

(Former) PUBLIC SCHOOL 64, 605 East 9th Street (aka 605-615 East 9th Street and 350-360 East 10th Street), Manhattan.

Built 1904-06, C.B. J. Snyder, architect.

Manhattan Tax Map: Block 392, Lot 10.

On May 16, 2006, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of (former) Public School 64 (Item No. 4). The hearing was continued to June 6, 2006 (Item No. 1). Both hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Forty-eight people spoke in favor of designation including City Councilmember Rosie Mendez and representatives of City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, State Assemblymember Sylvia Friedman, Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr., Congressman Nydia Velazquez, State Assemblymember Deborah Glick, State Senator Martin Connor, Community Board Three, the East Village Community Coalition, Place Matters Project, Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Society for the Architecture of the City, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the Landmarks Conservancy, Municipal Art Society and Historic Districts Council. Six people spoke in opposition to designation including three representatives of the owner, and a representative of REBNY. In addition the Commission has received several hundred letters, petitions and postcards in support of designation.



Summary

(Former) Public School 64 was designed by master school architect C.B.J. Snyder in the French Renaissance Revival style and built in 1904-06. This was a period of tremendous expansion and construction of new schools due to the consolidation of New York City and its recently centralized school administration, school reforms, and a burgeoning immigrant population. As the school board's Superintendent of School Buildings, C.B.J. Snyder created a large body of innovative and beautiful school buildings that served as visual reminders of the important civic role of public education. P.S. 64 is designed with Snyder's innovative H-plan, which he created to provide light and air to classrooms in schools built on mid-block sites in congested city locations. With the H-plan, schools were organized around two courtyards that

also helped insulate the classrooms from city noise. These courtyards provided the luxury of open space in densely packed neighborhoods and the schools became immediately recognizable symbols of civic pride and benevolence. Additionally P.S. 64 is one of the first and the oldest extent elementary school to include an auditorium with direct access from the street. This innovation was introduced by Snyder in 1903 and allowed schools to function as community centers, as they began to take on an expanded role in the lives of the people of the neighborhood. The auditorium provided a generous public space for evening lectures, and educational programs that helped acculturate the area's large numbers of immigrants to their new country. By setting the auditorium partially underground and using its roof as a play yard, Snyder was able to create more useable space in an already cramped lot. Throughout its history, the auditorium of P.S. 64 was frequently open to the community, serving as the venue for cultural lectures, political speeches, and theatrical events.

As a school, P.S. 64 was noted for educational innovation and experimentation. Its second principal, William E. Grady, was a supporter of the Ettinger or Pre-Vocational Plan, in which seventh and eighth grade students received vocational training as a way to enrich their curriculum and try to keep more students interested and in school. The founder of the progressive Little Red Schoolhouse, Elizabeth Irwin, taught at the school from 1912-21 and during this period devised a classification system for students predicated on the scores of their IQ tests. Distinguished alumni of P.S. 64 include Yip Harburg, who wrote the lyrics for *The Wizard of Oz*, Sam Levene, who played Nathan Detroit in *Guys and Dolls* on Broadway, and film director Joseph Mankiewicz.

Architecturally, P.S. 64 is a unique example of Snyder's work in the French Renaissance Revival style. Because Snyder was under severe pressure to produce large numbers of school buildings to house the fast-growing population, he occasionally repeated similar designs in other locations, but there is no school design like P.S. 64. Its keyed surrounds, slate-covered mansard roof, terra-cotta moldings and keystones, contrasting brick and stone materials, and pediments filled with fruit and foliage resulted in a visually prominent school building. This distinguished structure and its distinctive plan and siting in the middle of a crowded neighborhood of tenement buildings helped create a strong statement about the importance of education and the importance of the building itself in the crowded immigrant neighborhood. P.S. 64 was designed while Snyder was at his creative and inventive peak, and is an unusually intact example of a school building from this early period.

The school board closed the school in 1977 but, in the spirit of Snyder's original vision, the building continued to function as a busy community center. Just as it had served as a center of education and acculturation for European immigrants of the early twentieth century, this building was adapted to the needs of a new generation of immigrants. It was taken over by CHARAS/El Bohío a group formed in the 1960s to meet the needs of the Latino community. They used the former school for classes, meeting rooms, performances, rehearsal space, art studios and galleries to foster and promote local culture and community. As El Bohío, this building served as an area focal point for the broad-based, citizen's movement to preserve the buildings and the community of a poor and minority neighborhood despite its deterioration and the city's fiscal crisis of the late 1970s and 80s. During a period when the Lower East Side was beset by owner disinvestment and abandonment, this building served as a physical and symbolic center of local efforts to restore and invest in the buildings and community of the Lower East Side, or Loisaida neighborhood.

In 1998, the city sold the building at auction and it was purchased by a private owner. CHARAS was evicted in 2001 after prolonged litigation and the building has been empty since that time.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

History of the Tompkins Square Neighborhood¹

Public School 64 is located on the Lower East Side of Manhattan which consists of the section from Avenue A east to Avenue D and from 11th Street to Houston Street. The term is used as an umbrella for a number of different neighborhoods with complex, overlapping and interconnected histories.² The school is located on a lot between Ninth and Tenth Streets, half a block east of Avenue B and Tompkins Square Park, in what has come to be known as the Tompkins Square neighborhood. The park was named for Daniel D. Tompkins, governor of New York and vice president of the United States under President James Monroe. During the first half of the nineteenth century, brick and brownstone residences were developed along the east side of the park and the Tompkins Square area was populated by workers and middle class shop owners.³

The Lower East Side has always been home to poor immigrant groups seeking labor in the industrial city. Beginning with the first construction of tenement buildings in the 1840s, the bulk of the population was made up of Irish Catholics working in the shipbuilding and construction trades. Later in the nineteenth century, the population became mostly German, a group that dominated the area into the twentieth century. The northern section of the Lower East Side, east of the Bowery and north of Division Street, became known as *Kleindeutschland*, Little Germany, Dutchtown, or *Deutschlandle*. From the late 1840s to 1860, “another hundred thousand Germans fleeing land shortages, unemployment, famine, and political and religious oppression” joined their countrymen who had already made it to America.⁴ The community overflowed the area near City Hall, where they previously lived, and established a new neighborhood whose boundaries expanded north to 18th Street and east to the East River. By 1880, the German-speaking population of *Kleindeutschland* exceeded 250,000 making up approximately one-quarter of the city’s population and becoming one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the world.⁵

In 1904 more than 1000 of the area’s residents died in the burning of the *General Slocum*, an excursion steamboat. (A monument to the victims stands in Tompkins Square.) Following the tragic accident, many of the remaining German residents moved out of the area. Italian, Eastern European, Russian, and Jewish immigrants replaced the German residents and made the neighborhood their own.

Although there has been some recent new construction, many of the nineteenth and early twentieth century masonry row houses and tenements, built for the masses of immigrants then arriving in New York, still line the neighborhood’s streets. The remaining late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century Greek Orthodox churches, Catholic churches, and Jewish synagogues suggest the historic diversity of the area. A few important buildings evoke earlier eras and have been designated as New York City Landmarks: The New York Public Library, Tompkins Square Branch at 310 East 10th Street (1904, built to provide the community with access to educational resources and literature); First Houses (1935-36, just four blocks south of the square, was the country’s earliest public, low-income housing project); the Charlie Parker House, 151 Avenue B (home to the noted alto saxophonist and jazz composer from late 1950 through October 1954); and the Children’s Aid Society, Tompkins Square Lodging House for Boys and Industrial School, 296 East 8th Street (1886, constructed to provide for homeless young newsboys and bootblacks). Amid this neighborhood of tenements, the large scale Public School 64 represents a significant civic presence.

