Landmarks Preservation Commission
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NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN MUSEUM (now LIBRARY) BUILDING, *FOUNTAIN OF LIFE*, and TULIP TREE ALLEE, Watson Drive and Garden Way, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park, the Bronx; Museum Building designed 1896, built 1898-1901, Robert W. Gibson, architect; Fountain 1901-05, Carl (Charles) E. Tefft, sculptor, Gibson, architect; Allee planted 1903-11.

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map 3272, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the property bounded by a line that corresponds to the outermost edges of the rear (eastern) portion of the original 1898-1901 Museum (now Library) Building (excluding the International Plant Science Center, Harriet Barnes Pratt Library Wing, and Jeannette Kittredge Watson Science and Education Building), the southernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building (excluding the Annex) and a line extending southwesterly to Garden Way, the eastern curbline of Garden Way to a point on a line extending southwesterly from the northernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building, and northeasterly along said line and the northernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building, to the point of beginning.

On October 28, 2008, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the New York Botanical Garden Museum (now Library) Building, *Fountain of Life*, and Tulip Tree Allee and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Six people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the New York Botanical Garden, Municipal Art Society of New York, Historic Districts Council, Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America, and New York Landmarks Conservancy.

Summary

The grand neo-Renaissance style New York Botanical Garden Museum Building, along with the *Fountain of Life* and Tulip Tree Allee, form a distinguished and monumental Beaux-Arts civic space within the largest and most renowned botanical garden in the country. Founded in 1891 and located within Bronx Park, the Botanical Garden showcases one of the world's great collections of plants and serves as an educational center for gardening and horticulture. The Museum (now Library) Building, designed in 1896 by architect Robert W. Gibson and constructed in 1898-1901, originally housed the Garden's preserved botanical specimens and was the first American museum devoted solely to botany. The long four-story structure, clad in greyish-buff brick and buff terra cotta, features a symmetrical design and classically-inspired ornament characteristic of Beaux-Arts civic buildings at the turn of the century, with a rusticated and pedimented central pavilion with monumental columns and copper-clad saucer dome, flanked by sections and end pavilions with monumental pilasters. The energetic bronze sculptural group of the *Fountain of Life* (1903-05), designed by Carl (Charles) E. Tefft for Gibson's marble plinth and basins, depicts a cherub astride a dolphin atop a globe and two web-footed plunging horses being restrained by a female and a boy, surprising a merman and mermaid in the basin below. The fountain was restored in 2005. The Tulip Tree Allee, consisting of trees lining both sides of the drives leading to the fountain, was planted in 1903-11 at the direction of Nathaniel Lord Britton, first director of the Garden.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

New York Botanical Garden in Bronx Park [1]

As early as 1888, the Torrey Botanical Club, the largest such American society, took on the mission of establishing a great botanical garden for New York City. The club was reportedly inspired by the description of Elizabeth Gertrude Knight Britton, and her husband, Nathaniel Lord Britton, both academics and botanists, of a recent visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, England. A committee of the club, and the Brittons, in particular, promoted the idea, gaining the support of newspapers and influential New Yorkers. By the following year, club members had selected Bronx Park in the Bronx as a favorable location; the park land had been acquired by New York City in 1884 in anticipation of Consolidation. This was part of the vast former land holdings (beginning in 1792 until 1870) of the Lorillard family of tobacco fortune fame.[2] According to the censuses of 1800 and 1810, Peter Lorillard owned one slave. It is unknown whether or not slaves were used in their Bronx operations, but tobacco production in the South would have been based on slave labor.

After an act was drawn up by Addison Brown and Charles Daly, two federal judges with botanical/horticultural interests, the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) was established by the New York State Legislature in 1891 (with an amendment in 1894) for

> the purpose of establishing and maintaining a botanical garden and museum and arboretum therein, for the collection and culture of plants, flowers, shrubs and trees, the advancement of botanical science and knowledge and the prosecution of original researches therein and in kindred subjects, for affording instruction in the same, for the prosecution and exhibition of ornamental and decorative horticulture and gardening, and for the entertainment, recreation and instruction of the people. [3]

NYBG was to be managed by a Board of Directors, consisting of the president of Columbia College, and its professors of botany, geology, and chemistry; the president of the Torrey Botanical Club; the president of the New York City Board of Education; the mayor; and the president of the Board of Commissioners of the Dept. of Public Parks; along with nine elected members. The legislation stipulated that when sufficient funds (not less than $250,000) were raised within five years of its passage, the Board was authorized to appropriate a portion of Bronx Park, not to exceed 250 acres, as well as to construct "a suitable fireproof building for such botanical museum and herbarium, with lecture rooms and laboratories for instruction"[4] and other necessary structures. The City was then to issue bonds for $500,000.

In June 1895, it was announced that the $250,000 goal had been met, with major contributions from such titans as Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, J.D. Rockefeller, and Cornelius Vanderbilt II (president of the Board). At that time it was noted that "the scientific Directors have appointed a committee to confer with the experts of the Park Board in regard to the location to be chosen for the garden in Bronx Park."[5] The Board of Directors thus referred the question of site selection to Calvert Vaux, one of the city's most eminent landscape architects since his first collaboration with Frederick Law Olmsted in Central Park (1858), and Samuel Bowne Parsons, Jr., Superintendent of Parks and Vaux's partner. It was reported in the *New York Times* that "after full examination both agreed in recommending that the northern end of Bronx Park be selected, and after some delay the Park Board appropriated it accordingly."[6] By August 1895, plans were made for an accurate topographical survey of the tract. Due to the location of the Bronx River on the site, with its

adjacent marshy ground, drainage on the property was a significant early consideration. The Board hoped to "retain as much as possible the natural scenery of the place, which in beauty far exceeds that of any existing botanic garden,"[7] and approved Vaux's preliminary plan in October. Vaux, however, drowned in November 1895, presumably a suicide.

After the topographical survey was completed by March 1896, the *New York Times* reported that

> the plans of the garden have been formulated by Cornelius Vanderbilt, President of the garden; President Seth Low of Columbia College, William E. Dodge, Judge Addison Brown, and Prof. N.L. Britton, and preparations to carry them into effect have been completed. ... A building with three stories and a basement and having a total floor space of 90,000 square feet, is to be erected near the entrance to the garden for use as a museum. It will also contain rooms for a library, an economic museum, herbaria, laboratories, and also apartments where students may study special subjects. [8]

This was intended as the first American museum devoted solely to botany.

In May 1896, Dr. Nathaniel Lord Britton (1859-1934), professor of botany at Columbia and the secretary of the Board, was named Director in Chief of NYBG (in which position he served until 1929). Britton had become an instructor of botany at Columbia in 1886, an adjunct professor in 1890, and a professor in 1891, and was known for his rearrangement and reclassification of Columbia's herbarium and botanical library. The actual master plan for the Garden was drawn up by a commission consisting of John R. Brinley, landscape engineer; Samuel Henshaw, landscape gardener; Lucien Underwood, a professor on the Board of Scientific Directors; architect Robert W. Gibson; and Lincoln Pierson, of the firm of Lord & Burnham, preeminent conservatory builders; along with Britton and Parsons. Since the Garden's location as part of Bronx Park was on city-owned land, the Dept. of Public Parks had jurisdiction over the maintenance of buildings and grounds, as well as construction of roads and pathways. Columbia College was closely associated with NYBG, with arrangements made for the college's herbarium and botanical library to be placed in the Museum Building, and for NYBG facilities to be used by Columbia faculty and students. NYBG became one of the largest such gardens in the world.

