

HAFFEN BUILDING, 2804-2808 Third Avenue (aka 507 Willis Avenue), the Bronx
Built 1901-02; Michael J. Garvin, architect

Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2307, Lot 59

On December 15, 2009, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Haffen Building and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 3). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three people spoke in favor of designation, including representatives of the Historic Districts Council and the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

Summary

The Haffen Building is a seven-story Beaux-Arts style office building designed by architect Michael J. Garvin and erected in 1901 to 1902 by brewery owner Mathias Haffen. The building is located in the western Bronx neighborhood of Melrose, an area predominantly populated by German-Americans during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Haffen Building was part of the rapid development of the “the Hub,” the commercial center of Melrose, which centered on the intersection of East 149th Street, Melrose, Willis and Third Avenues. By the turn of the 20th century, the Haffen family was one of the main families of the Bronx, having made essential contributions to the physical and social infrastructure of the Bronx including surveying and laying out of parks and the streets, developing real estate, and organizing of a number of civic, social, and financial institutions.

Mathias Haffen was active in real estate development in Melrose and, in 1901, chose a prominent, through-block site between Third and Willis Avenues in the Hub to erect a first-class office building for banking and professional tenants. Haffen hired architect Michael J. Garvin to design the building, Garvin had close ties to Mathias’s brother, Louis F. Haffen and served as his secretary during Haffen’s two terms as the Bronx’s first Borough President, from 1897 to 1909. Garvin received major building commissions throughout his long personal and professional association with the Haffens. Garvin served as the borough’s first Commissioner of Buildings, and is best known as the architect of the Beaux-Arts-style Bronx County Courthouse, located at the intersection of East 161st Street and Third Avenue (1905-1915, an individually designated New York City Landmark).

When the Haffen Building opened in 1902, the ground floor was occupied by a branch of the Twenty-Third Ward Bank, of which Mathias’s brother, John M. Haffen, was vice president. The Twenty-Third Ward Bank, which changed its name to the Bronx County Trust Company in 1925, was a tenant at the Haffen Building as late as 1935.

The Haffen Building remains a distinctive structure in the Hub. Architecturally, the Haffen Building is an outstanding and remarkably intact example of the Beaux-Arts aesthetic. Historically, it is an important reminder of the prominence of the German-American community in the western Bronx during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and of the borough’s rapid urbanization at the turn of the 20th century.



DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Development of the Bronx¹

The Native American tribe that settled in the Bronx prior to and during the first European settlements were the Reckgawawancs, traditionally associated with most of the island of Manhattan and, in the Bronx, the area adjoining the east bank of the Hudson River as far north as Yonkers and the area north of the East River (and east of the Harlem River) as far east as the Bronx River.²

The Bronx was originally part of Westchester County. The earliest settlement in the Bronx was situated along the Harlem River in 1639, in what is now Mott Haven. In 1874 the towns of Melrose, Morrisania, West Farms and Kingsbridge, all of which were west of the Bronx River, were annexed to the City of New York.³ In 1895 another bill annexed to the city the areas east of the Bronx River, consisting of the towns of Pelham and Eastchester, the village of Wakefield, and the town of Westchester. Then commonly known as the Great North Side the area was generally referred to as the “Annexed District” or “North Side,” but it remained fairly isolated.⁴ In 1898, all of the areas that had been annexed in 1874 and 1895 became the Borough of the Bronx. Soon after annexation, local residents, property owners, business owners, and booster groups like the North Side Association began agitating for improved infrastructure, including better transportation connections with Manhattan.⁵

Beginning in the 1890s the new Borough of the Bronx became the refuge of thousands of second generation immigrants seeking to escape the crowded tenements of East Harlem and the Lower East Side. Between 1880 and 1930 the Bronx became one of the fastest growing urban areas in the country, with the population reaching well over a million by 1930.⁶