Public Schools in Greater New York⁶

After the consolidation of New York City in 1898, there was a need to create a unified public educational system out of numerous, independently-administered school districts, each having a variety of curricula, grade divisions, educational policies, and standards for personnel selection. The Borough School Boards and Central Board had been established in 1897 to begin centralized decision making, but in 1901 they were abolished and replaced by a newly reorganized Board of Education, consisting of 46 Local School Board Districts and a central Executive Committee.⁷

The work of this new organization was affected by several recently implemented efforts at reform. The Compulsory Education Law of 1894 mandated school attendance for all children until age fourteen, school reformer Nicholas Murray Butler led a successful effort to pass a School Reform Law in 1896 (mandating that the state should support secondary schools), and the city charter was revised in 1901. These laws substantially increased the number of children attending city schools, created new types of schools (manual training, high schools, trade schools, etc.) and improved the accommodations that had to be made for them. In addition, the growth of the city was spurred on by improvements in transportation, development projects, and a huge and extended increase in immigration beginning in the late 1890s. Between 1900 and 1910 alone, the city's population grew by nearly 39 percent.⁸

These events and new laws resulted in a tremendous shortage of school buildings. During 1898 as the city made its transition to the consolidated municipality, there was a temporary halt in funding for new buildings, significantly slowing school construction. In the following three years however, construction funding soared to \$14.8 million for 53 new schools plus additions.⁹ From 1902-04, the School Board authorized over \$26 million for 49 new schools and 30 additions.¹⁰ The needs were enormous throughout the city but worse on the Lower East Side of Manhattan where so many immigrants had settled. A description of the conditions written by Snyder in 1899 follows:

The density of population and the number of children coming from the blocks and acres of five-story, four-family tenements in various parts of the city is simply appalling. School buildings accommodating 2,500 children are numerous in the Lower East Side, but new ones are being erected all the time, and yet there is a demand for further accommodations.¹¹

Of the many schools Snyder designed for the densely populated Lower East Side, few remain. Those that survive help to remind us of this period of explosive growth of New York City's immigrant population.

The Architect: C.B.J. Snyder¹²

Charles B.J. Snyder (1860-1945), Superintendent of School Buildings, was the architect responsible for the planning, design, and construction of all new and expanded schools in the five boroughs after consolidation. Appointed to this position in 1891 (at age 31), when he oversaw Manhattan and the annexed district of the Bronx, Snyder remained in the post until 1923. Little is known of his background beyond his birth in Stillwater, N.Y., his attendance at Cooper Union, and his architectural study with William E. Bishop. He was first listed as an architect in New York City directories in 1886 and remained in practice until around 1936. A specialist in school design, Snyder was recognized as a national leader in this regard in a 1905 article in *American Architect & Building News*:

Possibly it was not the best, probably it was not the most economical, certainly it was not the most expeditious way to have all the school-houses the city stood in such sore need of designed and built by the official architect to the Department of Education. But, since that method had to be followed, it is a matter of wonderful good fortune that the official architect chanced to be such a man as is Mr. C.B.J. Snyder, who not only at the outset showed such distinct capacity for his task, but has proved himself a man able to grow as his opportunities opened before him. Mr. Wheelwright in Boston, Mr. Ittner in St. Louis, Mr. Mundie in Chicago, have done excellent service to their respective cities in the way of building school-houses. . . but they have not had to do their work under the same sort of pressure that has been put upon Mr. Snyder, and they have not had to adapt their architectural treatment to as closely restricted sites.¹³

Snyder's achievement was particularly remarkable given the scale of new school construction in New York, as cited in the same publication:

The magnitude of the undertaking and the reality of the need for these new school-houses is shown by the fact that, even after several years of active building, there are at this time seventy-seven school-houses in various stages of completeness now in charge of the architect to the Department of Education, while contracts for twenty-four more will shortly be made.¹⁴

Snyder is credited with the design of over 140 elementary schools, ten junior high schools, and twenty high schools, as well as many additions and alterations through the course of his career.¹⁵ Recognized for his inventiveness, with his designs and ideas widely published, he was also a member of the Society of Municipal Engineers, a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and president of the American Society of Heating and Ventilating Engineers.¹⁶

Snyder's School Designs

Embracing a variety of architectural styles, Snyder's schools were considered inventive, handsome, and appropriately ornate to serve as civic monuments and community centers. It was widely felt that a beautiful school in New York's crowded neighborhoods would help build moral character and also help acculturate the numerous immigrants who came from so many and varied cultures. As a writer in *Scribner's* magazine in 1901 suggested, school buildings that are designed with "symmetry, order, restraint, and dignity" give children "that unconscious aesthetic education that comes from spending years, early in life, face to face for many hours each day, with the fruits of art, with work of man that is rightly, honestly, and beautifully done."¹⁷

Snyder's long tenure as Superintendent of School Buildings resulted in the creation of a large body of distinguished New York public school buildings. Snyder's schools formed architectural and community centerpieces for the neighborhoods in which they were built, and as a group, these surviving buildings constitute a series of monuments to New York's tradition of investment in public education. Observing these buildings, noted reformer Jacob Riis commented, "Snyder did for schools that which no other architect before his time ever did or tried. He 'builds them beautiful.' In him New York has one of those rare men who open windows for the soul of their time."¹⁸ Another contemporary critic, John Beverly Robinson, writing in *The Architectural Record*, commended Snyder's design sensitivity, noting,

With all this [construction] the architecture of the buildings has not been neglected, for as education ceases to be conducted by factory methods it is well

that the walls where education dwells should signalize the change by forsaking their factory appearance.¹⁹

Stylistically, Snyder's early schools continued the Romanesque Revival style of George W. Debevoise, his predecessor as Superintendent of School Buildings, using round-arched openings set in masonry facades. These early buildings also tended to be built up to the lot lines and were often sited on large streets or corner lots. As Snyder continued to produce more buildings and create his own plans and systems, his architectural vocabulary moved from the picturesque to the various historical revival forms popular during the period. Snyder is credited with the introduction of the Collegiate Gothic style to New York public school architecture, a style previously associated with universities and one that he successfully used on many of his schools for more than twenty years. He also drew ornamental details from Jacobean, Dutch Renaissance, French Renaissance, Colonial, Beaux-Arts, and Secessionist styles, and he tried to make his designs responsive to each individual neighborhood.²⁰ Because the architectural office was turning out new schools at such a rapid rate, Snyder occasionally reused some of the details, or even the overall building designs, but continued to adapt them to the particular sites and needs of each school. Design and ornament inspired by the French Renaissance were used on very few of his buildings however, and the specific design scheme of P.S. 64 is not seen on any other New York school building.²¹

For most architects, the dominant ideas of the first decade of the twentieth century were represented by the City Beautiful movement, and were concerned with issues of large-scale urban planning, and buildings of a grand scale, created with classical detailing. At P.S. 64, Snyder was responding to these ideals, creating a grand public structure, with a significant amount of appropriately classical ornament. A recent survey of his work observed, "The degree to which Snyder employed elements such as sculpted stone, moldings, and terra cotta trim was unprecedented."²² In addition to the ornament, the plan of the building was unique. "The way the H plan drew the building back from the street marked the school as an utterly distinct kind of building, not just a collection of generic rooms."²³ The open space provided by the courtyards, the large groups of windows and the elegant decorative ornament were generous gestures and made this building stand out in this neighborhood of plain, rundown, and overcrowded tenements. The school symbolized the benevolent role of government to help its citizens and provided a visual reminder of the opportunities available to these newcomers through public education.

