

# American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage



## DESIGNATION REPORT

# American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage

## LOCATION

Borough of Brooklyn  
233 Butler Street (aka 231-237 Butler Street)

## LANDMARK TYPE

Individual

## SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by Renwick, Aspinwall and Tucker, the ASPCA's finest surviving structure in New York City and the horse drinking fountain in front of it constitute an elegant reminder of the early promotion of humane treatment of animals, and New York's central role in the national anticruelty movement.



BROOKLYN OFFICE, SHELTER AND GARAGE  
233 BUTLER STREET, BROOKLYN

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *Annual Report for 1921* (New York: The Society, 1922), 21.

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# **American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage**

233 Butler Street (aka 231-237 Butler Street),  
Brooklyn

law. The Commission received support for the proposed designation from 14 people, including representatives of the property owner, New York City Councilmember Brad Lander, the Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, Historic Districts Council, Society for the Architecture of the City, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Municipal Art Society of New York, Park Slope Civic Council, Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus, and four individuals. In addition, the Commission received 33 written submissions in support of the proposed designation.

## **Designation List 515 LP-2637**

**Built:** 1913, expanded 1922

**Architect:** Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker

**Landmark Site:** Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 405, Lot 51 in part and a portion of the Butler Street sidewalk in front of Lot 51, bounded by a line beginning at the northeast corner of said lot, continuing southerly along the eastern lot line and a line extending southerly to the northern curblineline of Butler Street, westerly along the northern curblineline of Butler Street to a point on a line extending southerly from the southwest corner of the building at 231-237 Butler Street, northerly along said line and the western building line of 231-237 Butler Street to the northern lot line, and easterly along the northern lot line to the point of beginning.

**Calendared:** June 25, 2019

**Public Hearing:** September 24, 2019

On September 24, 2019, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage as a New York City Landmark and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of the

## Summary

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage

Constructed as an animal shelter in 1913 and expanded in 1922 into the ASPCA's Brooklyn office, shelter, and garage, 233 Butler Street is the city's finest surviving building associated with the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Founded in New York City in 1866, the ASPCA was the first anti-cruelty organization in the United States. It was crucial in changing Americans' attitudes toward animals and in establishing New York as a national leader in expanding animals' rights and protecting them from neglect and abuse.

Upon its 1913 opening, the ASPCA hailed its new Brooklyn shelter as "the most modern establishment of its kind in existence" and the largest animal shelter in the country, surpassing even its own Manhattan shelter. Its construction followed decades of activism by Brooklyn ASPCA members and other anti-cruelty advocates, with support from prominent local philanthropists. The ASPCA opened its first Brooklyn shelter on Malbone Street in 1895; the new Butler Street shelter replaced this outdated facility with a modern, sanitary, fireproof structure in a location more convenient for most Brooklynites.

Both the 1913 shelter and its 1922 expansion were designed by Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker. With the expansion, the ASPCA realized its long-valued goal of bringing its Brooklyn offices, shelter, and garage under one roof. Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker had recently completed several high-profile projects; partner J. Lawrence Aspinwall was an ASPCA member. The shelter, housed in the expanded building's western end, was mirrored on its east by a new ambulance portal. A classical limestone entrance crowned by a relief of the

Society's seal, depicting a sword-bearing angel protecting a fallen horse, provided access to the new second floor. The *Brooklyn Citizen* called the new facility "the most modern and up-to-date structure of its kind in the country," representing "all of the wonderful humane work being done by" the ASPCA.

During its time as a shelter, thousands of Brooklynites adopted pets from this building. Staff at 233 Butler Street investigated and prosecuted animal abuse cases, rescued cats from high places and horses from ditches, treated and released injured pigeons and squirrels, and inspected pet stores, poultry markets, stockyards, stables, equestrian paths, and Coney Island's animal shows. They also taught schoolchildren about caring for animals, coordinated Boy and Girl Scout programs, organized the 1935 Brooklyn Dog and Horse Parade, and awarded heroism medals to courageous animals and humans. The ASPCA remained at 233 Butler Street through the 1970s but vacated the building by 1981, when it was sold to a pair of partners including master organ builder Lawrence Trupiano.

The design of the building is primarily neo-Romanesque, with classical features and patterned brick enlivening its main facade. Historically associated with fortresses, castles, and churches, the Romanesque was a fitting inspiration, expressing the building's protective function, reinforcing the Society's image as guardian of the vulnerable, and reflecting the spiritual undertones of its work. Many of its features are consistent with the design of armories and other secure structures of the time.

The landmark site includes the sidewalk in front of the building, which contains an animal drinking trough funded by a major ASPCA benefactor, Edith G. Bowdoin, and installed with the original shelter's opening in 1913. Horses were ubiquitous on the streets of New York City into the early 20th century, and the lack of public drinking water caused many to suffer, especially during

summer. The ASPCA was a leader in erecting public drinking fountains, and by the early 20th century, hundreds had been installed throughout the city. The trough-like granite fountain in front of 233 Butler Street is a rare survivor of these efforts. It is of a standardized design approved by the city's Art Commission in 1909 following a campaign led by Bowdoin to "erect a large number of simple, inexpensive drinking troughs ... where they are most needed." The only animal drinking fountain remaining in front of a historic ASPCA facility, this trough and the building behind it constitute a unique monument to the work of local advocates in promoting the humane treatment of animals, and reminder of New York's historic role at the center of the national anticruelty movement.

## Building Description

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage

### Description

The former ASPCA building at 233 Butler Street (aka 231-237 Butler Street) was originally a 38-foot-wide single-story structure constructed in 1913 to serve as the Society's Brooklyn dog and cat shelter. This building occupied the western portion of its lot, which was then only 80 feet wide. In 1922, the building attained its present appearance when it was expanded eastward and to two stories, to increase its capacity for homeless animals and to house the Society's Brooklyn offices and ambulance garage. Both the 1913 building and 1922 expansion were designed by Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker.

The 1913 building consisted of the first-story portion of the present building west of its main entrance, the projecting limestone sill and belt course crowning this portion of the first story, and a low brick parapet, which was removed as part of the 1922 expansion. The current facade, which is primarily neo-Romanesque in style, is little changed from its 1922 appearance. At the time of the expanded building's opening, the large first-story round-arched openings contained its shelter entrance (west) and ambulance portal (east). The second story features grouped square-headed window openings, a continuous brick transom bar, a round-arched cornice with tile-ornamented frieze, and a patterned-brick parapet. The chimney at the building's western end replaced a smaller flue after around 1940.<sup>1</sup>

Faced primarily in red brick, the main facade is enlivened through the picturesque use of varying brick bonds—including Flemish, soldier, and header

bonds—as well as dogtoothed, corbelled, and gauged brick. Projecting brick moldings and window enframements, and limestone and tile trim, add texture and visual interest. Over the main entrance, a carved limestone medallion containing the ASPCA’s seal recalls the building’s 66-year history as an ASPCA facility. No. 233 Butler Street remains well-preserved, with changes almost entirely limited to sash and door replacement.

In addition to the building at 233 Butler Street, the designation includes the portion of the sidewalk directly in front of it. The sidewalk was historically paved with concrete, as it is today. This portion of the designated site contains a granite watering trough sponsored by Edith G. Bowdoin and installed in 1913 that is a significant historic feature. Between 2017 and 2019, a similar granite trough inscribed with the name of Frederick J. De Peyster was placed directly in front of the building on wooden boards, but this trough has not been installed in the sidewalk, has no historic connection to the site, and is not considered a significant feature.

Between 1939 and 1963, the building’s lot was expanded westward. The portion of the lot west of 233 Butler Street contains a yard and open staircase (built between 2017 and 2019) attached to the building’s secondary west facade. This yard and staircase are not included in the Landmark Site.

The primary south (Butler Street) facade and secondary west facade are the only two facades visible from public thoroughfares.

### **Primary (South) Butler Street Facade Historic**

The main facade of the ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage is symmetrical, with seven bays at its first story and 15 at its second story. A granite water table forms its base. The facade is primarily faced in red brick, laid mostly in Flemish bond at the first story. The building’s first story is dominated by

its central main entrance and two large round-arched openings. The main entrance is set within a neo-Classical limestone surround with a transom bar, molded enframement, and pilasters supporting an entablature with two rosettes flanking a central panel inscribed with “THE ROGERS MEMORIAL.”<sup>2</sup> The surround is crowned by a molded cap and a medallion, cradled by a pair of scrolled buttresses, carved with a relief of the ASPCA seal. This seal depicts a sword-bearing archangel lifting his hand to prevent a violent cartman from striking his horse, and is surrounded by the words “THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.” The three-pane wood window within the main-entrance transom opening is historic.

The two large round-headed openings are crowned by gauged-brick arches framed by projecting brick archivolts. These archivolts spring from limestone corbels that punctuate the higher of two soldier-brick courses above the building’s base. The arched openings are set within projecting square enframements with patterned-brick borders and with limestone or cast-stone and circular brick panels filling their spandrels. The west round-arched opening contains a historic wood transom frame. Projecting brick enframements also surround the four square-headed first-story window openings.

The second story has a continuous limestone sill course, projecting on corbels over the first-story arched openings. This story is faced in Flemish-bond brick, with header-course brick panels between the groups of window openings. Brick soldier courses form continuous second-story transom bar and lintel courses. Crowning the building is a projecting brick cornice with repeating round arches springing from soldier-brick corbels, two rows of dogtoothed brick, and a molded cap. The cornice’s brick frieze is punctuated by green tiles arranged in a diamond shape with brick borders. The high brick chimney at

the building's western end has rectangular openings and is capped.

