

New York Public Library, Tremont Branch



New York Public Library, Tremont Branch

LOCATION

Borough of the Bronx
1866 Washington Avenue

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

The New York Public Library, Tremont Branch, designed by the prominent architectural firm of Carrère and Hastings, opened in 1905 is an impressively intact Carnegie library that has been a significant part of the community since its construction.



Tremont Library

1915

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New York Public Library, Tremont Branch¹

1866 Washington Avenue, Bronx

Designation List 537

LP-2677

Built: 1905

Architect: Carrère and Hastings

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx, Tax Map Block 2918, Lot 1

Building Identification Number (BIN): 2009573

Calendared: October 17, 2023

Public Hearing: January 23, 2024

On January 23, 2024, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the New York Public Library, Tremont Branch as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The Commission received support for the proposed designation from three people including representatives of the New York Public Library, the Historic Districts Council, and the Bronx Borough Historian. No one spoke in opposition. The Commission also received one written submission in support of the proposed designation from an individual.

Summary

New York Public Library, Tremont Branch

Located at the corner of East 176th Street and Washington Avenue in the Bronx, the Tremont Branch of the New York Public Library is one of 67 circulating libraries constructed for the city's three public library systems in the early 20th century with funding from steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. The Classical Revival style building was designed by the prominent architectural firm of Carrère and Hastings in 1904 and opened in 1905. It is one of 14 Carnegie libraries designed by the firm for the New York Public Library, including three in the Bronx.

Prior to the opening of the New York Public Library Tremont Branch, the Bronx Free Library provided library services to the Tremont community out of the Trinity Congregation Church until 1905. The Bronx Free Library was located on the northeastern corner of East 176th Street and Washington Avenue, across the street from the soon to be constructed Tremont Branch. Opened in 1905 the Tremont Branch built upon the familiarity the neighborhood had with this intersection as a home to their library.

From its opening day, the Tremont Branch was popular with the adults and young people of the community. The librarians of Tremont regularly met with students, helped young people set up clubs, taught classes to children, taught English to new immigrants, and held meetings for community members. The librarians of Tremont expressed their ideas for programs, utilized new ways to reach non-native English speakers better, and recorded their insights on the advantages the library provided to immigrants learning English. The Tremont Branch became heavily involved in literacy education for the

neighborhood. In the 1950s, Tremont became one of the foremost branch libraries for books, literature, and programs on Jewish culture and history, and the Hebrew and Yiddish languages.

Carrère and Hastings extended the Tremont Branch building by one bay between 1915 and 1916 using leftover funds from the Carnegie donation. The extension increased space for book circulation and the children's reading room. The now six-bay two-story building is a Classical Revival corner brick building in the rural style of the Carrère and Hastings library designs. The building has a partial third story for the janitor's apartment. The building features a limestone trim, with limestone keystones on the first floor in the arched windows, a projecting band course between the first and second floors, limestone enframements of the second-floor window, a denticulated cornice, and parapet panels. Due to the extension, what originally was a central entrance is now positioned asymmetrically. The building also has a side entrance and a basement entrance on East 176th Street.

The Tremont Branch has historically been a community space, a classroom, and a safe place for those learning English. The Tremont Branch is a pristine example of an early Carrère and Hastings Carnegie library. Beyond its impressive architecture the Tremont Library serves as an example of the significance libraries played in their communities from their opening day.

Building Description

New York Public Library, Tremont Branch

Description

The Tremont Branch of the New York Public Library is located on the corner of Washington Avenue and East 176th Street on what is now a mixed manufacturing, commercial, and residential block. The Classical Revival style building, as designed in 1905, featured nearly identical five-bay-wide brick and limestone facades on both street elevations. In 1915-16, with monies left over from the Carnegie grant, a recessed sixth bay was added on the north side of the Washington Avenue facade, and the arched entrance in the eastern bay of the East 176th Street facade was reconfigured. Subsequent alterations to the exterior were made in the 1940s, 1950s and most recently in 2022-23 when the doors were repaired. The Tremont Branch is one of several Carnegie libraries on corner sites designed by Carrère and Hastings including the Hunts Point Branch (1928-1929, Carrère and Hastings, a designated New York City Landmark), and the Hudson Park Branch (1906, Carrère and Hastings, designated within the Greenwich Village Historic District Extension II).