Improvements in transportation throughout the 19th century made the Bronx more accessible to Manhattan and contributed to its growth. As early as 1841, the New York & Harlem Railroad began regular commuter service between the Bronx and Manhattan. The New York & Harlem Railroad, following the Bronx River valley, was opened to White Plains by 1844 with stations in Morrisania, West Farms (Fordham), and Yonkers. However, transportation was still complicated for commuters bound for the Bronx as it involved transferring to the horse-drawn “Huckleberry Line” and paying an extra fare to travel to northern areas in the Bronx. The Suburban Rapid Transit Company began an elevated train service that crossed the Harlem River in 1885, that would later become the Third Avenue el. While the Suburban was under construction, *Real Estate Record & Builders’ Guide* predicted that it would have an enormous impact on the North Side, calling it, “a great thing for the [Annexed District], as well as for New York City. It will garner further residential development. We may expect many light manufacturing industries to become naturalized on the other side of the Harlem.”⁷ The Suburban line connected Manhattan to the Bronx, and provided a more direct route in the northern and western sections. Services on the lines were expanded and improved between 1887 and 1902.⁸ In 1904 the first subway connecting the Bronx to Manhattan was opened. The new subway lines opened at this time and in subsequent years, along with the older Third Avenue elevated line, provided cheap rapid transit to and from Manhattan.

The Third Avenue elevated line was gradually extended northward and in the process trolley lines were connected to it, forming a rapid transit system that provided access from lower Manhattan to large expanses of undeveloped land. The new subway system sparked a wave of land speculation and a building boom, resulting in many apartment buildings and commercial buildings being erected along the corridor of the elevated line, which reached its northern

terminus at Gun Hill Road in 1920.⁹ With the new subway the old village of Melrose became known as the Hub of the Bronx.

History of Melrose¹⁰

The English crown granted Lewis Morris the entire south Bronx in 1697.¹¹ It remained under the ownership of Morris descendants until the 1840s. During this time period, it was customary for large landowners including the Morris family, to own slaves. In 1827, the last held slave in the state of New York belonged to the Morris family.¹² Lewis's grandson, Gouverneur Morris II, began to sell off parcels of families' holdings and small villages were laid out as early 1828.¹³ With the success of the village of Morrisania in 1848 Morris further developed his property and had surveyors Hampton Denman, Andrew Findley and Robert Elton lay out several more communities, resulting in the establishment of Woodstock, Melrose, Melrose East and South in 1850.

Melrose is centered in the south Bronx directly north of Mott Haven. It was a rural village populated largely by Germans immigrants seeking a healthier alternative to life on the Lower East Side. Melrose's main street, Courtlandt Avenue, was called the "Dutch Broadway"¹⁴ because of the high concentration of German shops, saloons, beer halls and gymnastic and singing societies. Melrose was a community of artisans, craftsmen, and small shopkeepers.

In 1874 the township of Melrose became part of New York City along with the rest of the western Bronx. With the 1888 opening of the elevated rail line along Third Avenue, the process of urbanization began to transform the Mott Haven, Melrose, and Morrisania sections of the western Bronx, and development only intensified after the arrival of the subway in 1904. Residential housing and small frame structures gave way to new law tenements and large business buildings.¹⁵ Encouraged by this growth, grocery stores, restaurants, vegetable and fruit markets, tailors, and hardware stores were also established. By the turn of the century, the commercial heart of Melrose—with numerous theaters, shops, and banks—was centered around the intersection of East 149th Street, Melrose, Willis and Third Avenues, known as the Hub.¹⁶ It is the oldest major shopping district in the Bronx, with inhabitants throughout the borough patronizing its department stores, boutiques, movie palaces and vaudeville theaters. The intersection of 149th Street and Third Avenue became known as the "42nd Street and Broadway" of the Bronx.¹⁷ As predicted, by 1911 the intersection was "the great business center of the north borough." Melrose continued to prosper well into the 20th century.

Haffen Family¹⁸

Mathias Haffen Jr., who built the Haffen building at 2804 Third Avenue, came from a German-American immigrant family known for having made essential contributions to the physical and social infrastructure of the Bronx. The patriarch of the Haffen family, Mathias Haffen, Sr., (1814-1891), emigrated from Germany in 1831, first landing in the village of Williamsburg, Brooklyn before settling in the village of Melrose in 1850.¹⁹ Mathias married Catherine Hays (1823-1888) an emigrant from Limerick, Ireland in 1840. The family home stood on the northwest corner of Courtlandt Avenue and East 152nd Street.²⁰ Their marriage produced six children, two daughters, of whom there is little or no information, and in addition to Mathias Jr., three other sons: John (1847-1910), who later founded the Dollar Savings Bank of the City of New York; Mathias, Jr., (1850-1917)²¹; Henry (1852-1932), who served on the New York Board of Aldermen; and Louis (1854-1935), the youngest and most notable son, who served as the first Bronx Borough President.