### **Alterations**

Main-entrance door and infill within west round-arched first-story opening (originally a single-leaf paneled door, with nine-pane window flanked by pilasters and paneled sidelights of similar size, also with nine-pane windows; molded transom bar; and 16-pane sash flanked by nine-pane sashes within the historic transom frame) replaced except for tripartite wood transom frame; intercom on main-entrance reveal; scissor gate at this opening; non-historic infill within east round-arched first-story opening (historically an ambulance portal, with infill consisting of what appears to have been a single, large, swinging or sliding door with crossbuck detailing on its lower portion and a tripartite transom portion containing multipane sashes); portions of arch spandrels partially resurfaced; first-story window openings covered with non-historic grilles and windows replaced (historically four-over-four double-hung); second-story windows replaced (historically four-over-four double-hung, with four-pane sashes within the transom openings); replacement of most brick within second-story transom bar and lintel course; standpipe, signage, and water meter readers at first story; cameras on facade and at roof; exhaust flue replaced with brick chimney after c. 1940.

### **Secondary West Facade**

#### **Historic**

This facade is faced in common-bond brick; the west face of the building's historic brick chimney rises above it.

#### **Alterations**

Portions of facade behind (north of) main facade painted or parged; large opening with steel and glass

infill set back from main facade; metal walkway roof; rooftop HVAC equipment towards rear of building; lighting and conduit; attachment points for adjacent open staircase (not part of this designation) built between 2017 and 2019.

### **Butler Street Sidewalk**

#### **Historic**

This sidewalk, which was historically concrete, and has been resurfaced in concrete over time, contains a rectangular granite animal watering fountain or trough installed at the time of the original building's opening in 1913, with the inscription "PRESENTED TO THE/ A.S.P.C.A./ BY/ EDITH G. BOWDOIN/ 1913" on its north face. The location of the hatch in front of the westernmost first-story window opening is also historic.

#### **Alterations**

Two concrete accessibility ramps with metal pipe railings installed between 2017 and 2019; replacement metal hatch.



## History and Significance

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage

### Early History of the Area<sup>3</sup>

The ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage is located in the northern portion of Brooklyn's Gowanus neighborhood, which extends from around Baltic Street southward to the Gowanus Expressway and from Bond Street eastward to Fourth Avenue. Before the arrival of European colonists, this area was occupied by the Canarsee, one of several Algonquin-speaking groups comprising the Lenape people, whose territory extended from the Upper Hudson Valley to Delaware Bay. The Canarsee lived in loosely organized, relatively autonomous groups in seasonal campsites and farming communities, moving with the seasons to obtain their food supply of seafood in the spring, bean and maize crops in the fall, and small game in the winter. "Gowanus" is a Munsee word of uncertain meaning. The area's central geographic feature was Gowanus Creek, a tidal estuary originating near the present-day intersection of Third Avenue and Baltic Street and meandering southward through marshlands into Gowanus Bay. Estuaries like Gowanus Creek were vital to the Canarsee, providing access to the shoreline and its abundant shellfish. Native American sites have been identified in the area, including a campsite just east of the canal head where pottery, clay pipes, and arrowheads have been found; the Gowanus Houses just west of the canal occupy the former site of the village of Werpos.

In 1609, Englishman Henry Hudson, backed by the Dutch East India Company, explored the river that now bears his name and opened the region to

Dutch colonization. Although the Canarsee initially traded with Dutch and English settlers as they had with other Native groups, the colonists quickly overtook them and were displacing them by the 1640s. Never large in number, the Canarsee were devastated by armed conflict and the introduction of European diseases, as well as by land agreements based on European concepts of property ownership that were completely foreign to them.<sup>4</sup> The few remaining Canarsee left the region entirely by the 1700s.

At the time of the American Revolution, Gowanus was largely agricultural, with much of its labor performed by enslaved people of African descent. Along the shore of Gowanus Bay, several tide mills had been erected, which released water impounded during high tide to grind grains into flour and meal. The area played a key role in the Battle of Long Island (also known as the Battle of Brooklyn), the first major conflict of the Revolutionary War and the largest waged in North America up to that time. In August of 1776, thousands of British troops assembled at Gravesend Bay with the goal of capturing New York City and crushing the nascent rebellion. One of the few routes leading to New York was the Gowanus Road, located around present-day Fifth Avenue. At the Vechte-Cortelyou House (demolished) on the Gowanus Road near 3rd Street, a small contingent of Maryland troops incurred severe casualties in battling the British forces and allowing Washington and his army to escape northward and survive.

### The Gowanus Canal and Its Neighborhood<sup>5</sup>

The ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage sits across Butler Street from the Gowanus Canal, its neighborhood's central feature since the mid-19th century. Although the Gowanus area remained rural into the 1840s, Brooklyn's rapid expansion southward and eastward from its historic center

around Fulton Ferry and Brooklyn Heights, the extensive commercial development of Brooklyn's waterfront, the transformation of Red Hook into a major grain-handling center with the 1846 opening of Atlantic Basin, and the establishment of nearby Green-Wood Cemetery focused increasing attention on Gowanus Creek and its 1,700 acres of wetlands. To real estate speculators and developers, the marshlands were worse than useless: unable to be built upon, they were also thought to generate unhealthy air that impeded development throughout the surrounding area. Draining the Gowanus marshes, the *Brooklyn Eagle* argued, would remove the "miasma which hangs about Prospect Hill and other portions of the city, making them liable to intermittent fevers and other diseases; and thus shutting them out from improvement."<sup>6</sup>

At that time, industry clustered along the city's waterways, which were its main conduits for freight, raw materials, and finished goods. In 1849, the city approved a proposal by the developer of Atlantic Basin, Daniel Richards, for a waterway that would drain the marshes and accommodate barges and other commercial vessels. As a cost-saving measure, it would follow the path of Gowanus Creek, extending northward from the bay to around 6th Street, and then curving eastward to around Second Avenue and northward again before terminating near Butler Street. Richards envisioned the Gowanus Canal and its large commercial basins lined with "warehouses, sheds and yards, for deposit and storage of heavy coarse goods, [and] also lumber, coal brick, stone, and wood yards, as well as manufactories."<sup>7</sup> No formal mechanism was created for the canal's construction; left up to local landowners, it proceeded haphazardly through the 1850s. Although work on the Gowanus stagnated during the Civil War, it accelerated starting in 1866 with the founding of Edwin C. Litchfield's Brooklyn Improvement Company to develop private docking

facilities there.<sup>8</sup> Soon afterward, the state chartered the Gowanus Canal Improvement Commission, which would dredge the canal, install permanent canal walls, and carry the project through to completion over the next four years.

By 1869, about a dozen firms had established themselves along the canal; most dealt in bulk goods, as would be typical of the Gowanus throughout its history.<sup>9</sup> By the early 1870s, the canal had become the center of Brooklyn's coal trade, and by 1880, more than 30 industrial firms had settled nearby as Gowanus developed into one of Brooklyn's busiest industrial neighborhoods, producing, among other goods, tinware, furniture, chemicals, paint, paper, textiles, building materials, and food and tobacco items. Working in these businesses were large numbers of Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants—with Italian immigrants joining them later in the 19th century—many of whom lived in wood or brick houses or small tenements set a block or more from the canal, where they were often interspersed with stables and industrial buildings.

Despite Richards' expectation that tidal action would keep the canal clean, pollution bedeviled the Gowanus from its start. Sewers were routed into the canal while it was still under construction, and by 1877 the *Eagle* found it to be "very vile ... a nuisance that is seriously affecting the health of South Brooklyn people."<sup>10</sup> An 1889 commission investigating the matter recommended filling the canal, calling it "detrimental to health, obstructive to traffic, and an injury ... to real estate values throughout South Brooklyn."<sup>11</sup> Opened in 1911, the Gowanus Flushing Tunnel was expected to purify the canal by drawing its water through a mile-long tunnel into Buttermilk Channel, but it had little effect and was shuttered following a mechanical breakdown in 1960.

In 1921, the *New York Times* called the

Gowanus Canal “one of the dirtiest, one of the shortest, and one of the most important waterways in the world.”<sup>12</sup> The 1920s would be the canal’s most productive decade, when more than 20,000 vessels used it per year and it handled more freight than the entire Erie Canal, known at the time as the New York State Barge Canal. Its use steeply declined in the 1930s with the onset of the Depression, the decline in local building activity, the shift from coal to oil, and the replacement of local waterborne freight with trucking. Even so, the neighborhood remained well-connected with other areas of Brooklyn, via the Fourth Avenue Subway, opened in 1915, and the IND Culver Line, which opened in 1933 with a high truss viaduct over the canal and new subway stops at Carroll Street, Smith-9th Streets, and Fourth Avenue. After World War II, Gowanus remained a working-class, largely immigrant community with increasing numbers of Hispanic and African American residents. Its larger manufacturers were replaced by smaller, more specialized companies, many devoted to food production. In 2010, the canal was declared a Superfund site, initiating a multiyear cleanup project that continues today; reduction in sewage overflows and reactivation of the flushing tunnel in 2014 have improved conditions in and along the canal. Apartment houses have been constructed on many former canalside industrial sites in recent years, and the area is undergoing a rezoning by the New York City Department of City Planning.

### **Henry Bergh and the ASPCA<sup>13</sup>**

Henry Bergh revolutionized Americans’ attitudes toward animals. The son of a prominent shipbuilder, Bergh was born into wealth in Manhattan around 1813. For most of his life, he had a variety of interests and pursuits, entering Columbia College to study law and leaving without graduating, dabbling in poetry and playwriting, and traveling extensively

in Europe. In 1839, he married Matilda Taylor, and following his father’s death in 1843, Bergh and his brothers inherited his fortune which allowed Henry and Matilda to travel the world and live for a while in Germany. Comfortable within the well-heeled social circles of New York and Washington, Bergh sometimes conducted low-level diplomatic work during his time abroad. In 1862, President Lincoln appointed him Legation Secretary to the court of Russian Czar Alexander II, setting Bergh, then well into middle age, on the path that would change his life and American society.

