

Landmarks Preservation Commission
January 17, 2012, Designation List 451
LP-2471

WILLIAMSBURG BRANCH, PUBLIC NATIONAL BANK OF NEW YORK (now Bank of America), 47-49 Graham Avenue (aka 63-73 Varet Street), Brooklyn
Built: 1921-23; Architect: Eugene Schoen

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 3105, Lot 26

On March 22, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America) 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. One person, a representative of the Historic Districts Council, spoke in favor of designation. The Commission received a letter in support of designation from the Bank of America.

Summary

The striking neo-Classical style Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (1921-23), at the corner of Graham Avenue and Varet Street in the eastern section of the Williamsburg neighborhood in Brooklyn, was the first of several Public National branch bank buildings designed by architect Eugene Schoen. Although little remembered today other than as a furniture designer, Schoen (1880-1957) was for the first half of the 20th century in the



forefront of modern American design and an esteemed contemporary of many well-known colleagues. Born in New York City, he graduated from Columbia University in 1902, and soon after traveled to Europe, meeting in Vienna Otto Wagner and Josef Hoffmann, who influenced his work. Schoen practiced architecture from 1904 until 1925, after which time he became largely an interior designer, opening his own New York gallery. In 1921, Schoen received the lucrative patronage of the Public National Bank of New York (Public National Bank & Trust Co. of New York after 1927), which had been chartered in 1908 with its headquarters on the Lower East Side. He designed many of the firm's branch banks until 1930. Designed in the form of a one-story temple and clad in cast stone (now painted), the Williamsburg Branch features rusticated columns and corner piers on both principal facades that frame rectangular and round-arched fenestration, with panels and entrance surrounds displaying a combination of classical and Secessionist ornament. This building was published in *Architecture and Building* in 1923. Alterations include a reconfiguring of entrance and window openings on Graham Avenue. A rare example in New York City of early-20th-century Viennese influence, the corner structure achieves a monumentality through the use of bold classical forms, abstraction, and predominant rustication. This branch bank, which later served Bankers Trust Co. of New York and National Westminster Bank (and now Bank of America), remains one of Schoen's most interesting and intact architectural commissions.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Williamsburg, Brooklyn and its Eastern District¹

At the beginning of the 19th century, the area that became the Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg was mostly open farmland. In 1802, Richard M. Woodhull, a prosperous Manhattan merchant, purchased a 13-acre tract at the foot of present-day North 2nd Street, which he named Williamsburgh after its surveyor, Col. Jonathan Williams. Williamsburgh was incorporated in 1827, and the village limits were extended eastward in 1835, from its original boundary around Bushwick Creek and present-day Union Avenue over to Bushwick Avenue, encompassing the area that came to be known as the “New Village.” The population more than doubled between 1840 and 1845, and Williamsburgh grew even more rapidly in the 1850s as a large number of Germans began settling here. In April 1851, the State Legislature granted Williamsburgh a city charter, at which time it had over 30,000 inhabitants and was the 20th largest American city. It remained an independent municipality for only a few years, being consolidated with the City of Brooklyn and Town of Flatbush in 1855. At this time, the 16th Ward (also known as the Eastern District) was created, which included the eastern section of Williamsburg and a portion of Bushwick. Laid out with streets in the early 1850s, it rapidly changed into an urban neighborhood densely built-up with houses.

Industries established along the East River waterfront, including docks, shipyards, distilleries, foundries, mills, sugar and petroleum refineries, and glass and pharmaceutical factories, made Williamsburg a significant center of commercial prosperity. Industrial operations also began to locate on Newtown Creek and its branch known as “English Kills,” as the waterway was improved with the deepening of its channel and the construction of bulkheads. Peter Cooper was one of the first industrialists to become interested in this area, and in the late 1840s he purchased a large tract on which he built a glue manufacturing works. These industries provided jobs for the area’s growing population, which was made up mostly by German immigrants – by the late 19th century, Williamsburg was often called “Dutchtown” because of its large German population.

By the 1850s, a number of institutions emerged to serve Williamsburg’s burgeoning population and thriving businesses, such as the Williamsburgh Savings Bank (organized in 1851 and located in an 1854 building at Bedford Avenue and South 3rd Street). The post-Civil War business boom brought redevelopment to Broadway, Williamsburg’s most important commercial street and main thoroughfare, which up until then had been lined mostly with single-family dwellings that had been altered for commercial use. Significant new commercial buildings arose, including the Kings County Savings Bank (1868, King & Wilcox), 113 (later 135) Broadway;² King’s County Fire Insurance Co. Building (1870; demolished), 87-89 (later 97-101) Broadway; Smith, Gray & Co. Building (1870), 95 (later 103) Broadway;³ and Williamsburgh Savings Bank (1870-75, George B. Post; Peter B. Wight, interior), 139-149 (later 175) Broadway.⁴ Public National Bank was one of the financial institutions that came to serve the area of the Eastern District.

Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York⁵

The Public Bank of New York was organized by Joseph S. Marcus, a German-born clothing merchant, and chartered in 1908 with its headquarters on the Lower East Side at Delancey and Orchard Streets. Considered one of the largest banks in the United States with a predominately Jewish clientele, it became the Public National Bank of New York in 1917 and was characterized by continual steady growth, achieved without mergers and developing branches solely within the company. The bank advertised resources of approximately \$85 million in 1921, \$101.86 million in 1923, and over \$135 million in 1927. Its branches multiplied from six in Manhattan, two in the

Bronx, and three in Brooklyn in 1923, to nine in Manhattan, eleven in the Bronx, and ten in Brooklyn in 1928. Succeeding Marcus as Public National Bank's president was Edward S. Rothchild (1914-22), also a clothing merchant; followed by Alfred S. Rossin (1922-29), who worked in his father's tobacco firm, S[amuel]. Rossin & Sons, and married Clara Lewisohn, daughter of Adolph Lewisohn, the wealthy investment banker and philanthropist. In 1927, the firm became the Public National Bank & Trust Co. of New York.

In February 1921, the *New York Times* and *The Bankers Magazine* announced Public National Bank's purchase of a 50-by-100-foot site in the eastern section of Williamsburg for a new "monumental branch banking building."⁶ This location, at Graham Avenue and Varet Street, was just two blocks away from its branch operated since 1917 at Graham and Siegel Avenues. The bank cited the need for a new building due to an increase in its business. The intersection of Graham Avenue and Varet Street was also the location of a branch of The State Bank. The new one-story Public National Bank branch was expected to cost \$20,000 and to be clad with stone and marble (as built, it was cast stone), with a large banking room. The architect had not yet been mentioned in March 1921, according to *The Bridgemen's Magazine*,⁷ but by November 1921, Eugene Schoen had been announced.⁸ Schoen had previously been selected (by March 1921)⁹ to remodel the ground story of a building at 1758 Pitkin Avenue (now demolished) for a Public National Bank branch, which he executed in a neo-Classical manner. The Williamsburg Branch, which was Schoen's first Public National Bank commission for a new branch bank building, was published in *Architecture and Building* in 1923.¹⁰

Architect: Eugene Schoen¹¹

Although little remembered today other than as a furniture designer (whose objects are highly sought by collectors), Eugene Schoen (1880-1957) was for the first half of the 20th century in the forefront of modern American architecture and interior design and an esteemed contemporary of many well-known colleagues. He was born in New York City of Hungarian Jewish ancestry. His father, Jacob Schoen, born in Esperies, Hungary, immigrated to the U.S. in 1878 and was a teacher; revered as the Grand Secretary of the Independent Order of B'rith Abraham, his funeral in 1913 was attended by an estimated crowd of 20,000. Eugene graduated from the first class of the Manual Training High School, Brooklyn (the first such school in what became Greater New York City) in 1897, then from Columbia University in 1902, having studied architecture. During the summers, he worked in the architectural office of McKim, Mead & White, and from 1901 into the 1910s, he lectured on art and architecture at public schools in Brooklyn and Manhattan. He also became involved in leftist political causes.

According to his son, Lee Schoen, after his parents' marriage in 1902, they traveled through Europe (Eugene Schoen's passport application is dated 1904), ending their tour in Vienna. The founder of Columbia's Dept. of Architecture, William R. Ware, had arranged for a travel stipend and for Schoen to meet architect Otto Wagner, the leader of the Viennese modern movement, who also introduced him to Josef Hoffmann and artist Alphonse Mucha.¹² Schoen later spent five months in Europe in 1913. According to the monograph *Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work* (1985) by Eduard F. Sekler, "Schoen brought back lasting impressions of Hoffmann's work from a tour of study in Vienna and effectively transposed them into designs of his own in New York."¹³ Hoffmann (1870-1956), a student of Wagner, was one of the founders in 1897 of the Vienna Secession, a group of painters, sculptors, and architects breaking away from the prevailing conservatism in the arts. He became a professor at the *Kunstgewerbeschule* (Arts and Crafts School) in 1899. In 1903, along with Kolomon Moser, Hoffmann formed the Wiener Werkstatte, initially a branch of the Secession but

independent by 1905, which intended to stimulate cooperation among manufacturers and artists. Viennese architects were considered the most influential of professionals in the design fields at this time, with Hoffmann the acknowledged leader.