P.S. 64 was also the physical representation of the new and expanded role of the public school during this time. Reformers such as John Dewey proposed that schools had a social responsibility to cultivate the individual as a service to the community and "that the ultimate mission of education was to advance the welfare of society."²⁴ Progressives (who played a large role in the school establishment at that time) believed that schools could help solve society's problems and saw them as community centers, offering recreation, adult education and health care during the hours that classes were not in session. Snyder himself expressed his faith in the public school system as an equalizer for "the children of the rich and poor, who are taught in the same class room."²⁵ Historian Diane Ravitch explained further,

...in the early twentieth century, the public school was transformed into a vast, underfinanced, bureaucratic social-work agency, expected to take on single-handedly the responsibilities which had formerly been discharged by family, community, and employer...the idea took hold that the public school was uniquely responsible for the Americanization and assimilation of the largest foreign immigration in the nation's history.²⁶

This role was well understood at the time. Writing in *World's Work* in 1903, Adele Marie Shaw pointed out that "85 percent of New York's population was foreign-born or of foreign parentage." And she observed that "The future of this country is more than ever in the hands of the public schools."²⁷

School Planning Under Snyder

In planning his school designs, Snyder's primary concern was for the health and safety of the students, and he focused on fire protection, ventilation, lighting, and heating systems and classroom size. He used segmental terra-cotta blocks in floor construction to improve the building's fireproofing, and developed new methods for mechanical air circulation in school buildings to improve the students' health.²⁸ He insisted on the use of steel skeleton framing for buildings over four stories, allowing for cheaper and faster construction. This structural method also enabled the walls to be less thick than they would be if constructed of masonry, resulting in shallower returns and larger window openings.²⁹ In fact, the facades of most of his buildings have more window than wall space to maximize the amount of natural light and air in the classrooms.

Snyder's problem for his school designs, particularly in Manhattan, was compounded by the small and constricted sites necessitated by the high cost of land acquisition. Lots on the broad avenues were expensive and the traffic noise was overwhelming. As a result, Snyder introduced the "H-plan," especially useful on through-block sites that faced the smaller cross streets. With this plan the school building had an open court facing each street. The courtyard on each side of the central block provided increased light and ventilation, as well as off-street areas between the wings for safe recreation. The recesses allowed the classrooms to be set back from the street, helping to protect them from the street noise when windows were open.³⁰ Over time, Snyder developed a generally consistent plan for these buildings that included four stories of classrooms with larger spaces dedicated to manual and physical training in the fifth story, usually under a high roof. In order to allow the most natural light to reach the classrooms, they were arranged flanking a central hallway with stairways located at the juncture of the wings of the "H" and windowless side walls that faced the neighboring properties. The first floor was often used for an indoor play area and alternatively could be put in service as an assembly room. Classrooms on the second story could be joined together by the use of moveable partitions to create another large assembly space.

Snyder's first H-plan school was P.S. 165, a Collegiate Gothic style building dating from 1898 at 234 West 109th Street in Manhattan.³¹ Although Snyder designed many schools with the H-plan during the following ten years, it was not a set arrangement that he applied to all schools. He was careful to create a unique design for each school, to meet its specific site requirements as well as its unique programmatic needs.³² By 1910 Snyder was only rarely using the H-plan because the continuing problem of overcrowding increasingly demanded "a design approach that corresponded with the growing bureaucracy and centralized control needed to manage the city's resources."³³ During the period of its implementation, Snyder's H-plan became a distinctive and highly recognizable building form, strongly associated with school architecture.

Because of the tremendous need for classrooms, at first Snyder resisted including large meeting rooms in his plans. His attempt to accommodate the need for larger spaces by the use of moveable partitions proved awkward and the partitions were insufficiently soundproof. In his semi-annual report to the School Board in July, 1902, Snyder first suggested a plan to locate an auditorium slightly below grade on one side of an H-plan building, maintaining its paved rooftop (including glass blocks for passage of light to the area below) as a play area for the children. By building up a wall at the lot line, Snyder created a separate entrance to this auditorium which

could then be used in the evening for lectures and entertainments, without necessitating that the public have access to the rest of the school building. This auditorium design was first implemented at P.S. 106 between Mott and Elizabeth Streets in 1903.³⁴ This building is no longer extant. P.S. 64, designed shortly after this, was among the first elementary schools to incorporate this new auditorium arrangement, and is the earliest extant example of this plan.³⁵

Having a publicly accessible auditorium was important for the expanded role of the public school at this time. Since the passage of a state law in 1889, the School Board sponsored a popular lecture series on evenings and weekends that, by 1902, had an annual attendance city-wide of more than a million people.³⁶ These lectures took place in a variety of halls and public schools and were announced weekly in the newspapers.³⁷ They covered a wide range of topics, and some of those presented at P.S. 64 included “Camping in the Rockies,” “The Prevention of Tuberculosis,” and “The Ottoman Empire and its Relations to Europe.” The auditorium of P.S. 64 was also put to use in 1909 for a lecture by the District Superintendent of Public Schools on the use and educational value of motion pictures.³⁸ A commentator of the time observed that with these lectures, the schools became “social and civic centers” for their neighborhoods. He continued,

The inclusion in school buildings of auditoriums for lecture purposes indicate the fact that the school is no longer regarded merely as a place for the instruction of children, but also a place for the education of men and women. To what nobler purpose can our schoolhouse be put than to hold within its influence all the children of the republic, young and old?³⁹

As a further effort to educate and acculturate those in the “city’s crowded neighborhoods,” in 1911 the Committee on the Care of Buildings of the Board of Education determined that school playgrounds should be used for dramatic performances. Julius Hopp who founded the Theatre Centre for Schools and the Wage Earners’ Theatre League was selected to stage the performances, using professional actors and plays of “an educational nature.”⁴⁰ The first outdoor play was scheduled at P.S. 64 because it was the first school to have outdoor electric lights in its courtyard. More than 1,500 people crowded the courtyard and many more perched on neighboring fire escapes and rooftops to see the free performance of Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. Unfortunately, the noise from the passing streetcars and the crowd was so loud that the actors were inaudible. When it became obvious that the full play could not proceed, several of the actors, including Sydney Greenstreet, Clara Knott, Eric Blind and P.J. Kelly presented short scenes or monologues instead, and the play was finally staged three days later inside the auditorium of the school.⁴¹

As another example of community use, the assembly room of P.S. 64 was also the scene of numerous political events during its long history. In 1923, Mayor Hylan used this platform to urge New Yorkers to support his position on a transit bill before the legislature. Governor Alfred Smith, in 1925, gave a thunderous speech against Hylan and William Randolph Hearst at P.S. 64 during his campaign for mayor. Both Mayor Jimmy Walker and Franklin Delano Roosevelt used this auditorium for speeches during their campaigns as well.

Snyder’s H-Plan and the publicly accessible auditorium were two highly significant architectural features of P.S. 64. The effect of these design elements was especially important in this location because of their impact on the many immigrant families residing on the Lower East Side.

The Style of Public School 64⁴²

The style of Public School 64 is formal and symmetrical with its main entrance set at the center of the courtyard on 9th Street. The bay in which the entrance is located projects from the façade and carries an elaborate set of moldings and an entablature to draw attention to the transom-topped double doors. The molded seals of New York City and the Board of Education, another formal and official element, are also located adjacent to the doorway.

Typical of the French Renaissance style, the red brick walls form a strong contrast with the rusticated limestone base and the white terra-cotta trim. Another element typical of this style is the slate-covered, convex mansard roof. While Snyder's buildings often had steep roofs to accommodate numerous activities on the top floors, they were generally pitched or hipped rather than mansard, a style derived from Parisian palaces designed by seventeenth century architect François Mansart. Snyder's elaborate dormer windows further emphasize the French origins of this style. The cornucopias spilling their profusion of fruit and foliage in the dormers of the central and end bays give added emphasis to these bays and suggest the abundance to be gained from the education available within. Other elements of the ornamental scheme, such as keystones, volutes, molded spandrel panels, and pedimented dormers also place this building firmly in the classical tradition of the French Renaissance.

Public School 64 goes through the block from East 9th Street to East 10th Street, with an open, paved court fronting both facades, typical of Snyder's fully-developed H-Plan.⁴³ The wings on each side of the lot shield the central courtyard, which is enclosed by an elaborate iron fence with stone pilasters near the front lot line on 9th Street. On the 10th Street façade, the courtyard is bounded by a rusticated stone wall topped by a balustrade. This shields the auditorium and its window and door openings indicate that it was accessible from the street. The roof over the auditorium is paved and served as another play yard, below the second story but higher than the one on 9th Street. Above the ground story the façade arrangement and ornamental details on 10th Street are almost identical to those on 9th Street. The contrasting brick and stone, the classically-inspired ornament such as keystones, rustication, bracketed sills and pediments over the dormers all contribute to make the building stand out in its neighborhood context.

