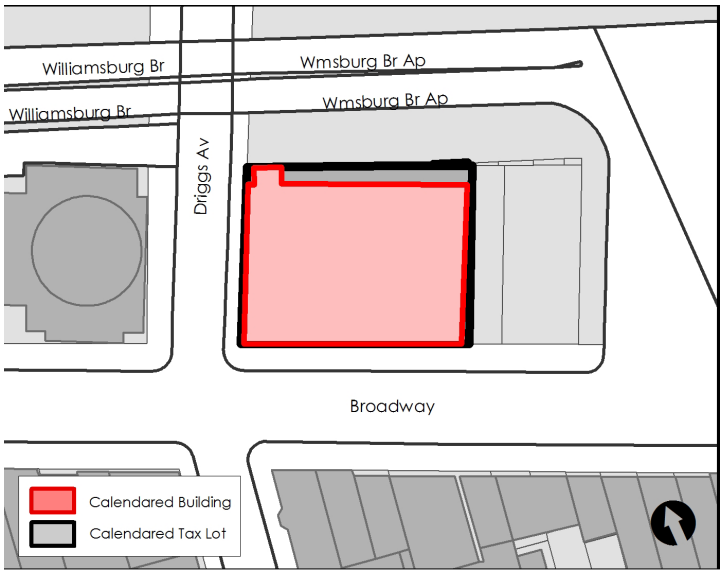
Landmarks Preservation Commission

Backlog Initiative: Addressing 95 Properties
Brooklyn Items

183-195 Broadway Building

183-195 Broadway, Brooklyn
Brooklyn Block: 2446; Lot: 51

Brooklyn Community Board 1
Public Hearing Date(s): 11/18/1980; 02/10/1981; 06/12/1984; 07/10/1990; 09/11/1990



Photos: (left) 2009 (right) undated

Special Public Hearings

The Landmarks Preservation Commission will hold a public hearing on the backlog of buildings in the Borough of Brooklyn on **October 8, 2015**. Each speaker will be given three minutes to speak, and in that time may address all of the items within the Borough, specific items, or add comments to support written testimony. In order to conduct efficient hearings, we ask speakers to register in advance and submit written statements by **October 1, 2015** to backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov. If you are unable to attend the hearing, your written submissions will be entered into the record and distributed to the Commissioners.

If you have any questions about this property or the hearing process, please contact backlog95@lpc.nyc.gov or call (212) 669-7817. If you would like more information about this property, please see the research file summary (over) and go to our website (http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/backlog95) and click on the link for this building's research file.

183-195 Broadway Building Description
Built: 1882
Architect: William B. Ditmars
Style: Italianate

Landmark Type: Individual

Research Staff Hearing Statement (1990)

185-195 BROADWAY BUILDING, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

The 185-195 Broadway Building is one of the finest surviving cast-iron buildings in Brooklyn and among the most unusual examples of the type in New York City. The four surviving cast-iron buildings clustered along this section of Broadway in Williamsburg (originally there were at least six) are the only such substantial group in the boroughs outside of Manhattan; they date from an era when Williamsburg, annexed to the City of Brooklyn in 1885, functioned as Brooklyn's secondary downtown commercial district with banks, insurance companies, and warehouses. No. 185-195 was built, probably as a factory and warehouse, for shoe dealers James R. Sparrow and his son James R. Sparrow, Jr.

The building was designed by Williamsburg architect William B. Ditmars in 1882, a year before his death. Ditmars also designed the early Romanesque Revival style Reformed Dutch Church of Greenpoint at 145-153 Kent Street in 1869 (now St. Elias Greek Rite Roman Catholic Church, in the Greenpoint Historic District) and the former Beth Elohim Synagogue on Keap Street. The iron elements of the 185-195 Broadway Building were cast by the Atlantic Iron Works of Manhattan. Initially known as the G.R. Jackson Company in 1840, the firm name was changed by the 1880s to the Atlantic Iron Works. Examples of iron-fronted buildings in Manhattan cast by the Atlantic Iron Works include 268 Canal Street (1886, Lansing C. Holden) in the proposed Tribeca East Historic District and 485 Broome Street (1872, Elisha Sniffen) in the Soho-Cast Iron Historic District.

The tripartite composition of the 185-195 Broadway Building, with stories separated by strong horizontal elements, is derived from the Italianate style cast-iron-fronted commercial buildings erected between 1850 and 1875 in Manhattan and elsewhere. The fifteen bays of the Broadway facade are divided into groups of five by rusticated piers at the ground story and double-story fluted Ionic pilasters uniting the second and third stories. The cast-iron treatment of the Broadway facade is continued on the Driggs Street facade at the two southern bays. The remainder of that facade is executed in finely detailed brick with fenestration reflecting that found on Broadway. The storefronts of these facades contain several surviving original elements, such as cast-iron piers and the original cornice. The building is crowned by a bracketed Italianate cornice. The ornament on and around these classical elements, however, shows the inventive approach to design typical of the cast-iron buildings of the 1880s which departed from the classical vocabulary. A tall, slender calla lily rises from stylized drapery at the base of each double-story pilaster, and a smaller drapery form hangs from a leafy flower at the top of each smaller third-story pier, while the second-story piers have wreaths draped across their console brackets. The calla lilies on the pilasters are similar in concept to the spiral floral patterns found on two buildings in Manhattan designed by William W. Smith: the 361 Broadway Building (1881-82), a designated New York City Landmark, and the W. & J. Sloane Building, 880-88 Broadway (1882, 1898) in the Ladies' Mile Historic District.