

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Ottendorfer Branch, New York Public Library and Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital

AND/OR COMMON

Ottendorfer Library and German Dispensary

## 2 LOCATION

STREET &amp; NUMBER

135 and 137 Second Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New York City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

18

STATE

New York

CODE

036

COUNTY

N.Y.

CODE

061

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

## CATEGORY

DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

## PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

☒ EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER: Hospital

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Stuyvesant Polyclinic: Mr. Andrew Ziegler, Pres.

Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital - 137 Second Ave. N.Y.

Ottendorfer; Mr. John M. Cory, Dir. N.Y. Public Library, 5th Ave. &amp; 42nd St. N.Y. 10018 &amp;

Mr. William H. Wilson Vice-Pres. Lenox Hill Hosp. 100 East 77th St. N.Y. 10021

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

New York

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New York County Hall of Records

STREET &amp; NUMBER

31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

New York

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT  
☒ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED  
☒ ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Stuyvesant Polyclinic and Ottendorfer Library, designed by William Schickel, were constructed together in 1883-1884 and are united in appearance by their materials and a number of design elements such as the alignment of floor levels and round-arched fenestration. Although both buildings are three stories in height, the Ottendorfer Library is smaller in overall height and width and more modest in its use of decorative detail. The library is an interesting and tasteful combination of elements from several late Victorian building styles, although many of its details such as the very clear separation of each of the three floors by decorative friezes are ultimately derived from Italian Renaissance sources. The contrast of deep red Philadelphia pressed brick with dark mortar joints and terra-cotta trim and the manipulation of classical details are common features of late Victorian architecture and of the Queen Anne style.

Although in scale and composition the facade of the Ottendorfer Library is similar to residential buildings, the broad arched entryway and the ornamental detail clearly distinguish this modestly scaled structure as a public building. The most interesting feature is the broad elliptically-arched entryway, at once monumental and inviting, with its infill of glass and iron. The broad, low stoop leading to the double doors is flanked by delicate curvilinear wrought-iron railings with spiral newel posts. The glazed entryway is subdivided by iron pilasters with overlapping medallions and a wide ornate iron transom bar with shells and fleur-de-lis details. French windows with iron grilles and pressed metal spandrel panels flank the central doors with their grilled transom. The broad arch is articulated by an enframing of molded bricks and a terra-cotta arch with an egg and dart molding. The line of the transom bar is continued by terra-cotta band courses which flank the arch. Much of the ornamental detail of this broad entrance alludes to the function of the building and its role in the community. Urns and books, symbolic of learning, ornament the spandrel panels below the windows. Cartouches and urns are set in the floriated ornament of the terra-cotta arch. The terra-cotta band course is embellished by owls and globes, symbolizing wisdom and knowledge.

The terra-cotta entablature with its projecting cornice on corbel blocks further reinforces the symbolism of this entryway. The frieze which separates the first and second stories has floriated ornament with carved cherub heads flanking an unfurled scroll with the German inscription "Freie Bibliothek u. [nd] Lesehalle." (Free Library and Reading Room.) An egg and dart molding extends across the facade above this frieze.

The second and third floors are very similar in organization and decorative embellishment. Each floor has three tall, narrow, round-arched windows, eight feet in height, articulated by molded brick enframements and terra-cotta voussoirs embellished by cartouches. These windows echo the form of the paired windows on the adjacent Polyclinic building, and are further articulated by smooth flanking band courses set just above the terra-cotta entablatures. The frieze between the second and third floor is ornamented with hemispheres and cartouches as well as an egg and dart molding. The friezes separating each floor give a strong horizontal emphasis to the building in contrast to the vertical accents of the tall windows.



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A terra-cotta frieze with panels of relief carving with wreaths and garlands, outlined by egg and dart and bead and reel moldings extends across the facade below the overhanging sheet metal cornice. Supported on richly embellished terra-cotta brackets, this cornice handsomely crowns the facade.

Schickel's design for the dispensary building is a handsomely ornate and individual version of the neo-Italian Renaissance style. The facade is of Philadelphia pressed brick (now painted white) above a stone basement. All the ornamental detail is executed in molded terra-cotta, a building material then only recently introduced to New York.

The handsome facade of the dispensary building is symmetrically arranged with paired round-arched windows under segmental arches at each floor, flanking the one-story entrance portico which has triple round-arched windows above it at the second and third stories. The paired windows are separated by Corinthian colonnettes which are adorned with delicate spiraling vines. The central round-arched windows of the upper stories are richly enframed and are linked horizontally at each floor by continuous entablatures. Panels with foliate reliefs appear between the floors connecting the windows vertically. Elaborate bas-relief foliate ornament adorns the spandrels and the pilasters which flank the windows. The projecting entrance porch is supported on slender paired piers of brick with evenly spaced vermiculated blocks and Corinthian capitals. Above these piers is a frieze with classical triglyphs and metopes with floral ornaments. The low arch above the entrance is set between the columns and is surmounted by a pedimental composition with the head of Caritas at the center from which leafy branches unfold toward seated cherubs holding cartouches inscribed with the dates of the dispensary founding, "1857" and construction, "1883" at the corners. The single most interesting feature of the sculptural detail is the series of terra-cotta portrait busts set within circular niches. They are inscribed with the names of the men depicted. Four busts, portraying figures from Classical Antiquity adorn the porch: Celsius, Roman author of medical texts; Hippocrates, Greek physician; Asklepius, Greek god of medicine; Galen, Greek physician and writer of the Roman period. Within the elaborate foliate frieze beneath the cornice of the building are five additional busts depicting men of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries: Harvey, English physiologist and court physician; Linne, Swedish botanist; Humboldt, German scientist and explorer; Lavoisier, French chemist and physicist; Hufeland, German physician and author.