Primary (Washington Avenue, West) Facade

Resting on a low granite base, the Washington Avenue facade is executed in brick laid in Flemish bond and articulated by limestone sill and lintel courses at the second story and limestone trim at the windows, entrance, and parapet. The cornerstone, carved with “MDCCCCIV,” is set into a granite base. The arched openings on the first story feature brick vousoirs with molded limestone keystones,

into which are set the stone door and window surrounds. The entrance features an arched transom with decorative metal grille. The fenestration consists of six-over-six double-hung windows with curved upper sash and stone sills and spandrels. The tall second-story windows are set within flat limestone surrounds with decorative iron railings and feature nine-over-nine double-hung sash. “New York Public Library” is carved into the frieze of the denticulated cornice. Above the cornice is a parapet with stone piers and coping. Light fixtures flank the entrance. The cellar windows retain their historic decorative grilles.

Alterations

Entrance altered: sill lowered, double-leaf door replaced with single-leaf door; non-historic lintel with branch name, and roll-down security gate; metal security grilles at first-story windows; plaque with library name replaced; flagpole; spotlights at second story and roof.

Primary (East 176th Street, South) Facade

The East 176th Street facade is identical to the Washington Avenue facade in materials and decoration except for the easternmost bay. Reconfigured in 1915-16, the once arched entrance features a double-leaf, wood-and-glass door with decorative security grilles. Above the door are two six-over-six sash windows with a security gate. A decorative security light sits in the band course above the windows. In lieu of a single tall window at the second story, the opening features four, four-over-four sash windows with metal railings. A service entrance with stone lintel is set to the east of the entrance. The cellar windows appear to retain their historic metal and mesh grilles. A tall brick chimney with stone cap rises above the roof on the east.

Alterations

Six-over-six double-hung windows added above

entrance; metal security grilles at first-story windows and windows above entrance; metal roll-down gate at entrance; decorative light fixture at entrance; spotlights at parapet; service entrance closed off; light with conduit at cellar; metal pipe added to chimney; pipe; remote utility meter.

History and Significance

New York Public Library, Tremont Branch

Early History and Development of the Bronx

Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the area that became the Bronx was occupied by Indigenous peoples known as the Manhattans, Wiechquaesgecks, and the Siwanoy, members of the larger Algonquian group, the Lenape or Delaware, who spoke a dialect called Munsee.² The area of present-day Tremont was inhabited by the Wiechquaesgeck.

In 1641, Jonas Bronck, a Scandinavian immigrant to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, became the first recorded European settler of the present-day Bronx when he “purchased” a 500-acre tract from local Indigenous people. While Europeans viewed contracts such as this as purchase agreements, scholars have noted that at this time, Indigenous peoples did not perceive them the same way, recognizing them more as temporary tenancies. Bronck’s settlement, which became known as Broncksland, extended eastward from the Harlem River to a stream called Sacrahung by Indigenous people and Bungay Creek by later English settlers. Sacrahung rose within a marshland later known as Hassock’s Meadow near present-day Crotona Park and flowed southward, roughly along the line of Intervale Avenue, into the East River near Port Morris. Bronck built a stone house near the Harlem River in what is now the Mott Haven neighborhood.

By 1669, the land above Broncksland, present day Mott Haven, between the Harlem and Aquehung (or Ahquahung) today’s Bronx River was the only tract of land left in care of the Wiechquaesgeck people, the land was known as Keskeskick. John Archer, a Dutch man, purchased

this land. The tract ran from present day Broadway and 238th Street, in Kingsbridge, east to the Bronx River above Gun Hill Road, in Williamsbridge, south along the Bronx River and west across to the Highbridge.³ Within this tract, Archer established the Manor of Fordham, to enact special privileges under English rule.⁴

By the 1690s, the European presence in the counties that make up today’s Bronx was increasing as the Indigenous population decreased. Their land was taken from them, and some were enslaved; at the same time, the population of enslaved Black people also increased. By the 1700s, roughly 10% of the eight hundred people who lived in the counties that would make up the Bronx were enslaved.⁵

Through the 1700s and 1800s the area that would become Tremont remained rural. In 1856, Tremont was named as a town within West Farms by Postmaster Hiram Tarbox and other men who purchased land in the upper farm of Morrisania from Governor Morris. The name is derived from the three hills or mounts in the area (Mount Eden, Mount Hope, and Fairmount.) Tremont was a part of the town of West Farms which was annexed into the City of New York in 1874.