After his return to New York, around 1904, Schoen entered architectural practice, working briefly in the office of Robert W. Gibson. He was a partner in Hedman & Schoen, with the Swedish-born Axel S. Hedman (1861-1943), from 1905 to around 1918, during and after which time he practiced independently. Hedman & Schoen designed the First Hungarian Congregation, Ohab Zedek Synagogue (1906-07), 20 West 116th Street, and Bnai Sholaum Synagogue (1913-15), 401 9th Street, Brooklyn; and were associate architects for the remodeling of the former Lenox Lyceum as the New German Theatre (1908, Herts & Tallant; demolished 1929), Madison Avenue and East 59th Street. Rudolph Rosenthal and Helena L. Ratzka, in *The Story of Modern Applied Art* (1948), called it “one of the first [American] buildings free of any style influence,”¹⁴ though it was clearly inspired by contemporary Viennese design, with murals by Alphonse Mucha. Schoen was responsible for the design of the Shaari Zedek Synagogue (1909-11), 767 Putnam Avenue, Brooklyn; the reinforced concrete Simms Magneto Co. factory (1914), Watsessing (East Orange), New Jersey; Israel Orphan Asylum (1914-17; demolished), 274 East 2nd Street; and the reinforced concrete Nathan Mfg. Co. brass appliance factory complex (1916-17), Flushing, Queens; and participated in the design of houses in Forest Hills Gardens (after 1910), Queens. His own residence on Olive Place in that community was where he was said to have held artistic salons.

During World War I, Schoen was forced to find other employment, and served as general manager of the firm of his uncle, Emanuel Schoen, the International Oxygen Co., Newark, New Jersey, which dealt in electrolytic oxygen and hydrogen generating apparatus, cylinders, compressors, etc. *The Bankers Magazine* in 1915 announced that Eugene Schoen was the president of the newly organized Bankers Engineering Co., consultants in the “construction, remodeling and equipping of banking houses,” and remarked that Schoen “for many years has specialized on work of this character.”¹⁵ In 1921, he received the lucrative patronage of the Public National Bank of New York, which lasted until 1930, and he is known to have designed many of the firm’s branch banks.¹⁶

Schoen was said to have been inspired to become largely an interior designer after attending the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, Paris, and opened his own New York gallery. Christopher Long has described his aesthetic thusly: “Schoen’s designs merged the pure geometries and material sumptuousness he had taken from the Viennese with the elegance and softened contours of the French. His innovative mixture was animated and urbane, its evident refinement immediately won over a number of clients.”¹⁷ After 1928, at his gallery he displayed complete settings of rooms (including furniture, textiles, and rugs).¹⁸ Schoen was part of the circle of the leading modernist designer Paul T. Frankl, which also included Ely Jacques Kahn, Raymond Hood, Joseph Urban, as well as Wolfgang Hoffmann (son of Josef) and his wife Pola, architect William Lescaze, designers Donald Deskey, Gilbert Rohde, and Walter von Nessen, and photographer Edward Steichen. Schoen was credited with bringing Bavarian glassmaker/ceramist Marianna von Allesch to the U.S. in 1928, and gave the sculptor Isamu Noguchi his first solo exhibition at the Eugene Schoen Gallery in 1929. In 1931, Schoen became a professor of interior architecture at New York University, and received a medal of honor “in native industrial art” from the Architectural League of New York, for a metal and glass building entrance.

He was named as technical advisor for the New York State exhibit at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1933-34, which resulted in two exhibition rooms with decorative panels by Urban and photomurals by Steichen. Among Schoen’s significant interior design commissions were the nightclub of the *S.S. Leviathan* (1929); RKO Roxy Theater (1932; demolished), Rockefeller

Center, for which the *New York Times* praised its “grace and sophisticated refinement;”¹⁹ the three-story Dunhill tobacco/ specialty shop (1933) in the British Empire Building, Rockefeller Center; Café Loyale and Savoy Room (1936), Savoy Plaza Hotel; Cafritz House (c. 1939), Washington, D.C.; and Sherry-Netherland and Commodore Hotels. His later architectural work included the remodeling of the Soviet Embassy (1933-34), Washington, D.C.; conversion into apartments of the former Netherland Club (1939), 3 Gramercy Park (Schoen was the owner); and Sons of Israel Synagogue (1948-50, with Fritz Nathan), Woodmere, Long Island. Schoen was a member of the Federal Housing Authority during World War II.

Lee Schoen (1907-1994) was involved in his father’s architectural practice by the late 1920s, and by 1937, they were joined by another son, Harold H. (c. 1905-1951), in the firm of Eugene Schoen & Sons. Their work included the National Safety Bank & Trust Co. (1937) in No. 1400 Broadway (Ely Jacques Kahn, architect); Philwold Estates summer house community (1939-40), Sullivan County, New York; Parke-Bernet Galleries interiors (1949), Madison Avenue; and Amalgamated Laundry Workers Union Health Center (1953), 226 East 34th Street. The *New York Times* at his death in 1957 stated that Eugene “Schoen was regarded as one of the leading exponents of modern architecture and design and as such helped to develop the movement here.”²⁰

Designed in the form of a one-story temple and clad in cast stone (now painted), the Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York features rusticated columns and corner piers on both principal facades that frame rectangular and round-arched fenestration, with panels and entrance surrounds displaying a combination of classical and Secessionist ornament. Despite alterations that include a reconfiguring of entrance and window openings on Graham Avenue, it is a rare example in New York City of early-20th-century Viennese influence. The corner structure achieves a monumentality through the use of bold classical forms, abstraction, and predominant rustication, and remains one of Schoen’s most interesting and intact architectural commissions.