Activities associated with the use of the property may have produced archeological remains. However, the archeological potential has not yet been assessed.

1. The text of this nomination form is taken almost in its entirety from Landmarks Preservation Commission, Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital Designation Report (LP-0924) by Nancy Goeschal (New York, 1976) and Landmarks Preservation Commission, Ottendorfer Branch, New York Public Library Designation Report (LP-0969) by Barry Bergdoll (New York, 1977).

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Ottendorfer Library

The interior of the first floor of the Ottendorfer Library is a long, narrow room which is divided into four sections: the entrance area with check-out desk; the reading room with book shelves lining the lower part of the walls and tables for the use of borrowers; the stack section; and the offices. A handsome staircase against the left wall, a striking feature of the entrance area, is constructed of dark wood with slim, twisting balusters alternating with rectangular molded balusters. The wall side of the staircase has vertically grooved panelling rising about a foot above the bannister. The third area, containing the stacks, is the architecturally and visually most interesting. Its black wrought-iron partitions divide the stacks into eight sections on the first level and nine on the upper. The supporting elements are cast in a simple rectangular cut-out design. A circular iron stairway on the left side leads to the upper stack level which is separated from the lower level by a ceiling constructed of glass and metal. The lower walls of the small office are wood panelled. This section also contains a skylight which has been covered over. The layout of the second floor (not presently in use) is similar to that of the first floor, with a long, narrow room divided into three sections. Low book shelves line the entire right wall. The front section, which was the children's library, contains three, handsome, finely detailed, long, narrow windows facing Second Avenue, which rise from one third of the way above the floor almost to the ceiling. Each window consists of consoles supporting a curved cornice window head. The middle and longest section of the room contains a fireplace with a marble mantel and book shelves. A glass panelled partition divides the back section from the first two. A sign at the entrance reads "Zur lese Halle für Frauen." (Women's Reading Room) The superintendent presently occupies the third floor and it, therefore, is not open to the public. The original interior of the Ottendorfer Library is virtually intact, with the exception of the installation of fluorescent lighting in place of the old gaslights and the covering up of the skylight in the first floor office.



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Stuyvesant Polyclinic

The small entrance lobby of the interior of the Stuyvesant Polyclinic contains a wall constructed of marble below and wood panelling above and has an interesting elliptical arched ceiling. Glass panelled double doors lead to the main lobby, a rather large squarish room with a cashier's desk on the left and doors leading to offices, patients' rooms and a doctor's office at the front on the left and right. A corridor at the back right-hand corner leads to what were probably once examining rooms. An imposing wide staircase in the middle of the right wall, the most notable feature here, turns at right angles as it leads to the upper two floors. It is flanked by columns with Corinthian capitals and its mid-section is decorated with acanthus leaves and rosettes. Its dark wood bannister has siding of light gray metal scrollwork. The room is enriched with dark wood moulding and trim which frame all the doors and a stringcourse of the same dark wood which runs around the room from door to door. The upper two floors follow a similar layout as the main floor, but at present most of the rooms are empty and not in use (including a room on the second floor containing dental equipment and examining chairs which was used for training dental students). The only rooms in use are two offices on the third floor.



# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD                                        | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |                                                 |                                                 |                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC          | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION   | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)<br>Medicine |
|                                               |                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |                                                 |                                                                 |

SPECIFIC DATES 1883-1884

BUILDER/ARCHITECT William Schickel

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital and the Ottendorfer Branch Library are significant for their architectural excellence and their connection with important 19th-century philosophy and philanthropy. The Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital is an exceptionally handsome building designed in a modified version of the neo-Italian Renaissance style by the German-born architect William Schickel, and the Ottendorfer Branch Library is a particularly interesting and personal interpretation of the Queen Anne style by the same architect. The extensive and imaginative use of molded terra-cotta on the facade was innovative when the buildings were constructed, and the ornament is especially interesting on the hospital building for its series of portrait busts depicting famous physicians and scientists. The buildings were the gift of two German immigrants who were important and influential figures in New York and noted philanthropists, and the buildings have long been associated with the German community in New York. The library provided reading material and knowledge for immigrants and the Ottendorfer is the oldest branch in the New York Public Library system still in its original building. It is one of the oldest buildings in the city designed specifically as a public library and it played an important role in the public library movement in New York in the late 19th century.

The Polyclinic, too, was long associated with the German community in New York and provided free health care to the needy and, in combination with the adjoining library, was intended to "promote the bodily and mental health" of Germans in New York. The polyclinic and the library still play a vital role in community life today.