Public School 64 is one of the most highly developed and intact examples of the work of C.B.J. Snyder in this part of the city, and shows the work of this architect at the height of his creative power. It has a fully developed H-plan and the earliest extant example of a below grade assembly room accessible from the street in an elementary school.

Education and Reform at P.S. 64

Just as the construction of P.S. 64 was part of the School Board's response to the tremendous need for more school buildings early in the century, the people and activities inside this school continued to reflect the forces and changes that were part of the education community. Within this context, P.S. 64 developed a reputation for being open to educational reforms. In 1914, with the school population continuing to soar and many students still in school only part of the day, the School Board was searching for ways to make the system work more efficiently, cost less and serve more students. One response to all these problems took the form of the "Gary Plan," brought to New York from Gary, Indiana by Professor William Wirt, Superintendent of Schools in Gary.⁴⁴ The "Gary Plan" was originally associated with progressive educators who wanted to give students experiential learning opportunities beyond sitting in the classroom all day and proposed classes such as gardening, shop, gym and presentations in the auditorium in addition to academic subjects. By moving classes alternately to different parts of a school building and thus fully using the facilities, Wirt believed he could accommodate more children for less money than was currently spent by providing "a seat for every child," an old

progressive educational tenet. In New York, it was also seen as a way to give practical, useful vocational training to the many immigrant children who were “destined to be industrial citizens.”⁴⁵ In a series of articles in the *New Republic* in 1915, Randolph Bourne described the plan’s “unique contribution” to the economics of education as treating “the public school as a public service and apply to it all those principles of scientific direction which have been perfected for the public use of railroads, telephones, parks and other ‘public utilities.’ ”⁴⁶ As the plan was implemented in New York however, there were not enough facilities and teachers specifically dedicated to all these additional programs and so students were placed for long periods in mixed age groups in gym and auditorium programs, or assigned to work with craftsmen or mechanics on building maintenance and repair.⁴⁷

A variation of the Gary Plan was the Ettinger or “Pre-Vocational” Plan, developed by then Assistant Superintendent of Schools William Ettinger, and promoted by William E. Grady, the second principal of P.S. 64.⁴⁸ In this program, only students in the seventh and eighth grades received vocational training and then it was in specially designed classes by teachers hired to teach these skills. Neither of these plans saved money for the district nor did they, by themselves, accommodate more students. In spite of the opposition of many parents and educators, local political leaders liked the Gary Plan and during the year 1914-15, it was implemented in two schools (P.S. 45 in the Bronx and P.S. 89 in Brooklyn) and the Ettinger Plan was put into effect in six schools, including P.S. 64. In order to evaluate the programs, in March and June of 1915, examinations were given to students in traditional elementary schools and to those in the Gary and Ettinger Plan schools, with the best results achieved by the students in the traditional program. In Superintendent Maxwell’s annual report for 1916 and again in 1917, he recommended the abolition of both programs since they had none of the positive effects promised and caused the expenditure of additional money. In spite of these results, the Gary Plan remained popular among politicians and Maxwell noted its expansion during 1916 and 1917 into thirty-five city elementary schools.⁴⁹ Maxwell continued to recommend that it be terminated. He noted that the Gary Plan was “one of the leading issues of the municipal election of 1917. . . [And that] The opposition of the great mass of the people upon whom the Gary Plan has been inflicted is the most intense and widespread I have ever known...”⁵⁰ In his campaign of 1917, Mayor John Hylan pledged to end all double sessions of the Gary Plan, but by 1921, the President of the Board of Education testified that at that time there were just as many double sessions of the Ettinger Plan.⁵¹

Many of the immigrant families (particularly the Jewish ones) who lived on the Lower East Side resented the idea that their children should receive any different kind of education than that of any other American group. They saw education as a way for their children to rise above the poverty they were experiencing and as a road into the middle class. They wanted them to have strong academic skills and were happy for the Americanization (in terms of the study of English language, history and literature) that was such an important part of the educational system of the time.⁵²

Elizabeth Irwin, founder of the Little Red School house and an influential progressive educator, taught at P.S. 64 from 1912-21.⁵³ During this time she devised a curriculum based on the idea of educating the “whole child.” By separating children into different classes based on their IQ scores, Irwin believed that teachers could better meet the needs of the individual child. She wanted to fit the educational system to the individual, depending on his or her age and abilities, placing emphasis “on the physical, social and emotional welfare of the children.”⁵⁴ Irwin tested her theories on the children of P.S. 64 for several years before promoting them more broadly.⁵⁵ She left P.S. 64 in 1922 because it was being turned into a junior high school, and went on to found The Little Red Schoolhouse, a private, progressive school still extant in

Greenwich Village. William Grady and his successor as principal of P.S. 64, Louis Marks, both supported Irwin's methods, declaring that the use of IQ tests was "the most effective method of dealing with individual differences in children," and with this system "there will be little retardation" and a "better chance for true education of the children."⁵⁶ Marks also co-authored a book with Irwin, entitled *Fitting the School to the Child*. Marks, as principal of P.S.64 established a reputation as having "unusually liberal views" toward education.⁵⁷

Further Cultural History of P.S. 64

As a public school with a broad range of students and employees, P.S. 64 was the site of various political activities through the years. In 1912, a large group of students from P.S. 64, in response to a similar action by students from rival school P.S. 19, formed Local No. 2 Arithmetic Union and walked out of classes because they thought their highly popular principal was being transferred.⁵⁸ During the late 1940s and early 1950s, two members of its faculty were called to Washington to testify before the House Un-American Affairs Committee about whether they were members of the Communist Party.⁵⁹

Other activities were more specific. In what appears to be a political confrontation, James C. Byrnes, Chairman of the Board of Examiners was charged with favoritism for promoting a teacher at P.S. 64, Louis Buchholtz, in the examination for license of principals of elementary schools.⁶⁰ In the 1970s, in an effort to create some racial balance and to reflect the populations of the individual schools, many laid-off teachers were rehired and assigned to specific schools based on their own race, including to P.S. 64.⁶¹

There were many thousands of students who spent their formative years at P.S. 64, but elementary school experiences are not often mentioned in individual biographies. Among the well known alumni is Yip Harburg, the creator of the lyrics for *The Wizard of Oz* and *Finian's Rainbow* as well as such classic songs as *Brother Can You Spare a Dime* and *April in Paris*, who cited P.S. 64's "lovely stage" where he "won prize after prize for acting and reciting" and how he wrote for the school's monthly newspaper and was urged on by the "inspiring" teachers.⁶² Another alumnus is Morris Green, who became the "youngest producer on Broadway," with his work on Cole Porter's *Greenwich Village Follies*, followed by such hits as *Louder Please* and Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*.⁶³ Joseph Mankiewicz screenwriter, producer and director of such films as *All About Eve* and *The Philadelphia Story* attended P.S. 64 when it was a junior high school⁶⁴ and graduated at the "precocious age of eleven" before going on to attend Stuyvesant High School.⁶⁵ Sam Levene, a comic actor who appeared on Broadway in *Guys and Dolls*, and *Dinner at Eight* as well as hundreds of film roles, came to the United States from Russia at age 2 with his family. In a story typical of so many, his father was a cantor and settled his family on the Lower East Side where Levene attended P. S. 64.⁶⁶

Recent History of the Lower East Side

After World War II the ethnic make-up of the Lower East Side changed again. In the mid-twentieth century it began to be dominated by Latin-American immigrants, especially those from Puerto Rico. Their immigration to the mainland was encouraged by the government as a source of cheap labor particularly for the garment trades, hotels and small manufacturing.⁶⁷ The community named itself Loisaida to symbolize the second generation Hispanic roots that had developed in the context of the African-American and Latino movements for social and economic justice, equality and identity.⁶⁸ The word was coined in the early 1970s by two Puerto Rican poets and activists, Chino Garcia and Bimbo Rivas and referred to the area "bordered by the East Village in the north and west and Two Bridges in the south."⁶⁹

