

Public School 48

(now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School)



DESIGNATION REPORT

Public School 48

(now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School)

LOCATION

Borough of Queens
155-02 108th Avenue
(aka 155-02 – 156-00 108th Avenue;
108-01 – 108-03 155th Street)

LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

SIGNIFICANCE

Designed in 1932 by Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings for the New York City Board of Education, Public School 48 was the first school constructed using Martin's "P" plan and is a fine example and early use of the Art Deco style applied to a community elementary school.



Public School 48, Entrance Detail
2020

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Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School)

155-02 108th Avenue (aka 155-02 – 156-00 108th Avenue; 108-01 – 108-03 155th Street)
Queens

Designation List 519 LP-2646

Built: 1932-1936

Architect: Walter C. Martin

Landmark Site: Borough of Queens, Tax Map
Block 10144, Lot 42

Calendared: June 9, 2020

Public Hearing: August 4, 2020

On August 4, 2020, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School) as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No.1). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The Commission received support for the proposed designation from four people including Councilmember Adrienne E. Adams, and representatives of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, and the Art Deco Society of New York. No one spoke in opposition. In addition, the agency received one letter in support of designation of Public School 48.

Summary

Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School)

Proposed in 1931 and completed in 1936, the Art Deco style Public School 48 in South Jamaica represents an extensive construction program undertaken by the New York City Board of Education to relieve overcrowding in existing school districts and to meet the needs of new growing residential neighborhoods after World War I. It is a notable design by its architect, Walter C. Martin, and an early use of the Art Deco style for elementary school buildings, demonstrating innovations in school planning and a stylistic shift away from the more traditional revival styles commonly used in the early 20th century and into the 1940s.

Jamaica, one of the five towns that made up Queens county prior to New York City's consolidation in 1898, was a vital link between the farms of Long Island and the markets of New York. The downtown developed throughout the 18th and 19th centuries as a result of improved roads and public transportation. South Jamaica was dominated by large farms until the early-20th century, when it began to develop into a diverse working-class neighborhood. Public School 48 was housed from the turn of the century until 1936 in a wood frame schoolhouse, originally built in 1886 to house the Jamaica "colored school" before New York State ended the segregation of schools in 1900. Efforts to replace the old school began in 1905 but it was not until 1931 that plans to build the new Public School 48 at 108th Avenue and 155th Street were first announced. In 1932 it was reported that the new school would be the first to be

built along the "P" type plan, originally developed by Walter C. Martin in 1930, incorporating an extended auditorium wing with space for more classrooms. At Public School 48, the proposed auditorium wing was never added.

Walter C. Martin, Superintendent of School Buildings for the Board of Education from 1928 until 1938, designed hundreds of new schools and/or additions to existing schools throughout the five boroughs, including 34 new elementary schools and five high schools in Queens alone. Martin's school designs were executed in a variety of styles, displaying the range of approaches to school design in the interwar period. Martin used the modernistic or Art Deco style for some large projects—such as his 1929-31 Herman Ridder Junior High School in the Bronx, a New York City Landmark and perhaps his most notable building—and adapted it for smaller elementary schools like Public School 48.

Constructed between 1932 and 1936, Martin's design for the three-story Public School 48 imparts a sense of civic monumentality, anchored with strong corner towers and featuring vertical piers with stylized foliate capitals. His use of the Art Deco style incorporated distinctive decorative treatment such as bi-color brick spandrel panels, bi-color terra-cotta plaques evocative of the importance of education, granite entrance surrounds topped by stylized eagles, and large stylized cartouches.

Prominent within the neighborhood of South Jamaica, Public School 48 has served the community for more than 70 years. Little changed since its opening on May 4, 1936, it is a highly intact example of Walter C. Martin's use of the Art Deco style in the 1930s. Its successful blend of Art Deco design elements and massing was novel for elementary schools at the time it was proposed, and it represents a significant early application of the style for New York City schools.

Building Description

Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School

Description

The design of Public School 48 in the Art Deco—or “modernistic academic” style as it was referred to at the time—was influenced by Art Deco-style industrial and commercial architecture of the period and incorporated decorative features expressive of its educational function. Located on the corner of 108th Avenue and 155th Street, the three-story building has two primary, street-facing facades, a side facade facing the athletic courts of the adjacent city park, and a rear facade facing a driveway and a new school building constructed between 2008 and 2010. Public School 48 was executed in light tan brick, laid in Flemish bond along the front and side elevations, with limestone trim over a granite base and features wide window bays separated by brick piers, deep red brick detailing at the spandrels, and stylized terra-cotta decoration.

Primary (108th Avenue, North) Facade

To provide the three-story building with a sense of monumentality, Martin anchored the nine-bay-wide facade with two sturdy brick towers. Granite stoops with possibly historic metal railings lead to the school’s two entrances. Each entrance has a granite surround incorporating a gabled pediment with anthemion guarded by stylized eagles all supporting a carved lintel. The historic double-leaf bronze doors decorated with fluted and foliate panels are separated from the historic gabled transoms by bronze, eared transom bars decorated with classically-derived motifs such as paterae, roundels

