Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 14, 2009; Designation List 412
LP-2323

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, HUNTS POINT BRANCH, 877 Southern Boulevard, Borough of the Bronx
Constructed 1928-1929; Carrère & Hastings, architects

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx, Tax Map Block 2722, Lot 63

On January 13, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the New York Public Library Hunts Point Branch. Four witnesses spoke in favor of the designation, including a representative of the New York Public Library, and representatives of the Municipal Art Society, the Historic Districts Council and the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America.

Summary

Opened on July 1, 1929, the Hunts Point Branch of the New York Public Library was the last Carnegie branch library built in New York City. It is one of nine in the Bronx (eight still extant) and one of sixty-seven throughout all five boroughs, built when Andrew Carnegie donated $5.2 million in 1901 to establish a city-wide branch library system. The firm of Carrère & Hastings, architects of the New York Public Library building at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, designed the Hunts Point Branch in the style of the Italian Renaissance. This striking building was the firm's fourteenth and last Carnegie library. The library's open plan and palazzo-inspired style are characteristic of the suburban Carnegie library type; notable architectural features include the building's symmetry and horizontal massing, elegant blind arcade, richly detailed terra-cotta ornament, and arched first and second-floor windows providing abundant light to the simple interior The Hunts Point Branch has played a prominent role in the neighborhood for eighty years.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Early Twentieth-Century Development of Hunts Point[1]

Hunts Point, along with Clason's Point, Screvin's Neck, and Throg's Neck, is one of several large salt meadowland peninsulas in the Bronx that jut into the East River. Before European colonization, the Hunts Point area of the Bronx was associated with the Siwanoy Native Americans, a sub-group of the regionally dominant Wappinger group, which was part of the broader Algonquian cultural and linguistic group.[2] Until the Civil War, Hunts Point was characterized as a rural area where prominent businessmen maintained country estates. As with many New York City neighborhoods, the creation and availability of transit routes to the Hunts Point area in the early twentieth century helped initiate development of the once-remote area. The opening of the extension of the West Side IRT subway into the Bronx in 1904 helped bring about a period of feverish land speculation southeast of Westchester Avenue near the transit line. The opening of the Intervale Avenue subway station in 1910, in particular, has been an acknowledged impetus for development near Hunts Point. The Hunts Point station of the New Haven Railroad, Harlem River branch, which had opened in the 1850s, began serving the area as a station of the New York, Westchester and Boston Railway line after 1912.

In addition to increased transportation options, local boosters could point to the many advantages the South Bronx offered to industry, including the excellent rail service and freight terminals of several major lines that provided the means for transporting raw materials, supplies, and finished products conveniently. There were ample sites for building in the vicinity of the waterfront or adjacent to rail lines, and the power to operate facilities was relatively inexpensive because of the easy access to coal deliveries. The growing local labor force could be supplemented by workers traveling to the Bronx via the rail and transit lines. In 1909, there were 700 factories in the Bronx; by 1912, the number of industrial operations in the borough had more than doubled. By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, the local real estate press enthused that "a great city [was] building along Southern Boulevard."[3]

At the start of the twentieth century most of the Hunts Point area was controlled by a small number of real estate developers, including George F. Johnson and James F. Meehan, who were developing elevator apartment houses, flats, and semi-detached houses near the subway stops.[4] Construction of housing, including semi-detached houses and multiple dwellings of various sizes, in Hunts Point and in the nearby area accelerated after 1912. By 1915 most of the area around Southern Boulevard between Intervale Avenue and East 163rd Street had been developed with 5-story apartment buildings and 4-story rowhouses. The population housed by the new residential construction in Hunts Point was largely Jewish; other groups included African-Americans and people of Italian and Irish descent, and later a significant wave of Puerto Rican immigrants.[5] A Catholic church, rectory and school occupied the lot next to the future Hunts Point Branch library site, which remained vacant land until construction of the library began in 1928.

History of New York City Libraries[6]

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries libraries in New York City were private, institutional, or subscription. The New York Society Library, a subscription library where users paid a membership fee, was established in 1754, and Columbia University opened a library by 1757. Both were destroyed during the Revolutionary War but were rebuilt, and by 1876 Columbia had one of the largest collections in the country. Reading rooms, operated as businesses or by non-profit organizations, made books available to the public, and bookseller Garrett Noel opened the earliest known reading room in 1763.

Institutions including the New-York Historical Society, the Cooper Union, and Union Theological Seminary opened libraries in the first half of the nineteenth century. New York State legislation enabling City support of libraries was passed in the 1830s, but libraries were privately

supported for most of the nineteenth century. The Astor Library, the City's first free public reference library, incorporated in 1849. The Lenox Library, a private collection of rare and reference books, incorporated in 1870. By 1876, there were about ninety various libraries and collections in New York City.

The earliest branch library system was the private New York Free Circulating Library, established in 1878 to provide education and self-help for the poor. Support came from Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and other wealthy New Yorkers, and from public funds beginning in 1887. There were eleven branches by 1901. The smaller Aguilar Free Library Society was started in 1886 to foster the "free circulation of carefully selected literature, in the homes of the people of this City, with distributing branches in localities where the Jewish population was dense." [7] The organization, later associated with the Educational Alliance, was named after Grace Aguilar, an English novelist and Sephardic Jew. There were four branches by 1901.