The village developed quickly, largely due to Tarbox. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Bronx Free Library, the fire department, and the post office (for which he was the only post-master general.) Tarbox did not live to see the construction of the Tremont Library, which his home stood diagonally across from. Shortly after Tarbox’s death Tremont developed into a bustling town with crowded commercial streets full of shops including clothing stores, pawn shops, and taverns.⁶

In 1880, Tremont was home primarily to first-generation Americans and immigrants including Irish, Germans, Spanish, and French people. Tremont became increasingly diverse by the start of the 20th century, with a population made up primarily of

European immigrants. By 1920, the area was home to a large Russian and Austrian Jewish population, with a minority population of western European immigrants. The Eastern European Jewish community remained through the 1930s and 1940s. The 1938 redlining report noted 15% of the population as Black and Latino people.⁷ By the 1950 census most residents of Tremont living near the library were identified as Puerto Rican.⁸

History of New York City Libraries⁹

In the 18th and early 19th centuries, libraries in New York City were not common. The libraries that did exist were private, institutional, or subscription based. The New York Society Library, a subscription-based library, was operational in 1754. Columbia University had a library by 1757. Reading rooms were available but they operated as businesses, the earliest of which was opened in Garrett Noel's bookstore.

In the 1830s, New York State passed legislation enabling the city to support libraries; however, they remained private institutions through the 19th century. In 1849, the Astor Library, the city's first free public reference library was incorporated. In 1870, the Lenox Library, a private collection of rare and reference books, incorporated. In 1876, there were about 90 libraries and book collections in New York City.

In 1878, the New York Free Circulating Library was established to bring books and education to the public. Early financial support came from Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and other wealthy New Yorkers. The New York Public Library was formed in 1895 by the consolidation of three corporations. The three corporations included the Astor Library, established with gifts from John Jacob Astor, his sons, and grandsons, amounting to about \$1,700,000; the private library of James Lenox with an endowment of

\$505,500; and The Tilden Trust, Samuel J. Tilden's private library with an endowment fund estimated at \$2,000,000.¹⁰ Andrew Carnegie gifted the City of New York \$5,200,000 to construct a branch library system. To benefit from the gift, the New York Free Circulating Library system merged its eleven branches with the New York Public Library on January 11th, 1901, and on March 12th, 1901, Andrew Carnegie formally offered funding for establishing branch libraries across the city.¹¹

History of Bronx Libraries¹²

The earliest known Bronx library was the Dodge Library in Riverdale, started by William E. Dodge's wife, Grace Dodge, in 1872, several years prior to the establishment of the New York Free Circulating Library. Grace Dodge launched an initiative to run a small library out of a greenhouse on their land; with its increasing popularity, the Riverdale Library Association was formed in 1883. Soon after the formation of the association, Riverdale residents Mr. and Mrs. Percy Pyne donated money to construct the Riverdale Public Library, which was used as the Riverdale branch of the NYPL until it was replaced with its current building in 1967.

In Westchester Square, the Van Schaick Reading Room (1882-83, 1890-1892, a designated New York City Landmark) was donated by Peter C. Van Schaick in 1883 and expanded by the donation of Collis P. Huntington. The library operates today as it did in the 1890s, as a reading room rather than a circulating library. The Kingsbridge Free Library, the Riverdale Free Library, the High Bridge Free Library, and the Bronx Free Library all opened at the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century, which marked the move from a traditional closed reading room to a circulating library system.

In Tremont, the Bronx Free Library was formed in 1901. The library was housed in the Trinity Congregation Church, located on the

northwestern corner of East 176th Street and Washington Avenue, across the street from where the Tremont Branch of the New York Public Library would open four years later.¹³ The Bronx Free Library quickly grew its collection, from 111 books in circulation in 1901, its opening year, to 1,500 books in circulation in 1902; by its closure in 1905 it had 10,000 books in circulation, which it would subsequently donate to the Tremont Branch. In addition to donating its books to the New York Public Library circulating system, the trustees of the Bronx Free Library maintained their organization after its closure to act as an advisory committee to the new Tremont Library. They helped the staff of the new branch for several months before its opening day.¹⁴

Andrew Carnegie and the New York Public Library¹⁵

The Scottish-born industrialist Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) had risen 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. As early as the 1870s and 1880s, Carnegie believed that the wealthy should live modestly and, while still living, give away their funds for the good of humanity. For him this took the form of donations to universities, libraries, medical centers, parks, meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches. By the time of his death in 1911, Carnegie had given away about 90 percent of his wealth for these worthy causes including the financing of more than 2,500 Carnegie libraries worldwide with over 1,680 in the United States.