Botanical Museum [9]

An elevated site for the Botanical Museum, about 1,000 feet east of the Bedford Park Railroad Station, was chosen by the Board in March 1896 due to its proximity to the station and its "very commanding position."[10] An architectural competition was announced for the museum building, and among those who submitted designs were some of the city's most eminent architects: Ernest Flagg, N[apoleon]. Le Brun & Sons, Clinton & Russell, William Appleton Potter, and Parish & Schroeder. Robert W. Gibson was selected, and he filed plans in November 1896 for a structure expected to cost $250,000. Construction on the museum was delayed due to appropriations being withheld by the City after a public debate developed over the location and design of the building (and the planned Conservatory), as well as general plans for NYBG, including its mission as a great scientific institution versus the park as an unspoiled landscape.[11] In September 1897, the Board of Estimate & Apportionment finally appropriated construction funds. Bids were received from twelve contractors in October; the lowest, for $354,000, was accepted from the John H. Parker Co. The City's Corporation Council, however, deemed the bidding process invalid, and seven new bids were

received; John H. Parker Co. was again selected in November, for $347,000 (also to include construction of a powerhouse and stable).

On December 31, 1897, the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Botanical Museum took place. After foundation work, the first bricks of the walls were laid in May 1898. *American Gardening* reported in September that

> the Museum building... is rapidly taking shape now after a series of vexatious delays, chafing to the energetic spirit of the ever active director in chief, Dr. N.L. Britton. Huge masses of iron, stacks of brick, terra cotta pieces, and shaped stone lying about in a bewildering profusion are not picturesque in detail; they await their proper combination to yield New York and America a botanical museum that shall be worthy of both.... Beautifully designed, tastefully set, nobly planned, and easy of access, it will be a great addition to the educational buildings of the City. [12]

The *Times* also then reported that three-quarters of the steel framing had been completed, along with exterior walls to the second story; and that "the outside of the building is of brick and terra cotta, giving a soft, warm gray effect, which has been chosen as the best to blend with the landscape and not stand out too vividly in either Winter or Summer."[13]

In November 1898, another $200,000 in city bonds was authorized towards museum construction. A supplementary contract of $12,875 was awarded in July 1899 to the John H. Parker Co. for building the "Front Central Portico," which was completed in October 1899. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* mentioned in March 1900 that the museum building "has just been completed, [and] is said to be the largest, most elegant, best illuminated and for its purposes the best adapted of any similar edifice in the world."[14] The John H. Parker Co. contract was officially terminated in April, at a reported cost of $348,000, close to the original bid.[15] NYBG indicated that "plans prepared by Mr. Gibson for some further ornamentation of the end pavilions of the Museum have been accepted by the Board of Managers... but he has concluded that it will be advantageous to defer this work for the present."[16] In April 1901, a contract for a planned fountain in front of the museum and approaches to it [see below] was entered into with the Wilson & Baillie Manufacturing Co., a Brooklyn firm; this contract also referred to "cornice and roof ornaments on Botanical Museum."[17] Gibson's "additional ornamental terra cotta work for the pavilions" was delivered, but installation was delayed during the winter of 1901. New ornamentation included acroteria and pediments.

The grand neo-Renaissance style Botanical Museum Building, with a front facade over 300 feet in width and the central pavilion surmounted by a copper-clad saucer dome, was constructed with steel framing and concrete floors, and clad in light greyish-buff brick, with extensive buff terra cotta ornament. The terra cotta was manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co.,[18] which had been established in 1886 by Orlando B. Potter (with Asahel Clarke Geer) after his experience in the construction of his Potter Building (1883-86, Norris G. Starkweather), 35-38 Park Row,[19] which used extensive architectural terra cotta. The only major architectural terra cotta firm in New York City, it became one of the largest such American manufacturers, producing ornament for such notable structures as Carnegie Hall (1889-91, William B. Tuthill); Montauk Club (1889-91, Francis H. Kimball); West End Collegiate Church and School (1892-93, Robert W. Gibson); Ansonia Hotel (1899-1904, Paul E.M. Duboy); and Plaza Hotel (1905-07, Henry Hardenbergh).[20] The company, with its factory located in Long Island City, lasted until bankruptcy in 1932. Gibson's design for the Museum received much notice, being shown at the 1898 exhibition of the Architectural League of New York, and featured a number of times in the contemporary

architectural press: *The Brickbuilder* (August 1898), *Architecture & Building* (October 1898), *American Architect & Building News* (April 1900), and *The Brickbuilder* (June 1900).

Within the Botanical Museum Building originally were: a lecture hall in the ground-story level; a museum of economic botany (with plants used in the arts, industry, and sciences) on the first story; a general museum, with exhibits on the families of plants on the second story; a library, with the reading room under the dome, and a stack room to the rear on the third-story center wing; plant embryology laboratories in the northern third-story wing; and taxonomy laboratories and herbaria, including Columbia University's herbarium, in the southern third-story wing. When it was completed, this was considered the largest botanical museum in the world, with the largest botanical library in the United States. It also served as NYBG's administration building.

Architect: Robert W. Gibson [21]

Robert Williams Gibson (1854-1927), born in Essex, England, graduated in 1879 from the Royal Academy of Arts, London (winning the Soane Medallion) and spent a year traveling on scholarship in Italy, France and Spain. After immigrating to the United States in 1881, Gibson established an architectural practice in Albany, N.Y., where he soon entered the competition for the design of the Cathedral of All Saints (Episcopal). His Gothic Revival style design was selected in 1883 over the only other submission, that of the preeminent Romanesque Revival master, Henry Hobson Richardson; the building was constructed in 1884-88 and 1902-04. Gibson also designed the Romanesque Revival style National Commercial Bank (1887), Albany. In 1888, Gibson moved to New York City, where he established a successful practice, specializing in ecclesiastical and commercial buildings. Two early commissions that were Romanesque-inspired were the U.S. Trust Co. Building (1888-89, demolished), 45 Wall Street, and the New York Ear & Eye Infirmary (1888-94), Second Avenue and 13th Street.

Gibson was responsible for the design of many churches, especially Episcopal, in New York State and region, mostly in the Gothic Revival style, including : Christ Mission (1886), Gloversville, N.Y.; Christ Church (1888-89), Herkimer, N.Y.; the 1888-89 interior of St. Paul's Cathedral (1860-61, Richard Upjohn), Buffalo, N.Y.; St. Stephen's Church (1888-89), Olean, N.Y.; Christ Church (1886-94), Rochester, N.Y.; St. Michael's Church (1890-91), Amsterdam Avenue and West 99th Street; Trinity Church (1891), Ossining, N.Y.; St. John's Church (1892), Northampton, Mass.; Grace Church (1892), Plainfield, N.J.; Christ Church (1893), Corning, N.Y.; and St. Luke's Church (1897-98), Mechanicsville, N.Y. West End Collegiate Church and School (1892-93), West End Avenue and West 77th Street, a designated New York City Landmark, is a distinctive essay in the Dutch Renaissance Revival style, while the Church Missions House (1892-94, with Edward J.N. Stent), 281 Park Avenue South, a designated New York City Landmark, was inspired by a medieval Flemish guildhall. The Randall Memorial Chapel and Music Hall (1890-92; chapel demolished), Sailors' Snug Harbor, Staten Island, signaled a turn in the latter part of Gibson's career to classically-inspired styles.

Among his notable commercial and institutional projects are the Fifth Avenue Bank (1890, demolished), 530 Fifth Avenue; Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club (1891-93), Oyster Bay, N.Y.; Greenwich Savings Bank (1892, demolished), 246 Sixth Avenue; Bank of Buffalo (1895), Buffalo, N.Y.; New York Coffee Exchange (1895, demolished), 110 Pearl Street; New York Clearing House Exchange Building (1896, demolished), 77 Cedar Street; New York Botanical Garden Museum Building (1896-1901), Bronx; Women's (later Martha Washington) Hotel (1901-03), 29 East 29th Street; and Merchants and Mechanics Bank (1902), Scranton, Pa. The Morton F. and Nellie Plant

House (1903-05), 651 Fifth Avenue, Cartier's since 1917, is a designated New York City Landmark.

