

DESIGNATION REPORT

(Former) Colored School No. 4



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(Former) Colored School No. 4

LOCATION

Borough of Manhattan
Tax Map Block 792, Lot 53
128 West 17th Street

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

The 1849-50 former Colored School No. 4 is a rare surviving example of an urban pre-Civil War schoolhouse, significant for its association with African American education within segregated 19th-century New York City.



(Former) Colored School No. 4, c.1939-40
Municipal Archives, City of New York

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(Former) Colored School No. 4

128 West 17th Street, Manhattan

Network, the Schomburg Center in Harlem. No letters were received in opposition. A petition supporting designation with 2,843 signatures was also received.

Designation List 532

LP-2659

Built: 1849-50

Architect: Undetermined

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan

Tax Map Block 792, Lot 53

Building Identification Number (BIN): 1014588

Calendared: February 14, 2023

Public Hearing: April 25, 2023

Designated: May 23, 2023

On April 25, 2023, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of (Former) Colored School No. 4 (Item No. 1). The public hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law. At the public hearing, 21 people testified in support of designation, including Council Member Erik Bottcher and representatives of Community Board No. 4, the Council of Chelsea Block Associations, the Municipal Art Society, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, Village Preservation, New York Chapter of the Victorian Society, Save Chelsea, Friends of Abolitionist Place, and a representative of several block associations in the neighborhood. Ten individuals also spoke in favor, including the historian Eric K. Washington; no one spoke in opposition. In addition to those who testified, seven letters of support were received, including from the African American Redress

Summary

(Former) Colored School No. 4

The former Colored School No. 4 is Manhattan's only known surviving example of a racially segregated school from the Civil War and post-Reconstruction era. This highly significant former public school building was built in 1849-50, became a segregated "Colored School" in 1860, and continued to serve Black students until it closed in 1894. It is associated with many significant individuals and illustrates how education afforded crucial opportunities and skills to Black students as they struggled against the discrimination and inequities that were part of their daily life.

The three-story mid-block brick building was built by the City's Public School Society using a model design adopted by the Society for primary schools in Manhattan. The 25-foot-wide building retains its four-bay facade with simple punched window and door openings. The wood multi-pane sash at the second and third stories remain in place as do the characteristic two entry openings, originally one for boys and the other for girls.

The school was transferred to the newly formed Board of Education in 1853. In 1860 it became the racially segregated Colored School No. 7 for both primary and grammar school students, one of eight public "Colored" schools in Manhattan. Renamed Colored School No. 4 in 1866, its name changed again in 1884 when the Board of Education dropped the term "Colored" from the City's public schools. Despite the name change, Grammar School No. 81 continued to serve African American children until it closed in 1894.

The former Colored School No. 4 is an important reminder of the African American

community's commitment to education as they faced rampant discrimination in all aspects of their lives. Schools were important avenues for social justice and civil liberties within the 19th-century city, laying the fundamental groundwork for future opportunities. This is illustrated by the determination, commitment, and accomplishments of Black teachers and students associated with the school.

During the 1860s, Sarah J. S. Tompkins Garnet, later a suffragist, was one of the first African American women to serve as a principal in a New York City public school. William Appo, an accomplished musician, taught at several of the schools, including the former Colored School No. 4. Joan Imogen Howard, also a teacher, represented New York women as a manager at Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Examples of the school's graduates who became prominent leaders in their respective fields include the acclaimed composer and classical violinist Walter F. Craig, Susan Elizabeth Frazier, who challenged and overcame the City's prohibition of Black teachers at integrated public schools, and James H. Williams, an influential organizer and labor leader at Grand Central Terminal.

Since the school closed in 1894, the building has remained in City ownership. In the early 20th century, it was leased to various veterans' associations. By 1936 the New York City Department of Sanitation was using it as one of their facilities and remains the building's owner.

Despite alterations such as the addition of 1930s brick cladding, the building exhibits its pre-Civil War schoolhouse design and retains its overall form, roofline, fenestration pattern, and other character-defining features that reflect its 19th-century period of significance. Its enduring presence illustrates how NYC's public educational system served African American students during the City's period of mandated racially segregated schools.

Building Description

(Former) Colored School No. 4

to six-story multifamily, loft, and commercial buildings line the narrow street from Sixth to Seventh avenues.⁵

The former Colored School No. 4 is a three-story mid-block brick-clad building constructed in 1849-50 on West 17th Street in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan.¹ Designed as a model primary school for its time, it exhibits an overall simplicity in its four-bay facade treatment and flat roof, qualities of the Greek Revival, a style that was in common use at the time and like the two- and three-story row houses then present in the neighborhood.

The building's 25-foot-wide facade retains a short stone base and historic rectangular openings for the doors and windows. Its historic and generously sized sixteen-over-sixteen wood sash windows with wood brickmolds remain in place at the second and third stories. The first story's two separate entries, one at each side of the front facade, was a common feature in 19th-century school buildings, separating boys and girls. Its 25-foot wide and 92-foot-deep footprint on the lot has remained the same since 1850.²

Alterations: Alterations include the c. 1936-1940 recladding of the facade in a beige-colored brick—incorporating brick lintels, sills, parapet, and framed panels—and removal of the cornice; and later replacement of the entrance doors and first story-window sash with metal or metal-clad doors and windows.³

Site: The former school building extends the full length of the 92-foot deep lot. Along West 17th Street, it is adjacent to a nine-story early 20th-century loft building and a five-story late 19th-century private school building.⁴ A variety of three-

History and Significance

(Former) Colored School No. 4

Development of the Chelsea Neighborhood

The school building is located within the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan that extends from West 14th Street north to 30th Street, and from Sixth Avenue to the Hudson River.⁶ When the former Colored School No. 4 was built, Manhattan was organized geographically into wards, and schools were administered by ward trustees.⁷ Although the school was located within the 16th Ward, it served students throughout a larger West End of Manhattan.