In 1901, New York City received a \$5.2 million grant from Carnegie for the construction of branch libraries throughout the five boroughs. To advise the New York Public Library on how to proceed with construction, the Library Board's Executive Committee appointed a temporary

architects' advisory committee consisting of Charles F. McKim of McKim, Mead & White, John Carrère of Carrère & Hastings, and Walter Cook of Babb, Cook & Willard in 1901. The committee advised that the branches be uniform and recognizable in materials, style, plan, and scale and that different site requirements would provide variety. Among their general recommendations were that they should be classical in style, a simplified version of the Beaux Arts model similar to most public buildings designed in this period, and clad either in limestone or in brick with limestone trim. For those libraries located in more densely populated areas, the buildings should be vertically oriented and sited midblock, while in less densely built-up areas, such as the Bronx and other parts of the outer boroughs, "suburban" branches were to be located on larger sites and horizontally oriented.

To accomplish the project, they recommended forming a committee of two to five architectural firms who would design the buildings in cooperation with each other, while consulting with librarians on planning and design. Andrew Carnegie objected to the lack of competition in this system but was ultimately convinced that it would be faster, cheaper, and would produce a more unified collection. The advisors, McKim, Carrère, and Cook, were selected for the permanent committee, and their firms designed most of the New York Public Library's Carnegie branches.

Carrère and Hastings¹⁶

The architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings designed many of New York City's most prominent structures, including the Central Branch of the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations (1898-1911), Grand Army Plaza (1913), the Manhattan Bridge Arch and Colonnade (1905), and the Staten Island Borough Hall (1903-07) (all designated New York City Landmarks). John

Merven Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) met in Paris while studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Carrère, whose previous education was in Switzerland, graduated in 1882 and Hastings, who briefly attended Columbia University, graduated in 1884. Their architectural style was heavily influenced by their studies in Paris. Both men were hired out of school by the office of McKim, Mead & White and in 1885 they formed their own firm.

The firm's earliest commissions were churches or hotels. The majority of their significant work was in New York City, but they were also responsible for the House and Senate Office Buildings (1906) in Washington, D.C. and Woolsey and Memorial Halls (1906) at Yale University.

The firm won the competition for the New York Public Library Main Building in 1897. This monumental Beaux-Arts style building was a major influence on early twentieth-century architecture in New York. The firm proceeded to design fourteen classically-inspired Carnegie branch libraries in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island from 1904 to 1929. The buildings followed the design prescriptions put forth by the architects committee in which Carrère & Hastings participated. Their libraries applied classical elements such as a mixed facade of brick and limestone, ornate ironwork, and arched windows, all displayed in the Tremont branch library. Their Hunts Point (1929) branch, also in the Bronx, was designated a New York City Landmark in 2009.

History of the Tremont Branch

The Tremont Neighborhood

The Tremont neighborhood of the Bronx has been home to numerous ethnicities since the end of the 19th century. At the turn of the century the neighborhood's demographics were a mixture of first-generation Americans and Western European immigrants. By 1920, a large Russian and Austrian

Jewish population had moved into the neighborhood alongside Protestant English, Catholic Irish and Italians. The neighborhood had religious schools and many denominations of churches. By the 1930s, the Irish, English, and Italians had left the neighborhood and East Tremont became a mostly Eastern European neighborhood populated by Yiddish-speaking Jewish people from Russia, Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia. One no-longer-extant church was turned into a synagogue in the 1930s as Catholics moved out. This community remained through the 1940s. In the late 1930s, the area became home to a small community of Latino and Black people, and as Jewish people began to move out in the 1950s, Puerto Rican people became the dominant community in Tremont. In 1985, according to Community Board 6, within which the Tremont Branch is located, the population was 48.6% Latino, 30.5% Black, and 19.2% White.¹⁷

The Tremont Branch Library

When the Tremont Branch Library opened on July 22nd, 1905, it was the 33rd branch of the circulating department of the New York Public Library and the sixth library newly constructed for the branch system (the other 27 were acquired for the branch expansion). The Tremont Branch was the third Carnegie library opened in the Bronx, and it was the first designed by Carrère & Hastings.¹⁸

On its opening day the Tremont Branch had 10,000 volumes on its shelves, which were donated from the Bronx Free Library located across the street.¹⁹ Building upon the community's familiarity with this intersection as a home to a library, the Tremont Branch was situated in a prime location near the Harlem Railroad and the old Bronx Borough Hall.²⁰

As one of the few public institutions in the area, the library was used as a meeting place by many groups over its lifetime. The Bronx Society of

Arts and Sciences was founded here on October 20, 1905.²¹ In 1908, the librarians of Tremont helped young girls form the Cranford club, the first girls reading club in the branch system.²² Other clubs that met here included the Bronx Women’s Voter League, the City History Club, the Yiddish Mother’s Club, a drama reading and discussion club, the Bronx Council girl scouts, and many afterschool groups. In the 1970s, teachers, parents, and librarians helped the young people of Tremont form book, film, and music clubs at the Tremont Library.²³

