

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
October 13, 1998, Designation List 298  
LP-1994

**Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch**, 431 Sixth Avenue, aka 427-441 Sixth Avenue, 350-354 8th Street, and 377-383 9th Street, Brooklyn. Built 1906; architect, Raymond F. Almirall.

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1006, Lot 1

On April 21, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 9). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. A representative of the library spoke in favor of designation. There were three additional speakers in favor of designation; there were no speakers in opposition.

#### Summary



The Park Slope Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, built in 1905-06, was one of the earliest branch library buildings constructed in the Borough of Brooklyn using the multi-million dollar gift provided by Andrew Carnegie. This building was one of four Brooklyn Carnegie branches designed by Raymond F. Almirall, who served as secretary of the Brooklyn Carnegie Committee's Architects' Advisory Commission, and was later hired to plan the central Brooklyn Public Library building. Park Slope, by the second half of the nineteenth century, had become a popular residential area for middle- and upper-class professionals, as a result of the development of Prospect Park and the ease of transportation to Manhattan provided by the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge. The active and well-organized population demanded a substantial library facility for their local branch, which had been organized originally in 1900 and first housed in the Litchfield Villa in Prospect Park. Almirall provided a dignified brick and stone structure which the contemporary press called "imposing" and "the most pretentious" [of the Carnegie libraries]. Located on a prominent site, with a projecting, columned entrance portico, large, tripartite windows, and classically-inspired, carved stone ornament, the well-planned and elegantly designed building continues to serve as a focal point for the Park Slope community.

## DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### Brooklyn Libraries<sup>1</sup>

Early in the nineteenth century, a number of small libraries and library associations (both free and subscription) were started in Brooklyn. The first seems to have been a commercial circulating library which was begun in 1809 by Joseph Pierson; around that same time the Brooklyn Union Sabbath School also made books available to its students. While neither of these endured, they represent the beginning of numerous attempts to create substantial collections of reading material for Brooklyn's growing population.

The first free library of Brooklyn was the Apprentices' Library, founded by Augustus Graham in 1823, and incorporated in 1824 as the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association. It was located in its own building on the corner of Henry and Cranberry Streets from 1825 until 1836 when it moved to the Brooklyn Lyceum.<sup>2</sup> In 1843, the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library Association broadened its scope of educational activities and changed its name to the Brooklyn Institute (later becoming the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Letters), while the library changed its name to the Youths' Free Library.

Near the middle of the century, two other subscription or membership libraries were opened: the Brooklyn Athenaeum Library, and the Brooklyn Mercantile Library. Before long, these two organizations merged their administration and both were housed in the Brooklyn Athenaeum on the corner of Atlantic and Clinton Streets. In 1867, ground was broken on Montague Street for a new building for the Mercantile Library Association; in 1878 its name was changed to The Brooklyn Library.<sup>3</sup> The Brooklyn Library also operated the Eastern District (now Williamsburgh) branch, located on Bedford Avenue.

Another private library was started in 1867 by the Union for Christian Work, a relief organization founded in 1865. This private organization received part of its funds from the City of Brooklyn and thus the library was free for persons "of good character who were duly recommended."<sup>4</sup> The library was given to the people of Brooklyn in 1882.

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, The Brooklyn Library grew through gifts of money and private collections (of books, musical scores, etc.) This period also witnessed the development of a number of smaller libraries, both reading rooms and circulating collections, in different parts of Kings County. Examples included: the Long Island Free

Library, a circulating library on Atlantic Avenue, near Flatbush, which was the largest of the local libraries; the Bay Ridge Free Circulating Library, begun in 1888 after having been started as a reading room shortly before this; and Fort Hamilton, another free library opened in 1889. In addition, various public school libraries, while developed for schoolchildren, came to be used for area residents as well. The library of Brooklyn's Eastern District, in Williamsburgh, was probably the largest of this type.

In 1892 the Library of the Union of Christian Work absorbed the Youths' Free Library, thus severing the latter's ties with the Brooklyn Institute (which became the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences), and clearing the way for the establishment of a genuine free public library system for Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Library, however, was not interested in becoming such a free library for fear of losing its pre-eminent position as a scholarly, research institution. Therefore, a new organization, the Brooklyn Public Library, was established in 1892 by an act of the New York State Legislature, as a department of the city government, to be administered by a board of directors. The first branch of the new system in the City of Brooklyn was opened in 1897 in a former public school building in the Bedford section. Between 1898 and 1901, Brooklyn developed a sixteen-branch system, incorporating both new and existing libraries as well as an Administration Headquarters and a Traveling Library Department. Despite the absorption of the City of Brooklyn into Greater New York in 1898, the Brooklyn Public Library remained independent from the New York Public Library.<sup>5</sup>

An agreement between the Brooklyn Public Library and the City of New York in 1902 (ratified in 1903) arranged for the management of the Brooklyn Public Library to be handled by a new private corporation with its own Board of Trustees, also to be called the Brooklyn Public Library. After this, the still-private Brooklyn Library deeded all its property, including its special collections and endowment funds to the new corporation, adding considerably to the stature of the institution.