Before and at the time of European contact, today's Chelsea neighborhood in the vicinity of the former school was associated with the Munsee-speaking Lenape people.⁸ Not far from the present-day school was Sapohanikan, a canoe landing, a planting ground, and trading point along the Hudson River. Today that site's location is Gansevoort and West 14 streets.⁹

From the 17th century into the early 19th century, this area of Manhattan was dotted with large Dutch and later English farm estates. Wealthy landowners in the area included Sir Peter Warren and Captain Thomas Clarke. It was Thomas Clarke, a British Army captain, who named the neighborhood Chelsea during the English period.

The school site was part of the Peter Warren (1703-1752) farm, a large 300-acre tract that extended from Christopher Street to 21st Street. He was a notable British Navy admiral and a member of Parliament who used his country property on Manhattan as a retreat. Although he spent much of his time in England, he enslaved a sizeable number of persons on his estate.¹⁰

The transition of Chelsea from large rural

estates to city blocks occurred during the early 19th century. As the estates were sold, the streets were laid out and paved in the 1830s.¹¹ Thomas Clark's grandson, Clement Clarke Moore, developed the northwest section of the family estate into a fashionable residential neighborhood from 1830 to 1860.¹² Moore's subdivided blocks included deed restrictions that excluded commercial and industrial buildings. Consequently, these types of buildings were built in the section of Chelsea where the former Colored School No. 4 is located.

The area in the immediate vicinity of the school's site on West 17th Street was developed predominately with modest row houses. Closer to the Hudson River, there were many waterfront industries that attracted laborers who lived in the lower rent housing nearby. As such, the neighborhood supported a variety of working-class people, including Scottish, German, Italian, French, and English immigrants, and after 1840, a large Irish community.¹³ By 1860 many African Americans who were often limited to where they were able to live, settled the west side of Manhattan from 10th to 30th streets, and the school reflects this history.¹⁴

Early churches near the school's location in the southern section of Chelsea served this diverse neighborhood, such as Saint Peter's Episcopal Church, built 1836-38, within the Chelsea Historic District, and Saint Columba Roman Catholic Church, built in 1845.¹⁵ The W. Perris Map of 1854 also indicates an "African Church" along West 15th Street. This church provided meeting space for Colored Primary School No. 1, the public school in the 16th Ward for African American students before Colored School No. 7 (later renamed Colored School No. 4) assumed that role in 1860.¹⁶

Before 1860, there were two public grammar schools and four public primary schools in the 16th Ward for white students (one being in the building that would become Colored School No. 4), while

African American students were served only by the previously mentioned Colored Primary School No. 1 that met in the African Union Church along West 15th Street.¹⁷

Design and Construction of the School Building

The public school building that would become Colored School No. 4 was built in 1849-50 on a lot along the section of 17th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues. The entire block and others in the vicinity had been part of Sir Peter Warren's estate for many years before it was sold by the family in 1795.¹⁸ The property had a succession of owners until 1848 when the Public School Society of New York City bought it from Lissack H. Simpson who that same year had acquired it from Charles A. and Catherine Clinton.¹⁹ The school building was the first improvement on the lot.

The Public School Society was responsible for public education at that time in Manhattan and constructed the school using the Model Primary School House plan. The design was said to date from 1844 and provided the prototype that the Society used to erect their primary schools, using a typical 25-foot-wide lot.²⁰

The following is how the building was described in a publication of 1869.

The school buildings erected by the late Public School Society were all built upon the same general plan, and that plan—owing no doubt to the limited funds of the Society—was a very economical one. Their "Model Primary Schoolhouse" was built upon a single lot, covering the whole width—twenty-five feet—to a depth of sixty-two feet, and at that point was joined by a rear stairway wing some eleven feet wide by twenty-eight feet long. By this reduction in the width, some rear light was secured; but this was of service only on the brightest days, and when the fresh air and

sunshine were not shut out by rear buildings on adjoining lots.

It will be seen that compactness and severe plainness are the main features of this plan. A building like the above accommodated about three hundred and fifty scholars. The arrangement of seats was very inconvenient, yet one of these buildings was considered, thirty years ago, as a great improvement on anything that had preceded it.²¹

During the mid-19th century, children began their attendance at primary schools, also called primary departments, at about age five or six years old and attended for approximately three years. Then the students advanced to a grammar school, often identified simply as "School" or "Ward School." Typically, the course of instruction ended when a student was 14 years old.²²

The former Colored School No. 4 was designed and built for primary-level students only and served that level for its first 10 years. Since the building accommodated both girls and boys, individual doors separated them from the time each group entered the building. That separation was maintained by the divided ground floor where the students lined up before classes and by two sets of stairways at the rear extension of the building (see floor plans, p. 22).²³ The girls' stairway led to the second floor where they were accommodated in a large single room. Likewise, the boys' stairway led to the third floor where the room arrangement was the same. Long desks lined the walls parallel to the length of the building. Since the building extended to the back of the 92-foot deep lot, there was no rear-yard outdoor play area.

Public Education in New York City²⁴

The former Colored School No. 4 was constructed at a time when New York City's school system was shifting towards offering publicly funded education

for the City's children.

During the 17th century beginning in 1638, the Dutch colony supported and maintained what were considered public schools because they were open to all children regardless of background and were partially funded with tax revenue.²⁵ Controlled by the Dutch Reformed Church, the schools also charged tuition to supplement income.

