

# Morris Avenue Historic District

## Designation Report



ccs

## Landmarks Preservation Commission

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**MORRIS AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT  
DESIGNATION REPORT**

1986

City of New York

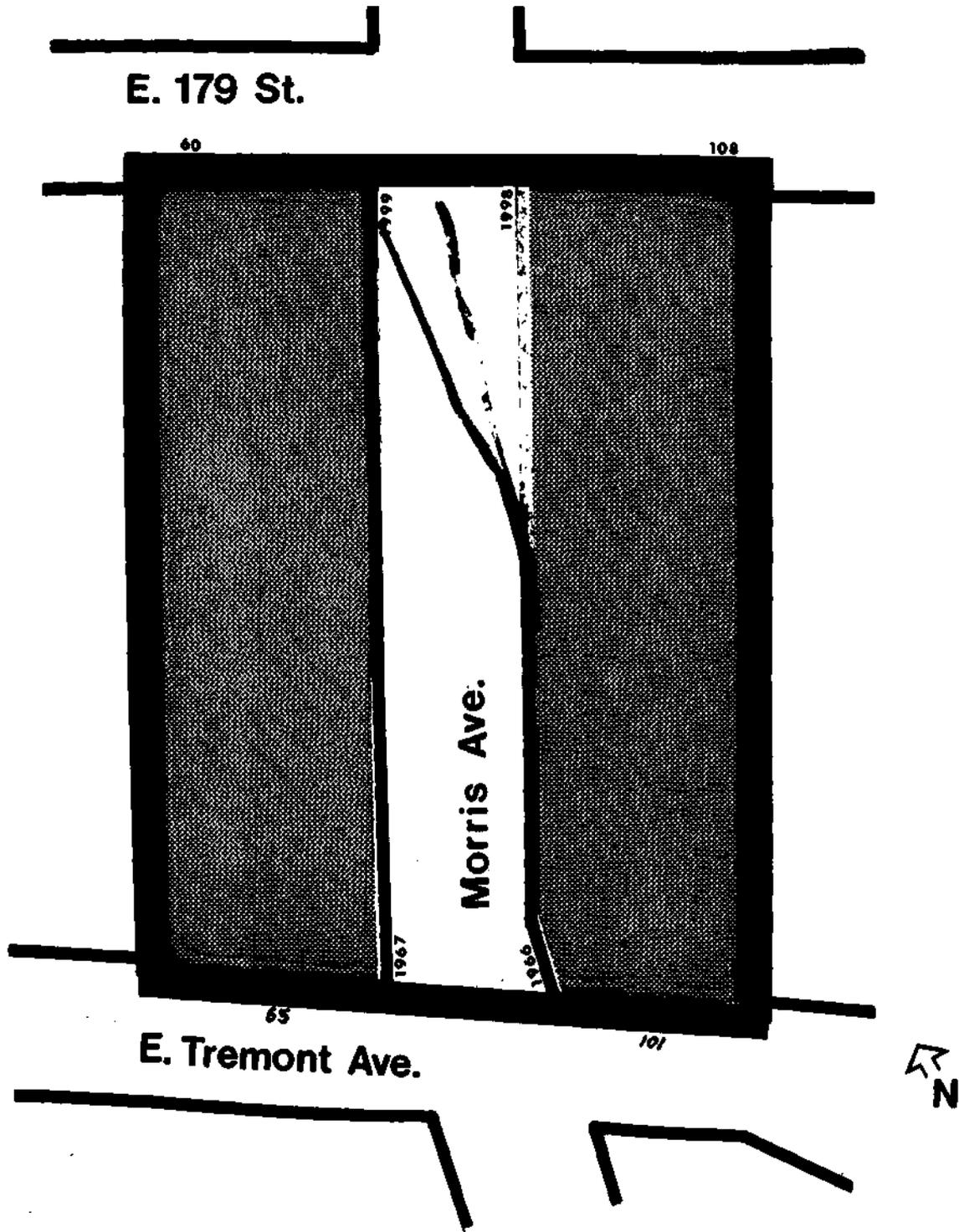
**Landmarks Preservation Commission**

Report prepared by:  
Charles Savage, Research Department

Editing:  
Marjorie Pearson, Director of Research

Photography:  
Charles Savage and  
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# Landmarks Preservation Commission



**MORRIS AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
Bronx

Designated **JULY 15, 1986**

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
July 15, 1986, Designation List 185  
LP-1392

MORRIS AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT, Borough of the Bronx

BOUNDARIES

The property bounded by a line extending easterly along the southern curb line of East 179 Street, southerly along the eastern property line of 108 East 179th Street, southerly along the eastern property lines of 1990-1966 Morris Avenue, westerly along the northern curb line of East Tremont Avenue, northerly along the western property lines of 1957-1991 Morris Avenue, and northerly along the western property line of 60 East 179th Street, to the point of beginning.

TESTIMONY AT THE PUBLIC HEARING

On September 14, 1982, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the Morris Avenue Historic District (Item No. 9). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Four statements were received in support of designation, including statements from the local community board and the South Bronx Development Corporation. There were no speakers or statements opposing designation.

## HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INTRODUCTION

The block of Morris Avenue between Tremont Avenue and East 179th Street in the Bronx, constructed between 1906 and 1910 by the speculative builder August Jacob to the designs of architect John Hauser, is a notable example of a uniformly planned streetscape. The resulting architectural homogeneity is rare in any urban situation. While the houses appear to take the form of the standard single-family rowhouse found throughout the urbanized sections of Manhattan and Brooklyn in the 19th century, these are in fact two-family dwellings. They are significant as examples of how law can effect design. Hauser's response to proposed changes in the building law is responsible for the three-story elevations of the houses on Morris Avenue and the unique interior arrangement behind them. Jacob's land acquisitions and the subsequent building history here reflect the Bronx's early urban development.

### Bronx Development

This block of Morris Avenue, in the 17th century, had been but a miniscule and uncharted portion of the 3200 acre Manor of Fordham, the only Westchester County manor to be granted by Royal Charter, that of James, Duke of York, to John Archer, the first lord. In retrospect the manor's final dissolution in 1764 -- sold in tracts by the Dutch Reformed Church -- has been called the largest sale of real estate in the history of the Bronx. By mid-19th century this block was still a small part of a larger property owned by Thomas W. Ludlow, described as located at Fordham in the Town of West Farms. In 1846 Westchester was divided; east of the Bronx River remained part of Westchester County, but the area between the Bronx and Harlem Rivers became West Farms. In 1874 West Farms was annexed to the City of New York as the 24th Ward. Four years later Ludlow sold his holdings in four parcels, or sub-divisions, an area roughly approximated today by the Grand Concourse on the east, East Tremont on the south, University Avenue on the west, and Burnside Avenue on the north.

In 1889 three of these subdivisions were reunited and within a matter of months were sold together to one Augustus Kountze, who bought more property in the neighborhood a year later. Kountze died in 1894, leaving his widow Catherine and their children to consolidate most of the inherited holdings into ownership by a single entity of which the son, Herman Kountze, was president--the United Real Estate and Trust Company incorporated in the State of Nebraska and located in Omaha. Herman himself, and his brothers, Luther and Charles B. of Denver, joined their mother as trustees. As a consequence of their distant domiciles, legal transactions involving their Bronx property required a battery of notaries. The property increased in value in the seventeen years of their stewardship; in 1901 179th Street was opened from Jerome Avenue to Anthony Avenue; in 1904 Morris Avenue was opened from Tremont Avenue to Parkview Terrace. By 1906 Morris Avenue had been given its full length.

The urban development of the Bronx gained momentum after the introduction of the Interborough Rapid Transit in 1904. Although the area had been served by the Harlem and Hudson River Railroad for several decades already, the factor of public transportation was still a major one in the area's transition from rural and suburban to urban. The IRT extended under nearby Jerome Avenue. In 1907, it was announced a trolley line would be

laid along Tremont Avenue.<sup>1</sup>

Convenient transportation encouraged residents of the more densely populated borough of Manhattan to seek more spacious accommodations in the Bronx. Real-estate speculators and builders were ready; indeed, it appears they were more than ready. The anticipated influx from Manhattan, though significant, didn't fill all of the brand new space available, especially the new tenements. Despite the cheaper rents and promotional headlines like "Flat hunting in the Bronx is now a seasonable pastime/Every taste can be suited,"<sup>2</sup> many new tenements were still empty and loan companies refused to back further tenement construction. Manhattan tenement residents who did not have sufficient means to buy a single-family house were looking for a less congested environment. Realizing this, developers then turned their attention to building two-family dwellings. This block of Morris Avenue is a response to such trends.

### The Builder and the Architect

At present little is known of August Jacob, the developer and builder of this block of Morris Avenue. Nor is it known if this was his first effort. When he began the Morris Avenue project, Jacob resided at 527 West 149th Street. He was married; his wife's name, Philipina C. Jacob, appears on the deeds conveying each of the new houses on Morris Avenue to its new owners. Jacob's frequent associate, George H. Jacob, is somewhat of a mystery as well. Based on the scant evidence which deeds and conveyances offer, it is posited that George Jacob was either August's brother or his son. Slim evidence points to the latter. At the time this block was developed, George was unmarried and living at the same address as the August Jacobs. Although the last six houses on the the east side of the street (extending to the corner of 179th Street) were erected on land bought by August but nominally George's when building permits were applied for,<sup>3</sup> each was sold by August and Philipina C. Jacob. By 1910 George was secretary of the August Jacob Construction Company, formed to erect the two five-story tenement buildings flanking the Tremont entrance to the block, while August was president. Yet, after this block had been developed all three Jacobs bought and sold property independently in the block west, on 179th Street. The large size of their undertaking on Morris Avenue, the complexity of coordinating the several building campaigns, the timely manner in which they arranged loans for both land acquisition and building construction, and the speed in which they accomplished it all leads to the assumption that the Jacobs had some previous experience in real-estate development.