### The Andrew Carnegie Gift<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, libraries were seen as an important means of improving the lives of poor Americans and new immigrants, and much effort was spent to make them available in working class neighborhoods, along with parks,

playgrounds, and public baths. Because of the connotation of self-improvement, libraries were often favored with gifts from wealthy individuals. Andrew Carnegie, who had been a poor working boy in Pennsylvania and was the exemplar of the self-made man, attributed much of his own success to the hours he was allowed to spend in the private library of Colonel James Anderson. Carnegie spelled out his philanthropic philosophy in two articles published in 1889 in the *North American Review* and later reprinted as the title essay of his book, *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (1901). Carnegie's aim was "to help those who would help themselves."<sup>7</sup> He was thus continuing a popular charitable tradition when he decided, in 1881, to use a portion of his vast wealth to donate library buildings to some of his favorite towns. He began with towns with which he had a connection, such as Dunfermline in Scotland where he was born, and Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, where he lived after emigrating to this country.

During the last years of the nineteenth century, Carnegie expanded his grant process, donating libraries to 26 towns in 1899, with a total of 204 towns by 1903. Using the practical abilities he developed during his business career, Carnegie created a complete system for his library grants, demanding that the localities provide the sites and tax their populations for money for books and upkeep in return for his gift, which would be used to construct the actual buildings. Through his Carnegie Corporation, established in 1911 and one of the first such philanthropic foundations, he institutionalized his generosity, with the goal of improving the standard of living of the working poor. By 1917, Carnegie had given over \$41 million to more than 1,400 communities (mostly small towns) throughout the United States for the construction of 1,680 library buildings.

By basing his gifts on specific criteria, Carnegie was able to remove the sense of paternalistic charity so often found in earlier donations. He was also able to impose certain design standards on the buildings and, after 1908, allowed his secretary to approve all library designs. As a result there is a certain harmony and continuity of design among the numerous Carnegie libraries. He insisted, and the public contribution demanded, that they be modest rather than extravagant, with practical interior planning to get the best value for his money. While each building is distinct, there are similar design characteristics among the Carnegie branches. In Brooklyn they are freestanding, masonry buildings faced in red brick with limestone trim.<sup>8</sup> One or two

stories high, they have prominent, (mostly) centrally-located entrances reached by a flight of stairs. The style of the buildings was classical, with stone ornament consisting primarily of columns, pilasters, pediments, cornices, quoins, and keystones. Large windows fill much of the facade. In addition, Carnegie was concerned with the siting of the libraries and wanted them to stand out as libraries, with a central location, preferably close to other institutions such as schools or YM/YWCA's. It was felt that it was desirable to establish the libraries

as far as possible, in conspicuous positions on well-frequented streets....The fact that a branch library is constantly before the eyes of the neighboring residents so that all are familiar with its location will undoubtedly tend to increase its usefulness.<sup>9</sup>

Although Andrew Carnegie lived in New York and served for many years as a trustee of the New York Free Circulating Library, at first he considered the city's system too wealthy for his gift. By 1901 however, he changed his mind and offered to fund the branch library system for New York City. Between 1901 and 1929, Carnegie donated \$5.2 million for 67 branch library buildings in all five boroughs. Of that amount, the Brooklyn Public Library received \$1.6 million.

#### The Brooklyn Carnegie Libraries

In 1901, an agreement was reached between the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library, and representatives of Andrew Carnegie which called for the construction of 20 branch libraries in the Borough of Brooklyn.<sup>10</sup> A committee was then appointed to select the sites for these buildings and to oversee their construction. The Carnegie Committee was chaired by David A. Boody (former Mayor of Brooklyn and President of the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Public Library), with members Daniel W. McWilliams, John W. Devoy, and R. Ross Appleton. *The Brooklyn Eagle* later declared that this committee would have a very difficult job dealing with an eager and large population.