The Stuyvesant Polyclinic, formerly the German Dispensary, was designed by William S Schickel, a German-born architect, in an interesting exuberant version of the neo-Italian Renaissance style. The building is especially notable for its sculptural detail which includes a series of portrait busts of famous physicians and scientists. The learned assembly, many of whom wrote classic medical texts, alludes indirectly to the relationship between the dispensary building and the small neighboring library. Built in conjunction with Ottendorfer Library, next door, the buildings were the gift of Anna and Oswald Ottendorfer, German-American philanthropists who concerned themselves with the welfare of the German population centered on the Lower East Side in the mid to late 19th century. The juxtaposition of the library and the clinic building is by no means coincidental. Rather it reflects the 19th-century philosophy, particularly influential in Germany, of developing the individual both physically and mentally. Ottendorfer's desire was to help to uplift both the body and the mind of his fellow Germans in the United States ("dem Körper und dem Geisten zu helfen").

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Reports: September 20, 1977, number 3, "Ottendorfer Branch, New York Public Library" and November 9, 1976, number 5, "Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital."

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

Less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 58.5 50.0 4.5 09 03.0  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B                    
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C                  

D                  

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 464, Lot 37 (see attached map).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

Contact: Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph, 518-474-0479

NAME / TITLE

Division for Historic Preservation

Joan R. Olshansky, National Register Coordinator

See Continuation Sheet

ORGANIZATION

Landmarks Preservation Commission

DATE

10/2/78

STREET & NUMBER

305 Broadway

TELEPHONE

566-7577

CITY OR TOWN

New York City

STATE

New York

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL XXX

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

DATE

9/30/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: Lynn S. Burke

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

July 22, 1980

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

July 9, 1979



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Early Development of Dispensaries in New York

Dispensaries were the 19th-century equivalent to health clinics of the present day. They provided medical care free of charge or at nominal fees to "medically indigent" out-patients. The first in New York City was founded in 1791 on Tryon Street, and by the end of the 19th century dispensaries were located throughout the city, many being affiliated with hospitals. The German Dispensary was established in 1857 and became, through an amendment to its charter in 1866, a branch of the German Hospital at Park Avenue and 77th Street. As their names imply, both the German Hospital and the German Dispensary were founded and maintained by Germans, and were intended to serve the poor of the German community in New York City, although treatment was available to the general public. The lower east side of Manhattan had a large German immigrant population in the second half of the 19th century, and the dispensary from its founding was located in this section of the city. In 1884 at the same time that the building on Second Avenue was completed, a dispensary department was opened at the German hospital itself. Patients were obliged if "able" to pay a fee of ten cents.

By 1905, very likely in response to the growth of the Yorkville German community, plans for a new dispensary building near the hospital had been formulated. The Board of Trustees of the German Hospital determined to sell the downtown building and in April of 1906 it was purchased by the German Polyklinik, another charity dispensary devoted to the care of New York's German population. This institution, founded in 1883, provided free medical treatment as well as clinical observation sessions for medical students. The building was renovated and repaired in 1906, and has since had several other interior alterations and improvements, including the addition of an auditorium in 1941. The clinic has continued to provide free medical services, relying on private donations and volunteer doctors. The name of the clinic was temporarily changed to the Stuyvesant Polyclinic during World War I, owing to the intensity of anti-German sentiment in this country at the time; again during World War II it was given this name and has since retained it. Very recently the polyclinic has become affiliated with the Cabrini Health Care Center.

The Ottendorfer Library

The Ottendorfer Library is the oldest branch library in Manhattan and one of the earliest buildings in the city constructed specifically as a public library. Designed in 1883-1884 by the German-born architect William Schickel, it is a particularly interesting example of late Victorian architecture exhibiting elements of both the neo-Italian Renaissance and the Queen Anne styles.



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Early Development of Libraries in New York

The prominent architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner has noted that, "Socially ... speaking, the free public library is the most important nineteenth century development in the field of libraries." Although dispensaries, the 19th-century equivalent of health clinics, were widespread in New York City, the concept of the free circulating library, especially that which served the poorer segments of the population, was just beginning to receive considerable attention in New York. In the 1830s, the first of a series of bills to encourage the growth of libraries was passed by the New York State legislature. The New York newspapers were filled with editorial criticism of the lack of library facilities, the failure to serve the poor, and the backwardness of New York, in contrast with other cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, in establishing a free public library. The New York Evening Post reported in 1880 that "only one class of people in our city are unprovided for in the matter of reading -- that is the very poor, some of whom cannot afford to procure their reading, and are not eligible for the free libraries." The New York Times, writing in the more political tone which characterized the movement for public libraries in the press, wrote in 1884: "It is not too much to say that next to a clean administration of its affairs a great free circulating library is the city's chief lack,"

By the late 19th century, New York City had excellent research facilities in a number of privately owned libraries, but few general libraries that offered a wide variety of popular and serious reading to the general public. The Astor and Lenox Libraries founded respectively by the will of John Jacob Astor in 1894, and by the famous book collector and philanthropist James Lenox (1800-1880) in 1870, both served as great research libraries open to students and scholars. These two research institutions together with the funds of the Tilden Trust, established in 1886 by the will of Samuel J. Tilden (1814-1886), a former governor of New York, were consolidated in 1895 to form the New York Public Library. Despite these resources in research libraries, the reading needs of the general public, especially the poor and immigrant population, went largely unmet by any institution through most of the 19th century.

