E. Austin, on the design of the Queensboro Contagious Disease Hospital. His association with Austin began during his partnership with Hobart Upjohn and continued for several years. The two men collaborated on the Hallenbach-Hungerford Building in Manhattan and several contagious disease hospitals throughout the city. Formerly affiliated with the firm of Conable, Smith & Rowley, Assoc. Architects, at the time of his death in 1933, Conable was associated with Robert J. Schirmer and Julius W. Schmidt.

#### Subsequent History

Jamaica continued to grow through the 1930s and 1940s helped by the completion of the Grand Central Parkway and the extension of the IND subway to 168<sup>th</sup> Street. In the post-World War II era, Jamaica began to change and by 1980 the population had become predominately African-American and Hispanic. During the next decades immigrants from the Caribbean, South Asia, and China were also attracted to the neighborhood. Once the shopping hub for Queens and Long Island, Jamaica's commercial district, hampered by inadequate parking, lost customers to

the new shopping malls in Nassau and Queens. Revitalization of downtown Jamaica began in the 1980s with the completion of several government-financed projects such as the York College campus, the Social Security Administration office building, and the transit hub at Archer Avenue which replaced the demolished Jamaica Avenue el.<sup>16</sup>

The Jamaica Chamber of Commerce has continued to work for the betterment of greater Jamaica through programs such the creation of the Greater Jamaica Redevelopment Corporation and business improvement districts. In July 2010 it dedicated a new building on Rockaway Boulevard to house the Chamber offices as well as an incubator for up to eight start-up companies operated by minorities and women. The former Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building has remained in active use as an office building since the Chamber moved its offices in 1999.<sup>17</sup>

### Description

The Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, located on a prominent site at the head of 90<sup>th</sup> Avenue, is typical of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century office building with its tripartite horizontal massing; however, Conable emphasized the building's verticality by dividing it into three sections, the slightly projecting center section beginning at the entrance and rising to the three-story pavilion above the seventh story.

The terra-cotta clad base features a central entrance flanked by two stores. Designed in the form of a triumphal arch, the entrance has a central arch with carved spandrels supported by granite columns in antis. "Jamaica Chamber of Commerce" is carved into the frieze of the cornice that runs across the facade above the first story.

From the second through the seventh stories, the facade of variegated brick, laid in Flemish bond, is defined by cast-stone quoins at the corners and to either side of the four-bay-wide center section. To create a transition from the commercial first story, Conable used a row of round-arched windows with full surrounds and blind fanlights flanking a segmental-arched triple window with similar surround and fanlight at the second story. At the seventh story, a simple molded cornice and windows with flared brick lintels and cast-stone keystones serve as a transition to the building's large, three-sided central pavilion.

The three-story pavilion has a two-story base with refined ornament that is topped by a pedimented temple with paired Doric pilasters, large scrolls at the corners and a large cartouche in the pediment. The side bays at the upper stories are deeply setback and minimally ornamented.

The rear of the building is sharply set back above the first, fourth, and seventh stories and is unadorned. On the roof, the building's chimney and bulkheads are well recessed in order not to intrude upon the design of the primary facade.

*Main (West) Facade:* The terra-cotta clad first story is composed of three bays, articulated by four pilasters decorated with rosettes in the capitals. The building's recessed entrance is approached through the central arch which opens onto a barrel-vaulted vestibule. The arch with keystone and carved spandrels springs from the cornice, here supported by Doric-style granite columns. The entrance vestibule is paved with terrazzo tile with a wide granite threshold. Paneled pilasters (one with a possibly historic doorbell) frame the tripartite doorway and two display windows with shallow bulkheads and molded cornice face each other across the vestibule. To either side of the entrance are large display windows, with shallow bulkheads, framed by Doric pilasters supporting a cornice above which are two large transom openings framed by paneled piers. Historic lighting fixtures are attached to the pilasters framing the entrance bay and another is suspended from the vaulted ceiling of the vestibule. The date 1928 is