Mathias, Sr., established J. & M. Haffen Brewing Company in the German neighborhood of Melrose in 1856.²² Mathias, Sr. was an influential member of the community. He helped to organize the Melrose village firemen, and remained president of the brewery until his retirement in 1871. .

John Haffen grew up working in the family business that he would later inherit with his brother Mathias; however, his interests were centered on the banking industry. He was the first president and later vice president of the Twenty-Third Ward Bank (later the Bronx County Trust Company), founder and president of the Dollar Savings Bank of the City of New York, treasurer of the Peoples' Guaranty and Indemnity Company, and a director of the Union Surety Company. John Haffen was also president of the Twenty Third Ward Taxpayers Association, member of the North Side Board of Trade and president of the Talapoosa Club.²³

Mathias Haffen Jr., (Martin),²⁴ along with his brother John, took over the family brewery business after their father's retirement in 1871. Mathias Jr., introduced many improvements to the family brewery. He expanded the building, modernized the power plant, and increased productivity. J. & M. Haffen Brewery provided work for scores of people in the Melrose section of the Bronx. It was during this time of increased prosperity, that Mathias Jr., commissioned Garvin to design the Haffen building. Mathias Jr., was president of the J & M Haffen Brewing Company until the brewery was purchased by Jacob Ruppert in 1914. Mathias Jr., was also active in real estate development, in the Bronx, and was president and director of Haffen Realty Company from 1900 until his death in 1917. At the time of his death, the estate Mathias Haffen Jr., was reported to be worth close to a million dollars.²⁵

Louis Haffen²⁶ was elected the first Borough President of the newly-formed borough of the Bronx. After earning a degree in Civil Engineering from Fordham University (then College) in 1875, Louis graduated in 1879 with Civil Engineering and Doctor of Law degrees from Columbia. Louis started his civic career as a city surveyor, he then became an engineer with the Department of Parks and was later promoted to superintendent. Subsequently he became the engineer-in-charge, then the superintendent and finally Commissioner of Streets for the Twenty Third and Twenty Fourth Wards, serving there until the post was abolished. During his incumbency he made many street improvements, surveyed and classified parklands. He was regarded as the "Father of the Bronx"²⁷ and was re-elected as Borough President for three successive terms. During his fourth term he resigned from office, six months before the expiration of his term, amid allegations of cronyisms, fraud, corruption and mismanagement. From 1918 to 1933 he served as consulting engineer to the borough of the Bronx.

Michael J. Garvin (1861-1918)²⁸

Born in Morrisania, Michael J. Garvin lived in the Bronx throughout his life. He was educated in local public schools and Manhattan College. In 1885, Garvin was associated with August Schmidt, before establishing his own architectural and civil engineering office at 3307 Third Avenue. He served as the first Commissioner of Buildings for the Bronx and was the borough's first Under-Sheriff, as well as Executive Member of the Samoset Democratic Club. Garvin was a member of several local political organizations and is best known as the architect of record for the Bronx Borough courthouse located at the intersection of East 161st Street and Third Avenue (1905-15, a designated new York City Landmark).²⁹ Garvin's career was not without controversy: allegations of plagiarism and fraud arose in connection with the design of the Bronx Borough Courthouse, when it was discovered that Oscar Bluemner,³⁰ not Garvin, was the author of the design.³¹ This public scandal called into question Garvin's abilities as an

architect, and whether it was his association with the Haffen family that had fueled his successes. The association with Gavin and the court house scandal forced Louis Haffen to resign from office of as Bronx Borough President, amid accusations of cronyisms, fraud and corruption.³²

Building Design and Construction

Set in a prominent location within the Hub, The Haffen building is a seven-story structure situated on the easterly side of Third Avenue, between 147th and 148th Streets and extending through to Willis Avenue. The lot is of an irregular shape and size, the Third Avenue facade is four bays wide; while the Willis Avenue facade is tapered, it has the same window configuration.

Mathias Haffen Jr., purchased the lot for the Haffen building from Swartz Properties for \$18,000 in 1901.³³ Garvin's design clad the building with limestone with the ground floor and transitional second story in a heavily rusticated limestone with polished granite base. The main facade of the building has a tripartite design, with two story base, a five story shaft, and a two story capital. The upper floors are vertically divided by monumental four-story pilasters and several projecting cornices divide the building into three horizontal segments.