John Hauser had been designing single residences and tenement buildings, predominantly in northern Manhattan, for more than a decade when he began his collaboration with August Jacob in the Bronx in 1906. Indeed, that year saw the completion of the residential row at 453-475 West 141st Street, Manhattan, which he designed for the Picken Realty Company.<sup>4</sup> These twelve four-story rowhouses were built of brick and limestone in the "free classical" style. The alternating pattern of three-sided and curved bays is of interest in the context of his designs for August Jacob on Morris Avenue.

August Jacob's initial purchase from the the United Real-Estate and Trust Company<sup>5</sup> included three parcels: the whole eastern half of Tax Map

Block 2829 (i.e., the west side of Morris Avenue from Tremont Avenue to East 179th Street); the last five lots on the east side of Morris Avenue (Tax Map Block 2807, now the six lots numbered 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 96); and the first four and one half lots on the east side (lots 1, 90, 2, 3 and one half of 4 of Tax Map Block 2807). The first of the remaining seven and one half lots (half of lot 4 through lot 10 of Tax Map Block 2897) was bought from Catherine Kountze's surviving trustees, dwindled down to only Luther and Charles B. Kountze. The other lots were also bought individually or in pairs throughout 1907.<sup>6</sup> All of these, on both sides of the street, were covered by protective covenants enforceable until 1910, restricting what could and could not be constructed on them: no slaughter houses, smiths' forges, furnaces, foundries, iron factories, breweries, distilleries, noxious or dangerous emissions, no building less than two stories, no building without a cellar except barns and outhouses, and no barns within sixty feet of the street.

### Building History

Despite its common authorship and for all its apparent homogeneity, this block of Morris Avenue has a rather disjointed building history. Differences among the groups of houses best identify the five building campaigns which Jacob and Hauser undertook, sometimes overlapping, sometimes simultaneously, within the short four-year time span in which both sides of the street were developed.

The reasons for these differences are very basic. The property records demonstrate that Jacob could not acquire the land all at once. Consistently, from the same two mortgagors, he had to secure loans from one to buy the sites and from the other to build the houses. What with preparations like the probable demolition of a few existing structures, grading and excavating, he was unable to launch a single building campaign. Jacob purchased the three initial parcels in 1906, the remainder on the east side of the street throughout 1907. The first building campaign, from June 20, 1906 to January 1, 1907,<sup>7</sup> occurred on the last six lots on the west side of the street, now occupied by Nos. 1989 through 1999 (plate 1), and the adjacent lot, containing No. 60 East 179th Street (plate 2). The six, all abutting, were articulated as three buildings, as if Hauser's major concern at the outset was to differentiate between the houses, rather than to create uniform rows. This appears to have been his intention when designing the row on West 141st Street in Manhattan for the Picken Realty Company. The alternating bays on West 141st Street are immediate predecessors of these six on Morris Avenue, which are two stories high set on high English basements. Here pairs with curved bows flank a pair with angled bays. Stoop and areaway railings are uniform in decorative pattern.

The second campaign, which began two months after the first, August 21, 1906, comprised the last six houses on the east side of Morris, Nos. 1988 through 1998, directly across the street from the first group, and a seventh, No. 108 East 179 Street (plates 3 and 4).<sup>8</sup> Like those of the first campaign, these houses were designed as two-family dwellings. Like the first campaign, pairs of dwellings alternate brick shades, red and buff. But the overall design is different; this was the first group to be a full three stories. Stoop and areaway railings are uniform though a different pattern from those across the street.

The third campaign, the construction of Nos. 1970 through 1986, appears to have been started late in 1906 or early 1907 (plate 5). The earliest house sold was No. 1986, on October 27, 1907. This group of nine three-story houses is characterized by the greatest variety of brick shades, buff, dark honey and burnt orange. The wrought-iron stoop railings are similar to those of Nos. 1988 to 1998 and 108 East 179th Street, but the areaway railings are, again, a different pattern.

Nos. 1971 through 1987, the row of nine houses on the west side of Morris (plate 6), were constructed in a fourth campaign about mid-1907 -- the earliest house in this group was sold on September 30, 1908. All of these houses have three stories, and there is no variation in color; they are all buff brick. However, stoop and areaway railings are yet a different pattern.

The two tenement buildings on Tremont (plates 7 and 8) and one house, No. 1968 Morris Avenue (plate 9), comprise the Jacobs' fifth and final building campaign. The plans for these three were all approved on January 27, 1909. However, No. 1968 was begun on April 1, while the tenements were begun four months later, on August 12. No. 1968 was finished on January 31, 1910, and the tenements were sold about two months later, on April 4. The wrought-iron sidewalk railings are chest height.

#### Evolution of the Design

Two major questions, unanswered in the buildings' history, remain. The first is why Hauser introduced a new design two months after his initial designs for the group of houses. The second, not unrelated to the first, is why Hauser shifted his earlier emphasis upon variety in facade design towards a greater homogeneity. Explanation of the rest of the inconsistencies and differences may depend on the resolution of these two questions.

August Jacob's earliest purchase of land on Morris Avenue, the west side of the street between Tremont and East 179th Street and the two separate parcels on the east side, suggests that, from the start, he intended to develop both sides of this block as a whole. But Hauser did not repeat his designs for the first group of houses in the succeeding building campaigns. The two-story dwellings on their high English basements were superseded by three-story houses. Yet both designs were for two-family houses. In the first group there was a floor for each family, and the family on the first floor also had use of the high basement. The slightly later three-story houses contained two units also; a duplex apartment with connecting interior staircase on the first and second stories, and the second apartment on the third story. No doubt, the three-story houses with their duplexes were an attractive alternative to two-family housing elsewhere. But might not some circumstance external to the design process have prompted this unconventional arrangement? Why this sudden generosity?

There was at this time (1906-07) a bill introduced before the New York State legislature to amend the Tenement House Law to exempt three-family dwellings. Proposed by builders predominantly active in the Bronx and called the Sheridan Bill, it was sponsored by Bronx Assemblyman Sheridan of the 39th Assembly District. Contemporary newspapers carried accounts of

this effort daily. Proponents posited that land values in some sections were too high to build two-family houses profitably. They reasoned that three-family houses would attract the same class of tenant who was seeking single or two-family accommodation and that tenants would be willing to pay more for this semi-privacy than they would for comparable space in a tenement building.<sup>9</sup> Although not often mentioned but basic to the builders' argument, building costs for exempt housing were much lower. Single or two-family dwellings were cheaper to construct; all supports could be of wood. Tenements, by law, had to employ masonry columns and girders of iron or steel. And the builders argued that the return on one rental apartment was insufficient to maintain a family, a mortgage, and meet annual charges. Could it be that Jacob hoped to be in a position to take advantage of this amendment the minute it was approved? With little trouble his duplexes could be transformed to two single apartments.<sup>10</sup>

By 1911 the Sheridan Bill, and others like it before the legislature, had continued to meet with opposition. The staunchest opponent was the Tenement House Commission itself. The atrocious conditions existing before 1901, the year the Commission was established to supervise construction for multi-family use, had not been forgotten. The tenor of a contemporary report on the issue,<sup>11</sup> was pro-Commission, describing the speculative builders as a self-seeking minority and encouraging the Commission to enforce protection. The hoped-for amendment was well on its way to becoming a dead issue only five years after it had seemed a mere legislative formality.

Hauser's three-story bowed facades, used from the second campaign on, perhaps a direct response to the promise held within the Sheridan Bill, became the module to be repeated the length of the block. But what about the second question; why had Hauser shifted his earlier emphasis from variety toward greater homogeneity? In successive building campaigns Hauser reduced the prominence of his earliest architectural features to a more subtle, syncopated rhythm of component elements. Indeed these undulating brick rows are reminiscent of the Soanian ashlar granite double-bowed facade of the David Sears house (1816) on Boston's Beacon Street, designed by Alexander Farris.

The reason Hauser eschewed variety in favor of homogeneity is most likely the same reason he shifted from a two- to a three-story dwelling. Jacob, aware of the hard economic facts of speculative building, requested him to do so. A repeated elevation is much cheaper than any kind of variation. A curved bow uses less brick than an angled bay. But Jacob did not forgo all amenities; the bows admitted more light and air than a simple flat facade.

## Summary

This block of Morris Avenue represents a rare case of an intact, early 20th-century urban development where design responsibilities were limited to but one architect. The block is significant architecturally, as well, for it includes not only typical contemporary building types -- tenement buildings and two variations of the two-family dwelling, but illustrates here in built form the architect's step by step solution to a unconventional program. The resultant homogeneity in itself is exceptional for its time and place. There is no conspicuous evidence here of the sporadic land acquisition and the five consequent building campaigns, all within five years. The building and design histories here on Morris Avenue reflect the hyperactivity that followed the introduction of rapid transit to and from Manhattan as developers sought to provide housing in accommodations more spacious than the congested Manhattan tenements.

## DESCRIPTION

Tremont Avenue does not intersect Morris at a right angle but obliquely, descending from the ridge along which now runs the Grand Concourse (toward Jerome) roughly southeast to northwest (plate 10). Consequently, Hauser and Jacob were presented with an east side of the street a few feet longer than the west side. That is why there are seventeen dwellings on the east side and sixteen on the west. Both the northeast and southwest corners of the intersection of Tremont and Morris Avenues contain tenement buildings, their bulk occupying the legal percentage of their vaguely quadrilateral lots. Then follow two rows of houses, facing each other across the street. The lots here are twenty feet wide and 100 feet deep. The houses are the same width but only fifty-five feet in depth. That is until the last four lots on either side of the street are reached. Here the lots are but eighty feet deep to compensate for the two lots inserted behind them (Tax Map Block 2829, Lot 12, and Tax Map Block 2807, lot 96) which front East 179th Street. Each of the houses on East 179th Street, No. 60 and No. 108, is twenty feet wide and eighty feet deep. In total then, there are two tenements and thirty-five dwellings.