carved into the pilaster to the right of the entrance bay. The northern store retains one of its historic recessed entrances with terrazzo flooring. The upper facade of the building is variegated brick set in Flemish bond. The windows at the second story rest on a cast-stone sill course and have full, cast-stone surrounds with keystones, impost blocks, and blind fanlights. The central segmental-arched triple window is flanked by two metal flagpoles with foliate bases and decorative bracing and two round-arched windows. Each of the side bays has two round-arched windows. The windows at the third through seventh stories have cast-stone sills. The windows at the seventh story have flared brick lintels with cast-stone keystones. Further articulating the seventh story are cast-stone band courses across the outer bays between the sixth and seventh stories. From the eighth to tenth stories the side bays are deeply recessed to offset the prominent three-story center pavilion. The cast-stone quoins at the building's corners extend through the ninth story. At the tenth story the corners are ornamented by cast-stone double pilasters. The center pavilion is ornamented by paired, two-story cast-stone pilasters with stylized capitals that support a cast-stone cornice above the ninth story. The small pedimented temple at the tenth story has paired Doric pilasters that support a cast-stone cornice. The brick-faced tympanum has a cast-stone cartouche with swags. At the tenth story, urn-shaped finials terminate the pilasters of the pavilion's base and large scrolls bracket the temple's base. The pavilion has three windows with full surrounds and iron balconies at the eighth story and flared brick lintels with cast-stone keystones and sills at the ninth story. The temple at the tenth story has a single window flanked by two narrow windows all with flared brick lintels with cast-stone keystones. There are single windows on the north and south sides of the pavilion with cast-stone sills, those on the ninth and tenth stories have flared brick lintels with cast-stone keystones. To either side of the pavilion, there are two windows at the eighth and ninth stories with cast-stone sills. Those at the ninth story have flared brick lintels with cast-stone keystones. At the tenth story there are two double windows with cast-stone sill course and one single window to each side of the pavilion. All have flared brick lintels with cast-stone keystones. Above the tenth story a brick parapet with cast-stone plaques rises above a cast-stone cornice that incorporates the cornice of the pavilion. Deeply set back on the roof are a brick chimney, a brick bulkhead with cast-stone coping, and a brick fire tower. The bulkhead has round-arched blind windows (two on the north and south and one on the east and west) which have cast-stone sills and brick lintels with cast-stone keystones and corbels. There is a small, multi-light window with cast-stone sill set into the blind window on the east. Alterations: The first story has been painted, the transoms replaced with solid panels, and both storefronts, which have been extended into the entrance bay, have been replaced. The southern storefront has roll-down security gates across the storefront including the window facing the vestibule. A fixed fabric awning with multiple attached signs extends into the entrance bay. In the extension, the front bulkhead is pierced with two vent plates and two boxes are attached to the bulkhead facing the vestibule. Two metal conduits are attached to the southernmost pilaster. At the northern store, the recessed vestibule floor has been repaired with cement and the door enframing replaced with brick. The metal-and-glass storefront has a recessed door, fixed fabric awning, and signage in all windows including that facing the vestibule. The main entrance has been replaced with a modern metal-and-glass door, sidelights and transom; the sidelights have been decorated with a stick-on design that simulates frosting. The tympanum above the door has been replaced with corrugated metal paneling and a fluorescent light fixture attached above the transom. The windows of the upper stories have been replaced with aluminum one-over-one sash and panning. Through-wall air conditioners have been randomly inserted in the upper facade. The balustrades, scrolled brackets, and finials at the

eighth story were removed prior to 1983. There are telecommunication equipment and antennas on the roof and bulkhead. A two-story tall fabric sign advertising office space for rent has been attached at the second and third stories.

*South Facade:* The facade is brick, offset by cast-stone quoins at the corner where it meets the main facade. The front section, which is laid in Flemish bond, has two closely-spaced bays of windows from the second through the eighth story, the eastern bay continuing to the tenth story. At the tenth story there is also a double window at the corner. There is a one-bay-wide return laid in common bond with single windows at the second through seventh stories and double windows at the eighth through tenth stories. The rear of the facade, which is laid in common bond, is set back above the first, fourth, and seventh stories at which points it is coped with clay tile. There are two window openings toward the rear of the first story; the second through fourth stories are six bays wide, the fifth through seventh are five bays and the eight through tenth stories are four bays. The windows in the first two bays are irregular in size and placement; all windows have cast-stone sills. Alterations: The first story, which abuts a landscaped public pathway, has been partially painted and three of the brick piers supporting the path's lighting are attached to the wall of the building. Decorative metal panels that are part of the path's 161<sup>st</sup> Street gate and fence are also attached to the wall. The two window openings toward the rear of the first story have been shuttered and covered with decorative grilles matching the ironwork of the pathway. Four small openings in the first story facade have been replaced with brick, a fifth retains part of a metal vent. On the roof of the first story is an air-conditioning compressor. The rear section of the facade has been painted at the eighth through tenth stories. An additional window has been cut at the ninth story in the front portion of the building. There are randomly placed through-wall air conditioners across the facade and two dish antennas, one with wires, attached to the facade. Like the primary facade, the windows have been replaced with aluminum sash and panning, those at the second story (except the front bays) are protected by metal mesh security grilles. There are six metal conduits attached to the return of the front portion of the building three of which run across the return and part of the rear portion of the building above the tenth story. A full-height metal chimney stack is attached to the rear section between the first and second bays. A metal conduit is attached to the facade at the second story. There are telecommunication antennas on the roof.