Lectures and events held at the Tremont library were largely informed by the demographics of the surrounding community. In its first few decades the lectures focused primarily on the arts, science, and on topics related to the European background of local residents, including *Irish Life and Song*, *Italy Past and Present*, *Animals of New York State*, and *Paintings in the Metropolitan* [sic].²⁴ As shown in the library’s archives, in the 1930s and 1940s the community became interested in the War and Jewish and Eastern European history, prompting the library to hold lectures on these subjects. Tremont established Jewish Book Week, which became Jewish Book Month in the 1950s. Tremont established a “Jewish Division” and had the largest and most publicly accessible collection of books on Jewish culture, literature, history and the Hebrew and Yiddish Languages in the branch system.²⁵ A list of Jewish books put together by librarian Esther Barag was republished in the American Library Association journals, the Jewish Forum Journals, and the staff news of the NYPL, and the collection she put together was often loaned out to book fairs.²⁶

In 1967, the Tremont Branch was one of eight NYPL branches to participate in *El Proyecto Del Sur Del Bronx*, known in English as “The South Bronx Project.” The South Bronx Project originated after funding was set aside by Congress in 1966 for “experimental library services.” The NYPL lobbied

for the funding “to establish and demonstrate effective library programs, methods, and materials, and to introduce the value of these services and books in eight rapidly changing neighborhoods which are predominantly Spanish-speaking and not library or book oriented.”²⁷ The project brought in bilingual staff, Spanish-language books, and programs, and it sought to bring pride to the many Latino and Hispanic communities present in the South Bronx. The South Bronx Project became an essential part of Tremont’s programs. Tremont began producing brochures in both English and Spanish as early as the 1960s. The library also put together film, book, and family clubs for Spanish-speaking members of the community, as well as specifically gearing clubs towards teenagers in the neighborhood.

By the 1960s, poetry and arts highlighting the Black community became an integral part of the programming at Tremont. In 1968 the library held a workshop on the work of Langston Hughes, and after the New York Public Library started celebrating Black History Month in earnest, in the 1980s it became a part of Tremont’s yearly calendar. In 1987 Abiodun Oyewole, noted poet, teacher, and member of the African-American music and spoken-word group The Last Poets, gave a talk that drew a large crowd.²⁸ Also in the 1980s, New York Public Library librarians established an unofficial Black Heritage Committee, which sought to highlight Black authors and create annual lists of significant books. The Black Heritage Committee held several meetings at the Tremont Branch with the participation of Tremont librarians.²⁹

The Librarians of Tremont³⁰

As libraries became more common in the mid-19th century, librarianship was typically a pastime pursued by wealthy white men, who viewed it as a way of bringing civilization to the general population. During the late 19th century, women

became increasingly involved in the field, and by the end of the 19th century, as librarianship shifted from a pastime for the wealthy to a professional career, libraries were mostly staffed by women, though still run by men. In 1887, Columbia University became the first institution in the United States to offer a library studies specialization.³¹ Librarianship was considered an acceptable career for women, as the library was in many ways an extension of the classroom, or the home, where people came to learn, and librarians were the caretakers of those seeking knowledge or a reprieve in this new community space.³²

In 1901, Andrew Carnegie's large donation and the expansion of the branch library system created a great demand for librarians in New York City. Librarians had to engage communities with varying needs and often economic, language, and educational disparities. The librarians themselves made Carnegie libraries integral parts of the communities where they operated. Throughout the 20th century, as these neighborhoods began to change rapidly, the librarians changed with it. They held meetings on community issues, communicated across languages with books, art, and music, and, during tough times, the library remained a welcome constant in the neighborhood.

Librarians employed at the Tremont Branch, the vast majority of whom were women, provided extremely detailed documentation of the library's programming, circulation, and changes to the surrounding community throughout its history. Many staff wrote letters describing the importance of libraries and their work with the public. Their detailed descriptions of changes to the neighborhood and advocacy for programming give a unique insight into the impact the library had in Tremont. For example, the Russian-born Esther Barag worked for the Tremont Branch from 1927 until about 1952. She was a critical figure in making the Tremont Branch a

central location for information on Jewish culture. According to her letters, Barag also felt very strongly about the role the library could play for those learning English. She worked with new immigrants to help them open library cards and navigate the shelves, and suggested books for them to begin reading. In 1952, Barag wrote a multipage report detailing the importance of the library for literacy education. In the report, she suggested formalizing the library's work with immigrants, including increasing the number of foreign-language books, establishing a book committee to publish a yearly list of easy reading books, encouraging teachers to require library visits, hiring more experts in literacy education, contacting new immigrant groups in their neighborhoods, and training staff to accommodate the needs of new adult readers. Many of Barag's suggestions would be implemented in the "experimental" South Bronx Project, begun twenty-four years after her report.³³