It was in St. Petersburg, Bergh later recalled, that he first noticed the cruelty that animals, especially working animals, were routinely subjected to. Bergh resigned his post in 1864, and having decided to dedicate his life to alleviating animal suffering, stopped in London on his way home to meet with leaders of what was then the world’s only humane organization, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The New York Bergh returned to was a largely animal-powered city, with oxen and equines doing the bulk of its heavy labor. Horses pulled the city’s streetcars and private carriages, hauled its freight, and were indispensable to construction. “In the ‘rational’ world of the 19th century,” historians Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr explain, “people increasingly viewed horses as property or living machines subject to technical refinement, not as sentient beings.”<sup>14</sup> State laws addressing the care of animals viewed them “as items of personal property not much different than a shovel or plow” rather than as living beings deserving of considerate treatment in their own right.<sup>15</sup> This was reflected in New York’s pioneering 1829 law, which only covered commercially valuable animals such as horses, oxen, cattle, and sheep. Horses were worked to death and their carcasses left on city streets; bull, dog, and cockfighting were common pastimes, as was the

shooting of pigeons, whose wings were often injured beforehand to alter their flight patterns and make them more challenging targets.

Soon after landing in New York, Bergh secured the support of elite New Yorkers including Peter Cooper, William Cullen Bryant, Horace Greeley, Ezra Cornell, James Lenox, and members of the Roosevelt and Fish families. In 1866, he persuaded New York State to charter the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals as the first humane organization in the Western Hemisphere, second only in the world to Britain's Royal Society. Bergh's vision of his work as a moral crusade akin to the earlier abolition movement and contemporaneous women's rights, temperance, and prison reform movements was reflected in the new organization's seal. Drawn by Frank Leslie, publisher of the popular *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, it depicted a sword-bearing archangel lifting his hand to protect a fallen carthorse from its club-wielding driver. "To plant, or revive, the principle of mercy in the human heart," Bergh would say during the ASPCA's early years, would be "a triumph ... greater than the building of the Great Pacific Railroad."<sup>16</sup>

Within days of the Society's founding, Bergh succeeded in having the state legislature toughen the 1829 law by adding animal neglect to its list of punishable offenses and by outlawing the abandonment of old or diseased equines in city streets. In 1867, he persuaded New York State lawmakers to pass a vastly expanded anticruelty law of unprecedented scope in the United States. Written by Bergh, the 1867 Act applied to all "living creatures" regardless of their ownership or commercial value. It expanded the list of offenses to include overloading and overdriving, required animals to be transported humanely, and banned animal fighting contests. It also required owners to provide "a sufficient quantity of good and

wholesome food and water," and, where this was not being done, permitted any citizen to enter private premises, feed the animal, and bill its owner for the food. Perhaps most importantly, it anointed the ASPCA and its agents as the law's dedicated enforcers. "With the 1867 Act," legal scholars David S. Favre and Vivien Tsang explain, "an ethical concern for the plight of animals was transformed for the first time into comprehensive legislation."<sup>17</sup> Veterinary ethicist Jerrold Tannenbaum has called it "one of the most remarkable pieces of legislation in the history of American law," noting that it continues to form "the nucleus of the majority of state cruelty laws in this country."<sup>18</sup>

The founding of the ASPCA and passage of the 1867 Act sowed the seeds of the national anticruelty movement. Within little more than a decade, 33 of the 38 states passed legislation modeled on New York's, and all of them did so by 1900. Although the ASPCA's charter limited its operations to New York, sister SPCAs were established in 19 states and Canada within five years. By the early 1900s, SPCA organizations had been established in 34 New York counties and in 40 of the 46 states, as well as in the District of Columbia.

Bergh was tireless in leading the Society, frequently patrolling Broadway on the lookout for mistreated carthorses and overloaded streetcars. Often ridiculed during the Society's early years, he soon gained the support of James Gordon Bennett and other powerful publishers, who were crucial in turning the public toward his cause. Bergh inaugurated the Society's public education programs, invented the clay pigeon as an alternative to pigeon shooting, and introduced the horse ambulance to New York's streets two years before Bellevue Hospital did the same for humans. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow celebrated Bergh in poetry as "the friend to every friendless beast," and *Scribner's Monthly* noted in 1879 that "since Horace Greeley's death, no

figure more familiar to the public has walked the streets of the metropolis.”<sup>19</sup>

During Bergh’s presidency, the ASPCA prosecuted thousands of animal abuse cases, investigated adulterated horse feed, fought against vivisection and the live plucking of poultry, monitored livestock yards and the state’s mule-drawn canal barges, broke up dogfighting contests, published the magazine *Our Animal Friends* and other humane literature, and campaigned for improved street pavements that were easier on horses’ hooves and against “swill milk” produced by mistreated cows. Bergh and other society members were also instrumental in founding the country’s first child-protective organization, the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, in 1875.

### **The ASPCA After Henry Bergh<sup>20</sup>**

Following Bergh’s death during the Blizzard of 1888, the ASPCA’s mission continued to expand. At the urging of anticruelty advocates, in 1894, the state abolished New York City’s notorious dog pound and handed its sheltering duties to the ASPCA.<sup>21</sup> It also granted the Society the right to sell dog licenses, which helped dogcatchers distinguish between owned and stray dogs and provided much-needed revenue to the organization. At a time when neutering was rare, hundreds of thousands of stray cats and dogs roamed the city, with roving dog packs posing an especially pernicious public health and safety threat. Anticruelty advocates considered it inhumane to permit domestic animals to live uncared for on the streets, and although many of the animals received by the Society’s shelter were able to be reunited with their owners or rehomed, most were not. For these unfortunate animals, the ASPCA exerted considerable effort in developing euthanization methods that were as quick and painless as possible. “The Society deplores the destruction of animal life,” its leaders explained in

1909, but they also feared that if the ASPCA did not carry out this work, city authorities would do so “using less humane methods.”<sup>22</sup>

The Society continued in its traditional roles of investigating cruelty allegations, arresting and prosecuting perpetrators, and tending to disabled horses and other working animals, both in New York City and in rural parts of the state. By 1910, increased use of motorized vehicles enabled agents to reach and treat injured animals more quickly and carry out enforcement more efficiently. In 1912, the ASPCA opened its own hospital and free animal dispensary in Manhattan, and during World War I, it teamed up with Britain’s Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to help care for the approximately one million equines serving the Allies on European battlefields. Educational outreach continued to be a key focus, and in 1922, the Society joined with the Board of Education to create a poster contest that would “link up the teaching of humaneness . . . with the study of English composition, nature study, civics, and applied design.”<sup>23</sup> The celebrated jewelry designer Art Smith won honorable mention in one of these contests while attending public school in Brooklyn in the early 1930s. This recognition for his poster of, in his words, a “big-eyed mongrel dog, appealingly barking some be-kind-to-animals slogan,” gave Smith the confidence to pursue a career in art despite the challenges faced by African American artists.<sup>24</sup>

The ASPCA’s sheltering, educational, and enforcement work remained largely unchanged into the late 20th century. Advocacy work included campaigning, in 1963, against the proposed extermination of all of the city’s five million pigeons.<sup>25</sup> In the early 1970s, Brooklyn alone was estimated to have more than 100,000 stray dogs, which hampered city services and bit more than 13,000 people per year.<sup>26</sup> To combat this problem, in 1973, the ASPCA started requiring the neutering of

all pets adopted from its shelters and added more than 50 volunteers to screen prospective adopters, assess their homes, and educate them in responsible pet ownership.<sup>27</sup> Although it carried out an essential city service, the ASPCA received no direct governmental support and continued to be funded primarily by dog license sales and private donations.<sup>28</sup> The city started helping financially by the 1980s, and in 1989, it aided the Society's construction of a new headquarters, veterinary hospital, and neutering clinic on East 92nd Street and a new shelter on East 110th Street.<sup>29</sup> New York is believed to be the last major U.S. city in which animal control was handled by the ASPCA.<sup>30</sup> In 1994, the Society decided to discontinue this work and it was taken over by the nonprofit group Animal Care & Control (now Animal Care Centers of New York).<sup>31</sup>

### **The ASPCA's Early Years in Brooklyn<sup>32</sup>**

Although a sister SPCA organization, similar to those of other major New York cities, had been established in the then-separate city of Brooklyn in 1867, it failed to take permanent root despite Henry Bergh's best efforts. In 1881, Bergh abandoned these efforts and decided instead to open a branch "agency" of the ASPCA in Downtown Brooklyn that would also serve adjacent areas of Long Island.<sup>33</sup> Financial support was provided by several wealthy Brooklynites, most notably merchant Horace B. Claflin, who had been active in earlier efforts to establish a Brooklyn SPCA, and banker George I. Seney, who is best-known for endowing the institution that later became Methodist Hospital.<sup>34</sup> By 1883, the ASPCA's Brooklyn office had become a "self-sustaining and efficient organization," making 177 arrests and ordering the removal from harness of 375 large animals that its agents deemed unfit for work.<sup>35</sup> By 1893, the Society was assisted by a women's auxiliary called the Brooklyn Women's

Dumb Animal Aid Association, which counted among its leaders Emma Toedteberg, the longtime librarian of the Long Island (now Brooklyn) Historical Society.<sup>36</sup>