Another extant and noteworthy Schoen commission, the virtually unknown Public National Bank of New York Building (1923) at No. 106 Avenue C, is a designated New York City Landmark. Here, Schoen even more explicitly displayed the direct influence of Josef Hoffmann, in particular the Viennese architect’s refined neo-Classical work of the period c. 1909-15 (which Schoen may have seen during his 1913 trip to Europe), specifically such buildings as the Ast Villa (1909-11) and Skywa Villa (1913-15), Vienna, and Austria House (1914), German Werkbund Exhibition, Cologne. Direct references to Hoffmann’s designs on Schoen’s Avenue C bank include the flat capital-less fluted pilasters, the highly stylized molded cornice, and the employment of “incrusted” ornament in certain areas, in particular the lower band with bosses of the cornice, and the Viennese-inspired terra-cotta ornament surmounting the entrance.

Later History²¹

In 1955, the Public National Bank & Trust Co., described as “a retail bank with the fourth-largest branch network in New York City,”²² merged with the Bankers Trust Co. of New York (incorporated 1903), then the ninth largest American bank. At the time of the announcement of the merger, the *Times* stated that “one of the chief aims of the merger would be to combine two large branch systems,”²³ which resulted in 42 Bankers Trust branch banks – the Williamsburg Branch on Graham Avenue was one of eight in Brooklyn. In 1981, this branch bank was one of 16 acquired from Bankers Trust by the National Bank of North America, which had been sold two years earlier to National Westminster Bank, Great Britain’s second largest bank. It currently serves as the Williamsburg Branch of the Bank of America in Brooklyn.

Description

Historic: one-story neo-Classical style temple with two principal facades; cast-stone cladding (now painted); rusticated columns and corner piers frame rectangular and round-arched fenestration, and support entablature; panels and entrance surrounds with classical and Secessionist ornament; multi-pane metal Varet Street windows, with fanlights in arches and lower portion decorative metal grilles; clock above original Graham Avenue entrance; small window at each end of Graham Avenue with decorative metal grille; projecting rectangular Varet Street entrance at east end, surmounted by transom; terminating parapet

Alterations (post-1988): Graham Avenue entrance and window openings reconfigured (entrance now in middle bay was originally at north end, bulkheads removed from middle and southern bays), with new metal and glass doors and plate glass windows (originally similar to Varet Street windows); bank name inscription on Graham Avenue middle bay covered; Varet Street entrance doorway covered; mesh grilles over Varet Street windows; security lights on parapet; signage on cornice and above original Graham Avenue entrance; deposit box in small Graham Avenue window at corner

East Facade: exposed wall parged

Sources: *Architecture and Building* (June 1923), pl. 141-142; NYC Dept. of Taxes (c. 1939 and 1988)

Report researched and written by
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NOTES

¹ This section is adapted from: Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Williamsburgh Savings Bank Interior Designation Report* (LP-1910)(New York: City of New York, 1996), prepared by Gale Harris, and *F.J. Berlenbach House Designation Report* (LP-2152)(New York: City of New York, 2004), prepared by Donald Presa.

² It is a designated New York City Landmark.

³ It is a designated New York City Landmark.

⁴ It is a designated New York City Landmark and Interior Landmark.

⁵ Kings County, Office of the Register, Liber Deeds and Conveyances; NYC, Dept. of Buildings (NB 11462-1921); Jaffray Peterson, *Sixty-five Years of Progress and a Record of New York City Banks* (New York: 1935), 105; C.E. Unterberg & Co., *An Analysis of the Public National Bank & Trust Company of New York* (New York: 1934); "Financial Notes," *New York Times (NYT)*, Apr. 26, 1921, 32; "Public National Bank," *The Bankers Magazine* (May 1921), 876; "J.E. Reynolds Heads 1st National Bank," *NYT*, Jan. 11, 1922, 37; The State Bank, advertisement, *NYT*, Oct. 6, 1922, 40; "The Brooklyn Market," *NYT*, Sept. 13, 1922, 42; "Edward S. Rothchild," in John W. Leonard, ed., *Who's Who in Finance and Banking* (New York: Who's Who in Finance, Inc., 1922), 590; Public National Bank, advertisement, *NYT*,

Apr. 11, 1923, 34, and May 16, 1927, 35; "Latest Dealings in Realty Field," *NYT*, Aug. 16, 1924, 16; Joseph S. Marcus obit., *NYT*, July 4, 1927, 15; Alfred Rossin obit., *NYT*, June 6, 1947, 23.

⁶ "New Bank Buildings," *NYT*, Feb. 1, 1921, 27; "Public National Bank to Build \$200,000 Brooklyn Branch," *The Bankers Magazine* (Feb. 1921), 323.