Gibson built a summer home in Oyster Bay in 1899 that he continued to enlarge in subsequent years. He was a director of the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects and a president of the New York Architectural League. By 1909, his career was in decline and personal problems, including the death of his son and his wife's increasing breakdowns, led him to rent his home in Oyster Bay; he moved to Aveley Farm in Woodbury, N.Y., where he died in 1927.

Later History of the Botanical Museum Building [22]

Due to the growth of both the library and the herbarium, an addition to the Botanical Museum Building was contemplated as early as 1926. Nothing was accomplished except for internal remodeling and expansion until a library wing was planned in 1958 by architects Eggers & Higgins. The original rear central wing of the Museum Building was demolished, and the Harriet Barnes Pratt Library Wing was built in 1964-65, but not occupied until 1966. In 1960-61, the balustrades, cheek walls, and steps in front of the museum were replaced with new granite steps and brick walls with bluestone and concrete coping. The Jeannette Kittredge Watson Science and Education Building, for education and environmental units, administrative offices, and experimental greenhouse, was constructed behind the Museum Building's southern wing in 1969-72 (William and Geoffrey Platt, architect). An Annex to house specimens from the herbarium collection was built in 1993-94 (Coe Lee Robinson Roesch, Inc., architect) to the south of the Museum Building. The International Plant Science Center was constructed behind the Museum Building's northern wing in 1998 (Polshek Partnership, architect), containing the William and Linda Steere Herbarium, LuEsther T. Mertz Library, and Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery and Lecture Hall. All of these additions to the original Museum Building are excluded from this designation.

Description: Museum (now Library) Building (excluding the International Plant Science Center, Harriet Barnes Pratt Library Wing, Jeannette Kittredge Watson Science and Education Building, and Annex)

Front Facade: The long four-story neo-Renaissance style structure, clad in greyish-buff brick and buff terra cotta (manufactured by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Co.), is articulated horizontally with a rusticated and pedimented central pavilion with four monumental Corinthian columns and copper-clad saucer dome, flanked by intermediate sections and end pavilions with monumental Corinthian pilasters. The rusticated ground story serves as the base of the building, while the entrance on the first story is approached by wide stairs, and the third story is a mansard roof (clad in standing-seam metal, with segmental dormers) on the intermediate sections, between the full-story pedimented pavilions (with pilasters and molded copper cornices). Fenestration is rectangular, except on the second story, which is round-arched with voussoirs and keystones. Balustrades are located at the base of the second-story windows. In 1959-61, "swivel type" windows were replaced with double-hung sash. The cornice above the second story is modillioned on the central pavilion and denticulated on the rest of the building, and ornamented with swags on the pavilions. A pierced parapet originally extended atop the entire second-story cornice; today only that on the central pavilion survives. Anthemion ornament acroteria, placed in 1901 at the corners of the roof of each pavilion, were removed by 1950. Flagpoles originally located atop each of the three pavilions have been removed. **Central Pavilion**: There are three entrances, each with double wood-and-glass doors and double transoms. The central main entrance has a surround with brick Doric columns that support an entablature which is surmounted by a seal of New York City,

flanked by scrolls and in turn surmounted by a segmental pediment. The flanking entrances are surmounted by smaller segmentally-pedimented seals of the United States and New York State. A cartouche with the seal of NYBG, flanked by scrolls and edged with a cornucopia, is located in the center of the third story. **Front Steps/Approach**: In 1960-61, the original curved balustrade along the drive in front of the Museum Building and the front steps were replaced with new brick walls (now painted) with concrete coping and curved ends, and new granite steps with brick cheek walls with bluestone coping. A metal lamppost with three globes has been placed on either side of the steps atop the cheek walls, and the steps have metal railings. A handicap-accessible lift has been placed to the north of the northern cheek wall. There are steps to the ground story flanked by a brick cheek wall, to the south of the main steps. **End Pavilions**: Each pavilion has a ground-story pedimented and arched entrance with double wood-and-glass doors and arched transoms. The northern pavilion has a service entrance to the north, with double wood doors, flanking brick cheek walls, and bluestone paving. The southern pavilion has flanking brick cheek walls and bluestone paving in front of the entrance. **Intermediate Sections**: An entrance is located on the ground story to the north of the Central Pavilion, having double wood-and-glass doors and double transoms, and is flanked by one brick and bluestone cheek wall and approached by bluestone steps. A ground-story entrance to the south of the Central Pavilion is partially filled in with brick, and is flanked by one brick and bluestone cheek wall and approached by bluestone steps.

Rear (East) Facade: Three portions of the original Museum Building are visible on the rear facade: a section south of the Jeannette Kittredge Watson Science and Education Building; the central dome, visible above the Harriet Barnes Pratt Library Wing; and a northern section between the Pratt Library Wing and the International Plant Science Center. The visible southern four-bay portion has a three-bay southern pavilion and is articulated with rustication. The watertable has been parged. The southernmost windows on each story have been filled with brick, as have the northernmost two bays of the ground story. The third story is a mansard roof, having a molded and denticulated cornice and three segmental dormers on the pavilion (the southernmost window is filled in) and two rectangular dormers to the north. The visible four-bay northern section is articulated with rustication and has an angled polygonal entrance with wood-and-glass doors and transom, flanked by small rectangular openings with louvers. To the south of this entrance is a light well with a window, and to the north a basement entrance with a metal door. The third story is a mansard roof, having a molded and denticulated cornice and four rectangular dormers.

South Facade: The five-bay south facade is articulated with a rusticated ground story and monumental Corinthian pilasters on the first and second stories. The ground story had a pedimented and arched entrance, which is now connected to the Annex, with the upper portion of the arch filled in. The eastern portion of the watertable has been parged. The windows on each story of the easternmost bay have been filled with brick. The westernmost three bays of the third story are full-height, while the rest of the story is a mansard roof, with an easternmost segmental dormer.

North Facade: The only remaining visible portion of the north facade of the original five-bay Museum Building is the three westernmost bays, articulated with a rusticated ground story and monumental Corinthian pilasters on the first and second stories, and a small adjacent portion also having a pilaster on the first and second stories, as well as a small portion of the mansard roof. The ground story bays were altered (east to west) with: a louver and a painted window; metal doors; and louvers.

Botanical Garden Fountain: *Fountain of Life* [23]

The original plan of NYBG included a fountain in front of the Botanical Museum, and after the building's substantial completion in 1900, "the marble basins, whose position had been established by the general plan in 1897, were constructed at the time that the path approaches and marble seats, garden fountain and drinking fountain were built on the driveway [at the western end of the museum approach drives], leaving only the character of the bronze fountain itself to be determined, and its construction secured."[24] The Dept. of Public Parks' *Annual Report* of 1900 noted that "specifications have been prepared for the improvement of grounds adjacent to the Botanical Museum Building... estimated to cost $40,000,"[25] while the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in March 1900 indicated that "considerable work remains to be done on the surroundings, such as grading and constructing a driveway and path approaches to the front central portico, the building of a fountain designed to occupy the space within the outer curved retaining wall of the front approach, and of a parapet retaining wall around the terrace which surrounds the building."[26] At that time, NYBG announced that "the Board of Managers have also authorized a sculptors' competition for designs for the fountain planned for construction in front of the Museum Building, and arrangements for such competition have been made by a committee of the Managers and the architect."[27] Gibson envisioned the fountain as the focus of the vista looking toward the Museum, and as having upper and lower water basins, the flowing "water element" giving "distinctive character both as a landscape feature and as a botanical exhibit."[28] Atop the Gibson-designed rusticated marble plinth and basins was to be a bronze sculptural fountain group, to be designed through this competition.

