

Landmarks Preservation Commission
October 13, 1998, Designation List 298
LP-1997

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, PORT RICHMOND BRANCH, 75 Bennett Street, Staten Island. Built 1904-05; architects Carrère & Hastings.

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 1007, Lot 26

On May 5, 1998, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 4). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. A representative of the New York Public Library spoke in favor of designation; there were no speakers in opposition. State Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly submitted a statement supporting designation.

Summary



Opened on March 18, 1905, the Port Richmond Branch of the New York Public Library is one of four Carnegie branch libraries on Staten Island and one of sixty-seven in New York City, built with Andrew Carnegie's 1901 donation of \$5.2 million which established a city-wide branch library system. The distinguished and prolific architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings designed the Port Richmond Branch as well thirteen other Carnegie branch libraries and the Main Building of the New York Public Library. The library, prominently sited on a corner, is Classical Revival in style with a center entrance highlighted by a columned portico above a flight of stairs leading to an interior brightly lit by large arched windows. Port Richmond has been a major village, port, and commercial center on Staten Island since the early nineteenth century. The library has played a prominent part in Port Richmond's social and civic life for nearly one hundred years.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

History of Port Richmond¹

Port Richmond is located on the north shore of Staten Island, adjacent to the Kill van Kull, the strait between Staten Island and Bayonne, New Jersey. The area was settled by the Dutch and the French in the late 1600s and was the site of the Dutch Reformed Church cemetery as early as 1690. At the time the area was sparsely populated; in 1698 only 727 people lived on all of Staten Island.

The county seat was established in 1729 in Richmond, in the center of the island, but much of the development occurred on the shore, at ferry landings. By 1771 the population of Staten Island was 2847. Port Richmond village grew throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to become a small but important ferry landing, transferring people and property between Staten Island and New Jersey, in particular Bayonne and New Brunswick. The village incorporated as Port Richmond in 1866, the same year as the Staten Island villages of New Brighton and Edgewater.²

Port Richmond was a transportation center for three centuries. The ferry landings were located at the north end of Port Richmond Avenue, which was laid out in 1701. The Staten Island Railroad, established in 1860, built a station there in the 1880s, and Port Richmond Square was a transportation hub for streetcars by 1900. Port Richmond's commercial and industrial base included the 1836 Staten Island Whaling Company; the first bank on Staten Island, established in 1837 in conjunction with the whaling company; and the Jewett White Lead Company, which later became part of Dutch Boy Paints and operated into the twentieth century. Lumber and coal yards sprang up along the waterfront.

The village's earliest residents were Dutch and French Huguenots. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Irish and German immigrants built houses in the neighborhood. Other immigrant groups, including Scandinavians and Poles, moved in later in the century, building frame and masonry detached and row houses. Staten Island's first public park, now called Veteran's Park and located across the street from the Port Richmond branch library, was laid out in 1836. In 1883, Port Richmond was described as a model village:

The general appearance of Port Richmond is inviting and pleasing. The streets are wide, well-macadamized and smooth; the side walks well paved and generally shaded by trees of large growth. The business

blocks are substantial and the dwellings range from pretentious mansions to quiet cottages.³

In 1898, at the time of the consolidation of New York City, the population of Staten Island was 65,000.⁴ Population increased slowly on Staten Island and in Port Richmond in the first half of the twentieth century and no other libraries were built in the former village. After World War I, the borough's industrial base declined and the north shore factories slowly closed, spurred by the Depression in the 1930s. Port Richmond's ferry business ended with the opening of the Bayonne Bridge in 1931. Port Richmond Avenue was still considered the shopping and entertainment district for the surrounding communities in 1939, and Port Richmond remained a small but bustling village until after World War II, when it slowly declined. The area was the site of Staten Island's first public housing project in 1943. The neighborhood grew little and declined economically through the 1980s, but has recently experienced a social and economic resurgence, with the restoration of historic houses and buildings.

Staten Island Libraries⁵

During the nineteenth century several scattered subscription and reference libraries were located on Staten Island, but there were no known libraries in Port Richmond. Libraries began to be considered a fundamental part of public education in the nineteenth century, and the presence of libraries in the public schools is noted by 1845. This innovation was attributed to New Englanders who settled on Staten Island at the time. The majority of the libraries were reference libraries in institutions, like the Franklin Society library, which was established in 1833-34. The reference library of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences was established in 1881, the Staten Island Academy library was endowed by the Winter family in 1886, and both are still operating today.

The precursors to the public branch libraries were the reading rooms, which opened by the middle of the nineteenth century. These small libraries generally shared space in other buildings. Some were free and open to the public, and some were available by subscription. In 1859, J.C. Thompson's Reading Room was located on Bay Street and the Young People's Literary Association Rooms operated in Tompkinsville. There was a free reading room with 700 volumes in New Brighton in 1860. The Tottenville

Library Association, organized in 1899, was Staten Island's first free public library chartered by New York State. It had all of the hallmarks of a public branch library: a dedicated space, professional staff, regular hours, and easy access for the public. The association merged with The New York Public Library in 1903 and the collection was housed in the first Carnegie branch library building on Staten Island, the Tottenville Branch (1904).

The New York Public Library has operated the public libraries on Staten Island since four branch libraries were constructed as a result of the Carnegie grant: Tottenville (a designated New York City Landmark), Port Richmond (1905), Stapleton (1907), and St. George (1907). They are still operating today and represent a significant component of the eleven-branch library system on Staten Island.