The Committee will have its judgment taxed to the utmost in deciding where to put the new libraries and give every part of the borough the benefit of the added library facilities...<sup>11</sup>

For the designs of these branches, the Carnegie Committee first hired Professor A.D.F. Hamlin of

Columbia University as consulting architect.<sup>12</sup> Hamlin established an Architects' Advisory Commission consisting of the following individuals or firms from Brooklyn: Lord & Hewlett, W. B. Tubby, R. L. Davis, Walker & Morris, and R. F. Almirall. Hamlin's goal was to create a "unity of general type and character . . . without the sacrifice of that individuality which gives interest to a design." The procedure called for each of the five architects on the advisory commission to create a preliminary design for one particular branch, in consultation with the entire commission, a librarian, and Hamlin himself, thus gaining the collective wisdom and judgment of the entire group. These preliminary designs would then go to the Carnegie Committee to help them reach conclusions about what features and requirements would be needed at all the libraries. The committee would then frame final instructions for the architects who would prepare the working drawings. After this, the rest of the fifteen branches would be assigned to the architects. Since most of the members of the commission, like Almirall, were trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the designs had distinctive, French classical tendencies.

Raymond F. Almirall was selected secretary of the Architects' Advisory Commission. He also seems to have become a spokesman for the libraries. In a 1904 interview, Almirall compared the plans for Brooklyn's Carnegie branches<sup>13</sup> very positively to those for the Manhattan branches which, he felt, were too alike.

In Brooklyn we are working to fit each building to its environment, to make each serve the needs of its individual neighborhood and surroundings. While we have sought originality of design externally, our chief concern has been the internal arrangement. This varies in details widely in the different buildings according to their ground plans.

Still later, Almirall was the featured speaker at the meeting of the American Library Association in Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, in July 1906.<sup>14</sup> In his talk, Almirall called for,

a common basis of design and of construction with a proper discrimination between essentials and non-essentials, as they may appear in the various applications.

#### Park Slope<sup>15</sup>

Park Slope is that section of Brooklyn located just to the west of Prospect Park between Flatbush

Avenue at the north and 15th Street on the south. The scene of a major battle during the Revolutionary War, the area remained primarily rural in character until the 1860s. Although some development had begun in the area as early as the 1860s, war and economic woes made it slow and spotty. In 1866-67, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux laid out the design of Prospect Park, along with an elliptically-shaped entrance plaza (now Grand Army Plaza) and a series of parkways which essentially provided the framework for the future development of Brooklyn. The construction of Prospect Park, along with the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883 (which provided easy access to Manhattan) encouraged the development of Park Slope as a residential district for prosperous merchants, lawyers, physicians, brokers, and other professionals who commuted to and from their offices in lower Manhattan. By the mid-1880s these people began to build impressive mansions and townhouses in the northern part of the area (the streets closest to the park and Grand Army Plaza). Later, however, in addition to the fine houses on Eighth Avenue and Prospect Park West, the area was built up with simpler rowhouses, and low, walk-up apartment houses for people of more modest means, particularly south of 11th Street.

#### Raymond F. Almirall (1869-1939)<sup>16</sup>

A native of Brooklyn, Raymond Almirall studied at the Polytechnic Institute and earned a degree in architecture from Cornell University in 1891. After a four-year stay in Paris as a student of Victor Laloux at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, he returned to New York in 1896, and began an architectural practice with John W. Ingle which lasted until 1900. Their best known works are the Binghamton (N.Y.) City Hall (1897-98), and the Ormande Hotel in Florida (1899). During his architectural career, Almirall specialized in public buildings, designing many hospitals, such as Fordham (1905) and Seaview (1906-1914) on Staten Island, as well as several buildings for the Metropolitan Hospital on Blackwell's (now Roosevelt) Island (1906-1910). Almirall's designs for religious institutions included St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church, and Church of the Nativity in Brooklyn, Roman Catholic churches at Glen Cove, Oyster Bay, and Sea Cliff, Long Island, an Episcopal Church in Franklin, Pa., and the Novitiate of the Little Sisters of the Poor, Queens, Long Island. He also designed bank buildings, such as the one for the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank (1908-12, a designated New York City Landmark and designated Interior

Landmark, 51 Chambers Street, Manhattan), the Kingston Savings Bank, and the Binghamton Savings Bank in that city, as well as individual homes in Georgia and New Jersey.

Almirall gave much of his time and energy to civic affairs. In 1900 he was appointed by Theodore Roosevelt to the Tenement House Commission, a group which was responsible for many of the laws designed to improve this type of apartment. In 1919-21 he served as foreman of a special grand jury which had been called to investigate an alleged conspiracy on the part of subway and union officials to raise the subway fares. After serving in France during World War I, Almirall returned there in 1924 as the representative of William Welles Bosworth, architect in charge of the restorations of Versailles and the Trianon for John D. Rockefeller, Jr. He was later made a chevalier of the Legion of Honor for this work.