⁷ "Bank - Pub. National Bank," *The Bridgemen's Magazine* (Mar. 1921), 161.

⁸ "New York: Bank & Offices," *The American Contractor*, Nov. 26, 1921, 48.

⁹ "Buildings: Proposed Work," *Engineering News-Record*, Mar. 24, 1921, 164; "Brooklyn, N.Y. - Bank," *American Architect & Architecture*, Apr. 6, 1921, 734.

¹⁰ "Public National Bank, Brooklyn, N.Y.," *Architecture and Building* (June 1923), pl. 141-142.

¹¹ LPC, architects files; James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (New York: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1989); New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co., archives; "Board of Education Lectures," *NYT*, Jan. 13, 1901, 10; "Free Lectures," *NYT*, Oct. 19, 1901, BR12; "Manual Training High School," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 17, 1901, 28; "Eugene Schoen," U.S. passport application (1904); "The Building Department," *NYT*, May 18, 1906, 15; "Synagogue of the First Hungarian Congregation, Ohab Zedek, West 116th Street, New York, N.Y.," *American Architect & Building News*, Sept. 28, 1907, 104, pl. 1657; "New Home Uptown for German Theatre," *NYT*, Mar. 1, 1908, 9; "The German Theatre in New York," *Architectural Record* (Dec. 1908), 408-416; "The Decoration of the New German Theatre," *Architects' & Builders' Magazine* (Dec. 1908), 89-92; Bill Morrison, "The Theaters of Herts & Tallant," *Marquee* 4 (1990), 15, 17, 20; "Latest Dealings in Realty Field," *NYT*, May 15, 1910, X11; "Four New Lecture Centres," *NYT*, Sept. 25, 1910, 16; "Shaari Zedek Synagogue, Brooklyn, N.Y.," *American Architect & Building News*, Feb. 22, 1911, pl. 1835; "Factory for the Simms Magneto Co., Watsessing, N.J.," *American Architect & Building News*, June 14, 1911, 232-233; "20,000 at Funeral of Jacob Schoen," *NYT*, June 30, 1913, 7; "Art at Home and Abroad," *NYT*, Jan. 4, 1914, SM15; *American Jewish Yearbook* (1916), 98; "The Real Estate Field," *NYT*, May 24, 1916, 19; "Manufacturing Building for Nathan Manufacturing Company, Flushing, Long Island, New York," *American Architect*, Oct. 24, 1917, 293-296, 303-305; "Eugene Schoen," World War I draft registration card (1918), U. S. Census (Queens, 1920 and 1930), and U.S. passport application (1920); "Architect's Home for Sale," *NYT*, Sept. 19, 1920, RE6; "New Bronx Plans Filed by Builders," *NYT*, Mar. 12, 1926, 33; "Modernist Furniture Calls for Unity," *NYT*, Feb. 5, 1928, 83; Nellie C. Sanford, "An Architect-Designer of Modern Furniture," *Good Furniture* (Mar. 1928), 116-118; "Value of Modern Art Subject of a Debate," *NYT*, Mar. 7, 1928, 2; "The Latest Art-in-Industry Exhibit," *NYT*, May 27, 1928, 81; "Bringing Art to the Factory and the Machine," *NYT*, July 1, 1928, 74; "New Twists Enliven Modern Furniture," *NYT*, Dec. 9, 1928, SM8; "Stewart Opening...," *NYT*, Oct. 6, 1929, RE1; "The Decorator's Art in the New Age," *NYT*, Feb. 23, 1930, 86; "A Blend of Old and New for Interiors," *NYT*, June 15, 1930, SM8; "Empire State Wins Architects' Award," *NYT*, Apr. 22, 1931, 18; "A Branch Bank in New York City," *Architectural Record* (May 1931), 383-388; "Named for Chicago Fair," *NYT*, July 31, 1932, 14; "Radio City Theatres to be Opened Soon," *NYT*, Oct. 30, 1932, RE1; "Plan New York Room at Chicago Exhibition," *NYT*, Nov. 20, 1932, RE2; "Modern Decorations on a Grand Scale," *NYT*, Dec. 25, 1932, SM12; "Walls and Sculpture Scandal," *NYT*, Jan. 1, 1933, X9; "Portray New York in Exhibit at Fair," *NYT*, May 21, 1933, N2; "Plans Liquor Sale in Rockefeller City," *NYT*, Nov. 21, 1933, 15; "To Repair Soviet Embassy," *NYT*, Nov. 30, 1933, 28; "Embassy Occupied by Troyanovsky," *NYT*, Apr. 7, 1934, 5; "National Safety & Trust Company, New York City," *Architectural Forum* (Aug. 1937), 99; "Mark Twain House Sold for Altering," *NYT*, Apr. 19, 1938, 39; "Eugene Schoen," *Who's Who in American Jewry*, John Simons, ed. (New York: Jewish Biographical Bur., 1938), 943; "Suites for House in Gramercy Park," *NYT*, June 2, 1939, 47; "Jewelry Firm Builds," *NYT*, July 14, 1940, 126; "Family Building Colony of Homes on 10,000 Acres," *NYT*, June 15, 1941, RE1; Eugene Schoen, "Architectural Work of Ernest Flagg," *NYT*, Apr. 19, 1947, 14; Rudolph Rosenthal and Helena L. Ratzka, *The Story of Modern Applied Art* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), 158; "New Home Opened by Parke-Bernet," *NYT*, Nov. 11, 1949, 28; "Building Plans Filed," *NYT*, July 4, 1951, 36; Harold H. Schoen obit., *NYT*, July 5, 1951, 25; Eugene Schoen obit., *NYT*, Aug. 17, 1957, 15; Karen J. Rigdon, *Eugene Schoen: Designs for Furniture, 1927-1936* (Master's Thesis, Cooper-Hewitt, Natl. Design Museum, 1986), which includes Lee Schoen's "Eugene Schoen: Commission List, 1905-1940" as Appendix I; Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987); Stephen N. Greengard, "Interview: Alan Moss and the Revival of American Modernism," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (Spring 1989), 76-77, 89; "Eugene Schoen," Mel Byars, *The Design Encyclopedia* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 503; Lee Schoen obit. notice, *NYT*, Sept. 1, 1994, D19; "RKO Roxy, New York City: Long Gone and Almost Entirely Forgotten," *Marquee* (2002), 20-23; Christopher Long, *Paul T. Frankl and Modern American Design* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr.,