The New York Public Library and Andrew Carnegie⁶

The New York Public Library was established in 1895 as a private corporation which received limited public funds. Formed by the merger of the Astor and Lenox Libraries and the Tilden Trust, it was primarily concerned with establishing a major reference library on the site of the old Croton Reservoir at Fifth Avenue and West 42nd Street. The consolidation of New York City in 1898 inspired the unification of the many library institutions in the city. The promise of a large grant from Andrew Carnegie in 1901 spurred the library mergers. The New York Free Circulating Library merged with the New York Public Library in 1901, contributing an eleven-branch library network in Manhattan. The New York Free Circulating Library had been established in 1878 to provide education and self-help for the poor. With branches located in poor and immigrant neighborhoods, it was supported by such wealthy citizens as Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, and Cornelius Vanderbilt, and from 1887 in part by public funds. Most of the small independent libraries, such as Aguilar, Webster, Kingsbridge, and Tottenville, joined the New York Public Library at this time, increasing the size of the still inadequate branch network.

Andrew Carnegie and John Shaw Billings, Director of the New York Public Library, strongly supported the amalgamation of all of the libraries, including the Brooklyn and Queens libraries, although they ultimately chose to remain independent.⁷ In 1901, when the library institutions were large and cohesive enough to suit him, Andrew Carnegie donated \$5.2 million to New York City to build a system of branch libraries in all five boroughs. The grant was divided among the three library systems, with the New York Public Library

receiving \$3.36 million, and Brooklyn and Queens allocated \$1.6 million and \$240,000 respectively. The grant bought sixty-seven libraries in all five boroughs, two more than originally envisioned.⁸ In a 1901 letter to John Shaw Billings, Carnegie said "Sixty-five libraries at one stroke probably breaks the record, but this is the day of big operations and New York is soon to be the biggest of Cities."⁹

Andrew Carnegie rose from poverty to become one of the wealthiest men in the United States, after he sold his steel business to J.P. Morgan in 1901. He began donating to libraries in 1881, but with the grant to New York City he began the vast, worldwide operation which made him unique in the world of philanthropy. Andrew Carnegie based his donations on a philosophy of giving he developed in the 1870s and 1880s. He believed that the wealthy should live simply and, while still living, give away their funds for the good of humanity. He considered seven areas worthy of his philanthropy: universities, libraries, medical centers, parks, meeting and concert halls, public baths, and churches. Like other wealthy New Yorkers involved in the social reform movement, he understood the problems facing New York City at the beginning of the twentieth century: the overcrowding from massive immigration, poverty, lack of education and lack of such facilities as baths, playgrounds, and libraries. Andrew Carnegie gave away about 90 percent of his wealth by the time he died in 1911. More than 1680 Carnegie libraries were built in the United States and over 2500 worldwide. Today the Carnegie Corporation and twenty other foundations and funds carry out his intentions.

The inventor of cost accounting, Carnegie gave away his money with great efficiency. His grant provided for the construction of the buildings, but New York City had to contribute the cost of the land as well as the books, the upkeep and the operation of the libraries in perpetuity. The acquisition of sites for the Carnegie branches cost the New York Public Library over \$1.6 million, just under half the cost of the buildings.

In 1901 the New York Public Library Board Executive Committee appointed a temporary architects' advisory committee consisting of Charles F. McKim of the firm McKim, Mead & White, John M. Carrère of Carrère & Hastings, and Walter Cook of Babb, Cook & Willard, to advise them on how to proceed with construction. The committee advised that the branches be uniform and recognizable in materials, style, plan, and scale and that different site requirements would provide variety. They recommended forming a committee of two to five

architectural firms who would design the buildings in cooperation with each other. Andrew Carnegie objected to the lack of competition in this system but ultimately was convinced that it would be faster and cheaper and would produce a more unified ensemble of buildings. The advisors, McKim, Carrère, and Cook, were fortuitously selected for the permanent committee and their firms designed most of The New York Public Library Carnegie branches.¹⁰ The architects consulted with the librarians, an innovation which was just becoming accepted in library planning and design.

Carrère & Hastings¹¹

The important architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings designed many of New York City's most prominent and enduring landmarks, including the Main Building of the New York Public Library (1898-1911), Grand Army Plaza (1913-16), the Manhattan Bridge Approach (1910-15), and the Staten Island Borough Hall (1904-06). John Mervin Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) met in Paris while studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Carrère, whose previous education was in Switzerland, graduated in 1882 and Hastings, who briefly attended Columbia University, graduated in 1884. Their architectural style was heavily influenced by their studies in Paris. Both men were hired out of school by the offices of McKim, Mead & White and in 1885 they founded their own firm.

The firm's earliest commissions were churches and hotels in Saint Augustine, Florida, designed for the famous and prescient developer and partner in Standard Oil, Henry Flagler. Their early hotels include the Ponce de Leon (1888) in St. Augustine, the Laurel-in-the-Pines (1889-90, demolished) in Lakewood, New Jersey, and the Hotel Jefferson (1893-94) in Richmond, Virginia. The majority of their significant work was in New York City, but they were responsible for the House and Senate Office Buildings (1905-08) in Washington, D.C. and Woolsey and Memorial Halls (1906) at Yale University.

Carrère & Hastings designed a wide variety of building types. They introduced the French Beaux-Arts style townhouse to New York City, influencing a generation of urban residential building.¹² Early, important houses include the Henry T. and Jessie Sloane House (1894-96, now the Lycée Français de New-York) at 9 East 72nd Street and the John Henry and Emily Vanderbilt Sloane Hammond House, now the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in New York (1902-03) at 9 East 91st Street. The versatile firm designed the Globe

Theater, now the Lunt-Fontanne Theater (1909-10) at 203-217 West 46th Street and First Church of Christ, Scientist (1899-1903) at 1 West 96th Street. All of these buildings are designated New York City landmarks.