As its Brooklyn work expanded, the ASPCA leased and constructed new facilities there. In 1893, its Brooklyn office moved from Fulton Street to a larger space on Willoughby Street, and in 1895, the Society built a new ambulance house nearby on Lawrence Street.<sup>37</sup> Following the Society's assumption of sheltering duties for the city of Brooklyn, it also, in that year, built a barnlike wooden animal shelter at the corner of Malbone Street and Nostrand Avenue.<sup>38</sup> These locations were considered temporary, pending the construction of a building that would gather all of the ASPCA's Brooklyn operations under one roof.<sup>39</sup>

The Society's Brooklyn facilities served both their home borough and Queens. Typical of their agents' work was a summer 1907 tour of Coney Island, Rockaway, and other coastal resorts to inspect "the treatment given the caged and performing wild animals as well as the racehorses and the army of nags impressed into the carriage service about the tracks and beaches."<sup>40</sup> These areas were also of special concern for the large numbers of stray dogs abandoned by their owners at the end of each summer season. Brooklyn ASPCA agents also monitored the working animals crossing the Brooklyn and Williamsburg Bridges, infiltrated dog and cock fights, and arrested their organizers. Starting in 1905, officials from the Brooklyn office participated in presenting the Vietor Medals, which were funded by Mrs. T.G. Vietor in recognition of the Street Cleaning Department's "most careful and attentive drivers" with the "best records for taking care of their horses."<sup>41</sup>

### **The ASPCA at 233 Butler Street<sup>42</sup>**

In January of 1913, the ASPCA announced plans to

replace its Malbone Street dog and cat shelter with a new fireproof shelter in a more convenient location. It would be built on the north side of Butler Street across from the head of the Gowanus Canal, on an 80-foot-wide lot split off from what had been a much larger property containing a lumberyard and extending all the way eastward to Nevins Street.<sup>43</sup> The architects were Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker, who had designed other buildings for the Society including its recently opened shelter, dispensary, and hospital on Manhattan's east side. As the new shelter neared completion in May of 1913, it was visited by the *Brooklyn Eagle*, which was impressed by its "very artistic arch doorway" and numerous features making the facility "as modern and sanitary as can be furnished."<sup>44</sup> Kept cool by its concrete construction and a well-developed ventilation system, it contained a full kitchen for preparing animal meals as well as rooms for its attendants, who staffed the building around the clock. The ASPCA considered its new Brooklyn shelter to be "the most modern establishment of its kind in existence" and the largest animal shelter in the country, surpassing in size even its own Manhattan shelter.<sup>45</sup>

As completed in 1913, the Brooklyn shelter was a single story in height and 38 feet wide, occupying the western portion of its lot. In 1922, Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker designed an expansion that brought the building to its current size, expanding it eastward to a full 80 feet and upward to two stories, and enabling the Society to realize its long-cherished goal of bringing its Brooklyn offices, shelter, and ambulance garage under one roof.<sup>46</sup> In the expanded building, the shelter remained where it was before, while a new arched opening to its east served as the ambulance entrance. A new, classical entrance crowned by a relief of the Society's seal provided access to the second floor, which housed offices, the complaint bureau, and the dog-license counter. The *Brooklyn*

*Citizen* called the expanded building "the most modern and up-to-date structure of its kind in the country," representing "all of the wonderful humane work being done by this well-known institution."<sup>47</sup>

The ASPCA's Brooklyn office was a pioneer in employing female ambulance drivers, who responded to public calls and collected unlicensed animals from the streets. They were hired, its manager explained, in the hope "that the presence of women on the force will do much to spread the doctrine of humaneness on which the society is founded, and to win the confidence of housewives, from whom most complaints about stray animals are received."<sup>48</sup> Working at a time when rabies and other animal-borne diseases posed a serious health risk, this work was both dangerous and emotionally demanding.<sup>49</sup>

Tens of thousands of stray and unwanted dogs and cats entered the Brooklyn shelter each year. Although "the Y.W.C.A. or the church orphan committee never exerted more care in finding a home for their charges than the A.S.P.C.A.," according to the *Brooklyn Standard Union*, most of the animals entering the facility were never rehomed.<sup>50</sup> Anticruelty advocates considered it a kindness to euthanize animals considered too sick or aggressive to be adopted, as well as healthy animals for which homes could not be found; returning them to the streets was never an option. While 233 Butler Street was therefore a place of considerable sadness, it also witnessed moments of joy. In 1930, staff reunited a dog bearing a California license with its owner on the West Coast, and in 1932, a local man who had lost his dog visited every day for six months until "master and dog were reunited at the shelter, the dog wildly barking its recognition."<sup>51</sup> The shelter was at its happiest during the holiday season, especially during the Depression, when the dog cages were decorated with holly wreaths and many Brooklyn parents jumped at the opportunity to bring home a

pet for the cost of only its two-dollar license fee. “This is the week children coax their parents to call at the Brooklyn SPCA . . . to make sure they will have their long-desired canine pets for Christmas,” the *Brooklyn Citizen* reported in December of 1932, explaining that 500 dogs had already been adopted that month.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1930s, the area surrounding 233 Butler Street remained industrial and the Gowanus Canal active. In 1935, the *Brooklyn Eagle* visited the facility’s manager and his office overlooking the canal, noting that “the view down its axis is an extraordinary one. Mountains of coal and high coal elevators rise on either side. Barges float lazily, rising slowly during the day as they are emptied of their contents by great mechanical scoops.” Among the staff’s recent rescues was a dog who had fallen off a barge within sight of the building. “He could swim but he couldn’t climb up the greasy timbers that line the canal,” District Manager William H. Groome recounted, explaining that ASPCA staff rappelled down the sides of the canal to save a dog that was “pretty glad to get out . . . of that dirty water.”<sup>53</sup>

In addition to its shelter work, the Brooklyn office carried out typical ASPCA duties such as investigating and prosecuting animal abuse, rescuing cats from trees and tight spaces, and inspecting pet stores, poultry markets, stockyards, stables, equestrian paths, and Coney Island’s exotic animal shows.<sup>54</sup> Tens of thousands of horses still worked the city’s streets into the 1930s, and during its early years, agents from the Brooklyn office often assisted equines trapped in muddy streets or ditches.<sup>55</sup> They staffed equine watering stations during the summer, collected and distributed free horse blankets in the winter, made and gave out free “carpet shoes” for horses plying slippery streets, ordered unfit horses retired from duty, and prosecuted those who abused them.<sup>56</sup> Farm animals were still common in Brooklyn

at that time, and when they strayed, they sometimes found shelter at 233 Butler Street.

Teaching humane principles and a general love of animals was central to the Brooklyn office’s work. Its staff taught schoolchildren about caring for animals, coordinated Boy and Girl Scout programs, and led obedience classes.<sup>57</sup> In 1935, staff members organized the Brooklyn Dog and Horse Parade, held on Eastern Parkway on a June day officially declared to be “Brooklyn Be Kind to Animals Day.” Ten thousand people watched the event, which included horses from the borough’s bakeries, dairies, and breweries adorned with ribbons and American flags; an elderly “pensioner” horse riding in an ASPCA ambulance; mascot dogs from ten Brooklyn fire companies; and a procession of local canines with their owners. Awards were given for the oldest, smallest, and happiest dogs, as well as those with the longest ears, tail, and hair.<sup>58</sup>

The work of the Brooklyn office continued through the 1970s. Over the years, the Brooklyn office awarded bravery medals to several heroic humans as well as animals, including Micky the dog, who alerted his family to a 1939 house fire, and the cat-and-dog team of Mickey and Sparky, who saved 28 Flatbush apartment dwellers from a gas leak in 1947.<sup>59</sup> Animals rescued and cared for by Brooklyn staff included numerous cats stuck behind walls and in high places, a seven-foot snake found lounging on a Borough Park woman’s stove, a skunk plucked from a raft in New York Bay, sheep found roaming near the Belt Parkway, a goat that had wandered into a nearby police station to gnaw on its staircase, a leopard found in the hold of a cargo ship, an abandoned pinto pony discovered in an Ocean Avenue apartment, and an alligator inhabiting a trash can in the Brooklyn Museum subway station.<sup>60</sup> During World War II, Brooklyn ASPCA staff corralled a dozen monkeys running loose through Bay Ridge that had been brought to the city by navy



seamen; they were returned to their owners or given to the zoo.<sup>61</sup> Injured pigeons and squirrels were routinely treated and released, and rabbits purchased by Brooklynites as Easter novelties were collected by the shelter and taken to the country.<sup>62</sup>

### **Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker<sup>63</sup>**

William Whetton Renwick (1864-1933)

James Lawrence Aspinwall (1854-1936)

Fitz-Henry Faye Tucker (1874-1938)

The designer of both the 1913 ASPCA dog and cat shelter and its 1922 expansion to accommodate the Society's Brooklyn offices and ambulance garage, Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker was a successor to the firm originally established by James Renwick, the celebrated designer of Grace Church and St. Patrick's Cathedral (both designated New York City Landmarks) as well as the original Smithsonian Institution building and Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. Renwick began taking partners in 1858, and in 1883, his wife's distant cousin J. Lawrence Aspinwall became a partner after many years of serving as his draftsman. Renwick's nephew, William W. Renwick, became a junior partner in 1890, and the firm was renamed Renwick, Aspinwall & Renwick soon afterward. Between the 1895 death of the elder Renwick and 1904, the firm was known as Renwick, Aspinwall & [Walter T.] Owen, with Aspinwall serving as senior partner. Little is known about Fitz-Henry Faye Tucker, who replaced Owen at the firm in 1905, at which point it became Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker, the name under which it operated until 1925. From 1926 to 1940, it continued as Renwick, Aspinwall & [Shirley R.] Guard.

