

Richard Webber Harlem Packing House

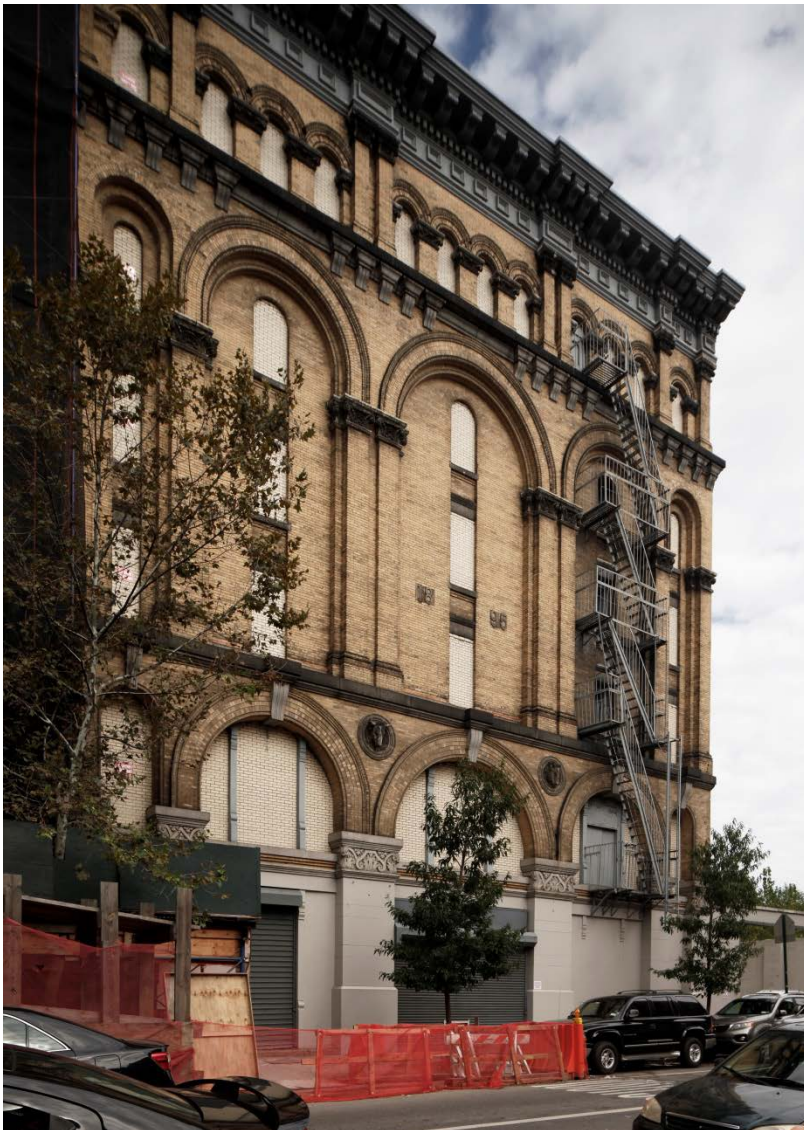
207-215 EAST 119TH STREET
Tax Map Block 1784 Lot 5

Built: 1895

Architect: B. & J. P. WALTHER

Style: ROMANESQUE REVIVAL

Proposed Action: Propose for Calendaring Month November 14, 2017



Richard Webber Harlem Packing House, LPC

The former Richard Webber Harlem Packing House is a historic meat market building in East Harlem, constructed in 1895 and originally part of a larger commercial slaughterhouse, meat packing and retail complex. Designed by the architectural firm of Bartholomew & John P. Walther for the prominent butcher Richard Webber, this Romanesque Revival building is a fine example of the style and an intact reminder of East Harlem's commercial and industrial past.

Richard Webber, an English immigrant, started a small butcher shop in East Harlem in the late 1870s. The company was very successful, expanding into a large complex with a staff of 500. Webber maintained other businesses, and at the time of his death in 1908, he was described by the New York Times as "one of the largest butchers in this city if not in the United States."

Webber was a member of the New York Produce Exchange, the Poultry and Game Trade Association, and the American Meat Packers' Association, and maintained affiliations with several local meat trade societies. He was active in the community, serving on the Harlem Board of Commerce, and as a trustee of the Harlem Savings Bank. He was also a pioneer educator, giving lectures at New York Teachers College for the opening of their domestic science department, and at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

Bartholomew and John Peter Walther designed the meat packing house, which was constructed in 1895. Active in the late-19th and early-20th century, the architects Bartholomew Walther and his son John Peter Walther specialized in warehouses, factories and flats buildings, and designed a number of buildings in Upper Manhattan.

Much taller than the other buildings in the complex, the formal design and high quality craftsmanship of the Packing House presented a sophisticated public face for Webber's operations, the six-story, brick and stone Romanesque Revival building features a tripartite façade with a stone base, grand arches and pilasters with carved Corinthian capitals, surmounted by an prominent bracketed cornice. The central bay of the façade includes the building's date 1895 in carved stone, and prominently features terra-cotta cow head reliefs symbolizing the building's original function.

The complex remained in use by the Webber meat packing company until 1928, after which the building served a variety of functions. This building retains a high degree of historic integrity; limited alterations including infilled windows and painted masonry at the base do not diminish its strong architectural character or presence.