The firm won the competition for the New York Public Library Main Building in 1897. This monumental Beaux-Arts style building was a major influence on early twentieth-century public architecture in New York. The firm proceeded to design fourteen classically-inspired Carnegie branch libraries in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island between 1904 and 1929.

John Carrère lived on Staten Island and helped plan the Civic Center. The firm designed several of the major buildings in the Civic Center area, including the Staten Island Borough Hall, the Richmond County Courthouse (1913-19), the St. George Branch of the New York Public Library (1907), and the old Ferry Terminal, (1908, burned). The firm was responsible for several other buildings on Staten Island, including three other Carnegie-funded libraries, the Tottenville (1904), Port Richmond (1905) and Stapleton (1907) branches, the Vanderbilt model houses (1900) in Clifton, and the Hughes Memorial Branch Library (1928).

While Thomas Hastings is credited as the firm's main designer, John Carrère had an interest in urban planning, writing *City Improvement from the Artistic Point of View* in 1908. Many of the firm's commissions involved planning and siting, such as Grand Army Plaza, the Manhattan Bridge Approach, and the Staten Island Civic Center. All of the libraries on Staten Island were carefully sited. They are prominently located on large corner lots surrounded by lawns, allowing ample natural light, while the St. George Branch is located on a hill overlooking the harbor. They stand out as public structures yet remain in context with their low-rise residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Carrère and Hastings were active and influential in the architectural profession; both served as directors of the American Institute of Architects and both were elected Fellows. Carrère was a director of the American Academy in Rome and founder of the Beaux-Arts Society, the New York City Art Commission and Federation of Fine Arts. Hastings was president of the Architectural League of New York. John Carrère died in an automobile accident in 1911 and Thomas Hastings continued the work of the firm, which included the remaining Carnegie libraries, the Standard Oil Building (1920-28, with Shreve, Lamb & Blake) at 26 Broadway and the Cunard Building (1917-21, with Benjamin Wistar

Morris) at 25 Broadway; both are designated landmarks.

Design and Construction

The sites for the Carnegie libraries were selected by the New York Public Library with approval from the City. Because the Carnegie libraries were so eagerly sought, site selection was the only part of the smooth-running building process where there was any contention. The Carnegie branches were intended to stand out in their communities, to be centrally located and, if possible, to be near schools and other civic structures. John S. Billings stated this position in 1901:

Every one of these buildings ought to be of one distinctive and uniform type, so that the most ignorant child going through the streets of the City will at once know a Carnegie Library when he or she sees it.¹³

On Staten Island, The New York Public Library set up an advisory group of residents to consult on locating the branches. It was first intended to build one central library, but the advisory committee suggested four.¹⁴ The branches were located in the more populated areas and were distributed geographically, with the Port Richmond and St. George branches at the north and Tottenville branch at the south. The New York Public Library consultant responsible for site selection, Alanson T. Briggs, hired a real estate agent, Cornelius G. Kolff, to find and appraise a site in Port Richmond. Kolff was enthusiastic about a centrally located site on Heberton Avenue and Bennett Street, describing it in a 1902 report:

It can safely be considered the choicest location in Port Richmond, as it is immediately opposite the public park and is surrounded by a class of residences which have firmly established the desirable residential character of the immediate surroundings.

It is easily accessible from all parts of Port Richmond: the Midland trolley, the Shore trolley, the Port Richmond station as well as the Port Richmond high school and churches of different denominations being in close proximity.¹⁵

The library bought this 100 foot by 100 foot property from Jose F.J. Xiques in 1902 for \$5000. The frame house on the site was demolished.¹⁶ Construction on the building started by 1904 and was completed in 1905. The E.E. Paul Company,

the builder, frequently worked with Carrère & Hastings. The company built the Tottenville and Stapleton Branches on Staten Island as well as the Epiphany, Riverside, and Muehlenberg Branches in Manhattan for Carrère & Hastings as well as the Woodstock Branch in the Bronx for McKim, Mead & White. The building and equipment cost \$25,398.¹⁷

The library opened on March 18, 1905, on a sunny Saturday afternoon. The crowd filled the library for the opening day ceremony, with speakers including Charles V. Fornes, president of the Board of Aldermen, George Cromwell, president of the Borough, John S. Billings and Arthur Bostwick, president and secretary of the New York Public Library, and Staten Islander Charles Howard Russell. Miss Cora Butley's mandolin class and the P.S. 20 glee club serenaded the crowd.¹⁸

The New York City Carnegie branch libraries share many design characteristics and are clearly recognizable as Carnegie libraries. They were designed to stand out as separate and distinct structures, an innovation in 1901 when many libraries and reading rooms were located in other buildings. They are classical in style, a simplified version of the Beaux-Arts model, similar to most public buildings designed in this period. They are clad in limestone, or in brick with limestone trim. There are two distinct types, the urban and the suburban. The urban branch, vertically oriented and sited on mid-block, was located in densely populated Manhattan and sections of the Bronx.

The suburban branches were built in the less densely built-up areas of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Queens. They are freestanding, one to two stories high, located on corner sites, and set back from the street on lawns. The Port Richmond Branch embodies the major characteristics of the suburban branches. It is constructed of brick and stone with a prominent center entrance with a flight of steps. It is Classical Revival in style, with such classical ornament as columns and a molded cornice. There are large arched windows and a low hipped roof. It is very similar to the larger Tottenville Branch, opened the year before, and almost identical to the Stapleton branch, opened two years after.