## **MORRIS AVENUE**

### **EAST SIDE**

#### No. 101 East Tremont (No. 1966)

This tenement building, built in 1909 and intended for eleven families, rises ninety feet high from the curb (plate 7.) Built on a base of Portland cement and concrete, the foundation is constructed of quarried stones, cement and sharp sand mortar. The interior supports are both walls of stone and brick and columns of iron. The walls above the foundation are brick and cement, with limestone trim. Between every six courses of running bond is a course of headers. The first story is supported on iron floor beams, the floors above on spruce. This flat-roofed building is semi-fireproof; the cornice is of galvanized iron; and the fire escapes, both balconies and stairs, are of ornamental wrought iron.

The south and west faces of No. 101 carry the the building's decorative program. The building is in the "free classical" style associated with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and popular at the turn of the century. The five-story building has a first story articulated with alternating bands of limestone and brick suggesting rustication. The wall surface above, without horizontal interruption for three more stories, is traversed by a thin molding below the fifth story windows. A classical cornice of modillions and brackets made of galvanized iron tops the building. The vertical articulation of the facades is more subtle; raised quoining in the bond itself frames the central seven bays on the Tremont elevation on all four stories above the banded first story. The southeast corner carries this quoining also. All of the window lintels, except those of the first story, carry keystones. One of the limestone bands serves as a continuous first story window lintel, though an individual, slim drip molding appears on the band's upper edge to protect each window

below it. All of the window sash are wood and one-over-one. Tremont's diagonal intersection with Morris creates corner angles of unequal width. This disparity is reflected in this tenement building whose building line is parallel to the curb line. No. 101's Morris Avenue corner is an obtuse angle, articulated with limestone quoins. The wall continues from this angle to a point 20.92 feet distant and then curves in to meet the building line on Morris Avenue's east side. A high ornamental wrought iron railing (spear pattern) encloses the areaway around the building.

The projecting, ornamental limestone entrance portico on Tremont Avenue required an amendment to the building permit (November 18th, 1909). The entrance doorway is segmentally arched (plate 50). The original iron double doors and transom with their original wrought-iron decorative grilles remain. However, the corrugated metal awning, projecting from the under the bracketed balcony is more recent. In 1939 a projecting swing sign in the shape of a shoe -- for a shoe repair and bicycle rental shop -- was appended to the building (Alteration Permit # 164/1939). Two years later two dentists' offices were created on the first floor (Alteration Permit # 1091/1941). To make one of these offices accessible from Tremont Avenue, an exterior doorway was cut into the third window to the right of the main entrance.

#### No. 1968.

This three-story brick house, the last to be built on this block, in 1909, has limestone trim and a galvanized iron cornice now painted black (plate 9). Built as a two-family house, it is thirty-seven feet high and is fifty-five feet deep and twenty feet wide. Like the tenement buildings it is constructed on a concrete base, with a foundation of quarried stone and mortar. The upper wall of buff colored brick is laid in a running bond. No iron was required in its construction, and consequently it is not fireproof. The "free classic" facade is dominated by a curved bow which rises the full three stories in height. The arched entrance above a low stoop is articulated by keyed blocks and a raised molding carried on corbels in the form of faces: one sharp-featured, mustached, and bearded in the imperial style; the other more smoothly conceived, more feminine, and with a suggestion of longer hair (plate 12). (Could these visages be those of August and Philipina C. Jacob?) The arch carries a limestone cresting of paired volutes flanking a palmette. The double doors of wood with glass panels and semi-circular, glazed transom above are original. The decorative wrought-iron security grilles on the doors and on the transom are recent additions. Continuous sill moldings run below the windows in the bow on all three stories; similar moldings are below the windows above the entrance. The splayed window lintels have prominent keystones. The windows are double-hung, one-over-one aluminum sash. Wrought-iron stoop and areaway railings with cast-iron posts, part of the original design, survive intact.

#### Nos. 1970 - 1986.

These nine three-story brick houses were built in 1907. They are of the same dimensions, same basic form, and use the same construction methods as No. 1968. Given an apparent homogeneity by their uniform height and width, curving bows, limestone trim, and galvanized iron cornices with

modillions and a frieze of wreaths in low relief, they are, nonetheless, subtly differentiated. Three brick colors are used: Nos. 1970, 1972, 1978, and 1980 (plates 13, 14, 15, and 16) are faced with the same dark honey-colored brick as the corner tenements on Tremont; Nos. 1974, 1976, 1982, and 1984 (plates 17, 18, 19 and 20) are faced with buff-colored brick; No. 1986 is of burnt-orange brick and is thus unique on the block. The other major means of differentiation are the treatment of the entrances and the window lintels. While all the entrances are placed sequentially to the south of the curved bows, some are arched, like that at No. 1968, while others are rectangular and have limestone entablatures carried on pulvinated friezes. Arched entrances with the same keyed blocks and limestone cresting as No. 1968 are at Nos. 1970, 1976, 1978, 1984, and 1986 (cresting missing at No. 1976) (plates 13, 18, 15, 20 and 21). The raised moldings on the arches rest on corbels carved in the form of a bell flower facing upward and stylized in conception (plate 22). The double doors of wood with glass panels and the semi-circular and rectangular glazed transoms on eight of these nine houses are original; No. 1986 is sealed. Rectangular entrances are found at Nos. 1972, 1974, 1980, and 1982 (plates 14, 17, 16 and 19). The houses with arched entrances have limestone lintels with moldings above the windows; continuous sill moldings on the bows do not continue below the windows of the second and third stories above the entrances. The houses with rectangular entrances are given a different window treatment. Splayed window lintels have prominent keystones, and continuous window sill moldings on the bows extend below the windows above the entrances. Thus, except for the first house (No. 1970) in this group, houses which are paired by the articulation of detail (although not in brick color) alternate. Windows are double hung with one-over-one sash; the sash of Nos. 1970, 1978, 1980, 1982, and 1984 are wood while the rest -- Nos. 1972, 1974, 1976 -- have aluminum sash. Each house is approached by a low stoop. Only Nos. 1982 and 1986 are missing their original wrought-iron basement window grilles. All retain their original wrought-iron stoop and areaway railings with cast-iron posts, except No. 1972 (plate 23) which has heavy wing walls lining the stoop; each is pierced with six holes and the ends are articulated with panels containing cartouches each carrying lion's heads. No. 1972 is also missing the modillions from its galvanized iron cornice. The cornices of these nine houses vary in color: those of Nos. 1970, 1972 and 1976 have been painted white; those of Nos. 1978 and 1984 are black; those of Nos. 1974 and 1986 are green; and the cornices of Nos. 1980 and 1982 are buff colored. As has been indicated above, No. 1986 is vacant, and the entrance and windows are sealed.

This group of houses, built in the third campaign of construction, shows Hauser's means of avoiding monotony in a long row. While the entrances are sequential, rather than abutting, the syncopation of architectural elements is apparent and the greatest variation of brick color appears. Rather than a regression inconsistent with a move toward homogeneity, these are artifices to mask the interruption in the chronological sequence of building and the consequent minute disparities caused by the last phases of land acquisition.

Nos. 1988 - 1998.

These six three-story brick houses were built in 1906, about six months earlier than the group immediately to the south. They are of the same dimensions, same basic form, and same construction. Uniform in height and width, with curving bows, limestone trim, and galvanized iron cornices, they too are subtly differentiated like the houses in the adjacent group. Two brick colors are used: Nos. 1988, 1990, 1996, and 1998 (plates 24, 25, 26 and 27), are of buff-colored brick; Nos. 1992 and 1994 (plates 28 and 29) are faced with red brick. Two pairs of houses (Nos. 1988 and 1990, 1996 and 1998) with rectangular entrances and splayed window lintels with keystones flank a pair (Nos. 1992 and 1994 - plate 3) with arched entrances and limestone window lintels with moldings. Raised moldings outlining the arched entrances rest on corbels in the form of curved oak leaves, not unlike some Romanesque detail (plate 30). In this group, the brick color is consistent with the articulation of detail. All six houses retain their paired wood and glass doors and transoms, though No. 1996's transom is cracked. Windows are double hung with one-over-one wood sash except for No. 1990's which are aluminum one over one. Nos. 1988, 1994, and 1996 have aluminum storm sash and screens. No. 1998's first story windows are covered with chicken wire nailed to the window frames. With but two exceptions all of these houses have their original stoop and areaway railings and basement grilles. Like No. 1972 down the street, No. 1992 has concrete wing walls instead of stoop railings, but the cartouches ornamenting their sidewalk faces contain not lions but faces in profile, on the left a man with moustache (but no goatee) and on the right a woman with her hair in a bun (plate 31). (A current inhabitant of the house supposes these represent the first owners -- Mr. and Mrs. Rudolf Seus). No. 1988 is missing its basement window grilles. The cornices of these six houses have been painted in different colors: Nos. 1988, 1990, and 1992 are gray; No. 1994 is white; No. 1996 is unpainted; and No. 1998 is barn red. The treatment of No. 1998's East 179th Street elevation carries around from the principal facade. (So does the chicken wire.) The windows have splayed lintels and keystones and rest on continuous sill moldings, except for the second and third story bathroom windows which, being shorter, have their own sills. Centered on the first story is a triple window (plate 32), within an elliptical arch of limestone voussoirs. The sidelights contain leaded art glass panels; the center light is double hung and its upper sash contains leaded art glass. The cornice and areaway railing also continue round from the Morris Avenue facade.

In this group, the second to be built on the block, variation of projections and architectural accoutrements was de-emphasized. All of the facade projections became true bows. Although the alternating paired facades and two shades of brick, buff and red, were retained from the first group, the entrances do not abut but are sequential.

**WEST SIDE**

No. 65 East Tremont (No. 1969).