As one of the five members of the Architects' Advisory Commission for the Carnegie libraries in Brooklyn, Almirall was also responsible for the designs for the Pacific Branch (1903), the Bushwick Branch (1908), and the Eastern Parkway Branch (1914), in addition to the Prospect (Park Slope) Branch. Almirall traveled with Hamlin and others throughout Europe in 1906, in an effort to look at many different libraries as inspirations for their designs.<sup>17</sup> In 1908, Almirall was chosen to design the main Brooklyn Public Library as part of a large scheme for the development of Grand Army Plaza. Portions of his building were constructed but the project stalled for lack of funds in the 1920s. After Almirall's death in 1939, construction was resumed but most of what Almirall had built was replaced by a design by Githens & Keally.<sup>18</sup>

#### The Park Slope Branch

The Park Slope Branch library, which began as the Prospect Branch, was housed in Litchfield Villa in Prospect Park in 1900. Originally a traveling library, it was composed solely of works on natural history. As demand grew for other types of books, particularly those for children, the Board of the Brooklyn Public Library arranged for a new permanent home and a broader collection. By 1901, with a collection of 13,000 books and a membership of 1,700, it was moved to larger quarters in two storefronts on 9th Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues.

The site for the Prospect Branch was already under discussion in 1903 and was purchased by the city in 1904. This building was the ninth of the Brooklyn Carnegie branches, opening with great

fanfare in July 1906. Thousands attended the opening ceremonies which were presided over by David Boody, head of the Brooklyn Carnegie Committee. A local newspaper reported, "The imposing building, which is the most pretentious of the many libraries given to the city by Carnegie, was crowded to overflowing."<sup>19</sup>

This area received one of the earliest branches, not only because the existing location was so overcrowded, but also because of intense lobbying by the South Brooklyn Board of Trade. The selection of the particular site on Sixth Avenue between 8th and 9th Streets was a matter of some controversy. Two properties were initially approved by the Committee for the branch site, one at Sixth Avenue near 7th Street, and the site between 8th and 9th Streets where it was actually built. The other site was smaller and would thus cost less for the city to purchase. It also had a politically well-connected owner who wanted to sell the property. The site finally chosen was across 8th Street from P.S. 39 (1876-77, a designated New York City Landmark), a situation the Carnegie Committee generally favored. More importantly, however, the South Brooklyn Board of Trade wanted the larger site and arranged for local contributions to cover half the cost of the land purchase. Since this was an offer the City could not refuse, the larger site was eventually purchased, resulting in an expansive blockfront location.<sup>20</sup>

Almirall took full advantage of this important site when designing the building, placing it on a small rise, set back and surrounded by lawn, trees, and an iron fence. The wide front spreads across most of the blockfront, with an impressive, centrally located, columned entrance portico. This entrance is reached by a flight of stairs and is embellished by stone moldings with the name of the building carved above it. The two-story, brick and limestone, Classical Revival style building was typical of the Carnegie libraries. Ostentation was not desired and so ornament was limited to the columns and carved stone surrounds at the entrance, the end panels which feature open books to illustrate the building's purpose, the cornice and parapet, and the keystones enhanced by torches representing the light of learning. Planning was an important component in these libraries and this one reflects that concern in the wings which extend to each side of the entrance. Each houses one of the two main reading rooms, one for adults and one for children, with large windows to allow light into these spaces and a central circulation desk for easy access and visibility. The book stacks and smaller workrooms

are located in a two-story rear extension, with community meeting rooms available in the basement. The building displays a restrained, yet elegant, design in an open setting which makes it truly stand out in the bustling Park Slope neighborhood.

#### Later History

The library has been in almost continuous use since it opened in 1906. During its early years it was open 365 days a year, until 9 P.M. each day. For health reasons, the building was closed from July through September 1916 during a polio epidemic. In the early 1940s, the entrance to the building was reconstructed, including the steps and platforms.<sup>21</sup> The iron fence which surrounds the building appears to have been added during this time period. Neglect to the building in the 1940s led to its closure for major repairs from January 1948 until July 1949. After another period of delayed repairs during the 1970s, the building had again become badly deteriorated. From 1978 through 1981 it was vacated for total rehabilitation. Heating, cooling, and plumbing systems were replaced, and repairs were made to the walls and roof. There are security gates which close off the building's main entrance which were probably added at this time. In June 1981, the library was reopened with new furnishings, while maintaining much of the original fabric, such as fireplaces and wall paneling. In 1975, the name was changed to the Park Slope Branch.