William W. Renwick was born in Lenox, Massachusetts, and graduated in 1885 from the Stevens Institute of Technology, where he studied mechanical engineering. He also studied sculpture at

Paris' Ecole des Beaux-Arts and painting in New York, Paris, and Rome. In his uncle's office, Renwick participated in several church commissions, including St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Church of All Saints (a designated New York City Landmark), for which he is credited with working out the details of his uncle's general design. He also designed the neo-Classical-style Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul (1891-92) in Indianapolis. Working independently after 1900, Renwick specialized in ecclesiastical architecture and decoration. Among his major commissions during this period were St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church (a designated New York City Landmark), the Church of All Saints School, and, at Grace Church, alterations to Edward T. Potter's 1870 Chantry. Renwick is credited with developing the decorative mural process of "fresco relief," which incorporates both sculpture and painting.

The likely designer of both the original 1913 Brooklyn shelter and its 1922 expansion, J. Lawrence Aspinwall was born in New York City and studied at several private schools. He eventually studied under L. Colian, a French architect and engineer living in New York, then entered James Renwick's firm in 1875. Aspinwall was credited with much of the design of Grace Church's marble steeple, which replaced its original wood spire in 1883. He also designed Stony Wold, a charitable tuberculosis sanitarium in the Adirondacks; the Percy R. Pyne estate in Bernardsville, New Jersey (1899; destroyed by fire, 1982); and the 1916-17 American Express Company Building (a designated New York City Landmark) on Lower Broadway.

Over the course of its two decades, Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker designed a wide range of buildings, including office skyscrapers, warehouses, lofts, public baths, hospitals, and banks. Aspinwall was active in many charitable organizations, including the ASPCA, and the firm designed several

buildings for both these groups and their members.<sup>64</sup> In 1892, Aspinwall designed the Manhattan headquarters of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which had been founded by ASPCA leaders, and in 1896, he designed the ASPCA's headquarters (altered) at Madison Avenue and 26th Street.<sup>65</sup> In 1906, the firm designed the Grace Church Neighborhood House (a designated New York City Landmark), funded by the ardent ASPCA supporter George S. Bowdoin, whose daughter Edith donated the drinking trough in front of 233 Butler Street. Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker, likely Aspinwall himself, also designed the ASPCA's Manhattan shelter, hospital, and dispensary (demolished) at Avenue A and East 24th Street, which opened in 1912.<sup>66</sup> Other commissions executed by the firm included sanitarium additions at Seaview Hospital (1917, within the New York City Farm Colony-Seaview Hospital Historic District), and the Dollar Savings Bank (1919, a designated New York City Landmark) on East 147th Street in the Bronx.

### **Design of the ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage**

When it opened in 1913 as the ASPCA's dog and cat shelter, 233 Butler Street consisted only of the present building's three westernmost first-story bays, as well as a low parapet above what is now the second-story sill. Its three-bay design dominated by a large central portal expressed a kinship with urban stables, an animal-related building type familiar to most New Yorkers.<sup>67</sup> The first-story portion east of the original shelter, including the limestone-framed main entrance, along with the entire second story, were added in 1922 when it was expanded to house the Society's Brooklyn offices and ambulance garage. Given the seamless integration of the 1913 shelter into the full building, as well as the ASPCA's long-expressed desire before this time to consolidate

these operations under one roof, it seems likely that the entire building was designed in 1913 in anticipation of its ultimate completion.

The building is primarily neo-Romanesque in style, with classical features and patterned brick enlivening its facade.<sup>68</sup> Historically associated with fortresses, castles, and churches, the Romanesque was a fitting inspiration, expressing the building's protective function, reinforcing the Society's image as guardian of the vulnerable, and reflecting the spiritual undertones of the Society's work, which were rooted in the Christian dictum to care for "the least among us."<sup>69</sup> Its prominent round-arched portals, projecting first-story window enframements, narrow second-story window openings with heavy piers and transom bars, and arched corbel table with dogtoothed brick courses are characteristic of the style and consistent with the design of armories and other secure structures of the time.<sup>70</sup> Its facade is both robust and lively, animated by the lightness of its ornament—especially its delicate corbel table punctuated by colorful tile lozenges, the Renaissance-inspired limestone-and-brick spandrel panels flanking its ground-floor portals, and its classical limestone entrance surround crowned by elaborate buttresses cradling the Society's seal.

Also enlivening the main facade is its extensive use of "tapestry" or patterned brick, one of the period's most popular decorative techniques.<sup>71</sup> A traditional feature of Romanesque architecture, the use of brick patterning also reflects the influence of the late-19th-century British Arts-and-Crafts movement, which emphasized traditional craft techniques in the face of increasing industrialization. The reliance on brick's inherent properties for decorative effect, as well as the high level of craftsmanship implied by its intricate masonry work, place 233 Butler Street within the Arts-and-Crafts tradition. During the early 1900s, patterned brick was used across practically all building types, including

houses and apartment buildings; firehouses, police stations, public baths, and other civic structures; clubs; religious buildings; and residential institutions.<sup>72</sup> Although its historical references were sometimes specific, harking back to medieval England or France, or to Colonial America, often its purpose was simply to delight the eye, to be picturesque, to fuel the imagination by evoking a hazy romantic past.

While the brick patterning of 233 Butler Street does not appear to have a direct historical precedent, its corbel table and dogtoothed patterning recall the architecture of Romanesque-era Lombardy. The first story is primarily of Flemish bond, with soldier courses above its base making it seem higher and more substantial. Projecting brickwork, including molded archivolt springing from small limestone corbels and square enframements around the first-story portals, provide additional texture. The second story is primarily of header brick, with soldier courses framing the transom openings. The use of header-brick panels may have been inspired by Stanford White's richly patterned Colony Club (1904-08, a designated New York City Landmark), which were said to refer to the Colonial-era houses of Annapolis, Maryland.<sup>73</sup> The lozenge motif crowning 233 Butler Street's facade is a typically Romanesque feature also employed, somewhat unconventionally, by Stanford White at the Colony Club.

The former ASPCA Office, Shelter, and Garage remains remarkably intact. Other than the replacement of doors and windows, and the installation of security gates and grilles, it is essentially unchanged from the early 1920s. As an institutional building, it is a rarity in Gowanus and remains the neighborhood's finest historic building of this type.

## **Animal Drinking Fountains in New York City<sup>74</sup>**

The designation of the ASPCA Office, Shelter, and Garage includes an animal drinking trough in the Butler Street sidewalk in front of the building. Installed when the original shelter opened in 1913, this trough was the gift of longtime ASPCA supporter Edith G. Bowdoin.

Through the 19th century, horses were ubiquitous on the streets of New York City, where they were crucial to commerce and industry, construction, and transportation. Out of concern for their welfare, the ASPCA erected public drinking fountains at ten Manhattan intersections by 1868 "so that dogs, horses, and human beings may freely refresh themselves with Croton."<sup>75</sup> The emphasis on humans as well as animals in the Society's early fountain work underscores the close ties between anticruelty and temperance advocates, who believed that the lack of free drinking water was leading many New Yorkers into the saloons, and that new public drinking fountains would help keep them out of them.

By this time, anticruelty advocates in the then-separate city of Brooklyn were also advocating for public drinking fountains, and in 1869, the city erected a grand fountain in the heart of Downtown featuring a large basin for horses, smaller ground-level bowls for dogs, and an additional basin at which "the sons of men may drink without money and without price."<sup>76</sup> Despite predictions that similar fountains would soon follow throughout the city, Brooklyn lagged far behind other American cities in providing public drinking fountains.<sup>77</sup> Even so, humane advocates were successful in installing a number of Brooklyn fountains during the 1890s, including one sponsored by the ASPCA next to Brooklyn City (now Borough) Hall, and two presented by the Brooklyn Women's Dumb Animal Aid Association near the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge

and in Fort Greene, which were described as being among the largest ever erected in Brooklyn or Manhattan.<sup>78</sup>

By the early 20th century, hundreds of animal fountains had been installed in New York City. These included prominent, grand artistic works like Cherry Hill Fountain, the circa-1870 Jacob Wrey Mould-designed horse fountain in Central Park (a designated New York City Scenic Landmark), and the John Hooper Memorial Fountain (1894, a component of the Macomb's Dam Bridge Individual Landmark designation).<sup>79</sup> While some ASPCA fountains, generally those funded by individual benefactors, were also opulent, most of the Society's fountains were considerably more modest, reflecting its goal of spreading watering facilities throughout the city as quickly and inexpensively as possible. By 1885, the Society had begun installing small cast-iron fountains of standardized design, each with three basins for horses, humans, and dogs, and by 1905 it had added more than 100 tiny foot-level bowls, strictly for cats and dogs, to city sidewalks.<sup>80</sup>

With the rise of the City Beautiful movement during the 1890s, New York's panoply of drinking fountains of diverse styles, sizes, types, periods, and materials attracted increasing aesthetic scrutiny. In 1898, Brooklyn became part of the newly consolidated City of New York, which established an Art Commission charged with approving the design and location of all buildings, sculptures, and other permanent improvements proposed for city-owned property.<sup>81</sup> By 1905, the Commission banned the installation of all drinking fountains and watering troughs in parks, squares, and other public places pending approval of a suitably artistic design.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, the need for watering facilities was as great as ever, with horses continuing to collapse in the streets during searing heat waves. While Society President Alfred Wagstaff recognized the Art Commission's goal of beautifying the city to be

“meritorious,” he also lamented the need to erect “elaborate and ornate structures which are no better, for all practical purposes, than a simple... trough.”<sup>83</sup> After the Art Commission approved a handsome bronze fountain for horses, humans, and dogs designed by H. Van Buren Magonigle for the ASPCA in 1907, the Society continued to work toward developing a less-expensive type of fountain, strictly for animals, that would meet the Commission's standards.<sup>84</sup>

### **The Edith G. Bowdoin Drinking Fountain**

Resulting from a movement started and largely propagated by the ASPCA, New York City's sidewalks and other public spaces were once filled with hundreds of public animal fountains and drinking troughs, both elaborate and simple. Today, only a handful remain. Bearing the inscription “Presented to the ASPCA by Edith G. Bowdoin,” the Butler Street fountain is the only one in the city remaining in front of a historic ASPCA facility. Together, this fountain and the former ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage are unique in recalling a time when working animals filled the city's streets and dedicated anticruelty advocates fought to ensure rights and standards of fair treatment for animals that are taken for granted today.