with lotus flowers, and stylized wave patterns. The 20-light transom at each entrance is framed by a glazed border with a decorative bronze grille with diagonal striations set in an alternating pattern. The nine bays of paired windows are defined by simple projecting brick piers, trimmed with limestone and capped by Art Deco-style terra-cotta plaques that rise above the roofline, creating the appearance of a crenellated parapet. Between the piers the roofline is decorated with alternating panels of limestone and tan brick laid in stack bond. Spandrel panels featuring trios of simple geometric plaques executed in light-tan brick within a border of deep-red brick with mitered corners are found at the second and third stories in all bays except above the entrances. The spandrel panels above the two entrances feature bi-colored (light tan and dark red) terra-cotta plaques. Their design, symbolizing the importance of education, features children flanking an open book on a plinth emblazoned with the word “knowledge,” from behind which radiates the sun. The corner towers, edged by stepped piers, rise to pedimented parapets coped with limestone. In lieu of carving the school’s name above the entrances, Martin designed two large stylized limestone cartouches with the school’s numerical designation which can easily be seen from a distance. At the base of the towers are placed carved plaques with the seals of the City of New York on the east and the Board of Education on the west, each surrounded by a heavy foliate border. Just to the right of the western entrance is the cornerstone engraved with the year 1935. A decorative grille is incorporated into the first-story window adjacent to the west entrance. With one exception, the windows and grilles at the basement appear to be historic.

Alterations

Towers repointed and cleaned; historic 12-over-12 awning windows¹ replaced with nine-over-nine aluminum sash; spotlights; pipes through and

attached to walls; light fixtures at entrances replaced; conduits; alarm; signage; screens at first story; louvered grille at basement by east entrance; remote utility meter

Primary (155th Street, West) Facade

The west facade overlooking 155th Street is five bays wide and similar to the main facade in materials and color palette. The two southernmost bays are identical to the 108th Avenue facade in fenestration and decoration. In the tower the fenestration changes to a single bay of paired windows bracketed by two bays of single windows, and each bay is surrounded by a simple border of limestone. Here the spandrel panels feature reeded limestone plaques with tan brick borders within the overall red brick border. The decoration below the roof line is a trio of simple limestone plaques. The windows and grilles at the basement appear to be historic.

Alterations

Tower repointed and cleaned; historic 12-over-12 awning windows replaced with aluminum nine-over-nine sash; screens at first story; spotlights; multiple wires draped over facade; box with conduit

Secondary Side (East) Facade

The east facade overlooking the adjacent park is seven bays wide and similar to the main facade in materials and color palette. The four southernmost bays are identical to the 108th Avenue facade in fenestration and decoration. The fenestration pattern and decoration of the three-bay east tower are the same as those of the west tower facing 155th Street.

Alterations

Tower repointed and cleaned, some brick patched; historic 12-over-12 windows, likely awning windows consistent with the other street facades, replaced with aluminum nine-over-nine sash;

screens at first story; spotlights; metal chimney extending from upper sash of window; basement window openings infilled with masonry or louvered grilles; spigot; perforated grille

Secondary Rear (South) Facade

The roughly L-shaped rear facade is more utilitarian than the school's street-facing facades. Executed in tan brick laid in common bond, the only ornament is provided by the projecting brick piers with limestone caps defining the corners and bordering the windows on the south facades of the two wings. The fenestration, which was historically detailed in plans found in the archive of the Public Design Commission of the City of New York as nine-over-nine and six-over-six sash, features limestone sills and brick lintels. There are three entrances on this facade one on the east wing with a single door and two at the base of the light courts adjacent to the center pavilion both with triple-leaf doors. The stoops are brick with granite treads and have metal railings. A tall brick chimney is attached to the center pavilion and in addition to two brick bulkheads there is a possibly historic copper ventilator on the roof. The windows and wrought-iron grilles at the basement are possibly historic.

Alterations

Brick repointed and cleaned; brick appears patched below the roofline; stoop adjacent to east wing partially reconfigured with ramp; windows replaced with aluminum four-over-four, six-over-six, and nine-over-nine sash and screens; individual windows on interior of both wings infilled with brick, both have vents, the one on the east includes a through-wall air conditioner; louvered vent at basement and in a small window on east wing; doors at entrances have been replaced; bulkheads above entrances in light courts; lights, spotlights, conduits and wires attached to walls; pipes through

wall or attached to chimney; signage; motion sensor; antenna on roof

Site

Public School 48's site features landscaped areaways on the north and west sides of the building; a paved south areaway; and a partially paved east areaway. The north areaway includes a slate-paved path.

Historic site elements include wrought-iron areaway fence and gates; basement window wells with concrete borders and metal grilles; and utilitarian cellar hatches with diamond-plate covers. Non-historic elements include two standing metal display cases; flagpole; gooseneck pipe; and a chain-link fence on southwest corner of lot.

History and Significance

Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School)

Development of South Jamaica, Queens²

Jamaica, in central Queens, is one of the oldest and most densely populated areas in the borough. The southern part of the neighborhood, where Public School 48 is located, centered around Beaver Pond and was inhabited by a Native American tribe called the Jameco or Yamecah (a word meaning Beaver in Algonquin) when the first Europeans arrived from neighboring Hempstead in 1655 in search of more space to farm. In 1656, Robert Jackson applied to Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Netherland for a patent and “purchased” 10 acres of land from the native tribe.³ A further patent in 1660 extended and incorporated the settlement under the Dutch name Rusdorp, meaning resting place.

The town’s name was changed to Jamaica when the English took over control of the colony in 1664. Queens County (then including what would later become Nassau County) was chartered in 1683 as one of the ten counties of the colony of New York. The town of Jamaica, whose boundaries included all the land south of today’s Jackie Robinson and Grand Central Parkways, served as the county seat and became a trading post where farmers from the outlying areas brought their produce.