During the time of English colonial rule in the late-17th and the 18th centuries, the wealthy employed private tutors, but most children attended schools funded and operated by the Church of England's missionary society. The only schools that might be considered free were the charity schools sponsored by various philanthropic associations and at times, partially supported with city taxes.²⁶

After the American Revolution New York State created a common school system in 1795 through legislation that encouraged individual towns and cities to form school districts. Funding this system began in 1805 through the sale of public lands. While the state-wide system of publicly funded schools was slowly being implemented, three separate educational systems developed in New York City that responded to the education of those children who could not afford private instruction or who were not included in church schools. These three systems would evolve by mid-19th century into a single publicly funded system under the New York City Board of Education.

The first of these was the African Free School founded in 1787 as a charity by the New York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves. The second were schools established in 1802 by the Association of Women Friends (Quakers) for the Relief of the Poor, open at first to all poor children of any religion. Later these Quaker schools limited enrollment to girls.²⁷

The third and largest was the Free School Society in New York City, incorporated in 1805 by

wealthy businessmen as a philanthropic cause.²⁸ In 1815 the Free School Society began receiving money from the state-wide Common School Fund and by 1820 there were four such schools in operation in Manhattan. Around the same time across the East River, the Brooklyn Common School System was organized in 1816.

In 1825 the Free School Society in Manhattan changed its name to the Public School Society of New York City. As the city increased in population, many primary and grammar schools were built and financed by the Society. By 1834 the African Free Schools were added to the Public School Society. Although the Public School Society received some revenue from the state's common fund, Manhattan did not follow the state's model of school districts until mid-century.²⁹

The city's transition to New York State's Common School System resulted in the formation of the Board of Education.³⁰

In April 1842, the Legislature first extended to this city, the Common School System which, for thirty years, had prevailed in the other parts of the State. Before that time, the only organized system of Common School instruction for this city existed in the numerous excellent schools established and conducted by the New York Public School Society...³¹

By 1853 a total of 224 schools serving the City's children from ages 5 to 14 were officially transferred to the City to be administered by the Board of Education.³² Included within the total number of schools, 25 were for African American students, six for males, six for females, nine primary schools, and four orphan asylum schools.

During these early days of the Board of

Education, the number of enrolled students were tabulated for each school, including the average daily attendance, commonly about 30-50%. Attendance was low, primarily because compulsory education did not become a reality in New York City for another 30 years.³³ The Board of Education had finally centralized the administration of all the schools, but also continued to maintain local control. Using the pre-existing ward system, each ward elected its own trustees who ran the routine administration of the schools.³⁴

The Board of Education ushered in the period when the City's schools truly became a system of public education that was provided by a government agency under public control and funding. Similarly, a Brooklyn Board of Education was created in 1845 resulting in its replacement of the previous Brooklyn Common School System.

Africans and African Americans in Manhattan³⁵

People of African descent have lived in New York City since its earliest European settlement. In 1626, the Dutch West India Company first brought enslaved people from Africa to New Amsterdam. During the 17th and 18th centuries their labor in the port, construction, mills, residences, and farms significantly contributed to the physical and economic growth of the colony. Under Dutch rule, enslaved Africans had the possibility of obtaining half- or wholly-free status and some received grants of land. This formed the nucleus of a community known as the "Land of the Blacks" or "Little Africa," an area that provided a buffer between New Amsterdam and the Lenape peoples farther north. These land grants, most of which were south and east of today's school site, extended north from Five Points, today's Chinatown, and from the Collect Pond near today's Canal Street.

When the British took over in 1664, the practice of slavery became more entrenched and new repressive laws were written to restrict the freedoms of both the enslaved and the small number of free Black residents. They took away official land ownership from the half-free Africans and imposed stricter laws while importing more enslaved people. By 1740, 20% of New York's residents were enslaved. Those early land grants under the Dutch were taken over by wealthy English landowners. Despite confiscation of ownership, the area north of the Collect Pond remained settled by freed Blacks and later after the American Revolution by African Americans.

In 1827 New York State abolished slavery after a period of gradual emancipation, but complete abolition came much later in 1841 when non-residents visiting the state were no longer exempt from bringing enslaved individuals with them. After 1827 many African Americans lived in areas near City Hall and today's Chinatown, and north and west to the Hudson River. By 1850 most of the city's Black citizens were living in or near Greenwich Village, and by 1860 others had settled on the West Side between 10th and 30th streets.

During the 19th century, despite the lack of opportunities in New York City, African Americans established their own churches, newspapers, benevolent associations, literary societies, and lending libraries, all supporting the community's efforts toward full participation and respect. One example of these efforts was the formation in 1847 of the Society for Promoting Education among Colored Children to oversee and encourage the education of Black children.³⁶ One of the founders of the Society was educator and poet Charles L. Reason (1818-1893).³⁷ A graduate of the African Free School, Reason became a grammar school principal, a languages and mathematics college professor, and reformer. He became a highly acclaimed educator

who worked tirelessly for improving the educational system of Black children.³⁸

During the American Civil War Manhattan's African American community became the target of racist violence during the New York City Draft Riots which engulfed the city on July 13, 1863, when racial tensions erupted in reaction to new federal laws requiring men to fight within the Union Army in the ongoing war. Over the course of several days, violent attacks targeted African Americans, abolitionists' residences, Black churches, and institutions such as the Colored Orphan Asylum, and the former Colored School No. 4.³⁹ Institutions such as these had incredible significance, and those few buildings that remain in New York City are important reminders of this history.