#### Description

The Park Slope Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library is a brick and stone structure sited on a prominent, raised and bermed lot comprising the entire blockfront of Sixth Avenue, between 8th and 9th Streets. A simple, non-historic iron fence marks the perimeter of the plot. The building sits on a raised limestone basement, which is fronted by an areaway concealed behind the berm. (The below-grade portion of the basement has window openings with non-historic sash; none of these elements are visible from the street.) The library is topped by a stone parapet which hides the shallow pitch of the standing seam metal roof. T-shaped in plan, the building has its long front symmetrically arranged around a projecting, central entrance portico

featuring four Doric columns in antis. The columns support a full entablature surmounted by an engraved parapet exhibiting the words, "Brooklyn Public Library/Established 1897." A set of stairs leads to a pair of non-historic entrance doors, recessed within the portico. The entrance is enframed by a foliate molding which also encloses a transom panel incised with "Prospect Branch." A large keystone ornamented by a torch is located over the door. To each side of the entry are three double-height rectangular window openings, each containing a tripartite, multi-sash replacement window topped by a three-part transom. The window openings are covered by non-historic metal grilles. Each window is topped by brick voussoirs with a stone keystone decorated with a torch. A recessed, brick panel fills the spandrel below each window. Above the keystones, a stone bandcourse rings the entire building, while it, in turn, is topped by flat stone panels above each window.

The narrow end facades are identical to each other. Each is faced in stone, with paired, engaged pilasters flanking a flat panel edged with a foliate molding. The pilasters support a full entablature and a triangular pediment which is embellished by a carved open book.

The rear of the building is visible from the side streets, and is also faced in brick and stone with similar, although simpler motifs. The rear of the main section has two bays with large windows on each side (the same size and with the same ornamentation as those on the front), and then the building extends back in two sections. The large, double-height, single stories of the front section are replaced by two stories of smaller windows. In the first section, they are separated by stone-edged panels in the spandrels, while the top story windows are topped by broad stone lintels. A rear door is located at the back of this first section. The final section has windows with continuous stone sills and lintels, while the stone bandcourse continues around from the front.

Report prepared by  
Virginia Kurshan  
Research Department

## NOTES

1. The history of the library system in Brooklyn has been compiled from the following sources: Margaret B. Freeman, *The Brooklyn Public Library: A History* (New York, 1966); Marcia McKee, *A Brief History of the Brooklyn Public Library* (New York, 1968); and Louis Feipel, *Historical Information Regarding the Brooklyn Public Library* (Brooklyn, 1937).
2. Beginning in 1839, the Brooklyn Lyceum Building was also the location of the Brooklyn City Library, a subscription library which continued to function until 1851. Eventually its collection of books was divided between the Long Island Historical Society and the Youth's Free Library of Brooklyn Institute.
3. This was a different institution from the current Brooklyn Public Library. The Montague Street building was a Victorian Gothic design by architect P. B. Wight.
4. Feipel, 5.
5. During the late nineteenth century while the various private libraries and reading rooms in Brooklyn were being established and consolidated, the same activity was occurring in Manhattan. In 1895, the privately-owned Astor and Lenox Libraries, and the Tilden Trust were brought together to form the Reference Department of the New York Public Library. The New York Free Circulating Library was established in 1878 with both public funds and the generous donations of wealthy New Yorkers, and in 1901 became the Circulation Department of the New York Public Library.
6. The information on the Carnegie gift and the libraries built from it was adapted from Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy, The Carnegie Libraries of New York City* (New York: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, 1996), Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free To All, Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), and LPC, *New York Public Library, Tottenville Branch (LP-1867)*, report by David Breiner (New York: The City of New York, 1995).
7. See Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1917), 345-351.
8. The one exception to this was the Red Hook Branch, built in 1915 by Richard A. Walker. This building, which is no longer extant, was constructed in a Mediterranean Revival style, with stuccoed walls, wide, overhanging eaves and a deep cornice pierced by attic windows.
9. Dierickx, 27.
10. *The Brooklyn Eagle*, July 24, 1901. Although this amount of money was supposed to fund 20 libraries for the Borough of Brooklyn, 21 libraries were actually built.
11. *Eagle*, Oct. 20, 1901.
12. The information about the design process comes from a newspaper clipping entitled "Five Districts Named for Carnegie Libraries." This is dated 1901 and was found in the clippings file of the Brooklyn Public Library, with no other, more specific identification.
13. "Types of the Carnegie Libraries in the City," *The Sun* May 29, 1904.
14. "Paper by Brooklynite Read at Narragansett," *The Brooklyn Eagle*, July 5, 1906.
15. The information about the development of Park Slope was taken from the Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Park Slope Historic District Designation Report (LP-0709)* (New York: City of New York, 1973).
16. Information on Raymond F. Almirall comes from the architects' files of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, specifically: "Almirall, Raymond Francis," in *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography* 24 (New York: James T. White & Co., 1941), 321; "Almirall Dies; Architectural Firm head, 70," *The New York Times* (5/19/39); and Henry R. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1970), 17-18.
17. *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Brooklyn Public Library* (1906) (Brooklyn, NY: Eagle Press, 1907), 24.