Although early records indicate the existence of enslaved African Americans living in Jamaica prior to New York State’s abolition of slavery in 1827, throughout its history Jamaica also had a free Black population. One of its most well-

known Black residents of the 19th century was Wilson Rantus (1807-1861) who was born in Jamaica. Rantus (sometimes spelled Rantous) owned his own farm and invested in other residential properties in Jamaica in an area then known as “The Green.”⁴ Well-educated, he started a school for Black children and became involved in the effort (along with other African-American men from Queens such as Samuel V. Berry from Jamaica and Henry Amberman of Flushing) to achieve the right to vote for Black citizens.

Incorporated as a village in 1814, Jamaica became a center of trade on Long Island. Around 1836, the Long Island Rail Road, which had been incorporated in 1834, began running a trunk line from the foot of Atlantic Avenue to Jamaica and then eastward to eastern Long Island. In 1850, the former Brooklyn, Jamaica & Flatbush Turnpike Company sold the toll road to new owners incorporated as the Jamaica and Brooklyn Plank Road Company. After the Civil War, new modes of transportation continued to transform Jamaica by further facilitating commutation to New York City. The East New York & Jamaica Railroad Company established horse car lines along Fulton Street (renamed Jamaica Avenue in 1920) in 1866 which were replaced by electric trolleys in 1887.

The 19th century also saw Jamaica evolve into a retreat for urban residents who patronized its numerous inns and saloons on weekend excursions and built large summer homes on its open land. The permanent population of Jamaica increased steadily throughout the second half of the century particularly in the area of Jamaica Avenue.

In the early-20th century, the decade prior to World War I brought a series of additional transportation improvements that opened Jamaica and the entire Borough of Queens to rapid growth and development. The Long Island Rail Road was electrified in 1905-08, the Queensboro Bridge was

opened in 1909, railroad tunnels were completed beneath the East River in 1910, and the elevated line was extended along Jamaica Avenue from Cypress Hills in 1918.

Between 1900 and 1920, the population of Jamaica quadrupled and its commercial district, centered on Jamaica Avenue, became one of the busiest and most highly valued on Long Island. As soldiers returned from World War I wanting to settle down and start families, a shortage of building materials and a financial downturn exacerbated the lack of housing in New York City. The stage was set for a massive construction boom in the 1920s as “families fled from paying exorbitant rents for walk-up apartments in Manhattan to buy houses in Queens.”⁵

South Jamaica, the area south of Liberty Avenue between today’s Van Wyck Expressway and Merrick Boulevard and extending to the Belt Parkway was largely rural farmland through the 19th century. The site of Public School 48 was part of a farm owned in the 1840s by Abraham Bergen. The family’s house was located on South Road with the farm laid out to the southeast.⁶ By the 1870s the property was held by Henry Hanna, a German-born farmer, who appears to still have been farming the land with his son in 1900.⁷ In 1905, the land was purchased by Jacob Dubroff, the streets cut through and the blocks subdivided, but development in the area was still sparse.⁸ As development increased over the next three decades, the area attracted a racially diverse, largely working-class population among whom were native-born whites and African Americans, European immigrants largely from Ireland, Italy, Poland, Russia, and Germany as well as immigrants from the Caribbean.⁹ With each decade the population increased and by the 1940s, South Jamaica was fully developed with modest frame dwellings.¹⁰

Public Education in Jamaica, Queens¹¹

The present New York City public school system, fully supported and maintained by public funds, developed slowly from the initial establishment under Dutch rule of elementary schools supported and jointly controlled by both the civil authorities and the Dutch Reformed Church. Under English rule, a system of private academies similar to those in Britain appeared in lieu of a public system. Through the 18th century, schools in Queens were rarely free and were primarily run by religious institutions.¹² It was not until after the American Revolution that New York State undertook the task of creating a public education system. During the period between the first meeting of the state legislature in 1777 and 1851, nearly 1,000 pieces of legislation concerning education were passed. In 1812, New York State adopted a common school system intended to provide free elementary education to all the residents of the state to be funded through local taxes. In 1813, the town of Jamaica voted to receive its allotted quota of the state’s school fund to put towards establishing common schools.¹³

“Union free school districts” were established during the 1853 session of the legislature as a way for municipalities to combine two or more common schools for the purpose of making education available to children from a broader region. In addition to free admission, pupils within union free school districts were also entitled to free school materials, such as textbooks.¹⁴

Public schools at this time were segregated, and in Jamaica, education for African American children was provided by local churches.¹⁵ Wilson Rantus and his associates had tried earlier in the 19th century to get support from the authorities for a public school for Jamaica’s Black children; but, it

was not until 1886 that a one-room wooden schoolhouse was constructed at 159th Street and South Road (today Tuskegee Airmen Way).¹⁶ One of Queens County's two "colored" public schools, in the 1890s it became the focus of a boycott and multiple court cases brought by African-American parents, most prominently Samuel Cisco and his wife Elizabeth, dissatisfied with the quality of education offered at the school and who demanded access to better educational resources and facilities for their children.¹⁷

Consolidation of New York City in 1898 created the need for a unified public education system that would combine the numerous, independently-administered school districts of the borough, each with its own curricula, grade divisions, and educational policies. The Borough School Boards and Central Board had been established in 1897 to begin centralized decision making, but in 1901 they were abolished and replaced by a newly reorganized Board of Education consisting of 46 Local School Board Districts and a central Executive Committee. The work of the new organization was affected by several recently implemented state and municipal efforts at reform, including the Compulsory Education Law of 1894 which mandated school attendance for all children until age 14, and the School Reform Law of 1896 which mandated state support of secondary schools. Furthermore, in 1900 the legislature amended the Consolidated School Law abolishing the separate school system for Black children. These laws substantially increased the number of children attending city schools, created new types of schools, and improved school accommodations.