Opportunities for Education of African American Children in Manhattan⁴⁰

The history of New York City's free education includes the story of early efforts to provide schools for all children. From 1834 until 1883, African American children in Manhattan attended publicly funded schools that were mandated to be racially segregated from the rest of the school population.⁴¹ These separate schools did not serve just their immediate neighborhood. Consequently, Black students often had to travel long distances to the few schools that were provided for them during that time.⁴²

Before publicly funded schools, African American children could attend African Free Schools that were established in 1787 as a charity of the Manumission Society. The Society was an abolitionist organization that was composed of prominent, wealthy businessmen and politicians who were working for the end of slavery in the United States.⁴³

After fire destroyed the first African Free School building in 1814, the Society replaced it with

one at 245 William Street. In 1820 another was built at 135 Mulberry Street near the Five Points area where the population of Black residents was higher at the time.⁴⁴ By 1833, five more schools were constructed in Manhattan resulting in a total of two grammar schools and five primary schools for African Americans. Although the first teachers were white, by 1834, most of the teachers were Black.

In 1834 the Public School Society (by that time publicly funded) absorbed the African Free Schools in Manhattan. The school buildings accommodated all students, but Black students were forced to attend classes in separate classrooms. In 1845 the State Legislature authorized local governments to create separate school(s) to educate Black children. By 1850 the City's Board of Education had finished the transition to separate schools exclusively for African American students, identified as "schools for colored children."⁴⁵ After the State's Civil Rights Act of 1873, public schools, were to be open to all children, but that was slow to be implemented in New York City where school segregation continued until 1883.⁴⁶

Separately named colored schools were abolished "...after a long debate..." as of September 1, 1883. However, an appeal by "colored citizens to the Legislature" resulted in an act passed on May 5, 1884, which allowed any colored school to "...be continued...with their present teachers...and shall be open for the education of pupils for whom admission is sought, without regard to race or color."⁴⁷

As a result, the action taken in 1884 allowed two New York City schools that had been used exclusively by African American children to continue with African American teachers. One was the former Colored School No. 4, and the other was the former Colored School No. 3 in Ward 22 at 225 West 41st Street (no longer extant). After 1884 the word "colored" was removed and they were renamed and renumbered, becoming Grammar School No. 81

and Grammar School No. 80, respectively. The Annual Report ends this section with "...the color line has finally and happily disappeared from our schools, except so far as it may be said to remain in the case of the two schools referred to."⁴⁸

Although the label of "Colored" had been dropped from Manhattan schools in 1884, the former Colored School No. 3 and the former Colored School No. 4 were the only two in the city that remained racially segregated until each closed. The Annual Report of 1884 did not explain why these two exceptions were made, but at that time, African American teachers were unofficially barred from teaching in schools with white students. Colored Schools No. 3 and No. 4 had retained their African American teachers and staff and as such were able to remain open.

(Former) Colored School No. 4⁴⁹

The building today known as the former Colored School No. 4 on West 17th Street has accommodated many schools at both the primary- and grammar-school level and has been given different names over the years.

Upon its construction date of 1849 it was Primary School Nos. 27 and 28 until 1853.⁵⁰ From 1853 to 1858, the two primary departments were renamed Nos. 25 and 26 and for two years until 1860 was Primary School No. 14.⁵¹

In 1860 the school building was set aside and refitted for African Americans and renamed Colored School No. 7, accommodating both primary and grammar school students.⁵² Not long afterwards in 1866 it became Colored School No. 4, the name it is identified by today.⁵³

In 1884 it became Public Grammar School No. 81 but continued to serve Black students despite the name change. The Board of Education closed the school ten years later in 1894, but the city retained the property for other uses.

Notable Staff and Graduates 1863 to 1894⁵⁴

The former Colored School No. 4 is historically significant for its association with important teachers and students during the time it was a school for African Americans. Many made their mark in education, music, transportation, public service, and social justice.

One of the most distinguished teachers was Sarah J. Smith Tompkins Garnet (1831-1911) who became one of the first Black women to become a principal in the New York City Public School system. The oldest of 11 children, her family members were well-to-do Brooklyn farmers and merchants. Her sister became one of the first women physicians in the state.⁵⁵ Sarah herself started her career when she became a school monitor at age 14 and soon afterwards taught for a Williamsburg school.

A few months after Sarah Tompkins, as she was known then, was appointed principal at the former Colored School No. 4, the school became a target of racist violence during the New York City Draft Riots in July 1863, as described in the *New York Daily Tribune*:

The mob congregated in front of the Sixteenth Ward School-House, in Seventeenth street, while the school was in session, and made a demonstration with a view to gain entrance to the building. It seems that two colored women whom they had pursued had taken refuge in the school-building, and they were determined to get at them. The teachers promptly barred all the doors leading into the street, and the rioters, after a few ineffectual efforts to break in, turned their attention to...the opposite side of the street...⁵⁶

Sarah Tompkins Garnet remained as principal until the school closed in 1894 (then named Grammar School No. 81). She then accepted the position of principal at Public School No. 80, retiring from there in the fall of 1900 after more than 50 years as a teacher and principal. Not only was she a pioneering educator, but she was also an important leader in the women's suffrage movement. She helped establish the Equal Suffrage League of Brooklyn, a group affiliated with the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.⁵⁷

William Appo (1808-1880) was a musician, composer, and a noted abolitionist who joined the faculty of the colored schools in Manhattan, teaching there from 1864 to 1868.⁵⁸ Trained in Philadelphia, he performed often in New York City where he gained a reputation as one of the finest musicians of his time. During his retirement years he lived on a farm in upstate New York, but often spent the winters in New Jersey and New York City, enabling him to teach in Manhattan.⁵⁹

Joan Imogen Howard (1848-1937) came to the former Colored School No. 4 in 1868 as an assistant teacher, her first position after graduating from Girls High and Normal School in her native Boston. In addition to teaching in the grammar school, she was the principal of the evening school held at the school building for several years. In 1877 she earned a Master of Arts from the Normal College of New York City. During the planning for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, she was invited to participate as a member of the Committee of Education for the Board of Women Managers of the State of New York.⁶⁰

In addition to distinguished faculty, many of the school's graduates became prominent leaders in their fields. Three such examples are Walter F. Craig, Susan Elizabeth Frazier, and James H. Williams.