The plans of the Carnegie libraries were drawn up in collaboration with the architects' committee and the librarians. The librarians met with the committee at the beginning of the process and commented on the final plans. The plans featured accessible stacks, a central librarian's desk, and light, spacious, reading rooms, all innovations at the

time. The Port Richmond plan shares these characteristics. The original plan was basically rectangular, with a central charge desk, adults' and children's reading rooms on each side, and a librarian's room in a small rear wing. Storage and working space was located in the basement. The books were located on shelves along the perimeter of the reading rooms under windows set high on the facade and on freestanding shelving.

Subsequent History

The Port Richmond Branch has continuously operated as a library since its opening in 1905 and has adapted to serve the changing community. In the early twentieth century, the library was well-known for its collection of Danish and Norwegian books. As the ship building industry grew on Staten Island during World War I, the library responded to requests by assembling one of the largest collections of books on ship building in the New York Public Library system. In 1938-39 a one-and-one-half-story brick rear addition, which reflected the design of the original library, was built with Works Project Administration funds. A rear first floor reading room, a second floor custodian's apartment, and a basement auditorium were created. Auditoriums or community rooms were original features in many of the Carnegie libraries and they have been used extensively for programming by the libraries over the years. The auditorium in the Port Richmond branch, Chimes Theater, is a small theater with a raised stage. Custodians' apartments were also regular features of the Carnegie branches. There have been several small renovations in the last three decades, including roof recladding in 1967 and window replacement.¹⁹

Description

The Port Richmond library is located on the corner of Bennett Street and Heberton Avenue, set back on a lawn which is bordered by hedges.²⁰ A wide concrete walk and a flight of concrete steps, with recent metal railings at the sides and in the center, lead to the entrance. The side facade on Heberton Avenue is set back slightly and contains a non-historic concrete access ramp with metal railing leading to the basement of the rear addition. A tall flight of brick steps with a metal pipe railing leads to the side entrance in the addition. The rear and west side alleys are enclosed by a non-historic chain-link fence and a brick wall.

The library is a freestanding, three-bay masonry structure with a T-shaped plan. The main block is one story over a high basement and the rear addition is one-and-one-half-stories high, although both sections are about the same overall height. The hipped roofs of the

main block and the addition are clad in asphalt shingles. Deep overhanging bracketed wooden eaves wrap around the building on all sides, on both the main block and the addition. All facades are composed of red Flemish bond brick and stucco with Indiana limestone and cast stone trim.

The projecting center entrance section has a full wooden triangular pediment supported by tall stone Tuscan columns. The wooden modillioned cornice has a frieze with raised X's set in squares and an architrave containing the words "NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY." A flag pole is anchored at the center of the frieze. The tall arched entranceway is set in a limestone frame. The wooden doorway enframing has fluted pilasters supporting a flat pediment with a rectangular transom above non-historic double metal doors. The arched window above the doorway is covered by a metal mesh grate. A recent (1996) metal plaque on the west side of the doorway reads "New York Public Library Port Richmond Branch."

The basement terminates in a curved, molded brick watertable on both the main block and the addition. The basement windows in the main block are rectangular with flat stone lintels and decorative metal grilles overlaid with non-historic mesh grilles.

On either side of the center doorway, the two first-story arched windows are set flush into a stucco frame which is keyed into the brick to form classically-inspired quoining. The spandrel below the projecting stone window sill is also stucco. Each window opening contains two replacement one-over-one aluminum double-hung windows with a fixed arched aluminum transom above. The windows are covered by non-historic metal grills. On the side facades of the main block, two windows are set into a stucco frame like that on the front facade.

This original window detailing is duplicated for the window on the Heberton Avenue facade of the rear addition. This facade also features a one-bay, one-story brick staircase addition at the south corner with an arched window at the basement level. A rectangular doorway with a non-historic metal door and a rectangular window are both set flush into the brick wall of the addition at basement level. The windows have replacement aluminum sash.

On the west facade of the rear addition, which can be seen from Bennett Street, a large rectangular window is set into a stucco frame keyed into the brick. There are also four simple rectangular windows, three on the second level. The windows have replacement aluminum double-hung sash. A rectangular doorway with a wooden door at basement level leads to the custodian's apartment. The cornice line is broken in the center and slightly raised to accommodate the second floor windows.

The rear facade of brick is part of the WPA addition and can be seen from Heberton Avenue. The original window details are duplicated on the two easternmost windows; the center window is also arched but set flush into the brick. The remaining two windows are rectangular and set into a stucco frame keyed into the brick. The westernmost side cornice is raised for the three rectangular second floor windows. There are rectangular basement windows and a doorway. All of the windows contain replacement aluminum sash.

No original exterior lighting survives; a number of light fixtures have been installed within the last three decades. A metal lantern hangs from the underside of the pediment in the center of the doorway, and two

floodlights are placed at either end of the top of the door enframingent. Two rectangular light fixtures are located at each end of the front facade. There is a small, c.1940 fixture above the basement door on the Heberton Avenue facade and three non-historic fixtures at the stair door. The west facade has one non-historic exterior light fixture and the rear facade has three. Later metal downspouts from at least two periods run along and down the side and rear facades.