This five-story tenement building appears to be a twin of that across the street (plate 8). Though built of the same honey colored brick with similar limestone dressings, it fills a larger lot and differs from No. 101 in several ways: in its entrance treatment; in the addition of two ranks of

wider fenestration; and in the form of its southeast corner. The diagonal intersection of Morris with Tremont would have rendered the northwest corner lot too narrow at its western line for a tenement building. Hauser pre-empted the lot to the north of it. As a result No. 65 East Tremont's Morris Avenue frontage is broader than No. 101 East Tremont's. The entrance doorhead, on East Tremont, is not segmental as at No. 101, but flat (plate 33). The ornamental wrought-iron grilles in the glazed double doors are identical in design except in the transom where the pattern conforms to the flat lintel. Like No. 101 all the windows are one-over-one wood sash, some original and some recent. Unlike No. 101, No. 65 has two ranks of wide windows. Immediately to the left of the entrance, the first story window is a double one. Above it, the windows of the second, third, fourth and fifth stories are the same width but triple -- a central one-over-one sash projects slightly and is flanked by angled narrow one-over-one sash. The second rank of wide windows occurs in the fourth bay to the right of the entrance and is identical to that on the left. No. 65 East Tremont's southeast corner is an acute angle; Hauser compensated for what would have been too sharp an edge by rounding this corner. The northeast corner of the building is rounded also, to meet the bow of its immediate neighbor No. 1971 Morris Avenue. Brick quoining defines the flat plane flanked by these two rounded corners. Except for these differences, Nos. 101 and 65 East Tremont are quite similar in appearance. The same high areaway railing (spear pattern) that surrounds 101 East Tremont is used at No. 65 also.

#### Nos. 1971 - 1987.

These nine three-story brick houses, the fourth of Jacob's groups, were built in 1907, and may be compared with those across the street (plate 6). They are constructed in the same way and are uniform in height and width, with curving bows, limestone trim, and galvanized iron cornices. Like those across the street, they are differentiated by their entrance and window treatments: rectangular entrances and splayed window lintels with keystones at Nos. 1971, 1977, 1979, 1985, and 1987 (plates 34, 35, 36, and 37), and arched entrances and limestone window lintels with moldings at Nos. 1973, 1975, 1981, and 1983 (plates 38, 39, 40, and 41). As across the street paired wood and glass entrance doors open below either semi-circular or rectangular glazed transoms. There are differences however. There is no variation in brick color; these nine houses are all built of the same buff-colored brick. The raised moldings of the arched entrances rest on corbels in the form of heads but none of these repeat the male and female visages across the street at No. 1986. At No. 1973 (plate 42) both faces are moustached while next door at No. 1975 (plate 43) the faces are both female. At No. 1981 (plate 44) both faces are beardless and wear turbans; at No. 1983 (plate 45) the turbaned faces are both bearded. Different too is the pattern of the stoop and areaway railings, a variant of those seen across the street. An alternation in the sequential arrangement of the bows and entrances occurs at Nos. 1985 and 1987; here the entrances abut each other and are flanked by the bows. (This creates a transition to the group of paired houses immediately to the north.) All windows are double hung with one-over-one sash; Nos. 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1983 and 1987 retain the original wood sash while Nos. 1971, 1981, and 1986 have been converted to aluminum sash. Nos. 1977, 1979 and 1987, though wood, have aluminum storm sash and screens. However, chicken wire has been placed over the first story windows at No. 1977. All the original wrought-iron stoop and

areaway railings and basement grilles survive except at No. 1975 which is vacant; its windows and doors have been sealed. A modern aluminum awning has been placed above the door at No. 1979. Again the cornices vary in color: Nos. 1971, 1977 and 1987 have white cornices; Nos. 1979, 1981, and 1983 have black cornices; and the cornices of Nos. 1973, 1975, and 1985 are unpainted.

This last group of houses to be built establishes the final facade pattern. The undulation of the facades softens the urban streetscape. The entrances (with one variation) are sequential, paired arches followed by paired entablatures, and the brick facades are laid in a running bond. The synoepation of entrance and lintel details across the regular rhythms of the bow, only reminiscent of Hauser's original design conception, provides the delicate, almost subliminal, differentiation that redeems the row from the monotony of repetition.

#### Nos. 1989 - 1999.

The last six houses on the west side of the street (plate 1), but the first group to be built, in 1906, were intended as two-family houses and are twenty feet wide and fifty-five feet in depth. Two stories high, they are not as tall as their neighbors, standing only thirty-four feet curb to cornice. These are constructed on concrete bases also, their foundations of quarried stone, cement, sand and mortar. The walls are brick laid in a running bond, the trim is limestone, the cornices are galvanized iron, and the roofs are flat.

These six, constructed as three paired or double houses, are very different in appearance from their neighbors, but together they share many characteristics: all are brick; they are all two stories on high (English) basements, each with a long flight of front entrance steps — ten compared to the neighboring houses' three; all entrances are paired, their overdoor entablatures incorporating the limestone band that serves as a common lintel for the first story windows. But the central of these three double houses (plate 46) is a unique variant of its neighbors. Instead of bow windows there are angled bay windows flanking the paired entrances. The brick is red, rather than buff, and the second story windows are round headed with keystones. Also the paired entrance enframements are simpler; Hauser eschewed the attached columns and projecting architraves seen on the flanking pairs. But it should be noted that the paired houses flanking the center pair are not exactly similar either. The southernmost, Nos. 1989 and 1991 (plate 47), has straight limestone window lintels; the windows of the northernmost, Nos. 1997 and 1999 (plate 48), are constructed with limestone keystones. Windows in all six houses are double hung with one-over-one sash; Nos. 1989, 1991, and 1997 have aluminum sash; the sash at Nos. 1993, 1995 and 1999 are wood. Paired wood and glass doors open below transoms. Most houses retain their original basement window grilles, wrought-iron stoop and areaway railings; exceptions are Nos. 1991 and 1993 whose areaway railings have been replaced by higher cyclone fencing. Cyclone fence augments the extant stoop and areaway railing at No. 1995. The cornices at Nos. 1989 and 1991 are unpainted. Those at Nos. 1993, 1995 and 1997 are green. In 1969 fire destroyed the roof of No. 1999. The burned roof beams were replaced and the cornice removed from the east and north sides of the building. Other architectural detail, limestone bands

and keyed window lintels, are continued from the Morris Avenue facade on the north elevation along East 179th Street (plate 49).

The graceful bow windows and angular bay windows, the straight lintels and arched window openings, the differing entrance treatments, the alternating paired facade patterns, and differing shades of brick seen in this the first group of houses demonstrate that, initially, Hauser meant to avoid the monotony inevitable in long rows of repetitive facades by introducing a variety of architectural elements.

#### **EAST 179TH STREET**

##### **No. 60.**

This two-story house on a high basement is a single unit (plate 2), built in 1906 as part of the first campaign. It is of red brick with limestone trim and a galvanized iron cornice. In its height and proportions, No. 60 resembles its immediate neighbors. Like the central of the three paired facades around the corner, it has an angled bay but with only two faces in expectation of a party wall being constructed to the south. The door enframingent is like those on Morris Avenue with the straight entablatures. But like the two extreme paired house facades, limestone bands incorporate entablature and window lintels on the first story and window lintels on the second story. Windows are double hung, one-over-one wood sash. Paired wood and glass doors open below a transom. A modern aluminum awning has been added over the doorway. Original wrought-iron stoop railings survive but the cyclone fencing surrounding the areaway is a recent addition. The cornice is painted green.

##### **No. 108.**

This three-story house is a single unit built in 1906 as part of the second campaign (plate 4). It is faced with red brick, has limestone trim, and is topped with a galvanized iron cornice. Almost a reflection of No. 60, it too has a projecting two-faced bay its full height. But unlike No. 60 it resembles the majority of the houses lining both sides of Morris Avenue in its height -- three full stories on a low basement. (Its lower floors are sealed with cinder block at present.) Of two facade variations Hauser had introduced on Morris Avenue, No. 108's is the arched entrance, straight window lintel variation. Only one original wrought-iron stoop railing, on the left side, survives.

Rather than with tenements buildings, as at the southern end of the block, Hauser managed to introduce a more subtle feature to terminate his overall architectural scheme for the Jacob development. The two-sided bays of Nos. 108 and 60, near reflections of one another, were designed to act as transitional elements to whatever might abut them in the future and give the north end of the Jacob development a fitting symmetry.

NOTES

1. Bronx Home News, 1, Aug. 16, 1907.
2. Ibid., 1, Dec. 30, 1907.
3. George was listed as the owner on the New Building permits.
4. These houses are part of the Hamilton Heights Historic District.
5. Recorded June 15, 1906, Liber 87, p. 464.
6. Mortgage indentures from the same mortgagor for both Nos. 1972 and 1974 Morris Avenue are dated Feb. 14, 1907.
7. These are the dates recorded on the permits from the Buildings Department.
8. It should be noted that deed records reveal that lot 10, containing No. 1988, was bought separately, on February 15, 1907, rather than at the same time as the rest of Parcel #3 in 1906.
9. Bronx Home News, 1, Feb. 16, 1907.
10. Indeed, this happened forty years later when a majority of the houses on this block, one by one, were reclassified as rooming houses.
11. "Objections to Three Family Dwellings," Real-Estate Record & Guide, 88 (July 1, 1911), 1237-38.