Walter F. Craig (1854-1933) graduated from

Colored School No. 4 in 1867 when Sarah Tompkins (Garnet) was principal. He was a popular violin soloist, composer, and orchestra director in New York City known for his many recitals in both classical and contemporary music. His obituary noted that he was both "...a pioneer and a veteran in the field of music."⁶¹

Susan Elizabeth Frazier (1864-1924) graduated from Colored School No. 4 in 1882. She later became New York City's first African American teacher assigned to an integrated public school, but only after a legal battle in 1895. Before Frazier, Black teachers were not hired to teach in schools with white students.⁶² In addition to her teaching career, she was active in organizations that supported the military efforts during World War I.⁶³

James H. Williams (1871-1948) grew up on West 15th Street, attended Colored School No. 4, and later became the chief porter at Grand Central Terminal. He was an influential labor leader of the Red Caps with executive duties such as hiring, training, assigning, and supervising the all-Black porters.⁶⁴ These three students represent many African Americans who attended the segregated school from 1860 to 1894 and excelled within their areas of expertise even as they struggled for civil liberties.

20th Century History of 128 West 17th Street

The school closed in 1894 and the City of New York has retained ownership of the building since that time. During the early years of the 20th century, it was used by several Veterans and Fire Department organizations.

Alterations on file occurred in 1920 and 1936, creating meeting rooms and an apartment on the third floor and strengthening the structure at the rear and first floor interior. Between 1936 and 1940, the front facade was clad in beige brick. By 1936 it was used by the Department of Sanitation as Section

Station No. 14.⁶⁵ Currently the building remains City property under the Department of Sanitation.

Conclusion

The former Colored School No. 4 is Manhattan's only known surviving example of a racially segregated school from the period between the Civil War through the Post Reconstruction era. This extraordinarily significant former public school building was constructed in 1849 as a primary school but became a segregated combined primary and grammar "Colored School" in 1860, serving the African American population who lived on the west side of Manhattan. It continued to serve Black students until it closed in 1894. It is associated with many significant individuals and exemplifies how education afforded crucial opportunities and skills to Black students as they struggled against the discrimination and inequities that were part of daily life.

Retaining its original form and configuration, the former Colored School No. 4 building is remarkably intact and illustrates how a small urban school was designed to meet the needs of the students during the last half of the 19th century. It is a particularly significant and unique resource within the history of New York City's 19th century African American community.

Endnotes

- ¹ The *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education, City and County of New York* (New York: Wm. C. Bryant & Co., 1854), 99, for the year ending December 31, 1853, established the date of construction, 1849. Tax Assessment Records of 1846-1851 at the Municipal Archives includes the presence of a building in 1850. The address of the school at that time was 98 West 17th Street.
- ² William Perris, *Maps of the City of New York* (New York: Lith. by Korff Bros., 1855), Vol. 5, Sheet 70.
- ³ New York City, Borough of Manhattan, Department of Buildings, Alteration Permits, ALT 3447-1920 and ALT 1391-1936 and associated architectural drawings; New York City Department of Taxes Photograph (c. 1938-43), all on file at the New York City Municipal Archives; New York City Department of Finance, Bureau of Municipal Investigation and Statistics. *Real Estate Owned by the City of New York Under the Jurisdiction of the Presidents of the Boroughs: Boroughs of Manhattan, The Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Richmond* (New York: City of New York, 1908), 21.
- ⁴ Formerly St. Francis Xavier Parochial School; at this writing Winston Preparatory School.
- ⁵ Several of the three-story brick buildings along the street appear to be pre-Civil War. Closer to Seventh Avenue is a 12-story multifamily building completed in 2001.
- ⁶ Hilda Regier, "Chelsea (i)" in Kenneth T. Jackson, Ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010), 234.
- ⁷ The 16th Ward's northern boundary is 24th Street.
- ⁸ The Lenape, or Lenni-Lenape, known today as the Delaware people, were associated with a large area that included parts of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. There were three different language variations within this group. The northernmost spoke Munsee. See Robert S. Grumet, *The Munsee Indians: A History* (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).
- ⁹ Reginald P. Bolton, *Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922), 58. Permalink to the book: <https://doi.org/10.5479/sil.936154.39088015279508>
- ¹⁰ Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Julius' Bar Building (LPC-2663)* (New York: City of New York, 2022), prepared by Michael D. Caratzas, 10.
- ¹¹ The Council Minutes of 1831 reported that completing 17th Street from river to river was an ongoing priority; landowners were being paid for roadwork property. Parts of 17th Street were completed by 1831 per allocations of money to contractors. *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1784-1831* (New York: City of New York, 1917), Vol. XIX, 101, 442.
- ¹² (LPC), *Chelsea Historic District Designation Report (LP-0666)* (New York: City of New York, 1970), 2-4. In addition to developing his family's property, Clement Clarke Moore is best known as the author of "A Visit from St. Nicholas."
- ¹³ Betsy Kearns and Cece Kirkorian, Historical Perspectives, Inc., *Seventh Avenue Rezoning Project*, CEQR No. 86-0-82M Area A; Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment, 1988, 14. http://smedia.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/arch_reports/401.pdf.
- ¹⁴ Sherrill D. Wilson, "African Americans, From the Colonial Period to 1900," *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition*, 10-11.
- ¹⁵ St. Peter's Episcopal Church on West 20th Street is within the New York City Landmark Chelsea Historic District. Saint Columba Church remains on West 25th Street near Eight Avenue.
- ¹⁶ William Perris, *Maps of the City of New York*, Vol. 5, Sheet 70. The "African Church" was the African Union Church, an African Methodist Episcopal congregation that is listed in the 1859-60 New York City Directory.
- ¹⁷ *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York* (New York: Wm. C. Bryant & Co., January 1, 1854), 48.
- ¹⁸ Office of the Register, New York City Department of Finance, Deeds and Conveyances, Section 3, Block 792, "General Statement of Early Title." In 1795 the land was conveyed by Warren's estate to Coll(in) MacGregor, a Scottish New York City merchant.
- ¹⁹ Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 505, Page 404, (June 12, 1848) Lissack H. Simpson to The Public School Society of New York; Liber 497, Page 599, (April 26, 1848) Charles A. Clinton to Lissack H. Simpson. Charles Clinton (1798-1861) was a son of