18. See Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Brooklyn Public Library, Central Building Designation Report* (LP-1963), report prepared by Matthew A. Postal (New York: City of New York, 1997).
19. *Brooklyn Citizen*, July 28, 1906.
20. *The New York Times*, August 11, 1903; Aug. 15, 1904; August 18, 1904. See also, bound collection of letters to and from the Carnegie Committee regarding the selection of sites for Brooklyn branch libraries, in the Brooklyn History Collection, Brooklyn Public Library. The site was eventually acquired on September 28, 1904, for \$35,000 after the South Brooklyn Board of Trade offered to raise \$17,000 toward its purchase. According to Dierickx (p. 87), the building itself cost \$91,678.
21. Brooklyn Department of Buildings, BN 2661-1942.



## 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 the Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch, has a special character, and 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 Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch building, built in 1905-06 was one of the earliest Brooklyn branch libraries constructed with money from Andrew Carnegie's gift; that Andrew Carnegie's gift to Brooklyn of \$1,600,000 for the construction of 21 branch libraries helped establish the importance of the Brooklyn Public Library throughout the borough; that the Architects' Advisory Commission, assigned to oversee the designs of the Brooklyn Carnegie libraries, led to a uniformity of scale and general design type within which the architects created a wide range of individual structures; that this building's architect, Raymond F. Almirall, was a well-respected designer of numerous institutional and private buildings, who served as secretary of the advisory commission, and later designed the central building for the Brooklyn Public Library; that this was one of four branch library designs Almirall created and one of the most elegant and well-designed of his library works; that the library's design reflects its function, with two wings for different reading rooms and a projecting, two-story rear section housing the stacks, tall windows to illuminate the reading rooms, a grand entranceway, and carved ornament including torches to light the way of learning and open books at each end panel to explain what was inside; that the refurbished building with public meeting rooms in the basement, continues to serve the numerous needs of people from the whole community; and that it joins with the neighboring school to create a focal point for Park Slope.

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 Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch, 431 Sixth Avenue, aka 427-441 Sixth Avenue, 350-354 8th Street, and 377-383 9th Street, Brooklyn, and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1006, Lot 1, as its Landmark Site.



Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch, 431 Sixth Avenue, Brooklyn

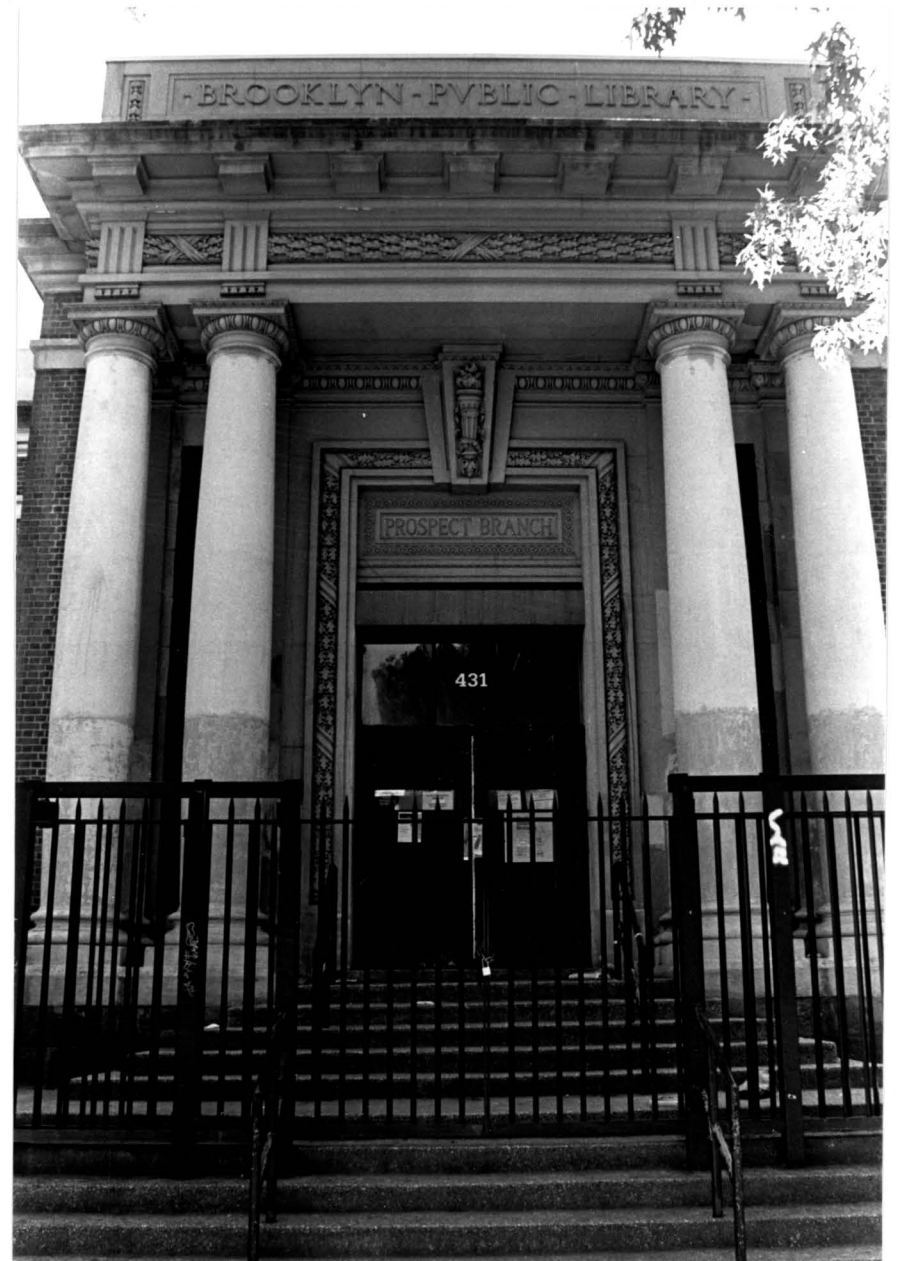
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch, 431 Sixth Avenue, Brooklyn  
Eighth Street elevation  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