A temporary halt in funding for new buildings significantly slowed the construction of school facilities in most parts of the city for a year following consolidation, despite the need. Although

the moratorium led to further overcrowding in existing schools in Jamaica, as throughout the city, in the years that followed, millions of dollars were authorized for the construction of new facilities in the early 20th century.

History of Public School 48

By 1901 the old schoolhouse that had housed Jamaica's "colored" school was renamed Public School 48 and opened to all neighborhood children. It served as an annex first to P.S. 82 at 88-02 144th Street, then P.S. 40, 109-20 Union Hall Street and appears to have been limited for a time to students in kindergarten to second grade. The school's name "William Wordsworth School" was in use by 1915, and thirteen years later it became an independent school.¹⁸

Although efforts to replace the old schoolhouse began as early as 1905, it was not until 1931 that the Board of Education took construction of a new building for Public School 48 under consideration. The following year the Board approved Superintendent of School Buildings Walter C. Martin's proposed use of the "P" plan for the school announcing that it would be the first of its type, although Martin had originally announced his intent to use the type for a school in 1930. Built during the Great Depression of the 1930s, it was not until late 1934 that the Board of Education received an allotment of \$345,000 from the Public Works Administration that enabled construction to begin. Originally scheduled to be completed in March 1936 it was another two months before the new 800-seat elementary school opened, welcoming its students on May 4, 1936.¹⁹

Modernization of School Architecture and the Influence of the Art Deco Style²⁰

Public School 48 is an early and distinctive use of the Art Deco style for the design of a public

elementary school in New York City, and represents the modernization of school design in the 1930s. Its design, by Superintendent of School Buildings Walter C. Martin, successfully incorporates the bold forms, massing strategies, and stylized ornamentation typical of the Art Deco style.

The 1920s were a period of change in the design of American school buildings, with a gradual move toward modernized and standardized educational facilities. The preference for the Collegiate Gothic or “scholastic” style school buildings was replaced by other styles including the Colonial Revival, Renaissance Revival, and Art Deco. By the end of the 1920s, not only had advancements been made in planning and constructing school buildings, educators and designers alike were also pushing for a more visible modernization of school exteriors.

When American school designers turned to modernistic ornament for schools, their primary sources of inspiration, both theoretically and practically, were industrial and commercial buildings. The aesthetic austerity and fenestration of many school designs in the mid-1920s had already prompted a comparison between schools and factory buildings. The image of an industrial America was a strong influence on the art and national consciousness of the 1920s, and the idea of a building designed as a machine for a specific use was popular in architectural theory. Architect Wallace K. Harrison expressed an ideological approach to school design by asserting that “the [school] building must be, to a certain extent, industrial in character as it is a machine for education...”²¹

Reflecting these national trends in school design were the changes in school architecture in New York City. Walter C. Martin, the Superintendent of School Buildings for the Board of

Education from 1928 to 1938, supervised the emergence of the “modernistic academic” style in New York City, which came to be referred to as the Art Deco style. The first phase of Art Deco-style schools in the City can be traced to the designs of the Seward Park High School in Manhattan (1928-29, begun by his predecessor William Gompert and completed under Martin) and Brooklyn Industrial High School for Girls (1929-30, now Brooklyn High School of the Arts) in which Art Deco-inspired ornament was combined with modernized classical elements. For Herman Ridder Junior High School in the Bronx (1929-31, a designated New York City Landmark), the first of the City’s purpose-built junior high school buildings, Martin’s robust design scheme more fully incorporated Art Deco elements characteristic of contemporary commercial and industrial buildings, including an entrance tower modeled as a set-back skyscraper, structural emphasis in the pier and window treatment along the classroom facades, a roofline with pedimented parapet and Art Deco style ornament.²² For Public School 48, Martin incorporated geometric and stylized ornamentation, bold and austere massing, and adapted many of the same Art Deco elements used for Ridder Junior High School to his design for the much smaller building, particularly the use of gabled entrance surrounds, here enhanced by the magnificent multi-light transoms, bi-colored brick and terra-cotta spandrel panels, and multi-story piers with foliate plaques that give the building the appearance of having a crenelated parapet.²³ Now replaced by sash windows, the school’s historic fenestration, 12-over-12 awning windows, was another reflection of the influence of commercial architecture inherent in early-20th century Art Deco school design.

Walter C. Martin²⁴

Walter Christy Martin (1887-?), the designer of

Public School 48, was the son of an English-born building foreman and bricklayer and his wife and raised in the Bronx where he attended the local public school. He received his architectural training at Cooper Union while working in the office of Charles S. Clark, a Bronx architect, from 1901 to 1914. During his employment in the Clark office, Martin worked on a range of new buildings and alterations (one of which was the addition to his parents' home). His most notable project during this period was his involvement in the 1912 design of the Bergen Building (now home to municipal offices) at 1932 Arthur Avenue. Martin left the Clark firm in 1914 to open his own independent practice in the Bronx. For the next four years Martin worked almost exclusively for Bronx builder William C. Bergen designing tenements, single-family houses, a factory, and garages as well as designing an addition to the Bergen Building in 1915 to be used by the city as a courthouse and jail.

In 1918 Martin was appointed to the post of Superintendent of the Tenement House Department for the Bronx, a post he held until 1925 when then Mayor-elect James Walker promoted him to Tenement House Commissioner. In November 1927 William H. Gompert, who had succeeded the long-term Superintendent of School Buildings C. B. J. Snyder in 1923, was forced to quit his position. Martin succeeded to the post the next spring following months of speculation.