History of Bronx Libraries[8]

As early as 1872 a small lending library was operating out of a greenhouse on the William E. Dodge estate in Riverdale. Under the initiative of Miss Grace Dodge, this small library collection led to the founding of the Riverdale Library Association in 1883. Shortly thereafter, Riverdale residents Mr. and Mrs. Percy R. Pyne donated funds for the construction of a library on a donated plot of land; the Riverdale Library was the precursor to the Riverdale Branch of the New York Public Library.[9] Another early library was the Van Schaick Free Reading Room, a designated New York City Landmark at Westchester Square, which was donated to the community by local philanthropist Peter C. Van Schaick in 1882-23 and designed by Frederick Clarke Withers. The library was expanded to the designs of William Anderson in 1890, when it was endowed by railroad tycoon and Throg's Neck resident Collis P. Huntington, and renamed. The Huntington Free Library and Reading Room is still administered by its trustees and functions as a non-circulating library open to the public. Church libraries included those belonging to the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip and to the Mott Avenue Methodist Church.

The Kingsbridge Free Library and the Riverdale Library were founded prior to 1900, while the High Bridge Free Library and the Bronx Free Library were both founded in 1901, the latter being mainly an adult education organization. All four were eventually absorbed into the New York Public Library system, which at the time was operating a "traveling" branch that periodically circulated books in neighborhoods not served by a permanent branch.

The New York Public Library and Andrew Carnegie[10]

The New York Public Library was established in 1895 as a private corporation, which received limited public funds. Formed initially by the merger of the Astor and Lenox Libraries and the Tilden Trust, it was primarily concerned with building a major reference library on the site of the old Croton Reservoir at Fifth Avenue on 42nd Street. The consolidation of New York City in 1898 inspired the growth and unification of the library institutions in the City, including the New York Public Library.

New York was one of the largest cities in the world with a population of three million in 1898 and growing rapidly. It trailed behind other cities in public library support, ranking ninth in per capita spending.[11] A public branch library system was established in 1901 when the New York Free Circulating Library merged with The New York Public Library. Most of the small independent lending libraries, such as the Aguilar, Webster, Kingsbridge, and Tottenville, joined the New York Public Library, increasing the size of the still inadequate branch network. The promise of a large grant from Andrew Carnegie in 1901 spurred these library mergers. The New York Public Library is still organized into the separate reference and branch systems that were created during this consolidation.

Andrew Carnegie and John Shaw Billings, Director of the New York Public Library, strongly supported the amalgamation of all the library systems, including Brooklyn and Queens libraries, which ultimately chose to remain independent. Today, New York City still has three separate library corporations, The New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, and the Queens Borough Public Library.

In 1901, when the library institutions were large and cohesive enough to suit him, Andrew Carnegie donated $5.2 million to New York City to build a system of branch libraries in all five boroughs. The grant was divided among the three library systems, with the New York Public Library receiving $3.36 million, and Brooklyn and Queens allocated $1.6 million and $240,000 respectively. The grant bought sixty-seven libraries in all five boroughs, two more than originally envisioned.[12] In a 1901 letter to John Shaw Billings, Carnegie said that "sixty-five libraries at one stroke probably breaks the record, but this is the day of big operations and New York is soon to be the biggest of Cities."[13]

Andrew Carnegie rose from poverty to become one of the wealthiest men in the United States after he sold his steel business to J.P. Morgan in 1901. He began donating to libraries in 1881, but with the grant to New York City he started the vast, worldwide operation which made him unique in the world of philanthropy.

Andrew Carnegie based his donations on a philosophy of giving he developed in the 1870s and 1880s. He believed that the wealthy should live modestly and, while still living, give away their funds for the good of humanity. He considered seven areas worthy of his philanthropy: universities, libraries, medical centers, parks, meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches. Like other wealthy New Yorkers involved in the social reform movement, he understood the problems facing New York City at the beginning of the twentieth century: the overcrowding from massive immigration, poverty, lack of education and absence of such facilities as baths, playgrounds and libraries. Andrew Carnegie gave away about 90 per cent of his wealth by the time he died in 1911. More than 2,500 Carnegie libraries were built worldwide and over 1,680 in the United States. The library program ended in 1917 but the Carnegie Corporation and twenty other foundations and funds have carried on his aspirations.[14]

The inventor of cost accounting, Carnegie gave away his money with great efficiency. His grant provided for the construction of the buildings, but New York City had to contribute the cost of the land as well as the books, the upkeep and the operation of the libraries in perpetuity. The acquisition of sites alone cost the New York Public Library over $1.6 million, just under half the cost of the buildings.

In 1901, the New York Public Library Board Executive Committee appointed a temporary architects' advisory committee consisting of Charles F. McKim of the firm McKim, Mead & White, John M. Carrère of Carrère & Hastings, and Walter Cook of Babb, Cook & Willard, to advise them on how to proceed with construction. The committee advised that the branches be uniform and recognizable in materials, style, plan and scale and that different site requirements would provide variety. They recommended forming a committee of two to five architectural firms who would design the buildings in cooperation with each other. Andrew Carnegie objected to the lack of competition in this system but was ultimately convinced that it would be faster and cheaper and would produce a more unified collection. The advisors, McKim, Carrère, and Cook, were fortuitously selected for the permanent committee, and their firms designed most of The New York Public Library Carnegie branches.[15] The architects consulted with the librarians on planning and design, an innovation recently adopted in library design.