One of the ASPCA's most generous donors, Edith G. Bowdoin wrote to the *Times* in 1907 explaining the need for drinking troughs and encouraging public support:

The Society ... hopes and expects to obtain the permission of the Art Commission to erect a large number of simple, inexpensive drinking troughs in the more congested sections of the city where they are most needed....

Let us hope that individuals, as well as the large corporations and private owners of horses, will contribute generously to this fund, to the end that no horse in New York need go without water for the want of a public place at which to quench its thirst.<sup>85</sup>

In 1909, the Art Commission approved the ASPCA's proposal for a simple trough-like granite fountain combining, in the Society's words, "beauty of design with durability and utility."<sup>86</sup> Despite their modest appearance, these fountains, like the city's more elaborate ones, were fed by a dedicated water line. Edith's father George Bowdoin, a longtime partner of J. P. Morgan and a major ASPCA supporter, sponsored the first fountain of this type, installed in Harlem's Hancock Square (now Park).<sup>87</sup> Over the next several years, the Society would install dozens of these troughs, several of which were funded by Edith Bowdoin. Given that the fountain in front of the Butler Street Shelter was of this type, the Art Commission only had to approve its location, which it did on April 14, 1913.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to funding drinking fountains, Edith Bowdoin helped motorize the Society's fleet by donating several automobiles to the ASPCA.<sup>89</sup> Upon her death in 1945, Bowdoin left the Society \$250,000 as well as an additional \$10,000 in the form of a trust for her 14-year-old chow chow.<sup>90</sup>

### Later History

The ASPCA vacated 233 Butler Street by 1981, when it sold the building to a pair of partners including master organ builder Lawrence Trupiano.<sup>91</sup> When they purchased the building, the partners acquired its entire lot, which included a 79-foot parcel adjoining the building on its west. This parcel was assembled between the late 1920s and early 1940s by the Society, which had built kennels as well as a cat solarium in the 1950s.<sup>92</sup> At 233 Butler Street,

Trupiano and his staff built organs, including one for Brooklyn Heights' First Unitarian Church, and undertook several high-profile restoration jobs, including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Appleton Organ, the mammoth pipe organ of Philadelphia's historic John Wanamaker store, and the organ of St. Paul's Chapel, which was filled with debris following the September 11th attacks.<sup>93</sup> For a period in the mid-1980s, 233 Butler Street also served as a performance art space.<sup>94</sup> From 1983 to 2018, it was also the home of RetroFret, a seller of historic guitars and other musical instruments.<sup>95</sup>

In 2017, Trupiano and RetroFret's owner, Steven Uhrick, sold the building and its entire lot to 1459 Realty Associates, LLC and Bergh 233 Investors, LLC, which continue to own it today.<sup>96</sup> It currently houses Public Records, a café, bar, and live music venue.<sup>97</sup>

### Conclusion

Monuments to Henry Bergh have been erected in Bridgeport, Connecticut—by early foe and later ally, P.T. Barnum—and in Milwaukee, where a nine-foot-tall sculpture of Bergh reaching down to pet an appreciative dog stands in front of the Wisconsin Humane Society. Bergh himself is interred about two miles from the ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage in an Egyptian-style mausoleum in Greenwood Cemetery bearing a bronze medallion of the Society's seal. "A more imposing monument than the one over Henry Bergh's grave," social historian Gerald Carson wrote in 1967,

is the flourishing network of anticruelty societies that exists today in North America, along with the many federated humane societies, the specialized auxiliaries such as animal-rescue leagues, shelters, defenders of wildlife, and placement services for homeless animals. They testify to the power

of a man whose ideas gave kindness a new dimension.<sup>98</sup>

Henry Bergh's ASPCA has been headquartered in New York City for its entire history. It occupies a key place in the city's social history, and its presence here was crucial to establishing New York City and State as leaders in the country's humane movement and in spreading the organization's message across the country and around the world. During its emergence and establishment as a major advocacy and civic organization between the time of its founding and World War II, the ASPCA built and occupied several buildings for various purposes throughout the five boroughs. Its former Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage at 233 Butler Street is not only one of the finest structures ever constructed by the Society but the only one from this period that remains essentially unaltered, standing, along with the drinking trough in front of it, as a unique testament to the work of Brooklyn's and New York City's animal advocates.<sup>99</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This flue is visible in the c. 1938-43 New York City Department of Taxes photograph in the Municipal Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Who the building was named after is unclear. An explanation has not been found in either newspaper accounts or the Society's annual reports. It may have been named after Brooklyn resident Julia F. Rogers, who donated an animal fountain in 1912 and apparently died around the time of the building's expansion. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *Annual Report* for 1912 (New York: The Society, 1913), 9; "Auctions: Estate of Julia F. Rogers," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 5, 1923, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Portions of this section are adapted from LPC, *Sunset Park South Historic District Designation Report (LP-2622)* (New York: City of New York, 2019), 9-10. Other sources include Richard W. Hunter, *National Register of Historic Places Eligibility Evaluation and Cultural Resources Assessment for the Gowanus Canal* (Northern Ecological Associates, Inc., 2004), 2-1 to 2-57; and Joseph Alexiou, *Gowanus: Brooklyn's Curious Canal* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Although European settlers considered their "purchases" of property from Native Americans to be outright acquisitions, the European concept of holding title to land was foreign to the Lenape, who considered these transactions as customary exchanges of gifts smoothing the way for settlers' temporary use of the land for camping, hunting, fishing, and the cultivation of crops.

<sup>5</sup> Sources for this section include Hunter and Alexiou; and M. Dripps, *Map of the City of Brooklyn* (New York: M. Dripps, 1869).

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Alexiou, 114.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Alexiou, 114.

<sup>8</sup> Central to the canal's completion would be the railroad magnate, financier, and speculator Edwin C. Litchfield, who had acquired the old Dutch farms between 1st and 9th Streets, stretching from the canal eastward to what is now Prospect Park, in the early 1850s. Litchfield directed much of the filling, grading, and paving work along the east side of the canal; politically savvy and powerful, he

was instrumental in creating a state commission to improve 3rd Street through the heart of his property between the canal and his new villa, Grace Hill. Designed by Alexander J. Davis and built between 1853 and 1857, Grace Hill is now within Prospect Park. It predated the park's construction and was designated a New York City Landmark in 1966.

<sup>9</sup> Several lumber yards, a stone yard, a sawmill, and factories making doors, blinds, and drainpipe were already operating on the Gowanus, which would play a key role in Brooklyn's late-19th- and early-20th-century building boom as a major entry and distribution point for building supplies. In 1872, the New York and Long Island Coignet Stone Company, a pioneering manufacturer and marketer of concrete block in the United States, moved to a five-acre site adjoining the canal's 4th Street Basin and began building its office (a designated New York City Landmark), one of the country's first concrete buildings. See LPC, *New York and Long Island Coignet Stone Company Building Designation Report (LP-2202)* (New York: City of New York, 2006), prepared by Matthew A. Postal.

<sup>10</sup> "Very Vile: The Disgusting Condition of Gowanus Canal," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 3, 1877, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Alexiou, 250.

<sup>12</sup> "Gowanus Tonnage \$100,000,000 a Year," *New York Times*, October 29, 1922, 111.

<sup>13</sup> Sources for this section include American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *Annual Report* for the years 1866 through 1888 (New York: The Society, 1867-1889); Sydney H. Coleman, *Humane Society Leaders in America* (Albany: American Humane Association, 1924), 33-64; Gerald Carson, "The Great Meddler," *American Heritage*, December 1967; David S. Favre and Vivien Tsang, "The Development of Anti-Cruelty Laws During the 1800s," *Detroit College of Law Review* (Spring 1993), 1-35; Jerrold Tannenbaum, "Animals and the Law: Property, Cruelty, Rights," *Social Research* (Fall 1995), 539-607; Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); and Janet M. Davis, *The Gospel of Kindness: Animal Welfare and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1-83.

<sup>14</sup> McShane and Tarr, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Favre and Tsang, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Carson.

<sup>17</sup> Favre and Tsang, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Tannenbaum, 566.

<sup>19</sup> "Henry Bergh and His Work," *Scribner's Monthly* (April 1879), 872.

<sup>20</sup> Sources for this section include American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *Annual Report* for the years 1889 through 1945 (New York: The Society, 1890-1946).

<sup>21</sup> The New York City dog pound was a notorious patronage mill employing a bounty system for collecting—and, advocates charged, stealing—dogs, often with the help of children. These dogs were drowned to death in large crates in the East River. See Jennifer 8. Lee, "Where They Used to Drown the Dogs," *New York Times*, September 30, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1909 (New York: The Society, 1910), 23.