None of the submitted fountain designs were considered acceptable, and two additional designs were procured, but also rejected. In April 1901, a contract for $33,575 was awarded by the Dept. of Public Parks to the Wilson & Baillie Manufacturing Co., for "grading grounds, constructing, regulating, grading and paving walks and roads, furnishing and laying iron water pipes, constructing basin for statuary fountain, erecting garden fountain and drinking fountain, constructing stone seats, etc., in front of the Museum building."[29] This contract was completed at the end of 1902. During that year, NYBG requested assistance in finding a sculptor from the National Sculpture Society, which appointed a committee composed of leading sculptors Karl Bitter and Daniel Chester French, and architect Charles C. Haight. A new open competition for the NYBG fountain was held in January-March 1903, with the jury composed of sculptors French, John Quincy Adams Ward, Charles Grafly, and Herbert Adams, and architect George B. Post. Fifteen sculptors submitted designs, and in April that of Carl (Charles) E. Tefft was selected, subject to his submitting a model for the committee's approval.

In November 1903, it was reported that "the model is an admirable piece of work, giving abundant proof of the sculptor's ability to carry out intelligently and artistically the design recommended to the Board."[30] Tefft's fountain design was also approved by the NYBG Board and John E. Eustis, Commissioner of Parks. Tefft completed the full plaster model in September 1904, and a $7,500 contract for casting and setting the bronze was granted in December to the Roman Bronze Works in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. The Art Commission approved the design in January 1905. Cast in the Cire-Perdue process, the fountain was completed in May, purchased for $20,000, and installed by the City in June 1905, becoming fully operational in July. The Art Commission described the theme of the energetic fountain sculpture:

> This is a bronze group, heroic size, of the head and shoulders of two rearing horses with webbed forefeet. A nude female figure of hilarious mien is astride the one at the left, which she guides with her right hand, while she swings her left hand backward

> in, merry gesture. A nude boy tries to control the horse at the right, and in his right hand holds a fish by the tail. Above the horses, a nude boy sits on the back of a dolphin on a large globe. Water flows from beneath the plinth into a large basin below, in the left side of which is a bronze merman looking up in a startled manner at the plunging animals and in the right side of the basin a bronze mermaid turns partly round to look at the group above her as she hurries to get out of their way. [31]

Tefft's creation of the horses' webbed feet was considered novel. Preeminent sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens praised the work, while writer Frank Owen Payne opined that Tefft

> has created a most brilliant work. No other fountain of the city of New York is so admirably located. With the imposing facade of the great Botanic Museum behind it, and with its superb setting of fine shrubbery, this fountain is indeed a thing of rare beauty. ... The sculptor has called this the Fountain of Life, typifying, as it were, the great life principle of "Struggle for Existence" and "Survival of the Fittest." The marvellous [sic] vivacity and motion displayed in this unique group certainly give force to the idea. [32]

Sculptor: Carl (Charles) E. Tefft [33]

One of the leading American public sculptors of the early 20th century (though not well-known today outside of Maine), Charles (later Carl) Eugene Tefft (1874-1951) was born in Brewer, Maine; both his mother and grandmother were designers. He began to study sculpture as a teenager, and after high school, moved to New York City in 1893 to attend the New-York Institute for Artist-Artisans (founded 1888) on a scholarship. Tefft apprenticed with sculptor John Quincy Adams Ward, and in 1898 became a professor of sculptural modeling at the Institute. Around 1913 he established a studio and lived in Tompkinsville, Staten Island, using the name Carl professionally. During World War I, Tefft served in the 9th Coast Artillery. He was appointed director of sculpture at the New York Industrial Institute of Art around 1918, and later became director of sculpture for the Sesquicentennial International Exposition (1925), Philadelphia. After his wife's death in 1936, Tefft divided his time between New York, Washington, and Maine, where he died in Presque Isle.

Among Tefft's most notable public sculptures are: *Lake Superior*, Pan-American Exposition (1901), Buffalo, N.Y.; *Osceola*, Charleston (S.C.) Exposition (1901-02); *Iowa* and *Renaissance Art*, Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904), St. Louis, Mo.; *Revolutionary War Monument* (1908), Ft. Lee, N.J.; *Peace Monument ("Victory")* (1922), Belleville, N.J.; *Spanish-American War (Battleship Maine) Memorial* (1922), Bangor, Maine; *Luther H. Peirce Memorial ("The Last Drive")* (1925-26), Bangor; *Hannibal Hamlin* (1927), Bangor, depicting Lincoln's first Vice President (a 1933 copy was placed in Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol); *William Henry Maxwell Memorial* (1928), American Museum of Natural History, commemorating New York City's Superintendent of Schools, 1898-1918; and *Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial* (1939), Bangor.

Later History: *Fountain of Life*

In 1960-61, the original balustrade that curved behind the fountain (on which lampposts were placed) was replaced by a brick wall (now painted) with concrete coping and curved ends. Two steel flagpoles, donated by Edward D. Adams (by 1920) were re-installed on the curved ends. Around this time, the western side of the circular drive around the fountain was reconfigured as a path (now paved with asphalt and flanked at each end by a lamppost). In 1968, the fountain's bronze figures

were cleaned by the Parks Dept. At that time, cracking was observed in the marble plinth and basin, and plans were made to reset the supporting bronze mermaid and merman figures "that were removed some years ago" (two adjacent crab claws were also missing). [34] The fountain was restored for a reported $2 million in 2005 by the A. Ottavino Corp. and Building Conservation Associates. New mermaid, merman, and crab claw figures were sculpted in bronze by Glenn and Diane Hines according to historic photographs, including those of Tefft's original model. The fountain was named after philanthropist donor Lillian Goldman, and a new bronze book (by sculptor Stephen Doyle) was placed on the edge of the lower marble basin.

Tulip Tree Allee [35]

The contract between the Dept. of Public Parks and the Wilson & Baillie Manufacturing Co., to grade the grounds, construct and pave walks and roads, etc., in front of the Museum Building [see above] was executed between April 1901 and the end of 1902. This contract also included, at the western end of the Museum drives, the installation of a seating area and drinking fountain (no longer extant), described by Gibson as:

> [a] set of stone seats with a drinking fountain – a little architectural structure of Corinthian order about 16 feet high with a bronze cluster of water symbols. ... From this point looking toward the Museum the main avenue will give a delightful vista toward its principal entrance with the terrace and ramps leading up to the grand portico. [36]

In 1903, Carolina poplars were planted along the approach to the museum.[37] By the beginning of 1904, the driveway was re-graded after completion of the main fountain's basins, as well as the seating area and drinking fountain (the latter in operation in June 1903), and the paths leading to the museum were completed. Tulip trees were planted between the poplars in 1905.[38] By 1911, the poplar trees were removed, leaving the tulip trees.[39] The seating area/drinking fountain at the west end of the allee was removed c. 1954-56 when a laboratory building was constructed nearby. Today, the allee is formed by 25 trees. The drives are currently paved with asphalt with concrete curbs, and are lined with benches. Asphalt and concrete sidewalks alongside the drive lead to the front steps of the Museum Building, and asphalt paths lead from the drive to the west of the northern and southern pavilions of the front facade.