Carrère & Hastings[16]

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

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

The firm's earliest commissions were churches or hotels in St. Augustine, Florida, designed for the famous developer and partner in Standard Oil, Henry Flagler. Their early hotels include the Ponce de Leon (1888) in St. Augustine, the Laurel-in-the-Pines (1889-90) in Lakewood, New Jersey, and the Hotel Jefferson (1893-94) in Richmond, Virginia. The majority of their significant work was in New York City, but they were responsible for the House and Senate Office Buildings (1906) in Washington, D.C. and Woolsey and Memorial Halls (1906) at Yale University.

Carrère & Hastings designed a wide variety of building types. They introduced the French Beaux-Arts style townhouse to New York City with the Richard Hoe House (1892, 9 East 71st Street, demolished) and the Dr. Christian A. Herter House (1892, 819 Madison Avenue, part of the Upper East Side Historic District), influencing a generation of urban residential building.[17] Early, important houses include the Henry T. and Jessie Sloane House (1894-96, now the Lycée Francaise) at 9 East 72nd Street and the John Henry and Emily Vanderbilt Sloane Hammon House (1902-03, now the Russian Consulate) at 9 East 91st Street. The versatile firm designed the Globe Theater (now the Lunt-Fontanne Theater, 1909-10) at 203-17 West 46th Street and First Church of Christ, Scientist (1899-1903) at 1 west 96th Street. All of these buildings are designated New York City Landmarks.

The firm won the competition for the New York Public Library Main Building in 1897. This monumental Beaux-Arts style building was a major influence on early twentieth-century Beaux-Arts architecture in New York. The firm proceeded to design fourteen classically-inspired Carnegie branch libraries in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island from 1904 to 1929. All three of their branches in the Bronx have survived: the Tremont (1905), Melrose (1914) and Hunts Point (1929) Branches.

John Carrère lived on Staten Island and helped plan the borough's Civic Center. The firm designed several of the major buildings in the Civic Center area, including the above-named Staten Island Borough Hall, the Richmond County Courthouse (1913-19, both designated New York City Landmarks), the St. George Branch Carnegie library (1907), and the old Ferry Terminal (1908, burned). The firm was responsible for several other buildings on Staten Island, including three other Carnegie branch libraries, the Tottenville (1904, a designated New York City Landmark) and Stapleton (1907) libraries, the Vanderbilt model houses (1900) in Clifton, and the Hughes Memorial Branch Library (1928).

Carrère & Hastings were active and influential in the architectural profession; both served as directors of the American Institute of Architects and both were elected Fellows. Carrère was a director of the American Academy in Rome and member of the Beaux Arts Society, the New York City Art Commission and Federation of Fine Arts. Hastings was president of the Architectural League of New York. John Carrère died in an automobile accident in 1911 and Thomas Hastings continued the work of the firm, which included the remaining Carnegie libraries (Hastings died shortly after the completion of the Hunts Point Branch), the Standard Oil Building (1920-26, with Shreve, Lamb & Harmon) at 26 Broadway, and the Cunard Building (1917-21, with Benjamin Wistar Morris) at 25 Broadway (both designated New York City Landmarks).

Design of the New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch[18]

The New York City Carnegie branch libraries share many design characteristics and are clearly recognizable as Carnegie libraries. They were designed to stand out as separate and distinct structures, an innovation in 1901 when most of the branch libraries were located in other

buildings. They are classical in style and, with few exceptions, a simplified version of the Beaux-Arts model, similar to most public buildings designed in this period. They are clad in limestone, or in brick with limestone or terra-cotta trim. There are two distinct types, the urban and suburban. In Manhattan and densely developed sections of the Bronx, the Carnegie libraries were designed for mid-block sites, a condition which encouraged vertically-oriented palazzo-like facades and simpler interior layouts characterized by a tripartite scheme: vertical circulation was contained along one solid side wall, and front and rear rooms, separated by a librarians' station, were aligned along a second side wall, typically lined with bookshelves. On less restrictive sites in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, a freestanding library typically had a symmetrical front with a central entrance leading to a room containing the librarians' station, which was flanked on two sides by large reading rooms. The second floor contained offices or another reading room; the basement accommodated a packing room, boiler and toilets.

The plans of the Carnegie libraries were drawn up in collaboration with the architects' committee and the librarians. The librarians met with the committee at the beginning of the process and commented on the final plans. The majority of the libraries featured offset entrances and stairs, a concession to the librarians. While the architects preferred classical center entrances, the offset entrances and elevated first floors provided for spacious, light-filled reading rooms. A prominent circulation desk afforded control of the entire reading room by a single librarian. There were accessible stacks, an innovation in the early twentieth century; nineteenth-century library book stacks were off limits to everyone except the librarians.