<sup>23</sup> "Poster Exhibit Planned," *New York Times*, May 13, 1928, 30.

<sup>24</sup> "Art Smith, "Jewelry Making Is My Craft," *Opportunity*, Winter 1948, 14. The Brooklyn Museum hosted an exhibition of Smith's work from 2008 to 2011.

<sup>25</sup> "A.S.P.C.A. to Fight for Pigeons Here," *New York Times*, October 3, 1963, 37.

<sup>26</sup> Alan M. Beck, "Packs of Stray Dogs Part of the Brooklyn Scene," *New York Times*, November 12, 1972, 147.

<sup>27</sup> Deirdre Carmody, "A.S.P.C.A. Shift Heartens Critics," *New York Times*, February 24, 1973, 62.

<sup>28</sup> David Bird, "A.S.P.C.A. Eliminates Pickup of Stray Dogs in New York City," *New York Times*, April 8, 1977, 30.

<sup>29</sup> "A.S.P.C.A. and City in Accord on Building Three Animal Shelters," *New York Times*, November 15, 1985, D19; "A \$22.8 Million A.S.P.C.A. Expansion," *New York Times*, September 24, 1989, R1.

<sup>30</sup> "A.S.P.C.A. Plans to Stop Killing Strays," *New York Times*, March 26, 1993, B1.

<sup>31</sup> William C. Thompson, Jr., *Audit Report on the Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the Center for Animal Care and Control* (New York, 2002), ES-1.

<sup>32</sup> Sources for this section include American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *Annual Report*, for the years 1866 through 1912 (New York: The Society,

1867-1913).

<sup>33</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1866, 79; *Annual Report* for 1881, 9.

<sup>34</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1881, 10; "Bergh: Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," December 14, 1875, 4; "Death of H. B. Claflin," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 15, 1885, 1; "The Seney Hospital: A Site Selected for it in South Brooklyn," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 11, 1881, 4; "Stories of Old Brooklyn: M.E. Hospital Begun Just 50 Years Ago," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 2, 1931, 23.

<sup>35</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1883, 20.

<sup>36</sup> *Brooklyn Life* (April 22, 1893), 8; "Auxiliary to the S.P.C.A.: Meeting of the Brooklyn Women's Dumb Animal Aid Association," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 22, 1893, 5; "In Behalf of Dumb Animals," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 20, 1896, 9; "300 Book Plates Are Exhibited at Historical Society," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 1, 1936, 10.

<sup>37</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1893, 9; ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1897, 10.

<sup>38</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1895, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Regarding the relocation of its Brooklyn office to 13 Willoughby Street, the Society stated in 1894 that "these are temporary quarters, not originally intended, nor now properly adapted, for the work of our Society. Both in New York and Brooklyn ... it is high time that we should have a building erected with a special view to the use of our Society, and in every way adapted to the purposes of our work." ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1893, 9.

<sup>40</sup> "Caring for the Animals: Work of the S.P.C.A. to be Extended to the Beaches and Pleasure Resorts," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 19, 1907, 1.

<sup>41</sup> "Vietor Medals Presented: Recipients Are Street Cleaning Department Drivers Who Have Been Kind to Horses," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 1, 1907, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Sources for this section include "S.P.C.A. to Build a Modern Shelter," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 4, 1913, 8; "New Animal Shelter Erected by the S.P.C.A.," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 11, 1913, 3; "New Shelter Home," *Brooklyn Times Union*, June 10, 1913, 6; "S.P.C.A. in New Building," *Brooklyn Citizen*, June 10, 1913, 7; "Dogs Live in Real Style Before Rapid Death Comes," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 29, 1913; "S.P.C.A. now Installed in Its New Home," *Brooklyn Citizen*, October 29, 1922, 1C; "Tear Down Dog Pound on Malbone Street," *Brooklyn Times Union*, July 10, 1914, 1;

"S.P.C.A. in New Quarters; Invites Callers," *Brooklyn Times Union*, December 21, 1922, 4; and "New Home for the Care of Animals," *Brooklyn Standard Union*, November 5, 1922, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 3401, 334 (January 8, 1913). The lumberyard property is visible on Hugo Ullitz, *Atlas of the Brooklyn Borough of the City of New York* (Brooklyn: Hyde & Company, 1898), 3.

<sup>44</sup> "New Animal Shelter Erected by the S.P.C.A."

<sup>45</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1913, 5.

<sup>46</sup> "Plans Filed for New Construction Work," *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* (January 4, 1913), 38-40; "Contemplated Construction," *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* (March 25, 1922), 378-79.

<sup>47</sup> "Fido, Caught by A.S.P.C.A., Has Happy Ending," *Brooklyn Citizen*, November 19, 1922.

<sup>48</sup> "Three Women 'Dog Catchers' Idle as A.S.P.C.A. Uniforms Are Delayed," *Brooklyn Times Union*, December 1, 1924, 3; "Women Ambulance Drivers Preferred to Men by S.P.C.A.," *New York Times*, December 1, 1924, 19.

<sup>49</sup> The emotional toll was apparent in a 1928 newspaper article detailing the work of A.S.P.C.A. dogcatchers as they rounded up stray dogs around Coney Island. These animals had been abandoned by their owners at the end of the summer season, leading them to scavenge for their survival. Many were reported to have bitten children. "You hear a lot of folks telling you how much they love dogs," one catcher told the reporter, "but I wonder how much some of these summer people really loved their pets when they let them come to this." Two years later, another reporter documented the routine verbal and occasional physical abuse suffered by two Brooklyn dogcatchers at the hands of the public. "Kids yell at us, and older people ... call us 'big bums' and such nice terms. Tell us we are two lazy to earn an honest living..." one of the dogcatchers said. "'Call of the Wild' Silenced With 61 Coney Dogs Captured," *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, December 4, 1928, 37; "All Around Town: With the Dog-Catchers," *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, April 21, 1930.

<sup>50</sup> "Brooklyn's Dog Shelter a 'Haven of Mercy' for Scores of Lost Animals," *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, July 31, 1929. According to the *Eagle*, fewer than 1,000 of the 23,000 small animals collected in Brooklyn and Queens by the Brooklyn shelter in 1913 were rehomed, with the vast majority euthanized ("Dogs Live in Real Style Before



Rapid Death Comes”).

<sup>51</sup> “Dogs Must Prove Innocence, Otherwise Are Held Guilty,” *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, November 5, 1930, 5; “Homeless Dogs Welcome Christmas—500 ‘Adopted’ as Gifts for Youngsters,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, December 20, 1932, 2.

<sup>52</sup> “Homeless Dogs Welcome Christmas.”

<sup>53</sup> “Cats Are Forever Hunting Trouble,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 22, 1935.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, “‘Trimming’ Puppies Termed Cruelty,” *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, December 16, 1926, 1; “Animal Poisonings Arouse Officials of S.P.C.A. Here,” *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, November 21, 1931; “Depression Hits the Cats with Depressing Meows: Tabbies Give Experts in Rescue Plenty of Work to Do,” *Brooklyn Daily Standard Union*, November 12, 1931, 16; and “Thousands Haled to Court Yearly Through Efforts of A.S.P.C.A. Here to Teach Value of Human Kindness,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, January 31, 1934.

<sup>55</sup> There were an estimated 20,000 horses in New York City in 1934, down from about 100,000 15 years earlier. “S.P.C.A. Wagon Carrying Water to City’s Thirsty Work Horses,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 13, 1919, 57; “Thousands Haled to Court Yearly.”

<sup>56</sup> “Horses Get Pneumonia,” *Brooklyn Times Union*, November 3, 1931, 64; “Cats Are Forever Hunting Trouble.”

<sup>57</sup> Jane Corby, “Man’s Best Friend, Other Pets Have Best Friend at S.P.C.A.,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 7, 1948, Section 2.

<sup>58</sup> “Every Brooklyn Dog Has Its Day—June 22,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 27, 1935, 21; “How Old Is Your Mutt? It May Be Prize Pooch,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 29, 1935, 14; “Horse and Dog Parade June 22 to Set Record,” *Brooklyn Citizen*, June 3, 1935, 3; “Brooklyn Pets Vie in S.P.C.A. Parade,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1935, N1.

<sup>59</sup> “Dog Receives Medal for Rescue in Fire,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1940, 14; and “Cat and Dog Get Heroism Medals,” *New York Times*, November 27, 1947, 44.

<sup>60</sup> “Snake a Sleepy Burglar: 7-Foot Reptile Found Reposing on a Stove in Brooklyn,” *New York Times*, August 14, 1941, 19; “Seagoing Skunk Has Woodsy Ways,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1950, 33; “Brooklyn Residents Surprised by Sight of a Touring Sheep,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1967, 37; “250-Pound Goat Likes Stairs Diet,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 26, 1925, 3; “Man’s Best Friend, Other Pets Have Best

Friend at S.P.C.A.”; “The Baffler in Brooklyn: Pinto Pony in the Parlor,” *New York Times*, February 7, 1976, 25; and “‘Gator Startles Tube Crowd,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 7, 1937, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Margaret Mara, “Wants His Dog to Come Home to--,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 23, 1944, 8.

<sup>62</sup> “It’s a Dog’s Life! Whine 15 Pups Seeking Homes at Boro SPCA,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 27, 1944, 13.

<sup>63</sup> This section is largely adapted from LPC, *Neighborhood House Designation Report (LP-0854)* (New York: City of New York, 1977); LPC, *American Express Company Building Designation Report (LP-1932)* (New York: City of New York, 1995), prepared by Jay Shockley, 4; and LPC, *Hotel Mansfield Designation Report (LP-2517)* (New York: City of New York, 2012), prepared by Donald G. Presa, 4-5.