Concurrent with these changes and undeterred by its deteriorated physical state, young artists began to move into the neighborhood because of the availability of affordable space, and the area became the locale for outdoor rock concerts and hippie gatherings. During the 1970s, the Lower East Side evolved into a major avant garde art environment. A recent retrospective of this period at the New Museum observed that by the late 1980s there were hundreds of art galleries in the area.⁷⁰

During the 1960s and 1970s, New York City lost 55% of its manufacturing jobs as the result of capital flight and the reduction in manufacturing industries. The population of New York City dropped significantly during this time, and that of the Lower East Side, which in 1910 had been listed as 540,000 declined to 174,532 by 1979.⁷¹ In 1960, the U.S. Census showed that more than 94% of the dwelling units on the Lower East Side were in need of rehabilitation or replacement. The infrastructure was deteriorating along with New York's crumbling economy. New York's fiscal crisis of 1975 meant there was no municipal investment in the area and many owners simply walked away from their buildings. Arson for profit was rampant and the district began to look like a bombed city of rubble-strewn lots and empty buildings.⁷²

Although many were moving away, some local residents and community groups were determined to stay and save their neighborhood and began organizing into collectives to repair their buildings and renovate them through sweat-equity and their own creativity.

Self-help sweat-equity urban homesteading involved the rehabilitation of city-owned abandoned buildings by low-to moderate-income men and women who were to become resident owners...[and this] model brought together concepts of cooperative ownership, cooperative labor, and community integration.⁷³

The activism exhibited by local residents involved with the urban homesteading movement was consistent with a tradition that had long been present in the Lower East Side. In part because of the ongoing and extreme poverty, overcrowding and unhealthy conditions of the area, this neighborhood has experienced wide ranging efforts at social reform through the years, beginning with the settlement house movement started in the 1880s. People from the neighborhood immediately surrounding P.S. 64 have a long history of working and speaking out for reform, seen in the numerous demonstrations that have taken place in Tompkins Square Park. As early as 1874, a "rally of unemployed workers was broken up with some violence by the police."⁷⁴ This early "Tompkins Square Massacre" presaged the more recent confrontation that took place in August 1988 and became known as "The Battle of Tompkins Square." The early stirrings of gentrification were becoming clear by that time and local residents were not happy about it. Tompkins Square Park "grew dense with cardboard shanties and plastic tents" of homeless people, squatters and activists and there was a "haze of smoke that drifted over Avenue A from cooking fires in the park."⁷⁵ When police moved in to try to enforce a 1 P.M. curfew in the park, fighting erupted with the local residents, resulting in the injury of 40 civilians and 13 officers and the eventual closing of the park.

Most of the activism has been of a less violent nature however. A 1969 report by the NYC Planning Commission described "the high degree of activism and successful engagement of community organizations and the comparatively broad range of groups active on the Lower East Side."⁷⁶ Among these important community organizations, CHARAS and Adopt-A-Building were particularly active during the 1970s and 80s.

Recent History of P.S. 64

When P.S. 64 opened in 1906, it accommodated 2,500 children and even (for a time) had an annex. When the New York City school administration determined that the building was no

longer needed as a public school and closed P.S. 64 in 1977, there were 844 pupils. Those students were moved to another building at 6th Street and Avenue B and this one was abandoned and subsequently vandalized.

At this time, a local nonprofit organization, Adopt-A-Building, was searching for space for its workers and trainees. This group had been started by the Rev. Norman Eddy and the New York City Mission Society in East Harlem in 1970 to help local residents repair and restore their buildings when owners had let them fall into disrepair or had abandoned them.⁷⁷ Their goal was to train and empower residents of blighted neighborhoods to improve their own buildings and their communities and they became part of the widespread urban homesteading movement of the 1970s. By the mid-1970s, Adopt-A-Building had moved its operations to the Lower East Side where they felt their goal was “more than just the reclamation of housing, but as the preservation of community life; the saving of a community and its people.”⁷⁸ Adopt-A-Building had received a large grant to train local young people in the construction trades and P.S. 64 provided a perfect project for them. The trainees moved into the abandoned P.S. 64 and began working to make the building habitable again so that the administration and programming staff could move in (which they did in late 1978).⁷⁹

Beginning in 1979, another existing local group, CHARAS, occupied the western wing and theater of the school building. CHARAS and Adopt-A-Building formed a new corporation, El Bohío (a word that translates as “hut” and signifies a friendly public space for community use) to sign a lease for the building with New York City, a lease that specified that the building be used for community purposes.⁸⁰ CHARAS was a continuation of a previous group called the Real Great Society. This had been formed in 1964 by five young Puerto Rican men who had been leaders in a youth gang and had decided to put their skills to more positive uses, fostering community-based urban ecology, arts and culture.⁸¹ At P.S. 64, CHARAS sponsored many of its own programs such as after-school programs and physical fitness programs for local children. Continuing the role of the school as a community center envisioned by the original architect, they hosted cultural performances in the auditorium and in Teatro La Terraza by such groups as Grupo Ache Dance Company, Latin Dance and Ballet Workshop, New Music Series, Visual Arts/ Media Programs, Teatro Charas and Photography Workshops. They sponsored an art gallery at P.S. 64, La Galeria en El Bohío, and provided studio space for such artists as Maria Dominguez. This venue was “particularly appreciated by Latino artists who felt they were overlooked by mainstream galleries and performance spaces, or who were searching for a venue that specifically promoted Latino culture.”⁸² CHARAS also ran a film series that included documentaries, classic feature films and revival-type classics, set in the room that had been the school gymnasium.⁸³ CHARAS provided an audience to such (then) unknown film makers as John Sayles, Todd Haynes and Spike Lee.⁸⁴

At the same time they were providing a cultural venue, CHARAS was tackling other community problems to try to help the residents of the Lower East Side improve their neighborhood. They started numerous community gardens and recycling centers and explored alternative energy sources, linking environmental and ecological issues to that of neighborhood revival.

The actions of CHARAS in taking over P.S. 64 were not unique. As other schools were closed in the 1970s, there were several arts organizations that saw the abandoned buildings as perfect homes for their activities. In 1979, a “bunch of scrappy performance artists transformed an abandoned public school (Public School 122 at First Avenue and Ninth Street) in the East Village into a showcase for experimental dance and theater,” calling it Performing Space 122.⁸⁵ At first the building served mainly as a rental space for performers to rehearse and perform but the group eventually hired a director and turned into a producing company as well. Eventually,

there were five separate groups that used the space and formed the 122 Community Center that runs the building: Performance Space 122, Painting Space 122, the Children's Liberation Day Care Center, Mabou Mines and the AIDS Service Center. P.S. 160, at 107 Suffolk Street was originally used by a nonprofit agency, Solidariadad Humana after it was abandoned by the school board. In the early 1990s the building was taken over by a Latino art center, the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural and Educational Center that rented studios to artists and sponsored performances in its three theater spaces. This group was allowed to take over the building in 1998, when it was about to be sold and continues to operate there.

In 1998, the city sold the building of P.S. 64 at auction to a private developer. After a series of lawsuits to try to stop the transfer, CHARAS / El Bohio was evicted from the building in 2001 and its members were forced to leave. The building has been empty since that time.

Description

P.S. 64 is a five story building that occupies a lot between 9th and 10th Streets, east of Avenue B. In plan, the building has an H shape, with the two wings running between the side streets, each having a plain brick wall on the outside. The cross piece of the H is located near the center of the lot, parallel to the streets, with an open, paved court fronting each street. On 9th Street, the court is enclosed by an iron fence with stone pillars (original) and is reached by several steps at the center of the lot. On 10th Street, the court is enclosed by a stone wall topped by a stone balustrade. In the wall there are segmentally-arched window and door openings with voussoirs, that have all been closed.