**Appendix List of first owners and the years they purchased arranged by block, house number and lot.**

**Block 2829**

65 East Tremont aka 1969 Morris	24	Charles C. Sievers	4/4/1910
1971 Morris	23	Wilhelmina and Christian Bayer	4/18/1911
1973	83	Charles B. and Anna M. Schneider	3/26/1910
1975	22	Bridget McDonough Evelyn M. Maher	6/28/1909
1977	82	Mary Ann Rudd	9/31/1909
1979	21	Mary Ann Rudd	9/31/1909
1981	81	Anna and Charles F. Siemone	10/23/1908
1983	20	Magdalena Erdlich	9/30/1908
1985	80	Mary I. Hennessey	5/2/1910
1987	19	Emma Stuve Barker	11/9/1909
1989	18	Michael Cusack	10/23/1908
1991	17	Peter Wynn	3/15/1909
1993	16	Mary Ann Rudd	3/16/1909
1995	15	Conrad and Elizabeth Bill	5/2/1918
1997	14	Henrietta C. and Louis C. Marquart	3/8/1908
1999	13	August and Philipina C. Jacob	developer
60 East 179 Street	12	Joseph A. and Elizabeth Richter	10/23/1908

**Block 2807**

101 East Tremont aka 1966 Morris	1	Charles C. Sievers	4/4/1910
1968 Morris	90	Wenzel C. Urban	1/13/1912
1970	2	Devetta Shepherd	10/16/1910
1972	3	John Blumers	5/6/1908
1974	4	William Ellis	3/11/1908
1976	5	Katie R. Regal	4/17/1908
1978	6	Joseph Lahres	4/6/1908
1980	7	Elizabeth Heremann	5/4/1908
1982	8	August Jacob Herrlich	3/23/1908
1984	9	Fred. H. Marienhoff	3/2/1908
1986	93	Mary Kohring	10/27/1907
1988	10	Clementine Brodbeck	10/10/1907
1990	11	Thomas P. Kennedy	7/3/1907
1992	12	Rudolf Seus	4/1/1908
1994	13	Annie Roberts and Margaret Griffen	12/7/1908
1996	14	Moses and Louise R. Levy	5/1/1919
1998	15	Charles Reinhart	3/20/1907
108 East 179 Street	96	Joseph C. Noethen	6/27/1919

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this area, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Morris Avenue Historic District contains buildings and other improvements which have a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value and which represent one or more periods or styles of architecture typical of one or more eras in the history of New York City and which cause this area, by reason of these factors, to constitute a distinct section of the City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Morris Avenue Historic District is a notable example of a uniformly planned streetscape; that the block is significant architecturally, for it includes not only typical contemporary building types, tenement buildings and two variations of the two-family dwelling, but illustrates here in built form the architect's step-by-step solution to an unconventional program; that the resultant homogeneity in itself is exceptional for its time and place; that the height and the rhythm of the repeated bays create exceptionally pleasing blockfronts, but the synoapation of architectural detail creates a subtle diversity within the homogeneity; that these three-story, two-family dwellings are significant as examples of how law can effect design; that the pattern of land acquisition and subsequent building history here reflect the Bronx's early urban development and the hyperactivity that followed the introduction of rapid transit to and from Manhattan as developers sought to provide housing in accommodations more spacious than congested Manhattan tenements; and that the buildings retain a high degree of their original fabric, factor which adds to their architectural significance and helps to establish the character of the historic district.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21, Section 534, of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Historic District the Morris Avenue Historic District, Borough of the Bronx, containing the property bounded by a line extending easterly along the southern curb line of East 179th Street, southerly along the eastern property line of 108 East 179th Street, southerly along the eastern property lines of 1990 - 1986 Morris Avenue, westerly along the northern curb line of East Tremont Avenue, northerly along the western property lines of 1987 - 1991 Morris Avenue, and northerly along the western property line of 60 East 179th Street, to the point of beginning.

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Plate 1. 1989 - 1999 Morris Avenue, first building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 2. 60 East 179th Street, first building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 3. 1988 - 1998 Morris Avenue, second building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 4. 108 East 179th Street, second building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 5. 1970 - 1986 Morris Avenue, third building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 6. 1971 - 1987 Morris Avenue, fourth building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 7. 101 East Tremont Avenue, fifth building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 8. 65 East Tremont Avenue, fifth building campaign. (Savage)



Plate 9. 1968 Morris Avenue, fifth building campaign. (Landmarks)

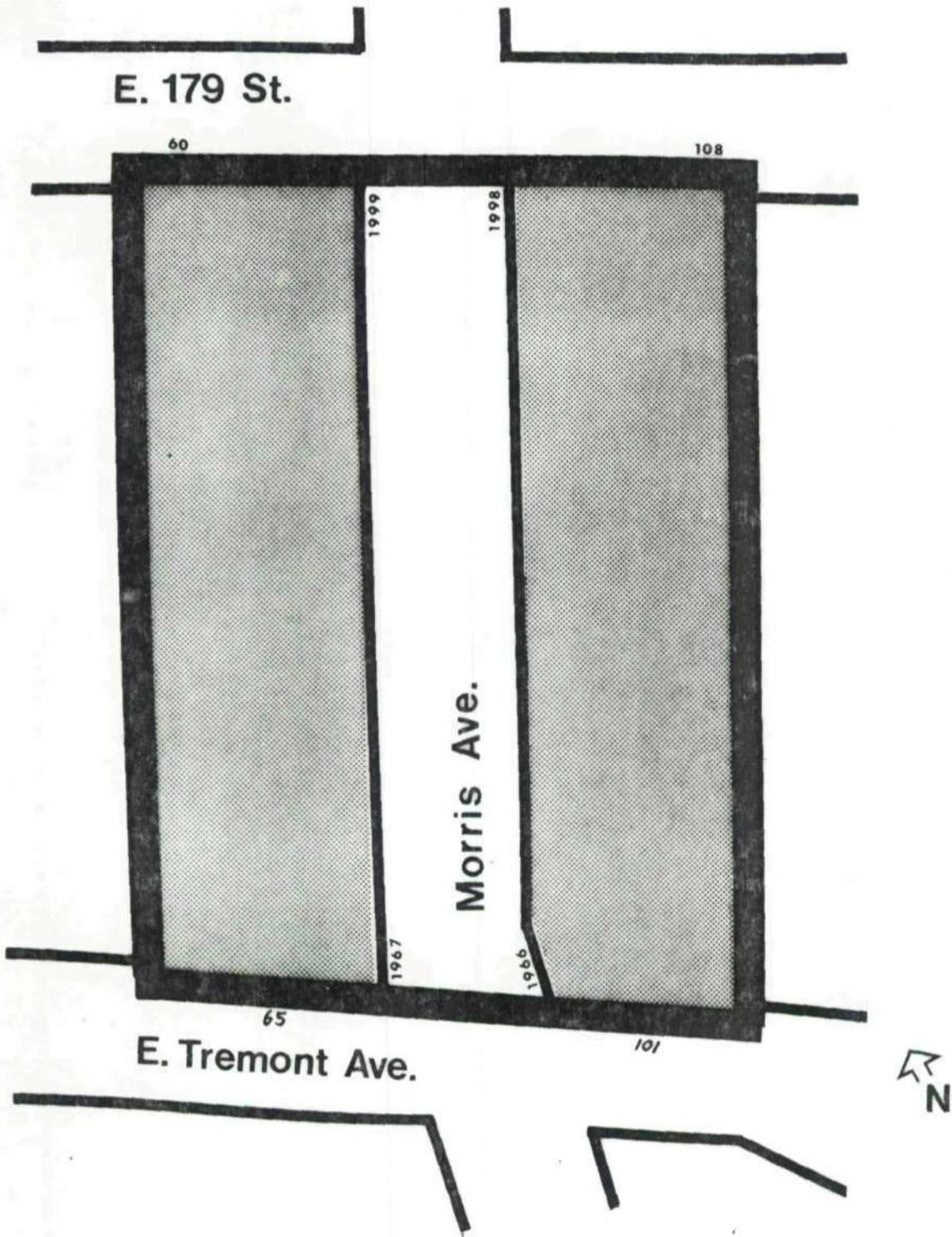


Plate 10. Intersection of Morris Avenue with East Tremont Avenue.



Plate 11. Entrance, 101 East Tremont Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 12. Corbels, 1968 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 13. 1970 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 14. 1972 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 15. 1978 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 16. 1980 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)

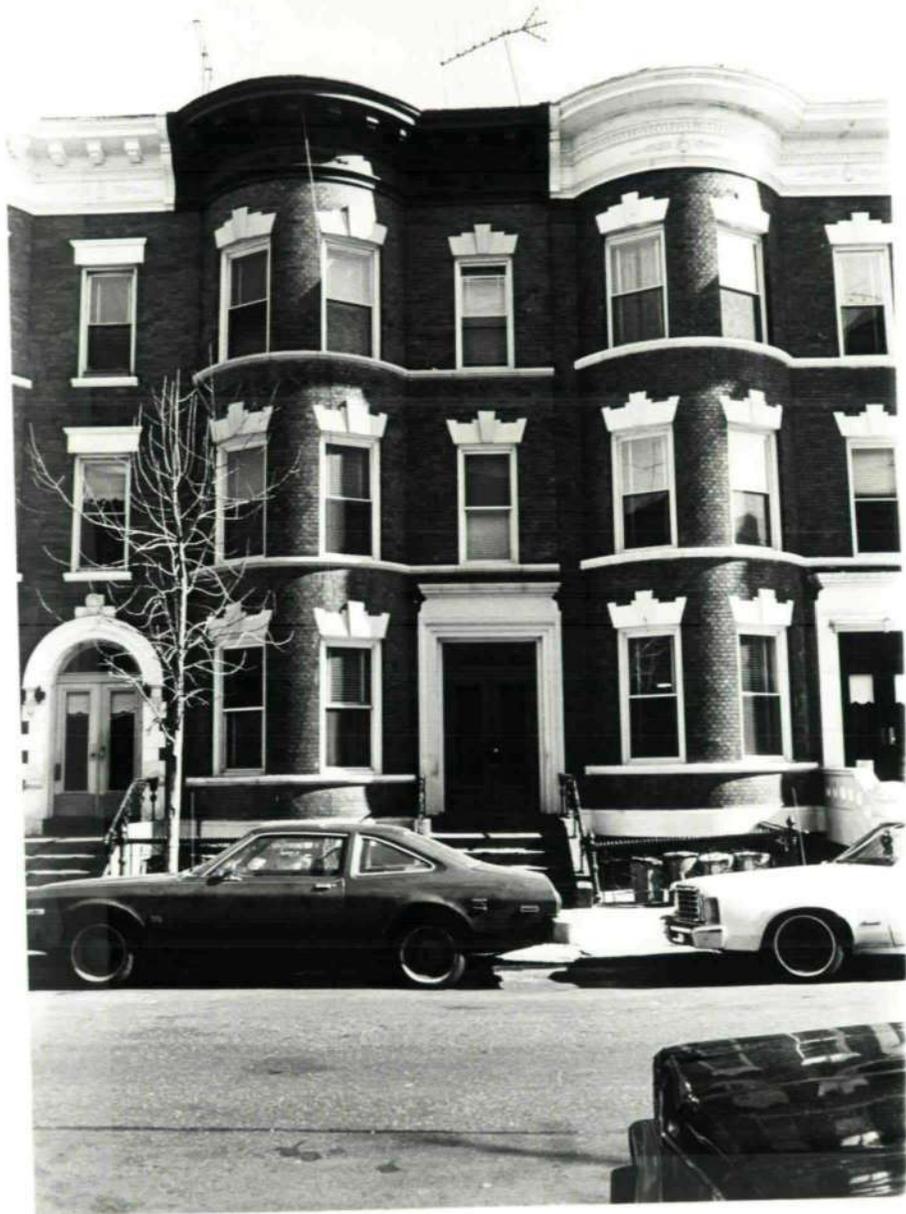


Plate 17. 1974 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 18. 1976 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 19. 1982 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)