The influence of 19th-century moralistic philosophies is apparent in the earliest private efforts to provide free reading to the public. Most of the early public libraries were the philanthropic efforts of wealthy New Yorkers interested in aiding and encouraging the self-education of the poor. Libraries were seen as an agent to the improvement of the city as well as the lot of the poor. The historian Sidney Ditzion recounts that "the story of how a local library branch had driven a neighboring saloon out of business demonstrated one practical result of opening branches." The earliest of the philanthropic efforts in the city was the New York Free Circulating Library founded in 1878 and incorporated in 1880 with the express purpose, according to the First Annual Report (1880), of providing "moral and intellectual elevation of the masses." During its first few years the library grew impressively, and the board of the library began discussing the possibility of establishing branches in the various neighborhoods of New York. The Second Annual Report of the New York Free Circulating Library (1880-81) stated that:

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It is proposed to establish small libraries, located in the centers of the poorest and most thickly settled districts of the city. The books are to be selected with special reference to the wants of each community, carefully excluding all works of doubtful influence for good.

The first branch of the New York Free Circulating Library, the Ottendorfer Branch, was formally opened on December 7, 1884. One of the very first buildings in New York City to be designed specifically as a public library, it was the gift of Oswald and Anna Ottendorfer to the people of the Lower East Side.

The Ottendorfers

The German Dispensary building and the Ottendorfer library were among numerous charitable gifts of the Ottendorfers. Anna Ottendorfer (1815-1884) had immigrated to New York in 1844 with her first husband, Jacob Uhl, a printer. They purchased the German language newspaper, the New Yorker Staats Zeitung, a weekly paper founded in 1834 (and still published today). At the death of her husband in 1853, Anna inherited the paper, by then a thriving daily publication, and six years later married Oswald Ottendorfer, editor-in-chief since 1858. Oswald Ottendorfer (1826-1900) was educated at the Universities of Vienna and Prague and was politically active in Austria. After the Revolution of 1848 failed, he fled to Switzerland, and in 1850 to the United States. He worked first as a laborer and then joined the staff of the Staats Zeitung. Under his management the newspaper continued to grow in popularity, and was a highly respected conservative paper, "severely classic in tone." By the 1870s the Staats Zeitung was housed in an elaborate building on "Newspaper Row" (Tryon Row, now the site of the Municipal Building). Ottendorfer, a leading citizen within the German community of the city, was politically influential both at the local and national levels. In 1872 he was a New York City Alderman, and in 1874 as a staunchly anti-Tammany Democrat he ran unsuccessfully for mayor. Both Ottendorfers were deeply concerned with philanthropic projects, although Mrs. Ottendorfer was more directly involved in their execution. She helped fund German schools in the city, gave a wing--The Women's Pavilion--to the German hospital and established the Isabella Home in Astoria (now located on Amsterdam Avenue and 190th Street). The home, named in memory of her daughter who died as an young woman, was an institution which cared for old and indigent German women. The German Dispensary building was also Mrs. Ottendorfer's particular project. The library was the special concern of Mr. Ottendorfer who personally directed the selection of books.

Mrs. Ottendorfer acquired the land for the two buildings in 1883 and commissioned the architect William Schickel to design a dispensary building. According to Oswald Ottendorfer in his speech at the opening ceremony, the land was sufficient for an additional building and it was decided to erect a library in conjunction with the dispensary, thereby serving both the physical and mental well-being of the German community.



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In November of 1883 the German Empress Augusta honored Anna Ottendorfer for her philanthropic work by presenting her with a silver medal of merit and a citation. Unfortunately Mrs. Ottendorfer died in early 1884, before the opening of either the dispensary or the Ottendorfer Library. The dedication on May 27, 1884 of the dispensary was also a memorial service for her. A portrait of Mrs. Ottendorfer "profusely surrounded by choice flowers" was displayed on a temporary platform draped in black, and the ceremony consisted of musical offerings from the Liederkrantz Quartet and a series of speeches. One of the many guests was Carl Schurz, the famous German-born statesman and politician, a personal friend of the Ottendorfers. The opening of the library on December 7 of the same year was also well attended by leading members of the German community in New York,

On January 10, 1884, -- even before construction was completed -- the Ottendorfers officially turned the library over to the New York Free Circulating Library and the Board of Trustees promptly named the building after the donors. Oswald Ottendorfer personally selected the first books for the library. Numbering some 8,000, the books were equally divided between English and German titles. Ottendorfer also provided the library with an initial endowment of \$10,000, which he frequently augmented by additional gifts in later years. Ottendorfer's purpose in establishing the bilingual library was multi-fold. He not only wished to provide German reading material for the immigrant population, but also hoped that "they would naturally be attracted from the German books to those in English." He also hoped that the library would serve the needs of Americans interested in the German language. Like the dispensary building, the library was aimed at uplifting the community and easing the assimilation of the German population into American society.