2007); “Lee Schoen,” www.ancestrylibrary.com website; Paul Donzella, “Eugene Schoen,” www.greenbriarwoodworks.com website (2007).

¹² Lee Schoen, in Rigdon, 2.

¹³ Eduard F. Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1985), 189.

¹⁴ Rosenthal and Ratzka, 158.

¹⁵ “Bankers Engineering Company,” *The Bankers Magazine* (July 1915), 169.

¹⁶ These included the ground story of No. 1758 Pitkin Avenue (c. 1921-22; demolished), Brooklyn; the Williamsburg Branch (1921-23), 47-49 Graham Avenue (aka 63-73 Varet Street), Brooklyn; No. 106 Avenue C (1923), Manhattan; No. 319 Grand Street and No. 896 DeKalb Avenue (c. 1925), Brooklyn; No. 177 East Broadway (c. 1927), Manhattan; and the Art Moderne style No. 503 Claremont Parkway (1930-31; altered), Bronx .

¹⁷ Long, 61.

¹⁸ He also participated in a number of influential design exhibitions, including Macy’s International Exposition of Art in Industry (1928); The Architect and the Industrial Arts: An Exhibition of Contemporary Design (1929), for which he served on the Co-Operating Committee of Architects (with Raymond Hood, Ely Jacques Kahn, John W. Root, Eliel Saarinen, Joseph Urban, and Ralph T. Walker), and Contemporary American Industrial Art, 1934 (1935), the latter two at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁹ Jan. 1, 1933.

²⁰ Eugene Schoen obit.

²¹ Kings County; “New York Bank History,” www.scripophily.com website (June 2011); “Bankers Trust, Public National Announce Plans for a Merger,” *NYT*, Feb. 16, 1955, 41; “Public National, Bankers Trust Win Authorization for Merger,” *NYT*, Mar. 25, 1955, 33; Bankers Trust Co., advertisement, *NYT*, June 6, 1955, 16; “Bankers Trust Wins a Test,” *NYT*, Jan. 15, 1980, D9; “Notice of Proposed Acquisition of Bank Assets...,” *NYT*, Aug. 17, 1981, D6; “Westminster Bank Selects New Chief,” *NYT*, Feb. 11, 1982, D2; “NatWest Does the Unexpected,” *NYT*, Sept. 18, 1983, F4; “NatWest USA Climbs Back,” *NYT*, Mar. 19, 1986, D1; “National Westminster Names New U.S. Chief,” *NYT*, Mar. 23, 1991, 31; “Bank of America Williamsburg Branch,” www.bankswd.com website (June 2011).

²² “Bankers Trust New York Corp.,” Lisa Mirabile, ed., *International Directory of Company Histories 2* (Chicago: St. James Pr., 1990), 229-230.