Polly Post Nelson, the head librarian of the Tremont Branch between 1953 and 1970 also left detailed documentation of her time at Tremont, including numerous reports describing the dramatic changes she saw in the Tremont neighborhood over her 17 years at the branch. For example, in 1956-1957's report, she noted that "Some [changes] are obvious and dramatic such as the displacement and sudden loss in population because of the Cross-Bronx Expressway. Other changes are imperceptible but have caused a steady loss in circulation. Two new housing projects should reverse this process by 1960."³⁴ Nelson saw the changes and devastation the Cross-Bronx caused to Bronx communities firsthand, and her letters depicted these challenges as inspiration for even greater commitment to the community in her role as their head librarian.³⁵

As is evident in their many letters and annual reports, the branch's staff viewed their library as a highly important resource and a cornerstone for the

community. The archival records kept by the librarians of Tremont showcase the deep connection they and the library had to the community. These sources also provide an invaluable insight into the history of the neighborhood, where the library's services continually changed to reflect the needs and interests of the people it served.

Conclusion

The New York Public Library, Tremont Branch is a distinguished example of a highly intact, well-preserved branch library constructed from the donation of Andrew Carnegie that created the most extensive library system in the United States. Featuring impressive stately architecture by the firm of Carrère & Hastings, it is a community space that has evolved in step with the Tremont neighborhood.

Endnotes

¹ Commissioners Frederick Bland and Mark Ginsberg were recused for this designation.

² According to Ann-Marie Cantwell, the Munsee had social and economic ties with other Munsee speaking peoples in communities “across a territory that stretched from the lower Hudson Valley and western Long Island across northern New Jersey,” including the region now defined New York City. Robert Grumet highlights the difficulty of establishing the identity of specific Indigenous communities in what is now New York City during the early colonial period as the names that have come to be associated with 17th-century Indigenous groups historically represented a diversity of things including place names, an individual or community leader, a village, or a longhouse community. In turn, these identities shifted as groups moved or were forced to relocate. Wiechquaesgeck, for example, was a local place name that became a general term for the larger community that inhabited portions of Northern Manhattan and the Bronx. The name Siwanoy represented the Indigenous communities that lived along the northern shore of Long Island Sound from Norwalk, Connecticut to the south Bronx that subsequently merged with the Wiechquaesgeck and other Indigenous groups in the Westchester highlands during the second half of the 17th century. The name “Manhattan” was historically identified as a language and a community of people living in northern-Manhattan and adjacent areas in the Bronx. Anne-Marie Cantwell “Penhawitz and Wampage and the Seventeenth-Century World They Dominated” in Meta F. Janowitz and Diane Dallal, eds., *Tales of Gotham, Historical Archaeology, Ethnohistory and Microhistory of New York City* (New York: Springer, 2013), 7–28; Robert Steven Grumet, *Native American Place Names in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1981), 24-26, 53, 59-62; Robert Steven Grumet, *The Munsee Indians: A History* (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 309–310n6. The present-day descendants of the area’s Indigenous people are members of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans, the Delaware Nation, the Delaware Tribe of Indians, the Shinnecock Nation, and the Unkechaug Nation.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Stephen Jenkins, *The Story of the Bronx* (New York: Jazzybee Verlag, 1912), 275; Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Old Croton Aqueduct Designation Report* (LP-2673), (New York: City of New York, 2024), prepared by Sarah Eccles, 9.

⁵ *The Encyclopedia of New York City: Second Edition*, (United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 2010), 161; LPC, *Old Croton Aqueduct* (LP-2673), 9.

⁶ Lloyd Ultan, *The Northern Borough: A History of the Bronx. United States: Bronx County Historical Society*, 2009; LPC, *Old Croton Aqueduct* (LP-2673), 9.

⁷ 1938 Redlining Report, New York City, Bronx, 4, Grade D-, from Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, et. al., “Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America,” <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining>.

⁸ 1910 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, Thirteenth Census of the United States; 1920 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, Fourteenth Census of the United States; 1930 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, Fifteenth Census of the United States.

⁹ This section 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 Dierickx.

¹⁰ LPC, *New York Public Library Designation Report*, (LP-0246) (New York City: City of New York, 1967), 1.