The Hunts Point Branch followed the suburban model, taking advantage of a corner site to provide a Children's Entrance on Tiffany Street, in addition to the main entrance on Southern Boulevard. The library's centered main entrance lead into a small vestibule opening onto a large open-plan room with a circulation desk in the center, circulating stacks to the left, and a reading room/ reference area with a fireplace to the right. An office, work room, locker room, and service stair lined the back wall of the room, opposite the entrance. The second floor was dedicated to children and could be reached via the Children's Entrance stairwell (also accessible from the main library floor); a circulation desk and circulating stacks occupied the left portion of the second floor, a reading room/ reference area with a fireplace occupied the right, and a work room and service stair lined the back wall. A patio and garden behind the library was accessible via a door on the main library floor. The architecture of the Hunts Point Branch was unusual among the Carnegie libraries for its strong reference to the architecture of the Italian Renaissance; the elegant arcade accented by roundels explicitly referred to architect Filippo Brunelleschi's early 15th-century Spedale degli Innocenti (Foundling Hospital) in Florence.[19] A review of the new branch in the *Bulletin of The New York Public Library* described the building thus:

> The exterior architectural design is fourteenth-century Florentine, the windows on the front and Tiffany Street facades showing effective use of the loggia style. The materials used – stone, brick and terra cotta tile – corresponded as closely as was practicable to those used in the Florentine prototypes.[20]

Another unique feature of the Hunts Point Branch was the one-car garage built alongside the library to house the Bronx Book Wagon, which began serving the neighborhood in July of 1928, a full year before the branch opened.[21]

Construction and Subsequent History[22]

The New York Public Library selected the sites for the Carnegie libraries with approval from the City. Because every community wanted a Carnegie library, site selection was the only part of the smooth-running building process where there was any contention. The Carnegie branches were intended to stand out in their communities, to be centrally located and, if possible, to be near schools and other civic structures. John S. Billings stated this position in 1901:

> Every one of these buildings ought to be of one distinctive and uniform type, so that the most ignorant child going through the streets of the City will at once know as Carnegie Library when he or she sees it.[23]

The New York Public Library Executive Committee hired New York attorney Alanson T. Briggs to propose library sites and act as agent to the libraries and liaison to New York City. After identifying densely populated neighborhoods, he looked for centrally located sites in these neighborhoods. George L. Rives, Secretary of The New York Public Library, described the philosophy behind site selection in 1901:

> The trustees are of the opinion that in establishing branch libraries it is of great importance to establish them, as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well frequented streets. In some measure the same principles should be applied that would govern in the selection of a site for a retail store. The fact that a branch library is constantly before the eyes of the neighboring residents so that all are familiar with its location will undoubtedly rend to increase its usefulness.[24]

Sites were approved by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment. Many neighborhoods were vying to be chosen by the library as branch sites, and in 1928 the East Bronx Property Owners group sent a petition to the New York Public Library Trustees urging the construction of a branch library in the underserved East Bronx, which included Hunts Point.[25]

In the February 25th, 1928 issue of *Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide*, a bid for general contractor appeared for a three-story brick and terra cotta library building to be built for the City of New York; the building notice appeared in the April 28th issue of *RERBG*, listing the cost for the library construction at $130,504.[26] The contractor eventually selected was the E.E. Paul Company, the same contractor Carrère & Hastings had hired to build several of their other Carnegie libraries. The Hunts Point Branch appears to be the only Carnegie library for which Carrère & Hastings chose terra cotta as a building material;[27] it is used to sumptuous effect in the deep arcade running across the primary façade; the elegant arched window and door surrounds; the corbelled cornice; and the "New York Public Library" sign. It is likely that the terra cotta was manufactured by the Atlantic Terra Cotta Company, which was based in Staten Island and manufactured architectural terra cotta for the New York City building market from its founding in 1897 until it went out of business in 1943.[28]

The sixty-seventh and last of the Carnegie libraries to be built in New York City, the Hunts Point Branch opened on July 1, 1929, despite unfinished interiors. The 12,000 square-foot library building plus equipment cost approximately $151,875, finally exhausting the Carnegie funds.[29] The opening ceremony was presided over by the head of the New York Public Library Circulation Department, and 300 children lined up at the Children's Entrance waiting to take out library cards.[30] The library began operating with 14,000 books and a staff of nineteen librarians. As early as 1934, Hunts Point's head librarian wrote to the Trustees of the New York Public Library requesting funding for an expansion to accommodate much-needed activity space and an additional reading room.[31] Following the award of $2.5 million in Works Progress Administration funding to the New York Public Library in 1935, the library received the sought after addition, a two-story rear extension completed in 1938.[32]

Between 1952 and 1954, the library was closed for interior repairs. The library received a new roof in 1980, and two years later the original six-over-six wood sash windows with tympanum lights were replaced with square-headed aluminum sash windows described by the head librarian at the time as "a disaster."[33] By the nineties, the library was in need of serious repairs and basic upgrades. The building's plight finally caught the public's attention in 1996 after a sizeable chunk of terra cotta fell from the cornice to the sidewalk; a community group then launched a fundraising campaign, and in 1999 the City Council representative for the area pledged $500,000 of the $2.75 million needed for a full interior and exterior restoration. The

project included façade repair and restoration, a new roof, and interior restoration and reprogramming; the work was completed in 2002 and won the New York Landmarks Conservancy's Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award.[34]