During his tenure as Superintendent of School Buildings, Martin oversaw a major expansion of the number of public-school buildings within the five boroughs. In 1938, Martin's position was eliminated in an intentional reorganization of the Bureau of Construction and Maintenance by the Board of Education, bringing to an end his 20-year-long civil service career. Martin retired by the outbreak of World War II, and it cannot be

determined if he ever returned to private practice.²⁵

Later History

At the time Public School 48 was completed, its South Jamaica neighborhood was home to a racially diverse working-class population of native-born and immigrant residents. The demographics of South Jamaica began to change in the 1950s as white families began to move away and increasing numbers of African Americans moved into the area, making South Jamaica the largest Black neighborhood in Queens.²⁶

The change was due at least in part to the racist policy of redlining that began prior to World War II. In 1933 the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) was founded as part of the New Deal in an effort to stem housing foreclosures. In the late 1930s, the HOLC began issuing maps color-coded on a scale from A to D to help lenders determine which neighborhoods were "desirable" places for investments and which were not.²⁷ The HOLC maps graded the area between the Long Island Rail Road and Linden Boulevard from Van Wyck Boulevard (now the Van Wyck Expressway) to 180th Street including the area around Public School 48 as "D-Hazardous" and recommended that lenders refuse to provide loans in these areas except on a conservative basis. Among the reasons for this grade, according to the HOLC, were the mix of business and residential use, the condition of the homes, limited availability of mortgages for either purchase or construction, and most particularly that nearly half of the area's working-class population were either immigrants or Blacks, groups that were unjustly considered "undesirable."²⁸

In the 1980s new immigrant groups began to arrive from the Caribbean and Latin America, joined more recently by immigrants from India and Bangladesh.²⁹ Today the student body of Public School 48 is largely African-American and Hispanic

but shows an increasing number of Asian students.³⁰ Between 2008 and 2010 a new school building was built to the south of the original building and designated Public School 48Q, The William Wordsworth School. As of 2020, the historic Public School 48 is to be used as one of several special education centers in the borough of Queens, designated as P75Q at P.S.48, The Robert Peary School.

Conclusion

Prominent within the neighborhood of South Jamaica, the three-story Public School 48 has served the community for more than 70 years. Little changed since its opening on May 4, 1936, it is a highly intact example of Walter C. Martin's use of the Art Deco style in the 1930s. Its successful blend of Art Deco design elements and massing was novel for elementary schools at the time it was proposed, and it represents a significant early application of the style for New York City schools.

Endnotes

- ¹ As shown in the tax photograph the fenestration was the awning type window. New York City Department of Taxation Photograph, c. 1938-43, Municipal Archives.
- ² Based on Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Jamaica High School Designation Report (LP-2316)* (New York: City of New York, 2009), prepared by Virginia Kurshan, 2-3; Benjamin F. Thompson, *History of Long Island* (New York: E. French, 1839); Vincent Seyfried, "Jamaica," in *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, Kenneth Jackson, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 610-611; LPC, *Suffolk Title and Guarantee Company Building Designation Report (LP-2088)* (New York: City of New York, 2001), prepared by Virginia Kurshan; LPC, *Jamaica Savings Bank Designation Report (LP-2109)* (New York: City of New York, 2008), prepared by Donald Presa; LPC, *Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Designation Report (LP-2386)* (New York: City of New York, 2010), prepared by Marianne Percival.
- ³ The Native American "system of land tenure was that of occupancy for the needs of the group" and that those sales that the Europeans deemed outright transfers of property were to the Native Americans closer to leases or joint tenancy contracts where they still had rights to the property. Reginald Pelham Bolton, *New York City in Indian Possession*, 2nd ed. (NY: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1920; reprint 1975), 7, 14-15.
- ⁴ The Green was roughly the area now bounded by Douglass Street (now Douglas Avenue), Liberty Avenue, 168th Street and 175th Street. Jamie Atkinson, "Life on 'The Green:' An Analysis of the Development of African American Community in 19th Century Jamaica, Queens," *Hofstra Papers in Anthropology*, article #3, Volume 5, 2010 (Hofstra.edu/academics/colleges/hclas/anthro/hpia-atkinson.html, accessed June 30, 2020)
- ⁵ "Elbow Room," *Long Island Press*, January 9, 1938.
- ⁶ *Map of the Village of Jamaica, Queens County, Long Island* surveyed and drawn by Martin G. Johnson, 1842 (Brooklyn Historical Society Map Portal, accessed July 16, 2020), Henry Francis Walling, *Topographical Map of the Counties of Kings and Queens, New York* (New York: W. E. and A. A. Baker, 1859).
- ⁷ *Map of Kings County with Parts of Westchester, Queens, New York & Richmond: Showing Farm Lines, Soundings, etc.* (New York: Matthew Dripps, 1872?); *Map of the Village of Jamaica, Queens County, N.Y.: Showing Every Lot and Building* (New York: Matthew Dripps, 1876); U.S. Census records, 1900.
- ⁸ Frederick Hanna sold the farm and its buildings to Theodore F. Archer in January with the stipulation that he and his wife could remain until April and could harvest the crops before the first of June. Archer assigned the contract to Jacob S. Dubroff on the same day. The land was surveyed and lotted in March 1905. A separate conveyance was executed between Hanna and Dubroff in June. Queens County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1355, 325-326 (January 14, 1905, recorded January 20, 1905); Liber 1357, 267 (June 27, 2-1905); *Atlas of the Borough of Queens* (Brooklyn: E. Belcher Hyde, 1907), v. 1, pl. 10.
- ⁹ The population around the location of Public School 48 was predominantly white with many households headed by immigrants from numerous European countries. While a smaller proportion of the population, Black households were headed by both American- and Caribbean-born men and women. U.S. Census Records, 1900-1940.
- ¹⁰ Vincent Seyfried, "South Jamaica," in *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 1098-99.
- ¹¹ Information in this section is taken from the following sources: LPC, *(Former) Public School 64 Designation Report (LP-2189)* (New York: City of New York, 2006), prepared by Virginia Kurshan; LPC, *Flushing High School Designation Report (LP-1798)* (New York: City of New York, 1991), prepared by James T. Dillon; New York State Department of Public Instruction, *38th Annual Report of the State Superintendent for the School Year 1893* (New York: State Printer, 1904); Archie Emerson Palmer, *The New York Public School: Being a History of Free Education in the City of New York* (New York: MacMillan, 1905), 138, 260-1, 292-3.
- ¹² Palmer, 260.
- ¹³ Palmer, 261.
- ¹⁴ Palmer, 138.
- ¹⁵ Atkinson, "Life on 'The Green.'"
- ¹⁶ The building was demolished by 1951. *Atlas of Queens County, Long Island, New York* (New York: Chester Wolverton, 1891), pl. 8; *Insurance Maps of the Borough of*