¹¹ *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (New York: New York Public Library, 1906), p 353.

¹² This section 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.

¹³ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1902), 241.

¹⁴ *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 509.

¹⁵ LPC, *New York Public Library, Harlem Branch Designation Report* (LP-2652), (New York: City of New York, 2021), prepared by Marianne Percival, 8-9.

¹⁶ LPC, *New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch Designation Report*, (LP-2323), (New York City of New York, 2009), prepared by Olivia Klose, 4-5.

¹⁷ 1890 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, 1910 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, Thirteenth Census of the United States; 1920 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, Fourteenth Census of the United States; 1930 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, Fifteenth Census of the United States; 1940 U.S. census, Bronx, New York, Sixteenth Census of the United States; 1950 U.S. census, Bronx, New York; Redlining Report,

1938, Bronx, D4; Ms. Long, *Tremont Annual Report*, Tremont Branch Archives, August 13, 1985, NYPL Special Collections.

¹⁸ Carrère and Hastings designed the designated Hunts Point branch (1929), the altered Melrose Branch (1914), and the demolished Highbridge Branch (1908).

¹⁹ “Opening Exercises of the Tremont Branch”, *New York Public Library*, July 22nd, 1905.; Report of the Director (New York: University of the State of New York, 1913); Bulletin of the New York Public Library (New York Public Library, 1906).

²⁰ Estimates of the Departments, Board of Education, Judiciary and Officers of The City of New York, Including Various Charitable Institutions, *Journal of Proceedings*, (New York: Mail and Express Company, 1902), 863-864.

²¹ On their founding fifteen men gathered at the Tremont Library to form a society to “develop and encourage the study of arts and sciences and to form collections of objects of interest found within the Borough of the Bronx.” Reverend F. Barrows Makepeace, former head of the Bronx Free Library, was appointed treasurer. At the society’s second meeting, the society appointed Chancellor MacCracken, founder of New York University, its president. The Society traveled around different Bronx institutions and on July 10, 1907, the society was given the Lorillard Mansion for use of their meetings, art displays, and lectures; “Bronx to Promote Art,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 1905, 5.

²² *Annual Report*, (New York: New York Public Library, 1955/56), 71.

²³ Tremont Library Archives, NYPL Special Collections.

²⁴ Tremont program, 1906, Tremont Library Archives, NYPL Special Collections.

²⁵ Mordecai Soltes, *Jewish Book Programs All Year 'round* (New York: Jewish Book Council of America, 1943), 6; Esther Barag, Tremont Branch Reports, 1952, NYPL Special Collections.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Martha Finney, “Bilingual Library Program Serves South Bronx,” *Forum* (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1978), 6.

²⁸ Tremont Branch Archives, 1987, NYPL, Special Collections.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Tremont Branch Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, accessed 6/30/23 & 7/11/23.

³¹ “Columbia University Libraries” (accessed January 11, 2024), https://library.columbia.edu/about/policies/collection-development-policies-strategies/subject/library_information_science.html.

³² Katharine Phenix, “The Status of Women Librarians,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 9, no. 2 (1987): 36–40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3346187>.

³³ Esther Barag, letter, Tremont Branch Archive, June 1952, NYPL, Special Collections.

³⁴ Polly Post Nelson, *The Tremont Branch Library Annual Report 1956-1957*, Tremont Branch Archives, 1956-1957, NYPL Special Collections.

³⁵ Tremont Library Archives, *Polly Post Nelson Year Reviews*, NYPL, Special Collections; Other women who worked at Tremont included: Minerva Ethel Grimm, who worked for the Free Circulating library and took summer courses at Harvard; Louise Elizabeth Jones, who earned a degree in manual art from Pratt Institute; Maude Agnes Wait Louson, who studied with the NYPL training class; Adele Crawford Martin, a graduate of Wellesley who worked at the library from 1947-1953 and served on the Metropolitan Library Council, which was formed to “face the questions of the day which have a direct bearing upon library services, e.g., censorship, state and federal aid for libraries, tenure, unionization, etc.”; and a housewife from the neighborhood, Mrs. Lorezini, who was employed part time at the library. *Staff News*, the New York Public Library. United States: 1955; Tremont Branch Archives, 1955, NYPL, Special Collections.

Findings and Designation

New York Public Library, Tremont Branch

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the New York Public Library, Tremont Branch 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, state, and the nation.

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 New York Public Library, Tremont Branch and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2918, Lot 1 as its Landmark Site, as shown in the attached map.