Report prepared by
Mary B. Dierickx,
Historic Preservation Consultant

Notes

1. This section on Staten Island and Port Richmond history was based on the following sources: Federal Writers' Project, *The WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Pantheon Books, reprint, 1982, originally published 1939), 620; Edna Holden, *Staten Island, A Resource Manual for School and Community* (New York: Board of Education of the City of New York, Bureau of Curriculum Research 1964), 5, 147, 174-177; Charles W. Leng and William T. Davis, *Staten Island and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1930) 348; Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1995), 929, 1112-1118; "Port Richmond," *New York Times*, July [], 1996 [Real Estate Section]. Preservation League of Staten Island, *Port Richmond Walking Tour*, brochure, [c.1995].
2. Port Richmond has had many names in its three-hundred-year history. The area was known as the Burial Place in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, after the Dutch Reformed Church cemetery. The port village grew as the site of a number of popular ferries and the name of the village changed with the name of the ferry operators. In the early nineteenth century it was known as Decker's Ferry, Dacosta's Ferry, Hilleker's Ferry, Ryers' Ferry, and Mersereau's Ferry, or Landing. The village was also known, in the mid-nineteenth century, as New Bristol, Irvington, and Cyrene. It is said that the Reverend James Brownlee of the Dutch Reformed Church suggested the name Port Richmond.
3. *Port Richmond Walking Tour*.
4. In 1904, Edmund Joseph Nolan, a nineteen-year-old resident of Port Richmond, wrote a letter to be placed in the foundation of the new library: "Port Richmond is but a country village now, which by the time this is found may be a flourishing town with many libraries." Edmund Joseph Nolan, "April 3, 1904, Letter To Whom It May Concern," Port Richmond, NY, 1904, at New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, "Port Richmond File"; *Staten Island* (Newspaper), April 15, 1938, also in Port Richmond File. Mr. Nolan asked if the letter were found, that the contents be published and that it be given to Andrew Carnegie for exhibition. It was found in 1938 when an addition to the original library was constructed.
5. This section on Staten Island and Port Richmond libraries is based on LPC, *New York Public Library, Tottenville Branch Designation Report*, LP-1867, prepared by David M. Breiner (New York: City of New York, 1991) and Leng & Davis.
6. This section on the New York Public Library and Andrew Carnegie is adapted from Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy, The Carnegie Libraries of New York City* (New York: Cooper Union and NYC Department of General Services, 1996), 19-43 with additional information from Phyllis Dain, *The New York*

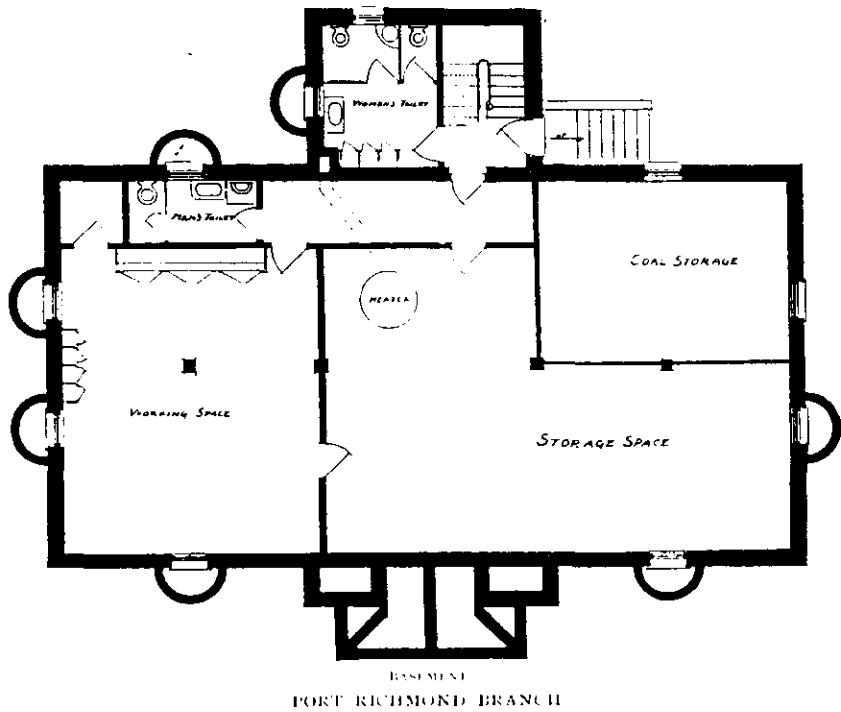
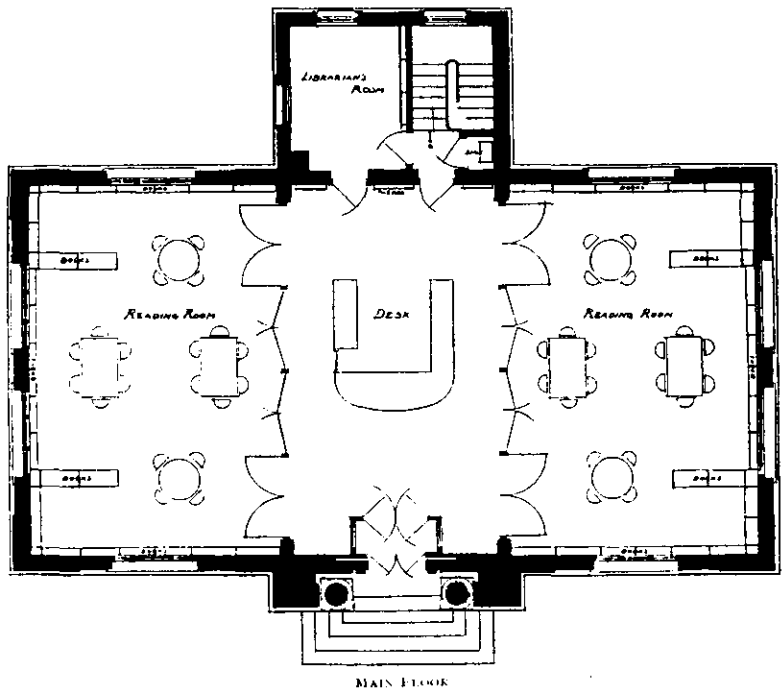
- Public Library: A History of its Founding and Early Years* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1973), 209-247; Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1917); *Tottenville Designation Report*; LPC, *The New York Public Library, Morrisania Branch Designation Report*, LP- 1996, prepared by Donald G. Presa (New York: City of New York, 1998).