*East (Rear) Facade:* The six-bay wide facade is setback above the first, fourth, and seventh stories. The windows at the eighth story are irregularly spaced. The first story is coped with clay tile as are the setbacks above the fourth and seventh stories and the roof. Alterations: The facade has been painted from the second through the tenth stories. The windows have been replaced with aluminum sash and panning and those at the second story have metal mesh window grilles. Through-wall air conditioners have been randomly inserted into the facade. A metal chimney stack follows the setbacks from the second story to the roof. There are a vent and three air conditioning compressors on the roof of the first story. There are a wire with lights and metal conduit attached to the wall of the first story and a metal conduit with lights attached at the second story. There are telecommunications antennas on the roof one of which has a dish attached to it.

*North Facade (partially visible):* The facade is brick. The front portion, which is laid in Flemish bond, is offset by cast-stone quoins at the corner, the mass broken only by a single window at the seventh story and a double window at the tenth. The front of the building extends one story in height on the east to accommodate the fire tower. The return is one bay wide with single windows at the eighth through 11<sup>th</sup> stories and openings with metal railings at the ninth and tenth

stories. The rear portion of the building is set back above the first, fourth, and seventh stories and is six bays at the eighth and ninth stories and five bays at the tenth story. Alterations: The facade of the return and the second through tenth stories is painted. The windows have been replaced with one-over-one aluminum sash and panning. Through-wall air conditioners have been randomly inserted in the facade. A metal conduit is attached to the wall of the rear portion and telecommunication antennas attached to the wall of the fire tower, their cables attached to the return.

Site features: There are a diamond plate cellar hatch, a small hatch stamped “The Canton FDY & MCH Co.,” and a standing siamese hydrant in front of the southernmost store and a standing pipe to the north of the entrance.

Researched and written by  
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### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> “Chamber Building Dedication Epochal Event,” *Jamaica Jinjer* 10 (June 1929), 357-358.

<sup>2</sup> Information in this section was compiled from Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Former J. Kurtz & Sons Store Building Designation Report* (LP-1132) (New York: City of New York, 1981), prepared by Virginia Kurshan, 1; E. Belcher Hyde, *Atlas of the Borough of Queens* (Brooklyn: E. Belcher Hyde, 1901), vol. 1, pl. 10; Jon A. Peterson, ed., “A Research Guide to the History of Queens Borough and Its Neighborhoods” (typescript, Queens College Department of History, 1983); Frank Bergen Kelley, *Excursion Planned for the City History Club: Historic Queens* (New York: City History Club of New York, 1908), 5-6, 35; H. W. Munsell, *The History of Queens County, New York* (New York: H. W. Munsell & Co, 1882), 220-221; *Jamaica, Hempstead, Richmond Hill, Morris Park, and Woodhaven: Their Representative Men and Points of Interest* (New York: Mercantile Illustration Co., 1894), 17-21; Vincent F. Seyfried, *Jamaica Trolleys* (Long Island Trolley Histories, 1953), vol. 4, 1-5; and Theodore H. M. Prudon, ed., “Jamaica, Queens County, New York: Aspects of Its History” (typescript, Columbia University, Graduate Program for Restoration and Preservation of Historic Architecture, June 1975).

<sup>3</sup> Prudon, 39. See also the pamphlet *Souvenir Improvement Celebration, Jamaica, N.Y., April 20, 1898* ([Jamaica, NY: Bertram Blackwell, printer?], 1898).

<sup>4</sup> *Jamaica, Hempstead, Richmond Hill, Morris Park, and Woodhaven*, 18.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent F. Seyfried and William Asadorian, *Old Queens, N.Y. in Early Photographs* (New York: Dover, 1991), 26.

<sup>6</sup> The Jamaica Chamber of Commerce merged with the Queens Borough Chamber of Commerce from 1930-32. “Board of Trade Has Wonderful Growth,” *Jamaica Jinjer* 7 (March 1926), 179; “Chamber Merger Overwhelmingly Popular,” *Jamaica Jinjer* 11 (February 1930), 189; “Jamaica Chamber Formed,” *New York Times (NYT)*, February 3, 1932.



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<sup>7</sup> The Chamber was concerned not only with central Jamaica but the adjacent outlying areas, described as being from Richmond Hill and Woodhaven on the west, Flushing on the north, Jamaica Bay on the south and the city line on the east. *Jamaica Jinjer* 10 (May, 1929), 297.