Tremont Library
Sarah Eccles, February 2024



Tremont Library, East 176th St Facade
Sarah Eccles, February 2024



Tremont Library, Washington Avenue Facade
Sarah Eccles, February 2024



Tremont Library
Sarah Eccles, February 2024



Tremont Library
Frederick J. Stein, Courtesy of the NYPL, 1915-1925



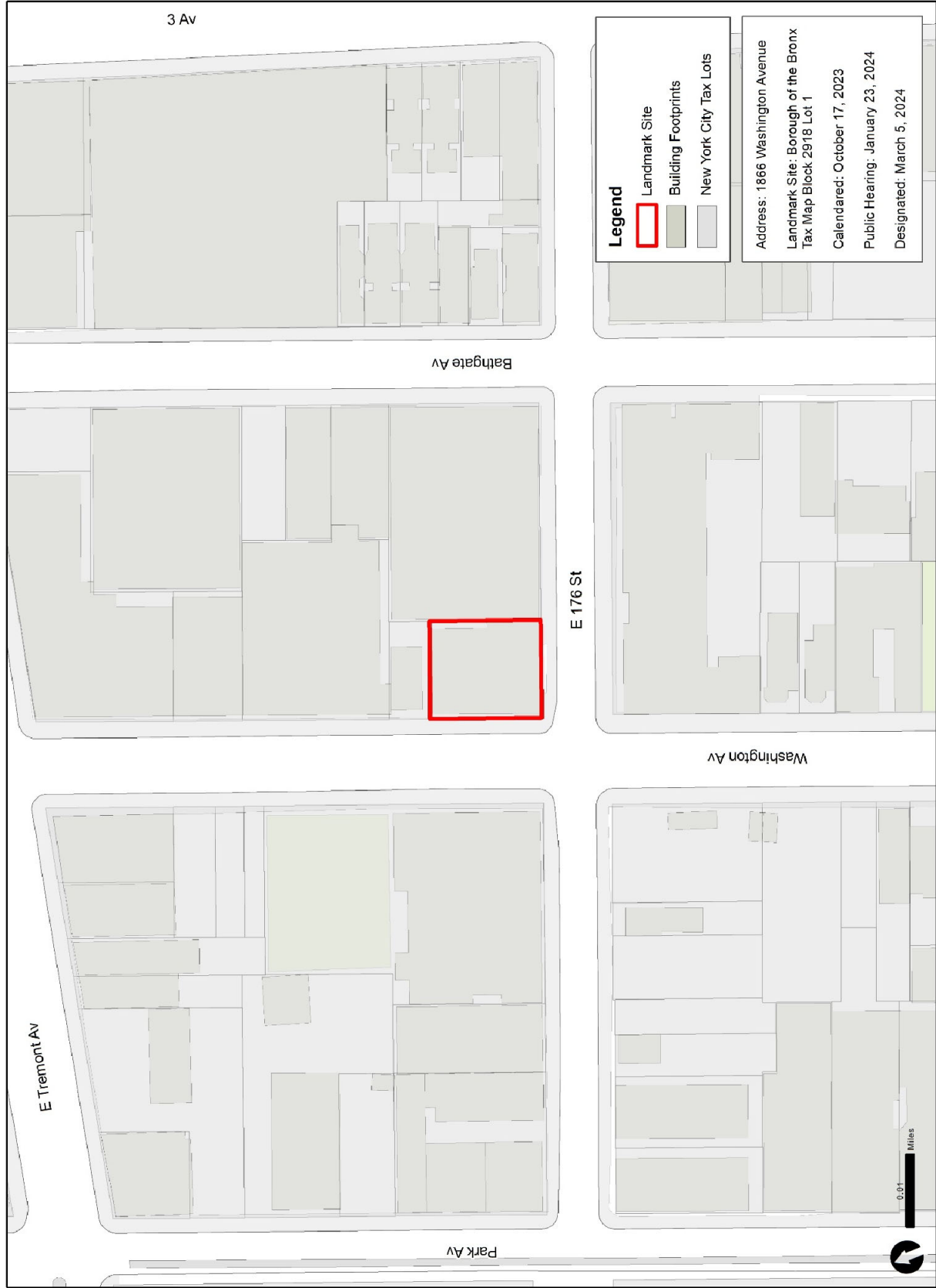
Tremont Library, Pre-Extension

Thaddeus Wilkerson, Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, 1909



Tremont Library, 1866 Washington Avenue, Post-Extension

Wurts Brothers, Courtesy of the Museum of the City of New York, 1915-19



Graphic Source: MapPLUTO, Edition 22.v2, Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, DHW, Date: 3.5.2024