Report prepared by
JAY SHOCKLEY
Research Department

NOTES

1. New York State, *Laws of the State of New York, Chapter 285* (1891), 523-525; "The Botanic Garden in the Bronx," *Bulletin of Pharmacy* (May 1891), 198; "Botanical Garden Plans," *New York Times (NYT)*, May 10, 1896, 4; *The Bronx, New York City's Fastest Growing Borough* (N.Y.: Bronx Bd. of Trade, 1921), 29; "Nathaniel Lord Britton" and "Elizabeth Gertrude Knight Britton," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 25 (N.Y.: James T. White & Co., 1936), 88-89; Francis R. Kowsky, *Country, Park, & City: the*

Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1998), 318-319, 356; Ogden Tanner and Adele Auchincloss, *The New York Botanical Garden: An Illustrated Chronicle of Plants and People* (N.Y.: Walker & Co., 1991); Gregory Long and Anne Skillion, eds., *The New York Botanical Garden* (N.Y.: Abrams, 2006).

2. The Lorillard Snuff Mill (c. 1840) is a designated New York City Landmark.

3. New York State, 523.

4. New York State, 524.

5. "For the Botanic Garden," *NYT*, June 13, 1895, 9.

6. "No Better Site Found," *NYT*, Aug. 18, 1895, 2.

7. "Botanic Garden Survey," *NYT*, Aug. 15, 1895, 9.

8. "Plans for the Botanical Garden," *NYT*, Mar. 8, 1896, 16.

9. Tanner and Auchincloss; "For the Study of Botany," *NYT*, Nov. 28, 1896, 8; "Buildings in the Bronx," *NYT*, June 22, 1897, 12; "Buildings in Bronx Park," *NYT*, July 20, 1897, 12; "Bronx Park and the Botanical Garden," *NYT*, Sept. 19, 1897, 18; "The Botanical Museum," *NYT*, Sept. 30, 1897, 12; "New York Botanical Garden," *American Gardening*, Jan. 8, 1898, 25; [Parish & Schroeder,] *Architecture & Building*, Feb. 12, 1898; "Front Elevation, Museum Building, New York Botanical Garden," *The Brickbuilder*, Aug. 1898, 171, pls. 61-62; "Museum Building, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park, New York City," *Architecture & Building*, Oct. 1, 1898; "Sales of Bonds Advertised," *NYT*, Nov. 17, 1898, 12; "Bronx Park," NYC, Dept. of Public Parks (DPP), *Annual Report* (1898), 56-57; Architectural League of New York, *Catalogue of the Thirteenth Annual Exhibition* (1898), 129; "Bright Prospects in Bronx Borough," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Apr. 16, 1899, 26; St. Louis Architectural Club, *Catalogue Annual Exhibition* (1899), 94; "Central Pavilion: Botanical Museum, Bronx Park, N.Y.," *American Architecture & Building News*, Apr. 7, 1900, pl. 1267; "Botanical Museum, Bronx Park, New York.," *The Brickbuilder*, June 1900, 130; "New Collections for the Botanical Garden," *NYT*, Nov. 11, 1900, 3; Columbia Univ., *Catalogue* (1900-01), 79-80; "The Botanical Garden, New York," *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, Aug. 24, 1907, 151; N.L. Britton, "Botanical Garden is Widely Known," *NYT*, May 17, 1908, B4; "Bronx Park: The Botanical Garden," Fremont Rider, *Rider's New York City* (N.Y.: Henry Holt & Co., 1916), 378-383; Henry Hope Reed and Edmund V. Gillon, Jr., *Beaux-Arts Architecture in New York* (N.Y.: Dover Publics., 1988), 82.

10. NYBG, *Bulletin* (1897), 31.

11. See: "An unfortunate controversy..." *American Architect & Building News*, July 31, 1897, 38.

12. "Editorial Chat," *American Gardening*, Sept. 24, 1898, 670.

13. "An Eden in Bronx Park," *NYT*, Sept. 25, 1898, 4.

14. "Harlem and the Bronx," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Mar. 27, 1900, 15.

15. NYC, DPP, *Annual Report* (1900), 29.

16. NYBG, *Bulletin* (1900), 298.

17. NYC, DPP, *Annual Report* (1901), 78.

18. *The Brickbuilder*, June 1900, 130.

19. This building is a designated New York City Landmark.

20. The Montauk Club is located within the Park Slope Historic District; the other buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.

21. LPC, architects files and *Church Missions House Designation Report* (LP-1044) (N.Y.: City of New York, 1979) prepared by Ruth Selden-Sturgill; James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940*

(N.Y.: Comm. for the Pres. of Archl. Recs., 1989); Gibson obit., *NYT*, Aug. 19, 1927, 17; Robert B. Mackay, Anthony Baker and Carol A. Traynor, eds., *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects 1860-1940* (N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 177-179; Cornelia Brooke Gilder, "Robert W. Gibson (1851-1927)," *Albany Architects: The Present Looks at the Past* (Albany: Hist. Albany Fdtn., 1978), 10-11, and "Robert W. Gibson: Master of Many Styles," *Preservation League of New York Newsletter* (May-June 1984), 4-5; "Robert Williams Gibson," Albert Nelson Marquis, ed., *Who's Who in America* 7 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis & Co., 1912), 797, and *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 11 (N.Y.: James T. White Co., 1893), 324; George E. DeMille, *Pioneer Cathedral: A Brief History of the Cathedral of All Saints* (Albany, 1967), 51.

22. NYBG, *Bulletin* (1926, 1930), 186 and 172, and *Annual Report* (1949-74); "Botanical Library Set," *NYT*, May 28, 1959, 20; "New Library is Dedicated by the Botanical Garden," *NYT*, Dec. 17, 1965, 42; J.K. Watson obit., *NYT*, Feb. 12, 1966, 23; "New York Botanical Garden Dedicates New $2.5-Million Research Building," *NYT*, Oct. 8, 1972, 75.

23. NYBG, *Bulletin* (1903-06); "Bronx Park Fountain a Novelty in Bronze," *NYT*, June 11, 1905, 16; "The Fountain in Front of the Museum Building," NYBG, *Journal* (Sept. 1905), 140-144; "Ellis H. Baillie," *Who's Who in New York City and State* (1907), 60; NYBG, "Flowing Water and Restored Bronze Figures Return 100-Year-Old Lillian Goldman Fountain of Life to Its Full Glory," press release (Oct. 2005); Eve M. Kahn, Traditional Building, "Fountains and Water Features," www.traditional-building.com website.

24. NYBG, *Journal* (Sept. 1905), 140.

25. NYC, DPP, *Annual Report* (1900), 33.

26. Mar. 27, 1900.

27. NYBG, *Bulletin* (1900), 299 and 303.

28. NYBG, *Journal* (July 1901), 107.

29. NYC, DPP, *Annual Report* (1901), 78.

30. NYBG, *Journal* (Sept. 1905), 142.

31. NYC, Art Commission, *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York* (1909), 224.

32. Frank Owen Payne, "Some Noteworthy American Fountains," *The International Studio* (Jan. 1916), reprinted in NYBG, *Journal* (Feb. 1916), 26.

33. "Carl E. Tefft," Smithsonian American Art Museum, Art Inventories Catalog, Smithsonian Institution Research Information System; "Training School for Artisans," *NYT*, Mar. 13, 1898, SM3; "Carl Tefft," *Builders of Our Nation: Men of 1913* (Chicago: 1914), 455; "Directs Sculpture at Fair," *NYT*, Dec. 27, 1925, 19; "Museum Dedicates School of Service," *NYT*, Jan. 18, 1928, 52; Tefft obit., *NYT*, Sept. 21, 1951, 23; Richard R. Shaw, *Brewer* (Mt. Pleasant, S.C.: Arcadia Publg., 2000), 69; "Made in Maine: Charles Eugene Tefft, Sculptor," Tefft Family Assn., *Newsletter* (Apr. 2001), 3 and 6; "Charles Eugene Tefft," www.bairnet.org website; Federal Writers' Project, *Maine: A Guide "Down East"* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937), 136-137.