<sup>8</sup> *Jamaica Jinjer* 7 (March 1926), 182 and 10 (May 1929), 328. The central library was moved to a new building on Merrick Boulevard in 1966, and the former library converted into Family Court. Jeff Gottlieb, "Rededication of Queens Supreme Court House Highlights Its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," (1998) <http://www.nycourts.gov/library/queens/cthousehistory.shtml> (July 16, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> *Jamaica Jinjer* 7 (March 1926), 179 and 10 (August 1928), 5.

<sup>10</sup> "Suggest Board of Trade Erect Building," *Jamaica Jinjer* 8 (December 1926), 101.

<sup>11</sup> The lot was described at the time as beginning 527.1 feet from the northeast corner of 161<sup>st</sup> Street and Jamaica Avenue and measuring 72 feet by 110.4 feet. The current description of the lot's distance (526.18 feet) and dimensions (72.11 feet by 110.5 feet) were changed in 1958, to conform to the United States Standard of Measurements. Queens County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 3193, no. 58367, p. 407 and no. 58368, p. 409 (June 29, 1928); Liber 7045, p. 327 (April 4, 1958).

<sup>12</sup> *Jamaica Jinjer* 7 (March 1926), 179, 10 (May, 1929), 302, 328, 346, 350, 8 (February 1927), 158, and 10 (September 1928), 37; New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Queens, New Building permit 7004-1928.

<sup>13</sup> *Jamaica Jinjer* 10 (June 1929), 357-358.

<sup>14</sup> This biographical section is based on the following resources: *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York: James T. White, 1918), vol. 16, p. 367, James Ward, *Architects in Practice New York City, 1900-1940* (Union, N. J.: J & D Associates, 1989), 15, 79; "Bryan Speaks Here 3 Times on Monday," *NYT*, May 16, 1925, 20; "George W. Conable, Is Dead," *NYT*, January 4, 1933, 17; "Brief Biographies of American Architects Who Died Between 1897 and 1947," transcribed by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. [www.sah.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=BiographiesArchitects&category=resources](http://www.sah.org/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=BiographiesArchitects&category=resources) (July 29, 2009) ; Wagner College, "Campus Facilities," [www.wagner.edu/about\\_wagner/campus\\_facilities](http://www.wagner.edu/about_wagner/campus_facilities) (July 2, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Conable is credited with the design of Trinity Lutheran Church; however, it is unclear whether he was still practicing independently or whether he had already formed his partnership with Hobart Upjohn. Hobart B. Upjohn was the son of Richard M. Upjohn and grandson of Richard Upjohn, both of whom were renowned church architects.

<sup>16</sup> Vincent Seyfried, "Jamaica," *Encyclopedia of New York City* ed. by Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 611.

<sup>17</sup> In 1999 the Chamber moved to 90-25 161<sup>st</sup> Street. The new building on Rockaway Boulevard was dedicated in July 2010. Telephone conversation with Robert Richards, President, Jamaica Chamber of Commerce, July 28, 2010.

## **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 Jamaica Chamber of Commerce 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 Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building was built in 1928-29 and designed by the respected New York architect George W. Conable; that the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1919 as the Jamaica Board of Trade to promote the benefits of Jamaica to businesses and residential developers; that this ten-story office building was constructed to provide both office space and income to support the work of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce; that to pay for its construction, a separate entity known as the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, Inc. was incorporated and that the building was partially funded through the sale of shares in this company; that the Georgian Revival style is based on 18<sup>th</sup>-century American and British precedents such as symmetrical arrangement, contrasting materials, and classically inspired elements; that George W. Conable used the triumphal arch, quoins, and a three-story pavilion with pedimented temple to create the building's distinctive formal facade.

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 Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, 89-31 161<sup>st</sup> Street, Borough of Queens and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 9760, Lot 27 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice-Chair  
Diana Chapin, Roberta Brandes Gratz,  
Christopher Moore, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building  
89-31 161<sup>st</sup> Street  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*



“Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, May 15, 1936”  
(Courtesy of the Queens Borough Public Library, Long Island Division, Frederick J. Weber  
Photographs)





Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building, entrance details  
*Photos: Christopher D. Brazee and Marianne S. Percival, 2010*



Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building  
Window details and pavilion  
*Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*





Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building  
View from the south east  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*



Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Building  
View from the northwest  
*Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2010*





JAMAICA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUILDING (LP-2386), 89-31 161st Street  
Landmark Site: Borough of Queens, Tax Map Block 9760, Lot 27

Designated: October 26, 2010