Queens (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1951), v. 6, pl. 64. The site is now part of the York College/CUNY campus.

¹⁷ The history of the segregated public school in Jamaica dates to 1854 when the first facility was built by the area's white residents for the education of the African-American children. The school constructed in 1886 was under the control of one teacher, Eveline Williams, who was responsible for the education of 75 students in multiple grades and, despite efforts to convince the board to hire another teacher, was the only teacher in 1895 when the protests began. At the time, Jamaica was still largely rural and African Americans made up 6% of the population. Carlton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State: From Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 1979), 228, 230.

¹⁸ The building is labeled Public School 48. *Atlas of the Borough of Queens, City of New York* (Brooklyn, NY: E. Belcher Hyde, 1901), v. 1, pl. 10; "Demand of Craig Is Turned Down," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, June 10, 1920, 6; "Jamaica High's Army Training Move Opposed," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, December 29, 1928, 13; "Good Conduct and Perfect Attendance: P.S. No. 48-Jamaica, Miss Margaret Scott, Principal," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 12, 1913, 28, February 19, 1915, 33.

¹⁹ "Urges Abandoning Public School 48," *Standard Union*, October 11, 1905, 2; "Plan First 'P' Type School for Brooklyn," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 2, 1930, 15; "Two New Schools in Brooklyn and Queens Are Sought," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 22, 1931, 17; "O.K. \$250,000 P.S. 48 Plan for Queens," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 11, 1932, 25; "School Awards Voted," *New York Times*, October 11, 1934, 4; "Acts to Speed Work on P.S. 48, Queens," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 29, 1934, 5; "Mayor Plans 13 New Schools for Queens by 1938 to Reduce Congestion," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 15, 1936, 22; "Jamaica School Opens," *New York Times*, May 5, 1936, 8.

²⁰ LPC, *Herman Ridder Junior High School Designation Report (LP-1628)* (New York: City of New York, 1991), prepared by Betsy Bradley, 3-5.

²¹ Wallace K. Harrison and C. E. Dobbin, *School Buildings of Today and Tomorrow*. (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co, 1931), 2 as quoted in LPC, *Herman Ridder Junior High School Designation Report*, 4.

²² LPC, *Herman Ridder Junior High School Designation Report*, 1.

²³ Many of Martin's plans were used for multiple schools. Public School 48 shares its basic design with Public Schools 107 and 108 in the Bronx and 162 in Queens but

the schools are not identical.

²⁴ LPC, *Herman Ridder Junior High School Designation Report*, 7-8.

²⁵ Ancestry.com, *U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* [database on-line] Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2005; U.S. Census records, 1900, 1920-1940; New York State Census, 1905 and 1915; *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, various issues, 1908-1917; "22 Appointed by Walker," *Brooklyn Times Union*, December 31, 1925, 21; "Martin Is Elected to Gompert's Post," *New York Times*, June 16, 1928, 17; "Martin Ousted from School Job," *Daily News*, May 19, 1938, 49; Ancestry.com, *U.S. World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942* [database on-line] Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2011.

²⁶ U.S. Census records, 1930 and 1940; Community Council of Greater New York, Bureau of Community Statistical Services, Research Department, *Queens Communities: Population Characteristics and Neighborhood Social Resources* (New York: The Council, 1958), v. 2, 77; Jonathan Lemire, "Working-Class Area Works at Comeback: South Jamaica Is 'Turning Corner'," *New York Daily News*, April 27, 2003. The *Queens Communities* report indicates that between 1950 and 1957 the population of African Americans in Jamaica-South Jamaica increased by 23,000 people, rising from 21.7% to 36.3% of the total population. At the same time there was a net loss of 13,400 white residents.

²⁷ LPC, *Sunset Park South Historic District Designation Report (LP-2622)* (New York: City of New York, 2019), prepared by Michael Caratzas and Jessica Baldwin, 21; Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing, W. W. Norton and Company, 2017), 63.

²⁸ Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, (<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining>, accessed June 30, 2020).

²⁹ "South Jamaica, Queens," *Wikipedia* (accessed June 30, 2020); New York City Population Fact Finder, census tracts 254 (tract includes Public School 48), 258, 260 covers demographic statistics from 2000 to 2018 (popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile, accessed April 2020).