34. NYBG, *Annual Report* (1968-69), 47.

35. NYBG, *Bulletin* (1904-21).

36. NYBG, *Journal* (July 1901), 107 and pl. 8.

37. NYBG, *Bulletin* (1903), 474. A mature tulip tree already existed on the site, to the north of the Fountain of Life.

38. There has been NYBG speculation that these trees were propagated from seeds taken from the existing "mother tree."

39. In 1911, one large tulip tree was planted to fill in a gap in the allee.

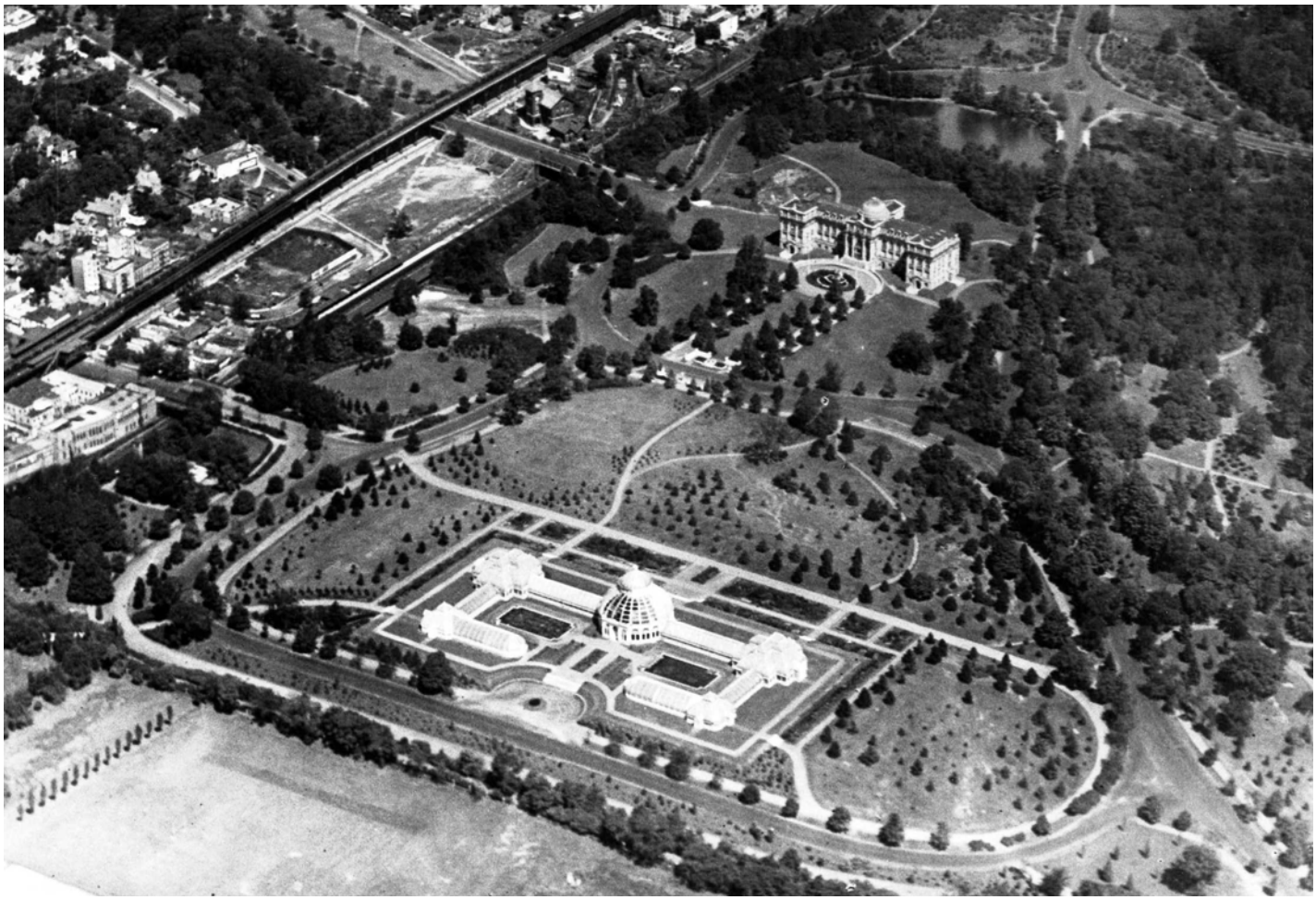
FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this complex, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the New York Botanical Garden Museum (now Library) Building, *Fountain of Life*, and Tulip Tree Allee have a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among their important qualities, the grand neo-Renaissance style New York Botanical Garden Museum (now Library) Building, along with the *Fountain of Life* and Tulip Tree Allee, form a distinguished and monumental Beaux-Arts civic space within the largest and most renowned botanical garden in the country; that founded in 1891 and located within Bronx Park, the Botanical Garden showcases one of the world's great collections of plants and serves as an educational center for gardening and horticulture; that the Museum Building, designed in 1896 by architect Robert W. Gibson and constructed in 1898-1901, originally housed the Garden's preserved botanical specimens and was the first American museum devoted solely to botany; that the long four-story structure, clad in greyish-buff brick and buff terra cotta, features a symmetrical design and classically-inspired ornament characteristic of Beaux-Arts civic buildings at the turn of the century, with a rusticated and pedimented central pavilion with monumental columns and copper-clad saucer dome, flanked by sections and end pavilions with monumental pilasters; that the energetic bronze sculptural group of the *Fountain of Life* (1903-05), designed by Carl (Charles) E. Tefft for Gibson's marble plinth and basins (and restored in 2005), depicts a cherub astride a dolphin atop a globe and two web-footed plunging horses being restrained by a female and a boy, surprising a merman and mermaid in the basin below; and that the Tulip Tree Allee, consisting of trees lining both sides of the drives leading to the fountain, was planted in 1903-11 at the direction of Nathaniel Lord Britton, first director of the Garden.