The Haffen Building is a remarkably intact example of the Beaux-Arts style aesthetic. American architects, influenced by the principles of the French Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the popularity of the "Great White City"—the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago—based designs on interpretations of Renaissance and neo-Classical prototypes. In part, Academic Classicism and the Beaux-Arts style were popularized as a means to create an architecture characterized by order, clarity, and sobriety, qualities considered appropriate to the democratic ideals of the expanding nation. In making historical associations, American architects drew parallels between their own culture and the American neo-classical past, and the enlightened Greco-Roman and Renaissance civilizations.³⁴

The Beaux-Arts characteristics of the Haffen Building include: the formal base-shaft-capital facade composition of both facades, exuberant, carved ornament depicting festoons of fruit, flowers and ribbons; laurel wreaths and sheaves of wheat (the latter might be an allusion to the Haffen brewery business), the oversized metopes, inverted console brackets, and modillions. The Third Avenue façade is larger and slightly more elaborate than the Willis Avenue facade, with three bays at the ground floor, a transitional second floor of rusticated limestone, arched openings accentuated by voussoirs and paired pilasters of polished granite, molded cornices at the first, second and sixth stories, paired double-hung windows, a variety of escutcheons, festoons and wreaths, and a deep copper cornice supported on paired scroll-brackets tapering to acanthus leaves. The Willis Avenue façade displays basically the same composition and detailing as the Third Avenue façade, but has a more modest base with simple square-headed openings flanked by elegant Ionic pilasters.

Subsequent History

The Haffen Building has housed several banking institutions from the early 1900s until the 1950s; two of the most notable were the Knickerbocker Trust and the Dollar Savings Bank. The building has also been occupied by several governmental agencies: the new Tenement House Department leased the second and third floors from September of 1902 until 1930s.³⁵ The architectural firm of Margon & Glaser had offices at the Haffen Building from 1921-1925.³⁶ Recently, The Haffen Building has been home to the National Puerto Rican Day Parade, Inc., and the law offices of Javier A. Solano.

Description

Third Avenue Facade: The Third Avenue facade has a tripartite design: the base consists of ground floor and transitional second story clad in rusticated limestone with a polished granite base, a four story midsection, and a one story capital with an over scaled cornice. The base has been patched in several places, at the extreme right of the building are a capped pipe and a siamese standpipe. The ground floor contains two central multi-light windows with non-historic metal security grilles, the windows are flanked by two arched entrances with molded keystones. A small granite step leads to a non-historic double-leaf metal-and-glass entrance at the south side of the facade. Above the door is a metal spandrel and a former fanlight covered in metal with the address in raised metal numerals. A small granite step leads to a non-historic entrance on the north side of the facade, that is obscured by a metal security door and louvered vent covers. Both entrances are surmounted by projecting bays supported on paired pilasters with fluted brackets and panel decorations. The friezes of the bays are embellished by a cartouche surrounded by a foliate design. A projecting transitional denticulated cornice spanning the width of the building, between the first and second story, supports outsized matching inverted console brackets at either side of the facade, which are enriched with pellet molding and acanthus leafs. The console brackets frame the second floor's two sets of central paired one-over-one double-hung windows. Paired one-over-one double-hung windows are located within each pair of brackets at the outer bays. Above each of the consoles are corresponding taenia and volutes supporting pilasters that vertically divide the upper part of the facade into four sections.

The midsection of the facade is structured around three bays of windows that are separated by four pilasters with each bay being slightly recessed. The pilasters are topped by cartouches and festoons and ascend to a bracketed cornice accentuated by garlands. The third through the fifth floor has a central bay that contains two sets of paired one-over-one double-hung windows. The flanking bays contain paired one-over-one double-hung windows featuring a flat arch accentuated by intrados, voussiors and molded stone sills.

The central bay windows from the fourth through sixth floors feature wide mullions in the form of an Ionic pilaster. The paired windows at the six floor are separated by a single scrolled bracket. The third transitional cornice spans the width of the building at the sixth floor and is ornamented by brackets and carved festoons. This cornice serves as a sill for the seventh floor windows. The seventh floor windows are smaller but follow the same configuration and type, as the windows of the midsection. The building is topped by a deeply projecting copper cornice that runs the width of the building. It is supported by paired brackets at both ends, accentuated by modillions, and ornamental foliate details and at the center of the cornice the words "HAFFEN BUILDING" are prominently displayed in raised copper lettering.