Over its eighty years of existence, the Hunts Point Branch has been a positive social force and an anchor in a community beset by economic disinvestment, inadequate public services, and periodic violence. The branch has a history of serving the largely immigrant population of Hunts Point, offering books in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Spanish as early as 1941 and developing a strong Spanish-English bilingual program by the 1970s.[35] The branch has long been known for its substantial Hispanic Heritage Collection, the foundation of which can be traced to 1946.[36] Under the leadership of librarian Lilian Lopez and with support from a federal grant, the Hispanic Heritage Collection was significantly expanded in the 1960s and continues to be cultivated today.[37] Beginning in the 1970s, Hunts Point experienced economic crises and waves of arson and violence that earned the neighborhood a reputation as one of the poorest and most dangerous in the entire city.[38] During these difficult years, the Hunts Point Branch – like library branches all over the city – faced successive budget cuts that resulted in reduced or irregular hours and cuts in services. The Bronx Book Mobile, which began in 1928 as the Bronx Book Wagon, stopped serving the South Bronx community in the 1980s.[39] But in recent years the Hunts Point Branch has seen a rebirth, providing the community with improved facilities and wider access to communications technology.

Description

The Hunts Point library is an imposing two-story, seven-bay rectangular brick building trimmed with richly detailed terra-cotta ornament. Occupying a prominent corner site, the building is dominated by a deeply articulated blind arcade on the double-height ground story, a stringcourse separating the first and second stories, and a boldly corbelled cornice. The façade brick is laid in common bond, except where noted, and the library's foundation is a limestone plinth whose profile thins toward the northern edge of the site in accordance with an increase in grade. In the 2002 restoration, portions of the parapet were rebuilt and the library was repointed with a white mortar that is incompatible with the rich color of the brick and terra cotta.

A freestanding one-story brick garage stands adjacent to the library on the west, across a driveway. The garage has a flat roof bordered by limestone coping, and a corrugated metal roll-up door. Two historic wood windows protected by metal bars face the library on the garage's east façade. The driveway is marked by two limestone-capped brick piers standing on limestone plinths; the top portion of the brick has been rebuilt on both piers. The piers graduate into curving brick cheek walls abutting the garage and the library, respectively. A chain-link gate sits between the piers.

Main (East) Facade

Centered on the double-height ground story of the library, the main entry door is reached from the sidewalk by a low flight of four granite stairs. The double door is wood and appears to be original. The two panels in the upper half of the door are glazed, and beneath these are two smaller rectangular panels, followed by two larger panels containing decorative wood diamonds. Brass kickplates protect the bottom of the door, while the door handles and push plates also appear to be brass. The glazed panels are protected by a decorative wrought iron grille. A wood-framed signboard is located on the wall to the right of the main entry. The transom light above the double door is protected by a cast-iron grille of an interlocking fleur-de-lys pattern. The door and transom light are surrounded by a thick, flat limestone band. Bronze numbers indicating the library's address (877 Southern Boulevard) appear in the center of the limestone lintel. A bronze lantern is centered over the bronze numbers. Above the door and limestone band the brick tympanum is laid in a grid of header bond. The door, transom light and tympanum are surrounded by a brick arch two courses deep and two courses wide, the inner course laid in soldier bond and

the outer course laid in header bond. The outer brick header course projects slightly from the façade plane above the springing line of the arch.

The main entry is set within the middle arch of the blind arcade, with three arches flanking it on either side. The inside of each arch is delineated by a slightly projecting brick header course. The blind arcade is supported by an engaged Corinthian order resting on Ionic bases; the Corinthian capitals are executed in terra cotta, while the shafts and bases of the columns are executed in limestone. The Corinthian capitals are decorated with exuberant bunches of acorns, sunflowers, and grapes springing from stylized acanthus leaves. The archivolts of the blind arcade are composed of three bands of molding depicting, from inside outward, a chain of interlocking rings containing stylized rosettes, a leaf-and-dart motif, and an egg-and-dart motif. A series of stylized pendant bellflowers link the egg-and-dart molding between each archivolt. At each end of the arcade, the archivolts terminate in a terra-cotta band course that wraps around the corners of the building. Six plain limestone roundels encircled by a brick header course are centered above the blind arcade between each arch.

The wall plane within each arch is slightly recessed from the main façade plane, creating a shadow effect under the blind arcade. Each arch contains a round-headed window with non-historic single-pane, double-hung sash with side lights, a transom light, and glazed tympanum. The three first-floor windows are covered by metal security grilles. Set above a simple limestone sill with an ear detail, the windows are framed by a terra-cotta surround. The terra-cotta surround is composed of slender engaged colonettes capped by acanthus-and-rosette capitals supporting an arch of grape-leaf garland crowned by a rosette. The inside of the surround is delineated by a thin band of molding in a leaf-and-dart motif. The surround is framed by a brick soldier course, and framing this is a brick arch of alternating flush and raised headers.

The second story is marked by a simple limestone stringcourse above a band of terra-cotta rope molding supported on brick dentils. Seven arched window openings, smaller than the window openings on the first story, sit directly on the stringcourse and are centered above the windows and main entry of the first story. The arched window openings contain non-historic square-headed windows with faux muntins in an eight-over-eight pattern. The windows are framed by a brick arch laid in soldier course springing from a limestone base, and then two bands of terra-cotta molding in a bead-and-reel and leaf-and-dart motif springing from the limestone stringcourse. A limestone keystone interrupts the terra-cotta molding to crown each window. Two floodlights flank the center window, affixed to the window surround near the base of the brick arch. Also affixed to the center window surround, just above the floodlights, are two bronze rosettes each anchoring a mast arm for a flagpole that was removed or fell off at some point. A chip in the limestone stringcourse below the middle window indicates where the flagpole would have been anchored. Four rectangular security lights are affixed to the façade at roughly even intervals just below the stringcourse.