<sup>64</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1911, 36; *Annual Report* for 1912, 38; *Annual Report* for 1914, 41; *Annual Report* for 1915, 43.

<sup>65</sup> “J.L. Aspinwall, 82, Architect, Is Dead,” *New York Times*, May 17, 1936, N9; “For the Little Ones: What the New Building of the Gerry Society Will Be,” *New York Times*, February 21, 1892, 10.

<sup>66</sup> “Plans Filed for New Construction Work,” *Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*, December 23, 1911, 967.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, the stables constructed on East 73rd Street in Manhattan between Lexington and Third Avenues in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which are designated New York City Landmarks.

<sup>68</sup> For an overview of Romanesque architecture, see David Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture, Second Edition* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 1996), 88-125.

<sup>69</sup> Janet M. Davis, *The Gospel of Kindness: Animal Welfare and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Brooklyn’s 14th Regiment Armory (William A. Mundell, 1891-95), the Bronx’s Eighth Coastal Artillery Armory (Pilcher & Tachau, 1912-17), and Headquarters Troop, 51st Cavalry Brigade Armory (Werner & Windolph, 1926-27), all designated New York City Landmarks.

<sup>71</sup> Jonathan D. Taylor, *Tapestry Brick Dwellings: The Emergence of a Residential Type in Brooklyn* (Masters Thesis in Historic Preservation, Columbia University, 2013).

<sup>72</sup> Examples include the Bronx’s 52nd Police Precinct Station House (Stoughton & Stoughton, 1904-06); St. Paul’s Chapel of Columbia University (Howells & Stokes, 1904-07), and the Free Public Baths of the City of New York (Werner & Windolph, 1906-11), all designated New York City Landmarks.

<sup>73</sup> Leland Roth, *McKim, Mead & White, Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 272.

<sup>74</sup> Sources for this section include ASPCA *Annual Reports* for the years 1866 through 1912.

<sup>75</sup> The term “Croton” referred to the fresh drinking water provided through the city’s Croton water system, opened in 1842. “Topics of To-day,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 29, 1867, 2. The installation of public drinking fountains for animals went hand in hand with the installation of those for humans. The first public drinking fountains were installed in London in 1859 by a private philanthropic organization seeking to make clean drinking water, a rare commodity in London at that time, readily available to the city’s poor. This group, which soon began installing fountains for animals as well, became known as the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association in 1867. The organization still exists. See “Our History,” Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association website ([www.drinkingfountains.org](http://www.drinkingfountains.org)), accessed October 24, 2019.

<sup>76</sup> “Drink for Man and Beast,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1869, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Lamenting Brooklyn’s failure on this front, the *Eagle* noted in 1882 that “in Philadelphia there are upward of 100 fountains throughout the city, some of them quite costly. . . . Before the fountains were put up a number of valuable horses died every year in the streets from exhaustion. Now at the least signs of fatigue, a driver can stop and bathe the animal’s head or give him a drink, and it is rare to hear of the loss of a horse.” During that year, prominent Brooklynites including future parks commissioner George V. Brower formed the Tree Planting and Fountain Society to make the city “more attractive and healthful as a place of residence” by providing shade trees and public drinking fountains in neighborhoods large and small. “Trees and Fountains,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 27, 1882, 3; “The Supervisors,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 18, 1883, 2.

<sup>78</sup> “New Fountain Ready,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 28, 1897, 3; “Bridge Plaza Fountain,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 10, 1897, 2.

<sup>79</sup> “Water for Man and Beast: Public Fountains in this

City, and Where They Are,” *New York Times*, May 17, 1896, 25; LPC, *Macomb’s Dam Bridge and 155th Street Viaduct Designation Report (LP-1629)* (New York: City of New York, 1992).

<sup>80</sup> An illustration of the three-basin fountain appears on page 24 of the ASPCA’s annual report for 1884. A photo of the “water basin for dogs and cats” appears in the Society’s annual report for 1904.

<sup>81</sup> The Art Commission is now known as the Public Design Commission.

<sup>82</sup> In its annual report for 1906, published in 1907, the Society noted that “no drinking fountains for animals have been erected in this city for the past two years or more, owing to the lack of a design satisfactory to the Art Commission” (24).

<sup>83</sup> Alfred Wagstaff, “Fountains for Horses,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1907, 6.

<sup>84</sup> Magonigle’s design appears on page 31 of the Society’s annual report for 1906 (published in 1907).

<sup>85</sup> Edith G. Bowdoin, “Funds Needed for Drinking Fountains,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1907, 6.

<sup>86</sup> ASPCA *Annual Report* for 1910, 7.

<sup>87</sup> The ASPCA annual report for 1909 (6) notes that George Bowdoin funded the drinking trough in Hancock Square. According to Juliana Monjeau of the New York City Public Design (formerly Art) Commission, the Hancock Square fountain/trough was the first of the standard granite trough design approved by the Art Commission and installed at 233 Butler Street to be installed in the city (email message from J. Monjeau to M. Caratzas, August 6, 2019). See also LPC, *George S. Bowdoin Stable Designation Report (LP-1953)* (New York: City of New York, 1997).

<sup>88</sup> American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Submission 1672 to Art Commission of the City of New York (March 27, 1913). The author wishes to thank Juliana Monjeau of the New York City Public Design Commission Archives for furnishing this information.

<sup>89</sup> These donations are detailed in the ASPCA’s annual reports for the years 1910 through 1914.

<sup>90</sup> “Miss Bowdoin Left \$250,000 to ASPCA,” *New York Times*, August 29, 1945, 23.

<sup>91</sup> Kings County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 1244, 1125 (June 15, 1981).

<sup>92</sup> The kennels are visible on *Insurance Maps of the Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1915, updated to 1992), in the LPC's collections. Drawings of the cat solarium are located within the block-and-lot folder for Block 405, Lot 51 at the Brooklyn Department of Buildings. On the cat solarium, see "New Adoption Center for Brooklyn Shelter," *Animal Protection* (Fall 1957).

<sup>93</sup> Allen Hughes, "An American Treasure Finds a New Home," *New York Times*, November 14, 1982, H21; Eleanor Blau, "The Mr. Fix-It of the Pipe Organ," *New York Times*, December 24, 1995, CY7; Mythili Rao, "Near Ground Zero, Organ in Historic Chapel 'Speaks' Again," CNN.com, April 10, 2009 ([www.cnn.com/2009/US/04/10/ny.chapel.organ/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/04/10/ny.chapel.organ/index.html)), accessed September 6, 2019).

<sup>94</sup> "Arts & Entertainment Guide," *New York Times*, June 17, 1984, G18.

<sup>95</sup> Fran Pado, "A Canal Zone Comes Into Its Own," *New York Times*, May 2, 2010, MB3; Rebecca Flint Marx, "A Refuge for Guitars and Musicians," *New York Times*, November 9, 2012, MB3.

<sup>96</sup> Kings County, Office of the Register, City Register File Number 2017000068206 (February 17, 2017).

<sup>97</sup> Pamela Wong, "Public Records: New Music & Performance Space Coming to Gowanus," Bklyner.com, February 22, 2019 (<https://bklyner.com/public-records-new-music-performance-space-coming-to-gowanus/>), accessed September 6, 2019.

<sup>98</sup> Gerald Carson, "The Great Meddler," *American Heritage*, December 1967.

<sup>99</sup> The 1944 ASPCA annual report contains a montage of the ASPCA facilities standing throughout New York City at that time. These consisted of the Society's Manhattan shelter and hospital, designed by Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker and opened in 1912, and the Queens shelter (1929) and office building (c. 1943) on 158th Street in Jamaica, all of which have been demolished. The Society's former Bronx shelter on Park Avenue at 173rd Street was completed by 1925 and still stands today. Although sharing some similarities with the Butler Street facility, it is less elaborate in its design and is only a single story in height. It has experienced alterations to its window openings, including the enlargement of a former window opening into a vehicle portal on its Park Avenue facade. The Society's Staten Island shelter at 4 Willow Avenue in Rosebank was a utilitarian brick structure that has either been extensively altered or demolished and replaced with

another structure. The Society's former headquarters at Madison Avenue and 26th Street, designed by Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker and completed in 1896, has been extensively altered with the replacement of its fourth story and the addition of six stories above. Previous facilities associated with the ASPCA during its early decades, including its former headquarters at 10 East 22nd Street in Manhattan, and Brooklyn facilities at 13 Willoughby Street and 114 Lawrence Street in Brooklyn, have been demolished.

## Findings and Designation

ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage

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 the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage 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 the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 405, Lot 51 in part and a portion of the Butler Street sidewalk in front of Lot 51, bounded by a line beginning at the northeast corner of said lot, continuing southerly along the eastern lot line and a line extending southerly to the northern curbline of Butler Street, westerly along the northern curbline of Butler Street to a point on a line extending southerly from the southwest corner of the building at 231-237 Butler Street, northerly along said line and the western building line of 231-237 Butler Street to the northern lot line, and easterly along the northern lot line to the point of beginning, as its Landmark Site.



**American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals  
Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage**  
**233 Butler Street (aka 231-237 Butler Street), Brooklyn**  
Sarah Moses, LPC, October 2019



1913 ASPCA shelter and sidewalk watering trough, 233 Butler Street

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *Annual Report for 1913* (New York: The Society, 1914), 17



Circa-1940 Tax Photograph

New York City  
Municipal Archives, c. 1938-43



**ASPCA Brooklyn Office, Shelter, and Garage, entrance**  
Sarah Moses, LPC, October 2019



**Sidewalk watering trough**  
Sarah Moses, LPC, October 2019