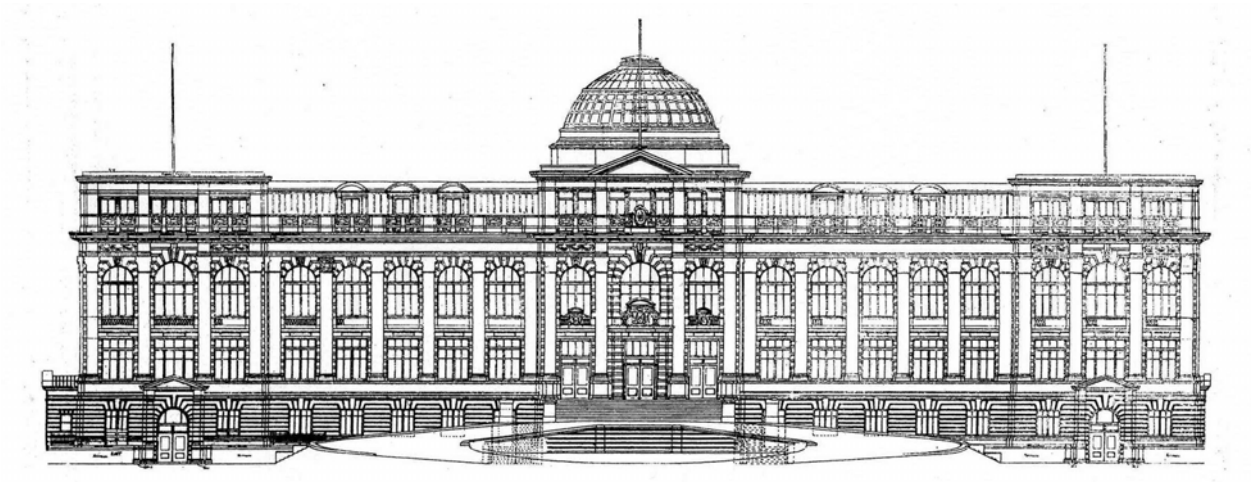
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the New York Botanical Garden Museum (now Library) Building, *Fountain of Life*, and Tulip Tree Allee, Watson Drive and Garden Way, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park, Borough of the Bronx, and designates Bronx Tax Map 3272, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the property bounded by a line that corresponds to the outermost edges of the rear (eastern) portion of the original 1898-1901 Museum (now Library) Building (excluding the International Plant Science Center, Harriet Barnes Pratt Library Wing, and Jeannette Kittredge Watson Science and Education Building), the southernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building (excluding the Annex) and a line extending southwesterly to Garden Way, the eastern curbline of Garden Way to a point on a line extending southwesterly from the northernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building, and northeasterly along said line and the northernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building, to the point of beginning, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair; Pablo E. Vengochea, Vice Chair
Fred Bland, Stephen F. Byrns, Diana Chapin, Christopher Moore, Commissioners



New York Botanical Garden (pre-1954)

Photo: Collection of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission



Museum (now Library) Building, New York Botanical Garden

Source: *The Brickbuilder*, August 1898 (top) and June 1900 (bottom)

Museum (now Library) Building, New York Botanical Garden

Photos: Postcard (c. 1902-03) (top)
Christopher D. Brazee, 2009 (bottom)

Museum (now Library) Building, New York Botanical Garden

Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

Museum (now Library) Building, New York Botanical Garden

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

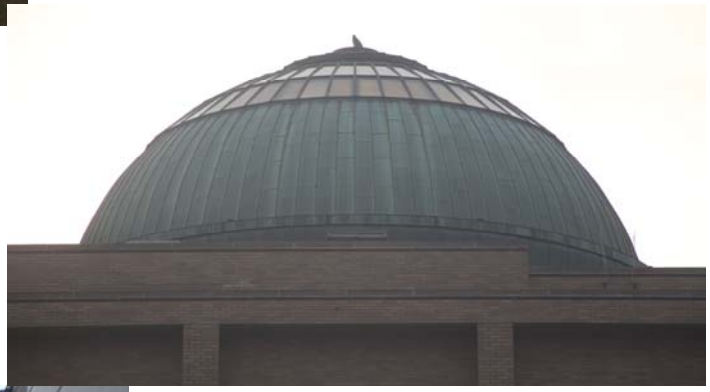
Museum (now Library) Building, New York Botanical Garden

Central pavilion upper stories and cartouche with New York Botanical Garden seal

Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

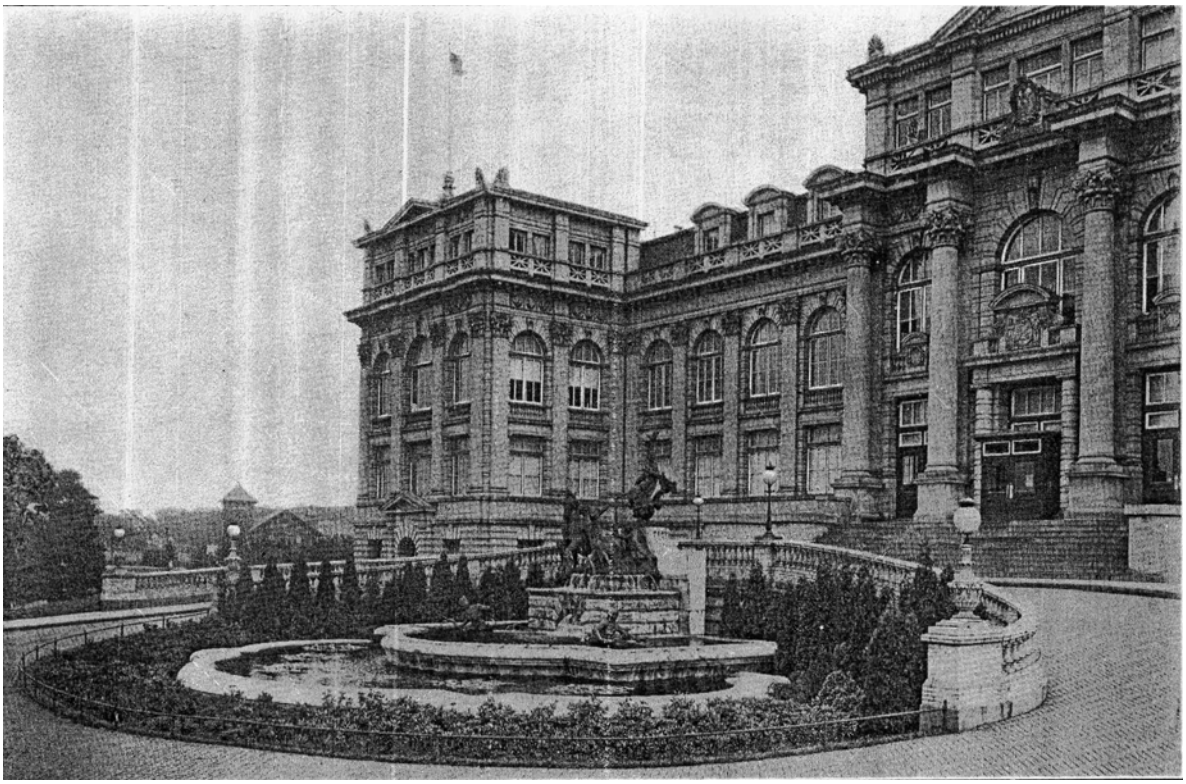
Museum (now Library) Building, New York Botanical Garden, south façade (top) and north façade (bottom)

Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



Museum (now Library) Building, New York Botanical Garden, rear (east) facade

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

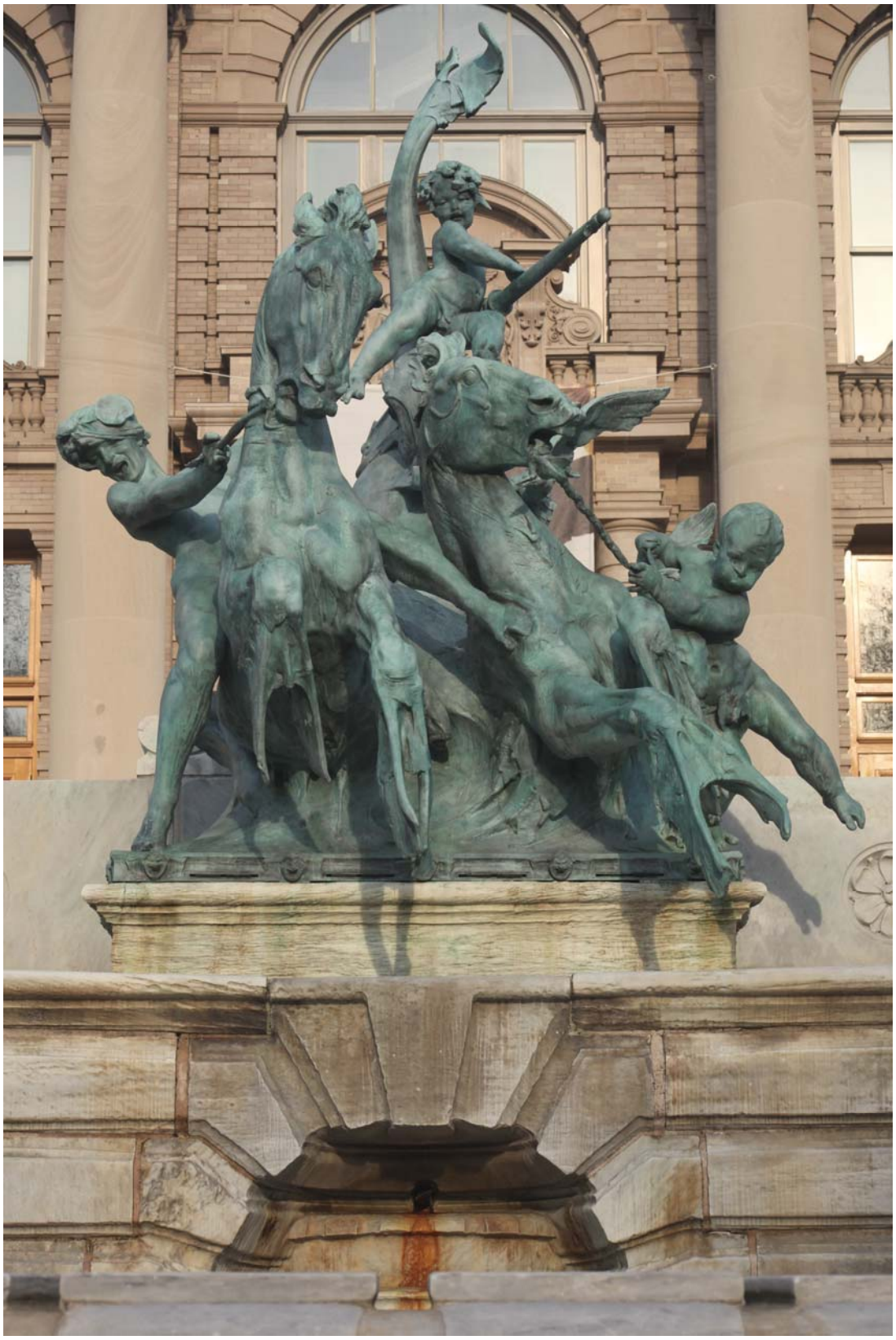


Fountain of Life, **New York Botanical Garden**

Source: NYC Art Commission (1909) (top) and NYBG, *Bulletin* (1916) (bottom)

***Fountain of Life*, New York Botanical Garden**

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



Fountain of Life, **New York Botanical Garden**

Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

***Fountain of Life*, New York Botanical Garden**

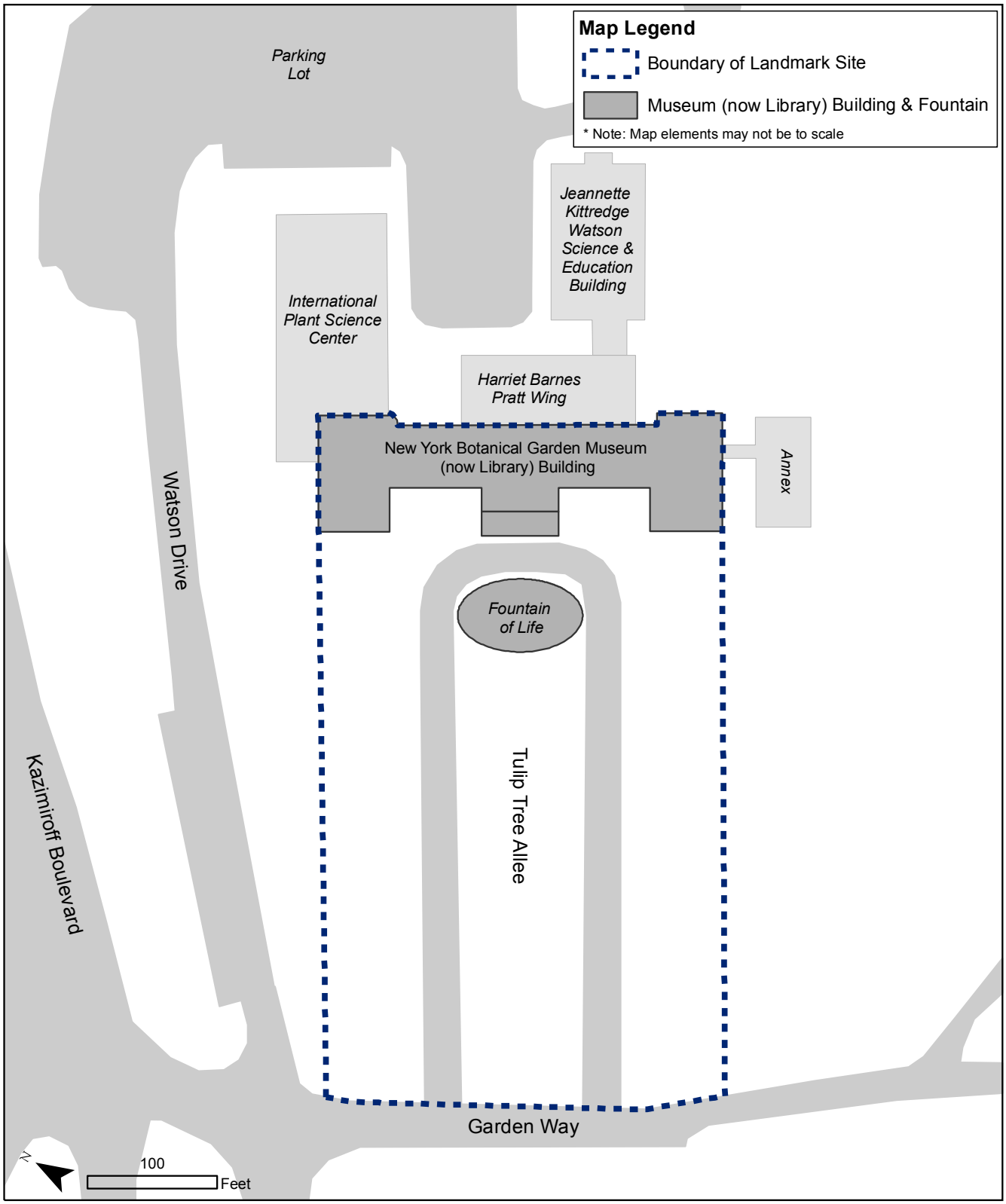
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

Tulip Tree Allee, New York Botanical Garden (c. 1906-10)

Photo: Courtesy of the Collections of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library, New York Botanical Garden

Tulip Tree Allee, New York Botanical Garden

Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009 (top) and Cynthia Danza, 2008 (bottom)



NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN MUSEUM (NOW LIBRARY) BUILDING, *FOUNTAIN OF LIFE*, AND TULIP TREE ALLEE (LP-2311), Watson Drive and Garden Way, New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park, Borough of the Bronx, Tax Map Block 3272, Lot 1 in part, consisting of the property bounded by a line that corresponds to the outermost edges of the rear (eastern) portion of the original 1898-1901 Museum (now Library) Building (excluding the International Plant Science Center, Harriet Barnes Pratt Library Wing, and Jeannette Kittredge Watson Science and Education Building), the southernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building (excluding the Annex) and a line extending southwesterly to Garden Way, the eastern curbline of Garden Way to a point on a line extending southwesterly from the northernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building, and northeasterly along said line and the northernmost edge of the original Museum (now Library) Building, to the point of beginning.

Designated: March 24, 2009

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 06C, December 2006. Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, JM.