Willis Avenue Facade: The Willis Avenue facade has a tripartite design of a two-story base, four-story midsection, and one story capitol. The ground floor and transitional second story are rusticated limestone with a polished granite base that has been painted. Four Ionic pilasters frame the ground floor entrance and windows, and support a molded stone cornice. At the north side of the facade three wide curved stone stairs and stone sill with historic wrought-iron railings leads to the main entrance, which consists of a non-historic metal-and-glass door with sidelights and transom. The lower section of the door is textured and displays a Greek key pattern. The windows at the first floor are non-historic. An unadorned frieze gives way to a projecting denticulated cornice that spans the width of the building and serves as a sill for the second story windows. The windows at the upper stories are articulated in the same manner as the Third Avenue facade. The third through fifth floors openings feature a flat arch accentuated by

intrados, voussiors and molded stone sills. The sixth floor contains four non-historic one-over-one double-hung windows with molded stone sill and feature ornately carved ornaments that frame the windows. Scrolled brackets centered above each window act as support for a transitional projecting cornice. The windows at the seventh floor are of the same type and configuration as the sixth floor. The Willis Avenue facade is topped by a deeply projecting copper cornice that runs the width of the building. It is supported by paired brackets at both ends, accentuated by modillions and ornamental foliate details. At the center of the cornice the words "HAFFEN BUILDING" are prominently displayed in raised copper lettering.

South Facade, Third Avenue Section: The first floor the building abuts a one story structure and is not visible. The second through seventh floor at the southwesterly portion of the facade is of unarticulated brick. At the southeasterly portion of the facade from the second through the sixth floors, at each level, is a one-over-one double-hung window. The seventh floor is devoid of openings and it has an irregular roofline. There is a chimney that is flush with the facade, with a stack rising above the facade, which is only visible from Willis Avenue. This portion of the facade has been resurfaced.

South Facade, Willis Avenue Section: The first floor the building abuts a one story structure, and is not visible. The second through seventh floors at the southeasterly portion of the facade is of unarticulated brick. A wall-mounted stretch banner extends down from the roof to the fifth floor. The southwesterly portion of the facade contains a light well from the third through sixth floors, and has paired one-over-one double-hung windows with stone lintels and sills at each level. A non-historic electrical conduit runs from the third through the sixth floors. This portion of the facade has been resurfaced.

Report prepared by
Theresa C. Noonan
Research Department

NOTES

¹ Adapted from: James L. Wells, Louis F. Haffen, and Josiah A. Briggs, Eds., *The Bronx and its People: A History 1609-1927* (New York: The Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1927), 98; Lloyd Ultan, Gary Hermalyn, *The Bronx in the Innocent Years 1890-1925* (New York: Harper and Row 1985), xi-xxviii; Stephen Jenkins, *Story of the Bronx*, (New York: Knickerbocker Press 1912).

² Eugene J. Boesch, Ph.D., *Archaeological Evaluation and Sensitivity Assessment of the Prehistoric and Contact Period Aboriginal History of the Bronx*, New York, July 19, 1996.

³ The Borough of the Bronx came into being in 1898, with New York City's consolidation. It was part of New York County until 1914, when Bronx County was created. Gary D. Hermalyn and Lloyd Ultan, 25-30; Kenneth T. Jackson ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 142-146.

⁴ See Gary D. Hermalyn, "Annexed District" and "North Side," Jackson, 39, 854.

⁵ By 1902, booster groups pushing for improved rapid transit connections with Manhattan included the North Side Board of Trade, Twenty-Third Ward Property Owners' Association, South Bronx Association, University Heights Association and Bronx East Side Association; "Rapid Transit for the Bronx," *New York Times*, August 26, 1902, 3.

⁶ Adapted from: Evelyn Gonzalez, *The Bronx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 4-6.

⁷ Adapted from: "Suburban Rapid Transit," *Real Estate Record & Builders' Guide*, (December 12, 1885), 1362.

⁸ Jackson, “Elevated Railways [Els],” 368-369; William Fullerton Reeves, *The First Elevated Railroads in Manhattan and the Bronx of the City of New York* (New York: The New York Historical Society, 1936), 34-41; Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1053-1056.

⁹ Adapted from: “A History of Transportation in the Bronx,” *350th Anniversary of the Bronx: Commemorative Issue*, (New York: Bronx County Historical Society, XXVI, 2, Fall 1989), 80-83. The four year period from 1917-1920 saw the greatest expansion of the of the rapid transit system in the history of the Bronx, the policy was to build all lines simultaneously and spread the benefits equally. <http://www.thirteen.org/bronx/history2.html>.