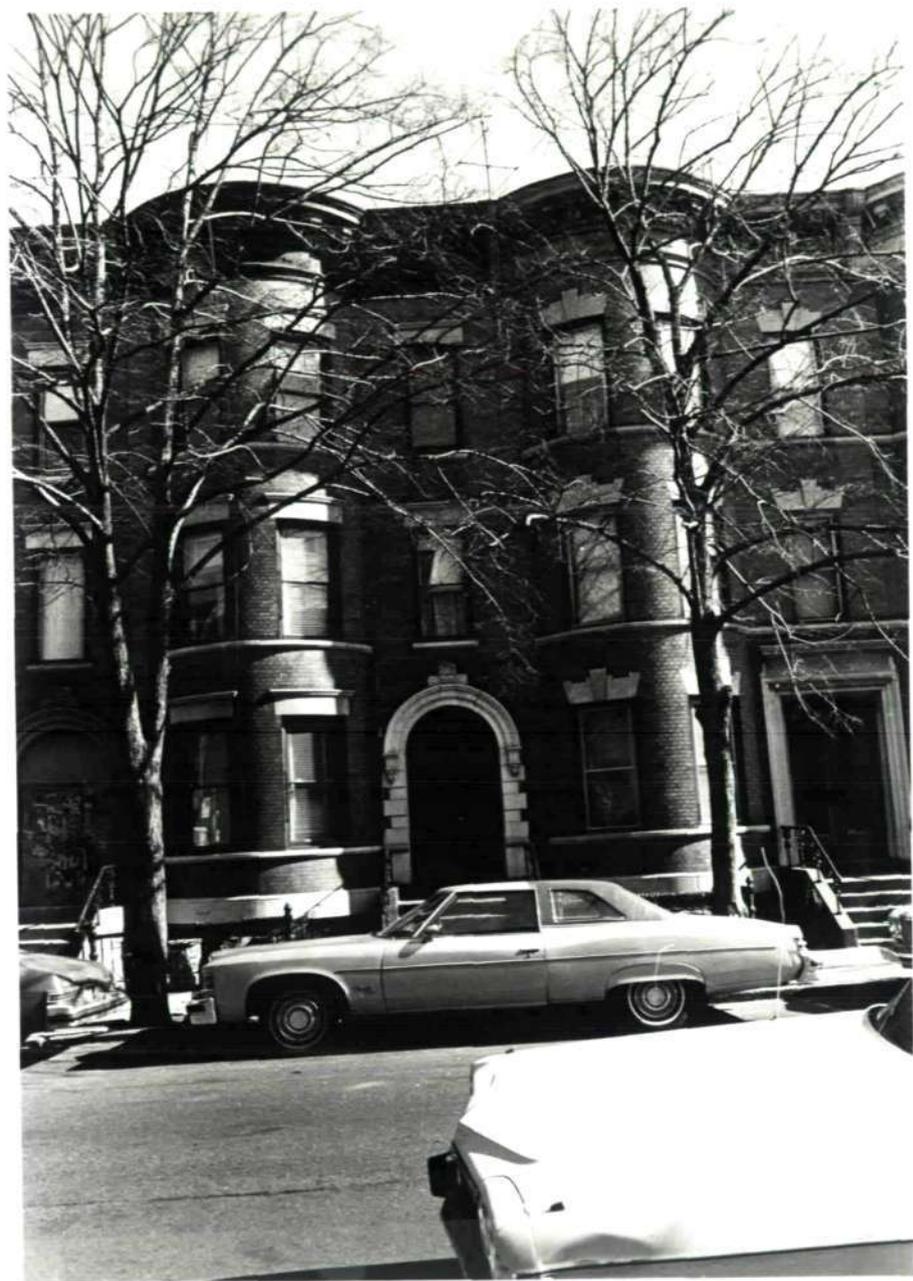


Plate 20. 1984 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 21. 1986 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 22. Reversed Bellflower corbel, 1970 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 23. Concrete balustrades, 1972 Morris Avenue. (Savage)

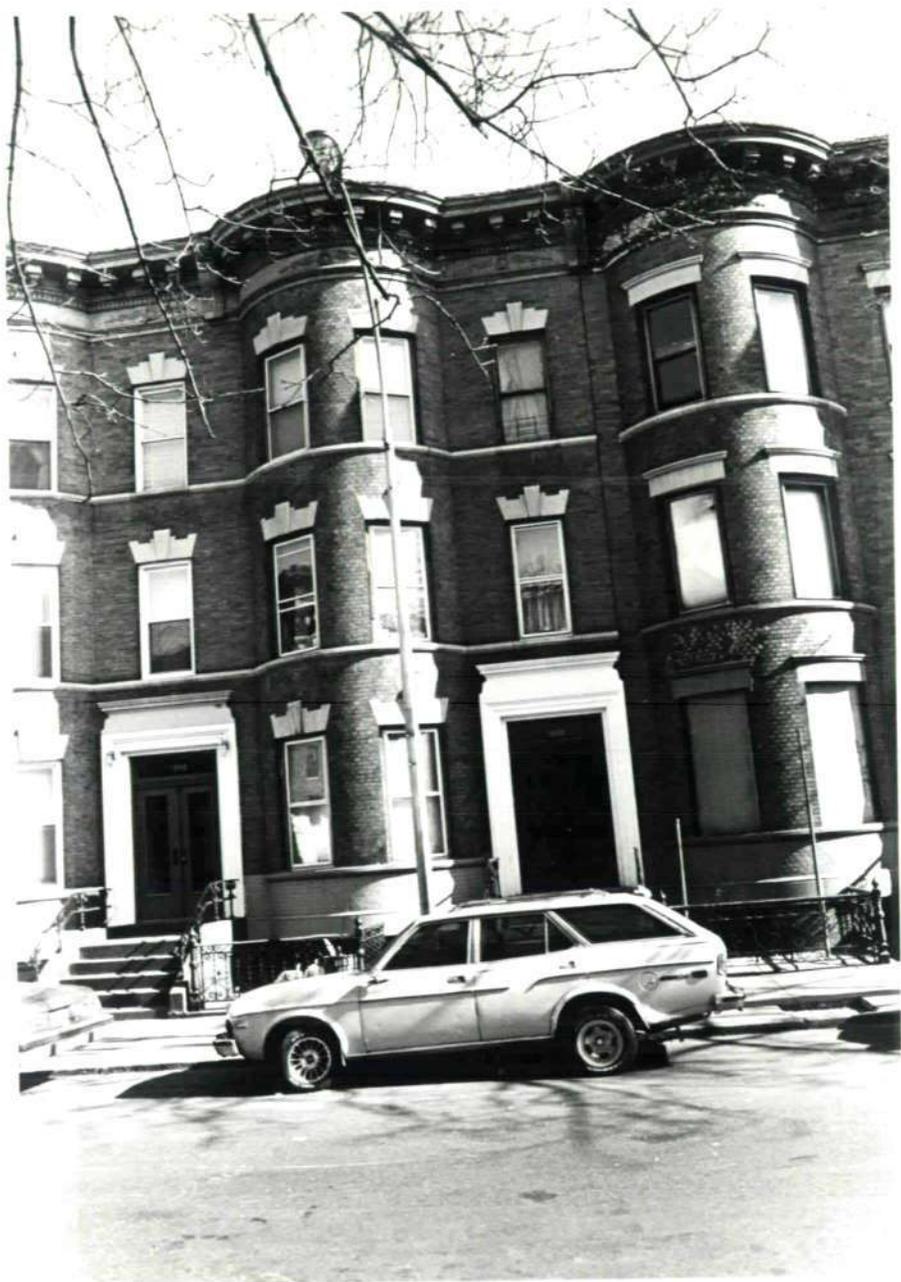


Plate 24. 1988 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)