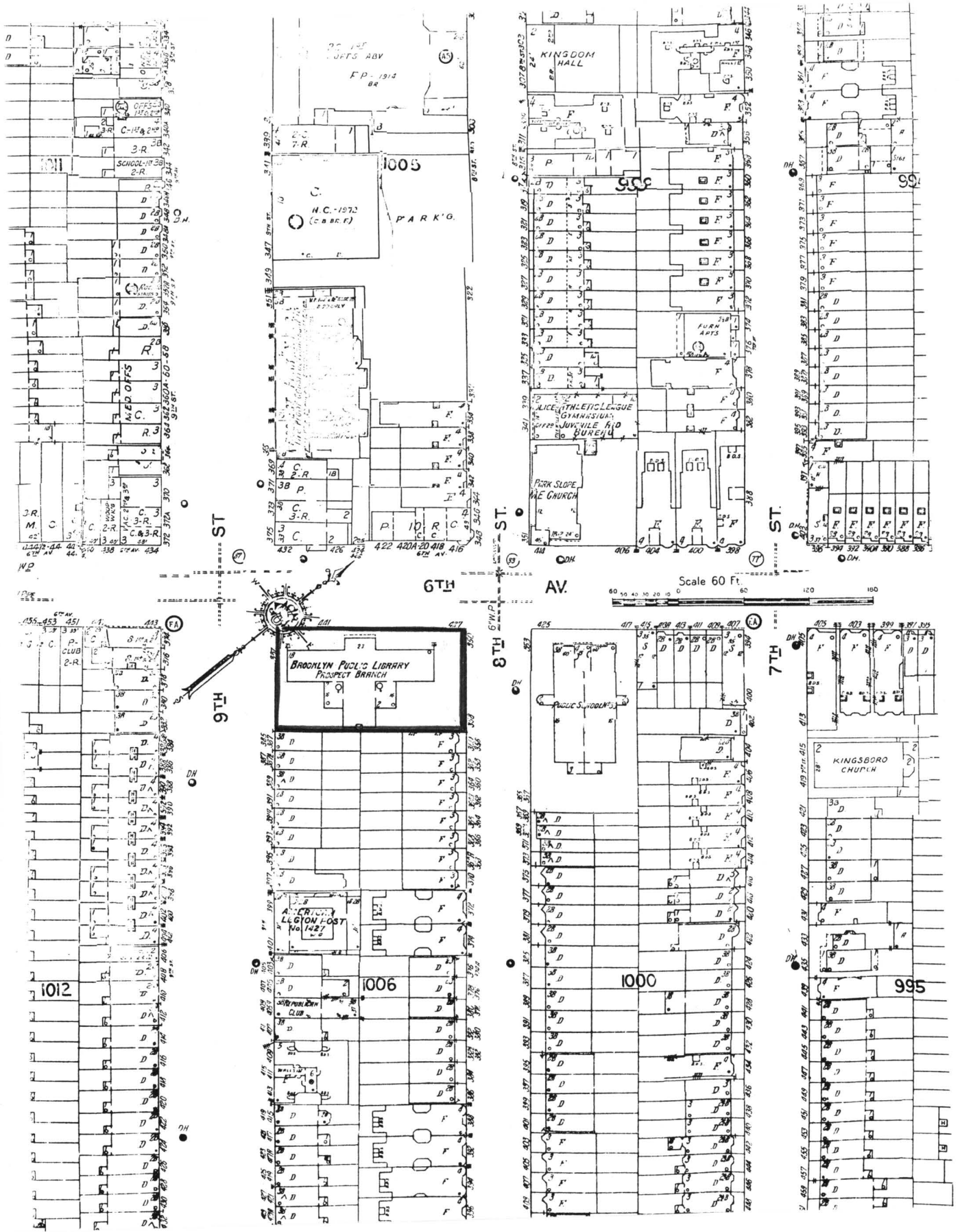
Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch  
End gable detail, 8th Street  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch  
Entrance portico detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch  
Entrance detail  
*Photo: Carl Forster*