DeWitt Clinton, and his wife Catherine (1810-1841) was the daughter of John Hone. During the early 19th century, this undeveloped lot sold to John and Rebecca Tonnele, Sr. in 1817, to John Hone in 1833, and later to Charles A. and Catherine Clinton in 1840.

²⁰ *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York*, January 1, 1854, after page 64. There were additional model schoolhouse designs including stand-alone buildings intended for larger lots and with more sophisticated architectural details.

²¹ Thomas Boese, *Public Education in the City of New York: Its History, Condition, and Statistics* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), 155.

²² David Ment, "Public Schools," *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition*, 1056.

²³ The rear extension also housed the latrines.

²⁴ This section is an overview of the early years of public education in New York City. Sources include David Ment, "Board of Education," and "Public Schools," *The Encyclopedia of New York, Second Edition*, 137-139 and 1055-1057; LPC, *(Former) Colored School No. 3 (LPC-1977)*, 1998, prepared by Donald G. Presa; and Andy McCarthy, Librarian II *Class Act: Researching New York City Schools with Local History Collections*, New York Public Library, October 20, 2014. <https://www.nypl.org/blog/2014/10/20/researching-nyc-schools>

²⁵ It is unclear if Africans, either free or children of enslaved, were also included.

²⁶ Andy McCarthy, New York Public Library.

²⁷ Although the Quaker schools received money beginning in 1813 from the state's common fund, when the Quaker schools limited their enrollment to girls, they were not public in the same sense as the Public School Society schools open to both girls and boys.

²⁸ DeWitt Clinton was its first president.

²⁹ Although non-sectarian, these City schools taught with a Protestant bias. With the influx of immigrants, particularly Roman Catholics, religious and political controversies increased. Consequently, the Board of Education was formed in 1842. David Ment, "Board of Education," *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition*, 137.

³⁰ The transition gradually occurred from 1843 to 1853, during which time some of the schools maintained racially segregated classrooms.

³¹ "Introductory Remarks," *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York*,

January 1, 1854, 3-5.

³² Office of the Register, Liber 544, Page 315 (July 30, 1853), The Public School Society as grantor and the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonality of the City of New York as grantees.

³³ *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York*, January 1, 1854, 7. The official count or the average for all children was about 41,000 students; for Black children it was 918 at that time. These numbers represent about a third to about a half of eligible students. Compulsory attendance began in 1874. The percentage of Black students and white students attending school did not differ much between the two groups.

³⁴ Beginning in 1873 the mayor appointed the members of the Board of Education, following the state-wide Common School System, but the ward system also continued until 1898. David Ment, *The Encyclopedia of New York, Second Edition*, 137.

³⁵ LPC, *African Burial Ground and The Commons Historic District Designation Report (LP-1993)*, 1993, by Gale Harris, Jean Howson, & Betsy Bradley; Sherrill D. Wilson, "African Americans: From the Colonial Period to 1900," *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition*, 10-11.

³⁶ Carla L. Peterson, *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 205-206.

³⁷ Sherrill D. Wilson, 11.

³⁸ Carla L. Peterson, 145.

³⁹ Edward Robb Ellis, *The Epic of New York City: A Narrative History* (New York: Old Town Books, 1966), 293-316. See also LPC, *Lamartine Place Historic District Designation Report LP-2324* (New York: City of New York, 2009), 13-14, prepared by Virginia Kurshan and Theresa Noonan.

⁴⁰ Robert C. Morris, "African Free Schools," *The Encyclopedia of New York City, Second Edition*, 14; See also LPC, *(Former) Colored School No. 3 (LPC-1977)*, 1998, prepared by Donald G. Presa.

⁴¹ Public funding began in New York in 1815, but until the African Free Schools were absorbed by the Public School Society in 1834, it does not appear that they received public funding.

⁴² The percentage of Black students remained low, about 2-5%, due to the increasing population of European

immigrants in Manhattan at that time.

⁴³ Boston's Abiel Smith School was founded by African Americans in 1798 and in 1816 was admitted to the Boston Public School system, making it the first public school in the United States for African Americans. Boston desegregated its schools in 1855, thirty years before New York City. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/abiel-smith-school-1798-1855/>

⁴⁴ The Mulberry Street school became associated with several prominent Black men who attended it, most notably abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet and educator Charles L. Reason, to name a few.