¹⁰ Adapted from: Gonzalez, 26-31; John McNamara, *History in Asphalt* (New York: The Bronx Historical Society, 1991), 343. Originally part of the Morris family manor lands, the village boundaries were East 156th Street to East 163rd Street, from Park Avenue to Third Avenue.

¹¹ Wells, Haffen, Briggs, 138-142.

¹² Wells, Haffen, Briggs, 156.

¹³ In 1816, Gouverneur Morris II had his land surveyed, mapped, and farm lots laid out by John Randall, surveyor and engineer in 1828 he sold two hundred acres at \$175 an acre to Jordan L. Mott.

¹⁴ Adapted from: Ultan & Herman, xi; “Dutch” a corruption of the word *deutsch*, was a popular term for Germans.

¹⁵ Adapted from: Gonzalez, 73-74; *Bronx Home News*, April 3, 1908, December 7, 1913; *Record and Guide*, (November 4, 1911). Lots in the Hub had sold for slightly more than \$4,000 in 1901. Ten years later, these lots were selling for \$30,000 each.

¹⁶ “The Hub” is the unofficial name given to the intersection of East 149th Street, Melrose, Willis and Third Avenues, it is believed to have been coined around 1896 when Melrose Avenue was cut through to join Willis Avenue, some believe that the term was used as early as the 1880s.

¹⁷ Adapted from: John Lewis, “History of Hearn’s,” *Daily News*, September 23, 1979.

¹⁸ Adapted from: John McNamara, “The Haffen Family,” *The Bronx Historical Society Journal*, vol. X, (July, 1973), 53-65.

¹⁹ Information in this section adapted from: “Haffen Family” *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, vol. 13 (1943), 111; McNamara, 51; 1880 Census Place: Morrisania, Westchester, New York; Roll T9-0899; Page: 303D; Family History Library Film: 1254899.

²⁰ The home is listed as the residence of John Haffen until his death in 1910.

²¹ 1870 Census Place: Morrisania, Westchester, New York; Roll M593_1117; Page: 271A; Image: 544; Family History Library Film: 552616.

²² Adapted from: Bill Twomey, *Images of America: South Bronx* (New York: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 77; The brewery that Mathias Haffen started in 1856 was registered under several names Mathias Haffen (1856–1871), J. & M. Haffen (1871–1899), J. & M. Haffen Brewing Co. (1899–1913), <http://trayman.net/Brewery/Haffen.htm>.

²³ Adapted from: “John Haffen Dead,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1910; “The Twenty Third Ward Bank of New York City,” *The Bankers Magazine*, vol. LXIV (January to June, 1902), 865-866; *Notable New Yorkers of 1896-1899*, (New York: King, 1899), 545.

²⁴ McNamara, 53-65.

²⁵ Information in this section adapted from: “Mathias Haffen Estate \$922, 991,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1917.

²⁶ Information in this section adapted from: <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/X196/>; Haffen joined the Parks Department in 1883, where he served as Commissioner of the Department of Streets. Along with Louis Heintz and Louis Risse, he planned the Grand Concourse and other boulevards and parkways. Haffen helped to secure public park land for the borough of the Bronx. In 1911 he founded the Bronx Old timers Association for Bronx residents of fifty years or more, and served as the organization’s first president. In 1958 the City of New York acquired land for a park named in Haffen’s honor.

²⁷ Fordham Alumni Magazine; obit, *New York Times*, Dec 26, 1935; *Bronx Historical Society Journal*, vol. IV (February 1936), 17.

²⁸ Information in this section adapted from: "Bronx Upbuilder Dies," *The New York Times*, September 2, 1918; Dennis Steadman Francis, *Architects in Practice in New York City 1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979).

²⁹ Michael J. Garvin is the architect of record, however, it was later discovered that Oscar Bluemner (1867- 1938) designed the courthouse. Oscar Bluemner instituted court proceedings, declaring that he, and not Garvin, was the sole author of the designs for the Bronx courthouse.

³⁰ Oscar Florianus Bluemner (1867-1938) was born in Germany in 1867. He studied painting and architecture at the Royal Academy of Design in Berlin. In 1901 Oscar relocated to New York City and in 1903 the architect Michael Garvin hired Bluemner to design the Bronx Borough Courthouse, with the promise that he would credit Bluemner and split the commission with him if the proposal was approved. When Garvin submitted the design solely in his name and won the commission a dispute developed that lead to a lawsuit. Although Bluemner won, the experience turned him away from architecture. Information in this section adapted from: James Schuyler and Simon Pettet, *Selected Art Writings*, (New York: Black Sparrow Press, 1998) 99.