²³ Feb. 16, 1955.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

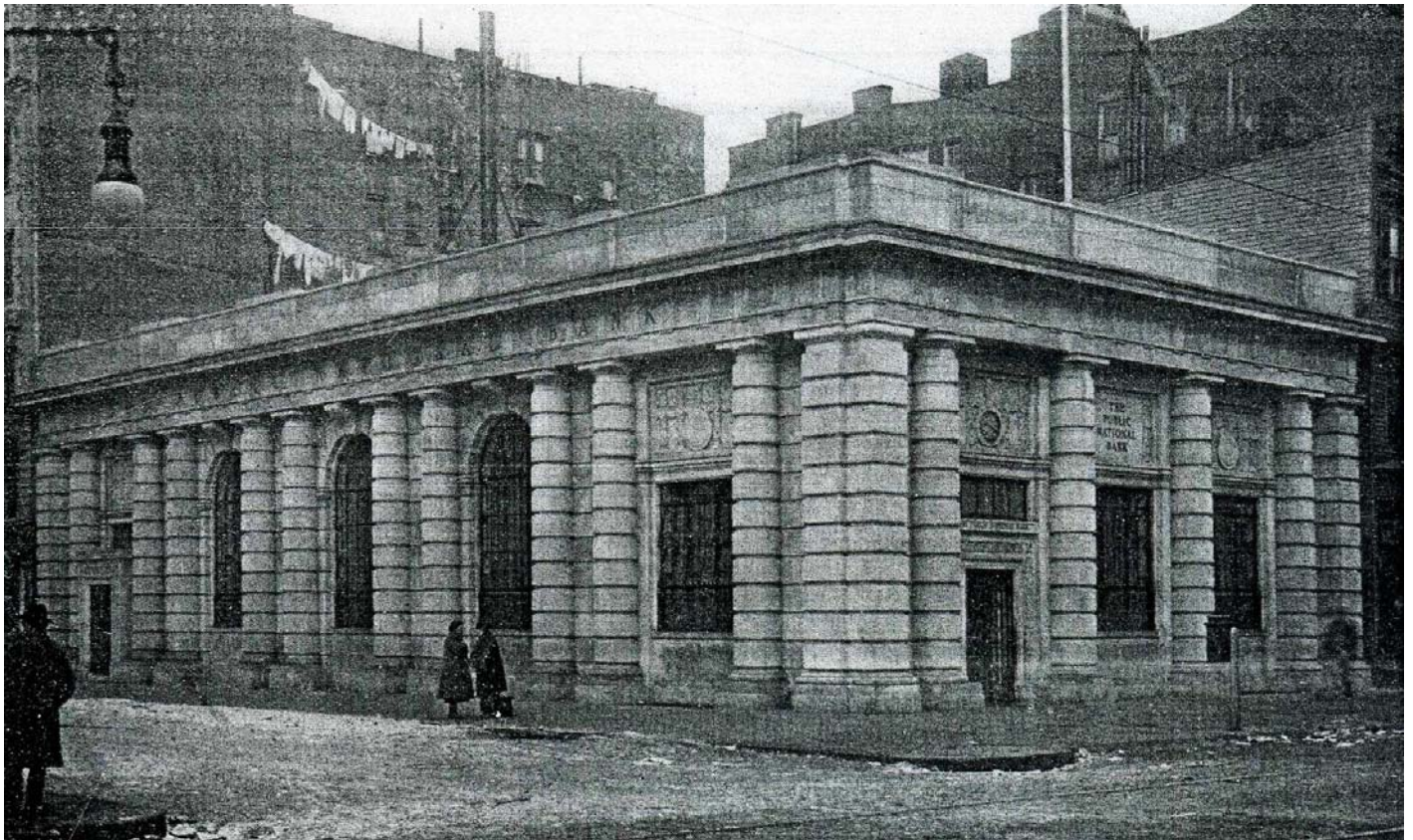
On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America) has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the striking neo-Classical style Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (1921-23), at the corner of Graham Avenue and Varet Street in the eastern section of the Williamsburg neighborhood in Brooklyn, was the first of several Public National branch bank buildings designed by architect Eugene Schoen after receiving the bank's lucrative patronage, until 1930; that although little remembered today other than as a furniture designer, the New York City-born Schoen (1880-1957) was for the first half of the 20th century in the forefront of modern American design and an esteemed contemporary of many well-known colleagues, from the time after his graduation in 1902 from Columbia University when he traveled to Europe, meeting in Vienna Otto Wagner and Josef Hoffmann who influenced Schoen's architectural practice from 1904 until 1925, after which time he became largely an interior designer, opening his own New York gallery; that the Public National Bank of New York was chartered in 1908, with its headquarters on the Lower East Side, and became Public National Bank & Trust Co. of New York after 1927; that designed in the form of a one-story temple and clad in cast stone (now painted), the Williamsburg Branch features rusticated columns and corner piers on both principal facades that frame rectangular and round-arched fenestration, with panels and entrance surrounds displaying a combination of classical and Secessionist ornament; and that this corner branch bank, which later served Bankers Trust Co. of New York and National Westminster Bank (and now Bank of America), was published in *Architecture and Building* in 1923, is a rare example in New York City of early-20th-century Viennese influence, achieving a monumentality through the use of bold classical forms, abstraction, and predominant rustication, and remains one of Schoen's most interesting and intact architectural commissions.