The corbelled terra-cotta cornice crowning the library is composed of a band of shell-headed niches supported on tightly spaced acanthus consoles, surmounted by rope molding. A short brick parapet wall rises above the cornice and is capped by limestone coping. The band of shell-headed niches terminates just short of the corners of the building, but the rope molding continues around the corners where it is wrapped by grape leaves. The southeast corner of the parapet is marked by square terra-cotta tiles depicting a fleuron (a stylized four-leafed floral ornament); above these tiles and directly below the limestone coping of the parapet wall is one more row of tiles with a simple vertical groove motif. The center section of the cornice broadens to accommodate the inscription "NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY," which is composed of molded terra-cotta tiles framed by two triglyphs supported on acanthus consoles. Rope molding runs across the cornice's center section, above the inscription. A band of plain terra-cotta tiles sits above the rope molding and directly below the limestone coping of the parapet wall.

South Façade

The south façade of the library has four bays and continues the design of the main façade on a more modest scale. The fourth and leftmost bay is irregular, lacking the stringcourse and cornice that wrap around from the main façade and unify the three other bays. The leftmost bay contains the Children's Entrance, apparently unused today, which is accessible via a non-historic brick and concrete ramp with metal pipe railings. The Children's Entrance contains a black-painted metal door, flanked on the right by a metal panel and surmounted by a sealed transom light protected by a cast-iron grille of an interlocking fleur-de-lys pattern. The lintel above the doorway is a flat brick arch laid in stretcher bond interrupted by a limestone keystone. To the right of the lintel a security light is affixed to the façade. Above the doorway is a limestone plaque with the inscription "CHILDREN'S ENTRANCE." The fourth-bay wall terminates below the level of the main cornice with a raised brick soldier course and a parapet wall of irregular height. The parapet wall has five battlements capped by curving limestone tiles; in between each battlement is a short section of limestone coping. The parapet wall and two rightmost battlements increase in height to the level of the main cornice, creating a stepped effect for the south façade.

The three remaining bays of the south façade continue the design from the main façade, with three arched windows on the first and second stories. The string course and cornice described above wrap around from the main façade and continue across these three bays. The terra-cotta band course wraps around from the arcade on the main façade and continues across all four bays of the south façade, interrupted only by the three first-story window surrounds. The three arched windows on the first story contain non-historic sash identical to the first-story windows on the main façade, but have simpler terra-cotta surrounds. The surround is composed of slender engaged colonettes capped by acanthus-and-rosette capitals supporting an arch of reeding wrapped in grape leaves, crowned by a rosette. The inside of the surround is delineated by a thin band of molding in a leaf-and-dart motif. The window arch is framed by a brick soldier course that continues down to meet the limestone foundation, and framing this is an arch of alternating flush and raised headers that becomes a band of flush headers also continuing to the foundation. Each window sits on a limestone sill with a simple ear detail, and beneath each window is a slightly recessed spandrel panel framed on the top and bottom by header courses in the common-bond façade brick and on the sides by the brick soldier course just described. The three second-story windows sit directly on the denticulated limestone stringcourse. These window openings are smaller than those of the first story, and contain non-historic square-headed sash with faux muntins in an eight-over-eight pattern. Each window is framed by a brick soldier course springing from a limestone base, and then two bands of terra-cotta molding in a bead-and-reel and leaf-and-dart motif springing from the limestone stringcourse. A limestone keystone interrupts the terra-cotta molding to crown each window. A security light is affixed to the façade below the stringcourse at the leftmost window. The windows on the first and second story are covered by metal security grilles.

North Façade

The north façade of the library is a plain brick party wall with terra-cotta tile coping. A one-story, two-car garage is located directly adjacent to library's north façade.

West Facade

The west façade of the library is partially visible from Tiffany Street, and is marked by several windows and two later brick additions to the main library building. The larger addition is a two-story "L" projecting from the north portion of the original building (the addition was completed in 1938 with WPA funds), and the second addition is a two-story service or elevator core that appears to have been added rather recently. The brick parapet wall of the main library building has terra-cotta tile coping.

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NOTES

[1] This section adapted from LPC, *American Bank Note Company Printing Plant (LP-2298)* (New York: City of New York, 2008), report prepared by Betsey Bradley & Jennifer Most.

[2] Eugene J. Boesch, Ph.D. "Archaeological Evaluation and Sensitivity Assessment of the Prehistoric And Contact Period Aboriginal History of the Bronx, New York." (Research study submitted to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1996), 13-14.

[3] "A New City in the Bronx," *Real Estate Record & Builder's Guide* 83 (April 17, 1909), 753-754.

[4] Other prominent developers in the area were the American Real Estate and the Henry Morgenthau companies; *Map of Kings County: with Parts of Westchester, Queens, New York & Richmond* (New York: Matthew Dripps, 1872); *Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of the Bronx* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1893); *Insurance Maps Borough of Brooklyn* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1901, 1915).