The school building has a granite water table and the first story is faced with rusticated limestone. Above a broad cornice, floors 2-4 are faced with painted red brick with terra-cotta trim. A copper gutter separates the top story, which is composed of a mansard roof faced with slate, interrupted by a series of pedimented dormers embellished with terra-cotta ornament. The top of the curved roof has a standing seam metal roof (not original).

9th Street Façade: Currently the front of the building is enclosed by a high wood fence and there is scaffolding in front of each side bay, making the ground story difficult to see. Facing 9th Street, the façade has a squared "U" shape, symmetrically arranged with three bays across the center, arms that are two bays deep, and a single bay on each end, fronting the street. The main entrance is in the center bay, marked by a doorway under a modillioned entablature with sculpted seals on each side. The double doors are fitted into a segmentally-arched opening marked by a keystone, under a tripartite transom. All the windows on the ground story are segmentally arched with stone voussoirs and a keystone. All the windows (except the one closest to the street on the east side) are original with double-hung wood sash and multiple lights. All are covered by metal grilles. A large cornice with moldings separates the ground story from those above it. An additional broad terra-cotta band is located above the cornice, between the windows. The windows on floors two through four all have continuous terra-cotta lintels and molded sills carried on small brackets. They are grouped in threes and have double-hung, wood sash windows with multiple lights. The windows on the side arms are slightly smaller than the others.

The center bay of the 9th Street façade projects from the main plane for a depth of one narrow window which is located at each floor. On this projecting section, a continuous keyed molding links the windows of the three central stories and is formed into an eared enframingent with a keystone at the cornice level. The spandrels between these floors are enlivened by molded geometric designs. The central window of the third and fourth stories is fronted by a slightly projecting sill. A similar molding and decorative scheme groups the windows of the second through fourth stories on the end bays. Above the windows, a cornice wraps around the entire façade, ornamented with moldings shaped around each group of windows. A projecting copper

gutter (not original) is located above this cornice. Set behind the gutter, in each bay are large dormers, composed of either two or three windows. The dormers are topped by molded pediments carried on small brackets. Those on the central and end bays have three windows and the pediment is filled with molded fruits and foliage. The windows of the dormers are all double-hung wood sash windows with keystones centered above them. A convex mansard roof rises behind the dormers and it is edged with copper flashing and faced with slate. Near the top of the mansard, the material changes to standing seam metal roofing.

10th Street Façade: The façade on 10th Street is identical to that on 9th Street except for the ground story. The side bays hold double doors (now boarded up) rather than windows and there is no entrance in the center section. Other entrances are located in the rusticated stone wall that shields the school's auditorium and is located between the end arms of the school building. It is set below ground with the roof paved for a play yard, shielded by the stone wall and its balustrade.

Additionally, there is a modern ventilating pipe that rises from the ground level to the roof and is located near the inside eastern corner of this façade.

Report researched and written by
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NOTES

¹ This section on Tompkins Square history is based on the following sources: Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 578-579, 1025-1027; the Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Pantheon Books, reprint, 1982, originally published 1939) 122-124; Kenneth T. Jackson, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1995) 1190; Andrew Roth, *Infamous Manhattan* (New York: Citadel Press, Carol Publishing Group, 1996) 199-201, 231; Susan Elizabeth Lyman, *The Story of New York* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1975) 157-158, 211-213; I.N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan, 1498-1909* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1918-28) v. 5.

² Malve Von Hassell, *Homesteading in New York City, 1978-1993. The Divided Heart of Loisaída* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1996), 39.

³ Tompkins Square itself has been the site of major public demonstrations and a nexus of civil disobedience since its opening. From the 1849 Astor Place Opera House Riot (a conflict between Tammany Hall Democrats and Whigs) through a 1988 demonstration against a park curfew, this has been the scene of numerous "Tompkins Square riots."

⁴ "Germans," *Encyclopedia of New York City*, 463.

⁵ Landmarks Preservation Commission (hereafter LPC), *Hamilton Fish Park Play Center Designation Report*, (LP-1264) (New York: City of New York, 1982), prepared by Andrew S. Dolkart, 1-3. In the 1860s, the *New York Herald* described the area as having "that incredibly dusty, dirty, seedy, and 'all used up' appearance peculiar to the East Side of town" quoted in Andrew Roth, in *Infamous Manhattan*.

⁶ New York City, Board of Education, *The First Fifty Years: A Brief Review of Progress, 1898-1948* (New York: 1948), 2-20; Gary Hermalyn, *Morris High School and the Creation of the New York City Public High School System* (New York: Bronx Co. Histl. Soc., 1995); LPC, public school research files.

⁷ Beyer, Blinder, Belle, "Guide to the Preservation of New York City Historic Schools," prepared for the School Construction Authority, 2002, Part II, 2-3.

⁸ New York City, Bd. of Education, *New York City School Buildings 1806-1956* (New York: Bd. of Ed., 1956), 34.

⁹ Beyer, Blinder, Belle, Part II, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ *New York City School Buildings, 1805-1956*, 32..

¹² "Charles B.J. Snyder," *Who Was Who in America* 4 (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Co, 1968), 883; Snyder obit., *National Architect* 2 (Jan., 1946), 13; Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Stuyvesant High School Designation Report* (LP-1958)(New York: City of New York, 1997), prepared by Jay Shockley, *Public School 31 Designation Report* (LP-1435)(New York: City of New York, 1986), and *Public School 27 Designation Report* (LP-1895) (New York: City of New York, 1995), both prepared by Virginia Kurshan; Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 71; James Ward, *Architects in Practice, New York City 1900-1940* (N.Y.: COPAR, 1989), 73; Robert A.M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Massengale, *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 78-87; Michele Cohen, "C.B.J. Snyder, Superintendent of School Buildings, Sets the Stage for Public Art," *The Municipal Engineers Journal* 85 (1998), 21-38.

¹³ "Excellent Character of Mr. Snyder's Work," *American Architect & Building News* (July 29, 1905) 33.

¹⁴ One measure of the enormity of Snyder's job at the time was that the Board of Education granted him a six-week vacation with full pay in 1899. *Journal of the Board of Education, 1899*, 1069.

¹⁵ Cohen, 21. The following schools designed by Snyder are designated New York City Landmarks: Public School 67 (High School of the Performing Arts) (1893-94), 120 West 46th Street, Manhattan; Public School 27 (1895-97), 519 St. Ann's Avenue, the Bronx; Public School 167 (later 31) (1897-99), 425 Grand Concourse, the Bronx; Morris High School auditorium interior (1900-04), East 166th Street and Boston Road, the Bronx; Wadleigh High School for Girls (1901-02), 215 West 114th Street, Manhattan; Curtis High School (1902-04, 1922, 1925), 105 Hamilton Avenue, Staten Island; Public School 91 addition (1905), 1257 Ogden Avenue, the Bronx; Stuyvesant High School (1905-07), 345 East 15th Street, Manhattan; Boys' High School additions (c. 1905-12), 832 Marcy Avenue, Brooklyn; Westfield Township District School No. 7 addition (1906-07), 4210 Arthur Kill Road, Staten Island; Girls' High School addition (1912), 475 Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn; Public School 72 annex (1912-13), 1674 Lexington Avenue, Manhattan; Flushing High School (1912-15), 35-01 Union Street, Queens; Erasmus Hall High School (1905-06, 1909-11), 899-925 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn; Newtown High School (1920-21) 48-01 90th Street, Queens; and Public School 166 (1897-99), 132 West 89th Street, Manhattan.

¹⁶ Cohen, 23

¹⁷ "Point of View," *Scribner's Magazine* 29 (Feb., 1901), 252.

¹⁸ Jacob Riis, *The Battle with the Slum* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 353.

¹⁹ John Beverley Robinson, "The School Buildings of New York," *Architectural Record* 7 (Jan-Mar, 1898) 383.

²⁰ AKRF Engineering, "Architectural Evaluation of Public School 64 at 605 East 9th Street and Survey of C.B.J. Snyder Schools," (June 5, 2006), report delivered to the East Village Community Coalition and the Landmarks Preservation Commission, 4.