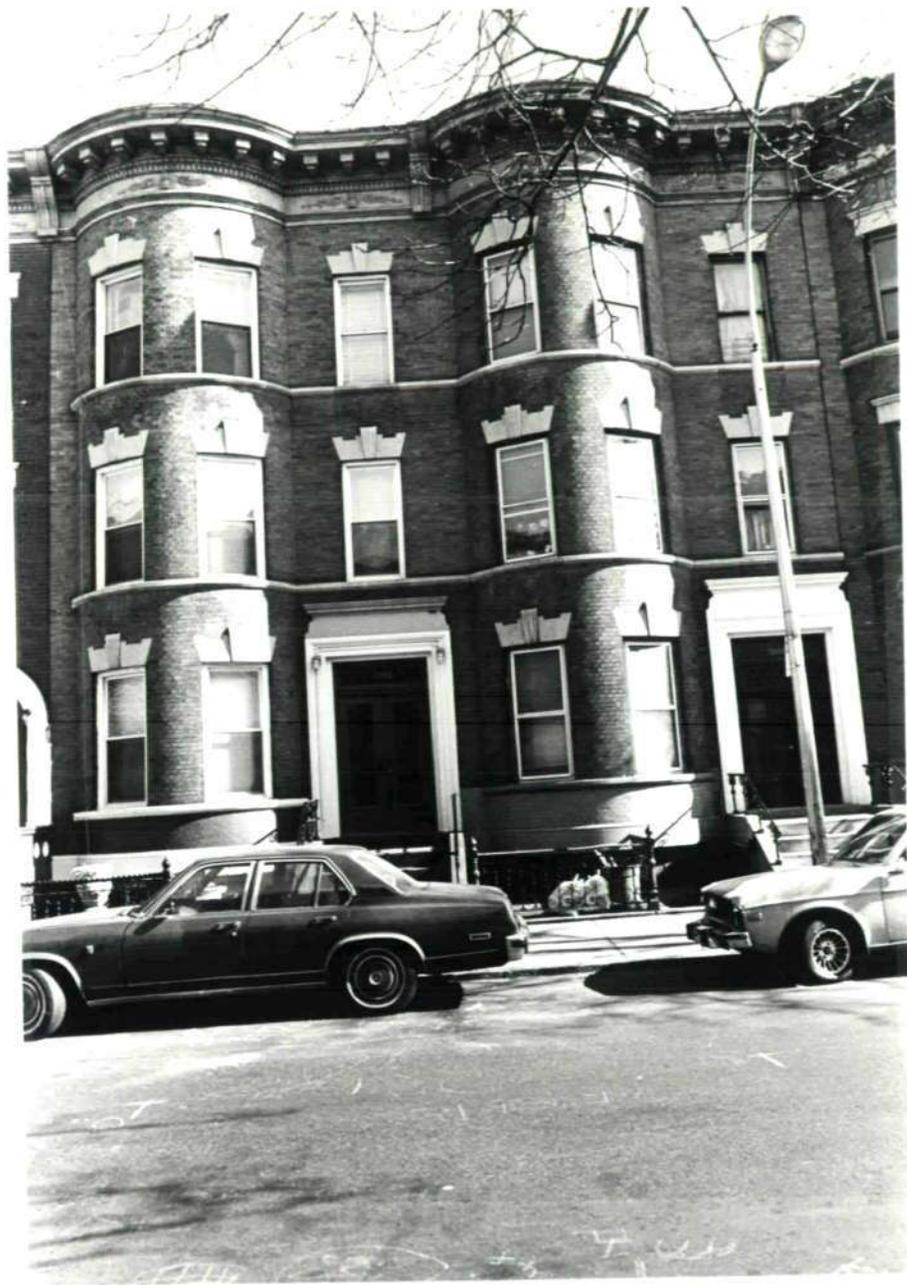


Plate 25. 1990 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 26. 1996 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 27. 1998 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 28. 1992 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 29. 1994 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 30. Curved oak leaf corbels, 1994 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 31. Concrete balustrades, 1992 Morris Avenue. (Savage)

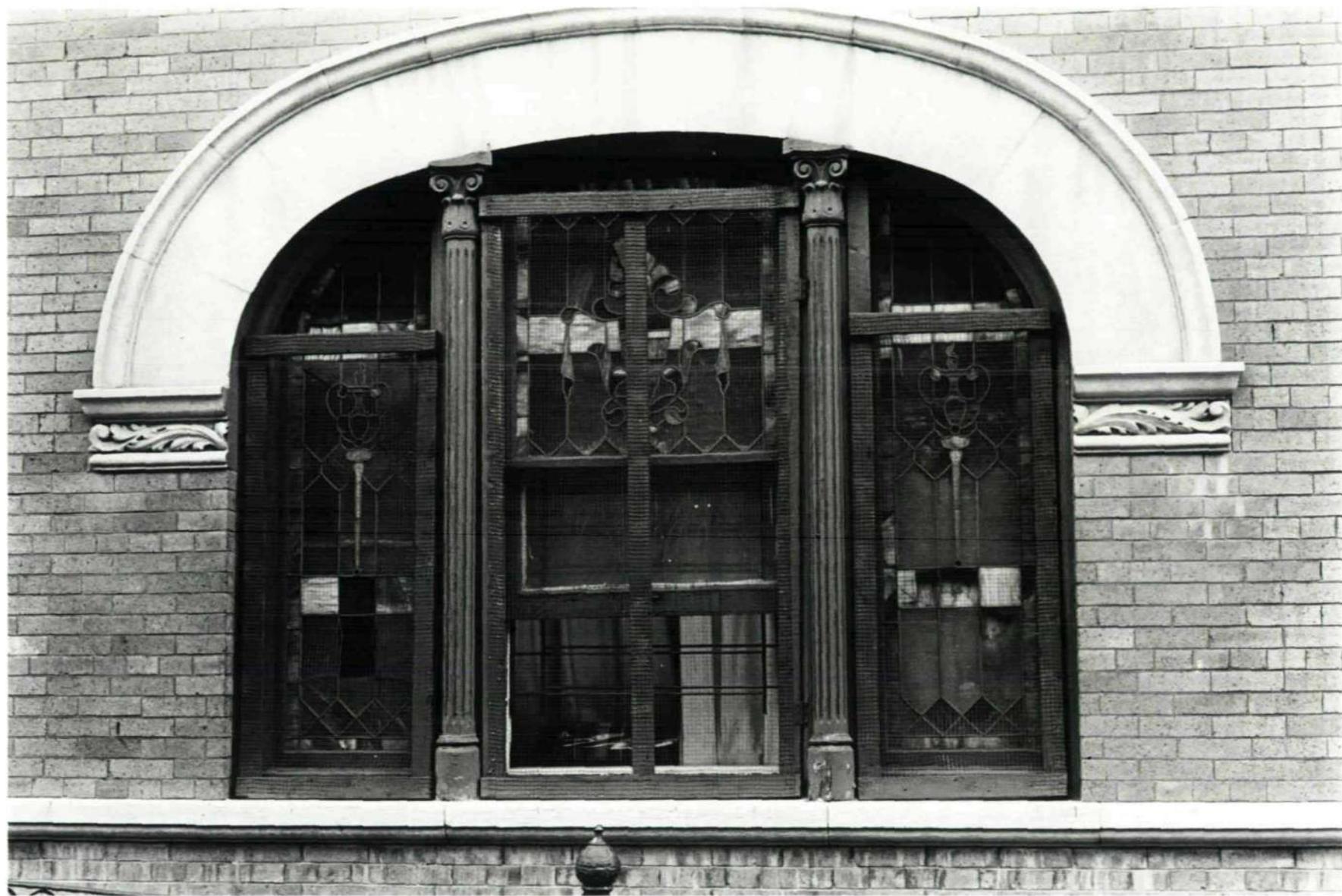


Plate 32. Window, East 179th Street facade of 1998 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 33. Entrance, 65 East Tremont Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 34. 1971 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 35. 1977 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 37. 1985 and 1987 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 36. 1979 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 38. 1973 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 39. 1975 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 40. 1981 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 41. 1983 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 42. Corbels, 1973 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 43. Corbels, 1975 Morris Avenue. (Savage)