[5] Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 577.

[6] This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report (LP-2098)* (New York: City of New York, 2001), report prepared by Mary Dierickx.

[7] Harry Miller Lydenberg, *History of the New York Public Library* (New York: 1923), 241.

[8] This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch (originally McKinley Square Branch) Designation Report (LP-1996)* (New York: City of New York, 1998), report prepared by Donald Presa.

[9] "Riverdale Branch records, 1955-1985," manuscript finding aid in The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division (http://www.nypl.org/research/manuscripts/arc/arc8rive.xml); Shirley M. Milord and Renee Kotler, "Public Libraries in the Bronx," essay in the collection of the Bronx Historical Society (New York: Bronx Borough Office, The New York Public Library), 2.

[10] This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report (LP-2098)*.

[11] In 1901, before the Carnegie bequest, New York City spent nine cents per capita on libraries, comparing poorly with Boston, which spent fifty cents per capita and Buffalo, at forty-one cents per capita. Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: a History of its Founding and Early Years* (New York: the New York Public Library, 1973), 215.

[12] The original 1901 agreement called for sixty-five libraries but in 1902 the estimated cost per branch was lowered and the total number was optimistically established as a maximum of seventy-three. Because of rising costs the number of branches totaled just two more than the original sixty-five. See Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy: the Carnegie Libraries of New York City* (New York: Cooper Union and NYC Department of General Services, 1996) for more details.

[13] Andrew Carnegie, *Letter to John Shaw Billings*, Director of the New York Public Library, March 12, 1901, in the "Brooklyn Collection," Brooklyn Public Library.

[14] No new grants were given after 1917. Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 217.

[15] Carrère & Hastings designed fourteen of the sixty-seven Carnegie branches; McKim, Mead & White designed twelve; Babb, and Cook & Willard designed eight. Their successor firms, Babb, Cook & Welch, Cook, Babb & Welch, and Cook & Welch designed another three. James Brown Lord designed the first Carnegie library, the Yorkville branch, but this was actually planned before the grant was given, and Herts & Tallant were responsible for the major renovation of the Aguilar branch, which they originally designed in 1899.

[16] This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Muhlenberg Branch Designation Report (LP-2060)* (New York: City of New York, 2001), report prepared by Mary Dierickx, with additional information from Channing Blake, "Carrère & Hastings," in Adolf Plazcek, ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia*

of Architects (New York: Free Press, 1982), 387-388; "The Works of Messrs. Carrère & Hastings," *Architectural Record 27* (January, 1910): 1-120; David Gray, *The Architecture of Thomas Hastings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933); "John Merven Carrère Obituary," *New York Times* (March 2, 1911) 9; Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessy & Ingalls, 1970), 109-110, 269-271.

[17] Robert A.M. Stern, et al., *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 325-29.

[18] This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report (LP-2098)* and LPC, *New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch (originally McKinley Square Branch) Designation Report (LP-1996)*. Sources for this section include "Hunts Point Branch," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (vol. 30, June 1930) (New York: The New York Public Library); Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy*; and Russell Sturgis, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Building* 3 vols. 1902. Reprint (3 vols.). Detroit: Gale Research Company, Book Tower, 1966.

[19] Sturgis, 376.

[20] "Hunts Point Branch," 421-422.

[21] "Hunts Point Branch," 410.

[22] This section adapted from LPC, *New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch Designation Report (LP-2098)*; LPC, *New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch (originally McKinley Square Branch) Designation Report (LP-1996)*; Mark Allen Hewitt, et al., contributors. *Carrère & Hastings, Architects,* 2 vols. (New York: Acanthus Press, 2006).

[23] John S. Billings, *Letter to Andrew Carnegie,* November 9, 1901, New York Public Library Collection, New York Public Library Archives.

[24] Harry Miller Lydenberg, "Moving the New York Public Library," *Library Journal* (vol. 36, June 1911): 296-297, as cited in Dain, 237.

[25] "3,000,000 Visited Library in Year," *New York Times* (June 13, 1929) 34.

[26] *Real Estate Record & Builders' Guide* (February 25, 1928), 45; *RERBG* (April 28, 1928), 46.

[27] Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy*.

[28] Author's e-mail correspondence with architectural historian Susan Tunick, January 15, 2009; Diane Jones Sliney, "Atlantic Terra Cotta Company" in Maxine Lurie and Mark Mappen, *Encyclopedia of New Jersey* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 46. Retrieved from Google Book Search on November 12, 2008.

[29] "East Bronx Library Will Open July 1," *New York Times* (June 20, 1929) 32.

[30] "New Library Branch Open," *New York Times* (July 2, 1929) 15.

[31] "Hunts Point Branch: the Year 1934," 1934. Box 1, Hunt's Point Branch Records, 1929-1987. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York City.

[32] "2,500,000 WPA Fund for Public Library," *New York Times* (August 22, 1935) 17.

[33] "Annual Report,"1982. Box 1, Hunt's Point Branch Records, 1929-1987. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York City.