Development of the Library System

The New York Free Circulating Library was supported wholly by private funds until public funding was added to its budget under state legislation in 1887. Many prominent and wealthy New Yorkers helped to further the library including Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jacob H. Schiff, and Henry G. Marquand. Both Oswald Ottendorfer and John Jacob Astor, the son of the founder of the Astor Library, served for many years on the Board of Trustees. During the next seventeen years (1884-1901), the New York Free Circulating Library grew tremendously, adding branches in various parts of the city, increasing circulation impressively, and benefiting by increased public support and state funds. It was the desire of the trustees that the library serve the general public, and many, including a writer in the New York Times of 1884, saw the emerging system in just such terms:

The substantial growth of the New York Free Circulating Library since its modest beginning, four years ago, has made it clear that its founders and promoters have already laid the cornerstone of the city's future great free library.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

MAY 14 1979

DATE ENTERED

JUL 22 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

Stuyvesant Polyclinic

and Ottendorfer

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE 6

By 1901, when the New York Free Circulating Library was incorporated with several smaller free circulating libraries in the city to form the Circulation Department of the New York Public Library (now the Branch Libraries System), the system had eleven branches throughout Manhattan and over 1,600,000 volumes, as well as a traveling branch. The Ottendorfer Library had also changed somewhat during that time, reflecting changing concepts of the social function of the small neighborhood library. Originally designed with cast-iron stacks and a circulation desk on the main floor, the library was somewhat remodeled in the late 1890s to experiment with the open-shelf system. It had been felt by the founders that the poor population which used the library could not be trusted to use an open library, but the pride and responsibility that was taken in the use of the collection led to such democratizing innovations. The original bindery of the New York Free Circulating Library was installed in the basement of the Ottendorfer Branch and began functioning in 1887; for many years it was the central bindery for the New York Public Library System as well. The second floor of the library was originally designed with a separate reading room for the use of women. In 1900 a special children's room was established there as part of an attempt to increase service to children and encourage reading from an early age.

The Carnegie grant of the early 20th century resulted in a large scale construction of neighborhood branch libraries and is largely responsible for the New York Public Library system as it is today. As a forerunner of these later libraries, the Ottendorfer is an important example of the earliest philanthropic efforts on behalf of the popular education of the public.

William Schickel

At the dedication ceremony for the German Dispensary, Mr. Ottendorfer noted that his wife had taken a great interest in the construction of both the dispensary and the library and that she herself had selected the architect. William Schickel (1850-1907) was a native of Germany where he received his architectural training. At the age of twenty he emigrated to New York and worked as a draftsman for several architectural firms, including that of the well-known architect Richard Morris Hunt. In the 1880s Schickel established his own office and designed, in addition to the German Dispensary and the Ottendorfer Library, the Stuart Residence on Fifth Avenue at 68th Street (1881) and a building for St. Vincent's Hospital (1882). Schickel enlarged his firm calling it Schickel & Company in the late 1880s, and during this period designed several notable buildings such as the brick commercial structure, No 93-99 Prince Street, now within the SoHo Historic District, the Constable Building on Fifth Avenue of 1893 -- a handsome neo-Renaissance office building adjacent to the former Arnold Constable Department Store, and the Jefferson Building on West 23rd Street, an impressive structure of brick with terra-cotta trim. By 1896 Schickel had taken Isaac L. Ditmars as partner. The firm's most noted work was in church architecture of which numerous examples can be found in both Manhattan and Brooklyn, including the magnificent church of St. Ignatius



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CONTINUATION SHEET Stuyvesant Polyclinic  
and Ottendorfer ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 7

Loyola (1895-1900) on Park Avenue, a designated New York City Landmark.

Schickel's designs for the dispensary and library buildings included the use of molded terra-cotta for all ornamental detail. In 1883 terra-cotta had only recently been introduced to New York. In the rebuilding of Chicago after the great fire of 1871 much architectural terra-cotta had been used; whereas, in New York City it was not generally used until late in the 1870s. The first important building to employ terra-cotta was designed by the eminent architect George B. Post. His Long Island Historical Society Building in Brooklyn Heights of 1880 is richly ornamented with terra-cotta and includes a series of portrait busts, like those on Schickel's richly decorated Dispensary Building.

The manufacturer employed by both Post and Schickel was the Perth Amboy Terra-Cotta Company, established in 1879. Schickel in using terra-cotta so extensively for the Ottendorfer Library and the dispensary ranks among the first architects in New York to make important use of this building material, which was to become popular by the turn of the century.

Conclusion

The Stuyvesant Polyclinic has long been a source of pride to local residents and the Ottendorfer Library remains much as it was when the Ottendorfers presented it to the New York Free Circulating Library in 1884. It still attracts readers from all over the city and offers a variety of reading material in foreign languages with particular strength in its German collection, which includes many of the original books donated by Oswald Ottendorfer. As both architectural and historical landmarks the Ottendorfer Library and Stuyvesant Polyclinic continue to play an active role in the life of the community.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 14 1979

DATE ENTERED JUL 22 1979

Ottendorfer Branch, New York Public Library and Stuyvesant Polyclinic  
Hospital New York, New York County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 11 PAGE 1