³¹ Information adapted from: http://www.hollistaggart.com/artists/biography/oscar_florianus_bluemner/.

³² Information adapted from: Avis Berman, *Beaux-Arts Battle in the Bronx*, <http://wirednewyork.com/forum/showthread.php?t=7465> (November 30, 2009); "Claims the Laurels for Courthouse Plans" *New York Times*, March 17, 1905, 3.

³³ Information adapted from: Bronx Deeds and Conveyances, April 8, 1901, Liber 39 page 59.

³⁴ Richard Guy Wilson, "The Great Civilization," *The American Renaissance, 1876-1917*, (New York, 1979), 11-16.

³⁵ Information in this section adapted from: Robert W. De Forest and Lawrence Viller, "Tenement Reform in New York Since 1901," Robert W. De Forest and Lawrence Veiller, eds. *The Tenement House Problem*, vol. I, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1903), 45-72. In 1900 the New York State Legislature created the New York State Tenement House Commission, which created a separate Tenement House Department for the City of New York. The City's Tenement House Department, during the first quarter of the 20th century, vacillated between being an active reform agency and merely an impotent enforcement body depending upon its director. The Tenement House Department was abolished in 1937 and merged with the Department of Buildings to become the Department of Housing and Buildings.

³⁶ The firm's designs are featured in the Ladies Mile and the Riverside-West End Historic Districts.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Haffen Building 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 Haffen Building is a seven-story Beaux-Arts style office building designed by architect Michael J. Garvin and erected in 1901 to 1902 by brewery owner Mathias Haffen Jr.; that the building is located in the western Bronx neighborhood of Melrose, an area populated by predominantly German-Americans during the 19th and early 20th centuries; that the Haffen Building was part of the rapid development of the “the Hub,” the commercial center of Melrose, which centered on the intersection of East 149th Street, Melrose, Willis and Third Avenues; that by the turn of the 20th century, the Haffen family was one of the main families of the Bronx, having made essential contributions to the physical and social infrastructure of the Bronx including surveying and laying out of parks and the streets, developing real estate, and organizing of a number of civic, social, and financial institutions; that Mathias Haffen Jr., was active in real estate development in Melrose and, in 1901, chose a prominent, through- block site between Third and Willis Avenues in the Hub to erect a first-class office building for banking and professional tenants; that Haffen hired architect Michael J. Garvin to design the building, Garvin had close ties to Mathias’s brother, Louis F. Haffen and served as his secretary during Haffen’s two terms as the Bronx’s first Borough President, from 1897 to 1909; that Garvin received major building commissions throughout his long personal and professional association with the Haffens; that Garvin served as the borough’s first Commissioner of Buildings, and is best known as the architect of the Beaux-Arts-style Bronx County Courthouse, located at the intersection of East 161st Street and Third Avenue (1905-1915, an individually designated New York City Landmark); that when the Haffen Building opened in 1902, the ground floor was occupied by a branch of the Twenty-Third Ward Bank, of which Mathias’s brother, John M. Haffen, was vice president; that the Twenty-Third Ward Bank, which changed its name to the Bronx County Trust Company in 1925, was a tenant at the Haffen Building as late as 1935; the Haffen Building remains a distinctive structure in the Hub; that architecturally, the Haffen Building is an outstanding and remarkably intact example of the Beaux-Arts aesthetic; that historically, it is an important reminder of the prominence of the German-American community in the western Bronx during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and of the borough’s rapid urbanization at the turn of the 20th century.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Haffen Building, 2804-2808 Third Avenue (aka 507 Willis Avenue), the Bronx, and designates Borough of the Bronx Tax Map Block 2307, Lot 59 as its Landmark Site.