³⁰ New York State Education Department, New York State School Report Card: Accountability and Overview Report, P.S. 48 William Wordsworth School 2005-6, 2009-10 (Internet, accessed April 2020); New York State Education Department, P.S. 48 William Wordsworth Enrollment, 2018-2019 (data.nysed.gov/enrollment.php?year=2019&instid=800000042785, accessed July 6, 2020).

Findings and Designation

Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School)

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 Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School) 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.

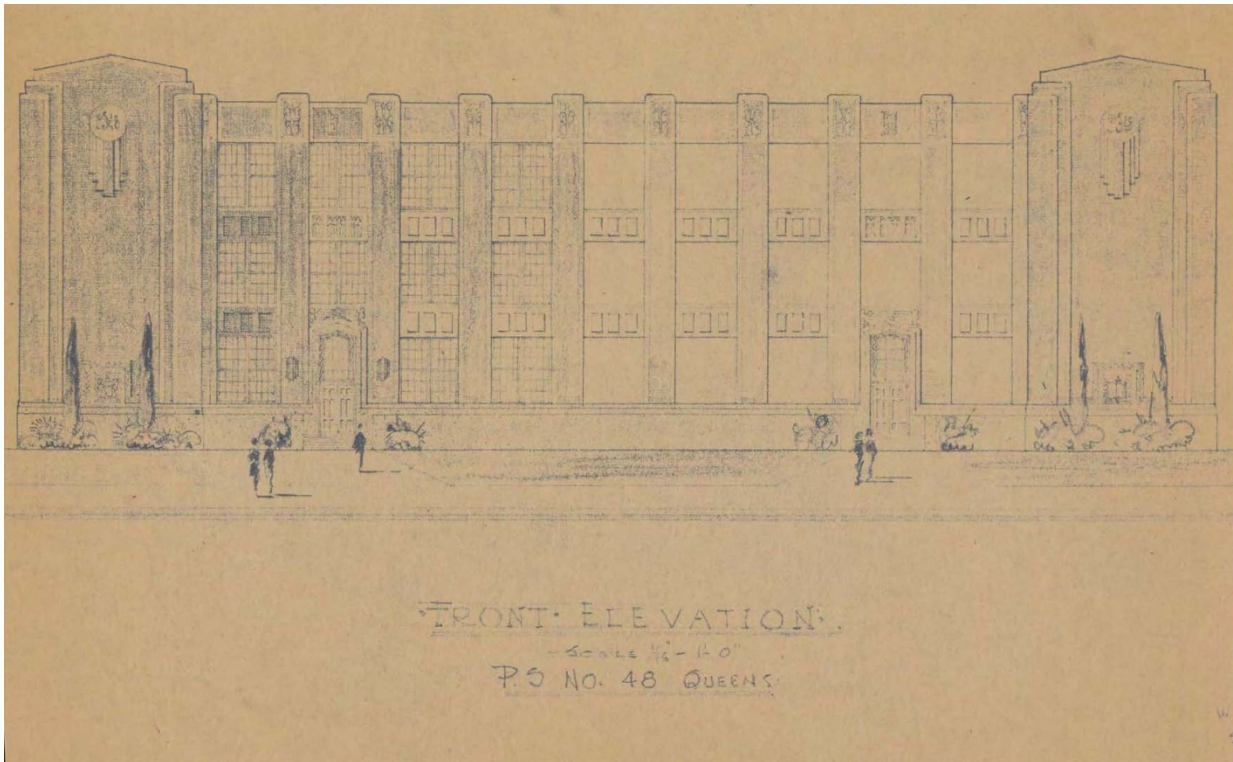
Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark Public School 48 (now P75Q at P.S. 48, The Robert E. Peary School) and designates Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 10144, Lot 42 as its Landmark Site, as shown in the attached map.



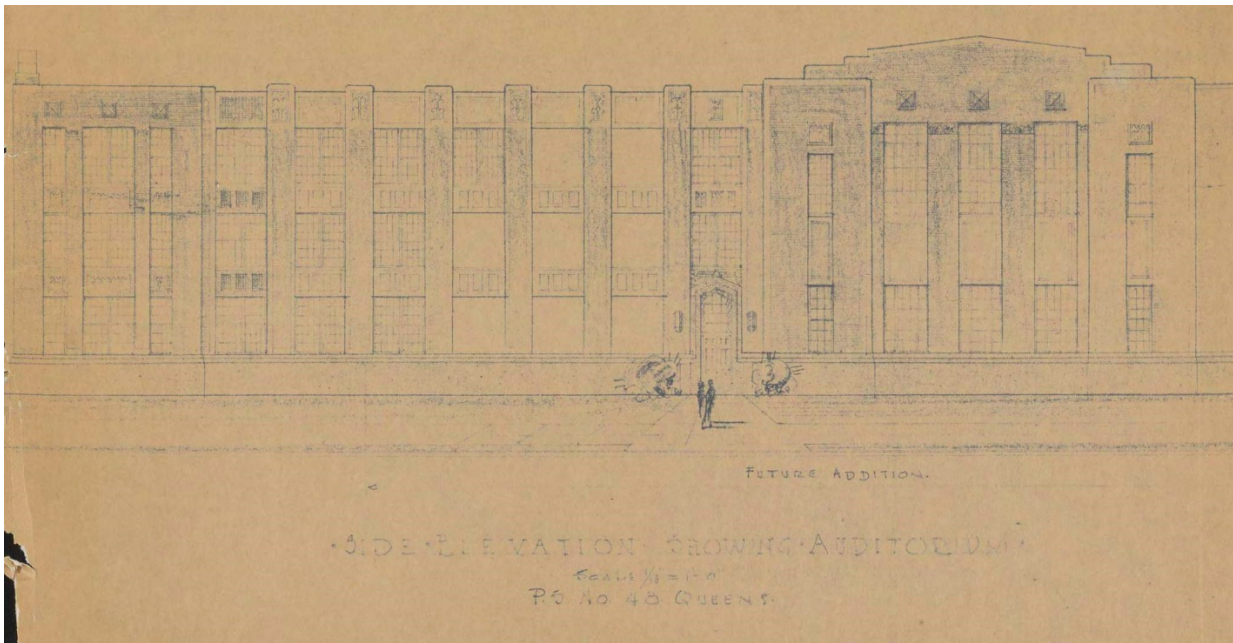
Public School 48, 155-02 108th Avenue
Michael Caratzas, September 2020



