



The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

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COMMISSION GIVES LANDMARK STATUS TO TWO NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE BRONX

Designed by Carrère & Hastings and McKim, Mead & White, Branches Are among 67 Funded by Andrew Carnegie To Establish a Citywide Library System in the Early 20th Century

The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved the designations of the New York Public Library's Woodstock and Hunts Point branches in the Bronx as New York City landmarks, citing their striking design, history and cultural significance. The Commission also voted to formally consider proposals to give landmark status to a 19th century residence on Staten Island, and expand a proposed historic district in Queens.

The two library branches are among 67 that were constructed in all five boroughs in the first three decades of the 20th century with a \$5.2 million donation from steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. The city contributed \$1.6 million to pay for the books and land for each library, and promised to cover upkeep costs and operate them in perpetuity. The Carnegie branches, all of which are similar in style and scale, were intended to stand out in their communities, and constructed in central locations near schools and other important civic institutions.



Located at 761 East 160th Street in the Morrisania section of the borough, the urban palazzo-style Woodstock Branch (see photo, at left, courtesy of the New York Public Library) opened February 17, 1914 and was designed by McKim, Mead & White, whose commissions include the Boston Public Library, Low Memorial Library at Columbia University and the J. Pierpont Morgan Library.

The Hunts Point Branch at 877 Southern Blvd. opened July 1, 1929 and was built in the Italian Renaissance style to the designs of Carrère & Hastings, who were responsible for the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, Grand Army Plaza and the Manhattan Bridge Arch and Colonnade.

“For the better part of a century, these fine buildings have anchored the communities of Morrisania and Hunts Point,” said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney. “They were built in response to the explosive increase in the city’s population and a growing imperative to make knowledge freely accessible to all New Yorkers, a mission that continues to this day.”

McKim, Mead & White and Carrère & Hastings were two of five firms selected to design the 67 Carnegie libraries in cooperation with each other to produce a unified collection. McKim, Mead & White designed 12 of the branches, while Carrère & Hastings designed 14.

The three-story, three-bay Woodstock branch has a classically inspired façade clad in rusticated limestone and features an offset entrance, carved stone ornament, and tall, arched windows on the first floor and a frieze topped by a simple limestone cornice. It's almost identical to McKim, Mead & White's West 40th Street Branch, and was the seventh of nine Carnegie libraries that opened in the Bronx. The branch had 5,500 square feet on each floor and a total of 11,000 books on its shelves.

With two stories and 12,000 square feet, the Hunts Point Branch was the last of the 67 Carnegie libraries to be built and had 14,000 books when it opened. The imposing, brick rectangular building (pictured right), located on a prominent corner lot, is trimmed with richly detailed terra cotta ornament and topped by a boldly corbelled cornice. Its main façade is composed of an elegant arcade accented by roundels that recall architect Filippo Brunelleschi's early 15th-century Foundling Hospital in Florence.



In addition to the votes on the libraries, the Commission voted unanimously to “calendar,” or schedule, public hearings on proposals to give individual landmark status to **327 Westervelt Avenue**, a 19th-century, Shingle-style residence in the New Brighton section of Staten Island, and historic district status to **212 buildings in the Ridgewood** section of Queens, the second phase of the Commission's effort to preserve the neighborhood's distinct architecture and historical and cultural significance. The proposed district is bounded by Woodward Avenue to the north, Seneca Avenue to the south, Woodbine Street to the west and Catalpa Avenue to the east. The Commission is expected to vote in September on a proposal to give historic district status 90 buildings to the northwest of those included in the second phase. Dates for the hearings on the Staten Island residence and second phase of the proposed Ridgewood district were not immediately scheduled.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency responsible for protecting and preserving New York City's architecturally, historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Since its creation in 1965, LPC has granted landmark status to more than 25,000 buildings, including 1,229 individual landmarks, 110 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks and 93 historic districts in all five boroughs. Under the city's landmarks law, considered the most powerful in the nation, the Commission must be comprised of at least three architects, a historian, a realtor, a planner or landscape architect, as well as a representative of each borough.