Robert Tierney, Chair

Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice Chair

Frederick Bland, Stephen F. Byrns, Diana Chapin, Joan Gerner, Roberta Brandes Gratz, Christopher Moore, Margery Perlmutter, Elizabeth Ryan, Roberta Washington, Commissioners



Haffen Building
2804-2808 Third Avenue (aka 507 Willis Avenue)
Borough of the Bronx
Tax Map Block 2307, Lot 59
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



*Haffen Building
South Facade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



Haffen Building
 Third Avenue Facade (Details)
 Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



Haffen Building
Third Avenue Facade (Details)
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



Haffen Building
Third Avenue Facade (Details)
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



*Haffen Building
Willis Avenue Facade
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009*



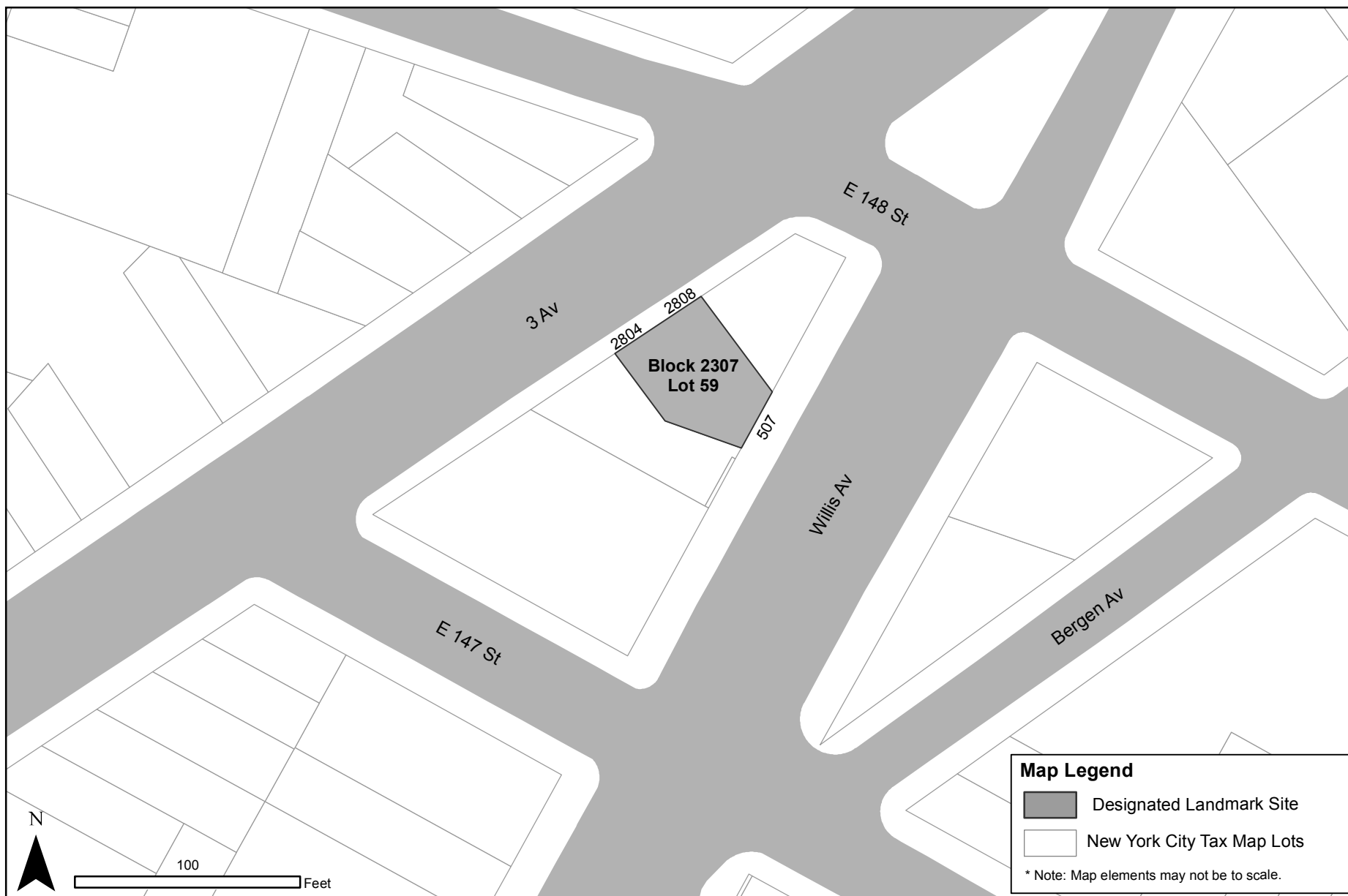
Haffen Building
Willis Avenue and South Facades
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



Haffen Building
 Willis Avenue Facade (Details)
 Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



Haffen Building
Willis Avenue Facade (Details)
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee, 2009



HAFFEN BUILDING (LP-2388), 2804-2408 Third Avenue (aka 507 Willis Avenue).
Landmark Site: Borough of the Bronx, Tax Map Block 2307, Lot 59.

Designated: June 22, 2010