7. Today, New York City still has three separate library corporations, the New York Public Library, the Brooklyn Public Library, and the Queens Borough Public Library.
 8. The original 1901 agreement called for 65 libraries, but in 1902 the estimated cost per branch was lowered and the total number was optimistically established as a maximum of 73. Because of rising costs the number of branches totaled just two more than the original 65. See Dierickx for more details.
 9. Andrew Carnegie, Letter to John Shaw Billings, Director of The New York Public Library, March 12, 1901, in the "Brooklyn Collection," Brooklyn Public Library.
 10. Carrère & Hastings designed fourteen of the 39 Carnegie branches, McKim, Mead & White designed twelve, and Babb, Cook & Willard designed eight. Their successor firms, Babb, Cook & Welch, Cook, Babb & Welch, and Cook & Welch designed another three. James Brown Lord designed the first Carnegie library, the Yorkville branch, but this was actually planned before the grant was given and Herts & Tallant were responsible for the major renovation of the Aguilar branch, which they originally had designed in 1899.
 11. This section was adapted from *Tottenville Designation Report*; Channing Blake, "Carrère & Hastings," in Adolf Placzek, ed., *Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 387-388; "The Works of Messrs. Carrère & Hastings," *Architectural Record* 27 (January, 1910), 1-120; David Gray, *The Architecture of Thomas Hastings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933); "John Mervin Carrère Obituary," *New York Times*, March 2, 1911, 9; Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessy & Ingalls, 1970), 109-110; 269-271.
 12. Robert A.M. Stern, et. al., *New York 1900* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 325-329.
 13. John S. Billings, Letter to Andrew Carnegie, November 9, 1901, NYPL Collection, NYPL Archives.
 14. Unidentified newspaper article, March, 1905, at Port Richmond Branch, "Port Richmond File."
 15. Cornelius G. Kolff, Report to Alanson T. Briggs, May 28, 1902, NYPL Archives, RG5, Box 9.
 16. NYC Department of Finance, *Real Estate Owned by the City of New York Under the Jurisdiction of the Presidents of the Boroughs* (New York: City of New York, 1908); NYPL, "Port Richmond Branch Information Sheet," n.d., NYPL Archives, RG5, Box 9; H.F. Letter to A.T. Briggs, March 25, 1907, NYPL Archives, RG5, Box 9.
 17. Dierickx, 206-208.
 18. March 1905 newspaper article.
 19. New York City Department of Buildings, Borough of Staten Island, Files of Block 1007, Lot 26, Dierickx, 178-179; NYPL Archives, 12/18/1950 Memo, RG6 Business Office, Box 13. In 1950, the salary for a custodian for the Port Richmond Branch was \$239.17 a month, along with the apartment. The auditorium was undergoing interior rehabilitation at the time of designation.
 20. Hedges and lawn can be seen in old photos - see the Port Richmond Branch File, Historic Post Card Collection, Staten Institute of Arts and Sciences.