⁴⁵ *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York*, January 1, 1854, 4. The number of schools for African Americans in New York was never large and decreased over the years. For example, by 1861 there were eight schools for African Americans in New York City.

⁴⁶ "The 1873 New York statute established that no state citizen, 'on the basis of race, color...' was to be excluded from the equal enjoyment of accommodations or facilities provided by inn-keepers, common carriers, theaters or common schools and public educational institutions." David McBride, "Fourteenth Amendment Idealism: The New York State Civil Rights Law, 1873-1918," *New York History*, Vol. 71, No. 1, April 1990.

⁴⁷ *Forty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Education for the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1884*. 52-53. It is not clear who appealed to the legislature, but Black teachers may have feared the loss of their jobs since they were not allowed to teach white students. The two remaining "colored" schools were open to all, but it likely the student body remained the same.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁹ Research on the former Colored School No. 4 and public education in 19th-century New York City was aided by David Ment at the New York City Municipal Archives and by his previous related research.

⁵⁰ "Appendix," *Doggett's New York City Directory for 1851-1852*, Public Primary School 27 & 28, 32.

⁵¹ *Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York* (for the year ending January 1, 1855), 93.

⁵² *Twentieth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York* (for the year ending December 31, 1861), 23.

⁵³ *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York* (for the year ending December 31, 1866), 12.

⁵⁴ This report draws on Eric K. Washington's early research, particularly on the many teachers and students associated with the former Colored School No. 4.

⁵⁵ Sarah Smith Tompkins Garnet's sister Susan McKinney Steward was the first African American woman in the state of New York to earn a medical degree, and the third in the United States.

⁵⁶ *New York Daily Tribune*, July 15, 1863, 8.

⁵⁷ "Sarah J. Smith Garnet: Sudden Death of a Leading School Principal in Her 81st Year," *The Chat*, September 20, 1911, and "Garnet Memorial Services Held in Honor of Colored Educator and Suffragist," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 30, 1911, 6.

⁵⁸ *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City and County of New York* (for the year ending December 31, 1864), 99-100. See also the Annual Reports of 1868 and 1869.

⁵⁹ Amy Godine, "The Noteworthy Mr. Appo," *Adirondack Life*, December 2003. <https://www.adirondacklife.com/2021/10/28/the-noteworthy-mr-appo/>

⁶⁰ L. A. Scuggs, *Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character* Raleigh (North Carolina: Scuggs, 1893), 156.

⁶¹ "Musician Who Made his Mark," *New York Age*, February 11, 1933, 4.

⁶² *Homespun Heroines and Other Women of Distinction* (Xenia, Alden Publishing Co. 1926) 222; "New York's First Colored Teacher in Mixed Schools, Dead," *New York Age*, February 9, 1924, 1-2.

⁶³ A memorial plaque at St. Philip's Church (a New York City Landmark) honored Frazier. "Tablet to the Late Miss Elizabeth Frazier to be Unveiled Sunday," *New York Age*, June 20, 1925, 10.

⁶⁴ Eric K. Washington, *Boss of the Grips: The Life of James H. Williams and the Red Caps of Grand Central Terminal* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 2019), xvii; 24.

⁶⁵ New York City, Borough of Manhattan, Department of Buildings; New York City Department of Taxes Photograph (c. 1938-43), Municipal Archives.

Findings and Designation

(Former) Colored School No. 4

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and the other features of this building and site, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that (Former) Colored School No. 4 has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City, state, and the nation.

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 Colored School No. 4 and designates Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 792 Lot 53 as its Landmark Site, as shown in the attached map.



(Former) Colored School No. 4, 128 West 17th Street, Manhattan

Lisa Buckley and Bilge Kose, May 19, 2023



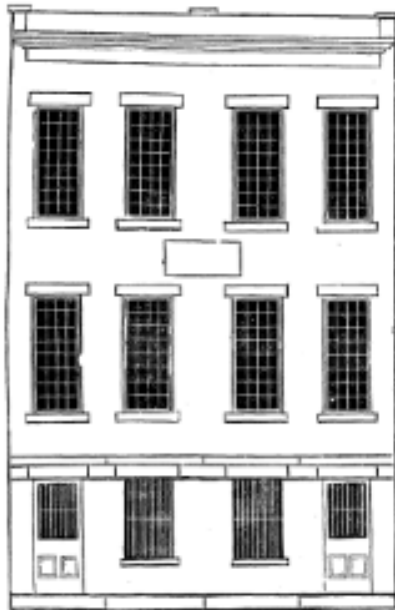
Ground Floor
Marianne Hurley, May 24, 2023



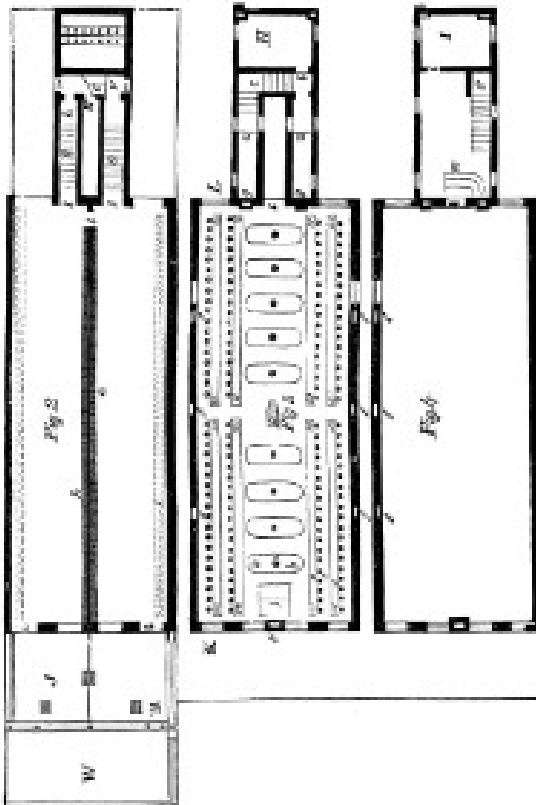
Second and Third Stories
L. Buckley and B. Kose, May 19, 2023