²¹ *The Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools (1906-08)* includes historic photos and statistics of New York City School buildings and is available in the Municipal Archives. It provides the opportunity to make a visual comparison of the many buildings produced by Snyder's office early in the century.

²² Beyer Blinder Belle, Part II, 5.

²³ Christopher Gray, "Renovating a 1902 Novelty," *The New York Times* (hereafter *NYT*) (Sept. 19, 1993).

²⁴ Cohen, 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Quoted in Cohen, 23.

²⁷ Gray.

²⁸ Cohen, 24-25

²⁹ Beyer Blinder Belle, Part II, 2 and AKRF, 3.

³⁰ C.B.J. Snyder, "Public School Buildings in the City of New York" (Part 1), *American Architect & Building News* (Jan. 25, 1908) 30.

³¹ Although this building is not a designated New York City Landmark it has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Today this building is vacant and severely deteriorated.

³² Today, there are only 15 extant H-Plan public schools in Manhattan designed by Snyder in which the courtyards face adjacent streets. Of these, only Wadleigh High School on West 114th Street is a designated New York City Landmark. Of these fifteen H-Plan schools, nine are located north of 90th Street and three are on the Lower East Side. Seven of the fifteen were constructed before P.S. 64, three were built consecutively, and five post-date P.S. 64.AKRF, 3-5.

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- ³³ Beyer Blinder Belle, Part II, 4. The AKRF report lists the only later building as P.S. 60 at 419 East 11th Street, built in 1923.
- ³⁴ C.B.J. Snyder, *1902 Annual Report of the Superintendent of School Buildings*, 196-201.
- ³⁵ The importance of the role of the publicly accessible assembly room for the huge immigrant population is well-explained in the Michele Cohen, “Art to Educate: A History of Public Art in the New York City Public Schools, 1890-1976,” unpublished dissertation, City University of New York, 2002.
- ³⁶ *1902 Annual Report*, 197.
- ³⁷ The *New York Times*, among other papers, carried a weekly listing.
- ³⁸ AKRF, 2.
- ³⁹ Henry P. Leipziger, “Free Lecture System of New York City,” *Municipal Affairs* 3 (1899), 466, quoted and discussed in Cohen, “Art to Educate,” 2-3.
- ⁴⁰ “Drama in School Yards,” *NYT* (Jun. 26, 1911).
- ⁴¹ “School Roof Drama Not a Big Success,” *NYT* (Jul. 27, 1911), and “Drama on School Platform,” *NYT* (Jul. 30, 1911).
- ⁴² The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has determined that P.S. 64 is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because it is “(A) associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” and it “(C) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or represents the work of a master; or possesses high artistic values; or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.”
- ⁴³ While Snyder first conceived of the H-plan in 1896, it was not until the early years of the twentieth century that he used it consistently and fully at mid-block sites.
- ⁴⁴ Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools* (NY: Basic Books, 1988), 198-205.
- ⁴⁵ Stephan F. Brumberg, *Going to America, Going to School: the Jewish Immigrant Public School Encounter in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (NY: Praeger, 1986), 114.
- ⁴⁶ Ravitch, 202.
- ⁴⁷ In fact City Comptroller Prendergast tried to use the implementation of the Wirt plan to call for a lengthening of the school day and a reduction in the number of teachers, Ravitch, 205-06.
- ⁴⁸ Grady was principal of P.S. 64 between 1908 and 1917. Grady wrote two articles in the *New York Times* explaining the Ettinger plan, “Competitive Experiments in Education,” (Jul. 19, 1915) and “Advocate of Ettinger Answers Nudd,” (Sept. 17, 1915). It was discussed in Ravitch (206) as well.
- ⁴⁹ This took place while he had been on medical leave.
- ⁵⁰ William H. Maxwell, *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools for the Year Ending July 31, 1917*, 50-51.
- ⁵¹ “Hylan Board Seeks Advice on Schools,” *NYT* (Nov. 27, 1917) and “Says Hylan Failed to End Part Time,” *NYT* (Sept. 13, 1921).
- ⁵² Brumberg, 115, 143-7.
- ⁵³ http://www.lrei.org/whoware/history_philosophy.html
- ⁵⁴ “Elizabeth Irwin” *NYT* (Oct. 17, 1942).
- ⁵⁵ “Intelligence Test for 40,000 Pupils,” *NYT* (Jul. 24, 1921).
- ⁵⁶ “Psychology to Aid in Grouping of Pupils,” *NYT* (June 5, 1921).
- ⁵⁷ “Dr. Louis Marks,” *NYT* (Mar. 28, 1943).
- ⁵⁸ “Schoolboys Launch a Union and a Strike,” *NYT* (Sept. 24, 1912).
- ⁵⁹ “House Body Defied on Red Link Query,” *NYT* (Oct. 20, 1948) and “Trial of Teachers Put Off to Sept. 18,” *NYT* (Jun. 23, 1950).
- ⁶⁰ “Charge Favoritism in Teachers’ Tests,” *NYT* (June 29, 1923).
- ⁶¹ “Assignment of Teachers by Race: Anxiety In New York City Schools,” *NYT* (Sept. 23, 1977).
- ⁶² Harold Meyerson, *Who Put the Rainbow in the Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, c. 1993), 12-15. In a letter to the Landmarks Preservation Commission dated April 23, 2004, Harburg’s son Ernest wrote that while at P.S. 64, his father “fell in love with the English language and the reading and writing of light verse which formed the foundation for his later career as a lyricist.”
- ⁶³ “Some People of the Broadway Stage,” *NYT* (Jul. 19, 1925), X1.
- ⁶⁴ It is not clear when P.S. 64 was converted from an elementary school to a junior high school, but it was changed back to an elementary school in 1957 due to changing demographic needs. “Work is Speeded on 11 New Schools,” *NYT* (Aug. 19, 1957), 16.

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- ⁶⁵ Kenneth L. Geist, *Pictures Will Talk: The Life and Films of Joseph L. Mankiewicz* (New York: Scribner, 1978), 18-19.
- ⁶⁶ Josh Barbanel, "Sam Levene, a Creator of Comic Roles, Is Dead at 75," *NYT* (Dec. 29, 1980), D13.
- ⁶⁷ Von Hassell, 47.
- ⁶⁸ City Lore, Inc. and Place Matters, "Historical background report on PS 64 building at 605 E. 9th ST., NYC," (June 2, 2006), prepared by Marci Reaven & Elena Martinez and submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, 26.
- ⁶⁹ Von Hassell, 7.
- ⁷⁰ New Museum Exhibition "East Village USA, Dec. 9, 2004-Mar. 19, 2005," www.newmuseum.org
- ⁷¹ Von Hassell, 38-39.
- ⁷² Von Hassell, 50-53.
- ⁷³ Von Hassell, 2.
- ⁷⁴ Von Hassell, 43-44.
- ⁷⁵ Andrew Jacobs, "A New Spell for Alphabet City," *NYT* (Aug. 9, 1998), CY1.
- ⁷⁶ Von Hassell, 44.
- ⁷⁷ City Lore, p.10-12.
- ⁷⁸ City Lore, 12.
- ⁷⁹ City Lore, 5.
- ⁸⁰ City Lore, 6. Adopt-A-Building moved out of P.S. 64 in 1981, leaving the entire space to CHARAS.
- ⁸¹ According to information in the City Lore report (7), the Real Great Society started out in a storefront on East 3rd Street where they opened a small school, operated "small businesses, tackled community problems and got involved politically."
- ⁸² City Lore, 23.
- ⁸³ Program notes for "Charas Mini-Retrospective Revisited" Robert Beck memorial Cinema, May 11, 2004.
- ⁸⁴ City Lore, 25.
- ⁸⁵ "Trying to Balance the Old Garde with the New," *NYT* (May 16, 1999), AR7.