[34] "Press Release: The New York Public Library and State Assemblyman Ruben Diaz, Jr. to Celebrate the Newly Spruced-up Hunt's Point Regional Library, January 5," January 2, 2002 (accessed via New York Public Library website February 11, 2009, http://www.nypl.org/press/2002/huntspoint2.cfm); "Hunts Point Regional Library," Tonetti Associates website (accessed February 12, 2009 http://www.tonettiaa.com/r3.htm,).

[35] "About New York: Dimming a Beacon," *New York Times* (June 13, 1975), in "Hunts Point" clippings file, Bronx Historical Society.

[36] "Annual Report," 1946. Box 1, Hunt's Point Branch Records, 1929-1987. Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York City.

[37] Suzanne Ruta, "Bronx Cheers: the Little Libraries That Could." *Voice* (August 15, 1989), 54-59), in "Hunts Point" clippings file, Bronx Historical Society.

[38] John Lewis, "Hunts Point Once a Model Area," *Daily News* (June 20, 1982), 3.

[39] Whitney N. Seymour, Jr., "Don't Wound Branch Libraries." *New York Times* (May 14, 1988), 31.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch, built in 1929, was the ninth branch library built in the Bronx and the last branch library in New York City to be built with funds provided by the $5.2 million gift from Andrew Carnegie to New York City for the purpose of establishing a city-wide branch library system; that it opened to the public on July 1, 1929 with an inventory of 14,000 books and a staff of 19 librarians; that it was designed by the nationally famous and influential architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings, which designed fourteen Carnegie branch libraries as well as many of the major public and private buildings in New York City; that the classically inspired style that was the hallmark of the firm's library designs as well as a major characteristic of New York City's Carnegie libraries and other public buildings of the period is articulated through the symmetrical façade composition, terra cotta arcade and corbelled cornice, arched window openings, and other features; that it is characteristically sited on the corner of a major thoroughfare; that the Hunts Point Branch has been culturally, visually and historically an important component of its community for eighty years, which was the original intent of the Carnegie branches; and that the exterior of the building has retained its significant architectural characteristics.

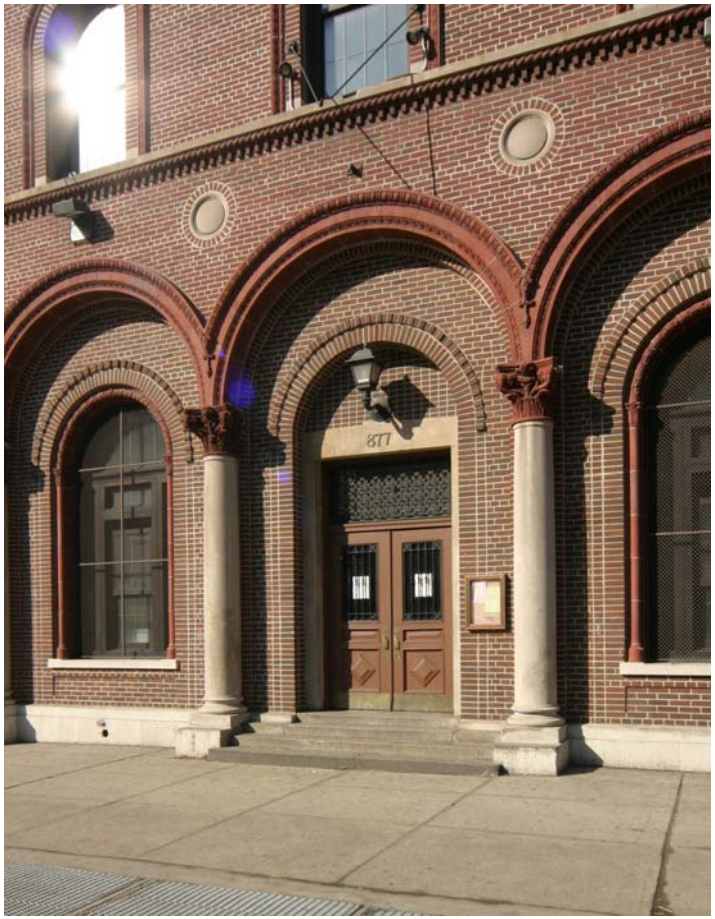
Accordingly, pursuant to the provision of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2722, Lot 63, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Pablo Vengoechea, Vice-Chair
Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Margery Perlmutter,
Stephen Byrns, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Commissioners

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch
877 Southern Boulevard, Borough of the Bronx
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch: General view, c. 1929
Photo: New York Public Library ID 1557756

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch
Main (east) facade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch

Main entrance in 2009
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

Main entrance c. 1930
Photo: New York Public Library ID 100803

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch
Detail, terra-cotta capital
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch
Detail, limestone roundel
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch
Detail, acanthus-leaf consoles and scalloped niches in the terra-cotta cornice
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch
"New York Public Library" sign
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch

Secondary (south) façade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

"Children's Entrance sign"
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

New York Public Library, Hunts Point Branch
Book Wagon garage
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009

New York Public Library Book Wagon, c. 1930s

Photo: New York Public Library ID 434211

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, HUNTS POINT BRANCH (LP-2323), 877 Southern Boulevard
(aka 871-877 Southern Boulevard; 860 Tiffany Street). Borough of Bronx, Tax Map Block 2722, Lot 63.

Designated: April 14, 2009

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 06C, December 2006.
Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, JM. April 14, 2009.