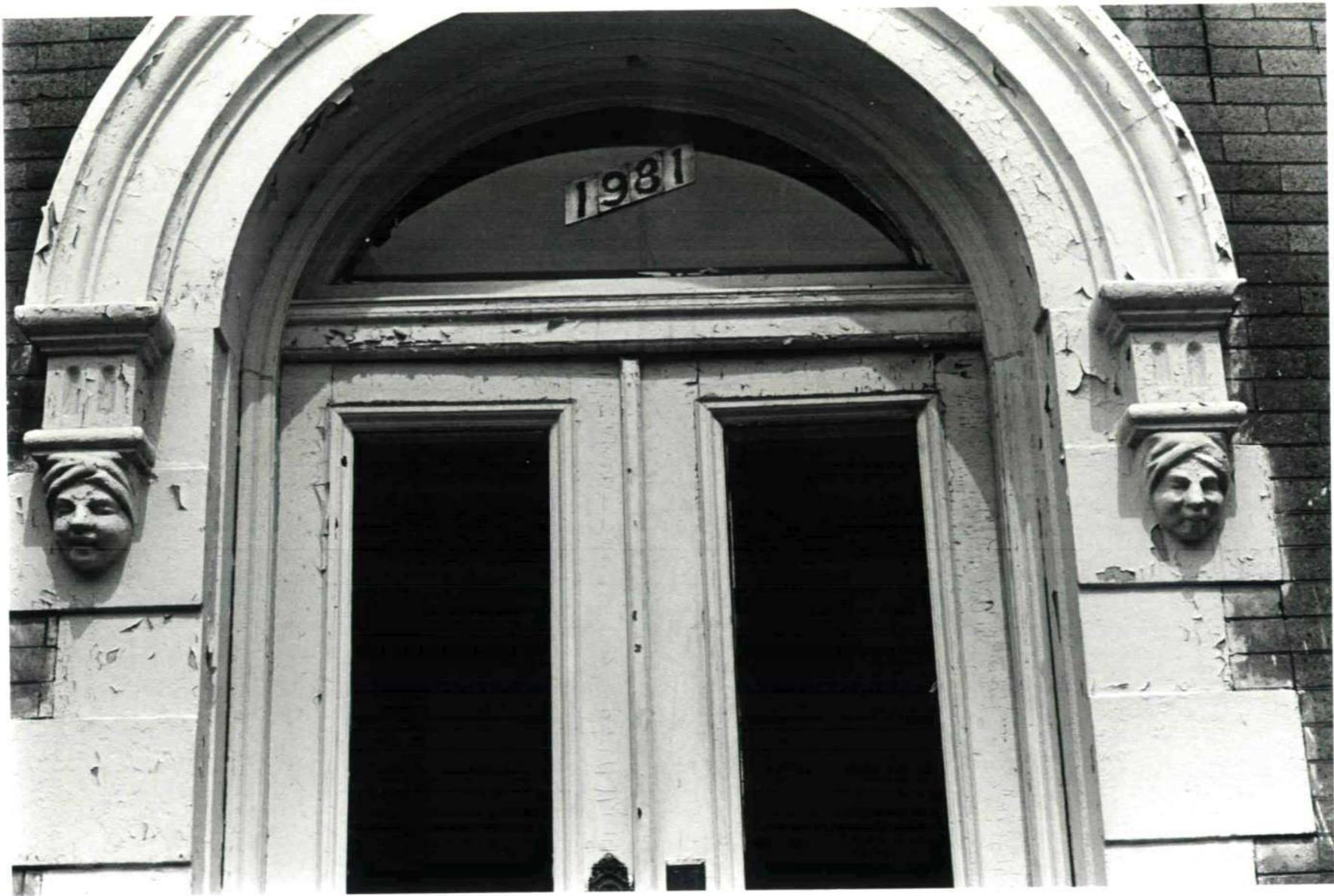


Plate 44. Corbels, 1981 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 45. Corbels, 1833 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 47. 1989 and 1991 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 46. 1993 and 1995 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 48. 1997 and 1999 Morris Avenue. (Landmarks)



Plate 49. 1999's side along East 179th Street. (Landmarks)

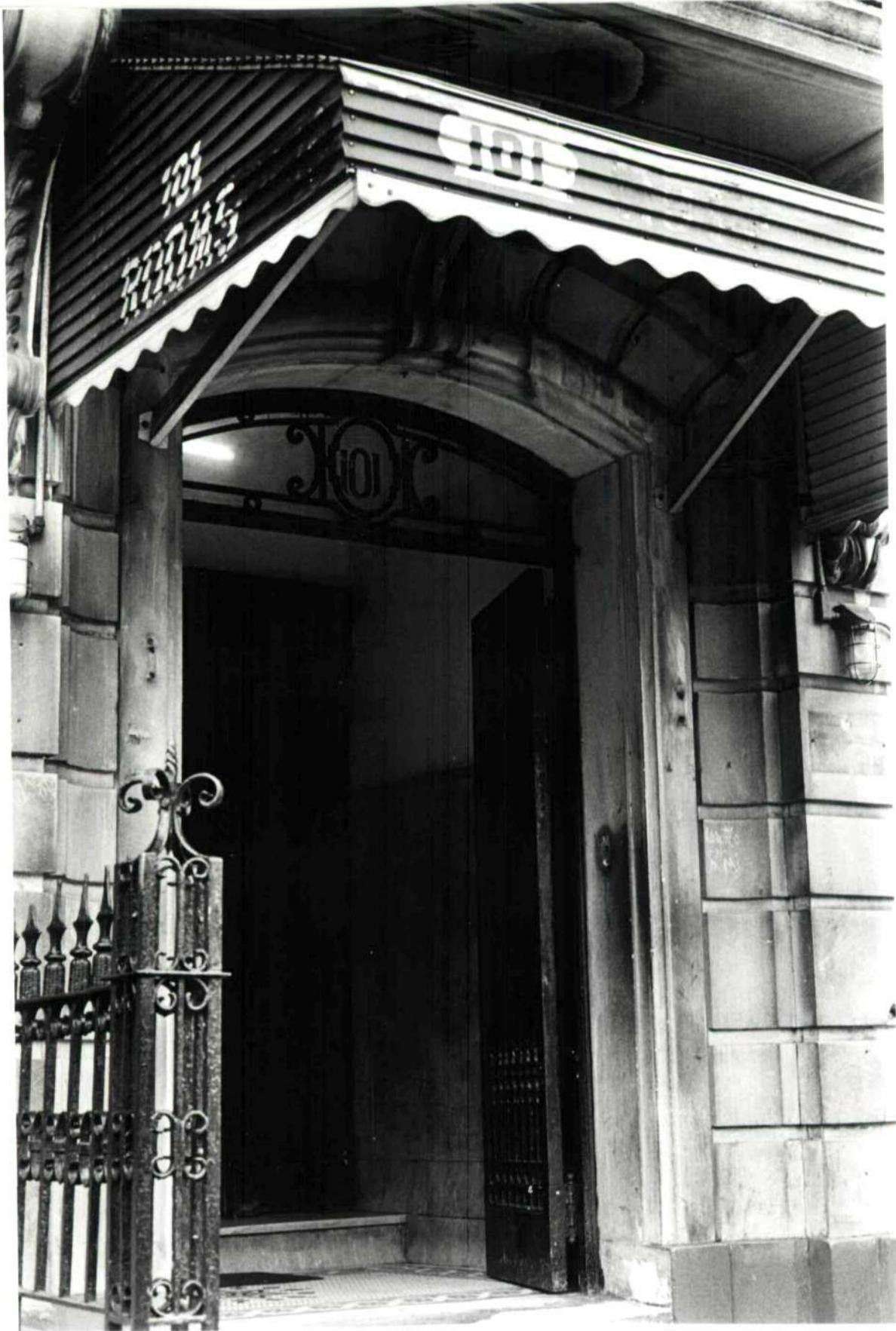


Plate 50. Entrance, 101 East Tremont Avenue. (Savage)

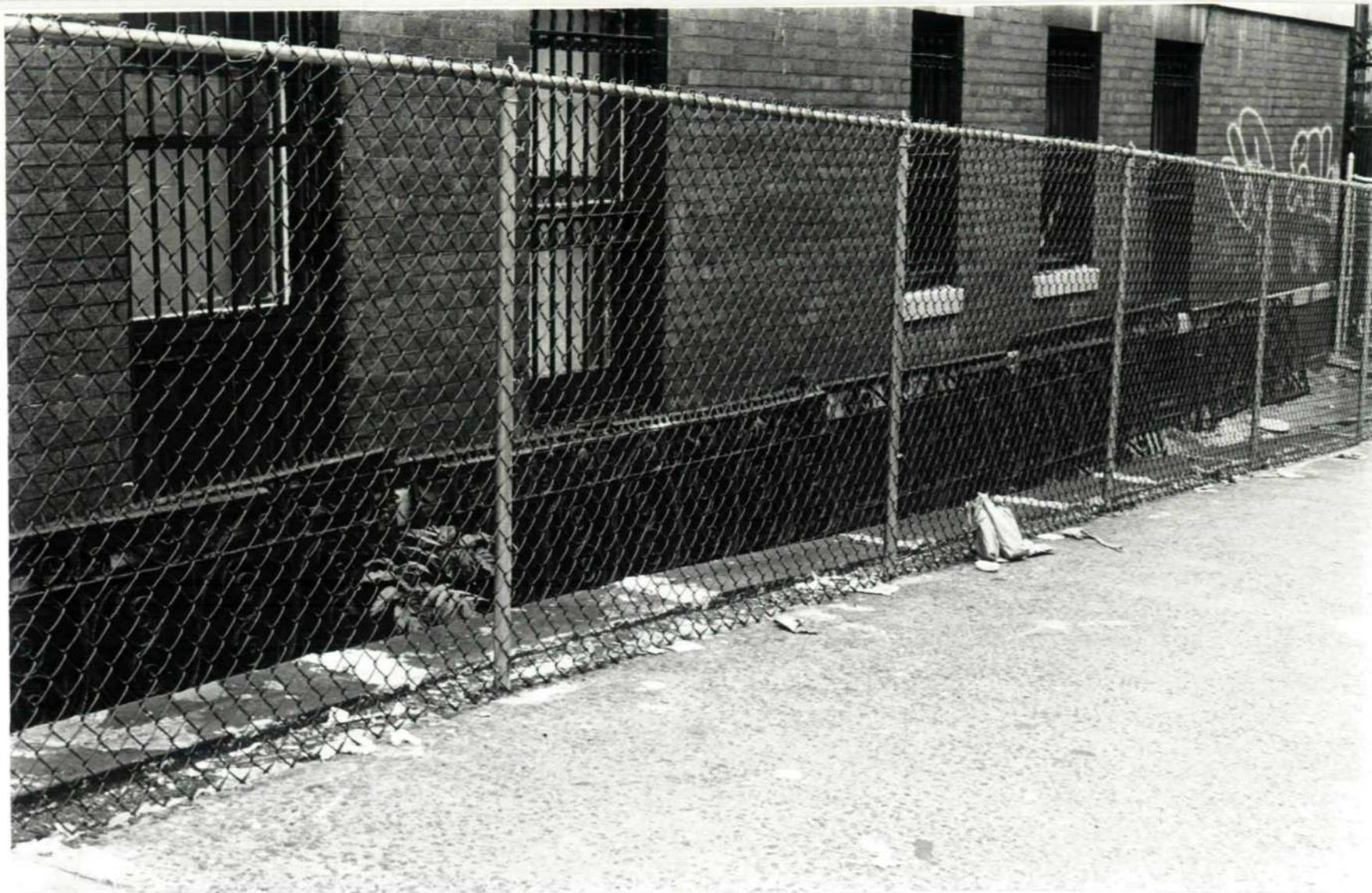


Plate 51. 1999's new cyclone fence with the original railing stacked behind it.



Plate 52. Distinctive stoop and areaway railing characteristic to 1988 - 1998 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 53. 1998 Morris Avenue's railing along East 179th Street. (Savage)



Plate 54. Distinctive stoop and areaway railing characteristic to 1970 - 1986 Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 55. Distinctive stoop and areaway railing characteristic to 1971 - 1973  
Morris Avenue. (Savage)



Plate 56. Distinctive stoop and areaway railing characteristic to 1968  
Morris Avenue. (Savage)