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 (Former) Public School 64 has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the (Former) Public School 64 was designed by master architect C.B.J. Snyder in his role as Superintendent of School Buildings for the New York City Board of Education; that P.S. 64 was designed and constructed in 1904-06 during a period of tremendous need and building of new schools due to changes in school laws and a huge increase in immigration; that the school was designed in the French Renaissance Revival style, one of the many historical revival styles Snyder used to enhance and embellish his large school buildings and help them stand out and serve as centerpieces for their neighborhoods; that while Snyder was inspired by many different styles and sometimes used the same basic design on more than one school, elements of the French Renaissance style were used only rarely on Snyder's many buildings and the actual design of P.S. 64 is unique; that P.S. 64 has two architectural features that illustrate Snyder's exceptional abilities as an innovative planner and designer: the "H-plan" and the publicly accessible auditorium; that the "H-plan" which included two street-facing courtyards, made the crowded city lot more useable by increasing the amount of light and air that reached the classrooms on mid-block sites and providing safe play areas for the children; that these courtyards provided the luxury of open space in densely packed neighborhoods and created an immediately recognizable symbol of civic good; that the partially below grade auditorium was first used by Snyder in 1903 to make his elementary schools accessible from the street for public evening programs; that the auditorium at P.S. 64, one of Snyder's first and the oldest now extant in an elementary school, was well-used and served the immigrant residents of the Lower East Side as a center of learning for both children and adults; that the auditorium of P.S. 64 continually served as a community center and was the scene of a wide variety of artistic and educational programs as well as political speeches by such notables as Alfred Smith, Jimmy Walker and Franklin Roosevelt; that P.S. 64 was noted for its reform-minded educators, including William Grady, Louis Marks and Elizabeth Irwin, who developed and promoted the use of IQ tests to group students as a means of better serving their individual needs; that noted alumni of P.S. 64 include lyricist Yip Harburg, actor Sam Levene and film director Joseph Mankiewicz; that after the school closed in 1977, the building continued Snyder's original vision in its role as a community center for a more recent group of immigrants; that for twenty years, a local group called CHARAS/El Bohío used P.S. 64 for classes, after-school programs, meeting space for local organizations, performance and rehearsal space for theatrical groups, gallery and studio space for visual artists, and a local film series all of which highlighted the work of Latino artists; that the Lower East Side has had a long history of community activism which continued during the 1980s and 90s through the work of CHARAS/El Bohío; that the building served as the symbolic center and focal point for the urban homesteading efforts of local residents working to restore their homes and maintain their neighborhood in the face of owner disinvestment and abandonment of many buildings; that the building was sold by the city at auction to a private owner in 1998 and after a series of litigation, CHARAS/El Bohío was evicted in 2001; and that the strong, classically-influenced decorative scheme of P.S. 64 is remarkably intact and includes contrasting brick and stone, slate mansard roof, terra-cotta-framed dormer windows, with pediments full of fruit and foliage, molded and eared window surrounds, and keystones; and that this building, which was constructed as a

symbol of civic pride and investment in the city's neighborhoods and people continues to create a strong visual statement about the importance of education and the importance of this building to the neighborhood.

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 (Former) Public School 64, 605 East 9th Street (aka 605-615 East 9th Street and 350-360 East 10th Street), Manhattan and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 392, Lot 10 as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Pablo Vengoechea, Vice-Chair
Stephen Byrns, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz,
Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan



(Former) P.S. 64
605-615 East 9th Street aka 350-360 East 10th Street, Manhattan
East 9th Street Façade
Photo: Carl Forster



(Former) P.S. 64
East 10th Street Façade
Photo: Carl Forster



(Former) P.S. 64
East 9th Street Façade
Photo: Carl Forster



(Former) P.S. 64
East 9th Street Façade
Photo: Carl Forster



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East 10th Street Façade
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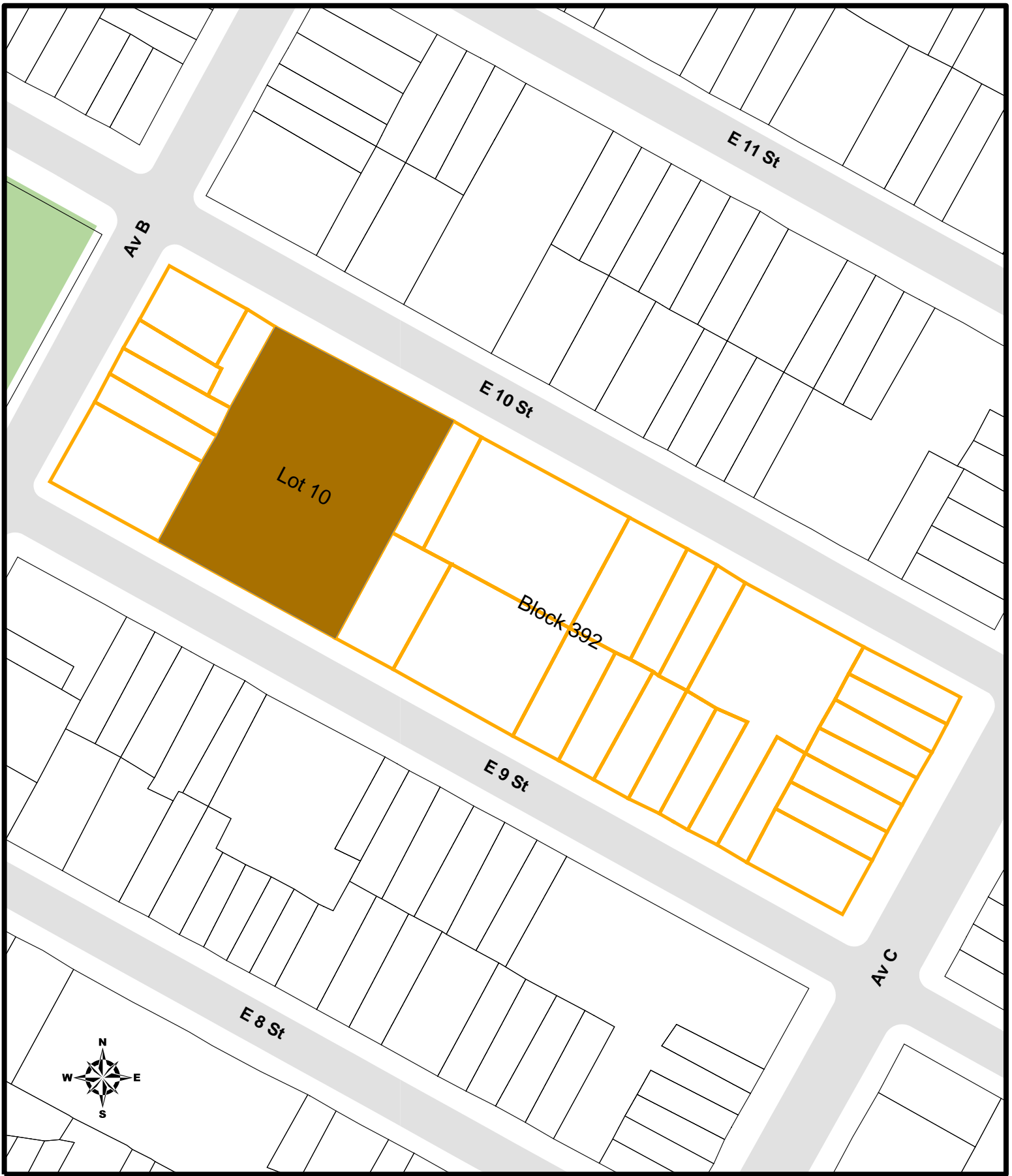


(Former) P.S. 64
East 9th Street Façade Details
Photos: Carl Forster





(Former) P.S. 64
East 9th Street Façade Details
Photo: Carl Forster



(Former)P.S. 64 (LP-2189), 605 East 9th Street
(AKA: 605-615 East 9th Street and 350-360 East 10th Street), Manhattan.
Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 392, Lot 10

Graphic Source: New York City Department of City Planning, MapPLUTO, Edition 03C, December 2003