### Interior descriptions by:

Suzanne Wilson  
Consultant  
92 Perry Street  
New York, NY 10014

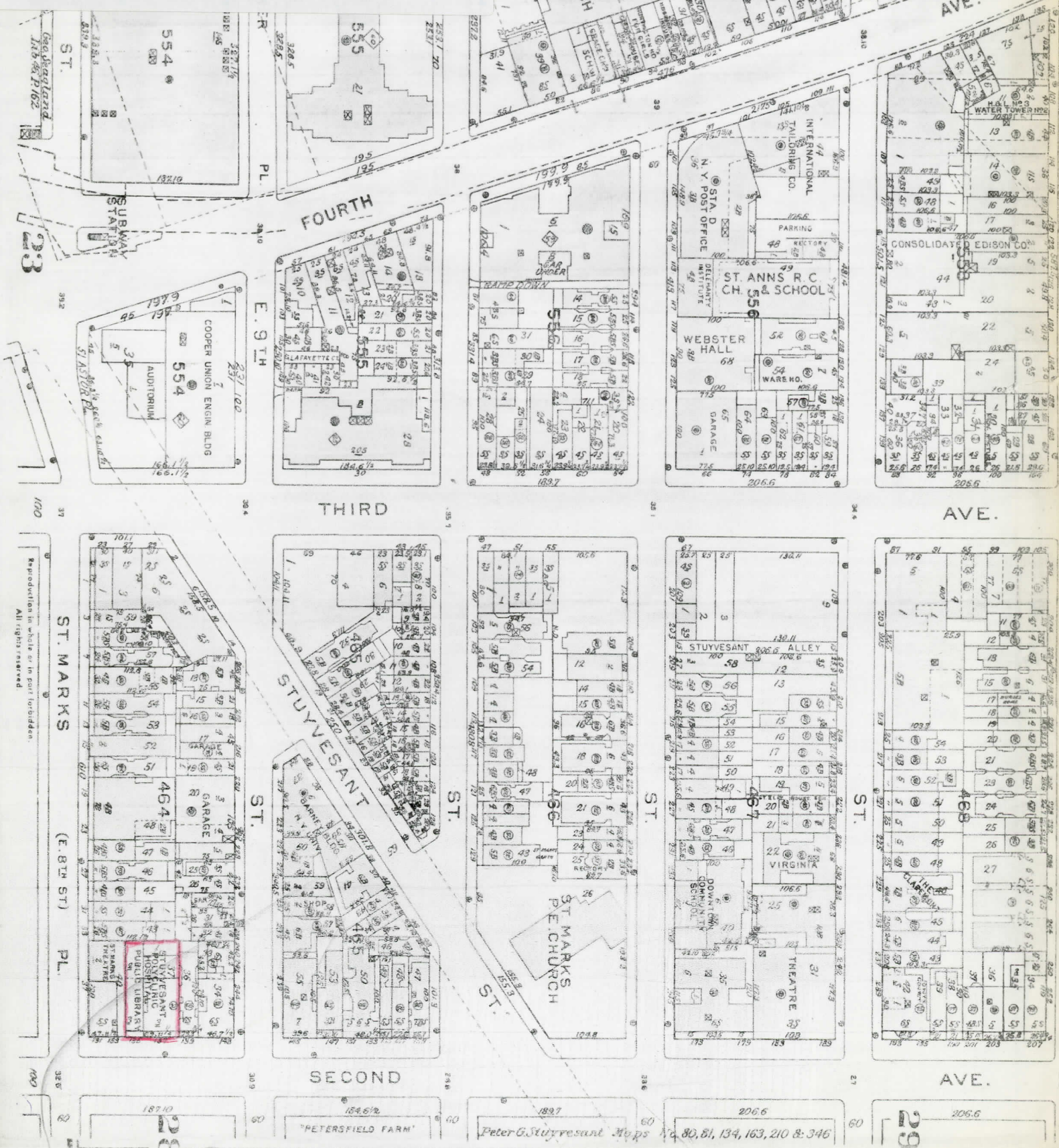


New York, New York County  
Sanborn Map, New York City  
Supplied by New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

New York, New York County  
Sanborn Map, New York City  
Supplied by New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

New York, New York County  
Sanborn Map, New York City  
Supplied by New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Supplied by New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission









Property

OTTENDORFER PUBLIC LIBRARY AND STUYVESANT POLYCLINIC HOSPITAL

State

N.Y. (N.Y.)

Working Number

5.14.79.1150

TECHNICAL

Photos

8

Maps

2

CONTROL

OK 5.16.79

HISTORIAN

STUYVESANT POLYCLINIC Hospital, A version of ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN  
Renaissance Revival style, and the Ottendorfer  
Branch Library, eclectic Queen Anne style, were built in  
1880s by noted Manhattan architect, William Schickel.  
Schickel, a German, was likely architect because of  
two buildings' strong focus to aid German immigrants.

John H. Gilmore

7/12/79

Accept

Hospital provided free health care to German community  
and library, oldest branch of NYPL, provided German  
literature to community.