(Former) Colored School No. 4, 128 West 17th Street, Manhattan
Marianne Hurley, May 24, 2023



A PRIMARY SCHOOL.
 FIGURE 1. (Front View.)

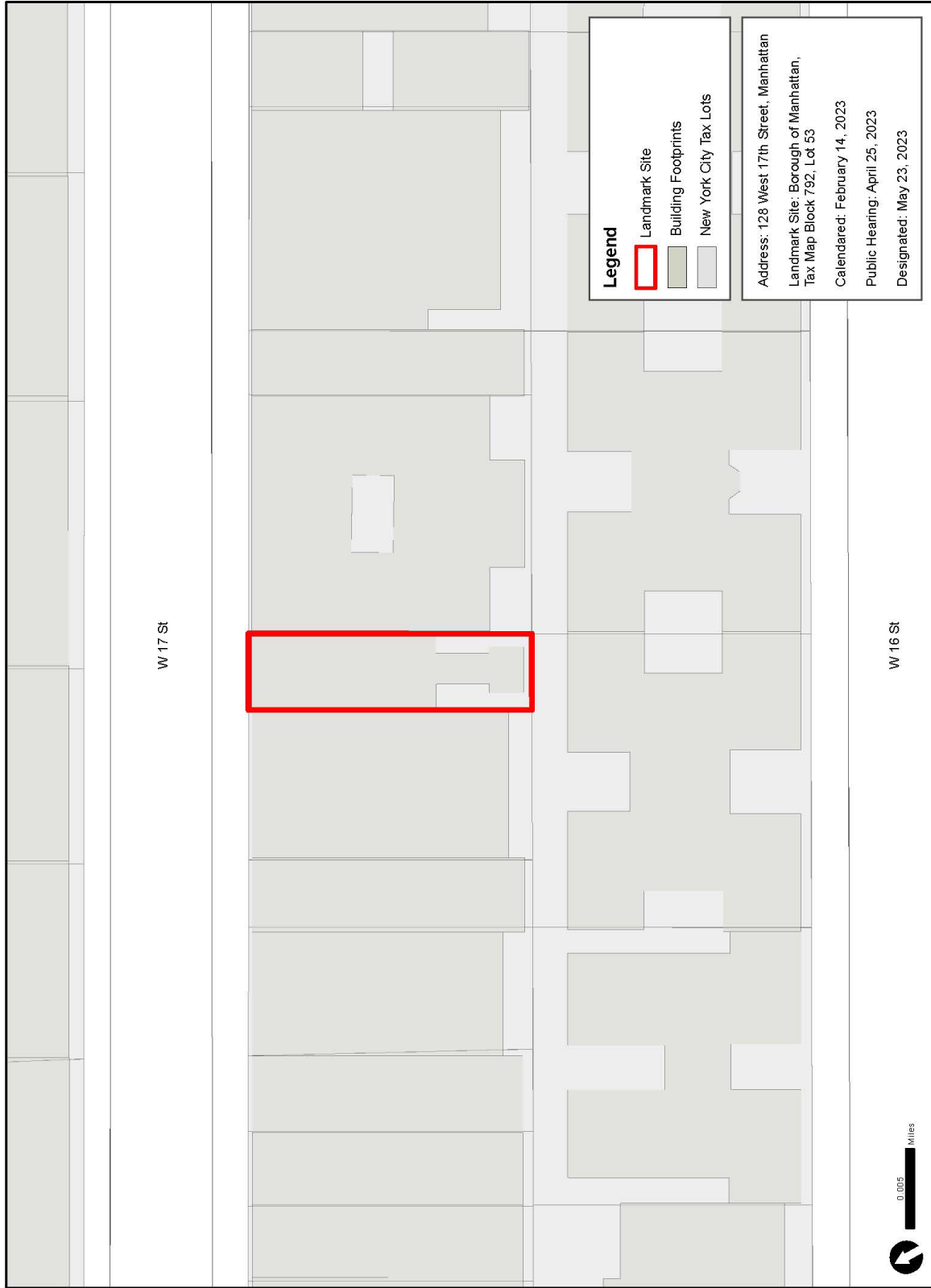


Front Facade (above) and Floor Plans of Model Primary School House of Public School Society
 Thomas Boese, *Public Education in the City of New York: Its History, Condition, and Statistics*
 New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869, 155



Headquarters of Veterans Zouaves, Seventy-Third Regiment

*Real Estate Owned by the City of New York, Under the Jurisdiction of the Presidents of the Boroughs
Boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, and Richmond, 1908, 21*



Legend

- Landmark Site
- Building Footprints
- New York City Tax Lots

Address: 128 West 17th Street, Manhattan
 Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan,
 Tax Map Block 792, Lot 53
 Calendared: February 14, 2023
 Public Hearing: April 25, 2023
 Designated: May 23, 2023



Graphic Source: MapPLUTO, Edition 22v1, Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, DHW, Date: 5.23.2023