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 New York Public Library, Port Richmond 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 New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, built in 1904-05, was the second branch of the New York Public Library constructed on Staten Island and the sixteenth branch library in New York City to be built with funds provided by the \$5.2 million gift from Andrew Carnegie to New York City for the purpose of establishing a city-wide branch library system; that it was designed by the prestigious and influential architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings, which designed fourteen Carnegie branch libraries as well as the Main Building of the New York Public Library; that the Classical Revival style that was the hallmark of the firm's library designs as well as a major characteristic of New York City's Carnegie libraries and other public buildings of the period is articulated through the symmetrical composition, projecting central stone, brick and wood entrance portico, arched and rectangular door and window openings framed in stucco, hipped roof with bracketed overhanging eaves, and other features; that it is characteristically sited on a corner set back from the street with a lawn bordered by hedges; that the Port Richmond Branch has been culturally, visually, and historically an important component of its community for over ninety years; and that the exterior of the building has retained its significant architectural characteristics.

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 New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, 75 Bennett Street, Staten Island, and designates Staten Island Tax Map Block 1007, Lot 26, as its Landmark Site.



Original plan, New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch
 Source: Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1917)



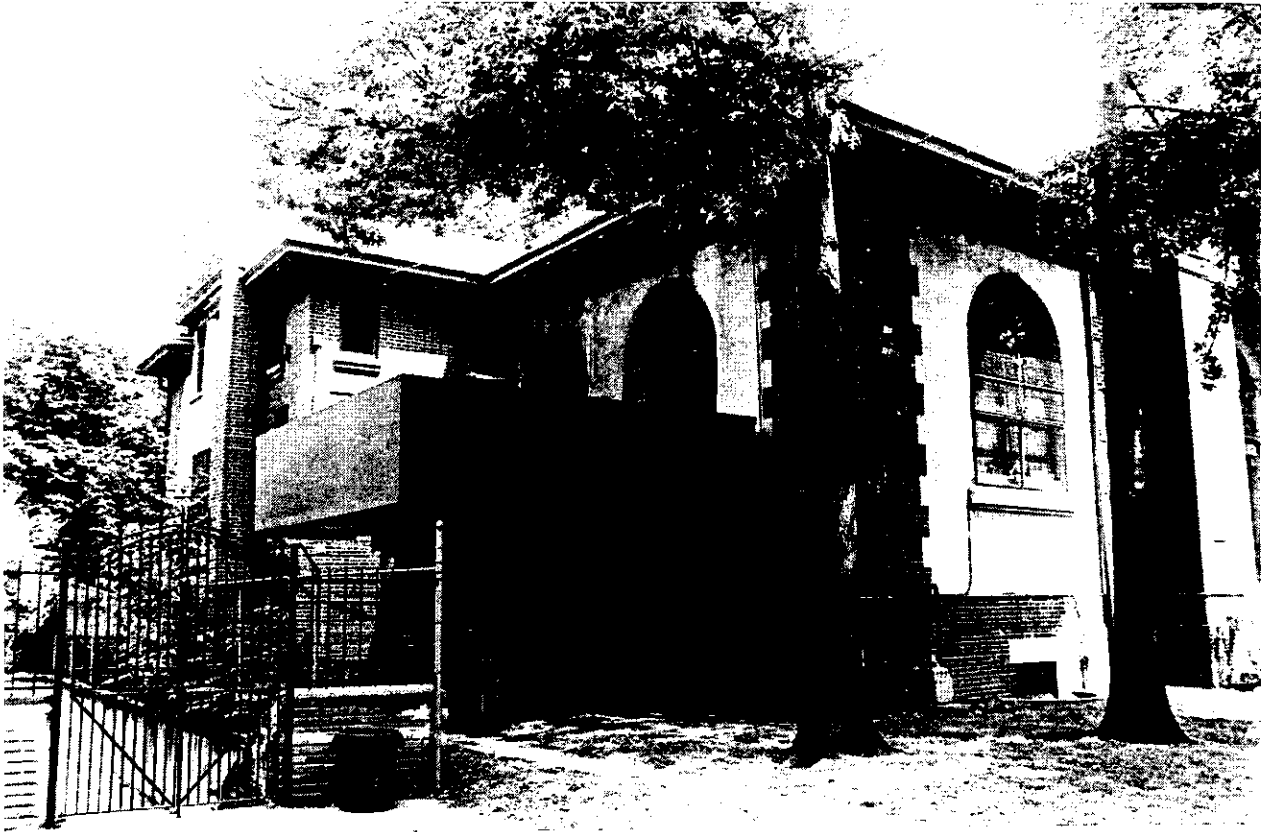
New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, c. 1910.
Source: Postcard Collection, Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences



New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, 75 Bennett Street, Staten Island
Photo Credit: Carl Forster



New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, 75 Bennett Street, Staten Island
Detail of entrance portico
Photo Credit: Carl Forster