New York City Department of Taxes Photograph, c. 1938-43
Courtesy: Municipal Archives



Front Elevation P.S. No. 48 Queens, Walter C. Martin, 1931
Collection of the Public Design Commission of the City of New York



Side Elevation showing auditorium P.S. No. 48 Queens, Walter C. Martin, 1931
Collection of the Public Design Commission of the City of New York



Public School 48, east facade
Michael Caratzas, September 2020



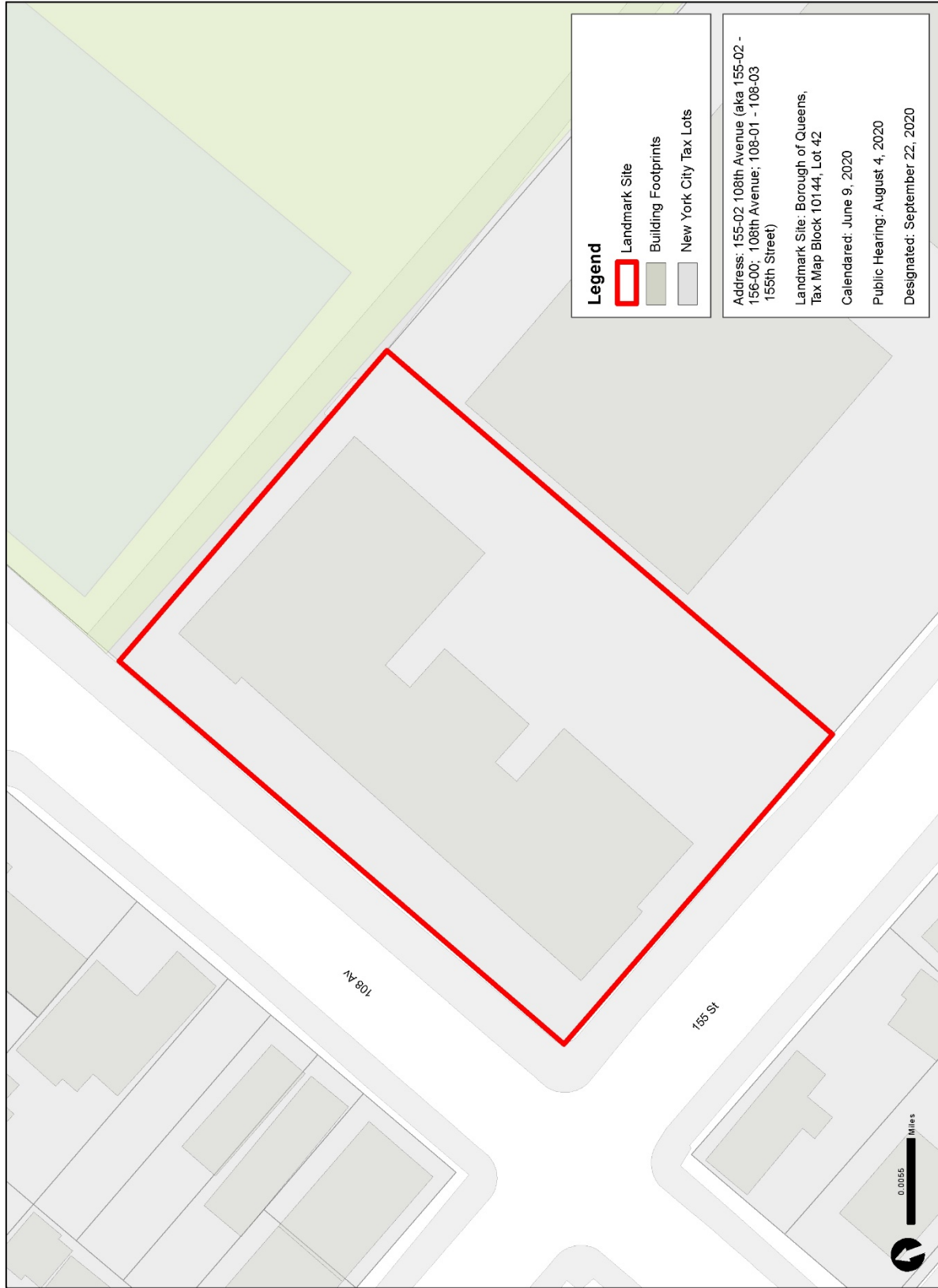
Public School 48, west facade
Michael Caratzas, September 2020



Public School 48 west tower elevations and details
Michael Caratzas, 2020



Public School 48, entrance with decorative details
Michael Caratzas, September 2020



Graphic Source: MapPLUTO, Edition 20v2, Author: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, MD, Date: 9/24/2020.