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 Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America), 47-49 Graham Avenue (aka 63-73 Varet Street), Borough of Brooklyn, and designates Brooklyn Tax Map Block 3105, Lot 26, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair

Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire, Joan Gerner, Michael Goldblum,
Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America),
47-49 Graham Avenue (aka 63-73 Varet Street), Brooklyn

Source: *Architecture and Building* (June 1923)



Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America)

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2011)



**Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America),
Graham Avenue facade**

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2011)



**Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America),
Varet Street facade**

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee (2011)

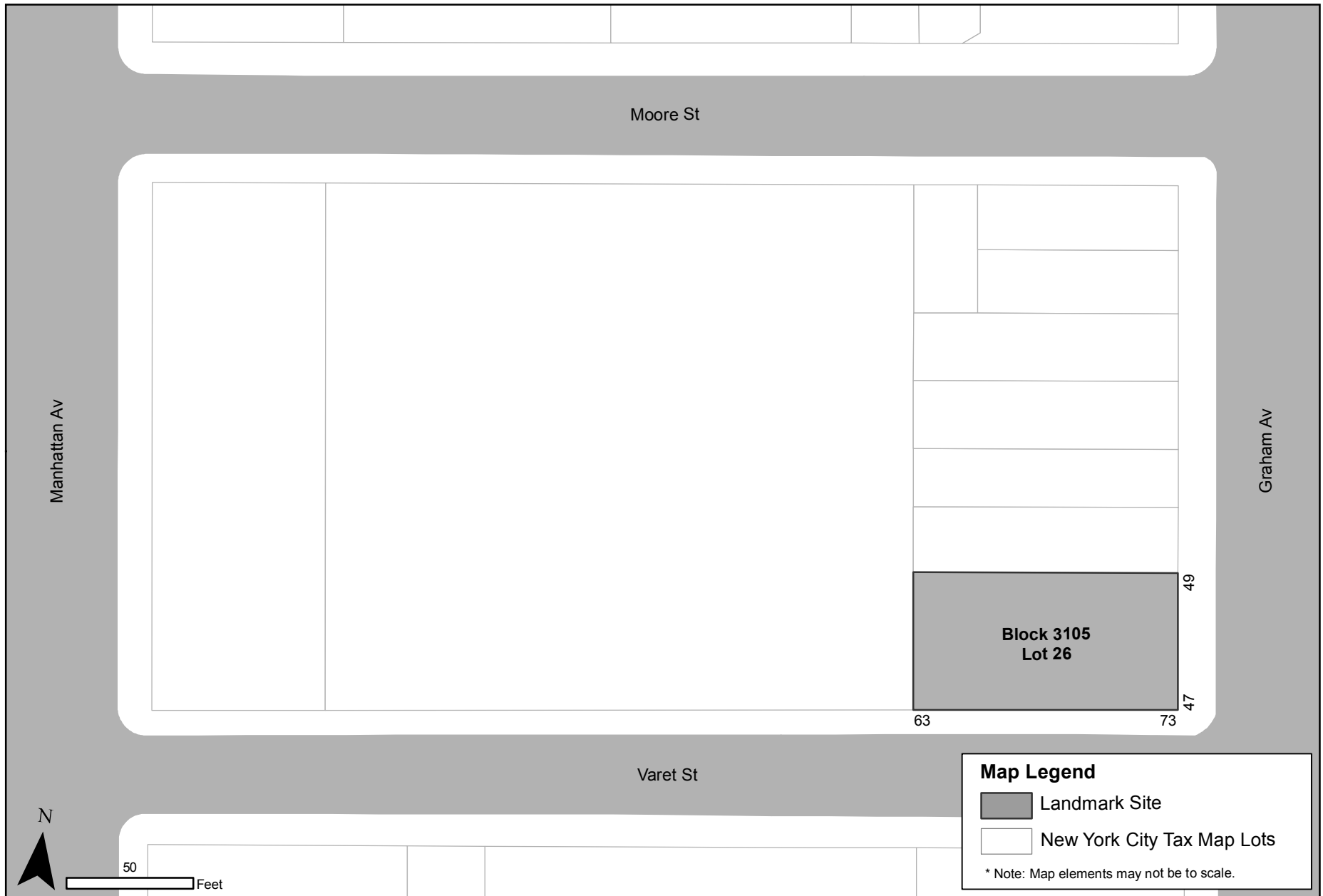


Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America),
Varet Street facade detail



Williamsburg Branch, Public National Bank of New York (now Bank of America),
Graham Avenue façade panel detail
Varet Street façade metal grille detail

Photos: Katie Horak (upper, 2008) and Christopher D. Brazee (lower, 2011)



WILLIAMSBURG BRANCH, PUBLIC NATIONAL BANK OF NEW YORK (NOW BANK OF AMERICA) (LP-2471)
 47-49 Graham Avenue (aka 63-73 Varet Street). Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 3105, Lot 26

Designated: January 17, 2012