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory

Review

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept  
L. Beebe  
7/19/79

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

Accept  
L. Beebe  
7/22/79

National Register Write-up

Federal Register Entry

8-7-79

Send-back

Re-submit

Entered JUL 22 1979





1 538

Ottendorfer Library and Stuyvesant Polyclinic <sup>Hospital</sup>  
New York, New York *N.Y. County*  
Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1965-Photo  
View to the west  
Neg. at: Landmarks Preservation  
Commission, 305 Broadway, New York, NY

#1 of 8  
JUL 22 1979

DOE

MAY 14 1979





**LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007**

*Dittender Public Library # 2 of 8*  
*And* Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital  
137 Second Avenue, New York City,  
New York County

Photo: Suzanne J. Wilson, 1979

Neg: New York City Landmarks

Preservation Commission

Detail of ground floor facade

*DOE*

JUL 22 1979 MAY 14 1979





LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007

*Ottendorfer Public Library #3 of 8*  
and Stuyvesant Polyclinic *Hospital*  
137 Second Avenue, New York City,  
New York County

Photo: Suzanne J. Wilson

Negative: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Main floor facing rear - stairway  
with flanking columns

MAY 14 1979

DOE  
JUL 22 1979



LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007

*Ottendorfer Public Library*  
*and* Stuyvesant Polyclinic *Hospital #4 of 8*  
137 Second Avenue, New York City,  
New York County

Photo: Suzanne J. Wilson

Negative: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Main floor: detail of stairway  
with scroll work design and columns

*DOE*  
JUL 22 1979

MAY 14 1979





**LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007**

*Ottendorfer Public Library and  
Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital #5 of 8*

**Ottendorfer Library**

**135 Second Avenue, New York City,  
New York County**

**Photo: Suzanne J. Wilson, 1979**

**Neg: New York City Landmarks**

**Preservation Commission**

**Detail of ground floor facade**

*DOE*

**MAY 14 1979**

**JUL 22 1979**





LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007

*Ottendorfer Public Library #6 of 8*  
*Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital*

Ottendorfer Library

135 Second Avenue, New York City,  
New York County

Photo: Suzanne J. Wilson

Negative: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Main floor entrance area with  
staircase and part of check-  
out desk

DoE

JUL 22 1979

MAY 14 1979



LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007 #7548

*Ottendorfer Public Library & Surgeon  
Polyclinic Hospital*

Ottendorfer Library

135 Second Avenue, New York City,  
New York County

Photo: Suzanne J. Wilson

Negative: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

Main floor stacks - facing office in  
rear

MAY 14 1979

DOE  
JUL 22 1979





**LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007**

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Ottendorfer Library

#8478

135 Second Avenue, New York City,  
New York County

Photo: Suzanne J. Wilson

Negative: New York City Landmarks  
Preservation Commission

2nd floor children's library with  
windows facing Second Avenue

MAY 14 1979

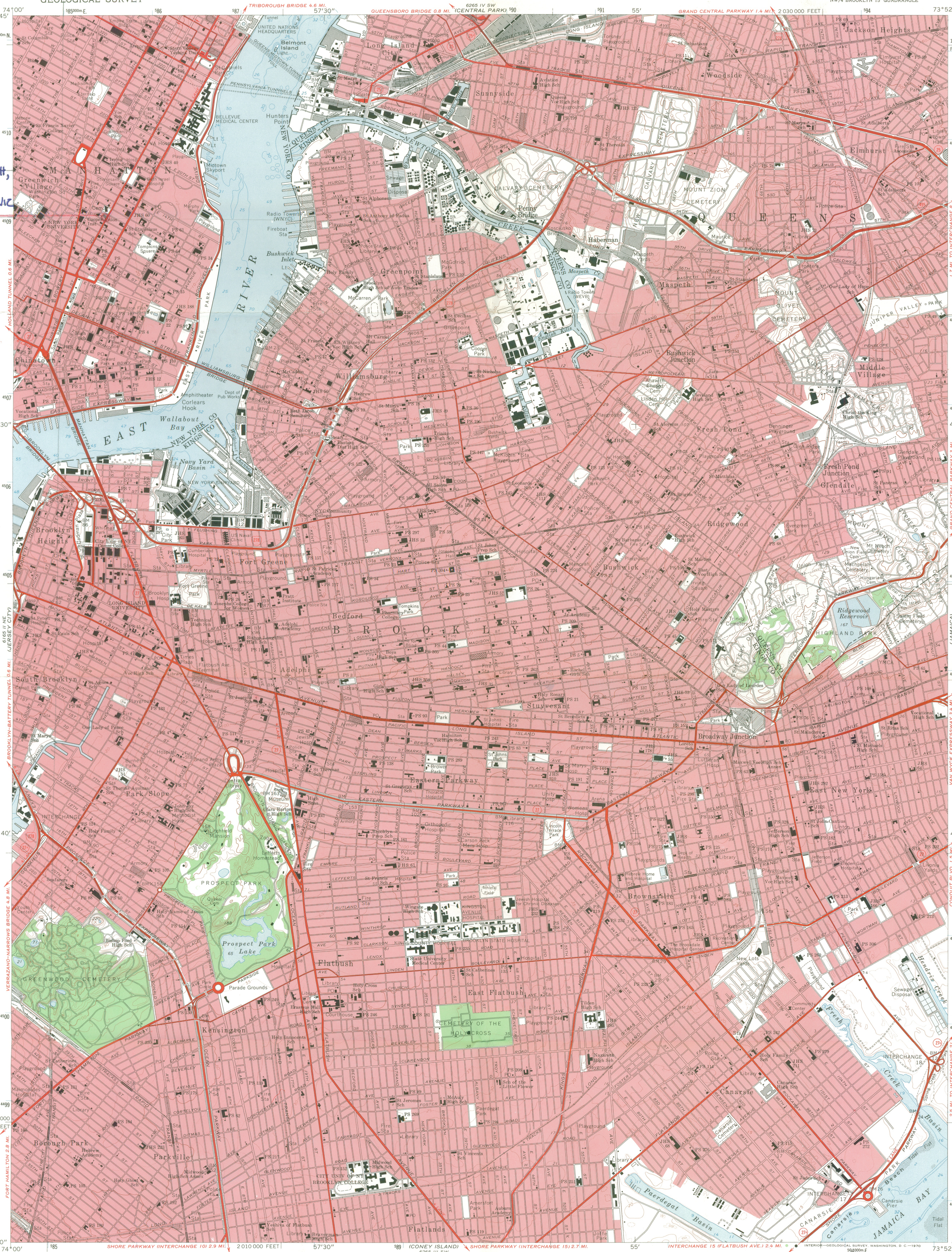
*Ottendorfer Public Library  
& Stuyvesant Polytechnic School*