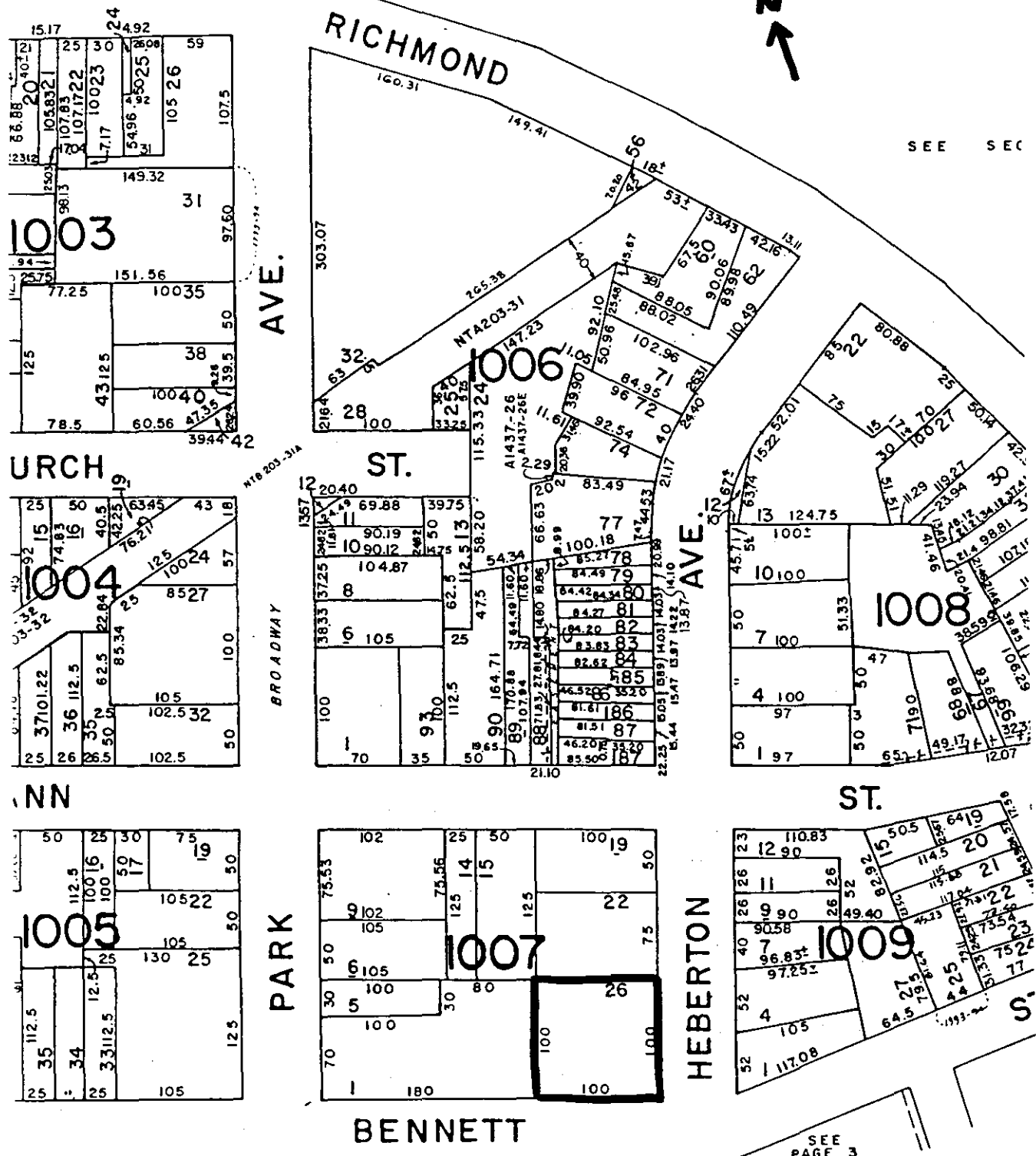


New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, 75 Bennett Street, Staten Island

Top: View of west elevation from the southwest

Bottom: View of Heberton Street facade and north elevation

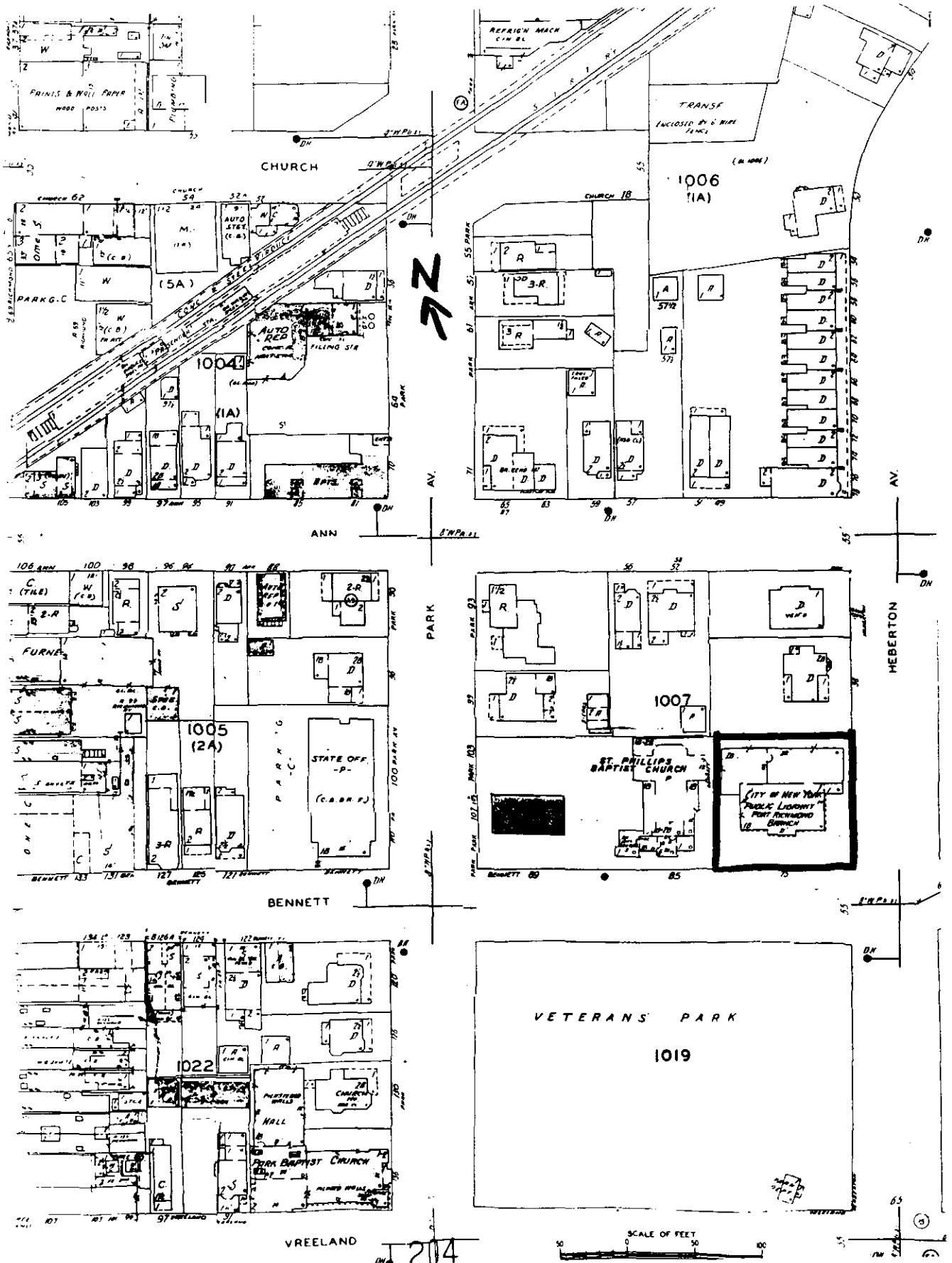
Photo Credit: Carl Forster



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New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, 75 Bennett Street, Staten Island
 Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 1007, Lot 26
 Source: Dept. of Finance, City Surveyor, Tax Map



New York Public Library, Port Richmond Branch, 75 Bennett Street, Staten Island
 Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island Tax Map Block 1007, Lot 26
 Source: *Sanborn Building and Property Atlas of Staten Island, N.Y.* (TRWRedi, 1997), 18th ed., vol. 5, pl. 203