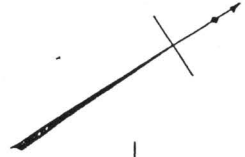
Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch, 431 Sixth Avenue, aka 427-441 Sixth Avenue, 350-354 8th Street and 377-383 9th Street, Brooklyn

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1006, Lot 1

Source: Sanborn Building and Property Atlas of Brooklyn, N.Y. (Experian, 1997), 18th ed., vol. 6, pl. 34

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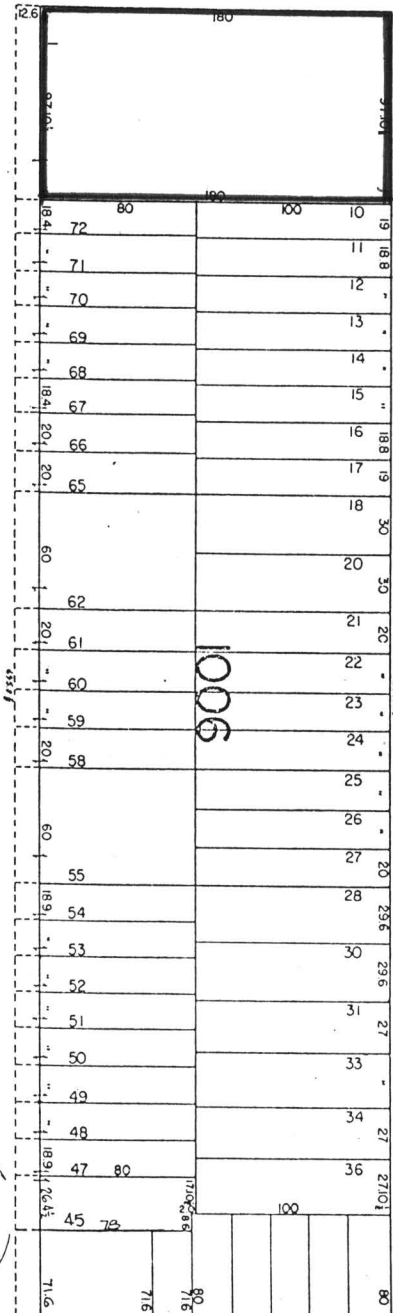
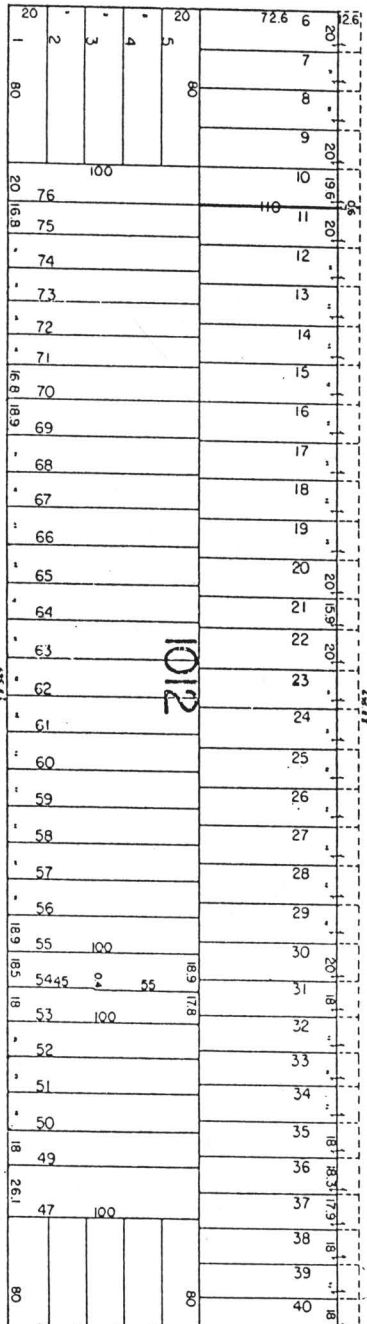
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Brooklyn Public Library, Park Slope Branch, 431 Sixth Avenue, aka 427-441 Sixth Avenue, 350-354 8th Street and 377-383 9th Street, Brooklyn  
 Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1006, Lot 1  
 Source: NYC Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map