DOE

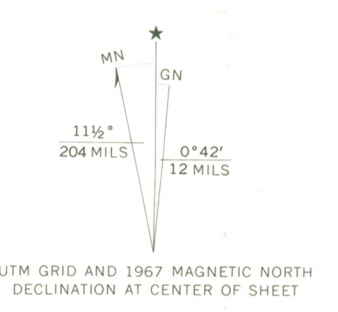
JUL 22 1979



OTTENDORFER BRANCH,  
NEW YORK PUBLIC  
LIBRARY AND  
STUYVESANT POLYCLINIC  
HOSPITAL  
EASING  
5/85/500  
NORTHING  
45/09/630

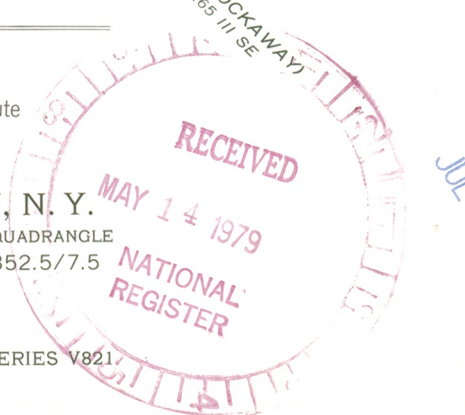


Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Revised in cooperation with New York Department of Transportation  
Control by USGS, USCGS, USCE, and City of New York Board of  
Estimate and Apportionment  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1954, and from USCGS Charts T-5094, T-5335, T-5454  
T-5459, T-5460, and T-8449  
Topography by planetable surveys 1955-1956. Revised from  
aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USCGS Charts  
275 (1964), 542 (1967), and 745 (1965). This information  
is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Entire area lies within New York City



SCALE 1:24,000  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 4.2 FEET IN THE EAST RIVER  
AND 5.2 FEET IN JAMAICA BAY  
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———  
Unimproved dirt ———  
Interstate Route ——— State Route ———  
BROOKLYN, N.Y.  
NW/4 BROOKLYN 15' QUADRANGLE  
N4037.5—W7352.5/7.5  
1967  
AMS 6265 III NW—SERIES 1982





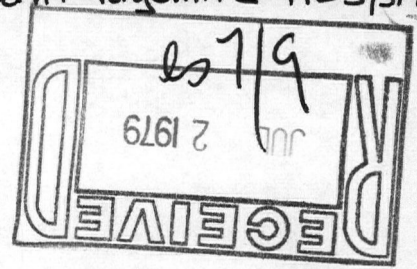
Ottendorfe.

ny 2nd Stuyvesant Polyclinic Hospital

5/29/79

Public Library

New York  
Co.



**The New York  
Public Library**

ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street  
New York, New York 10018

June 28, 1979

Dr. William J. Murtagh  
Keeper of The National Register  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Pension Building  
440 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20243

(Attn: NOM)

Dear Dr. Murtagh:

I understand that the Ottendorfer Branch of The New York Public Library at 135 Second Avenue, New York City has been nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. I would like to go on record for The New York Public Library as favoring such listing.

The Ottendorfer Branch Library building was built in 1884 and is presently the oldest active branch library in Manhattan. It is a particularly interesting example of late Victorian architecture, exhibiting elements of both the neo-Italian Renaissance and the Queen Anne styles. The building was designated as an official New York City Landmark on September 20, 1977 by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

I trust the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service will see fit to approve the building for listing in The National Register of Historic Places. If you have any questions regarding the building, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Gerald Gold  
Business Manager

GG/gp

cc: D. Bauer

E. Holmgren

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE      NEW YORK

Date Entered      JUL 22 1979

| <u>Name</u>                                                      | <u>Location</u>                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Newkirk Homestead                                                | Leads vicinity<br>Greene County  |
| Ottendorfer Public Library and Stuyvesant<br>Polyclinic Hospital | New York City<br>New York County |
| Community Theatre (Broadway Theatre)                             | Kingston<br>Ulster County        |
| Dodge, Lillian Sefton, Estate                                    | Mill Neck<br>Nassau County       |

Also Notified

Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan

Honorable Jacob K. Javits  
Honorable Gerald B. Solomon  
Honorable S. William Green  
Honorable Hamilton Fish, Jr.  
Honorable Jerome A. Ambro

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mr. Orin Lehman  
Commissioner  
Parks and Recreation  
Agency Building #1  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12238

NR      Byers/bjr      7/26/79

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.